HORROR IN THE 1980'S: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF

VIOLENT CONTENT IN INDEPENDENT STUDIO AND

MAJOR STUDIO HORROR MOVIES

DISSERTATION

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By

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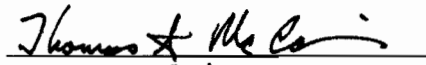
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INTRODUCTION

Context

Throughout the 1980's the genre of horror flourished
unlike any time in recent history (Carroll, 1990;
Twitchell, 1985). Horror seemed to ooze from everywhere.
Novels by Stephen King and Clive Barker reached the New
York Times best seller list, making both men household
names. Michael Jackson's 10 minute Thriller video
(Jackson & Jones, 1982) combined music with dancing
zombies, and featured Jackson himself metamorphosing into
a werewolf. On Broadway, a cult classic Phantom of the
Opera became a smash (Carroll, 1990). On television,
shows such as Friday the 13th: The Series, Freddy's
Nightmares, and Tales of the Dark Side enticed viewers to
the dark nature of humanity. At the newsstand, horror
magazines (e.g., Fangoria and Gorezone) appeared with
behind-the-scene interviews, how-to articles by effects
artists, and high-gloss blow-ups of blood and guts.
Nothing, however, matched the thirst for horror movies.

Between 1980 and 1989, the number of domestic horror
movies nearly doubled from the previous decade, from 433

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to 835 (Cohn, 1988, June 8; Porco, 1991). Coupled with this increase, the genre underwent a shift in the presentation of violence. While violence and bloodshed had appeared in horror films before 1980 (<u>The Flesh Eaters</u>, 1964; <u>The Gruesome Twosome</u>, 1966; <u>Night of the Living Dead</u>, 1968; <u>Texas Chainsaw Massacre</u>, 1974; <u>The Hills Have Eyes</u>, 1977) according to film critics, horror movies after 1980 took on a more graphic nature, giving up subtle, implied violent actions, for blatantly visceral deeds (Dika, 1985, 1990; Waller, 1987; Gingold, 1991). As the rash of graphic violence continued throughout the decade, the genre became the subject of heated debates.

Books and magazine articles appeared which attacked the genre for its "pornographic gore" and destruction of social mores (Shalit, 1980; Ebert, 1981; Gordon, 1984; McMurran, 1984; Bruning, 1987; Gore, 1987; Berger, 1989). Others rebuffed this pessimistic view, and argued that the shift in violence merely reflected contemporary anxieties of death, hopelessness, and sexual maturation: concepts which have obsessed man throughout the ages (Wood, 1987; Prince, 1987; Dickstein, 1980; Waller, 1987; Ryan & Kellner, 1988; Twitchell, 1985, 1989; O'Donnell, 1988). The presentation of graphic violence in horror movies also reverberated concerns over the impact and influence of violence on audiences (Cantor & Reilly, 1982; Cantor &

Wilson, 1984; Cantor, Ziemke & Sparks, 1984; Cantor &
Sparks, 1984; Sparks, 1986; Zillman, Weaver, Mundorf, &
Aust, 1986; Tamborini & Stiff, 1987; Weaver & Zillman,
1988). For all the horror genres investigation and
criticism, there have been few, if any, attempts to
examine the type of violent actions actually depicted in
horror movies. Nor have there been attempts to assess
potential differences among producers of violent content.
Indeed, it is important to assess if graphic violence may
have potential effects on viewers. However, it is equally
important to validate the claims of pornographic gore and
excessive graphic violence through systematic research
studies which can determine, with more exactness, the type
and degree of violence evident in horror movies.

Defining Graphic Violence

The type of violence I refer to, graphic violence, is
different from mere depictions of violence. While both
terms are based on the noun "violation," and the verb "to
violate," what separates the two is the degree to which
the individual is violated and the extent to which that
force of infliction is graphically depicted. Witness, for
example, the violent punctuation of the closing scene in
Bonnie and Clyde (1968), or the seemingly hundreds of
bullets shot into Sonny Corleone's body in The Godfather

(1972). This type of modern violence evident since the late 1960's, is different from the violence which occurred in the thirties, forties, or fifties. Then, a violent action was rarely explored, there was little loitering; little focus on the effects of the violent action. As Sobchack (1982) noted,

> Death came swiftly, noisily, and in the midst of confusion--on the decks of pirate ships, in the circle of covered wagons, over the teeming battlefield...the long shot, the panoramic view, kept death far from us and that was real. The bullet holes were too small to see well; the sword wounds were always on the side facing away from the camera (p. 190).

Beginning in the late-1960's this changed. Motion pictures began to examine violent actions with equal intensity as the dramatic build-up prior to the action. The cinematic build-up of an anticipated death concluded with an equally striking depiction of that death. The camera began to intensely inspect the effects of an action, remaining fixed upon the antagonist until the last breath was extinguished; carefully inspecting the carnage (Sobchak, 1982; Farber, 1979; Twitchell, 1989).

Horror films, defined here as normality threatened by a monster (Wood, 1984) was a genre which lent itself to such exploitation. The genre was distinguished from other genres (fantasy, comedy, adventure) because the root of horror is this threat to normality. This is not to suggest that other genres avoided elements of horror, but

rather that the very root of the horror film, and the emotion it promotes, is the feeling of fear, dread, and abhorrence (Thatcher, 1981; Carroll, 1990).

Need for Content Based Studies

The present concern over the lack of content-based studies of motion picture violence is not a new phenomenon. In 1969, the dearth of studies on violent film content was noted by the United States National Commission on the Causes and Prevention of Violence (Catton, 1969) which reported, "the lack of any recent analyses of movies precludes an analysis of that medium's content" (p.425). Eight years later, after examining the limited studies on film content Linton and Jowett (1977) noted,

> Since the mid-1950s and the advent of television, there has been little or no interest in undertaking detailed analysis of movie content. There have been a few specialized exceptions...John Cogley prepared detailed tables on the changing thematic content of American film in the period from 1947-1954...George Gerbner published his comprehensive cross-cultural study in 1969...since the Gerbner study, there have been no further studies of movie content of any consequence that deal with violence or crime (p.477-478).

The lack of detailed content information in motion pictures appears to follow a pattern of disinterest among media researchers over established forms of mass

communication as newer media are introduced. Wartella and
Reeves (1985) for example, observed that with the
introduction of each new 20th century medium, research on
existing media diminished regardless of audience size or
participation. One factor which has driven this shift in
focus has been the expressed social concerns over the new
mediums effects and influence on youths and adolescents.
As Wartella and Reeves (1985) noted, "within each epoch,
scholars introduced their research with self-conscious
acknowledgement of widespread public concern about the
influence of media on children" (p.130). With the
widespread adoption of pay-per-view, cable-tv, and
prerecorded videocassettes, studies addressing motion
picture content can play an important role in advancing
our understanding about the type of actions individuals
are exposed to.

Dispelling Misconceptions

In addition to advancing knowledge about the type of
actions occurring in motion pictures, content studies can
also assist in dispelling misconceptions about genre
movies, or movies with certain ratings. Leyshon (1981)
for example, suggested that certain movie ratings, in
particular X-rated movies, may mislead viewers to assume
that these films contain more violent or graphic material

than pictures given another rating. After examining 70 motion pictures with various ratings (G, PG, R, and X) Leyshon found that G-rated films ranked second in the average number of violent actions, and that G-rated movies were virtually the same as PG and X-rated movies when "violent time" was compared to "total movie time" (p.89).

The assumption of film content based upon certain classifications also has implications for the horror genre. When the perception of certain film genres (such as horror) are based on an assumed single criterion (e.g., explicit graphic violence) these assumptions can form the basis of an argument which may not align with the actual content. Without specific evidence from content-based studies, these assumptions may, in turn, form the grounding for policy decisions which can have implications for other genres or, at worst, the entire film industry.

But, just as it is important to examine motion-picture content to assess the types of actions actually occurring, it is equally important to examine the producers of motion-picture content.

Film Organizations and Violent Content

Motion pictures do not occur within a vacuum, rather they are the product of companies and corporations competing to fulfill the entertainment demands of

audiences. But the motion-picture industry is not
entirely about entertainment. While being entertained may
be the end result of attending films, the construction,
distribution, and exhibition of motion pictures is
entirely a business venture (Jowett and Linton, 1989;
Maltby, 1983; Guback, 1982; Wasko, 1980, 1982). As a
business venture the primary goal of the film's producer
or financier is to make money. To this end, certain
genres as well as types of content have been profitable
for competing film companies. As Donahue (1987) noted,

> If a genre has proven to be successful at the box
> office, less risk is involved in the release of a
> picture of that genre. Investors and distributors
> have case histories to substantiate a decision to
> release a picture, whereas if one makes a unique film,
> the distributor has to risk failure of his own
> judgement (p.271).

For studios and production companies, violent films and
films which contain doses of violent content have been
among the most profitable. It is perhaps not so
surprising that some of the most successful films of the
1980's were also among the decade's most violent (Return
of the Jedi, 1983: ranked #2; Batman, 1989: ranked #3;
Gremlins, 1984: Ranked #15; Lethal Weapon 2, 1989: ranked
#16; Rambo First Blood Part 2, 1985: Ranked #18: Variety,
February 25, 1991)[1].

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[1] The top 20 films of the 1980's (1980-1989) ranked #1 to
#20 are as follows: E.T.The Extra Terrestrial, 1982;
Return of the Jedi, 1983; Batman, 1989; Ghostbusters,
1984; Raiders of the Lost Ark, 1981; Indiana Jones and

For scriptwriters who want to "break into" the film industry, violent scripts have been among the easiest to sell (Farber, 1979). Writer Steve Shagan, quoted in Farber (1979) has provided this analogy:

> There are 4,000 members of the Writers Guild, and there were only about 55 films made by the majors last year. Writers know that if you write a soft, introspective character study, it's a gamble. Save the Tiger took me three years to sell. Hustle came together in two weeks (p.338).

Hustle, a mystery thriller about a detective who becomes romantically entangled with a high-price call girl, was among Variety's "All-Time Film Rental Champs" for the seventies with rentals exceeding $10 million. Save the Tiger, a soft introspective film about a failing businessman faced with changing social values, did not even appear on the list of 231 films (Variety, February 25, 1991)[2].

Understanding the business of motion pictures increases an understanding of the trend toward graphic

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the Last Crusade, 1989; Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom, 1984; Beverly Hills Cop, 1984; Back to the Future, 1985; Tootsie, 1982; Rain Man, 1988; Three Men and a Baby, 1987; Who Framed Roger Rabbit, 1988; Beverly Hills Cop 2, 1987; Gremlins, 1984; Lethal Weapon, 1989; Top Gun, 1986; Rambo First Blood 2, 1985; Rocky 4; 1985; Back to the Future Part 2; 1989)

[2] Summaries of these two films were based on a 1987 Film catalogue produced by Blackhawk Films.

violence. For, if the potential impact of a film on audiences ever worried directors, producers, or even studios, then it appears to have been overshadowed by concerns of profit and loss (Twitchell, 1989).

In an examination of the companies involved in horror-movie productions, Porco (1991) found that among 830 horror movies produced between 1980 and 1989, 78% came from independent production-distribution companies (e.g., New World, New Line, Embassy, Media, Vestron, Cannon, Concorde, Taurus). Conversely, the industry's nine Major production-distribution companies (MGM/UA, Paramount, Orion, Tri-Star, Warner Brothers, Columbia, 20th Century-Fox, Universal, and Buena Vista) accounted for 22% of all horror motion pictures. That the majority of horror movies during the eighties came from independent studios competing against the few lavish, technically sophisticated, and highly publicized major-studio productions points to one explanation for the use of exploitative content, such as graphic violence, to draw audiences.

Graphic violence in horror movies by independent studios also capitalized on the public's unsated demand for horror. Beginning in the late 1960's, horror movies underwent a cycle of popularity which continued to the end of the 1980's (Waller, 1987; Carroll, 1990). This modern

cycle of horror, according to Carroll was, "the most long-lived, widely disseminated, and persistent genre of the post-Vietnam era" (p.1). Donahue (1987) too pointed out that between 1970 and 1983, horror films were the most popular of all film genres. Although Donahue's analysis stopped at 1983, according to figures released by Variety (Cohn, 1988, June 8) horror movies continued to rank among the most popular film genres throughout the rest of the decade. As Table 1 illustrates, from 1970 to 1988, the average yearly rentals for horror movies rose from $83.9 million between 1974 and 1979, to over $171 million between 1980 and 1988. During this twenty year cycle the average number of domestic horror films with rentals exceeding $1 million doubled from 10.5 between 1970 and 1979, to 22 between 1980 and 1988 (Cohn, 1988, June 8).

As a result of the horror genre's popularity, a vast number of independents entered the market to seek financial profit. The glut was so great, in fact, that a number of national publications ceased to review the flood of low-budget horror movies (Donahue, 1987). The longevity of this modern cycle and the vast number of independent productions which sought financial profit seems linked to a series of factors which not only restructured how audiences viewed motion pictures, but also restructured their means of production.

Table 1

Domestic Theatrical Rentals of Horror Films from

1970 to 1987

Year	Horror Films Exceeding 1 Million in Rentals	Total Horror Film Theatrical Rentals
1987	24	$ 196,000,000
1986	22	159,000,000
1985	19	83,000,000
1984	14	286,000,000
1983	18	110,000,000
1982	31	229,000,000
1981	22	141,000,000
1980	26	168,000,000
1979	19	230,000,000
1978	9	109,000,000
1977	21	118,000,000
1976	11	73,000,000
1975	11	166,000,000
1974	6	80,000,000
1973	5	7,000,000
1972	10	31,000,000
1971	8	19,000,000
1970	5	6,000,000
Average (1970-1979)	10.5	$83,900,000
Average (1980-1987)	22	$171,750,000

Source. Cohn (1988, June 8).

Purpose

The purpose of the present study was to compare the violent episodes occurring in horror films produced by independent and major studios between 1980 and 1989. During the 1980's the domestic film industry experienced several significant developments which had profound influences on the number of horror films produced as well as the exploitation of graphic violence.

Trade practices, horizontal cooperation, and the oligopolistic structure of the film industry was successful in limiting or excluding independent studios from competing directly with major studios. Innovations in video technology occurring during the late-1970's and continuing through the 1980's, reduced the costs of making movies resulting in a plethora of independent movie producers. The rapid expansion of the home video market created a demand for movie products which allowed many low-budget independent producers to bypass the major studios control by releasing movies directly to the video market. The lack of content controls in the video market enabled independent horror film producers to exploit the publics insatiable demand for horror, thereby filling a niche (Garnham, 1990; Guback, 1987; Gomery, 1989). These developments influenced the structure of the motion picture industry, and the competitive arena of major and

independent studios. More importantly, these developments influenced the amount of graphic violence in horror films.

Domination by Major Studios

Since the mid-1970's major studios (Paramount, MGM, Universal, Columbia, 20th Century-Fox, Warner Brothers, Disney) and their distribution arms (Tri-Star, Buena Vista, Orion, United Artists) have maintained control over the film industry by dominating the channels of distribution which bring motion pictures to audiences (Garnham, 1990). This control allowed the majors to limit direct competition from large independent production-distribution companies (Concorde Pictures, New Line/Seven Arts, Miramax/Millimeter/Prestige, Shapiro-Glickenhaus) as well as low-budget single production projects[3] (Jowett & Linton, 1989; Guback, 1982:1987). Table 2 illustrates the nine major production-distribution studio's market share from 1980 to 1990.

The basis of the major studios distributive domination dates to May, 1948 when anti-trust suits brought against the, then, 5 major studios (Warner Brother, Paramount, Loews/MGM, 20th Century-Fox, RKO) was handed down by the

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[3] For the present study both large independent production companies and single production companies will be considered under the rubric "independent studios."

Table 2

Percent of Market Share for the Major Production-

Distribution Studios: 1980 to 1990

Year	COL	FOX	MGM/ UA	PAR	UNIV	WB	BV	ORI	TRI	TOT
1990	.05	.14	.03	.15	.14	.13	.16	.06	.08	.94
1989	.08	.06	.06	.14	.17	.19	.14	.04	.07	.95
1988	.03	.11	.10	.16	.10	.11	.20	.07	.06	.94
1987	.04	.09	.04	.20	.08	.13	.14	.10	.05	.87
1986	.09	.08	.04	.22	.09	.12	.10	.07	.07	.88
1985	.10	.11	.09	.10	.16	.18	.03	.05	.10	.92
1984	.16	.10	.07	.21	.08	.19	.04	.05	.05	.95
1983	.14	.21	.10	.14	.13	.17	.03	.04	---	.96
1982	.10	.14	.11	.14	.30	.10	.04	.03	---	.96
1981	.13	.13	.09	.15	.14	.18	.03	.01	---	.86
1980	.14	.16	.07	.16	.20	.14	.04	.02	---	.93

Note. Tri-Star Pictures (TRI) began operations in 1984 and absorbed Columbia Pictures in late 1987. Columbia was acquired by Sony in 1989. Columbia Pictures Entertainment (COL) was changed to Sony Pictures Entertainment in 1991. Both Sony and Tri-Star retain separate sales staffs. Buena Vista (BV) releases Walt Disney Company pictures. New Line Cinema had .04 percent rentals in 1990. Embassy Pictures market shares are as follows: .03 percent in 1980, .05 percent in 1981, .01 percent in 1993 and 1985. Embassy was bought by Columbia Pictures in 1985.

Source. Murphy (1991).

Supreme Court[4]. Prior to 1948, the structure of the film industry was based upon a system of vertical integration which concentrated the production, distribution, and exhibition of films within the hands of each major studio. As part of their domination, major studios constructed national and international distribution networks which linked studio products to exhibition channels (Heutig, 1944; Conant, 1960). It was theatrical exhibition, however, that formed the economic base of the major studios. Although the Majors collectively controlled only about 17% of all theatrical houses, they owned approximately 70% of the first-run theaters in the 92 largest cities, and 60% of the first-run theaters in smaller cities (Cook, 1981, Donahue, 1987). Ownership in first-run theaters was important to the major studios because they accounted for a substantial portion of the film's total rental fees, and so they received a bulk of the business. As Heutig (1976) noted, "it is very likely that in all but the largest cities of the country the first-run theaters provided well over 50 percent of the

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[4] United States V. Paramount Pictures: RKO Consent Decree, 1948-1949 C.C.H. Trade Cases 62,335 (S.D.N.Y., 1948); Paramount Consent Decree, 1948-1949 C.C.H. Trade Cases 62,377 (S.D.N.Y., 1949). The final decision concerning the other major studios was filed on July 25, 1949 [United State V. Paramount Pictures, 85 F. Supp. 881 (S.D.N.Y., 1949)]. The final rulings of other majors occurred in 1951 with 20th Century-Fox, and Warner Brothers 1953.

total revenue, in some areas as much as 80 percent"
(p.245). By controlling these first-run theaters major
studios could control access to the screen (Sklar, 1975;
Heutig, 1976; Guback, 1976). As Borneman (1976) noted,

> Control of first-run theaters meant, in effect,
> control of the screen, and the process of doling out
> licenses designating this theater as first-run and
> that as second-, third-, fourth-, or nth-run was the
> means by which the control over the whole of the
> motion picture industry was first achieved, and is
> still maintained (p.334).

Theatrical control also allowed the major studios to
insure a steady and predictable profit, which allowed them
to finance large studio lots, and provide long-term
contracts for stars, directors, writers, and other
creative personnel.

The result of the decrees was the divestiture of the
major studio's production and distribution sectors from
their theatrical chains, and the outlaw of block-booking
(Conant, 1960; Balio, 1976; Cook, 1981)[5]. The separation
of theaters from the production and distribution arms of
the business was, not as clean as this history suggests.
Not only did divestiture destabilize the major studio's

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[5] Block-booking was an all-or-nothing practice by major
studios where prestigious "A" films were combined
together with lesser "B" quality films and sold as one
package. In order to obtain several desirable titles
(usually prestigious star vehicles) the exhibitor was
forced to accept lesser quality films. This practice of
tying films together in blocks provided the major
studios with a constant outlet for films, regardless of
quality.

economic base and control in an unpredictable market,

divestiture also fragmented the production sector of the

major studios. As Garnham (1990) and Guback (1982) have

noted, production sectors of the major studios prior to

the decrees had been running at a break-even point. It

was the security of theatrical control which allowed major

studios to establish a steady production output and

maintain fixed investments and high overhead costs such as

long-term star and director contracts, writing staffs, and

studio lots. In the wake of the decrees, major studios no

longer had a guaranteed outlet for their films.

Exhibitors were free to choose which films to show, and

independent studios quickly capitalized on the exhibitor's

new freedom (Conant, 1976). On the impact of the decrees

for independent studios Wasko (1982) noted,

> In 1945, there were 40 independent companies producing
> features. By 1946 (the year that block booking was
> prohibited), there were 70 such companies. In 1947,
> 100 production companies, (including the 7 majors)
> were listed by the U.S. Census Report...and, by 1959,
> it was estimated that 65% of the features produced by
> the industry were by 165 full-time independent
> producers (p.107).

Perhaps more telling about the strength and success of

independent studios after the decrees, was that from 1954

to 1962 seven Best Picture Academy Awards went to

independently produced films (Bohn and Stromgren, 1987).

As a result of the decrees, the distribution sector of

the major studios was the only area left wholly intact.

In fact, the distribution sector of the Majors was actually encouraged to expand through the U.S. government's support of the Motion Picture Export Association of America (MPEAA: Garnham, 1990). As Guback (1976) noted,

> The MPEA was organized as a legal cartel under the provisions of the Webb-Pomerene Export Trade Act of 1918...The act permitted domestic competitors to cooperate in foreign trade by forming export associations that might otherwise have been held illegal under the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 and the Clayton Antitrust Act of 1914. This exemption allowed companies supposedly in competition in the American market to combine, to fix prices, and to allocate customers in foreign markets....In bringing together the majors and allowing them to act in concert through a single organization the MPEA presented a "united front" to the nations of the world, and by legal internal collusion prevented possible ruinous competition among American film companies overseas (p. 395).

After world war II, the MPEAA exported 600 domestic films to Italy, and by 1948 the figure had risen to 668 (Sklar, 1975). Support for the MPEAA by the State Department was also instrumental in removing France's prewar import quota, substituting it for a provision which stated that screen time in French theaters would be reserved for French films (Sklar, 1975). In Great Britain, postwar conditions and the huge profits Hollywood and the MPEAA was extracting (almost $60 million annually), threatened the nation's financial structure (Sklar, 1975). In order to stop the flow of dollars out of the country to America, and the collusive practices of the American major studios,

the British government, in August 1947, required a customs
duty equal to 75% of each film's value (i.e., expected box
office earning in Great Britain). The MPEAA called "foul"
and instituted an embargo of all domestic films to
Britain. After nearly 7 months of boycotting, the MPEAA
and Britain agreed to freely import American films, but to
allow the MPEAA to export only $17 million annually out of
the country (Bohn and Stromgren, 1987). Following
Britain's lead, other countries (France and Italy) also
took steps to impose importation quotas of foreign films.
Instead of removing box-office earnings from the country,
the major studios agreed to reinvest profits in production
studios, equipment, and salaries. Reinvestment, only
served to strengthen the major's control in these foreign
markets. As Sklar (1975) noted,

> Such ventures not only gave American filmmakers access
> to their earnings but could bring down production
> costs in comparison with Hollywood's high wage salary,
> and at the same time feature locations and players who
> would appeal to overseas audiences...By the 1950s
> overseas locations and American investment in foreign
> production had become essential elements in
> Hollywood's financial survival (p.275-276).

Re-investment in foreign markets served a more important
role in the major studio's survival and domination of the
film industry. Foreign markets allowed major studios to
reduce the risk of filmmaking by spreading investments
over a global market which could insure a movie's profit.
The result Garnham (1990) noted,

> The major distributors alone controlled access to
> enough of the market to spread their investment risk
> in production over a large enough programme of films
> to return a regular and reasonable profit. Only they
> were in a position to ensure the necessary match
> between production investment and box-office revenue
> upon which the economic viability of the total system
> rests (p.195).

Such risk protection, however, did not ensure that the majors were impermeable to the fickle nature of film audiences.

Beginning in early fifties, the film industry began to lose audiences to television. From 1950 to 1960, studio productions declined nearly 50% (Cook, 1981). Initially the studios panicked. Studio heads were forced out of office (e.g., Louis B. Mayer), contracted stars, writers, and directors were let go, and in-house B-films were stopped. In an attempt to bring back audiences, major studios attempted to offer them what television could not, bigger and longer colored pictures. Major studios introduced a number of wide-screen and three-dimensional films to separate their products from television's programming. Several blockbuster films (West Side Story, 1961; Mary Poppins, 1964; The Sound of Music, 1965) did become enormous hits, but many others (El Cid, 1961; Mutiny on the Bounty, 1962; Cleopatra, 1963) only put the studios deeper in debt (Bohn and Stromgren, 1987; Cook, 1981; Wasko, 1982). As a result of over-investments during the 1960's, and the rising cost of film production during the

1970's, major studios (many under the control of corporations) decreased the number of films produced (Donahue, 1987; Cook, 1981). During this time, however, the number of theaters actually increased as well as the yearly theatrical admissions (Guback, 1982). This concentrated the industry's power in the hands of those who controlled the flow of motion pictures to audiences-- the major studios. As Guback (1982) noted, power is the ability to decide how resources are used and by whom. In the film industry, power has been situated in the hands of major production companies which can control the types of films produced, which films are accepted for domestic or international exhibition, or if a film is to be exhibited at all (Guback, 1982).

Control over the channels of distribution established by the majors during the 30's and 40's functioned to stifle larger independent studios as well as low-budget projects during the 1980's. In a longitudinal study conducted by Variety (Cohen, 1988, October 19), Lawrence Cohen noted,

> American indie feature production stands barely better
> than a 50% chance of ever being released theatrically
> in this country...[and] odds are significantly worse
> for indie pics produced with no distributor (major or
> indie) in place up-front (p.1).

Between 1983 and 1988, virtually every in-house production by a major studio was released, conversely the number of

independent productions with a theatrical release decreased (Cohn, 1988, October 19). During the last half of the 1980's, major studios extended their control through constructing theatrical outlets and buying into the holdings of large theatrical chains (Guback, 1987). By 1990, major studios had holdings or investments in national theatrical chains such as Cineplex Odeon, Loews, and United Artists (Rosen & Hamilton, 1990).

Perhaps in any other decade the constriction of theatrical exhibition and film distribution would have spelled certain death for independent productions, but during the same time that major studios tightened the chains on independent theatrical distribution, technological developments were opening up a series of alternative viewing options for motion pictures creating a demand for film products.

New Technology and Increased In-home viewing options

During the 1980's, a number of in-home viewing options became available which created an unprecedented demand for motion pictures (Standard and Poor's Industry Surveys, 1990, March 15). Cable-TV, pay-per-view, and the video cassette recorder opened up new avenues for viewing, and created an unprecedented demand for movie products (Rosen & Hamilton, 1990). Between 1980 and 1985, cable

households grew from 19.6 million to 39.9 million, an increase of 104%. Over the next five years, the total number of cable subscribers jumped to 54.3 million, an increase of 180% from 1980 (MPAA U.S. Economic Review, 1990). During this same period, VCR households exploded from 1.85 million in 1980, to 23.5 million in 1985, to 65.4 million households in 1990. Coupled with the rise in VCR's, sales of prerecorded videocassettes burgeoned from 3 million in 1980, to 52 million in 1985, to 220 million in 1990 (an increase of 7,233% over the ten year period). Table 3 illustrates this growth in the VCR and pre-recorded videocassette market.

The figures reported in table 3 should be read with care. Differing companies use differing accounting methods combining feature movie productions with other areas (such as, exercise videos, animation shorts, documentaries, instructional videos, or made for television movies). These figures however represent the best available information about the videotape industry and its growth over the decade.

The most significant of the in-home viewing options for the horror genre was the video market. For producers and directors, video technology offered a cheaper forum within which to experiment and show off talent (Gingold. 1991). Video also allowed independent producers and

Table 3

U.S. Video Market 1980-1990

Year	No. of VCR Households (in millions)	% of TV Homes with VCR's	No. of Pre-recorded Videos (in million units)
1990	65.4	70.2	220.0
1989	62.3	67.6	200.0
1988	56.2	62.2	135.0
1987	45.8	51.7	110.0
1986	32.5	37.2	84.0
1985	23.5	27.3	52.0
1984	15.0	17.6	22.0
1983	8.3	9.9	9.5
1982	4.8	5.7	6.0
1981	2.5	3.1	5.5
1980	1.9	2.4	3.0

Note. Number of VCR Households reflect year-end figures.
Prerecorded videocassette sales reflect dealer figures and
exclude adult movies and public domain films. All figures
were rounded by the MPAA, any may not reflect actual
complete figures.

Source: Graves, 1990; Motion Picture Association of
America, 1990.

distributors a chance to bypass the channels of
distribution controlled by the major production-
distribution studios. This was done by releasing movies
to video and distributing them through regional video
outlets, or through contract agreements with developing
cable or pay-per-view systems.

