THE IMPORTANCE OF HORROR: HOW HORROR FILMS REDUCE ANXIETY TOWARD SOCIETAL FEARS

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in
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by
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The Undersigned Faculty Committee Approves the

Thesis of Patrick Michael Johnson:

The Importance of Horror: How Horror Films Reduce Anxiety Toward Societal Fears

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5/17/12
Approval Date
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by

Patrick M Johnson

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to Margaret R. Johnson, my paternal grandmother, who helped instill in me the value of an education and always encouraged me to go after my dreams. May she rest in peace.
We make up horrors to help us cope with the real ones.

– Steven King
ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

The Importance of Horror:
How Horror Films Reduce Anxiety Toward Societal Fears

by

Patrick Michael Johnson

Master of Arts in Liberal Arts and Sciences
San Diego State University, 2012

It has been said that fear is one of the most powerful and ancient emotions in the human race. It should come as no surprise then that horror as an art form has existed for centuries. Throughout history horror has let humans externalize their fears. It is my conjecture that the artists who make horror films and literature have, unintentionally, found a way to let people expose themselves to their very real fears by means of sophisticated metaphors. The aim of this study was twofold. First, I sought to demonstrate that horror is a reflection of the fears of the society and culture in which it was created. Secondly, I intend to show that it acts as a sort of subconscious, prolonged exposure that helps people deal with their societal fears.

This study contained two main elements to test this hypothesis. The first is that participants monitored their fear levels in vivo while watching scenes from six different horror films. This was to test to see, first, if there was indeed an increase in fear from the start to the end and, second, if the end of each clip would result in a decrease in fear. This would indicate that the participants experienced some type of relief from their fear. The second element is that the participants were asked to retrospectively explain what made each scene scary. This was left vague to prevent influencing the answers, but the goal was to see if participants were relating these horror scenes with the real life fears that are represented in each of the films.

The participants not only experienced a sense of relief at the end of each scene, but there was also some indication in the case of The Crazies that this may be because people are associating the film with real life fears. This study has shown that those who watch horror experience a type of relief after each scene, even if that scene does not bring about relief on its own. This is because horror is not an emotion that can be sustained during prolonged exposure. If viewers experienced a decline in horror after only 10 minutes in each scene, it is logical to assume that the decline would be even greater after the entire film was over. If audiences are experiencing this relief in the theater, it is also logical that they are experiencing this relief in their everyday lives.
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHAPTER</th>
<th>PAGE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ABSTRACT</td>
<td>vi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF TABLES</td>
<td>ix</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIST OF FIGURES</td>
<td>x</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS</td>
<td>xi</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## CHAPTER

1. INTRODUCTION .................................................................................................................. 1

2. REVIEW OF LITERATURE .................................................................................................. 4
   - Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus ................................................................. 4
   - The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde .............................................................. 6
   - The Invasion of the Body Snatchers ............................................................................. 7
   - Interview with a Vampire ............................................................................................... 9
   - Hostel ............................................................................................................................ 11
   - Implications .................................................................................................................. 12

3. METHODOLOGY ............................................................................................................... 14
   - Sample ......................................................................................................................... 14
   - Treatment .................................................................................................................... 15
   - Films Chosen ............................................................................................................... 16
     - The Crazies ................................................................................................................. 16
     - The Ruins .................................................................................................................. 18
     - The Mist .................................................................................................................... 19
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Sample Demographics .......................................................... 15
Table 2. Mean Participant Profile ..................................................... 16
# LIST OF FIGURES

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Figure</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Figure 1</td>
<td>Starting fear rating vs Ending fear rating</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 2</td>
<td>Maximum fear rating vs Ending fear rating</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 3</td>
<td>Maximum fear score rating vs Retrospective fear rating</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 4</td>
<td>Comparing fear ratings between references to reality and other</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Figure 5</td>
<td>Maximum and Minimum fears during The Crazies by reason for scariness</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would first like to thank Dr. William Nericcio for helping me conduct the study and also for being there to support me throughout this process. I would also like to thank Dr. Christopher Frost and Dr. Nader Amir for their assistance with the research and development of this study. Additionally, I would like to thank Dr. Yetta Howard for agreeing to come onboard towards the end of the project to help provide feedback on the written work. I would also like to thank Luis D Medina, MS for his assistance with the formation of the study and the statistical analyses as well as his emotional support. Finally I would like to thank my parents Samuel and Diane Johnson for their never wavering support and encouragement.
CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Horror is defined as being a strong aversion mingled with dread.¹ It has been said that fear is one of the most powerful and ancient emotions in the human race. It should come as no surprise then that horror as an art form has existed for centuries. Throughout history, horror has let humans externalize their fears. Even though the monsters or villains in horror art are usually far from being realistic, when analyzing horror through the context of the time period in which it was created, it is easy to see that many horror novels and movies are not about what they might seem to be.

Films have long been known to be related to how we view our everyday lives. In fact, there is even a documented psychological phenomenon, albeit a rare one, known as cinematic neurosis. Cinematic neurosis is defined as “the development of anxiety, somatic responses, dissociation, and even psychotic symptoms after watching a film.”² In the 1990s there was the story of an adolescent boy who became addicted to horror films, specifically the Nightmare on Elm Street series. He went to a therapist who deduced that the boy related to the villain Freddy Krueger because he felt that Freddy’s anger stemmed from a losing his mother. The boy had experienced that same feeling of loss having been abandoned by his own mother years earlier.³

³ Ibid.
The fact that horror films are able to cause horror in real life is taken for granted. However, they are also able to help alleviate fears and by doing this may be closely related to fairy tales that we tell young children.

Fairy tales are used to initially increase anxiety and then provide a cathartic mechanism for relief. The child’s identification with the characters’ initial helplessness, followed by resourcefulness leading to victory, lends strength to the child’s struggle with his or her anxieties and facilitates sleep.

This is very similar to how horror films may be viewed by adolescents and adults. The formula for the story is almost the same, at least in American horror films. Let’s take the horror classic *The Exorcist* as an example. In the movie, Regan starts experiencing signs of being possessed. Her mother tries everything scientifically possible to cure her daughter, but nothing helps. They are helpless and she must turn to religion to try and save her daughter. It is only through the final exorcism and the mother returning to her previously abandoned religious beliefs is she able to save her daughter. This is almost the exact same formula as a fairy tale, even right down to the magical elements.

