

Activities

The Road Game

Issues addressed

Dealing with issues of power, control, negotiation.

Developing conflict resolution skills through co-operative and collaborative working.

Aims

To enable participants to analyse their own behaviour in a group seen in terms of cooperation and competition.

Discuss ways of resolving conflict and encouraging cooperation, both in the simulation and in the world today.

Time

1–2 hours. This activity is most effective if carried out in one complete session but it can be divided over a few sessions if necessary.

Group size

Ideally 16–24 people (max. 32)

Age

11+ years

Activities

Preparation

- A large open space
- Four large pieces of thick paper in four colours, preferably red, green, blue and yellow (22 inches by 28 inches or more) or paint on white paper to indicate its colour.
- Four jars of poster paint. The colours should match the four colours of paper (make sure it's water-based!).
- Four inexpensive paint brushes, 1 inch-wide. Large marking pens will do.
- One roll of 1 inch masking tape for taping the squares of paper together and to the floor so the map will stay put.
- Cards for each Community 1–4, describing each community. These cards to be given out to each Community Group.

A	B
D	C

- Newsprint or any cheap paper to attach to the edges of the 'map' or game board, about 2 inches wide all around the edges, to keep paint off the floor.

If paint and paper all over the floor are impossible where you are, try spreading the four squares of coloured paper on a large table. You could use one huge spread of newsprint, if necessary, marked into the four squares. A table confines this game a little, but not as much as expected, especially if the group is small.

Activities

Put the paint jars at the ready just beyond the edge of the game board but on the newsprint. Match up blue paint with blue paper, red paint with red paper etc.

Be sure you have at least six inches of open space all around the game board, for people to move about in.

Instructions

Lay out the map (as described above).

Read aloud the Explanation (anything in brackets is for you to do to know but not to read out).

Explanation

We are going to play a game about communities and territory.

It is about competition and cooperation, teamwork and chaos, perception and misperception, communication and conflict resolution. It is a game about the ways that communities and the people in them interact.

The game has three sections to it:

1. Road building
2. A hearing
3. Discussion at the end

It will involve conflict, politics, diplomacy, morals, competition, chaos and order.

In this game we live in a flat world with four communities in it, each of which has its own colour. (*Point to map.*)

Activities

The aim of the game is for your community to build roads. These roads will go from your territory through the land of other communities to the perimeter of the map.

Your community will decide where you want to build your roads and how you are going to negotiate with the leaders of the other communities for permission to cross their land.

I would like two people to be observers of the game.

Please divide yourselves into four communities. You have 30 seconds to do this.

Please choose a community leader. This person will negotiate on your behalf with other communities. S/he is the only one allowed to talk to other communities. You have 30 seconds to do this.

Please choose your first road builder. You will paint the road for your community. Take turns within your community to do this job, but you are allowed only one road builder at a time. You have 30 seconds to do this.

(Hand out the four community profiles and give the observers their notes.)

This is a profile of your community. You have three minutes to become this community. Please keep these details to yourselves as much as possible, except where you have been asked to do something in your profile or asked a question by a leader of another community.

You have been assigned a colour to play this game. This is where your community lives.

Activities

You will need to produce and display your principle product now, using whatever you can find in the room. You have three minutes to do this.

Gather around the map, please, in your community groups. Show us what your principle product is.

I am now going to read out the rules of this *once*. I will then accept one question from each team.

Not everything will appear to be fair in this game, but rules are rules and they must be kept to.

Activities

THERE ARE TEN RULES.

