



LUND UNIVERSITY
School of Economics and Management

Department of Business administration

Course code: FEKH49

Title of the course: Bachelor Degree Project in Organization

Semester: Autumn 2019

The portrayal of leadership in popular culture

A discourse analysis of leadership power and influence attempts in movies

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Acknowledgements

First of all, we would like to express our deepest gratitude to our supervisor Monika Müller for her support during this trying process. Her insights have guided us through the completion of this thesis and helped us believe in our own ability to contribute to research in the field of leadership. Secondly, we would like to thank our fellow students for contributing with critical perspectives during the thesis process.

14th January 2020

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Abstract

Title: The portrayal of leadership in popular culture – A discourse analysis of leadership power and influence attempts in movies

Seminar date: 17th of January 2020

Course: FEKH49, Business Administration: Bachelor Degree Project in Organization, Undergraduate level, 15 University Credits Points (UPC) or ECTS- cr)

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Key words: Leadership, influence tactics, power, discourse analysis, popular culture.

Purpose: The purpose of this study is to provide in-depth research on power and influence attempts in the context of leadership, through analyzing the discourse in popular culture in the form of movies.

Methodology: In order to address the research question a qualitative study has been conducted with a discourse analysis as the main tool, complemented with a narrative analysis. The reasoning behind the paper is social constructionism, with an abductive approach.

Theoretical perspectives: This study was conducted with the theoretical perspective of affecting leadership effectiveness through the use of deliberately structured influence attempts.

Empirical foundation: The source of the empirical material was popular culture in the form of movies. Specifically, the two movies The Dark Knight and Inception.

Conclusions: The study's three key findings were mirroring of discourse and influence tactics within influence attempts, that discourse and power affect one another, and ambiguity in the outcome of an influence attempts. All in the context of leadership, portrayed in popular culture.

Table of contents

1. Introduction	1
1.1 Background	1
1.2 Problematization	2
1.3 Purpose	4
2. Theory	4
2.1 Review of the pertinent literature on leadership	4
2.1.1 From leader to follower	4
2.1.2 Popular culture and leadership	5
2.1.3 Leadership power	6
2.1.4 Influence tactics	7
2.1.5 Resistance to influence attempts	8
2.2 The bases of leadership power	8
2.2.1 Position power	9
2.2.2 Personal power	11
2.3 Influence tactics	11
2.3.1 Proactive influence tactics	12
2.3.2 Influence effectiveness, resistance and follow-up attempts	14
2.4 Discourse	16
2.5 Research gap	17
3. Method	18
3.1 Discourse analysis	19
3.2 Narrative analysis	20
3.2 Qualitative content analysis	21
3.3 Scientific presumptions	22
3.4 Abductive approach	23
3.5 Object of study	23
3.6 Collection of empirical data	24
3.7 Analytical process	25
3.8 Argue for reliability	26
4. Empirical material and analysis	28
4.1 The Dark Knight	29

4.1.1 The discourse in separate segments in The Dark Knight	29
4.1.2 Collective discourse in The Dark Knight	39
4.2 Inception	41
4.2.1 The discourse in separate segments in Inception	41
4.2.2 Collective discourse in Inception	50
4.3 The collective discourse in both The Dark Knight and Inception	52
4.3.1 Simple requests using legitimate power	53
4.3.2 The complexity in power relations and influence roles	55
4.3.3 Dynamic aspects of discourse and influence tactics	56
4.3.4 Disadvantages of the fixed influence outcome categories	57
5. Discussion	57
5.1 Coexisting influence attempts and dyadic relationships	57
5.2 The interplay between discourse and power	58
5.3 Influence outcomes on a scale	60
5.4 The power and influence of movies	62
6. Conclusions	63
7. Reference list	66
8. Appendix	72
8.1 The Dark Knight	72
8.2 Inception	73

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The subject of this thesis is leadership, with a focus on power and influence attempts. In order to investigate the subject, its portrayal in popular culture will be scrutinized through discourse analysis. Scholars find it difficult to define the concept of leadership, and researchers often define the concept according to their individual perspectives (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017; Yukl, 2013). Though an array of different definitions of leadership exist, most include some form of intentional influence within an organization (Yukl, 2013). We define organization in accordance with Eriksson-Zetterquist, Müllern and Styhre (2001), “a group of people working together to achieve a common goal” (p. 4).

Power and influence are essential parts of leadership, and Iszatt-White and Saunders (2017) even argue that “the essence of leadership may purely be an attempt to influence the actions and behaviours of others through the exercise of power” (p. 17). This is supported by Yukl (2013), “influence is the essence of leadership” (p. 188). He further describes power as the capacity of one party to influence another party (Yukl, 2013).

From research on leadership, power and influence, distinctive studies have been conducted in the pursuit to identify specific techniques or tactics used when attempting to enact influence over others (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980; Yukl, 2013). The first distinction is between proactive and reactive influence attempts. Proactive influence attempts are when an agent, the person enacting influence, attempts to influence a target, the person at the receiving end, to conform or act on an immediate request. Reactive influence attempts on the other hand, are when a target is resistant and attempts to object or renegotiate a request (Yukl & Michel, 2006). The outcome of an attempt can be categorized as resistance, compliance or commitment. In short, resistance is when a target refuses to perform a request or obstructs it. Compliance is distinguished when a target is unwilling or apathetic about a request yet performs it. Commitment is achieved when a target has internalized the request and puts great effort into performing it (Yukl, 2013).

Leadership is closely connected to and affected by popular culture (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2004). Lexico defines popular culture as, “Culture based on the tastes of ordinary people rather than an educated elite”¹. The key word here being ordinary, as it conveys that masses of people are the focus rather than small groups. More specifically, we have analyzed movies to examine the portrayal of power and influence in the context of leadership, disclosed to the masses. Further, the analysis will also consider the outcome of influence attempts presenting a more complete view of the convoluted processes associated with power and influence. Moss Kanter (1979) states:

“It is easier to talk about money-and much easier to talk about sex-than it is to talk about power. People who have it, deny it; people who want it, do not want to appear to hunger for it; and people who engage in its machinations do so secretly” (p. 22).

To perceive power as a clearly observable phenomenon is often faulty, and this emphasizes the difficulties of identifying power (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017 drawing on Hardy & Leiba-O’Sullivan, 1998). In order to analyze power and influence attempts in the context of leadership, this study employs discourse analysis to identify underlying assumptions and other insights on the subject, through the portrayals thereof (see e.g. Fairclough, 2003). The term discourse concerns language and how it is constructed and used to give meaning to the socially created reality (Fairclough, 2003; Svensson, 2019).

The study resulted in the following three key findings. First, the tendency of mirroring one’s counterpart within an influence attempt. Second, that power and discourse tend to affect one another. Third, an ambiguity in the outcome of influence attempts. From the third key finding we developed the suggested framework, the Triangle of Influence Outcomes, to address the problems with categorizing ambiguous outcomes.

1.2 Problematization

The common research method in the field of leadership is survey studies (Yukl, 2013). To this day, only a small amount of studies in leadership are based on popular culture (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2004). One important aspect that popular culture achieves, that tends to be absent in other

sources of leadership studies, is that it can present complete depictions of leadership situations (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2004). According to Czarniawska and Rhodes (2004) this presentation is also of significance considering the ability they ascribe to it, “popular culture seems to outperform management researchers in the roles that many aspire to - as analysts, teachers, and the providers of exemplars” (p. 25). Further, the importance of popular culture is emphasized as, the portrayal of exchange between leaders and followers in popular culture is both reflective of and significant to the shaping of society's view on leadership (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2004; Chen & Meindl, 1991).

By observing and analyzing the portrayal of influence and power in the context of leadership, and the outcome thereof, we are able to better understand what expectations reflect and shape society. Studies in the field of leadership with either a discourse analysis or popular culture as its source of empirical data are scarce, even more rare is one containing both. The prevalent operation of research is to find empirical material from either common sources, use methods that are common practice or both (Yukl, 2013). Thus, only a few studies can act as providers of new insights, and challenge the state of current theory. Specifically, on the subject of influence tactics most studies have been made with a one-sided focus on proactive influence tactics, and endeavoured to assess their level of success and effectiveness. This has resulted in the aspect of resistance to influence attempts and reactive influence tactics being studied in insufficient ways, “as yet there is only a rudimentary conceptualisation of resistance tactics” (Yukl, Fu & McDonald, 2003, drawing on O’Hair, Cody, & O’Hair, 1991, Tepper, Eisenback, Kirby, & Potter, 1998, Tepper, Nehring, Nelson, & Taylor, 1997). In contrast to the previous statement, Yukl (2013) asserts that most proactive influence tactics also function in a reactive manner to resist unwanted influence. This is however, yet to be thoroughly researched with both the agent and the target being observed in natural situations, or representations thereof. Thus, the behaviour of both the agent who is enacting influence and the target at the receiving end has not been examined at depth.

In summary, we are attempting to explore new areas in terms of the source of empirical material, with an original approach to analyzing power, influence attempts and outcomes in the context of leadership portrayed in popular culture. This enables us to explore the subject in ways that facilitate both the development of research and contribute with a more critical standpoint as this study is not

shaped to corroborate previous research. As requested by Yukl (2013), we endeavoured to include uncommon features in this study in order to make the research more productive.

1.3 Purpose

The purpose of this study is to analyze how the exercise of power in the context of leadership is portrayed in modern popular culture. More specifically, we aim to describe how power and influence processes in the context of leadership are portrayed in two prominent movies of the last two decades, *The Dark Knight* and *Inception*, to provide insight thereof. In other words, our purpose is to critically analyze leadership and influence from an uncommon source with common leadership theory in mind in order to provide the field of leadership with new insights that strive to push research forward. To achieve our purpose, we pose the following question:

How is leadership in organizations portrayed with regards to power and influence attempts in modern movies through discourse?

2. Theory

In this chapter we will first present theory pertinent to the study in order to allow the reader to orient themselves on the subjects of popular culture, discourse, power and influence in the context of leadership. Following a broad introduction to theory, we will present a deeper description of the basis on which we conducted the analysis.

2.1 Review of the pertinent literature on leadership

2.1.1 From leader to follower

Leadership theory has since its beginning focused on leaders and what qualities they possess. Thomas Carlyle's theory *The Great Man* is a classic that focuses on the historical male leader. This

theory later developed into a wide array of theories in modern leadership studies, called Trait theory. Trait theory attempts to distinguish connections between human traits and successful leadership (Iszatt-White and Saunders, 2017). Collinson (2011) points at a substantial flaw in traditional leadership theory. He claims that leaders are often presented as omni-powerful and that their traits and actions are the sole factors determining whether they will be extraordinary leaders or not. Further, Collinson (2011) states that focus should be moved from the leader, to the dynamic relationship between leaders and followers. Blom and Alvesson (2013) take this even further when discussing the role of the follower. They claim that the follower is not a passive subject but, in many cases, a knowledgeable initiator and in fact the ones that inspire leadership rather than the leader themselves.

2.1.2 Popular culture and leadership

Schyns and Meindl (2005) argue that people's view of leadership can strongly be connected to personal experiences and how they affect who we view as leaders and connect it to "implicit leadership" (p.9). Implicit leadership concerns the idea that we one cannot simply study how leaders act, but also how the followers interpret this leadership and what preconceived ideas followers have regarding leadership. Iszatt-White and Saunders (2017) also claim that leaders, and forms of leadership, we have previously been exposed to have often had great influence over what kind of leaders we decide to follow in the future. They continue to claim that stereotypes regarding leadership are also formed based on an individual's previous experiences and social surroundings. Callahan, Whitener, and Sandlin (2007) emphasize the role of popular culture in the shaping of leadership ideas and values. They follow suit with Iszatt-White and Saunders (2017) and discuss how people's perception of leadership is often based on experiences and leaders in popular culture, and basing one's own ideas off these experiences.

Czarniawska and Rhodes (2004) argue that the effects of popular culture go even further. They discuss the effect it has on society with each individual's views of good leadership becoming a reflection of what is portrayed as good leadership in popular culture. This influence from popular

culture can be seen in all formats, but foremost in the movie industry. This due to the ease with which viewers can imitate and compare the perceived leadership to their own lives, in contrast to trying to apply abstract theories and models to everyday life (Czarniawska and Rhodes, 2004). This relationship between society and popular culture is also discussed by Strong (2018) who investigates how good and bad leadership is portrayed in youth popular culture. She argues that strong connections can be found between the views of today's youth and the views of leaders in fiction, especially views driven by power and control (Strong, 2018). In today's popular culture, the trends seem to be dystopian societies threatened by bad leadership where acts of good leadership often being displayed by someone who is willing to do whatever it takes to get the job done (Strong, 2018). Strong (2018) claims that today's youth wants the same form of leadership, with a leader willing to take risks and do what is necessary in each situation which aligns with what is portrayed in popular culture aimed at youths. Furthermore, Kirkpatrick, Brown, Atkins, and Vance (2001) argue that in modern times, popular culture can be used as an effective teaching strategy when educating about leadership. Connections can be drawn between students' own experiences and that which is portrayed in popular culture, increasing understanding of certain situations and through this influence the viewer (Kirkpatrick et al., 2001).

2.1.3 Leadership power

The fact that relationships exist in organizations makes it inevitable not to consider power relations between individuals, since social relationships between people in organizations have a considerable effect on the leadership of the organization and a leader's abilities (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). As stated by Linstead, Fulop, and Lilley (2004 cited in Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017) "power is an indisputable part of everyday life, every social relationship imaginable, and one of the most controversial aspects of organizations" (p. 22). Power in leadership can be linked to both formal and informal systems, and a leader can, for instance, claim control over resources through a formal system, but may use informal networks to build cooperation throughout the organization (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017).

The work on the bases of power by French and Raven (1959) is frequently cited in research regarding leadership power (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). Their main purpose was to identify and define the major types of leadership power systematically, to enable comparisons in terms of changes leaders make and other effects that are accompanied with the use of power. This resulted in five bases of power: reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, expert power, and referent power (French & Raven, 1959). Two additional bases of power were later added to the list, one by Yukl (2013) named ecological power, and another by Raven (2008) named informational power. Daft (2010 cited in Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017) groups the bases of power further under the headings of hard and soft power. Hard power is connected to a position of authority, specifically coercive, reward and legitimate power. Soft power, specifically expert power and referent power touches on the ability to manage relationships to achieve an outcome. He further argues that while hard power leads the followers to either resist or comply, soft power is more effective and generates more of a commitment from the followers (Daft, 2010 cited in Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). Making a distinction between position power and personal power is the most common classification of the bases of power (Yukl, 2013, p. 196, drawing on Bass, 1960, Etzioni, 1961, Rahim, 1988 and Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Yukl (2013) argues that the main difference between the two depends on whether the opportunity for power derives from a position within an organization, or from personal attributes. This distinction will be further explained later on in this chapter.

2.1.4 Influence tactics

Leadership authors tend to view leadership and sources of power as linked to influence (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). Further, the ability to influence can be an important determinant of managerial effectiveness (Yukl & Michel, 2006 drawing on Yukl, 2002, Lo & Osman, 2008 drawing on Kotter, 1985, Bass, 1990). Yukl (2013) even include influence in his definition of power, “power is the capacity to influence the attitudes and behavior of people in the desired direction” (p. 219), and that the ability to influence is derived from both position and personal power. Yukl (2013) has identified eleven distinct proactive influence tactics that specify behaviour used to gain acceptance or support for an immediate request, these eleven tactics are defined in 2.3.1 Proactive influence tactics. He further argues that a leader's power acts as a moderator variable for the effectiveness of proactive influence tactics (Yukl, 2013).