There has been a trend recently, however, to deviate from this old formula that was successful for almost the entire slasher genre. In recent years the days of a happy ending of the film are long gone. We are even a far cry away from the pseudo-happy endings of such classic films as *Halloween*, *Friday the 13th*, and *Nightmare on Elm Street*. In all of those series, even though the killer gets away in the end there is a temporary sense of relief that the heroes have lived to see another day. In modern horror, the killer often gets away with the crimes or the curse goes unbroken. Examples of this are the *Saw* series where the killer wins at the end of the movies or *Drag Me to Hell*, in which you thought the curse was broken only

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4 Ibid.
to learn that the heroine was mistaken. The lack of closure at the end of the film heightens the fear. It means that you no longer can expect the killer to get caught and the heroine to save the day. Even though the film itself does not always provide its own relief at the end, the audience receives their reprieve when the lights in the theater go on and they are once again in the real world, having survived whatever horror they just witnessed.

Why do we enjoy being scared? Why do we tell these stories to our children before bed or voluntarily pay to sit in a dark room and be subjected to this torture? Steven King, one of the master’s of modern horror, has an interesting idea about this, suggesting how the “work of horror really is a dance – a moving, rhythmic search. And what it’s looking for is the place where you, the viewer or the reader live, at your most primitive level… horror films and writings, as mass produced mediums, can serve society…by becoming a nationwide analyst’s couch.”5 In other words, horror actually helps individuals and society deal with their fears, anxieties, and frustrations.

It is my conjecture that the artists who make horror films and literature have found a way to let people expose themselves to their very real fears by means of sophisticated metaphors. The aim of this thesis is twofold. First, I seek to demonstrate that horror is a reflection of the fears of the society and culture in which it was created. Secondly, I intend to show that it acts as a sort of subconscious, prolonged exposure that helps people deal with their fears.

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5 Nicole Brown, “Living Through the Horror: An Investigation of How and Why People Enjoy Horror Films” (PhD diss, Adelphi University, 2008), 4, Proquest (UMI 3318647).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

FRANKENSTEIN; OR, THE MODERN PROMETHEUS

Much like the Greek myth that lends its name to the novel, *Frankenstein* is a cautionary tale warning about the dangers of science and technology going too far. Prometheus was a Titan who became the champion for mankind when he stole fire from Zeus to give to humans. According to the legend, this is when Pandora, the first woman, was created out of clay by Hephaestus and sent to earth to punish man. She carried with her a jar containing all the evils, pain, and diseases that were unleashed upon men. Prometheus was also punished in the form of getting chained to a rock and having his liver eaten daily by an eagle, only to have it regenerate over night. Victor Frankenstein went a step further than Prometheus in his hubris. Instead of just stealing from the gods, Frankenstein actually encroached onto the territory of them by creating life. Frankenstein is arguably punished even worse than Prometheus because the monster does not just aim to hurt Victor, but decides to punish Victor by killing everyone close to him. Even though not everyone thinks that the novel is against advancements in science, it seems without question that the novel is clearly critical of how Victor practices science without regard for consequences.

Victor’s pursuit of creating life is not a novel idea in the story, but rather an ancient one that he had been studying for many years. It is only with the combination of this

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newfound science that he is able to achieve what so many people before him had tried. Some have stated that Shelly draws comparisons between science and magic/alchemy. Others have argued that she has separated them and the book is actually in support of science\(^8\). However, one could argue that the novel is actually more critical of science, because it is with science that Victor unleashes such a terrible thing on the world. The novel also shows the dangers of reckless science and how even though someone could have good intentions, it can lead to disastrous results. This is a fear of society that is still relevant today, with scientific advancements in areas such as genetic engineering, artificial reproduction, medicine, and cloning.

The novel goes beyond being critical of scientific advancements, and ventures into being critical of too much thought and too much education. This is reminiscent of *Oedipus Rex* who, like Frankenstein, saw himself as almost godlike due to his superior intellect, but it was ultimately also the cause of his downfall. This problem of too much education is also demonstrated through the monster. Unlike almost every adaptation of *Frankenstein*, in the original novel the creature becomes educated, which eventually leads to his discontent and his eventually vow for revenge against his creator. By depriving the monster of intelligence and a voice, the story is unfortunately altered severely and loses much of its meaning. Perhaps the monster’s gaining of intelligence and deciding to seek revenge on his creator for making him was too subversive for most audiences.

*Frankenstein; or, the Modern Prometheus* is a warning of what happens when science goes too far and encroaches upon “God’s territory.” This sentiment is best expressed by Jeff Goldblum’s character Ian Malcolm in *Jurassic Park* (1993). In it he reprimands John

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\(^{8}\) Ibid.
Hammond by telling him, “Your scientists were so preoccupied with whether or not they could, they didn’t stop to think if they should.”

**THE STRANGE CASE OF DR. JEKYLL AND MR. HYDE**

When one looks at how horror is a mirror towards the fears of a particular society, one would be remiss to not investigate the novella *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* by Robert Louis Stevenson. It is not for its overtly explicit representations of these fears (although coming from the Victoria Era, much like *Frankenstein*, there is a definite and clear representation of the same fear of technology and science), but rather it is the lack of specificity that makes this story truly interesting. Consisting of only around 50 pages the story lacks most of what modern fans associate with the tale. In fact, neither Jekyll nor Hyde are main characters in the story, which focuses on the investigation by Mr. Utterson of strange encounters people have had around the home of Dr. Jekyll. Upon reading the story, one barely even would know what Hyde looks like. Rather than being specific (as in the case of *Frankenstein*) the description lacks any real descriptors and all the reader is given is the following vague passage:

> He is not easy to describe. There is something wrong with his appearance; something displeasing, something downright detestable. I never saw a man I so disliked; and yet I scarce know why. He must be deformed somewhere; he gives a strong feeling of deformity, although I couldn't specify the point. He's an extraordinary looking man, and yet I can name nothing out of the way. No, sir; I can make no hand of it; I can't describe him.⁹

