Chapter 9
Ethics and Simulation Games in a Cultural Context: Why Should We Bother? And What Can We Learn?

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Abstract Ethics is a challenging subject, especially when applied to the already social complex reality of simulation games (SGs). In this chapter we explain the factors involved and provide suggestions on how to deal with the challenges that arise. Our aim is to create learning opportunities for both participants and facilitators. Ethical challenges in SGs stem from two main sources; the first is the context of the SG and its participants as they start interacting in the gameplay, and the second is within the SG itself. In this chapter we take you on a journey to provide insights into the kinds of challenges you may encounter and how they can enable you as designer and facilitator to optimize learning both within and beyond the SG. Because SGs as tools are adding much of their value by connecting to specific (ethical) issues relevant for learners, it is important for facilitators to understand how these may become problematic as a SG proceeds.

Keywords Simulation game · Game design · Facilitation · Debriefing · Types of simulation games · Gamification · Serious games · Culture · Game-based learning · Ethics

9.1 Introduction: Why Should We Bother?

Elyssebeth Leigh, as second author of this book chapter, states that "any kind of educational activity is inherently manipulative"; it is clear that learners in simulation games (further abbreviated with SG) depend on both the ethical and cultural awareness and skills of facilitators who select the activity and can manipulate events. Designers can create a simulation game to inform or teach participants about almost

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anything. Games can be abused for propaganda reasons (keynote Dr. Kriz, ISAGA Indore conference 2021) to display hidden messages based on the values of the designers and facilitators. And with such power comes a responsibility to design and facilitate with the right intentions for the right reasons and at the right time. Questions concerned with ethical design and facilitation in cultural contexts include.

- How do we know that, when we are facilitating and designing, we are addressing the right issues in specific cultural contexts?
- What might lead us to go astray from this good intention?
- Since all simulation is—in some way—a 'manipulation' of conditions why would we do such a thing anyway?

Cultural ethical issues in SGs have two main sources, first the SG itself and secondly the participants and their specific context at a moment in time. We begin with the SG itself as a source of ethical issues because as facilitators and designers we can influence learning simply by our choice of activity as well as in the ways we choose to use it. The second source of ethical issues is the participants who may challenge or feel challenged by the activity. As designers and facilitators, we need to be alert to deal with and adapt to these challenges. These context- and participant-specific characteristics can provide amazing learning opportunities for participants and facilitators and also create ongoing challenges. The learning opportunities thus created require identifying and raising relevant learning issues to fit the learning challenges for specific groups of participants. Connecting experiences in a simulated activity to their beliefs and personal schema while paying attention to (cultural) differences is essential in facilitation SGs.

9.1.1 Added Value of SGs in Ethical Education

Before we explore in depth the two main sources of ethical challenges in SGs, we need to establish why educators would use SGs at all. The added value of SGs is a long recognized and proven issue (Bogost, 2010; Hays, 2005; Hofstede et al., 2010; Klabbers, 2009; Kriz & Auchter, 2016; Ravyse et al., 2017; Schaefer et al., 2011; Stoppelenburg et al., 2012). SGs move educators and learners beyond passive ingestion of information. By coupling thinking and doing, SGs move challenges from simply theorizing how certain things might work (De Caluwé, 2001). Learning in action and reflecting on actions is an important component of learning in SGs (Alklind Taylor, 2014; Kolb & Kolb, 2009). Opportunities include finding your own learning path through a SG, making use of scaffolding, experiencing agency, and receiving personalized feedback and motivation for learning. All these are important components adding to the learning process (Bandura, 1989; Bedwell et al., 2012; Deen, 2015; Plass et al., 2011; Squire, 2008; Streicher & Smeddinck, 2016; Tieben, 2015; Watt & Smith, 2021) also in an ethical sense because they are intended to connect to the learnings instead of imposing norms and others think are valuable and point toward creating a learning environment within a SG that connects the

experience and to what is meaningful and relevant to the participant (Harteveld, 2011; Leigh & Spindler, 2005; Spindler & Leigh, 2003). With this in mind, we proceed this chapter with a basic categorization of SGs and comment on how these different types of SGs influence the learning taking place within them.