Video technology for the independent horror producer
also came at a time when the drive-in market, the staple
of the horror genre, began to decline. Independents
(e.g., New World Pictures, Jerry Gross Organization, and
AIP) during the 1960's and 1970's, often released
exploitation films primarily to drive-ins because their
films catered to younger audiences (Boyle, 1983; McCarty,
1984). As Boyle noted, "the [drive-in] market
traditionally belonged to the so-called independent"
(p.286). As drive-ins began to close down (over 74%
between 1980 and 1989: MPAA, 1990) many independent
exploitation producers migrated to video technology and
the booming pre-recorded videocassette market. Table 4
illustrates this decline in drive-in screens, the rise in
VCR's, and the number of horror films produced by
independent and major studios. Boyle (1983) attributes
the decline of drive-ins, in part, to the development of
shopping centers and the construction of multiplex

Table 4

VCR households, Drive-ins, Horror Film Productions:

1980-1990

Year	No. of VCR Households (in millions)	Drive-In Screens	Major Horror Films	Independent Horror Films
1990	65.4	915	N/A	N/A
1989	62.3	1,103	17	46
1988	56.2	1,545	27	85
1987	45.8	2,507	17	102
1986	32.5	2,818	22	68
1985	23.5	2,820	14	65
1984	15.0	2,832	12	57
1983	8.3	2,852	17	54
1982	4.8	3,043	19	48
1981	2.5	3,308	19	59
1980	1.9	3,561	15	67

Source: MPAA, 1990; Porco, 1991.

theaters on the valuable land which the drive-ins were located. The decline in the drive-in market, however, can also be traced to economic conditions.

Economically, drive-ins were less efficient than video retail outlets. A drive-in typically had only one or two screens, while video rental outlets and multiplex theaters could offer the movie viewer more options. Drive-ins also played during limited hours, namely after dusk. Indoor screens and rental outlets offered showings throughout the day. Additionally, drive-ins located in the mid-west and

eastern states were closed during late- fall, winter, and early-spring months making them less efficient than video which was not effected by seasonal variations. For the independent horror producers the limitations of the drive-in market (limited viewing times, short seasonal playing periods, and declining popularity) meant less chance to earn a profit. Video technology, conversely, was a growing market. A horror movie in a video rental outlet could be rented or purchased at any time.

Video technology also offered several advantages for the movie viewer. Videos were a cheaper form of entertainment relative to the rising costs of theater admission (a 12.4%
increase from 1980 to 1989: Motion Picture Association of America, 1989). Prerecorded video cassettes offer the viewer more movie options than those at the local cineplex. The greatest impact of video however was the reduced cost of making motion pictures.

New Technology and the Reduced Cost of Making Movies

Camcorders, Super-8 video systems, and low-cost editing equipment made increasingly available throughout the 1980's dramatically reduced the cost of production. This made it possible for virtually anyone to make a film. The low cost of production resulted in a dramatic increase

in the number of independent film companies competing

against major studios (Cohn, 1988, June 8). Lower

production costs enabled independent horror producers to

use gadgets and gimmicks in films without sacrificing

production costs. This meant using increasingly

sophisticated gimmicks, such as foam latex, plastic

prostheses, and monster animation. As Twitchell (1985)

noted,

> Horror films are so dependent on visual shock that any
> technical innovation that can unsettle visual
> expectations will greatly magnify our response. Until
> the forties the horror film was technically the most
> innovative, and it is fast returning to that status
> thanks to computer-driven optics and all manner of
> special effects, of which the most effective is the
> pneumatically operated mask. The only analogy for the
> excitement of watching heads spin 360 degree, or
> explode into smithereens, or burst out into wolf
> faces, is to think how exciting it was to first see
> blood in technicolor in the 1940's, or prehistoric
> monsters battle in the 1930s, or birds landing on
> faces in the 1950s (p.55).

The low cost of movie making, also lent itself to

exploitation, as Gingold (1991) noted, "for every amateur

auteur who turned a low budget to his advantage...there

were a dozen hacks turning out backyard disasters" (p.86).

The lack of content controls on video, compared to the

motion picture industry's Classification And Rating

Administration (CARA), offered independent producers a

chance to exploit violence and fulfill the unsatisfied

demands of certain audiences ("gorehounds") whose endless

demands for bloodletting extended beyond that of

mainstream film audiences. As a result, a myriad of horror sub-genres appeared, from subtle psychological thrillers which thrilled and chilled audiences, to graphic exploitation "splatter" films which shocked and assaulted audiences with increasing heights of blood and violence. As certain sub-genres became popular (Slasher films, Zombie films, Supernatural films) dozens of low-budget filmmakers entered the market with their projects and a chance to earn a profit.

The Genre of Horror in the Film Industry

Stirring in The Film Industry:

Antecedent Conditions to Modern Fear

Throughout most of the cinema's history, horror films remained faithful to their literary-gothic traditions of monsters, supernatural demons, ghosts, haunted houses, and apparitions (Tudor, 1989; Hardy, 1986). Violence which occurred was often hidden behind closed doors, suggested as shadowy impression against a wall, or implied as the camera faded to black (Shoell, 1985). During the fifties, however, several significant events occurred which had profound influences on the nature of violence in film. These events had important implications for the horror films of the 1980's because they set the precedent for motion picture content, and the exploitation of sex and violence on the silver screen.

The 1950's: Divestiture and Free Expression.

Perhaps the single most important event which spurred sex and violence in the cinema was the divestiture of the major studio's production-distribution sectors from their theatrical chains. With divestiture, independent studios

found a demand for their products in an industry which had
been all but closed (Bohn & Stromgren, 1987).

Divestiture also played an important role in
restructuring the regulation of motion-picture content.
Prior to divestiture, motion-picture content was regulated
by the industry's Production Code Authority (PCA).
Originally the PCA was designed to satisfy the growing
concerns over violence and sex in films during the 1920's
and to stifle the growing number of state and local
censorship boards which had formed under the 1915, Mutual
V. Ohio Supreme Court decision [Mutual Film Corp. V. Ohio
236 U.S. 230, 244 (1915)] that ruled,

> The exhibition of moving pictures is a business, pure
> and simple, originated and conducted for profit, like
> other spectacles not intended to be regarded by the
> Ohio Constitution, we think, as part of the press of
> the country, or as organs of public opinion.

Unlike the classification rating system since 1968, the
PCA instituted content control over every film produced
and exhibited to the public. Films approved for public
viewing carried the production code's seal of approval.

The seal was originally instituted in 1930, however,
it had very little influence on the content of motion
pictures (Cook, 1981; Mast, 1971). Like the industries
list of "Don't and Be Carefuls" instituted in 1922, there
was no punishment for breaking the PCA's codes. In
essence, there were no teeth to the codes. As Cook (1981)

noted,

> The only "censorship" consisted of informal advising
> according to the principle of "compensating values"
> whereby...vice could be flaunted for six reels so long
> as virtue triumphed in the seventh. The main task of
> the Hays Office in the twenties was to stave off the
> threat of government censorship by mollifying pressure
> groups, managing news, deflecting scandal, and
> generally discouraging close scrutiny of the industry
> (p.214).

In order to give the codes some teeth and elude growing
criticism, in late 1930, submission of scripts to the Hays
Office was made mandatory. Jason S. Joy, appointed to
oversee self-regulation, was given the power to appeal
movie scripts to the director of the Motion Picture
Association of America over the heads of a panel of studio
executives, which had in the past, voted against script
changes. But, for some unknown reason, Joy never used the
right of appeal, as MacGowan (1965) noted, "pictures whose
doubtful moral integrity...[was] universally recognized,
were passed over Joy's disapproval" (p.357). These
measures were enough to temporarily exorcise sex and
violence from motion pictures. The introduction of sound
in 1927 had also insulated the film industry from the
depression. By 1932, however, attendance had dropped from
90 million in 1930, to 60 million in 1932 and 1933
(Brauer, 1982). As the depression wore on, studios
increasingly reverted back to more risque topics to draw
audiences. In films such as Common Clay (1931), Born to

<u>Love</u> (1930), and <u>The Easiest Way</u> (1931), women lost their virtue before they were married. In others (<u>Faithless</u>, 1932; <u>Call her Savage</u>, 1932; <u>Blond Venus</u>, 1931) wives sold their bodies to get food or needed medicine for loved ones. The new realism of sound also resulted in a host of gangster films which exploited violence and "tough vernacular speech" (<u>Little Caesar</u>, 1930; <u>The Public Enemy</u>, 1931; <u>Scarface</u>, 1932: Cook, 1981).

Horror films during this time also became more graphically violent as censors continued to lose their clout. <u>The Mask of Fu Manchu</u> (1932) featured Boris Karloff as an Asian sadist and contained scenes of torture and violence which still shock the viewer (Weaver, 1991). In <u>King Kong</u> (1933) the "eighth wonder of the world" was shown chewing up island natives and New Yorkers in gleaming close-ups. Decaying, disembodied heads adorned the trophy room of Leslie Banks in <u>The Most Dangerous Game</u> (1932: Weaver, 1991; Hutchinson and Pickard, 1983). With no end of the trend for sex and violence in sight, in 1933, two books appeared which crystallized public opinion against Hollywood.

Henry Forman's summary on the findings of the Payne Foundation studies in <u>Our Movie Made Children</u> (1933) sparked new fires of criticism against the growing tide of sex and violence in motion pictures (MacGowan, 1965).

That same year, Herbert Blumer's <u>Movies and Conduct</u> (1933) raised concerns over the ability of motion pictures to undermine the mores of society. As Blumer noted,

> [The] penetration of basic human values into new social forms constitutes one of the most interesting features of motion pictures. It explains why and how they undermine the prevailing pattern of local culture (p.125).

In response to the increase of sex and violence in films, in the spring of 1934, a committee of bishops formed the Legion of Decency. The Legion's purpose was to warn Catholics against immoral films, and to fight for more "moral" movies (MacGowan, 1965; Cook, 1981). In the end, though, it was the legions ability to influence the pocketbooks of the studios through boycotts which put teeth in the PCA's codes. Joseph Breen, a Catholic layman, was appointed to head the PCA, and the production codes were rewritten by Father Daniel Lord, a Jesuit priest, and Martin Quigley, a Catholic layman. After 1934, any film not deemed acceptable by the code authority, was refused a "PCA seal," and in August 1934, the PCA instituted a $25,000 fine for any infractions. Interestingly though, the fine was never imposed (Cook, 1981).

Major studios, as well as independents, closely followed the PCA's codes for fear of losing its precious stamp, and facing the threat of economic boycott by the Legion of Decency. As Bohn and Stromgren (1987) noted,

> The legion, by threat of economic boycott, held
> enormous power over Hollywood. Legion officials were
> called in on every film and exerted great influence.
> If the legion wanted something removed or altered, the
> filmmaker did it with little argument (p.247).

Cook (1981), however, provides a more insightful account

of the Legion of Decency and the role of the PCA codes

during this time. As Cook noted,

> By regulating the "moral" content of American films,
> the Breen Code was regulating their social content as
> well, so that what purported to be a blueprint for
> "cleaning up the movies" was actually an instrument of
> social control in a period of economic chaos (p. 307).

In the 1930's and 1940's, when the major studios owned

exhibition houses they could institute content control of

motion pictures by refusing to show or distribute films

without a PCA seal, which they did. With divestiture

however, major studios began to lose control over the type

and content of motion pictures. For several years after

the divestiture, independent exhibitors continued to shy

away from films without a seal. This changed in 1951. In

1951, an independent importer-distributor, Joseph Burstyn,

brought an Italian production, The Miracle into the U.S.

After the film opened in New York, it ran into trouble

with the New York Board of Regents which revoked the

film's license on the basis of "sacrilege" (Cook, 1981;

Bohn & Stromgren, 1987). After several lower court

battles, the case made its way to the Supreme Court which

ruled in May, 1952 that motion pictures fell under the

First and Fourteenth Amendments guaranteeing free speech and free press. The "Miracle Decision" [Burstyn V. Wilson, 343 U.S. 495, 501-2 (1952)], and subsequent rulings established motion pictures as an art form protected under the first amendment.

The decision was significant because it allowed a new freedom for expression in motion pictures. After the miracle decision several films appeared (The Moon is Blue, 1953 and The Man with the Golden Arm, 1955) which tested the force of censorship laws to protect audiences from seeing taboo topics (Conant, 1976; Bohn & Stromgren, 1987). Both The Moon is Blue and The Man with the Golden Arm were denied the PCA seal and should not have been shown. Prior to 1948 these films might not have received a theatrical release. But with divestiture, both films were released without the PCA seal. Both films were also financially successful even with boycott threats from the Legion of Decency. The success of these two films signaled the demise of the PCA and diminishing power of the Legion of Decency. It was, however, not until the success of Baby Doll (1956), the first American film condemned by the Legion of Decency, that content control in the industry was completely destroyed (Bohn & Stromgren, 1987). Throughout the decade, and until the mid-1960's, production codes existed amidst an air of

virtually free expression (MacGowan, 1965; Randall, 1976).
The new-found freedom of film content also immigrated to
the horror genre.

Horror in the 1950's and 1960's

Horror films during the late-1950's and throughout the
1960's more than any other time previously, congealed the
feelings and happenings of the industry (Lucas, 1991).
The open air of expression from the "Miracle" decision and
subsequent rulings was reflected in the horror film's
taste for eroticism blended with violence. During the
mid-1950's, color had become the staple of the motion-
picture industry, and with color came the redness of
blood.

Horror films began to use blood and increasingly
grotesque characters, breaking every unwritten law of the
genre's gothic origins (e.g., subtlety is better than
blatancy, monsters can be ugly but not grotesque, violent
actions should not expose blood). The penchant for sex
and violence continued through the 1960's, and pulled
horror films in a number of fascinating ways. Early in
the sixties, Alfred Hitchcock struck two nerves, initially
with Psycho (1960) and later with The Birds (1963), but it
would not be until the 1980's that the sons and daughters
of Norman Bates would mark their wrath on the horror

genre. Films such as <u>Blood Feast</u> (1963), and <u>2000 Maniacs</u> (1964), abused the new freedom with blatantly exploitative acts that rivalled the bloodletting in horror of the 1980's. Other horror films (<u>Curse of the Vampire</u>, 1960; <u>The Naked Witch</u>, 1961) combined violence with sexploitation as stately heros staked naked female vampires, or unsuspecting johns became unwilling victims of prostitute vampires (Hardy, 1986).

During this time, two independent studios dominated the horror film industry; Britain's Hammer Films and American International Pictures (AIP). Hammer's horror films specialized in familiar monsters (Dracula, The Wolf Man, Frankenstein) terrorizing European townsfolk or let loose on the backstreets of eighteenth century London. AIP specialized in baroque adaptations based, at times in title alone, on Edgar Allan Poe (Cohen, 1984; Hardy, 1986). Both Hammer and AIP's films were markedly different from the more innocent gothic terrors of Universal or RKO during the 1930's and 1940's (Hardy, 1986). As Warren (1991) noted, these studios were not into Gothic-Germanic horror, they were into full-blooded Grand Guignol where the shock effect depended on what was shown, not implied.

Thematically however, the films of this time maintained the structure of "normal" social beliefs

prevalent in the cinema's golden years. Monsters, no
matter how hideous or powerful, were always destroyed at
the end. This was not because the monster represented a
threat to man, but rather because it meant a threat to
man's social structure and social stability. The
destruction of the monster signified the return to defined
societal roles, where man was positioned as the supreme
being over all that was natural as well as supernatural.
On the horror films of this time Waller (1987) noted,

> [horror] films reaffirm what are assumed to be the
> normal values of heterosexual romance, clearly defined
> sexual roles, and the middle-class family and testify
> to the importance and the relevance of social
> stability and traditional sources of authority and
> wisdom (p.4).

While no exact figures are available, the horror films of
the 1950's and 1960's were not overwhelmingly popular. No
horror film from 1951 until 1960 (except Hitchcock's
Psycho, 1960) reached the list of 276 films from Variety's
"All Time Film Rental Champs" of the 1950's.   During the
1960's only three horror films (The Birds, 1963; The
Boston Strangler, 1968; and Rosemary's Baby, 1968) reached
Variety's list of 208 "All-Time Rental Champs" for the
1960's (Variety, 1991, Feb. 25). The films produced by
Hammer, AIP, and other independent horror studios catered
to a small loyal crowd, namely the drive-in market. As
Cohen (1984) noted,

> Throughout the 1940s, 50s and 60s, horror movies
> continued to attract large, but not enormous
> audiences. There were no horror films that everyone
> was talking about...The status of horror films changed
> in 1968, and a new era in which major horror films
> were made began (p.51).

During the late 1960's, horror films underwent a dramatic

shift. This shift did not occur among stories, plots or

characters, but in the way stories were explicated, how

characters were portrayed, and the degree of violence

shown.

What separated horror films of this modern cycle from

those of the past was the degree to which they broke the

traditional values, themes, and motifs prevalent since the

cinema's golden years--themes which previously aspired to

bestow the values of the nuclear family and social harmony

with motifs of cinematic closure (Waller, 1987). Horror

films beginning in 1968 and continuing throughout the

1980's preached uncertainty, the breakdown of the nuclear

family, and abnormality disguised as normality (Waller,

1987; Twitchell, 1985). These modern horror films

attempted to explore every gruesome detail of a violent

action, to grub the carpet of society and expose the dust

which had been collecting for years, holding it in full

front of the viewer.

The violence and anxieties expressed in horror films

were part of a larger movement expressed by other films

(<u>Woodstock</u>, 1967; <u>Easy Rider</u>, 1968, <u>Bonny and Clyde</u>, 1968;

The Wild Bunch, 1968) which began to reflect an increasingly violent society. A period when assassinations (Martin Luther King, jr., Robert Kennedy), political turmoil (the march on Washington, the "madness" of the Democratic National Convention in Chicago, and nation wide protests over an unpopular war in Vietnam), and violence (gunning down of students in Mexico City, and nightly television reports of actions in Vietnam) was prevalent (McCarty, 1984; Ryan and Kellner, 1988).

The Age of Modern Horror

The modern horror film was ushered in, appropriately, by an independent as well as a major studio: George Romero's Night of the Living Dead, and Roman Polanski's Rosemary's Baby. Each film was released in 1968, the same year the MPAA instituted its "Industry Code of Self-Regulation" and the National Commission on the Causes and prevention of Violence held hearings on the role of the mass media (Waller, 1987; Liebert and Sprafkin, 1988).

Rosemary's Baby, produced by Paramount, marked the first time that a major studio contributed big names and a big budget to a horror film. Although several major studios (Universal, Columbia, Warner Brothers, Paramount, MGM) had produced horror films throughout the 1930's, 1940's and 1950's, these pictures generally received

second billing ("B" treatment) to the major studio's more prestigious "A" pictures (which contained stars and a large budget). Universal's classic horror film <u>Dracula</u> (1931) for example, was set at a budget of $355,000. A year earlier, 1930, Universal had spent $1.45 million for <u>All Quiet on the Western Front</u> (Skal, 1990).

In addition to its attention to a budget, <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> also gave birth to a number of elements which would shape and define the genre for major studios over the next two decades. The film was highly-polished and situated in contemporary America. The events were contextualized within the "here and now." This contextualization made the film, according to Waller (1987), "acceptable and authorized" (p.5). <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> situated terror within the familiar where evil and monstrosity reside next to normality and commonality. As Hardy (1986) noted,

> <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> is one of the few films where the artifacts and rituals of witchcraft are given credibility and where its practitioners are virtually free of caricature: the unreal, for a short while, becomes reality (p.199).

The focus of the film, the occult, also became the basis of major studio horror films to follow (e.g, <u>The Exorcist</u>, 1973; <u>The Omen</u>, 1976; <u>The Amityville Horror</u>, 1979: Cohen, 1984; Waller, 1987). The immense success of <u>Rosemary's Baby</u> pointed towards the genre's growth in popularity. An

Oscar awarded to Ruth Gordon[6] for best supporting actress
in 1968, and Britain's prestigious Queen's Award presented
to Hammer Film studios, the same year, also raised the
level of the genre from an underground form of
exploitation to that of a legitimate genre (Cohen, 1984;
McCarty, 1984). It was, however, the profitability of
horror films that prompted several other studios to enter
the market with big budgets and bigger stars (e.g., The
Exorcist, 1974; Jaws, 1974; The Sentinel, 1976; The Car,
1977; Alien, 1979).

George Romero's independently produced Night of the
Living Dead (1968) was a dark film about the breakdown of
social order, the nuclear family, the ineffectiveness of
media, as well as local and federal governments (Waller,
1987, Dillard, 1987). Night of the Living Dead was among
the first films to display graphic violence. Violent
actions took place in front of the viewer as zombies ("the
walking dead") were shown fighting over the innards of the
deceased and eating severed limbs. The film's most
horrific scene, was when a couple's young daughter was
shown stabbing her mother (with a garden trowel) then

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[6] An Oscar awarded to Ruth Gordon was only the second time
in history that an actor or actress in a horror film
achieved such honors. The first actor was Frederic
March who was awarded an Academy Award for his leading
role performance in the Paramount, 1931 version of Dr.
Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Cohen, 1984).

gnawing on the severed arm of her dead father. The
extreme graphic violence in the film was made even more
shocking by the painfully common conditions of the film.
The film took place in ordinary looking locations, not
gothic castles or surrealistic London streets (Dillard,
1987). <u>Night of the Living Dead</u> was shot in black and
white though, according to Stein (cited in Dillard, 1987),
Romero did have a budget for color. Romero (cited in
Russo, 1985), however, noted, "the use of black and white
rather than color was a budgetary decision rather than an
esthetic [sic] one" (p.7). Whether purposeful or not, the
black and white cinematography gave the film a documentary
feel, which was made even more realistic by radio and
televised news reports appearing throughout the film
(Russo, 1985).

Like <u>Rosemary's Baby</u>, the setting of <u>Night of the
Living Dead</u> was the present, represented through a typical
looking farmhouse fashioned with furniture representative
of the time. Its characters were ordinary: no demons or
ghosts here. The zombies which came back to life were not
based on some voodoo culture as in Universal's <u>White
Zombie</u> (1932), they were farmers, homemakers, sons,
daughters, mothers, and fathers: ordinary townsfolk
defined according to Stein (1970) as America's middle
class; the "silent majority." As Dillard (1987) noted

about the film,

> The graveyard is no neo-expressionistic set like that
> of <u>Frankenstein</u> with a painted sky and lighting that
> comments on the scene even as it functions within it;
> it is a small Pennsylvania country graveyard, flatly
> lit and unretouched...the night of the living dead is
> a Sunday night, the first after the time change in the
> autumn. The season, with its overtones of dying away
> and approaching winter cold, is symbolically
> significant, as is the sunday which emphasized the
> failure of religion in a secular age (p.17).

It was this dichotomy of normality and extreme psychopathy
(punctuated with graphic violence) that was to form the
basis of other independent horror films to follow
(<u>Sisters</u>, 1972; <u>Last House on the Left</u>, 1972; <u>Texas
Chainsaw Massacre</u>, 1974; <u>Carrie</u>, 1976; <u>Martin</u>, 1978).

<u>Violence and Horror</u>

As already suggested, an important shift in this new
cycle of modern horror films (films between 1968 and 1990)
was the way violence was portrayed. Violence of the
thirties, forties and fifties, while at times cruel, often
detached the action from the victim. Violence and "gore"
(the butchery and carnage often associated with horror
films of the 1980's) was limited to the imagination; it
was rarely depicted on the screen. Few films attempted to
depict violence or death in its more macabre nature;
rarely was blood from a gunshot wound seen or a knife
wound exposed (Farber, 1972; 1979; Schoell, 1985).
Violence which occurred was like the printed pages from

its borrowed text, suggested as shadowy impressions formed in the mind's eye (Schoell, 1985).

By the seventies, however, advances in make-up and special effects allowed producers and directors to exploit violence and use it more prominently in motion pictures, testing the boundaries of the newly formed rating system (McCarty, 1984; McDonagh, 1991). This is not to suggest that violence did not occur in horror films prior to 1968; it did, but often there was little loitering: an action happened and the camera cut to another scene. More importantly, in most horror films audiences never saw the act. Witness for example, the shower scene of Hitchcock's Psycho (1960). The spectator never saw a knife wound or a stabbing actually occur though the montage of shots assaulted the viewer to believe such an action happened.

Beginning with Night of the Living Dead and continuing through out the 1970's and 1980's, the camera attempted to get inside of the violent act through extreme close-ups and slow motion. Audiences were given the best visual vantage of the violent act, whether this was through slow motion (Friday the 13th, 1980; An American Werewolf in London, 1981; Wolfen, 1981) or the killer's point of view (Halloween, 1978; Zombie, 1980; Basket Case, 1982). As Romero (Russo, 1985) noted about the graphic violence in Night of the Living Dead,

> I directed for naturalism and saw no reason to cut away for reaction shots when the ghouls began devouring the flesh of their victims. In fact I was delighted when one of our investors, who happened to be in the meat-packing business, turned up on the set with a sackful of animal innards which made the sequence seem so real, never realizing the extent of taboo-breaking the scenes would achieve (p.7).

Horror films of the 1980's, placed the viewer on the blade of a knife as it penetrated a victim, placed the viewer in the head of an assailant through point of view shots, and the lingering camera eye maintained its fix on the victim long after the act had been committed (Giles, 1984; Sobchack, 1982). Unlike their early predecessors, special effects artists paid particular attention to the biological facts of life and death, displaying with clinical accuracy how a severed artery spurts blood or vividly depicting how a mutilated body looks (Twitchell, 1989; Schoell, 1985).

Along with the shift in depictions of violence--from implied to explicit actions--and a shift in setting--Gothic fantasies to the contemporary--the central characters of the modern horror film too changed, from gothic figures to every-day figures. Monsters like Dracula, Frankenstein, or The Mummy, were a staple of the genre prior to 1968. While scary for their times, they were based in the fantastic, derived from the dreams of their creators. The monsters of the modern horror film, epitomized by Michael Mayer, and Jason Vorhees, became the

stuff of nightmares.

Horror films during the late-1970's and through the 1980's increasingly drew their plots from contemporary sensationalized newspaper headlines which touted the daily accounts of mass murders, obsessive fans, serial killers, and deranged psychopaths. The "monsters" of the modern horror film were based, albeit at times loosely, in realty and on real people such as Son of Sam, Charles Manson, Ed Gein, The Hollywood Strangler, The Zodiac Killer, and The Subway Slasher (Schoell, 1985; McCarty, 1986).

The combination of the shifts in violence, setting, and characterizations resulted in a thematic shift of the horror film. The film as tale of horror became the film as tale of terror. Instead of attempting to evoke a fright response, to "chill the spine," modern horror films used graphic violence to shock and attack viewers. The excessiveness of screen violence seemed to appear with a "top that" quality as body counts escalated. This transference, from horror to terror, had important implications for how horror films were received throughout the 1980's.

That is, throughout the cinema's history few objections were voiced about the nature of violence in horror films. Although the overall makeup of the film industry, in particular the production code authority, did

much to stifle the violence shown on the silver screen during the thirties and forties, even during the production codes demise in the 1950's and the increase in sex and violence in film, there were few expressed concerns about bloodshed on the screen. Among the studies which attempted to assess violence in film (Dale, 1935; Jones, 1942; Wolfenstein & Leites; 1950; Linton & Jowett, 1977) the genre of horror was never examined. However, as the horror film shifted its focus during the 1970's and 1980's, from horror to terror, implied violence to explicit violence, and gothic creatures to modern day psychos, questions about the intentions and messages of horror films, and those who watch them were raised. Perhaps more telling has been the vast number of books published exclusively on the modern horror film, and which critically examined the genre's propensity towards graphic violence and the redefinition of the monstrous and the normal (Derry, 1977; Manchel, 1983; Handling, 1983; Balun, 1983, 1986, 1987; Barker, 1984; Schoell, 1985; McCarty, 1986, 1989; Conner, 1987; Wood, 1986; Gange, 1987; Waller, 1987; Newman, 1988; Rockett, 1988; Twitchell, 1985; Tudor, 1989; Carroll, 1990; Dika, 1985, 1990).

One important, though often overlooked, area which played an instrumental role in the rise of graphic violence and the disposition of the genre during the

eighties was the nature of the film industry and advances in technology. Dramatic technological developments occurring during the late 1970's restructured not only the way motion pictures were viewed, but also how they were produced. These shifts in turn had important influences on the competition between studios attempting to capitalize on the popularity of horror and the use of graphic violence.

The Motion Picture Industry

Oligopolistic Theory, Culture Industries, and Film

Since the industrial revolution and the development of
mass culture, the long term propensity towards economic
profit has been the guiding force of many popular cultural
industries. This propensity towards profit does not
necessitate inferior products, but that profit, rather
than artistry, has driven mass culture industries (McPhee,
1966). As a result, major firms operating in culture
industries have tended towards an oligopolistic structure
in an attempt to control the flow of products from
production to exhibition (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Gans,
1964; Jowett and Linton, 1989).

An Oligopoly has been defined as an industry dominated
by a few firms (Scherer, 1980). When the number of
dominating firms is small enough (such as with the motion
picture industry) each major firm recognizes that its own
actions are mutually interdependent upon the actions of
competitors (Scherer, 1980; Samuelson & Nordhaus, 1983).
As Scherer (1980) noted, "Each firm recognizes that its
best choice depends upon the choices its rivals make. The
firms are interdependent, and they are acutely conscious

of it" (p.151). When one firm (A) in an oligopoly lowers prices, the interrelated nature of the oligopolistic structure necessitates that other competing films (B, C, D) must also lower their prices accordingly. They must do this, or firm A will get the majority of the business and market share. Similarly, when a major firm (A) establishes a standard, it sets the precedent for other competing firms. One example of this was the dramatic rise in salaries paid to big stars and directors in the film industry during the eighties (Knowlton, 1988).

