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**What can entertainment theory say about perceptions of classic versus
popular films?**

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by

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Abstract

What can entertainment theory say about perceptions of classic versus popular films?

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The purpose of this study is to examine individuals' perceptions of *classicness* in film experiences. To this end, the paper begins by providing general anecdotal and professional definitions of classicness, and by pointing out the limited explication found in previous academic literature in entertainment. I discuss distinctions between enjoyment and appreciation from previous literature in media psychology. Following this, a study is presented by applying a measure of enjoyment and appreciation adapted from Oliver and Bartsch's scale (2010) to an online questionnaire in order to understand individuals' film experiences with both popular (high grossing) and classic (high rating) films. Results indicate that perceptions of classicness are highly associated with appreciation, but unrelated to enjoyment. Additionally, results also provide a negative relation between appreciation and the release-year as well as budget. Discussion focuses on the study's empirical definition of classicness, as well as the study's extension of previous research examining the relationship between film popularity, budget, and audience perceptions (Grizzard, Lewis, Lee, & Eden, 2011).

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1. Introduction

Literature in entertainment theory has hitherto stayed away from defining the notion of a classic film, or investigating how audiences use the word “classic” to describe films. Although this topic has been avoided in the entertainment literature, anecdotal definitions and criteria for what it means to be classic abound. For example, referring to literature, Mark Twain (1900) famously said, “a classic is something that everybody wants to have read but nobody wants to read.” Similarly, on *The Scarlett Olive* (2014), a “podcast devoted to the memory of classic films,” the authors suggest that classic films tend to be strong in emotion. Classicfilmguide.com (2014), another website dedicated to remembering classic films, defines classicness as “movies which make you think, appreciate ... give one a deep feeling of satisfaction - a good cry, a warming in your heart, a laugh in your belly, or a gut-wrenching sorrow - or even help you to learn something new.” Martin Scorsese (1995) discusses classic films as being “complex,” “reflecting changing times,” and those that yield “fascinating insights into American culture.”

Although literature in entertainment theory has not specifically investigated this topic, the anecdotal definitions above point to several concepts that have been investigated by media scholars. Specifically, media experiences can be *effortful*, *negatively valenced*, and *thought provoking*, which goes beyond pleasure principle used by the majority of media theories to explain liking and appraisal. Research has now begun to integrate these concepts into descriptions of the entertainment experience.

The definitions of classicness above capture these concepts that are now integral to understanding media appreciation. Mark Twain’s definition (1900) above points out that classic texts may be more *effortful* to experience (because “nobody wants to read”

them). The definition from Classicfilmguide.com (2014) suggests that classic films may be characterized by sad or *negative emotion* (“a good cry”). And Scorsese’s definition (1995) describes a cognitive component to classic films, suggesting they go beyond mere hedonic value (“fascinating insights”). This definition is similar to Dolf Zillmann’s distinction (1974) between films that “delight and enlighten” audiences to those that merely delight.

The concepts above also point to recent work entertainment theory regarding diverging audience responses to entertainment content. In order to more formally map out an empirically based definition of *classiness*, this paper begins by pointing out general anecdotal, organizational, and folk descriptions of classiness, discussing the limited explication found in previous definitions of enjoyment, and reviewing distinctions between enjoyment and appreciation from initial research. Following this, a study is presented by applying a measure of enjoyment and appreciation adapted from Oliver and Bartsch’s scale (2010) to an online questionnaire in order to understand individuals’ film experiences. Finally, I report the results from the questionnaire to verify the assumptions that individuals’ perception of classiness is highly associated with appreciation, but not with enjoyment. Discussion centers on implications for entertainment scholarship.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Entertainment Research

Previous research on media enjoyment includes audience moral judgments (Zillmann & Bryant, 1975), individual differences (Raney & Bryant, 2002; Weber, Tamborini, Lee, & Stipp, 2008; Zillmann & Cantor, 1977), moods (Zillmann, 1988, 2000; Zillmann, Hezel & Medoff, 1980), and enjoyment of various genres defined by Hall (2005, p.385). Most of this type of research defined enjoyment merely as hedonic satisfaction to predict audience responses to media entertainment (Bryant & Miron, 2002; Raney, 2003; Zillmann & Bryant, 1986).

The concept of enjoyment is often associated with audiences' pleasurable responses such as relaxation to media and responses such as amusement, or thrills (Johnston, 1995; Sparks, 1986; Tamborini & Stiff, 1987; Zuckerman, 1996). Such research that relies on the pleasure principle is abundant in entertainment theory (e.g., Miron, 2003; Raney, 2003; Raney & Bryant, 2002; Tamborini, 2003).

Even though defining enjoyment as pleasure and diversion is understandable, it fails to cover the full spectrum of entertainment experiences. Moreover, the films that are often cited as the best of all time, or are otherwise considered classic, are not always filled with delighting and pleasurable content. For example, in the classic play (and film adaptations) *Les Misérables*, there are many depicted injustices that evoke negative emotions. Actress, Fantine, is discriminated due to unmarried pregnancy and must work as a prostitute. Actor, Jean Valjean, has been imprisoned for nineteen years because of stealing bread simply to survive. He suffers from bullying and discrimination to find a job after his release, because his identity card is marked as a jailed person. Police officer

Javert's suicide is a mockery and complaints for the people who worship the justice and the rule of law. Although this story is a well-received classic, many individuals would claim that they did not have fun or get much pleasure from this type of media experience, or at least many portions of the story evoke negative emotion.

By contrast, the 1992 film, *Ricochet*, starring Ice T, John Lithgow, and Denzel Washington satisfied all justice needs in the end of the story, and is likely to be more enjoyed, but less appreciated. The film is also not likely to be resurrected as a classic film. While being framed, "good guy", police officer, Nick Styles, ultimately proves his innocence, apprehends criminals, and upholds justice. In the end, the purely evil villain, Earl Blake, is killed, thus receiving his just deserts and satisfy all of the audiences salient needs. Whereas *Ricochet* might be characterized as a simple good-guy versus bad-guy narrative that delights audiences on an emotional level, the gratifications from a story such as *Les Miserables* go beyond the emotional to cause contemplation of morality and humanity. Moreover, *Les Miserables* is more mutually taxing on the audience, due to its negative emotionality and complex moral considerations.

