**Play By the Rules**

**A game to teach cultural sensitivity and diversity awareness**

**Sheryl Smith, Counselor, Wrights Mill Road Elementary School**

Age Level: 8-Adult

Time Requirement: 45-60 minutes

Materials: Copy of Game Rules (1 per table), Popsicle sticks-to award to winners, 1 deck of cards per table with face cards removed

Outcomes:

* Realization that different cultures perceive things differently, and/or play by different “rules”.
* Students will understand and connect with the difficulties involved with effective immersion into cross-cultural groups.

**Introduction**: This is a modified version of the game Barnga, created by Dr. Sivasailam Thiagarajan. Participants experience the shock of realizing that despite many similarities, people of differing cultures perceive things differently or play by different rules. Players experience emotions and conflicts during the game similar to those that occur in real life when individuals arrive to a new country or environment and attempt to merge with the existing culture of that environment. As an added constraint, language becomes a barrier.

**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 top 2 people who win the most tricks move clockwise to the next table, Others remain at their first 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
* 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
* Those with the most tricks are Winners and will move 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, practice 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. (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 round won).
* The dealer can be anyone at the table. The player to the right of the dealer goes first.
* The first player for each round may play ANY suit. All other players must follow by playing 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 round is won by the person with the HIGHEST card of the ORIGINGAL 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?

ATTACHED ARE 6 DIFFERENT RULES OF THE GAME

**RULES OF THE GAME**

* Players are dealt 5 cards each at the beginning of each round. No additional cards are pulled from the remaining deck.
* The dealer can be anyone at the table, the person to the right of the dealer plays first.
* The first player for each round lays a card down on the table. First player may play ANY suit of choice. All other players must follow by playing a card of the same suit. For each round, each player plays one card.
* If a player does not have a card in the same suit, a card of any suit can be played. The round is won by the person who plays the HIGHEST card of the ORIGINAL suit that was played.
* Ace is a high card. No trump cards.
* Continue playing with the 5 cards in hand until no additional cards can be played.
* The game “winner” will be the person who has won the most tricks in total.
* Players keep track of scores with Popsicle sticks (one stick per round won).
* Winners of each round receive 1 Popsicle stick.
* At the end of the game, the 2 winners with the most tricks (winning sets) at this table will move clockwise to the next table and play.
* Everyone else stays at the same table and plays again.
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* If a player does not have a card in the same suit, a card of any suit must be played. The round is won by the person who plays the HIGHEST card of the ORIGINAL suit played.
* Ace is a low card. Diamonds trump.
* Continue playing with the 5 cards in hand until no additional cards can be played.
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