

# 12 angry men



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This paper is designed to study the behavior of “ 12 Angry man” and how they react to their responsibilities as individuals and as a group. The 12 men depicted in this movie are members constituted from different classes of a society, from an architect to a broker to a man brought up in the slums.

Their one and only goal is to decide unanimously whether or not the accused 18 year old boy did or did not stab his father and result in death. Since the defense lawyer was appointed by the city, he goes lenient on the prosecution and does not thoroughly go through the case in hand to defend the boy, making all evidences put forward going against the boy which seems to make the jury’s verdict obvious - guilty.

In spite of all the evidence shown against the defendant, there is one juror who is not sure that all the evidences presented in the case has enough weight to put the boy to a death sentence, juror number 8, played by Henry Fonda who we later come to know as Davis. This case appears to be simple and the 11 other jurors in the room have already decided to vote guilty but Davis feels he has not seen adequate proof to send the boy to die.

He wants undeniable and irrefutable proof that the boy is guilty instead of what the witnesses to the case have so ‘ plainly’ seen or heard. Some jurors talk about baseball games, some about their jobs and lives, but juror number 8, Davis, is keen to talk and discuss with his fellow peers and point out contradicting factors in the evidence in favor of the defendant. He either wants to actuate himself into believing the boy is guilty or convince the other members that he’s innocent.

Every individual is different in their own way and some factors to determine this difference is their personalities and their intelligence. People can be

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distinguished by physical characteristic, but they can also be different by their way of thinking which can be unique in every individual. One theory of personality is ' those relatively stable and enduring aspects of an individual that distinguish him/her from other people and at the same time form a basis for our predictions There are many factors that assimilate the personality of an individual. Here is a summary of some of them: i. Nature vs. Nurture debate: this debate discusses how an individual is affected by his upbringing or by the environment around him/her.

It questions what affects the individual more; hereditary traits or the factors that affect him/her in their surroundings. ii. Genetic Factors: this factor explains that there are some mental characteristics that individuals inherit from their parents. For example, if a parent is aggressive in nature, the child is also likely to be aggressive. iii. Social Factors: this factor explains that an individual is also shaped by the interaction with the people surrounding him/her. Early socialization, which involves parents, siblings and peers, has a direct effect on the individual's behavior in later life. iv. Cultural Factors: every social circle embraces a culture of their own. Therefore, the belief, norms and value certainly affects the individual as they grow up learning the same culture.

Situational Factors: different situations can also affect the personality of an individual. For example, if a child has gone through a horrific vehicle accident that child will always be a bit scared of vehicles. All these factors affect the decision of the individuals in the jury. We can relate all of these factors to the jury members. In this movie, the individuals in the jury reflect their childhood or their past to make a verdict.

The most aggressive juror, juror number 3 played by Lee J. Cobb, associates the defendant with his runaway son and compels himself to vote guilty because he is heartbroken and furious with his long lost son. Jack Klugman, the juror brought up in slums shows his knife skills learnt by looking at knife fights and asserts a strong valid point that the killer was an amateur. Juror number 9, played by Joseph Sweeney, is the oldest man in the jury and illustrates his life experiences to point out that the witness in the trial (the old man who heard the killing) craved attention, and so did the woman who saw the killing. It is these factors that shape most individuals and also the members of the jury which finally makes them make a verdict.

A group doesn't have a globally accepted meaning but after Schein (1980), a group is defined as a number of people who interact with each other, who are aware of the people around him/her, who think that they are a group as a whole and those who target to achieve one or more goals. There are Formal Groups and Informal Groups. The group in this movie is a task group, which falls under a subcategory of Formal Groups. A task group is a group of individuals who are brought together for a short period of time to perform a specific task. According to Tuckman (1965) there are 5 stages of group development: i.

