

# The corruption in films film studies essay



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Remarkable numbers are obtained while looking whether system shown is characterized by corruption at political, administrative or judicial branches. Corrupt systems are shown in 72. 73% of the films. Non-corrupt systems are shown in 27. 27% of the cases. Strong presence of corruption is shown in Inception (2010). In a world where technology exists to enter the human mind through dream invasion, a highly skilled thief is given a final chance of redemption, which involves executing his toughest job to date: Inception.

[1]Although Cobb is judged guilty for murder of his wife and must be detained once he tries to cross US border— Saito keeps his promise and once they arrive in Los Angeles makes the call to get the authorities off Cobb's back. Cobb goes through security and customs without a hitch. Figure 56 films' distribution according to structures' characteristics-6. Source: the author's calculations.

### **Politically influenced judiciary forms**

Judiciary form has political influence in 70. 83% of cases. In 29. 17% of the films structures are not influenced by government. One of the few films in which judiciary form is not influenced by politics is The Bourne Ultimatum (2007). When Jason Bourne is framed for a botched CIA operation he is forced to take up his former life as a trained assassin to survive. Jason Bourne dodges a ruthless CIA official and his agents from a new assassination program while searching for the origins of his life as a trained killer.[2]Although the evidence of corruption is strong – judiciary form is not politically influenced. An example of a film in which judiciary form is extremely strongly influenced by politics is The Matrix Reloaded (2003).

## **Analysis of the citizens/people shown in films**

The films selected for the study feature diverse societies, rebellions and revolutions, but no single evidence of overthrowing a monarchy in order to create a democratic structure — in 8 out of 33 films rulers are replaced by other emperors.

## **People's attitude toward structures**

In 40. 63% of cases citizens are against a structure. On the contrary, in 59. 37% of the cases, people are happy with the structure they live in. An example of a film which shows citizens to be strongly against the system is The Matrix Reloaded (2003). Neo and his friends indeed want to combat artificial reality created by machines. An example of a film in which people are not against the structure is The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King (2003). Even after the goal is achieved — the political structure remains a monarchy, however with a different leader.

## **Political systems in which people have a chance to express their dissatisfaction**

People are allowed to complain against the structure in 46. 88% of cases. In 53. 13% of the films citizens are prohibited to express their frustration. The example of a structure in which people are not allowed to complain or to show their dissatisfaction is Snow White and the Huntsman (2012). Queen Ravenna kills everybody who tries to challenge her views or decisions. An example of a film in which people are allowed to complain about the structure is X-Men: The Last Stand (2006). Citizens demonstrate and oppose decisions made by the government, such as mandatory vaccination of individuals with supernatural powers.

## **Films in which people complain about their leader**

Even if people are mostly not satisfied with their ruler – they complain about a leader only in 27. 59% of cases. Citizens do not object to a leader in 72. 41% of the cases. An example of the film in which people complain against the leader is Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 (2011). " Rescued from the outrageous neglect of his aunt and uncle, a young boy with a great destiny attends Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry. As Harry races against time and evil to destroy the Horcruxes, he uncovers the existence of three most powerful objects in the wizard-world: the Deathly Hallows. Harry, Ron and Hermione search for Voldemort's remaining Horcruxes in their effort to destroy the Dark Lord." [3] When Voldemort becomes a leader — several students take his side, some remain against him. An example of a structure in which people do not complain about the structure is The Hunger Games (2012). President Snow is the leading figure of Panem. Depicted as a cruel and evil man he holds the districts of the country tight under the control of the Capitol. Due to the extra strong discipline people do not criticize their leader. Figure 57 films' distribution according to citizens' characteristics-1. Source: the author's calculations.

## **Single hero's raise against system in films**

In 50% of the cases a single hero, and in other half of the cases more people fight against a system. An example of a film in which a single hero challenges a system is Hunger Games (2012). Although Katniss Everdeen applies no physical violence against the system – her behaviour created the feelings of rebellion in the Districts. " Later an announcement states that the rule, which allows two winners — is revoked; meaning only one shall remain.

Peeta begs Katniss to kill him so that she may win, but she takes out her hand and holds out some Nightlock berries. She takes some for herself and gives the rest to Peeta, hinting that there would rather be no winners instead of one. Before they can commit suicide, a speaker pleads them to stop and announces that they are both winners."[4]An example of a film in which people fight against the system is *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). People and creatures altogether battle against the White Witch and her supporters.