1. The object of this game is to build as many roads as possible from your land to the perimeter of the map. Your road engineer will paint the roads in your colour.
2. Each road must begin at a point on the edge of your own territory and arrive at the outside edge of the game board on the property of another community in order to count.
3. Roads completely on your own property will not count as roads at the end of the game.
4. You can talk freely within your own community, but you can only talk to other communities through your community leader. Outside your community s/he must only speak with leaders of other communities.
5. Your leader must negotiate for permission from the other leader and his or her team before you can enter their territory to build a road. Your leader must also get permission every time you wish to cross another group's road, even in your own territory.
6. A group leader can only grant permission to build a road once s/he has the unanimous agreement of his/her community. No deals, without complete consent of your community. You may have to negotiate with other communities and within your own. If even one member of your community does not agree, you cannot grant permission.
7. I will not act as a judge during this game. You must settle your own arguments among yourselves.
8. Community leaders do *not* paint roads. Only road builders do that. Please take turns at holding the road painting stick.
9. Teams do *not* take turns painting roads. All teams begin at the same time and keep going until the game is over. As soon as your leader makes a deal for you to cross another community's property, your road builder can begin painting.
10. All roads must be painted tidily. Messy roads will be disqualified at my discretion.

Activities

One question from each team please.

I will read the rules once more only.

There will be a time limit on this game. The game can end at any time and is known only to me when that will be.

(Hand out brushes to the road builders and the notes for observers to the observers.)

BEGIN!

The Game

Start the game – allow 20 minutes.

Make no reference to the time limit or number of roads they have to build.

Do a three minute countdown.

The Hearing

Please sit around the map in a circle.

Please count the number of roads your community has built. Remember only to count the ones which begin in your community and end in another one and at the edge of the map.

(Ask the observers to write up on a piece of flip chart how many each community thinks they have.)

This is only the unofficial count. The final count will be determined at the hearing.

Activities

We will begin the hearing. Does any community have any complaint to lodge against another community? Complaints will only be about specific attempts to build specific roads and cannot be general complaints. I will hear complaints one at a time please.

Once your community has made its complaints, I will move onto another community. You cannot make further complaints after this time.

We are not so much interested in the truth but the majority decision.

(Hear the complaint and allow the other side to put forward a case in defence.)

(Ask the other two groups not in the debate to vote on whether the roads should be allowed or not. You have the casting vote.)

(Some wheeling and dealing may begin once communities realise they have a vote and can change the outcome.)

(Do not take on the role of judge. The other two communities must decide.)

(Once everyone has complained, do a road recount and announce a winner.)

Debriefing

We need to have a short debrief and discussion.

We will look at things like politics, competitions, authority, leadership, morals, values, conflict and communication.

Activities

First of all each community was asked to display a trait from within their community. What were they? (*guess*)

(*Feedback from the observers*)

What did you as an individual feel as you were playing? (*hurt, angry, cheated, proud, lonely*)

Did competition develop?

Did the communities work well as separate groups? Were you listened to? What was your leader like? Did you get angry about what was happening? Were you surprised about the way you behaved? Did you know you could get like that? Did you all think the same way or were there differences within your own community?

Why were there disputes? Lack of time, lack of understanding, competitiveness, greed? Real life conflicts!

Did anyone cheat? What do you think about the cheaters? Why did they do it?

Which was the most powerful community at the start of the game? How was this displayed? Did this change by the end of the game?

Which was the most powerless community? Why?

Which community stood the best chance of surviving the real world in the 21st century?

What are the parallels with real life – religions, languages, economies, politics, morals, beliefs etc.?

Activities

Was there a problem caused by restricted knowledge? For example, lack of known time limit, didn't know that the most number of roads would win, only heard the rules once and only allowed one question per team, varied interpretation of the rules?

Why did you assume that there was a competition to build the most roads?
I never said this?

Did the economic status of your community affect the game?

Why did you get so heated up during the hearing? About what? It's only a game after all.

What did you think about the voting system in the hearing? Was it fair?

How did you feel about winning / losing?

Did any community help another?

In your communities go and discuss how you might play this game differently if you played again and what you might do for the good of all the communities.

Notes for observers

1.

Please watch two teams each. Decide this amongst yourselves.

2.

Make notes throughout the game from when the communities begin to build their roads.

Activities

3.

Note down:

- behaviour patterns
- arguments
- team work
- negotiation styles

4.

Does the community gain consensus before building roads?

5.

Does everyone participate in decision-making?

6.

How does the community leaders function?

7.

How do individuals respond to conflicts?

8.

Who seems to be co-operative?

9.

Who seems to be competitive?

10.

