

DOING MURDER ONE AGAIN

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ABSTRACT

Murder One is an experiential exercise developed in 1975 by J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones to focus on how information is shared within groups. This exercise was conducted in fall 2010 to see how students of the millennial generation react to and analyze the situations they are placed into. The experiential exercise's content was not changed but some external factors were and student reactions to it were recorded. Student's reactions to new group members, their assessments when interpreting case details and how detective teams worked together were evident even after a semester of working together as a class. New and interesting aspects about team behavior can be learned when MURDER ONE is used.

INTRODUCTION

As the Fall 2010 semester was coming to a close, instructors in management fundamentals and organizational behavior courses decided to investigate how students were using learned team development skills. Both classes were broken into the same teams for the entire semester and did not participate with other students on class exercises. At least at our university, once teams are formed those teams continue to be used for the entire semester. We believe it is done this way because of the ease of use, a class structure is already created, and student location and comfort issues. With this belief, the instructors wanted to see how the class would be able to work together in new circumstances.

MURDER ONE REVISITED

Murder One is an experiential exercise developed in 1975 by J. Pfeiffer and J. Jones to focus on how information is shared within groups. This exercise can be used to examine effects of group cooperation versus competition during problem solving and to see if roles emerge in teams. Team sizes for the exercise should be limited to five. A sixth can be allowed as an observer and note taker to record what occurs in this forty-five minute exercise.

The facilitator is introducing the activity to class as a group problem-solving exercise. However, each of the current teams is broken up by having everyone draw numbers out of box. For example, if you have a class of thirty students make a six sets of numbers, one through five, placed in a box for students to select. Students with the same number will be one team. Once the teams are formed the exercise can begin (see Attachment 1).

The task for teams to perform is for them to decide which suspect should be arrested for first-degree murder. There is only one correct answer. Each student is placed in the role of being a city detective and they are given a briefing sheet of exercise rules, a list of suspects and their backgrounds, plus a sequence of murder events.

Each detective (numbered 1-5) is given his/her private version of the murder event. Just like with interviews on television's Law & Order, our detectives are told they are allowed to take notes from this material because the hard copy notes will be taken up after ten minutes. Students need to try and deduce significant facts of the case that they can use to talk with other members of their team.

What makes this exercise interesting is the fact each detective gets a slightly different sequence of murder events. No one person has "perfect" information so it requires the team to sort through their notes because the answer is there if they communicate well and exchange their information. To close out this exercise, students are asked to tell which suspect they believe is guilty of first degree murder. After the decision process is discussed with them, each team is asked to complete a Murder One Questionnaire (see Figure 2) on their experience

When the student teams indicated the results of their discussions, one class with 6 teams selected four different suspects and in another a class of six teams it selected three different suspects. Obviously, information was not being exchanged properly among team members. Teams were asked to detail who their main suspects were and why? Teams then discussed their disagreements with the particular selections. Each decision was analyzed and the team rationale for their decision was documented. Each team had to come to class decision on which suspect could be charged.

Students, before leaving class, had to answer several questions on their impressions of what this exercise was working toward (see Figure 3). When analyzing the comments, Figure 4 shows students did have several learning moments when participating in Murder One. Many students loved the opportunity to work and talk with new people in the class. However strong feelings on how the group work, we did in class, did provide value to for students as they move toward graduation. Interestingly too, perspective differences between participant ages and genders on how information was interpreted was highlighted. For example, how old is middle age? Is it 30? Or 40? Or 50?

CONCLUSIONS

New teams, new situations, and new class dynamics created a wonderful experience for semester-long seasoned students. Students were happy to meet and interact with “new” people in the class. The instructors have talked and plan to use this exercise, or other ones like it, earlier in the semester to get better student interacting with each other better. We believe that the Murder One experience not only improves students but makes instructors more in tune with students of today.

REFERENCES

- McLeod, D.K (1980). *Murder One: Information Sharing*. Structured Experience Kit. San Diego CA, University Associates, Inc.
- Pfeiffer, J.W. & Jones, J.E. (1975). *A Handbook of Structured Experiences for Human Relations Training*, (VI). San Diego, CA: University Associates.

Figure 1
MURDER ONE INSTRUCTION SHEET

Instructions	Assumptions
1. The threat of violence between various factions of organized crime, over the control of narcotics, imperils the tranquility of your community. To combat this threat, the commissioner has directed a step-up in the activity against criminal organizations within your community.	1. Assume that there is one solution.
2. You are a group of top detectives who have been assigned to the Organized Crime Bureau within your department.	2. Assume that all data are correct.
3. Charly Poppa Hasson's gang has been singled out for particular attention by your team.	3. You have 45 minutes in which to determine a suspect.
4. Your task becomes complicated when murder occurs during your investigation.	4. Assume that today's date is March 7, 1987, and that all primary actions are taking place on this date.
5. Your task, as a group, is to single out one suspect from members of the Hasson gang. Circumstantial evidence may be used to identify and arrest one member of the gang. The remaining six suspects must be cleared for a specific reason which you as a group must declare at the termination of the activity. Data has been supplied regarding the suspects. Your team has all the information necessary for the solution of the case.	5. There must be substantial agreement in your group that a problem is solved.
	6. You must work the problem as a group.