2.1.5 Resistance to influence attempts

Resistance exists in several forms in the context of leadership and can be researched in many aspects. As this study sets out to research specifically power and influence in the context of leadership it is important to be aware of what form of resistance this study concerns. This study's regard to resistance is only in terms of resistance to influence attempts in the context of leadership.

The outcome of an influence attempt can be distinguished as either commitment, compliance, or resistance (Yukl, 2013). The most successful outcome is commitment, described as, "when the target person makes a great effort to carry out the request or implement the decision effectively" (Yukl, 2013, p. 191). The outcome of compliance occurs when the target person is unconvinced, and "is willing to carry out a request but is apathetic rather than enthusiastic about it and will make only a minimal effort" (Yukl, 2013, p. 191). The most unsuccessful outcome is called resistance and is present when a request is not performed, Yukl (2013) describes it as "when the target person is opposed to the proposal or request, rather than merely indifferent about it" (p. 191). Yukl (2013) states that it is useful to differentiate between these when analyzing the outcome of an influence attempt with a single target person.

2.2 The bases of leadership power

In the following section we will describe the framework called The bases of power created by French and Raven (1959). An updated version of the framework is provided with additions from Raven (2008) and Yukl (2013). The framework is provided as it is essential to consider power in the context of leadership when analyzing influence attempts (Yukl, 2013). The different bases of power can be categorized into position power and personal power, the classifications that most frequently will be used in the analysis and is connected to our chosen theory regarding influence. In order to create further understanding of the two it is essential to provide a greater insight into the individual bases of power, provided in the following paragraphs. The framework is used in order to analyse the choice and use of different influence tactics and their outcomes in the context of leadership as portrayed in the movies.

One general way of classifying different bases of power is the distinction between position power and personal power (Yukl, 2013, p. 196, drawing on Bass, 1960, Etzioni, 1961, Rahim, 1988 and Yukl & Falbe, 1991). Yukl (2013) argues that the specific bases of power can be categorized into these two categories. The two depend on whether an individual's inherent opportunity for power derives primarily from a position within an organization, or from the individual's personal attributes. Position power includes the potential to influence derived from reward power, coercive power, legitimate power, ecological power, and information power. Personal power includes the potential to influence derived from referent power and expert power. The determinants of position power and personal power interact in complex ways, making the distinction between them difficult (Yukl, 2013).

2.2.1 Position power

Reward power is defined by Raven (2008) as the ability of an individual to offer positive incentives if the subject complies. This can for example be a raise or other privileges. Contrarily, *coercive power* concerns the ability of an agent to enact change by threatening with negative and undesirable consequences, such as demotions, undesirable work tasks, or termination. Raven (2008) argues that outcomes of exercised power are socially dependent or independent. Socially dependent outcomes require further social interaction in order for the outcome to be definite, whereas socially independent outcomes do not. Both reward power and coercive power are considered socially dependent as the target relates its compliance or resistance to future actions of the agent. Surveillance is necessary for these types of powers to be effective. Rewards and undesirable consequences from these form of power should not only be considered tangible or impersonal, but also in a personal form such as the approval or disapproval from someone that one highly value (Raven, 2008).

Legitimate power, often connected singularly to authority (French & Raven, 1959), depends on social norms requiring the target of an influence attempt to simply comply with the request made by the influencing agent (Raven, 2008). An indication of this type of power is the use of discourse similar to "oughtness" such as "should, ought to, and has a right to" (French & Raven, 1959, p. 153). Raven (2008) identifies four types of legitimate power. The most obvious being legitimate

power that stems from social norms that require targets to comply as the agent occupies a superior position within a formal or informal social structure (Raven, 2008). Legitimate power of reciprocity, is built upon the norm of reciprocity, meaning that when another individual does something beneficial for us, we feel obligated to reciprocate (Raven, 2008 drawing on Goranson & Berkowitz, 1966, Gouldner, 1960). Raven (2008 drawing on Walster, Berscheid, & Walster, 1978) argues that legitimate power of equity “can be thought of as righting a wrong, thus following a compensatory norm”. This refers to a situation where someone has worked hard, suffered or is harmed, giving them the right to ask you for something in return. Lastly, legitimate power of responsibility stems from a social responsibility norm, stating an obligation to help others who cannot help themselves, or are dependent upon our help (Raven, 2008 drawing on Berkowitz & Daniels, 1963).

As legitimate power is highly connected to authority it is usually exercised with an order, something that Yukl (2013) describes a simple request. Simple requests are based on legitimate power and occurs when a request has relevance for the work and the target of the influence attempt knows how to execute the request. Simple requests are often effective in reaching compliance, but Yukl (2013) emphasizes that effectiveness can depend on the politeness of the request and how clearly the request is stated, with the clarity of a request being more important during stressful situations. An individual with legitimate power in certain work situations or contexts can therefore obtain compliance by making a simple request instead of using specific influence tactics, which will be described later on in this chapter.

Yukl (2013) argues that the base of power called *ecological power* derives from the opportunity to control physical environments, technology, and the organization of work enabling the opportunity to indirectly influence people. It can therefore be characterized as position power. Behaviour of individuals is affected by their perception of opportunities and constraints and consequently, individuals who can alter this perception by rearranging the environment can be considered to have opportunity to utilize power (Yukl, 2013). This is occasionally referred to as situational engineering or ecological control (Yukl, 2013 drawing on Cartwright, 1965) and can, for example, exist in the form of modifying the design of jobs.

Lastly, Raven (2008) argues that *information power* concerns the ability of an individual to influence a subject through the use of information regarding valuable work processes, through persuasive reasoning to argue in favour of more effective procedures. If the subject complies with the influence attempt, the attempt is considered socially independent as they understand and accept the information, changed their behaviour and after a while will not even remember that the agent influenced them (Raven, 2008).

2.2.2 Personal power

Raven (2008) argue that *expert power* stems from a target's belief that an agent possess superior insight or knowledge regarding what behaviour is best under certain circumstances. Expert power is very similar to information power with the main difference between the two, as stated by Raven (2008), being "understanding the reason" (p. 3). Expert power stems from the target's faith in the agent, meaning that they do not necessarily need to understand the reason behind the request. Raven (2008) further argues that if the target on the other hand sees the agent as a role model that they want to identify with, without a clear indication of faith in the agent's expertise, it is considered *referent power*. Both expert power and referent power is considered to result in socially dependent change as the agent is constantly influencing the target to change their behaviour (Raven, 2008).

2.3 Influence tactics

Early researchers used agent self-report questionnaires, named Profiles of Organizational Influence Strategies (POIS), for studying influence attempts on their supervisors, co-workers, or subordinates (Kipnis, Schmidt & Wilkinson, 1980; Schriesheim & Hinkin, 1990). Yukl and colleagues developed an Influence Behavior Questionnaire (IBQ) over the last decades, which has been used in several studies to collect material from subjects on how influence attempts are observed at their workplace. The IBQ included five proactive influence tactics similar to those identified by Kipnis, Schmidt and Wilkinson (1980) and an additional six. In total eleven proactive influence tactics which are defined below (Yukl & Michel, 2006).

2.3.1 Proactive influence tactics

Yukl (2013) defines the eleven separate proactive influence tactics at more length than in the IBQ, where they are described in short. Out of the eleven, four are considered to be core tactics as they are most likely to invoke commitment to the immediate request, based on research in the forms of surveys, critical incident, experiments and scenario studies (Yukl & Michel, 2006; Yukl & Tracey, 1992; Yukl, Kim & Falbe, 1996; Yukl, Kim & Chavez, 1999; Fu & Yukl, 2000). The four core tactics are named rational persuasion, consultation, collaboration and inspirational appeals and the remaining, less effective, are apprising, ingratiation, personal appeals, exchange, coalition, legitimating tactics and pressure (Yukl, 2013). Following is the definition of each of the proactive influence tactics, first the four core tactics and thereafter the seven additional tactics.

Rational persuasion is defined as a flexible tactic that can be used in most influence attempts and on different targets. It pertains to the use of logic and facts in order to influence a target and is most effective when the target of the influence attempt shares the agent's objective and considers the agent to be credible and having high expertise (Yukl, 2013). *Consultation* involves the targets participation in the planning, development or implementation of a request, the target plays the role of advisor in how to achieve an objective, not on the construction of the objective itself. This is best used by authority to conform a target to the shared objective in order to carry out the work (Yukl, 2013). *Collaboration* is distinguished by the offering of resources or assistance to the target in order to influence the target to perform the desired objective. By providing resources or assistance, the effort required for the target to follow through with the request is reduced and compliance is increased. This is most commonly found in lateral or downwards attempts as the tactic requires the agent to have control over certain resources (Yukl, 2013). *Inspirational appeals* play to the target's emotions or values and attempts to invoke strong positive emotions in connection to the completion of a request. This tactic can be effective in any direction, but especially in connection to increasing commitment to new projects (Yukl, 2013).

Apprising involves the agent making the target aware of how the request will personally benefit the target, through the use of explanation. Most common in lateral or downwards influence attempts as it requires the agent to be knowledgeable of the outcomes and a credible source (Yukl, 2013). *Ingratiation* is an action intended to increase the agent's value in the eyes of the target. This

can be achieved through the use of compliments, performing favours or being extra friendly. Most common in lateral and downwards attempts as the agent is more often held in higher regard in those situations and it is key to be perceived as sincere considering the behaviour can be interpreted as manipulative (Yukl, 2013). *Personal appeals* pleads the target to do the agent a favour based on their personal connection. Thus, this tactic is only reasonable to use when the target has a personal interest in the agent and is most commonly used for lateral requests unrelated to the work, considering it is awkward to use within relationships that are unequal (Yukl, 2013). *Exchange* is the offering of explicit or implicit rewards for a target of a request to comply. The exchange offered needs to be high enough for the target to motivate the expected high effort or inconvenience of compliance, and the target must view the agent as able to provide the offered exchange. Most commonly used in lateral and downwards attempts as tangible rewards, such as increased pay, are available and socially acceptable to provide in these situations (Yukl, 2013). *Coalition* tactics refers to the engagement of the agent to combine forces with other members of the organization in order to affect the target. This tactic is often used in combination with other tactics, especially when the other members of the coalition take an active part in the influence attempt. Most common in lateral or upwards appeals as supervisors in western cultures are expected to be able to enforce requests without the help of coalition (Yukl, 2013). *Legitimizing tactics* are most common in requests that are not part of the usual business or not clearly within the agent's authority to request. Thus, providing the target with information establishing the legitimacy of the request can influence the target to comply with the request. Most common in lateral influence attempts as the agent's authority often is ambiguous, but can be used in any direction when the nature of the request or the agent's authority is expected to be questioned (Yukl, 2013). Lastly, *pressure tactics* are used to force the target into complying with a request, they can take the form of threats, assertive behaviour and repeated checking or demands to get the target to comply with a request. The harder the nature of the pressure tactics the more likely it is to cause resentment and undermining of the relationship between the agent and the target. Most commonly used in downwards influence attempts as it is required for the agent to be able to resort to superior relative power over the target in order to exert pressure, and most likely to be successful when the target is apathetic to the request (Yukl, 2013).

2.3.2 Influence effectiveness, resistance and follow-up attempts

Resistance to influence is necessary to regard when considering how effective both an individual influence attempt and a manager is (Yukl, 2013). Broadly, considering the distinction between the three responses to an influence attempt, resistance, compliance, commitment, are all dependent upon how the target reacts, and whether or not the target takes action to obstruct the attempt is crucial when determining the effectiveness of an influence attempt.

The eleven proactive influence tactics can also be used to describe the resistance in which a target attempts to reactively affect the attempt (Yukl, 2013). It is however necessary to slightly modify or perceptively interpret the definitions of the proactive influence tactics to allow them to convincingly describe the behaviour of a target who is resistant to an influence attempt (Yukl, 2013). This is seemingly reasonable as the engagement of a target attempting to reactively influence the agent, also can be considered an attempt to influence on its own. It is also reasonable to expect that any person attempting to exert influence over another person will utilize the tactics they have available to them. Which is dependent upon what the source of their power is, and if they are aware of the powers available to them. Thus, the behavioural differences between an agent and a target are likely to be contingent on several aspects, rather than the details of who made the initial attempt.

As commitment is connected to enthusiasm this is not always necessary for an influence attempt to be considered a success. For some attempts compliance can be considered as useful as commitment (Yukl, 2013). This is important to keep in mind when determining if an influence attempt should be considered a success, and what level of effectiveness can be connected to the attempt. As previously stated, proactive influence tactics are used by an agent in an immediate attempt, a follow-up attempt on the other hand is a secondary, following, attempt which includes the possibility to take the initial attempt's outcome into consideration (Falbe & Yukl, 1992). This allows the follow-up attempt to regard the resistance in the target's response and adjust the tactics used to achieve a greater outcome. Falbe and Yukl (1992) found that even when the follow-up attempts were treated as individual attempts with their own individual outcome, the relative effectiveness of the nine tactics studied remained the same. The largest difference found was that rational persuasion was more effective as a follow-up tactic than an initial tactic. The reason for

this finding was credited to the fact that many initial attempts utilized very weak forms of rational persuasion, whereas follow-up attempts seldom did (Yukl & Falbe, 1992). This result and the reasoning on the determining factor depicts an important conundrum, that the choice of certain influence tactics is not the sole determinant of success; it is also necessary to consider how they are utilized, in what setting, as well as who the target is and how the task is perceived.

Yukl, Kim and Chavez (1999) suspected that differences in how a target reacted to an influence attempt was contingent upon how the agent perceives a task. They found support for the causal model which is described in the following quote:

“the causal model, which specifies that agent perception of importance and feasibility affect the agent’s influence behavior, which affects the target’s perception of importance and feasibility, which affects the outcome of the influence attempt” (p. 1).

Thus, the way in which an influence attempt is presented by the agent to the target is something of great importance considering that even a brief influence attempt consists of a complex chain of causal effects (Yukl, Kim & Chavez, 1999). Further, this indicates that the complex situation of influence is contingent upon many different subtle aspects that previously utilized methodology could not provide insight into; especially when regarding the target’s attitude and resistance when determining the level of effectiveness.

The different hues and complex composition of an influence attempt as part of a leadership interaction will be regarded in the analysis and discussion as far as our ability allows. Although research into people’s perception and resistance to different aspects in general is both wide and deep, this study attempts to explore the aspects associated to organizational studies and specifically leadership and management. Thus, we will focus on the behaviour of both agents and targets to the extent that an analysis thereof can be of value from the perspectives of leadership and management.

2.4 Discourse

The term discourse, often referred to as discourse analysis, exerts a particular view of language as “an element of life which is closely interconnected with other elements” (Fairclough, 2003, p. 3). A basic description of discourse analysis is that it is both a theoretical perspective and a method of analysis, used to gain insight into how language is constructed and gives meaning to the socially created reality. One of the basic standpoints of discourse is that society is created through people’s actions, interactions and the use of language (Svensson, 2019). It does not consider language as an abstract system of rules and glossary but instead as an action, which affects our way of experiencing our environment. The language is often referred to as texts, and the definition of texts can be defined both narrow and wide (Svensson, 2019). Everything from books to interviews and movies can be considered to fit into the definition (Svensson, 2019 drawing on Kress & van Leeuwen, 2001). Fairclough (2010) emphasizes that even though discourse can be seen as some sort of entity, it is important to remember that it, in itself, consists of a complex set of relations, not only between the people who talk and the way of communicating, but also complex relations with objects in the physical world.

