The Effects of Video Entertainment on Group Bonding
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Introduction

Giles, Bourhis, Gadfield, Davies and Davies (1976) suggest that there are four primary reasons for the use of humor; the most relevant reason to our project is the creation or maintenance of in-group solidarity. This study concluded that humor can be used to improve our understanding of interpersonal interaction. The results of this study show that the emotional management of others is what improves our understanding of this interpersonal reaction. Francis (1994) maintains that emotion management strengthens or restores the feeling norms of the situation, and creates amusement in the self and others.

As the workshop leaders for Linguistics 210: Introduction to Sound Systems, we wanted to explore how we could affect the dynamic of each workshop to create a stronger bond between the members. The students were required to work together to complete a group project on the sound system of a language of their choice, and in order to foster a comfortable working environment, the workshop leaders wanted to create a relaxed atmosphere in which to work. We went through several stages of experiments before we decided on an experiment that was purposeful and relevant. At first we thought that providing food to the workshop members would make them more comfortable, but in the end it was too difficult to execute logistically as there were too many variables. We then took the slightly more aggressive approach of attempting to record audio from our workshops, but that violated privacy rules and several students were uncomfortable with the idea. Finally, we decided to show entertaining videos at the beginning of each workshop. We thought that if we showed a short video clip at the beginning of each workshop, the atmosphere would become more informal and relaxed, aiding in group bonding.

Other research has shown that in order to create a positive working environment with a group, several factors are important. “The class members [are] encouraged to be informal
and relaxed in expression of ideas, attitudes, and beliefs “ (Jeep and Hollis 204). Along with this point, Jeep and Hollis also point out that all statements made by individuals should be accepted by other group members and that members should be encouraged to “think out loud”. We felt that we should aide in this process and promote similar goals within our workshops which is part of the motivation for our research project.

Method

Members of the Introduction to Sound Systems class were required to attend a weekly workshop, run by a workshop leader. Each workshop leader had two workshops a week. The workshops contained anywhere between 2 and 8 members each, totalling in around 30 members who regularly attended the workshops. During the middle of the semester, we administered a feedback survey on which the members rated seven aspects of the workshop on a scale from one to seven, with one being the least satisfactory and seven being the most. The questions were as follows:

1. The rules and performance objectives of workshop are understood
2. The atmosphere is informal and relaxed
3. Everyone is clear about what is expected of him or her as members of the workshop
4. Everyone participates in a team effort to solve the problems
5. The leader provides a sufficient degree of support for the workshop members
6. The members have sufficient resources to do the work
7. Workshop sessions are helpful

In order to affect the outcome of the second question (the atmosphere is informal and relaxed) on the final feedback survey administered at the end of the semester, we decided to show a short, entertaining video clip once per workshop at the beginning of the session
as people came in. We showed two video clips: one was a humorous trailer for an upcoming movie, another was a short clip of someone taking their cat for a swim. The video links are below:

http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fZ_JOBCLF-I
http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5vOA1FTydjI

At the end of the semester, we administered the same survey. We compared the results from the midterm survey and the final survey. In order to collect data into easy-to-read bar graphs, we entered the data into an excel spreadsheet, averaged the numerical results from question two, and created graphs. We made four separate graphs: one for the average of Anansa’s workshops, one for the average of Cuyler’s workshops, one for the average of Zoe’s workshops and one for the average of all the workshops combined.

Results

![Cuyler's Workshops Graph](image-url)
Our results show that, in general, the atmosphere of the workshop became more informal and relaxed by the end of the semester. In Cuyler’s workshops, the average rose from 6.45 to 6.8. In Zoe’s workshops, the average rose from 6.66 to 7.0, and in Anansa’s workshops, the average fell from 7.0 to 6.83. Combined, the average rose from 6.7 to 6.86.

Discussion

Zweig (2007) describes group coherence as an energetic phenomenon that occurs in groups when the group assesses its collective identity with a clear sense of its own right action to achieve its goal. As workshop leaders, we hoped that we could increase this energetic phenomenon. Our results support our hypothesis in that the average for the final feedback survey was higher than the average for the midterm feedback survey. However, there were several factors that might have influenced the survey results other than the introduction of the entertaining videos. The workshops spanned across several days of the
week as well as times throughout the day. At the end of the semester, some of the workshops were not held in the same place they were in the beginning of the semester. The final survey was administered on the last day of the semester, which could have influenced the members’ moods. The results also depended on the individuals’ moods of the day. Finally, the group members could have simply become more comfortable with each other throughout the semester because they were required to work together to complete a group project. Chiriac's article talks about problem-based learning and its advantages. These students participating in the workshops were in a problem-based learning environment since they had to complete a final project. This problem-based environment forced relationships to occur between the students since the project was worth 30% of their grade. We certainly feel that this final project dramatically affected the students’ willingness to cooperate and function in a group with a common goal.

Conclusion
In order to provide the best results, the number of variables should be restricted as much as possible. Ideally, each workshop should be held in the same place at the same time every week, and every member should attend the workshop regularly. For further research, a number of variables could be changed. For example, a different genre of video could be shown at the beginning of each session. One group could be shown a humorous video, another group could be shown a video of cute animals and a third group could be shown interesting informational videos. We could have also increased the sample size and administered the surveys more frequently throughout the semester, or shown videos over a longer period of time. Another possibility is that we could have had the workshop members label their surveys with their name to see how the members progressed on an individual
basis. Our results did, in fact, support our hypothesis, but possibly only incidentally so. Due to the reasons discussed in the Discussion section above, it might be safer to say that our results are inconclusive since many factors could have contributed to the dynamic of the group.
References


