

Twelve angry men | film analysis



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

The jury of twelve angry men, entrusted with the power to send an uneducated, teenaged Puerto Rican, tenement-dwelling boy to the electric chair for killing his father with a switchblade knife, are literally locked into a small, claustrophobic rectangular room on a stifling hot summer day until they come up with a unanimous decision – either guilty or not guilty. The compelling, provocative film examines the twelve men's deep-seated personal prejudices, perceptual biases and weaknesses, indifference, anger, personalities, unreliable judgments, cultural differences, ignorance and fears, that threaten to taint their decision-making abilities, cause them to ignore the real issues in the case, and potentially lead them to a miscarriage of justice.

The Prosecution's Case:

At the beginning of the play, eleven of the jurors believe that the boy killed his father. They summarize the compelling evidence of the trial:

A 45 year old woman claimed she witnessed the defendant stabbing his father. She watched through her window as the city's commuter train passed by.

An old man living downstairs claimed that he heard the boy yell " I'll kill you!" followed by a " thump" on the floor. He then witnessed a young man, supposedly the defendant, running away.

Before the murder took place, the defendant purchased a switchblade, the same type that was used in the murder.

Presenting a weak alibi, the defendant claimed he was at the movies at the time of the murder. He failed to remember the names of the films.

Finding Reasonable Doubt:

Juror #8 picks apart each piece of evidence to persuade the others. Here are some of the observations:

The old man could have invented his story because he craved attention. He also might not have heard the boy's voice while the train was passing by.

Although the prosecution stated that the switchblade was rare and unusual, Juror #8 purchased one just like it from a store in the defendant's neighborhood.

Some members of the jury decide that during a stressful situation, anyone could forget the names of the movie they had seen.

The 45 year old woman had indentations on her nose, indicating that she wore glasses. Because her eyesight is in question, the jury decides that she is not a reliable witness.

Characters:

Juror 1 (Foreman; coach) Martin Balsam

Non-confrontational, Juror #1 serves as the foreman of the jury. He is serious about his authoritative role, and wants to be as fair as possible.

Juror 2 (Bank clerk; inexperienced juror) John Fiedler

He is the most timid of the group. Juror #2 is easily persuaded by the opinions of others, and cannot explain the roots of his opinions.

Juror 3 (Angry gentleman with photo of son) Lee J. Cobb

In many ways, he is the antagonist to the constantly calm Juror #8. Juror #3 is immediately vocal about the supposed simplicity of the case, and the obvious guilt of the defendant. He is quick to lose his temper, and often infuriated when Juror #8 and other members disagree with his opinions. He believes that the defendant is absolutely guilty, until the very end of the play. During Act Three, Juror #3's emotional baggage is revealed. His poor relationship with his own son may have biased his views. Only when he comes to terms with this can he finally vote "not guilty."

Juror 4 (Stock Broker) E. G. Marshall

A logical, well-spoken stock-broker, Juror #4 urges fellow jurors to avoid emotional arguments and engage in rational discussion. He does not change his vote until a witness's testimony is discredited (due to the witness's apparently poor vision).

Juror 5 (Grew up in the slums) Jack Klugman

This young man is nervous about expressing his opinion, especially in front of the elder members of the group. He grew up in the slums. He has witnessed knife-fights, an experience that will later help other jurors form an opinion of "not guilty."

Juror 6 (Painter) Edward Binns

Described as an “ honest but dull-witted man,” Juror #6 is a house painter by trade. He is slow to see the good in others, but eventually agrees with Juror #8.

Juror 7 (Sports fan)Jack Warden

A slick and sometimes obnoxious salesman, Juror #7 admits during Act One that he would have done anything to miss jury duty. He represents the many real-life individuals who loath the idea of being on a jury.

