

Overpower

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Overpower is an instructional simulation in the form of a game, illustrating power and its effects on the behavior of individuals and groups.

Leader's Manual

Overpower is a simplified and standardized variation of the popular *Star Power*. While “*Star Power*” demands an experienced leader (one who has been a participant in a previous playing of *Star Power* and has studied something of the theory of social structure), *Overpower* has been designed so that an inexperienced leader will be guided along the way through his or her first leadership of the game. After this first experience the leader is free (as are all *Star Power* leaders) to innovate and create variations of the game according to knowledge of the trainees and his or her growing awareness of the dynamics of power that the game is able to simulate.

The major objective of *Overpower* is to give each participant experience in examining a power-structured situation in which he or she has a part. It is intended that the participant will recognize the relationship between the “rules” and the power created by those rules and, in turn, the tendency of people to behave in certain ways.

Contents

Prepare the following kit for 24 players

- 24 pin-on labels
- 24 initial allocations (in marked envelopes)
- Supplies
- 1 each “Bonus” and “Welfare” packets

Requirements for Playing *Overpower*

A kit is provided for 24 players, playing once. The materials can be re-used if carefully retrieved after the game and carefully re-packaged.

Group Size. 9-24 players (more may play but a second kit of materials will be needed).

Space and Seating. Ideal seating is around three separate tables—one for each team. Chairs are needed for meetings of the teams between rounds; open floor area is needed for interactions during the playing rounds.

Equipment. A whiteboard or projector is needed for the public posting of individual player's scores and team totals after each round.

Name Tags. Each player needs a *team name tag* for clear identification during each round. Prepare in advance an equal number of each name tag in the shape of a Square, Circle, and Triangle.

Playing Pieces. The playing pieces are colored paper squares or poker chips designated with specific “trading points.” Prepare the pieces in advance using the following allocations. Place each player's starter pieces in an individual envelope.

Each member of the **Squares** is given an envelope of pieces with the following “trading points” designated:

Quantity	Color	Value (each)
1	white	5 points
2	yellow	10 points
2	orange	15 points
1	red	25 points

Each member of the **Circles** is given an envelope of pieces with the following “trading points” designated:

Quantity	Color	Value (each)
2	white	5 points
3	yellow	10 points
1	orange	15 points

Each member of the **Triangles** is given an envelope of pieces with the following “trading points” designated:

Quantity	Color	Value (each)
4	white	5 points
2	yellow	10 points

Supplies

After round one, after the scores are posted, give each team as many slips of paper as they have members. These are given to the team as a whole—each team decides how to distribute them.

The Squares get orange slips

The Circles get yellow slips

The Triangles get white slips

After round two, give one **Bonus Packet** to the team that is leading in total point value. The team must decide how to distribute the bonus among its members.

Bonus Packet: 2 Red

2 Orange

1 Yellow

At the same time, give one **Welfare Packet** to the team with the lowest point score. The team must decide how to distribute the welfare among its members.

Welfare Packet: 12 white

Directions for Play (the leader reads the instructions aloud, repeating if necessary but not commenting)

Leader:

Divide the group into three equal teams

Distribute the packets

Distribute the name tags

Read aloud:

“Raise your hand if you do not understand. I am allowed to repeat but not to comment. The rules for *Overpower* are arbitrary and somewhat artificial. A game such as this is a simulation of reality—not reality itself. There has to be a certain amount of announced structure. Please don’t argue with the rules or what may seem to be unfair.

The teams must be the same size, within one person. You will be given packets of six playing pieces that you will use to trade on the floor. The pieces are designated with your trading points. You may conceal your packet in your hand. When on the floor, offer to trade with another person. You can try to be cagey to ensure that you know what you are getting in advance if you wish. *You don’t have to trade sight unseen, but once you agree to trade you have to trade something.*

You can’t trade like for like. In every exchange you will either gain or lose. An aggressive trader will take a chance, play the risks and occasionally lose a few points in order to keep moving and keep his/her points in circulation.

If you are willing to trade, extend your hand as in a handshake. This grip is maintained until the trade is completed. To refuse to trade, fold your arms.

There is to be no talking until you clasp hands with another person.

To review . . . Once you clasp hands you must trade before releasing hands. One piece must be traded for one piece. Pieces with the same value are the same color, therefore, pieces must be of a different color—you may not trade like for like.”

Read after Round One:

“Now and after each round, each team will “huddle” for scoring and planning. Count your individual scores and post them on the team charts, name by name. Total the points. A team captain or spokesperson may post the scores in view of the group.”

Begin Round One

Allow 3-5 minutes depending on the degree of activity. When a lull develops, call for the huddle.

Huddle after Round One:

Total the individual scores

Add up the total score for team

Post the scores

Leader: In advance, prepare the following charts large enough for the whole group to see.