Oligopolistic structures, however, are not central to cultural industries. For some industries, an oligopoly exists as a result of economies of scale. These oligopolies, though, occur mainly in manufacturing such as a steel mill or a full-line automotive plant, which require enormous start up, manufacturing, and maintenance costs (Samuelson and Nordhaus, 1983). In culture industries such as film, however, the barriers to competition occur not from the economies of production, but rather from control over the channels of distribution. Because the measure of success in cultural industries is based upon the ephemeral interests of the public, there are few formulas which can predict success (Conant, 1960). Faced with the uncertain demands of motion picture audiences, major players in the motion picture industry

have tended towards restrictive trade practices which discourage outsiders (i.e., independent studios) from entering the competitive arena. Major studios in the film industry have sustained control through regulating the availability of products, and controlling the channels of distribution which connect products to consumers (Strick, 1978). The importance of distributive control as the central factor of the Majors domination in the film industry cannot be overstated. As Garnham (1990) warned,

> It is easy to overlook and misunderstand the nature of distribution because to ordinary members of the public (as well as specialist writers on film who should know better), film is mainly associated with the experience of watching films in the cinema (or increasingly on TV) or with all that the word Hollywood represents in popular mythology, the glamour of the stars, big-name directors, flamboyant producers, etc., that surrounds production, while distribution appears to be a mundane and mechanical function of linkage. Nothing could be further from the truth (p.183).

Distributive control by the major studios serves two primary purposes. On a global scale, control over the channels of distribution has allowed each Major to obtain the financial resources necessary to maintain a worldwide distributive network (Garnham, 1990). At the domestic level, control over the channels of distribution serves each Major by reducing the total cost (and liability) of production commensurate to the number of theaters the film is shown. That is, as the total number of domestic theaters (which is only a small percentage of a film's

profit) in which the film is shown increases, the total cost of the production decreases per ticket sold. As a result, production costs are recouped faster, and profits realized more quickly (Guback, 1982). For example, a $60 million major studio production airing in 2,000 theaters with 50 seats per theater sold at a cost of $4.00, aired over 7 days with 6 showings per day, potentially could recoup its production cost in less than 4 weeks. As other forms of exhibition are included (e.g., international release, domestic TV, cable or pay-per-view release, and pre-recorded video cassette sales), the film's profits could double, triple, or even quadruple.

Conversely, an independent production with a negative cost of $2 million airing 7 days, with six showings a day in 13 theaters with 50 seats per theater sold at the cost of $4.00 per ticket would not recoup production costs until the 19th week. It is unlikely that any independent studio would obtain a 19 week release, moreover, unless the independent production is "picked up" by a major distributor for international release or cable rights, the only other outlet to recoup costs would be through videocassette sales.

By controlling the channels of distribution, major studios could afford to make higher priced pictures, pay larger star salaries, and maintain large domestic and

international networks. And, as control over the channels of distribution are expanded, the number of domestic or international film companies which can compete against a major studio decreases. This is because the cost of maintaining such a network becomes sufficiently high to limit competition (Schifrin, 1981; Jowett and Linton, 1989; Garnham, 1990).

Another way major production-distribution studios have sustained industry control has been through reducing the availability of products and acquire films through "negative pick-up" deals. Under these conditions a distributor guarantees to pay a specified amount for distribution rights upon delivery of a completed film by a specific date. If the negative is not delivered on time, the distributor has no obligation, or liability, to distribute the motion picture (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990). By concentrating on negative pick-up deals, major studios can reduce the liabilities of motion picture production (e.g., maintaining studio lots, negotiating star salaries and director fees, or establish shooting schedules). This forces independent production studios to bear the brunt of responsibility. Major production-distribution companies, however, do need to maintain active relationships with exhibitors. As Alan Ladd, Jr., former president of Twentieth Century-Fox (cited in Donahue, 1987) noted,

>When you are involved in a major company like this
>(Fox), you really must supply a minimum of 12 pictures
>a year...you have to feed a distribution system. You
>just can't just back and say, "there are only five
>films that I like this year, and that's all we'll
>make." The company would go broke very quickly
>(p.190).

Table 5 illustrates the majors in-house productions, and
pickups from independent studios from 1980 to 1988.
Since the majors need to release no more than 12 to 15
pictures, they have concentrated on films with minimal
risks, and signed stars and directors with a history of
success (Donahue, 1987). What has resulted, is an
interdependent relationship between the buyer (exhibition
outlets) and the producer/distributor with power situated
in the hands of the major production-distribution studios.

The limited number of major studio motion pictures,
the Major's domination of distribution channels, and the
exhibitor's need to have something to show audiences has
resulted in two types of controlling practices: selective
contract adjustments and blind bidding (Larmett, et. al.,
1978; Jowett and Linton, 1989).

Table 5

U.S. Feature Production and Releases by Majors: 1980-1989

Year	In-House	Pickups	Total
1988	63	44	107
1987	72	60	132
1986	62	47	109
1985	64	31	95
1984	73	40	113
1983	69	44	113
1982	63	52	115
1981	55	58	113
1980	76	40	116

Note. All data exclude made-for-tv features.

Source. Cohn (1988, October 19); Donahue (1987)

Selective Contracts and Blind Bidding

In selective contract adjustments, theaters which cooperate with major studios tend to get preferential rates for certain productions (Jowett and Linton, 1989). In order to obtain such preferred treatment, the theater owner may devote more screen time to a major studio's production and less time to independent or foreign films. A theater chain may also agree to carry all of a major studio's films in order to obtain several blockbuster productions.

The second type of controlling practice is blind bidding. In blind bidding, exhibitors enter into rental agreements with major studios long before a production's actual showing. This has generally occurred with a major studio's blockbuster film but can also occur with "smaller" films which contain popular stars. In order to secure a major studio production a theater owner must bid against other competing theaters. The theater with a successful bid may obtain exclusive or first run rights in that market (Fellman, 1983). To obtain such exclusivity, a theater or chain may bid a longer playing time or a higher rental payment to the distributor. As a result, the movie has a longer run or may play on several screens simultaneously, leaving less time or screen space for independent productions (Fellman, 1983).

A third practice, although not a controlling practice, evident during the 1980's was the timed release of major studio blockbuster films concurrent with the industry's most lucrative seasonal periods (Christmas, Easter, and the summer). This practice has insured widespread attendance and an assured recoup of production costs (Guback, 1982; 1987).

As a result of these practices independent studios have encountered fewer theatrical outlets and loss of the most profitable rental times of the year. In addition to

these direct controlling practices, major studios have
also limited competition by inflating production costs,
offering exorbitant salaries for scripts, stars, and
directors. As Hammer and Murr (1988, June 25) noted,

> To improve the odds of worldwide success, studios are
> ponying up ever larger sums for special effects and a
> handful of stars with global appeal: Eddie Murphy and
> Arnold Schwarzenegger each commanded $9 million to $10
> million for their current films, plus a chunk of the
> gross profits. Hot director Renny Harlin...
> reportedly was offered $3 million to make Gale Force.
> The surge of spending has even benefitted the lowliest
> members of the creative team: scriptwriters (p.50).

While it is important to note that since the early 1920's
stars have played an economic force in the industry,
during the 1980's the amount of money paid to stars
dramatically increased. This in turn limited many
independent companies from using their appearance in film
productions. As noted previously, when one firm in an
oligopoly sets a precedent for an industry, the mutual
interdependency of oligopolistic firms has tended to
require other competing firms to follow those actions.
Those which cannot follow tend to lose strength in the
market. One precedent which major studios set during the
1980's was to increase the cost of film production by
offering tremendous salaries to the industry's most
successful commodity: successful stars, directors, and
producers. This in turn limited direct competition to
only the few (generally competing major studios) who could

match competing prices and conditions.

The Rising Cost of Film Production

The cost of making motion pictures dramatically increased during the 1980's: nearly 150% between 1980 and 1989 (MPAA, 1989 U.S. Economic Review). This increase, however, was not from the direct cost of making motion pictures, but rather from high salaries paid to the creative and artistic personnel of a film. In the past, production and the direct costs of film making have accounted for approximately 5% of the total allocation of monies, while star salaries have accounted for as much as 20% of the total cost of production (Gertner, 1978). By the mid-1980's, five, seven, and even ten million dollars for one star was no longer uncommon for a major studio production. Movie scripts and director salaries averaged one million dollars, though a "hot" director could make as much as 3 times that for one picture (Knowlton, 1988; Hammer and Murr, 1990). These high artistic salaries and inflated overhead costs (which have accounted for an additional 20% of the studio's total allocation of monies) dramatically raised the cost of film production. In 1980, for example, the average cost of a motion picture was $9.3 million. By 1985 average film costs had risen 40% to $16.7 million, and by the end of the decade the average

negative costs of a motion picture had risen to over $23
million (MPAA Economic Review, 1989). Independent
studios, whose total budget averaged $4.4 million (less
than a single star's salary) in 1989 (Graves, 1990), faced
not only restrictions over talent, but also literary
rights, sets, location moves, or any charge which may have
added greatly to costs of production (Edmunds and Strick,
1977). Independents were also limited in theme and format
choices. Large sets, "casts of thousands," and chase
scenes with mass automotive carnage was simply out of the
question. With limited budgets in comparison to the
Majors, independent producers had to look to more
ingenious, or exploitative, means to attract audiences.
The dramatic cost of film production reflected though
enormous star salaries, literary rights, director fees,
focus on computer animation, and large scale disasters
however, suggests two consequences of the Major's
oligopolistic structure: homogeneity of products, and
collusive breakdown (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Phillips,
1975; Gomery, 1989).

Homogeneity of Product

Collectively, a small group of major firms can
successfully bar entry from competing smaller firms by
controlling the channels which link products to audiences.

In the film industry, the major studios' control over domestic and international distribution networks has allowed each major to maintain a sustained growth and dominance. Maintaining large international distribution networks, however, has forced the major studios to focus on safe topics. As a result, they have been less likely to innovate and alter their productions (Peterson and Berger, 1975). While economists such as Shumpeter (1950) note that oligopolists can pass the costs of innovation to the public, the products of competing oligopolists in culture industries (such as television, film, and music) have remained remarkably similar (Steiger, 1952; Peterson and Berger, 1975; and Linton and Jowett, 1989). In the film industry, once a temporary formula for success has been uncovered (the musical, the space adventure, the slash-n-gash film) each studio has attempted to bilk its popularity based upon the uniqueness of each clone over another. The success of <u>Jaws</u> in 1975 spawned a number of sea-creature-gone-mad copycats (<u>Orca</u>, 1977; <u>Piranha</u>, 1978; <u>Jaws II</u>, 1978). The success of <u>Star Wars</u> (1977) resulted in a wave of space adventures (<u>Battle Beyond The Stars</u>, 1989; <u>Battlestar Galactica</u>, 1979; <u>Star Trek: The Motion Picture</u>; 1980). In the horror film, the success of <u>Friday the 13th</u> (1980) resulted in a slash-n-gash cycle which continued to reverberate at the close of 1990.

Collusive Breakdown

Oligopolies are also difficult to sustain because in attempting to garner the largest share of the audience, an oligopolist may attempt to undercut others; this is where collusion breaks down (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Gomery, 1989). As collusion breaks down, an industry may experience lower prices (through price wars), or the addition of more competitors into the industry (Samulson and Nordhaus, 1983). As more sellers enter the market it becomes increasingly difficult for a major firm to maintain prices above costs. As Scherer (1980) noted,

> The coordinating problem increases with the number of firms...[there is] the probability that at least one will be a maverick, pursuing an independent, aggressive pricing policy. And if market shares are sensitive to price differentials, even one such maverick of appreciable size can make it hard for other firms to hold prices...Finally, different sellers are likely to have at least slightly divergent notions about the most advantageous price. Especially with homogeneous products (p.199).

As this competition occurs, and lowered prices promulgates to other fringe firms, major firms may usurp control of an industry through collusive practices bringing a cycle of control full circle. It is this alternating cycle of competition and control which some argue, results in market correction and a consistency of prices over time (Sorokin, 1937; Kavolis, 1968).

In the film industry, however, market correction through alternating cycles of competition and control has

not followed this cyclical pattern. Rather, the film
industry has existed under long periods of control
followed by short spurts of competition (Peterson and
Berger, 1975). However, even these short spurts of
competition have not been grounded in market correction
through breakdowns in collusion, but rather through the
elimination of certain barriers through external actions
(Gans, 1964; Jowett and Linton, 1989; Peterson and Berger,
1975). For example, the open air of competition during
the late 1950's through the mid-1960's was more a result
of the Decrees and television than market adjustments
through collusive breakdowns (Cook, 1981). This was also
the case with competition during the 1980's when video hit
the home market (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990). As long as
major studios have maintained control over the means of
production and channels of distribution, domination of the
industry and the trend towards product homogeneity has
continued (Peterson and Berger, 1975; Gomery, 1989).

Independents V. Majors During the 1980's

For independent film studios competing against the
oligopolistic structure of the major studios, domination
of the film industry and the homogeneity of products exist
as a conundrum. Independent film companies operating
against the major studios have attempted to cater to the

diverse interests of audiences but have faced limited distribution channels. Because major studios have chosen to maximize profits by concentrating on a few blockbuster films, costs of production, star salaries, literary rights and director fees have raised production costs beyond the capability of many low-budget independent producers (Jowett and Linton, 1989). As a result, many independent studios were forced to seek assistance from financial institutions or from major production-distribution corporations, the very companies which they were attempting to compete against.

With such control, it is not surprising that the nine major distribution companies (Columbia, Fox, MGM/UA, Paramount, Universal, Warner Brothers, Buena Vista, Orion, Tri-Star) have averaged 90.5% of all box office dollars and theatrical rentals in the U.S. and Canada between 1970 and 1990 (Standard and Poor's Industry Survey: October, 1990; Variety: January 14, 1991). The actual number of films produced per year conversely, has shifted from major studios to independent studios (Jowett and Linton, 1989; Variety, June 8, 1988). By the end of the 1980's, the situation seemed to mirror that of the majors during Hollywood's golden years, rather than an open market which the Decrees were supposed to foster.

Perhaps more telling of the major studios attempt to dominate the film industry was their reentry into theatrical exhibition, through investments in national theatrical chains and the construction of mulitplex outlets, during the last half of the 1980's. By early 1990, Matsushita (then MCA) owned 50% of Cineplex Odeon, Paramount and Warner Brother were partners in Cineamerica, Columbia owned Loews, Warner Brothers had holdings in HBO and Cinemax, and Paramount also owned the second largest theater chain in Canada (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990; Standard and Poor's Industry Survey: October, 1990). Collectively, these four production-distribution studios had ownership stakes in nearly 2,600 domestic screens, roughly 11% of the nationwide total (Standard and Poor's Industry Survey: October, 1990).

Ostensibly, the entry of major studios into theater ownership might suggest a greater variety of film offerings. The small number of films that the majors had been producing annually would imply that they would have to look beyond their own output to fill the screen time, and thus open the door for more independent or foreign film productions. Theatrical ownership by the majors, however, has not meant a greater choice for the moviegoer nor an increase in the available options for independent productions. Rather, there are now only more locations to

view a limited number of films (Guback, 1987). Analyzing

the film releases during the Christmas 1986 season, Guback

(1987) found that, "the five most widely distributed films

were playing in a third of all theaters in the country

[and] five other pictures were in a quarter of the

theaters"(p.75). In reality, the major's entry into the

exhibition arena has only served to increase their

domination by providing a ready-made market for their film

productions, again usurping vertical integration and

uncontested control of the domestic and international film

industry.

Reducing Uncertainty: Sequels, Stars, and Exploitation

While no formula yet exists which can determine the

success of a film, there are several strategies major and

independent studios have used to increase a film's chance

for success. Sequels of previously successful films have

been one hedge against uncertainty (Cook, 1981). If a

movie is a success, or if it breaks even, there is a

greater chance that the production company will turn out a

part 2, 3, or 4, "ad nauseam." Sequels, in general, are

not as popular as the films they follow, but they can

generate as much as 70% of the original's domestic

theatrical rentals. Tracking 142 sequels released over

the past 25 years, Standard and Poor's found that sequels

averaged $23.5 million, while their predecessors averaged
$32 million (Standard and Poor's Industry Survey: October,
1990).

A second way to reduce the uncertainty of a film's
performance is to recruit artists with previous box office
success. For a studio, a box office star can escalate an
average film into a box office smash, and they are treated
like royalty for their ability to bring profits to a major
studio. Knowlton (Fortune, 1988) provides this account of
the treatment for the favored few in Hollywood,

> Warner spends lavishly to ensure the convenience and
> comfort of top stars, regardless of whether they are
> under contract to the studio. The company's two
> Gulfstream III jets and its IPTN Super Puma helicopter
> regularly transport the likes of Streisand and
> director Steven Spielberg between coasts or to and
> from vacation homes...Such favors help smooth the
> courtship of top entertainers and build good will for
> the studio. Says a producer: One of the smartest
> things Steve Ross ever did was to buy those G III's.
> You cannot put a value on them (p.79).

A third strategy which became a staple of the film
industry since the successful marketing of Jaws (1975),
was a host of marketing strategies (merchandising and
product tie-ins) and saturation advertising through print,
radio, and television. Donahue (1987) suggests that
between 50-60% of the negative costs of a motion picture
is spent on advertising and promotions. By the late
1980's, average advertising costs by a major studio had
risen from $3.54 million in 1980 to $9.92 million in 1990,

an increase of nearly 180% (MPAA, 1990). Many major studio productions also have tie-ins with fast food restaurants, video games, retail outlets, and merchandising paraphernalia (Blum, 1983; Jowett & Linton, 1989).

For independent studios, these boosts to success--star salaries, director costs, literary rights and advertising campaigns--have skyrocketed beyond the total budget of many productions. As Donahue (1987) noted,

> Increased costs of promotion and advertising pictures have hurt independents...Today one must spend more than $1,000,000 to be competitive with the majors and must play the film more than one week to make a profit...Many [independent] films are produced without publicity...thus, they lose much valuable publicity that the majors generate prior to advertising. Among exhibitors, the independents are second priority to the powerful majors. An independent may have a $6 million ad campaign scheduled for an opening of a picture around the country in June, and will be unable to book a theater in New York until August (p.215-216).

But even before an independent producer or director can consider advertising strategies, they face the formidable challenge of obtaining financial backing. Because many independent films are produced by students fresh out of film school or individuals making their first films, few financial institutions have been willing to chance millions of dollars in an uncertain market (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990). Major studios can bring big name stars and well known directors to the film to reduce the

financial risks.

For major production-distribution corporations,
financial backing from national banks and investment
cooperatives have existed for decades (Wasko, 1982).
These financial institutions have historically provided
major studios with the needed capital to produce
blockbuster films, finance distribution systems, and
develop new technologies such as computer enhanced
graphics, blue-matting, and large-scale disasters. For
national banks such as Bank of America, Citicorp, Chase
Manhattan, J.P. Morgan and Company, and a host of others,
investments in major film corporations have situated
financial institutions in a multi-billion dollar industry
(Wasko, 1982). Banks, in general, have extended credit to
only established producers or studios without even
considering newer entries. Those banks which do extend
credit to new or emerging producers or directors, do so
only for those with enough collateral to secure a loan
(Wasko, 1982). For non-established directors or directors
working outside of Hollywood's major studios, financing is
a barrier to competition.

This is not to suggest that banks should open their
vaults to independent studios on the premise that with
proper financing independents could produce "better"
pictures. But, that in the uncertainty of the film

business, bank financing for independent producers was generally based on either the producers own collateral, or the guarantee of a major studio's backing though contractual distribution agreements (Wasko, 1982). This requirement by bankers was indeed quite understandable; they were only interested in establishing risk protection. The requirement of a contractual distribution guarantee by banks, however, placed unrequited power in the hands of the major production-distributors. By denying independent producers any type of support major studios could quite literally exercise complete control. Independents that wished to pursue a project without a major studio's support faced the task of obtaining financial backing through more riskier means.

Pitching a film project to prospective investors was one alternative way independent producers could obtain financial capital. However, this can be a difficult process since the only basis of the investment is the investor's belief that the director can offer a completed project. As Rosen and Hamilton noted in <u>Off Hollywood:</u> <u>The Making and Marketing of Independent Film</u> (1990),

> Low-budget specialty investment...is more akin to high
> risk "play" money-investors with money they can afford
> to gamble assess their opportunity less on
> conservative business terms (e.g., protective
> investments or high return potential) than on
> intrinsic, qualitative factors (e.g., a belief in the
> filmmaker, and excitement about the film, or the
> appeal of being involved in show biz) (p.264).

Rosen and Hamilton (1990) also suggest that such

investments are inextricably linked to the economic

situation of the times. During more prosperous times,

such types of financing tended to be readily available.

During bad economic times investment financing has been

more difficult.

For an independent producers capital financing,

whether through banks or investment pools, was easier to

obtain if a producer had established a record of success

(Wasko, 1982). One way successful independent production

companies (e.g., AIP, New Line Cinema, New World Pictures)

with limited budgets, no stars, and little money for

advertising established a record of success was to rely on

exploitation. As Donahue (1987) noted,

> While most independent distributors remain in business
> to release one picture or for at most a few years, the
> successful companies specialize in a few genres.
> These independents often emphasize a particular genre
> such as horror or youth pictures, and seldom risk
> making a picture outside of the proven formula
> film...AIP built its reputation for financial
> stability through the years by producing and
> distributing low-budget exploitation pictures.
> (p.263, 272).

Successful independents which have relied on exploitative

content to establish a success record during the 1970's

and 1980's, include; AIP[7], Crown International, Motion

Picture Marketing (MPM), New Line, Avco Embassy, Jerry

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[7] AIP was acquired by Filmways Pictures in 1981, and
   changed the name to Orion in 1982.

Gross Organization, and Compass International (Donahue,
1987). Crown International's forte was exploitation
teenage sex comedies (Pom Pom Girls, 1977; My Tudor,
1982), MPM established a successful record with both teen
sexploitation and horror films (Vampire Playgirls, 1980;
Satan's Playthings, 1980; Classroom Teasers, 1981, The
Gates of Hell, 1983). AIP and New Line concentrated on
action-adventure films, but received some of their most
profitable rentals from the horror genre (The Amityville
Horror, 1979; A Nightmare on Elm Street, 1985, 1987, 1988,
1989: Donahue, 1987). Exploitative content, Edmunds and
Strick (1977) suggest, tended to be safe because it
fulfilled the demands of audiences. However they also
noted that, "the matter of whether the film depicts
violence or nonviolence does not appear to be crucial to
the success of the film" (p.84). The fact that genre
films such as horror were produced en masse during the
1980's with a decided slant towards graphic violence
suggests that exploitative content still continued to be a
popular genre format (Carroll, 1990; Waller, 1987).

Exploitative content was not without its consequences.
Studios that wished to use graphic violence to exploit the
primal interests of audiences found their projects
increasingly criticized by social groups, and they faced
the potential stigma of an "X" by the MPAA's
Classification and Rating Administration (CARA).

Code Authorities

As long as motion pictures have caressed the silver screen there has been a struggle between majors, independents, and code authorities over what could be properly shown on the screen (Gardner, 1987). Studios attempting to reduce economic uncertainty have offered audiences sexual and violent titillations with characters enacting the private wishes of the audiences. Conversely, the possibility of certain audience members to mimic the actions of glorified screen characters has led social groups to protest exploitative screenplays (Randall, 1968; Wistrich, 1978; Leyshon, 1981).

In the twenties, local and municipal censorship boards were rampant, exorcising sex and violence out of the silents and talkies. During the thirties and forties the production codes, and the Legion of Decency kept morality in check, and under a tight grip (McGowan, 1965). Since 1968, the film industry's self-appointed Classification And Rating Administration (CARA) has kept tabs on film content under the same vision as previous codes: to protect the youth of America (Randall, 1968; Cook, 1981; Farber, 1972; Valenti, 1983). Like its predecessors, the current ratings system struggled with the fine line between censorship and classification.

Classification since 1968

The MPAA's ability to influence the content of films began on April 22, 1968 (Farber, 1972, Conant, 1960). After years of increasingly liberal production codes resulting from the "miracle" decision, two Supreme Court Decisions were handed down which reversed this process, and solidified the MPAA's role in film censorship/classification (MacGowan, 1965). Each ruling dealt with the continuing struggle between the movie studio's attempt to reduce economic uncertainty by offering the public sex and violence, and the morality of film content upon the eyes of youth.

The first Supreme Court decision Ginsberg v. United States [383 U.S. 463.493, (1968)], established a legal distinction between adult and children's rights. The ruling stipulated that material protecting an adult's right of free speech could still be considered obscene for adolescents. Adult content could be separated from what children could see. This allowed the MPAA to set up a multi-tier system which could classify content without infringing on the 1952, Burstyn V. Wilson decision. It was the second decision, however, which would pave the way for the CARA which was concerned with the content of motion pictures and its effects on youths.

The Supreme Court ruled in Interstate Circuit V. Dallas [366 F.2d 590 (5th Cir. 1968)] that Dallas' classification ordinance was invalid based upon vague production standards. The ruling, not only broke the growing tide of liberal standards, but left open interpretations for a stricter rating and classification system that, with tighter standards, could stand constitutional challenges (Farber, 1972; Randall, 1968). Fearing again the threat of local, municipal and state censorship boards rampant during the first half of the century, the MPAA established a new film classification system six months after the Dallas decision (Farber, 1972; Twitchell, 1989). Jack Valenti (Valenti, 1990, August 5), lamenting about this time, stated,

> When I assumed my post in 1966, two seminal events occurred that challenged not only the movie industry but the national ethic as well. The first was an upheaval in the mores and customs of society. War was grinding on in Vietnam; the streets were alive with rioting; college campuses roiled in rebellion; neighborhood disciplines cracked at the edges...no wonder that the creative film makers strained to be rid of artificial constraints and seethed under a coverlet of what they deemed to be censorship. The second event was a decision by the Supreme Court which said 1) the constitution would not be tormented if children were barred from seeing films that were available to adults, and 2) cities, counties and states had the power to construct local boards that could classify movies and restrict children's viewing. The specter of hundreds of local ratings boards in full jubilant stride was a terrorizing shadow to the movie industry and to me...The ratings have one mission: to offer some cautionary advisory warnings about individual films so that parents can make

decisions about their children's movie going (p.9-10).

Originally, four classifications were devised by the MPAA: G, M (later recoded to GP then again to PG), R, and X (recoded on September 27, 1990 to NC-17).

Films rated G were for general audiences. G films did not contain scenes of nudity, sex, or drug use, nor any violence that would be deemed offensive by parents for younger children. Language could go beyond conversational style, but was devoid of sexual connotations. PG films contained some material which parents might find unsuitable for children. They could contain some profanity, but not in a sexual manner. Some violence or brief nudity could be shown, but the film would still be devoid of explicit presentations. R rated films were adult films with "rough language," harder violence, nudity and lovemaking (but not explicitly shown, as in pornography). Viewers under 17 were required to have an adult accompaniment. X rated films contained adult themes; however, they are not necessarily pornographic or obscene. They might contain an accumulation of brutality, explicit or excessive sex, or excessive or sadistic violence. Their themes may have directly challenged social mores. No one under 17 was admitted (Farber, 1972; Valenti, 1983; Movie Rating System [pamphlet], AMC Theaters; MPAA The Voluntary Movie Rating System: MPAA,

1991). Unlike G, PG, and R ratings, the X category was not copyrighted by the MPAA, thus any filmmaker could impose a self-rated X for their film, a self-selection that many pornographers used and abused with "XXX" classifications. In addition to these four classifications ("XXX" notwithstanding), PG-13 was added in 1984 as a buffer between PG and R. These films contained some scenes of drug abuse, or harsher sexually derived words. Parental guidance was suggested for those under 13, but unlike R and X, there were no enforcements. The last rating change occurred in September, 1990 when X was changed to NC-17. Little in the way of content descriptions between X and NC-17 occurred, but the MPAA did copyright the new rating to avoid the same fate as X.

Together the motion picture rating codes were designed to provide parents with a guideline for children's viewing, each one equal in rank. But at the outset, equal status of the ratings was never the case, particularly among films rated X.

X Marks the Spot

From the start, the X category was, in spite of MPAA's publicity, distinguished from the other three. What separated X-rated films was that they were initially denied the MPAA's seal of approval (Farber, 1972;

Twitchell, 1989). It was, however, the view of the CARA's board members early in its formation that provided the crucial perception of what "X" meant. And, it was this perception that separated the code from the other ratings. Board member Dr. Jacqueline Bouhoutsos appointed in 1968, stated this about what an X meant: "garbage, pictures that shouldn't have been made for anybody, films without any kind of artistic merit, poor taste, disgusting, repulsive" (quoted in Farber, 1972; p.47). Another board member Dr. Arron Stern, appointed in 1971 stated, "The major difference between freedom and perversion is the willingness to pay prices...Make anything you want, but if you make an X picture, be man enough to take your X" (quoted in Farber, p.96). While these were not the views of all board members at that time, nor the views of all board members since, Farber (1972), appointed by the MPAA under a one-year fellowship in 1969, persuasively argued that the clout of these two members during the rating board's infancy influenced the industry's directors and producers and ultimately set implicit rules about the content of films. With the growing wave of sexually explicit films during the 1970's and the self-imposed "XXX," the MPAA's X-rating became synonymous with terms like pornography, sleazy, and disgusting rather than "adult orientated content." As a result, an X-rating

became box office poison (Sklar, 1975; Farber, 1972; Cook,

1981; Twitchell, 1989). Exhibition houses refused to show

any MPAA X-rated film, and distribution companies refused

to pick-up, or distribute any film which was rated X

(Sklar, 1975; Schrader, 1990; Kneale, 1990). Farber

(1972), provided this account for the X:

> It has become common practice for studio contracts
> with producers and directors to include a ratings
> clause requiring the producer or director to bring the
> film in with a particular rating and to make any
> changes required by the Code and Rating Administration
> to meet that rating. These contracts account for much
> of the rating board's power (p. 116).