There are relationships between texts, which Fairclough (2003) calls intertextual elements, where parts from one text are integrated into another. The most obvious being quotations, but intertextual elements can also refer to types of implicit assumptions. He distinguishes the two by arguing that intertextuality is generally attributed to specific texts whereby assumptions are not. He explains this further by stating that “What is ‘said’ in a text is ‘said’ against a background of what is ‘unsaid’, but taken as given. As with intertextuality, assumptions connect one text to other texts, to the ‘world of text’ as one might put it” (p. 40). To find a concise definition of discourse is very difficult as it is not simply an independent entity and can differ to a high degree depending on the context (Fairclough, 2010; Svensson, 2019). Nevertheless, “we can say what it is in particular that discourse brings into the complex relations which constitutes social life: meaning, and making meaning” (Fairclough, 2010, p. 3).

Fairclough (2003) describes social practices as “articulations of different types of social element which are associated with particular areas of social life” (p. 25), and that “they articulate discourse (hence language) together with other non-discoursal social elements” (p. 25). The exercise of

influence is based upon social interaction and language, therefore it is considered a social practice. It is inevitable to consider the relationship between language and society, as emphasized by Fairclough (1989) claiming that language is part of society, meaning that linguistic phenomena are to some degree social phenomena. Language can be considered the producer of the social element but also interpretative of the social element (Fairclough, 1989). The relationship between the two can therefore be considered a loop where both affect one another. As stated by Müller (2018 drawing on Fairclough, 2001), “social conditions shape language use and consequently beliefs, values and implicit underlying assumptions which, in turn, shape the production and interpretation of texts and discourses” (p. 48).

2.5 Research gap

We found that although a number of studies have examined the effectiveness of different proactive influence tactics (see e.g. Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, Kim, & Chavez, 1999; Yukl, Fu & McDonald, 2003), very few were able to provide the aspect of both the agent and target of the same influence attempt. The only examples we found, where both the agent and target of a single attempt were observed, were studies using surveys (see e.g. Yukl & Tracey, 1992), and experiments (see e.g. Yukl, Kim, & Chavez, 1999), both of which have their respective limitations and problems. First, Yukl and Tracey (1992) used a survey system in which they collected answers from multiple people at different levels of an organization which gave insight into how the behaviour of an agent affected the behaviour of a target. However, in their study the parties were aware of each other’s involvement, meaning there was an increased risk of receiving false or biased answers and that research based on this empirical material could skew the results. Further, there was no definite connection of responses that could be linked to the same influence attempt and thus causality in a specific attempt was impossible to determine. This study was also subject to the risk of selective memory (Yukl & Tracey, 1992). Second, Yukl, Kim and Chavez (1999) carried out an experiment in which role-play was used, which consisted of some similarities to our study in terms of collecting empirical material. They attempted to find causality between influence attempts and the following reactions. However, this specific study was an attempt to test a specific model, and thus more research is needed.

Yukl (2013) provides support for uncommon studies. In his reasoning, a lot of current research in leadership studies are simply recreations of previous studies on a “popular topic” with minor changes, or studies designed to corroborate “weak theory” (p. 405). His view is summed up well in the following sentence, “The leadership research seems to be biased toward easy methods and faddish topics” (Yukl, 2013, p. 405). Yukl (2013) lists the following aspects as common, survey as research method, replication as research objective, individual or dyadic as level of processes, a short time frame, unidirectional causality, one or two criterion variables, few or none mediating variables, a single data source, convenience sampling and the level of the leader is a supervisor. Regarding these aspects, this study is neither constructed with uncommon features in every aspect, nor is it entirely constructed with common features which should result in a greater contribution to future research; “Greater use of the uncommon features would make leadership research more productive” (Yukl, 2013, p. 405).

To summarize, previous research has focused on viewing either the target-agent relationship or power relations as constants rather than fluid and continuously developing. This has resulted in the fact that the broad definitions of bases of power and influence tactics can be effectively used to cultivate studies aiming for width, and that sound understandings of the subjects are readily available. What these studies lack in general, is the understanding of power relations and influence tactics, and how these two are interconnected and perpetually determine the effectiveness of one another. Thus, to research one of the above subjects at depth, we have to considerably regard the other in order to attain a result that is valid. To research influence tactics at depth, portrayed in modern popular culture, is yet to be done; and to do this productively we have embraced uncommon features.

3. Method

This section will provide information regarding the methodological approach of this study. To address the research question the focus of this study will be a discourse analysis, supported by a narrative analysis, and our approach to these analytical tools will be presented. The last section

of this chapter will include an argumentation of our choices and what limitations can be connected to the chosen method.

3.1 Discourse analysis

One of the basic standpoints of discourse analysis is that society is created through people's actions, interactions and use of language (Svensson, 2019). The analysis will therefore not consider words in a grammatical perspective, rather from a perspective of seeing the meaning of words and sentences as symbols in influence attempts in the context of movies. Svensson (2019) emphasizes the difficulty of finding a concise definition of discourse analysis as the analysis can differ depending on the context in which it takes place. This leads to the fact that the discourse analysis, to a certain degree, needs to be constructed freely to fit the purpose of the study (Svensson, 2019).

As more recent leadership theories emphasize the role of leadership being socially constructed (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017), the analysis is considered a social psychological discourse analysis with a focus on the use of discourse in social interactions (Svensson, 2019). The focus of the study is influence attempts, meaning that a social psychological discourse analysis gives us a good foundation to address the study's purpose considering the study aims to give insight into a social interaction involving influence. The analysis has a similar structure to what Fairclough (2010 drawing on Bourdieu, 1977) describes as a critical discourse analysis. This analysis aims to systematically examine causality and determination between discursive practices and, in a wider view, social and cultural contexts, such as power relations and power struggles (Fairclough, 2010 drawing on Bourdieu, 1977). Svensson (2019) states that questions regarding power are highly relevant for a discourse analysis and specifically the connection between an action of exercising power and the use of language. A discourse analysis can therefore give us an insight into how language, both consciously and unconsciously, is used to dominate and control people or groups in social interactions that are related to exercising leadership (See e.g. Svensson, 2019).

As the theory section previously defined what discourse analysis is according to researchers, the following text will instead give a depiction of how we shaped our analysis and used discourse analysis to investigate what is portrayed in the movies. We have chosen to view the discourse

portrayed at three different levels, going from a micro to a macro perspective of our empirical material. First, we will view and analyze the discourse of individual segments of the movies. Secondly, we will view and analyze what the movie as a whole portrays and what the segments of each movie present merged together. Lastly, we will view and analyze all the collected empirical material, considering what values, opinions and underlying assumptions are portrayed unitedly in the overall discourse. As values, opinions and underlying assumptions can be presented in different ways we will rely on our analytical ability to identify these even though they are often hidden in the context. This process allows us to view both the discourse portrayed in the movies as well as our own analysis critically. Having different levels of analysis and pitting them against each other, provides us with a functional scrutinization of our own interpretation of the discourses portrayed.

3.2 Narrative analysis

Even though the main focus is discourse analysis, it will be supported in parts by a narrative analysis. Bryman (2016) defines narrative analysis as:

“an approach to the elicitation and analysis of data that is sensitive to the sense of temporal sequence that people, as providers of accounts (often in terms of stories) about themselves or events by which they are affected, detect in their lives and surrounding episodes and inject into their accounts” (p. 589).

The analysis focuses on stories and tries to give an explanation to how people make sense of what happened and the effect of that interpretation (Bryman, 2016). Selby and Cowdery (1995) connect narrative analysis to television and explain that even though the stories and events, presented in television programs, seem quite logical and natural, it is actually a result of narrative construction. The editing of information in the program gives us no control over the way in which the narrative events are presented to us (Selby & Cowdery, 1995). They further explain that a narrative analysis should unfold in three basic levels. The first level is a straightforward description in which one describe what is happening in the story. The second level is where one moves from the straightforward description to analyze the explicit meanings that the text offers. The final level is

where the analysis develop further and give insights into the implicit meanings implied by the narrative told by the text (Selby & Cowdery, 1995).

In the segments selected for analysis we will describe the storyline and the relevant circumstances. However, instead of trying to give insight into implicit meanings of the narrative unfolding in the segment, we will rely on the discourse analysis and give insight into the meaning of the discourse used and support this with descriptions of the narrative.

3.2 Qualitative content analysis

The study aims to analyze popular culture in a qualitative rather than quantitative manner, with the aim of achieving depth rather than width which is connected to quantitative studies. Qualitative studies finds transferability through the creation of thick descriptions with cultural details that have been observed by the authors (Treharne & Riggs, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2017, drawing on Geertz, 1973). As we are studying movies, the study is considered a discourse analysis in the form of content analysis. This is defined as an analysis that is conducted on documents and texts in different forms, such as electronic and visual forms (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Bowen (2009) claims that documents can be used for systematic evaluation in a variety of forms, including radio and television program scripts. The content analysis consists of a search for themes in the empirical material that is being analyzed, often in the form of quotes (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Treharne and Riggs (2015, drawing on Guba, 1981; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011) argue that the quality criteria used to increase the quality of a qualitative study includes transferability, credibility, dependability, confirmability, and authenticity. Transferability concerns whether the results of a study are applicable to other social environments, often seen as a problem in qualitative studies as it requires a high level of transparency to be feasible. Credibility on the other hand, relates to how well the studies observations align with that of participants being researched. Dependability deals with whether or not the results would be replicated if another researcher undertook the research. In general, it is difficult to determine dependability and transferability in qualitative research, as research is often contingent upon social environments which change over time. Confirmability focuses on the research team and in what ways they may

have affected the study through bias, for example when interpreting and analyzing the empirical material. Lastly, authenticity pertains to the presented viewpoints and whether or not these represent a fair range of different viewpoints. One way to increase the quality of qualitative studies is to use multiple methods or sources of empirical material, to triangulate the results (Treharne & Riggs, 2015 drawing on Guba, 1981; Lincoln, 1995; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Lincoln et al., 2011). Treharne and Riggs (2015) argue that personal reflexivity is a demonstration of quality. It is defined as, researchers looking inwards in order to perceive how they may have affected the study. Further, Treharne and Riggs (2015) state that, “being reflexive requires more than writing a shopping list of the personal characteristics” (p. 60), and that personal reflexivity rather, “involves an ongoing process of questioning the relevance of your identity in forming how the research proceeds” (p. 60).

3.3 Scientific presumptions

The base of reasoning behind the study is social constructionism. Bryman and Bell (2017) describe this as a belief that social actors continuously create and give meaning to social phenomenon. Social phenomenon and categories are not only created through social interactions, they are also under constant adjustment. Important to consider is that with this type of reasoning, the researcher presents their description of the social reality. This means that the specific interpretations described cannot be considered truth (Bryman & Bell, 2017). This means that the reality described in the movies is not meant to be a replication of the true social reality, as it is under constant adjustments, but instead an insight into the social reality as described by the authors, shaped by the empirical material. Further, leadership phenomenon portrayed in the movies is constructed through social interactions as they are based on a manuscript and presented in constructed scenes by the director. The portrayed leadership is therefore based on the writers of the manuscript and the director of the movies, who both are affected by the social interaction with society. They, in turn, also affect the social construction of the leadership for society, creating a dyadic relationship.

3.4 Abductive approach

The study has an abductive approach, also referred to as abductive reasoning, based on a pragmatist perspective, by taking incomplete observations from experience or reality and finding the best prediction of the social reality of individuals (Mitchell, 2018). This approach aims to address the weaknesses associated with deductive and inductive approaches (Mitchell, 2018). In the deductive approach one moves from theory and what one knows in an area of research to hypotheses that are then tested in practice using data. The inductive approach, on the other hand, can be described as approaching the study from the other way around as it starts with a series of specific observations that lead the researcher to a general conclusion which is then compared to theory (Mitchell, 2018; Bryman & Bell, 2017). Bryman and Bell (2017) argue that it is often hard to make a distinction between the two and it is instead better to consider them as deductive and inductive tendencies as both frequently are in play during a single research study. They further argue that the main weakness connected to a deductive approach is that it relies too strictly on logic connected to the testing of theory and hypothesis, leading to a problem due to the uncertainty involved in choosing the theory to be tested. The main weakness of an inductive approach is instead that the amount of data necessary to create or add to theory is uncertain, making the approach more difficult to pursue (Bryman & Bell, 2017).

Emphasis is put on the similarities between abductive reasoning, deductive and inductive approaches concerning that “it is applied to make logical inferences and construct theories” (Mitchell, 2018, p. 105). Kovács and Spens (2005 cited in Mitchell, 2018) claim that the research process in an abductive approach starts with “surprising facts” or “puzzles” (p. 105), and the following research aims to explain what has been observed. The empirical phenomenon might not be explained by current theories leading the researcher to present the best answer from many alternatives, to explain the phenomenon (Mitchell, 2018).

3.5 Object of study

The sample consists of two male dominated science fiction action movies, *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* (see e.g. IMDb, 2020a; IMDb, 2020b). An overview is necessary to allow the reader

who has not seen the movies to understand and critically view our analysis and discussion. Therefore, plot summaries can be found in the appendix. Closer descriptions and conversations of segments analysed are presented in connection to analysis. The choice of sample size and composition was made primarily upon the fact that we set out to research what modern popular culture portray in the context of leadership, specifically movies. It was relevant for us to research movies whose portrayal reached a large audience.

In order to find movies with a large audience we turned to the International Movie Database, IMDb. As of May 2019 the database contained over 500,000 movies and over 4.2 million user reviews (IMDb, 2019a). As the objective was to seek out the modern movies with a large audience, we decided to study the movies with the highest number of votes from the year 2000 and forward. To find this, we used IMDb's list of the 1000 highest rated movies, sorted in descending order by the number of registered votes. The top two titles in terms of number of registered votes from the year 2000 and forward were, in order, *The Dark Knight* and *Inception* (IMDb, 2019b). This process was chosen as we wanted to avoid tainting the empirical material through interference.

3.6 Collection of empirical data

The collection of empirical data for this document study was done through the online streaming service Netflix (Sweden). First, the movie *The Dark Knight* (2008) was observed by each of the three authors separately, in its entirety, and while simultaneously taking notes of timestamps when a display of power in the form of a request or an influence attempt was made in the context of leadership, by an agent of the same organization as the target. Secondly, the noted timestamps by each of the observers were revisited and reviewed a number of times, until consensus of the entire segment and the discourse within was achieved. At the point of consensus, the entire segments were written down with quotes along with additional annotations necessary for interpreting the segment. As we later realized, this process generated an abundance of data; giving us the opportunity to let the empirical material display interesting aspects of power, influence and their interrelation in the context of leadership, from which our continued research could be shaped.

Along with Yukl's (2013) support for uncommon features in leadership studies, Czarniawska and Rhodes (2004) also present support for studying popular culture as the source of empirical material, something rarely utilized in leadership research:

“On the one hand, popular culture appears to be an undervalued and underutilized resource for the study of management. On the other hand, popular culture seems to outperform management researchers in the roles that many aspire to - as analysts, teachers, and the providers of exemplars. What if anything is left for research literature?” (p. 25).

