

## The Analysis of the Movie *12 Angry Men*

### LEADERSHIP

It is important for a leader of a group to recognize and to know how to deal with the various stages of group formation and it is also helpful to recognize the various ineffective roles that might be adopted by individual members of the group either temporarily or throughout the group task. There are six general self-roles that might come into play during group task work. These include the Aggressor, the Blocker, the Joker, the Avoider, the Self-Confessor and the Recognition Seeker. Juror 3 is demonstrated as an aggressor to the greatest degree. He continuously attacks his fellow jurors for their opinions regardless of the veracity of their claims and obviously without having first considered their words. Juror 8 is the best example of a blocker, consistently bringing up counterarguments to every piece of evidence that is provided in the case and setting himself up as the lone opposition to a guilty verdict. Juror 10 is a good example of a joker since he is always disrupting the work of the group.

By recognizing various personalities that make up a group and identifying various stages of the group development, group leaders are more capable of handling the dynamics that may arise. This is particularly important within all professions, as groups likely to be led will frequently involve highly personal, sensitive and sometimes controversial issues. Being able to predict group behavior and understanding the various personality types that may emerge will help the leader to validate the claims of the individuals while keeping the group productive and positive.

## PARTICIPATION

One of the most obvious features within the film is the development and participation of the group as a whole. Because most seem anxious to get out of the room and on with their day, there isn't much time for getting to know each other, to form trusting relationships or to establish a sense of universality, all of which are integral to the complete effectiveness of the group. Despite this, the foreman continues to attempt to keep the group functional by establishing the group rules and calling things to order when necessary. As the remaining stages of the group are worked through in the film, the importance of this first step, and knowledge of it, emerges as the group experiences numerous difficulties as a result of not having had adequate time to foster a working relationship.

The storming phase of group formation comes after the group has been established. In the film, it happens when various men begin raising their voices and shouting in true anger at one man who shows that he is not convinced beyond the shadow of a doubt that the boy on trial is guilty of murder. Everyone is standing, shouting and talking out of turn, and the foreman, unable to regain order, attempts to give up his chair. Recognizing that they're all getting out of hand, several of the group members jump in to try to calm things down, reassure the foreman that he's doing a tremendous job as a leader, and each member of the group seems to dedicate themselves to the issue at hand. This enables them to move into the "norming stage" of group development since the men begin to realize that they all have the same responsibility to decide whether another man lives or dies and begin discussing the issues spontaneously rather than by a show of hands or a progression around the table. With an attempt at respecting each others' opinions and a dedication to sticking to the facts of the case, the group moves into the performing stage of group development, in which much of the work is done.

## CLIMATE

To help bring out the intense social climate he wished to cover, Sidney Lumet, the director of the film, found it necessary to allow all twelve characters their development throughout the movie, although there have been arguments brought forward that some jurors, such as Juror 8, show very little progression as they are already close to Lumet's view of socially aware and responsible. In describing the movie-making process in general, Lumet says that it is like making a mosaic:

Each setup is like a tiny tile. You color it, shape it, polish it as best you can. You'll six or seven hundred of these, maybe a thousand. Then you literally paste them together and hope it's what you set out to do. But if you expect the final mosaic to look like anything, you'd better know what you're going for as you work on each tiny tile. (Lumet 52)

The ability to work with Kaufman adds yet another element as Lumet explains Kaufman's style to be exactly in tune with the dramatic interpretation of the scenes that Lumet himself envisions. "The camera becomes another leading actor. ... the camera – like everything else in a piece – has to relate to what's going on dramatically. You have to cast your camera the way you cast an actor" (Lumet 52).

Thus, with a clear direction and vision in the mind of the director as well as a working crew that shares that vision and is able to utilize their technical skills in adhering to it, a movie (such as *12 Angry Men*), in which every element contributes to the overall message being portrayed, can be produced. The movie doesn't necessarily provide any answers to the problems that it raises since the solution is not the point of this film. Through the use of such artistic innovations as treating the camera as a leading actor in the scene, the movie is able to draw the audience into the drama being played out in this small, warm room to such an extent that they can

feel the heat of the summer day even in the winter temperatures of their living rooms 35 years after the movie's production. This intensity of focus serves to provide all the action and suspense the film needs to capture attention and retain it throughout the end of the story, slowly revealing the characters inner layers even as they themselves come face to face with their own true beliefs, sometimes for the first time.

#### CONFLICT

The diverse 12-man jury consisting entirely of white, middle-class men, is sequestered in a small rectangular room in the middle of summer to deliberate whether to send the boy to the electric chair or not. Voting "not guilty" in the very first vote because of a reasonable doubt held, one juror holds out, determinably and persuasively forcing the other men to reconsider and review the shaky information and eyewitness testimony that had been provided against the defendant.

Following this opening vote, the emotional atmosphere within this group could only yield conflict. Despite heated arguments, the formation of alliances of different groups of jurors, frequent changes of opinion and votes, this one juror persists in getting to the real reason jurors are voting guilty in the case. Through the conclusion of the film, in which the boy is finally proven to be unquestionably innocent, viewers are made aware of how these preformed notions, ideas, insecurities, personality traits and combinations of the same work to shape the way in which the law is perceived and administered, independent of what the actual codified version might say.

## ARGUMENTATION

*Twelve Angry Men* takes place in a single room and involves 12 ordinary men who are each stereotypical of prevalent societal attitudes at the time of the film's making, but could easily be transferred to more modern times, forcing the viewer to focus on the psychological action occurring rather than the latest high-dollar computer graphic imagery or fast-moving car chase scene. Each element of the film speaks to the question of doubt, as the men work their way through personal prejudice to decipher the facts from their own preconceived ideas, motives, inclinations and objectives. Viewers begin to understand the personal experiences and preconceived biases that entered the jury room.

As more and more of each juror's personality emerges, it becomes evident that one is so completely biased and judgmental, not to mention hostile toward all youth thanks to a poor relationship with his own teenage son, that he would have been unlikely to have been selected as a juror had the defense truly been working in the best interests of the pro bono client. Another juror, equally biased, even goes so far as to refer to the world as divided between "them" and "us". Five of the remaining nine jurors were as unconcerned that they held a child's life in the balance as they would have been had they been walking in the park on a bright summer's day.

## Works Cited

Lumet, Sidney. *Making Movies*. New York: Knopf, 1995.

*12 Angry Men*. Dir. Sidney Lumet. Perf. Henry Fonda, Jee J. Cobb, Martin Balsam, Jack Warden. Orion-Nova Productions, 1957. Film.