Recent research has begun to reflect the difference between these two types of stories. Scholarship has taken into account that further characterizing the functional role of entertainment solely in terms of pleasure yields some limitations (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010; Lewis, Tamborini, weber, in press; Tamborini, 2011; Vorderer & Ritterfeld, 2009). For instance, poignant or tragic films such as *Les Miserables* account for a great amount of the media diet. People may express their preference toward these kinds of films, but less of them would regard their movie experiences as a pleasurable ones. Lewis, Tamborini, and Weber (2011) indicated that on selective exposure to media entertainment,

most research uses logic consistent with pleasure principle when explaining media selection. They further expressed that many entertainment studies applied mood management theory arguing that media selection is based on the desire to extend pleasurable moods and shorten non-pleasurable ones. However, using pleasurable approach as a type of logic is incapable to explain the attraction to tragedy, drama, art films, or documentary, which may evoke strong negative emotion yet still manage to be positively appraised by audiences.

2.2 Appreciation as Audience Response

Although the paradox of attraction to sad films dates at least as far back as Aristotle, social scientists have only recently begun applying their methods to explaining it. Entertainment scholars (Oliver & Bartsch, 2010) proposed that *appreciation*, which has been addressed not only as means of accounting for “the paradox of enjoyment of tragedy” (Oliver & Bartsch, 2011, p.30) but a means of broadening the scope of entertainment responses. However, the pervasiveness of appreciation as an audience response seems to raise another theoretical question for scholars. That is, what gratifications do audiences get from such entertainment for? On the other hand, the scope of fun and the diversion are well-covered by some gratification models such as mood management (Zillmann, 1988, 2000; Zillmann, Hezel, & Medoff, 1980), or sensation seeking (Zuckerman, 1994). The notion of appreciation seems to require more studies to account for its emotional and cognitional roles in entertainment experience.

2.3 Theoretical and Conceptual Backgrounds

Contemporary literature in entertainment theory distinguishes enjoyment from appreciation in at least three ways. First, Oliver and Bartsch (2010) stated that the

difference between enjoyment and appreciation is that they are driven by different gratifications, *hedonic* versus *eudaimonic* gratifications. According to Oliver's (2008) argument that audiences use entertainment not only to look for pleasure seeking (one of theoretical perspectives defined as enjoyment) from entertainment consumption, but also as a means of contemplating human virtues and meaningful life experiences, which is regarded as eudaimonic gratification. Such contemplations were tied to a combination of cognitions and positive/negative emotion mixtures (Oliver, 2008).

Furthermore, Oliver (2008) discussed that the concept of eudaimonic gratifications (in contrast to hedonic gratifications) echoed Zillmann's (1998) statement that the concept of enjoyment, as a commonly understood, may not be appropriately described as the gratifications to cover all types of entertainment responses. However, the experiences of enjoyment and appreciation should not be mutually exclusive categories of viewer's entertainment responses; instead, they can be characterized as a set of gratification elements that regularly co-occur (Oliver & Barstch, 2010). For example, the 2005 fiction/thriller film, starring Ewan McGregor and Scarlett Johansson, depicts that there is a bunch of clones locked in a secret island. The plot assumes that if clones have their own thoughts, whether people still have the right to control over clones' organs for transplanting use. Although this story is trying to address a moral/ethics conflict under today's technology, the main characters, the clones, escaped the island to defend their right to survive in the end. Thus, although mixed emotion and contemplation of virtues is present during the narrative, the end of the narrative provides closure for the audience, yielding both enjoyment and appreciation. Similarly, the 2002 fiction/thriller film, *Minority Report*, starring Tom Cruise, discusses necessity of "PreCrime" program, which

can predict criminals in the future. Questions of morality emerge in the mind of the audience: If the suspect hasn't committed a crime, how can I assume the crime will be made and arrest the suspect, first? What if the suspect was just thinking about a crime but stopped this idea in the moment right before he makes it, is it still a crime? The "PreCrime" division is shut down because of a fundamental flaw in the system: if one knows his or her future, he or she can change it. Both films depict moral /ethics dilemmas and further make audiences think about human virtues (eudaimonic gratification), but the end of movies lead to a positive, enjoyable ending which also satisfy pleasure-seeking principles for audiences (hedonic gratification).

Vorderer and Ritterfeld (2009) discuss appreciation in a similar manner, but from a slightly different perspective. They proposed a two-factor model of media responses to account for differences between enjoyment versus appreciation, which distinguished the two responses based on which types of needs are satisfied by exposure to various types of media entertainment. Consistent with Oliver's (2008) statement that not all entertainment responses are driven by pleasure satisfaction, Vorderer and Ritterfeld (2009) identified both *lower-order* needs (i.e., rather immediate or lower order functions) labeled as enjoyment and *higher-order* needs (i.e., less immediate or higher-order goals) labeled as appreciation. In Vorderer's model (2009), the enjoyment factor concentrates on hedonic needs such as mood or pleasure, the appreciation factor focuses on the non-hedonic needs such as self-determination theory's (SDT; Ryan & Deci, 2000) autonomy, competence, and relatedness needs. In addition, Vorderer (2009) associated enjoyment (the satisfaction of lower-order needs) and appreciation (the satisfaction of higher-order needs) with distinct "emotional" and "rational" processing systems, and argued that both lead to

positive valuations of entertainment and the experiences arisen from the interplay between these processing systems occurs mostly without our awareness.

Finally, Tamborini (2011, 2012) proposed another way of distinguishing enjoyment from appreciation. His dual-process model distinguishes enjoyment from appreciation by focusing on the cognitive processes from media appraisals, and the manner in which needs are satisfied. Although the means of categorization of Tamborini's approach is similar to Vorderer's (2009) two-factor model, Tamborini's model does not distinguish enjoyment from appreciation based on a needs hierarchy. Rather than distinguishing enjoyment and appreciation based on which needs are satisfied, the model focuses on the manner in which the needs are satisfied. Tamborini's dual-process model can be differentiated into a quick, intuitive, and gut-level reactions labeled as enjoyment and a slower, reflective, and considered one labeled appreciation. Such slower, deliberative appraisals come about when needs are in conflict, such as a storyline in which the mutual satisfaction of all salient needs is impossible. One such situation is a moral dilemma, where a character must choose between multiple decisions without a clearly best choice. According to Evans and Stanovich (2013), the heightened demand on working memory during such situations is tied to higher order reasoning processes. Base on this logic, the slower and reflective reaction (i.e., appreciation) in Tamborini's dual-process model can account for the response when different intuitive preferences are in conflict. Such media experiences are more effortful due to their heightened demand on working memory. They are characterized by negative emotion, because not all salient needs are satisfied. The cognitive conflict inherent in such media experiences also

produces deliberative responses. Thus, this framework maps onto the anecdotal definitions of classicness mentioned in the introduction.