The question ending the quote signals their view on the significance of popular culture, and that the role popular culture plays is larger than simply being a source of entertainment. Czarniawska and Rhodes (2004) attempt to answer their question, and one of their suggestions strongly support this study and our choice of source for empirical material; “management [sic] studies can, and perhaps ought to, pay more attention to the two-directional relationship between popular culture and the practice of management” (p. 25).

3.7 Analytical process

Following is a description of our practical analytical process. After the empirical material was collected and written down, we continued by addressing the issue of chaos and began coding and sorting, then reducing, and lastly arguing, all as described by Rennstam and Wästerfors (2018). In our first step, we coded the material based on what proactive and reactive influence tactics were used in the specified segment. This enabled us in the following interactions, with the empirical material, to easily identify the segments that included more complex situations where multiple tactics were used. Additional comments were also made regarding the segment's connection to theory, specifically if parts of the segment were clearly connected to previous research, unexplained by previous theory, or seemingly absent in previous research.

The issue of chaos was still present, to continue the process of coding and sorting we decided to give each segment a rating. A higher rating was given to segments with a higher number of influence attempts, and more ambiguity in the power relation. The rating of the segments measured

from the numbers 1 to 5, with intervals of 0,5. Where a rating of 1 through 2,5 generally was a simple request achieving commitment, or at least silent compliance; thus, these segments would not provide insight for a deeper analysis of a more complicated reciprocal process. A rating of 2,5 and above represented a reciprocal process in which the target of an influence attempt commented or resisted the agent's attempt. A rating of 4 or above, on top of representing a situation of a reciprocal process also included definitive resistance that was verbalized by the target and required the agent to comment, or adjust their use of influence tactics. To differentiate between ratings 4 and 5 we used three factors, the complexity, length in terms of words, and variations in the usage of influence tactics in the segment. The last factor refers to variations in both individual tactics and different combinations of tactics.

At this point, we had achieved closeness and intimacy with the empirical material. Therefore, we were ready to begin the process of reducing the vast amount of empirical material to a more appropriate number of segments from which a competent analysis could be performed (see e.g. Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018). We used our numbering system to omit segments that did not represent the themes we had identified in other segments. This resulted in an increased relevance in the remaining material, enabling a thorough analysis presenting insights unavailable through previous research methods. As we endeavoured to locate and analyze one or more themes that had not previously been researched, this method proved very efficient in reducing the material.

Lastly, we contend both that our empirical findings are aptly interpreted and analyzed individually, and that our analysis of the collected material as well as our interpretations thereof are appropriate and provide value for forthcoming research. The analysis of the collected material also includes conceptualization of the themes, processes and practises that echo through our empirical material (see e.g. Rennstam & Wästerfors, 2018).

3.8 Argue for reliability

Qualitative research consists of reasoning based on interpretations and presumptions of the authors, therefore littered with subjectivity (Bryman & Bell, 2017). Instead of striving for objectivity, we have in each step of developing this study consistently aimed for transparency.

Further, we have allowed our study to grow out of our interpretations of what is of interest to the field of management and leadership when developing our method, expanding our theoretical foundation, increasing and reducing the empirical material, as well as discussing our findings to employ personal reflexivity (see e.g. Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Furthermore, this was done in an internally critical manner as we endeavoured to create an environment where strongly criticizing one another was encouraged to consistently explore as many perspectives as possible. These two in combination, the critical positioning and not disregarding our own interpretations, have allowed us to explore the empirical material in ways that more closely resemble stories true-to-life. Furthermore, it has allowed us to follow paths of reasoning that describe the human experience and thus the construction of organizations, rather than preoccupying ourselves with statistics of an unsatisfying sample. In the following description of qualitative research by Tesch (1990), our view, and method, is supported:

“Qualitative research is to a large degree an art. The question of its validity does not depend on replicable outcomes. It depends on the employment of a data ‘reduction’ process that leads to a result that others can accept as representing the data. The result of the analysis is, in fact, a representation in the same sense that an artist can, with a few strokes of the pen, create an image of a face that we would recognize if we saw the original in a crowd. The details are lacking, but a good ‘reduction’ not only selects and emphasizes the essential features, it retains the vividness of the personality in the rendition of the face. In the same way a successful qualitative data reduction, while removing us from the freshness of the original, presents us instead with an image that we can grasp as the ‘essence’, where we otherwise would have been flooded with detail and left hardly a perception of the phenomenon at all” (p. 304).

However, it also forces us as authors to both innovatively create and follow a systematic process that invokes confidence in the reader; and transparently depict our study in detail so the reader is able to eliminate any doubt regarding the quality of this study.

Following are three arguments in favour of our process, the arguments will summarize our method and present a body of support for our study, and ultimately the results thereof. First, the collection

of empirical material was done without any of the authors interference and before determining the specific frameworks on which the analysis was later build. This supports the study as it is neither set to corroborate, or contradict, previous research nor built on specific presumptions on the matter at hand. Second, the processes pertaining to dealing with and reducing the empirical material was thoroughly discussed between the authors and ultimately agreed upon, in order to address personal reflexivity and confirmability (see e.g. Treharne & Riggs, 2015). To address dependability, this process was also documented. Furthermore, all of the raw empirical material is available to anyone who has the possibility to watch the movies. This supports the study considering that any misinterpretations or inappropriate dealings with the empirical material is fully available to be exposed. Third, the analysis is structured in a way that views the discourse portrayed by the movies in multiple levels, acting as different sets of sources for empirical material. This supports the study as it enables us to, to an extent, triangulate the data and simultaneously achieve a greater depth in the analysis (see e.g. Treharne & Riggs, 2015). Through this structure we are allowed to both view the different levels individually and balance our analysis to more fully explain the portrayal of power and influence attempts in the context of leadership. Thus, avoiding an analysis that is overreaching and unfounded. All of the three steps also decreasing the risk of one individual's research bias to corrupt the study.

4. Empirical material and analysis

The following section will include extracted empirical material in the form of segments from the movies, these segments will be presented in connection with a corresponding analysis. From each of the two movies four segments are analyzed. These have been chosen to represent the movie's depiction of power and influence within organizations and in the context of leadership. The chosen segments and corresponding analysis from The Dark Knight is presented first, afterwards a collective analysis of these segments are presented. Following this, the same structure is used to analyze the movie Inception. Finalizing the analysis, in the last section is our analysis of the collective segments and other interesting occurrences from the two movies presented to lead the way into a discussion regarding the findings.

4.1 The Dark Knight

4.1.1 The discourse in separate segments in The Dark Knight

In this section the segments chosen to represent The Dark Knight's depictions of power and influence attempts as part of leadership interactions between social actors, will be presented and analyzed. These will follow in chronological order with the exception of Segment 1, as it presents certain analytical points interesting for the following analysis. This is not an issue as the characters in Segment 1 are not part of the remaining segments.

Segment 1. Minute: 18:15 - 18:35.

In this segment two parties, Reese and Fox, of the same organization are trying to influence each other as they discuss the behaviour of Bruce Wayne, who is hierarchically superior to them both, during a recently finished meeting. The scene takes place outside the office where the meeting was held. Reese is concerned with Wayne's behaviour and turns to Fox who is chairman of the board, Wayne is the owner of the company. Further, Fox inhabits a vastly superior position in comparison with Reese, as Fox is chairman of the board while Reese is an accountant.

- Reese: Sir, I know Mr. Wayne is curious about how his trust fund gets replenished but frankly... this is embarrassing [Wayne sleeping during meeting].
- Fox: You worry about the diligence Mr. Reese. I'll worry about Bruce Wayne.
- Reese: It's done. The numbers are solid.
- Fox: Do them again. Wouldn't want the trust fund to run out, now would we?

The two are clearly separated hierarchically, granting Fox position power over Reese (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). A display of relative position power is made by agent Reese whose first word to target Fox is "Sir" shows him treading carefully when approaching target Fox. Fox's immediate response which depicts him as superior to the extent that he can tell Reese off; "You worry about the diligence Mr. Reese", his superior position power is further established and demonstrated in his response as he refers to Reese as "Mr. Reese" (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Onwards to influence, Reese's initial reason for approaching Fox can be interpreted as an upwards influence attempt using the proactive influence tactics rational persuasion and legitimating tactics. This is determined

considering that his response, “this is embarrassing”, is based on both logical reasoning and organizational norms. The aspect of rational persuasion is interpreted from Reese expressing an understanding of Bruce Wayne’s situation yet logically connects his behaviour to an embarrassment, the aspect of embarrassment is a way of legitimating his viewpoint as this is not how Bruce Wayne should behave, according to the norm (see e.g. Yukl, 2013).

Fox’s resistance to Reese’s influence attempt is more multifaceted and complex, it takes the rational persuasion and legitimating tactics used by Reese and turns the situation around, as the same proactive influence tactics used by Reese are also used to resist his attempt it is unsuccessful. Fox’s resistance is resolute, he does not only use the same tactics as Reese but also adds the two facets exchange and pressure (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). The last two aspects are interpreted from his response, it is an example of Fox micro-managing Reese through an exchange in which he is also being told off considering his work ethic is criticized, “You worry about the diligence”. Although Reese realizes that his attempt was unsuccessful his following response attempts to shut Fox’s request down using rational persuasion again, “It’s done”. At this point, Fox's response moves further towards pressure, he repeats his request with slight modification as he is taking Reese’s resistance into regard, “Do them again”, and continues with even more pressure tactics as he asserts, “Wouldn’t want the trust fund to run out, now would we?” (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). The development of this interaction is aggravated gradually as the two involved parties cannot come to an agreement. As a result, Fox resorts to using a large amount of pressure and forcefully deterrers Reese whom at this point becomes silently compliant in regards to Fox’s reactive resistance as Fox enters the elevator to leave.

This can be seen as successful influence from Fox’s perspective as Reese in the end becomes compliant with his request to stop pursuing Mr Wayne, and instead do the diligence (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). This result shows a complex dyadic relationship of the subjects involved in influence attempts. In this case Reese is the agent and initiates the attempt by using a proactive influence tactic only to be met with a more convincing and multifaceted resistance attempt from Fox, who is in a much more powerful position.

When analyzing this segment, two interesting findings undiscussed by Yukl (2013) regarding influence tactics are highlighted. Firstly, the successfulness of an influence attempt is often measured through the reaction of the target, whether they are committed, compliant or resistant (Yukl, 2013). Although the three described responses are helpful in determining the success of an attempt, this case shows it beneficial to view resistance on a gliding scale considering that the result can be interpreted as showing Reese in between resistance and compliance. Reese can be interpreted as being resistant and compliant at the same time. It could be that he is resistant to the task requested by Fox but compliant regarding Fox's response to his complaint concerning Bruce Wayne's behaviour. Either way Reese's reaction does not fit into the specific descriptions of resistance or compliance. Secondly, theory often describes isolated influence attempts with two individuals locked in the roles of agent and target (see e.g. Yukl & Tracey, 1992). As depicted above, these roles are much more fluid and can even alternate between the individuals, as a result of their interactions and influence attempts. The initial target, Fox, uses reactive influence tactics to reverse the roles and instead become the agent and through pressure tactics persuades Reese to comply with his request. In summary, the agent's proactive influence tactics are found lacking and as a result the, in this case, more powerful target is so strongly resistant that he influences the initial agent into compliance with a new request, resulting in Fox becoming the agent and Reese the target. Further, this accentuates the importance of both the bases of power but also the relative power between the agent and target when researching influence tactics.

Segment 2. Minute: 16:08 - 17:52

District Attorney Dent and Police Lieutenant Gordon are having a discussion in Dent's office. Dent has just been the subject of an assassination attempt and is determined to dismantle organized crime in the city of Gotham. Dent is in need of Batman's aid to be successful and tries to pressure Gordon, who he is convinced to be in contact with Batman, into introducing them to one another. Dent and Gordon can be considered working in the same organization as they are both part of the judicial system. Gordon is not greeted warmly as he enters the office, but rather has to locate a chair and place it in front of Dent's desk in order to sit down. Dent is in a superior position considering his title as district attorney. Dent desires to meet Batman, Gordon is able to arrange this as he is in contact with Batman, leading to a complex power relation between the two.

- Gordon: I hear you got a hell of a right cross [Dent punched a witness who threatened him with a gun]
- Dent: *giggle*
- Gordon: It's a shame Sal's going to walk.
- Dent: Yeah, well, good thing about the mob is they keep giving you second chances.
- Dent: Lightly irradiated bills. Fancy stuff for a city cop. Have help?
- Gordon: We both liaise with various agencies--
- Dent: Save it Gordon. I wanna meet him [Batman]
- Gordon: Official policy is to arrest the vigilante known as Batman on sight.
- Dent: *confirming humming* And what about that floodlight on top of MCU?
- Gordon: If you got problems with malfunctioning equipment I suggest you take them up with maintenance, counselor.

Dent utilizes position power as he has the authority to back up warrants, which is derived from his formal position in the system. Further, he can utilize personal power as he is held in high regard by Gordon. Gordon can resort to position power through information power, as he is in control the information regarding Batman (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). We identified several of Yukl's (2013) influence tactics as proactive and reactive, therefore this segment will be presented in two parts with a descriptive paragraph in between. The first part consists of Dent attempts to influence Gordon to give up information regarding Batman. The second part is more complicated as Gordon himself has requested Dent to back warrants issued by his department. This leads to the fact that the two characters are using both proactive and reactive influence tactics at the same time in order to get what they want.

Dent starts off with a simple request, "I wanna meet him", and when he is met with resistance from Gordon, he continues with a follow-up attempt utilizing the influence tactic rational persuasion. This is interpreted through the question, "And what about that floodlight on top of MCU?", indicating that he is aware of Gordon's and Batman's secret cooperation and there is no logical reason to exclude him from the cooperation (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). The discourse used in this sentence is important. Dent is not reaching for an answer concerning the floodlight itself, but instead the question is used as rational persuasion to prove that he knows that Gordon, even though

he denies it, has contact with Batman. Logically, it should therefore be possible for him to meet Batman. The outcome of the influence attempt by Dent, to make Gordon give up information about Batman and set up a meeting with him, is resistance as the discourse show that Gordon opposed to Dent's request (see e.g. Yukl, 2013).

Most interesting in this part, is the use of discourse by Gordon in his reactive influence attempts. Gordon uses legitimating tactics by using policy and standards in the organization to resist Dent's attempt, but this is not a definite rejection. When you consider the discourse, Gordon is not even responding to the request by Dent, but instead he uses rational persuasion as a reactive tactic to avoid the request, inclining that he does not know Batman (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). The complexity of the resistance in this part of the segment supports the view of resistance on a scale. As the two use multiple influence tactics in multiple attempts simultaneously, it indicates that viewing the target-agent relationship as fixed and their resistance as one of three categories is an oversimplification. Instead, through viewing their respective resistance on a scale one can, to a larger extent, understand their respective reactions. For example, if we instead of regarding Gordon as simply resistant to Dent's request, of meeting Batman, view Gordon to be positioned somewhere in between commitment and resistance it is possible to continue the analysis with regards to multiple aspects. By avoiding to simply distinguish the reaction of a target into a single category, multiple aspects are readily available to be analyzed, allowing the analysis more depth and versatility. For example, it is obvious to question why a position on a scale is placed at a specific location, what is attracting it in each direction and that each attraction may include multiple contingencies.

- Dent: I've put every known money launderer in Gotham behind bars but the Mob is still getting its money out. I think you, and your friend, have found the last game in town and you're trying to hit them where it hurts, their wallets. Its bold. You gonna count me in?
- Gordon: In this town the fewer people know something the safer the operation.
- Dent: Gordon, I don't like that you've got your own special unit, and I don't like that it's full of cops I investigated at internal affairs.