MURDER 1 SUSPECT DATA SHEET

Viron, Benjamin (Benjie) M-W-49
 Height: 5'-4" Weight: 220 Hair: Gray/ Brown
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: B Shoe: 7 1/2D
 Tattoos: Right arm, AMother@ Vehicle: 1987 Mercedes dark blue Sedan
 Record: 17 arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Loan sharking, Extortion, Assault, Narcotics, Robbery, Rape.

Enopac, Alphonse (AJumbo@) M-W-52
 Height: 5'-7" Weight: 245 Hair: Black/Gray
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: A Shoe: 8D
 Tattoos: Left arm, AAl & Eloise@ Vehicle: 1986 Mark IV Black Sedan
 Record: 26 arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Narcotics, Extortion, Assault, Statutory Rape, Homicide.

Ollag, Joseph (Chills) M-W-52
 Height: 5'-7 1/2" Weight: 180 Hair: Brown
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: A Shoe: 8D
 Tattoos: None Vehicle: 1986 Cadillac Black Sedan
 Record: 20 arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Narcotics, Assault, Extortion, Homicide.

Phelps, James (ADigger@) M-W-52
 Height: 5'-7" Weight: 210 Hair: Black/ Brown
 Eyes: Blue Blood Type: B Shoe: 7 1/2D
 Tattoos: Chest, ABlue Birds@ Vehicle: 1987 Cadillac dark green sedan
 Record: 30 arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Narcotics, Assault, Robbery, Loan sharking, Homicide.

Sutter, Edward (ABlue Eyes@) M-W-51
 Height: 5'-7" Weight 240 Hair: Black/Gray
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: B Shoe: 7 1/2D
 Tattoos: Right arm, AFor God & Country@ Vehicle: 1985 Chrysler black sedan
 Record: 12 arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Loan sharking, Assault, Rape, Extortion.

Lagas, Franklin (AHot Dog@) M-W-50
 Height: 5'-7" Weight: 235 Hair: Black/Gray
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: B Shoe: 8D
 Tattoos: None Vehicle: 1987 Cadillac black sedan
 Record: 19 arrests
 Charges: Homicide, Robbery, Assault, Extortion, Narcotics, Gambling, Impairing Morals of a Minor

Aifam, George (Gypsy) M-W-39
 Height: 5'-7 1/2" Weight 245 Hair: Black
 Eyes: Brown Blood Type: B Shoe: 8D
 Tattoos: Left arm, ATo Mother with Love Vehicle: 1986 Cadillac black sedan
 Record: 23 Arrests
 Charges: Gambling, Loan sharking,, Assault, Extortion, Homicide.

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As a result of the threats, Poppa has been making himself scarce and rarely meets more than one gang member at a time. He has secluded himself in an apartment in a remote part of town, a relatively safe location unknown to the gang members. An informant has told your department about Hasson's hideout, and a legal wiretap has been installed on his telephone. Several days have gone by, and no action has been indicated by the tap. On March 7, at 7:03 p.m., Charly made a call to an undetermined public phone booth and a taped conversation was recorded as follows:

Unknown Person: Yeah?
Poppa (Charly): Eh, I got a big one, meet me at the club at 10:30.
Unknown Person: O.K (Clicks off)

Past information indicates the club to be the Starlight Hunting & Fishing Club at 197 Kenmore Street, a secluded place used in the past for gang members. Other persons have divulged that some heavyweight drugs have come into town. Thus, it appears that Poppa may be getting a slice of the action. With this in mind your squad C.O. decides to cover the club and put a close surveillance on all suspects at the location.

The Joint Task Force, having information confirming a big shipment to the city, swings into action at 9 p.m. this date and simultaneously rounds up suspects who might be involved. The sweep nets twenty suspects, including Johnny "Blue Eyes", Harry Hinge, Bruce Comma, Benny Carato, Sam Perez, John Smith, Mike Crupa, Danny Skidmore, Frankie Todd, Sidney Hall, Jackie Leod, and Cary Crooke. All are known by the department to be actively engaged in illegal narcotics traffic. The stakeout at Poppa's house reports that he leaves at 9:30 p.m., but he loses the tail at about 10 p.m. on the other side of town. Other tails report in, and information about the members of Poppa's gang is compiled by the team. At 7 p.m. surveillance had disclosed that "Jumbo" and "Benjie's" whereabouts were unknown, "Hot Dog" and "Gypsy" were near an off track betting officer, "Digger" was at some meeting, and "Chills" and "Blue Eyes" were in the vicinity of a social club. Armed with this information, the team moves to 197 Kenmore Street.

