The Interrelationships among Personality Traits, Cultivation Effect, and Perceptions of Media Violence & the Enjoyment of Horror Films

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Abstract

The current study set out to examine the relationships among personality traits, perceptions of media violence, cultivation and enjoyment of horror films. Firstly, temperament was found to account for 7% of the variance in horror film liking; however, there were no significant findings relating temperament to the consumption of horror films. There was no significant relationship between neuroticism and cultivation effect in any subcategory as well. In addition, it was found that enjoyment and consumption of horror films was not significantly related to cultivation effects. Also, it was found that there was not a significant relationship between liking of horror films and the submeasures of perceptions of media violence (constructions of reality and embedded values about violence). However, there was a weak yet significant positive relationship found between horror film liking and social responsibility of portrayal as well as responses of audience members. Lastly, there was no difference found between males and females in their perceptions of media violence or cultivation effect.

Keywords: Horror Films, Temperament, Cultivation Effects, Media Violence
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There is no explanation for the particular styling of a person’s taste in film genre. However, what can be said for certain is that in this day and age the genre of horror films is a powerful force on the big screen. These movies have become a mainstay in the United States; horror films such as Jaws have been able to gross over 330 million dollars (Tomalin, 2000) validating them as an important market and genre. Still there are many questions to be answered about horror films, among the most prominent being why it is we enjoy slasher, basher, beating, and murderous plots upon the movie screen and how this affects us as humans. The drive to achieve these goals through horror films may be attributed to several characteristics associated with the defined personality traits of Eysenck of psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism (Krcmat & Kean, 2005).

These internal relationships that are theorized as the causes of horror movie viewing and enjoyment are not the only area of study. The effects of violence and horror films are seen in both the perceptions of violence within the film industry and in the real world as well. Perception of violence is categorized as the sense associated with an overt expression of physical force against self or other, compelling action against one’s will on pain of being hurt by Gerbner and Gross (1994). This area of research relates exposure to the perception of violence to likeability of horror films. Aside from the shift in perception of media violence, there is also a shift in the perception of actual societal issues. George Gerbner’s (1986) development of the cultivation theory defines cultivation as “the independent contributions television viewing makes viewer conceptions of social reality” (p.23). These measurements of personality traits, horror film enjoyment, perceptions of media violence, and cultivation effect demonstrate a clear
Horror Films relationship between causes for exposure and effects of exposure to violent media. The current study is concerned with an individual’s prominent personality traits, enjoyment of horror films, perceptions of media violence and possible cultivation effect. To begin this investigation, the following scholarly review will focus on the research of Eysenck’s personality traits, perceptions of media violence, and cultivation theory.

**Review of Literature**

**Personality Traits**

There are different ways in which men and women are taught as well as expected to behave. Most individuals believe that men are more likely to see action movies and women are more likely to see romantic comedies. This is the idea that men and women both seek social interaction but from different media sources. The consideration of individual traits impacting a person’s perception of films has been researched. Eysenck (1985) has argued that the traits known as extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism “really embody the three ways in which individuals interact” (p.14). Extraversion captures sociability, neuroticism captures fearful avoidance, and psychoticism captures hostility and aggression (Eysenck, 1960). Researchers have found these factors to be associated with media preferences (Weaver, 2000; Zuckerman & Little, 1986). Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism are thought to affect an individual’s behavior as well as interacting together to shape media behavior. Also, traits can be known as constructs which are inferred from behavior (Eysenck, 1982).

Previous work investigating personality as an antecedent of media use has tended to evaluate consumption of particular media genres (Weaver, 1991, 2000, 2003) or, less frequently, use of particular media (Finn, 1997). The product variables that are considered in the analysis consist of both of these elements. Focusing on media exposures as well as genre preferences
Horror Films allows one to consider the impact of genre content while also factoring out variation in exposure that is due to the medium (Hall, 2005). Individual differences are thought to be the result of variation in the sensitivity or reactivity of these physiological systems (Beatty & McCroskey, 2001; Gray, 1991).

