

simsoc

simulated society

FIFTH EDITION

PARTICIPANT'S MANUAL
with Selected Readings

WILLIAM A. GAMSON

FREE PRESS

New York London Toronto Sydney New Delhi

To my newest set of game players, Gilad, Ari, and Maya



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Acknowledgments

The preparation of the fifth edition of SIMSOC's *Participant's Manual* (2000) was assisted by Larry Peppers. His role was to make suggestions that would enhance the use of SIMSOC in adult leadership training programs, since my experience in running it had been primarily with classroom use for undergraduates. Peppers suggested additional readings for the *Participant's Manual* and a few enhancements for coordinators in running and debriefing such programs, for which he received a fixed fee. He is no longer involved in any way in running the game.

Preface

SIMSOC has been developed to make social science more vivid to students at the college level and to adults in leadership training programs. It focuses on what is perhaps the most central problem for a student of society: the establishment and maintenance of social organization. When citizens riot, when governments use indiscriminate violence against their citizens, when generals seize power and liquidate political opponents, when armed gangs terrorize their neighbors, we begin to recognize that the existence of order and legitimacy is a mystery to be explained rather than part of the world's natural organization.

There would be less mystery if societies provided full social justice for all citizens. But many instead provide great social, political, and economic inequalities, with some groups excluded and deprived of benefits that are enjoyed by others. Demands for inclusion and social justice inevitably generate conflict. SIMSOC attempts to create a situation in which participants must actively question the nature of the social order and examine the processes of social conflict and social control. As an inevitable by-product, participants find themselves dealing with a host of issues, including interpersonal trust, leadership, "deviant" behavior, social protest, and power relations.

SIMSOC is intended to be used in conjunction with conventional classroom discussion and readings. A selection of such readings is included in this manual. The manual also includes suggestions for study questions based on participation in SIMSOC. The current edition represents a newly revised version of the game.

The use of games as a teaching or training device has a long history in many fields. Social scientists have developed a variety of games focused on social processes for use in teaching students about the society in which they live. Like all of these games, SIMSOC does not attempt to imitate a real society in every respect, but includes characteristics that highlight certain issues and problems. One can participate in SIMSOC at many levels. As in real life, what one learns will depend on what one puts into it.

WILLIAM A. GAMSON
August 1999

In Order to Play SIMSOC

Each participant should have a copy of this *Participant's Manual*, which includes the necessary materials. The coordinator should obtain a copy of *SIMSOC: Coordinator's Manual*, which contains all materials required by the coordinator, provides complete directions on how to set up and run SIMSOC, and suggests how to handle a variety of situations that might arise. One copy of the *Coordinator's Manual* will be needed by the coordinator for each SIMSOC of up to 90 participants. The *Coordinator's Manual* is available for a \$5.00 fee, and may be obtained by instructors who write, using their letterhead, to:

The Free Press
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Faculty Service Desk
1230 Avenue of the Americas
New York, NY 10020

NOTE: SIMSOC is pronounced "sim-sock."

simSOC

simulated society

1 RULES

simSOC Introduction

You will shortly be participating as a citizen in a simulated society.* If the society is to be a valuable learning experience, we will need your cooperation. Cooperation in this context means taking your objectives in the society seriously. We have tried to create a situation in which each of you has goals that depend on other people in the society for their achievement. Some of your goals will be held in common with other people, and some will bring you into conflict with others. Inevitably, some of you will do better than others in achieving your goals but, unlike some games, SIMSOC has no clear winners or losers.

You represent only some of the citizens of your society. Other citizens are present only in imaginary form—that is, certain rules of the game are based on assumptions about the reactions of these imaginary citizens. Nevertheless, this is basically your society to do with as you like.

COORDINATOR'S ROLE

The coordinator's role is kept to an absolute minimum once the society is in process. He or she will maintain the bank, receive forms, and carry out other tasks specified in the manual to make the game operate. If questions about the rules arise, the coordinator will guide you to the appropriate section of the manual and help you locate appropriate forms, but *will not interpret ambiguous rules or advise you how to deal with situations arising in the game*. The coordinator will do everything possible to avoid becoming enmeshed as a participant in your society once it has begun.

NATURE OF THE RULES

The rules in the manual are intended to represent certain “natural” forces in the real world rather than human laws. To ignore them by cheating simply renders the game pointless and meaningless. The coordinator should not be put in the position of having to monitor your observance of the rules, but should be able to depend on your cooperation to achieve the larger purpose of learning. The rules of the manual, as you will see, allow great leeway for you to add your own agreements and rules. The agreements that you make among yourselves are your own responsibility—these represent human laws rather than “natural” forces. If a player ignores or refuses to comply with a rule your society makes, you must face the issue of how to deal with this behavior. All players have a responsibility to observe the rules in the manual to make the game operative, but it is a matter of individual choice whether one observes the rules that you may establish to govern yourselves.

