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The Sabermetrics of *Survivor* – The Role of In-Group Identity to Survival in Reality Television

Andrew Hanson

ABSTRACT

Every day people are thrust into situations in which they are forced to work with individuals they don't know. Often times, these people come from different backgrounds. The only rules these people are bound by are the laws and norms of society, which they may or may not break. In reality television game shows such as *Survivor*, a microcosm of real life and how we live is created. This paper examines how small group dynamics play out in the sixth season of the show "Survivor." In the show strangers are forced to work together and create a society for themselves, while gradually eliminating each other as competitors from the game. This study looks at the role of in-group and out-group identity in small groups using Realistic Conflict Theory. Using Realistic Conflict Theory as a conceptual framework, this paper examines voting patterns at the game's tribal council of participants in the television show *Survivor*. A quantitative analysis was used to examine the voting tendencies, while a qualitative analysis was employed to examine dialogue and interaction between contestants. This study hypothesizes that the better job a player in the game does at fostering an in-group identity, the further the contestant will progress in the game.

Keywords: survivor, small group, in-group

Mark Burnett has created some of the country's top reality television shows since launching *Eco-Challenge* in 1995. His rolodex of shows include *The Voice*, *Shark Tank*, *The Apprentice*, and *Survivor*; the last is Burnett's most successful show, now in its 34th season (Lynch, 2015). The finale of the show's first installment, *Survivor: Borneo*, was the second most watched television episode of the 2000s. The first season finale of the series was watched by an audience of 51.7 million people in the United States (Young, 2009). Nielsen reported the show also had 125 million unique viewers (Starr, 2000).

In addition to becoming a cultural phenomenon, *Survivor* was a game unlike any other made before in the United States. Charlie Parsons, who created *Expedition: Robinson*, which aired in Sweden in 1997, developed the show that would be the precursor to the American adaptation. Parsons has since served as an executive producer alongside Burnett on the U.S. version of *Survivor* (BBC News, 2001).

Survivor is a social experiment where 16-20 contestants are marooned on a remote island or region. Contestants are given meager supplies and left to create a new society. The game is broken down into two phases:

- The tribal stage, at the beginning of the game, is when contestants are divided into anywhere from two to four groups. (This study examines a situation involving two groups.) These groups are called tribes in the game. In this stage, everything is tribal.

Every challenge–reward and immunity–are won by tribes. At tribal council, a group eliminates a player from their tribe.

- The second phase of the game occurs when the two tribes merge into one. From this point on in the game, everything is individual.

Approximately every three days (or one episode in the show), a contestant is voted out at the tribal council and eliminated from the game. While there are elements of survival in camp life and physicality in the challenges, *Survivor* is ultimately a social game. The relationships an individual develops within their group and how they interact with fellow contestants will decide their fate in the game.

This study examines how small-group dynamics play out in the sixth season of the series, *Survivor: The Amazon*. The essay looks at the role of in-group and out-group identity in the show, which is analyzed through players' voting patterns and interactions at tribal council. Along with looking at voting tendencies, a qualitative analysis was completed by examining dialogue between contestants that help establish the in-group and out-group identification.

Like in *Survivor*, humans are forced into everyday interactions with strangers who they've had no prior interaction with whether it is at work, school, the grocery store, or in their personal lives. Whether it is in an office setting or on a sports team, it's important to determine what the in-group and what the out-group is in a group scenario. This is of particular relevance in today's society, where individuals are constantly thrust into unique situations and success is heavily dependent upon their ability to identify with the in-group.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Long before Burnett's game played out on an island in the South China Sea, an experiment similar to *Survivor* was carried out in Robbers Cave State Park by University of Oklahoma professor and social psychologist Muzafer Sherif (McLeod, 2008).

The underlying hypothesis that Sherif sought to answer, or affirm, in his experiment was the existence of intergroup relations and how conflict or harmony amongst the members impacted the group's dynamics. Also known as Realistic Conflict Theory, the theory states, "Competition between groups for valuable but limited material and/or symbolic resources breeds hostility" (Brief, Umphress, Dietz, Butz, Burrows, & Scholten, 2005). A social-psychological theory, the concept of Realistic Conflict Theory was advanced by Donald Campbell who summarizes the concept as the following: "The perception that one group's gain is another's loss translates into perceptions of group threat, which in turn cause prejudice against the out-group, negative stereotyping of the out-group, in-group solidarity, awareness of in-group solidarity and internal cohesion" (Sidanius & Pratto, 1999, p. 831).