What may seem like laziness and Stevenson's part is what allows the story to be so interesting and relevant. While it is likely Stevenson wanted each reader to have his own interpretation (or maybe it really was just laziness or lack of creativity), what is really

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interesting is that since the time it was written, there have been numerous adaptations and re-envisionings of the story all of which of been able to adapt this vague, yet terrifying description into the specific fears of that society.\(^\text{10}\)

When the story was originally put on stage in London, Jack the Ripper was murdering prostitutes and leaving the citizens of London in terror. Hence, this was when the notion that Hyde was a murderer was created. In the original, the only person Hyde may have killed was a little girl whom he trampled, although her ultimate fate is not quite clear. In the stage version, though, Hyde was a serial killer who murdered prostitutes. Rumor has it that because this fear was so prevalent and the transformation on stage was so realistic that many in the audience believed there was a link between the play and Jack the Ripper.\(^\text{11}\)

Throughout the years there have been many other interpretations, including Hyde being a woman (\textit{Dr. Jekyll and Sister Hyde}) and even a playboy (\textit{The Nutty Professor}). While it is true that some of these stories are in fact comedies, they do get their inspiration from horror and also must play off the fears of that society, even if done so in a comic manor.

\textbf{THE INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS}

Jumping forward almost a century from \textit{Jekyll and Hyde}, the 1950's found the world in a state of Cold War and a showdown over nuclear arms. It was a fight between Democracy and Communism. This is no more evident than when looking at Jack Finney's \textit{The Invasion of the Body Snatchers}. Even though this story is technically Science Fiction, the line between Sci-Fi and Horror is very thin and many Sci-Fi stories contain the same


elements as a good horror story (one only has to remember the scene from *Alien* in which the creature bursts out of the stomach of one of the crew members).

Set in the small California town of Santa Mira, the story takes place in your iconic 1950's perfect American suburban town. Everything is perfect here until people start acting differently. In this town someone you had known your whole life could over the course of one evening become completely different, even though they still looked and sounded the same. Even though there is no physical difference the characters are able to feel a change in their loved one:

That's just it!...Miles, there is no difference you can actually see. I'd hoped you might find one...that you'd see some sort of difference. But of course you can't, because there isn't any to see. Look at him....Miles, he looks, sounds, acts and remembers exactly like Ira. On the outside. But inside he's different. His responses...aren't emotionally right...there's something missing.  

In the story it was because they had been taken over by aliens. In reality, people feared that this would happen as people they knew became communists. This is the common interpretation of the story, which very accurately describes the generalized fears of America at the time. However, there is another way to read into the story that suggests it not only plays on the overwhelming fear of McCarthyism, but also the fears of Women’s Liberation and Immigration. According to the article “’You’re Next!’: Postwar Hegemony Besieged in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*,” the film not only delves into fears of communism, but also “potential disruptions of the gender, racial, and sexual status quo.”

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The article makes many comparisons between the novel and what was happening in major cities in the United States with a flourishing black community and how those neighborhoods could “pass” for white-neighborhoods, very similar to how in the novel the aliens passed for residents of Santa Mira.\textsuperscript{14} The article compares how the aliens were characterized as hard working, vigilant, and desiring to conform with society to the mentality often associated with immigrant workers who wanted to fit into society. There is a definite preference in the novel for the “white-middle class” man who is a non-conformist. (I think it is very easy to see in this novel that it is purely an American, individualist product. Had this story been told in a collectivist culture it would not have had nearly the same impact.)

The final comparison the article makes is to that of the sexual liberation of the time.

Becky’s lack of passion for Miles marks the pinnacle of horror in the film. After the ‘limp-fish’ kiss, Miles flees the cave and in voice-over whimpers, ‘I’ve been afraid a lot of times in my life – but I didn’t know the real meaning of fear until – until I’d kissed Becky.’ Moreover, it was not simply her lack of sexual response that was alarming, but the patriarchal and paternal loss it signaled.\textsuperscript{15} This clearly represents the fear that even your own wife could have become just like all of those other sexually liberated women in the 1950’s American society.

\textbf{INTERVIEW WITH A VAMPIRE}

Moving forward thirty years there was a different kind of sexual liberation going on in America: The Gay Rights Movement. This time the fear wasn’t that women would become free to explore their sexuality, but rather that someone you knew could become homosexual. This was an interesting time in vampire stories, and to appreciate it one needs to take a look back at the early days of these stories in order to see how much changed in the

\textsuperscript{14} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{15} Ibid.
1980s. There is definitely a reason why this story became a gay cult classic. In most vampire stories the vampire, if male, tended to only bite female characters and if female, tended to also only bite females. If you think about Dracula, none of the men are ever bitten even though it comes close several times. In the novel *Interview with a Vampire*, even though the characters are not gay, there are many gay undertones throughout the novel:

“’Listen, keep your eyes wide.’ Lestat whispered to me, his lips moving against my neck. I remember that the movement of his lips raised the hair all over my body, sent a shock of sensation through my body that was not unlike the pleasure of passion…”

If one was unaware that the quote was from a mainstream novel, one may think it came from a book of gay pornography.

*Interview with the Vampire* is sometimes regarded as a gay novel and Ann Rice is considered to be a gay rights activist. Even if this novel was intended to reach a gay audience, it does not mitigate the fact that this novel became widely popular during the early days of the gay rights movement, during a time when many Americans were afraid of who may be coming out as gay next. People were afraid that homosexuality could spread or was contagious, much like Lestat was able to infect Louis. One of the most transgressive portions of the book is the character, Claudia, a six year old girl who gets turned into a vampire by Lestat. *Interview with a Vampire* was initially written in 1976, only one year before Anita Bryant began Save the Children because she knew “that homosexuals cannot biologically reproduce children; therefore, they must recruit our children.”

She later went on to say, “I don’t hate homosexuals…but as a mother, I must protect my children from their evil

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influence.” She was specifically discussing homosexuals, but those quotes could have come directly from Claudia’s mother in the novel. This was also a very subversive part of the novel that had to be adjusted for the screen. In the novel, Claudia is six. In the movie, she was played by a twelve year old Kirsten Dunst.

