

Fear and Loathing at the Cineplex: Gender Differences in Descriptions and Perceptions of Slasher Films

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This study investigates gender-specific descriptions and perceptions of slasher films. Sixty Euro-American university students (30 males and 30 females) were asked to recount in a written survey the details of the most memorable slasher film they remember watching and describe the emotional reactions evoked by that film. A text analysis approach was used to examine and interpret informant responses. Males recall a high percentage of descriptive images associated with what is called rural terror, a concept tied to fear of strangers and rural landscapes, whereas females display a greater fear of family terror, which includes themes of betrayed intimacy, stalkings, and spiritual possession. It is found that females report a higher level and a greater number of fear reactions than males, who report more anger and frustration responses. Gender-specific fears as personalized through slasher film recall are discussed with relation to socialization practices and power-control theory.

The Texas Chainsaw Massacre scared me to death. It was intensely unpleasant, even though it's a cheap splatter flick about some teenagers who get slaughtered by some deranged lunatics in rural Texas somewhere. I guess the most freaky thing about the movie is all the screaming. The one girl who barely escapes the chainsaw guy screams all throughout the movie. She is terrorized unrelentlessly, and after a series of close calls with the chainsaw she is finally rescued by a trucker. I was drained after seeing that film. The gore and graphic violence made me feel awful—almost guilty—for watching it.

—Participant No. 102, male undergraduate

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INTRODUCTION

As described above, Tobe Hooper's *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is a notoriously violent and profoundly disturbing horror film. Many have credited the 1974 release for launching a new genre in American cinema known as "slasher" or "splatter" films. In Carol Clover's horror film analysis *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, the slasher movie is defined as "the immensely generative story of a psychokiller who slashes to death a string of mostly female victims, one by one until he is subdued or killed, usually by the one girl who has survived"³ (1992, p. 21). Indeed, Hooper's *Massacre* provided a template for a number of entries into the slasher hall of fame, most notably John Carpenter's smash *Halloween* and Sean Cunningham's *Friday the 13th*. However, the production of successively inferior sequels caused the genre to deteriorate by the late 1980s, although slasher films are presently experiencing a revival in popular appeal. It is precisely this appeal that has motivated studies of the emotional effects of slasher violence and commentaries on the cultural subtext of slasher film storylines.⁴

The significance of gender within the slasher genre has captured the attention of a few social scientists and film scholars (e.g., Grant, 1996; Clover, 1992, 1996; Pinedo, 1997). Clover (1996) and Pinedo (1997) offer insightful analyses of the politics of emotions and the construction of sexual and bodily metaphors in contemporary slasher films. From a psychological perspective, hypergraphic films are important because they evoke a variety of responses in viewers. Zillman *et al.* (1986) determined that male and female enjoyment of horror films is a function of moviegoers' level of attraction to companions of the opposite gender. Mundorf, Weaver, and Zillmann (1989) measured college students' emotional responses to slasher films, and concluded that females enjoy horror significantly less than males, who are both bored and entertained more frequently than females by slasher gore. Inquiry into the personality characteristics of regular slasher film viewers has found the presence of the Machiavellian trait of deceit, an affective preference for graphic violence, and, among male subjects, a preference for pornography (Tamborini, Stiff, & Zillman 1987).

Helpful as these studies may be toward understanding gender perceptions and attitudes toward depictions of slasher violence, scholars of the genre tend to lump informant responses into a limited set of emotional

³However, in a content analysis of slasher film victims, Cowan and O'Brien (1990) discovered that males are just as likely as females to die at the hands of a killer. Clover's definition is used here because it mirrors the popular conception and understanding of the genre.

⁴Sociological treatment of the slasher genre has interpreted films such as *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* and *Friday the 13th* as portrayals of the breakdown of the community (Crane, 1994) and the apocalypse, or "end-time," of American society (Sharrett, 1984).

response categories. For example, Mundorf, Weaver, and Zillmann (1989) limited their response set to *fright*, *boredom*, and *enjoyment*. Viewers of slasher films exhibit a much broader range of significant psychological and emotional reactions that have yet to be identified. Furthermore, what is essentially absent from the literature is a qualitative evaluation of the types of slasher images that elicit these reactions among spectators. For example, what kinds of motifs carry special perceptual and emotional significance for viewers, and how do these motifs differ for men and women?