Another concept crucial to cohesiveness in small groups is trust. Although basic in premise, the idea of trust is perhaps the most critical element to the success of a small group. Trust impacts not only an individual's relationships and perceptions of others, but also the efficacy of a group. One of the benefits of trust is "it has been shown that trust influences the emotional responses of individuals: trusting people tended to feel less pain when excluded from a group than less trusting people" (Cuadrado & Tabernero, 2015).

Trust is crucial to the success of any small group. However, when strangers are united and forced to work together, those who can develop the quickest trust are more likely to succeed. In *Survivor*, trust is the basis for alliances. These alliances are often established as the in-group and are the primary factor in who is eliminated at tribal council in the game (Salter, 2014).

In Sherif's study, "Intergroup Conflict and Cooperation: The Robbers Cave Experiment," he along with colleagues at the University of Oklahoma consisting of O.J. Harvey, Jack White, William Hood, and Carolyn Sherif predicted that,

...intergroup attitudes and behaviors are determined primarily by the nature of functional relations between groups in question (and not primarily by the pattern of relations and attitudes prevailing within groups themselves, nor primarily by the deviate or neurotic behavior of particular individual members who have suffered more than the usual degree of frustration in their personal life histories). (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961)

As part of the study, a group of 24 12-year-old boys were selected. The boys were from Protestant middle-class families and were not described as problem kids at school or home. Because the study was dependent on interactions between strangers, the boys could not be previously acquainted with any of the other subjects. Due to Oklahoma City's size and proximity to the University of Oklahoma (Norman, where the University of Oklahoma is located, is a suburb of Oklahoma City), its schools were chosen as the pool for subjects. After narrowing down the selection pool to 50 potential candidates, 22 were chosen for the experiment. Two subjects were eliminated from the original goal of 24 because of not meeting proper criteria. A 200-acre Boy Scouts of America camp at Robbers Cave State Park, located in the southeastern part of the state was chosen as the experiment site (Sherif et al., 1961).

The boys were divided into two groups, eventually named the "Rattlers" and the "Eagles" by the boys. Bussed to the experiment site on successive days in June 1954 by group, the boys began the experiment, which lasted a total of 21 days. The participation and result of the competitions throughout the three stages of Sherif's experiment had a direct impact on the groups' dynamics, such to the point that "intergroup relations deteriorated into overt hostility and negative out-group stereotypes, with a corresponding increase in in-group solidarity and positive stereotypes" (Tyerman & Spencer, 1983).

Sherif concluded that "when groups in a state of friction are brought into contact under conditions embodying superordinate goals the attainment of which is compelling but which cannot be achieved by the efforts of one group alone, they cooperate toward the common goal" (Sherif et al, 1961).

While the Robbers Cave Experiment may have been a social-psychological test, it has had a direct impact on the reality television genre. Shows like *The Apprentice*, *Big Brother*, and *Survivor* have all in one form or another evolved from the idea of realistic conflict theory that Sherif helped establish more than 60 years ago.

Sherif's research was the foundation of modern competitive reality TV programming and conflict. In fact, the parallels between *Survivor* and the Robbers Cave Experiment have been

compared before. As the contestants are divided into two separate tribes at the beginning of the game, they must “work together to build shelter, find food, and most important, win challenges. However, with every challenge lost, the tribe decides who they want to send home... The same team that was working together to win a challenge four hours earlier now sits in tribal council, forced to vote out one of their own” (Schacter, 2015).

In reference to the communication concept of trust, during the post-merge portion of *Survivor*, individuals can “struggle with the decision to either remain loyal to their prior tribe teammates or abandon their group identity and seek out new allies from the (previously) opposing tribe” (Schacter, 2015).