SQUARES

Names	Scores—Round 1	Scores—Round 2	Scores—Round 3
Individual totals for each round			

TOTAL SCORE	
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CIRCLES

Names	Scores—Round 1	Scores—Round 2	Scores—Round 3
Individual totals for each round			

TOTAL SCORE	
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TRIANGLES

Names	Scores—Round 1	Scores—Round 2	Scores—Round 3
Individual totals for each round			

TOTAL SCORE	
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Leader reads aloud the following:

“In order to keep the game moving smoothly and to keep the teams compatible, we need to make some adjustments. First, the member of the Squares with the lowest score must move to the Circles. The member of the Circles with the lowest score must move to the Triangles. The member of the Triangles with the highest score must move in with the Squares.”

The leader erases and re-enters the names and scores of the three people affected. Be sure they exchange their name tags.

The leader distributes the Supplies and reads aloud: “You are free to distribute this additional wealth any way you wish within your team.

Begin Round Two

Trade as before for 3-5 minutes

Huddle after Round Two:

Total the individual scores

Add up the total score for team

Post the scores

The leader calls attention to the charts and reads aloud: “The team with the largest score is the _____. (The team with the largest score will probably be the Squares.) We must now give them a reward for their effective playing. They can divide it within their team as they wish. We also notice that the team with the lowest score is the _____. (Probably the Triangles.) We would all feel better if they were given a little help. So here is a welfare packet for them to distribute among the members of their team.”

Allow time for distributions. No members are added or exchanged from team to team at this time.

Begin Round Three

Allow 3-5 minutes to trade as before. Don’t be surprised if some players seem to be losing interest or even act irritated.

Huddle after Round Three

Total the individual scores

Add up the total score for team

Post the scores

Leader reads aloud:

“In order to add interest for one final round, we are to add one rule. This rule is to be written so that it will work to the advantage of one certain team. But the game allows one team to decide what that one individual rule will be. Within your team, plan and write down your suggestion for an additional rule. We will listen to the suggestions in a few minutes.”

After a suitable interval, the leader says,

“Suggestions ready? Triangles, what rule have you suggested? (Listen) Thank you. Squares, what is your suggested rule? (Listen) Thank you. These are interesting suggestions, but the rules of the game indicate that we must use this excellent suggestion made by the Squares. Please repeat it

for us. (Listen). Thank you. Now I must allow you 60 seconds to decide on any particular strategies you may want to consider in view of this new rule. (Allow one minute.) The Final Round begins now!”

Final Round

It is possible that one or more groups will refuse to play. If so, don’t comment. Allow 3-5 minutes to play then call the game to a halt and begin the debriefing.

Debriefing for *Overpower*

Leader reads aloud, “What did you feel during this game? (Wait) To what extent and against whom did you feel anger or frustration? (Wait) What did you discern about the purpose of this game? (Wait)

“*Overpower* was designed to give people experience with social class structure as it is experienced in the United States. You have played one or more roles, giving you some familiarity with the roles that are played in our system by other socio-economic components. In the game’s over-simplified structure, money is power and the basis of status. Lack of money is equivalent to lack of power and results in lack of status. In our society, money and status are more tightly linked.

In *Overpower*, we use “trading points” to represent money and the accumulation or loss of wealth. Each of the three teams represents one of three different socio-economic sectors of our community. We distribute to them initial wealth representing their various starting places and then they trade that wealth on the floor. As is true in our society, each of the groups can deal with other groups in the strata. But dealing has certain advantages and disadvantages. Each element in our society can deal with other elements, but often under certain prejudiced conditions. This game is designed to help you *feel* what it is like to be in certain positions of privilege or lack of privilege. We play the game without pointing that out. We let privilege and deprivation become part of the “aha” of the game.”

Questions for Discussion

In discussing all or selected questions, don’t be satisfied with less than three or four responses to each.

When did you begin to “feel” the effects of the game? Describe your feelings.

At what point(s) in the game did you feel helpless or hopeless?

To what extent did you begin to dislike someone or a group? Why?

To what extent did you feel sympathy for someone or a group? Why?

In what ways did your dislike, or your sympathy, affect your actions and/or attitudes?

In what ways, if any, did the game prompt your rejection of the “system?”

Who of you wanted the game to stop and what group are you in?

What morality or ethical decisions were stimulated by the structures of the game?

Describe your reaction to the ways in which you felt and/or acted? Evaluate your reaction.

What purpose(s) did it serve to have teams? (You are scored individually and as teams; your team represents the segment of society in which you live.)

Why was it necessary to trade with other teams? (Trading within one’s team won’t add to the team’s status.)

How realistic is the game?

To conclude the experience, ask each person, in turn, to articulate what was for him/her the most important observations prompted by the game—a self-insight or a view of others’ behavior.