9.2 Specific Types of SGs and Their Related Challenges

Rule-based and open SGs can be placed on a continuum. In rule-based SGs, actions of participants are based on rules; often these formats have preset roles, organization structures, and procedural workflows and sometimes contain black box feedback and scoring calculation mechanics. If the structure of the SG also contains task divisions both in a functional and in a hierarchical sense, the interdependencies can create a lack of overview and generate extensive experienced complexity (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010; De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021; Sitter, 1981), which may or may not resemble participants' reality. Depending on the learning goals for the participants, a rule-based SG may mirror the dynamics of the real organization. However, a rule-based structure that contains many rules and interdependencies might also impede the learning because experimentation is restricted by the rules, participants receive less personalized feedback, and they may also lack overview of the larger process and therefore be unaware of how their personal actions contribute to, or impede, the organization's survival (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021). Since similar contributions and blind spots may be occurring in real bureaucratic (rule based) organizations, this raises opportunities for the facilitator to discuss the implications of rules and restrictions in SGs both in the debriefing and during subsequent reflections (M. De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2022).

Open SGs have as few overt rules as possible. Sometimes there may only be a start and a stop rule available (Christopher & Smith, 1990; De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021; Klabbers, 2009; Leigh & Spindler, 2004). Players usually begin to play based on a starting scenario introduced by the facilitator. Any player can stop the game at any time (this is the stop rule) when he or she feels unsafe in the learning process or feels any need to stop the process. Due to the fact the players are most unrestricted in their actions and they can receive adaptive feedback from other players as well as the facilitator, the chances are that they will learn more (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Jankowicz, 1973; Kickmeier-Rust & Albert, 2010). The downside of this type of SG is that the learning outcomes are strongly dependent on the quality and skill of both players and facilitator. The facilitator can perform an array of interventions to increase learning safety (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021). This type of open SG can also evoke specific ethical challenges because the openness means that anything can happen in the SG and unexpected events can occur because of the high amount of autonomy and hence unpredictability. Personal schemata may be triggered by the gameplay (Bekebrede et al., 2015; Klabbers, 2000; Lukosch et al., 2018; Van Laere, 2005), and personal projections and trauma might possibly be surfaced in the gameplay.

Rule-based and open SGs can be placed on a continuum that will include any type of SG whether it is a digital or analogue SG. Naturally specific characteristics of a design may trigger ethical challenges. In a recent publication (special issue facilitation, *Simulation & Gaming* journal), de Wijse-van Heeswijk (2021) explains how it is possible for certain types of rule-based games to trigger even more ethical challenge because they trigger participants into (or out of) certain behaviour. It is important as facilitators to make a distinction between behaviour that is caused by the rules in the SG and behaviour that is natural to the players and therefore stems from their own personal and cultural assumptions. Sometimes it is hard to make this distinction because the two are interwoven. So it remains constantly important to explore with participants what dynamics may have been caused by the SG and what caused by interactions with the game design concepts, as well as identifying with participants how this relates to their reality. The following paragraphs add insight in how (social) systems and organizational theory contribute to how to discern influence from the type of SG and its (facilitation) design and the values and (cultural) norms of the participants.

9.3 The Role of (Social) Systems and Organizational Theory in Understanding Learning in SG

(Social) systems theory and organizational theory can aid facilitators and participants in their understanding of what is happening in SGs. In an interpretation of Luhmann's thoughts, Achterbergh and Vriens (2019) explained how structures are based on expectancies of their social actors, and how those expectancies are in turn 'fed' by their schemata filled with cultural assumptions. Tsoukas and Chia (2002) and Orlikowski (1996) further developed this notion and conducted research on how learning in organizations really takes place and concluded it is an ever-changing system and not a steady state. Although the authors also recognize the stability pressures from the expectancies of the organizations, they note that inhabitants also create a certain force for maintaining the status quo which can help to explain why it is so challenging to engage in organizational change.

