

Barnga

Thiagarajan, S. & Stienwachs, B. (1990) Yarmouth, ME: Intercultural Press. Available through Amazon. OR directions attached.

Retrieved from:

http://socrates.acadiau.ca/courses/educ/reid/games/Game_descriptions/Barnga1.htm

A game about inter-cultural awareness

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Time Requirement: 60-80 minutes

Outcomes:

- Realization that different cultures perceive things differently, and/or play by different rules.
- Students must understand and reconcile these differences if they want to function effectively in a cross-cultural group.

Introduction: In Barnga, participants experience the shock of realizing that despite many similarities, people of differing cultures perceive things differently or play by different rules. Players learn that they must understand and reconcile these differences if they want to function effectively in a cross-cultural group.

Overview: Participants play a simple card game in small groups, where conflicts begin to occur as participants move from group to group. This simulates real cross-cultural encounters, where people initially believe they share the same understanding of the basic rules. In discovering that the rules are different, players undergo a mini culture shock similar to actual experience when entering a different culture. They then must struggle to understand and reconcile these differences to play the game effectively in their

"cross-cultural" groups. Difficulties are magnified by the fact that players may not speak to each other but can communicate only through gestures or pictures. Participants are not forewarned that each is playing by different rules; in struggling to understand why other players don't seem to be playing correctly, they gain insight into the dynamics of cross-cultural encounters

Set-up: Set up (approximately) 6 tables (about 4 people per table), depending on the number of people participating. On each table there should be a copy of the rules for that table per player plus a deck of cards (use only A-10, no face cards). To start, let the participants play a few rounds with the rules and with talking allowed. Next, EVERYTHING is removed from the playing tables. Play continues with everyone at his own table. From now, talking is prohibited. Winners will receive one popsicle stick (see below for how to win).

After allowing a few rounds without talking at the home table, participants must switch tables—the person who won the most tricks moves clockwise to the next table, the person who loses the most tricks moves counter-clockwise to the next table. What the players do not know is that each table has learned a different set of rules (see below).

The rules: Depending on the number of players, rule sheets can be altered or discarded for the number of tables being used. Some samples of rules are as follows:

- Table 1: Ace high, no trump
- Table 2: Ace low, diamonds trump
- Table 3: Ace low, clubs trump
- Table 4: Ace high, hearts trump
- Table 5: Ace high, spades trump
- Table 6: Ace low, no trump
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- In all cases, other cards will be worth face value—10 high, 2 low.

Each table shares the following rules:

- Players are dealt 5 cards each
- Whoever wins the most tricks will move clockwise to the next table
- Whoever loses the most tricks will move counter clockwise to the next table
- Everyone else stays at the same table
- Ties are resolved by paper rock scissors
- Each round will be about 5 minutes long (longer if time allows) and each round will consist any number of games that the time allows.
- After the initial round, players will not be allowed to see the rules or speak to each other. Gestures and pictures are allowed, but players are not allowed to use words.
- The game “winner” will be the person who has won the most tricks in total. (Of course, once game play starts, winning will likely take a back seat to trying to figure out what everyone else is doing, as they are playing by different rules.)

- Players can keep track of scores with popsicle sticks (one stick per trick won).
- The dealer can be anyone at the table, the person who plays first will be to the right of the dealer .
- The first player for each trick may play ANY suit. All other players must follow suit (play a card of the same suit). For each round, each player plays one card.
- If a player does not have that suit, a card of any suit must be played. The trick is won by the person with the HIGHEST card of the ORIGINAL suit (players will begin to become confused when some players believe their card is trump, and others disagree or contradict this).

Debriefing: After playing a number of rounds—either use a set time limit, or allow the number of rotations according to the number of tables in play (6 rounds for 6 tables). Students should be aware that they were playing by different rules, and the following questions should be discussed. Students can stay in the last group they were in, or return to their home groups at the teacher’s discretion.

Questions:

- If you could describe the game in one word, what would it be?
- What did you expect at the beginning of the game?
- When did you realize that something was wrong?
- How did you deal with it?

How did not being able to speak contribute to what you were feeling?