

The Early Days of *Simulation & Games*: A Personal Reflection

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This account describes the origination of Simulation & Games as an outgrowth of the Academic Games Project at Johns Hopkins University in the late 1960s. It identifies the key role of Michael Inbar in conceiving and implementing the journal, as well as its early commitment to an interdisciplinary focus.

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Gender discrimination opened up the world of simulation and gaming for me. In 1967, I completed my doctorate in sociology at Rutgers—The State University. Yet in that year of flush academic jobs, when male peers without dissertation or publications were getting interviews and offers, I reached May without any employment for the next year. When Matilda White Riley heard of my predicament, she called me into her office, rang up Sarane Boocock at Johns Hopkins University, and asked if she knew of any openings. Sarane said she could use a researcher on a project she directed under the sponsorship of Jim Coleman, the Academic Games Project with the Center for the Study of Social Organization of Schools. During the interview in Baltimore, my excitement over the project's assumptions and direction must have shown, for I was hired and joined the group in June.

The Academic Games Project grew out of Coleman's epic work on school desegregation. On the basis of that study, he surmised that simply mixing heterogeneous students in the same classroom would not guarantee the elimination of prejudice and social discrimination. He also suspected, which later project research suggested to be correct, that through simulated games poor youths could exhibit skills less apparent in traditional classrooms, experience academic success, and increase what psychologists refer to as locus of control. Thus the Academic Games Project developed simulation games, pretested them among ourselves and in schools, did teacher training, and conducted evaluation research to compare the effects of games with traditional pedagogy.

The project was never very large in full-time staff, less than a half dozen people at any one time. In addition to doing research in collaboration with

Earling Schild, Sarane was working on the first of her seminal books on the sociology of education. My primary role was in designing, directing, and implementing studies. Dove Toll, who designed GHETTO, did most of the fieldwork, as later did Lindy Harry. Eventually, Samuel Livingston signed on to do curricular development.

Although not a full-time participant, Jim Coleman was the catalyst for the energy and creativity. Gentlemanly, he elicited the best in people through his calm commentary, suggestions, and encouragement. Despite being the star, he was modest and self-effacing, never giving to ownership of ideas nor autocratic control of the project's direction. For a novice academic, he was a superb role model of ethical professionalism, scholarly practice, and collegial generosity.

In fact, because of Coleman's inspiration and leadership, many graduate students were involved in the Games Project. Gerald Zaltman, who went on to become a business school professor, created and tested the game CONSUMER. Paul MacFarlane's dissertation used the THE PARENT-CHILD GAME for small groups research. Psychologist Julian Stanley, among other Hopkins faculty, attended informal seminars and provided other expert direction. Almost all were interested in interaction games (then referred to as "man [*sic*] simulation"), but one Coleman protégé, Jimmer Leonard, created TOY STORE, a computer game that conveyed basic economic principles to elementary school students.

The atmosphere was heady with challenge and excitement. We tried out new games at lunch or in people's homes in the evenings. Our stacks of computer paper contained data that suggested the value of gaming for social and emotional as well as cognitive change. As is common with evaluation research performed in natural settings, our results were often confusing and left us frustrated. Yet, in the schools where children showed up hungry, haggard from daily exposure to violence, we observed obvious improvements in student interest and motivation. Teachers agreed with us, wanted copies of the games and training in how to design their own games.

Within the center overall though, housed in what was once a doctor's office and home near the university, some members of other projects sniped and even ridiculed us. We were having too much fun and, worse, had a contract with Western Publishing Company to produce and disseminate some of the materials. We were not "pure" enough. Fortunately, the federal overseers supported our efforts and praised our activities during funding reviews. Somehow they understood that we were on the cusp of a new direction in pedagogy, one that would later expand to include such branches as cooperative and collaborative learning and team projects.

In 1968 Sarane left the project to teach at the University of Southern California, and Earling Schild returned to Israel. Suddenly, I was the senior member of the program, only too aware of my insufficient experience to handle that responsibility. Fortunately, Michael Inbar, who had earlier developed DISASTER under the mentorship of Coleman, was able to arrange a split position. Half the year he worked at Hebrew University, the other half at Johns Hopkins. As a result, formally we became codirectors of the project, although I was actually in charge during his absence.

Such a strange sharing of authority would normally lead to disaster. Somehow Michael and I never found the situation awkward. A Frenchman turned Israeli, he thought in his original language, translated to Hebrew, then translated to English to speak. Nonetheless, he spoke faster than anyone I knew, gesticulating with his cigarette the entire time. I was of very different background and experience, from smalltown South Jersey, one that made me feisty and ready to stand up for my views. We argued loudly, frequently, and easily, without rancor. Michael trusted me to handle our plans while he was away, and I was grateful to have him take over when he returned. As a result, any work we did then was the result of a meta-author, Inbar-and-Stoll. I have never since had such a congenial collaboration.