Vampire novels went through another interesting change around this time as well. After the AIDS crisis, there became a trend in vampire novels to have a virus cause one to become a vampire. As the fear of AIDS grew, it is hard to not see the comparison between vampires becoming infected through blood much like gay men were becoming infected with HIV. As the fears of society changed, vampire stories had to adapt to stay relevant and scary.

**HOSTEL**

On September 11, 2011 two planes crashed into the World Trade Center, which launched a war on terror that has definitely shaped the fears of our modern society. One of the most notable fears to be born of this tragic day and the subsequent wars and attack attempts was an increased xenophobic atmosphere in America. This is no more evident than in the 2004 movie, *Hostel*. *Hostel* was one of many films in which Americans travelling abroad encounter untold horrors. Another fear and theme present in the film is that of consumerism. In this film, wealthy people are able to purchase people to torture and murder them. This definitely fits with fears and frustrations that American’s were beginning to have in the years leading up to the 2008 recession and the Occupy Wall Street protests of today.

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18 Ibid.
In addition to the xenophobia present, Hostel is part of the ever growing horror phenomenon known as “torture porn.” This would include the Saw movies, The Ruins, Touristas, and the remake of The Hills Have Eyes. Even though this trend is growing recently, it is by no means novel. In fact during the 1970s we had similar types of films, many of which are now being remade. It is often interesting to think of remakes and why they are decided to be remade. When comparing the 70s to today, we are in a very similar political climate. Both decades involved America involved in a violent and controversial war. The death tolls for those wars were high. As Nicole Brown recently concludes:

One might argue that the popularity of this class of horror comes as a response to the fact that...[real life] unadulterated destruction and horror can be witnessed with full view, and so perhaps, in this way “torture porn” acts as a sort of psycho-drama for people as they try to come to terms with what seems to be the sanctioning of murder.20

In other words, according to Brown, horror films may have become so graphically violent in recent years because of the increased amount of real life violence we are exposed to in this nation almost every day.

**IMPLICATIONS**

By looking at the history of horror as a genre, it is easy to see that these stories are scary because they represent horrors more real than monsters and ghouls. They are representative of the fears of each culture in which they were created. This is also evident when examining how horror differs from culture to culture and country to country. It has long been assumed that those who watch horror will become desensitized to the violence in them, but this has never been studied or proven. It also ignores the fact that these fears that we are desensitizing ourselves to are the ones that we face every day. It is for these reasons

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that I decided to study the effects that horror does have on its audience, specifically younger adult fans of horror.
CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

It is the hypothesis of this study that one of the reasons for horror’s popularity and longevity might stem from the fact that it can act as a sort of prolonged exposure to help fans deal with fear. This study contained two main elements to test this hypothesis. The first was that participants monitored their fear levels in vivo while watching scenes from six different horror films. This tested, first, if there was indeed an increase in fear from the start to the end and, second, if the end of each clip would result in a decrease in fear. This would indicate that the participants experienced some type of relief from their fear.

The second element was that the participants were asked to retrospectively explain what made each scene scary. This was left vague to prevent influencing the answers, but the goal hoped to see if participants related these horror scenes with the real life fears that are represented in each of the films.

SAMPLE

For this study 24 individuals between the ages of 18-35 were recruited from San Diego State University and the surrounding community through flyers and social networking sites. All participants were given informed consent as approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at San Diego State University. There were 13 women and 11 men with a mean age of 21. Most of the participants had a High School diploma, but a few had either an Associate’s or a Bachelor’s degree. The Crazies was the only movie included in the study that had been seen by more than 50% of the population. Most of the participants had a high
interest in horror films with an average rating of 7.8 out of 10 and reported to have seen an average of more than 6 horror movies in the past year. The majority of participants were White making up 45.8% of the population. (see Table 1 and Table 2)

Table 1. Sample Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>n</th>
<th>% of sample</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>54.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Racial/Ethnic Background</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>White</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hispanic</td>
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<tr>
<td>Asian/Pac. Islander</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td>16.7%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Education</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>No Answer</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>High School</td>
<td>19</td>
<td>79.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Associate's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bachelor's</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>8.3%</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Previously Viewed Movies</strong></td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Devil</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>37.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Crazies</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>70.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daybreakers</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>45.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Splice</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>25.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Mist</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Ruins</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>50.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**TREATMENT**

At the beginning of the study participants were asked to fill out a short preliminary survey that included their demographic information as well as their interest in horror movies...
Table 2. Mean Participant Profile

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Mean (SD)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>21 (3.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Horror Film</td>
<td>7.2 (1.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interest in Horror Lit.</td>
<td>3.9 (2.8)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Films seen in Past year</td>
<td>6.8 (3.5)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

and horror literature. The participants were also given a list of the six films in the study and were asked to state whether they had seen any of the films before.

The volunteers were then asked to watch select scenes from six movies, each chosen because it contains elements of particular fears of society. Throughout each scene, participants were also asked to monitor their levels of horror *in vivo* for each film on a chart (see Appendix A)

Participants were then surveyed after the screening where they ranked their over-all level of fear for each scene, as well as their reactions to why each scene was scary. (see Appendix B)

**Films Chosen**

The films chosen for the study were: *The Ruins, The Mist, Daybreakers, Devil, Splice,* and *The Crazies.* The films were all chosen because they represented different types of horror and because they represented a wide variety of horror films. Each of these films were specifically selected because they were deemed by myself to represent or contains themes that transcend the film itself

**The Crazies**

The Crazies is a film that is set in Middle America and follows a sheriff, his pregnant wife, and two friends as they are trying to escape to freedom after the army takes over their
town after a mysterious illness turns ordinary citizens into crazed murderers. The army comes into the town supposedly to help, although ultimately they just exterminate everyone from the town after rounding them up into trains. The sheriff and his wife not only need to escape their crazed, homicidal neighbors but also from the government who doesn’t want anyone to leave alive.