Von Foersters' theory on 'eigen behaviour' (Achterbergh & Vriens, 2010; Von Foerster, 1984) can aid participants and facilitators in understanding the complexity and often unique outcomes and behaviour of the SGs they engage in. The unique characteristics of participants in assuming their roles together with the actions of the facilitator, as they make decisions and perform actions, recreate unique behaviours that Von Foerster names 'eigen behaviour'. Understanding this observation is important for anyone engaging in SGs because we need to be able to discern the difference between 'normal/routine' behaviour and what is behaviour caused by the structure of the particular SG. For example, if a rule-based game contains restrictive rules (or structural elements) inhibiting participants' ability to oversee the larger scenario, it is hard for them to develop insight into how they can add value to the

organization as a whole. The Beer Game developed by Jay Forrester (Goodarzi et al., 2017; Turner et al., 2020) is a good example of a simulation that generates the 'bull whip effect' among participants regardless of who they are. This effect is a systems phenomenon that shows how delayed responses occur in a system and shows that it takes a long time before even a simple chain of actors will begin behaving in a stable pattern. A facilitator needs to know how this behaviour occurs and how this may relate to players' actions in real time, when they engage in similar systems. Eigen behaviour in the Beer Game can consist—for example—in participants requesting the facilitator to provide extra information or deliberation round. This is not standard to the game and can be unique to the (cultural) assumptions of the players.

Next we turn to consideration of how concepts such as distance and scope (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021) can further explain the kinds of ethical challenges that may arise and how facilitators and designers can deal with these.

9.3.1 Distance

In our work 'distance' in a SG refers to the space participants experience as existing between their perception of what is normal or recognizable work and what they are doing in a simulation. For example, consider a person who is an administrator by profession and is required by a game to make puzzles which are claimed to represent administrative processes. They may feel 'distant' because they dislike puzzles, preferring tidy logical working processes, and avoid taking risks, which are required by puzzling which involves applying a trial-and-error approach. For this administrator the tasks in the SG have a high distance because they are unable to recognize the puzzles as relevant to their work. In addition, they may hate puzzles because they personally can find no meaning in them. In addition, they may dislike apply trial-and-error learning strategies. This makes the distance for such a person high on three points: (1) game tasks are unrelated to real work processes (although the puzzles are meant as metaphor by the designer), (2) the learning process is not compatible with the participant's learning, and (3) the entire process seems unrelated to the work processes the participant perceives to be meaningful. We have encountered numerous such examples, where the point is that the 'distance' experienced by the players is a key determinant for their motivation to engage in and be motivated to learn from a SG. This distance as experienced may also impede learning from the SG, when the game processes are not perceived to be relevant and meaningful, this impedes immersion and active engagement in the SG as a learning strategy. For another person, playing exactly the same SG, the 'distance' experienced could be low, as this person perceives the puzzles in their intended role as metaphorical representations of the delaying processes inhibiting cooperation. Facilitators have a role in influencing this experience of 'distance' by preparing participants for the learning process of specific SGs. For instance, they can explain the meaning behind the abstraction of certain processes and affirm that trail-and-error strategies can provide for

personalized feedback, enabling deeper learning to happen in contrast to passive ingestion strategies.

9.3.2 Scope

The scope of a SG relates to the autonomy of participants, including how much space they have in terms of (no) restricting factors in the form of rules/functions/limited resources in the SG. Making a choice as designer or selector of SGs on how much autonomy is allowed to players directly influences the amount of learning opportunities a player may encounter in gameplay. For example, in a rule-based SG where scope is narrow, a facilitator might have to work harder to provide sufficient personalized feedback so participants know what actions produced which results and how to learn from the SGs. If the learning goal is to experience how limited autonomy affects motivation, agency, and immersion/flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1997; Deen, 2015), then a facilitator/designer can specifically choose for limited scope. When reviewing conditions that aid learning in SGs, scope should be seen to be sufficient for participants to experiment and scaffold (Bedwell et al., 2012; K. De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2022; Watt & Smith, 2021). However, if scope is very wide, a participant may feel lost in the SG because of the array of options, and the experience may also lose meaning because participants feel unattached to the situation recreated in the SGs when it is unrelated to their working conditions. This also may trigger ethical challenges, because feeling lost and impeded from learning can evoke strong and frustrating emotions. The following section provides further explanation on the phenomenon of the 'valley of despair' as a phase that can trigger learning in SGs.