With regard to *Simulation & Games*, Michael deserves full credit for the idea. I frankly doubted whether there was sufficient interest in so specialized a journal, let alone enough potential contributors. Scattered around the country were key people, similar to Coleman; however, few had the grant support and numbers of people that we had at Hopkins. Among these early developers were Garry Shirts, who was holding gaming workshops in La Jolla; Harold Guetzkow, whose Inter-Nation Simulation (INS) was the first large-scale game for adult players; William Gamson, who was completing the design of SIMSOC; Richard Duke, who was exploring human-computer interfaces in his METROPOLIS simulations. We knew of a few economists and social scientists who had developed pure computer simulations, but given our project's emphasis on interactive games we lacked the collegial relationships necessary for developing this potential audience.

When Michael first came to the project, he had a contract with Free Press to write a general overview of the field and to include articles by various designers. Primarily because of my better facility with English, he asked me to coauthor the work, which became *Simulation and Gaming in Social Science* (Inbar & Stoll, 1971). In the course of conversing with contributors, we were able to test the idea of a journal and received a favorable response. We also started presenting papers at sociology conventions, where we drew large crowds. Nevertheless, I remained skeptical.

Michael was determined to push ahead with his plan, and he simply swept me along. We contacted Sara Miller (later McCune), publisher of Sage Publications, which specialized in books and journals in the social and behavioral sciences. Sage was publisher of Boocock and Schild's *Simulation Games in Learning* (1968), thus Sara was familiar with the field and saw value in the idea. Sara suggested that we begin by editing a special issue of *American Behavioral Scientist* (*ABS*; Stoll & Inbar, 1969). In retrospect, I realize how important that opportunity was, for *ABS* was a well-known interdisciplinary journal that attracted an eclectic group of scholars, most of whom would not have learned of the new journal otherwise. Without Sara's foresight and willingness to risk her own resources, I doubt the plan would have succeeded so well.

Because English was Michael's third language, he spent more time soliciting articles, while I set up an office system and oversaw the manuscript evaluations and final editing. The *ABS* issue appeared in July-August 1969 and featured a theoretical article by Jim Coleman, one on conflict research by Paul Smoker, an exploration of detrimental features of simulation gaming by John Baldwin, an exploration of psychological accounting models by Robert B. Smith, on the POLIS Laboratory designed at Santa Barbara under Robert C. Noel, and a multinational study of an innovation diffusion simulation by a team of Michigan State University sociologists. Scanning these articles after 25 years, I am impressed with their complexity and continued utility.

By the time *Simulation & Games* was ready to operate, Michael had returned to Israel. I traveled to Beverly Hills to meet the staff at Sage, to observe how a journal was composed (real cut-and-paste, not electronically, as today), and to understand their requirements. Michael designed the original cover, which consisted of interlinking boxes that represented both various levels of information and a complex interactive structure. He also organized the Editorial Board, which included a number of scholars who had done dissertations at Johns Hopkins, along with people like Richard Duke and Bill Gamson. Even when Michael was in Baltimore, I essentially ran the daily operations of the journal, that is, sent manuscripts to reviewers, composed acceptance and rejection letters, and edited the final versions for clarity, grammar, and syntax. (I was committed to having articles be as readable as possible and required authors to give me this final editing authority. This practice was not typical of academic journals then and probably is not so even today.) Michael held final authority on editorial decisions, handled business matters with Sage, and spread the word.

One of our early problems was filling the first issues. We discovered, as I have learned is common with new journals, that the editors have to prime the

pump. On the one hand, this means that they call their associates and solicit articles—not the most objective approach. On the other, they are able to shape the tone of the contents from the start. Michael and I were determined that the journal be as open to the full range of simulation styles, uses, and approaches. Because we came out of a tight-knit group, we wanted to avoid being an insider publication dominated by people connected with Johns Hopkins. He chose as the lead article to the first issue a simulation of unconscious dream process developed by Schlomo Breznitz and Amia Lieblich. This topic was so different from other simulations of the day that it could not help but alert the reader that we welcomed originality. I think the growth and success of the journal testifies to our meeting that goal. The variety of themes and approaches evident in the special issue of *ABS* continued, and we were soon receiving articles from scholars previously unknown to us.