The specific scene chosen for the study begins when the sheriff and his wife have been rounded up the army and still do not know what is happening. The army has medical staff inspecting every person for elevated temperatures, and because the wife is pregnant, her temperature is slightly raised and she gets taken away from the crowd to be quarantined. The sheriff escapes the line to the bus and sneaks back to the sheriff’s office where he runs into the deputy. Meanwhile the wife has been strapped down to a table by men in Haz-Mat suits and placed in a room with many other people also strapped to tables. Pretty soon there is a disturbance outside and all the men in the room get called outside leaving the wife on the table. She recognizes a girl that she knows from the town who also has not been infected and the two struggle to free themselves. As they are doing this an infected man comes into the room dragging a pitchfork. He walks up to a person and stabs him through the chest. He kills a couple of people before coming across the girl. As he is about to stab her, the sheriff’s wife screams and distracts the man who then starts heading towards the wife, slowly dragging the pitchfork across the ground leaving a trail of blood. As he is about to stab the wife, the sheriff comes in and shoots him, saving his wife and the girl.

I chose this film because I feel it represents two different fears in today’s society, both of which I feel are related to the Patriot Act. The first is the fear of a government willing to hurt anyone it needs to and infringe on the rights of its citizens to protect them.
The second is the fear that you may not actually know who your neighbors really are. This should seem familiar and very reminiscent of some of the fears from the Cold War era demonstrated in *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, only this time it is the War on Terror.

**The Ruins**

The Ruins is a film about a group of college students who go on a Spring Break trip to Mexico and when they go visit the ruins of a pyramid they get trapped on top when the locals won’t let them leave. They eventually learn that the plants growing in the ruins are carnivorous and that is the reason the locals won’t allow them to leave. One by one each of the students are injured and eventually die.

The scene used in the study is when one of the girls wakes up and notices that she has plants moving around inside of her skin. She asks her friends to cut them out, so after disinfecting her skin with tequila they use a hunting knife to dig the plants out. After they are finished, the girl feels a plant moving in her forehead and her friends see it, but know that she can’t take any more cutting so they pretend everything is fine. The next morning the friends all wake up to see the girl standing off in a corner and when she turns around she has completely cut her body apart trying to remove all the plants she believes are inside of her. When her boyfriend tries to stop her she stabs him out of frustration and kills him. She then falls down too weak to continue on and asks her friends to kill her.

One of the biggest fears that I see represented, albeit in a very exaggerated way, is the fear that the earth is going to kill us. It is a theme that has been very present in recent horror films. A more “realistic” example would have been The Happening, in which plants have evolved to emit toxins that cause humans to kill themselves. I chose The Ruins because in addition to showcasing this fear that the earth is going to come back and kill us, it also has
another fear that has been prevalent in modern horror – xenophobia. The Ruins is just one of many recent films that involves a group of Americans going to a foreign country and not coming back alive.

**The Mist**

Based on a novella by Stephen King, *The Mist* tells the story of a group of people in Maine who are trapped inside of a grocery store when the town is covered in a dense fog that contains monsters from another dimension. While on the face of it, this may seem like “just another monster movie,” I would like to argue that many monster movies are really representations of very real fears. The monsters in this movie are in fact representative of the fear that technology going too far and that the government is not thinking about the potential repercussions of such actions. Also, as represented in this scene that I will describe below, some of the scariest monsters are not the monsters outside of the store, but rather the people inside the store.

The scene chosen for the study starts as Mrs. Carmody (played by Marcia Gay Harden) is interrogating Private Jessup who informs her that he had heard rumors that the army had been doing experiments with other dimensions and accidentally opened up a door to one allowing these monsters inside. Mrs. Carmody, the super-religious lady who was previously viewed by the town as being crazy, has now managed to convince most of the town that they are in the end times and that the army has brought it upon them with their hubris. She convinces them that they need to make a sacrifice to the beast and the town starts stabbing Private Jessup then carrying him outside to feed him to the monsters. The small band of townspeople who have not fallen under Mrs. Carmody’s spell decide after this event
that they would be safer taking their chances with the monsters and decide to leave the next morning.

When they go to leave in the morning, they find Mrs. Carmody has taken their supplies and is blocking their way out of the store telling them that they cannot leave. Pretty soon the rest of the townspeople start getting behind her making it impossible to leave. She calls for another sacrifice and says this time she wants “the boy,” the young son of David Drayton and “the whore,” Amanda Dunfrey. The townspeople try to rip the boy from Amanda’s hands to feed them both to the monsters. They are only saved when Mrs. Carmody is shot and killed. The small group then leaves the store and tries to make it to their car, where they are attacked and several are killed by the giant spiders and praying mantis. The scene ends with David Drayton needing to leave the car to grab the gun that is on the hood of the car as the spiders are rushing forward.

This movie was chosen because it definitely shares similar themes with Frankenstein and reminds me very much of the modern debate over stem-cell research. It has the fear of technology going too far without any regard for consequences, just like in Frankenstein, as represented by the monsters attacking the town. In my personal opinion, Mrs. Carmody represents a fear of any specific religion trying to assert its beliefs over everyone else. I also think it can be interpreted more broadly as the danger of people blindly following someone else without thinking for themselves, again going back to the government. The final fear represented here is actually not a common societal fear but a common phobia, and that is arachnophobia – the fear of spiders.
**Daybreakers**

*Daybreakers* is one of the easiest films to determine its underlying allegorical meaning. The film is set in the near future, where almost all humans have turned into vampires. The remaining humans were rounded up to be harvested for their blood, but now because of recklessness and not trying to conserve any blood, the vampires are running out of blood and vampires are starting to devolve into very primal creatures without a conscious. The company that supplies much of the blood is now trying to create a blood substitute.

The scene chosen is a relatively slower scene and involves a lot of set up to allow the audience to understand the premise. After some dialogue explaining about the blood crisis, explaining what happens when vampires don’t drink human blood, and that they are looking for a blood substitute, the scene cuts to the first vampire experiment with the blood substitute. The experiment starts going well, but soon the vampire starts shaking and spitting up. The machines measuring his vitals start sounding alarms and then the test subject lights on fire before exploding on everyone in the room.