In spite of efforts to anticipate various contingencies, ambiguous situations will inevitably arise. When more than one meaning of a rule is possible, the coordinator will re-

*If you are unfamiliar with game simulations, you may wish to read the articles by Abt (pp. 41–43) and Raser (pp. 43–47) in this manual before reading the rules of SIMSOC.

fer the question to a group within the society for interpretation. The coordinator will be concerned only with those aspects of the ambiguous situation that affect his or her specific tasks as coordinator.

SUMMARY OF THE RULES

The rules that follow are detailed, but not as complicated as they first appear; you will discover this once SIMSOC is in process. A short summary of the rules is included here to give you a general sense of the nature of the society and the options available to you. It also includes page references so that later you can easily look up exact details as necessary. A careful reading of this summary is a helpful way to begin, but you should read the complete rules rapidly. Once you begin to play and attempt to achieve your goals, you will need to read various specific sections of the complete rules more carefully.

Simbucks

Simbucks are the basic currency in SIMSOC. Initially, they are held in a bank run by the game coordinator (see p. 7).

Region

All members of the society live in one of four regions (see p. 7).

Moving

A player may move to another region by paying a moving fee to the bank (see p. 7).

Travel

A person cannot travel between regions without having either a travel ticket or a Private Transportation Certificate. Travel tickets may be obtained from a limited number of players who have travel agencies and receive a supply of tickets each session. A Private Transportation Certificate may be purchased from the bank (see p. 8).

Subsistence

Every member of the society must, for every session attended, provide for his or her subsistence, doing this by means of either a subsistence ticket or luxury living. Subsistence tickets can be obtained from a limited number of players who have subsistence agencies and receive a supply of tickets each session. Luxury living may be purchased from the bank.

Failure to provide subsistence for a session will mean loss of one's job. Failure to do so in two consecutive sessions means one is considered dead and cannot participate in the society in any way (see pp. 9–10).

Munchies (optional)

The coordinator will maintain a Munchie Bazaar where Simbucks may be con-

verted to food or beverages. Or, instead of Munchies, the coordinator may make other desirable items available for purchase with Simbucks.

Enterprises

Participants can invest their Simbucks to buy risky enterprises from the coordinator. The success of these enterprises depends partly on luck and partly on the skill of the investors (see pp. 10–11).

Basic Groups

There are eight basic groups in SIMSOC for which you can work. Only the heads of these groups will be designated by the coordinator at the beginning. The rest of the players must find jobs. The head of each group receives the group's income to disperse.

The groups include two industries (BASIN and RETSIN), two political parties (POP and SOP), an employee interest group (EMPIN), a human services group (HUMSERVE), a mass media group (MASMED), and a rule-interpreting group (JUDCO). You should read the description of these groups before beginning play because you will be asked to designate a preference. If you are not picked as head of a group, you will be faced with the need for employment (see p. 11). You will also have an opportunity to support or withhold support from some of these groups.

National Indicators

Numerical values for four National Indicators are calculated at the end of each session. The indicators are Food and Energy Supply (FES), Standard of Living (SL), Social Cohesion (SC), and Public Commitment (PC). These National Indicators may be raised by investing Simbucks in either of two broad public programs—Research and Conservation, or Welfare Services. The National Indicators decline by a certain percentage each session and can be lowered further by various actions and events in the society. If the National Indicators decline below certain points, the income available to the basic groups in the society declines. If the National Indicators rise above a certain point, the income available to the basic groups in the society increases. If any National Indicator goes below zero, the society collapses and the game is over (see pp. 22–24).

Absenteeism

Certain National Indicators (described above) are lowered when members are absent, regardless of the reason for the absence (see p. 25).

Unemployment

Certain National Indicators are lowered if there are members of the society without jobs (see p. 25).

Death

Certain National Indicators are lowered if members die (see p. 25).

Minority Group (optional)

The coordinator will announce whether this option is in effect. It provides for the designation of some members of the society as Minority Group Members. These people may be removed from their positions at any time by action of any two non-Minority Group Members (see p. 26), or may face other obstacles.

Individual Goals

You will be asked to select certain personal or individual goals to pursue during the course of the society. You will have an opportunity to change these goals and to declare at each session the extent to which you feel you are meeting them (see pp. 26–27).

