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## Human Factors

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## Human Factors

### Abstract

This is a review of *Human Factors* (2021), directed by Ronny Trocker.

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### Author Notes

Rubina (Ruby) Ramji is an Associate Professor in the Department of Philosophy and Religious Studies at Cape Breton University. After serving as a Chair of the Religion, Film and Visual Culture Group for the American Academy of Religion and then on the steering committee, Rubina continues to serve on the Executive Committee for the Canadian Society for the Study of Religion as President and is the Film Editor of the *Journal of Religion and Film*. Her research activities focus on the areas of religion, media and identity, religion in Canada, and religion and immigration.



**Human Factors (2021), dir. Ronny Trocker**

*Human Factors* allows the viewer to see the many truths that exist in any storyline. We are introduced to an upper middle-class white family, who experience a mysterious house invasion while on vacation. Told from the perspectives of father, mother, son, and daughter (as well as Zorro the pet rat), we soon realize that what we may assume is the “truth” can be understood in many different ways. We also quickly realize that what we see from one vantage point never gives us the whole picture. A single perspective is never “truth.”

What seems like a perfect family vacation quickly unravels. Nina and her husband run a very lucrative business and have a good life – but the happy veneer is quickly removed and we begin to see the cracks within the family. Each has their own plans for the weekend: no one really talks to each other or cares where the others are. Then the story quickly veers in a new direction,

when Nina screams that she has encountered intruders in her family vacation home. Yet no one has witnessed what she has seen.

Jan is busy making decisions about their advertising agency on his own. In fact, he has taken on a political election campaign that illustrates how white privilege affects perspective. The movie takes place in multiple countries and in multiple languages – clearly illustrating the class privilege of the characters in the movie. The political campaign is a reflection of the current political climate of European countries such as Germany and Belgium, and a focus group represents the average white European middle-class perspective that is gaining traction: they freely express their anti-immigrant views, their abhorrence of racial mixing, and their fear of the ethnically and religiously other – even though most European countries remain majority white.

Director Ronny Trocker spends a large part of the movie gaslighting the characters in the film as well as the viewers themselves. They suspect each other and we suspect all of them. In this way, we soon realize that this same issue is playing out in European countries: with only one viewpoint, one cannot see the whole picture. Not all Muslims are terrorists. Not all ethnically different people are dangerous. Yet those singular viewpoints are what is driving political parties to enact laws keeping out those who are too “other” to be “truly understood.”

Although the truths of each character in *Human Factors* are based upon their beliefs, we soon realize that all four stories hold separate truths that require a cohesive understanding in order to see the whole picture. Fear and distrust will continue to be the norm as long as all the groups involved keep believing that their own “truths” are all that matter.