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Remember the Titans Analysis Example

Remember the Titans depicts the hardships and victories, both athletic and personal, of the Titans football team at the newly-integrated T.C. Williams high school in the American south. They learn to accept each other's differences during a time of racial discrimination. The movie is set in 1971 in Alexandria, Virginia, a town where football holds great meaning to the surrounding community. In an attempt to introduce integration in the town, the all-white T.C. Williams High School is integrated with the black students from a nearby high school. Football coach Herman Boone, a black man, reluctantly takes over the head coach position at T.C. Williams, replacing the current coach Bill Yoast - a white man and an esteemed member of the community - demoting him to assistant coach. The summer before the school year begins, the new Titans travel to Gettysburg for training camp. There their racial issues come to a head and conflicts abound. Coach Boone requires each team member to connect with their counterpart on an intimate level - the team members must learn about each other's families, hobbies and share personal details about his counterpart. This proves initially difficult for all of the players on the team, but particularly hard for the two team captains, Gerry Bertier and Julius Campbell. Through Coach Boone's firm and relentless coaching style, these two young men become the driving force behind the team's unity, cultivating a strong friendship that spearheads the entire team's efforts towards tolerance and unification. When the Titans return home from camp, Boone is told by the school board that if the Titans lose just one game, he will be

dismissed; while Coach Yoast is told that if the Titans lose just one game, he will be inducted into the football Hall of Fame, as his coaching record would be unblemished - displaying the true pettiness of Alexandria's steadfast racism. With their belief in the new, unified team culture (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.77), the Titans fight their way through their season to end up undefeated champions despite racial barriers. In the semi-final game, the referees are biased against the Titans. Yoast realizes the game is being rigged and uses his privilege as a respected white figure to demand it be called fairly, or he will expose the scandal. Ultimately the Titans win the state championship, but Yoast loses the opportunity of being placed in the Hall of Fame because he was a whistleblower and called out the right thing to do (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.210). The film displays the power of culture, commitment, sportsmanship, positive and negative outcomes through varying perspectives, and how there are many different ways to be part of a team. The characters in the film that best exemplify the aforementioned organizational behaviors are Herman Boone, Bill Yoast, Gerry Bertier, and Julius Campbell. Coach Herman Boone is a black man and exhibits a tough but fair coaching strategy to establish the true sense of equality that he never receives in the real world. After becoming the head coach of the team, it becomes evident that Boone possesses a high level of extraversion (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 266) as he is an assertive, bold, and dominant leader. He also motivates his players by setting clear and specific goals and coaching in accordance with each player's ability to achieve those goals. Coach Bill Yoast is a white man who, before Boone takes over, is the highly respected head coach of T.C. Williams High School as well as a respected member of the community. Yoast has a very personal relationship with his existing team, and the bond he shares with them informs his decision to take on the position as assistant coach. Unlike Boone, Yoast employs a coaching focused on player input and cooperation. He has a high level of agreeableness (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 266), in that he is cooperative and sympathetic towards the players. Team captain, Gerry Bertier, is a white player whose leadership is put to the test when the team integrates. However, through the eye-opening leadership from Coach Boone, Bertier portrays a high level of openness (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.266) as he allows himself to fully participate in the building of this new culture and realizes the true meaning of teamwork through acceptance of his black teammates. The other team captain, Julius Campbell, is a black player who is skeptical of his white teammates and has no interest in building a new team culture. Julius displays classic characteristics of lone wolf behavior (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 70), in that he is only looking out for himself. However, Campbell

