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EVALUATING VIOLENCE IN SLASHER FILMS: SIMILARITY AND
SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION WITH THE FINAL GIRL

by

Felicia L. Sanders

A Thesis
Submitted to the
Faculty of The Graduate College
in partial fulfillment of the
Requirements for the
Degree of Master of Arts
Department of Communication

Western Michigan University
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Felicia L. Sanders

EVALUATING VIOLENCE IN SLASHER FILMS: SIMILARITY AND SOCIAL IDENTIFICATION WITH THE FINAL GIRL

Felicia L. Sanders, M.A.

Western Michigan University, 2003

Prior research has shown that the media can have an impact on behavior, perception, and gender roles. This study examines violence against women in slasher films through the lenses of similarity theory and social identity theory. Both theories suggest we are attracted to others who are similar to ourselves. In slasher films, the final girl is depicted as a strong character that exemplifies many qualities viewers may see in themselves. Thus, it was hypothesized that as viewers' perceived similarity with the final girl the more they would like her character and the film. Results suggest that viewers perceived similarity the final girl. Additionally the more viewers perceive similarity the more they liked the final girl and the more they liked the film. Researchers also examined perceived amount of violence and whether it predicts liking of the final girl and secondary female characters. Results indicate the amount of violence and liking of the secondary female characters were negatively correlated, however perceived amount of violence and liking of the final girl were not correlated.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

Violent behavior is all around us, in the news, on television and movies. Violence may appear attractive on the big screen; however, it can pose a serious threat in real life. Prior research has shown that media violence can have an influence on behavior, perception, and gender roles (Linz, Donnerstein, & Penrod, 1984; Linz, Donnerstein, & Penrod, 1988, Linz, Donnerstein & Adams, 1989). While there remain questions as to whether or not media violence actually induces aggressive behavior, the conditions that increase the potential for real world violence are typically found in graphic horror films (Tamborini & Salomonson, 1996). Exposure to mediated violence not only leads to aggressive behavior but may also trigger emotional responses such as fear, distress, and anxiety (Neuendorf & Sparks, 1988; Sparks, 1986). Further exposure to violent media may alter gender perceptions (e.g., Eschholz & Bufkin, 2001; Linz et al., 1989).

Studies have shown that prolonged exposure to sexually violent portrayals of women may have serious consequences (Linz et al., 1989; Linz et al., 1988). Horror films are one genre of violent film where females are commonly depicted as victims. Research has shown that frequent viewing of women in violent situations has led to the desensitization to violence toward women in general (Linz et al., 1988; Tamborini & Salomonson, 1996). Not only are women portrayed as victims in films, but in some studies female viewers have been shown to express distress, therefore becoming a victim or a damsel in need of rescuing by male viewers (Clover, 1992; Zillmann, Weaver, Mundorf, & Aust, 1986).

The notion of the woman as victim has been pushed further with the slasher film, a sub-genre of the horror film. Slasher films link violence and sex, and in these films, female characters are typically murdered following some form of sexual activity, which may be viewed as punishing them for their promiscuity (Cowan & O'Brien, 1990; Rieser, 2001).

In slasher films, one female character rises above the others. She is the final girl. The final girl is "the only person who recognizes the danger and fights back against her attacker usually defeating him single-handedly" (Trecansky, 2001, p. 64). The final girl is often the lone depiction of a strong female character in slasher films. While much is known about how the victimization of women in films impacts viewer perceptions (e.g. Tamborini, Stiff, & Zillmann, 1987; Weaver, 1991; Zillmann et al., 1986), little is known about how powerful female characters impact viewer perceptions or how the specific portrayal of characters influences perceptions. Specifically, this study hopes to better understand how perceived similarity toward the final girl impacts viewers liking of the final girl and enjoyment of films. Secondly, the researcher will examine how perceptions for violence against female characters impact the viewer's liking of the characters and the film. Thirdly, the researcher will determine if perceived violence against women predicts film enjoyment. This paper examines the relevant literature on horror films, slasher films, and the role of the final girl in slasher films and makes predictions based on principles of similarity and Social Identity Theory.

Based on the existing research, it was predicted that attitudes and viewers' perceived similarity with the final girl was positively related. The more a viewer perceived similarity between themselves and the final girl the more positive their attitude

was towards the final girl and the film in general. Additionally, this study examined whether perceptions of the amount of violence against women in slasher films are related to negative attitudes toward the secondary female characters and the film in general. It was predicted that negative relationship between perceptions of violence and attitudes toward the female characters and the film was negatively correlated.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

The Evolution of Horror and Slasher Films

The literature in this section of the paper will highlight the progression of horror films to slasher films. Further, the review offers a definition of the slasher film, explains the objectification of women in the slasher film, and explores the juxtaposition of sex and violence in the slasher film.

The talking horror film was introduced in the early part of the 20th century with the release of *Dracula* (1931) and *Frankenstein* (1931) in the 1930s (Sapolsky & Molitor, 1996). These early films avoided graphic displays of violence on the big screen. Horror films evolved, and the films of the 1950s began with science fiction pictures featuring giant fireballs from outer space followed later in the decade by films featuring giant insects like spiders and ants. In the 1960s, the horror film was forever changed by one movie, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), which is considered to be the immediate precursor of slasher films (Clover, 1996). *Psycho* was the first horror film to exhibit blood, gore and violence against a female character (Sapolsky & Molitor, 1996). Additionally, *Psycho* introduced yet another sub-genre of horror film known as gore cinema.

Gore films pushed the limits of on-screen violence. A trailblazer in this genre is *Night of the Living Dead* (1968), which depicted zombies feeding on the flesh of innocent victims. This was the beginning of the films that displayed up close squashed heads, eyes popping out, flayed faces, dismembered limbs, and eyes penetrated by needles (Clover, 1992). *Night of the Living Dead* not only became a cult classic but achieved critical

acclaim as well. Gore cinema was the prequel to the slasher film (Sapolsky & Molitor, 1996).

More exploitive than gore cinema, slasher films began where *Psycho* (1960) left off, depicting violence against women, however, a new factor was introduced--sex. In fact, slasher films are known for their portrayal of brutal and grotesque violence against women mixed with scenes of sex (Oliver, 1994). Typically, slasher films are the story of a psycho killer who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims before, during or after a sexual encounter until he is subdued or killed by the one lone female survivor (Clover, 1992). Characters in slasher films are in direct danger of the film's killer and no matter the shape the killer takes the outcome is almost always death (e.g. *Halloween* 1978, *Friday the 13th* 1980).

This unlikely combination of sex and violence has scared up big business at the box office and created an image of women as both sex kitten and victim. Before a woman is brutally attacked in many of these films, she is usually engaged in some sort of sexual behavior such as disrobing, masturbating or sexual intercourse (Clover, 1992; Pinedo, 1997; Weaver, 1991). Therefore Oliver's (1994) suggestion that sexual behavior in slasher films seems to be a good predictor of life or death corresponds with Nolan & Ryan's (2000) theory that the underlying message in slasher films is that sexual curiosity is punishable with death. Although both men and women are victims in the slasher film (Molitor & Sapolsky, 1993), some content analytic research has shown that stalking and killing of the female characters is primary (Linz et al., 1989).

Molitor & Sapolsky's (1993) research indicates however, that in slasher films women are not targeted with violence more often than men, but are shown in frightening

or terrifying situations for a longer period of time. Pinedo (1997) among others posits that in slasher films male characters other than the killer are of no real use for development of the story line and are disposed of quickly usually within seconds on the screen or in some instances off camera (Clover, 1992; Weaver, 1991). For example, in *Friday the 13th*, (1980) a male character is stabbed with a knife, which lasts only a few moments on the screen. In contrast, female death is drawn out; in some cases the victim plays with her killer unknowingly. For example, in *Halloween* (1978), a young woman toys with the film's killer Michael Myers, thinking he is her boyfriend. She has no idea her boyfriend has just been murdered downstairs in the kitchen. As she converses with the killer who is wearing a sheet and her boyfriend's glasses she shows her breasts.

To the killer in slasher films sexual displays are a trigger to homicidal violence (Clover, 1992). Researchers have offered various explanations as to why the killer reacts in this manner. The reason behind this brutality may lie in the killer's inability to express his own sexuality (Rieser, 2001) or his attempt at repressing female sexuality (Trecansky, 2001). Given the predominance of horror and slasher films in U.S. society, it is important to understand the impact of this violent medium on people's perceptions and the appeal of these films to viewers.

The Effects of Horror and Slasher Films

The literature in the section explains the effects of horror and slasher films on viewers. Specifically, this section examines the literature on behavioral and emotional responses to horror and slasher films. Viewer enjoyment of horror and slasher films is examined and the notion that viewers identify with characters in horror and slasher films is introduced.

In the 1980's researchers began examining the effects of viewing aggressive erotic films, including horror and slasher films, as a mediating factor for violence. These studies centered on the outcomes of viewing violent media including behavioral and emotional responses to films and enjoyment of viewing violent media content. This research examined the outcomes of portrayals of violence in general, and more specifically in aggression against women (e.g. Linz et al., 1988). One of the first studies relating exposure to horror films with violence examined perceptions of male undergraduate college students (Linz et al., 1984). The researchers analyzed the students' behavior following multiple viewings of violence against women. Linz et al. (1984) concluded that the subjects displayed fewer emotional responses to scenes of violence following numerous viewings of violence against women. Additionally, participants in the study who experienced multiple screenings of violent films perceived the brutal scenes as less violent and degrading toward women than those with fewer or no exposures to the violent scenes.

In a follow-up study conducted by Linz et al., (1988) it was discovered that men who were exposed to film clips featuring violence against women over a period of time became desensitized to female victims who encountered actual violence. Tamborini & Salomonson (1996) found that multiple viewings of sexually violent horror led males to perceive the violence as humorous and less offensive and degrading to women. Further, the authors found women exposed to violent horror scenes against women offered less concern for the film's victim than those who did not view multiple instances of violent horror. Dexter, Penrod, Linz, & Saunders (1997) found that women exposed to high

doses of sexual violence attributed less distress for the female victim than women exposed to lower doses of violence.