Notably, the dual-process model tested by Lewis, Tamborini, and Weber (in press) reinforced the argument provided in Oliver and Bartsch's study (2010) that appreciation is driven by the contemplation of human virtues. However, the model's logic broadens the scope of entertainment responses by providing a cognitive account of the mechanisms (instinctive moral domains) and processes (needs satisfaction) common to both enjoyment and appreciation. The framework also integrates a theory of morality to more systematically examine which virtues might be contemplated by audiences during such meaningful media experiences.

3. Research Hypothesis

3.1 Appreciation and Perceptions of Film Classicness

According to the anecdotal definitions about classicness above, such media experiences is tied to effortful, negatively valenced, and thought provoking reactions. The notion of classicness goes beyond pleasure principle which labels enjoyment as individuals' hedonic responses; on the other hand, can resonate with the concept of appreciation which accounts for the effortful, negative, and deliberative media reactions as well. I thus make these two hypotheses to further explore whether individual's perceptions of classicness are associated to the concept of appreciation.

H1: Films rated higher on appreciation will be more likely to be perceived as classic by participants.

H2: Film enjoyment will be unrelated to perceptions of whether a film is perceived as classic.

3.2 Film Age

Anecdotal, organizational, and folk definitions of classicness often include something about how classic films should be old. For example, News from the Library of Congress (2013) indicates that films must be at least 10 years old to be recognized as classic, cultural, historical, aesthetical, or significant films, and to qualify for National Film Registry for preservation. Similarly, Jim Emerson (2008), a movie critic working for RogerEbert.com, states that all the classic pictures he mentions up are before 1983, and those films were so contemporary at the time. I therefore pose this as a research question:

RQ1: Does the age of the film relate to perceptions of classicness?

3.3 Budget

Previous literature has shown that film budget relates to the degree to which justice is served in film endings. Grizzard, Lewis, Lee, and Eden (2011) found that higher budget related to greater justice satisfaction in film endings. They measured the degree to which films adhered to disposition theory, whose tenets state that audience enjoyment is maximized when virtuous characters are rewarded and villainous characters are punished, whereas enjoyment is minimized when virtuous characters are punished or villainous characters are rewarded. The idea is that films in which the hero and villain both receive their deserved reward or punishment are enjoyed more than films in which justice is not perfectly satisfied. This is consistent with notions of unsatisfied needs (and resultant negative emotions) characteristic of sad films that are appreciated and not enjoyed (See Figure 1). It may be the case that classic films are more negative emotionally, and thus are more likely to be lower budget films than Hollywood box office smashes. It may be the case that Hollywood producers strive to maximize profits on big budget films by ensuring that endings clearly satisfy viewers' moral and emotional needs. Since classic films tend to not be of this ilk, they likely have lower budgets than simpler Hollywood-style films. I therefore pose this as a research question:

RQ2: Are perceptions of classicness related to film budget?

It may be the case as well that perceptions of classicness vary based on personality, temperament, or other individual differences. If the logic above is correct that classicness covaries with appreciation, then other studies' findings may be informative. For example, Lewis, Tamborini, Grizzard, Weber, and Prabhu (2012) found that political ideology (measured in terms of participants' responses on various moral

dimensions) moderated the degree to which stories were appreciated, such that high progressives (vs. low progressives) appreciated sad stories more. This was explained as an underlying temperamental force, such that threat sensitivity, political ideology, and basic moral foundations might influence narrative appreciation. In the current study, I measure threat sensitivity (in terms of regulatory focus; Higgins, 1997), political ideology, and moral foundations to determine whether these individual differences will influence ratings of classicness as well.

RQ3: Do individual differences in moral decision-making and threat sensitivity influence perceptions of classicness?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

Participants ($N = 249$, $N_{\text{female}} = 180$) were recruited from the participant pool of the Department of Advertising and Public Relations at the University of Texas at Austin. Participants' ages ranged from 19 to 37 ($M_{\text{age}} = 22.25$, $SD = 3.082$), and their ethnicity are as follow: White/Caucasian ($N=110$), Asian ($N=89$), Hispanic ($N=38$), African American ($N = 6$), Pacific Islander ($N = 1$), and the other ($N = 5$). Participants received course credit and were informed that they were taking part in a study designed to understand individuals' perceptions of films.

4.2 Film Sample

The participants described above rated a sample of 50 films. (See Table 1 for complete list of films along with their source.) Films were randomly selected from a Top 100 IMDB list of classic films ($n = 25$; <http://www.imdb.com/chart/top>) as well as a Top 100 Box Office Mojo list of highest grossing films ($n = 25$; <http://boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>). This was done to ensure that participants saw a number of films ranging in both classicness and popularity. These films later served as the unit of analysis (see results). Three films happened to be on both lists (*Dark Knight*, *Return of the King*, and *The Two Towers*).

4.3 Procedure

In this study, I conducted an online questionnaire. After reading an informed consent page, participants were randomly assigned different versions of the questionnaire in order to control for effects of order and fatigue. (The order of the 50 films was

randomized for each participant, although the order of the preceding individual difference measures stayed the same across all participants.)

The questionnaire included three parts, the first of which was five individual-difference measures (described below under measures subheading), then fifty sets of film questions, and demographic information. In the first part, participants were asked to fill out five different measures including tolerance for ambiguity, status orientation, regulatory focus, moral foundations questionnaires, and a political ideology rating.

Following completion of individual-difference questions, participants were directed to a randomized list of the top 25 classic movies retrieved from IMDB's top 100 classic movies list (See Table 1) as well as the top 25 highest grossing movies retrieved from Box Office Mojo's top 100 highest grossing movies list (See Table 1). For each film, participants were asked the following questions: (1) "Have you seen the movie?" (a dichotomous, yes/no response, if yes, participants were asked to fill out additional measures related to the film. (2) "Do you personally consider this movie to be a classic or not?" (a dichotomous, yes/no response). (3) Oliver and Bartsch's (2010) two 3-item scales for enjoyment and appreciation. After having responded to all individual difference measures and rated all of the films they had seen, participants were asked to give the demographic information (age, gender, and ethnicity) on the final screen of the online survey.