### **Heroes questioned by people in films**

Based on evidence, people are more likely to question a hero, rather than a state or a leader. People do criticize hero in 72. 73% of cases. In 27. 27% of the cases the hero is not questioned. The aim is to observe in how many films decisions and actions of hero are accepted implicitly and unconditionally. An example of a film in which hero and his or her actions are questioned is *The Bourne Ultimatum* (2007). Jason Bourne is trying to prove that he is ungainly and people questioning him have personal reasons to do so. An example of a film in which a hero is not questioned by people is *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003). In the course of the film Frodo and Sam are never questioned or criticized by people.

### **Films in which opponents of heroes die / survive**

People who criticize hero survive in 34. 38% of cases. Accordingly, they die in 65. 63% of cases. An example of a film in which individuals who are against the hero do survive is *Avatar* (2009). After Na'vi people gain the victory in the battle the most of the remaining humans are shipped back to Earth. An example of a film in which people who are against the hero die is

Troy (2004) — an adaptation of Homer's epic. The film follows the assault on Troy by the united Greek forces and chronicles the fates of the men involved. People of Troy, as opponent of Achilles and the king are exterminated by the Greek army. Figure 58 film distribution according to citizens' characteristics-2 Source: the author's calculations.

### **People sacrificed or not sacrificed by hero**

Considering empirical evidence, only in 36.36% of cases people are sacrificed by the hero. In 63.64% of cases people are not sacrificed by the hero. An example of a film in which people are sacrificed by the hero is Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 (2011). Lord Voldemort announces the ultimatum: to deliver him Harry Potter in order to avoid the war. However, an alternative decision is made, and a substantial number of students and professors die as a consequence. An example of a film in which people are not sacrificed by a hero is Thor (2011). Thor tries to protect inhabitant of planet earth, and even sacrifices himself for this. He would not allow others to die for him – as this is exactly what could happen if he would not stop a gigantic iron machine sent to earth to kill him.

### **Fear of citizens in films**

People are not afraid of punishment in 50% of films. An example of a film, in which people are fearless, is The Last Samurai (2003). An American military advisor embraces the Samurai culture he was hired to destroy after he is captured in battle.[5]The samurais and their families are shown as fearless and ready to fight the emperor's well-equipped army in order to protect themselves. An example of a film in which people are afraid of punishment is Clash of the Titans (2010). People are scared of retribution of the gods. Some

inhabitants are demanding the sacrifice of Princess Andromeda, in order to fulfil the demand of Hades, the ruler of the underworld and the king of the dead. Figure 59 film distribution according to citizens' characteristics-

3Source: the author's calculations.

### **Helpless people in films**

People are able to protect themselves in 54. 55% of the cases. Accordingly, in 45. 45% of the cases citizens are helpless and need superheroes for their protection. An example of a film in which citizens are inefficient and helpless is Hancock (2008). Citizens and policemen are portrayed as helpless characters. On the contrary, people are efficient and can help themselves in the film 300 (2006). King Leonidas with 300 Spartan soldiers combats the multi-thousand Persian army at Thermopylae.

### **Governance structures in films**

People organize themselves in 48. 48% of cases and are organized by someone in 51. 52% of cases, accordingly. An example of a film in which people are organized by themselves is Spider-Man 3 (2007). Each citizen is free in decisions and actions. An example of a film in which people are directed by a leader is Avatar (2009) — Nuri people have a clan leader who decides for them. Figure 510 film distribution according to citizen's characteristics-4Source: the author's calculations.

### **Cooperative vs. aggressive behaviour of citizens in films**

Considering empirical evidence – in 72% of cases citizens demonstrate, and are praised for cooperative behaviour. In 28% of cases people demonstrate, or are praised for aggressive or dominant behaviour. As an example of a film

in which people are praised for aggression and dominance is *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003). Most people and creatures are involved in fights and wars. An example of a film in which cooperation benefits ordinary citizens is *Alice in Wonderland* (2010). The creatures benefit from cooperation with Alice and are praised for their solidarity.

### **Educated vs. illiterate societies**

Educated citizens are an important component of democratic society. In 75% of films educated citizens are perceived, while in 25% of the cases inhabitants are illiterate. An example of a film showing educated citizens is *TRON: Legacy* (2010). The son of a virtual world designer is trapped within father's invention.[6]The film spectacles two worlds: the virtual and the real, in both worlds people are well-educated. Illiterate people are shown in the film *300* (2006), as the only thing which Spartans could do was to fight. Figure 511 film distribution according to citizens' characteristics-5Source: the author's calculations.

### **Analyzes of the Villains shown in films**

Villains tend to be the characters, which make the plot less democracy oriented. Decision-making processes are often non-legislative. Leaders tend to be unjust, violent and cruel towards citizens.

