

**A CASE ANALYSIS  
OF THE  
GROUP DECISION MAKING PROCESS**

By

Glen Cooper

Christine Ip

Craig Schauer

Course: MGMT 570  
Professor: Dr Weiss

## INTRODUCTION

This is a case analysis of the movie Twelve Angry Men. This movie displays many of the assets and liabilities found in the group problem solving process. This paper will start by describing the assets and liabilities commonly found in the group problem solving process. Next, it will present a general case background of the movie and demonstrate how these attributes of group assets and liabilities are exhibited within the movie. Finally, it will show how the interplay of group asset and liabilities allowed the jury in Twelve Angry Men to go from an eleven to one guilty vote to a unanimous not guilty vote.

## ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

Any group can be analyzed in terms of the assets and liabilities that group possesses. Generally, assets and liabilities are classified into three categories: (1) items that are clearly assets, (2) items that are clearly liabilities and, (3) items that may be either an asset or a liability. If a group's assets are able to dominate its liabilities then that group is likely to reach a more auspicious conclusion than if the converse is true.

One item that is clearly a group asset is that the individuals within a group possess more knowledge than any one of its single members. Here the experience and education of the group can be pooled to provide a greater base of information from which to analyze a given situation. An adjunct to this greater knowledge is the increased number of potential problem solutions that can be generated in a group situation then could be spawned by any single member.

A powerful group liability is social pressure. This phenomena occurs when the majority causes the minority to accept an opinion other than its own. This liability is most dangerous when the problem requires a solution that is based upon facts and not upon feelings. An interesting study of this phenomena was conducted by Solomon E. Asch. Asch placed a group of eight individuals in a room and asked each to declare publicly which of three unequal lines matched a fourth line. The first seven individuals were previously instructed to give the same incorrect answer. It was found that the eighth member, who was unaware of the deception, gave answers that were either in agreement with the group error or were in the direction of the group error one-third of the time.

An equally powerful force at the opposite end of the spectrum from social pressure, is the vocal minority. Here rather than having the majority force a conclusion on the group, a skilled vocal minority can influence the group into making a decision that is independent of its objective quality. The vocal minority is a form of liability called individual domination. Another form of individual domination emerges when one of the group members attempts to fatigue the opposition into accepting his opinion by stubborn persistence. Still another form of individual domination is when a single member captures more than his share of influence through a greater degree of participation.

A very destructive group liability occurs when winning the argument becomes the goal. The presence of alternative solutions causes members to have preferences. During the problem solving process certain members must be converted. The conflicting secondary goal becomes winning the argument, not finding the best solution.

Certain items within group dynamics can be either assets or liabilities depending upon how the group members function together. One such item is disagreement. Discussion can lead to disagreement which can in turn can lead to innovative ideas or hard feelings. Another item which can be an asset or a liability is conflicting goals. Conflicting goals can be an asset when the result is the exploration of new alternatives. Conversely, conflicting goals can result in drifting without a mutual interest being identified.

## CASE BACKGROUND

Twelve Angry Men is a movie that explores the interaction of a group of jurors when arriving at a decision regarding a boy who was accused of murdering his father. In order to discuss the jurors' interaction, names were given to each member (see figure 1). Additionally, the following case background information is provided:

1. The Switch Blade Knife - The weapon used to kill the father was an unusual looking switch blade knife. It was found at the murder scene without fingerprints and was identified as having been purchased by the boy.

2. The Old Man's Testimony - An old man, who lived just below the father's apartment testified that he heard the father's body hit the floor and that he saw the boy running from the apartment.

3. The Woman's Testimony - A woman who lived opposite the apartment testified that she saw the boy stabbed his father in the chest through the windows of a passing L-train while she was lye in bed.

4. The Boy's Defense - Upon returning home at 3 a.m. in the morning of the murder, the boy was arrested by the police. When questioned where he had been, the boy claimed he was at the movies but could not remember the movie he saw. When asked about the knife, the boy said it had fallen through a hole in his pocket.

A preliminary vote was taken and eleven out of the twelve jury members voted the boy guilty of murdering his father.