- Gordon: If I didn't work with cops you'd investigated while you were making your name at IA I'd be working alone. I don't get political points for being an idealist. I have to do the best I can with what I have.

At this point the discourse takes a turn to become noticeably softer. From the initial use of legitimating tactics and strong rational persuasion, to the following discourse in which both parties turn to the use of exchange, supported by versions of inspirational appeals or ingratiation (see e.g. Falbe & Yukl, 1992; Yukl, 2013). This could be a result of Dent realizing that he will not be able to influence Gordon with force as Gordon express such strong resistance. Instead, in the continued conversation he tries to utilize a softer discourse with less forceful behaviour to sway Gordon into trusting him.

- Dent: You want me to back warrants for search and seizure on five banks. Without telling me what we're after.
- Gordon: I can give you the names of the banks.
- Dent: Well, that's a start. I'll get you the warrants. But, I want your trust.
- Gordon: Oh, you don't have to sell me, Dent. We all know you're Gotham's white knight.
- Dent: Yeah. Well, I heard they have a different name for me down at MCU.
- Gordon: I wouldn't know about that.

The last part of the conversation adds another request, specifically Gordon's request of Dent backing the warrants for the search and seizure of five banks. This creates a situation where both parties can be interpreted as being both proactive and reactive considering that the request by Gordon coexist with the previous request to meet Batman, made by Dent (see e.g. Yukl & Michel, 2006). The fact that both are playing proactive and reactive roles could be another explanation for the discourse taking a softer turn, as both of them have something they desire at stake. Firstly, as stated above, both of them utilize the influence tactic exchange in order to achieve the desired outcome, for example Gordon gives Dent the names of the banks to make him comply with his request, and Dent requests Gordon's trust in order to commit to the request (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Secondly, Gordon's response to Dent's request for trust in exchange for the warrants is provided instantaneously since Gordon has already placed trust in Dent, "Oh, you don't have to sell me,

Dent. We all know you're Gotham's white knight". This allows the last few sentences to take a very informal discourse compared to their initial discussion, even ending with a joke. The development portrays how quickly the discourse can change and how complex the dyadic process of influencing someone is, where the roles of the agent and target can quickly change during an interactive process of influence. It is also a portrayal of how both influence tactics and discourse can be perceived as dependant on each other and to some extent determinants of one another.

Segment 3. Minute: 26:18 - 27:20

Gordon, Dent and Batman on the rooftop above the police building where Gordon works, discussing Lau's departure from Gotham. Dent argues that he needs to be kept informed of what Batman and Gordon are planning in order to assist them and, in turn, Gordon claims that Dent's office is corrupt. Batman can resort to superior relative power in comparison to Dent and Gordon in this segment, as he is the only one able to retrieve Lau. The relative power between Gordon and Dent is viewed as fairly equal in this segment.

- Dent: You're a hard man to reach.
- Dent: Lau's halfway to Hong Kong. If you'd have asked, I could've taken his passport. I told you to keep me in the loop.
- Gordon: All that was left in the vaults were marked bills. They knew we were coming. As soon as your office got involved--
- Dent: My office!? You're sitting down there with scum like Wuertz and Ramirez and you're talking-- Oh, yeah Gordon... I almost had your rookie cold on a racketeering beat.
- Gordon: Don't try and cloud the fact that clearly Maroni's got people in your office, Dent.
- Dent: We need Lau back, but the Chinese won't extradite a national under any circumstances.
- Batman: If I get him to you, can you get him to talk?
- Dent: I'll get him to sing.
- Gordon: We're going after the Mob's life savings. Things will get ugly.
- Dent: I knew the risk when I took this job, lieutenant. How will you get him back any--
- Gordon: He does that [Batman (disappears)]

Batman, Gordon and Dent can be seen as parts of an organization since they are working together in a deliberate manner to achieve a common goal (see e.g. Eriksson-Zetterquist, Müllern & Styhre, 2011). Although they can be seen as parts of the same organization none of them relate to one another in a direct hierarchical manner. This means that although their relative power can vary, they are to be seen as peers, on the same level hierarchically.

Most interesting from a perspective of influence and resistance, begins when Dent expresses “We need Lau back”. He continues by explaining that this however is out of his hands, “the Chinese won’t extradite a national under any circumstances”. Meaning, his resources and powers are completely ineffectual in this instance as he is unable to get Lau back. Dent uses rational persuasion to try and convince the targets to collaborate with him in order to solve the objective of getting Lau back (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Dent’s attempt differs from a conventional request using rational persuasion, and instead invites the targets to help resolve the agent’s problem by stating a need rather than a request, “We need Lau back”. In this case the objective is something that is clearly in the interest of all subjects involved. Logically, this is only functional when the objective is mutually beneficial, either through a shared goal in line with the objective or an exchange since the targets would otherwise gain nothing by assisting the agent when an objective is presented in this manner.

Batman who realizes Dent’s limitations offers his services as he is capable of doing what Dent cannot, enabling Batman the use of personal power (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Batman does however display resistance and uses a reactive influence tactic to request an exchange in return for his engagement, “If I get him to you, can you get him to talk?”. The exchange tactic is obvious from the discourse and requires Dent to use his resources, along with Batman, to resolve the bigger problem (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Thus, both Dent’s initial proactive influence attempt requesting to get Lau back, and Batman’s reactive influence attempt are to be considered a success from an influence perspective resulting in a mutual commitment (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). This segment, again, illustrates the limitations of categorising target reactions as committed, compliant or resistant. Batman is committed to Dent’s initial request of getting Lau back as his own objective aligns with this. At the same time Batman shows resistance when asking Dent to perform a task in exchange

before confirming that he will commit to Dent's initial request. As a result, Batman is both committed and resistant in response to a single influence attempt.

When analyzing Batman's bases of power in this segment, a complexity regarding the distinction between position and personal power is evident. In this segment for instance, Batman's power can be interpreted as deriving from expert power, a source of personal power, due to the fact that he is considered to possess the ability of retrieving Lau (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). On the other hand, it can also be seen as position power due to the fact that Batman operates outside of the judicial system and is therefore not bound by the bureaucracy that confines Dent (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). These two different views regarding Batman's bases of power highlight how the two bases interact with one another in a convoluted manner, making it hard to distinguish which source is most prevalent.

One explanation for Batman's reactive influence attempt, utilizing exchange, being successful is that Dent's power limitations in this manner mean that he does not have any other option but to perform the task that Batman requests in exchange (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Another explanation connects to the exchange requested by Batman, where the action required by Dent may be something he would have provided no matter if Batman requested it in exchange or not. Either Dent viewed the exchange as a necessity, and therefore worth it at any cost, or he viewed the requirements on him to be low enough for the entire exchange to be a worthwhile process that would benefit him in the end. In summary, the segment showcases a complex dynamic relationship between agent and target where the characters objectives, bases of power, influence tactics and relationships all need to be taken into consideration.

Segment 4. Minute: 47:00 - 48:50

Judge Surrillo is under threat from the Joker. Policemen arrive at her home to inform her about the threat, and to persuade her to go to an unknown safe location. Judge Surrillo is by the door talking to two police officers, hesitant to leave her house. Surrillo inhabits a formally superior position to the policemen. The police manage to convince her, handing her an envelope as she gets in her car preparing to leave. Judge Surrillo opens the envelope, finds a note with the word "UP" written and the car explodes.

- Policeman 1: These are dangerous people Judge.
- Surrillo: Yeah, but you're not giving me an awful lot of information.
- Policeman 1: Even we don't know where you're going.
- Policeman 2: Take the envelope. Get in. Open it, it'll tell you where you're headed.

In this relatively stressed situation, we identified two different influence tactics, in the discourse used by the policemen. First, they use rational persuasion when explaining that her life is in danger, as one can logically assume that she does not want to die, leading to the fact that the proposal they are offering is the best option for Judge Surrillo (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Second, one can identify the influence tactic pressure in the discourse used by the policemen (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). From this perspective one could argue that, even though the source of the threat itself is not the policemen, they indirectly incline that if she does not comply she will die, and they present this in an assertive manner, "Take the envelope. Get in. Open it".

Judge Surrillo is compliant with the influence attempt and it is visually confirmed that she executes the request made by the policemen. Even though Judge Surrillo is compliant with the influence attempt she shows resistance to the initial attempt and reacts with the use of influence tactics. She shows her resistance by contending that she has not been informed about the proposed request. Therefore, her use of reactive influence tactics closely resembles Yukl's (2013) description of rational persuasion. Her reactive influence attempt can also be interpreted as using legitimating tactic considering that both the policemen and the judge work within the justice system, and therefore are in the same organization. Through her response, it is implied that a norm exists within the organization of providing sufficient information, something required by her in order to immediately become compliant or committed to the request (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Policeman 1 uses a follow-up attempt in the form of legitimating tactics, but also implies that his formal position does not enable him to have the information requested by Surrillo, and therefore guards him from responsibility. Lastly, it is inevitable to not consider the power relations between the individuals in the segment. Surrillo is a judge and can utilize position power, more specifically legitimate power over the policemen as her formal position in the justice system is higher than the policemen (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). However, the policemen and the judge are not in a strict

hierarchical relationship which results in ambiguity even though clear position power is available to Surrillo. This could be the reason that both parties resort to the choice of using legitimating influence tactics when trying to influence one another.

In this segment we deem that the outcome of the influence attempt does not portray Surrillo's view, as neither the discourse nor the narrative reveal if she is committed or simply compliant, only that she submits to the policemen's request (see e.g. Yukl 2013). Coincidentally, her corresponding position on the gliding scale of resistance is in this case irrelevant to the policemen as long as she performs the requested task, it is also possible that these two are connected. Reasonably, the irrelevance to the agent, regarding the target's position on the resistance scale, creates a discourse in which a target is expected to withhold their opinion when it is irrelevant to the agent.

4.1.2 Collective discourse in The Dark Knight

All of the segments above will in this section be analyzed collectively. Each of the analytical points made in the individual segments will also be regarded and compared to the other segments in order to view their collective discourse. One observed occurrence found in each of the segments above regards the development of the discourse between the target and the agent, they tend to mirror their counterpart. When a target reacts with resistance to an influence attempt their response has many similarities to the agent's discourse, behaviour and choice of proactive influence tactics. It is also true in follow-up attempts made by the initial agent, in this case the target's resistance is taken into account and the response seems to be tailored to consider the points made through counterpoints of the same nature. This might seem like a natural reaction but is still an interesting occurrence as it is visible in the discourse and through their choice of influence tactics.

In segments 1 and 4 this observed occurrence is visible when analyzing the development within the two segments. The two segments depict both parties of an influence attempt adjusting to their counterparts in a gradual manner. Following one party's reactive influence attempt the counterpart

make use of the same influence tactics used in the resistance, with the two prominent tactics in these two segments being rational persuasion and legitimating tactics. One explanation for one party adjusting to the resistance of their counterpart could be that this is done in order to demonstrate the validity of their request. This is especially interesting considering that Segment 1 and 4 have very different outcomes. In Segment 1 the situation is turned around as the target in this situation in the end acts as an agent for a new, successful, influence attempt. In Segment 4 the influence attempt is instead only initially resisted, followed-up, and in the end the original target executes the requested action. Another similarity, atop of both developing in a similar manner, is that the two segments are both relatively short, yet the discourse and the choice of tactics are modified during the limited time span. This suggests that neither the discourse nor the choice of influence tactics are fixed entities, and rather that the two operate in a more fluid manner subject to many external contingencies. A third similarity is that both segments include two parties that have very different levels, and sources, of power. In each of the two segments the initial agent is deemed to be inferior and have less power than the target. However, the difference in the outcomes is likely to be contingent on the context in the respective segment, rather than the specific influence tactics used. This is likely considering that Segment 4 exists in the context of the superior target's life being threatened whereas in Segment 1 the superior target is requested to deal with the issue of a third person's, idiosyncratic, behaviour.

Segment 3 on the other hand depicts three parties with more similar levels of power. All three of them have different sources of power but the ambiguity regarding their relative levels of power portrays them as roughly equal. Although this segment also depicts some usage of rational persuasion the prominent influence tactic used is exchange. This is particularly interesting considering that the exchange is made between Dent and Batman, who have similar levels of power yet ambiguous relative power. Logically, this situation makes it difficult for one party to pressure or force its counterpart to act on a request. The longer Segment 2 also includes the use of the influence tactic exchange. In this segment the exchange takes place between Gordon and Dent, whose relative power relationship is also similar and ambiguous. There is another common denominator in these two exchanges, namely Dent. It is possible that these two situations display of exchange is not contingent upon the fact that the characters' relative power is similar yet ambiguous, but rather that Dent is a character who resorts to this form of influence. This is

reasonable considering his position as district attorney, a position that gives him the opportunity to continuously gain benefits from exchanges.

Furthermore, Segment 2 also depicts a situation in which the discourse develops gradually as described previously. In this segment it is particularly apparent that the discourse gradually hardens until a turning point, after which the discourse completely shifts to gradually become more pleasant to the extent that the segment ends with a joke. As previously described, the two parties in this segment have similar but ambiguous power levels which could be a reason for this gradual development. As it is not apparent how the counterpart will react to a request made by one party, their behaviour and discourse could be interpreted as trying to get a sense of the counterpart's perspective on their relative power relationship. Lastly, all of the segments above indicated that viewing resistance on a scale could be helpful in analysis of depth, as it enabled us to analyze different dimensions in the ambiguous outcomes of influence attempts.

4.2 Inception

4.2.1 The discourse in separate segments in Inception

In this section the segments chosen to represent Inception's depictions of power and influence attempts as part of leadership interactions between social actors, will be presented and analyzed. These will follow one another in chronological order and the analysis will be presented in connection with the corresponding description of each segment.

Segment 5. Minute: 21:37 - 21:57

Dom and Arthur are sitting on a plane to Paris and discussing a business proposal from Saito regarding the idea of inception. Inception refers to the planting of an idea in an individual's subconscious and having them believe that the idea is their own. Inception is believed to have never been performed, but in actuality it has been performed by Dom. This gives him superior insight in the matter. Dom is also to be seen as in a superior position considering he is in charge of the missions.

- Arthur: Look, I know how much you want to go home, this can't be done.
- Dom: Yes, it can. You just have to go deep enough.
- Arthur: You don't know that.
- Dom: I've done it before.
- Arthur: Who'd you do it to? Why are we going to Paris?
- Dom: We're gonna need a new architect.

The two characters relative levels of power is something very intriguing to examine further. Firstly, Dom utilize personal power through the base of expert power as he is seen as the utmost expert regarding inception. Further, he can resort to positional power since he is seen as the informal leader of previous missions and therefore is in a superior position compared to Arthur (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). What Arthur does not know before this segment is that Dom can utilize even more expert power than Arthur suspects, since Dom has in fact performed inception before. This leads to a significant imbalance of power between the two characters in this segment, something that strongly affects the outcome of their influence attempts.

