Sometimes group dynamics can’t be understood through just reading books or case studies. It can be best learnt or understood when seen or experienced. Most of the MBA students undergo GD processes before they enter the B-School of their choice, so they have some idea of what how group dynamics can lead to different results.

12 Angry Men is one such movie which shows how group dynamics can actually lead to success or failures. 12 Angry Men is a classic movie which was released in 1957. In the movie 12 men are put in one single room to discuss a case and reach a final decision on it. Until they don’t come up with a final decision no one is allowed to leave.

Much similar to a typical GD session. Group dynamics is related with the structure and functioning of groups as well as the different types of roles each individual plays. In the film, twelve men are brought together in a room to decide whether a boy is guilty of killing his father. In the whole movie, each member has been crafted very carefully. He has been given a proper role to play in the group dynamics. The whole spectrum of humanity is represented in this movie, from the bigotry of Juror No.10 to the coldly analytical No.4. Whether they brought good or bad qualities to the jury room, they all affected the outcome.

In the start, the movie shocks the viewer. There is no discussion and 11 members vote the accused as guilty and try to leave the room. Nobody is actually bothered to think that their decision means for the individual. One is too rigid to change and the other wants to go to his baseball match and doesn’t bother what becomes of the accused. When a group becomes too confident and fails to think realistically about its task, groupthink can occur. Since it takes a longer time to communicate and reach a consensus in a group, decision making in a group is time-consuming. But juror no. 8 doesn’t fall prey to the groupthink error and stands against the group. After this, the movie is very intense. Juror no. 8 agrees that he is unsure whether the accused is guilty or not but he wants some discussion on the case. From here on the movie not only presents the discussion but also reveals the type of each individual in detail.
Juror no.1 tries to impose order in his capacity as Leader(or Foreman). He plays the role of “leader”, A simple man who clearly does not understand the complexity of the task that lies before him but is trying to do everything not to let anyone else find this out. He appears at ease only once during the film – when he talks about football. He has the misfortune to be selected Foreman of the jury – a task he clearly does not enjoy. Juror no.2 is a small, quiet man who is clearly unaccustomed to giving his own opinion much less to expecting his views to be of any importance. In his subdued “observer” and meek “information giver” role, No. 2 apparently finds comfort in his job – he is an accountant. Juror no. 3 is probably the most complex personality in the film. He starts off like a pleasant self-made successful businessman, analyzing the case impartially, explaining the arguments well and is reasonably self-assured. As time goes on he becomes more and more passionate exploding in disbelieving anger and seems somehow to be personally involved with the case. His motivation for behaving as he does is revealed when he discloses that he’s not on good terms with his own son. Illusions to his animosity toward youth were made when he says that kids today have no respect and that he has not see his son in over a decade. No.3 namely plays the “aggressive”, “dominator” and “blocker” roles. His personal baggage with his own son “blocked” or prolonged the decision-making. Yet this overbearing, angry and sadistic man finally deserved our sorrow. Juror no.4 is a self -assured, slightly arrogant stockbroker.

He obviously considers himself more intelligent than anyone else in the room, and he approaches the case with cool heartless logic but he does not take into account the feelings, the passions, and the characters of the people involved in the case. No.4 played the role of the coldly, analytical “information giver.” He ticks off the facts in the case as if he were reading closing stock prices from the newspaper. His studious and ever stern glare cuts down those who disagree with his. Juror no.5 is a man under great emotional stress. He comes from the same social background as the accused boy – with whom he almost unwillingly seems to identify with. Paradoxically this appears one of the main reasons for him voting guilty – he does not want compassion to influence him – so ironically it does. Reacting strongly and defensive, No. 5 represented the “emotional.” Juror no.6 is a simple man, quite readily admitting that everyone in the room is better qualified than he is to make decisions and offer explanations. But he really wants to see justice done and it worries him that he might make a mistake. Agreeing with everyone and talking even less, No. 6’s role is the “silent” and “conformist.” Juror no.7 is the only one who really has no opinion on the case – he talks of baseball. Of the heat, of fixing the fan but the only reason he has for voting this way or that is to speed things up a bit so he might be out of the jury room as soon as possible. Not an evil man he just has no sense of morality whatsoever – he can tell right from wrong but does not seem to think its worth the bother. Failing to take the group seriously, No. 7 falls into the “playboy” and “bored one” roles. Juror no.8 is a caring man who has put more thought into the case than any of the other jurors. He tries to do his best in the face of seemingly impossible odds. Both confident and nervous, as well as being under intense and hostile scrutiny, No. 8 states that he couldn't vote in that way for one simple reason; there is reasonable doubt in his mind. No. 8 acts as “model person” and “nonconformist.” Juror no.9 is a wise old man. With his great life experience he has quite a unique way of looking at the case.
After the juror no. 8 had refused to go without discussion he is ridiculed by the fellow men and is forced to change his decision but he doesn’t move. He says that they all will have a second round of voting in which he will not vote. If all other 11 men vote guilty, he will also vote the same and case can be closed. But this time Juror no 9 joins him and now it becomes 2 vs. 10. So now all have to sit and discuss the case. Juror no.10 is the most horrifying character in the film. He votes guilty and does not even try to hide the fact that he does so only because of the boy’s social background. The tragedy comes from the fact that his own social position is only a cut above the boy’s – which makes him all the more eager to stress the difference. The repulsive and poisonous bigotry of No. 10 puts him in “aggressive”, “debunker”, and “blocker” roles throughout the film. Juror no.11, an immigrant watchmaker, is a careful analytical man, well mannered and soft spoken. He respects the right of people to have different opinions to his and is willing to look at both sides of the problem. He loses his temper only once – horrified by the complete indifference of Juror No. 7. His role is that of “group observer” as well as “opinion giver.”

Juror no.12 is a young business type – perhaps he has his own opinions – but is careful to hide them. What he has learnt out of life seems to be that intelligence is equal with agreeing with what the majority of people think. No. 12 works in advertising and views serving on a jury no more seriously than he would creating a laundry soap jingle. He is a smooth-talking but easily swayed young “airhead” who plays the role of “conformist.” The movie moves forward and gradually all members start supporting juror no. 8 and in the end all jurors vote the accused not guilty. The movie is highly intense in the way, juror 8 convinces all others in taking the case to a logical end. The story is also great which provides the best background bringing out the group dynamics in the movie. The sudden twists and turn keeps the audience also intrigued till the end.

P.S. If you are an Indian MBA student, you can also watch ‘Ek ruka hua faisla’ which is the Indian adaptation of the ‘12 angry men’. It features very good actors of the likes of Pankaj Kapoor, Anu Kapoor and many others. The story is adapted as per the Indian issues and relevance. You can watch any one or the both. When you watch the movie just track the various the group dynamics that happen in the course of the movie. Mbaskool.com highly recommends 12 Angry Men (or 1 ruka hua faisla).