# JURY ROOM

(Below is the seating arrangement  
in the movie  
Twelve Angry Men)

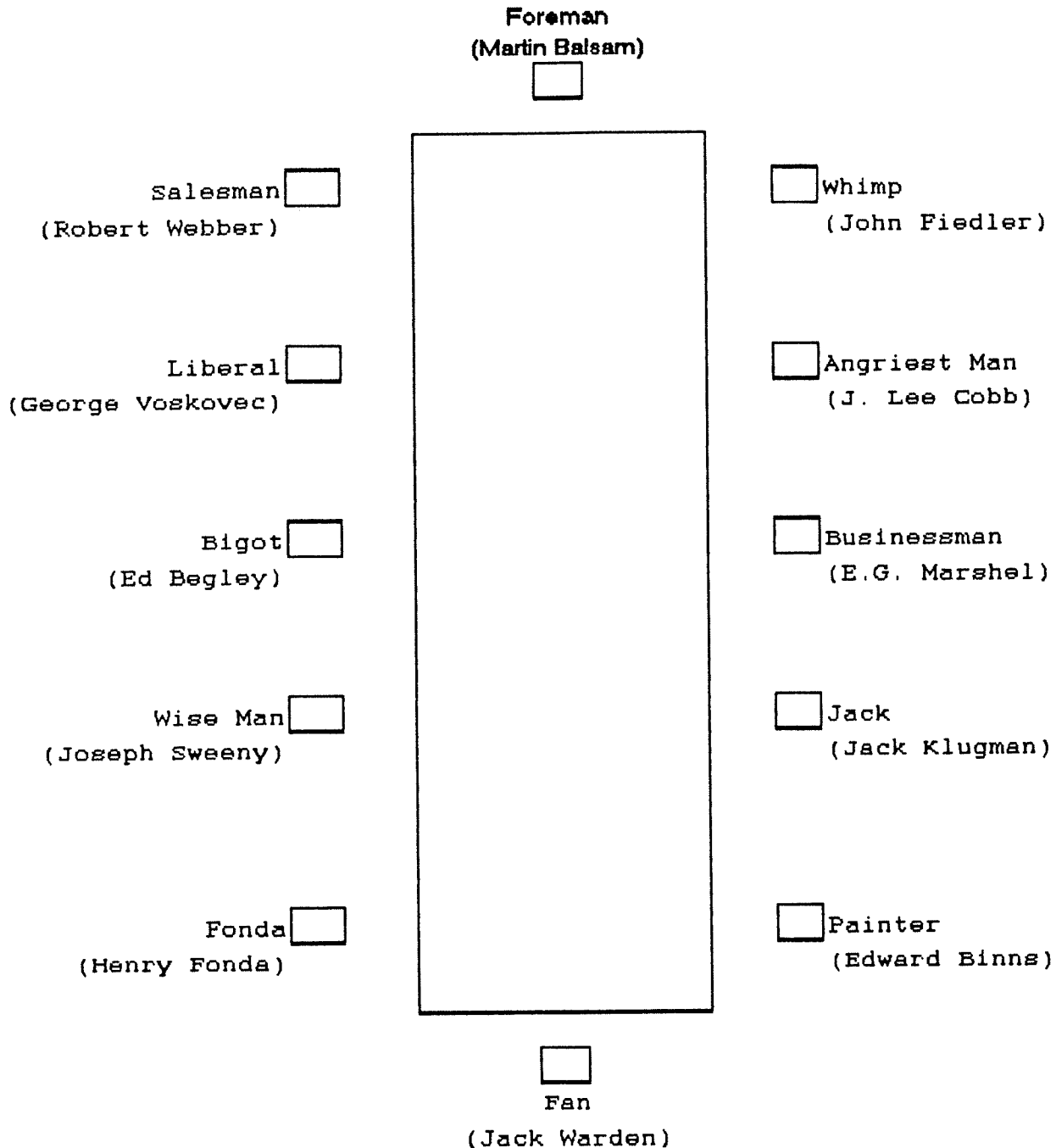


Figure 1

## CASE ANALYSIS

### **Preliminary Vote**

Upon entering the jury room, the jurors took a preliminary vote. The preliminary vote was, as noted above, eleven for guilty and one for not guilty. However, the eleven to one count is misleading. This count is misleading because an examination of each man's behavior during the voting process demonstrates that several voted immediately for guilty, while four withheld their votes until they saw how the others were voting and only then did they vote guilty. This is a clear example of social pressure. Just like the eight person in Asch's experiment the four jurors' acquiesced to the majority's opinion.