The beginning of this scene definitely is a metaphor for the current oil crisis and the fear that we have been exhausting all of our fossil fuels and the search for alternative fuels. Even though not included in the scene shown, the end of the movie even touches on the fear that oil companies have no real concern with actually finding a substitute as the head of the blood company states that he will never stop producing real blood and he is even willing to allow his daughter to die because she wouldn’t convert to his beliefs. This scene also has the same fear of technology that we have seen in other films so far in this study and that we will continue to see in other films as well.
**Devil**

*Devil* is a psychological thriller by M. Night Shyamalan about a group of six strangers trapped in an elevator and one of them is the Devil. They are being watched by security and the police through the security camera. The police can communicate with the people trapped, but cannot hear what anyone in the elevator is saying. The people in the elevator slowly begin dying one by one whenever the lights shut out.

Due to the short nature of the scenes, instead of showing just one scene I chose two different scenes in order to make it the same length as the other movies. The first scene chosen for the study takes places after one person has already died. The police and security have just learned that every person remaining in the elevator has a less than angelic past and all seem capable of being a murderer. The lights go out and much of the scene is in the dark, and when the light returns the elderly woman is hanging from a cable, dead.

The second scene starts with the three remaining people standing with their backs to each other and their hands against the walls. They are all accusing each other of being the murderer. The lights start to flicker again and they all realize that the lights are going to be going out again, which means someone will most likely die again. When the lights do go out, the security guard is dead with his head twisted backwards. The two remaining survivors both arm themselves and put themselves into a duel with each other, each accusing the other of being the murderer.

I chose these scenes because it goes back to a similar fear as in The Crazies and that is that you do not know who the person next to you is or who you can trust. As I discussed earlier this is a fear that we saw a lot of during the McCarthy trials and the Cold War that has resurfaced during the War on Terror. Even if this fear is not at the forefront of everyone’s mind, it is definitely an prominent undercurrent of the society in which we currently live.
**Splice**

*Splice*, like *The Mist*, is a good, old fashioned monster movie very reminiscent of *The Fly* or *Frankenstein*. The premise of this movie is that two scientists who do work with cloning and genetic engineering decide to manufacture a new species that is partially human. What starts out as a successful experiment quickly devolves as the species turns out to be a violent killer.

The scene chosen for the study begins slowly and we see the scientists beginning work on their experiment and it goes all the way until when the fetus is ready to be born. When the female scientist reaches her hand inside the machine, something suddenly grabs her hand and starts yanking it inside. When her colleague finally gets her out, she has lesions all over her arm and starts going into shock and begins seizing. The creature falls out of the incubator and looks like a slimy blob with a tail that has a stinger at the end. The male scientist traps the creature which promptly begins trying to escape. He then gives his colleague a shot to stop her seizures.

Like *Daybreakers*, this film is blatantly obvious in the fear that it represents. It is especially relevant in today’s society with the fear of technology going too far and that people are willing to do things without regard for the consequences. This brings the specific fears of genetic engineering and human cloning to the forefront of the film.

**Data Analysis Procedures**

As mentioned earlier, the participants were asked to rate the fear levels throughout each scene on graphs (See Appendix C for an example). I then measured four key points on each graph to assign numerical numbers to each of the graphs. Using the middle line as a
base measure of zero, I measured each participant’s starting, minimum, maximum, and ending fear rating in centimeters.

In addition to the graphs, participants were asked to rate each scene and describe why the scene was scary. In order to quantify this data as best as possible, I went through each description and coded each one as either a zero or a one. A one meant that the description contained references to reality, social fears, or personal phobias. A zero was assigned to any that did not fit any of those three categories, for example stating that the scene was scary because it was suspenseful without any other descriptors would be a zero (see Appendix D for an example).

I calculated correlations between observed variables and also compared groups using t-tests and linear regressions. Additionally the participants’ descriptions of what made the scenes scary were analyzed quantitatively to look at the specific reasons why people were identifying certain scenes as being scary and the correlations those people were making with real life.
CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

A Student’s t-test revealed that there was a significant increase of fear in each scene from the beginning to the end. (see Figure 1.)

![Figure 1. Starting fear rating vs ending fear rating.](image)

A Student’s t-test also revealed a significant decrease in fear from the maximum level in the scene to the end of the scene. (see Figure 2.)

![Figure 2. Maximum fear rating vs ending fear rating.](image)
Maximum fear scores were significantly, positively correlated with retrospective fear ratings wherein higher maximum scores were related with higher retrospective ratings, $r(22) = .746$, $p < .001$. Even though measured on a different metric, when comparing the z-scores for each movie, you can see that the maximum fear and the retrospective ratings are similar. (see Figure 3.)

A Pearson correlation revealed that there was no significant relationship ($p > .05$) between if the participant had previously viewed the movie and how scary he/she ranked it retrospectively or *in vivo*.

A linear regression revealed that for three of the movies neither the maximum fear level nor the minimum fear level were significantly related ($p > .05$) to how many movies the participant had seen in the past year. There was a significant relationship between the maximum levels of fear and how many movies the participant had watched for *The Crazies*, *Daybreakers*, and the first scene from *Devil*. The more movies the participant had viewed,
the scarier he/she found *Devil* (VALUES), however the more movies the participant had viewed, the less scary he/she found *The Crazies* (VALUES) and *Daybreakers* (VALUES).

Even though an ANOVA revealed that there was no significant relationship (p>.05) between why the viewers found the scene scary and how they measured their fears *in vivo*, a means plot indicates that there is a trend, although not significant. (see Figure 4.) On average, those who related the scene to reality found the scene to be scarier retrospectively and had a higher maximum, however they also started lower, had lower minimums, and ended the scene with less fear than those who found the scene to be scary for another reason.

![Figure 4. Comparing fear ratings between references to reality and other.](image)

Finally, an ANOVA revealed that viewers experiencing a decline in fear at the end of the scene related the scene to reality for the movie *The Crazies*, F(1,22) = 15.52, p = .001, $\eta^2 = 0.4$. (see Figure 5.)
Figure 5. Maximum and minimum fears during *The Crazies* by reason for scariness.
CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

In every scene there was an increase in fear from the beginning to the end. This indicates that each of the scenes was indeed found to be scary, something very important for a horror film. More significantly, in each scene the audience experienced a lessening of fear from the maximum point to the end of the scene. It is important to note that not all scenes ended with a conclusion, but rather some ended in the middle of the action. This indicates that even though the audience experienced an elevation of fear from the beginning of each scene, that they also experienced some amount of relief from their maximum fear level regardless of whether the scene came to a conclusion or not. This supports my hypothesis that through exposure to a scene from a horror movie that one will experience some type of relief after reaching their maximum fear level.

