

Perception errors as seen in "twelve angry men"



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Perception Errors as seen in "Twelve Angry Men" "The innocent and the beautiful have no enemy but Time" - William Butler Yeats The movie "Twelve Angry Men" opens up with a sequence which justifies the above stated quote. The storyline follows the story of two random people chosen as jurors who have been asked to give a verdict on a murder case. The case involves the murder of a father by his teenage son. The verdict can be held legal and valid only if it is unanimous. At the start of the movie, everyone except a gentleman votes as 'guilty' for the boy.

The gentleman expresses his desire to go over all the facts after which he would make his decision whether the teenager is guilty or not. After several deliberations, re-questioning of the stated facts and witness testimonials, slowly the jurors start changing their verdict from 'guilty' to 'not-guilty'. The story ends with the unanimous verdict in the favor of the teenager. Common Perceptual Distortions: 1. Stereotype or Prototype: One of the jurors has the belief that teenagers growing up in slums tend to be criminals. A generalization on the behalf of the juror is incorrect. . Projection: One of the jurors shares a failing relationship with his own son. This creates an effect wherein he sees the image of his son in the teenager held in the trial. He tries to force his own conscious image onto the teenager and sees him as guilty. 3. Self Fulfilling Prophecy: One of the jurors is timid in nature and hence his opinions are not heard and ignored. 4. Mine is better thinking: One of the jurors thinks that since he is an influential person in his domain, he knows better because of his higher status in society. . Selective Perception: One of the jurors is only interested in finishing the verdict. He has no arguments in favour or against the teenager. 6. Pretending to Know: One of

the jurors tries to justify everything by giving the statement ' know what I mean', inspite of having no concrete facts supporting his arguments. 7.

Unwarranted Assumptions: One of the jurors holds onto the testimony that the murder weapon is unique. Also one more assumption is the thing that the sick man can cover a long distance to the stairs in a few seconds. 8.

Attacking other people : One of the jurors starts fighting and shouting at everyone as if that would prove that others are wrong. 9. Halo Effect: The fact that the teenager stays in the slums creates a general impression in one of the jurors' minds that the teenager is guaranteed a criminal. 10. False Consensus Effect: At the beginning of the session, all but one decide as ' guilty' on the verdict. Many of the jurors gave their vote just on the simple reason that others would give the same, and not on their own opinions.