The presence of conflicting goals was another group liability found at this point. Certain group members had goals other than making a decision based on the available facts. For example, the fan wanted to go to the baseball game being played that afternoon, the bigot was prejudiced against people from slum backgrounds, and the angriest man wanted to vicariously punish his own son.

### **Fonda Votes Not Guilty**

While the first liability to emerge in this case was social pressure, the first asset was disagreement. Remember that disagreement can be either an asset or a liability. If disagreement is used constructively it will be an asset, if not it can cause disharmony and the eventual break down of the group. When Fonda raised his hand and voted not guilty he successfully resisted social pressure and started the group on the road of investigation.

Fonda's disagreement with the group forced the group members to state their reasons for voting guilty and to try and convince Fonda that he was wrong. The enumeration of the facts also demonstrates another group asset. That asset is the increased number of potential problem solutions. During the listing of the facts by each group member, it was apparent that different jurors had focused on different aspects of the case. The discussion of these different aspects provided the entire group with a greater number of problem solutions.

### Knife One of a Kind

In a form of individual domination where one member gains more than his share of influence on the group by, the businessman significantly influences the group by recounting the facts as follows: after having a fight with his father the boy goes to a shop where he buys an unusual switch blade knife, the boy later shows the knife to his friends, the boy returns to the house and stabs his father, the boy wipes his fingerprints from the knife and leaves the apartment in a hurry. A central premise in this interpretation was that the knife used was unlike any other knife.

To refute this premise Fonda pulls out a knife which looks identical to the knife used in the killing. This brings out the vocal minority liability. There are two members of this minority. They are the angriest man and the bigot. Each one takes a turn at trying to discredit the identical knife. These objections are loud and emotional. Finally, they pressure the group into making a decision. The angriest man turns to Fonda and says, "You're the only one!" Then the vocal minority calls for a group vote, trying to pressure Fonda into changing his vote.

This liability forces Fonda into a compromising position. Fonda suggests that the group vote by secret ballot. He says that if every one votes guilty then he will vote guilty. One member gives Fonda support by voting not guilty. Here, the liability of winning the argument appears. The angriest man stands and demands to know who the "traitor" was. It is clear that this member of the vocal minority is not concerned with finding the best solution but with triumph over Fonda's arguments.

### Old Man as Witness

The vocal minority attacks with the angriest man asking about the old man's testimony. He informs the group that the old man testified that he heard the killing and saw the boy running from the apartment. At this point the ability of a group to pool its knowledge to analyze facts becomes apparent.

Fonda first asks how long it takes an L-train to pass a given point. Some members do not know but those with experience in the matter are able to give an estimate of about ten seconds. Fonda next asks if any one has lived near an L-track. The painter said that he painted an apartment near an L-train. Fonda asks him if it is noisy when the train passes. Very noisy says the painter. Fonda points out that if the L-train were racing by during the murder, the noise from the train would have made it impossible for the old man to hear the boy kill his father. The angriest man and the bigot protest this conclusion. "Why would he lie?" asks the angriest man. The wise man, with his keen perception, says he knows why the old man might have been wrong. He noted that this old man in his waning years may never have received the respect he deserves. He suggests that this may have been the old mans chance to be someone that people listen to and respected. It wasn't that the old man lied, the wise man points out, but that his desire for attention clouded his perception of the events. During this scene Fonda's analysis coupled with the experience of the group proved to be powerful asset.

A similar example of this group asset occurs when the group examines the old man's testimony about seeing the boy running from the apartment. Here the introvert starts the analysis by suggesting that the old man could not make it to his apartment door to see the boy running from the murder. Several members team together, each contributing information to arrive at a new conclusion.

### The Stabbing

The jury was deadlocked. Six voting guilty and six voting not guilty. Here disagreement proved to be an asset. The whimp said something was bothering him and "being that we are stuck", asked about the angle of the stab wound. He pointed out that the boy was seven inches shorter than his father and that the he did not see how a downward stab wound into the fathers chest could be made. This question resulted in the development of another group asset, that is the greater sum knowledge of the group. After the question was asked, several members stood up and demonstrated how the stab wound could have been made. At this point the introvert came forward. He came from a slum background and had seen several knife fights before. No one in the group had this particular experience. The introvert was able to demonstrate that an experienced knife fighter would never have stabbed downward but would have used an upward motion.