Juror 8 (Architect; Man who doesn't know)Henry Fonda

He votes “ not guilty” during the jury's first vote. Described as thoughtful and gentle, Juror #8 is usually portrayed as the most heroic member of the jury. He is devoted to justice, and is initially sympathetic toward the 19-year-old defendant. At the beginning of the play, when every other juror has voted guilty he is the only one to vote: “ not guilty.” Juror #8 spends the rest of the play urging the others to practice patience, and to contemplate the details of the case. A guilty verdict will result in the electric chair; therefore, Juror #8 wants to discuss the relevance of the witness testimony. He is convinced that there is reasonable doubt. Eventually he persuades the other jurors to acquit the defendant.

Juror 9 (Nice older gentleman)Joseph Sweeney

Described in the stage notes as a “ mild, gentle old man, defeated by life and waiting to die.” Despite this bleak description, he is the first to agree with Juror #8, deciding that there is not enough evidence to sentence the young man to death. Also, during Act One, Juror #9 is the first to openly

recognize Juror #10's racist attitude, stating that, "What this man says is very dangerous."

Juror 10 (Prejudiced older gentleman with cold) Ed Begley

The most abhorrent member of the group, Juror #10 is openly bitter and prejudice. During Act Three he unleashes his bigotry to the others in a speech that disturbs the rest of the jury. Most of the jurors, disgusted by #10's racism, turn their backs on him.

Juror 11 (Foreign watchmaker) George Voskovec

As a refugee from Europe, Juror #11 has witnessed great injustices. That is why he is intent on administering justice as a jury member. He sometimes feels self-conscious about his foreign accent. He conveys a deep appreciation for democracy and America's legal system.

Juror 12 (Advertising Executive; doodler) Robert Webber

He is an arrogant and impatient advertising executive. He is anxious for the trial to be over so that he can get back to his career and his social life.

EFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Juror 8

In this movie, Juror 8 emerged as a leader because he gains respect by other jurors. At the beginning of the movie, he is the only one to vote "not guilty" during the jury's first vote. It is because he is convinced that there is a reasonable doubt. He wanted to talk about seriousness of the case without emotionally pre-judging the 18 year old boy. He showed empathy by asking

other jurors to imagine themselves in the boy's shoes awaiting death sentence, physically abuse by his father, growing up in the slums and etc. Juror 8 convince the other jurors that the boy isn't guilty by persuading them in a calm manner . He stay calmed and talked over the evidence presented by the prosecution and finding flaws in it. Juror 8 analyzed every detail of the evidence with the other jurors. He was presenting calm and used logical theories about why he has doubt that the boy didn't kill his father. As Juror 8 always stay calm, polite and respectful, many of the other jurors are persuaded easier and prefer to side with him rather than juror 3 and 10. He persuaded almost half of the jurors to vote not guilty towards the middle of the movie. He elaborated what every juror was trying to say and making suggestions to keep the group focus even though it was a long and tedious process.

Juror 8 focus on task oriented approach . He does not seek status or ego enhancement. In this movie, he used a lot of questioning skill and able to lead other juror to analyze the evidence in a concrete manner. He encourages the jurors to think in bigger picture: defendant's background, witness's credibility, defending attorney's motives and etc. He asked jurors to put aside their personal biases, and stressing the importance of resuming their responsibility seriously. He aims for group success. As time passes, other jurors adopt his strategies. Together, they synergistically find flaws in the trial's evidence and reached informed conclusions eventually.

Juror 8's interpersonal style is classified as open receptive and objective. This leadership trait is extremely effective in questioning other jurors' motives and their views . It helped bring out an efficient jury in this case. Throughout

the movie, he openly admitted that he did not know if the boy indeed killed his father. Instead, he solicited feedback from other jurors in order to make an accurate decision. He encouraged others to discuss their doubt on the case and he was ready to receive feedback. He guided other jurors to make decision based on facts and conscience, and not using rush judgment and personal prejudice.