9.4   The Valley of Despair in Relation to Ethical Challenges

The valley of despair is a well-known phenomenon in SG literature (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021; Wenzler & Chartier, 1999) and refers to the period that often occurs in SGs in which participants temporarily feel lost and frustrated. Such discomfort can both inhibit or generate grounds for learning. Going through the valley of despair by experimenting with new behaviour can aid participants to develop new, more adequate adaptive repertoires of response to challenges from their environment. However, it remains true that a facilitator should not 'aid' the participants too much; as Bion states "the answer is the death of the question" (1984), and participants are better served when they find their own ways to perform effectively in the SG. Then the probability increases that they will take feedback they receive more seriously and learn more. The connection between strong emotions and learning is proven to be an effective method for (transformative) learning (Sessa et al., 2011; Tosey, 2006). However, since emotions cause frustration, this can evoke ethical challenges too (Jones, 1998a, b; Kato, 2010; Plass & Kalyuga, 2019). The question

is how participants perceive the valley of despair. If they are prepared by a facilitator, this may happen during the gameplay, and this is often a sign of deep learning; they may deal with the phenomenon with more resilience than when they do not recognize what is happening to them. There are different ways a facilitator can aid the learning processes in the valley of despair; providing reflection from within the role a participant fulfils in the SG aids in reducing the 'distance' from the gameplay and assists in finding new perspectives on how to achieve learning goals.

Also, different people may respond differently to the challenges within the valley of despair. Some research delivered the insight that people with a multicultural background have a higher adaptivity toward changing challenges which is also present in SGs and they are better equipped for dealing with learning from experience (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, PhD research). However, in various cultures different conceptualizations on how learning occurs exist and may influence how participants perceive learning in the SG. For example in some cultures learning is perceived as a passive activity; in another cultures learning does not allow for experimentation and making mistakes. Facilitators should pay attention to how learning in SGs should be perceived, that it involves active participation, experimentation and that making mistakes is an essential part of the learning. We provide more perspective and handholds for that in the paragraph on ethical challenges from culture on a personal, group, organization, and country level.

9.5   Ethical Challenges from Culture on a Personal, Group, Organization and Country Level

Specific group and personal characteristics may have extensive influence on learning in a SG. Some of these are listed in Table 9.1 (below) along with suggested opportunities for enabling learning (safely). The word 'safely' is placed inside the brackets because we mean to address both learning and safety, since they are interrelated. When learners feel safe, they learn more and better than when they feel unsafe because then they are more open to feedback, experimentation and sharing of experiences. Experienced safety is always relative to the specific participant involved. Potentially learners can feel a bit anxious or unsure at times in the simulation game. Simulation games are never totally safe (Carrera et al., 2016). The safe transfer of the learnings is the most crucial bit, so participants can leave the SG with a safe feeling and valuable learnings. In addition to educational SGs, also policy games are used for instance to test changes in the organization's structure. It may be possible by playing a game of this type the consequences are certain jobs have become obsolete. If participants have not been informed beforehand on what the implications could be, this could lead to a highly unethical situation. Participants then should be informed of the potential consequences and unpredictable outcomes of the policy game and should be asked if they agree to voluntarily participate under these conditions. Although we mainly focus on the educational perspective of SGs in this chapter, it is certainly worth thinking through the consequences of possible