Previous research has found psychoticism to be associated with enjoyment or exposure to several media genres that are often seen as transgressive, including horror movies (Weaver, 1991), violent cartoons (Aluja-Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998), and an unwillingness for tragedy films (Weaver, 1993), which was more set on female results then men. An example of this research is when Zillmann and Weaver (1997) found that the influence on violent films varied according to the gender and psychoticism level of the participants so that males who were high in psychoticism were the most likely to be affected. Since specific media genres offer different satisfactory opportunities, it can be said that both the use of a particular media and the preference for a specific media genre within a media can be sensitive to audience members’ personality attributes. Weaver’s (2000) findings support this suggestion. He transformed his participant’s score on Eysenck’s personality scales into discrete personality types and ascertained whether those with different dominant personality characteristics varied in their motives for using specific media.

The conceptualization for the personality trait of extraversion suggests that those who are in high extraversion will expose themselves to media, such as movies, that are consumed in social settings more frequently than will those low in extraversion (Hall, 2005). The personality trait of extraversion also suggests that it will be associated with preferences for media genres that have social utility. Male and females will most likely react differently to specific types of genres but, the idea of finding out how and why is creative. Zuckerman and Little (1986) found
extraversion to be associated with exposure to horror movies among female viewers. This finding is consistent with the conceptualization of Extraversion in that one of the functions of horror films is to allow audiences to enact gender-role expectations (Hall, 2005). Whereas men get pleasure from displaying mastery over the content by appearing unafraid, women gain a higher proportion of their gratifications from the social pleasure of attending with others (Tamborini, 1991; Zillmann, Weaver, Mundorf, & Aust, 1986). This type of so-called pleasure may be, for the most part, more important to female extraverts.

Neuroticism also plays a role in selecting the type of media audience members choose. Those who are high in neuroticism are particularly likely to feel affected by violent or disturbing media content (Hall, 2005). Viewers with high neuroticism scores have been found to rate specific media texts as more violent and more frightening than those with lower scores (Gunter, 1958). Neuroticism has also been found to be associated negatively with recall of violent news stories (Gunter & Furnham, 1986), which suggests that violent images are more disruptive to memory processing among those high in this personal dimension. Neurotics may be more likely to avoid a disturbing matter because they are extremely bothered by this type of viewing. As we can see from previous studies, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism all contribute to specific preferences in both males and females in regards to media genres, more importantly, horror films. Personality as an antecedent of media use has tended to evaluate consumption of particular media genres (Weaver, 1991, 2000, 2003). Audience, as well as media factors, that contribute to the impact of personality traits will vary depending on the trait.

The idea that cultivation effects are somewhat dependent on personality traits has been brought up in several studies. "Personality traits represent internal factors that affect one’s
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unique life history and social encounters and, therefore, promote chronic construct accessibility” (Eysenck, 1990, p. 245).

Personality traits are likely to influence an individual’s opinions and attitudes, thought process, behavior and experiences. The proposal that personality traits might obstruct the cultivation process has been brought up by researchers. The cultivation theory emphasizes on the fact that ordinary conceptions of violence effects the perceptions of real-world occurrences which can be portrayed through certain traits.

According to Eysenck (1990), “personality is a hierarchal structure comprised of single and habitual cognitions or acts, dimensions or patterns of thoughts and feelings, and inter-correlations between traits” (p. 250). Genetics can be categorized as governing personality traits due to the fact that personality traits are most commonly known to be lasting and long-term. The display of threatening and violent media is known to result in negative feelings. “Generally speaking, those high in neuroticism exhibit biases towards negative, dangerous thoughts; experience more stress; and tend to have lower life satisfaction than low neurotics” (Matthews et al., 2003, p. ). This idea connects to the fact that neuroticism is linked to emotional instability. On the other hand, the personality trait of psychoticism seeks for violence and violent situations. This may lead to aggressive, violent, and hostile behavior. Weaver (1991) found that “high psychotics prefer violent horror movies and they found the violence to be more enjoyable, interesting, and humorous than low psychotics” (Bruggemann & Barry, 2002, p. 335). Sensation seeking individuals seek for new adventure, experiences, and activities that can be related to dangerous means. Sensation seeking and extraversion can be categorized together. Within the broader personality dimension of extraversion, media researchers have emphasized the trait of sensation seeking particularly in studies of media violence (Hall, 2005). “Sensation
seeking is a biologically based personality that represents the need for varied, novel, and complex sensations and experiences and the willingness to take physical and social risks for the sake of such experiences” (Zuckerman, 1979, p.10). Due to the fact that sensation seekers are known to have aggressive traits and violent outbursts, high sensation seekers might have aggression and violence-related constructs chronically accessible and low sensation seekers have danger-related constructs chronically accessible (Hall, 2005). With the information given here, it is identifiable that high, not low, sensation seekers are more prone to violence-related cultivation effects. High sensation seekers seem to prefer media messages with high sensation value (Stephenson & Palmgreen, 2001) and they also seek out and enjoy horror films (Zuckerman & Litle, 1986). In conclusion, the introductory idea that cultivation effects are somewhat dependent on personality traits can be a supported by evidence.