Such clauses, contract stipulation, and distributor-

exhibitor agreements became so typical that an X-rating

could destroy a widespread theatrical release (Variety,

September 17, 1990:p.10; New York Times, August 5,

1990:p.9; Time, August 27, 1990:p.56).

Even if a producer or distributor wished to release a

film unrated the outlets for generating publicity were

lost because most newspapers and TV stations would not run

advertisements for X-rated or unrated films (Farber, 1972;

Schrader, 1990; Miller, The Atlantic, 1990:p.41-68).

Producers or distributors with an X-rated or unrated film

had no other option but to peddle their film to secondary

theaters or art houses. Though distribution and

production companies could appeal the MPAA's decision to

the Ratings Appeal Board, overturning a rating was akin to

a presidential veto, requiring two-thirds majority to be overruled. Like a presidential veto, often the appeals board (made up of MPAA, NATO-Nation Theater Owners, and IFIDA-Independent Distributors Association members) failed to meet the required majority and the MPAA's original rating was upheld (Valenti, 1983, Kneale, 1990).

Horror Films and Ratings

Since the formation of the rating system in 1968, CARA board members have attempted to grapple with the horror film. In 1979 the board refused to grant George Romero's Dawn of the Dead an R-rating. With a few exceptions (Zombie, 1980; Maniac, 1980; The Evil Dead, 1982; Mutilator, 1984; Rest in Pieces, 1987) the horror film has been an R-rated genre. An examination of horror films released between 1980 and 1989 revealed that horror films which were refused an R-rating, or released unrated, have come solely from independent studios. That is, no major studio has ever released a horror film without a rating, or with a rating higher than an R. Every major studio horror film has been rated either R, PG, or PG-13. What this suggests is that independent productions utilizing graphic violence or sexual content to attract audiences more often found that their films were more likely to receive an X rating, or the threat of an X, than their

major studio counterparts. A 1984 analysis of movie codes over a 16 year period by <u>Variety</u> offered some support to this theory. The investigation found that among 342 X-rated films released between November 1968 and September 1984, major studios received a total of 36 X ratings (28 were received between November 1968 and September 1970). Conversely, independent studios receive 306 X-ratings during the same 16 year period. Independents also received more R-ratings (64% or 1854 films) than the majors (36% or 1030 films) in the same time period (Variety, January 9, 1985: p.22). Table 5 illustrates the rating codes for independent and major studio films over the 14 year period.

These figures suggest one of two conditions: that the MPAA may have stricter standards for independent films, or that the independents indeed are more graphic, violent, or sexually explicit than their major studio counterparts. On ratings and independents, Farber (1972) stated,

> Because of its ties to the studios, the board has always seen itself as working for the industry-and this now means arranging pictures to give a member company the rating it wants whenever possible. If United Artists wants a G rating instead of GP, the board has an obligation to tell UA how to cut the film to get that G. (p.59)

Since the rating systems inception, Jack Valenti has continuously stated that the ratings are only a tool which

Table 6

MPAA Film Ratings: 1968-1984

	Majors				Independents			
Year	G	PG	R	X	G	PG	R	X
1984	3	76	75	0	3	31	106	1
1983	4	93	82	0	8	39	119	-1
1982	5	64	72	1	5	53	108	0
1981	5	63	88	-1	5	45	102	31
1980	10	72	66	0	4	52	85	32
1979	9	89	49	-1	15	63	114	26
1978	14	66	41	-1	25	70	85	15
1977	16	71	31	0	35	81	127	30
1976	24	75	45	4	40	85	179	45
1975	28	68	54	3	28	82	148	14
1974	36	88	55	-1	36	97	177	17
1973	43	112	79	3	42	73	182	17
1972	74	127	51	1	20	104	127	5
1971	60	105	70	3	41	91	100	45
1970	59	109	91	12	31	46	73	22
1969	120	154	8	16	21	18	22	9
Total	510	1432	1030	36	359	1029	1854	306

Note. Rating numbers are for the 11th month of the year to
the 10th month of the following year (e.g. 11/68-10/69,
11/69-10/70, 11/70-10/71, etc.). Negative numbers denote
the rerating and removal of previous X films shifted to
another category. PG-13 was instituted in 1984, figures
are as follows: 13 majors, and 5 independents. Figures
add vertically for each rating category.

Source. Variety, 1988, January 9

parents can use in guiding their children's viewing
habits, and that compliance of the codes is voluntary
(Farber, 1972; Valenti, 1985, January 5; Valenti, 1989,
January, 11; Valenti, 1990, August 5). The way film codes
are structured within the industry does, however, raise
several questions about the objectiveness and fairness of
the MPAA. There appears to be an inherent problem with a
system which has been supported by the very entities which
govern its appearance. This type of system might be
something akin to the domestic auto industry setting
import quotas for foreign cars. Studying the rating
system Twitchell (1989), noted,

> The current ratings system continues the industry's
> history of attempting to gain the largest possible
> audience without offending critics. What separates
> the current system from those in the past is, that it
> is so blatantly self-serving, instead of scaling down
> violence, the industry scales up the ratings (p.185).

A similar point was expressed by Farber in 1972,

> There is a basic problem inherent in the idea of
> industry self-regulation...The people who rate films
> are working for the Motion Picture Association of
> America, which is to say they are working for the nine
> major studios who belong to the Association and whose
> dues (along with the rating fees) help to sustain the
> board (p.19).

What is the cost of joining the MPAA? In 1988 the cost
was an annual "contribution" of $350,000 plus a pro-rated
share of the previous year's domestic theatrical, TV, and
home-video revenues (Hollinger, 1988). Not surprisingly
MPAA members have been the industries largest production

studios (Columbia, MGM, Paramount, Universal, 20th Century-Fox, Warner Brothers): studios which have dominated the film industry since the 1930's. Other MPAA members include the distribution wings of major production studios (Buena Vista, United Artists, Tri-Star, Orion) which have operated as separate entities of the major production studios but share in the major production studio's domination of the film industry.

It is important to note that no studio need join the MPAA, but every film under review for a MPAA rating must pay a rating fee. Rating fees are based on a film company's aggregate gross revenue from the distributor and the negative cost of the film. For companies with an aggregate gross revenue of $5 million or more, films with negative cost between $5 million and $9,999,999 were charged a rating fee of $6,000. With each $5 million increment (e.g., $10 million to $14,999,999, $15 million to $19,999,999, etc.) the fee increased by $1,000. For a film with a negative cost of $50 million or more the rating fee topped off at $15,000.

For companies with aggregate gross revenues from the distributor between $2 and $5 million, films with a negative cost between $500,000 and $999,999 were charged a rating fee of $2,000. With each $500,000 increment the rating fee was increased approximately $250. Films with a

negative cost of $15,000,000 or more paid a fee of $4,000.

For companies with aggregate gross revenues from the distributor less than $2 million, rating fees were sizably reduced. Companies were charged a rating fee of $1,000 for films with a negative cost between $100,000 and $199,999. With each $1 million increment the fee was increased $100. For films with a negative cost of $300,000 or more the rating fee was $1,200 (Classification and Rating Administration, Submittal for Rating form, 1991)

With the widespread use of VCR's during the 1980's, an X-rated film, or film released unrated no longer sounded the death knell for the distributor or producer. An X-rating still meant the loss of ancillary markets (cable, pay-per-view, free TV), which significantly limited a films economic viability. That is, as production-distribution studios expanded their networks into ancillary markets and worldwide channels, domestic theatrical rentals represented a decreasing percentage of gross revenues--from 40% in the late 1970's to 30%-35% by the late 1980's (Donahue, 1987). Conversely, ancillary markets such as foreign theatrical outlets, home video, and cable, network, and Pay-per-view increasingly accounted for the revenues and profits of domestic film productions (15-20%, 30-35%, and 10-15% respectively:

Graves, 1990). David Mount (cited in Natale, 1991) however, noted that as much as 75% to 80% of a film's negative costs can be recouped through worldwide video revenue alone (p.95). Theatrical success, though, was still the most influential factor of a film's reception and value in these ancillary markets.

When a film receives an X-rating, these ancillary markets are lost due to the stigma of an X, or a lack of confidence by major distributors. No matter what the film's praises, in the volatile film industry many distributors believe that it is simply not worth the gamble. Still, the video market which exploded in the 1980's was one venue where independents could recoup the costs of production and cater to selective audiences which demanded sexual or violent explorations--content that major studios could not, or would not, offer.

Video: A Gold Mine for Independents

No other event since the Decrees significantly destabilized the major studio's dominance in the film industry than the development of the camcorder and the Video Cassette Recorder (Rosen & Hamilton, 1990). With the advent of VCR's, a new and demanding movie audience arose. Between 1980 and 1989, VCR households exploded from 1.9 million in 1980, to 62.3 million in 1989, an

increase of 3,265%. During this same period, prerecorded videocassette increased from 3 million in 1980, to 200 million in 1989, an increase of 6,567% (MPAA, U.S. Economic Review, 1989).

The tremendous growth in VCR ownership resulted in an insatiable demand for motion picture products. In response to the video demand, more than 25,000 video rental stores sprang up across the country (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990). Video rental stores allowed the VCR owner to choose from a host of popular titles, genres, lesser known experimental films, foreign films, documentaries, and children's cartoons. No longer was the individual dependent upon the availability of films at the local cinema or cable TV; rather, the individual now had control over a multitude of viewing choices and options. The VCR owner did not have to wait months, or years, before a particular movie aired over cable or free TV, but could go to the corner video store and rent it for the day, or purchase it outright.

For independent studios the video market was a gold mine. Independent studios found their products in high demand as rental stores and retail outlets quickly scrambled to fill their shelves. Independents were not only freed from the rating constraints of the CARA, but were also able to bypass theatrical distribution

constraints by the majors. No longer was there a limited number of theater screens to view a limited number of films, rather, the individual's own TV set became a "mini-screen" expanding the viewing potential from roughly 21,000 theatrical viewing outlets in 1985, to over 23 million VCR households by 1985, and 62.3 million households by 1989.

Horror Movies in the Age of Video

One genre which saw an unprecedented growth in titles was the horror film genre. Although few statistics exist on the number of films prior to 1970, one source, Phil Hardy's (1986) Encyclopedia of Horror Movies, provides the best available information for domestic and international horror films for the genre's early years. A cursory count of 1960's domestic and international horror films placed the figure at around 310. A survey of horror film productions between 1970 and 1987 by Variety (June 8, 1988) placed the count of domestic horror films for the 1970's at 433, with international horror films at 628. From 1980 to 1987, 562 domestic horror films were produced, while international productions decreased to 320 (Variety: June 8, 1988). Porco (1991) found that from 1980 to 1989, 830 horror films were produced. As already noted, the majority of horror films produced between 1980

and 1989 came from independent studios, with much of the
violence undertaken with the air of 'top that' quality
(Waller, 1987). Violence in the horror films of this
period appeared to serve the same function for independent
producers as sex had ten years earlier: to draw the
interests of audiences (Sklar, 1975).

By 1980, the horror genre has been riding the crest of
a ten year cycle that showed no signs of decreasing. In
1980, horror films accounting for nearly half of all
independent films and nearly 21 percent of all film
productions (Variety; June, 1988). Many of the horror
films were slasher productions which attempted to
capitalize on the immense success of John Carpenter's
Halloween (1978)[8] (e.g., Dressed to Kill, 1979; Eyes of a
Stranger, 1980; Fade to Black, 1980; Friday the 13th,
1980; Prom Night, 1980; The Burning, 1981; Happy Birthday
to Me, 1981). By the mid-1980's, the slasher sub-genre
was beginning to show signs of wear, but the genre was in
quite good health. Horror movies had been through some
lull years; in 1982 horror movies accounted for only 12.6
percent of all independent productions, and in 1985 and
1986 they accounted for 16.7 and 16.3 percent of all
productions. But during the last years of the eighties,

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[8] Halloween was reportedly made for $350,000 and has since
grossed over $80 million in world wide sales, making it
among the most profitable films in history (Dika, 1987).

the genre averaged nearly 24% of all independent productions (Cohn, 1988, June 8).

One reason that independent studios seemed to gravitate towards the horror genre, in addition to its popularity and profitability, was that there was little competition from major studios. During the late-1970's and early-1980's, major film studios such as Paramount and Twentieth Century-Fox had their capital tied up in five or six blockbuster films with budgets averaging between four and seven million dollars. Another studio, Columbia, reportedly had all of its capital, twenty million dollars, invested in a single film Close Encounters of the Third Kind (Cook, 1981). With such amounts of money riding on one or two productions, major studios tended to avoid the horror film genre and in particular such ghastly presentations as exploding heads, dismemberments, or graphic bodily violence which could turn away audiences. Such presentations however, were not too reserved for independents, which seemed to thrive on presenting horror audiences with ever increasing heights of gore and bloodshed.

An important point, noted earlier, which appeared to drive independent horror video productions was the closing of the drive-in market. During the 1960's and 1970's drive-ins had been a popular market for independent low-

budget horror productions (Boyle, 1983). Between 1971 and 1980 only 4% of all drive-ins closed (from 3720 in 1971 to 3561 in 1980). However, from 1981 to 1990, 72.3% of all drive-ins had closed down (from 3308 in 1981 to 916 in 1990: MPAA, 1990). As the number of drive-in theaters closed independent and low-budget horror films gravitated to the booming video market.

This it not to suggest that major studios did not produce horror films, but rather that independents produced more horror films with apparent increases in graphic violence. Whether the majors indeed backed off of graphic violence while the independents continued to push the boundaries of acceptability has yet to be assessed. It appears, however, that the major studios needed to concentrate on more generalized, popular productions to maintain larger distribution networks and stay competitive with other major studios. Specialized genres, such as the horror film, could not bring in the necessary profits that other productions (e.g., comedies, dramas) could. Because of this demand on profit-driven productions, such as blockbuster pictures with budgets exceeding $20 million, independents appeared to fill a niche with specialized productions. With smaller budgets and the insatiable demand for graphically violent productions, independent studios could attract enough audiences to recoup negative

film costs while generating a small profit. Though
independent studios most likely knew their productions
would achieve little theatrical distribution, the
burgeoning video market was one avenue where demand for
graphically violent content had yet to be satisfied.

Hypotheses

The major question being addressed in the present
study is whether there is a difference in the level of
graphic violence between major studio horror productions
and independent horror productions produced during the
1980's. Since the mid-1970's, major studios have operated
as a mature oligopoly limiting direct competition by
hording national and international channels of
distribution. The result of this was to limit direct
competition from other competing studios (independents).
Those outside of the oligopolistic structure faced not
only limited channels of distribution, but limited, if
any, profits. As the major studios' domination extended
throughout the 1980's the economic viability of large
independent studios (New Line Cinema, Cannon, Concorde,
and others) as well as single low-budget productions was
threatened. One way independents could compete against
major studios was to concentrate on popular formats (such
as horror) which the majors seemed to avoid.

One popular genre throughout the history of film has been the genre of horror. Horror films have had a record of success by major studios in the 1930's and 1940's, and independents in the 1950's and 1960's. During the 1970's both majors and independents competed for the audiences attention. Major studio horror films were marked by highly-polished screenplays with large budgets and stars. Independent horror films were more rough, with no stars, limited budgets, and plots which seemed to be repetitive of previous successful productions. What the independent horror film could not offer in locations, star names, or story development, it made up for in graphic violence. Successful of independent productions which focused on graphic violence during the late-1970's (<u>Halloween</u>, 1978; <u>Dawn of the Dead</u>, 1979; <u>Friday the 13th</u>, 1980) spurred other independent productions to use increasing amounts of violence. The success of these graphically violent films spurred more, escalating the cycle of violence in the horror genre. This cycle of graphic screen violence, however, had its consequences. The MPAA's CARA began to castigate the depiction of graphic violence in the genre and institute content controls through threats of an X-rating (Waller, 1987; Kapsis, 1982; Barker, 1984). At the same time that the MPAA made a concerted effort to control the type of graphic violence occurring on the

silver screen, a new medium for motion picture viewing appeared to be taking hold: videocassettes.

The video cassette industry offered independent horror productions a chance to continue exploiting graphic violence by releasing unrated, or X-rated versions of motion pictures to a wanting market of "gorehounds." The vast number of video rental stores, video tape clubs, and other outlets (video tapes in record shops, and even grocery stores) allowed independents to recoup production costs and realize a profit. Thus based upon the evidence the following hypotheses are proposed:

H1: The violence in horror movies between 1980 and 1989 will be more explicit among independent studio horror motion pictures than major studio horror movies of the same period.

H2: Independent horror motion pictures will contain a significantly greater number of physically violent actions than major studio horror movie productions.

The hypotheses follow directly from the conditions occurring during the rise of the video cassette industry which allowed independent studios to exploit violence in the video market by offering specialized audiences graphic exploitative violence unmatched by major studio productions. As the number of independents entering the market increased, they appeared to draw audiences into the theater, or to a video tape, by touting more, and more explicit, scenes of graphic violence.

Both hypotheses are also born out of the oligopolistic structure of the film industry which placed control in the hands of the major production-distribution studios. Major studios dominated the channels of distribution, which limited an independent studio's chance to compete in a multi-billion dollar industry. The video industry which blossomed during the 1980's allowed independents to enter an open market with fewer distributive or content constraints.

In addition to the two hypotheses the following research question was proposed which examined the trend of graphic violence over the 10 year period.

R1: How have violent actions within the horror film changed from 1980 to 1989?

As Waller (1987) and others have noted, the trend in graphic violence throughout the eighties occurred with an air of "top that." As independent studios attempted to compete against the majors for the audiences attention, they were also competing against other independent producers. Witness the number of creative and quite unique deaths which occurred in stalker films such as Happy Birthday to Me (1981), Friday the 13th: Part 2, 3, 4 (1981, 1982, 1984), The Mutilator (1985), or the special effect wizardry in films like The Thing (1982), Re-Animator (1985), and The Fly (1986). As techniques and materials (latex, prosthetics, pneumatics, animation,

radio controlled blood pods) became refined they were increasingly used in horror films. Have these advancements in special effects significantly changed the type of violent actions appearing in horror film?

CHAPTER II

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

The purpose of the study was to compare the violent
content in independent studio horror motion pictures from
1980 to 1989, with violent content from major studio
horror movies over the same period.

Graphic Violence-defined

Graphic violence was defined as any visual depiction
of physical force (with or without a weapon) against
another (or self) by a character in a movie (natural or
supernatural, dead or alive, human or otherwise)
intentionally or accidentally inflicting an action against
another's (or self's) will which resulted in pain, death,
or any physical injury. This definition was based on
Gerbner, Gross, Morgan and Signorielli's (1980) definition
of violence which assessed violent content on television.
The same definition was also used by Linton and Jowett
(1976) as the basis for their content analysis of violent
film images for the Canadian Royal Commission on Violence

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in the Communications Industry.

Verbally violent episodes were part of the initial pilot study (Pilot Study #1) based upon Barak (1976) and Leyshon's (1981) definition of violence. There were, however, several difficulties in determining what constituted a verbally violent episode. The measure was dropped from the final study. A description of these difficulties will be discussed later in this chapter.

Based upon Gerbner et. al.'s definition, graphic violence was operationalized as the occurrence of one (or more) of the following conditions: A) Direct physical contact between two or more characters (or in the case of self-mutilation one character) initiated to cause harm. B) An intermediate object used to cause physical harm. This object had to be controlled by the character intending to cause harm (except under circumstances of self-mutilation where the object harmed just one character). Under this condition there need not be direct physical contact. C) Through some supernatural means, such as telepathy, witchcraft, voodoo or other spiritual means. Under this condition the individual causing the harm need not directly touch other character(s), nor use objects to cause physical harm. A violent act, though, must have been intentionally imposed on a character(s) by another character(s).

The first two types of violent actions were derived from the definition of violence already noted. The third category accounted for the types of violent episodes which might occur in a horror film, but were not addressed in other studies. That is, the third condition also accounted for a potentially wide number of anomalous situations unique to the horror genre not addressed by the first two conditions.

Unit of Analysis

The unit of analysis for the study was an episode of violence during a film. An episode of violence was coded from the introduction of the physical action to its cinematic end. In previous studies which have attempted to assess violence in the media, coding individual violent episodes, rather than total films, has been an important factor in determining violence (Linton & Jowett, 1976; Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli, 1980; Leyshon, 1981; Dale, 1935).

Consistent among previous studies of media violence, contact imposed by an initiator on a recipient was the point at which coding an episode started. There have been differences about what constitutes an episode's completion. Leyshon (1981) for example, coded a violent episode from its introduction until its completion

regardless of changes in location, or duration of action between characters. Linton and Jowett (1976) defined an episode's completion when one of the following conditions occurred; the setting changed, time-frame changed, a third party was introduced, or there was a change in the original party (p.567). The completion of a violent act for the present study was closely derived from Linton and Jowett's (1976) study. Linton and Jowett's operational definition was a more rigorous test of violence in film. Their parameters to delineate endings also made the episodes definable and less likely to be ambiguous to coders.

For the present study, a violent episode occurred when one of the already noted conditions of a violent action was met (i.e., physical, object, or supernatural touching) and ended with the occurrence of one of the following conditions: 1) The discontinuation of the violent activity. The violent action stopped for one reason or another (e.g., the character died, passed out, ran away, etc.). 2) A change in location (occurring through cuts, fades or movement to another location (e.g., running into the woods from a house, or into a basement from the kitchen). 3) A change in participants for that scene. If there was no break in the violent activity, a change of location, or a change of characters, the event was coded

until one of these conditions was met, even if several codeable activities occurred in the episode. If several codeable activities occurred during the episode, only the last codeable action was included.

Coding only the last violent act in an episode was directly derived from Linton and Jowett (1976). Although this criterion may have under-represented the actual number of violent actions in violent episodes, this level of analysis provided an adequate measure to determine the episode's levels of explicitness. Initially there was some concern that the number of violent acts within episodes would be problematic. There could be a problem with the coding scheme if multiple acts in a violent episode was a standard. If, for example, three violent acts occurred in one episode only one act would have been counted thus potentially under-representing the violence in horror films and the explicitness of that violence. After coding all 100 films, however, multiple acts within a violent episode occurred only a few times (perhaps a dozen).

In the horror film, violence occurred in a few select ways; through a sudden action (e.g., Jason Vorhees hiding behind a curtain suddenly jumps out and stabs a character), an elongated chase scene (e.g., Michael Myers stabs Laurie in her bedroom. Laurie runs out of the

bedroom to the kitchen, Meyers follows. Laurie stabs Michael in the kitchen, then she runs to the house next door. Michael follows and hits her in the bedroom of the second house, Laurie struggles free, etc..), a change in characters (e.g., another character enters the scene to help a victim), or through chaos (e.g., a group of zombies converge on a group of unsuspecting campers). The two most typical conditions was an unexpected action between an assailant and victim, and an elongated chase scene. Under these conditions the coding scheme was quite adequate to account for the violence.

When a violent action was not so clean (involving multiple characters, or multiple locations) the director typically singled out particular acts of violence between assailants and victims. That is, when a violent action involved groups, the director typically surveyed the action (two groups locked in battle), then focused on specific actions between characters (e.g., one assailant attacks one victim, two assailants attack one victim, one assailant attacks two victims, etc.). Under these conditions, the director rapidly cut to a number of violent actions to show the chaotic nature of the violence, or to show its intensity. When this happened the coding scheme could adequately assess the violence because the participants singled out by the director

usually changed, or the action moved to another location, thus fulfilling the "change in characters" and/or "change of location" requirements for a violent episode. If characters did not change, or the director chose to concentrate only on the two groups locked in battle, the scene was coded as group violence. It must also be noted that cinematically the tension in a film can be heightened through rapid cross-cutting between scenes and characters. Horror films often exploit this rapid cutting between locations, characters, and acts, so much so in fact, that the concern was not under-counting violent acts within a violent episode, but rather accurately coding multiple episodes within a short span of cinematic time.

Type of Violent Action

Type of violent action was defined as the modus operandi the initiator used to physically assault (willingly or unintentionally) another in a violent episode. Two sources provided the basis for the list of actions: the Sourcebook of Criminal Justice Statistics (Flanagan & Maguire, 1990), and Uniform Crime Reports (August 5, 1990). The "Sourcebook" and UCR contained compiled lists of violent actions in various reported crimes, such as; shooting, stabbing, strangulation, hitting with a blunt object, kicking. Two compilation

tapes (<u>Terror In The Aisles</u>, 1984; <u>Terror On Tape</u>, 1985) and ten randomly chosen horror films[9] were also reviewed for the type of actions which were not categorized by the UCR or the U.S. Department of Justice. From this analysis, and the published reports, 27 different types of violent acts were developed. Below are the definitions of each type of violent action. The ordering presented was based upon the researcher's perception of severity to the victim. Such an order was not important to the coding process.

<u>Pushing/Shoving/Throwing</u>: The use of force to move another, or to physically displace another's body.

<u>Slapping</u>: The use of an open hand to strike another forcibly.

<u>Grabbing Body Part</u>: Any forcible attempt to grab part of another's body.

<u>Attacking</u>: The forceful assault of one character against another. This action was not a grab, or bite but rather physical contact which occurred in a groping manner.

<u>Punching</u>: The use of a closed or clenched hand to strike another forcibly.

<u>Kicking</u>: Use of a foot or leg to strike another forcibly.

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[9] The ten films included: <u>Evil Dead II, Waxworks, Texas Chainsaw Massacre II, The Hunger, Maniac, Child's Play, 2000 Maniacs, Vampire Lovers, Hellraiser, Demons</u>.

<u>Hitting with an object</u>: Use of an object to strike another forcibly.

<u>Throwing an object</u>: An object thrown so as to strike another forcibly. In this situation the individual did not have direct contact with the object when the object hit another character(s).

<u>Cutting/Slashing</u>: Breaking open the skin with an object (usually a sharp object such as a knife, or glass). This did not involve actions by which a character(s) plunged an object into the body, but rather an object run across the skin so as to cause the skin to separate.

<u>Burning with Fire</u>: The use of fire to burn or heat the skin.

<u>Burning With Liquid</u>: The use of any non-solid form (such as oil, water, or other substances) to burn, scald, or scar the skin.

<u>Suffocate/Strangulate</u>: Refusal to allow air to a character. This occurred by covering air passages with objects such as pillows, or through strangulation. This however, did not include hanging, nor other actions which may cause the neck to break.

<u>Stabbing</u>: Any object(s) forcibly entered into another's body. This act did not include the use of bullets (as in shooting) nor the use of arrows unless they were physically forced into the character by another (or self).

Chopping/Hacking: The use of an object, in an up-and-down motion, to cut into another (or self). This did not include cutting or slicing which was a side-to-side act, but rather an action designed to chop into a character.

Shooting: The use of a device to propel an object forward and into another's (or self's) body (such as a gun to shoot bullets, a bow to shoot arrows, a slingshot to shoot pellets, or a blow-gun to shoot darts).

Breaking Bones: Any force or action which caused the bones of another (or self) to break.

Rape: The forceful act of sexual intercourse between two persons of the same or different sex. This was different from an attack, but to be coded as a rape there must have been some indication that sexual activity occurred (e.g., naked bodies in pelvic thrusting motion).

Hanging: Any objects placed around the neck so as to cause the body to be hanged by that object.

Bludgeoning: The repeated hitting by one person with any object upon the face, back, or chest area in order to disfigure or mutilate the character(s).

Biting/Tearing Flesh: The teeth of a character(s) are forcibly plunged into the character's body to break the skin. Tearing the flesh included the activity of actually ripping the skin from the muscle and bone. This activity need not be caused specifically by the other's (or self's)

teeth.

Scalping/Skinning: Use of an object to peel off the skin covering the head, or any other area of the body. Skinning could involve as much as the whole body or as little as a small piece of flesh. This act was different from "biting/tearing" of flesh because it involved the use of an object, like a knife, to separate the skin from the muscle and bone.

Bloodsucking: To feed off another character(s) for nourishment or survival.

Crushing: Use of force to compress a character's body or body part.

Drowning: Holding a person under water or some other liquid substance to impede air.

Electrocution: Use of electricity to cause harm, injury, or death.

Dismemberment: The forceful separation of a character's body part from the whole body. This did not involve the accidental dismemberment as a result of flying glass or metal, unless it was a direct result of the initiator's actions. This also did not include decapitation because it is classified separately.

Disembowelment: Use of an object to open and remove the internal organs of another. This act did not include simply cutting or chopping into the mid-section of a

character, but rather opening up the mid-section and removing the innards.

Decapitation: The removal of one's head from the body.

Exploding/Imploding: Any force or action which caused the body or a body part to explode or implode.

Explicitness

Explicitness was defined as, the extent to which an action(s) in a violent episode was shown in the motion picture. Little, if any, information was available concerning the explicitness of violent actions which occurred in motion pictures. Content analyses of sexual behavior occurring on television have attempted to assess a similar concept (Greenberg, Abelman and Neuendorf, 1981; Franzblau, Sprafkin & Rubinstein, 1977). The Greenberg et. al study was an exceptionally good framework on which to base the explicitness of physical violence in horror movies.