Table 9.1 Ethical challenges and learning opportunities

Ethical challenges from cultural aspects	Related literature	Opportunities for enabling learning (safety)
The amount of experience with learning in SGs: game literacy and systems competence If participants are familiar with learning in game simulations, they may have developed 'game literacy', meaning they have skills to respond adaptively and adequately to learning challenges in an ever-changing game (Abt, 1987; Buckingham & Burn, 2007; McGonigal, 2011; Squire, 2008)	Kriz published an article in German on systems competence (Kriz, 2011) about how individuals can develop system insights and adaptive skills to respond to quickly changing circumstances. Prof Geurts also talked about this systems competence skills in his farewell speech (Geurts, 2015) and stressed the importance of these skills to human survival. In this age of complexity and rapidly changing circumstances, information is renewed frequently, and information quickly becomes outdated	1. Ask participants if they are familiar with learning from SGs; if not prepare them for learning in SGs (e.g. show how learning from mistakes is an effective way of learning especially in low-cost environments such as a SG) 2. Explain how making mistakes is vital to acquiring new knowledge and games in education are learning opportunities not assessments 3. Make agreements on what safe learning is, how feedback should be provided, and what is needed from everyone to have a safe as possible learning environment
The amount of experience with interactive learning in general In many cultures it is not common practice to interact with teachers and/or with each other during learning. Learning is these contexts is often operationalized as sitting still, listening, and looking at the teacher without dialogue, interaction, or input from students. If these students are asked to engage in a SG, they must be prepared for what is expected of them and be told about how interactive learning takes place and what value it has	Anderson et al. (2014), Frank and Scharf (2013), Goodman and Beenen (2008), Hofstede (2009), Laycock and Stephenson (2013), Nakamura (2021)	1. Prepare participants with a smaller exercise to demonstrate and have them experience how learning from experience works 2. Have a trial round, and discuss what behaviour contributed to learning and what behaviour impeded learning 3. Discuss how participants experience the learning, and think together what is needed to get more out of the simulation experience 4. Prepare participants with structured open-ended guided questions on a process level that is reflected upon in a timeout in between game rounds or after a certain time spent in the SG

Table 9.1 (continued)

Ethical challenges from cultural aspects	Related literature	Opportunities for enabling learning (safety)
The amount of relevant working experience Novice learners without (much) relevant working experience might have difficulty linking theory to practice. For instance, if a game simulation is implemented in an educational setting where participants don't have (sufficient) working knowledge, it may be difficult for them to attach meaning to challenges they encounter in the SG. This might be even more challenging for some cultures or when working in a multicultural team. For instance, cultures perceive concepts like planning and time quite differently. If it is uncommon in a culture to say 'no' and other players and facilitators don't realize, this conclusion about behaviour may be wrong	Kirschner et al. (2006), Plass et al. (2011), Sweller et al. (2007), Tavella (2018), Van Merrienboer and Sweller (2005)	1. Before the SG discuss the values and behaviours typical for certain cultures and how this might be relevant for learning together in the SG. Use an example from a culture absent from the current situation. Avoid stereotyping; stimulate openness on reflection and interpretation of behaviour 2. Conduct a short teambuilding exercise or 'jolt' before the action to help participants think about cooperation with different personal values and how cultural values might interplay 3. Stimulate learners to reflect on their experiences, and slow down if necessary, for instance, with a timeout reflection using questions directed at the process of cooperation/decision-making and learning so learners make more effective use of the feedback to avoid learnings not being recognized in the rush of the game
Individuality vs. collectivity affirmation of persons In more masculine cultures, a focus on winning might impede learning if there are no game mechanics giving relevant feedback in the learning process. Conversely, omitting winning mechanics in a masculine culture might reduce motivation. More collectivist cultures dealing with winning mechanics on an individual level might impede the learning process since	Hofstede (2009), Teach (1993, 1990)	1. Reflect on the role of the winning mechanic. What does it mean? And what other indicators contribute to learning instead of a winning mechanic. 2. Add expert knowledge, for this—see publications on the role of the winning mechanic and learning outcomes that show teams that perform less well often learn more (see

(continued)