4.4 Measures

4.4.1 Status Orientation. Status orientation is intended to measure individuals' perceptions toward their social status. I created several items to address this dimension. Higher scores indicate a greater interest in esteem and status among peers. The measure

used 5 items ($\alpha = .91$) with a 7-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). A sample item is “I want my friends and acquaintances respect my social status.”

4.4.2 Regulatory Focus. Regulatory focus assesses individuals' orientations toward their goals. Regulatory focus posits two separate and independent self-regulatory orientations: prevention and promotion, which are the subscales existing within the instrument. Participants with higher scores on prevention focus means that then s/he avoids undesirable outcomes, views goals as oughts rather than possibilities, and is concerned with non-losses and losses; on the contrary, promotion focus emphasizes pursuing desirable outcomes, views goals as ideals, and is concerned with gains and non-gains. The measure (See Lockwood, Jordan, & Kunda, 2002 *General Regulatory Focus Measure (GRFM)*) uses 18 items, the prevention focus subscale consisted of 8 items ($\alpha = .81$) and the promotion focus subscale consisted of another 8 items ($\alpha = .88$), with 9-point Likert-type response scales ranging from 1 (not at all true of me) to 9 (very true of me). The sample items are “In general, I am focused on preventing negative events in my life (Prevention)”, or “I frequently imagine how I will achieve my hopes and aspirations (Promotion)”.

4.4.3 Moral Foundations Questionnaire. The moral foundations questionnaire (MFQ) is designed to understand individuals' morality variety and similarities across cultures, and assess individuals' saliences from the five moral intuitions: *care* ($\alpha = .72$), *fairness* ($\alpha = .72$), *ingroup* ($\alpha = .62$), *authority* ($\alpha = .68$), and *purity* ($\alpha = .77$). These five subscales exist and each of them includes 5 items within the instrument. The measure (See Graham, Haidt, & Brian, 2008) is divided into two parts; the first part has 15 items

asking about the relevance of various topics to their moral decision. This section has a 6-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 0 (not at all relevant) to 5 (extremely relevant). The response scale (the second half of the measure) asks about agreement or disagreement with various moral assertions. Responses for this second section range from 0 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). A sample item for the first half includes “Whether or not someone suffered emotionally (care).” For the second half, a sample item includes “Respect for authority is a virtue all children should learn (authority).”

4.4.4 Political Ideology. Participants were asked to rate their own political ideology on a single item. One item was used, which consisted of a 7-point-response scale ranging from 1 (very liberal) to 7 (very conservative) and a midpoint labeled “moderate.” The item was worded as follows: “As best you can, please rate your political ideology using the following scale.”

4.4.5 Enjoyment and Appreciation. The measure consisted of two 3-item scales (See Oliver & Bartsch, 2010 for scale validation). Both measures use a 7-point Likert-type response scale ranging from 1 (strongly disagree) to 7 (strongly agree). For enjoyment, items asked whether the story would be “fun,” “a good time,” and “entertaining.” For appreciation, items asked whether the story would be “meaningful,” “moving,” and “thought-provoking.” These two concepts were measured for each of the 50 films.

4.4.6 Classicness. This measure was a single item, dichotomous yes/no response that asked participants “Do you personally consider this movie to be a classic or not?” Participants responded by selecting one of two options (“Classic” or “Not classic”). Classicness was measured for each of the 50 films.

5. Results

The data were first re-organized such that films (rather than participants) became the level of analysis. (I return to the participant-level analysis below when addressing RQ3.) Each row contained the specific average enjoyment rating, average appreciation rating, proportion of participants who considered the film classic, budget, inflation-adjusted budget (USGPO, 1975), and release year of the film.

To examine the difference between the Box Office Mojo films (chosen because they were popular) and the IMDB films (chosen because they were considered classic), *t* tests were conducted. (Rather than a single comparison between IMDB and Box Office Mojo lists, two separate sets of independent-samples analyses were conducted due to the fact that three of the films appeared on both lists.) As expected, films on the IMDB list were more likely to be considered classic, $M_{\text{IMDB}} = .71$, $SD = .17$; $M_{\text{other}} = .47$, $SD = .25$; $t(48) = 3.94$, Cohen's $d = 1.10$, $p < .001$, were more appreciated, $M_{\text{IMDB}} = 5.17$, $SD = .56$; $M_{\text{other}} = 4.69$, $SD = .74$; $t(48) = 2.60$, Cohen's $d = .73$, $p = .01$, and *less* enjoyed, $M_{\text{IMDB}} = 5.33$, $SD = .57$; $M_{\text{other}} = 5.85$, $SD = .30$; $t(48) = -3.91$, Cohen's $d = 1.41$, $p < .001$, than the films not on the IMDB list.

Also as expected, the films on the Box Office Mojo list were less likely to be considered classic, $M_{\text{MOJO}} = .49$, $SD = .24$; $M_{\text{other}} = .71$, $SD = .18$; $t(48) = -3.72$, Cohen's $d = 1.04$, $p < .001$, were less appreciated, $M_{\text{MOJO}} = 4.73$, $SD = .70$; $M_{\text{other}} = 5.17$, $SD = .59$; $t(48) = -2.39$, Cohen's $d = .68$, $p = .02$, and *more* enjoyed, $M_{\text{MOJO}} = 5.85$, $SD = .28$; $M_{\text{other}} = 5.26$, $SD = .57$; $t(48) = 4.70$, Cohen's $d = 1.41$, $p < .001$, than the films not on the IMDB list. (See Table 1 for enjoyment and appreciation ratings for each of the 50 films.)

Also, participants were less likely to have seen and rated the IMDB (classic) films ($M = 87.37$) than the Box Office Mojo (popular) films ($M = 151.83$). Regardless of the lists, all 50 of the films were enjoyed as none fell below the midpoint of the enjoyment scale. Six of the films did fall below the midpoint on appreciation, however (all from the Box Office Mojo list: *Iron Man 3*, *Transformers 3*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides*, *Shrek 2*, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*, and *Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest*). See histograms in Table 1 for distribution of films' enjoyment and appreciation levels.