### **Films In which an authoritarian system is or is not questioned by leader**

An authoritarian system is not questioned by leaders in 95.65%. The only film in which an authoritarian system is questioned by a leader is *300* (2006). Theron is against the decision of the king to go for the war. The statesmen



announce that the oracle has spoken and according to their prophecy the Spartans should not go to war. Theron warns King Leonidas: " It is the law, my lord. The Spartan army must not go to war." [7] However the king goes against the law, and lies to Theron, by saying: " Nor shall it. I've issued no such orders. I'm here, just taking a stroll, stretching my legs. These, uh, 300 men are my personal bodyguard" [8] – which is indeed not true.

### **Gender of the villains in the films**

A female villain is observed in 12.5% of the films. Respectively in 87.50% of the cases a villain is a male character. An example of a film with female villain character is *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005) – with evil White Witch as a lead dictator-villain. An example of a film with a male villain is *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest* (2006). Davy Jones, the notorious captain of the Flying Dutchman is extremely evil. He treats his crew without any mercy.

### **Concerns and fears of the leaders**

Considering empirical evidence, in 16.13% of cases dictators and villains see a threat in people. Dictators see danger in a single hero in 83.87% of the films. An example of a film in which a villain sees a danger in people is *Avatar* (2009). Colonel Miles Quaritch and Parker Selfridge feel challenged by the Na'vi people supported by Jake Sully, Grace and several friends. An example of a film in which villain is challenged by a single hero is *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012). Beautiful Ravenna is only concerned about Snow White, as no other person is able to break the curse; this is the reason why Ravenna is trying to consume Snow White's heart in order to secure her

eternal beauty and throne. Figure 512 film distribution according to lieder's characteristics-1Source: the author's calculations.

### **Villains who lie vs. villains who say the truth**

In 12.5% of cases villains only say the truth — they lie in 87% of films. An example of a film in which a villain does not lie is Hancock (2008). The majority of films show dictators and villains, who lie to public or individuals. Those could be easily related to false statements made by politicians in real life. For example, in Snow White and the Huntsman (2012) Queen Ravenna gives a false promise to the huntsman, that in case he will bring her the heart of Snow-white – she will revive his deceased wife Sarah. False public announcement by the government is observed in The Hunger Games (2012). " Seneca announces that the rules of the game have been changed—two winners instead of just one will be allotted so long as they belong to the same district. However, by the end of the game a new announcement follows, which states that the rule which allows two winners has been revoked, meaning only one shall remain." [9]

### **Imprisoned vs. killed villains in films**

Punishment of the evil is common in blockbuster films. In 25% of cases an imprisonment of the villain is used as a form of punishment. A villain is killed either by a hero or fate in 75% of cases. An example of a film in which a villain is imprisoned in the end is The Avengers (2012). In the end of the film Thor escorts Loki and the Tesseract back to Asgard. An example of a film in which the villain is killed in the end is Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 (2011). Harry and Voldemort cast spells at each other; Voldemort's killing curse backfires, and kills him. In principle, Harry killed the villain, but <https://assignbuster.com/the-corruption-in-films-film-studies-essay/>

fate also played a role. Figure 513film distribution according to leaders' characteristics-2Source: the author's calculations

## **Leaders chosen by supernatural power vs. leaders with privileged birth**

Leaders came into power due to the privileged birth and they belong to some noble or aristocratic dynasty in 37. 5% of cases. Leaders are " chosen" by a supernatural power or a fate in 62. 5% of the films. An example of a film in which a leader is in power because he or she is a child of the former ruler is Thor (2011). The political structure is a fictitious monarchy, where the throne goes from a father to the son. An example of a film in which the master is chosen by fate or has supernatural power is Snow White and the Huntsman (2012). Beautiful Ravenna becomes queen after killing her husband King Magnus. In order to achieve her goals she dramatizes her capture by the dark army. The king marries her the same day, as he is charmed by her beauty. The fate played the role in Ravenna's process to become a queen – as it was Magnus ' s decision to marry her. However, in order to sustain the power she is using her supernatural abilities: she is a witch; she practices black magic and commands the black army.

## **Dominant vs. cooperative leaders in films**

Leaders demonstrate and are praised for cooperative behaviour only in 14. 87% of cases. Leaders show aggressive or dominant behaviour in 83. 13% of the films. An example of a film with a " fair" leader is National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007). Treasure hunter Benjamin Franklin Gates looks to discover the truth behind the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, by uncovering the mystery within the 18 pages missing from assassin John Wilkes Booth's

diary. In the film the leader is president of the United States, who cooperates with Benjamin Franklin Gates by telling him the national secret: the location of President's Secret Book. The president also gives Benjamin enough time to escape, which can be interpreted as a questionable scene: a president supports and cooperates with a criminal who kidnaps him. An example of a dominant leader is Ravenna from Snow-white and the Huntsman. Figure 514film distribution according to leaders' characteristics-3Source: the author's calculations. Acclaimed

## **Heroes in Films**

Heroes in fictitious film plots are not only the ones who have to fight villains, but also to save nations as they are endowed with supernatural power what makes them superior to ordinary citizens.