How is conflict resolved?

Tips for facilitators

1.

Unless you have used the suggestion about adding the element of competition to win, you have not said anything directly about that at all. You have commented about which roads count, and so on, but you haven't openly urged frantic competition to win. Whether competition develops, or not, will depend upon the group's perception of what you said. The omission of a direct order to compete was intentional, or else your inclusion of that element was intentional.

Activities

2.

The rules may seem very involved. They were deliberately designed to be that way. There is bound to be confusion and varying interpretations of the rules, creating problems the participants will have to resolve during the game. The communication channels are deliberately limited and confused. We do have a confusing world of mixed-up signals, with little chance to get through easily to each other.

3.

Be firm, and even cruel if necessary. Be sure you stay out of it and don't get trapped into being a judge now unless you mean to prove something by it. Be prepared for flac if you do serve as judge. The main idea is to know why you are doing whatever it is you are doing with the rules.

Information about the communities

(Adapted from *The Road Game* by Global Perspectives in Education, New York, NY, 1985.)

Community A

Your community is very industrialised. It depends on the import of raw materials and foodstuffs from other communities so your economy is dependent on other communities and trading with them. Your main exports are manufactured goods. Your community has a high standard of living and a developed education system. The people in your community have very similar values, cultures, ideas and experiences and share one common religion which you want everyone else to share too. You will need to demonstrate this to the other communities by your behaviour throughout the game without telling them.

Your colour in the game is red.

Activities

Community 2

Your community is new with lots of different cultures and religions. You will need to demonstrate this to the other communities by your behaviour throughout the game without telling them. Some of your community needs a great deal of open land for grazing herds; they worship and revere nature and natural things. You also have another rural group within your community, which grows the majority of its own food. They don't have a faith but believe only in themselves and science. It also grows food for the industrialised communities but it is in constant strife with them. Your community needs to develop a new industry to exploit the great mineral wealth of your land.

Your colour in the game is blue.

Community 3

Your community is a largely rural society, which is mainly self-supporting. You are a rather poor community and are very close-knit. Your community has been quite isolated from other cultures, communities and outside influences, and many people, but not all, wish to keep things as they always have been. The traditionalists are very religious and believe that this land was given to them by god; the modernists believe this too but believe that god would want them to share the land with others. You will need to demonstrate this to the other communities by your behaviour throughout the game without telling them. Your people have very similar morals, values, cultures, ideals and experiences. There is a high rate of illiteracy and a poor level of education.

Your colour in the game is green.

Activities

Community 4

Your community is on the verge of being a developed, industrialised society you have a lot of oil resources but few other natural resources. You rely, a lot, on imports. So far, only part of your community has been involved in the push towards industrialisation. Many of the people in your community worship oil and believe it to be sacred. Many others recognise its value to other communities and will sacrifice it to become an industrialised society. You will need to demonstrate this to the other communities by your behaviour throughout the game without telling them.

Your colour in the game is yellow.

Use this activity to raise issues of sectarianism and religious intolerance:

- In the introduction to the game highlight to the young people that the game is about community and territory and the aspects that make up a community such as religion, politics and economics.
- Use the debriefing session to discuss what role religion plays in a community, e.g. where did the community get their 'morals' from? Was there anything in the community description that indicated they were religious?
- When each community is asked to show a 'trait from within their community', if any of the communities show religious traits, use this as an opportunity to discuss what religious identity means to individuals and the effect it had on communities.
- Explore with the participants whether or not religion played a part in their behaviour.
- Also ask them to consider whether or not religion affects a community's ability to cooperate and compete with one another.
- What does sectarianism and religious intolerance do to communities? Does it stifle competition? Does it create opportunities?
- Is it possible for communities to be without sectarianism and religious intolerance? How can this happen?

Activities

Follow up activities:

The Holy Cross video - (see Resources section) This video can be used to highlight the idea of religion causing rifts within communities and the roles that people develop in situations where people struggle for power and inclusion.

Use the video animations (see Resources section) to show how religious diversity can cause problems in society. Allow the participants to discuss how this can be avoided and challenged.