Greenberg et.al. (1981) utilized a three-point scale of explicitness which ranged from high explicitness, to low explicitness, to not explicit. According to Greenberg et. at., an intimate sex act shown completely was judged high in physical explicitness. If a sex act was partially shown or "masked in some way" it was judged low in physical explicitness. If no physical act was shown the

act was judged as "absent." From this three-point scale, a four-point coding scheme was adopted for level of explicitness in horror films. A four-point scale, rather than Greenberg et. al.'s three-point scale, was used to account for the differences in content matter and medium examined, quite distinct from sex in daytime TV soap operas. The adapted scale maintained the distinctions of the coding scheme (absent, low, and high) but reclassified the act in physically violent terms.

Level of Explicitness

Based upon Greenberg et.al.'s (1981) definitions of explicitness, a four-point scale of explicitness was adopted to measure violent actions. Categories were: implied action, the introduction of an act, the act completed, and a completed action with gore. The addition of the extremely graphic category (completed with gore) was necessary to determine the types of actions which were completely shown, from those types of actions which were completely shown, but that also included a "gore" effect. It was determined that this 4-point scale would be a simple, but effective, way to code violent episodes.

It is important to note that coding explicit actions could have been approached in several different ways. Alternative measures of explicitness might have been,

comparing the time devoted to the presentation of bloodletting, or comparing the duration of a violent action from introduction to completion (Leyshon, 1981). An even a more subjective evaluation might have been comparing the amount of pain perceived to be inflicted. These alternative coding procedures, however, did not offer the rigor needed for this initial test of explicitness.

An "implied violent action" was defined as an action which was not shown, but appeared to happen based upon sounds off camera, or character movements occurring just before the action happened. This level was derived from Greenberg et.al.'s "absent" category of sexual explicitness, which registered a violent action's occurrence though an action was not seen.

The second level of explicitness was categorized as an "introduced action." This was defined as an action which was initiated, but not completed. This definition was borrowed from Greenberg et.al.'s (1981) criterion of "only partially shown."

The third level of explicitness was categorized as a "completed action." Similar to Greenberg et.al.'s (1981) study, this was an action which was defined by its completion.

The fourth level of explicitness was categorized as "completed plus gore." This was defined as an action which was completed, and which included the director's intention (willful or unintentional) to show the severity or injurious nature of the violent action. This "completion plus gore" was the oft-criticized nature of the horror films of the 1980's which showed excessive or unnecessary graphic bloodshed. It was the excessive nature of the completed action plus gore which appeared to separate independent studios from major studios.

Explicitness-Applied

It is important to contextualize how explicitness operated in the coding process, and to exemplify explicitness of a graphically violent episode. The following descriptions contextualize the four levels of explicitness in a scene from a horror film: a zombie attacking a human.

An implied violent action was defined as an action which was not shown, but appeared to happen based upon sounds off camera, or through character movements occurring just before the action happened. In a zombie film, a zombie lunges towards the neck of a potential victim but just before the actual attack, the scene ends through a cut to another location. It is implied that the

zombie would continue to attack the victim even though
nothing was actually shown. The coder might also hear a
yell or a biting sound which would offer additional
information though the action was not shown. Under these
conditions the episode would be coded as an implied
action.

Introduction of the violent act occurred when a
violent act was initiated, but not completed. Continuing
with the zombie example, if the biting was shown, that is,
the camera showed the zombie's teeth biting the skin, but
then the camera cut to another location, this type of
action would be coded as an introduced violent act. Under
these conditions there is little information known about
the outcome of the action. Perhaps another human shot the
zombie before it completed the act, or the attacked
individual stopped the zombie. The lack of completed
information would make this an introduced act.

The third degree of explicitness, an act completely
shown, included not only the introduction of the violent
action, but the completion of the action as well. That
is, the action was shown in its entirety. In the zombie
scene we would see the actual biting (the teeth biting the
neck) and then the flesh being ripped from the neck.
Under these conditions the coder knows what happened as a
result of the initial lunging toward the human, and the

zombie has completed its action.

The fourth level of a violent action was a complete action <u>and</u> gore. This, fourth level of explicitness, showed all the actions noted in the previous levels, and focused on the effect of the action (i.e., on the after-effects of some violent action). Typically this level involved showing blood, gushing or squirting from an open wound, exposed bone or muscle, or even viscera. If the zombie was shown biting the victim's neck, then skin was torn from the neck, then blood was shown squirted through exposed bone and muscle, this would be coded as an explicit scene.

<u>Coding: Initiator, Recipient, Relationship,</u> <u>Effect, Resistance</u>

In addition to coding the type of physically violent action and the explicitness of an episode, other episode information was collected. These items were derived from studies which have assessed violent actions in movies (Leyshon, 1981; Linton & Jowett, 1976), and measures which have quantified and classified violent actions occurring in society (Flanagan and Mcquire, 1990; <u>F.B.I. Uniform</u> <u>Crime Reports</u>: August 5, 1990). They include: demographic characteristics of the initiator and recipient, the relationship between initiator and recipient, effect of

the violent action, and resistant acts by the initiator.

Demographic characteristics were included to assess differences or similarities between major and independent studios. Demographic information of the initiator, recipient, and relationship between the two was derived from the Greenberg et.al. (1981) study. This study provided a complete list of character types and relationships. Where necessary, additional character classifications unique to the horror film was included for the initiator and recipient that the Greenberg et.al. study did not include (e.g., zombies, monsters, insects, etc.).

In addition to the aforementioned reasons, it is important to understand the context of violent actions and the conditions in which they occurred. Information about the initiator and recipient of violent episodes and there relationship plays a vital role in offering a more complete and comprehensive understanding about the violence in horror films. Moreover, in essays critical of the type of violence in horror films, or characters portrayed in horror films (e.g., Ebert, 1981; Shalit, 1980; Gore, 1987) a few select films (Texas Chainsaw Massacre, 1974; I Spit on Your Grave, 1980; Halloween, 1978; Friday the 13th, 1980) have been used as a representative example of the genre. The initiator,

recipient, and relationship categories were included to offer a comprehensive appraisal of not only what action occurred, but who/what performed the action, who/what were the recipients, and what was the relationship. Communication research has long found that the content of an event is a critical element in understanding and in interpreting action and intent (McQuail, 1987). By coding initiator, receiver, and relationship information some indication of the context of actions is revealed.

Initiator of the Act

The initiator of the action was defined as a character (person, monster, entity) which willfully or accidentally caused physical harm, injury, or death to another (or self) against that character's (or self's) will. When a violent episode occurred the initiator(s) of the physically violent act was determined and coded based upon a prescribed list of character identification tags (a complete list of character identification tags is located in the codebook in Appendix B). Initiator characteristics were broken down into age classifications, sexual characteristics, and human characteristics (e.g., male and female, children, adolescents, and adults). Other character tags included; male and female vampires, demons, zombies. Non-human based forms included; ghosts,

inanimate objects, insects, and possessed objects.

Receiver of the Act

The receiver was defined as a character (person, monster, entity) which, against its will, received physical harm, injury, or death from another's (or self's) willfully perpetrated or accidental action(s). When a violent episode occurred the recipient(s) of the physically violent act was/were determined and coded based upon a prescribed list of character identification tags (a complete list of character identification tags is located in the codebook in Appendix B). Like the initiator, recipient characters were broken down into age classifications, sexual characteristics, and human characteristics (e.g., male and female, children, adolescents, and adults). Other identification tags included; male and female vampires, demons, zombies. Non-human based forms included; ghosts, inanimate objects, insects, and possessed objects.

Relationship

The relationship between character(s) was defined as any association (spouse, co-worker, or relative) which linked the initiator and recipient. When the initiator and the recipient of the act were determined, the

relationship was coded based upon a prescribed classification. The identification tags is located in the codebook in Appendix B. Content-analysis studies which have examined violence in film (Gerbner, et.al. 1980; Linton & Jowett, 1976) have included relational measures as part of an analysis of violent information. As with the information attained concerning the type of violent action, and initiator and recipient information, this category was designed to provide as much information about the violent content for comparative analysis among studio types.

For every violent action coded there was a prescribed relationship ID to be coded, these included family ties (mother, father, brother, sister, daughter, son, wife, husband), links through non-professional relations (girlfriend, boyfriend, friend, acquaintance, enemy), relationships based upon occupation (employer, supervisor, employee, co-worker) and other relationships (religious person, pet).

Effect of the Violent Action

The effect of the violent action was defined as the physical condition of the recipient immediately after the violent action ended. An ID number was assigned for the result of the initiator's action upon the recipient. The

effect of a violent episode was ordered hierarchically, based upon the researcher's perception of increased physical damage to the recipient. Such a hierarchical ordering was not necessary to the coding process, but was done to maintain the consistency of increasing intensity among previous coding categories. These effects included:

Nothing: A physically violent action occurred, but the action did not effect the recipient physically. That is, the recipient showed no effect from the violent action.

Scared/Frightened: The emotional response of fear.

Unconscious/Passed-out: A physical condition (similar in appearance to sleep) in which an individual loses mental capabilities (i.e., consciousness) of the surroundings.

Coma: A condition in which the character has lost the power of thought or voluntary motion.

Wounded/Hurt: A physically violent action which resulted in a cut, bruise, or abrasion to the character's skin. This was not a life-threatening injury.

Badly Injured: A physically violent action which resulted in a serious threat to the character's life if not treated. This effect resulted in blood loss, or bodily injury.

Severely Injured: A physically violent action which would result in death through loss of blood, or other bodily injury.

Dead-Implied: A physically violent action which resulted in the implied death of the character. Death was not explicitly (verbally or non-verbally) stated, however, death was assumed based upon the physical action which had occurred.

Dead-Stated: A physically violent action which resulted in the expressed death of a character. This is not assumed, but through some means (verbal or non-verbal) the character was noted as dead.

Resistance of the Act

Resistance was defined as any willful attempt to stop the continuation of a violent act after it had been initiated. In previous studies of violent content (Linton & Jowett, 1976; Leyshon, 1981; Gerbner et.at., 1980; 1987), a violent action was defined wholly within the context of the initiator of the violent action, with little information about how a recipient responded. A perfunctory examination of violent content in film tends to show that recipients do attempt to fight back in a survival "fight or flight response." The "fight or flight" instinct can cinematically heighten the tension of a film as the struggle between characters develops throughout the film. This has been a common practice in horror film sub-genres like the slasher film (Dika, 1987)

where the main characters ("good" and "evil") lock in
"battle" during the latter half of the film. This
category was constructed because of the simple question:
Does the recipient attempt to fight back when confronted
with a violent episode?

Determining whether the recipient of a violent episode
fought against the initiator, was broken down into two
classifications. The first, was a dichotomous (yes or no)
classification. If the recipient did not fight back, the
next content item was assessed. If the recipient
attempted to fight back, the type of resistance was coded.
Below are the definitions of fight responses:

Yell/Plead to Stop: A verbal request or command directed
at the initiator to cease the action.

Ran Away: A flight response in which the recipient, after
an act was initiated, attempted to physically move away
from the initiator.

Fight Back/Struggle against the initiator: A fight
response in which the recipient attempted to physically
overpower or stop the initiator from continuing the
physically violent act.

Hit/Throw object at initiator: The use of an object by the
recipient to stop the initiator from continuing a
physically violent act.

Cut/Hack/Stab initiator: The use of a sharp object to stop the initiator from continuing a physically violent act.

Shoot at initiator: The use of a device to propel an object forward, such as a gun (to shoot bullets), a bow (to shoot arrows), a slingshot (to shoot pellets) to stop the initiator from continuing a physically violent act.

Burn initiator: The use of fire, or any non-solid form (oil, water, or other substances) to cause the skin of the initiator to burn, scald or scar to stop the initiator from continuing a physically violent act.

Weapon Used

As with the resistance to a violent act, the type of weapon used in a violent episode has received little attention in analyses of violent content in the media. Such reports, however, are a standard form of reporting violent acts in society (e.g., Uniform Crime Reports; U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics of Crime). There was also an implicit assumption that the type of weapon used in a violent episode (e.g., chainsaw, hatchet, surgical equipment) might lend itself to greater explicitness in a graphic depiction. Often people express fear of a slow and torturous death, and the weapon used in the violent action can play on these fears. In order to assess if there were differences among types of weapons by the two

studio types this category was developed. The list of
weapons included:

Gun/Rifle	Electricity
Knife/Kitchen Items/Swords	Stick-like object
Tools (hammer,screwdriver)	Gaseous substance
Fire or burning substance	Heavy equipment (car, van, truck)
Exploding substance (grenades, dynamite)	Lawn Tools
Bow and Arrow	Chain, rope, wire
Car Tools	Axe/ Hatchet
Chainsaw	Surgical Equipment
Brick/rock	

Other Characteristics

In addition to the characteristics which comprised the
violent episode, general information about the horror film
was collected. This information was collected to classify
and categorize each film for later data analysis. The
additional information included the title of film, the
length of film, and the date of the film.

Compiling the Database

As with any analysis of media content the first
difficulty was selecting a sample from the defined
universe. The universe for the present study was defined

as horror films produced by major and independent studios
between 1980 and 1989. There were few statistics
available on the number of films produced for this ten-
year period, thus this procedure was made even more
difficult because a population had to be constructed
before a sample could be drawn. The process of
constructing the population took several phases.

The first step was to determine if such a population
index, or database existed. To this end, initial contacts
to Baseline, a motion-picture-industry-research
organization, and Variety the film industry's weekly
publication, were made. These contacts proved
unsuccessful. Both Baseline and Variety noted that such
an established database did not exist. A Variety
spokesperson, however, noted that a horror genre profile
was constructed in the June 8, 1988 issue of the
publication. The profile contained annual production
rates from 1970 to 1987, but did not separate major studio
productions from independent studio productions. The
report also did not contain the number of domestic horror
films produced for the last two years of the decade. The
chart, however, did provide a basis for the expected
number of annual films.

With the universe defined, and the approximate number
of films to expect determined, the next step was to

construct a database from which a sample could be drawn. Several movie guides and video review sources aimed at the horror-film viewer provided initial information about horror films, (e.g., date of release, distributor/producer). John McCarty's <u>Official Splatter Movie Guide</u> contained approximately 219 horror film entries between 1980 and 1989. A second horror-film review source, <u>The Gore Score</u> (Balun, 1987) offered another 102 productions. <u>The Gore Score</u>, however, did not have distributor or producer information, so it proved inadequate for this project's goal: selecting a sample from major and independent studios.

A third source which yielded the majority of horror films was <u>Videolog</u>, a subscription service for video-store owners. <u>Videolog</u> is a comprehensive video reference guide which contains complete information on over 25,000 video titles (e.g., title, studio, stars, director, MPAA rating, running time, and year of theatrical release). <u>Videolog</u> titles are broken down by genre and cross-referenced by director, and stars. The genre classification proved to be an immeasurable help in compiling the horror database. A copy of <u>Videolog</u>'s titles for the horror genre was obtained directly from the company. Horror-genre video titles were combined with titles from the science-fiction genre (more than 2,100 horror and science fiction titles).

Plot synopses proved helpful in distinguishing horror from science fiction, but there was some concern over the crossover between horror and other genres. As Tudor (1989) noted in an analysis of thematic content from 990 British horror films between 1931 and 1984, up to 20 percent of horror films occupy the boundary between horror and other genres. Some films such as <u>Alien</u> (1979), or <u>The Thing</u> (1982) occupy a position on the fine line between horror and science fiction, others like <u>Fatal Attraction</u> (1987), occupy a position on the fine line between horror and thriller. When such cases arose, titles and synopses were cross-referenced with horror guides, and Prodigy's <u>McGuill Movie Index</u> (to be discussed). There were several cases when this process was conducted. The cross-referencing process was deemed appropriate because no previous database on horror films for this period existed. <u>Videolog</u>'s reference guide yielded 650 titles between 1980 and 1989--nearly 200 of which were repetitive titles from previous indices.

Based upon <u>Variety</u>'s compiled index of horror-film productions, there were still a number of missing titles. In order to complete the database it was necessary to examine the source of the original report: <u>Variety</u>. <u>Variety</u> is the film industry's oldest publication (in press for over 70 years), and it examines virtually every

aspect of the film industry (e.g., Box office reports, independent and major studio projects, film reviews, domestic and international economic information). In May 1990, an analysis of every issue of <u>Variety</u> for horror film information, from the closest issue to January 1, 1980 through the closest issue to December 29, 1989, was undertaken. The analysis of over 500 issues took nearly six months to complete. The periodical library at The Ohio State University provided the majority of the issues. When an issue was missing or not available other libraries (Worthington Public Library, Cleveland Public Library), and a personal collection of back issues filled the gaps.

With the database at approximately 820 horror films, horror films in Prodigy's <u>McGuill Movie Review</u> database were reviewed. The movie review guide contained more than 25,000 feature films from 1919 to 1991. The search yielded an additional number of unique titles. Combining these sources, as well as Phil Hardy's (1986) <u>Encyclopedia Of Horror Films</u>, yielded 830 horror films from 1980 until 1989. Although this may not be the universe of all horror films released in the prescribed period, the database represented the most complete record of horror films released between 1980 and 1989.

That is, any horror film released nationally was accounted for in the horror movie database. Several of the sources used (<u>Videolog</u>, <u>McGuill's Movie Index</u>, <u>Variety</u>) update their files regularly to include both new video releases and past motion pictures. In fact, some companies such as <u>Videolog</u> offering weekly updates of video and motion picture titles. Perhaps an additional 10 or fewer horror films existed which were not included in the horror motion picture database. Most likely these exclusions would have been regional horror films shot in video and released only to local or regional video rental outlets. These isolate (local or regional) titles notwithstanding, the database was the most comprehensive listing of horror films released between 1980 and 1989.

<u>Exclusions of the Database</u>

The database did not include horror films aired on free-tv, or cable-tv unless such films were also released in video format. This may be a potential problem with the defined universe of "horror films between 1980 and 1989." This was not, however, considered a major problem since the content analysis was based upon the opportunity to view the film and code its violent content. If such films were aired only on television there was no possible way to assess violent content through multiple viewings.

An additional limitation was that the database reflected only feature films. The database did not include half-hour or hour-long horror shows such as <u>Friday the 13th: The Series</u> (airing on Fox), or HBO's <u>The Hitchhiker</u>, or <u>Tales of the Crypt</u>, nor horror documentaries such as <u>Terror in the Isles</u> (1984), <u>Terror on Tape</u> (1984), or <u>Dario Argento's World of Horror</u> (1986), <u>Document of the Dead</u> (1989).

<u>Selecting the Sample</u>

With the population complete at 830 feature-length horror movies released between 1980 and 1989, the population was divided into two sub-populations: major studio productions and independent productions. The separation yielded a significant disproportion of film titles. Major studio horror films numbered 179 and independent horror films numbered 651.

In addition to assessing violent content between studio types, the study also sought to analyze any trend of graphic violence which might have increased throughout the 1980's. To assess any potential trend the two populations were stratified into yearly titles (eg. Major-1980, Independent-1980, Major-1981, Independent-1981, Major-1982, Independent-1982, etc...). From this 2 X 10 stratification (Year by Studio) five independent horror

movies and five major studio horror movies were randomly
selected for each year under analysis. The selection
process yielded a total of 100 films: 50 major horror
movies and 50 independent horror movies.

Selecting Horror Movie Titles

To select movie titles from the 2 X 10 stratification,
every film in the database was given a random four-digit
number. Random numbers were generated from Lotus 1-2-3's
random-number option ("RND"). The random numbers were
then matched to a table of random numbers appearing in
Babbie (1983: p.496-497). A random starting point was
chosen from the list of random numbers in Babbie. When
the first three digits in the list matched the first three
digits of a horror movie title, that title was chosen for
inclusion in the analysis. The fourth digit was used to
distinguish repetitive numbers and to prevent choosing two
horror films from one random number. That is, if the
three-digit random number in Babbie (1983) matched two
horror film titles, the fourth number was used to
determine which of the two films would be included. The
number which matched exactly, or closest to the fourth
digit was chosen.

When five titles for a particular studio and year were
selected, the rest of the titles for that year and studio

were eliminated from the selection process. The selection process continued until all 100 films had been selected.

For the movies chosen every effort was made to use that specific horror movie. However, when a film could not be located (though rental outlets, libraries, or personal collections) an alternative film was randomly selected from the year by studio stratification, in the same manner as the original 100 films. Twenty three films were replaced this way. The replacement was necessary because of the unavailability of the originally-selected horror films. The final list of 100 films appears in Appendix C.

Pilot Tests

Two pilot tests were undertaken to determine potential problems with the developed coding instrument.

Pilot Test #1

The goal of the initial pilot study was to assess the reliability of the code book and instrument, and to assess the number and degree of violent acts evident in horror films. In the first pilot, seven randomly-chosen horror films were selected to be coded. It was determined that since each coder must view seven complete films, the content of which at times was very graphic, individuals

who were horror film fans would minimize coding errors.
Unlike the final coding instrument this initial pilot
contained both physical and verbal acts of violent based
upon Leyshon's (1981) and Barak's (1976) definition of
violence.

Using modern communication equipment via computers and
modems, a message was placed on USENET's "Horror" bulletin
board which focused on horror literature and movies. The
initial message solicited persons who were interested in
participating in a study on horror film content.
Interested persons were prompted to return a reply. From
this initial post, 13 replys were received. Additional
correspondence was initiated to determine the coding
experience of the potential participants and their
available time to participate in the study.

Although specific coding experience was limited among
 interested persons (which may account for several
problems to be discussed later) from the initial 13
replies, 4 persons were chosen to participate. One final
post to the 4 participants explained the basis of the
study, including a list of information they would be
receiving. The post concluded with a note cautioning the
individual that the coding would take a good deal of their
time. The participants were asked to return-reply as soon
as possible if there were problems.

None of the participants voiced any concern over these potential problems and with a two week period a packet of 150 coding sheets, 1 code book, 1 crib sheet to facilitate coding, and a list of 7 horror films were sent to each participant. Of the seven films chosen, 4 were independent productions and 3 were mainstream productions. The list of films were: Demons II (1988), Maniac (1981), Cat People (1982), Dreamscape (1984), Warning Sign (1985), Re-Animator (1985), and Child's Play (1988).

Correspondence was maintained through electronic messages to each of the coders once a week. During the two-week coding process an electronic message was received by one of the coders which reported that a medical condition had occurred and he would be unable to code the films. Three coders were left in the analysis. One final message was sent on August 4, 1990 instructing each coder that three weeks had passed and they should finish the coding and send the completed coding sheets as soon as possible.

During the coding period, all seven films were again reviewed and coded for the potential number of violent acts, level of explicitness, initiator information, receiver information, and other aspects of the seven horror films. Upon receipt of the coding packets several problems became apparent. The first problem related to

coding physical versus verbal violence. A second problem related to the number of films actually coded by those solicited. A third problem related to the semantics and layout of the coding sheet.

Problems associated with Pilot #1:

After reviewing the completed coding sheets it became apparent that there was some confusion among the participants when coding verbally violent episodes. This confusion occurred particularly when a verbally violent episode resulted in a physically violent episode. The most typical occasion occurred when one character in a movie was verbally aggressive with another character which resulted in a physical action.

When a verbal episode escalated into a physically violent episode, there was some confusion in determining which character actually initiated the violent action. Moreover, when characters exchanged verbal threats and the verbal violence escalated to physical violence, the coders used the physical action to determine the initiator of the action. In addition to this coding dilemma, coders seemed confused when a verbally violent episode occurred but did not escalate to a physical act. Typically these acts of violence were not coded at all, or were coded only when the verbal threat of violence was too obvious to overlook.

Confusion over whether to code an episode as verbally violent appeared to stem from the vocal inflections, degree of pitch, and non-verbal actions of the initiator. Understandably, when a character yelled, or screamed at another character the action did not indicate a verbally violent episode but may have reflected strong differences of opinion, or an indication of fear. A character also need not scream or yell to threaten another character verbally. There are several instances when a director will have a character threaten another in a low, calm tone (such as Clint Eastwood's famous line "Go ahead kid, make my day"). Under these conditions the verbally threatening action appeared much like a subliminal message, bypassing the coders aural and visual cognitive processes. For example, in one scene from the film Child's Play (1987) a mother scolds her son for apparently lying to a police officer. In the scene, the mother verbally rejects her son's testimony, sending him to his room for lying. Her vocal inflections reflected a verbally violent episode, and her actions furthered that act, but at no point did the mother actually hit the boy. According to the coding procedures, this was a codeable act since the child was rejected by his mother, however, none of the coders coded this scene. Perhaps a mother scolding a son was not perceived as a verbally-aggressive episode, or perhaps the

coders considered it a socially correct action. In any event, the lack of agreement over what constituted a verbally violent episode indicated that changes in the coding procedure were needed.

Coding the verbal and physical violence was further complicated when several actions among different characters occurred simultaneously. That is, the parallel editing process of crosscutting between scenes further complicated the process of determining which character was the initiator of the violent action, and was which the recipient.

Secondly, the initial coding sheet included spaces for individuals to describe both the physical and verbal actions. Coders were instructed to fill out separate sheets for each aggressive action: one code sheet for a physical action and another code sheet for verbal actions. Both sections, however, were filled out when an episode of each type (verbal and physical) violence occurred.

A third problem associated with the pilot centered on the semantics of the coding instrument. Words and phrases on the code sheet appeared to bias the coder's perceptions of who was the initiator or recipient of violent episodes. On the initial coding sheet, the coders were instructed to provide demographic information about the "initiator" and "victim" of the actions. Although this seemed self-

explanatory, a victim was the recipient of a violent action while an initiator initiated the violent action, the coding sheet requested "victim" descriptive codes. As a result, coders consistently coded the "bad/evil" character as the "initiator" of the violent action and the "good/hero" character as the "victim" of the violent action. This occurred even though there were occasions when a "bad/evil" character was the recipient of the violent action (i.e., when the evil character was actually the victim).

One final problem associated with this initial pilot, was the number of films actually coded. Although all coders were aware of the extended time coding the complete films would take, none of the coders actually coded all 7 films. Rather the coders each completed only 3 of the 7 films, with only two films (Child's Play and Cat People) coded by more than one participant.

Reviewing the coding sheets it was observed that when the same scenes were coded, the descriptions of the verbal and physical violent actions appeared consistent. The greatest concern was the inconsistency in the type of violent actions (verbal and physical) coded per episode and, an inconsistency in the number of violent actions per film. The highest degree of inconsistency, however, occurred when coders coded (or did not code) scenes of

verbal violence which resulted in physical violence.

As a result of these inconsistencies, several adjustments to the coding sheet and the coding process were made.

Pilot Study II:

While the initial pilot study did yield some evidence for coding violent episodes in horror movies, the inconsistency among violent episodes did call for some adjustments in the coding process.

Since the focus of the larger study was to determine the number of physically violent episodes per horror film, and the explicitness of those episodes, the verbal indicator of violence was dropped. Violent episodes were defined wholly within a physical context. By dropping the verbally violent episodes the physical indicator of violence became more parsimonious. Coding a violent action occurred when character(s) in the movie initiated a physically violent action towards another character(s) with the intent to cause harm.

The coding instrument was also changed to reflect a more objective viewing of the horror film. "Victim" information on the coding instrument was changed to "recipient." To further minimize inconsistencies, the level of explicitness was changed from a four-point scale

(0-indicating an implied action to 3-indicating an explicit action) to cue words ("Implied action," "Introduced action," "Completed action," "Completed action with gore"). Furthermore, rather than requiring individuals to view completed films, a videotape of 3 to 5 random violent scenes from 10 different horror movies was constructed.

The videotape, along with the revised coding book, description of the study, a crib sheet, and a film clip explanation sheet was sent to two new coders. In addition, each of the coders was given a verbal tutoring session with several examples of how violent actions were to be viewed and coded. Problems with coding multiple scenes of violence and degrees of explicitness were verbally discussed with the coder. Each coder was then given an opportunity to ask questions. The second pilot packets were distributed during the third week of September, 1990.

Results:

Results of the second pilot were more promising than the first pilot. Of the 76 possible physically actions from the 10 films, 72 and 67 physically violent actions were coded by two coders with complete agreement in 61 of the violent actions. Using Holsti's (1969) formula for

intercoder reliability, the intercoder reliability for the second pilot study was .85. A more complete description of the results is given in Appendix A.

Coders Coding Horror Films-The Present Study

Violent episodes occurring during the film were coded in consecutive order. The coding started with 01, for the first violent episode in the movie, and then progressed upwards (without duplication) to the last violent episode in the motion picture. For each movie, the coding restarted at 01 and progressed consecutively.

Two coders (one male and one female) participated in the coding process. The two coders did not code all 100 films, but 10 randomly selected horror films based upon a 2 X 5 stratification of studio type by year. That is, years were collapsed into two-year increments (1980-1981, 1982-1983, 1984-1985, 1986-1987, 1988-1989) to avoid coding several films from a few years.

Before the actual coding, the coders underwent a series of training exercises. These training exercises sought to develop the coder's critical eye for differing levels of explicitness, the distinction between character types, and potential weapons. This "critical eye" was a necessary development to maintain some objectivity over the entertainment nature of the films. There was an

expressed concern that problems associated with the previous pilot studies did not occur. The two coders chosen were not familiar with the genre (though each had seen a number of horror films, along with other genre films). Both coders were not "horror fans," nor were they versed in differing aspects of cinematic techniques, such as parallel editing, cuts, fades, etc. All practice sessions included discussions of potential responses, and (at times) frame-by-frame analyses of violent actions.

Frame-by-frame analyses were important to the coder's development of a critical eye. This was done to avoid becoming too involved in the film and potentially missing a codeable episode. Inevitably such an involvement would occur, thus it was important for the coder to be aware when such cases arose.

When coders felt sufficiently competent with the coding system they then watched and coded a complete horror film (The Prince of Darkness, 1988). During the film, the coders were able to stop and review the action as many times as they needed. Stopping and reviewing the scene was encouraged at both the training session, and during the actual coding. Following the practice film, responses were discussed and compared. The comparison of responses was sufficient with a reliability of 95%.