Trecansky (2001) proposes, “films that prominently feature women victims are harmful to women. And slasher films fit that description perfectly” (p. 63). She further suggests the acts of violence within films may be performed in an attempt at repressing female sexuality. Pinedo (1997) counters this argument by suggesting that slasher films are about “male anxiety over female agency in which female agency wins out” (p. 85).

There is no doubt that men seem to enjoy graphic violence in films more than their female counterparts (Oliver, 1994). Graphic horror appeals to men more than women and men experience less negative emotional response to violent media than women (Mundorf et al., 1989; Zillmann et al., 1986). Tamborini (1991) found that women tend to not like graphic displays of violence and others have found that men find violent media enjoyable and acceptable over a prolonged period of time (Linz et al., 1984, 1988; Linz et al., 1989). Further, men enjoy violence in films if it is coupled with sexual portrayals (Oliver, 1993; 1994).

Several studies have tried to uncover why men enjoy graphic horror more than women. These studies have generally focused on several explanations for this phenomenon including male desire to see women as victims in need of rescuing, a need for men to face fear in a non-threatening environment, and the influence of trait-like individual difference factors (Mundorf et al., 1989; Tamborini et al., 1987).

It is believed that one reason men may enjoy slasher films more than women is that it provides the opportunity for them to act out traditional gender roles in a socially safe context (Mundorf et al., 1989; Zillmann et al., 1986). That is, men enjoy slasher

films when they have the opportunity to act as rescuer. Zillmann et al (1986) found men enjoyed film more in the company of a distressed woman than a woman who displayed little fear. Women, on the other hand, enjoyed horror films with a man displaying little fear compared to a man displaying fear. Also if her companion was less attractive initially, he became more attractive the more he mastered his fear.

Modern life and cultural norms provide men with few circumstances to display their bravery in the presence of a woman, viewing a horror film in the presence of a female provides such an opportunity (Tamborini & Salomonson, 1996). Mundorf et al (1989) assert, “at horror movies, young men have a chance to show off their fearlessness” (p. 657). This may be due to the defined roles of men and women portrayed in the media. That is, the perceptions perpetuated by the media are that women are in need of protecting by men and horror and slasher films are a safe situation in which these portrayals may be acted out (Eschholz & Bufkin, 2001; Linz et al., 1984; Oliver, 1994).

Personality differences are another explanation for why males enjoy horror films. For one, Tamborini et al (1987) suggest male preference for horror films may be based on personality factors such as sensation seeking and Machiavellianism. Sensation seeking is considered “the desire to seek out environmental stimuli that produce sensation or arousal” (Tamborini et al., 1987, p. 530) and men tend to exhibit higher levels of this factor than women. Tamborini et al (1987) suggest for those who are high sensation seekers, expectation of fear in horror films can be pleasurable. Machiavellianism deals with the audience’s longing to see the destruction found in slasher films (Tamborini et al., 1987). That is, those who are high in Machiavellianism (typically men) are more likely

to derive enjoyment from the content of slasher films than those who are low on Machiavellianism.

These personality factors have also predicted the fact that women are less likely to enjoy horror films. Tamborini et al (1987) found women tend to be low sensation seekers and thus, do not enjoy the thrill of watching slasher and horror films. Similarly, women tend to be low on Machiavellianism and do not enjoy the cruel and exploitive nature of horror films. Further, research suggests that women do not enjoy watching sexual violence against female characters in film (Tamborini & Salomonson, 1996) a defining characteristic of slasher films. There are, however, some women who enjoy watching horror and slasher films.

Pinedo (1997) theorizes women who like to view horror are essentially ostracized and are considered politically incorrect for enjoying films that feature the majority of women in submissive roles: those roles in which female characters are objectified and victimized. She goes on to clarify, however, that it is not the submissiveness portrayed in these films to which women relate; it is the transformation of rage against the attacker that female viewers acknowledge that is evident in the lone female survivor or 'final girl' character (Pinedo, 1997).

Female viewers of the slasher film may undergo such a metamorphosis of their own feelings to perceive similarity with the final girl. Tamborini et al (1987) discovered that women given a choice among violent drama and drama that does not feature violence prefer drama that features the least amount of female victimization.

Pinedo (1997) suggest women's enjoyment of violent content in films is not only triggered by perceptions of impending danger but also pleasure. The lone female survivor

of the slasher film often uses violence against her attacker to disable or kill him. Pinedo (1997) proposes the slasher film turns humiliation into female rage. "A female viewer can identify with a female character who has no choice but to use extreme violence against a male killer" (p. 86). The pleasure for women viewing this change is that now the female character becomes the hunter instead of the hunted, thereby displaying strength in adversity.

One factor that is known to impact perceptions of films is viewer identification with the characters in the film. That is, research has shown that the media can have an impact on reactions by causing viewers to identify with characters in a film. Identification may take many forms including making social comparisons with others and "accentuation of perceived similarities between the self and others" (Stets & Burke, 2000, p. 225). Identification with film characters has several important outcomes for perceptions of those characters specifically and of the film in general. Dexter et al (1997) suggests individuals that identify with the victim will be less likely to blame her for her circumstance or outcome. A study by G.G. Sparks, C.W. Sparks, and Gray (1995) found that participants experienced negative reactions to frightening films if identification with characters occurred. Individuals with a vivid imagination and who experience emotional attachment to characters (termed emotional contagion) are more susceptible to feelings of pain and torment experienced by victims in horror films (Tamborini, Stiff, & Heidel, 1990). For example, individuals may be able to identify with a couple being terrorized by an unseen entity shown in the film *The Amityville Horror* (1979) or a group of cosmonauts being chased by a monstrous figure on a ship in outer space much like the creature in *Alien* (1979). Tamborini et. al, (1990) found although an individual may

display emotion when identifying with a victim, they may avoid getting upset by looking away or thinking of something else.

Viewers may also identify with characters other than the victims in horror films. Specifically female viewers may identify with the final girl of the slasher film. The final girl is the female protagonist of the slasher film and is able to foresee danger while all other characters are unable to do so (Clover, 1996; Clover, 1992; Dika, 1987).

The Final Girl

The final girl is the heroine of the slasher film (Rieser, 2001). The viewers' identification is reserved for the film's heroine, as a good valued character; the final girl usually has more screen time than the other characters (Dika, 1987). Clover (1992) posits the final girl is the only female character in the movie that is fully developed. She is the center of the story line and every other character in the film revolves around her. The final girl is smart and most importantly, sexually inactive (Clover, 1996). If the final girl were to engage in any sexual activity that would guarantee her demise because women who are sexually active are killed in the slasher film (Trecansky, 2001). As Clover (1992) suggests, "the final girl is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the horror and peril around her" (p. 35). Any preoccupation with sex would deprive the final girl of acknowledging the eminent danger around her.

Unlike the final girl, female victims in slasher films are passive and dependent while males tend to be assertive and independent, traits, which can be observed, in varying degrees in the final girl (Cowan & O'Brien, 1990). The final girl is put in the position of becoming the hero, a role traditionally held in films by men. The final girl is "modern but not too modern, tough but not too tough, sexy but chaste" (Rieser, 2001, p.

380). Rieser (2001) further theorizes the final girl is not seen as a masculine person but a female who exhibits both feminine and masculine characteristics.

Most final girls lack femininity and have a surplus of masculine qualities: an androgynous name, boyish interest, hero qualities such as tracking down the killer, and the use of phallic weaponry such as a knife (Cowan & O'Brien, 1990; Rieser, 2001). Additionally, the final girl character breaks down walls and gains access to positions reserved for her male counterparts. After all her friends have been murdered the final girl is able to kill the monster almost single-handedly by using wit and sheer determination (Clover, 1992; Trecansky, 2001). She undergoes agonizing trials and virtually destroys the killer thus saving herself (Clover, 1996).

Where her friends are not able to fend off their attacker the final girl manages to do just that. Once she saves herself she is guaranteed a spot in the sequel much like Laurie in *Halloween* (1978), Nancy in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984), or Alice in *Friday the 13th* (1980). In essence, she is able to stand up for her fallen sisters and avenge their deaths. Therefore Totaro (2002) is justified when theorizing the spectator of the traditional slasher film is able to identify with the female heroine. She is in a position of power but the power comes gradually as she is able to attack and in some cases kill her assailant. Thus giving the audience a resolution, the bad guy is killed and good prevails over evil (Tamborini, 1991).

The notion of identification addressed in previous research may be based, in part, on perceptions of similarity with the final girl. The following section will examine theories of social identity and similarity as potential explanations for the role of viewers' perceptions of characters in film enjoyment.

Theoretical Framework

Similarity and Social Identity

The notion of similarity suggests we are drawn to individuals that we perceive similar to ourselves. Further, social identity theory suggests individuals that share a similar identification put themselves in the same social groups or categories (Stets & Burke, 2000). Thus, similarity is one aspect of social identification. The following section will address the role both theories play in identification with film characters.

There is evidence to suggest that we tend to like (Cialdini, 2001) and be attracted to (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988) others who we perceive as similar to ourselves. This similarity may take the form of attitudinal similarity or membership similarity (Stiff, 1994). Attitudinal similarity is “established when speakers express opinions and values that are shared by members of the target audience” (Stiff, 1994, p. 103). Membership similarity is established during interaction with other individuals in the same group (Stiff, 1994).

Membership similarity, also known as demographic similarity, is based in shared demographic characteristics (e.g. biological sex) and membership in social or cultural groups with an emphasis in establishing oneself as part of a group (Simons, Moyer & Berkowitz, 1970). For example, when a speaker refers to sharing the same association with an organization as those in his/her audience. Several theoretical perspectives, most notably, Simons, Berkowitz, & Moyer (1970) principles of similarity and Tajfel’s (1978) social identity theory (SIT) emphasize the importance of perceived similarity for a variety of outcomes including group identity and evaluation of others.

