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What does Hollywood tell us about Drowning and Lifesaving?

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Drowning as a mode of death has been the subject of limited research in cinematography. This study aimed to reveal the drowning related 'hidden' messages that arise by observing a sample of drowning episodes (n=296) that were shown in a convenience sample of Hollywood films. Table 1 contains frequencies of the most important variables that determine the outcome of a drowning episode (i.e. the rescuer, the casualty, the place and the circumstances of occurrence) and which were represented in these drowning scenes. In conclusion, these frequencies show that Hollywood passes several hidden messages about drowning and rescue to the film viewers. Most films containing drowning episodes are drama, thriller, horror, adventure and action. The victim survived in two thirds of the sampled cases. The rescuer was most often an amateur, adult, thin, white male who attempted an early rescue wearing clothes. The victim was often but not exclusively a thin, white, adult male, with varied behavior and needs in the water, who was not local to the area and fell into the water fully clothed and unintentionally. Most often victims did not shout for help and were alone. In terms of location, drowning occurred most often in normal water temperatures and calm conditions when victims were out of their depth in various aquatic environments and various distances from safety. Although in these films all types of rescue were portrayed, the most dominant was the least recommended or abandoned option by most lifesaving organizations for amateur lifesavers (i.e. body contact tow) possibly because it gave a heroic dimension and contributed to the development of the desired drama or action. The incidents occurred mainly during the day after engagement in various aquatic and non-aquatic activities. From these activities, particularly interesting was that drowning was repeatedly used as a means of suicide, homicide, bullying and torture. Most of those engaged in aquatics, did not wear a personal flotation device. A limited evidence of risk taking behavior, near-death experiences, paranormal after-effects and demonstration of resuscitation of the victims was also identified. Most incidents occurred during the summer. The average duration of the sampled drowning episodes was about 37 seconds. Overall, it seems that Hollywood contains a wealth of motion pictures that may be used as an alternative means of water safety, lifesaving, lifeguarding, aquatic research and education. In some cases, the films portray what "not to do" and in some others "what to do". Both can be used to trigger the interest of the viewers and constructive discussions in an entertaining way.

Table 1: Frequencies over viewing the rescuer and casualty characteristics, together with information about the place and the circumstances of occurrence of the sampled drowning scenes (n=296) that were shown in Hollywood films.