FOR YOUR EYES ONLY: DETECTIVE 1 Page 2

At 10:15 p.m. the first unit of the team arrives and observes that the club door is ajar and Hasson's car is parked outside. The area seems deserted, and only one light flickers through the open door. It appears from the outside that someone is laying on the floor. A decision is made to move in for a better look. Closer scrutiny reveals Charly's body lying face down on the floor. He is bleeding profusely from head wounds - apparently gunshot wounds from a weapon found lying near an open window at the rear of the premises. The area is immediately sealed off, and the forensic unit is called to the scene. While awaiting the results of the lab unit, the team makes a door-to-door canvas in an attempt to locate a witness or persons who might have seen Charly A Poppa@ with someone at the location. The search is apparently fruitless until one middle-aged man is found who observed two men entering the abandoned club while he was walking his dog. The frightened witness, who resides three blocks from the club, says he saw the two enter the building and then heard a loud argument during which someone shouted No! No! At that time he heard two shots, and the door of the club opened but no one came out. Then he saw a man fleeing from behind the building. The man was middle-aged, wore a white shirt and black trousers, was about average in height, and was heavy. The man fled in a dark sedan parked on the next block. The witness fearful for his own life, ran home, and when a detective doing door-to-door interviews came to his house, the witness gave him the above information.

The forensic unit thoroughly searches the premises and comes up with prints belonging to Poppa; other prints are not distinguishable and cannot be classified. The weapon located at the scene is a .44 magnum of undetermined origin--no prints are obtained from the gun. Blood stains seem to indicate a fierce struggle, and apparently Charly had almost made it to the door. The blood stains on the floor fell into two groupings; A and B. Charly had bled profusely; he had blood Type A. Beneath his fingernails are tufts of hair. Further investigation reveals a footprint in the tomato patch below the window at the rear of the club. The print seems to be anywhere from a size 7D to a 8D; it is somewhat distorted and was made by a man of greater-than-average weight. (This is determined by a mold made at the scene and a measurement of the height of the drop from the window to the ground.) Pressure from the hierarchy of the department demands a quick solution to this case, especially in view of the recent mass arrests made by the Joint Task Force. On the basis of the facts herein your team is directed to make a prompt arrest.

The most likely suspects are the members of Charly "Poppa" Hasson's gang. It would seem likely that Charly called a member of the gang and made an appointment with his killer. All the information available to your team can be pulled from the Briefing Sheet. Your task is to identify the killer by using the facts available.

Charly “Poppa” Hasson has been linked to organized crime by both federal and state Organized Crime Task Forces. Information has been received that Poppa Hasson has formed a gang of his own and is engaged in heavyweight narcotics traffic. Recent investigations by our department have disclosed the identity of seven members of the Hasson gang. Further investigations and surveillances have revealed that the members of the gang are actively engaged in narcotics distribution despite severe pressure from the Joint Organized Task Force. Confidential information has disclosed a widening rift between gang members and Charly Hasson; members of the gang have accused him of “skimming off the top.” Threats have been made by gang members to blow Charly away if he doesn’t shape up.

As a result of the threats, Poppa has been making himself scarce and rarely meets more than one gang member at a time. He has secluded himself in an apartment in a remote part of town, a relatively safe location unknown to the gang members. An informant has told your department about Hasson’s hideout, and a legal wiretap has been installed on his telephone. Several days have gone by, and no action has been indicated by the tap. On March 7, at 7:03 p.m., Charly made a call to an undetermined public phone booth and a taped conversation was recorded as follows:

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Unknown Person: O.K. (Clicks off)

Past information indicates the club to be the Starlight Hunting & Fishing Club at 197 Kenmore Street, a secluded place used in the past for gang members. Other persons have divulged that some heavyweight drugs have come into town. Thus, it appears that Poppa may be getting a slice of the action. With this in mind your squad C.O. decides to cover the club and put a close surveillance on all suspects at the location.

The Joint Task Force, having information confirming a big shipment to the city, swings into action at 9 p.m. this date and simultaneously rounds up suspects who might be involved. The sweep nets twenty suspects, including Johnny Blue Eyes, Harry Hinge, Bruce Comma, Benny Carato, Sam Perez, John Smith, Mike Crupa, Danny Skidmore, Frankie Todd, Sidney Hall, Jackie Leod, and Cary Crooke. All are known by the department to be actively engaged in illegal narcotics traffic. The stakeout at Poppa's house reports that he leaves at 9:30 p.m., but he loses the tail at about 10 p.m. on the other side of town. Other tails report in, and information about the members of Poppa's gang is compiled by the team. At 7 p.m. surveillance had disclosed that Jumbo and Benjie's whereabouts were unknown, Hot Dog and Gypsy were near an off track betting officer, Digger was conducting a union meeting, and Chills and Blue Eyes were in the vicinity of a social club. Armed with this information, the team moves to 197 Kenmore Street.