Simons et al., (1970) analyzed previous research on similarity, social attraction, and credibility. Simons and his colleagues suggested a need for research that examined the relationship between similarity-dissimilarity and attitudes. Prior to Simons et al., (1970) there was not a systematic review of the relationship between similarity and persuasion. Simons et al., (1970) offer several propositions to connect that research and make the distinction between attitudinal similarity and membership similarity (Stiff, 1994).

Simons et al., (1970) propose that the relationship between membership similarities and attitudinal change is based on the perceived status of the receiver relative to the source. Furthermore, Simons and his contemporaries put forward the proposition that attitudinal change toward the position advocated by the source depends on the extent to which similarities/dissimilarities are perceived as having instrumental importance for the receiver. Simons et al (1970) suggest:

relevant attitudinal similarities serve as powerful instrumental functions by enhancing credibility while simultaneously constituting premises or anchors in logically connected discourse. Depending on the relative positions of source and receiver, certain membership-group similarities may have instrumental value if they contribute to perceptions of competence. (p. 12)

Simons et al (1970) proposed, based on previous research that member group similarity is less a determinant of attraction than attitudinal similarities. That is a person becomes attractive or likable based on shared opinions and values, and interests not through references to demographics or social characteristics (Cialdini, 2001; Stiff, 1994).

Indeed, one may emphasize these similarities with others in order to claim membership in the same category as the others; a process addressed in social identity theory.

Social identity theory is based on the idea that persons view themselves and others as parts of categories (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Stets & Burke, 2000). By definition, social identity is “that part of an individual’s self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group together with the value and emotional significance attached to that membership” (Tajfel, 1978, p. 63). Stets & Burke (2000) assert, “through the process of self categorization or identification an identity is formed” (p. 224). In social identity theory, individuals who share a mutual identification view themselves as belonging to the same social category or social group (Stets & Burke, 2000). That is, according to SIT those individuals whose views or demographic factors differ from those members of the in-group are part of an out-group. When one acts as a group member through the process of self-categorization, an identity is formed (Abrams & Hogg, 1990; Stets & Burke, 2000). Individuals within an in-group are likely to share similar attitudes (Stiff, 1994).

In addition to attitudinal similarity, similarity of personality characteristics has been linked to social identity and group membership (Neimeyer & Mitchell, 1988; Triandis, 1989). Neimeyer & Mitchell (1988) define personality as the “distinctive traits or qualities of a person” (p. 134) and find that individuals with similar personalities are more attracted to each other. Further, demographic factors such as race or sex may be treated as cues that a person is a member of an in-group or out-group (Lapinski & Mastro, 2001).

Thus, similarity in attitude, demography, and personality can lead one person to identify with or have a positive attitude toward another individual.

Rationale, Hypotheses and Research Question

The research presented above has shown that the media can influence an individual's behaviors and attitudes. Dexter, Linz, Penrod & Saunders (1997) conducted a study whereby women viewed sexually violent films and found that those individuals that identified with the victim in the movie did not fault her for the sexual assault whereas women who did not identify with the woman in the film blamed her for the attack. These findings suggest that viewers may identify with characters in films and that identification may impact subsequent attitudes. One process by which identification occurs is through highlighting similarities between one's self and those with whom we wish to identify. In the slasher film, women are portrayed as sexual objects, with the exception of the final girl (Clover, 1992; Linz, Donnerstein, & Adams, 1989). It is likely that female viewers do not identify with women in a submissive position.

Existing research suggests women viewing slasher films may identify similarities in themselves with the final girl. The final girl may be viewed as a strong character in that she shows power in an assault on her predator. Pinedo (1997) proposes that a female can identify with a woman who has no choice but to use violence against a male killer. The audience viewing the slasher film may view female characters differently than other female characters in other types of horror films, because these women are both strong and weak within the same film.

Rieser (2001) suggested, "audiences usually identify with the film's killer in the beginning of the movie but later when the monster turns against the female protagonist,

the audience shifts along with the change in the camera point of view” (p. 374). That is audience members may shift to identify with the female protagonist. This shift may be particularly important for viewers who share demographic and possibly attitudinal characteristics with the final girl.

This study seeks to examine the relationship between perception of the final girl and violent content of slasher films and the attitudes of viewers framed in the paradigm of similarity and social identity theory. There are few studies that examine the impact of the final girl on the viewer. Studies that examine this phenomenon focus on the final girl’s behavior and how she has evolved over the years (e.g. Clover 1996; Clover 1992; Pinedo, 1997; Trecansky, 2001). Understanding the influence of the final girl is important because it may serve as an explanatory mechanism for female viewers enjoyment of slasher films.

The old final girl shown in films from the mid to late seventies including *Halloween* (1978) through the mid to late eighties was shown as a woman who fought back and in some situations killed her assailant without assistance from others until the very end (Clover, 1996). The new final girls of the late nineteen nineties, like Sydney from the *Scream* film series (1996, 1997, and 2000) posits Trecansky (2001), have no special skills or strengths that would guarantee victory thus becoming the lone survivor at random. It is unclear with which of these characters (old or new final girl) viewers will perceive more similarity. Therefore the researcher asks:

(RQ1): Do viewers perceive greater similarity with the old or new final girl?

Researchers believe both men and women can derive pleasure from watching slasher films. Pinedo (1997) posits enjoyment on the part of women lies in a combination of arousing anxieties in men while securing female victory. Pinedo (1997) postulates the interaction between sex and violence in slasher films is not only one of danger but also gratification because women are allowed to retaliate and “become agents of violence and defeat their aggressors” (p. 87). The final girl overcomes her role of victim to become the heroine of the film. Thus, viewers may identify with the final girl to the extent that they see themselves as similar to the final girl, which falls in line with social identity theory, which states an individual is attracted to others who accentuate ourselves (Stets & Burke, 2000; Tajfel, 1978).

Furthermore the literature on perceived similarity indicates that individuals will be more attracted to others who share the same opinions and values (Stiff, 1994). Simons et al., (1970) postulate that attitudinal similarities are more important than membership/demographic similarities. Thus, examination of attitudinal similarity will be primary in this study. Additionally, this study will examine perceived similarities with the final girl and attitudes toward the film. The independent variable is perceived similarity; the dependent variables are attitudes toward the final girl and film enjoyment. Therefore it is posited:

H1: There will be a positive relationship between viewer’s perceived similarity with the final girl and attitudes toward her character.

H2: The greater the perceived similarity with the final girl, the more the viewer will enjoy the film.

Slasher films have come under fire for depicting violence against women during or after a sexual activity (Linz, Donnerstein, & Penrod, 1984). Many in the entertainment industry, including movie producers and directors quickly defend the films with claims that the violence is not real (Bok, 1998). A study by Tamborini, Stiff & Zillmann (1987) found given a choice, women would view movies depicting the least amount of victimization against female characters. In other words, women do not care to watch violence against female characters in films, particularly horror and slasher films. This is not to suggest women prefer to look at violence against male characters. A study conducted by Tamborini et al (1987) explored depictions of violence against women. Results indicated female participants preferred to watch films that depicted the lowest amount of violence toward women. One explanation for this conclusion, women may perceive themselves as less able to protect themselves against an attack in real life (Nolan & Ryan, 2000), which is how the majority of women in slasher films are portrayed. The studies on men and their perceptions about violence against women were mixed.

Furthermore, the female characters in the slasher films are depicted as weak, brainless and unchaste with the exception of the final girl (Clover, 1992; Clover, 1996). Slasher films are very clear about punishing a sexually promiscuous woman (Rieser, 2001). This study examined perceptions of the amount of violence aimed at women in slasher films and measured participants' attitudes toward the female characters and the film. It was hypothesized that perception of violence and attitudes were negatively correlated. The independent variable was the perceived amount of violence against women contained in a film. It is important to note the independent variable was

continuous. The dependent variable was attitudes towards the female characters other than the final girl and film enjoyment. Therefore it is posited:

H3: As perceptions for the amount of violence toward women in slasher films increase, attitudes will become more negative toward the female characters (other than the final girl) in the films.

H4: As perceptions for the amount of violence toward women in slasher films increases attitudes will become more negative toward the film.

Chapter Summary

The literature review described the many phases the talking horror film has undergone since its inception in the early 20th century. Violence, once considered taboo on the silver screen became the norm in the mid to late fifties. One film, Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1960), was the first to display graphic violence against a female character and is considered the film that gave birth to the slasher film. Slasher films feature graphic displays of violence against men and women; however, the violence against women usually involves sexual activity. The final girl is a character featured in slasher films. She is the lone female character able to fend off and in some situations destroy the film's killer.

Social identity theory and theories of interpersonal similarity provide a framework for understanding how perceptions of the final girl may impact viewers' liking of the characters in the film and enjoyment of the film. Following from this framework, a research question and several hypotheses were proposed. The next chapter will outline a method for testing these hypotheses and addressing this question.

CHAPTER THREE

METHOD

Participants

The participants in the experiment were 192 undergraduate students enrolled in communication courses at Western Michigan University. Female students comprised 68.8% ($n=132$). The average age of the respondents was 20.42 ($SD= 2.38$).

Undergraduate students were utilized because previous research asserts that slasher films are marketed to teenagers and young adults (Clover, 1992, 1996). The participants identified themselves as primarily Caucasian/White ($n=140$, 72.9%), 11 (5.7%) were African-American/Black and 8 (4.2%) were Chinese. The remainder of the participants identified other race or ethnicities. Class standing of the participants was as follows; 24 (12.5%) first year students, 67 (34.9%) sophomores, 64 (33.3%) juniors 36 (18.8%) seniors and one participant did not report a class standing.

Recruitment Procedures

The researcher gained permission from four professors in the communication department to recruit potential subjects for the experiment from undergraduate courses. The researcher and the professor made verbal announcements stating the basic purpose of the study. The subjects were told they were participating in a study evaluating violence in slasher films. During this time the students viewed an overhead copy of the recruitment announcement and were given the opportunity to ask questions.

The researcher explained to potential participants that the experiment would take two to three hours to complete and would involve filling out two surveys and watching a scary movie. Potential subjects were briefed on the violence in the film and offered extra

course credit. The researcher invited interested participants to write his or her name, phone number and email address on a sign up sheet with the day and time for the study specified. The researcher emailed and called the subjects with scheduling information.