### **Heroes supported by friends vs. solo-heroes**

Among films selected for the study 87. 88% shows a hero supported by friends in his actions. In 12. 12% of the cases the hero is not supported by friends. An example of a film in which a hero is not supported by anyone in his activities is Hancock (2008). In the course of the film Hancock acts on his own. An example of a film in which a hero is supported by friends in his actions is Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows: Part 2 (2011). Ron and Hermione almost never leave Harry and are always there for him.

### **Gender of heroes in the films**

In 34. 14% of the films a hero is female and accordingly, in 65. 85% of cases the hero is a male. An example of a film with female-hero is Alice in Wonderland (2010); male hero is observed in TRON: Legacy (2010). Sam

Flynn is a lead hero, however, in certain actions he is supported by a female hero – Quorra, who is a surrogate daughter of Kevin Flynn, and has been loyally helping him to survive his digital exile.

### **Law-abiding heroes vs. heroes with a criminal record**

In 60. 61% cases the hero is law-abiding, and his actions do not include illegal activities. On the contrary, in 39. 39% of the films a hero has either a record for illegal activities – or his actions are not law-abiding. An example of a film in which a hero is shown as a law-abiding citizen is *The Hunger Games* (2012). Katniss Everdeen is portrayed as a law-abiding resident and even her actions against the system and the government are within the law. An example of a film in which a hero has a record for an illegal activity is *Inception* (2010). The lead hero, Cobb, is convicted for murder of his wife. Figure 515 film distribution according to heros' characteristics-1 Source: the author's calculations.

### **Forgiving vs. brutal heroes in the films**

In 32% of cases the hero forgives the opponent and accordingly, in 68% of cases the hero kills the opponent. An example of a film in which the hero kills the opponent is *Snow White and the Huntsman* (2012)—in the end Ravenna is killed by Snow White in a fight. An example of a film in which the opponent is forgiven by hero is *Spider-Man 3* (2007). In the end of the film Sandman approaches Peter and tells him that the killing of Uncle Ben was an accident caused by his gun going off. Peter forgives him and Sandman flies off through the buildings

## **Heroes who ask for external advice vs. heroes who do not need advice in films**

In 24. 24% the heroes do not ask for advice of another person. They make their decisions on their own. In 75. 76% of the films the heroes ask someone for an advice and do not base their actions purely on their own decisions. An example of a hero who does not need any advice of anyone is witnessed in Iron Man 2 (2010). An example of a film in which a hero asks advice someone is The Da Vinci Code (2006). A murder inside the Louvre and the clues in Da Vinci's paintings lead to the discovery of a religious mystery protected by a secret society for two thousand years—which could shake the foundations of Christianity.[10]Robert Langdon and Sophie Neveu go for advice to Sir Leigh Teabing, as they believe that he has more expertise and knowledge, and could help them to solve the mystery.

## **Armed vs. not armed heroes in films**

In 66. 67% of cases the hero has a weapon. In 33. 33% of the films a hero is a person, who would never touch a gun. An example of a film in which a hero has a gun is The Dark Knight Rises (2012). On the contrary, in National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007), the lead hero, Ben Gates, never uses a gun. Figure 516film distribution according to heroes' characteristics-2Source: the author's calculations.

## **Heroes who lie vs. heroes who do not lie**

A hero always says the truth in 54. 55% of the films. A hero who lies is observed in 45. 45% of cases. For example, in Clash of the Titans (2010) Perseus always pronounces the truth. An example of a film in which a hero

lies is Avatar (2009). Jake Sully lies to Neytiri and her clan about the real reason for joining them.

## **Achievement of heroes in films**

In almost all films used for the study – namely in 93. 75% of the cases, heroes manage to achieve their goals. Heroes die in 6. 25% of the cases. The only two films, in which heroes die in the end are 300 (2006) and Troy (2004). In both films the lead heroes (King Leonidas in 300 (2006) and Achilles in Troy (2004)) die in battles.

