

Star Power: An Experiential Learning Exercise to Foster Ecological Perspectives on Power, Privilege, and Oppression

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Conference Abstract: The purpose of Star Power is to help raise students' awareness about the unequal distribution of power in society, and its impact on individuals and institutions. The Star Power exercise is a representative simulation of distinct groups in society that hold differential amounts of social power. The simulation focuses on the act of trading chips that represent different numerical values. Students have an opportunity to exchange chips with other students in order to enhance their scores. The goal of the simulation is to obtain the highest score in order to win a prize. It is best facilitated with 18 to 35 students and takes approximately 80 minutes to conduct.

When to Use:

- The Star Power simulation can be used with undergraduate students, graduate students, and in non-academic spaces such as community or organizational trainings.
- Star Power is best facilitated with a minimum of 18 participants, and a maximum of 35.
- There should be three facilitators. Each facilitator will serve either as a scorer, a timekeeper, or the main facilitator.
- This simulation works best when group members have previously built some rapport, and have a basic or introductory understanding of social power, privilege, and oppression.

Supplies and Cost:

Star Power materials and full directions are available for purchase at: http://www.stsintl.com/schools-charities/star_power.html. The cost of this simulation is \$250 plus \$14.95 with shipping and handling fees.

Time Needed for the Activity:

A minimum of 80 minutes is required to run the simulation. The total length of time for the simulation and discussion is contingent on how many trading rounds the facilitator would like to run. We recommend a total of three hours to run the simulation, and complete small and large group discussions.

General Instructions:

Before the Simulation: Remove all tables. Create three circles that are similar in size with ample space for students to walk around the room. Hang Star Power posters in an easy to see location and prepare white board for scoring.

Round 1: Students randomly select chips. Facilitators explain trading rules.

Information adapted from: **Nnawulezi, N.**, Campbell, C., Landstra, K., Davis, S., Vandegrift, C., & Taylor, A. (2013). Star power: An experiential learning exercise to encourage ecological perspectives on privilege and oppression. *Journal of Prevention and Intervention in the Community*, 41(2), 113-120.

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
1. Trading	Students trade with one another and report final score. Scorer records first name and # of points students attained in the round on the whiteboard. Students are assigned a group based on score and sit in their respective circles.
2. Bonus	Facilitators give students bonus chips to distribute to members within each of the three groups. Groups must decide who in the group will receive these chips. The value of the chips are added to the students overall score. Scorekeeper performs inflation.
3. Promotions	Facilitators announce who moved into a higher group based on the additional bonus points. Scores of the highest students are announced.

Instructors to facilitators: Timekeeper should strictly enforced time limits. Encouragers and discouragers should be used during the trading round and promotion announcements. Trading rounds shorten as simulation progresses. Redistribute chips into separate bags at start of round two.

Round 2: Students randomly select chips. Facilitators explain the redistribution of chips and that all points earned in the second trading round will be added to their existing scores.

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
1. Trading	Same as before. Students add their scores to the previously posted scores.
2. Bonus	Same as before. Scorekeeper performs inflation.
3. Promotions	Same as before.
4. Lawmaking	Facilitators announce that squares can make the next trading round rules. All three groups discuss recommendations for next round. The triangles and circles each provide their recommendation to the squares. Squares deliberate and announce trading rules.

Round 3: After this third round, facilitators can choose to stop, or continue with another round.

STEPS	DESCRIPTION
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1. Trading	Same as before.
2. Final Scores	Facilitators announce winner of the simulation.

After the simulation: Facilitators should put students in groups of 2 or 3 who all occupied different status groups in the simulation. This small group discussion should be followed up with larger group discussion.

Note. This is an abbreviated version of the complete simulation instructions.

Sample Star Power Student Discussion Questions

Below is a list of sample questions that can be used for small or large group discussion:

1. What was your initial reaction to the Star Power simulation?
2. How does Star Power mirror what occurs in the real world?
3. How did you participate in the system of oppression? How did you alleviate the system of oppression?
4. Think about what group you ended up in (square, circle, or triangle) at the end of the game. What was the easiest thing about being in this group? What was the most difficult?
5. If you were able to move up or down between groups, what influenced your movement?
6. If you never moved to any group, what do you think influenced your lack of movement?
7. Did you develop a strategy to try and win the game? If so, what was it? If not, why not?
8. In the Star Power Simulation, who was in the agent group? Who was in the target group? How did you know?
9. What did social power look like in this game?
10. Who had the social power, and how did you know that?
11. What did you learn from the Star Power Simulation--about yourself and about the systems of oppression at work in our society?
12. What are some of your reflections on how oppression has played a role in your life, both as a member of a marginalized group(s), and as a member of privileged group(s)?