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Ethical challenges from cultural aspects	Related literature	Opportunities for enabling learning (safety)
participants may feel uncomfortable being in the spotlight when announced as solo winners while they felt they were part of a group that contributed to the process. In addition, hierarchical layers in some cultures have a strong influence. It is advisable to keep this in mind when inviting participants and making choices about mixing hierarchical layers among roles, because this may influence participants' interactions and feedback		Teach left column), since they experiment more and have to make more decisions and respond to feedback to remain their position. Often a winning team has beginner's luck
The subcultures present within groups and organization Apart from national cultures, there are often different subcultures within generations and within organizations that might help or hinder learning. Subcultures are quickly created via role division in game simulations; be aware that norms and values arise in groups due to the forming, norming, and storming phases that naturally evolve in groups. Physical surroundings and settings can influence learning, for instance, locating one team in a separate room may need to be explained. It is useful to note these influences and ask how realistic they are in the settings where participants work	De Wijse-van Heeswijk (2021), M. De Wijse-van Heeswijk (2022), De Wijse-van Heeswijk et al. (2022), Geurts (2015), Jones (1998a, b), Kato (2010), Roungas et al. (2016)	1. Share knowledge on how values and hidden norms can influence learning on personal level and group levels 2. Provide reflective questions aimed at uncovering hidden values and assumptions, and discuss their role in how it may affect learning 3. Stimulate participants to ask open questions instead of closed questions since closed questions often have hidden assumptions 4. Stimulate participants to ask about ideas and assumptions of participants in the SGs. Provide structured creative reflections for interactions among participants who did not regularly interact in the SG to enable perspective exchanges—see, for example, the *market place method* by Thiagi. For more methods see the chapter on facilitation design by De Wijse in

Table 9.1 (continued)

Ethical challenges from cultural aspects	Related literature	Opportunities for enabling learning (safety)
		Angelini et al. in press (November 2021)

outcomes for the people involved and especially the way they were invited to the SGs and what expectancies they had (Peters et al., 2014). The table indicates some of the ethical challenges that can arise from using simulations in a multicultural context and provides a contextualizing perspective on how these can be addressed.

9.6 Case Study Examples from Practice

We the authors of this chapter (Elyssebeth Leigh and Marieke de Wijse) together have over 60 years of worldwide experience in simulation gaming. Since we made an argumentation for developing a feel for ethical challenges in context, we have summarized some interesting examples we have encountered in our practice as both game designers and facilitators.

9.6.1 Inactive Players Due to Cultural Backgrounds

Marieke engaged in a multicultural asynchronous game played with groups from 12 different countries. The game is characterized as largely open because at the beginning it provides only a starting scenario, some role descriptions, and a general assignment. Marieke was one of the facilitators. The groups met one evening a week for four consecutive weeks. The purpose of the game was to develop sensitivity for cultural aspects and to obtain more knowledge on didactics used in school curricula. The participant teams were created with maximum focus on mixing the cultural backgrounds. Part of the assignment was to discuss the implications for different didactic methods used in different countries. Fruitful discussions took place on how teaching was perceived and how differently teachers and learners would interact in different countries.

Another part of the discussion concerned how play is viewed differently in different cultures. In some Arabic cultures, play is seen as unwise, foolish, and even offensive, while in other cultures, play and experiment are very common. In the Dutch culture, for instance, a large part of the population regularly engages in games during their education, and rules are usually perceived as suggestions instead of constraints. During the SG signs emerged that we had three groups of students behaving in very specific ways. One group consisted of highly communicative experimental, critical students who also questioned the SG and the role it had in

their curriculum in a positive critical way. One group gradually became more active and picked up on facilitation interventions aimed at activating their engagement and motivation to contribute. Later they reflected they had felt unsure for a relatively long time on how to behave and contribute to the learning. When they became active, they received more feedback, and they were able to work toward their learning goals. The smallest third group remained inactive, observing that they were unused to active experimentation and engaging in simulation-based interactions. They appeared passive and asserted; they were waiting for clearer instructions and felt 'lost in the fog' during the first 3 weeks. In the final week, their participation in reflective discussions was limited. Research uncovered that these students were from countries without active learning or interaction with teachers which they confirmed. The educational situation in their country does not yet allow active participation; however they were positive about the final result for group as a whole. Evidence indicates that experiencing a successful simulation and observing other students' active behaviour may enable them, in some future time, to engage in active learning; having a successful experience and having observed successful behavior contributes to lowering the threshold in becoming an active learner. Providing more direct and personalized feedback may enable less active learners to become more active.