Males and females have different individual characteristics that mediate the impact of media exposure. The idea of viewer aggression along with the liking of violent genres differs in both males and females which can be clearly linked to personality traits. Gender is an important demographic factor to consider in the study of media uses and effects. Gender can influence the uses and effects of television violence (Alexander, 1985; Atkin, 1983; Cantor & Nathanson, 1997; Scharrer, 2001; Wilson & Weiss, 1993). Research has suggested that boys are more interested in and more regular views of violent television fare than are girls (Atkin, 1979; Cantor & Nathanson, 1997). Males tend to be more aggressive than females. Research can be conducted in comparing the relationship between personality traits and media exposure, the different types of media, viewing motives, and content. These ideas are related to the uses and gratifications attempts that are used to examine how and why audiences are motivated to
Horror Films consume certain kinds of media. In doing this type of research, personality characteristics such as; openness, experience, and sensation seeking, can and should be measured.

In relation to the three personality traits involved in Eysenck’s research, neuroticism, extraversion, and psychoticism relationships between these traits and the liking and viewing of violent media are revealed. As mentioned before, neurotics tend to have anxiety, are typically nervous and worried, and observe what is going on in the environment through exposure to media. Neurotics are likely to be positively related to concern with the future, with one’s own safety, and with worry about potential negative outcomes (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). Since the idea that those high in neuroticism are likely to so-call “survey” the environment through media, it can be said that “because violent depictions may provide information, real or imagined, concerning the prevalence of danger, criminal acts, and environmental risk” (Krcmar & Kean, 2005, p. 399), neurotics would watch violent television for purposes of surveillance (Eysenck, 1960).

Extraverts are connected to activities that involve social interaction. These individual may seek to satisfy certain needs, perhaps social needs, through media use (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). Extraverts are known to attend movies whether it’s for social pleasure or a group activity, but it is possible that they may not enjoy violent movies. Krcmar and Greene (1999) found that experience seeking, or interest in novel experiences, are actually negatively related to interest in some forms of television violence. With this concept in mind, it is likely that extraversion will be negatively related to enjoyment of media violence (Krcmar & Kean, 2005).

Individuals are characterized to purposely use the media and perception of media to satisfy specific needs or desires. This idea can contribute to the fact that each individual has different traits that play a role in perceiving media and more specifically, violence. Traits are
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factors in this area as well as the thought of gender. To connect all of these ideas together, it is said that men are more physically and verbally aggressive than women and spend significantly more time watching violent programs (Krcmar & Kean, 2005). This collaborates with the proposal of the fact that females are less likely than men to be aggressive or antisocial after watching media violence (Hearold, 1986), and less likely to be aggressive in general (Harris 1996).

Numerous amounts of research have taken place due to the Eysenck’s theory of personality traits. Different researchers have a variety of meanings for personality. According to Watson (1930), personality is “the sum of activities that can be discovered by actual observation over a long period of time to give reliable information (Eysenck, 1960). But as an example of the dynamic type of definition, Prince (1924) defines personality as the sum-total of all the biological innate dispositions, impulses, tendencies, appetites, and instincts of the individual, and the acquired dispositions and tendencies’ (Eysenck, 1960). According to Eysenck’s theory, he considers personality differences as growing out of our genetic inheritance which made him mainly interested in temperament, which is the aspect of our personality that is genetically based, inborn, there from birth or even before (Eysenck, Eysenck, & Barrett, 1985).

