

Cultural values of 12 angry men essay



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Culture, which is the language, beliefs, values, norms, and behaviors, is around us everyday, all the time. To understand culture, social facts are necessary to know. Social facts are patterns of behavior that characterize a social group, which includes values, norms, and sanctions. In the movie, 12 Angry Men, the jury as a group is an example of a culture in which social facts can be described. The values of the jurors in 12 Angry Men seem to be along the same lines.

Most of the men value that the way they dress at work must be presentable. Their idea of what is desirable in life is to be successful. The group's values differ when it comes to the way they treat their elders, though. An obvious norm of the jury is that murder is not acceptable; it disobeys the expectations of behaviors that reflect their values. These men have a few norms that they share, but also have norms that are different, due to their differences in social facts. They all think kids now are worse than when they were kids.

Sanctions were expressed in the group when the men voted. At first the signs of sanctions consisted of being lectured for voting "not guilty". Disapproval was mostly directed towards the men voting "not guilty" because they stood up for the boy. A sanction against the boy, if found guilty, could be death.

The twelfth juror did not use his own group's way of doing things as a yardstick for judging others. He put himself in the boy's shoes by taking everything into consideration and the other men did not start to do this until the end of the movie. One of the men brought up a point that just because

he grew up in the slums doesn't mean he murdered his father. He spoke from his personal experiences.

But the twelfth juror added, " I kept putting myself in the kid's place. " This is important because his way of looking at the case was fine. The man stood firm on his vote until the boy was proved with facts to be guilty. He showed cultural relativism because he realized he must understand the culture of the boy on its own terms rather than comparing the boy to his own social facts to determine the outcome of his trial.

If the whole jury embraced cultural relativism when viewing the defendant's crime, they might put themselves in his shoes and try to take everything into consideration. The twelfth juror does this in the beginning and encourages others to do the same. They then change their mind to not guilty and realize, " the type of boy accused of the crime has nothing to do with the facts. " I do not think of myself as a member of any subcultures because I do not like labels. If I had to categorize myself, I would be in the punk/art group because I appreciate art in all of its forms and punk because that is what people think my style is.

I think my group is a subculture since my interests are the same as others within my group. My group is often sanctioned by the mainstream culture because of our appearance and interests. Watching 12 Angry Men helped me better understand the depths of culture. The culture of a person affects every aspect of their life. I also realized how big of a process juries go through to determine the fate of their defendant.