Meanwhile, at the same time Sherif brought the 22 boys to the campsite for the Robbers Cave Experiment, British author William Golding published *Lord of the Flies* in 1954. The book was later adapted into a film and has parallels to Sherif’s research and has been a level of comparison to some reality TV shows. In 2007, CBS gave the green light to *Kid Nation*, a show, which placed 40 kids between the ages of eight and 15 in a deserted ghost town in New Mexico where they were forced to fend for themselves and create a new world. The show was described as an example of something similar to what occurs in Golding’s book “In *Lord of the Flies*, the island-abandoned children, devoid of adult boundaries, are gradually overcome by their violent and primitive instincts. ‘Kill the pig! Cut his throat! Spill his blood!’ As they chant in a famous scene recreated with spine-chilling effect in Peter Brook’s 1963 film” (Pilkington, 2007).

While the show ended after one season, it did not go unnoticed, primarily for ethical reasons. The filming location of New Mexico was chosen because producers found “loopholes that allowed the children to work onscreen for long hours (Goldman, 2007).” However, New Mexico child labor laws were quickly changed following the production of the show. Carlos Castaneda of the New Mexico Department of Labor responded to the criticism, saying, “I don’t think they could successfully film the same way for another year in New Mexico, since we changed the law. This is why we changed the rules to protect children” (Goldman, 2007).

METHODOLOGY

This study was designed to examine small group dynamics in *Survivor*. In the game, in-groups and out-groups can be established through alliances. Richard Hatch created the first ever alliance during the show’s inaugural season, *Survivor: Borneo*. Hatch laid the footwork for how to win the game and illustrated the importance of understanding how pivotal small group dynamics can be in these competitions. Josh Wigler, who covers *Survivor* for *Parade Magazine*, believes Hatch’s understanding of alliance building and developing an in-group identity was critical to not only his success, but also the show’s. “Hatch’s win set the tone for the future of *Survivor*, paving the way for a cutthroat game where terms like ‘alliance’ and ‘blindsides’ stopped becoming dirty words, and became essential parts of the show’s vernacular. It’s hard to imagine a world where the more likable Kelly (Wigglesworth) wins over Richard; at least, it’s hard to imagine *Survivor* still airing today, all these years later” (Wigler 2015).

The purpose of this study is to establish the impact of a contestant’s ability to establish an in-group identity relative to his or her survival in the game and operates under the hypothesis that

the higher in-group identity score a player receives, the further they will go in the game. Thus, the better job an individual does at fostering this in-group identity, the more likelihood they have of winning the game.

A player's in-group identity score is established through voting patterns at the game's tribal council.

The points system is broken down as follows:

- A player gains three (3) points if they vote for who is eliminated at tribal council. By voting for who is voted out, a player is establishing their spot in the in-group. These players are part of the majority.
- A player receives zero (0) points if they vote for someone other than who is eliminated from tribal council. These players are relegated to the out-group because of their decision to not vote for who is eliminated. These players are described as the minority.
- A player loses one (1) point if someone other than who is voted out at tribal council votes for them. Because players are not allowed to vote for themselves, two players are guaranteed to receive votes.

If, for example, a player is eliminated by a vote of 7-1, that player would not lose any points because there can be an unlimited number of reasons why one player may cast their vote for another. In this situation, the player who received only one vote from who was eliminated would not lose any points, the reasoning being the vote is a unanimous decision and therefore the in-group is voting as one bloc.

However, if the vote were 6-2, that player would lose one (1) point because they received a vote from someone other than who is voted out. Essentially, the person who is voted out has their vote voided from the scoring matrix.

During the first stage of the game, the tribal phase, the group that loses the immunity challenge goes to tribal council and eliminates one player. This means that during this stage, one group does not attend tribal council and therefore these players will receive a score of zero (0) for the voting round.

Because each contestant may go to a different number of tribal councils during the game, a player's final in-group identity score is calculated by the total number of points received by a player during the game and is divided by the total number of tribal councils they attend, including the council in which they are eliminated.

A scoring method has been contrived factoring in the number of in-group identity points a player receives and the number of tribal councils that player attends. A player's standardized score is then calculated by dividing a player's in-group identity score by the total number of tribal councils they attended.

The matrix was put in place to reward individuals who vote out the eliminated contestant because that is the truest way of determining alliances in the game, which translate to the in-group.

It can therefore be hypothesized that a high standardized score will correlate positively to a player's time in the game.

A qualitative analysis was conducted by looking at in-game dialogue between contestants to determine how individuals were slotted into the in- and out-group based on their discussions, actions, and, in the case of the individual portion of the game, performance in challenges.