These two assets, disagreement and greater sum total of knowledge, provided the group with important new information. Had disagreement not lead to the whimps question and had the introvert never seen a knife fight each member would have accepted the angle of the stab wound without objection. But these two assets did appear and thereby upgraded the groups knowledge.



### **The Boys Defense**

Another example of how disagreement can lead to innovative ideas is found during the businessman's and Fonda's argument over the significance of the boys inability to remember the name of the movie he was watching at the time of the murder. Fonda points out that the boy came home to find the police there and his father dead. The police proceeded to interrogate the boy in his kitchen. Fonda argued that under this type of stress it was not reasonable to expect the boy to remember the name of the movie. The businessman felt that the boy should have been able to remember.

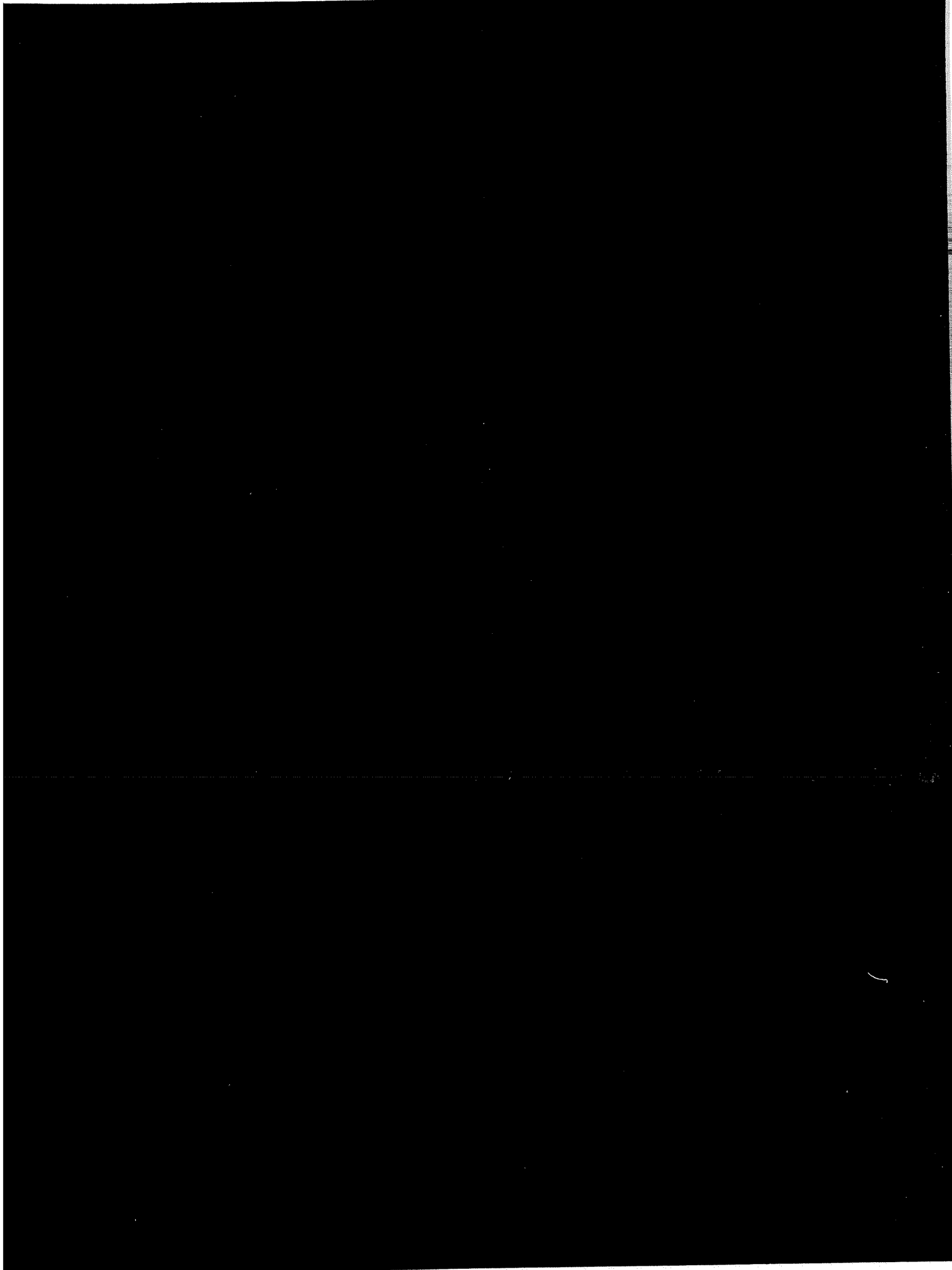
This argument lead Fonda to test the businessman memory. When they go back about three nights, the businessman could not remember the name of a movie he saw. The whimp having seen the movie gives the correct name. The whimp's ability to remember the movie supported Fonda's position that it is not always easy to remember things you have done in the recent past, especially when under pressure. This argument between two group members helped the rest of the group see the boys defense as more creditable.