At 10:15 p.m. the first unit of the team arrives and observes that the club door is ajar and Hasson's car is parked outside. The area seems deserted, and only one light flickers through the open door. It appears from the outside that someone is laying on the floor. A decision is made to move in for a better look. Closer scrutiny reveals Charly's body lying face down on the floor. He is bleeding profusely from head wounds - apparently gunshot wounds from a weapon found lying near an open window at the rear of the premises. The area is immediately sealed off, and the forensic unit is called to the scene. While awaiting the results of the lab unit, the team makes a door-to-door canvas in an attempt to locate a witness or persons who might have seen Charly APoppa@ with someone at the location. The search is apparently fruitless until one middle-aged man is found who observed two men entering the abandoned club while he was walking his dog. The frightened witness, who resides three blocks from the club, says he saw the two enter the building and then heard a loud argument during which someone shouted No! No! At that time he heard two shots, and the door of the club opened but no one came out. Then he saw a man fleeing from behind the building. The man was middle-aged, wore a white shirt and black trousers, was about average in height, and was heavy. The man fled in a dark sedan parked on the next block. The witness fearful for his own life, ran home, and when a detective doing door-to-door interviews came to his house, the witness gave him the above information.

The forensic unit thoroughly searches the premises and comes up with prints belonging to Poppa; other prints are not distinguishable and cannot be classified. The weapon located at the scene is a .44 magnum of undetermined origin--no prints are obtained from the gun. Blood stains seem to indicate a fierce struggle, and apparently Charly had almost made it to the door. The blood stains on the floor fell into two groupings; A and B. Charly had bled profusely and beneath his fingernails are tufts of hair. Further investigation reveals a footprint in the tomato patch below the window at the rear of the club. The print seems to be anywhere from a size 7D to a 8D; it is somewhat distorted and was made by a man of greater-than-average weight. (This is determined by a mold made at the scene and a measurement of the height of the drop from the window to the ground.) Pressure from the hierarchy of the department demands a quick solution to this case, especially in view of the recent mass arrests made by the Joint Task Force. On the basis of the facts herein your team is directed to make a prompt arrest.

The most likely suspects are the members of Charly Poppa Hasson's gang. It would seem likely that Charly called a member of the gang and made an appointment with his killer. All the information available to your team can be pulled from the Briefing Sheet. Your task is to identify the killer by using the facts available.

Figure 2
Murder One Suspect Work Sheet

Murder One Suspect List

Benjie	
Jumbo	
Chills	
Digger	
Blue Eyes	
Hot Dog	
Gypsy	

Figure 3

MURDER ONE Individual Assessment Questions

1) How did your group operate? Were some people: More engaged? More knowledgeable? More forceful than others? And what made them different?

2) From this exercise, what did you learn about groups that you can use in the future?

3) How did this exercise compare to what you had expected coming to class today? Specifically, what made it different? Made it better? Worse?

Figure 4 Student Comments on the Exercise

MURDER ONE Student Responses: What Did You Learn About Groups?

Everyone must bring detailed ideas and plans to the table
It's essential to consider opinion of others to eliminate errors
With the same information, people draw different conclusions
Communication is key.. Listening & evaluation ideas lead to more evolved decisions
Write down more & make sure you can argue a point; But keep an open-mind
Could have been more systematic; Come up with a strategy to draw clear answer
Everyone has different viewpoints which lead to various solutions
Need to have more structure; Too many people talking at once; No group consensus
Useful to do something like this in a group; More information by working together
Groups that put heads together & take good notes usually get the job done
Learned the importance of brainstorming and how effective it can be
Being respectful & listening to group members is important

MURDER ONE Student Responses: What Made This Exercise Different; Better; Worse

More involved where we could socialize more making it fun
Switching up teams to solve crimes; Different then case studies
What made it better was working with different people in the class
Working with new group I enjoyed it; I am psyched now to complete organizational file
Doing this exercise made me realize the many benefits from working in groups
Class was better by applying knowledge to real world situations
It made think logically and pay attention to details and remember them
The exercise showed how different people take in information
The new group members made the exercise better

MURDER ONE Student Responses: How Well Did Your Group Operate?

Group worked efficiently comparing & combining information
All provided input; Some more engaged and forceful
One group member came up/defended a new suspect after we eliminated him
Group discussion led to different clues being revealed to different members
Some members tried to push long-shot assumptions based on a profile
Some were more forceful than others when they believed they remembered info clearly