Over the next several weeks the coders independently coded the ten random horror films. Scott's Pi for intercoder reliability was used to assess the overall intercoder reliability for the two coders (discussed in the results section).

Coding Violent Acts-The Present Study

Coding the 100 horror films was undertaken by the researcher over a six week period from March until April, 1991. To avoid any biases all films were randomly selected and viewed in no particular order, with no more than two films having the same year. This separation was done to avoid a potential researcher bias based upon the hypothesis of an increase in violence throughout the 1980's.

In addition, no more than three films contained the same studio type. This separation was also necessary to avoid a research bias based upon the hypotheses which prescribed differences in the display of graphic violence by studio type. To avoid becoming sensitized, bored, or eager to complete the coding process and potentially miss-coding or even missing violent episodes, only up to five horror films were viewed each day. At times, more than five films were coded, but an effort was made to maintain this schedule.

Immediately after an episode concluded, the movie was paused and the coding sheet completed. The violent episode was then reviewed again after the coding sheet was completed. This was done to make sure the coding sheet was complete and that the responses were appropriate.

The coding process took nearly six weeks to complete. No time frame was determined before the coding started, nor were there prescribed time allotments per movie. On average, coding each movie took about twice its original length (e.g., a two hour film took an average of 4 to 5 hours to code).

After all 100 films were coded, the research included an "intra-coder check." Ten films were randomly chosen and viewed again with the completed coding sheets. This intra-coder check was done to avoid any biases which might have occurred during the coding process. During the intra-coder check process no new coding sheets were completed. That is, the coding sheet was only reviewed for its accuracy.

Among the ten films reviewed only a few cases raised some questions about the initial coding (approximately 10-15 cases). In most cases, questions about the initial coding were directed at coding explicitness (particularly between implied actions and introduced actions). After some thought, it was decided that the original coding

would stand. The small number of cases where the initial codes were questioned did not pose a threat to the accuracy of the data.

Procedures for statistical analysis

In the age of computers, it is the researcher's belief that these machines can provide immeasurable service in the collection and analysis of information. The computer can be utilized as a data collection tool that can minimize potential errors resulting from retyping information from a paper code sheet into a computer database. This potential for error increases as the number of coding sheets increases. During the latter half of the 1980's questionnaires and surveys entered directly onto the computer played an increasing role in avoiding error. Stanford Research Institute is only one of a growing number of research organizations which has utilized computers to collect large amounts of data and minimize human error.

The present study chose to minimize this potential human error by entering coded information directly into a developed database. It is important to note, that the two coders who coded the ten, randomly-selected films completed paper coding sheets. This information then was entered into the computer by the researcher. During the

coding by the researcher, however, this was not the case. A coding sheet, the same in every way as the paper coding sheet, was created on a database (dBase) program. This electronic coding sheet contained the same items as the paper coding sheet. When a violent episode was completed, the electronic coding sheet was completed and a new (blank) electronic sheet was readied for the next violent episode.

When coding the sample population was completed, the information was converted from dBase's format to ASCII (American standard and code index) format. The ASCII format was then imported into a mainframe computer and then into an SPSSx program where crosstabulations and frequencies were computed. Frequencies for items on the coding sheet were computed using the SPSSx FREQUENCY command.

For the first hypothesis crosstabs (using SPSSx's CROSSTAB command) were run based upon a tabulation of "studio type by level of explicitness." For the longitudinal analysis, crosstabs were run on a "year by explicitness" analysis for each studio. For the second hypothesis Chi square analysis determined the differences between the total number of violent episodes by studio type. Crosstabs were also run based upon an 2 X 10 tabulation of violent episodes per year by studio type.

CHAPTER III

RESULTS

Intercoder Reliability

As noted in the methodology section, two coders
participated in the coding process. The two coders
assessed violent content of 10 randomly selected horror
movies from the sample of 100 horror motion pictures.
Since all three coders (researcher included) coded the
same ten movies, the intercoder reliability reported was
derived from all three coders. It is important to note
that this was the first time each coder (including the
researcher) had seen the films in their entirety and thus
the expectations were equal among the coders. Analyses of
the intercoder reliability for the two coders (not
including the researcher) for every item on the coding
sheet were greater (i.e., higher in reliability) than the
reliability of all three coders together, thus the figures
shown (in table 7) for all three coders was reported.

The reliability of the coding instrument was
determined by Scott's Pi formula for intercoder
reliability. This was derived from the percent of

Table 7

Intercoder Reliability

Variable	Reliability
Type of Violent Action	.93
Initiator of Violent Action	.93
Recipient of Violent Action	.92
Relation of Initiator to Recipient	.88
Level of Explicitness	.96
Effect of the Action	.90
Resistance by the Recipient	.92
How did the Recipient Resist	.91
Weapon Used	.96
Average	.92

Note. Reliability was computed using Scotts Pi (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983; p.154)

observed cases minus the percent expected, this figure was then divided by the percent expected. Scott's Pi was chosen over other formulas for reliability (e.g., Holsti, 1969) because Scotts' Pi considers the number of coder agreements which might occur based upon the number of categories in the analysis (Wimmer and Dominick, 1983)

Overall, the intercoder reliability of all three coders was .92. The reliability of "relationship of initiator to recipient" was the lowest at .88, while two dependent measure were coded at a reliability of .96 ("weapon used" and, "level of explicitness").

As noted in the previous section, several content categories were derived from existing studies which attempted to assess similar types of content information (Linton & Jowett, 1976; Gerbner, 1980; Greenburg, Abelman & Neuendorf, 1981). Initially there was some concern over the dependent measures that were adjusted to include specific characteristics unique to the horror film. To minimize any potential error from these adjustments during the construction of the codebook, every effort was made to maintain the existing categories. Additional categories were adding only when those characteristics unique to the horror film were not addressed in the original categories.

In addition to the type of content information which was derived from previous studies, two additional content

categories developed wholly within the present study
("weapon used," and "resistance") also achieved a high
reliability (.96 and .91 respectively).

Violent Acts

The analysis of 100 films yielded 1684 codeable
violent episodes, an average of 16.8 violent episodes per
film. There was, however, a large range of violent
episodes per film. For example, <u>The Shining</u> (1980)
contained the least number of violent episodes (3), while
<u>Thou Shall Not Kill...Except</u>, (1985) contained the
greatest number of violent episodes (44). It is
interesting to note that <u>The Shining</u> was a major studio
production, while <u>Thou Shall Not Kill....Except</u> was an
independent studio production.

In a similar study of violent content in motion
pictures, Leyshon (1981) reported an average of 11 violent
episodes in 70 motion pictures. Leyshon's analysis
though, was not genre specific and included motion
pictures from all ratings (G, PG, R, X). Among films
rated R, Leyshon reported an average of 20 violent
episodes per film. And as Waller (1987) has noted, the
horror genre has been primarily an R category. Drawing
from Leyshon's results, and Waller's comments the average
number of violent episodes in the present study, 16.8,

appeared to be a consistent finding.

Types of Violent Actions

Table 8 rank ordered the types of violent actions appearing in violent episodes, from their greatest frequency across all 100 films, to the least in occurrence. In order to increase the readability of these statistics, several of the categories described in the methodology section were combined based upon the perceived similarity of the type of violent action (e.g., "burning with fire" was combined with "burning with liquid").

Among the 1684 codeable violent episodes, shooting was the most common type of violent action, occurring in 16% of all actions. Stabbings occurred in 10.5% of all violent episodes. Forcefully grabbing at another's body accounting for 10.3% of all violent actions. Actions which involved cutting, slashing, and chopping behavior accounted for 9.1% of all violent episodes. Physically violent Acts which included slapping, kicking or punching accounted for 8.5% of all violent episodes. Together these five categories of violent actions comprised the majority, 54.6%, of violent actions in the sample population. Apparent in Table 8 is the wide range of

Table 8

Type of Violent Action: Major and Independent Studios

Violent Action	% of Total
Shooting	16.2%
Stabbing	10.5%
Grabbing body	10.3%
Cutting/Slashing/Chopping	9.1%
Slapping/Kicking/Punching	8.5%
Hitting w/ object	7.8%
Pushing//Throwing	6.5%
Biting/Tearing Flesh	5.8%
Attacking	5.0%
Suffocate/Strangulate	4.5%
Burning with fire/liquid	4.2%
Dismember/Disembowel/Decapitation	3.6%
Crushing	2.7%
Exploding/Imploding	1.7%
Other	3.7%
Total	100.1%
	N=1684

violent actions used in horror films. It is also interesting to note that no single type of action accounted for the vast majority.

Interestingly, the types of violent actions which have been perceived as unique to the horror genre, and the actions singled out by critics (Shalit, 1980; Gore, 1987; Berger, 1989) accounted for the fewest violent episodes.

Biting or tearing the flesh accounted for 5.8% of all violent episodes. Dismemberments, disembowelments, or decapitations accounted for 3.6% of all physically violent acts, and exploding or imploding body parts accounted for 1.7%.

Initiator of the Violent Episode

Initiators of violent episodes were rank ordered in Table 9. The overwhelming majority of the violent actions were committed by adult males over 20, accounting for nearly half of all initiators, 46%. Adult females over 20 were the second most likely initiators, accounting for nearly 10% of all violent episodes. Teen males and females accounted for the third highest percentage of all initiators, 8.0%. Human Groups (males only, females only, and mixed gender) accounted for an additional 6.2% of all initiators. Together, human categories accounted for 70.9% of all initiators. Male and female children comprised the smallest percentage of human initiators at 0.8%.

The largest percentage of non-human initiators was the monster classification which consisted of gothic creatures (e.g., Frankenstein, Werewolf, Dracula) as well as other creatures (e.g., The Blob). Collectively these "monsters"

Table 9

Initiator of the Action: Major and Independent Studios

Initiator	% of Total
Adult-Male (20+)	46.0%
Adult-Female (20+)	9.9%
Teen-Male/Female (13-20)	8.0%
Monsters	7.4%
Male/Female Human group	6.2%
Demons/Ghosts/Devil/Witch	5.7%
Animals/Bugs/Insects	4.6%
Zombie-Male/Female	3.3%
Inanimate/possessed objects	2.3%
Possessed-Male/female	1.7%
Zombie group (male/female/mix)	1.2%
Child-Male/Female (Under 12)	0.8%
Monster group (male/female/mix)	0.3%
Other	2.7%
Total	100.1%
	N=1684

accounted for 7.4% of all initiators. Supernatural characters (e.g., ghosts, demons, devils, witches) accounted for 5.7% of all initiators. Other characters unique to the horror film, such as Zombies, accounted for 3.3% of all initiators, with insects or animals accounting for 4.6% of all initiators.

The strong showing of males as initiators of violent episodes was consistent with previous literature assessing violent content in the media (Linton & Jowett, 1976; Gerbner, et.al., 1980, Sherman & Dominick, 1986). It is perhaps more interesting to note that other characters, monsters, demons, zombies, did not account for a greater percentage of all initiators.

Recipient of a Violent Act

The recipients of violent episodes were rank ordered in Table 10. Adult males over 20 were the recipients of violent actions in 44% of all violent episodes. Adult females over 20 accounting for the next largest recipient group at 19.4%. Teen males and females accounted for the third largest percentage of all recipients, 12.3%. Human Groups (male only, females only, and mixed gender) accounted for an additional 3.8% of all recipients. As with initiators, humans accounted for the majority of all recipients. Collectively, human categories accounted for 81.3% of all recipients. Male and female children comprised the smallest percentage of human recipients at 1.8%.

Table 10

Recipient of the Action: Major and Independent Studios

Recipient	% of Total
Adult-Male (20+)	44.0%
Adult-Female (20+)	19.4%
Teen-Male/Female (13-20)	12.3%
Monster	4.1%
Male/Female Human group	3.8%
Zombie group(male/female/mix)	3.5%
Demons/Ghosts/Devil/Witch	2.6%
Animals	2.6%
Zombie-Male/Female	2.2%
Child-Male/Female (Under 12)	1.8%
Possessed Male/female	1.5%
Monster/Zombie group (male/female/mix)	1.0%
Other	1.3%
Total	100.1%
	N=1684

The largest percentage of a non-human recipients was the Zombie group (3.5%), with Monsters (Frankenstein, Dracula, Werewolf) the next largest recipient group at 4.1%. The findings here indicate that males were the recipient (as well as initiator) of more violent actions than any other category. However, females were more likely to be a recipient than an initiator of a violent

episode. This finding is consistent with previous research on violent content in the media which has noted that females, more so than males, are more likely to be victims than perpetrators (Gerbner et.at., 1980; 1987; Sherman & Dominick, 1986).

Relationships

The relationship between the initiator of the violent action and the recipient of the act were rank ordered in Table 11. In nearly 60% of the violent episodes (58.5%) the initiator of the violent action was unknown to the recipient. In 17% of all violent episodes the initiator and the recipient were friends or acquaintances, and in 10.3% of the violent episodes the initiator and recipient were enemies. In 4% of the violent episodes the initiator was an immediate family member to the recipient (mother, father, sister, wife, husband, brother, etc..). Other relatives accounted for only .8% of the violent episodes.

Table 11

Relation of the Initiator to the Recipient

Relation	% of Total
Stranger	58.5%
Friend/Acquaintance	17.0%
Enemies	10.3%
Immediate Family	4.0%
Employer/Employee/Co-worker	2.4%
Girlfriend/Boyfriend	0.9%
Other Relative	0.8%
Professional/Religious	0.6%
Other	5.6%
Total	100.1%
	N=1684

Effect of the Violent Action

Table 12 rank ordered the effect of the violent episodes. In 45.7% of all violent episodes the effect of an action resulted in the death (either implied or expressed) of the recipient. In 30.4% of all violent episodes there was either no effect upon the recipient, or the action frightened the recipient with no direct harm to the body (17% and 13% respectfully). In 9.3% of all violent episodes, the physically violent action wounding the recipient.

Table 12

Effect of the Action: Major and Independent Studios

Effect	% of Total
Dead	26.6%
Implied Dead	19.1%
Nothing	17.5%
Scared/Frightened	12.9%
Wounded	9.3%
Pass-out/Unconscious/Coma	4.9%
Badly/Severely Injured	4.8%
Other	4.9%
Total	100.0%
	N=1684

Resistance

Table 13 rank ordered the type of action a recipient undertook when resisting a violent action. In 39.7% of all violent episodes a recipient resisted an initiator's attack. That is, of the total number of violent episodes (1684) a recipient resisted an initiator's attack in only 669 cases. In 49.9% of all resisted acts, the recipient struggled or fought back against the initiator. In 19.7%

Table 13

Resistance of the Violent Action By the Recipient

Effect	% of Total
Fight Back/ Struggle	49.9%
Run Away	19.7%
Yell to Stop	13.3%
Shoot/Hit/Burn/Stab initiator	16.0%
Other	1.0%
Total	99.9%
	N=669

of the episodes, the recipient ran away from the initiator. In 13.3% of all resistant acts, the recipient yelled for the initiator to stop. In 16% of all resistance acts the recipient shot, stabbed, hit, or burned the initiator of the violent episode.

Weapon Used

Table 14 rank ordered the type of weapons used in violent episodes. Firearms (e.g., handgun, rifle, machinegun, etc..) were used most often by initiators. Use of firearms occurred in 18.4% of all physically violent

Table 14

Weapon used by Initiator: Major and Independent Studios

Weapon	% of Total
No Weapon	44.1%
Firearm	18.4%
Knife/Sword/Arrow	12.4%
Tools/Stick like objects	6.9%
Fire/Liquid/Exploding Substance	4.6%
Heavy Equipment (Car, Truck)	1.7%
Other	11.8%
Total	99.9%
	N=1684

episodes. Knives, arrows, or sharpened objects were used
by an initiator in 12.4% of all violent episodes. In 6.9%
of all coded violent episodes, a stick-like object (4.9%),
or a type of hardware (hammer, screwdriver, wrench: 2.0%)
was used. Fire was used as a weapon in 3.4% of all
episodes, with some type of burning substance, other than
fire, in 1.2% episodes. In 44.1% of all codeable violent
episodes, no weapon was used. These were
typically hands used to punch, slap, or (sometimes)
strangulate, and feet to kick.

It is interesting to note that weapons perceived to be a staple of the horror genre (e.g., axes or chainsaws) were the weapons least used. Chainsaws accounted for .5% of all weapons used in physically violent episodes. Axes or hatchets were used in 2.5% of all physically violent episodes. Rope, chain, or wire were used as a weapon in 1.4% of all physically violent episodes.

Explicitness by Studio Type

Hypothesis one proposed that independent studio horror movies from 1980-1989 would be more explicit than their major studio counterparts. Table 15, illustrates the level of explicitness by studio type. There was a significant difference between each level of explicitness for each studio type (Chi square=109.59, p <.001).

Major-studio horror movies showed a significantly greater number of implied actions than independent horror movies (Chi square=7.61, p<.01). There was also a significantly greater number of introduced actions shown by major-studio horror movies than independent-studio horror movies (Chi Square=16.68; p<.01). Conversely, independent studios horror movies showed a significantly more number of completed actions than major studios (chi square=5.17, p<.05), and a significantly more number of completed actions with gore (Chi square=80.02, p<.001).

Table 15

Percentage of Explicit Episodes by Major and
Independent Studios

Studio Type	Implied Action	Introduced Action	Completed Action	Completed With Gore
Major Studio n=765	6.0 a	25.2 a	58.7 a	10.1 a
Independ. Studio n=919	3.2 b	16.2 b	50.5 b	30.1 b
Total(n) N=1684	75	342	913	354

Chi Square = 109.59   DF = 3

*p<.001.

Note. Reading down, cells with no letter in common are

significant at the .05 level. Chi square analyses for

studio type by level of explicitness were: Implied Action

by Studio type (Chi sq.=7.61, df=1; p<.01); Introduced

Action by Studio (Chi sq.=16.68, df=1; p<.01);

Completed Action by Studio (Chi sq.=5.17, df=1; p<.001);

Completed Action with Gore by Studio type (Chi Sq.=80.02,

df=1; p<.001).

What these findings indicate are that, for the sample population, major studios tended to show implied, or introduced actions. Independent-studio horror movies tended to show more completed actions and completed actions with gore. Based upon these findings, hypothesis one was supported.

Level of Explicitness by Year for Studio Types

In addition to the hypothesized differences between studio types and level of explicitness, it was believed that the level of explicitness in independent horror movies increase between 1980 and 1989. This was based upon two conditions evident in the 1980's; an increase in the number of in-home viewing options which allowed independent studios to cater to audiences which wanted violent graphic bloodshed, and the lack of content controls in video which provided independent studios with an outlet for more graphic motion pictures.

Table 16 illustrates the level of explicitness for independent-studio horror motion pictures from 1980 to 1989. As Table 16 indicates there was no significant trend which developed among levels of explicitness over the 10-year period for independent horror movies. That

Table 16

Percentage of Explicit Episodes per Year for Independent Studio Horror Films

Independent Studio	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
Implied Action	0.10 a	0.14 a	0.07 a	0.03 a	0.28 a	0.07 a	0.07 a	0.10 a	0.03 a	0.10 a	n=29
Introduced Action	0.09 a	0.13 a	0.07 a	0.07 a	0.07 a	0.13 a	0.11 a	0.11 a	0.14 a	0.07 a	n=149
Completed Action	0.11 a	0.13 a	0.09 a	0.06 a	0.11 a	0.11 a	0.08 a	0.11 a	0.10 a	0.10 a	n=465
Completed Action and Gore	0.12 a	0.06 a	0.10 a	0.11 a	0.12 a	0.12 a	0.11 a	0.10 a	0.09 a	0.06 a	n=276

Chi Sq. = 38.31   DF= 27 p>.05

Note. Cell comparisons for level of explicitness are as follows:

Implied Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 9.82, DF=9; p>.05)

Introduced Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 7.28, DF =9; p>.05)

Completed Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 6.42, DF=9; p>.05)

Completed Action + by Year (Chi Sq. = 14.81, DF = 9; p>.05)

is, completed actions and completed actions with gore did
not increase over the 10-year period. In fact, the number
of graphically violent actions with gore actually
decreased during the latter half of the decade. The
number of completed actions maintained a constant level.
The greatest variation on a year-by-year basis was among
implied actions which ranged from a high of .28 of all
implied actions in 1984, to a low of .03 in 1983. Figure
1 graphically illustrates the four levels of explicitness
for independent studio horror movies from 1980 to 1989.

Table 17 illustrates the level of explicitness for
major studio horror productions from 1980 to 1989. As
Table 17 indicates there was an overall significance
between level of explicitness and year (Chi square= 86.96,
p<.001). There was, however, no apparent trend for any
particular level of explicitness.

The individual levels of explicitness indicated that
there was a significant variation among implied, and
introduced actions by year. Chi square analysis of
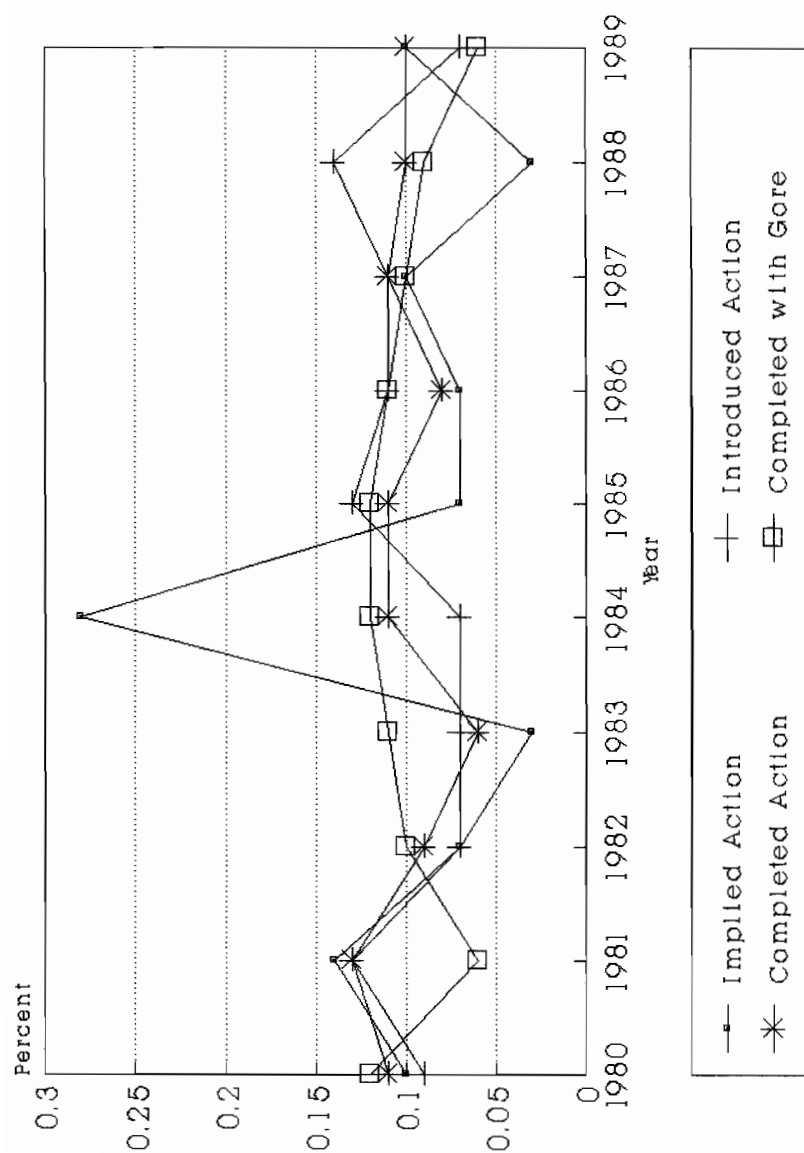
Figure 1: Percentage of Explicit Episodes per Year for Independent Studio Horror Productions

Table 17

Percentage of Explicit Episodes per Year for Major Studio Horror Films

Studio Major	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
Implied Action	0.15 a	0.13 a	0.02 b	0.07 a	0.13 a	0.24 a	0.02 a	0.13 a	0.04 a	0.07 a	n=46
Introduced Action	0.09 a	0.11 a	0.17 b	0.09 a	0.05 a	0.10 a	0.17 a	0.10 a	0.04 b	0.08 a	n=193
Completed Action	0.09 a	0.07 a	0.07 a	0.05 a	0.10 a	0.16 a	0.13 a	0.09 a	0.13 a	0.11 a	n=449
Completed Action and Gore	0.08 a	0.09 a	0.12 a	0.13 a	0.03 a	0.09 a	0.16 a	0.08 a	0.12 a	0.12 a	n=77

Chi Sq. = 86.96   DF= 27 p<.001

Note. Cell comparisons for level of explicitness are as follows

Implied Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 27.61, DF=9; p<.05)

Introduced Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 29.14, DF =9; p<.05)

Completed Action by Year (Chi Sq. = 15.51, DF=9; p>.05)

Completed Action with Gore by Year (Chi Sq. = 15.61, DF = 9; p>.05)

implied action by year reached a significant level (Chi
square=27.61, df=9; p.<.05), but this significance was not
a function of time. This was also the case for introduced
action by year (Chi square=29.14, df=9; p.<.05).
Differences between the tabulations of "completed actions"
by year did not reach a significant level, nor were there
significant differences among yearly tabulations of
"completed actions with gore." Figure 2 graphically
illustrates the percentages of levels of explicitness for
the 10-year period. As Figure 2 illustrates there was no
trend towards increasing levels of graphic violence. In
fact, completed actions, and completed actions with gore
were just as likely to occur in 1980 as in 1989.

Based upon these findings the level of explicitness
between studio types which was significant, was not a
result of any apparent trend of graphic violence but
rather appeared to be related to studio type.

Violence by Studio Types

The second hypothesis proposed that independent horror
movies would contain a greater number of violent episodes
than major studio horror movies.

Major studios accounted for 45.6% of the 1684 coded
violent episodes, while independent studios accounted for
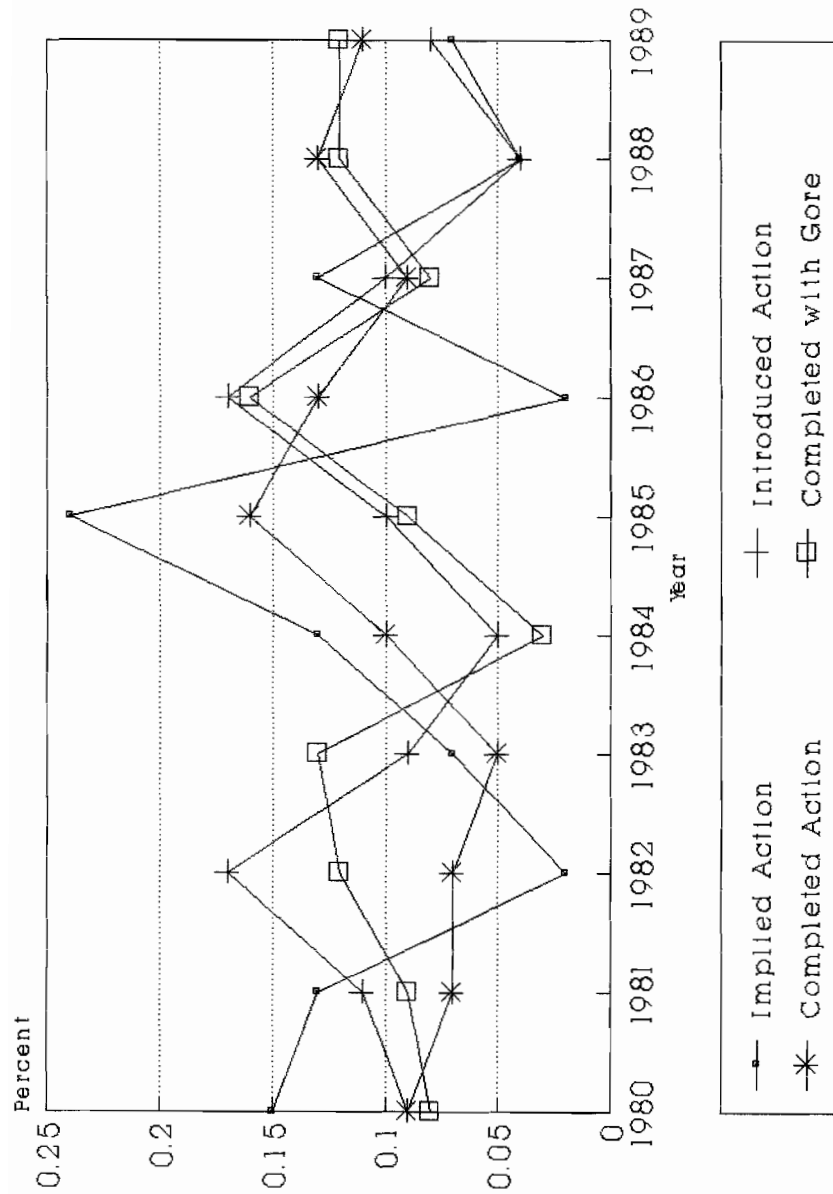
Percent

Figure 2: Percentage of Explicit Episodes per Year

for Major Studio Horror Productions

54.6% of all coded episodes. Chi square analysis revealed that there was a significant difference between the number of violent actions for major and independent horror movies (chi Square=14.08; df=1, p<.001). Based on the findings, hypothesis two was supported.

