



Who Do You Trust?

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Museum of Tolerance





Robbers' Cave Experiment

Muzafer Sherif et al, U of OK, 1954

22 12-year-old boys in two balanced groups

**Similar backgrounds: same year in school,
settled, lower-middle-class, Protestant,
well-adjusted psychologically, normal
physical development**

**Groups transported separately by bus to
200-acre Boy Scout camp in Robbers Cave
State Park in SE OK**



Phase I

Each group:

- lived in its own cabin**
- had no knowledge of other group**
- had its own swimming hole, hideouts, group activities - pitching tents, hiking, cooking**
- evolved rules, leadership, flag, identity**
“Rattlers” or “Eagles”



The next phase

Toward the end of Phase I (~a week), each group gradually “led” to awareness of the other group (but not visible yet)

Strong territorial reactions - “They better not be in OUR swimming hole”

Immediate separation between “us” and “them” – even though others had never been seen

Racial slurs and profanity applied to “them”



Phase II

Groups introduced to each other

**Competitions: baseball, tug-of war,
staff-judged events such as cabin
inspections**

**Scoring and prizes manipulated to fuel
competition**

**Groups began eating in a common dining
hall where prizes displayed**



War broke out

After one loss, Eagles burned Rattlers' flag. Next day the Eagles' flag burned in retaliation. Fighting erupted. Staff intervened.

After another loss, Rattlers launched a night raid on Eagles' cabin. Next day, Eagles took revenge on the Rattlers' cabin. Eagles began to store rocks against possible reprisal. Once again, staff intervened.



Phase III

Staff experimented with approaches to resolve conflict. Have fun together!

Non-competitive activities scheduled, e.g. watching movies while eating together in dining hall

Efforts were a failure

Groups remained apart, yelled at each other, food fights



We quickly categorize others

In just one week, Rattlers & Eagles emerged.

We might expect this in religious groups or political parties.

But we also see it in development teams and the most trivial of settings.

We are all too ready to regard “others” as the enemy.

Yet we believe we are unbiased, rational, realistic.



From the evolutionary psychologists

**Our hunter-gatherer ancestors had to
answer classification questions quickly to
survive.**

Can we eat these berries?

Is that a stick or a snake?

Who is friend or foe?

A fast labelling system served us well.



Blue-eyes vs. Brown

**This story tells of even quicker results –
just a few hours!**

Iowa 3rd grade teacher, Jane Elliott

1968 – the day after the MLK assassination

pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/divided/etc/view.html



It keeps us busy

We continually sort others into in-groups and out-groups

We unconsciously (sometimes consciously) label others

Research shows managers sort employees into ‘winners’ and ‘losers’ as early as 3 weeks (sooner?)



And, this can be a bad thing

It's easy to see why stereotyping is bad.

People are complex.

Labels mean we lose all their talents.

Carlsberg.flv

What's really bad - we do this to ourselves!



Framing the stereotype

University math students were given a difficult math test. When reminded of their gender, men outperformed women.

When assuming the role of a female avatar, (regardless of gender of player) players gave up sooner and performed poorly playing against a male avatar.



Stereotypes are prophetic

Stereotypes change our behavior. Our behavior affects other's behavior and without anyone understanding any of it, we have a self-fulfilling prophecy.

Michael Hill – Rule #1 for good management: Catch them doing something right.

Norm Kerth's Prime Directive.

Pygmalion in Management," J. Sterling Livingston, Sept/Oct 1988 *Harvard Business Review*.

A decorative header strip at the top of the slide. It is divided into three sections: the left section shows a close-up of a green plant with a white flower; the middle section shows a brown bird in flight against a green background; the right section shows a blue sky with white clouds and a yellow path leading towards the horizon.

How to bring peace?

Staff devised “real” projects with solutions requiring everyone’s help

The camp's water was cut off. Staff announced a possible leak in the supply pipe. All boys had to inspect the mile-long pipe and discovered a clogged valve at the tank. They celebrated together when the problem was fixed.



More projects

Joint use of a tug-of-war rope on a partly cut-through dangerous tree.

Truck carrying food for both groups had gotten stuck and required all the boys to pull it out.

When it was time to go home, they all rode in the same bus, sang all their songs, and shared prizes.