### **The Woman as an Eye Witness**

The jury was down to three guilty pleas. The businessman expressed that the women's eye witness to the incident was the overbearing factor. As the businessman recounted the evidence, he became very convincing, so much so, one juror changed his not guilty plea back to guilty. It seemed that the jury was again deadlocked. However, the wise man noticed that the businessman had impressions on each side of his nose where his glasses rested. The wise man said he noticed the same marks on the women during her testimony. A discussion of this fact lead to the woman's ability to see the murder coming into question and three of the four guilty votes were changed. At this point the final liability was surmounted. The angriest man attempted to fatigue the group by continuing to argue that the boy was guilty. However, the group pressed the angriest man and were finally able to convince him to vote not guilty. The final vote was for acquittal.

## CONCLUSION

This case analysis demonstrates how the assets of a group can overcome its liabilities. In the beginning, this group possessed many liabilities. Among these liabilities were social pressure, conflicting goals, and individual domination. However, the group asset known as disagreement was able to balance these liabilities. Disagreement lead to the development of still more assets, namely, the pooling of group knowledge and the exploration of alternative problem solutions. At one point the liability of individual domination in the form of the vocal minority almost destroyed the group decision making process. However, this liability was also surmounted and the problem solving process was allowed to continue. In the end, the assets prevailed and the group reached the best decision possible given the available facts.



**A DISCUSSION  
OF THE GROUP  
DECISION MAKING  
PROCESS**

**(A case study of the movie  
Twelve Angry Men)**

**Discussion Leaders:**

**Glen Cooper**

**Christine Ip**

**Craig Schauer**

**Course: MGMT 570  
Professor: Dr Weiss**

## MANAGEMENT 570

### INDIVIDUAL ANALYSIS OF GROUP PROJECT

The presentation on Twelve Angry Men (see attached background) will focus on the assets and liabilities in the group decision making process. Provided below are descriptions of various group assets and liabilities. After reading each description, provide three examples of each asset and liability from your group project. Please be prepared to discuss your examples during class presentation.

### GREATER SUM TOTAL OF KNOWLEDGE

The individuals within a group possess more knowledge than any one of its single members. Here the experience and education of the group can be pooled to provide a greater base of information from which to analyze a given situation.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

### SOCIAL PRESSURE

This phenomena occurs when the majority causes the minority to accept an opinion other than its own.

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

3. \_\_\_\_\_

### INDIVIDUAL DOMINATION

This liability occurs when a skilled vocal minority or a single individual captures more than their share of influence on the group's decision.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### SECONDARY GOAL

This liability arises when the secondary goal becomes winning the argument, not finding the best solution

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### DISAGREEMENT

Discussion can lead to disagreement which can in turn lead to either innovative ideas or hard feelings.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

### CONFLICTING GOALS

Conflicting goals can be an asset when the result is the exploration of innovative alternatives. Conflicting goals can, conversely, result in drifting without a mutual interest being identified.

1. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

## TWELVE ANGRY MEN

### A CASE BACKGROUND

Twelve Angry Men is a movie exploring the group interaction of a jury when arriving at a unanimous decision regarding a boy who was accused of murdering his father. The following evidence was presented during the trial:

The Switch Blade Knife - The weapon used to kill the father was an unusual looking switch blade knife. It was found at the murder scene without fingerprints and was identified as being purchased by the boy.