The game of *Survivor* is similar to Sherif's Robbers Cave Experiment in a number of ways but most visibly in the structure of the social experiment. Stage 1 of Sherif's study focused on the formation of in-groups, which can be applied to the early days of *Survivor* when the game contestants develop a group hierarchy. The second stage—the frictional phase—is evident when the two tribes go head-to-head and challenges, with the loser being forced to eliminate one of their own at tribal council. The last similarity occurs in the integration phase of Sherif's experiment, which is equivalent to the merge in *Survivor*. Once intense competitors, the contestants are then forced to work together with their former foes in the individual part of the game (Sherif et al, 1961).

While there is no objective way to mathematically calculate an individual's finish in a game dictated by human emotions, logic, and strategy, by analyzing a player's ability to establish an in-group identity and clearly decipher who is and is not in the in-group, we can determine a contestant's predicted finish. By examining voting patterns through our quantitative analysis, which looks at voting patterns, we explain through contestant dialogue, why the votes are cast.

RESULTS

Based on the scoring criteria explained earlier, the results of the voting patterns in *Survivor: The Amazon* were analyzed to determine how well a player did at establishing an in-group identity.

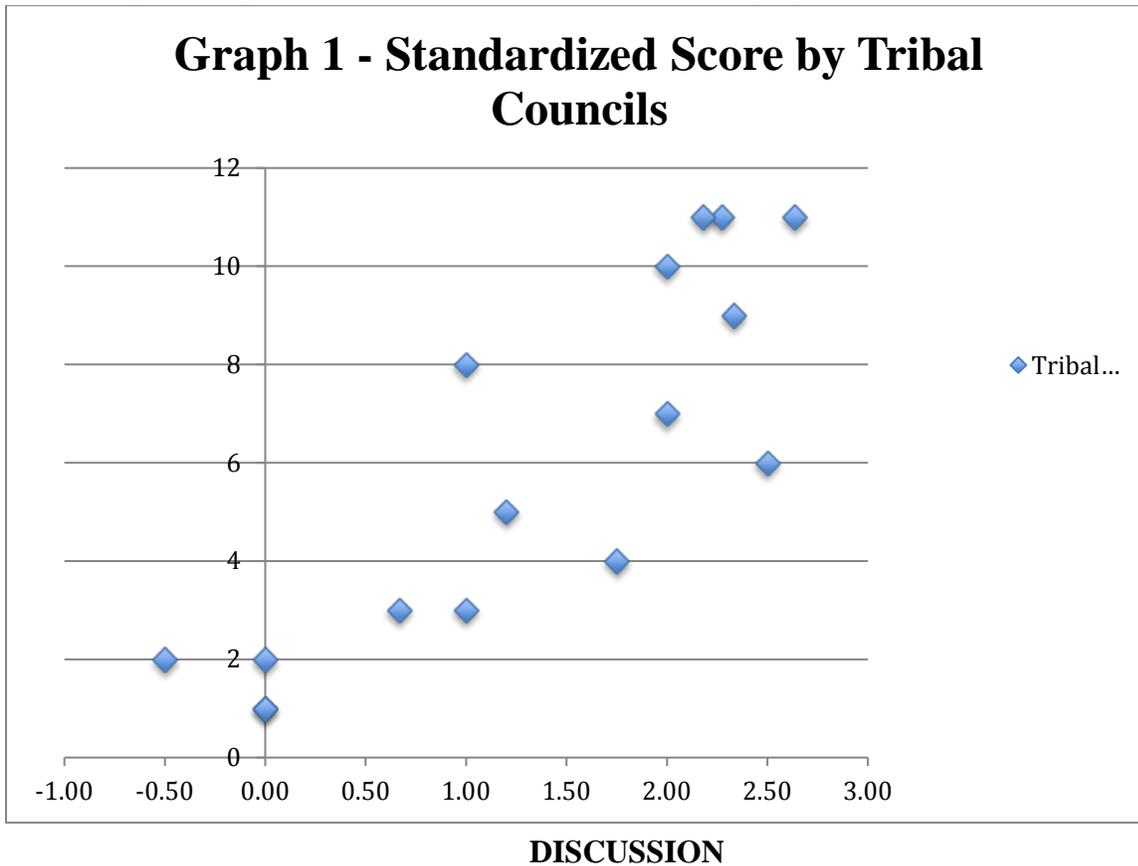
Table 1 – Player Rankings

Player	Scoring Method	Standardized Score
1 – Jenna Morasca	25 points / 11 tribal councils	(2.273) – 4 th place
2 – Matthew von Ertfelda	24 points / 11 tribal councils	(2.182) – 5 th place
3 – Rob Cesternino	29 points / 11 tribal councils	(2.636) – 1 st place
4 – Butch Lockley	20 points / 10 tribal councils	(2.000) – t-6 th place
5 – Heidi Strobel	21 points / 9 tribal councils	(2.333) – 3 rd place
6 – Christy Smith	8 points / 8 tribal councils	(1.000) – t-10 th place
7 – Alex Bell	14 points / 7 tribal councils	(2.000) – t-6 th place
8 – Deena Bennett	15 points / 6 tribal councils	(2.500) – 2 nd place
9 – Dave Johnson	6 points / 5 tribal councils	(1.200) – 9 th place
10 – Roger Sexton	7 points / 4 tribal councils	(1.750) – 8 th place
11 – Shawna Mitchell	2 points / 3 tribal councils	(0.667) – 12 th place
13 – Jeanne Hebert	3 points / 3 tribal councils	(1.000) – t-10 th place
13 – Joanna Ward	0 points / 2 tribal councils	(0.000) – t-13 th place
14 – Daniel Lue	-1 point / 2 tribal councils	(-0.500) – 16 th place
15 – Janet Koth	0 points / 1 tribal council	(0.000) – t-13 th place
16 – Ryan Aiken	0 points / 1 tribal council	(0.000) – t-13 th place

The value of the correlation (R) is 0.8499. This is a strong, positive correlation, which means that high X variable scores go with high Y variable scores (and vice versa).

The value of R², the coefficient of determination, is 0.7223. The result is significant at p < 0.01.