eventually trusts his co-captain, Bertier, and becomes a family with the rest of the team. The organization of Remember the Titans is T.C. Williams' High School football team. The tangible goal of the film is to win the finals and the societal goal is to also reduce the racism in their town and open people's minds to the benefits of integration. The combined efforts of the Titans and their coaches to reduce racial segregation both on and off the field and grow as a co-working organization instead of a group of individuals are how these goals are achieved. Throughout the film, the positive and negative aspects of individual and team-focused organizational methods are shown as the Titans grow and develop into a cohesive team. The interesting twist is that the positives and negatives often exist overlapping one another; they aren't always cut and dry and are largely deemed as positive or negative based on the personal opinions each team member and the influence of the times in which they live. The film is primarily about culture and good sportsmanship (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.37) - about how an attempt to change the culture of a local football team is completely dependent on their ability to prioritize good team sportsmanship above their own individual, petty preconceived notions. At the beginning of the film, the interaction adjustment "the degree of comfort when socializing and interacting with the host culture" (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.77) was absolutely non-existent due to the pervasiveness of racism. The existing culture is a negative, however because the negative culture results in steady wins for the high school, it's not seen that way. All of the white players absorb their present team culture from their surroundings and leadership - racist and resistant to change. Through the culture, initial perspective of teamwork, and local reputation, the school exists in the beginning of the film has a negative, arguably- successful, version of all of those things. Their actual success can be argued as it exists in a separatist, isolated, and hateful existence. To remove race and create a truly equal playing field Coach Boone employs the forced Ranking System Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, (p. 48), ranking each player against each other based solely on their ability to accomplish his set tasks. On the other side of the coin Coach Yoach employs a more feedback-based organizational style of coaching. However, both coaches agree that the best way to truly make the titans a successful team is to first receive their commitments to the team. The coaches draw affective, normative, and continuance based commitments (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 63) out of every player. Affective commitment is drawn by using the camp as a ground to create isolation and force them to be together together all day (if only out of fear of punishment). The togetherness stoked an emotional commitment born out of a need to be part of a group and continually-fed through the removal of external

influences. The nature of an encompassing obligation like being on the football team has already drawn continuance-based commitment from the players; Louis Lastik reveals to Coach Boone that he is only able to continue at the high school due to his affiliation with the football team, as he is a weak student academically. The obligation-based normative commitment is present and develops with the team as each practice and game brings them closer together and they begin to understand the nature of commitments and the importance of being there for their teammates. The Titans leave camp strengthened with a new, positive focus on their goal that was birthed through building a new team culture and the complete commitment of themselves to this organization. What at times strengthens and weakens that goal focus is the positive and negative aspects of each players' focus on themselves as individuals. The inimitability, inability to be imitated (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 10), of each team member is established right in the beginning of the movie and shown as both a positive and a negative. The entire team is comprised of unique characters whose personalities and athletic skills cannot be copied and therefore make them indispensable to the development of the team as a unit. The most-winking example of inimitability in the movie is the character of Ronnie "Sunshine" Bass'. His laid-back and open-minded Californian personality proves an asset playing football in the traditional Southern United States as his unique affectations (long hair, practice of tai-chi, comedic rejection of homophobia, etc) allow him to deceive unexpected opponents during game play and be an open and flexible teammate. Mirroring the positives of inimitability, the movie shows how that can also be a negative and lays the groundwork for distancing, self-aggrandizing personalities. Seasoned players, Julius Campbell and Gerry Bertier, are too aware of their own rarity and, in the beginning of the movie, prioritize that above team development. Prior to attending summer camp, Bertier makes it known to Coach Boone that he's the only All-American football player on the team and through acknowledging the value of his own rarity, attempts to use that as professional leverage with Coach Boone to guarantee his demands - for a half of all available team slots to be automatically given to white players from Hammond High - are met. While at camp, Julius is introverted and pulls away from the coaches and his teammates because he sees team pursuits as pointless. This expression of his knowledge informs his "lone wolf" behavior, which he explains in the following exchange with the aforementioned Bertier. Bertier: Honesty? You want honesty? Honestly, I think you're nothing. Nothing but a pure waste of God-given talent. You don't listen to nobody man. Not even Doc or Boone.... Julius: Why should I give a hoot about you? Huh? Or anyone else out there? You wanna talk about a waste, you the