The Old Man's Testimony - An old man, who lived just below the father's apartment, testified that he heard the father's body hit the floor and saw the boy running from the apartment.

The Woman's Testimony - A woman, who lived opposite the apartment, testified that she saw the boy stab his father in the chest through the windows of a passing "L" train while she was lying in bed.

The Boy's Defense - Upon returning home at 3 a.m. in the morning, after the murder, the boy was arrested by the police. When questioned where he had been the boy claimed he was at the movies but could not remember the movie he saw. When asked about the knife, the boy said it had fallen through a hole in his pocket.

A preliminary vote was taken and eleven out of the twelve jury members voted the boy guilty of murdering his father.



## Agenda - Twelve Angry Men

### I. Introduction - CRAIG (4 MIN)

A. Our analysis of the movie Twelve Angry Men focused on the assets and liabilities involved in the group decision making process.

B. In order to demonstrate these assets and liabilities, we will first show you a scene from the movie, discuss the asset or liability demonstrated and then ask you to discuss similar situations that occurred in your group.

C. So that you will have a general understanding of the this movie here is the first scene where the judge describes the case.

1. Movie summary scene (50 - 133) 1 1/2 min.

### II. Social Pressure - CHRISTINE (5 MIN)

A. Definition of social pressure - This phenomena occurs when the majority causes the minority to accept an opinion other than its own.

B. Preliminary vote (464 - 523) 1 1/2 min. - keep your eye on the way the hands are raised.

C. Discuss scene and related group experience

### III. Conflicting goal - CRISTINE (5 MIN)

A. Definition of conflicting goal - Conflicting goals can be an asset when the result is the exploration of innovative alternatives. Conflicting goals can, conversely, result in drifting without a mutual interest being identified.

B. Fan and baseball game (366 - 417) 1 min.  
Bigot wants to get back to work (1219 - 1226) 1/2 min. - Two scenes watch the baseball fan and the bigot

C. Discuss scene and related group experience

IV. Individual domination - GLEN (5 MIN)

A. Definition of individual domination - This liability occurs when a skilled vocal minority or a single individual captures more than their share of influence on the group's decision.

B. Businessman with notes (1073 - 1148) 2 min. - watch how the business man controls the group and how the whimp is being convinced.

C. Discuss scene and related group experience

V. Secondary goal - GLEN (5 MIN)

A. Definition of secondary goal (also note that vocal minority (define above) appears in these scenes) - This liability arises when the secondary goal becomes winning the argument, not finding the best solution. Also within these scenes be aware of the vocal minority attempting to influence the group.

B. Angriest man "what side are you on?" (1851 - 1857) 1 min. and Businessman says "not a contest" (2753 - 2765) 1/2 min. - In these scenes watch the angriest man and listen to what he and the others say to him.

C. Discuss scene and related group experience

VI. Greater sum of knowledge - CRAIG (5 MIN)

A. Definition of greater sum of knowledge - The individuals within a group possess more knowledge than any one of its single members. Here the experience and education of the group can be pooled to provide a greater base of information from which to analyze a given situation.

B. Switch blade knife (2489 - 2553) 2 1/2 min - Watch how the group pools its knowledge

C. Discuss scene and related group experience

VII. Disagreement - CRAIG (5 MIN)

A. Definition of disagreement (and summary of everything) - Discussion can lead to disagreement which can in turn lead to either innovative ideas or hard feelings.

B. Marks on businessman's nose (2770 - 2898)  
5 1/2 min. - Notice the vocal minority, the angriest man, pushes the group by his disagreement. Also how Fonda and the liberal contribute and finally how the angriest man stubbornly resist group.

C. Discuss scene and related group experience.

# JURY ROOM

(Below is the seating arrangement  
in the movie  
Twelve Angry Men)

Foreman  
(Martin Balsam)



Salesman ☐  
(Robert Webber)

Liberal ☐  
(George Voskovec)

Bigot ☐  
(Ed Begley)

Wise Man ☐  
(Joseph Sweeney)

Fonda ☐  
(Henry Fonda)

☐ Whimp  
(John Fiedler)

☐ Angriest Man  
(J. Lee Cobb)

☐ Businessman  
(E.G. Marshal)

☐ Jack  
(Jack Klugman)

☐ Painter  
(Edward Binns)



Fan  
(Jack Warden)