An examination of criminal victimization statistics may help explain how fear is socially constructed for males and females. In 1996, the US Bureau of Justice reported that males were significantly more likely than females to suffer victimization at the hands of strangers than at the hands of acquaintances. Conversely, females were victimized more frequently by acquaintances and family members. Sacco (1990) and Perloff (1983) suggest that victimization patterns play a role in engendering perceptions of fear and vulnerability. Other work by social psychologists suggests that women are more fearful than men because they perceive themselves to be at greater risk of danger and are less confident of their ability to protect themselves in the event of an attack (e.g., Gordon & Riger, 1989). Thus, it is postulated that the threat of vulnerability and the fear of being violently victimized are personalized quite differently for males and females.

The goal of this study is to identify the perceptual and emotional effects that slasher films exert on both male and female viewers. Rather than attempt to interpret the cultural subtext contained within slasher films, this exploratory project seeks to analyze which slasher themes are deemed psychologically salient by male and female participants. It is postulated that the victimization and fear response patterns outlined above will manifest themselves in the subjects' descriptive recall of slasher films, given the propensity for individuals to project themselves into the action onscreen (e.g., Pinedo, 1997). In general, it is expected that (1) males will exhibit a greater fear of violence associated with strangers, (2) males will report fewer fear emotions than females, (3) females will display a greater fear of violence associated with intimacy, and (4) females should describe more fear responses than males.

RESEARCH METHODS

Two kinds of data were collected from 60 Euro-American college students (30 males and 30 females) enrolled at the University of Missouri. First, participants were asked to name and describe in detail the singular

Table I. Slasher Films Named and Described by Participants ($N = 60$)

<i>Halloween</i> (9)	<i>Carrie</i> (1)
<i>The Texas Chainsaw Massacre</i> (4)	<i>The Vanishing</i> (1)
<i>Scream</i> (4)	<i>Hellraiser</i> (1)
<i>Psycho</i> (4)	<i>The Hitcher</i> (1)
<i>Friday the 13th Part I</i> (4)	<i>I Spit on Your Grave</i> (1)
<i>The Shinning</i> (3)	<i>Seven</i> (1)
<i>Children of the Corn</i> (3)	<i>The Omen</i> (1)
<i>Kiss the Girls</i> (2)	<i>The Kiss</i> (1)
<i>Silence of the Lambs</i> (2)	<i>It</i> (1)
<i>Pet Cemetary</i> (2)	<i>Pumpkinhead</i> (1)
<i>Deliverance</i> (2)	<i>Cujo</i> (1)
<i>Copycat</i> (2)	<i>Happy Birthday to Me</i> (1)
<i>Wishmaster</i> (1)	<i>The Fog</i> (1)
<i>Phantasm</i> (1)	<i>Friday the 13th, Part III</i> (1)
<i>Misery</i> (1)	<i>Unidentified</i> (2)

most frightening slasher film they could recall.⁵ To assure that all the participants described the same kinds of films, Clover's (1992) definition of the genre was provided on the survey protocol. Second, participants were asked to describe the emotional reactions they remember experiencing while watching that film. In all, the participants described 29 different slasher films (Table I). Two participants were unable to identify the name of the film they described.

Word counts and semantic network analysis were used to identify, compare, and interpret themes from the two data sets (see Bernard & Ryan, 1998, for reviews of these techniques). Word counts have long been used in mass media studies (de Sola Pool, 1952; Danielson & Lasorsa, 1997) and are useful for discovering patterns of ideas in any body of text and making comparisons between groups. For example, Ryan and Weisner (1998) used word counts to compare mothers' and fathers' descriptions of their children. By examining how often words were mentioned, they found that mothers expressed more concern over interpersonal issues, whereas fathers appeared to prioritize achievement-oriented and individualistic issues.

