

CHAMBER MUSIC QUARTET

Description

This video is about a well known string quartet--Cuarteto Latinoamericano. A string quartet is different from most groups students are familiar with. For example, string quartets produce music, not goods or services. Although they have "customers" (the public) like many work groups do, the Cuarteto is different in that their customer base is always changing--one week in Vienna, the next week in New York, and the following week in Santiago. String quartets also spend the majority of their time practicing. Typical work groups spend most of their time performing.

Some dynamic characteristic of string quartets are unique: tensions commonly exist between the first and second violinist. Traditionally, the first violinist is the quartet's leader and how it plays. Issues of fairness and equity are widely cited as issues which lead to conflict in string quartets and are sometimes implicated in their disbanding. The Cuarteto Latinoamericano has played together for more than 15 years. In some ways, its longevity makes it an exemplar for how to create a group which can work together long term at sustained high levels of quality.

The video is divided into the following sections:

1. INTRODUCTION by the Cuarteto of what it is like to work together
2. A WORD TO DESCRIBE THE GROUP -- Each musician is asked to provide one word that exemplifies their view of the Cuarteto.
3. MEANING OF EFFECTIVENESS
4. RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE
5. FACTORS LEADING TO EFFECTIVENESS
6. INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER INTO THE CUARTETO

Two of the possible applications of this video described below include:

- I. Presentation of model(s) of group effectiveness in a course on individual or group behavior.
- II. To stimulate discussion of teaching effectiveness through relationship building and the pursuit of excellence in a program designed to help doctoral students become effective classroom teachers.

I. Group Effectiveness

Although the quartet is clearly distinct from most groups your students are familiar with, it also has a lot of the similarities. A major focus of these notes is to help students gain a deeper

understanding of group dynamics and group performance by analyzing both the differences and similarities.

We recommend using the video to provide a basis for discussion of group effectiveness. It can be used to support a number of group performance models including the frameworks of Hackman, Goodman, or Ancona.

The following sketches illustrate major features of many effectiveness outcomes:

	INPUTS	PROCESSES	OUTCOMES
Hackman	Group Composition	Task	Performance
Goodman	Task	Maintenance	Satisfaction
Ancona	Social Factors		Capacity to work over time

First things first. We recommend always starting with the first section. Then other sections may be used alone or in combination to highlight issues relevant to your course objectives and time available.

1. Show the first segment (INTRODUCTION). Ask the students:

- What are the unique features of a string quartet?
- How are string quartets different from other groups you are familiar with?

Typical reactions focus on the audience's subject experience of the quartet's performance. Engage the students in a discussion of how audience reactions compare to customer satisfaction in work groups such as manufacturing work groups, consulting and audit teams, etc.

2. Introduce the next segment, A WORD TO DESCRIBE THE GROUP. Before showing the second segment, ask the students to guess which word(s) the musicians use to describe the Cuarteto. The members of the quartet were asked to describe in one word how they think about the quartet.

Following the video, compare the students' descriptions with those offered by the Cuarteto members. What surprises the class about the words the Cuarteto offers?

Tell the students that after the filming of the video, one of the Cuarteto members came up to the interviewer and said, "I forgot another word that is also very important." Ask the class what word he said.

It was LOVE. What does "love" mean in this context?

3. The next segment is the MEANING OF EFFECTIVENESS. Prior to showing this segment, ask the students:

- What does effectiveness mean for work groups in general?
- What are the predictors of group effectiveness?
- What does effectiveness mean for a string quartet? How do these effectiveness indicators relate to indicators in traditional work groups (such as a surgical team or a quality team in a factory)?

4. You may show the next segment along (RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PRACTICE AND PERFORMANCE) or along with the subsequent one (FACTORS LEADING TO EFFECTIVENESS). These two segments address how behaviors of the group give rise to high performance. The level of expertise, subjective performance standards, the value of innovation, and creative expression characterize both the Cuarteto and many other high performance teams.

One major factor highlighted by these segments is that expertise is not only an individual level capability (how well one plays the violin), but also reflects how well individuals work together. The role of transactive memory, knowing how best to work together, shapes the subsequent performance of the work group. This collective experience with each other is part of the underlying cause of the phenomenon frequently mentioned in the context of high performance teams: "the whole is greater than the sum of its parts."

Using the effectiveness model you have chosen to focus upon, have students identify the causes of performance. As you work through this process, get the students to look for similarities and differences between factors that contribute to the effectiveness of a quartet versus traditional work groups.

A key feature to examine is the extent to which causes of performance are individual level (skill, discipline) and group level (collective experience, norms).

5. The final segment (INTRODUCING A NEW MEMBER) concerns bringing new members into a group. This offers an opportunity for talking about the socialization of new members. After showing the video, ask the class:

- How do new members become integrated into a string quartet? Into more traditional work groups?

II. An Alternative Usage: Teaching Professors

An interesting use of this video was selected by a colleague. The video can be used in universities where doctoral students complete internships where they learn to teach. To simulate a discussion among graduate students regarding how one becomes an exemplary teacher, show segments 1-3.

The Cuarteto describe the height of their art as involving a number of experiences that coincide with high quality classroom teaching (as indicated in Frost and Andre's book):

- creating controversies
- being naked (emotionally exposed)
- risk taking
- accepting failure as inevitable in pursuit of the excellence

We recommend giving the students the following questions in advance of viewing the first three segments (Introduction of the Group, A Word to Describe Effectiveness, and Meaning of Effectiveness):

1. Building rapport and relationships with students. Excellence in teaching involves continually challenging yourself to connect with both your students and your subject matter in a holistic way. Your excitement generates a similar response and can create a similar response in your students. Listen to the Cuarteto describe their relationship with the audience. How would you describe that relationship?

After viewing the three segments, discuss this question above. Then, follow up with: How might you create a similar relationship with your students?

2. The role of emotion. What role does emotion play in creating an excellent string quartet performance?

After viewing the three segments, discuss this question above. Then, follow up with: How might emotion be engendered in the classroom experiences?

3. Changes over time. How has time altered the way the Cuarteto plays together?

After viewing the three segments, discuss this question above. Then, follow up with: How do you see your own teaching style and relationship with students developing over time?

Finally, after viewing the video:

1. What does it mean to "create controversies?" "being naked?" "taking risks?" "accepting failure" in the context of performing as string quartet?

2. Think about experiences you have had as a student where the professor was particularly effective in the classroom. How would you characterize that person's performance? Do the terms "creating controversies," "being naked," "taking risks," and "accepting failure" help us understand what that person did to be effective?