

Using Zimbardo's Experiment video documentary to effectively teach the power of roles and negatives in teams

Abstract: During this session, I will present a video analysis activity that illustrates the power of negative roles as well as some of the negative aspects of team dynamics. The video depicts actual footage of the *Stanford Prison Experiment* by Philip Zimbardo as well as interviews with some of the participants. The activity is used in my Organizational Behavior class, in both face-to-face and online formats. I will not only provide the conference participants with the opportunity to hear about my activity, but I also intend to encourage colleagues to share their own assignments on team dynamics.

Key Words: team dynamics, power of roles, video analysis

Introduction:

With this 60-minute activity session, I aim at demonstrating an effective video analysis activity that conference participants could use in their own classrooms during team dynamics discussions. The video analysis focuses on the power of negative team roles as well as dysfunctions like groupthink, group conformity, risky shift, and in-group- and outgroup homogeneity bias. The proposed activity is applicable for face-to-face and online classrooms and is suitable for both, undergraduate and graduate courses. I believe that the activity presented in this session could successfully be used in Organizational Behavior, Human Resource, Organizational Theory, and Organization Development classes.

Theoretical Foundation:

Team Dynamics

Some of the areas that I cover during my discussion of team dynamics include 1) negatives associated with teamwork, and 2) positive and negative roles that organically form amongst team members (See Appendix A for the terms and definitions used in my class discussion).

I have, however, found that simply describing these phenomena, without allowing students to see and identify them, doesn't guarantee comprehension (at best, I would see memorization for test purposes and no recollection past the examination date). As such, I needed to consider a better way to deliver the information that would allow comprehension, application, and retention of the material.

Video Analysis

As a pedagogical tool, videos have become an important component in the traditional classroom. Further, they serve as a cornerstone for many hybrid, flipped, and online courses.

Indeed, Schmid and colleagues (2014) have shown that that technology in the classroom can enhance learning and video analysis, in particular, can be a highly effective tool in that respect (e.g., Allen & Smith, 2012; Hsin & Cigas, 2013; Kay, 2012; Lloyd & Robertson, 2012; Rackaway, 2012).

To make videos effective as an educational tool, it is important to include elements that promote student engagement. Among these elements are the video's length, style of delivery, audience appropriateness, and matching modality. Indeed, shorter videos (Guo, 2014), conversational (Mayer, 2008) and class- and terminology-tailored language (Guo, 2014), as well as pictorial and verbal information presentation (Guo, 2014) have all shown to increase student engagement.

With these considerations in mind, I engaged in a search of an appropriate video to teach students about the negative aspects of team work as well as the importance of roles in collective settings. In my research efforts, I came across the Zimbardo video documentary (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZwfNs1pqG0>). The video describes in a narrative format the Zimbardo's Stanford Prison experiment, with both interviews and actual footage of the experiment. It is relatively short and it illustrates in understandable and impactful way the power of roles and team dynamics.

Learning Objectives:

Using this video analysis activity in my classes was guided by the following objectives:

Objective 1: To develop students' understanding about the impact of negative roles in collective settings.

Objective 2: To allow students to identify negative phenomena in teams.

Activity:

The activity is to be run on the day that instructors cover team dynamics. No prior preparation is required of students. The class begins with a brief lecturette on team dynamics including definitions, a discussion of positives and negatives associated with teamwork, as well as the formation and nature of roles within the team (See Appendix A for terms and definitions used in class). This part takes about 30 minutes of class time.

After the material has been presented and concepts explained, I indicate to students that I will show a video that depicts footage from an actual experiment. I also mention that some of the scenes are difficult to watch for they include mistreatment. My disclaimer is followed by showing of the video in class. This part takes about 14 minutes.

Following the video viewing, students are instructed to, individually and in writing, provide examples of groupthink, risky shift, group conformity, in-group bias, outgroup homogeneity bias as well as examples of negative roles present amongst “prison guards”. For this stage of the activity, I allow about 10 minutes.

The final stage of the activity, which takes about 20-25 minutes, engages the class in plenary debrief. Specifically, I ask students to share their examples of the negatives listed above (See Appendix B for typical answers). If time permits, we engage in a discussion of what prompts such negative behavior and what can be done. The second part of the debrief involves a discussion of roles in collective settings. I ask students to identify any dysfunctional roles being present within the group (focus on the prison guards) as well as the implications of allowing negative roles to flourish. Students ultimately arrive at the conclusion that self-serving/negative roles must be minimized or eliminated for effective teamwork to emerge. Being able to identify

these maladaptive behaviors allows individuals to monitor and eliminate the behavior when it occurs.

As a variation to my activity, instructors could ask students to propose a plan to eliminate this maladaptive behavior (that results from negative roles) either through increased awareness, coaching, or feedback.

Conference Session Overview:

After a brief introduction, the bulk of this session will involve engaging participants in a discussion and demonstration of the video analysis. The session will close with a dialogue regarding participants' thoughts, reactions, and questions. Conference participants will be encouraged to share their own experiences as well. This dialogue is important for many reasons. Specifically, participants will have the opportunity to leaf through the resources they can use in the classroom and digest the benefits and challenges of using the suggested ideas in their own classroom. Furthermore, this dialogue could inspire, and perhaps, create new ideas for addressing some of the negative aspects of team dynamics.