Semantic network analysis searches for patterns in texts by examining the relationships among the words (Osgood, 1959; Danowski, 1982, 1993; Barnett & Danowski, 1992). Typically, this is done by first identifying key words (often the most frequently mentioned), then counting the number

⁵Most of our participants reported in their descriptions that the movies they recalled were seen recently at a movie theatre. However, some of the participants who described older slasher films (e.g., *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Halloween*) indicated that these movies were watched on videotape or cable television. As indicated by an anonymous reviewer, the duration of the time lapse between viewing the film and recalling the film is likely to effect how participants reconstruct their descriptions. This, however, lay beyond the scope of our paper.

of times participants use each word. The data are stored in an informant-by-word matrix, which can be analyzed with multidimensional scaling, cluster analysis, and correspondence analysis.

For example, Jang and Barnett (1994) used semantic network analysis to see if U.S. and Japanese CEOs had discernible national business cultures. They identified the 94 words that CEOs of 18 U.S. and 17 Japanese corporations used most often in annual letters to stockholders. (They ignored a list of common words like *the*, *because*, *if*, etc.) They then counted the times that the 94 key words occurred in each letter and stored the results in a 94 (word) \times 35 (company) matrix. To assess the similarity among companies, they created a 35 (company) \times 35 (company) matrix and analyzed it with multidimensional scaling. The analysis clearly separated Japanese and American companies. Jang and Barnett used correspondence analysis to get a better feel for how companies' constructs were related. This analysis suggests that U.S. executives were more likely to discuss financial information and the structure of their organizations, whereas Japanese executives focused more on organizational operations.

Word counts and semantic network analysis considers neither the context in which the words occur nor whether people use words negatively or positively. These analyses, however, can help identify important constructs and provide data for systematic comparisons across groups (Weisner & Ryan, 1998; Bernard & Ryan, 1998).

For this study, a list of words used in participants' film descriptions was first generated. After eliminating common words, the most frequently mentioned descriptive nouns, verbs, and adjectives that had occurred at least three times were selected. From this list, words like *movie*, *watched*, and *remember* were eliminated because they refer to the act of viewing the film rather than to the description of the film itself. Words with similar meaning (such as *rape* and *raped* and *violent* and *violence*) were also merged into single entities. In all, a list of 40 key word forms was generated.⁶

Next, a 40 (word) \times 60 (informant) matrix was created to show which participant mentioned each word. From this matrix, separate word frequency listings were calculated for men and women. To see whether the degree to which men and women overlapped in their overall descriptions, a 60 (informant) \times 60 (informant) similarity matrix was created based on the degree to which participants matched in their word use. The similarities among participants were then plotted with multidimensional scaling (Kruskal & Wish, 1978). These data were also examined using correspondence analysis to examine the general relationships between words and

⁶The descriptive word list includes those that were mentioned at least four times in total, independent of the number of participants mentioning each word.

Table II. Frequency of Mention of Descriptive Image Words for Men and Women (N = 60)

Words	Total		Males		Females		Difference Men-Women
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	
Teenagers	10	16.7	10	33.3	0	0.0	33.3
Violent/ce	10	16.7	9	30.0	1	3.3	26.7
Disturbing	20	33.3	14	46.7	6	20.0	26.7
Rural	6	10.0	6	20.0	0	0.0	20.0
Dark	8	13.3	7	23.3	1	3.3	20.0
Tension	6	10.0	6	20.0	0	0.0	20.0
Country	4	6.7	4	13.3	0	0.0	13.3
Blood/y	9	15.0	6	20.0	3	10.0	10.0
Chainsaw	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0
Hillbillies	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0
Sickening	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0
Texas	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0
Killer	12	20.0	7	23.3	5	16.7	6.7
Horrible	6	10.0	4	13.3	2	6.7	6.7
Rape/d	6	10.0	4	13.3	2	6.7	6.7
City	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7
Death	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7
Massacre	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7