Simforce

Actual physical force is prohibited in SIMSOC but the equivalent of such physical force is provided. Any individual or group may create a Simforce with the power to arrest others and to protect specified others from arrest. A person who is arrested is restricted to his region and may not travel, may not hold any job or official position in the society, may not engage in any official transactions with the coordinator, and will have all possessions confiscated. All confiscated materials will be turned over to the head of the Simforce. A person is dead if his arrest is renewed for two consecutive sessions.

More than one Simforce can be created, and it is also possible to remove an existing Simforce. Arrests lower certain National Indicators (see pp. 27–30).

Simriot

Members of the society may riot by signing a riot form (Form M). Riots may be prevented, however, by the placing of a guard post. Riots lower certain National Indicators (see pp. 30–31).

Government

There is no requirement that the society establish a government nor are there any formal rules regulating a government (see p. 31).

Special Events (optional)

The coordinator may announce the occurrence of certain “outside events” affecting the society, but you will not know in advance when the events will occur or what their nature will be (see p. 31).

The Object of the Game

To achieve the individual goals you have set for yourself, to help the basic group to which you belong to achieve its goals, and to see to it that the society as a whole is a “success”—however you may choose to define this. If you try to achieve these objectives, the larger objective of learning will be achieved (see Summary, pp. 31–32).

GENERAL CONSTRAINTS

The “laws of nature” prohibit all of the following:

1. Taking resources from the bank or from other participants without their consent.
2. The use of physical force. (The game provides for a simulated version of this.)
3. Counterfeiting Simbucks or other resources.
4. Forging another person’s signature without his or her consent.

SIMSOC Personal Life

SIMBUCKS

Simbucks are the basic currency in SIMSOC. They are signified in these instructions by “\$.” You can use them to buy things you will need to achieve your goals in the society. For example, they will help you to travel or to buy subsistence, Munchies, or other items. You can also invest them in various ways, or you may save them in any given session for later use. As you read the following instructions, you will discover the many ways in which you can spend your Simbucks. All Simbucks not owned by individuals or groups are the property of the bank kept by the coordinator. The bank does not make loans or extend credit.

REGION

All members of the society live in one of four regions, designated Red, Yellow, Blue, and Green. At the beginning of each session, you must go to your home region.

Moving

Any player may move to another region by filing the Moving Sheet (Form C) and paying a moving fee of \$10 to the bank. The move becomes effective at the beginning of the session following the filing of this form. However, players may go to the new region immediately, if they provide their transportation as described in the next section.

Moving to a new region is subject to the following restrictions: First, no more than one-third of the total participants (including absentees) may live in any one region. Second, a player may be refused admission to a region by the *unanimous* consent of the inhabitants who are present (that is, excluding visitors or absentees).

TRAVEL

You may travel between regions in two ways:

1. *Public transportation.* A person who possesses a travel ticket may use it to travel between regions. A travel ticket is good for one trip, defined as leaving and returning to the home region with no more than one stop in each other region. A trip is over when the traveler returns to the home region or repeats a visit to any region. It is your responsibility to give the coordinator or an assistant your travel ticket at the beginning of each trip. Travel tickets can be obtained from people who head travel agencies (see discussion below).

2. *Private transportation.* Any individual may purchase a Private Transportation Certificate (Form D) from the bank at a cost of \$25. Those who possess such a certificate may make as many trips as they like. In other words, a Private Transportation Certificate allows you to travel freely for the rest of the session and for all future sessions of the society. Only the individual who has bought a Private Transportation Certificate may use it. He or she may, however, sell or transfer a certificate to another individual by filing Form F and paying a transfer fee of \$3 to the bank. The bank cannot buy back a Private Transportation Certificate once it has been issued.

No one may travel without either a travel ticket or a Private Transportation Certificate. A certain number of players will be designated as owners of travel agencies at the beginning of the game. These agency heads will receive five travel tickets in each session which they can use, hoard, dispense, save, or sell in any fashion they see fit. Unused travel tickets may be carried over to future sessions. A travel agency with its regular supply of five travel tickets may be sold or transferred (Form F), but a transfer charge of \$3 must be paid to the bank.

Restrictions on Travel

Travel is subject to the following restrictions. First, no more than half of the total participants present at a session may occupy any region at any one time. A traveling member may not enter a region in which there are already 50% of the members of the society present. This restriction also applies to any other areas even if they are not official regions (for example, an “uninhabited region” used as a meeting place). Second, any player, even with valid transportation, may be refused admission to a region by the unanimous consent of the inhabitants who are present (excluding visitors or absentees). He or she may *not* be refused admission if one or more of the inhabitants is willing to have the traveler enter.