Task Oriented Behaviour

Juror 8 has throughout this movie, at various occasion, showed consistency in clarifying the objective that is expected of the group. Where most jurors started with the notion that the task at hand was simply to determine whether the accused is guilty or not and based their judgements on various reasons and emotions, juror 8 clarified that the objective of the group was to establish whether or not there exist reasonable doubt with the evidence and arguments presented during the court hearing.

The first 15 minutes of the movie sees Juror 1 exhibiting promising leadership potential. In the beginning when the jurors first came back to their room after the deliberation in court, he was the first to organise the group. Juror 1 showed many examples of task-oriented behaviour. He organised ballots, organised seating arrangements and called for a start. These are example of organizing work activities to improve efficiency, and short-term operations planning.

Relations Oriented Behaviour

In the beginning, Juror 8 did not seem to show much of relations oriented behaviour, and therefore did not seem to make much of an influence. Many

other jurors seemed to display more extrovert personalities and socialized more among their peers. At this time, Juror 1 already showed significant amount of relations-oriented behaviors. For example, he suggested a 5 minutes break in consideration for the gentleman in the washroom. He also consulted with other jurors, asking them for their suggestions on how they wanted to start, whether to discuss or to take a quick vote first. He provided support and encouragement to Juror 12 when Juror 12 seems to lack the confidence after he suggested the idea for the 11 jurors to convince Juror 8 of their arguments why they think the boy is guilty.

Change Oriented Behaviour

Juror 8 showed by far the most and strongest change oriented behaviours throughout the length of this movie. The first instance of this is after the first vote where he alone votes for a not guilty verdict. When he was asked to clarify his decision he encouraged the other jurors to view the case at hand differently. He articulated that it's a big decision that they have to make since it's a life at stake and that he is not comfortable to make such a decision in less than 5 minutes. Juror 8 also took some risk and experimented with a creative approach to make a point across to the other jurors. First he asked to view the knife again. When the knife was made available and all the other jurors were convinced that the knife was quite unique, Juror 8 took out an identical knife that he bought and manages to grab everybody's attention. Although owning a switch blade knife is illegal, he took this risk in return for a firm foothold into challenging the pre-conceptions of the other jurors. After this event, he gained a vote for not guilty.

INEFFECTIVE LEADERSHIP BEHAVIOUR

Juror #3

Juror #3 has been informed to be a juror via mail like everyone else for this case. As he is the most important counterpart to juror #8 we will have a closer look at him. In the following we will characterize him and point out important scenes. This will be supported by a look at the body language and rhetoric. We will show in which leadership style juror #3 can be categorized and what mistakes have been done. In the end we will point out how juror #3 could have avoided his ineffective leadership style.

We will begin with characterizing juror #3 and explaining his role within the jury. He is used to having authority from his work, because, as the owner of a messenger service, he has 37 subordinates that listen to him. At the very beginning he is pointing this out and shows that he is proud of his achievement. In the discussion he behaves like he is at his workplace where he can order people around and has the authority to do so. The only time he shows respect to anyone is when he is speaking about his father and how he used to call him “ Sir”. In this scene he also shows how preoccupied he is about the youth and therefore also about the defendant. Juror #3 thinks that the youth shows no respect nowadays and is reminded of his own son. When his son at an early age was running away from a fight, he swore that he would make a “ real man” out of him. After a couple of years this behavior has led to a fight where he got hit by his son. Since 2 years there was no relationship between them and it is very clear that the relationship to his son is affecting the decisions of juror #3.

From the start juror #3 has expressed disrespect, aggressiveness and ignorance, but all these attitudes were becoming worse when he saw that more jurors were changing their minds and more jurors were openly showing dislike towards him. The later it gets, the louder he speaks. Of course this results in the fact that other jurors like him even less. Juror #8 uses this and provokes him to isolate him even more. A crucial point in the play is when juror #8 is attacking juror #3 verbally. #8 calls him a sadist and being confronted like that he tries to attack #8 physically. The other jurors hold him back so that he cannot reach #8. In this scene he also cries out that he will “kill” #8, which supports one the argument of juror #8 that you do not always mean what you say and do not necessarily act accordingly.