Even though there was a decrease in fear during each of the scenes, there seemed to be no consistent difference based on the amount of horror movies previously watched or even having watched that particular film before. Devil, The Crazies, and Daybreakers did show a relationship between how many horror movies the participants had watched and how scary the scenes were found. Unfortunately they did not all show the same effect, with Devil actually showing a larger amount fear and the other two having a smaller amount. I had theorized that the more exposure to horror films would result in a smaller amount of fear, but that was not consistently the case, however this could be a product merely of the scenes chosen and the order in which they were shown.
Even though there wasn’t a significant relation between the maximum levels of fear and whether the individual associated it to reality, there did seem to be a slight indication that this may be the case. On average the people who found at least one scene to be related to real life had higher retrospective fear ratings and also higher maximums. They also ended the scenes on average with a lower level of fear than others. Almost half of the audience described this connection to reality, but it does not mean that they are the only ones who felt this. One of the limitations of this study was the possible lack of clear understanding of how to answer the questions. While some people seemed to take the task very seriously and really tried to describe why the scene was scary, many people just wrote very short statement or described what happened in the scene without explaining why that was scary.

One of the most interesting findings is that there was a significant decrease in fear during *The Crazies* for those who associated it with reality. Not only did those viewers get more scared than the others, they also ended the scene with a lower level of fear. This definitely shows that, at least in this film, those who were associating the film with real life experienced more of a release at the end of the scene. This could be in part because the content of the film and this scene draws on many fears and is very explicit in demonstrating these fears. These fears include fears of the military, an all-powerful government that doesn’t mind harming innocent people to save the larger country, and the fear that you don’t know who your neighbor really is.
CHAPTER 6

SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Even though there does seem to be support for the thesis that these films can lead to a lessening of anxiety, it was not without its flaws. The first of these flaws was the number of participants. The original study called for 100 participants and to section those participants into different size groups. This would have not only given a higher total number of participants, but it would have seen if the group size had any effect on how scary the audience found the scenes. Another limitation, as briefly discussed earlier, was that since there was only one screening I was unable to show the films in different orders to different groups to see if the order of the films had any effect of the ratings.

The rest of the limitations are concerned with the forms that the audience filled out. The first of these is that the audience charted their own, subjective fear during each scene rather than using physiological measures (such as skin conductance, Galvanic Skin Response, MRI, heart rate, etc). This would have lead to a more accurate and uniform account of how people actually were reacting. Additionally there may have been some differences in how people interpreted the charts. Some people made sure to stay within the chart, while others felt free to go above or below the lines. Others decided to use the median line as a starting point, while others used the bottom of the chart as a starting off point. Finally, and most importantly, some of the participants may have not been taking the form seriously and did not put the thought into their answers and just wrote the first thing on their mind for each scene.
One way this study could be improved upon would be to not only have multiple groups with the films in a different order, but to have a guided discussion after the films to make people really think about why the elements of the scenes scared them. Many people may have subconsciously made the connections to real life, but did not realize it. A guided discussion could have led them to think about these subconscious feelings they were experiencing during the scenes.

One thing that was not able to be included in this study is to analyze the effect of gender on horror films. Even though gender showed no significant difference in fear levels this could just be a result of the low number of participants. Also further studies would need to be conducted to see if the gender of the victim in the scene has an effect on how horrifying the audience finds the scene.

**CONCLUSION**

It has long been said that horror films can desensitize the audience to violence and other horrors. It has been blamed for violence for generations. This study sought to explore the theory that horror films do desensitize its audience, but it also questioned whether that was a bad thing. In fact, this study has shown that throughout history horror literature and films have been made to utilize the fears of that society. If we are being desensitized to the content of horror films, it only makes sense that it may help to desensitize our fears of these every day horrors. This study has shown that those who watch horror experience a type of relief after each scene, even if that scene does not bring about relief on its own. This is because horror is not an emotion that can be sustained during prolonged exposure. If viewers experienced a decline in horror after only 10 minutes in each scene, it is logical to assume that the decline would be even greater after the entire film was over. If audiences are
experiencing this reprieve in the theater, it is also logical that this relief continues on into their everyday lives after the movie ends. This study was just the first in a series of studies that would need to be done to determine if films really can have this therapeutic effect on individuals, but it does give a good indication that this therapeutic effect is likely to exist and more research should be done in the future to ascertain the true power of horror.
REFERENCES


APPENDIX A

PRELIMINARY SURVEY
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study of horror films. Please complete page 1 before the screening begins. Please print legibly. If you are unsure of an answer, try to estimate or just write “UNSURE.” Thank you!

Age___ Gender_________________ Highest Level of Education Completed________

Level of interest in horror films (0=None 10=Only watch horror films)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

Level of interest in horror literature(0= None 10= Only read horror novels)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

In the past year, how many horror movies have you seen?_______________________
What was the last horror movie you have seen? _______________________________
In the past year, how many horror novels have you read?_______________________
What was the last horror novel you have read?_______________________________

Have you seen any of the following films (or read the material from which they were adapted): (Circle any that you HAVE seen)

*The Mist*  *The Crazies*  *Daybreakers*
*Splice*  *The Ruins*  *Devil*
APPENDIX B

RETROSPECTIVE SURVEY
DO NOT FILL OUT UNTIL YOU HAVE WATCHED ALL SCENES. THANK YOU!

Please answer the following questions in complete sentences. Please print legibly.

**Splice (2009):** Two young rebellious scientists are told by their employers to halt groundbreaking work that has seen them produce new creatures with medical benefits by splicing together multiple organisms' DNA. They decide to secretly continue their work, but this time splicing in human DNA.

Describe the scene from *Splice*: ________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horribly)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**The Crazies (2010):** About the inhabitants of a small Iowa town suddenly plagued by insanity and then death after a mysterious toxin contaminates their water supply.