To test the association between perceptions of classicness and appreciation (h1) and enjoyment (h2), the average enjoyment rating and appreciation rating was given to each film, along with the proportion of participants who categorized the film as a classic. I initially create a correlation matrix (See Table 2) containing each film's (a) average enjoyment rating, (b) average appreciation rating, (c) proportion of individuals who considered the film to be classic, (d) the release year of the film, (e) a dichotomous variable indicating whether the film appeared on IMDB's list, as well as (f) a dichotomous variable indicating whether the film appeared on Box Office Mojo's list.

Some interesting patterns were evident in the correlation matrix. First, appreciation was strongly and positively related to perceptions of a film being classic, $r = .73$, $p < .001$. This finding supports h1 that appreciation will be positively related to perceptions of the film being classic. Second, and notably supporting h2's contention that enjoyment and classicness will be unrelated, enjoyment was indeed unrelated to whether the film was considered classic, $r = .02$, $p = .85$.

The correlation matrix also seemed to provide clear answers to the first two research questions. With regard to RQ1, the release year was negatively related to perceptions of the film being classic, $r = -.45$, $p < .001$, suggesting that individuals are more likely to perceive older films as being classic than younger films. With regard to RQ2, film budget (adjusted for inflation) was negatively related to perceptions of being classic, $r = -.55$, $p < .001$, suggesting that films thought of as classic tend to have lower budgets than those rated lower on classicness.

I wished to control these variables for one another to ensure that budget, year, and appraisals (enjoyment and appreciation) were not confounded, and that each played an independent role in contributing to perceptions of classicness. To measure whether appraisals, release year, and budget accounted for unique portions of variance, a linear regression was conducted with three blocks. Enjoyment and appreciation were entered in block 1, release year in block 2, and inflation-adjusted budget in block 3. Each level yielded significant changes to the R^2 value (see Table 3). Enjoyment and appreciation in level 1 yielded an R^2 of .54, level 2 (release year) yielded a $\Delta R^2 = .14$, $p < .001$, and level 3 (inflation-adjusted budget) yielded a $\Delta R^2 = .04$, $p = .02$. Each level of the model accounted for significant portions of variance. The final model 's adjusted R^2 value was .69, accounting for the majority of variance in perceptions of films' classicness.

5.1 Individual Differences

To address RQ3's question regarding whether the individual differences measured would influence participants' perceptions of classicness, I went back to the participant-level data file. I computed an overall appreciation variable, an overall enjoyment variable,

and a proportion classic variable (reflecting the proportion of rated films that were judged to be classic by each individual participant).

Out of all the regressions (see Tables 4 through 7), there were no significant factors that contributed to perceptions of classicness. However, the estimate for MFQ's ingroup loyalty variable yielded a nearly significant, $\beta = -0.54$, $p = .08$, suggesting that perhaps higher scores on ingroup loyalty is negatively related to perceptions of classicness. Interestingly, this became significant when analyzing only the films from the (classic) IMDb list, $\beta = -.17$, $p = .04$ but was unrelated to perceptions of classicness from the (popular) Boxofficemojo list, $\beta = -0.5$, $p = .53$.

6. Discussion

The current study attempted to accomplish several goals. Beyond attempting to understand the concept of film classicness, my study also attempted to integrate the notion of classicness with existing entertainment theory, as well as extend previous research on how film budget relates to enjoyment and appreciation. Below, I will discuss each of these points in turn.

6.1 Concepts of Film Classicness

My goal was to understand what contributed to individuals' perceptions of classicness. The results gave several clear (although partial) answers to this question. For example, I found that appreciation was strongly related to whether a film was perceived as classic. This finding thus links concepts of meaningfulness and psychological conflict to the study of classic films. If the frameworks on enjoyment and appreciation in the introduction are correct, then classic films have several common qualities.

First, they are meaningful. That is, they make human virtue and morality highly salient to the audience. Second, they are moving, which means that they are strongly emotional. Third, they are thought provoking, which may mean that different psychological needs are in conflict within classic narratives such that some needs must be violated or go unsatisfied so that others may be satisfied. This component means that there may be negative or mixed emotions provoked by such narratives.

Another partial answer was related to the finding that enjoyment was unrelated to classicness. Although my sample was not large enough to accept this null hypothesis using equivalence tests, the relationship between enjoyment and classicness was virtually non-existent. This suggests that films may get away with not satisfying all audience needs,

yet still remain highly regarded and positively appraised such that they become classics. Interestingly, the film with the highest appreciation rating was also the film with the lowest enjoyment rating (*Schindler's List*; see Table 1 for means).

Lastly, with regard to perceptions, the release year of a film was negatively related to appreciation. This means that older films tended to be appreciated more than younger films. Of course, my sample intentionally included older classic films, and this finding needs to be qualified by the fact that my sample is not a random sample of all films, but rather a list that intentionally included the most popular films as well as the most classic of all films. Still yet, the finding is consistent with the notion from critics and others that classic films must be of a certain age before they may be classic. That is, standing the test of time is one criterion by which individuals judge films as classic or not classic.

6.2 Integration of Existing Entertainment Theory

Secondly, I attempted to integrate the notion of film classicness with entertainment theory. Previous social-scientific literature has not examined perceptions of classicness, and this study links understandings of classicness with newer research on the distinction between enjoyment and appreciation. Future research on appreciation may begin to further divide the different types of audience response to entertainment based on my research by considering perceptions of film age and classicness.

6.3 Extension of Previous Research

The last goal of the study was to extend previous research examining films and their budgets (Grizzard, Lewis, Lee, & Eden, 2011). The study by Grizzard et al. (2011) coded summaries of films (i.e., a content analysis) to measure the degree to which they

adhered to the tenets of disposition theory (Raney, 2004; Zillmann, 2000). Each of the films they coded received a rating on the disposition theory vector (see Weber et al., 2008 for a complete description of the vector). Positive scores on the disposition theory vector meant that virtuous characters were more rewarded and/or villainous characters were more punished. Negative scores on the vector meant that virtuous characters were more punished or villainous characters were more rewarded. Thus, the more positive a score, the more the content sought to satisfy audiences' needs for justice in the story ending. Such endings where characters receive their just deserts are known to delight audiences, and to cause an increase in story enjoyment.