We also discovered the seldom-discussed pressure placed on journal editors by associates. More than once people called me to say that they were in desperate need of a publication for their tenure or promotion review. Could we perhaps rush a review? Or worse, guarantee publication ahead of viewing the document? I was dismayed by the sloppy appearance and unedited writing of some manuscripts. These same people, I knew, would have flunked a student for submitting such shoddy work. Accordingly, I also understood why some people appeared in print so often—they submitted finished, legible manuscripts that met all the style requirements. The “good old boy” network had little to do with their success.

In addition to academic articles and book reviews, we included reviews of simulations that required the evaluators to administer the game or apply the model. A column on newly available simulations provided descriptions according to a standard format to facilitate a comprehensive overview of the contents. (These inclusions were the consequence of an Inbar-Stoll brainstorm, what observers may have called an argument.) These very practical features solved a pressing need: to help researchers, simulators, and teachers locate actual materials as they became available. Before the journal’s appearance, locating simulations for a particular purpose was haphazard at best. Most developers did not have a means to distribute their materials, which in the case of games were often self-produced through mimeograph or ditto machines. (Our hands were often purple in those days before affordable photocopying machines.)

The major value of the journal’s first years was less its scholarly content than its encouraging of a community of developers, researchers, and users of simulations. Because the field was in its infancy, the research studies were not always highly sophisticated. Computing was still very technical, and

programming languages were of a complexity to deter many potential model builders. (Just reserving computer time could be a problem on busy campuses.) As a result, the tools to create complex systems (Michael's interlinking boxes) were few and inadequate. At times, hope substituted for evidence, and expectation for clarity of a theoretical model.

Although simulation and gaming has its modern origins in the 19th-century military and was practiced in some business schools, it was an innovation in the social sciences and general education. Devotees faced the psychological pressures common to change agents. The nomenclature ("games" and "gaming") was not one to draw approval from all one's academic colleagues, who failed to understand the long tradition and potential of the approach. Scholars and practitioners were often isolated within their home disciplines, yet in need of the expertise of someone in another specialty. That the journal eventually became the official publication of four associations demonstrates its seminal role in creating interdisciplinary networks of support and exchange.

After two years of serving as Managing Editor, I left Baltimore to join the faculty of Sonoma State University. That new campus had included in its social science building a simulation laboratory incorporating a major classroom adjoined by five small-group rooms. All these rooms as well as four nearby large classrooms were interconnected by an intercom system, so one could do almost any simulation game, including SIMSOC, with up to a hundred people easily. In addition, connected to the major simulation classroom was a video production room and an observation room, both with one-way mirrors. The two video cameras and the editing deck freed both game participants and game administrators from having a split consciousness, that is, keeping in mind what was happening while it was happening. Immediate replay following the activity fostered more sophisticated dissection of events than one dependent primarily on memory.

As a result of my move across country, I became the Book Review editor. When Michael soon afterward had to give up his split position and return to Israel, Sarane Boocock, by then at Russell Sage Foundation, took over the journal with Gail Fennessey, a new member of the Academic Games Project. Consequently, the Hopkins network remained in charge, although by the fifth year the Editorial Board had doubled in size and had greater disciplinary diversity and geographical representation.

I became a consumer of games, both in sociology and management courses, and retained my enthusiasm for them. I used SIMSOC, BALDICER, GHETTO, and the MARRIAGE GAME to great effect. For several years I taught courses on simulation gaming and design, gave workshops in Bay area schools, and wrote for the teacher's journal *Media and Methods*. Gradually,

my academic interests shifted, and Bill Nighswonger, the political science colleague who had designed the simulation lab unfortunately died too young. When retrenchment hit the campus, no one was left to prevent the laboratory from being torn apart and replaced with standard classrooms. I gave most of my boxed games to the library and to education faculty. I even lost the copies of the journal I had once edited.

Eventually, I changed disciplines and became a history professor. In my first year I taught a course on Vietnam and discovered a set of curriculum materials containing a variety of related simulations. Accustomed to lecture or discussion formats, my students quickly gained an appreciation for the complexity and rationale of various sides of the issues in that terrible conflict. Most of them will go on to become teachers, and I am gratified to see that in a small way through them I am still diffusing the innovation. Even more, it is rewarding to know that so many others continue to explore the potential of simulation, both in interactive and computer formats, and that Michael Inbar's vision was correct.

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I now devote most of my research to a different type of simulation: social biography. My reconstructions have resulted in American Dreamers: Charmian and Jack London, The Vanderbilt Women, and The Rockefeller Women, all published by St. Martin's. I was the first director of the Center for Training and Professional Development on my campus, through which I consulted with faculty on pedagogy, and wrote many essays on aspects of active learning for the center's publication.

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