Kid	3	5.0	2	6.7	1	3.3	3.3
Night	3	5.0	2	6.7	1	3.3	3.3
Scary	13	21.7	7	23.2	6	20.0	3.3
Kidnapped	4	6.7	2	6.7	2	6.7	0.0
Children	9	15.0	4	13.3	5	16.7	-3.3
Pretty	5	8.3	2	6.7	3	10.0	-3.3
Woman	5	8.3	2	6.7	3	10.0	-3.3
Far	3	5.0	1	3.3	2	6.7	-3.3
Parents	3	5.0	1	3.3	2	6.7	-3.3
Religious	4	6.7	1	3.3	3	10.0	-6.7
Victims	4	6.7	1	3.3	3	10.0	-6.7
Girl/s	15	25.0	6	20.0	9	30.0	-10.0
Frightening	11	18.3	4	13.3	7	23.3	-10.0
Terrible	7	11.7	2	6.7	5	16.7	-10.0
Father	4	6.7	0	0.0	4	13.3	-13.3
Horror	15	25.0	5	16.7	10	33.3	-16.7
Evil	13	21.7	4	13.3	9	30.0	-16.7
Devil	5	8.3	0	0.0	5	16.7	-16.7
Young	12	20.0	3	10.0	9	30.0	-20.0
Little	8	13.3	1	3.3	7	23.3	-20.0
Boy	6	10.0	0	0.0	6	20.0	-20.0
Possessed/ion	6	10.0	0	0.0	6	20.0	-20.0

people. Correspondence graphically displays the relationships between row and column variables (in this case, words and participants) in the same space (Weller & Romney, 1988; Johnson & Griffith, 1998). Similar procedures were followed to analyze the emotional response data.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of Descriptive Image Words

Table II shows the frequency of mention for the 40 key words used in the film descriptions. Only words mentioned by at least three participants are included. Men were slightly, although not significantly, more verbose in describing memorable slasher images than are women. Men averaged 22.8 words per description compared to 20.4 words per description for women. The most common words among both groups mentioned were *disturbing*, *horror*, *girls*, *evil*, *scary*, *killer*, and *young*. To better compare the males' and females' descriptions, we have ordered the words in the table based on the magnitude of difference between their frequencies. The words at the top of the table were used more by men, those in the middle were used by both men and women, and those at the bottom were used more by women.

As shown in Table II, there is considerable gender overlap in terms of descriptive image words used. Take, for instance, the frequency of terms associated with youth and adolescence: *children*, *kid*, *girl*, and *young* are salient image terms for both males and females. These data suggest that many of the most unforgettable images in slasher violence are those in which teens and kids are either the targets or agents of terror. In a psychoanalytic reading of the horror genre, Wood (1984, p. 167) comments that the sexual repression of children and adolescents is a core concept in horror films that assumes "different forms from infancy, through 'latency' and puberty, and into adolescence—the process moving, indeed, from repression to oppression, from the denial or the infant's nature as a sexual being to the veto on the expression of sexuality before marriage." As Wood suggests, slasher films derive much thematic motivation by exploiting the tension surrounding the interplay between youth and sexual curiosity. Underlying numerous splatter films is the message that torture and death are the punishments for being young and sexually curious. The considerable male and female recognition of this disturbing slasher commentary is evident through the descriptive word use patterns.

Closely related to the theme of repressed adolescent sexuality is the concept of "family horror" (Williams, 1996). According to Williams, films

depicting family horror “serve as allegories. . . . stressing vulnerabilities to parents, the adult world, and monstrous punitive avatars.” (p. 173). In our study, females tend to recall more images associated with horrors in the home, in which the attackers range from sadistic mothers (e.g., *The Kiss*) and psychotic fathers (e.g., *The Shining*) to the murderous products of dysfunctional families (e.g., *Psycho*, *Friday the 13th*, *Halloween*). The words *father*, *boy*, *little*, and *parents* are good examples on Table II. When the killings occur inside the confines of the home, a sense of intimacy is destroyed within the family (Ingebretsen, 1998). In contemporary American culture, females are more involved in maintaining intimacy in family affairs and kinship activities (Poggie & Pelto, 1969), which may explain the female tendency to react to images of family terror.

In addition, females are more cognizant of an additional subtheme within the slasher genre: spiritual or demonic possession. Occult films generally depict women and men as equally vulnerable to spiritual possession, with women emerging as “restored” and men “reconstructed” via the process of exorcism (Clover, 1992). Clover (1992) also asserts that the emotional component of these films, like the concept of the paranormal, is feminine in character. Thus, female receptivity to images of possession in the horror and slasher genres probably stems from the cultural association between femininity and the occult. Females are also clearly responsive to occult-film images in which children are cast as the aggressors. Sobchack (1996) posits that children have played socially important roles as villains in the dramatization of family terror onscreen (for example, in *The Exorcist*, *The Omen*, and *Children of the Corn*, it is children who are or become possessed). Bordering on the taboo, horror films are not above characterizing children as the perpetrators of murder and evil, in which betrayed intimacy assumes the form of negating the bond between parent and child, and more dramatically, between mother and infant.