Describe the scene from *The Crazies*: __________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________________________

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horribly)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10
**Devil (2010):** A group of people trapped in an elevator realize that the devil is among them. Describe the scene from Devil: ________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horifying)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**Daybreakers (2009):** In the year 2019, a plague has transformed most every human into vampires. Faced with a dwindling blood supply, the fractured dominant race plots their survival; meanwhile, a researcher works with a covert band of vamps on a way to save humankind.

Describe the scene from Daybreakers: ________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________
__________________________________________________________________________

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horifying)

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

**The Mist (2007):** A freak storm unleashes a species of blood-thirsty creatures on a small town, where a small band of citizens hole-up in a supermarket and fight for their lives.
Describe the scene from The Mist: __________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ____________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The Ruins (2008): A group of friends whose leisurely Mexican holiday takes a turn for the worse when they, along with a fellow tourist embark on a remote archaeological dig in the jungle, where something evil lives among the ruins.

Describe the scene from The Ruins: __________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): ____________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)
0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

ONCE YOU HAVE FINISHED FILLING IN ALL QUESTIONS COMPLETELY, PLEASE TURN IN ALL PAPERS AND FEEL FREE TO LEAVE. THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION.
APPENDIX C

FEAR CHART
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
APPENDIX D

EXAMPLE OF COMPLETED SURVEY
Thank you for agreeing to take part in this study of horror films. Please complete page 1 before the screening begins. Please print legibly. If you are unsure of an answer, try to estimate or just write "UNSURE." Thank you!

Age: 19  Gender: Male  Ethnicity: Hispanic  Highest Level of Education Completed: 1st year at university

Level of interest in horror films

Not Interested: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  Only watch horror

Level of interest in horror literature

Not Interested: 0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10  Only read horror

In the past year, how many horror movies have you seen? 10

What was the last horror movie you saw? Scream Night

In the past year, how many horror novels have you read? 0

What was the last horror novel you read? N/A

Have you seen any of the following films (or read the material from which they were adapted)?

(Circle any that you HAVE seen/read)

- The Mist
- The Crazies
- Daybreakers

- Splice
- The Ruins
- Devil
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
Devil Scene 2

Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.

---

Horrified

Not Scared At All

Start 4.8
Min 4.8
Max 1.8
End 0.6
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
Splice

Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.

Horrified

Not Scared At All

Start: -4.3
Min: -4.3
Max: 1.9
Mean: 1.9
Please mark your level of fear/anxiety as the scene progresses. If you run out of room, please turn the paper over and continue on the other side. Please start each scene on a new scale.
DO NOT FILL OUT UNTIL YOU HAVE WATCHED ALL SCENES. THANK YOU!

Please answer the following questions in complete sentences. Please print legibly.

_Devil (2010):_ A group of people trapped in an elevator realize that the devil is among them.

Describe the scenes from _Devil:_ In one scene, there are four people in an elevator and one dead and the lights go out, when they come back on one of the people (old lady) is hanging from the top. In the second scene, the three people that are left are arguing with each other about who the killer is, the lights go off again and when they come back on the black security guy’s neck is twisted multiple times.

Rate how scary the scenes was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Scary</th>
<th>Horrifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>

What made the scenes scary to you (if you found it to be scary): What made the scene surtout? An old lady is hanging from the ceiling when the lights go back on. The old man was arguing with the others about the killer. In the second scene, the black security guard was shot in the neck, which made it a scary scene.

_The Crazies (2010):_ The inhabitants of a small Iowa town are suddenly plagued by insanity and then death after a mysterious toxin contaminates their water supply.

Describe the scene from _The Crazies:_ In this scene, a woman is taken by men in toxic waste suits and her husband is taken somewhere else. When the man wakes up he’s on a truck that headed to where the buses are taking people away while back in the lake the woman is strapped to a chair and a man with a disease comes with a pitchfork and starts killing people on the cars, he almost kills the woman before he gets shot and killed.

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Scary</th>
<th>Horrifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): What makes this scene scary is the part where the crazy guy with the pitchfork comes and starts killing the people strapped to the chair.
The Mist (2007): A freak storm unleashes a species of blood-thirsty creatures on a small town, where a small band of citizens hole-up in a supermarket and fight for their lives.

Describe the scene from The Mist: People are stuck in a supermarket and plan to escape from there while there are creatures outside who are killing anything they see. They make it to the car but not before losing a couple of people to some spider looking creatures.

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not Scary</th>
<th>Horrifying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): This scene wasn’t really that scary because there weren’t too many sporadic things happening. The creatures were barely visible so it didn’t make the scene as scary.

Splice (2009): Two young rebellious scientists are told by their employers to halt groundbreaking work that has seen them produce new creatures with medical benefits by splicing together multiple organisms’ DNA. They decide to secretly continue their work, but this time splicing in human DNA.

Describe the scene from Splice: Two scientists create some sort of creature and when the creatures tries to break out of the thing everything starts going wrong and the lady scientist almost dies in the process.

Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)

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What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): This scene also wasn’t very scary because even though the last part of the scene where the creature escapes and is creepy looking nothing really happens where your heart starts racing.
**The Mist (2007):** A freak storm unleashes a species of blood-thirsty creatures on a small town, where a small band of citizens hole-up in a supermarket and fight for their lives.

**Describe the scene from The Mist:** People are stuck in a supermarket and plan to escape from there while there are creatures outside who are killing anything they see. They manage to get out but not before losing a couple of people to some spider looking creatures.

**Rate how scary the scene was overall (0=Not at all, 10=Horrifying)**

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What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): This scene wasn't really that scary because there weren't too many sporadic things happening. The creatures were barely visible so it didn't make the scene as scary.

**Splice (2009):** Two rebellious scientists are told by their employers to halt groundbreaking work that has seen them produce new creatures with medical benefits by splicing together multiple organisms' DNA. They decide to secretly continue their work, but this time splicing in human DNA.

**Describe the scene from Splice:** Two scientists create some sort of creature and when the creatures tries to break out of the thing everything starts going wrong and the lady scientist almost dies in the process.

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What made the scene scary to you (if you found it to be scary): This scene also wasn't very scary because even though the last part of the scene where the creature escapes and is creepy looking nothing really happens where your heart starts racing.