Genetics contribute to individual differences that are linked to the three major dimensions of personality, psychoticism, extraversion, and neuroticism. An important outcome of the analysis of the genetic determination of individual items on personality questionnaires was that genetic effects are highly specific, even to the level of individual item responses, and not just confined to the major dimensions of personalities (Eysenck, 1990). A Swedish study indicates that in large samples, there is significant interaction between sex differences and genetic effects of personality (Eysenck, 1990). This is another area of research that has made new discoveries
and findings. It can be clearly stated that genetic contributions may be different for males and females which can be related to the fact that males and females have different individual traits. It is stated by Allport (1937) and Roback (1927) that, “personality is the more or less stable and enduring organization of a person’s character, temperament, intellect, and physique, which determines one’s unique adjustment to the environment” (Eysenck, 1990, p.252).

The continual aim for research can be described as, “to discover the main dimensions of personality, and to define them operationally by means of strictly experimental, quantitative procedures” (Eysenck, 1958). Another idea Eysenck portrays is that “progress in the scientific study of personality is intimately bound up with what may be called “objective behavior tests” (Eysenck, 1958, p.39). Personality traits are linked to behavior, differences in gender and genetics, as well as exposure to the real-world and environment.

Perceptions of Media Violence

There have been many studies attributed to the viewers’ perceptions of violence, and how it effects their development and behaviors. Much of the research has been done in children and adolescents, and how they perceive, react, and behave based on their exposure and type of violence, and how they perceive the acts of violence that are occurring (Scharrer, 2005; Tamborini & Salonmonson, 1996). Many researchers have believed, and proven, that there are differences between male and females who are exposed to violence, in levels or exposure, behaviors, and perceptions.

The impact of television images on individual viewers and on society as a whole has been conceptualized in several theoretical frameworks. Gerbner’s (1998) Cultural Indicates Model suggests that television contains a common set of themes about appropriate and inappropriate social relations and behaviors that reflect cultural values and that cultivate the belief that the
patterns shown are normative. Because television contains a consistent set of messages, heavy viewers from varied social backgrounds come to share a commons set of beliefs, a process called mainstreaming. People are especially likely to respond to themes and messages that are congruent with their everyday experience or are perceived as highly realistic, a process called resonance (Huston et al., 1992).

Erica Scharrer (2005) published a study measuring the effectiveness of a media literacy curriculum in changing audiences’ perceptions and attitudes about violence presented in the media. Media literacy can encourage audiences to engage in critical thinking about media violence, and question media practices, messages, and effects (Cantor & Wilson, 2003). Results suggest that the students made measurable progress, as evident in both their closed- and open-ended survey responses, in their understanding of three principles of media literacy (Aufderheide, 1997), media as constructions of reality, the presences (and absence) of particular values in the media, and the responses of audiences to the media (Sharrer, 2005).

Kirsch divides violence into two categories: glamorized violence and justified violence. Glamorized violence is characterized by the character traits. The perpetrators of such acts tend to be presented in an attractive manner, with charismatic and powerful personalities-characteristics to which many youthful viewers are drawn (Wilson et al., 2002).

Justified violence, as defined by Kirsch (2006), occurs “When the use of violence is perceived as necessary to the solution of a problem” (p. 205). When the use of violence is perceived as necessary to the solution of a problem, it is considered justified. In an assessment of 2,100 adolescents, Hartnagel, Teevan, and McIntyre (1975) found correlational evidence that youth perceiving violence on television as justified report engaging in more violent acts than youth lacking this perception.
Much of the previous research has focused on children and adolescents, and the differences between male and females. Valkenburg and Janssen (1999) found that 6 to 11-year-old children perceive the action and violence in television as separate characteristics. Children were found to have been more likely to watch a high-action high-violence agenda. Kirsh (2006) presents past evidence that has shown that although males and females tend to consume the generally same about of media, boys are more likely to consume media in which violence is present. For instance, Valkenburg and Janssen (1999) found that first through fourth grade Dutch and American boys, more than girls, preferred television shows with violence. Similarly, Collins-Standley, Gan, Yu, and Zillman (1996) demonstrated that 2- to 4-year-old boys preferred fairytales replete with violence, whereas same-age girls preferred romantic fairy tales.