captain, right? Bertier: Right. Julius: Captain's supposed to be the leader, right? Bertier: Right. Julius: You got a job? Bertier: I got a job. Julius: You been doing your job? Bertier: I been doing my job. Julius: Then why don't you tell your white buddies to block for Rev better because they have not blocked for him worth a plug nickel, and you know it! Nobody plays. Yourself included. I'm supposed to wear myself out for the team? What team? Nah, nah what I'm gonna do is look out for myself and I'ma get mine. It is through their inimitability, their individuality, that the team members do (or don't) lend themselves to citizenship behavior (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 35), "behaviors that contribute to organizational goals by improving the context in which the work takes place." Players Louis Lastik and Jerry "Rev" Campbell, best exemplify the positives of citizenship behavior through an unabashed willingness to instill a sense of comradery into the Titans by working together and encouraging each other's silliness. This was displayed through a joint performance of "Ain't Too Proud to Beg" in the lunchroom and "yo mama" jokes with Julius, Bertier, and other, less initially receptive teammates in the locker room. Team member Ray Budds, exemplifies the negative of how refusal to perform citizenship behavior can lead into a display of the erosion model, the crumbling of ability and/or desire to engage in his job performance (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 65). Outside of Bertier, Ray has no real ties to his other teammates - he seems to be un-close to any other white member of his teammates and has no interest in even trying to successfully play with his black teammates. Once Bertier changes his ways, Ray's sole relationship erodes and his apathy towards working with the other players exacerbates his disappointed withdrawal away from his teammates and into himself, his psychological withdrawal, (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 72) and leaves him angry and unsurprised by the time he is fired by Coach Boone. A positive within this same scene is that it shows the benefit of responding with voice (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 37) Bertier ultimately asks Coach Boone to have him removed for the betterment of the Titans and it proves to be a fruitful decision. Each player's individual nature effects the management style of each coach. Exacerbating the differences of their coaching styles, Coach Boone believes that Yoach's coaching is only effective due to the freedom his white players have to be more expressive and open as people, whereas his black players aren't given that same privilege due to the prejudices they face. He believes that for the sake of his black players being able to realistically navigate the world they live in, they need a measurement-based and critical management style. In one scene, team member Petey Jones stifles his own skill and plays worse throughout the game due to the Management-by-Objectives (MBO) (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, 46) influenced-

philosophy employed by Coach Boone. Boone's MBO coaching method leaves Petey susceptible to harsh treatment and possible removal from game time based solely on their ability to accomplish the measurable goals (the football plays) with little to no issue. Petey goes on to tell Coach Yoast verbally and through his body language that he needs a more rounded and input-based coaching approach in order to play better. This was one of the few times in the film this sort of input was provided without a negative confrontation. The players offer their feelings about their performance usually only through disciplinary windows and the commitment to one another that they feel is subtly expressed, as is typical for young men, especially young men who are of a high social status (Sokolov, Kruger, Enck, Krageloh-Mann, & Pavlova, 2011). Petey benefits from the feedback given to him from Yoast and the opportunity to do some sort of task-customizing job crafting (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 103) - he goes off of defensive and plays the offensive, a change which helps them with another game. By the end of the film Coach Boone is willing to inject external input into his decision-making. Coaches Boone and Yoast both play off of their players' affective commitment in an effort to keep the peace and get the most out of his players. Ultimately, they want the goals and values of his football team to be tied deeply to every player. Their goal is to establish a feeling of complete team embeddedness (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 68) within every Titan through establishing a relationship of trust, or relational contracts (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p.79), with one another, and they are successful. Remember the Titans introduced a wide array of management overarching themes that allowed the viewer to relate to job performance and organizational behavior. At the individual level, characters in the movie understood that they came into their roles with a unique set of traits that allowed each of them to stand out, which defines the the theme of inimitability. The diversity of the team allowed each player to see their worth through contributing to the common good - the success of the team. Therefore, motivation increased as team members were appreciated for their skill sets (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 62). The implementation of MBO helped players to be specific with their tasks by setting a measurement for comparison. Boone gives each player achievable goals that help demonstrate personal progress. When the players attempt to meet the expectations that are asked of them, they develop the skills needed to successfully perform. Therefore, organizational commitment steadily increases with them all. When observing the individual approach, there are themes that relate to personal aggression, abuse, and incivility that make some of the relationships difficult to manage. This specifically is shown through the slurs and derogatory terms that are shot at each team member -