Procedures

In order to test the proposed hypotheses and research question, an experiment was designed. Participants were randomly assigned to one of the two film conditions, either *Jason X* (2001) or *Halloween* (1978). Subjects were assigned to groups of twelve to twenty-two people (Mundorf, Weaver, & Zillmann, 1989). Every attempt was made to keep the viewing groups relatively similar in size. The average viewing group size for *Halloween* was 13.14 ($SD = 5.98$) and the average size viewing group for *Jason X* was 14.00 ($SD = 5.91$) and the means for each film condition were not significantly different from one another [$t(12) = .29, p = .79$]. Group size ranged from two to twenty-two with only two groups that were small ($n = 2, 4$). Because of the large sample size and that the small groups were distributed across both film conditions, these data were included in the sample.

In all there were twelve viewings over a three-week period. In order to facilitate random assignment to the film conditions, *Jason X* and *Halloween* were shown on the same night but at two separate locations. A researcher and a research assistant facilitated each film condition. The research assistant was trained ahead of time for his session with the participants. The research assistant joined the principal researcher during one of the two pilot sessions. The research assistant was given a script prepared by the principal researcher. During the pilot session the research assistant conducted the experiment with the help of the principal researcher.

First, participants were instructed to read a copy of the survey consent form. Once they were finished the researcher passed out envelopes containing two questionnaires. The researcher instructed the participants to complete the pre-test survey that contained measures of general enjoyment of frightening films. Items measuring familiarity toward the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series were included on this survey as well as items addressing demographics. Participants were instructed not to talk to one another. Once the participants completed the first questionnaire, they were instructed to put the questionnaire back into the envelope. The researcher began the movie.

Once the film was completed the subjects were instructed to take the posttest survey out of the envelope. The posttest addressed the independent variables perceived similarity toward the final girl and perceived amount of violence shown against women in each film. Additionally, the survey contained measures of the dependent variables including attitude toward the final girl, attitude towards secondary female characters, and film enjoyment.

Once respondents completed the survey they were instructed to put the survey back in their envelope and wait for further instructions. The researcher advised the participants to turn in the envelope, sign the extra credit sheet and to take a debriefing form. At this time, students with questions approached the researcher. All participants received five points extra course credit for participating in the study.

Film Conditions

The film *Jason X* (2001) was chosen because of its graphic depictions of violence toward women and the final girl. In this film, the final girl is a modern heroine (Trecansky, 2001) with qualities distinct from the final girl in previous films. The film

takes place in space in the year 2455 after serial killer Jason Voorhees is discovered cryogenically frozen by a group of students on a field trip. They take him back to their space ship and defrost him. The silent goalie-masked killer is awakened and begins killing the students one by one.

In one scene two teenagers are killed shortly after engaging in sexual activity. Also, a female researcher is brutally murdered after Jason sticks her head in liquid nitrogen and smashes it against a wall. The final girl, Rowan, who was frozen with Jason for hundreds of years tries to convince the group's leader that Jason must be stopped, but to no avail. The film juxtaposes sex and violence. In one scene, Jason is transported into a virtual world where two women are used as bait while Rowan and male partner Tsunaron try to figure out how to escape the space ship. The women stand topless motioning for him to come over and play with them. The women tell the serial killer that love smoking pot and engaging in premarital sex. Jason Voorhees proceeds to kill both women in brutal fashion by beating them to death.

Jason X follows the formula of the slasher formula that sexual activity leads to death (Clover, 1992). Rowan does manage to beat Jason, but not without help from Tsunaron. However Rowan is the only person who knows how dangerous Jason is which is a characteristic the final girl possesses (Clover, 1996). However, she is unable to kill Jason without help from her shipmates. Rowan fits Trecansky's (2001) description of the modern day final girl who is a strong, central character in the film, but does not possess the skills to defeat the killer on her own.

The movie *Halloween* (1978) was chosen because of its violence directed at women and the integration of sex followed by violence. The film begins on Halloween

night when Michael Myers is six years old. The young boy sees his sister through a window kissing her boyfriend. The two teenagers head upstairs to have sex. Michael walks into the house dressed in a clown suit, grabs a knife out of the kitchen drawer and proceeds to walk to his sister's room. He watches the boyfriend run down the stairs fixing his clothes, implying he and the sister did have sex. Once the boyfriend leaves Michael climbs the stairs and walks into his sister's room, where she is sitting at a vanity table wearing her panties and no bra. Shocked to see her little brother in the room, she asks him to leave, he immediately pulls out the knife and stabs her to death.

Michael Myers also kills two men; however, their deaths happen quickly and in one instance off camera. Laurie, the final girl, is introduced early in the film. She is presented as a smart, intelligent, slightly attractive girl. She is clearly into her schoolwork, while her friends are clearly into boys more so than their schoolwork, with one friend saying admitting she left her books at school. Laurie is first to recognize the film's killer. When she tries to tell her friends something weird is taking place only to be dismissed by her friends.

Both *Halloween* (1978) and *Jason X* (2001) have a considerable amount of violence against women. Both final girls are fully developed, have little or no sexual contact and are willing to fight back against their attackers (Trecansky, 2001; Clover, 1992; Cowan & O'Brien, 1990). However, the "new" or "modern" final girl, Rowan in *Jason X* is unable to overcome Jason without help or assistance. Laurie, the "old" final girl in *Halloween* is alone during her scenes with the killer, only at the very end of the film does help come, in the form of the killer's doctor, who shoots him several times. The

other female characters in both films are secondary characters or sidekicks (Rieser, 2001); their role is essentially to be the victim.

Measures

Independent Variables

Perceived Similarity to the Final Girl. Perceived similarity to the final girl was analyzed using a modified version of Zuckerman & Lubin's Multiple Affect Adjective Checklist (cited in Dexter et al., 1997; Linz et al., 1984). The researcher changed the response scale and modified the item content to make it appropriate for the current study. Perceived similarity was evaluated using 7 items on a Likert-type scale anchored with "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree." Scale items included "Laurie/Rowan was someone I could really relate too" and "Laurie/Rowan is similar to me." The items measured attitudinal similarity. Higher scores indicated the participant viewed themselves as more similar to the final girls. (See Appendix A)

Perceived Amount of Violence Against Female Characters. Perceived amount of violence against female characters in the slasher films was assessed using a four-item Likert type scale (1=Strongly Disagree to 5=Strongly agree) that included items such as: "Overall there was a high amount of violence directed toward women". Higher scores indicated the viewer perceived the film contained a high amount of violence against women and men. (See Appendix B)

Dependent Variables

Attitudes toward the Final Girl. Attitudes toward the final girl were examined on a 4-item Likert type scale anchored with "strongly disagree" and "strongly agree." One item was opened ended. This scale included items such as: "In general, I liked

(Laurie/Rowan)” and “I have a positive opinion of (Laurie/Rowan).” High scores indicated the viewer’s attitude was positive toward the final girl. Additionally one open ended item provided a qualitative assessment of viewers’ attitudes toward the final girl. The response to these items was reviewed for emergent themes in order to supplement quantitative data. (See Appendix C)

Film Enjoyment. Film enjoyment was evaluated with a series of Likert-type and semantic differential scales. The 2-item Likert type scale was anchored by “strongly disagree” to strongly agree.” Additionally, 3-items were assessed on a 5-point semantic differential scale. The items were: “This film was”....and the responses included: “Entertaining/Not Entertaining” and “Interesting/Not Interesting.” Higher scores indicated greater enjoyment of the film. (See Appendix D)

Attitudes toward Secondary Female Characters. Attitudes toward secondary female characters were assessed on a 4-item, scale including items such as “Overall, I thought the female characters other than Laurie/Rowan in this film were likable.” The 5-point Likert-type scales were anchored with “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicated greater liking for the secondary female characters in the film.¹ (See Appendix E)

Induction and Validity Checks

As a check of random assignment, general enjoyment of frightening films and familiarity with the films were assessed in order to ensure these factors did not vary significantly by condition. Additionally general violence and graphic violence were measured to guarantee reliability.

Perceived Amount of General Violence. Participants were asked about perceived amount of violence in the film. There were two items on a Likert type scale that were book marked with “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.” Scale items included “Overall there was a high amount of violence in this film.” Higher scores indicated the participants viewed a high amount of violence. (See Appendix F)

Perceived Amount of Graphic Violence. Participants were asked about their perceptions of graphic violence in the film. There were four items on a Likert type scale. One item was dropped because it did not add to overall reliability of the scale. Scale items included “The violence in this film was graphic.” The scales were book marked by “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicated that participants perceived a high amount of graphic violence in the film. (See Appendix G)

Enjoyment of Frightening Films. The pretest portion of the study included thirty-eight items using a Likert type scale based on Glen Sparks’ (1986) Enjoyment of Frightening Films (EFF) scale. Questions addressed the participants’ attitudes toward frightening films. Items included: “Frightening films contain endings that are too shocking for me to really enjoy” (Sparks, 1986, p. 69). The 14 questions were anchored with “strongly disagree” and “strongly agree.” Higher scores indicated less enjoyment of frightening films. (See Appendix H)

Familiarity with Film Series. The participants were asked to answer two survey items that assessed their familiarity with the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series. The items asked the respondents if they were familiarity with the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series. The Likert type scale was anchored by “strongly disagree” and

“strongly agree.” Higher scores indicated the participants were more familiar with the films. (See Appendix I)

Viewing History. Eighteen survey items required participants to reveal what films they had watched in the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series. Response choices were “Have Seen,” “Have Not Seen,” or “Don’t know/remember.” (See Appendix J)

Demographics. Demographics were assessed using two closed-ended items and two opened-ended questions. Items asked participants about their class standing, age, race, and biological sex. (See Appendix K).

Planned Analyses

After assessing the quality and reliability of the measures, descriptive statistics were calculated for all quantitative variables. Research Question One compared the mean of the old final girl to determine it was greater than or less than the mean of the new final girl. A t-test statistic was used in the analysis. Hypothesis One examined the relationship between perceived similarity and attitudes toward the final girl using a correlation.