Rosaen, Boyson, and Smith (2006) found through their study that gender was a "significant moderator of the relationship between certain personality traits and violence exposure" (p. 119). Exposure to violent media was more frequent when traits that are considered to be male oriented, such as sensation seeking, impulsivity, existed. Men exhibited lower levels of guilt than women did upon exposure as well.

Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, and Roberts (1978) developed a flow model of how television influences human behavior, and expanded the model to the formulation of ones individual itinerary. The major inputs of the model are the arousal evoked by the program, the degree of perceived reality, and perceived consequences. Additional inputs of the model are acts and alternatives.

Sequential relationships are specified among the variables that appear most essential to an understanding of the way television influences behavior. These include perceptions of television content (e.g. perceived reality, and perceived consequences of behavior).
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“black box” intra-individual processes (e.g. generalized arousal, inhibition, reinforcement, and catharsis), and situational contingencies (e.g. opportunity, consequences). (Comstock, et al., 1978, p. 25)

McLeod, Atkin, and Chaffee (1972a, 1972b) found a correlation between perceptions of reality in television content, and both exposure to television violence and the display of aggressive behavior. In one study, programs viewed by adolescents jointly with their parents were more likely to be perceived as realistic and to be violent than those viewed alone or with youngsters (Comstock, Chaffee, Katzman, McCombs, & Roberts 1978). Viewers who consistently consume the media in the form of television and motion pictures are more apt to develop a sort of relationship; the viewer tends to react more strongly to the characters actions and experiences. Many studies of character perception, however, have focused on evaluative judgments about personal attributes, often with regard to social desirability (e.g., good or bad, nice or mean) (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991).

Despite these differences in the nature of the information that is generally available about characters versus people, the cognitive processes involved in forming impressions of characters and real people appear to be highly similar (Babrow, O’Keefe, Swanson, Meyers, and Murphy, 1988; Perse & Rubin, 1989). Because there is so much consensus regarding the processes and crucial variables involved in person perception in interpersonal and mass communication contexts, the theories and findings of one area can be used to amplify and complement those of the other (Hawkins, Wiemann, & Pingree, 1988; Hoffner & Cantor, 1991).

Previous research done in the past to explain how audiences respond to the context of horror films, and the gender-role socialization (process whereby an individual acquires identity, and learns norms, values, and social skills associated with that identity) associated with that
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exposure. This reasoning suggests that the exposure setting provided by graphic horror films is unique in that it offers a socially approved context in which young men and women can engage in gender-specific behaviors that are denied to them in most circumstances (Tamborini, 1991). Findings from corresponding studies reveal that although upon exposure males and females consume the same images, males are more likely to respond to fear in the presence of a female. Males’ perceptions of violence are proven to be more likely to be consistent with social norms and values associated with gender.

Cantor and Oliver (1996) generalize people’s reasoning for the consumption of horror movies into a series of stimuli and responses. They theorize that one of the primary reasons for the selection of horror films is the internal arousal associated with the violence and victimization. As we argued in our stimulus generalization rationale (Cantor & Oliver, 1994), the more similar a depicted stimulus is to those stimuli that provoke fear in a particular individual, the greater the fear response should be. This principle predicts that horror films that focus on fears already resident in the viewer will produce more intense reactions than those that focus on other fear-evoking events. It may well be that an enhanced feeling of personal vulnerability is one of the most potent sources of fright among adults who view horror films (Cantar & Oliver, 1994).

The literature claims that environmental stimuli can activate the cognitive structures used in the formation of social judgments (Kaplan, 1991). This suggests that information contained in those cognitive structures can play an important role in governing social perception. As such, the impact of fictional horror on person perception can be seen as a direct function of its effect on the specific information made available to the decision-making process (Tamborini & Salomonson, 1996). Research conducted on the perceptions of victims in horror films has also
been performed, and men tend to prefer exposure, as women tend to not, especially in cases where violence against women is shown.

