

Prejudice and stereotypes in 12 angry men

[Psychology](#), [Abuse](#)



Stereotypes use generalisations to characterise people, and 10th juror is particularly prone to stereotyping the defendant based on socio-economic background. He regularly makes generalised statements about 'those people' (p. 6), without ever justifying his opinions with concrete details. Examples include: . 'I'm tellin' you they let the kids run wild up there' (p. 6). . '... You're not going to tell us that we're supposed to believe that kid, knowing what he is. Listen, I've lived among 'em all my life. You can't believe a word they say. I mean, they're born liars.' (P. 8) . The kids who crawl outa those places are real trash. I don't want any part of them, I'm telling you (p. 12) . 'Let's talk facts. These people are born to lie' ... 'I've known some who were OK, but that's the exception' (pp. 51-52) . 'They're violent, they're vicious, they're ignorant, and they will cut us up' (p. 53) The one instance where 10th juror uses details is when he argues 'his type, they're multiplying five times as fast as we are. That's the statistic.' (P. 53). Yet he only uses this statistic to ground his own fears: 'They're against us, they hate us, they want to destroy us ... If we don't smack them down whenever we can, then they are gonna own us. They're gonna breed us out of existence.' (P. 53). 10th juror is not the only one guilty of such generalisation and stereotyping. For example, 4th states: The boy ... He's a product of a filthy neighbourhood and a broken home ... Slums are breeding grounds for criminals. I know it. So do you. It's no secret. Children from slum backgrounds are potential menaces to society. (P. 12). Similarly, 3rd juror muses: .. sometimes I think we'd be better off if we took these tough kids and slapped 'em down before they make trouble, you know? Save us a lot of time and money. (P. 3) Neither 4th nor 3rd jurors make reference to specific details of the defendant's situation,

but rather rely on generalised stereotypes which support their own prejudices against 'those people'. In fact, 8th is the only juror to carefully review specific details from the case rather than resorting to general class stereotypes. He notes: ... This boy's been kicked around all his life. You know - living in a slum, his mother dead since he was nine. He spent a year and a half in an orphanage while his father served a jail term for forgery (p. 8). This lists specific facts and variables about the boy's upbringing, rather than distilling him into a non-specific member of a socio-economic group. Similarly, in 8th juror's speech on page 23, he lists specific details of the victim's rough existence - his gambling, his convictions, his employment history. This can be contrasted with 10th juror's simplistic and prejudiced attitude: 'listen, we know the father was a bum' (p. 24). This contrast between these two attitudes is that 8th juror is attempting to form his opinions based on the specific factors affecting the defendant and the victim, and trying to focus on the human beings in the case at hand. 10th juror is content to convict the defendant based on stereotypes and generalised tendencies of others in similar situations. Once again, by aligning the less simplistic attitude with 8th juror, Twelve Angry Men endorses compassion and condemns prejudice and stereotyping.