9.6.2   A Company's Culture Impeding the Learning

In a Dutch consulting group, colleagues usually worked in solitude occasionally cooperating in pairs on projects. Management wanted consultants to employ more SGs in their work. A trial session with Slogan (a well-known management game developed by Richard Duke) was provided to experience the effects of a SG. This game is positioned in the middle of the continuum rule-based open SGs, since the players are given more autonomy gradually during the gameplay. The consultants quickly became very frustrated and even angry with the game and the facilitator and only later realized they were being confronted by their inability to work together. This non-cooperative attitude was found its basis in the company's culture who rewarded independent consultants working on their own. The cooperative skills required in the game were not a quality the company demanded from their employees. The facilitator did not realize the company's culture would become so evident in the SG. Knowing more about the company's culture might have helped identify the frustration earlier and enabled timeout to consider it in relation to the stated SG goals. Participants experienced the gameplay as very confronting because of the extensive feedback from the game and from colleagues. Maybe if they had been better prepared about what was expected of them, they might have recognized the link between the game's cooperative goals and their own.

9.6.3 Case Study: A Group of Dutch Mayors

The group of mayors wanted to experience the work of commercial company directors to see what they could apply to their work as mayors. The activity chosen was a management game based on Stafford Beer's viable systems model (Beer, 1984). The game had a low complexity and limited rules and can be characterized as an open SG. From round one the mayors were confronted by their assumptions because the game quickly and painfully made clear they were not steering on priorities. They wanted to stop playing after just one round announcing that they could not play this game, turning it into a crisis game in the first round because they refused to make decisions. It became apparent that in their daily practice they took decisions based on political processes and personal agendas rather than community priorities. The experience was confronting but helpful for their learning goals. The openness of the SG provided an opportunity to experience the effects of their habit of delaying decisions in a commercial context. The SG setup was highly effective in drawing out cultural assumptions that were both sector related and shared by the mayors—as was confirmed in the debriefing session.

9.6.4 Case Study Rules Clash in a German SG

Hofstede (2009) plotted the Dutch culture as individualistic, participative, tolerant, entrepreneurial, and risk-taking (but not in a financial way). The Netherlands usually has little hierarchy and in SGs rules are there to break. The designer of the activity in this next case did not realize she was (still is) part of this culture. While the German culture can be described as being more collective, with a higher risk uncertainty avoidance.

   The activity was a Hex (developed by Richard Duke) session, which is positioned in the middle of the continuum of rule based to open SGs in Germany. Everything was going well, and participants were following the rules; however when it was suggested that they should experiment, they did not wish to do that. They assumed that playing by the rules as provided at the start should be all that was required. It was difficult to persuade them to try different options or accept that this is part of the game. Although they could negotiate rules and have rules evolve as circumstances changed, they did not want to try this. Subsequent reflection with facilitators from a German/Swiss background uncovered the fact that the facilitator could have framed the rules differently by naming them as the starting position rather than rules and could have made the starting position discussable at the beginning to motivate the German players into experimenting and learning from the gameplay. Without experimenting with the rules, the learning outcomes were less than optimal because everything had been done 'as usual' so the outcomes would be 'the usual' without change. The facilitator was unaware of the cultural difference, and the introductions did not provide a guide for participants to move out of their

assumptions and comfort zones which was perhaps too ambitious to achieve in a short SG with a playing time of 3 hours.