However, as the frameworks in the introduction of the paper make explicit, some films (i.e., appreciated films that are not enjoyed) may not delight audiences in this way. That is, appreciated films may violate the tenets of disposition theory and leave audience's justice needs not fully satisfied so that other, perhaps more important needs are satisfied. This previous research by Grizzard et al. showed that films adhering to disposition theory had higher budgets and gross than films that did not adhere to disposition theory. The authors speculated that producers of high-budget films wish to maximize profits by ensuring that all audiences' justice needs are satisfied.

The current study extends this previous research in at least two ways. First, the current study used actual films that participants had reported seeing rather than using summaries of films as the sample. Hopefully, this adds an ecological component to the study that was less present for the Grizzard et al. study. Second, rather than coding content of summaries using only two independent coders as was done by Grizzard et al., the enjoyment, appreciation, and classicness ratings in the current study were based on a

sample of 249 different participants. Thirdly, the current study links the concepts of enjoyment and appreciation explicitly with film budget and gross rather than looking at content-level variables such as whether the film adheres to the tenets of disposition theory.

7. Limitations

Although the study yielded interesting findings, these findings must be interpreted in light of several limitations. First, a convenience sample of university students was used to ascertain average enjoyment and appreciation ratings for each of the films. It is likely the case that enjoyment and appreciation vary with cultural background, and that the responses of the student sample might not generalize to other populations. However, the films were generally geared toward American audiences, and the respondent pool consisted of a majority of Americans.

Perhaps a more important limitation is the fact that the final sample consisted of only 50 films. With such a small sample, it is difficult to say whether these results would generalize to a random sample of all films ever produced. It would have been infeasible to ask the study participants to rate more films due to participant fatigue. I tried to circumvent this limitation by choosing films from published lists of popular versus classic films to ensure variation in students' perceptions of the films; however, it was impossible for me to completely remove this limitation given the resources of the study.

The final limitation regards the fact that no significant relationships were found between the individual-difference measures and perceptions of classicness. Although this was not a primary goal of the research, it would have added to the validity of the logic presented in the introduction of the paper if the individual-difference measures related to perceptions of classicness in a meaningful way. Logic from moral foundations theory (Haidt, 2001), as well as other sources (Jost & AModio, 2011) clearly suggests that political conservatives (vs. liberals) should appreciate classic stories less due to their heightened sensitivity to threat and ambiguity. The only place where this played out in

the results is the negative relationship between ingroup loyalty (a conservative virtue; see Haidt & Joseph, 2008) and perceptions of classicness for (classic) films in the IMDb list.

8. Conclusion and Future Research

This study provides the first ecological examination of individuals' perceptions of film classicness, and further provides evidence that the notion of classicness has a strong relationship with appreciation, and is unrelated to enjoyment. Further, there is a negative relationship with the release year of a film. A tentative definition of classicness then consists of qualities such as mixed emotion, conscious deliberation of moral values, and a consideration of how well the text has stood the test of time. Beyond this definitional concern, the study connects understandings of classicness to existing entertainment research on the distinction between enjoyment and appreciation, and extends the previous research on how sad or tragic films may be negatively related to budget. Ultimately, I hope this contribution will encourage future research by considering different types of audience response to entertainment. Results from this study showed that many highly appreciated films also have high enjoyment rating (e.g., *Inception*, *Fight Club*; see Table 1). It means enjoyment and appreciations are not exclusive appraisals; instead, they can co-exist in the same film. Therefore, comparing the degrees of enjoyment and appreciation in a film could be a more precise measure to explore entertainment experiences.

Moreover, other appraisals are worthwhile to be taken into consideration, such as "ironic enjoyment." Such appraisal may be seen in response to a "black comedy film" (Altman, 1999, p.22) and is hard to be categorized to either enjoyment or appreciation. For example, films directed by Quentin Tarantino are full of extreme violence which may lead to negative audience's responses; however, combined with the element of black humor, audiences may regard violence as a way to emphasize a sense of conflict on the

scene and further be entertained by such sarcasm either from the way that films make or the plot itself.

Future research might also investigate what kinds of narrative elements would be chosen as selling points in a film's marketing strategy. Underlying the result from Grizzard et al., the producers of high-budget films would tend to maximize profits by ensuring that all audiences' justice needs are satisfied. Consistent with this logic, it is reasonable to assume that film trailers tend to be edited as abbreviated, higher-enjoyment versions of the full film.

For example, in the 2010 movie, *Inception*, the trailer of this movie (<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=66TuSJo4dZM>) focused on the visual effects and positioned this film as an action movie, which ignored the main character's conflicted feelings about his family. Apparently, this plot had been ignored because of its cognitive conflict, which may result in mixed or negative emotions. The relationships between the manner in which films are marketed, their budgets, and the degree to which the film is perceived as classic is also an interesting question also from a managerial perspective. This study may be informative to film producers who wish to better weigh these alternative marketing strategies for their films. Do the producers wish for their film to be an immediate box office success (enjoyment)? Or would producers rather market their films as serious, poignant, thought-provoking fare that might give them a better chance of creating a film perceived to be classic (appreciation)? In this way, the current study should be informative for researchers and practitioners alike.

