

Gauging Personal Reaction to Change: A Classroom Exercise

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SETTING UP THE GAME*

↳ The game is intended to induce the realization that in a change situation, organizational members may have very different understandings of that situation and the new organizational norms/rules. It also provides a basis for individuals to assess how they react to such situations.

↳ **Necessary items:**

- Several decks of cards (ace through 7)... it seems more realistic when people are not playing with a full deck – at least, you can share that as a joke.
- Tournament rules and game playing play instructions can be obtained from Intercultural Press:

<https://www.interculturalpress.com/store/pc/viewPrd.asp?idcategory=&idproduct=30>

* This exercise is adapted from “Barnga: A Simulation Game on Culture,” Intercultural Press.

PLAYING THE GAME

- ↳ Put people in groups, making sure that at least one person in each group understands enough about playing cards to understand the concepts of tricks, trump, dealer, following suit, etc. That individual should read the “*Tournament Guide Sheet*” (available from Intercultural Press) to the group, explaining the concepts as necessary. These instructions can be on a slide that is visible during the entire exercise.
- ↳ Hand out “*The Game*” instructions (again, available from Intercultural Press). Each initial group should have the same set of instructions (there are 10 slightly different sets of rules dealing with trump, value of the ace card). The bottom of each sheet is coded with identifying information for 10 sets of rules. Participants DO NOT know that different groups have different “GAME” instructions. It is useful to have an initial practice round, where people can refer to “The Game” instructions. Then, collect the game instructions using some excuse such as “These tend to get lost and I need them for another class.”
- ↳ As winners and losers move to a different group, they will be playing under different rules (unbeknownst to them).
- ↳ **NOTE:** You must enforce the no talking, no notes, no signing rule. It is also useful to have them keep score of each round in their heads – if you give them paper and pencil to track their scores students have a tendency to write notes.

DEBRIEFING THE GAME

↳ Suggested discussion questions:

- What happened during play? How did you react during the game?
- How did people discover they weren't playing by the same rules?
- What did you do when you realized the rulers were different? What options did you have? What are the strengths/weaknesses of these options?

Illustrative Action	Strength / Weakness
Impose own rules	+ First mover advantage. - Newcomers risk being ostracized.
Sit back and learn	+ Understand the situation/culture; play by its rules - Others may take advantage of you when
Try to negotiate the rules	- Difficult when communication is limited/constrained

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↳ Suggested discussion questions (cont'd):

- ➔ Did it matter if you were the winner (or loser) coming into a new group?
- ➔ What was the effect of not being able to openly communicate?
- ➔ How did people attempt to deal with conflict? Develop trust? How did people feel when they entered a new group?
- ➔ Have you had any “real life” experiences that mirror “The Game”?
- ➔ What are the major learning points of this exercise? What did you take away about experiencing change?