The following chart shows the players' actual placement in the game in relation to their placement according to our scoring matrix. The x-axis represents a player's standardized score, while the y-axis represents the number of tribal councils a player attended.



The purpose of this research study was to determine the impact of an individual's ability to foster an in-group identity and how that relates to their longevity in reality television competitions in which players are forced to interact in small groups.

In *Survivor: The Amazon*, there were 16 players in the game vying for the title of Sole Survivor and the million-dollar prize. Based on our research, which determined which players succeeded or failed at establishing an in-group identity, we conclude there are outliers, individuals who progressed further in the actual game than predicted based on our scoring method and those who did not progress as far as predicted.

Our discussion, though, will focus on three individuals: Daniel Lue, who received the lowest in-group identity score; Rob Cesternino, who received the highest in-group identity score; and Jenna Morasca, who won the game. Morasca placed fourth in our in-group identity scoring model.

The sixth season of *Survivor* began unlike the previous five installments. For the first time in *Survivor* history, the group of 16 castaways was divided into two tribes based on sex. The eight males were placed on “Tambaqui,” and the eight females were placed on “Jaburu.” The two tribes (groups) quickly developed common identities, which helped develop group unity. “All the guys were really pumped up. There was no way that women are going to beat us in anything—physically, mentally, whatever. We’re never going to go to tribal council,” Lue remarked in a confessional (talking to the viewers on screen). A male vs. female, us vs. them mindset developed during the first episode, similar to Sherif’s Robbers Cave Experiment.

At the first immunity challenge, the men’s tribe jumped out to an early lead. However, in large part due to struggles by Ryan and Daniel during a balance beam portion of the challenge, the men lost. Because of attitude and camp work ethic, the in-group, consisting of Rob, Butch, Alex, and Roger decided that Ryan was going to be the first to go, with Daniel as the alternative pick. Eventually, Ryan was eliminated by a vote of 4-3-1. The faction of Ryan, Daniel, and Matthew, who was also on the outs, voted for the tribe’s leader, Roger. That left Dave’s vote up for grabs because despite being perceived as a member of the in-group, he refused to vote for Ryan because they’re from the same hometown. Thus, he voted for Daniel, who was also in the out-group. That begged the question as to why Daniel. A comment by Daniel at the challenge, lying about how much food they’ve gathered, led to Dave’s annoyance with Daniel. This is the first instance of realistic conflict theory in play because the contestants were vying for the most precious resource in the game – safety in the form of immunity.