Tables

Table 1 IMDb top movie list and Boxofficemojo top movie list

IMDb	Boxofficemojo
Enjoy <i>M</i> (SD); Appreciate <i>M</i> (SD)	Enjoy <i>M</i> (SD); Appreciate <i>M</i> (SD)
<i>The Shawshank Redemption</i> 5.46(1.34); 6.17(1.10)	<i>Avatar</i> 5.83(1.23); 5.23(1.55)
<i>The Godfather</i> 5.38(1.34); 5.41(1.36)	<i>Titanic</i> 5.62(1.14); 5.81(1.08)
<i>The Godfather: Part II</i> 5.25(1.22); 5.32(1.36)	<i>Marvel's The Avengers</i> 6.03(1.08); 4.00(1.56)
<i>Pulp Fiction</i> 5.73(1.14); 4.92(1.37)	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 2</i> 6.05(.98); 5.36(1.48)
<i>The Good, the Bad and the Ugly</i> 4.85(1.07); 4.33(.93)	<i>Iron Man 3</i> 5.84(1.06); 3.86(1.63)
<i>The Dark Knight</i> 6.02(1.03); 5.30(1.48)	<i>Transformers: Dark of the Moon</i> 5.43(1.41); 3.51(1.68)
<i>12 Angry Men</i> 4.37(1.33); 5.49(1.34)	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> 5.75(1.21); 4.97(1.51)
<i>Schindler's List</i> 4.18(1.69); 6.30(1.18)	<i>Skyfall</i> 5.75(1.01); 4.26(1.41)
<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Return of the King</i> 5.75(1.21); 4.97(1.51)	<i>The Dark Knight Rises</i> 5.97(1.01); 5.17(1.59)
<i>Fight Club</i> 5.78(1.27); 5.63(1.31)	<i>Pirates of the Caribbean: Dead Man's Chest"</i> 5.75(1.13); 3.85(1.50)
<i>Star Wars: The Empire Strikes Back</i> 5.81(1.14); 4.94(1.31)	<i>Toy Story 3</i> 6.33(.90); 5.74(1.30)
<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Fellowship of the Ring</i> 5.74(1.25); 5.00(1.48)	<i>Pirates of the Caribbean: On Stranger Tides</i> 5.32(1.29); 3.70(1.49)
<i>One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest</i> 5.09(1.07); 5.67(1.17)	<i>Jurassic Park</i> 5.84(1.05); 4.60(1.51)
<i>Goodfellas</i> 5.38(1.30); 4.67(1.31)	<i>Star Wars: Episode I - The Phantom Menace</i> 5.46(1.37); 4.46(1.64)
<i>Seven Samurai</i> 4.43(1.30); 4.86(1.31)	<i>Alice in Wonderland</i> 5.73(1.11); 4.63(1.38)
<i>Inception</i> 5.95(.88); 5.61(1.18)	<i>The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey</i> 5.41(1.33); 4.30(1.51)
<i>Star Wars: A New Hope</i> 6.02(1.07); 4.97(1.47)	<i>The Dark Knight</i> 6.02(1.03); 5.30(1.48)
<i>Forrest Gump</i> 6.15(.99); 6.28(.97)	<i>The Lion King</i> 6.43(.65); 5.99(1.06)
<i>The Matrix</i> 5.74(1.13); 5.21(1.36)	

<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers</i>	<i>Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone</i>
5.86(1.04); 4.96(1.38)	6.07(.97); 5.02(1.50)
<i>City of God</i>	<i>Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End</i>
4.61(1.34); 4.90(1.54)	5.90(.99); 4.93(1.51)
<i>Once Upon a Time in the West</i>	<i>Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows Part 1</i>
4.51(.92); 4.26(.89)	5.88(1.03); 5.01(1.44)
<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	<i>Harry Potter and the Order of the Phoenix</i>
4.93(1.46); 5.21(1.42)	5.88(1.03); 4.97(1.52)
<i>Se7en</i>	<i>Finding Nemo</i>
4.92(1.25); 5.22(1.31)	5.86(.98); 3.90(1.51)
<i>Casablanca</i>	<i>Harry Potter and the Half-Blood Prince</i>
5.21(1.25); 5.23(1.27)	5.64(1.16); 3.87(1.56)
<i>The Usual Suspects</i>	<i>The Lord of the Rings: The Two Towers</i>
5.01(1.20); 4.39(.94)	5.86(1.04); 4.96(1.38)
<i>Raiders of the Lost Ark</i>	<i>Shrek 2</i>
5.68(1.07); 4.16(1.30)	6.44(.68); 5.54(1.23)

1. Left column. Retrieved on 10/23/2013 <http://www.imdb.com/chart/top>
2. Right Column. Retrieved on 10/23/2013 <http://boxofficemojo.com/alltime/world/>

Table 2 Correlations among study variables

	Classic	Enjoy	Appreciate	Year	Inflated Budget	Total Gross	Inflated Gross	IMDb	
Classic	—								
Enjoy	.027	—							
Appreciate	.732**	.050	—						
Year	-.445**	.564**	-.196	—					
Inflated Budget	-.542**	.509**	-.334*	.719**	—				
Total Gross	-.287*	.602**	-.151	.643**	.802**	—			
Inflated Gross	.025	.597**	-.046	.380**	.564**	.859**	—		
IMDb	.495**	-.492**	.351*	-.617**	-.780**	-.730**	-.515**	—	
Boxofficemojo	-.473**	.562**	-.326*	.679**	.810**	.788**	.556**	.887**	—

Note: * $P < .05$, ** $P < .01$

Table 3 Regression among enjoyment, appreciation, release year, and inflation-adjusted budget

<i>Predictors</i>	Regr 1	Regr 2	Regr3
Enjoyment	.928	.016**	.003**
Appreciation	.000	.000	.000
Year		.000	.018**
Inflated Budget			.016**
R^2	.732 ^a	.821 ^b	.845 ^c
Adjusted R^2	.516	.654	.689
R^2 change	.536	.139	.040**
Sig. of change	.000	.000	.016**

** $p < .05$

Table 4 Regression of Moral Foundation Questionnaire for predicting classicness

<i>Predictors</i>	Regr 1	Regr 2
Enjoyment	.138	.085
Appreciation	.006**	.004**
Care		.521
Fairness		.627
Ingroup Loyalty		.081
Authority		.930
Purity		.916
R^2	.263 ^a	.297 ^b
Adjusted R^2	.062	.063
R^2 change	.069	.019**
Sig. of change	.000	.386

** $p < .05$

Table 5 Regression of Ideology for predicting classicness

<i>Predictors</i>	Regr 1	Regr 2
Enjoyment	.138	.130
Appreciation	.006**	.006**
Ideology		.416
R^2	.263 ^a	.267 ^b
Adjusted R^2	.062	.061
R^2 change	.069	.002**
Sig. of change	.000	.416

** $p < .05$

Table 6 Regression of Status Orientation for predicting classicness

<i>Predictors</i>	Regr 1	Regr 2
Enjoyment	.138	.160
Appreciation	.006**	.006**
Status Orientation		.940
R^2	.263 ^a	.263 ^b
Adjusted R^2	.062	.058
R^2 change	.069	.000
Sig. of change	.000	.940