**Cultivation Theory**

There is no doubt that in today’s society media contributes to a plethora of effects within our lives both daily and in the long run. The American Academy of Pediatrics recommends that a child’s television viewing not exceed two hours a day (Hammermeister, Brock, Winterstein, & Page, 2005) in order to retain a better mental health profile. A study done by Hu, Li, Colditz, Willet, and Mason (2003) reported a positive relationship between television overexposure and obesity rates. However, aside from being a detriment to an individual’s mental and physical health, prolonged exposure to television can also shape and distort perceptions and ideas. Cultivation theory deals with the idea of perceptions cultivated by television and media; this area of research focuses on the creation of particular perceptions as opposed to evaluating direct effects rooted in traditional and ideological research studies (Gerbner, 1994).

Cultivation is defined by Gerbner (1986) as “the independent contributions television viewing makes to viewer conceptions of social reality” (p. 23). Rather than judge or predict the behaviors of individuals who are exposed to varying amounts of television or in the case of this study film, cultivation takes measure of their perceptions on the outside world. These perceptions are general and easier to gage than are behaviors; general perceptions can be measured in an interval fashion however these perceptions can manifest behaviorally in an infinite number of ways in an infinite number of people. Gerbner’s (1986) extensive research and writing in this area continues on to claim that cultivation is caused by the repetition of specific images and ideals, “The pattern that counts is that of the total pattern of programming to which total communities are regularly exposed over long periods of time. That is the pattern of
settings, casting, social typing, actions and related outcomes that cuts across most program types and defines that world of television” (p. 19).

However, previous research has assumed that the viewing of media is uniform among all participants; it can be seen that with the variety of choices within today’s media that participants would partake in different types of viewing and view different types of programs (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). Cohen and Weimann’s (2000) study of various types of viewing genres was inconclusive with respect to the television genres of news, suspense, MTV, sports program, soap operas etc. Cohen and Weimann (2000) postulated that television viewing was content related, rather than just watching television for the sake of doing so. While Cohen’s study focused on the individual in relation to cultivation effect, it has been theorized that cultivation effect is also a societal effect (Bilandzic & Rossler, 2004). The individual subject’s relation to his fellow man allows the researcher to measure exactly what cultivation is. Cultivation can be seen in those who create a social reality, as in what is represented as truth about certain aspects of society, and those who subscribe to this social reality. Bilandzic and Rossler (2004) define the goal of cultivation research to be finding out how such a reality is constructed.

A second major question concerning cultivation theory is how such a cultivation occurs? Gerbner (1998) differentiated that “television neither simply ‘creates’ nor ‘reflects’ images, opinions and beliefs,” (p.180). How are we so influenced by a mostly fictional world? Are we as a society so impressionable that we ascribe any information presented to us as the truth? One possible answer to these questions lies in the idea of what is called heuristic thinking. In conducting a cultivation study comparing the results of survey methods, Shrum (2007) claims heuristic thinking involves “task simplification strategies – cognitive shortcuts – that people use to reduce the difficulty of judgment construction” (p. 65). This is the idea that individuals will
revert back to most recent or the most repetitive examples they have within their brains as a method of information recall. In line with this process of thinking, those who view more television are more likely to recall information from television and use this as a base for their perceptions of the world. This conclusion of the Shrum study is more likely to be seen when a subject feels rushed or time pressure, as they refer back to the most readily available piece of information rather than providing accurate and extensive analysis based on all that they know (p. 67). Not all research done has been able to link cultivation theory with the demonstration of these types of processing. Shrum, Wyer, O’Guinn, and Thomas (1998) explored the effects of “priming” upon cultivation theory responses and noted that the strength of cultivation theory may be reliant on the knowledge of the participant of the effects of television.