**Forming:** in the forming stage, strangers meet for the first time and try to 'fit in' or feel accepted as part of the group. Normally the individuals look to their group leader for guidance and direction. The individuals do not talk about their feelings or the task in hand seriously or deeply. They rather try to form a more closed group and be social as they all are new to each other. ii. **Storming:** members of the group become confident and assertive. Individuals

try to dominate other members of the group. Voices are raised and people try to assert their dominance in that particular group. There is more discussion among the group and most of the views are shared, I say most because some of the members in that group may be reserved or close-mouthed. Conflict inevitably arises in this group as their views and thoughts may not match with one another. This is mainly because they do not want to change or mold their attitudes and perception of the task in hand.

The conflicts will make the individuals grow hostile and questions arise like who makes you the leader? Why are you being so stubborn and adamant when you know I won't change my views? Etc. This stage slows down the process of group development as the group members must move from proving their thoughts and views towards listening to the other group members. This seems to be the most crucial part of the movie. iii. Norming: members of the group form personal relationships with one another and finally the group start making progress in the task at hand. This is characterized by cohesion. The structure of the group is emerged as to who the dominant one is, who the intellect is and who the team leader is. The task group finally becomes consolidated and they move forward to solve the conflict. The level of trust with one another also grows and basically leads to group cohesion. A sense of group belonging is formed during this process.

They share feelings, views and ideas and they also praise and give feedback to each other which makes the level of creativity very high. Individuals' morale is raised as they are now part of an effective group. This is also a very important part of the movie as the jurors cross the bridge between ' guilty' to ' not guilty' one by one. iv. Performing: this stage is not

reached by all groups but if the group is able to reach this stage they are truly cohesive and are able to think and act as one. This is the most productive stage of group development. The group tends to work together and start solving problems. v. Adjourning: this stage is reached when the task in hand is practically terminated. A conclusion is made within the group along with saying farewell to other group members.

The term 'risky shift' refers to the difference of decisions made when the individual is in a group and when he isn't. The individual tends to take more risks when he is in an enclosed group; risks he/she would not have taken alone or independently. Decisions tend to be more extreme in a group. This phenomenon was first identified by Stoner (1961) and has a good number of follow up studies like (Clark 1971).

There are some explanations to why this phenomenon occurs: i. Diffusion of responsibility: a group decision is less likely to be pointed out to one single individual. If there is any wrong decision taken by the group, no single individual is pointed out and the group takes the blame as a whole. ii. Valuing risk: risk is also valued by most people. Taking risks may mean that the individual is courageous or headstrong and thinks that other people will respect and admire him/her. iii. Familiarization: when the total risk of any future decision is discussed among the group, the risk tends to look less risky than it actually is and people start to get accustomed to it. iv. Prominence/leadership: the people who speak up more and assert their dominance in the group are the ones most likely to make the risky decisions.

The other members may not consider their risk-taking fully and agree and go along with them. Risky shift is more likely in cohesive groups because people

are subject to conformity and they disregard their previous stance or beliefs. They may move towards decisions that involve greater risk than those of their own. In the movie group polarization occurs when juror number 8, Henry Fonda takes a risk by voting 'not guilty' although all of his jury members seem to be absolutely sure that the defendant is guilty. He also takes a risk when he suggests that there should be a secret vote because he thinks that he has made valid points to convey to his fellow peers that the charged may not be guilty

. His risk taking pays off as juror number 9, Joseph Sweeney, jots down 'not guilty' in a blank piece of paper. As the movie goes along, the jurors examine each and every piece of evidence and finally one by one the jurors who had voted 'guilty' previously votes 'not guilty'. As individuals, the jury members excluding Henry Fonda would have all voted 'guilty' and would have sent the boy to die, but Henry Fonda leads the charge and convinces everyone that the boy is innocent.

The above analysis of the movie and the organizational behavior used in the movie shows how a group develops in the five stages of psychological development; forming, storming, norming, performing and adjourning. The 12 jurors are 12 random members of society coming from different classes and brought up in different ways. Although the group does not think or act the same way and have totally different views of the defendant they pass through the different stages of group development and unanimously decide the verdict 'not guilty'. Along the way, the movie also depicts group polarization and group thinking. As individuals, they may think different but as a group they finally come to a unanimous decision.