## **Superior vs. ordinary heroes**

The people are not outperformed by the hero In 39. 39% of cases. In 60. 61% hero is superior to other people. An example of a film in which people are not outperformed by one hero is Angels and Demons (2009). " Harvard symbologist Robert Langdon works to solve a murder and prevent a terrorist act against the Vatican." [11] Robert Langdon is the university professor and has no " supernatural powers" what would make him superior to other people. A hero superior to others of his kind is observed in Rise of the Planet of the Apes (2011). A substance, designed to help the brain repair itself, creates a super-intelligent chimp who leads an ape uprising. [12] The lead hero of the film is Caesar, who is the only survivor of a genetic experiment conducted by a San Francisco biotech company. Chimp is superior to his other fellows by astonishing brain capabilities and its ability to speak. Figure 517 film distribution according to heroes' characteristics-3 Source: the author's calculations.

## **Villains cooperation with heroes in films**

A villain is convinced by a hero to change the side and cooperate with him or her in 42. 42% of the films. Such kind of cooperation is not observed in 57. 58% of the cases. An example of a film in which a villain is persuaded to cooperate with hero is Snow White and the Huntsman (2012). Initially, Huntsman was sent to kill Snow White, but after understanding that she is innocent and that the promise of the Queen of Tabor is not realistic he changes his side and becomes a friend and protector of the princess he wanted to kill. A similar case is observed in Alice in Wonderland (2010). Bandersnatch, which in the beginning harms Alice, later helps her to escape from the palace of the Red Queen. Also in Spider-man 3 (2007), Harry Osborn initially considers Spider-Man to be his greatest enemy, but in the end he is convinced by Peter Parker to help him to fight Sandman and Venom. Figure 518film distribution according to heroes' characteristics-4Source: the author's calculations.

## **Aggressive vs. cooperative heroes in the films**

A hero applies physical violence, gives commands, insists on obedience, demonstrates dominance and aggression in 46. 01% of the films. On the contrary, in 53. 99% of cases, a hero encourages people without physical violence, shows benefits and convinces people to cooperate. An example of a film which shows a cooperative hero is Sherlock Holmes: A Game of Shadows (2011). " Sherlock Holmes and his sidekick Doctor Watson join forces to outwit and bring down their fiercest adversary, Professor Moriarty." [13]An example of a film in which hero is praised for dominance and aggression is Troy (2004).



## **Other aspects related to democracy in films**

Current subsection presents the empirical evidence related to other aspects relevant to democracy. The intention is to observe some evidence of dehumanization, gender inequality or other forms of discrimination in films, also what kind of ending — democratic or non-democratic — is more dominant, and whether the word " democracy" is mentioned in the films.

### **Dehumanization in films**

There is no evidence of dehumanization in 69. 70% of the films. On the contrary, in 30. 30% of cases dehumanization is shown. An example of a film in which dehumanization is shown is Avatar (2009). Na'vi people are often called " Blue Monkeys" and people from planet Earth think that they are well behind in their development.

### **A voting process and elections in films**

A voting process or elections are shown in 12. 12% of the films. In Angels and Demons (2009) and 300 (2006) elections of the Pope by the College of Cardinals' papal conclave, and the voting of the council are shown, accordingly. Figure 519 films' distribution according to other aspects related to democracy-1. Source: the author's calculations.

### **Gender equality in films**

Considering empirical evidence in 90. 91% of cases no form of gender inequality is observed. Gender inequality is observed in 9. 09% of the films. The films in which gender inequality is shown are Troy (2004), The Last Samurai (2003) and 300 (2006). The films belong to historical genre and show male dominated systems.

## **Discrimination in films**

In 33.33% present of the films discrimination is observed. Examples of such films are Avatar (2009), The Last Samurai (2003) and X-Men: The Last Stand (2006). Na'vi people's discrimination by earth-people is observed in Avatar. Discrimination of samurais by Japanese people is shown in Last Samurai. People with supernatural powers are discriminated by the rest of the population in X-Men. Figure 520 films' distribution according to other aspects related to democracy-2. Source: the author's calculations.

## **Attempts of revolution in films**

An attempt of rebellion or revolution is shown in 68.75% of the films. In 31.25% of cases no attempt of revolution is shown. Those attempts are successful in 54.55% of cases and not successful in 45.45% of the cases. Attempts of rebellion are shown in Alice in Wonderland (2010), The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe (2005), The Last Samurai (2003). A rebellion against the Red Queen is observed In Alice in Wonderland. A rebellion against the White Witch is shown In Chronicles of Narnia. The unsuccessful attempt of rebellion of samurais against the Japanese Emperor's army is shown in The Last Samurai.