When the tribe returned from the challenge, Dave told the group, “Don’t bring me down with your bullshit. I got character, and I’ve got integrity. I don’t care if they’re girls or guys but don’t lie to them. We’re doing great but don’t lie to them.”

Daniel responded, telling viewers in confessional, “Dave, he was upset about us joking around saying that we caught fish. It’s not a big deal. He needs to lighten up. Who does he think he is to stand up on a soapbox and lecture like that.”

The two had a different approach to how the game should have been played. Dave believed in being upfront and honest, while Daniel had a do-whatever-it-takes mentality. That fundamental difference in gameplay led to Dave voting for Daniel at tribal council. Rob summarized Dave’s philosophy on the game well, saying, “Dave is a stand-up guy. He has a lot of integrity and is a really honest guy, which is really great for me because I’m going to lie and cheat and do whatever it takes to win. He’s only going to tell the truth all the time and that’s only going to hurt him in this game” (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

By episode three, Roger and Daniel had grown particularly tired with each other. Roger, at least in his own mind, was perceived to be at the top of the in-group, Daniel on the outs with the out-group. A tense exchange over work ethic between the two regarding camp life escalated the situation to Roger wanting Daniel removed from the game.

It became clear to Daniel that he was in the out-group. The fact that his primary target was at the center of the in-group didn’t help his plight, either. He had already voted for Roger at the first tribal council, and Dave’s vote for him showed who was next in the pecking order.

Before the men headed to tribal council on day nine, Matthew, who was essentially in the middle of the two groups, remarked to Dave, “Let me ask you something. Do you think which situation would be better – without Daniel or without Roger?” Dave’s response sealed Daniel’s fate in the game, “I believe taking Dan would be better. After that, we’ll see how it goes.” Daniel was voted out by a vote of 6-1 (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

Daniel was the only player in our scoring method to receive a negative score. That is a result of quickly falling into the out-group and players letting him know he was on the outs. His failure lay in his inability to develop in-group relationships. The only true ally he had was Ryan, who was also in the out-group. The moment Daniel aligned with Ryan, his fate was sealed.

When examining at the two first-place finishers—Jenna in the actual game and Rob in our scoring model—we must consider factors outside of in-group identity. The two aligned during the tribe swap in episode five and worked together, along with others, and voted together at tribal council while they established an in-group up through the final seven. Common enemies, such as Roger during the merge at the final ten and Deena at the final eight, kept the alliance together. A series of confessionals from Rob throughout the five-episode arc illustrated his innate ability to develop an in-group identity:

There is a lot of tension between Deena and Roger. Roger was in charge of Tambaqui, and Deena was the leader at Jaburu. Deena is a very strong woman, who I have a lot of respect for. She’s a lawyer. She can argue her way out of just about any situation. Roger loves to hear himself talk. You get these two together. Roger thinks that women are stupid. Deena thinks that women are better than men. There are just about a million different conversations that they could go off on. (Burnett & Parsons, 2003)

Rob thrived as the center of conflict, going unnoticed as he pitted person against person, which inevitably pushed someone beside himself to the out-group. This also kept Rob securely in the in-group. He engineered Roger’s elimination in episode seven and did the same with Dave in episode eight “I’ve had an ax to grind with Dave for so long...[He’s] got to go. He’s a threat. The main alliance right now is myself, Deena, Jenna, Heidi, and Alex, which are the five people that I would most like to spend my time with here” (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

With that confessional, Rob showed he was at the center of the in-group and of whom it consisted. The following episode, Deena switched to the opposite side. Jenna and her faction with Alex and Heidi were going to vote for Deena. Rob had also developed a second in-group with Butch and Matthew and was once again driving the voting decision as to whether he should turn on Jenna and vote out their ally Alex, who received two votes at that tribal council but was not eliminated, or go with the entire in-group and vote out Deena “It’s like we’re in the mob, and there is going to be a hit on one of my friends, and I really have to look the other way and act like everything’s hunky dory. When we go to tribal council tonight, the one person that’s going to get the hit tonight is going to be the person that least expects it” (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

Rob cemented his spot in the game and in our scoring model during a conversation with Alex, one of Jenna’s closest allies, during episode 11. (Note: episode ten was a recap episode,

and this is the episode chronologically following episode nine.) The following dialogue displays Rob's knowledge of his position within a group:

Alex: So Rob, I was thinking if the four of us go to the final four, I know that those two have sworn to each other that they're never going to vote for each other. So the way I see it, if I win immunity my vote goes for you. I'm sure if you win immunity, you're going to vote me out and that's totally cool. I'm down. It's no worries.