Hypothesis Two analyzed the relationship between perceived similarity with the final girl and film enjoyment using a correlation. Hypothesis Three assessed the relationship between the perception for the amount of violence against women in slasher films and attitudes toward the secondary female characters using a correlation. Hypothesis Four evaluated the link between perception for the amount of violence against women in slasher films and film enjoyment using a correlation.

CHAPTER FOUR

DATA ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

Pilot

The researcher conducted a pilot study with undergraduate students ($n=40$) from the Communication Department at Western Michigan University. All procedures for the pilot were the same as those for the final experiment. The purpose of the pilot was to assure there was variance across films in amount of violence and attitudes toward the final girl and secondary film characters. Furthermore, the quality of the measures was established.

Respondents ($n = 28$) viewed the film *Halloween* (1978) and while respondents ($n = 12$) watched the film *Jason X* (2001). Twenty-five respondents (62.5%) were female the average age of the participants was $M = 20.10$ ($SD = 1.43$).

Internal consistency tests were conducted for all the variables including assessment of item contributions to scale reliabilities. One item from the scale measuring graphic violence and one item from the scale measuring liking of the final girl was eliminated from the scales because the questions did not contribute to the overall reliability of the scales. Additionally one item from the scale measuring violence directed toward women was eliminated. The mean, standard deviation, and alpha reliabilities are presented in Table 1.

Table 1

Means, Standard Deviations and Alphas for all Scales measuring Independent and Dependent Variables for Pilot Data

<i>Scales</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
Enjoyment of frightening film	3.68	.77	.90
Violence in actual life	1.95	.90	.69
Perceptions for the amount of film violence	3.89	.82	.86
Perceptions for the amount of graphic film violence	3.24	1.02	.90
Violence against women	3.65	.78	.84
Similarity to the final girl	3.86	2.59	.88
Attitude toward the final girl	3.54	.68	.86
Attitude toward the film	2.86	1.17	.93
Attitude toward the secondary female characters	2.81	1.03	.93

Researchers conducted t-tests on the scale measuring the amount of violence in both film conditions. The *Halloween* (1978) condition ($M = 3.75$, $SD = .78$) was compared to the *Jason X* (2001) condition ($M = 4.21$, $SD = .87$). The results of the t-test indicated there was no significant difference in the amount of violence in the film conditions [$t(38) = -1.66$, $p = .106$]. The *Halloween* condition was ($M = 2.86$, $SD = .88$) compared to the *Jason X* condition [$M = 4.14$, $SD = .75$] on the graphic violence scale. Results indicated there was a significant difference in the amount of graphic violence in the film conditions [$t(38) = -4.40$, $p = .01$].

The scale measuring violence toward women was assessed. In the *Halloween* condition ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .68$) compared to the *Jason X* condition ($M = 3.02$, $SD = .61$). Results indicated there was a significant difference between the film conditions [$t(38) = 3.97$, $p = .01$]. Researchers analyzed the scale-measuring liking of the final girl in the film conditions. The *Halloween* condition was ($M = 3.55$, $SD = .75$) was not significantly different from the *Jason X* condition [$M = 3.50$, $SD = .50$; $t(38) = .227$, $p = .82$]. Researchers examined the scale-measuring liking of the secondary female characters for differences between film conditions.

The *Halloween* condition was ($M = 2.71$, $SD = 1.14$) compared to the *Jason X* condition ($M = 3.04$, $SD = .71$). Results indicated there were no significant differences between conditions [$t(38) = -.917$, $p = .365$]. The *Halloween* condition was ($M = 3.11$, $SD = 1.26$) evaluated against the *Jason X* condition ($M = 2.29$, $SD = .68$) for film enjoyment. Results indicated there were no significant differences between the film conditions on liking of the film [$t(38) = 2.11$, $p = .42$].

Measurement Analysis

Measurement analyses were conducted for the final data set. Decisions regarding item retention were made by testing internal consistency, item contributions to reliability and by running inter-item correlations (Frey, Botan, & Kreps, 2000). The film violence scale yielded an alpha of .86. One item on the violence scale was removed because it was found to affect the overall reliability of the scale the resulting alpha was .92. Additionally, one item was not included in the violence against women scale. The resulting alpha was a .83. The mean, standard deviation and alpha for each scale are listed in Table 2.

Table 2

Means, Standard Deviations and Alphas for all Scales measuring
Independent and Dependent Variables for Final Data

<i>Scale</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Alpha</i>
Enjoyment of frightening film	3.47	.81	.91
Violence in actual life	2.12	.998	.78
Perceptions for the amount of film violence	3.93	.86	.70
Perceptions for the amount of graphic film violence	3.45	1.16	.92
Violence against women	3.48	.88	.83
Similarity to the final girl	2.55	.86	.90
Attitude toward the final girl	3.50	.74	.87
Attitude toward the film	2.53	1.12	.92
Attitude toward the secondary female characters	2.79	.96	.93

Pilot versus Final Data

Given that only instructional changes were made from the pilot to the final experiment, data from the pilot were tested to see if they could be reasonably collapsed into the final data. In order to ensure that the pilot and the final data could be combined t-tests were performed to examine whether or not the two groups differed significantly from one another on the relevant theoretical variables.

Researchers conducted t-test for pilot versus final data on enjoyment of frightening films. T-tests indicated the pilot ($M = 3.68$, $SD = .77$) and final data ($M = 3.42$, $SD = .81$) did not differ significantly on the extent to which participants generally enjoyed frightening films [$t(190) = 1.83$, $p = .07$]. The amount of violence did not differ between the pilot ($M = 3.89$, $SD = .82$) and the final data [$M = 3.95$, $SD = .87$; $t(190) = -4.13$, $p = .68$]. The researchers also assessed whether participants found the violence in the film too graphic, the pilot data ($M = 3.24$, $SD = 1.02$) and the final data ($M = 3.51$, $SD = 1.19$) showed no significant differences [$t(190) = 1.30$, $p = .195$]. The amount of violence toward women in the films was assessed between the pilot and the final data. The statistics revealed there was not a significant difference between the pilot data ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .78$) and the final data [$M = 3.43$, $SD = .90$; $t(190) = 1.40$, $p = .164$].

The researchers compared liking of the final girl in the pilot ($M = 3.54$, $SD = .68$) with the final data ($M = 3.50$, $SD = .76$) and found no significant differences between the two [$t(190) = .322$, $p = .748$]. Liking of the secondary female characters was assessed between the pilot ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.03$) and the final data ($M = 2.78$, $SD = .94$) and there was not considerable divergence [$t(187) = .198$, $p = .843$] between the pilot and the final data.

The experimenters compared the respondents liking of the film in the pilot ($M = 2.86$, $SD = 1.17$) to the final data ($M = 2.51$, $SD = 1.04$) and found no significant differences [$t(190) = 1.86$, $p = .065$]. The age of the participants did not differ from the pilot data ($M = 20.05$, $SD = 1.43$) compared to the final data [$M = 20.52$, $SD = 2.56$;

$t(189) = -1.10, p = .271$]. Sex of the respondents did not differ significantly between the pilot and final data [$\chi^2(1) = 1.04, p = .31$].

Researchers concluded that because the groups did not differ significantly on any of the relevant variables in the pilot compared to the final data, therefore the pilot data and the final data were collapsed together for additional analyses.

Tests for Researcher Effects

Due to the importance of gender perception in this study, t-tests were performed to examine the differences between the female researcher and a male research assistant who moderated several of the groups.

Enjoyment of frightening films was examined between the female and the male researchers. Comparisons of the female experimenter ($M = 3.56, SD = .83$) and the male experimenter ($M = 3.48, SD = .69$) indicated no significant difference on the enjoyment of frightening film scale [$t(170) = .635, p = .537$]. The next scale measured violence in the participants' real life. Results indicated violence in real life did not differ for the female researcher ($M = 2.08, SD = 1.03$) as compared to the male researcher [$M = 2.21, SD = 1.01; t(170) = -.868, p = .387$]. Familiarity with the *Halloween* film series and *Friday the 13th* film series were evaluated between both researchers. The female researcher results ($M = 2.08, SD = 1.03$) as compared to the male researcher ($M = 2.21, SD = 1.01$) and no significant differences were found [$t(170) = -.868, p = .387$].

Perceived similarity to the final girl was compared between both researchers. The female researcher results ($M = 2.60, SD = .90$) were compared to the male researcher results ($M = 2.57, SD = .78$). There were no significant differences found [$t(170) = .215, p = .83$]. The amount of perceived violence was compared between researchers.

The female researcher results ($M = 3.92$, $SD = .89$) were compared to the male researcher results ($M = 4.03$, $SD = .81$). No significant differences were found [$t(170) = -.830$, $p = .408$].

Graphic violence was compared between researchers. The scores for the female researcher ($M = 3.26$, $SD = 1.23$) were compared to the male researcher ($M = 3.70$, $SD = 1.06$). Data indicated no significant difference between researchers [$t(170) = -2.46$, $p = .015$]. The amount of violence directed toward women in the film was analyzed between the researchers. The female experimenter ($M = 3.65$, $SD = .87$) was compared to the male experimenter ($M = 3.19$, $SD = .85$). Data indicated a significant difference between researchers [$t(170) = 3.45$, $p = .01$].

Researchers examined scores for liking of the final girl between researchers. The female researcher results ($M = 3.60$, $SD = .76$) were compared to the male researcher results [$M = 3.42$, $SD = 7.22$]. Data indicated no considerable differences between the researchers [$t(170) = 1.50$, $p = .134$]. Additionally, liking of the secondary female characters were compared between researchers. The female researcher results ($M = 2.81$, $SD = 1.03$) were compared to the male researcher results [$M = 2.85$, $SD = .89$; $t(167) = -.276$, $p = .783$]. There were no major dissimilarities found.

Film enjoyment was compared between researchers. Female researcher results were ($M = 2.77$, $SD = 1.13$) compared to male researcher results ($M = 2.50$, $SD = 1.00$). Data indicted no significant differences [$t(170) = 1.64$, $p = .103$].