## **Films, in which the word " democracy" is mentioned**

In 87.88% of the films the word " democracy" is not mentioned. However, there are three films in which characters talk about democracy. Those are Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith (2005), National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007) and X-Men: The Last Stand (2006). The story Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith (2005) begins when " two Jedi Knights escape a hostile blockade to find allies and come across a young boy who

may bring balance to the Force, but the long dormant Sith resurface to reclaim their old glory. Ten years later, Anakin Skywalker shares a forbidden romance with Padmé, while Obi-Wan investigates an assassination attempt on the Princess and discovers a secret clone army crafted for the Jedi. After three years of fighting in the Clone Wars, Anakin Skywalker falls prey to the Sith Lord's lies and makes an enemy of the Jedi and those he loves, concluding his journey to the Dark Side."

[14]The word " democracy" is mentioned three times in the film. First time " democracy" is mentioned by Padmé in her conversation with Anakin Skywalker:" Sometimes I wonder what's happening to the Jedi order. I think this war is destroying the principles of the Republic. Have you ever considered that we may be on the wrong side? What do you mean? What if the democracy we thought we were serving no longer exists and the Republic has become the very evil we've been fighting to destroy? I don't believe that. And you're sounding like a separatist. This war represents a failure to listen. Now you're closer to the chancellor than anyone. Please, ask him to stop the fighting and let diplomacy resume. Don't ask me to do that. Make a motion in the senate, where that kind of a request belongs."

[15]Second time the word " democracy" is mentioned by Supreme Chancellor Palpatine in conversation with Anakin Skywalker." I know they don't trust you. Or the senate. Or the Republic or democracy, for that matter. I have to admit... ... my trust in them has been shaken."

[16]For the third time word " democracy" is mentioned by Obi-Wan Ken in his conversation with Anakin Skywalker:" I have brought peace, freedom, justice and security to my new empire! Your new empire? Don't make me kill you. Anakin, my allegiance is to the Republic, to democracy! If you're not with me then you're my enemy. Only a Sith deals in

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absolutes. I will do what I must. You will try." [17] In *National Treasure: Book of Secrets* (2007) the word "democracy" is mentioned by Mitch Wilkinson: "Nobody leaves unless I say so. That door is not gonna stay open by itself. We both know what has to happen here. One of us keeps the door open and stays behind. I vote Mitch. This isn't a democracy." [18] Mitch Wilkinson mentions the word "democracy" in the context that he does not want a democratic solution as he wants to decide upon who shall stay to hold the doors versus the majority voting. In *X-Men: The Last Stand* (2006) "democracy" is mentioned by the president in his conversation with Dr. Henry 'Hank' McCoy. Dr. Hank McCoy: Have you even begun to think what a slippery slope based on? The President: I have. And I worry about how democracy survives when one man can move cities with his mind. Dr. Hank McCoy: As do I." [19]

### **Democratic vs. non democratic endings in films**

Democratic ending is observed in 61.29% of the cases. In 38.71% films' ending is non-democratic. Examples of non-democratic endings are *The Hunger Games* (2012), *The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King* (2003), *The Chronicles of Narnia: The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe* (2005). In *The Hunger Games* Katniss Everdeen challenges the system and gives a government reason for a fear—but there is no change in the initially non-democratic and corrupt system. In *Lord of Rings* and *The Chronicles of Narnia* the monarchs are overthrown and replaced by other monarchs, while political systems remain non-democratic. Figure 52: films' distribution according to other aspects related to democracy-3. Source: the author's calculations.

## **Five category test and The Democracy Index for Films**

A transfer of Bechdel's ideas to democracy is formulated as the "Five Category Test". The test is used to identify non-democratic films using questions from five categories. Each film collects a point for each corresponding question from the questionnaire. If a film gets at least one point in each of the five categories it qualifies in all five categories and passes 5CT. The methodology is very similar to the one used for the Bechdel Test. As it was already mentioned in 3. 2, 5CT aims to distinguish films which would qualify in each of five categories and consequently would pass the test. The questions are selected in the way that positive answer to each of them would suggest a non-democratic element present in the plot. As it was previously mentioned, in order to pass the test the film would have to answer positively at least one question from each of those five categories. For example, films would qualify if there is shown: 1) a structure where decisions are made by one person, 2) a hero, who applies physical violence, 3) a leader who has a privileged birth, 4) ordinary citizens are inefficient and helpless and 5) the presence of gender inequality. The table 5-1 presents the ranking of the films according to number of points determined by the Democracy Index for Films. Evidence suggests that highest-scoring films are Troy (2004), 300 (2006) and The Hunger Games (2012) with 35, 31 and 30 points accordingly. Lowest-scoring turned to be the films National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007), Angels and Demons (2009) and Inception (2010) with only 4, 6 and 7 points respectively. Out of 33 films selected for study 26 successfully pass the five-category test. Only 7 films fail to pass test in all five categories. The seven films, which do not pass 5CT, are: Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith (2005), Inception (2010), The Da Vinci