Calling or shouting between regions is prohibited. Players should act as if sound-barriers make it impossible for them to speak to each other unless they are physically present in the same region.

Reassigning a Travel Agency

If owners of travel agencies are absent, arrested, or have a Minority Group Member Action (Form K) filed against them, they lose their agency. The coordinator will re-

assign the agency at random to another member of the same home region. If the old owner has not yet received the allotment of tickets for the current session, the new owner will receive the supply for that session.

Cell Phones/Laptop Use (optional)

Cell phones or Laptops may not be used to communicate between regions unless the coordinator announces that this option is in effect. Then, they may be used only by MASMED (see pp. 18–19).

Location of Bank

The coordinator's desk or bank is considered part of every region, and transactions with the coordinator do not require travel.

SUBSISTENCE

All members of the society must provide for their subsistence for every session at which they are present (even if present for only part of the session). You can do this by presenting the coordinator with a subsistence ticket at any time before the end of the session. You can also provide for subsistence plus luxury by purchasing one of the luxury-living options described below.

A certain number of players will be designated as owners of subsistence agencies at the beginning of the game. These agency heads will receive five subsistence tickets in each session, which they can use, hoard, dispense, save, or sell in any fashion they see fit. Unused subsistence tickets may be carried over to future sessions. A subsistence agency, with its allotment per session of five tickets, may be sold or transferred (Form F), but a transfer charge of \$3 must be paid to the bank.

The two luxury-living options are:

1. *Luxury-Living Package.* You may provide for your subsistence by purchasing a Luxury Living Package from the coordinator at a price of \$15 per session. A Luxury Living Package includes subsistence for the purchaser for the session of purchase and, at the discretion of the coordinator, may include other benefits as well.

2. *Endowment.* You may purchase from the coordinator a Luxury Living Endowment at a cost of \$25 (Form E). This endowment provides you with subsistence for the session of purchase and for all future sessions and, at the discretion of the coordinator, may include other benefits as well. You may transfer your Luxury Living Endowment to another participant (Form F), but a transfer charge of \$3 must be paid to the bank. The bank cannot buy back a Luxury Living Package or Endowment once it has been issued. A Luxury Living Endowment can be used to provide subsistence for only one individual per session.

Reassigning a Subsistence Agency

The same rules apply as for a travel agency.

Subsistence Failure

If you fail to provide subsistence for a session, you suffer the following consequences: as of the end of that session, you are unemployed; if you are head of a basic group, you will be removed from your position and a new head will be chosen in the manner specified in the rules. If you own a subsistence or travel agency, you forfeit it, and it will be reassigned as specified in the rules.

These restrictions remain in effect until you provide a subsistence ticket or buy luxury living. During the period in which you are without subsistence, you are free to talk to others and to travel if you have the means of transportation. Even though you are officially unemployed, you may participate in ongoing activities and may continue to hold any Simbucks or tickets which you have saved from previous sessions. You may turn in Support Cards for basic groups and participate in other activities. Once you obtain subsistence, it is up to you to find a new job or regain your old one; you do not automatically assume your old position.

Repeated Subsistence Failure. If you fail to obtain subsistence in two consecutive sessions, you are considered dead and henceforth cannot participate in the society in any way. You will then be asked by the coordinator to observe the society and assist the coordinator.

MUNCHIES

(Option One) Munchies represent imported luxuries. Under this option, the coordinator will maintain a Munchie bazaar at which Simbucks can be used to buy food or beverages at rates posted by the coordinator. The bringing of any food or beverage to sessions of SIMSOC is prohibited if this option is in effect. Participants should act as if the Munchie bazaar is the only place where it is possible to get Munchies while the society is in session.

(Option Two) Instead of (or in addition to) a Munchie Bazaar, the coordinator may make other desirable items available for purchase with Simbucks. The coordinator will announce whether this option is in effect at the beginning of the simulation. If this option is used, prices of the various items will be furnished to MASMED in a catalogue.

ENTERPRISES

At any time during the life of the society, any individual participant or group of participants may invest in a maximum of one high-risk Enterprise per session. This Enterprise will consist of three puzzles to be solved before the end of the session in which the investment occurs. If all three are not solved, you will lose your entire investment. But even if all three are solved correctly, there is a 50-50 chance of losing your entire investment. (The Coordinator will role a die, with even numbers indicating a successful outcome and odd numbers indicating failure.)

However, if the enterprise is successful, the investors will receive two and a half times the amount invested. For example, if you invested 40 Simbucks, solved all three puzzles, and receive an even number on the role of a die, you will receive 100 Simbucks