Nb. Although the setting of this case was in Germany, we are not generalizing the findings of this specific case study to the whole German culture. Other experienced designers and facilitators have been asked for comment and confirmed that some other case studies in German contexts found similar results regarding strict application of rules. We want to also consider that the theory of Hofstede was established before globalization set in and also new generations may have developed other norms. The results in this case study may potentially be explained due to risk avoidance and hence sticking to the rules. Furthermore, the matter of hierarchical power distance may explain partly why obedience to the game's rules and the facilitator's instructions was taking place.

9.6.5   Social Workers Claiming to Be 'Not Competitive'

A facilitator was invited to lead a simulation game for a group of social workers as part of their professional development. The brief for the session required an activity where participants could generate either cooperation or conflict. 'Unequal resources' was chosen as a team-based activity where each team received the same instructions but different resources and would need to negotiate with others to get essential resources. The action was fast, furious, and highly competitive. When the debriefing began, they claimed the 'game made us do it. We are not competitive'. The facilitator had not been advised about this cultural group identity and felt blindsided by the client who was fully aware of the self-image, but had not shared it, hoping the activity would reveal this aspect of their behaviour to the participants. In the time since then, the ethical issues around the client's withholding of information have been explored repeatedly. Deliberate concealment of an intention to show them how they really are left the facilitator feeling manipulated and uncomfortable about the entire debriefing process which had been conducted in ignorance of the client's hidden agenda. Simulation games should not be used to lay traps for participants, in this case and in this chapter. We explained the type of simulation game that can have influence on the behaviour of the participants. It is up to the participants and the facilitator how they perceive the value and transferability of the action in the simulation game into their reality. This should be an open and free process with an eye on ethical conduct from different perspectives (De Wijse-van Heeswijk, 2021). Biases and heuristics such as backward rationality are part of the process of discussion. Even if a participant might turn the truth a little bit in his or her advantage, the learning to her or him was clear otherwise no positive bias would have been applied. People do not learn more by pushing and pulling; people need freedom to reflect and should be respected in how far they themselves want to go in this process.

These case studies are provided as examples of how cultural issues can raise ethical problems for facilitators and are offered as learning opportunities toward continuing professional skill development.

9.7 Conclusion and Future Research

Being ethical is a verb and action word—and something to be put in action and aim for. Only in retrospect can we determine—using multiple perspectives—whether certain behaviours were ethical or not. In the Nicomachean Ethics (Hughes, 2013), Aristotle explains that a person wanting to be ethical needs to learn in context and reflect on events from different perspectives including working with the stakeholders involved. Being 'absolutely' ethical does not exist. Ethical behaviour is contextually based, and we can only try to do the best we can, given our understanding of specific contexts and conditions. Only afterwards can facilitators evaluate and learn to improve our feel for future situations. Therefore, we provided a variety of contextualized examples in this chapter to share a view into practice and the contingencies of selecting SG designs and using them in the context of participants.

Future research is needed to investigate the impact of the suggested interventions in different contexts, so we can learn together on what works best when. For SG designers and facilitators so far, no ethical guidelines have been established. Authors such as Jones, Kato, Leigh, van Laere and De Wijse-van Heeswijk referenced in this chapter and from the medical sector Rudolph and Dieckmann (Dieckmann, 2020; Dieckmann et al., 2009, 2010; Rudolph et al., 2013, 2014, 2006, 2007) have attempted to shed light on different aspects of ethical conduct in different types of SGs and game settings, and this all contributes to our understanding. However, we owe it to ourselves as SG community to establish formal ethical guidelines like they have in other professions as well but then for SGs specifically because these unique intervention instruments require a customized approach because of their:

– Complexity
– Unpredictability
– Potential high impact on the learning and possibly the wellbeing of its participants and facilitator

The authors can be contacted via the following contact details if you wish to contribute to or enquire about which future steps are or have been taken to further professionalize the ethical approach of designers and facilitators in the field. The authors thank all the learners, facilitators, and organizations they were able to work with in the past and that contributed to the development of the knowledge in this article. We would have been lost without you!

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