Induction Checks

In order to ensure enjoyment of frightening films (EFF) did not differ per condition, a t-test was conducted. Participant levels of enjoyment of frightening films did not differ by film condition.

That is, the mean EFF for *Halloween* ($M = 3.53$, $SD = .83$) was not significantly different from the mean of *Jason X* [$M = 3.41$, $SD = .78$; $t(190) = 1.12$, $p = .313$]

A one-sample t-test indicated that participants were not more familiar with one of the two experimental films. That is, participants did not report being more familiar with the *Halloween* film series ($M = 3.53$, $SD = 1.23$) than with *Friday the 13th* film series [$M = 3.44$, $SD = 1.27$, $t(190) = 1.12$; $p = .27$]. Independent sample t-tests indicated that levels of familiarity with the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series (of which *Jason X* is a part) did not differ significantly by film condition. That is, people in the *Halloween* film condition ($M = 3.61$, $SD = 1.69$) were not significantly more familiar with the *Halloween* film series than people in *Jason X* film condition [$M = 3.46$, $SD = 1.15$, $t(189) = .83$, $p = .41$]. Similarly, participants in the *Halloween* film condition ($M = 3.50$, $SD = 1.39$) were not more familiar with the *Friday the 13th* film series than those in the *Jason X* condition [$M = 3.38$, $SD = 1.14$, $t(190) = .65$, $p = .52$].

As an additional measure of familiarity, viewing history of the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series was assessed. Results indicated that viewing history did not vary significantly by film condition. In other words, participants in the *Halloween* film condition had not seen more *Halloween* films ($M = 2.10$, $SD = 2.25$) than *Friday the 13th* films [$M = 2.46$, $SD = 2.88$; $t(118) = -.76$, $p = .45$]. Participants in the *Jason X* film

condition had not seen more *Halloween* films ($M = 2.21$, $SD = 2.94$) than *Friday the 13th* films [$M = 2.00$, $SD = 2.74$; $t(116) = .39$, $p = .70$].

In order to ensure violence in the respondents real life did not differ per condition a t-test was conducted. Participants' level of violence in actual life did not differ per film condition. The mean for violence in real life for *Halloween* ($M = 2.08$, $SD = 1.04$) did not differ significantly from the mean of *Jason X* [$M = 2.16$, $SD = .96$; $t(190) = -.575$, $p = .566$].

Tests of Research Question and Hypotheses

RQ1 compared perceived similarity for the old versus new final girl. RQ1 examined which final girl, old versus new, participants' perceived similarity. Results indicated men ($M = 2.48$, $SD = .87$) and women ($M = 2.58$, $SD = .86$) did not differ in their perceptions of perceived similarity [$t(189) = .746$, $p = .456$] across films. Furthermore, tests for differences between *Halloween* and *Jason X* showed a marginally significant difference on perceived similarity such that the newer final girl ($M = 2.68$, $SD = .77$) was rated as more similar than old final girl [$M = 2.44$, $SD = .92$; $t(190) = -1.95$, $p = .053$]. Therefore data suggested respondents perceived more in common with the new final girl (*Jason X*, 2001) than the old final girl (*Halloween*, 1978).

H1 predicted a relationship between perceived similarity and liking of the final girl. Data revealed a significant positive correlation between perceived similarity and liking of the final girl ($r = .50$ $p = .01$) such that as perceived similarity increases liking increases. (see Table 3 for all correlations). Additionally, a t-test indicated liking of the final girl did not differ significantly by film condition.

The mean for *Halloween* ($M = 3.48$, $SD = .61$) compared to the mean of *Jason X* [$M = 3.54$, $SD = 3.5$; $t(190) = -.563$, $p = .574$].

Table 3

Correlation of Independent and Dependent Variables

	Similarity	Liking final girl	Liking film	Liking other women	Violence against women	General violence	Graphic violence
Similarity	1:0						
Liking final girl	.498**	1:0					
Liking film	.184*	.206**	1.0				
Liking other women	.293**	.148**	.252**	1:0			
Violence against women	.021	-.007	-.086	-.293**	1:0		
General Violence	.24**	.127	-.115	.058	.220**	1:0	
Graphic violence	.19**	.016	-.287**	.014	.122	.769**	1:0

* *P.01* P.05

There was one qualitative item on the survey that asked respondents to identify why they liked or disliked the final girl. Upon examination of the open-ended question several themes emerged. First, respondents believed the final girl to be brave. One participant made this comment about Laurie, the final girl in *Halloween*, "I liked Laurie because she fought back against Michael Myers in the worst of circumstances. I don't think I would have been able to be that brave." Another participant made this comment about Rowan, the final girl from *Jason X*, "I liked her because she was brave, level-headed and stuck to her beliefs." Respondents also commented about the final girl's intelligence. This

comment was in relation to Laurie, “She was smart, responsible and didn’t give up.” This subject had this to say about Rowan, “Rowan was a smart, independent young woman.”

There were several reasons respondents that reported they did not like the final girl. One theme that materialized from the open-ended question was the stereotypical behavior of the final girl. A participant had this to say about Laurie, “She was a dork, she kept dropping the knife and didn’t stab him (Michael Myers) 50 times to make sure he was dead.” Another participant made this comment about Rowan, “She was the stereotypical scary movie sexy girl who I knew would survive.” Participants commented on the acting in the films as well. This participant said this of Rowan, “She was a terrible actress. I didn’t like her because she was a crappy actor.” Another respondent said this of Laurie, “No one acts like that in real life.”

H2 predicted a relationship between perceived similarity with the final girl and film enjoyment. Results indicated there was a positive and significant relationship between perceived similarity and film enjoyment ($r = .18, p = .01$). Enjoyment of film did not vary by conditions such that participants did not enjoy *Halloween* ($M = 3.00, SD = 1.07$) more than *Jason X* ($M = 2.13, SD = .88$). The difference in film enjoyment was significant [$t(190) = 6.17, p = .01$]. Additional analyses indicated there was a significant correlation in favor of female participants for liking of the final girl with liking of the film ($r = .34, p = .01$), but there was not a significant correlation for men ($r = .01, p = .95$).

H3 predicted a negative relationship in the perception of violence against women and liking of the secondary female characters in the film. Results indicated there was a significant negative correlation between perceived violence against women and liking of

the secondary female characters such that the more violence is perceived against women, the less the participants liked the secondary female characters ($r = -.29, p = .01$).

Moreover, perceived violence against women and liking of the final girl did not have a significant correlation ($r = -.01, p = .92$).

H4 predicted a negative relationship between perceived violence against women and liking of the film. Results indicated perceived violence against women and film enjoyment were not significantly correlated ($r = -.09, p = .24$). Because of differences for the two experimenters on perceived amount of violence against women in the film, correlations were examined for each experimenter. This analysis indicated that for the female researcher perceptions of the amount of violence in the film and liking of the film were correlated significantly and negatively ($r = -.21, p = .04$), such that as perceptions of the amount of violence against women increased liking of the film decreased. This was not the case for the male researcher ($r = .07; p = .54$). There was not a significant correlation between amount of general violence and film enjoyment ($r = -.12, p = .11$).

CHAPTER FIVE

DISCUSSION

Summary of Findings

This experiment examined viewers' perceptions of similarity with the final girl in slasher films. Specifically, this study examined whether the effects for similarity on liking that commonly occur in interpersonal interaction can also occur in mediated communication. Further, this research observed how perceived violence against women affects viewers' attitudes toward the final girl, the secondary female characters and film enjoyment.

Research Question 1 examined participants' perceived similarity with the old final girl as seen in *Halloween* (1978) and the new final girl as seen in *Jason X* (2001). Results indicated that the viewers perceived more similarity with the new final girl as opposed to the old final girl. There was a marginal effect for the new final girl on similarity perceptions such that participants perceived more similarity with the new as opposed to old final girl. That is, participants seemed to have identified with the *Jason X* final girl's Rowan who exemplified the modern day final girl.

One explanation for the findings for research question one may be that in the film *Jason X*, more so than in *Halloween*, the final girl stood out as a positive and brave character compared to the other women in the film, who were essentially victims for the killer. This is evident in *Jason X* when Rowan decides to rally the other crewmembers on the ship after half of the characters in the film have been killed off. She picked up a gun and began to tell the surviving shipmates what to do. This action falls in line with Trecansky (2001) who posits the new final girl is an individual who is not strong enough

to fight or face her own repressed impulses until she is forced to. On the contrary, Laurie (*Halloween*) may have been portrayed as a smart and responsible person but the data indicated that some participants in the experiment believed she was lacking in intelligence for not making sure the killer, Michael Myers, was dead. An additional explanation for the perception of similarity with the Rowan character is simply the fact that the film *Jason X* is a modern film and Rowan may dress and speak more like the participants in this study than Laurie in *Halloween*. This study examined only attitudinal similarity; other forms of similarity may also be important for impacting perceptions of the final girl.

Hypothesis 1 examined perceived similarity and liking of the final girl and the data indicated that the variables were positively correlated. The results specified that the more the participants perceive similarity with the final girl the more they liked her. The subjects shared the same attitude as the final girl and that is what made her attractive to them. This data is consistent with Simons et al (1970) research that indicated attitudinal similarities are a determinant of attraction. Previous research on the relationship between similarity and liking, however, has generally focused on interpersonal attraction. This study extends the findings of the previous research by indicating that the relationship between liking and similarity can also occur in situations in which communication is mediated, mono-directional (rather than interactive), and one of the communicators is fictional. Results indicated that for the majority of participants the more they perceived similarity with the final girl the more they liked her. The implication is that the final girl has the power to influence viewers. Filmmakers can use this power in slasher films to get the audience involved in the film's story line based on the characteristics of the final girl.

Hypothesis 2 examined perceived similarity to the final girl and film enjoyment. The more the participants perceived similarity with the final girl the more they enjoyed the film. Results indicated that for female participants, the more they liked the final girl the more they enjoyed the film, but there was no relationship between male respondents' liking of the final girl and their ratings of film enjoyment.