After this incident juror #3 tries to change his tactics a little bit. He is still loud and disrespectful, but in two situations he tries to influence other jurors while speaking to them alone. In the first instance he tries to justify the attacking of juror #8 and in the second one he tries to convince everyone to call for a hung jury. His new behavior shows that he is realizing that his position within the group has changed. He tries new methods in order to turn the situation around. It does not succeed because he has lost all trust among the other jurors.

In the end he is the last of the jurors to plead guilty. At the first pressure to defend his arguments he crumbles. A last outburst of his anger shows his hidden agenda. He is not able to change his mind and admit that he has been wrong. Looking at the picture of him together with his son he realizes that he has done wrong with him and he tears the picture apart. Immediately he regrets his action as it is probably the only picture of them together. The

action lets him admit what to him looks like a defeat. He pleads “ not guilty” as well. Finally he breaks down crying on the table.

Juror #3 can be described best as an authoritarian/autocratic leader. He tries to use his authority to make the decision basically on his own. Of course this has to fail, because he does not have the authority in the first place and has not the ability to gain the authority as well. As already mentioned he does not listen to other arguments and positions except for his own. Additionally he is not willing to discuss his own points as well. When asked about his reasons for pleading guilty, he states that the facts are clear and cannot be questioned. He sticks to this point right until the end. Another aspect is that he does not support other juror even when they argue for him. Here he shows that he does not trust other members of the jury to help him and he does not think he needs their help (at least not in the beginning). Rarely does he agree with stated points, and when he does, he only states this in a short sentence without explaining why and especially without adding any content or arguments to the discussion. The last point to be mentioned here is that he tries to dictate the procedure and the methods of the discussion in an autocratic way. The other jurors are screamed at, bullied and insulted by him in order to pressurize them into his way of working. All this is supported by his body language and his rhetoric.

There is an observable development regarding his behavior and communication during the movie.

First he seemed structured, calm and self-confident. He talks with a normal voice and his mimic and gesture are serious but not angry. After the first

vote, when it turned out that not everyone supports 'guilty', his behavior changed. He got angrier which is expressed with his face and body language. Especially when a juror changes the vote, he showed humiliating behavior. When that happened, there was always the same, non-verbal reaction observable: He stands up, walks straight to the juror and stands at the jurors' back, with his hand on the hips, screaming and shouting at them. This shows that he tries to bring himself in the stronger position and awe the others by looking down at them. He is directly addressing them, trying to make them feel uncomfortable. That particular behavior occurred three times during the movie.

His angry and loud voice appeared when he got the feeling that he lost the power over the situation, when jurors changed their vote or the others have better arguments. It is hard for him to keep his countenance when he has weaker arguments and tries to get his self-confidence back in treating the others disrespectfully. That happens with laughing at others' arguments or shouting at them. Especially juror #8, as he is the activator of the whole discussion itself, is the target of his disrespect. When juror #8 wanted to make a point, juror #3 played 'Tic Tac Toe' showing obviously his disinterest. The situation between juror #8 and him heated up first, when juror #3 tries to re-enact the stabbing of the victim. That gesture showed clearly the dispute of the two and the attitude of Juror #3.

Now, the communication skills will be discussed. The character used several phrases that support the statements about him made before. At one scene he said to juror #2: 'Be quiet for a second.' This juror is a very shy and unconfident person. Addressing to him in that way shows that juror #3 has

little knowledge of human nature. By discussing the testimony he said once: ' [...] and I say it's not possible'. This undermines that he is self-centered and not open for other opinions. His disrespect against juror #8 gets clear when he addressed to him by pointing at him and saying: ' You over there'. This impolite communication is present during the whole time. Also when the last man changed his opinion, he asked: ' What's the matter with you?'

The verbal and non-verbal traits align with the leadership style reviewed in the first part of the analysis.

