

BARNGA

Category	Game
Type	Quiet game
Time to allocate (mins)	40
Instructions	<p>Players form small groups of, say, four-six players each. Each group is separated from the others. They receive a modified deck of cards (each deck containing only the same few cards) and a sheet of rules for playing a new card game called Five Tricks. They have a few minutes to study the rules and practice playing the game. Once everyone has the hang of it, the Scouter collects the rule sheets and at the same time imposes a strict command of "no verbal communication." This means that players may gesture or draw pictures if they wish, but may neither speak (orally or by signing) nor write words. Clearly, communication, should it be needed, is going to be more difficult henceforth. Since the game is so simple and so short, this artificial barrier to communication forces the players, within the simulated setting, to be as creative and alert as possible.</p>
	<p>Frequently at this point there is a little nervous laughter, some stifled last words, and finally a settling in to playing "Five Tricks" without the written rules and in silence. The facilitator then announces a tournament. As in any tournament, some players leave their home table and move to another, some from that other table have moved to yet another, and so on. They sit down at their new table, look around, and begin at once playing "Five Tricks." Shortly thereafter an almost imperceptible change is felt in the room, then expressions of uncertainty. . . murmurs of frustration. .. chuckles... fists banging on tables. The tournament, with more movement to other tables, continues for another ten minutes or so amidst growing uncertainty, frustration, laughter, banging on tables. Sometimes someone is all ready to claim a "trick" when someone else reaches out and takes it.</p>
	<p>Sometimes someone makes an effort to draw a picture clarifying an uncertainty. Sometimes whoever was at the table first prevails, sometimes the more aggressive.</p>
	<p>When, during the debriefing, the facilitator probes for what might have been going on, someone takes another player to task for not learning the rules correctly. Someone else confesses that she never was very good at cards. Someone else speaks about others trying to cheat.</p> <p>And several suggest that each table originally had been given a different set of rules. Some are sure of this; others think it might be true; others hadn't considered it.</p> <p>In fact, at the beginning of the game each group had received a slightly different version of a basic set of rules to "Five Tricks." In one set, for example, Ace is high; in another, Ace low. In one set diamonds are trump, in another spades, in another there is no trump at all. Variations on these few differences are the only differences, no matter how many groups are playing. This means that virtually everything except one or two aspects is the same for everyone.</p> <p>Here is the beauty of BARNGA--everything appears to be the same, and in fact almost everything is the same, yet great confusion, uncertainty, misunderstanding and misjudgments fill the room because of just a few differences. Even those who understand</p>

that the rules are different (and many do) are not necessarily clear about how they are different. And even those who understand how they are different have difficulty bridging the communication barriers to work out a solution. These concepts spark the energy generated by the game and provide the starting point for a group follow-up discussion rich in observations of how what happened can be seen as metaphors for what happens in real life.

Reflection:

What happened during the game/tournament?

What is it like when everyone plays by different rules? Was it fun? or not?

Entry written by Sharon Venn of 1st Randburg