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Code (2006), Mission: Impossible—Ghost Protocol (2011), Casino Royale (2006), Angels and Demons (2009) and National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007). The results of the five-category test are highly consistent with the ranking obtained through DIF. Inception (2010), The Da Vinci Code (2006), National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007) and Angels and Demons (2009) are lowest scoring films according to the ranking. Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol (2011) and Casino Royale (2006) are 8th and 9th in the ranking. Although Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith (2005) is only 15th in the ranking — based on its plot it could be considered as the most pro-democratic films among the ones selected for study: not only word " democracy" is mentioned in it 3 times — it also provides a clear comparison of a democratic structure versus an empire, and shows the superiority of democracy versus other forms of government. Table 5 Ranking of the films according to the democracy index for filmsSource: the author's calculations. Table 52 Ranking of the films according to the five-category test and the democracy index for filmsSource: the author's calculations.

## **Conclusion**

The current chapter presented empirical evidence, based on analyses of 33 films selected for the study. Along with statistics the chapter presented the results of the Five Category Test and evidence from the Democracy Index for films. The next chapter provides concluding remarks, discusses contributions to existing body of knowledge, and provides policy recommendations and directions for further research.

## Conclusion

### Summary

The current study analyzes all-time worldwide highest grossing films from the perspective of democracy. Adapted specifically to the present research the Democracy Index for Films is used to rank 33 films released in the last decade from high scoring to low scoring. The questions used for constructing the democracy index are clustered in five categories. Most of the questions are directly or indirectly related to such elements of democracy as are citizens' participation in decision-making, fairness, public awareness and satisfaction, etc. Although it cannot be claimed that the democracy index for films is the unique instrument to identify and distinguish pro-democratically from anti-democratically oriented films – nevertheless, the ability to differentiate high-scoring and low-scoring films gives basis for the following conclusions: high-scoring films contain the greater number of elements which are not characteristic for democratic structures. Empirical evidence also shows that high-scoring movies are more likely to score in each of five categories (films obtain at least one point from each of the five categories and they get points for each positive answer to the question from the survey). According to this results highest-scoring films are Troy (2004), 300 (2006) and the Hunger Games (2012) with 35, 31 and 30 points accordingly. On the contrary, lowest-scoring films are National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007), Angels and Demons (2009) and Inception (2010) with only 4, 6 and 7 points respectively. Both, evidence from the Democracy Index in films, as well as the results of the five-category test suggest that, indeed, there is some strong dominance of films with non-democratic elements. Non-democratic structures dominate among the political systems shown in the <https://assignbuster.com/the-corruption-in-films-film-studies-essay/>

films. Structures are rarely questioned by governors. Authoritarian decision-making is dominant over multilateral practices. Decisions are mostly not democratically legitimated, but reflect subjective ambitions of decision makers. An absolute majority of systems shown in films apply death penalty as a form of punishment. Almost 80% of the films show structures in which the leading decision maker is a strong master whose statements are not to be changed. Over 80% of the films show police as inefficient and weak, which raises expectations for a superhero to protect citizens from crime and evil powers. In almost 75% of the films the presence of corruption in political, administrative or judicial branches is observed. Judiciary form has political influence in over 70% cases. The way citizens are represented also suggests the strong presence of non-democratic elements in fictitious films plots. In most cases, people are not allowed to protest or even to complain against the structure as decision makers expect obedience from citizens. A single hero fights against a corrupt system or an evil villain in 50% of the cases. Individuals who are against the hero and criticize him do not survive in two-thirds of the cases. In the majority of the films, people are organized by someone instead of being self-organized. Villains are shown either as autocratic rulers or as external threats to existing systems. Authoritarian systems are never questioned by the leaders themselves. In 88% of cases, leaders are males, which is in line with findings of Ponocny and Ponocny (2006). Dictators and villains usually feel threatened by outstanding heroes instead of the common people. Such cases could be interpreted as a hidden pattern, that common people have no power to fight authoritarian regimes; it is considered a prerogative of the superheroes. In 75% of the films, villains are killed by superheroes instead of facing a trial. Thus, legal principles of