** $p < .05$

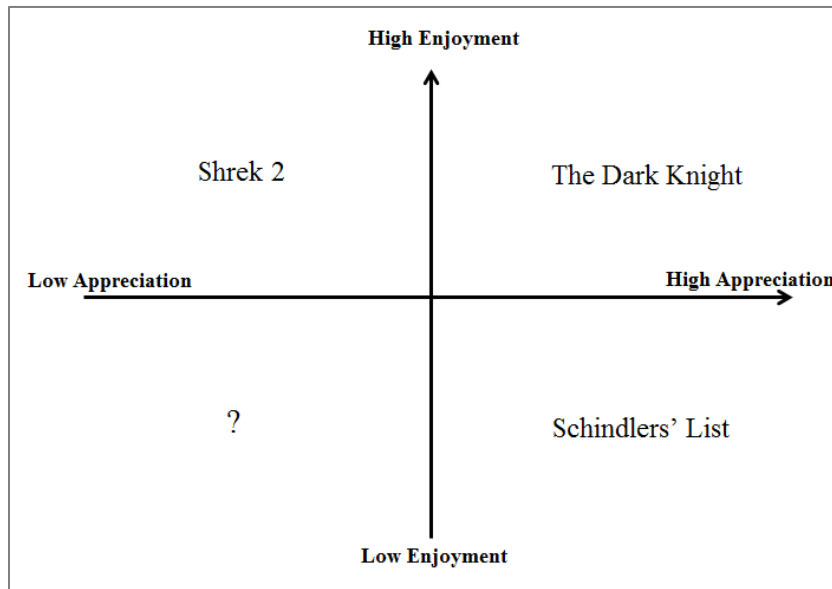
Table 7 Regression of Regulatory Focus for predicting classicness

<i>Predictors</i>	Regr 1	Regr 2
Enjoyment	.138	.080
Appreciation	.006**	.005**
Prevention Focus		.630
Promotion Focus		.398
R^2	.263 ^a	.271 ^b
Adjusted R^2	.062	.059
R^2 change	.069	.004**
Sig. of change	.000	.549

** $p < .05$

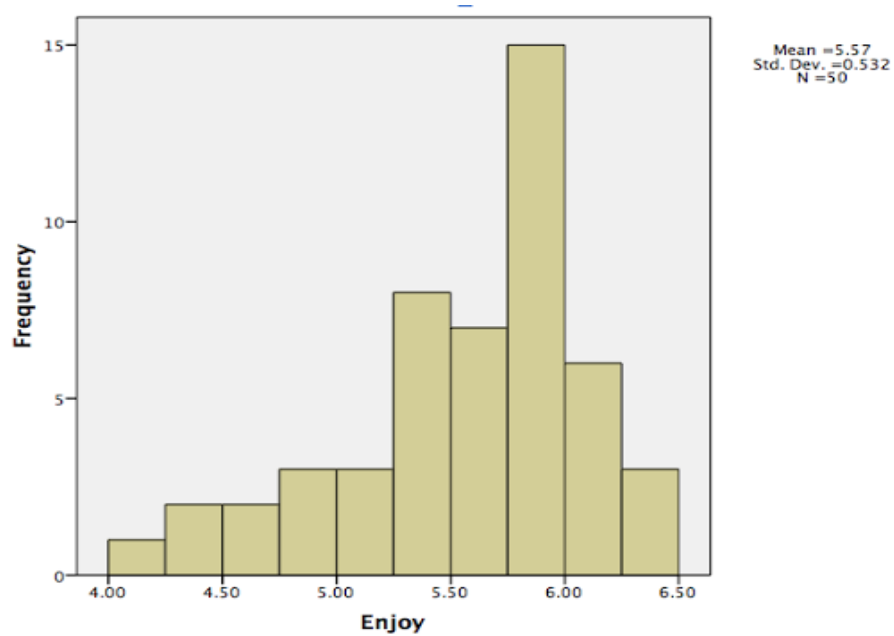
Figures

Figure 1 Films between enjoyment and appreciation

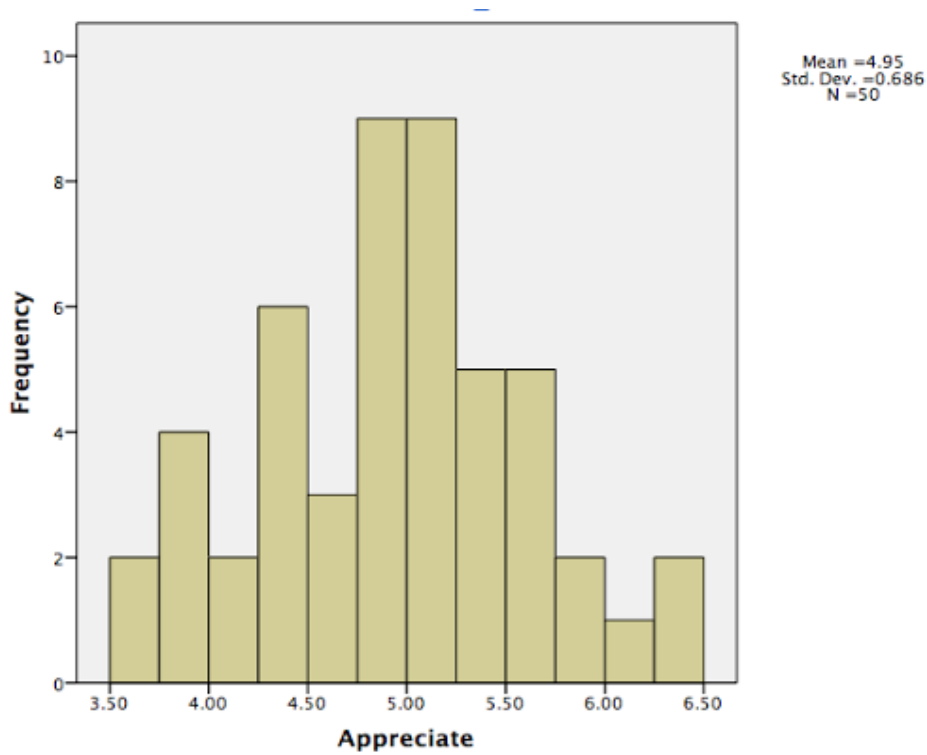


Appendix

Appendix 1 Distribution of enjoyment ratings for each film



Appendix 2 Distribution of appreciation ratings for each film



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