In the following the reasons for the failing of juror #3 will be outlined. Therefore we will check if the different sources of failure fit to this situation.

One reason here is a poor character. His inappropriate behavior is based on his character. As mentioned early in the movie, he had a strict father what may influence his traits as an adult. When a leader shows disrespect, little knowledge of human nature and no concern about others he will fail sooner or later. No interest in different opinions, suggestions or the person itself creates less or no followership.

The second reason for his failure is the poor communication skills of juror #3. As described before, he shows verbal and non-verbal lacks of an adequate behavior. He doesn't listen actively and doesn't know how to address at different personalities in a right way. He is not able to communicate effectively what is undermined by his unsuccessful chain of argumentation. A leader, who can't convince or influence his followers and can't express himself well, will fail.

A leader will also fail, when he puts own interest above the interests from those he leads. The consequences are no trust, no confidence and therefore no loyalty. The leader views himself or herself as superior to everyone else, refusing to accept other arguments. Juror #3 doesn't build a connection to the others and always insists on his point of view without even listening to several opinions. That is why it was not possible for him to create a relationship to other members of the jury. He is not interested in the needs of a person and is therefore unsuccessful with his leadership style.

His arrogance and self-centered behavior made him stand alone at the end of the movie.

The final reason why he failed is because he had no clear vision. He voted for 'guilty', even when all the facts showed the opposite. During the movie it got obvious that he is personally affected regarding the case and that leads to situations where he got unconfident and insecure.

Now that the problems are clear we suggest how to avoid ineffective leadership.

Ineffective leadership comes along with several improper traits and behaviors. The challenge is to avoid these and adapt the leadership style individually to the organization and the followers.

First of all: People are the key. A good knowledge of human nature facilitates to be the leader of a group. That is why an effective leader is able to listen and respond to his followers in a proper and satisfactory way. The ability to treat different characters in the right way is necessary. 'One leadership-style

fits to all' is not helpful. Therefore a good leader can identify how capable and self-confident a person is and react in the adequate way. The way of how a person behaves towards a team and tasks requires different leadership styles. Of course, some followers need an autocratic leadership style. So authority, as showed by juror #3, is not always wrong. The problem was that it was too much and that this kind of leadership doesn't fit to all of the jurors. The ability to show authority and do it with respect is the key. This trait will only lead to success when the leader owns the respect of the followers. Hence a leader don't have to be 'everybody's darling' but has to know how he should appear in particular situations and to particular kinds of people. An absolute mistake is bullying in an organization. That is what juror #3 showed in some of his behavior patterns and it creates a defense attitude of the others. To avoid immediate failure, a leader should never bully the people in the organization.

To succeed in the relationship to the followers a leader should know how to communicate. Influencing people and bringing the vision of the business to them requires good skills and techniques in communication. Therefore to avoid ineffective communication a leader should clearly, effectively and respectfully communicate to followers as well as to the external environment of an organization.

Another point, to avoid ineffective leadership, is to learn from own mistakes as well as from mistakes of others. Learning effects are valuable for a leader, adapting to situations and not repeating the same unsuccessful behavior over and over again. Realizing the current behavior is unsuccessful and promptly changing it would have been the right solution for juror #3. Being a

good leader is also about actively avoiding wrong decisions not only about making the right ones. Analyzing the past and project it properly to the future will create a good result. Therefore it is also important that the leader knows what business the company is in to avoid misguided efforts and lead his team appropriately. A clear goal is necessary to give the direction and creating trust of the followership. As well as for the leader to come up to expectations regarding performance.

An effective leader is also able to keep his emotions and concerns under control. In contrast to that juror #3 showed that he was personally affected and had an emotional breakdown at the end of the movie. That should absolutely be avoided if a leader don't want to lose the trust, loyalty and respect of his followers. A good leader can react calmly in turbulent times as well when stress and tensions are present, like it was at end of the movie.