Rescuer	
■ Rescuer: Amateur, 41%; Rescuer, 9%; N/A, 50%.	■Dressing: Clothes, 33%; Swimwear, 8%; Lifeguard/rescue dressing, 4%; Naked, 2%; N/A, 54%.
■ Age: Adult, 42%; Child, 4%; N/A, 50%; Teenager, 4%.	
■Gender: Male, 39%; Female, 10%; N/A, 50%; Multiple, 1%.	■Ethnicity: White, 40%; Color/Asian, 1%; Animal/Item, 8%; N/A, 50%; Multiple, 0,3%;
■Early approach: Yes, 43%; No, 8%; N/A, 49%.	
■Somatotype: Thin, 30%; Fat, 3%; Muscle, 18%; N/A, 49%.	
Casualty	
■Gender: Male, 53%; Female, 35%; Multiple, 10%; Not shown, 1%.	■Dressing: Clothes, 75%; Swimwear, 15%; Naked, 7%; N/A, 3%.
■Age: Adult, 72%; Child, 15%; Multiple, 6%; Teen, 7%.	■Instinctive Drowning Response: Yes, 21%; No, 76%; N/A-not shown, 2%.
■Ethnicity: White, 82%; Color, 3%; Asian, 3%; Animal/Item, 11%; Multiple, 1%.	■Shout for help: Yes, 21%; No, 77%; N/A or not shown, 2%.
■Casualty type: Non-swimmer, 19%; Weak, 13%; Injured, 3%; Unconscious, 18%; Multiple types of victims, 6%; Swimmer, 21%; N/A, 2%; Not shown, 18%.	■Somatotype: Thin, 75%; Fat, 7%; Muscle, 15%; Multiple somatotypes, 7%.
	■Number of casualties: Single, 84%; Multiple, 16%.
■The casualty fell in the water: Intentionally, 34%; Unintentionally, 66%.	■Residence: Local, 31%; No local, 69%.
Place of Occurrence	
■Water temperature: Normal, 70%; Hypothermic, 30%.	■Aquatic Environment: Sea, 48%; Pool, 5%; River, 12%; Lake, 11%; Bucket, 2%; Water tank, 4%; Flooded land/room, 10%; Bath, 5%; Fountain, 2%.
■Water condition: Calm, 71%; Wavy/Currents, 29%.	
■Water depth: Out of depth, 78%; Standing level, 32%.	■Distance from land: Between 1-10 m, 56%; Further than 50m, 8%; About 100 m, 11%; A few hundred meters, 10%; Ocean, 14%; Not shown, 1%.
Circumstances of Occurrence	
■Film genre: Comedy, 5%; Drama, 29%; Science Fiction/Fantasy, 9%; Thriller/Horror, 19%; Romantic/Family, 3%; Adventure/Action, 10%; Musical/Western, 1%; Mystery, 3%; Crime, 1%; Cartoon, 16%; TV series, 2%;	■Drowning outcome: Survival, 60%; Death, 30%; Death and Survival (*for more than one victims*), 6%; N/A, 0.33%;
	■Person died: Victim, 38%; Rescuer, 7%; None, 59%; Victim/Rescuer, 0.33%;
■Rescue type: Shout and signal, 1%; Reach, 7%; Throw 2%; Wade, 6%; Row, 4%; Swim with aid/Reel, 1%; Body contact tow, 22%; Air rescue, 2%; Self rescue, 20%; N/A or not shown, 35%.	■Season: Autumn, 27.4%; Winter, 27%; Spring, 10%; Summer, 35.5%;
	■Average drowning duration: 37.28 seconds
■Personal Flotation Device worn: No, 91%; Yes, 8%;	■Activity: Swim, 9%; Scuba/ snorkeling, 2.4%; Boat/ cruise/ sailing/ surf, 18%; Drive, 4%; Walk/ accidental fall, 14%; Bath, 1%; Flight/Spaceship, 1%; Suicide, 6%; Bullying, 0.33%; Training/Play/Sleep, 0.33%; Fishing, 1.3%; Torture, 2.4%; Fight, 2.7%; Unsuccessful rescue, 3.7%; Stunt, 1%; Free dive, 1.3%; Homicide, 19%; Hiding, 2%; Trapped, 7.4%; Escape, 3%;
■Alcohol/drug consumption: Yes, 52%; No, 98%;	
■Near-death experience/Paranormal aftereffects/ Dream: Yes, 12%; No, 88%.	
■Time: Day, 68%; Night, 32%;	
■Resuscitation performed: Yes, 8%; No, 91%;	■Risk taking behavior: Yes, 15%; No, 85%;

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Drowning Incidents due to Illegal Immigration in Greece, 2007-2011

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Drowning is a leading cause of death worldwide. Illegal immigration is one of the conditions leading to drowning accidents, usually attempts to enter illegally by boat. . Greece is a country positioned between three continents (Europe, Asia and Africa) with a long coast line (i.e. 13,676 Km) which is difficult to patrol and allows attempts of illegal crossings by those seeking a prosperous future in countries with a higher socio-economic state (Wikipedia, 2011). This study aimed to estimate the burden of drowning incidents that led either to death or missing victims while attempting to cross the sea borders of Greece illegally. The official statistics of the Hellenic Coast Guard for the period 2007-2011 were obtained (Hellenic Republic Ministry of Citizen Protection, personal communication 14 July 2011). Table 1 depicts, the number of drowning deaths and the number of cases from which people were missing at sea. In conclusion, it was found that during the examined 5-years period, 328 people attempted to cross the sea borders of Greece illegally. Of these, a total of 141 people drowned during 62 illegal crossing attempts. Also, another 187 people were reported as "missing" while attempting to cross the coastal borders in 23 illegal attempts. The greatest number of illegal attempts were noted in the year 2007 (62 deaths, 55 missing) whereas the lowest were noted in 2010 (6 missing) and in 2011 (2 deaths). Overall, results confirmed a decrease in the incident frequency that may be partially attributed to the recent better supervision of the Hellenic coastal borders by European and domestic guarding services (see Frontex, 2010) or the lack of employment opportunities that Greece may offer due to its poor current financial situation.

Year	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
Drowning deaths	62	17	24	36	02
Incidents	30	15	11	05	01
Missing persons	55	44	59	06	23
Incidents	08	06	05	02	02

Table 1: Illegal entry attempts in Greece via the sea during the period 2007-2011.

References

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Wikipedia. (2011). Illegal immigration. Retrieved on 22 July from http://en. wikipedia. org/wiki/Illegal_immigration