A year-by-year analysis of violent actions between independent and major studio horror films attempted to determine if there was an increase in the number of violent actions throughout the decade. Table 18 illustrates the crosstabulation of violent actions for each year by studio type. As table 18 shows, from 1980 to 1989, only two years yielded significant differences for violent episodes between major studio and independent horror films: 1984 (Chi square=4.25; df=1; p<.05) and 1986 (chi square=5.24; df=1; p<.05). As with the level of explicitness, there was evidence to support the hypothesis that independent horror films contained a significantly greater number of violent actions than their major-studio counterparts. There was, however, no difference on a year-by-year basis.

Table 18

Percentage of Violent Acts Per Year by Studio Type

STUDIO TYPE	1980	1981	1982	1983	1984	1985	1986	1987	1988	1989	Total
Major	8.9 a	8.5 a	9.9 a	7.2 a	8.2 a	14.1 a	13.5 a	9.5 a	10.2 a	9.9 a	n=765
Independen	11.0 a	10.8 a	8.8 a	7.4 a	11.4 b	11.4 a	9.7 b	10.7 a	10.2 a	8.6 a	n=919
Total	10.0	9.7	9.3	7.3	10.0	12.6	11.4	10.2	10.2	9.2	N=1684

CHI SQUARE = 17.8 DF = 9   p value = 0.039

Note: Reading down, cells with no letter in common differ at p<.05.

Violence: 1980-1989

A research question was presented to assess how
violent actions were portrayed within the horror film from
1980-1989. Figure 3 illustrates the six most prevalent
types of violent actions occurring in horror films
(Pushing/Shoving, Grabbing at body parts, Hitting with an
object, Cutting/Slashing, Stabbing, and Shooting).
Although there appears to be certain interactions between
studio type and type of violent action, in general there
appeared to be no discernable pattern among the type of
violent actions. This is not to suggest that major and
independent studios were expected to diverge in the types
of violent actions on a year-by-year basis, but that one
studio type might have concentrated on a particular type
of violent action over others. As the graphs indicate,
the type of violent action within violent episodes did not
appear to be linked within a longitudinal framework, nor
do the most prevalent types of violent actions appear to
be linked to one particular studio type. Perhaps it is
more interesting to note that, with the exception of
cutting/slashing violent actions, no one studio accounted
for the majority of a particular type of violent actions
throughout the 10-year period. That is, violent actions
varied not only on a yearly basis, but also on a studio
basis.
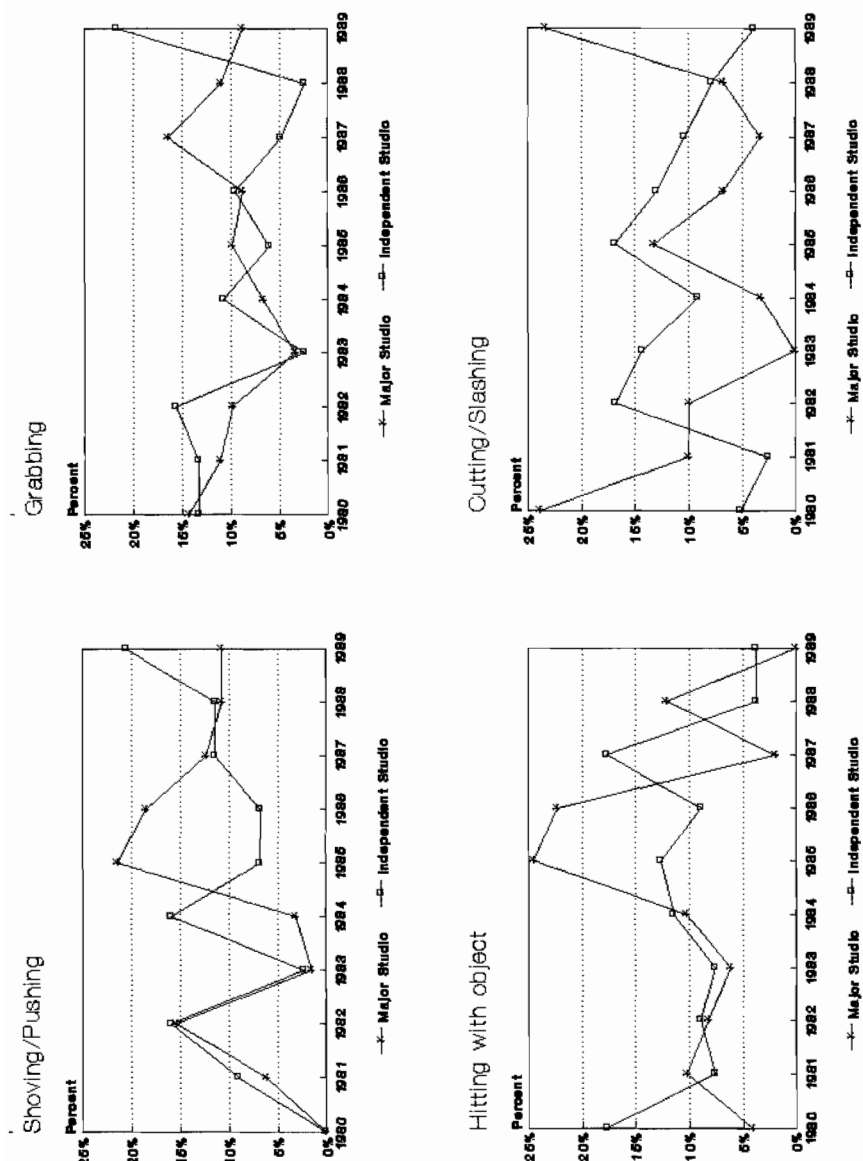
Figure 3: Type of Violent Action per Year
for Major and Independent Studios

Figure 3 (Continued): Type of Violent Action per Year

Stabbing

Shooting
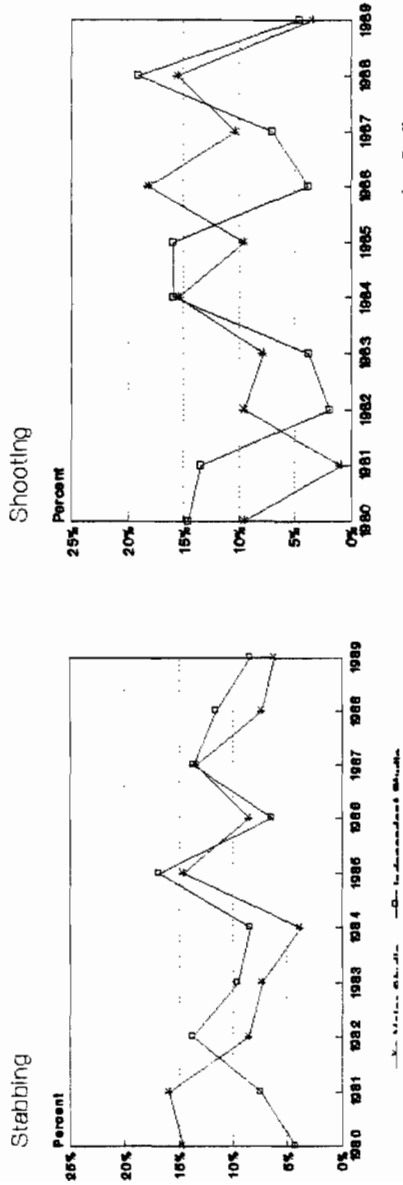
CHAPTER IV

DISCUSSION

Introduction

The objective of the present study was to compare
graphic violence between major and independent studio
horror movies. The level of graphic violence between
major and independent studio productions was examined, and
the number of violent episodes between studio types
compared.

The hypotheses were derived from the motion picture
industry's oligopolistic structure which appeared to
stifle independent studios by controlling the channels of
distribution. During the 1980's, however, the video
industry boomed, opening new channels for in-home viewing
which allowed independent studios to compete for an
audience's attention. One way independent studios
appeared to draw audiences was through increasingly
graphic violence.

The most important overall finding was that there were
significant differences between major and independent
studios between the level of graphic violence and the

number of violent episodes. Independent-studio horror movies contained not only more violent acts, but were also more explicit than major-studio horror movies. There was, however, no yearly trend of increasing graphic violence or number of violent episodes. That is, levels of graphic violence did not appear to increase through out the decade for either major studios or independent studios.

In addition to the two hypotheses, one research question attempted to assess any longitudinal differences among the types of violent actions portrayed in horror motion pictures. The six most prevalent type of violent actions were charted to see if there were differences between major and independent studios. The comparison yielded no significant differences between studio types.

Level of Explicitness

Consistent with the first hypothesis, independent studio horror movies were more graphic overall than major studio horror film productions. While each category yielded significant differences between studio types, the greatest difference between major and independent studios was among the most graphically violent actions: completed action with gore. The level of explicitness for each studio type, however, remained relatively stable (i.e., not statistically significant) over the ten year period.

What this suggests, is that no single year accounted for more violent actions than any other year. That is, graphically violent episodes remained as probable in occurrence in 1980 as in 1989. In fact, the analysis indicated a trend towards decreased graphic violence among independent horror movies. Reasons for this are best explained within the oligopolistic structure of the film industry.

The video market underwent several changes throughout the eighties. During the early part of the decade (1980 to 1983), major studios concentrated their efforts on cable, leaving the video cassette market open (Nevius, 1991). Between 1980 and 1983 prerecorded videocassette sales increased from 3 to 9.6 million. Cable penetration in 1980, was already at 19.6 million, and by 1983 basic cable households increased to 32.1 million (Motion Picture Association of America, 1990). During this same time, the horror genre was enjoying an unprecedented popularity. The modern slasher sub-genre beginning with <u>Halloween</u> (1978), gained a boost from the immense success of <u>Friday the 13th</u> (1980). This resulted in a plethora of copycat films. The three year period, 1980-1983 contained the highest number of horror films (207) than any other time in the genre's past (Cohn, 1988, June 8).

Between 1983 and 1986, prerecorded video cassettes sales surged 91.4%: VCR penetration expanded 81.8%. Basic cable households, however, expanded only by 31%, from 32.1 million to 46.6 million (Motion Picture Association of America, 1990). The video industry's growth captured the eye of the major studios. With the expansion of the home video market, major studios moved aggressively into the video market, setting up video divisions and began to release their own films to video. The majors began to flood the market with existing titles, and set release patterns for video less than a year after their theatrical release (Head and Sterling, 1987). As major production-distribution studios entered the video market, independent studios competed heavily for the growing market demand. These middle years were highly competitive between majors and independents. The data on graphic violence during this time indicated that these years were among the highest years of explicit graphic violence for independent studios. During this time, "completed actions" and "completed actions with gore" steadily increased among major and independent horror productions. By 1984, slasher movies had saturated the market and there was a noticeable decline in number of horror titles as well as film rentals. As Donahue (1987) noted,

> In 1983 domestic film rentals for horror films dropped
> more than 50 percent from the previous year. It was
> the lowest performance since 1976 and reduced the
> combined market share by science fiction and horror
> films to approximately one-third of all picture's
> business. Of the fifty-one new horror releases in
> 1983, twenty-seven were shelved pictures filmed in
> 1981 or earlier (p.271).

A similar, but more optimistic, point was also noted by

Waller (1987),

> While the box-office revenues and the production of
> horror films seem to have ebbed in 1983-84, the genre
> has by no means disappeared. In addition to the
> primetime television horror...1985-86 has seen a
> steady stream of sequels...as well as several
> variations on the "little" monsters of Gremlins...more
> adaptations of Steven King's fiction...and, proof
> positive of the genre's continued vitality and
> heterogeneity (p.2).

During the latter years of the decade, major studios

gained control of the videocassette industry through

distributive control by setting up video distribution

networks, video divisions of the major studios, and

recruiting many of the best independent producers (Nevius,

1991; Rosen & Hamilton, 1990). This period also showed an

increase in the number and dominance of video chains over

mom-and-pop specialty stores. As Rosen and Hamilton

(1990) noted, these chains provided more efficient

ordering, turns-per-cassette, and use of co-op advertising

with major studios (p.271). Video chains focused on

depth-of-copy (number of copies of hits) rather than

breadth-of-copy (number of titles carried) as a purchasing

criterion (Rosen and Hamilton, 1990). By the mid-1980's,

video outlets had established large inventories resulting
in a demand slowdown and less interest in low-budget and
lesser quality "B" videos during the latter half of the
decade.   The tightening marketplace began to take its
toll on independents as several independent distributors
(Libra, Cinema Five) and dozens of small studios went out
of business.   Following the market crash of 1987, capital
financing of films through loans or investment pools
became more difficult to secure (Rosen and Hamilton,
1990).   With more risk in the market, independent horror
films perhaps avoided specialized graphic content to
gather the widest possible audience and recoup production
costs as immediately as possible.

An additional consideration for the lack of any
sustained increase in explicit graphic violence resulting
from the expanding video demand might be explained by
examining normalized channels of film exhibition.   That
is, although video distribution was an independent studios
best chance to realize a profit, many independent studios
and distributors still sought to obtain a theatrical
release for their products.   If this were the case, the
structure of the film industry's coding entity (the MPAA)
could have required cuts and edits of graphically violent
content to obtain an R rating.   Waller (1987) for example,
noted that during the early 1980's, the MPAA's CARA made a

concerted effort to decrease the tendency towards graphic
violence. Others, such as Anthony Timpone, editor of
Gorezone, and Chas Balun (Horror Holocaust, 1986; The Gore
score, 1987) noted the lack of graphic violence and
"splatter" in horror films. Both Timpone and Balun
attributed the lack of graphic violence to the MPAA's
threats of an X-rating (Timpone, 1988, November; 1989,
September; Balun, 1989, January; 1989, July; 1990, March).
If independent producers were shooting for a theatrical
release, rather than a direct-to-video release, such a
crackdown on graphic violence would appear to influence
directors or producers in their choices of graphic
content.

One final consideration not based upon the
oligopolistic structure of the film industry was simply
that a few excessively graphic titles released throughout
the decade captured the attention of media critics and
media researchers, who over-represented the nature of
explicitness of violent actions in the horror film. There
is little doubt that violence and graphic bloodshed
increased during the 1980's as compared to films of the
1970's, 1960's, and 1950's (Waller, 1987; Sobchack, 1982;
Sanoff, 1986; Bronson and Hawkins, 1984). There is also
little doubt that the video market pumped new blood into
the horror genre, allowing exploitation producers, with

little or no theatrical release, an opportunity to realize
profits for movies. It appears, however, that a few
excessively graphic violent films such as Maniac (1980),
Evil Dead (1982), Day of the Dead (1985), and Re-Animator
(1985) captured the attention of media critics, who
created the impression that the horror genre itself was a
graphically violent one. There were few films in the
sample which focused exclusively on completed actions with
gore, rather violent episodes in horror movies were
diverse in explicitness. For example, between 1980 and
1989, there were only two years (1983 and 1982) where
independent productions focusing on "completed actions
with gore" were the highest percentage of explicit
actions. Among major studio horror productions,
"completed actions with gore" were at the highest
percentage in 1983 and 1989. Horror movies with explicit
actions seem to have been made throughout the decade for a
few "gorehounds" in order to make a profit, but these
exploitation films appeared to be the minority, not the
majority, of horror films produced.

Violent Acts in Horror Films

There was a significantly greater number of violent
actions in independent studio horror films than there were
in major studio horror films but only when examined as a

complete entity. The most important thing to note about the number of violent acts shown on a year-by-year basis, was that only 2 of the 10 years contained a significantly different number of violent acts. Otherwise, there were no significant differences among the number of violent actions occurring over the 10-year period (1980-1989).

The type of violent actions appearing in horror films also showed no distinct separation between major studios and independent studios. It was believed that advances in special effects would allow directors and producers, especially among independent productions, to explore greater visceral violent actions, such as decapitations, eviscerations, or dismemberments. What the results suggested, however, was that there were a small number of violent actions which appeared consistent in horror films regardless of studio type. Violent actions perceived to be common in horror films (e.g., exploding body parts, decapitations, eviscerations, and dismemberments) only accounted for a small percentage of all violent actions: less than one case per film.

In order to explain this, the dynamics of film as a business must be taken into account. The high cost of film production throughout the 1980's necessitated independent producers and directors to seek outside financial assistance. Financial assistance typically came

from two sources: banks or distribution sectors of major

production-distribution companies. These companies also

controlled the channels of distribution. When major

studios wholly or largely financed independent productions

they also typically distributed the film. But there is

also a sector of independent productions in which the

majors "pick-up" for distribution after the film's

completion, or after production finances have been raised.

Irrespective of how the independent motion picture was

financed, when a major distribution company took control

of a film's distribution, it also gained a vested interest

in the film's ability to turn a profit (Garnham, 1990).

Films with offensive content (such as eviscerations, or

dismemberments) however, limit the number of interested

viewers to a minority of "gore seekers" which in turn

limit the potential return of the film. As the number of

excessively violent actions were toned down, the film's

potential appeal attained a wider range of acceptability,

and hence profitability. Distribution companies which had

large financial stakes in a film may have required or

influenced the director to tone down content of the film

deemed too graphic or deviant in order to obtain a wider

acceptability. A director or producer faced with the

option of maintaining his "artistic" integrity and piles

of production costs, or reducing the violence of a film

and gain a national distribution, may have been less willing to take a chance in the presentation of violence and focus on more "common" forms of violence in order to attain a wide distribution for the film. Writing in the Harvard Business Review, Strauss (1930) noted this important point concerning widespread distribution in the motion picture industry,

> Once the original expenditures connected with the production of the picture have been incurred, no further costs other than those of distribution and exploitation must be met.....When a producer of motion pictures therefore increases his customers from any given film from two thousand theaters to four thousand theaters of the same grade, he may increase his net revenue a dozen times or more...It follows that in the motion picture industry, more perhaps than in any other, there is no factor so important as wide distribution.

With the Major's dominance over the channels of distribution and entry in theatrical exhibition, Strauss' point was as pertinent during the 1980's as it was 50 years earlier.

Another, more simple, explanation for the limited number of deviant actions throughout the 1980's was that these types of violent actions worked in a horror film only up to a point. The key to horror, or any genre for that matter, is that it must be grounded in some entertainment value to be viable in the market place. When a film ceases to hold any entertainment value for the movie-going public, it may become painful to watch. A

film based on the most gruesome types of violent actions shown in their entirety would cease to become entertaining, and like a clinical presentation of an autopsy, distressing to the viewer. A film which explored every dismemberment or decapitation would also interest only a few gorehounds, so few in numbers as to assure its loss in the theatrical and video tape market.

Even before entering the theatrical market, however, such a film would have been rated X by the MPAA and lose any potential for a national theatrical release and the more important ancillary markets. Whatever the movie theater's role in the overall profit of a film, the movie house is still considered a primary test of a film's potential as a financial success (Guback, 1982). A strong showing at the ticket counter opens up doors for other means of exhibition, such as pay-per-view, cable TV, and prerecorded video tape sales. Because of the MPAA's control over rating codes, and implied or written contracts which limit X-rated films from being theatrically distributed, such graphic violence would have been toned down in order to obtain an R-rating. Instances of horror films which were toned down by editing scenes of graphic violence abound. For example, a sampling of horror films in 1988 which were edited based upon MPAA recommendations in order to receive a theatrical R-rating

included <u>Friday the 13th, Part VII</u> (1988), <u>Bad Dreams</u> (1988), <u>Brain Damage</u> (1988), <u>Phantasm II</u> (1988), and <u>Waxworks</u> (1988: Timpone, 1988, November).

One line of research which might circumvent this problem as well as the erratic trend in explicitness, would be to analyze horror films released with an MPAA rating compared to horror films released unrated. Many unrated versions of theatrical edited movies are available though video retailers or can be ordered from specialized independent video distributors. The advantage of this would be to examine and compare how influential the CARA board was in censoring violence as well as graphically violent content.

Viewing Horror Films and the Conditions for Pleasure

The approach to the present study was not qualitative in nature, however, after viewing over 100 horror films the issue of horror as a pleasurable experience should be addressed.

Behind a curtain of stars, publicity campaigns, and special effects; underneath all that is "Hollywood," all that the cinema can offer a viewer is an illusion, an experience, or a promise of pleasure (Giles, 1984). When attending the theater, we do not purchase a film, or even a theater seat. We temporarily rent the space in the

theater seat in the hopes of being entertained by the
images that travel across the screen. Audience members,
however, do not enter a theater without expectations about
a film. Advertisements, film reviews, and even word of
mouth inform the viewer about what to expect. While the
spectator may not be aware of the entire story,
characters, or certain plot twists, there is an
expectation that the movie will be at least a pleasurable
experience. From this perspective, the pleasure of horror
is no different from that of any other genre. Approaching
the horror film, the viewer enters with perceived
expectations about what emotions or feelings will be
experienced. As these feelings are experienced, their
pleasure is heightened to the extent that the illusion is
satisfied (that is, the continuity of the film works
effortlessly for the viewer). It is, therefore, not
seeing a vivisection or a decapitation that adds to the
excitement (i.e. pleasure) of the viewing, but rather all
that precedes the final coup de grace. Like a roller
coaster with twists and turns, dips and drops, the
pleasure of horror is its multiple hills and twists, which
surprise or shock the viewer throughout the film.

One way the intensity of horror has been escalated is
though blocking the viewer's vision (Giles, 1984). In
film, horror or otherwise, the director, by virtue of the

medium, can place the viewer in any number of perspectives (depending upon the angle, camera position, location, or focus). The spectator may take the role of key character, overseer, victim of the act, or equal participant. It is this voyeuristic/participant quality that simultaneously draws the participant into the action and helps tell the story. Central to following the plot of the story and the character's role in it is the ability to see actions occurring on the screen, or in the case of horror films, the lack of vision over events which occur. In Halloween II (1981), the spectator knows where Michael Meyers is unbeknownst to Laurie (Jamie Lee Curtis), or other characters. As Meyers stalks his victims, the spectators have information which the character is lacking; this is what heightens the terror. The spectator knows something is about to happen but not how or when. In the horror documentary, Terror in the Aisles (1984), director Alfred Hitchcock noted,

> To get real suspense you must let the audience have information. Now, let's take the old-fashioned bomb theory. You and I are sitting talking about baseball, we're talking for 5 minutes. Suddenly a bomb goes off. The audience has a 10 second terrible shock. Now, lets take the same situation. Tell the audience at the beginning that under the table is a bomb, and show it to them, there's a bomb, and it is going to go off in five minutes, and we talk baseball. What is the audience going to be doing? They are saying don't talk about baseball there's a bomb under there, get rid of it...but they can't jump out of their seats up onto the screen and grab hold of the bomb and throw it down.

When an action is taken from the initiator's point-of-view (POV) we are drawn into the action. As these POV shots are pieced together in counterpoint with shots from the victim's perspective, the dance between initiator and recipient begins. As elements of tension are added (sound, information unknown by the recipient, mise-en-scene), the dance escalates.

Horror presentations represented though scopophilic or blocked vision can also take on a fetish quality for the viewer. The greater the taunting and lack of delivery (ie, seeing the presentation of an action), the more intense the viewer's need to see the action (Giles, 1984). But it has been suggested that blocked vision can also protect the viewer from the excessiveness of a traumatic vision; in a sense, inoculating the viewer to accept a later full vision (Giles, 1984). It is, however, this lack of vision or scopophilia during the dance between initiator and recipient which further adds to the terror experienced.

In the first chapter it was suggested that modern horror films were different from those of the past by the way violence was portrayed on the screen. Violence today is shown in full front rather than behind a closed door, or just off screen. Because violence is shown in full front to the viewer, the expectations of violence can

heighten the terror level of a film. Some research has supported the condition that forewarning an individual about a scary event can heighten the individual's frightened responses to a film clip (Cantor, Ziemke and Sparks, 1984). In other words, the imagination of violence can, with appropriate cues, be more terrifying than that which is actually shown. However, if the expectations of violence are not fulfilled the experience may not be frightening.

Suggestions for Future Research

Aside from the suggestions for further research already noted, there are other recommendations which might enhance further studies in this area. Horror films could be broken down into sub-genre categories (monster, zombie, supernatural, psycho) and analyzed for graphic content and levels of explicitness. The benefit of such a segmentation would be twofold. First, the additional stratification could assist in determining if there were differences in violent actions among particular sub-genres. Such a study could also be used to assess explicitness by sub-genre. Zombie films for example, are one sub-genre in which the overwhelming percentage of violent actions was biting or tearing flesh. In the sample population, zombie films (Burial Ground, 1980;

<u>Zombie</u>, 1980; <u>Gates of Hell</u>, 1983; <u>Night of the Creeps</u>, 1986) were also among the most graphically explicit. Zombie films were also mainly independent studio productions.

In addition to genre, clearly one problem with the present study was its inability to compare the types of violent actions occurring in horror films with those of other genres. The results of the present study raise an interesting question. If the majority of violent actions are punches, kicks, slaps, shootings, stabbings, and hitting with objects by males over 20, how different are these violent acts and characters from action films, dramas, and even comedies. In the genre of drama, Sanoff (1986, June 30) noted,

> Since 1972 when Clint Eastwood and his .44 magnum debuted in "Dirty Harry," Hollywood has been pumping out these sagas of revenge and vigilantism...With each new film, the body counts soar, the profits pile up and the controversy over blood smeared across the screen heightens (p.54)

With the present study, researchers can begin to determine how violent actions differ from other genres.

An additional suggestion, an extension of the present study, would be to select a sample of horror films from previous decades such as the 1930's when the PCA was at its height in content control, and compare these displays of violence with those of the 1950's during the rise of independent horror films, and with horror movies of the

1980's. This longitudinal analysis could provide a more complete explanation of how violent actions have shifted in the horror film.

Implications

The results of the present study have implications which are both practical and theoretical. Though more work is clearly needed, particularly to determine sub-genre differences among graphically violent actions, and possible correlations between the graphic violence in horror movies and the graphic violence among other genres, the results do point to a necessary reassessment of horror film violence and its influence, or potential influences on an audience. The findings of the present study indicate that differences between major studio horror films and independent horror films exist. A research study which incorporates both qualitative and quantitative measures might unveil more differences. The findings of the present study also point to a need among researchers to be more cognizant of the type of stimuli used in horror film research.

From a practical standpoint, the results provide some insight to the differences of horror presentation by competing studios. It appears clear from the sample population that independent horror productions are not

only more violent but also more graphically violent than major studio horror films. Independents with few stars, low budgets, and few advertising dollars have opted for graphic violence to draw viewers. The results do, however, confirm the concerns that horror films, at least independent horror productions as compared to major studio horror productions, are indeed graphically violent and that such violence may have adverse effects on some viewers, particularly youths and adolescents. Perhaps thankfully, though, independent horror graphic violence has not escalated over the past decade; in fact, it was declining towards the latter part of the decade.

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APPENDIX A

Pilot Study and Results

Introduction

This section describes the procedures utilized in designing the coding instrument and book for the pilot study. The larger study was designed to examine the type and degree of violence evident in horror films from 1980 to 1989. This initial pilot was designed to test a coding instrument and coding book which would be used in the larger study.

Pilot Study I

The goal of the first pilot study was to assess the reliability of the coding instrument to assess the number and degree of violent acts in horror films. It was determined that since each coder would be required to view seven complete films, using individuals who were horror film fans would minimize error in coding. An electronic message via computers was placed on a national communication bulletin board system which was directed at the horror fans. The initial message solicited persons interested in the study to reply. From this initial post, 13 replies were received. Additional correspondence was initiated to determine the coding experience of the potential participants and their available time to

participate in the study. Although specific coding experience was limited among all interested persons, from the initial 13 replies, four persons were chosen to participate. One final post to the four participants explained the basis of the study and a list of information they would be receiving. It also contained a note cautioning the individual that the coding would take a good deal of their time and that if there were problems to reply as soon as possible. None of the participants voiced any concern over these potential problems so a packet of coding sheets, a code book, a crib sheet to facilitate coding, and the list of 7 random horror films to code were sent on July 15, 1990. Of the seven films chosen, 4 were independent productions and 3 mainstream productions.

Correspondence was maintained through electronic messages to each of the coders once a week. Towards the end of the coding period, an electronic message was received by one of the coders who noted a medical condition occurred and that he would be unable to complete the study, thus three coders were left in the analysis. One final message was sent to the other coders on August 4, 1990 instructing them that three weeks had passed and they should finish the coding and send the completed coding sheets as soon as possible.

During the coding period all seven films were again
reviewed and coded for potential number of violent acts,
level of explicitness, location, initiator information,
receiver information and other aspects of the seven horror
films. Upon receipt of the coding packets by the coders
several problems became apparent. The first problem
related to the actual coding of the physical versus verbal
violent acts. A second problem related to the total
number of films actually coded by those solicited, while a
third problem related to the semantics and layout of the
coding sheet.

Problems associated with Pilot #1

After reviewing the completed coding sheets it became
apparent that among all the participants there appeared
some confusion when coding aggressive acts, particularly
when a verbal aggressive act resulted in a physically
aggressive act. The most typical occasion occurred when
one character in the film verbally assaulted another which
resulted in a physically violent action. When a verbally
violent action escalated into a physically violent action,
there was some confusion in determining which character
actually initiated the aggressive action. In general,
when two characters exchanged verbal threats and the
verbal violence resulted in physical violence, the coders

used the physical action as the determinant of the initiator of the action. There was also some confusion among coders occurred when a verbally violent act occurred but did not escalate to a physical act. Typically, these acts were not coded at all or were coded only when the verbal threat of violence was too obvious to overlook. This confusion appeared to stem from the vocal inflections, degree of pitch, and body language of the character initiating the act. Understandably, when a character yells or screams at another character the action does not necessarily indicate verbal violence. Such an act may reflect strong disagreements in opinion or indicate fear. A character also need not scream or yell to threaten another character verbally. There are numerous instances when a character might verbally threaten another character in a low, calm tone (e.g., Clint Eastwood's famous line "Go ahead, make my day"). Under these conditions, the verbally threatening actions appeared much like a subliminal message, bypassing the coders aural and visual cognitive processes. For example, in one scene from the film Child's Play (1987) a mother scolded her son for apparently lying to a policeman. In the scene the mother verbally rejected the son's testimony, sending him to his room for lying. Her vocal inflections reflected a verbal aggression towards the son,

and her actions furthered that act; however, at no point in the film did she actually hit him. According to the coding procedure and code book this was a codeable act since the child was rejected by his mother. None of the coders, however, coded this scene. Perhaps a mother scolding her son was not perceived as a verbally aggressive act, or perhaps it was deemed by the coders as a socially correct action. In any event, the lack of agreement over what constituted a verbal aggressive action indicated that the coding procedure needed changes.