Unique to the males’ descriptive image word list is an interesting theme not immediately associated with slasher films—a terror of rural people and places. The word *rural* was in fact mentioned by 6 of the 30 males in the sample. *Country* and *hillbillies* are other salient terms occurring exclusively in male descriptions. In an essay on representations of the rural idyll in American film, Bell (1997) affirms that slasher films generate tension by exploiting the city/country dichotomy. Slasher films often portray the rural American landscape as a bleak and dangerous place, inhabited by uncivilized humans (e.g., *Friday the Thirteenth*, *The Hills Have Eyes*) and malevolent animal-monsters (e.g., *Cujo*, *Pumpkinhead*). According to Bell (1997, p. 98), the rural backwoods is a place where “local patriotism merges into xenophobia,” such that “strangers are not merely avoided, but erased.” Clover (1992, p. 124) labels this fear *urbanoia*, and affirms that “going from

city to country in horror film is in any case very much like going from village to deep, dark forest in traditional fairy tales.”

That urbania is more apparent to males than females is not surprising. Recall the fact that males are more likely to be victimized (e.g., robbed, assaulted, murdered) by *strangers*, not by family members or acquaintances. For the adventuresome male who goes exploring the frontier, civility gives way to a wilder backwoods populated by strangers who are often stereotyped as hostile to outsiders. Although criminal violence is commonplace in the city, it becomes strangely darker and more dreadful when transplanted to the country, where protective urban law no longer applies. Clover (1992, p. 132) explains that “much of the ambient horror of these films resides in the fact that statelessness—our collective past—is not dead and buried but is just a car ride away.” It is here, in what Bell (1997, p. 98) calls the “sordid underbelly of America,” where the aggressor is surely lurking in the minds of male moviegoers.

So how different are men and women overall? Figure 1 shows the multidimensional scaling of male and female responses based on the degree to which they used the same words in their descriptions. Clearly, the males in the upper left are different from the females in the lower right quadrant. Likewise, however, there is a fair amount of overlap between the two groups, with many of the participants clustering in the middle.⁷

So who are these people? Figure 2 shows the results of a correspondence analysis that plots the relationships between words and participants. On the right side, the terms *young, evil, devil, possessed/ion, priest, and parents* are highly concentrated around a group of females, suggesting a strong association between female participants and words that reflect convergent images of family terror, occult, and possession. The concept of rural terror is coded by words at the top of the display including *rural, killer, country, city, massacre, and teenager*. With one or two exceptions, this conceptual zone is occupied by male participants, whose descriptions reflect the genre’s tendency to cast youthful characters as the targets of rural attackers (e.g., *Friday the 13th, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*). Trailing down the lower left side of the plot are the words *hillbillies, horrible, pretty, woman, and rape/d* alongside a number of male and a couple of female participants. These words are considered a semantic extension of the rural terror theme, and appear to reflect what Clover (1992) calls the

⁷Although our focus here is the difference between men’s and women’s responses, the overlap in word use is of considerable interest and should not be overlooked. One might interpret the pattern displayed in Fig. 1 as evidence that men and women are just as similar as they are different their responses. For example, Lorber and Farrell (1990) emphasize the inherent similarities between women and men, arguing that the grafting of gender categories to individuals from birth is what ultimately accounts for the differences observed in men’s and women’s behaviors and attitudes.

“rape–revenge” motif in slasher films. Rape–revenge films frequently pit “country” rapists against hapless “city” victims, and the subgenre does not adhere to strict gender rules in the depiction of these victims. In the infamous *Deliverance* rape scene, a male is victimized, whereas *I Spit on Your Grave* graphically portrays the gang rape of a woman (although both victims in these cases are city dwellers). The variation in the rape victim’s sex may explain why both male and female participants are clustered around the words associated with the rape–revenge motif.