which would decrease a person's will to be part of a team. When members are not initially seen as socially complex resources to a team then there can be great difficulty for commitment to continue, this is particularly seen if the team has a stigma that could be difficult to manage (Tosi 93). For some of them, the issue of race pushed them to the point of wanting to take the action and quit. For aforementioned team member, Ray, this informed the erosion-model that played out within him and led him to be content with his removal from the team. This acceptance of being fired was due to a lack of strong ties, his commitment decreased and his patience grew thin because his sole relationship deteriorated. Individuals with inimitable traits on a team are a positive aspect as people will work to develop a greater central mission. The coaches continued to foster the individual traits of their players, and their positive behaviors continued to be demonstrated. The increase of citizenship behavior is positive, as it will not only continue to bond the team but help set a clear expectation for success through removal of petty distractions and growing development of good sportsmanship. Continually, a Management-by-Objectives (MBO) style can have its downfalls if not implemented carefully, but it is developed to have a continuing positive effect on job performance through unending and increasingly-complicated goal setting. The film shone a positive light on the use of this style to monitor and improve workplace behaviors. Improving affective commitment can benefit a team positively as if individuals continue to hold this ethic, while other elements such as incivility (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 42) can continue to cause drawbacks on job performance. Personal aggression, abuse, and incivility, if left to continue, can harm others on the team and lead the to dissolution of the team as a whole. The loss of a teammate due to this reason would be undesirable for the company and create the challenge of finding a replacement. This concept was present in Bertier's pre-camp boast to Coach Boone about being the only All American on the team, a rare accomplishment like that indicates a level of skill that would be an incredible challenge to replace. If Julius has continued to be an lone wolf and that behavior encouraged, difficulties in maintaining group order would follow suit. Fortunately the coaches recognized the importance of making sure that lone wolves are feeling motivated and fully committed. By having Julius in a leadership position Coach Boone successfully integrated him into the team and sped up the embedding process. Without that sort of involvement, lone wolves lose motivation and leave the workplace. The racial integration of T.S Williams High School forced an entire school to work together, whether they wanted to or not and it was this reality that acted as the primary barrier for the Titan's ability to work together as a team. Despite

this, Coach Boone used his leadership skills to motivate his players to share a vision of victory and win the State Championship. To improve job performance Boone heavily relied on achievement through fear of punishment, coercive power (Colquitt, LePine, & Wesson, p. 114), “We will be perfect in every aspect of the game. You drop a pass, you run a mile, you miss a blocking assignment, you run a mile, you fumble the football and I will break my foot off in your John Brown hind parts... and then you will run a mile.” Although Coach Boone had trouble getting all of the players to buy into the process at first, it did prove to be effective and he was able to parlay their passionate feelings of fear and irritation at his methods into an equally strong passion for team success. It’s debatable whether or not a continuous implementation of that fear-based method would continue to be fruitful. The equalizing measuring behavior of Coach Boone and Coach Yoach’s input-based coaching behaviors seem like they would both be beneficial if continued, especially as the times in which they lived continued to change. They as coaches would have players that continue to feel equal to one another as well as comfortable expressing themselves and trying new ways to become more rounded players and people. A seemingly simple and static movie, *Remember the Titans* actually compacts a wide range of organizational themes into its run time that vary in seriousness from overcoming racial conflict to setting achievable objectives. From practical (fear-response, task accomplishment, etc) to ethical (motivation, trust, etc), the array of explored method, practices, feelings, and behaviors are all done in such a realistically human and complex way that their impact and effectiveness can all be interpreted differently based on the viewer’s alignment with the demonstrating character. Ultimately, the movie does not solely display the unending conflict of the individual versus the team (the organization) through the lens of race-relations, but shows how the true success/benefit and failure/harmfulness of an organization’s attitude and behavior can really only be measured through thoughtful input and application of both schools of thought.