justice are questionable. Most leaders demonstrate aggressive or dominant behavior. Heroes in fictitious film plots are not only the ones who have to fight the villains, but also to save nations as they are endowed with supernatural powers, are superior to ordinary citizens and practice arbitrary law. In most cases the role of the superhero can be characterized as follows: The superhero is not part of the democratic system. The superhero is not an elected power of state. The superhero's decisions are often subjective and outside the legislative system. The superhero practices arbitrary law. Arbitrary law is not compatible with democratic principles. Superheroes do not encourage people to stand up and fight but do all by themselves. The superhero fails to achieve a democratic solution for the conflict. The superhero thus stands as a symbol for 'higher justice', as a corrective for the deficiencies of man-made legal systems. Out of 33 films, 26 successfully pass the Five Category Test. Seven films do not pass the test and accordingly could be considered the most pro-democratic ones. These are: Star Wars: Episode III — Revenge of the Sith (2005), Inception (2010), The Da Vinci Code (2006), Mission: Impossible — Ghost Protocol (2011), Casino Royale (2006), Angels and Demons (2009) and National Treasure: Book of Secrets (2007). The results of 5CT are highly consistent with the ranking in the DIF. Although Star Wars: Episode III—Revenge of the Sith (2005) is only 15th in the ranking - by its plot it could easily be labeled the most pro-democratic films among ones selected for study. Not only is the word "democracy" is mentioned three times — it also shows the superiority of the democratic structure in comparison with other forms of government.

## **Contribution to knowledge**

This study contributes to the body of knowledge in democracy measurement in media and particularly in films. The paper builds on the previous evidence, such as media influence on the public, and especially on children. This way, the paper contributes to understanding of the values that films filled up with non-democratic elements could promote and what influence they could have on people. The study is pioneering, in the sense, that it seems the first paper to analyze blockbuster films from the point of democracy and issues related to social equality. DIF, as well as 5CT, could serve as an instrument for future studies in similar fields.

## **Implications for relevant stakeholders**

Violence and the dominance of male stereotypes are observed in most films focusing on both non-democratic elements and stories. While it might make sense that several specific films like Troy and 300 are dominated by non-democratic elements, and are also non-democratic characters centred — they would not or could not incorporate democracy propaganda or pro-democratic persons as major characters. However, most of the films made in Hollywood are non-democratic elements and characters centred. Empirical evidence suggests that Hollywood does not prioritize roles for democracy and is not intended in tell democratic stories. Things would change if filmmakers and screen writers would focus more films on democracy and pro-democratic characters. Reports show worldwide increase in box office numbers, which is the evidence of continuing popularity of films. " Global box office for all films released in each country around the world reached \$32. 6 billion in 2011, up 3% over 2010's total, due entirely to the

increase in international box office (\$22.4 billion). Each international region experienced growth in 2011. Chinese box office grew by 35% in 2011 to become the third largest market behind US and Japan, experiencing by far the largest growth in major markets. Box offices outside U. S. grew up 35% over five years period, driven by growth in various markets, including China and Russia." [20] There is much to learn also from films which do not promote democracy, as those could serve as good material for a discussion of how it is in films and how it should not be in life. As discussed in section 2.2, people, especially teenagers and children, are easily influenced by media. The implication addressed to parents is to watch films together with their children on a regular basis, to ask relevant questions, to discuss values, and to encourage critical thinking. Alternatively, parents could have conversations with their children about lately seen films. Since children are more likely to be impressed by the films they watch in comparison to adults — they also could be very enthusiastic to discuss the films with their parents. Those discussions might be an essential opportunity for democracy awareness education. The implication addressed to primary schools is the implementation of interactive classroom lessons, where teachers could show pupils fragments from motion pictures and discuss them. This way, children could get to know the very basics of democracy. Teachers could influence children's perception of things they see in films and media. This can play an important role in rising democracy awareness among the youth.

## **Future research**

For future research, it would be interesting to test DIF and 5CT on data from different time frames. As present research is restricted to worldwide

blockbusters from the last decade – analyzing films released in 1993-2002 and 1983-92 would allow us to judge about the development of anti-democratic elements in highest grossing films throughout time. Alternatively, one could apply DIF and 5CT to films which won, or were nominated for the Academy Award in different years. This could be interesting, especially, as many of these films are not necessarily highest grossing, nor belong to IMDB's Top 250 – rather, it would be films chosen by film industry experts. Examining those films could help us to answer the question: Does the Academy of Motion Picture Arts and Sciences care about democracy? Another direction of future research would be instead of focusing on worldwide highest grossing films – to examine Top 250 movies as voted by users of imdb. com. Of course it is up to consumers to choose which films to see, but still, blockbusters are usually associated with top filmmakers, studios, directors and actors, while the Top 250 as voted by IMDB users reflect the pure preferences of people. Democracy in media, and more specifically in films, remains to be an underexplored topic. The academic interest in films seems approximately inversely proportional to the worldwide consumption of films. Therefore, it could be worthwhile to put more emphasis on the research of how films influence the audience's political ideas and ideologies.