Follow-up experiments

1963 11-year-old boys in Beirut

8 Christians & 10 Muslims

Historic tensions between these religious communities in Lebanon

In Phase II, serious fighting broke out between the groups—Blue Ghosts & Red Genies

3 Genies threatened a Ghost with knives stolen from the camp kitchen—researchers decided to stop the experiment without reaching reconciliation (no Phase III)



Why this was interesting

Groups not defined by religion

**Blue Ghosts & Red Genies each made up of
5 Muslims + 4 Christians**

3 Genies with knives were Christians

So was their Ghost victim

Ties to the group stronger than religion



The good news

Historians, anthropologists, and political scientists now support the idea that human “categories” depend on context.

Yes, we seem to be hardwired to classify others, but we also seem to be hardwired to love working in small groups.



Cooperation on shared goals

Cooperation in work toward shared goals seems to be a part of conflict resolution.

This cooperation must be nourished at all levels in the system, building a sense of interdependence that lies at the heart of a culture of peace.

Could this be what makes a culture “agile” ?

The header features a collage of nature-themed images: a star-shaped flower on the left, a bird in flight in the center, and a rocky landscape with a stream on the right.

How agile practices help

Daily stand-up

Pairing

Short timeboxed iterations

Retrospectives

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A decorative header strip at the top of the slide. It is divided into three sections: the left section shows a close-up of a white flower with yellow centers; the middle section shows a brown bird in flight against a green background; the right section shows blue, rocky terrain with a yellow path leading away.

What collaboration is not

Friendship and liking are not required and may not result from collaboration



What collaboration is

Everyone is linked to everyone else so no one can succeed unless others do (and vice versa) and/or that you must coordinate your efforts with the efforts of others to complete a task.

The result—respect for others' abilities and contributions.

We really like being trusted and respected.



Social interdependence

Team members share common goals.

Each person's outcomes are affected by the actions of the others.

Individuals see they can reach their goals if and only if others in the group reach their goals.

Thus, individuals seek outcomes beneficial to all with whom they are cooperatively linked.



Measurable impact

Increased effort to achieve – both in individuals and the group

More positive relationships – give and receive social support

Improved psychological health – increased self-esteem, decreased anxiety and depression

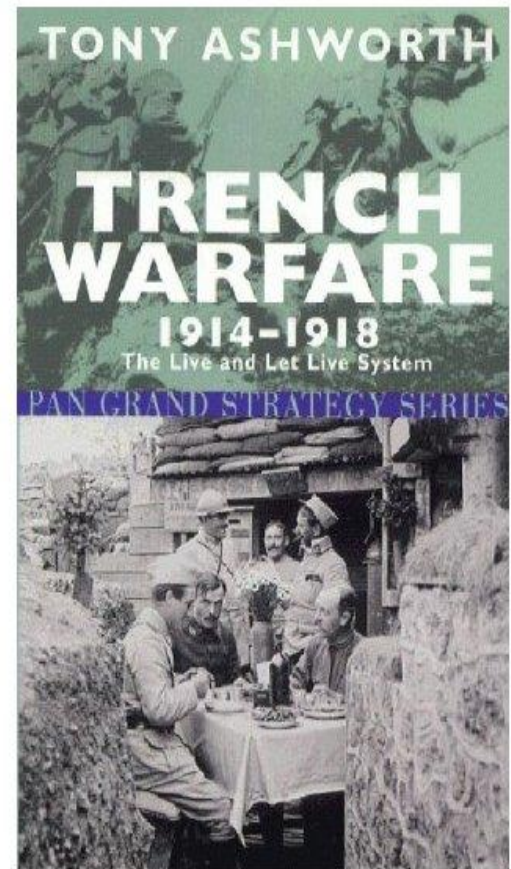
Could this be why agile teams are better?

Closing, encouraging story

At points along the line,
peace broke out.

Close proximity of the
trenches meant that the
two groups could see each
other, learn others' habits
and cooperate.

Friendship is not a
requirement for
cooperation!



The Movie Joyeux Noel – Christmas 1914





Other primates?

Experiment with juveniles: rhesus macaques (quarrelsome, violent) housed with stumptails (tolerant, easy-going).

All became friends, played together, groomed together, slept in large, mixed huddles.

Rhesus developed peacemaking skills.

When separated, rhesus still showed reconciliation and grooming behaviors.

Reason for hope



A decorative header strip at the top of the slide, divided into three sections. The left section shows a close-up of a white flower with yellow centers. The middle section shows a brown bird in flight over a green field. The right section shows blue, rounded rocks or stones.

Thanks for listening