Session Description:

My presentation will be in the following format:

Introduction (purpose of session and set up)	6 minutes
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Presentation

Presentation of the video used in the classroom	14 minutes
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Discussion of the video (as done in class)	10 minutes
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Dialogue:

Conference participants share their impressions	10 minutes
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Conference participants suggest improvements/alternative use	10 minutes
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Conference participants share their own experiences

10 minutes

Unique Contribution:

This presentation is unique and novel and have not been presented or considered for publication elsewhere.

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Appendix A: Terms and definitions

Positive Team Roles	
<i>Task Roles:</i>	Roles that relate to getting the work done by coordinating and facilitating effort within the team (Benne & Sheats, 1948)
Initiator-contributor	Proposes new ideas or different ways of approaching team problems or goals
Information seeker	Requests clarification of comments in terms of their factual adequacy
Opinion seeker	Asks for clarification of the values, attitudes, and opinions of team members
Information giver	Provides factual information to the team
Opinion giver	Expresses his or her own opinions and beliefs about the subject being discussed
Elaborator	Takes other people's initial ideas and builds on them with examples, relevant facts and data
Coordinator	Identifies and explains the relationships between ideas
Orienter	Reviews and clarifies the team's position
Evaluator-critic	Evaluates proposals against a predetermined or objective standard
Energizer	Concentrates the team's energy on forward movement
Procedural technician	Facilitates team discussion by taking care of logistical concerns
Recorder	Acts as the secretary or minute-keeper
<i>Building and Maintenance Roles:</i>	Roles that contribute to the positive functioning of the team (Benne & Sheats, 1948)
Encourager	Affirms, supports, and praises the efforts of fellow team members
Harmonizer	Conciliates differences between individuals
Compromiser	Offers to change his position for the good of the team
Gate-keeper	Regulates the flow of communication
Standard setter	
Group observer	Provides feedback to the team about how it is functioning
Follower	Accepts what others say and decide; seen as listener
Negative Team Roles	

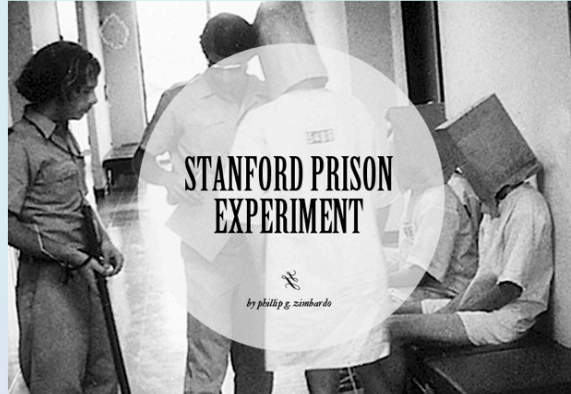
<i>Individual Roles:</i>	Attempts by "members" of a group to satisfy individual needs which are irrelevant to the task. These roles disrupt team progress and weaken its cohesion (Benne & Sheats, 1948)
Aggressor	Makes personal attacks using belittling and insulting comments
Blocker	Opposes every idea or opinion that is put forward and yet refuses to make own suggestions
Recognition-seeker	Uses group meetings to draw personal attention to himself
Self-confessor	Uses the group meetings as an avenue to disclose personal feelings and issues
Playboy	Uses group meetings as fun time and a way to get out of real work
Dominator	Tries to control the conversation and dictate what people should be doing
Help-seeker	Actively looks for sympathy by expressing feelings of inadequacy
Special interest pleader	Makes suggestions based on what others would think or feel
Risky Shift	When a group collectively agrees on a course of action that is more extreme than they would have made if asked individually (Shaw, 1976)
Groupthink	Faulty decision-making process whereby team members do not critically assess possible alternatives and refrain from disagreeing with the consensus in the team (Janis, 1972)
Group conformity	The adjustment of one's belief and behavior to fit in the group (Jenness, 1932; Asch, 1951)
In-group bias	Tendency that people have to favor their own team above that of others (Taylor & Doria, 1981)
Outgroup homogeneity	Perception of out-group members as more similar to one another than are in-group members, e.g. "they are alike; we are diverse" (Quattrone & Jones, 1980)

Appendix B: Slides

Slide 1. Location of the video

Teams

Zimbardo's "Prison" experiment



<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=sZwfNs1pqG0>

Slide 2. Answers on negatives in teams

Teams

Zimbardo's "Prison" experiment: Answers

Risky shift – crazy things being done to the prisoners.

Groupthink – all guards acted alike.

Group Conformity - chanting.

In-Out-Group Bias – “they are ALL dangerous prisoners” (OUT-); “we are better” (IN-).

Power of roles!

Slide 3. Answers on negative roles

Teams

Zimbardo's "Prison" experiment: Answers

Negative roles:

- Aggressor
- Recognition-seeker
- Self-confessor
- Playboy
- Dominator