A Second problem with the initial pilot was that the coders tended to code both the physical and verbal actions on the same coding sheet. Under these situations, however, coders were instructed to fill out separate sheets for each aggressive act; one for a physical action and another for verbal actions.

A third problem associated with this pilot centered on the semantics of the coding instrument which appears to have biased the coder's perceptions of the initiator and receiver of the violent actions. On the coding sheet the coders were instructed to provide demographic information about the initiator and victim of the actions. Although this seemed self-explanatory--a victim is assaulted, while an initiator is one who assaults--because the coding sheet requested the descriptive code of the "victim" many

viewers consistently coded the "bad/evil" character as the initiator of the violent action and the "hero/good" character as the victim of the violent action. This occurred even though there were occasions when a "bad/evil" character was the recipient of the violent action (that is, when the evil character was actually the victim).

One final problem associated with this initial pilot was the number of films actually coded. Although all coders were aware of the extended time coding the complete films would take, none of the coders actually coded all 7 films. The coders each completed only 3 of the 7 films, with two films (Child's Play and Cat People), coded by more than one participant.

Reviewing the coding sheets, when similar scenes were coded the descriptions of the verbal and physical violent actions appeared consistent. By far, however, the greatest concern was that there was an inconsistency in the number of violent actions per scene and, in general, an inconsistency in the number of violent actions per film. Most of the inconsistencies occur when coders coded (or did not code) scenes of verbal violence, or when verbal violence between characters resulted in physical violence. As a result of these inconsistencies, several adjustments to the coding sheet and process were made.

<u>Pilot Study II</u>

While the initial pilot study did yield some evidence for the coding process the inconsistencies did call for some adjustments in the coding process. Since the focus of the larger study was to compare physically aggressive actions by studio type and the explicitness of those actions, the verbal indicator of aggressive actions was dropped[10]. By dropping the verbal indicator, the physical indicator of violence became more parsimonious. Coding a violent action occurred when character(s) in the film physically assaulted another with the intent to cause harm to that character(s). The coding instrument was also changed to reflect a more objective viewing of the horror film. "Victim" demographic information on the coding instrument and in the coding book was changed to "recipient." The "level of explicitness" indicator was changed from a 0-3 point scale (0 indicating an implied action while 3 indicated an explicit action) to cue words (Implied action, Introduction of the action, Complete action, Complete action with gore). Rather than requiring individuals to view 10 complete films, a videotape of 3 to 5 random violent scenes from 10 different horror films was

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[10] It is also worth noting here that after reviewing content studies of television and film violence, nearly every study defined a violent act as one where a character physically assaulted another character.

constructed. This tape along with the revised coding
book, description of the study, crib sheet and a film clip
explanation sheet was sent to three new coders. A verbal
tutoring session with each of the coders was given with
several examples of how violent actions were to be viewed
and coded. Problems associated with coding multiple
scenes of violence and degrees of explicitness were
verbally discussed with the coder and the coder was given
an opportunity to ask questions. The second pilot packets
were distributed during the third week of September, 1990.

Results

Results of the second pilot were more promising than
the initial pilot. Of the 76 possible physically violent
actions from the film clips, 72 and 67 physically violent
actions were coded by two coders with complete agreement
in 61 of the violent actions. Using Holsti's (1969)
formula for intercoder reliability:

$$\text{Reliability} = \frac{N(M)}{N1 + N2 + NX} = \frac{3(61)}{76 + 67 + 72}$$

(Where M is the number of coding decisions where
coders agree and N# refer to the number of coding
decisions by coders.)

The intercoder reliability for the second pilot study was
0.85.

Type of Violent Actions

Although the coding book described 30 different types
of violent actions (ranging from pushing/shoving to self-
mutilation) the content analysis of the random scenes
revealed only 14 violent actions. Among the 14 coded
actions, Shooting was the most frequent (20%) with
Biting/Tearing Flesh (11.6%) the next most frequent,
Stabbing (11.2), Hitting With an Object (10.2%) and
Cutting/Stabbing (7.9%) occurring less often.

Similar to the "type of violent action" categories
there was a substantial difference from the total number
of available initiators (37 different types of initiators
ranging from male child under 6, to mixed gender zombies)
to those actually found in the random film clips. Only 14
types of initiators were shown to occur in the random film
clips. From these 14 initiator categories, the
overwhelming number of violent actions occurred by adult
males over 20 (56.7%). The next highest percentage of
violent actions were adult females over 20 (9.8%). Zombie
males accounted for the 9.8% of all violent coded actions.
Non-Human monsters (monsters whose appearance did not
resemble a human form), Animals (not including people who
change into animals), mixed gender group, and zombie mixed
gender group each accounted for 2.8% of the committed
actions.

Recipients of the violent actions, also tended to be adult males over 20 (43.7%) with adult females-over 20 accounting for the next highest percentage (25.1%). Male zombies were the third highest recipient of the violent actions (10.2%) with all male groups being the next largest recipients of violent actions (3.3%). In 47.4% of all the coded violent actions, the recipient and initiator of the violent action were strangers, while they were enemies in 11.2% and friends in 8.4% of all coded violent actions. Of the total violent actions coded, the complete action was shown 77.7% of the time. In 53% of all the physically violent actions, death or implied death resulted. However, in 33.5% of the actions, nothing happened (13.5%), the recipient was frightened (7.9), or the recipient received a non-life threatening wound (12.1).

Discussion of Results

One of the most interesting findings from the second pilot was that there was a relatively small proportion of violent actions which accounted for the majority coded episodes. While a welding axe, or chainsaw are found in some horror films, they account for only a small percentage of acts committed in horror films. It was beyond the scope of this pilot to adequately examine the

differences between independent and mainstream studio
productions. Of the 4 independent productions, a total of
32 violent actions were unanimously coded among the three
coders--8 violent actions per film. Among the 6
mainstream productions, a total of 29 coded acts were
unanimously agreed--4.8 violent acts per film. If, the
agreement among two coders is used as a gauge, a total of
32 violent actions occurred in the 6 mainstream
productions, while 42 violent actions occurred in the
independent productions, nearly double that of mainstream
productions. From these figures, there was support for
the proposition that independent horror films tend to be
more violent than their mainstream counterparts.

APPENDIX B

Code Sheet and Codebook

Viewer: _____   Date Viewed: _____

Title of the film: Code # _____

Length of film: _____minutes

Date of film: _____   Film Rating _____

Violent scene number: _____

Type of violent action: Code # _____

Initiator of the action: Code # _____

Receiver of the action: Code # _____

Relationship to the victim: Code # _____

Level of explicitness: Implied   Introduced
(Please circle one)   Action   Action

                          Completed   Completed Action
                          Action   with Gore

Was the violent action completely or partially shown?
(Circle one)

                COMPLETELY   PARTIALLY

Effect of the action: Code # _____

Did the receiver of the action resist?

(Circle one)   NO   YES

        If YES, How: Code # _____

Violent Behavior Codebook

UNIT OF ANALYSIS: Each physical display of violent behavior will be coded on a separate coding sheet. An act should be coded from the introduction of the physical act (its beginning) to its completed end. All coding sheets should be numbered sequentially through each film clip to the end of that film. That is, DO NOT restart numbering for film clips #2, #3, #4, etc.... Rather number the violent actions from #1 in Clip #1 through to the end of the film clips for that film. When a new film is shown restart the numbering at #1 for Clip #1.

For example:

        Film #1: Hellraiser

                    Clip #1 --- Violent scene Number 1
                    Clip #2 --- Violent scene Number 2
                                Violent scene Number 3
                    Clip #3 --- Violent scene Number 4
                                Violent scene Number 5
                    Clip #4 --- Violent scene Number 6

        Film #2: Lost Boys
                 (Restart Numbering Violent Scenes)
                    Clip #1 --- Violent scene Number 1
                    Clip #2 --- Violent scene Number 2
                    Clip #3 --- Violent scene Number 3
                                Violent scene Number 4

WHAT IS PHYSICAL VIOLENCE?: For this study, a "physically violent act" will be defined as an action performed by one character (or group) upon another character (or group) with the specific intention to harm that person/group/animal/entity/etc... This does not refer to slapping/hitting/etc. another character for erotic pleasure, nor medical dissections, or surgeries, etc... That is, unless the specific act is performed to cause harm to another it should not be coded. Furthermore, since this study is focusing specifically on physical violence, only acts which contain direct physical harm to another character will be coded.

Harm resulting from a physically violent act will take one of three forms:

a) One character directly touches another; that is there is direct physical contact of one character to another, such as suffocation, hitting, kicking, slapping, biting, etc...

b) Using an object to cause physical harm, such as shooting another, hitting with an object, stabbing with a knife, or throwing an object at another character, etc... here there is no direct physical contact.

c) Through some supernatural means. This can be through telepathic capabilities, witchcraft, or spiritualistic means. Under these conditions the individual causing the harm need not directly touch the other person, nor use objects to cause physical harm, however the character coded as the initiator of the action must directly cause the harm to the recipient.

One good example of this type of action is a voodoo doll that causes a particular person harm when pins are stuck into it.

CODING A PHYSICALLY VIOLENT ACT: As noted above, an act should be coded as a physically violent act if the intent of the character is to cause harm to another. Irrespective of the specific action performed, the act must be coded until its conclusion.

An individual act of violence will end with:

1) The discontinuation of the violent activity (that is the violent action stops for one reason or another-- like the character dies, passes out, or runs away),

                or

2) A change in setting, (this can occur by cuts or fades to another setting, or the characters physically move to another location--like running into the woods from a house, or into a basement from the kitchen),

                or

3) A change in participants for that scene.

If there is no break in the physical violent activity, change of location, or change in characters, the event

will be coded as one act, even if several codeable activities occur. For example, if a man stalks another man, then stabs him, then decapitates him only the last codeable action (the decapitation) will be coded. This is only if NO BREAK in the action occurs.

The Coding Sheet

VIEWER: Please Put your name in the space provided. You need not put your name on every sheet if you staple them together. (If you do this please put your name on the first and last coding sheet.)

DATE VIEWED: Please put the date that you viewed the film clips.

TITLE OF THE FILM: Each horror film will have a 2-digit number associated with that specific film.

LENGTH OF THE FILM (in minutes): Record in the space provided the total length of the film in minutes (this can be found on the videocassette).

FILM RATING: Record the film's MPAA rating (this can be found on the videocassette, or is noted at the beginning of each film).

VIOLENT SCENE NUMBER: As noted previously, each scene consisting of a codeable physical violent action will be assigned a 2-digit number beginning with 01 and proceeding upward without duplication for each episode. An explanation of the types of physical violence are provided later in this codebook.

TYPE OF PHYSICAL VIOLENCE: Each act coded will be assigned one of the following 2-digit numbers that best describes the physically violent act. The categories are as follows:

01--PUSHING/SHOVING/THROWING: The use of force to move another back, or to hurl another body (into the air or to the ground).

02--SLAPPING: The use of an open hand to strike another forcibly.

03--GRABBING BODY PART: To grab part of another body; this can be anything from a forceful grab of the shoulder, to grabbing hair/face/foot/other parts.

04--PUNCHING: The use of a closed or clenched hand to strike another forcibly.

05--KICKING: The use of one's foot or leg to strike another forcibly.

06--HITTING WITH AN OBJECT: The use of a object to strike another forcibly (this can be virtually anything from a baseball bat, to a brick).

07--THROWING AN OBJECT: An object thrown so as to strike another forcibly (this too can be anything from a baseball bat to a brick however the difference is that the individual does not have direct contact with the object when it hits another).

08--CUTTING/SLASHING: This includes breaking open the skin with an object (usually a sharp object such as a knife, or glass). This does not involve stabbing the person by plunging an object into the body, but rather slicing or slashing the skin so as to cause it to separate usually in a side-to-side motion.

09--BURNING WITH FIRE: The use of fire to burn or heat the skin.

10--BURNING WITH LIQUID: The use of very hot liquids (such as oil, water, or other substances) to cause the skin to burn, scald or scar.

11--ATTACKING: The forceful assault of one upon another. Typically this is an act associated with zombies who do not really grab or bite but physically contact another and grope the person.

12--SUFFOCATION/STRANGULATION: A refusal to allow air to the person. This can occur by another covering air passages with objects such as pillows, or through strangulation. This however, DOES NOT include hanging nor other incidents which may cause the neck to break.

13--STABBING: This involves any object or objects forcibly plunged into another person's body. This act does not include the use of bullets (such as shooting another) nor the use of arrows (unless they are physically forced into the person (that is, without the use of a bow).

14--CHOPPING/HACKING: The use of a sharp object in up and down motion to cut into another. This does not include cutting or slicing which is more a side-to-side act, but rather an action designed to dismember or chop into someone. Typically this act involves an axe or meat cleaver.

15--SHOOTING: The use of a device to propel an object forward, such as a gun (to shoot bullets), a bow (to shoot arrows), a slingshot (to shoot pellets), or a blow-gun (to shoot darts)

16--BREAKING BONES: This involves any force or action which causes the bones of a person to break. (usually in the horror film a breaking bone is associated with a breaking or snapping sound)

17--RAPE: The forceful act of sexual intercourse between two persons of the same or different genders. This is different from an attack (#11). To be coded as a rape there must be some indication that the actual act occurred.

18--HANGING: This involves any objects placed around the neck so to cause the body to be hung by the object. (any of these objects can be scarfs, belts, rope, chains, etc.)

19--BLUDGEONING: The repeated hitting by one person with a short stick (or a cane) upon the face, back or chest area in order to disfigure or mutilate another.

20--BITING/TEARING THE FLESH: This includes biting another so as to break the skin. Tearing the flesh includes actually ripping the flesh from the muscle and bone. (typically occurring in zombie or monster films where a person's flesh is either bitten or ripped from their body.

21--SCALPING/SKINNING: This act involves peeling off the skin covering the head or peeling off the skin of any other area of the body. Skinning can involve as much as the whole body or as little as a small piece of skin. This act is different from #20 (biting/tearing of flesh) because it involves the use of an object, like a knife to skin another where as #20 typically involves one's mouth or hands to bite or tear the flesh.

22--BLOODSUCKING: To feed off another human or animal for nourishment or survival. This act usually occurs in monster films involving vampires where the vampire sucks the blood from a person via the jugular vein, wrist or chest. However the act of bloodsucking can also include other means which use human or animal blood for nourishment or food.

23--CRUSHING: The use of force to physically compress the individual's body parts or complete body. This does not include suffocation but rather the use of heavy objects or devices to crush the body.

24--DROWNING: This includes holding a person under water or some other liquid substance so as to stop air flow to that person.

25--ELECTROCUTION: The use of electricity or an electronic current to cause death.

26--DISMEMBERMENT: This involves the use of objects or force to separate one body part from another (such as cutting off an arm). This does not involve the accidental dismemberment as result of flying glass or metal, unless it was a direct result of the initiators actions. (That is, this act would not be coded if it was the result of an earthquake, but would be coded if it was the result of an attack by a supernatural force).

27--DISEMBOWEL: The use of an object (usually a knife, or ax) to slice open and remove the innards of another. This does not include simply opening up the mid section of an individual, but rather opening up the mid section and removing the insides.

28--DECAPITATION: The removal of one's head from the body. Typically this involves cutting off the head, however, it can include any act which causes the head to separate from the body (such as the head ripped from the body by someone).

29--Exploding/Imploding: Any force or action which causes the body or a body part to explode. (This can include a body part exploding as a result of a gun blast or explosion).

88--OTHER (Please specify)

99--Unable to Determine

INITIATOR OF THE ACT: A 2-digit number will be assigned to the initiator of a violent act. The initiator is defined as the character who physically begins the act. When a character is the initiator of the violent act, that character's ID number is used. If the initiator(s) consist of two or more persons the following codes should be used to represent the type of group.

    27--All Male Group
    28--All Female Group
    29--Mixed Gender Group
    30--Monster Male Group (Vampires, Mutants, Demons)
    31--Monster Female Group (same as above)
    32--Monster Mixed Gender Group (same as above)
    33--Zombie Male Group
    34--Zombie Female Group
    35--Zombie Mixed Gender Group
    36--Possessed Group
    37--Re-animated Group (not zombies)

A list of characters and their ID's are as follows:

    01--Child (Male:Under 12)
    02--Child (Female:Under 12)
    03--Teenager (Male:13-20)
    04--Teenager (Female:13-20)
    05--Adult (Male:Over 20)
    06--Adult (Female:Over 20)
    07--Possessed Male (Human Form)
    08--Possessed Female (Human Form)
    09--Vampire (male or female)
    10--Monster (human form like
        "Frankenstein" with 2 arms and 2 legs)
    11--Monster (Non-human form like "The Blob")
    12--Demon (human form)
    13--Demon (Non-human)
    14--Zombie-Male
    15--Zombie-Female
    16--Spirit/Ghost
    17--Animal
    18--Werewolf (man/woman)
    19--Bugs/Insects/Snakes
    20--Devil/Gargoyle
    21--Inanimate Object(s)
    22--Mutated Human
    23--Mutated Animal
    24--Re-Animated (NOT ZOMBIE)
    25--Witch/Warlock
    26--Possessed Objects
    88--Other (SPECIFY)
    99--Unable to Determine

RECEIVER OF THE ACT: A 2-digit number will be assigned to the receiver of a violent act. The receiver is the character who is physically attacked. This character does not have to be the "hero/good person" or the "evil person" of the film. When a character is the receiver of a violent act, that character's ID number is used. If the receiver(s) consists of two or more persons the following codes should be used to represent that group.

    27--All Male Group
    28--All Female Group
    29--Mixed Gender Group
    30--Monster Male Group (Vampires, Mutants, Demons)
    31--Monster Female Group (same as above)
    32--Monster Mixed Gender Group (same as above)
    33--Zombie Male Group
    34--Zombie Female Group
    35--Zombie Mixed Gender Group
    36--Possessed Group
    37--Re-animated Group (not zombies)

A list of characters and their ID's are as follows:

    01--Child (Male:Under 12)
    02--Child (Female:Under 12)
    03--Teenager (Male:13-20)
    04--Teenager (Female:13-20)
    05--Adult (Male:Over 20)
    06--Adult (Female:Over 20)
    07--Possessed Male (Human Form)
    08--Possessed Female (Human Form)
    09--Vampire (male or female)
    10--Monster (human form like "Frankenstein")
    11--Monster (Non-human form like "The Blob")
    12--Demon (human form)
    13--Demon (Non-human)
    14--Zombie-Male
    15--Zombie-Female
    16--Spirit/Ghost
    17--Animal
    18--Werewolf (man/woman)
    19--Bugs/Insects/Snakes
    20--Devil/Gargoyle
    21--Inanimate Object(s)
    22--Mutated Human
    23--Mutated Animal
    24--Re-Animated (NOT ZOMBIE)
    25--Witch/Warlock
    26--Possessed Objects
    88--Other (SPECIFY)
    99--Unable to Determine

RELATIONSHIP: A 2-digit code will be assigned describing the relationship of the initiator to the receiver of the violent action. It is important to remember that each action consists of an initiator and a receiver thus for every volent action coded there must be a relationship (the only exception here is with self-inflicted actions). For example, in one film clip you might see a child attack her mother; if this happens you would code the relationship as 01--the receiver is the mother of the initiator. A list of potential relationships follows.

(Receiver's affiliation with the initiator, that is what tie --if any--does the receiver have to the initiator?)

      01--Mother
      02--Father
      03--Sister
      04--Brother
      05--Daughter
      06--Son
      07--Wife
      08--Husband
      09--Fiance/Girlfriend
      10--Fiance/Boyfriend
      11--Ex-Husband/Ex-Wife
      12--Other Relative (grandparents, uncles, aunts,
          in-laws, nephew, cousin, niece etc...)
      13--Friends
      14--Acquaintance
      15--Enemies
      16--Stranger/No Relation
      17--Employer
      18--Supervisor
      19--Employee
      20--Co-worker
      21--Doctor or other professional person
      22--Client/Patient
      23--Instructor (e.g., athletic, musical, education)
      24--Priest/Rabbi/Minister or other religious person
          (including cult leaders)
      25--Pet
      26--Prostitute (male/female)
      27--Self-mutilation
      88--Other (specify)
      99--Unable to determine

LEVEL OF EXPLICITNESS: Each act will be coded as to its level of explicitness. The level of explicitness for each violent act will be determined based upon the information about the act revealed in the scene (that is, how completely the act was shown). The level of explicitness consists of 4 distinct categories.

Each physically violent act must fulfill a set of requirements before its level can be coded as such. Below is an explanation of the categories and their criteria.

Level 1) IMPLIED ACTION: An implied action is a physically violent act which appears to take place but has not been shown. This type of act should only be coded when there is enough screen evidence to indicate the act will occur. For example if we see a woman with a knife and she is raising it up and then aiming toward's a mans chest. Then we see the knife going down as we hear the man scream. Even though the act was not actually shown (we may also see a closeup of blood coming from his mouth) there is enough indication that the act--a stabbing--did happen. If we see a man raise a gun to his head then the action switches to zombies attacking a woman, we don't know if the man will shoot himself, if he shot someone else or even whether he will discharge the gun at all. Not enough information would be available to code the man and the gun scene and the act would not be coded. If an act is implied we may only see a brief view of contact or none at all, but enough evidence is on the screen to indicate the act will occur.

Level 2) INTRODUCED ACTION: When the "introduction of the action" option is circled, contact has been made by the initiator towards a recipient; however, only the introduction of that act was shown. For example we may see a vampire start lunging towards then neck of a woman and see his mouth over her neck and see her scream; then the action changes to another scene. Under these conditions, we have seen the vampire START to bite her but only that. Thus we do not know if he/she finished the action or if another character stopped or even if she resisted enough to stop him. We know from the screen information that the act was initiated but we do not know if it was ever finished; that is, we see no recipient effect. For an act to be coded at this level there needs to be some form of contact between an initiator of a violent action and the recipient. If this condition is not met, the act should not be coded at this level.

Level 3) COMPLETED ACTION: A complete action includes an act that has both an introduction of the act and its conclusion. That is, we see the action initiated by a character through to its conclusion (we know what happened to the recipient of the act). For example, if a man and a woman are arguing then the woman hits the man and we see the slap completely, this would be coded as a completed action. Or if we see a man aim and shoot a zombie and we see the bullet hit the zombie in the chest then the scene ends this too would be coded as a complete action. If, however, we only see the man aim at an approaching zombie and shoot the gun but do not see it hit the zombie only the introduction of the act has occurred.

To be coded as a complete act, not only must there be some form of contact between initiator and recipient, but the result of the action (either death, passing-out, wounded, etc...) must be shown. That is, we must see how the action effected the recipient.

Level 4) COMPLETED ACTION WITH GORE: This type of action takes level 3 one step further; in other words, rather than simply showing the completed act, included are after-effects indicated how badly a character was effected by the physically violent action. This is often the "gore" effect that is associated with horror films. For example, if we see a man aim and shoot another man with a shotgun and we also see the man's head explode from the gun blast this would be considered an after-effect occurrence. Or if we see a zombie approach and bite a woman on the neck and we see the skin torn from the neck and blood gushing from the open wound this act would be coded as a complete action with gore. If however, we a zombie bite a woman and skin torn from the neck but then the film cuts to another scene, this would be coded as a complete action NOT a complete action with gore.

For an action to be coded as an after-effect the particular effects of the physical action to the body of the recipient must be shown (such as blood with a stabbing, a rolling head with a decapitation, etc..).

Levels of explicitness are as follows:

1) Implied Action--Implied violent act, but not actually shown

2) Introduction of the act shown--Violent action shown, but only the introduction of the act

3) Act shown completely--Violent action shown in its entirety, but no gore shown

4) Complete action with gore--Violent action shown in its entirety including physical results (such as blood or organs).

EFFECT OF THE ACTION: A 2-digit number will be assigned for the end effect or result of the initiator's action upon the recipient. The end result here will be defined as the point at which an individual act of violence ends either through:

1) The discontinuation of the physical violent activity, or,
2) A change in setting, more than just a quick cut (such as to a conversation), or
3) A change in participants for that particular scene.

When the act is completed, the coder will code the result of the violent action from among the potential effects listed below:

    01--Nothing (the action did not effect the recipient)
    02--Scared/Frightened
    03--Unconscious/Passed-out
    04--Coma
    05--Wounded/Hurt (this is an injury that is not life
        threatening)
    06--Badly Injured (typically this involves a good deal
        of blood loss and certain death if not treated
        immediately)
    07--Severely Injured (This assumes that the person
        is so injured as to cause death through loss of
        blood, such as dismemberment)
    08--Implied Dead (from the type of action it is
        assumed that the character is dead but it is not
        noted in the scene)
    09--Dead (not assumed, but through some means the
        character is noted as dead, i.e., we may see or
        hear that the character is dead)
    88--Other (Please Specify)
    99--Unable to determine

RESISTANCE OF THE ACT: For each act initiated there will be coded a potential resistance to the act by the recipient. That is, did the receiver struggle against the initiator? If, for example, the recipient does not resist the attack (that is, the recipient does not attempt to run away, fight back or attempt to stop the attacker) indicate this by circling a NO on the coding sheet (the recipient may also not have enough time to react to the act). If however, the recipient struggles against the initiator, runs away, or fights back circle YES on the coding sheet. As noted above signs of resistance can include: physically fighting the attacker, running away from the attacker, struggling against the attacker, stabbing/shooting/hacking the attacker or even verbal negations against the attacker (such as, DON'T!, or STOP!).

HOW DID THE RECIPIENT RESIST: If the recipient resists the initiators action a 2-digit code is assigned to the type of resistance by the recipient of the action. A list of potential recipient actions is provided below:

        01--Yell/Plead to Stop
        02--Run Away (after the act was initiated)
        03--Fight Back/Struggle against the initiator
        04--Hit initiator with an object/
            Throw object at initiator
        05--Cut/Hack/Stab initiator
        06--Shoot at initiator
        07--Burn initiator
        08--Didn't resist (for any reason)
        88--Other (SPECIFY)
        99--Unable to Determine

APPENDIX C

Horror Films

Horror Films

Film	Studio	Film	Studio
1980			
He Knows You're Alone	M	Burial Ground	I
* The Shining	M	To All a Good Night	I
The Island	M	Scared To Death	I
Eyes of a Stranger	M	Zombie	I
Inferno	M	Don't Go into The House	I
1981			
Wolfen	M	Dawn of the Mummy	I
Happy B-Day to Me	M	Dead and Buried	I
Hospital Massacre	M	* Ms. 45	I
Bloody Valentine	M	Fear No Evil	I
The Hand	M	Evilspeak	I
1982			
The Thing	M	Slumber Party Massacre	I
The Beast Within	M	New York Ripper	I
The Sender	M	* Basket Case	I
A Stranger Is Watching	M	Evil Dead	I
Visiting Hours	M	Incubus	I
1983			
The Keep	M	Blade In the Dark	I
* Psycho II	M	Bogeyman II	I
Cujo	M	Pieces	I
Jaws 3-D	M	Scalps	I
Deadly Eyes	M	Gates of Hell	I
1984			
* Dead Zone	M	Silent Night, Deadly Night	I
Body Double	M	* Mutilator	I
Amityville 3-D	M	House by the Cemetery	I
Exterminator II	M	Invasion of the Flesh	I
Impulse	M	C.H.U.D.	I

Horror Films (Cont.)

Film	Studio	Film	Studio
1985			
Lifeforce	M	Demons	I
Fright Night	M	Thou Shall Not Kill...	I
It's Alive III	M	Blood Cult	I
The Bride	M	The Ripper	I
Razorback	M	Creepers	I
1986			
Night of the Creeps	M	Night Train to Terror	I
Friday 13th-IV	M	Alien Predators	I
King Kong LIves	M	Doctors and Devils	I
Maximum Overdrive	M	Slaughter High	I
Deadly Friend	M	Truth or Dare	I
1987			
* Dead of Winter	M	* Angel Heart	I
Prince of Darkness	M	The Curse	I
Witches of Eastwick	M	Dolls	I
Demons of Paradise	M	Rest in Pieces	I
Lost Boys	M	Majorettes	I
1988			
* The Kiss	M	Ghost Town	I
They Live	M	Black Roses	I
Monkey Shines	M	Death by Dialogue	I
The Seventh Sign	M	Cheerleader Camp	I
Pulse	M	Demon Warp	I
1989			
Pet Sematary	M	Howling IV	I
Fly II	M	* Psycho Cop	I
Mask of Red Death	M	Welcome to Spring Break	I
Leviathan	M	Night of the Demons	I
The Horror Show	M	To Die For	I

Note: M denotes major studio horror movie.
     I denotes independent studio horror movie.
     * in front of title denotes that the movie was coded
       by two external coders.