Arthur, who does not believe inception can be done, tries to influence Dom into not accepting the mission. He executes a proactive influence attempt through rational persuasion to convince Dom that inception is in fact impossible and should therefore logically be something that Dom does not believe that he can be successful in attempting. Dom responds by using a reactive influence drawing on his expert power, "Yes, it can. You just have to go deep enough.", with the goal of getting Arthur to agree with him (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). Arthur responds in return with a follow-up attempt using rational persuasion, in his use of logical reasoning, trying to get Dom to, once again, let go of the idea of inception (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). What is interesting here is that the narrative also allows the viewer to interpret a sense of curiosity in Arthur. He still believes that inception is impossible but is intrigued by Dom's response to his previous attempt, resulting in Arthur's resistance to attempting inception slowly decreasing. Taking into account Dom's high level of expert power, his following reactive influence attempt using rational persuasion, "I've done it before.", is to be considered a success as Arthur's resistance seemingly disappears (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Further he is also increasingly committed to the idea being discussed which can be seen through his growing curiosity regarding if, and how, inception

actually can be performed. Along with this commitment Arthur still shows some resistance towards Dom's objective by continuing to ask questions concerning Dom's previous attempt at inception. The idea of considering resistance and commitment as a scale is additionally confirmed with the discourse showing Arthur being both committed and resistant when the segment ends.

The characters relative levels of power and how this affects their influence attempts is what stands out in this scene. Arthur's usage of power is clearly inferior to that of Dom's, this could be the reason it resulted in failed influence attempts. In turn, Dom's usage of expert power, gives weight to his reactive influence attempts in such a way that he completely resist Arthur's attempts, and even manages to increase Arthur's commitment to his objective of performing inception. This considerable shift in objective from Arthur should, in alignment with previous segments, mainly be seen as a result of the relative difference in power between the individuals rather than the influence tactics used in the segment. This confirms the importance of examining both bases but also relative levels of power when analyzing influence attempts and their outcomes.

Segment 6. Minute: 44:30 - 45:45

Dom, Eames and Saito are sitting atop a building, discussing the mission of using inception to plant an idea in Robert Fischer's mind. The discussion revolves around what is necessary for success and how they are planning to perform the mission. The three are trying to acquire information from each other in order to gain, or retain, influence and power over one another. Saito is the employer of Dom and Eames, and occupies a superior formal position. Dom, on the other hand, is viewed as the expert authority concerning inception. Lastly, Eames is to be seen as inferior.

- Saito: Robert Fischer, heir to the Fischer Morrow energy conglomerate.
- Dom: What's your problem with this Mr. Fischer?
- Saito: That's not your concern.
- Dom: Mr Saito, this [scoffs]... this isn't your typical corporate espionage. Yu--you asked me for Inception. I do hope you understand the gravity of that request. Now, the seed that we plant in this man's mind, will grow into an idea, this idea will define him. It may come to change, well, it may come to change everything about him.

- Saito: We're the last company standing between them and total energy dominance. And we can no longer compete. Soon, they'll control the energy supply of half the world. In effect, they become a new superpower [pounds the table]. The world needs Robert Fischer to change his mind.
- Eames: That's where we come in. How is Robert Fischer's relationship with his father?
- Saito: Rumor is the relationship is quite complicated.
- Dom: Well, we can't work based solely on rumor, can we?
- Eames: Can you get me access to this man here? [Shows picture of Uncle Peter Browning]. Browning. Fischer senior's right-hand man, Fischer junior's godfather.
- Saito: It should be possible. If you can get the right references.
- Eames: References are something of a speciality for me, Mr. Saito.

This segment is interesting considering the development of the conversation. The discourse used in this segment displays an apparent disparity between the three characters in terms of their respective bases of power. This results in the extent of their relative power being compared. Dom can resort to personal power in the form of expert power, as indicated by the discourse in which he presents great insight into key knowledge regarding the task at hand. Saito utilize positional power in the form of reward power, as he is the person that will give the team money if they accomplish the mission (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). Saito is purposefully withholding information, "That's not your concern". Thus, forcing the others to display power in order to persuade him to provide information they view as necessary to complete the job, therefore Saito can be considered to utilize informational power (see e.g. Raven, 2008). Through first withholding the information, Saito gains some insight into Dom's perspective of the job at hand. Dom's description of the effects associated with doing a job like this shows his concern for the person at the receiving end, "I do hope you understand the gravity of that request... it may come to change everything about him". This allows Saito to tailor his follow-up attempt, and the tactics within, into something that speaks to and satisfies Dom's request, while providing the necessary information. This use of inspirational appeals is a tactic that proves to be effective considering the commitment it results in (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). The level of commitment could be explained by other factors as well, it would however be naive to disregard how Saito's depiction of the situation imbues an emotional connection to the task. Considering his use of the proactive influence tactic

inspirational appeal, it should be viewed as a partial reason for Dom and the group's level of commitment.

The later resistance posed by Dom, "we can't work based solely on rumor, can we?", takes the form of rational persuasion. In this situation Dom can be considered resistant, however he does not oppose or resist the job itself but rather Saito's behaviour when withholding information (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Specifically, he requires Saito to increase his commitment and help the group in completing the job. This gives further support to the potential benefits of viewing the outcome of influence attempts on a scale, rather than certain categories. It would be wrong to consider Dom as simply resistant to the influence attempt as the segment ends with him seemingly compliant. Viewing him as compliant would misdirect the analysis as he later shows great commitment to the requested task. Thus, more dimensions need to be regarded when analyzing the outcome of an influence attempt in order to provide insight.

Eames involvement in this segment is quite distinctive and unusual. In the first two thirds of the segment he fills a role that can be described as supportive to the development of the conversation between Dom and Saito, in the last third he makes a request. The request is presented to Saito without any proactive tactics, but in the response Saito uses a reactive tactic in the form of exchange, that requires an exchange of information to take place. The exchange is quickly accepted by Eames as it only requires him to perform something within his job description. Thus, the exchange can be considered to be very similar to a simple request using legitimate power in combination with the influence tactic exchange (see e.g. Yukl, 2013; Raven, 2008).

Segment 7. Minute: 50:05 - 51:10

Dom, Arthur, Saito, Eames, Yusuf, and Ariadne are sitting in a warehouse planning the mission. The group is in a brainstorming session hosted by Dom, in which the group are using influence to shape the mission. The mission they are trying to accomplish is to go into the mind of Robert Fischer, the heir to a powerful energy conglomerate, a competitor of Saito's, in order to change his perception of the empire his father built. They need Fischer to dismantle his father's empire in order to complete the mission. There are several power relationships to take into consideration in

this segment as several characters interact with one another, resulting in complex multi-layered interactions.

- Dom: "I will split up my father's empire". Now, this is obviously an idea that Robert himself would choose to reject which is why we need to plant it deep in his subconscious. The subconscious is motivated by emotion, right? Not reason. We need to find a way to translate this into an emotional concept.
- Arthur: How do you translate a business strategy into an emotion?
- Dom: That's what we're here to figure out, right? Now, Robert's relationship with his father is stressed, to say the least.
- Eames: Well, can we run with that? We could suggest to him breaking up his father's company as a "screw you" to the old man.
- Dom: No, because I think positive emotion trumps negative emotion every time. We all yearn for reconciliation, for catharsis. We need Robert Fischer to have a positive emotional reaction to all this.
- Eames: All right, well, try this...um, "My father accepts that I want to create for myself, not follow in his footsteps".
- Dom: That might work.
- Arthur: Might? We're gonna need to do a little better than might.
- Eames: Oh, thank you for your contribution, Arthur.
- Arthur: Forgive me for wanting a little specificity, Eames. Specificity?
- Dom: Inception is not about being specific. When we get inside his mind, we're gonna have to work with what we find.

As the influence attempts in this segment are unclear and difficult to understand it is beneficial to divide the analysis with regards to each character's discourse to analyze their behaviour with regards to the respective use of power and influence tactics. There is a quite complex dynamic of power relations in this segment. Dom utilize expert power as indicated by his discourse and visually early on in the segment, whereby he gives superior insight and knowledge regarding the task at hand and everyone sits around him and listens (see e.g. Raven, 2008). The portrayal of him acting almost as a lecturer to the others gives further indication for this type of power. Furthermore,

the discourse used by Dom gives another aspect to the power relations, “We need to find a way to translate this into an emotional concept” which indicates that he values the others’ opinions and invites them to come with suggestions. This enables the others to utilize legitimate power as it creates a norm, inviting them to take part in the construction of the following mission (see e.g. Raven, 2008).

Dom can resort to position power that is derived from his authority in the decisions that shape the task at hand (see e.g. Yukl, 2013), but instead of utilizing his position power he indicates a reluctance when using the phrasing “We need”. By doing this he emphasizes the collective responsibility of finding a path to complete the task at hand, rather than ordering the group to do as he says or phrasing it in a manner that displays his authority, or the others’ inferiority. Everybody in the segment are considered to be able to utilize some base of power and are working towards a common outcome that is personally beneficial for all parties. This leads to an open interaction with several opaque influence attempts. An explanation for this is that even though they share the same objective with the mission, influence attempts can be identified with the goal of affecting how the mission is to be carried out.

Eames discourse in this segment shows him ingratiating himself to Cobb. This is visible through his supportive comments and the adjustments he makes in accordance with Cobb’s comments, “Well, can we run with that?” and “All right, well, try this...um”. This is prevalent in comparison with Eames’s response to Arthur’s comment. When Arthur expresses that “Might? We’re gonna need to do a little better than might” Eames responds with the ironic comment “Oh, thank you for your contribution, Arthur”, the irony is interpreted from the fact that it is specified in the discourse, and the narrative, that his comment does not provide any contribution. The differences in the discourse of Eames responses depending upon who the target is allows us to distinguish that he is using the proactive influence tactic of ingratiation in his attempt to influence his standings with Cobb and in doing so also affect the mission (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). One explanation for his choice of ingratiation as influence tactic is that the target, Dom, can resort to expert power (Raven, 2008), and thus Dom is a person whose opinion is valued by Eames. Dom’s relative power to Eames also impedes Eames from using forceful influence tactics such as pressure. Resorting to using ingratiation supported by rational persuasion is thus a logical outcome in this segment (see e.g.

Yukl, 2013). This portrayal of using the ingratiation tactic in an upwards attempt and simultaneously dismissing one's peer or colleague down with irony, displays a differentiating behaviour depending on a colleague's level of power.

This segment also depicts the previously discussed issue of determining the outcome of an influence attempt. As Eames is trying to work towards their common goal, his attempts are all directed to improve their chances of success. Thus, the influence attempt is not a clear request with the aim to get the target to perform a task but rather to influence the groups approach to the task at hand by influencing Dom, who is in charge. From the discourse in Dom's response, "That might work", it is ambiguous how he regards the influence attempt which is surprising considering the following narrative, in which they go to great lengths to perform the task in the suggested way. This is a possible indication that a reaction to an influence attempt is something that is not always experienced immediately, but rather developed over time as the target can contemplate the request and all the connected contingencies.

In addition, this further complicates the method of distinguishing a target's reaction into the three outcomes defined by Yukl (2013). This as the reaction may be under continuous development and susceptible to changes depending on what, or if, other alternatives are available and the context, rather than a fixed opinion. In this case, it might be that Dom internalizes this approach to the task at hand because the group was unable to find other approaches or that the investigation into the suggested approach, within the influence attempt, proved that this approach was appropriate considering the context or other undefined contingencies. As the narrative and discourse in a movie only portrays parts of a story we cannot determine with certainty that this was the case, but we should not disregard the possibility of this explanation. This suggests support for viewing the resistance of a target more on a scale, rather than simply differentiating between if a target is resistant, compliant and committed.

Segment 8. Minute: 1:00:54 - 1:01:20

Ariadne and Dom are sitting in the warehouse next to one of the devices that enables people to enter into a person's dreams. Ariadne has just caught Dom, using the device to visit memories, something that is strictly forbidden as only fiction is safe to visit. Saito and Arthur enter the room

and explain that Maurice Fischer, the owner of a powerful energy conglomerate, has passed away and that his funeral will take place soon, enabling them to gain access to his son Robert. Ariadne attempts to influence Dom to take her with them when they go into the subconscious of Robert, she argues that she is the sole team member who knows of Dom's personal issues. Dom is the leader of the group and the most knowledgeable regarding inception, and clearly superior to Ariadne. However, he is vulnerable to her knowledge of his personal problems, this gives Ariadne the possibility to utilize power over Dom in this segment.

- Saito: It's time. Maurice Fischer just died in Sydney.
- Dom: When is the funeral?
- Saito: Thursday, in Los Angeles.
- Arthur: Robert should accompany the body no later than Tuesday, we should move.
- Dom: Right.
- Ariadne: Cobb, I'm coming with you.
- Dom: I promised Miles, no.
- Ariadne: The team needs someone who understands what you're struggling with. A-and it doesn't have to be me, but then you have to show Arthur what I just saw.
- Dom: Get us another seat on the plane.

The conversation begins with Saito informing Dom, leading up to a simple request by Arthur, "we should move", and leads to commitment from Dom (Yukl, 2013). The agent of an influence attempt in this segment is Ariadne, she requests that Dom bring her on the mission. Dom shows resistance in his response, he uses reactive legitimating tactics through stating that he made a promise to exclude her (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). There is an underlying assumption indicated in his use of discourse, being that promises are meant to be kept (Fairclough, 2003). Something that can be considered a norm or rule in the organization and is therefore applicable to everyone. Ariadne's follow-up influence attempt uses a combination of influence tactics. Her discourse, "the team needs someone who understands what you are struggling with", indicate a use of rational persuasion or collaboration in the way that she provides a logical argument that he needs her as she can provide an understanding of his problem, which is important for the success of the team (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). In mid-sentence, she changes her initial attempt from wanting to come with

them to instead provide two options for Dom, he can either let her come with them or tell Arthur about his problems. This option has two interesting aspects to consider. First, the option can be considered as an influence tactic in the form of pressure (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Dom clearly does not want anyone to know about his problem. Through indicating that his only options are to either tell Arthur about his problem, or break his promise of not bringing Ariadne, this attempt is viewed as a demand. As Ariadne is capable of providing the information regarding Dom's problem, she has the ability to punish him by telling the others if he does not follow her instructions. Therefore, she is considered to utilize coercive power (see e.g. Raven, 2008). The second aspect considers the addition of an option as a follow-up attempt using exchange to counter Dom's reactive influence attempt using legitimating tactics. The exchange is interpreted from her indication that she will comply with his response as long as he tells Arthur in exchange (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). This is different from other types of exchange in both literature and our empirical material as it results in an outcome that is partly undesirable for both parts.

Dom utilize position power, in the form of legitimate power, in this interaction of influence due to the fact that he has the authority to decide on the approach to the mission and who will be part of it (see e.g. Yukl, 2013; Raven, 2008). The segment provides a relatively concise example of two individuals resorting to different bases of power relying on influence tactics in order to achieve a desired outcome. The fact that several different tactics can be distinguished from the discourse further support that influence tactics are frequently used in combination (Yukl, 2013). The outcome of Ariadne's influence attempt can be considered successful as she reaches the desired outcome, but to differentiate Dom as compliant or committed is harder. Considering his discourse takes the form of another simple request, "Get us another seat on the plane", aligned with Ariadne's request. This puts further emphasis on the difficulties of differentiating influence outcomes into three categories, whereby seeing them as on a scale can benefit analysis of the outcome of an influence attempt.