Rob (confessional): Alex's decision to tell me that he was going to vote me out at the final four is really kind of curious. I think it has to do with this idea that we're all each other's best friends. Even though I'm going to be voted out fourth, I'm losing to three worthy players...I realized that I've been coming off as very sensitive with this group, talking about how much I love them and how much I'm going to be friends with them after the game, but I have never stopped playing *Survivor*. Over my dead body will I turn over and let somebody just pass me by.

Rob immediately recognized his position in the group with Alex, Heidi, and Jenna, so he decided to switch over to the faction of odds-and-ends pieces of players consisting of Matthew, Butch, and Christy. In this instance, conflict occurred from conflicting goals among the two players. In a game like *Survivor*, where only one player will win, and the remaining 15-19 players will lose, there is bound to be hostility among those in the in-group and out-group, especially when the prize is one million dollars.

Rob told Matthew, "Alex is the power player here. He thinks you're the only person that can beat him at the physical competitions and that's why he wants you to go. Alex told me yesterday that when we get to four, he's going to vote against me." Matthew responded, asking Rob if he were serious. Rob replied, "Yes. This is what happens when people start being arrogant. It's hubris...Me, you, Butch, and Christy vote out Alex tomorrow" (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

After Christy's indecisiveness led to her elimination at the final six, Rob alluded to complications outside of in-group identity (external factors) that could shake up the game. In a conversation where he told Heidi she's next on the chopping block, but Rob said, "[W]e're so close to the end that immunities could screw anything up" (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

At the final four, the game came down to Rob and his new cohort of Butch and Matthew along with Jenna, who was presumed to be the next in line to go. However, she won the final two immunity challenges, which guaranteed her safety through the end of the game. Butch was unanimously voted at the final four, and Jenna then chose to cast her sole vote at the final three to eliminate Rob from the game. This decision ultimately led to her 6-1 win over Matthew in *Survivor: The Amazon* (Burnett & Parsons, 2003).

Rob was the only player in the game to vote for who was eliminated at every tribal council he attended through the final three, making his the highest standardized score in our model. Rob was at the forefront of the game, driving the decisions of the in-group as to which player should be eliminated from the out-group.

Jenna's ability to win two critical challenges at the end ultimately led to her victory in the game, although her ability to establish an in-group identity was what determined her place in the final four. This demonstrates that while an individual's ability to remain in the in-group drives a majority of the direction of their game in a reality TV competition like *Survivor: The Amazon*, there are ultimately other outside factors such as challenges that have an impact on the final outcome of the game.

CONCLUSION

The findings from this study show a direct correlation between a person's ability to develop in-group relations and their likelihood of successfully competing in reality TV. This study was based on one of the 32 seasons of *Survivor*, albeit a very small sample size. The analysis and data were contrived from voting tendencies at tribal council, the only time in the game where intergroup dynamics and those actions are quantifiable.

Despite a simple approach, we conclude that the more skillfully a player manages intergroup dynamics in small group settings (i.e. building alliances), the further said player will progress in the game.

While this study focused on one show, *Survivor*, similar studies could be conducted on other installments of the franchise or on other similar reality programs such as *Big Brother*. Studies could also be conducted on programs that have been cancelled such as *The Glass House* or *Pirate Master*, both of which had a basic premise of developing relationships within a small group and then voting to eliminate players from the game.

With Donald Trump, Mark Burnett's former host of *The Apprentice*, elected as the 45th President of the United States, the prevalence and significance of reality TV is at the forefront of discussion. The fact that an individual who hosted 14 seasons of reality TV (NBC, 2014) won the presidential election, further proves the significance of this genre of programming play in our society.

Sherif's Robbers Cave Experiment is the foundation for not only in-depth research on small group dynamics, but also modern day reality television programming.

The primary implication for future research consists of altering the scoring model used. We believe a scoring model of awarding two or perhaps one point for voting who is eliminated may aid this study. The reworking is necessary because the current model overemphasizes voting with the in-group and underemphasizes receiving votes.

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