Perceived similarity to the final girl affects how people like the film and it does matter for women. There is quite a bit of evidence in the media and popular press that suggests women do not like slasher films. A result of this study suggested that those who create mediated messages could make inroads by using the final girl and perceived similarity to establish a female audience for slasher films.

Certainly, film enjoyment is not based on perceived similarity alone. Other factors known to influence film enjoyment for men are repeated exposure to violence over a prolonged period of time and violence coupled with sex (Linz, Donnerstein, Penrod, 1984, 1988; Linz, Donnerstein & Adams, 1989; Oliver, 1993, 1994). Previous research conducted by Mundorf, Weaver & Zillmann (1989) found that men tend to enjoy horror films while in the company of a distressed woman. In this context, the male is able to enact the traditional gender role of protector within a non-threatening environment. Additionally, men are able to identify with the final girl character because they may see her as masculine. The final girl is smart and most importantly survives at the end becoming the hero figure, a role traditionally held by men (Clover, 1992; Rieser, 2001).

Hypothesis 3 examined perceived violence against women and liking of the secondary female characters. Results indicated a significant negative correlation between perceived violence against women and liking of the other female characters. In other

words, the more violence in the film that was directed toward women, the less the participants liked the secondary female characters in the film. There was not a relationship between the amount of violence directed against women and liking of the final girl. Furthermore, there was not a relationship between the other assessments of violence (the amount of graphic violence and amount of violence in general) and liking of either the final girl or the secondary female characters.

One reason for there not being a relationship between perceptions of violence and liking of the final girl may be that fact that the final girl is relatively unscathed in the slasher film compared to the secondary female characters. This supports literature that posits the final girl's friends are essentially victims for the film's killer (Clover, 1992; 1996). That is, the secondary characters are on the receiving end of most of the violence, making them appear weak and victimized. In contrast, the final girl appears strong. Thus, the violence directed at women in the film reflects negatively on the secondary female characters and not the final girl.

Hypothesis 4 examined perceived violence against women and liking of the film. The outcome of film enjoyment was related to the amount of graphic violence such that as the amount of graphic violence increased enjoyment of the film decreased. In both cases, differences in the demographic characteristic of the researcher had an effect on the outcome. This indicates that different types of violence in films may have distinct effects on film liking and that researcher characteristics may be a moderator of these effects.

The correlation for general violence with film enjoyment was not significant, but perceptions of the amount of graphic violence and violence against women exhibited a significant negative correlation with enjoyment depending on the researcher.

Of the types of violence perceptions examined in this study, graphic violence had the strongest relationship with enjoyment of the film. In general, participants did not report high levels of enjoyment for *Halloween* (1978) or *Jason X* (2001). Both films measured at the midpoint or below on a five point Likert scale measuring film enjoyment. For women, the final girl predicted film enjoyment; therefore it is likely film enjoyment for both movies would have been well below the midpoint on a five point Likert scale without the final girl character.

The most telling finding of the study is the participants perceived similarity with the newer final girl compared to the old final girl. The result is marginally significant but the literature (Trecansky, 2001) suggests participants would identify with the old final girl, Laurie in *Halloween* (1978) because she was not a random victim like new final girl, Rowan in *Jason X* (2001). One explanation for this result is that the respondents did not perceive Rowan as a random victim. Her character was frozen with Jason for hundreds of years; therefore she had an established history with the killer before the other characters entered the picture. Participants may have seen Rowan as a natural final girl because there was history between she and Jason. That is, respondents may have expected Rowan to be the final girl because of her previous relationship with Jason.

The qualitative data collected expanded our understanding of the choices made by the respondents about the role of the final girl. For example, in response to the open-ended item, most of the participants indicated they liked the final girl character in the film and thought the secondary women served no real purpose.

Additionally, the qualitative data bolstered the results of research question one and hypothesis one by supplying information as to why the respondents liked or did not like the final girl character.

Suggestions for Future Research

This experiment expanded previous research that examined the effects of violence in slasher films. This study was unique in that it examined the way in which the final girl affected the participants' liking of the film. This experiment also examined the affects of violence directed toward women in slasher films. Results indicated that participants did perceive similarity with the final girl and tend to identify more with the modern final girl seen in *Jason X* (2001). The more participants perceived similarity to the final girl the more the participants enjoyed the film.

Beyond the research question and hypotheses analyzed in this experiment, there are several directions that may be of importance for future research. In particular, researchers could explore racial/ethnic differences in perceptions of the final girl character, such as how Asians, Latinos, and African Americans view slasher films. The literature did not address cultural differences. The participants in this experiment were primarily White, European-Americans. The final girl characters in *Halloween* and *Jason X* and nearly all the supporting characters in the films were European American; therefore perceived similarity may have been pre-established with the Caucasian participants based on their racial/ethnic background. Member of various cultural groups may exhibit less identification with a European- American final girl.

Researchers could examine the effects of a final girl character that appears to be a member of a group other than European-American. There appears to be no literature on

the effects of a minority final girl character. Future research could explore the effects of a final boy as it relates to liking of his character and liking of the film.

The participants in the experiment did not like the secondary female characters. There are several reasons for this outcome. The secondary women were not as developed as the final girl, they appear in the film essentially to be victims and they are sexually promiscuous, which according to previous literature (Clover, 1992) essentially makes them a target for the film's killer. Future research can work to understand how secondary female characters are perceived specifically, what exact characteristic(s) trigger liking or disliking of their characters.

There was researcher effects in this experiment in that there was more perceived graphic violence when a male as opposed to a female researcher facilitated film conditions, whereas there was more perceived violence directed toward women when the female as opposed to the male researcher facilitated film conditions. Liking of the film was related to the amount of graphic violence, such that as the amount of graphic violence increased, enjoyment of the film decreased. The experimenter tested this effect and the results indicate the correlation was significant for the male research assistant but not the female researcher. Future research could explore the reasons behind the researcher effects.

This study compared the old final girl versus the new final girl in the *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th* film series; future research could compare the final girl within the same film series. For example the old final girl in *Halloween*, the first film in the series, to the new final girl in *Halloween Resurrection* (2002), the current film in the series. The

final girl presented in *Halloween Resurrection* represents the modern day final girl much like Rowan in *Jason X*; she is a victim at random (Trecansky, 2001).

Previous literature indicated that women are not the victims of more violence than men but the violence against women is prolonged (Molitor & Sapolsky, 1996). Future research could include perceived violence against secondary male characters as it relates to film enjoyment. This would be interesting in that men are traditionally viewed as heroes in film (Eschholz & Bufkin, 2001) however, in the slasher film the final girl is viewed as the hero (Clover, 1992, 1996; Pinedo, 1997). Therefore it would be interesting to better understand how participants view violence against men in slasher films and the role it plays in film enjoyment.

The age of the participants viewing the slasher film may have an impact on liking the final girl and liking of the film. In this study, participants were eighteen through forty-three years old. Previous research suggests slasher films are targeted toward teenagers (Trecansky, 2001; Clover, 1992), future research could determine if younger viewers would perceive similarity with the final girl.

Methodological Limitations

There are a number of limitations in this study that merit discussion. The first limitations were the films. *Halloween* (1978) and *Jason X* (2001) did not score high on the film enjoyment scale. *Jason X* was well below the midpoint on the Likert scale. Additional research could compare films that exhibit either higher levels of enjoyment or more variation across film conditions. The low level of enjoyment may be due to the fact that participants in this study were not necessarily admirers of slasher films. Although, those who particularly disliked horror films may have self-selected out of this study, the

researcher did not take particular care to include those who enjoyed frightening films. Future research could include individuals who enjoy slasher films.

A second limitation occurred during a film viewing. For one session, the researcher was not able to use a big screen for participants due to technical difficulties with the sound system. The subjects were moved to another room and viewed the film on a television screen. Although the television was quite large the subjects had to sit closer together to view the film than in other viewings, which may have left them feeling uncomfortable. The space in the room was smaller than the original room. Additionally the participants were left alone for a period of time while the researcher searched for a room, which may have added anxiety as to how long the participants would have to stay and watch the film, which seemed to be a concern during much of the experiment. This anxiety may be one reason the participant reported low levels of film enjoyment across both conditions.

The experiment also experienced several threats to internal validity. First, there was the threat of interparticipant bias (Frey, Botan & Kreps, 2000). Interparticipant bias occurs “when people being studied influence one another” (Frey, et al., 2000, p.123). The study was conducted over a four-week period. The researcher and her assistant asked participants not to reveal the details of the experiment to their classmates (who were recruited from four communication courses), but participants may have discussed details of the experiment with their peers. This discussion may have led participants to be more attentive to certain characteristics of the films or may have discouraged some from participating in the study.

The participants may have been warned ahead of time of the content of the movies, which would have led them to have preconceived thoughts, whether good or bad, about the films.

A second threat to internal validity included the researchers themselves. Researcher personal attribute effect occurs when a researcher characteristics inadvertently influences respondents behavior (Frey et al., 2000). Researchers discovered that participants perceived more graphic violence during the film condition conducted by the male experimenter than the female. It is unclear why this was the case except for the fact that the appearance of the researchers may have in some way influenced perceptions. The male researcher may have been viewed as threatening to the respondents whereas participants may have viewed the female researcher as a victim. Participants perceived more violence directed toward women in the condition run by the female as opposed to the male experimenter. Participants may have felt less protected in the presence of a female compared to a male researcher. Future research should control for these effects.

Conclusion

Overall, this experiment suggests that the final girl is a strong character; so much so that viewers perceived some similarity with her and the more the participants perceived similarity with the final girl the more the participants liked her. Additionally, women who perceived similarity with the final girl tended to enjoy the film more than men. Violence seemed to be a strong predictor of liking the secondary female characters. The results indicated the more perceived violence against women the less participants liked the secondary female characters, but violence against women did not have a relationship with participants' liking of the final girl.