Analysis of Emotion Response Words

To further investigate the gender differentiation regarding responses to slasher films, the words used to describe the emotional effects of slasher films are now examined. Table III compares the words used most frequently by males and females in these descriptions. Although a total of 73 emotion words were tabulated for males and 110 were counted for females, only those words used by two or more participants are listed. Interestingly, there is relatively little overlap between the two lists. A comparison of some of the most salient words for males (e.g., *shocked*, *angry*, *helpless*, *agitated*, *frustrated*) to those used by females (e.g., *nervous*, *vulnerable*, *horrified*,

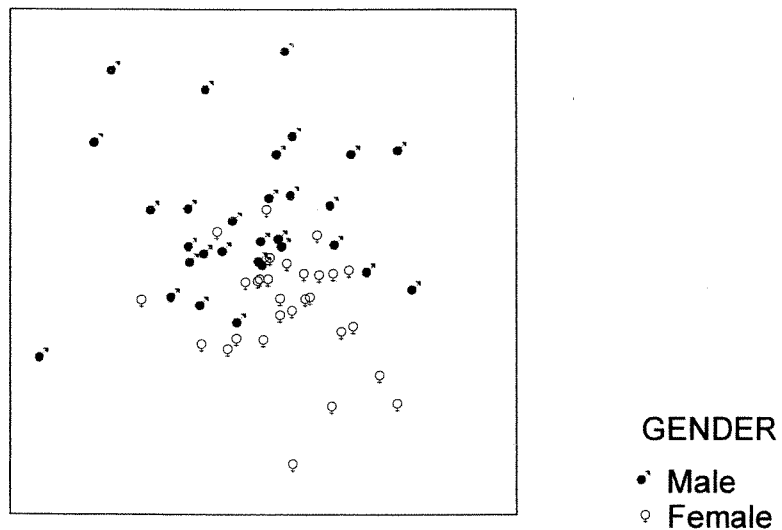


Fig. 1. Multidimensional scaling of informant-by-informant similarities from film descriptions (N = 60).



Fig. 2. Correspondence analysis of word-by-informant matrix (N = 60).

exposed, betrayed) clearly indicates gender differences in emotional responses to watching slasher films. Females tend to display the kinds of classic fear reactions most likely intended by the creators of slasher movies, who tend to portray women as the terrorized victims of unmitigated aggression. Clover (1996, p. 96) reminds us that “abject terror . . . is gendered feminine” and that this response represents “the essence of modern horror.” The women who populate slasher films are often subjected to emotional entrapment that assumes a number of forms ranging from intimate stalking to demonic possession. Not surprisingly, many of the females’ emotion descriptions mirror this sense of entrapment experienced by the female protagonists in slasher films. Words such as *vulnerable, trapped*, and

alone reflect the overt terror enacted by the female characters onscreen and, through projection, by the female spectators in the audience.

Males in the study report a general uneasiness or disquietude in response to watching slasher violence, but unlike the females, are disinclined to express fear directly. *Disturbed*, *anxious*, and *uneasy* are far more common than words such as *horrified* and *appalled*. If males are socialized to control their fear reactions, it appears that fear per se is substituted by feelings of agitation and frustration in the context of slasher-film viewing. In slasher films, it is usually the male, not the female, who is afforded the expression of rage and anger in the action onscreen, whether he is portrayed as the victim or the aggressor. This may account for the pattern of male emotion responses observed in the analysis. Both Pinedo (1997) and Clover (1992) challenge the assumption that male viewers of slasher films are unsympathetic (to female terror), and posit that males are more likely to identify with the surviving heroine, or "final girl" (Clover, 1992).

