

# Leadership and group decision making

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## Leadership and Group Effectiveness

The dynamics of group decision making is the central focus in the film 12 Angry Men. The leaders of the group are defined by two separate characteristics; those that are appointed as the leader and those with no special title that emerge as influential. In the movie you can recognize several concepts covered by Kinicki and Kreitner in their book Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior (second edition). I will be discussing the concepts of task identity, emotional intelligence, leadership styles, group think, and motivation. 12 Angry men is about a group of jurors attempting to render a unanimous verdict in the murder trial of a teenage boy. This boy happens to be Hispanic and poor. The room is very hot and the jurors want to make a quick decision so they can leave the room quickly. Right away the leader of the jury asks for a vote without talking about the evidence. The vote is 11-1 guilty. We can see that informational and normative influences played a role in the vote.

The behavior of the jurors who voted guilty showed signs of the limitations of decision-making based on majority processes. These 11 jurors now turned to juror number 8 to see why he voted not guilty. Juror number 8 (Fonda) begins to display task-related functions by offering up a new idea to the group. The idea that the boy is not guilty. This creates new options and processes for the group to explore. There becomes a power struggle between juror number 8 and those jurors that are adamant the boy is guilty. The fact that Fonda's character is task-oriented is embodied in the scene where he crumbles up a tic-tac-toe game the other jurors were playing while he is talking. This action serves as an emphatic reminder to abide to

their objective by not trivializing the groups role as jurors. Fonda is committed to helping the jurors stay on task until the process is completed. According to 888888, leadership is defined as a process that involves influence with a group of people toward the realization of goals. (888888) A leader's style of leadership is often based on the leader's own beliefs, personality, experiences and working environment. A Situational Theory suggests that different situations require different styles of leadership.

That is, to be effective in leadership requires the ability to adapt or adjust one's style to the circumstances of the situation. A Transformational Theory states that leadership is the process by which a person engages with others and is able to create a connection that results in increased motivation and morality in both followers and leaders. The key in transformational leadership is for the leader to be attentive to the needs and motives of followers in an attempt to help them reach their maximum potential. A Consultative Leader seeks the counsel of the whole team before making a decision on what the team should do. He is task oriented, but he seeks the opinion of his followers as well. The participative leader puts himself as a member of the team and discusses possible decisions with the team. He seeks consensus before coming to a decision and everyone is supposed to take ownership in the final decision. A Democratic leader seeks a consensus on the direction of the group. He outwardly expressed no adherence to either position of guilty or non-guilty. He instead encouraged his fellow jurors to simply discuss the case in an open-minded manner. " I don't know if I believe (the boy's story) or not, maybe I don't" (Brown, 2000, 94; Film, 12: 40).

This non-committal position serves to shield Fonda from much of the hatred typically directed at lone dissenters. Studies have shown that such acquiescences gives subsequent legitimacy (Hollander, 1958, 113) and lends credit to his emergence as a leader. Another form of leadership style displayed in the movie is Socratic Leadership. Fonda uses the means of asking provocative, probing questions that compel people to rethink their assumptions and beliefs. He was able to get the jurors to see that just because you are poor and Hipic does not mean that you are automatically guilty. He also challenged each witnesses testimony to see if there could have been mistakes made because the defending attorney did not challenge the witnesses. For me one of the key leadership aspects that is displayed is the way that Fonda repeatedly acknowledges his own uncertainty. He can't be sure if the boy is guilty or not, he frequently conceded that he could be; but the evidence is patchy, they are dealing with incomplete information sets, with evidence that hasn't been adequately tested by the defending lawyer. Persuasion is convincing strangers to consider new perspectives, new insights, new goals - is a fundamental, challenging task of leadership because it requires a deep investment of personal character, mental stamina, and a capacity for emotional insight perfectly balanced with the ability to reason. Logic and abundant feeling combine to persuade. (John K Clemens).

12 Angry Men clarifies persuasion so thrillingly by discerning the difference between getting others to think as you do, an obnoxious and risky use of power, and getting others to investigate themselves to discover common truths and facts - truths that transcend preference, prejudice, fear and

competitive jockeying. Finally, names and titles aren't the source of leadership. In the movie, the only time that any character names are revealed is right at the end of the movie. The background and jobs held by each of the twelve men is only revealed slowly as the plot progresses. The jury foreman exercises little leadership – others assume different leadership roles as the drama unfolds.

Groupthink as defined by Janis “ a mode of thinking that people engage in when they are deeply involved in a cohesive in-group, when members' striving for un-animity override their motivation to realistically appraise alternative courses of action.” (Janis, 1982) According to Janis's model there are eight classic symptoms of groupthink. In this movie, the symptoms of Inherent morality, Rationalization, Self –censorship, Illusion of unanimity and peer pressure are seen.

## REFERENCES

IL Janis. (1982). Groupthink, Second Edition.(Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1982), p. 9  
Kinicki, A. and Kreitner, R. (2009). Organizational Dynamics and Human Behavior, Second Edition. The McGraw-Hill Companies pp