Across the two researcher conditions in this study, perceived violence against women in the film and liking of the film were not significantly correlated. However, violence against women and liking of the film was significantly and negatively correlated in the film condition moderated by the female researcher. In other words, the more viewers perceived violence against women the less they liked the film. For the conditions moderated by the male researcher, there was no correlation between violence against women and liking of the film. Liking of the film and graphic violence was significantly and negatively correlated for the male but not the female researcher. In other words, the more graphic violence was displayed in the film, the less the respondents liked the film and this effect was evident only when the male researcher moderated film conditions.

The findings of this research have important implications for the predominance of strong female characters in films. Although this study is not without limitations, it provides an interesting basis for future research on the role of slasher films in public perception.

Endnotes

1. The researcher assessed attitudes toward secondary female characters in general as opposed to each secondary female character individually for several reasons. First, the researcher was most interested in general evaluations as opposed to evaluation of each secondary female character. Second, the evaluation of all secondary female character would have added a large number of times to the questionnaire. Third, there was a strong likelihood that participants would not remember the names of all secondary characters.
2. During one of the film viewings, the female researcher had to move respondents from a room featuring a screen and projector to a room with a big screen television due to audio problems the researcher and maintenance could not fix.

Appendix A
Measuring Perceived Similarity
to the Final Girl

Perceived Similarity to the Final Girl

1. Laurie/Rowan was someone I could really relate too.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I think I would do many of the same things that Rowan did if I were in her situation.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I could really identify with Rowan.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. Rowan's attitude is much like my own attitude.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. When watching this film, I thought Rowan was someone that would fit in with my friends and me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Rowan is similar to me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. I can see myself taking some of the same actions that Laurie/Rowan took if I were faced with the same situations.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix B

Measuring Perceived Amount of
Violence Against Female
Characters

Perceived Amount of Violence Against Female Characters

1. This film portrayed violence toward women in a sexual context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. This film portrayed violence toward men in a sexual context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Overall there was a high amount of violence directed at the female characters in this film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. The violence in this film directed at women was graphic.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. This film was degrading to women.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Much of the violence in this film was directed at the female characters.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix C

Measuring Attitudes toward the Final Girl

Attitudes toward the Final Girl

1. In general, I liked Laurie/Rowan.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I have a positive opinion of Laurie/Rowan.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. One of my favorite characters in this film was Laurie/Rowan.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. Laurie/Rowan was one person in this film that I really liked.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

On the lines below, please tell us a little about why you liked or didn't like Laurie/Rowan in this film.

Appendix D

Measuring Film Enjoyment

Film enjoyment

1. Halloween/Jason X was a good movie.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Generally, I enjoy this type of film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Please rate the following statements by placing a check along the line.

3. This film was.....

Entertaining	_____	Not Entertaining
Interesting	_____	Boring
Enjoyable	_____	Not Enjoyable
Good	_____	Bad

Appendix E

Measuring Attitudes toward Secondary
Female Characters

Attitudes toward Secondary Female Characters

1. Overall, I thought the female characters, other than Laurie/Rowan in this film were likable.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. In general, I enjoyed the female characters in this film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. Overall, I thought the female characters in this film were unlikable.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. In general, I did not enjoy the female characters in this film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix F

Measuring Perceived Amount
of General Violence

Perceived Amount of General Violence

1. Overall there was a high amount of violence in the film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. Thinking of this movie as a whole, there were more than five scenes of violence.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix G

Measuring Perceived Amount
of Graphic Violence

Perceived Amount of Graphic Violence

3. The violence in this film was graphic.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. The violence in this film was bloody or gory.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. The violence in the film made me look away.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Overall, this film had very violent context.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix H

Measuring Enjoyment of
Frightening Films

Enjoyment of Frightening Films

1. Frightening films contain endings that are too shocking for me to really enjoy.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. The frightening films I have seen have almost always contained too much graphic violence to make them really enjoyable.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

3. I feel exhilarated when I watch a scary film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

4. I do not enjoy the feeling of being frightened when I watch a scary film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

5. Frightening films have so much blood that you can't enjoy yourself.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

6. Scary films show too many people being abused or victimized.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

7. Scary films entertain me.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

8. I love the feeling of adrenalin flowing when I watch the most horrifying parts of horror films.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

9. As far as I'm concerned, the scarier a movie is- the better.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

10. The faster my heart beats when I watch a scary movie, the more I enjoy the film.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

11. I have been exposed to violence in real life.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

12. In my opinion, I have been exposed to more violence than most people.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix I
Measuring Familiarity with
Film Series

Familiarity with Film Series

1. I am familiar with the *Halloween* film series.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

2. I am familiar with the Friday the 13th film series.

Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neutral	Agree	Strongly Agree
1	2	3	4	5

Appendix J
Measuring Viewing History

Viewing History

1. Halloween ☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
2. Halloween II ☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
3. Halloween III: Season of the Witch
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
4. Halloween IV: The Return of Michael Meyers
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
5. HalloweenV : The Revenge of Michael Myers
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
6. Halloween : The Curse of Michael Myers
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
7. Halloween H2O : Twenty Years Later
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
8. Halloween Resurrection
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
9. Friday the 13th
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
10. Friday the 13th Part II
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
11. Friday the 13th Part III
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
12. Friday the 13th : The Final Chapter
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
13. Friday the 13th, Part V : A New Beginning
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
14. Friday the 13th Part VI : Jason Lives
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember
15. Friday the 13th Part VII : The New Blood
☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember

16. Friday the 13th Part VIII : Jason Takes Manhattan

☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember

17. Friday the 13th : Jason Goes to Hell

☐ Have Seen ☐ Have Not Seen ☐ Don't know/remember

Appendix K
Measuring Demographics

Demographics

Your sex? (Check all that apply)

1. ☐Female

☐Male

2. Class standing: ☐ First year student ☐ Sophomore ☐ Junior ☐ Senior

(Please write on the line following the question)

3. What is your age? _____

4. What is your racial/ethnic background? _____

Appendix L
Recruitment Document

Need Extra Credit?

Receive 5 points extra credit for your time!

Felicia Sanders, 2nd year graduate student is looking for help with a research project. The experiment will take about 3 hours to complete and you will be asked to watch a scary film. If you are interested please fill out the sign up sheet. All interested participants will receive a reminder email or phone call concerning dates and times.

Appendix M
Consent Document

WESTERN MICHIGAN UNIVERSITY
 H. S. I. R. B.
 Approved for use for one year from this date:

JUL 16 2002

x Mary Laquien
 HSIRB Chair

Survey Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research project entitled "Evaluating Violence in Slasher Films" designed to examine violence and its affects on viewers. This study is being conducted by Felicia Sanders (2nd year graduate student) from Western Michigan University, Department of Communication and Dr. Maria Lapinski. This research is part of a thesis designed to measure viewer responses to frightening media.

This study is comprised of survey, followed by viewing of a frightening movie. Once the movie has ended there will be a second survey to assess your reaction to the movie. **The entire study will take approximately four hours.** Your replies will be completely anonymous; so do not put your name anywhere on the actual questionnaire. You will in no way be associated with the responses you provide.

You may choose to not answer any question and simply leave it blank. If you choose to not participate in this survey, you may either return the blank survey or you may discard it in the box provided. If at any time you feel uncomfortable about the content of surveys or films, please feel free to discontinue your participation. You will not be penalized in any way for terminating your participation or for not answering all the questions. Returning the survey indicates your consent for use of the answers you supply.

If you are unable to participate in the study, see researcher for alternative opportunity.

There is some risk in this experiment, in that the films will contain images of violence. You may become frightened or disturbed during the film. If you feel uncomfortable any time during the experiment you are allowed to leave without penalty. However, in order to receive extra credit, you will be asked to read a short article and write a response to the article.

If you have any questions regarding the content of this study or the results of this research project, you may contact Felicia Sanders at 616-387-7780, Maria K. Lapinski at 616-387-0362, the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board (616-387-8293), or the vice president for research (616-387-8298).

The Human Subjects Institutional Review Board as indicated has approved this consent document for use for one year by the stamped date and signature of the board chair in the upper right corner. You should not participate in this project if the corner does not have a stamped date and signature.

Thank you for your help.

Appendix N
Debriefing Document

Debriefing Document

This study was designed to examine whether or not the amount of perceived violence against women in slasher films impacts attitudes toward the actresses in the film.

Secondly, the researchers wanted to understand how people's perceptions of the film's final girl impacted their liking of the film. The "final girl" is the lone female survivor in a slasher film. To this end, we asked you questions about your perceptions of the film and what you thought about the characters in the film.

If you feel disturbed by anything you saw in the film or the questions asked on the survey please feel free to talk to the researchers about your feelings either now or at anytime at the numbers listed below. You can also contact Dr. John Coonf, PsyD, Director of the Counseling and Testing Center. The address is 2513 Faunce, in the Student Services Building on the campus of Western Michigan University. The telephone number is (269) 387-1850.

Thank you again for your help with this study. Please contact either Dr. Maria Lapinski via phone (269) 387-0362 or e-mail (mlapinsk@wmich.edu) or Felicia Sanders via e-mail (fsanders2@yahoo.com) if you have further questions regarding the design or results of the study.

Appendix O

Research Protocol Approval Letter



HUMAN SUBJECTS INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

Date: July 16, 2002

To: Maria Lapinski, Principal Investigator
Felicia Sanders, Student Investigator

From: Mary Lagerwey, Chair

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Mary Lagerwey".

Re: HSIRB Project Number: 02-06-15

This letter will serve as confirmation that your research project entitled "Evaluating Horror Films" has been **approved** under the **expedited** category of review by the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board. The conditions and duration of this approval are specified in the Policies of Western Michigan University. You may now begin to implement the research as described in the application.

Please note that you may **only** conduct this research exactly in the form it was approved. You must seek specific board approval for any changes in this project. You must also seek reapproval if the project extends beyond the termination date noted below. In addition if there are any unanticipated adverse reactions or unanticipated events associated with the conduct of this research, you should immediately suspend the project and contact the Chair of the HSIRB for consultation.

The Board wishes you success in the pursuit of your research goals.

Approval Termination: July 16, 2003

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