4.2.2 Collective discourse in Inception

From the discourses in the segments above several points are lifted that are in need of comparison in order to view the interpretations as sound. As such, in this section, Segment 5 through 8 will be

analyzed jointly in order to portray their collective discourse. One apparent perspective presented in all of the segments is that of power. As stated previously, power and influence are intertwined and contingent upon each other (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017; Yukl, 2013). However, when viewing these segments collectively there are many indications of specifically influence tactics being contingent upon one party's interpretation of their counterpart's power, both in terms of level and source of power. This is interesting as it moves focus from the agent to the target, although it is the dependent agent's perspective of the target. The interpretation of this occurrence is derived from the discourse as Segments 6 through 8 show a gradual development of the conversation, in which the parties are alternating between displaying their power, and attempting to influence, and forcing their counterpart to display their power and giving them the opportunity to enact influence.

The chosen segments further support the reasoning made in the analysis of *The Dark Knight* regarding the usefulness of viewing resistance on a scale rather than differentiating between three separate outcomes. Support for this reasoning is found in all of the segments in 4.2 *Inception* as they in different ways present benefits to the analysis when viewing resistance more fluidly. In Segment 5 and 6 it is helpful to view their respective resistance as on a scale rather than differentiated into narrow descriptions as we from the discourse can interpret resistance and commitment simultaneously. The potential impediment posed by one person would be missed if they were to be viewed as committed, and their internalization of performing the requested task and the magnitude to which the results will affect them would be overlooked if they were viewed as resistant. In either of these two situations one person's emotional connection and corresponding behaviour can be significantly misunderstood. Thus, differentiating between whether or not they are committed or resistant may in actuality hinder the analysis rather than help it.

In the analysis of Segment 7 we present the possibility of a target's reaction to a request being delayed, and developed or changed over time. This reasoning also shows support for the use of a scale when determining a person's resistance, as it allows differentiation between those who are currently regarded as the same category. From the analysis of both Segments 7 and 8, we found that ambiguity in one's resistance appears to be common and that differentiating between whether or not a person's resistance is closer to one category or another can, under these circumstances, be

unhelpful. Further, this leads us to conclude that the collective discourse from Segments 5 through 8 suggests that the many contingencies and opaque responses a person can have to an influence attempt causes it to be unhelpful to simply differentiate between resistance, compliance and commitment, in an analysis of depth.

Something that is commonly portrayed in Segments 5 through 8 is complex and dynamic power relations, and that these can be connected to the discourse. For example, the discourse used by Dom in Segment 5 seemingly causes his use of expert power to gradually increase due to the phrasing of his sentences, as he consecutively indicates further superior knowledge regarding the processes without needing to show or provide that knowledge (see e.g. Raven, 2008). What he does, is to simply emphasize his previous experience, making him seem more knowledgeable and thus enabling him to use more power sourced from his expertise. Further examples of the complex and dynamic aspects of power relations are provided in Segments 6 and 7, where the discourse portrays different bases of power being weighed and compared to each other. In addition, it provides an insight into different individuals' perception of the existing power relationships and how they might adjust their approach, depending on the power of their counterpart, through their use in discourse. When they perceive a counterpart's power as superior to their own, they tend to use discourse characterized by politeness and respect. On the other hand, when the counterpart's power is equal or inferior the discourse is characterized by more strict phrasing, through the use of demands, irony, or forceful behaviour. This is something that is further supported by the use of discourse in Segment 7, as the initial target's power is superior to the agent's power and a polite and respectful discourse is used. Simultaneously, the aforementioned agent uses discourse characterized by irony when interacting with a target of similar power.

4.3 The collective discourse in both *The Dark Knight* and *Inception*

In this section we will present what our analysis of the two movies' collective discourse portrays. It will regard the aspects pointed out in the collective discourse of each individual movie and allow each to be contended by the other in order to assess the relevance in our analysis of the chosen segments. It will also regard other interesting occurrences, found in both movies, that collectively present interesting points for analysis.

4.3.1 Simple requests using legitimate power

During the analysis of the two movies several examples of simple requests were identified. As emphasized by Yukl (2013), simple requests are made by individuals that have legitimate power. Throughout the analysis we found no clear indications within the aspects of simple request that is not acknowledged in theory, and it will therefore not be discussed in the chapter 5. Discussion. Nevertheless, we will here provide an analysis where we dive deeper into the discourse used in simple request to present a more precise depiction of how the movies portray power and influence attempts. We found an abundant amount of simple requests portrayed in the movies, most in the form of orders, leading to commitment. The simple requests were mostly phrased as uncomplicated sentences with few words, while the following commitment or compliance was predominantly visually confirmed and seldom led to resistance. Even though the examples identified were aligned with current theory, the discourse analysis used in this study allowed the simple requests to be viewed from a new perspective and display interesting and overlooked aspects potentially useful for managerial work.

There was a clear distinction in the use of discourse depending on if the situation were stressful or not. In stressful situations the discourse consisted of direct and clear orders such as: “get him out of here!”, “We need air support, now!”, “Mount the curb!”, and “Stand away! All of you!”. The urgency of the situation is also identified in the discourse through the loudness of the request, as it is often louder when making a simple request. This is aligned with Yukl’s (2013) statement regarding the fact that simple requests are more effective when stated clearly, which can be a possible explanation to why the discourse used in simple requests in stressful situations can be characterized by more direct, clear, loud statements, and the use of simple words and sentences. Further, the discourse used in successful simple requests repeatedly consist of repetitiveness which portrays clearness as even more important. Several examples of this were identified: “I repeat, exit down. Exit down!”, “Rack them up, rack them up, rack them up”, “Red team, GO! Red team, GO!”, and “Sound the alarm! Sound the alarm! Go, go, go!”. All of the requested tasks in the examples above led to compliance or commitment considering they were performed, and are to be

considered successful. Both movies depict situations characterized by deadly violence, where most of the simple requests were made in the form of demands. This is interesting as the stakes are to be considered high and the importance of following instructions within these stressful situations may be higher than under different circumstances.

In situations where there was less indication of stress, the discourse used in simple requests took other forms. Instead of phrasing the request as more of a strict order to the target, the requests were phrased in terms of what the agent needed from the target. Specifically the word “need” was used frequently, as shown in the following examples: “I need a new suit”, “I need five minutes alone”, “But, I need your help”, and “we'd need you there to tailor compounds to our needs”. When comparing the quotes from stressful and non-stressful situations the discourse displayed significant difference. Specifically, the requests in non-stressful situations were no longer phrased as direct and clear orders of what the target should do, and rather shifted the focus onto what the agent needed to be the outcome. This difference is considerable as the targets in the latter are allowed freedom to perform the requested task in their own manner, whereas an order only can be completed in a single way.

Furthermore, there were few segments that could provide examples of politeness in the discourse used in simple requests, making it difficult to draw any major conclusions regarding this dimension. The dimension of politeness in the request seemed to stem mostly from the relationship between the target and the agent, through inside jokes, or shown visually in the scene in terms of courtesy behaviour such as an incline of the head. An indication for politeness in the simple requests was the use of honorifics, such as madam, mister or sir, for instance, “Assemble your team, Mr Cobb”. By using honorifics, the agent shows respect and politeness towards the target, making the request more effective as Yukl (2013) argue that politeness is an important factor for the effectiveness of simple request.

4.3.2 The complexity in power relations and influence roles

Another similar theme in the overall discourse in both movies is the complexity of power relations. The portrayal of power relations between individuals in the movies tends to be characterized with uncertainty and complexity, whereby, as mentioned previously, the discourse tends to be altered during a dialogue depending on the perceived power of one's counterparts. We were able to identify several bases of power from the discourse used by individuals in the movie. Yet, the complexity regarding aspects, such as relative power, and the strength of their power was more difficult to determine. The identification of different bases of power could be done easily when analyzing the discourse and the underlying meanings in the use of discourse. For example, when the discourse consisted of providing complex knowledge, it was clear that there was an underlying meaning that the person had superior knowledge and therefore considered to have expert power. Another example, when an individual used a discourse with underlying meanings drawing on social norms or rules, they were therefore considered to have positional power (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013).

Even though we were able to identify several bases of power, difficulties still emerged when trying to identify the relative power relation in their use of discourse. The outcome of an influence attempt gives an indication for the level of power held by an individual, as the effectiveness of an influence attempt is partly dependent on the level of power (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). In a number of situations one individual's use of discourse indicated superior power, while the other individual's use of discourse did not, strongly indicating the relative power between the two parties. However, it could be incorrect as it only addresses a single conversation. More often than not the power relations consisted of two individuals utilizing different bases of power, and with complex dynamics in terms of the relative power. Even when the different bases of power could be identified, as aligned with the definitions in theory, the different definitions were unable to encompass the full aspect of the relative power between two individuals.

Seemingly, due to the complexity of the power relationship between two individuals, and their respective bases of power, it was possible to identify dynamics regarding the roles, agent and target, in influence attempts. A constant theme in the use of discourse in several segments is that the roles in influence attempts are much more dynamic than described in theory. Frequently, both

parties acted with both proactive and reactive influence attempts, changing roles throughout an interactive situation of influence, resulting in both parties acting as both agent and target at the same time. Aligned with this, we found further support for what Yukl (2013) argues regarding the use of proactive influence tactics being used as resistance, as it was a frequent theme throughout both movies. While agent-target dynamics are important and the choice of influence tactics can affect the outcome of an attempt, in many scenarios, the most important factors to consider was the bases of power and the level of power utilized. The power relationship between the parties was often the determining factor as to whether influence attempts were successful or not.

4.3.3 Dynamic aspects of discourse and influence tactics

Throughout the two movies we have seen a theme in which the discourse used by individuals tend to change over time in dialogues regarding influence attempts, but also in situations where the individuals involved express their respective power. For example, as previously analyzed, in Segment 1 and 4, the parties involved tend to mirror the choice of influence tactic chosen by their counterpart, and also tend to use a similar kind of discourse. This is evident in Segment 6 and Segment 7 as well, where the parties involved tend to adjust their use of discourse depending on their perception of the power used by their counterpart. Similarities to this was found in Segment 2 where the discourse, used by the parties involved, transitioned from a more strict and impolite discourse, whereby the parties seem to test each other's respective power, to a more friendly and respectful discourse. When viewing these occurrences collectively they raise interesting aspects on the topic of development within influence attempts. On the topic of development, within an influence attempt there are two especially interesting aspects to analyze. Firstly, the repeated occurrence of mirroring one's counterpart in terms of influence tactics is interesting as it portrays the reactive influence attempts and the follow-up attempts outcome to be determined, to an extent, by the previously used influence tactics. Secondly, the repeated occurrence of a discourse that tends to mirror that of the counterpart is interesting as it portrays the relevance of one's perception of the counterpart, how an influence attempt is presented and how this is ultimately perceived by the counterpart. Most interesting, is that these two combined shows that one can, to an extent, control the outcome of an influence attempt when regarding these aspects.

4.3.4 Disadvantages of the fixed influence outcome categories

As mentioned throughout the analysis, we found in each of the individual segments and the movies' collective analysis that differentiating between the three categories, resistance, compliance and commitment, was not helpful. In some cases, the act of differentiating was even obstructing the analysis as it hindered potentially causal aspects to be analyzed. This is of particular importance as it is eminent when viewing the discourse of single segments, segments in each of the movies collectively, and even when the two movies together are collectively analyzed. The implications of viewing the outcome of an influence attempt as on a scale will be further discussed in the following chapter.

5. Discussion

This chapter includes discussions on the analytical findings in the segments and provides the reader with our reasoning through which we have made our conclusions.

5.1 Coexisting influence attempts and dyadic relationships

From the analysis of the different segments, and the collective analyses thereof, we found that more often than not the influence attempts with a more complicated discourse portrayed multiple influence attempts to coexist. From this fact and in connection to the ambiguity in the parties' reactions, an issue emerged. The emerged issue pertains to the act of distinguishing between different coexisting attempts and assessing their respective outcomes and effectiveness. When also adding on the matter of multiple tactics being used in simultaneous attempts, distinguishing causality while also regarding the context becomes a very complicated task. A task highly dependent on the interpretive and analytical abilities of the person conducting the analysis. However, even though it is a challenging task, it is an approach that attempts to examine the subject in a wholly manner. To analyze thoroughly is a necessity in order to detect weaknesses in previous research. This in turn is imperative in order to provide useful contributions to the understanding of the many contingencies, their interplay, existing during influence attempts and the effectiveness thereof.

Considering that the four core proactive influence tactics are dubbed as such with regards to their superior effectiveness, it is important to understand how this conclusion has come about and what implications this imposes on management practices. Yukl & Michel (2006) found that the four core tactics were more frequently used in closer relationships. This finding entails the possibility of the determined effectiveness actually being contingent upon the relationship rather than the choice of tactic. This reasoning is interesting when considering the abundance of potential contingencies affecting the outcome of simultaneously existing influence attempts. It is possible that the quality of the relationship between an agent and a target is a stronger indicator of whether or not an attempt will be successful, and thus to be considered effective. It is also possible that the relationship between an agent and a target is evolving during the time period of performing the requested task, and that this evolves with regards to how an agent treats a target. If so, the effectiveness of an attempt is potentially contingent upon previous attempts. Thus, the choice of influence tactics used by a manager in general, may be more indicative of the effectiveness in outcomes. Further, this is also interesting when regarding the aspect of a mirroring behaviour between the agent and target. If a manager in general uses core tactics in and has an insight into the connected contingencies and the target's perception of the requested task, they can to an extent control the outcome through adjusting these aspects.

5.2 The interplay between discourse and power

As presented in the analysis, we found an interesting relationship between the use of discourse and the different bases of power inherited by individuals portrayed in the movies. To start the discussion regarding this it is important to consider discourse as a phenomenon first. The use of discourse gives us an insight into the meaning of the use of language, and the underlying meanings in the words. Considering the fact that there is no specific tool to measure power, one can assume that these underlying assumptions are one of the few things that enables us to achieve some form of insight into levels of power and different relative power relations. What we found was that in situations with subjects having similar levels of relative power, the perception of their own and their counterparts power becomes more relevant. In order to understand this, it is inevitable to search for the underlying meanings in their discourse as the subjects rarely provide clear indications of their perception of their counterpart's relative power. An important aspect to

consider when drawing on underlying assumptions is the importance of being critical to our conclusions since they are based on our interpretations of the individual's perception of the power relation. Simply the fact that we were able to identify several bases of power from the use of discourse further supports the relevance of analyzing power in terms of the use of discourse. Nevertheless, it is important to consider that we could, to some extent, identify some sources of power visually from the movies, whereby for example the use of a gun indicates coercive power or physically showing expertise in performing a task could indicate expert power (see e.g. Raven, 2008). This made some identifications of the bases of power seem easier than others. In terms of what we found in regard to the bases of power, we could not identify anything that was far away from previous definitions of the different bases of power. Support for Yukl's (2013) argument regarding the complexity of categorizing power into the different bases could be identified. This means that even though it was relatively easy to identify the power of an individual, it was harder to specifically determine what base of power as many bases could be linked to the power of one individual. Further, it is important to consider that even though indications regarding an individual's level of power can be identified from an influence attempt, one cannot with certainty draw the conclusion that a successful influence attempt is the result of an agent utilizing greater relative power in comparison to the target.

The different bases of power are often defined in terms of an individual's opportunity or ability to utilize power, meaning that analyzing an influence outcome may lead to a faulty picture of the individual's level of power (see e.g. Raven, 2008; Yukl, 2013). For example, the relative power of an agent might be superior to the target's, yet the attempt can be unsuccessful due to the agent's inability to utilize the available power in their influence attempt. This inability can for example stem from the choice of utilizing influence tactics that are poorly connected to their bases of power, resulting in an unsuccessful outcome.