Another useful framework for interpreting these response patterns is found in power-control theory (Hagan, Gillis, & Simpson 1985; Hagan, 1987). In brief, power-control theory claims there is an engendered division between formal and informal control process in industrial societies, whereby males are associated with the former and females the latter (see Sacco, 1990, for a concise summation of the theory). Through the stratification of social power in society, males have become more instrumental in controlling the formal domain of production, including the justice system, whereas females are more instrumental in controlling the informal domestic domain of consumption, including the family and household. Indeed, Sacco (1990) recognizes the greater fear among females of being victimized and attacked. Sacco relates this increased sense of vulnerability to power-control theory, in which "variations in both fear and victimization are rooted in gender differences in family socialization into risk taking" (1990, p. 495). Conversely, the anger and frustration males describe in response to watching slasher-film violence may also be linked to power-control theory, which locates males as the executioners and subjects of an industrialized justice system. Accordingly, the frustration expressed by males may be seen as a behavioral extension of the engendered responsibility to bring justice to the criminal, the heinous slasher himself.

CONCLUSION

This study shows that men and women report different perceptual and emotional reactions to slasher films. Among men, there is a propensity to identify images of rural terror in describing the slasher antagonist as part

Table III. Frequency of Mention of Descriptive Emotion Words for Men and Women ($N = 60$)

Words	Total		Males		Females		Difference	
	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Frequency	Percent	Men-Women	
Shocked	4	6.7	4	13.3	0	0.0	13.3	
Angry	5	8.3	4	13.3	1	3.3	10.0	
Disturbed	5	8.3	4	13.3	1	3.3	10.0	
Helpless	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0	
Intrigued	3	5.0	3	10.0	0	0.0	10.0	
Terrified	5	8.3	4	13.3	1	3.3	10.0	
Agitated	2	3.3	2	6.7	0	0.0	6.7	
Fascinated	2	3.3	2	6.7	0	0.0	6.7	
Anxious	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7	
Sickened	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7	
Uneasy	4	6.7	3	10.0	1	3.3	6.7	
Disgusted	7	11.7	4	13.3	3	10.0	3.3	
Frustrated	3	5.0	2	6.7	1	3.3	3.3	
Frightened	5	8.3	3	10.0	2	6.7	3.3	
Awful	2	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0.0	
Claustrophobic	4	6.7	2	6.7	2	6.7	0.0	
Dread	2	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0.0	
Involved	2	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0.0	

Scared	4	6.7	2	6.7	2	6.7	2	6.7	0.0
Tense	6	10.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	0.0
Unsettled	2	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0.0
Upset	2	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	1	3.3	0.0
Offended	3	5.0	1	3.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	-3.3
Panic	3	5.0	1	3.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	-3.3
Troubled	3	5.0	1	3.3	2	6.7	2	6.7	-3.3
Excited	4	6.7	1	3.3	3	10.0	3	10.0	-6.7
Paranoid	4	6.7	1	3.3	3	10.0	3	10.0	-6.7
Appalled	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Betrayed	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Exposed	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Horrified	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Repulsed	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Worried	2	3.3	0	0.0	2	6.7	2	6.7	-6.7
Uncomfortable	7	11.7	2	6.7	5	16.7	5	16.7	-10.0
Overwhelmed	3	5.0	0	0.0	3	10.0	3	10.0	-10.0
Alone	4	6.7	0	0.0	4	13.3	4	13.3	-13.3
Trapped	4	6.7	0	0.0	4	13.3	4	13.3	-13.3
Vulnerable	4	6.7	0	0.0	4	13.3	4	13.3	-13.3
Nervous	5	8.3	0	0.0	5	16.7	5	16.7	-16.7

of a menacing and unfamiliar landscape. This pattern is consistent with the hypothesis that men fear strangers and unfamiliar assailants. Women in the study display a greater fear of images connected with family terror and demonic possession, the latter of which is often contextualized in the home against the backdrop of "the familiar." This observation supports the hypothesis that women's descriptions of slasher films mirror their fears of crises associated with domesticity and intimacy. The findings also suggest that women experience more abject fear when viewing slasher films than do men, which is explained in terms of gender victimization patterns on-screen and through women's perceptions of vulnerability as outlined in power-control theory. Men's responses to slasher horror are characterized largely by feelings of anger and frustration, an emotional consequence also linked to power-control theory, in which an active response to the visualization of violent victimization is realized.

While relatively neglected in gender role research, slasher films are laden with social messages and commentary on cultural behavior patterns. Although these messages are subject to much scrutiny by critics of popular culture, slasher films provide useful vehicles for understanding how gender roles mediate the reconstruction and interpretation of graphic violence by male and female audiences.

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