An important aspect to consider in our analysis is the relationship between the use of discourse and the respective base of power. In the analysis we were frequently able to identify bases of power from the use of discourse, but it is important to consider the relationship between discourse and power being inverted. The specific bases of power might just as well be the determinant for the use of discourse. This is aligned with Fairclough's (1989) argument regarding the fact that

language is both the producer of the social element, but also interpretative of the social element. We can therefore neither claim that the use of discourse decides what bases of power an individual can be considered to have, nor that an individual's power shapes their use of discourse. What we can say is that we found them to seemingly be affecting one another. This has implications for leaders in organizations as social relationships are an essential part of leadership (Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). Therefore, the use of discourse has an impact on the social relationships, and ultimately the outcome of influence attempts.

5.3 Influence outcomes on a scale

Throughout the analysis we found continuous support for achieving a deeper, and to the context more appropriate and precise, analysis when viewing the outcomes of influence attempts as more fluid rather than as one of commitment, compliance or resistance. One possible explanation for this is the fact that this study is of qualitative nature and as such it is inadequate to simply interpret and regard an outcome as one of three categories. As stated in the theory section, Yukl (2013) expresses that it is helpful to differentiate the outcome of an influence attempt, with a single target, into one of the three categories. The fact that our analysis points in a different direction could be a consequence of this study's different approach and method. Further, considering that our analysis aimed for depth rather than width suggests that the benefits of differentiation between the three categories may still be present when analyzing larger samples. As different methods are contingent upon different aspects it is also important to remember that although our analysis did not benefit from differentiating between the groups, we still found support in the definitions of resistance, compliance and commitment.

Considering the support our analysis received from the definition of the three categories, we contemplated how they could better be visualized when conducting a qualitative analysis. Initially, we found that there was support in viewing them as on a scale with resistance and commitment as the two extreme points. However, after further analysis, and the realization of the possibility of a target being resistant and committed at the same time, we found that the multi-layered reaction a single target could have, to even a single attempt, meant that this needed further development. To

account for this, we argue for viewing the outcome of an influence attempt as a covered area in the triangle with the three different categories at the three edges. As depicted below.

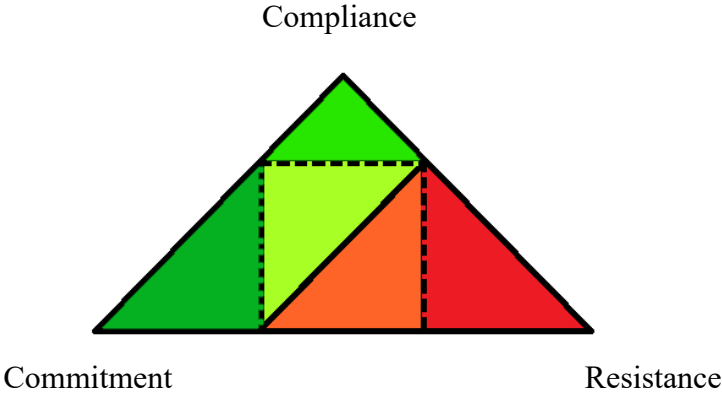


Figure 1: The Triangle of Influence Outcomes [own design]

The depicted triangle is intentionally not to scale as it is supposed to be used to visually depict the outcome of an influence attempt, rather than to quantify. Commitment is defined as, “when the target person makes a great effort to carry out the request or implement the decision effectively” (Yukl, 2013, p. 191). Compliance, when the target person is unconvinced, is defined as, “when the target person is willing to carry out a request but is apathetic rather than enthusiastic about it and will only make a minimal effort” (Yukl, 2013, p. 191). Resistance is defined as, “when the target person is opposed to the proposal or request, rather than merely indifferent about it” (Yukl, 2013, p. 191).

In contrast to the current categorization of influence outcomes, a framework able to represent multiple aspects of an influence outcome enables one to depict an individual as drawn to more than one category. If the depicted outcome of an influence attempt is mainly covering the green areas, the requested task has been performed. On the other hand, if the request is not performed, the majority of the depicted outcome will cover red parts of the triangle. The area within the dotted rectangle represents ambiguity. An outcome characterized by both commitment and resistance will to a greater extent cover the ambiguous rectangle as the two categories contradict one another. For example, the target of an influence attempt can be committed to a request and perform the task with great effort, but meanwhile express strong resistance to aspects of the request. In this case, the outcome of the influence attempt would fall somewhere in between commitment and

resistance. This is depicted in the triangle below, in which majority of the depicted outcome covers the green parts.

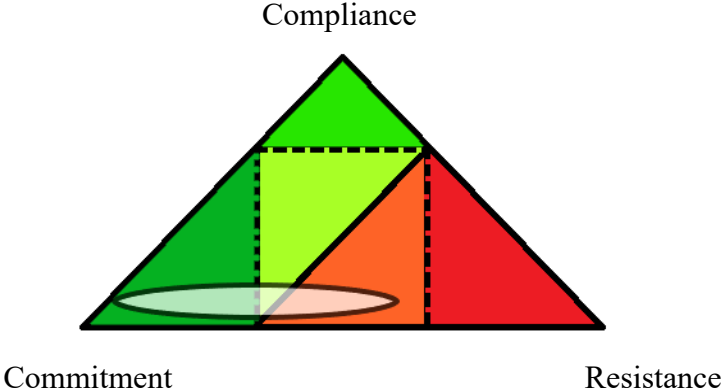


Figure 2: Triangle of Influence Outcomes with example [own design]

The framework enables us to not only consider the outcome of an influence attempt in terms of whether or not the request was executed, but also the target’s perception of the influence attempt. We therefore argue that the suggested framework will benefit a deeper analysis into the outcomes of influence attempts, as more aspects can be depicted and taken into regard. Nevertheless, one critical aspect of using the framework is that it still depends heavily on a user's ability to identify influence outcomes, and the related aspects. This results in the framework being vulnerable to subjectivity and incorrect representations of the outcome of influence attempts, depending on the user's perception of the situation.

5.4 The power and influence of movies

Lastly, we present a short meta discussion regarding the power and influence the movies themselves have. The movies themselves have power and an ability to influence the viewers. As previously stated, popular culture plays an important role in society due to its influence on society and ultimately on the construction of individuals’ perception of leadership (Czarniawska & Rhodes, 2004; Callahan, Whitener, & Sandlin, 2007; Strong, 2018; Kirkpatrick et al., 2001). Aligned with this one can argue that movies therefore have an ability to influence society’s view on influence, through their portrayals thereof. Thus, in a sense, the movies themselves have, to an

extent, the ability to present a portrayal of power and influence that in itself influence the audience on this subject. However, movies are entities and their way of influencing, and the outcomes thereof, cannot be considered as analogous to reasoning within research on influence in human interaction in the context of leadership. Although this perspective presents an interesting topic, as it can be interpreted as endlessly beneficial for popular culture to portray itself as influential in order to increase its ability to influence. However, it is not that simple to influence people in one particular direction, and this may in fact lead to the opposite, greater resistance in the audience, and thus lessen the power, and ability of popular culture to influence. When discussing the movies' ability to influence it is important to remember the aspect of perception, and the relevance of a target's interpretations. As discussed previously, the perception of one person can be different from that of another. This fact entails that it is immensely difficult to influence a large group of targets in one intended direction, as each of the targets' perceptions would have to be regarded in the portrayal of power and influence attempts in the context of leadership.

6. Conclusions

In this final chapter our conclusions and suggestions for future research is presented. First, we present our key findings, after which our additional findings are presented. Following the conclusions are our suggestions for future research.

The first key finding was the mirroring of discourse and use of influence tactics by the agent and target in the context of leadership. Considering the finding of both the target and agent of an influence attempt tended to adjust their discourse and use of influence tactics, we came to the conclusion that multiple aspects need to be regarded to anticipate the outcome of an attempt. This also strongly indicated potential benefits of an awareness of a counterpart's perception regarding a requested task, and contingencies connected to that task.

The second key finding was that discourse and power seem to be affecting one another. Discourse used in the movies often indicated different bases of power, but to identify the use of a superior relative power between individuals was far more ambiguous. This resulted in difficulties in

determining the outcome of an influence attempt beforehand. Further, we argue that even though we could identify bases of power from the discourse, it is possible that the use of a certain base of power can affect the phrasing and use of a certain discourse. Resulting in the conclusion regarding the existence of an interplay between discourse and power in the context of leadership.

The third key finding was the ambiguity in the outcome of a target's reaction to an influence attempt. This finding resulted in criticism towards the current categorization of influence outcomes with a single target, and suggested support for instead viewing the outcomes of an influence attempt as on a scale. To address the criticism towards the current categorization of influence outcomes, and the benefit of viewing outcomes as on a scale, we provided a suggested framework, the Triangle of Influence Outcomes based on Yukl's (2013) definitions of resistance, compliance and commitment. By viewing the outcome in this manner, the potentially many aspects of an outcome are allowed to remain even though a person may be closer to one of the categories. Thus, this allows the benefits of differentiating between the categories to remain, as this is still readily possible, and also allows the ambiguous aspects to be regarded as well.

Additional findings included numerous examples of simple requests with a differing discourse seemingly dependent upon the stressfulness of the situation. Further, the different bases of power and influence tactics could be identified, and proactive influence tactics were often used with benefit in combinations (see e.g. Yukl, 2013). Furthermore, although we cannot provide causality, we have found indications of movies having power and influence over society as portrayals in the movies showed intertextuality with leadership theory. Thus, movies can be considered to affect the audience's perception of power and influence, and also be reflective of society's perspective.

Future research can benefit from further examining discourse in movies with regards to the use of influence tactics and bases of power in the context of leadership. We suggest that research in the field of leadership and management, with empirical material sourced in popular culture, examine power and influence in the context of leadership with the use of different methods, in order to triangulate or contradict the results presented in this study. Further, our suggested framework, regarding the view of the outcome of influence attempts as an area on a triangle, needs to be tested with the use of different methods and other sources of empirical material. Furthermore, both the

opportunities and the limitations of applying this framework for analysis need to be thoroughly examined to determine its usefulness.

We also observed a different discourse within influence attempts in the context of leadership when the agent was a woman. This could be particularly interesting as the discourse seems to affect the outcome, and thus the outcomes of influence attempts should vary depending on whether the agent is a man or woman. Unfortunately, this was not possible to examine further considering that examples of influence attempts in organizations with female agents was too limited in our empirical material to identify recurring discourse. Further, the fact that both, examples of this, and that the number of female roles was severely limited also points to the possibilities of researching the differences between the portrayals of male and female leadership in popular culture. Considering the lack of female leaders one can also argue that even though leadership theories has evolved since the great man theory, popular culture seems to hold on to antiquated leadership theory (see e.g. Iszatt-White & Saunders, 2017). Thus, supporting the relevance for further research to focus on the differences between the portrayals of male and female leadership through discourse in movies.

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8. Appendix

The appendix includes the plot summaries necessary to grasp the segments and our interpretations. Following plot summaries are made based on interpretations of the movies themselves. For further insight into the synopsis we provide examples, after each summary.

8.1 The Dark Knight

The Dark Knight is a science fiction action movie from the United States of America released in 2008, directed by Christopher Nolan (IMDb, 2020a). It is a story about the superhero Batman, the dark knight, and his nemesis The Joker and their battle for the crime infested city of Gotham. Batman cooperates with law enforcement in order to put criminals to justice. Whereas The Joker forces the criminal gangs controlling the city and institutionalized mentally ill persons to cooperate with him. The movie is set in modern times and takes place in the city of Gotham. When the movie begins, Batman has managed to make criminal gangs run scared, a situation The Joker is rather displeased with. The Joker is a character who views criminality with financial goals as weak, and criminals of this nature are according to him of low class. He wants chaos. Batman is the alter ego of billionaire Bruce Wayne, whose superpowers derive from his immense wealth and possibility to develop weaponry unavailable to the rest of the world. He uses his company, Wayne Enterprises, and the chairman of the board, Fox, to develop these weapons. Another instrumental character to Batman is Alfred, the family butler who has been with him his entire life. Alfred has been crucial in Bruce Wayne's upbringing as his parents passed away when he was at a young age. Alfred supports him through all his endeavours and is the person closest to Batman.

Police lieutenant Gordon is in close cooperation with Batman. He is portrayed as working for the benefit of the masses while trying to remain a morally driven person. Cooperation with Batman is outlawed as he is a vigilante and should thus be arrested by the police. Gordon runs his own unit in which several of the police officers were previously investigated by Dent, the recently appointed district attorney of Gotham. He formerly worked for the police as an internal investigator. The relationship between Gordon and Dent is initially tense, however they show mutual respect as they appear to have a similar moral compass. As Gordon has contact with Batman, and Dent wants to

cooperate with Batman, the three form a cooperation, an organization of sorts, in order to achieve their common goal of ridding the city of the criminal gangs (see e.g. IMDb, 2020c).

8.2 Inception

Inception is a science fiction action movie from the United States of America released in 2010, directed by Christopher Nolan (IMDb, 2020b). It depicts relatively natural environments such as a warehouse, an airplane, or a downtown street. Even though many common environments are depicted, this can also be inverted when they enter a person's unconscious and another world is created. However, the created world in a person's subconscious often has many similarities to the real world. The movie tells the story of a highly skilled thief named Dominic "Dom" Cobb, the absolute best in the art of extraction, and his companion Arthur. Extraction concerns the process in which one, with the use of a device, forcefully go deep within the subconscious of another individual during a dreamstate in order to steal their most valuable secrets and ideas. In order to wake up from the dreamstate one needs to either feel the sensation of falling in real life, or die in the subconscious dreamstate. Time moves significantly slower when in a dreamstate, meaning that seconds in real life can become hours in the dreamstate as this exponentially increases the deeper into a subconscious one goes. The process is illegal and difficult, and the rare ability Dom possesses has made him one of the key players within corporate espionage. In the movie, Dom is approached by a man named Saito, the head of a large energy corporation, who offers him the chance to have his criminal record erased, enabling him to be reunited with his children, as a reward for completing a requested mission. The mission does not concern extracting a secret from another individual, as they have done several times before, but instead Dom is requested to plant an idea in the subconscious of a man named Robert Fischer. This is described as inception and is defined as the act of successfully planting an idea in someone's subconscious without them knowing it has been done. Fischer is heir to a powerful energy conglomerate, and Saito wishes to change Fischer's perception of his father's company and in turn break up the empire his father built. This is of concern for Saito as the empire is his main competitor and is running him out of business. Dom accepts the mission and assembles a team of five highly skilled individuals. The

group includes his companion Arthur, Saito the businessman, an architect student named Ariadne, a conman and identity thief named Eames, and a chemist named Yusuf.

Dom has experience of inception as he performed it on his late wife Mal. Due to a lack of foresight when visiting her subconscious and performing inception, the idea remained in her mind, rather than disappearing, when they returned to reality. The idea Dom introduced was that her life was just a dream, the idea ultimately drove her to take her own life. The reason for introducing this idea, was Mal's desire to stay in the subconscious dreamstate. This left deep scars in Dom as he felt responsible. In an attempt to persuade Dom to also take his life, Mal framed Dom, making him look responsible for her suicide. The murder charges drove him to flee the country and leave his family behind.

Dom has a close working relationship with Arthur, as the two have previously performed extraction together. Saito is a powerful businessman and, due to his ability to erase Dom's criminal record, has a strenuous relationship with him. Further, Dom and Eames are both known to each other before and well aware of their respective skills (see e.g. IMDb, 2020d).