Once information is recalled, there are also two theories as to how this information from the media is actually involved in the “cultivation” of our perceptions. One of these ideas is mainstreaming, which according to Cohen and Weimann (2000) is the “homogenization of people’s divergent perceptions of social reality into a convergent view” (p. 101); which directly confirms the idea of heuristic thinking as it describes the construction of a social view based on what is learned from television. An opposing theory is that of resonance described as comparing a mainstream constructed image of the world with one’s own direct experience (Cohen & Weimann, 2000). These two different theories are seen dividing hypothesis’s in many different areas of research. A study conducted by Nabi and Riddle (2008) used these two principles to come up with alternate hypotheses in the area of relationships between cultivation effect, television viewing and Eysenck’s personality traits. This study not only demonstrated important results in the area of personality trait research but also provided comparisons of the two aforementioned constructs of cultivation effect. The results of this study demonstrated a lack of
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consistency in both resonance and mainstreaming in predicting the validity of a particular cultivation effect. The importance of this finding is in relation to the early concept of the individual that is key to understanding cultivation effect, and here it is proven that cultivation effect is not only present in different levels in people but also manifests itself in different ways. Shrum’s (2007) study of measuring cultivation effects pitted these two theories together by comparing the results of a phone and mail survey. This study demonstrated that when respondents were forced to rush their answers (via telephone) there was more evidence of cultivation effect evidencing that in some instances cultivation effect may not be the underlying force of causation.

Not only does an individual dictate how cultivation effect manifests itself but also what message is crafted in the media that comes to affect our perceptions. The two main areas of study are violence and affluence. Understanding violence has become an imperative area of research for many social scientists especially in a day and age where violence appears in two thirds to three quarters of all television programs (Smythe, 1954). According to research done by the Cultural Indicators Project, violence on television demonstrates who can get away with what against whom; basically it informs the viewer of who is a winner and who is a loser in various situations (Smythe, 1954). Cohen and Weimann (2000) reported that females are more likely to be influenced in their perceptions of violent crimes due to this particular definition. The second area studied most by cultivation is the perceptions of affluence. The United States is frequently seen as a materialistic culture, and many studies have been conducted to see the effect and presence of this particular entity (Harmon, 2006). Harmon’s study of “Affluenza” in 2006 found that individuals who watched less television chose more anti-acquisition priorities than those who watched more television. This finding mirrors the belief that material gain is
something reflected in television and therefore through the cultivation theory reflected in the perceptions of viewers.

Harmon (2006) and the Cultural Indicators Project focused on the topics prominent on the television that caused beliefs they believed to be prominent. However, many researchers have dedicated studies to understanding genre specific cultivation effects. Rossler and Brosius (2001) conducted a study of German adolescents perceptions of issues typically dealt with on German talk shows. The results of the study demonstrated that the subjects that took part in the study overestimated the prevalence of issues presented on such talk shows such as gay and lesbian relationships, tattoos, and the negative public opinion of such issues. The results of the study demonstrated that if cultivation effect is explored in specific genre the results will be prominent within that particular area only.

While the aforementioned research has focused upon television, there has been a spread of research into other areas of media, for example video games. Van Mirelo and Van den Bulck’s (2004) study on video game and cultivation effect violates the basic general premise of nonspecific television viewing measured in Gerber’s work (p. 98). While there was no relationship found between videogame playing and cultivation effect in Van Mirelo and Van den Bulck’s (2004) (2004) study, it is more likely to do with the extreme differences in television viewing and playing video games, “There are many different video games and different players may be looking for different things in different games. Measures of selectivity are probably better indicators of the kind of message the gamer is exposed to than measures of overall game play” (Van Mirelo & Van den Bulck, 2004, p. 108). This study does however beg the question about cultivation of perception in different mediums of the media. While genre of television and video game usage has been studied in relation to the cultivation theory film and more specifically
the horror film genre has been an area absent from such study. Therefore this type of cultivation has not been compared to perception of violence and personality traits, two areas which have been studied in relation to both horror film and cultivation effect.

**Rationale**

Eysenck (1985) has argued that extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism “really embody three ways in which individuals interact” (p. 14). Researchers have found these factors to be associated with media preferences (Weaver, 2000; Zuckerman & Little, 1986). Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism are thought to affect an individual’s behavior as well as interacting together to shape media behavior. Also, traits can be known as constructs which are inferred from behavior (Eysenck, 1982).

Previous research has found psychoticism to be associated with enjoyment or exposure to several media genres that are often seen as transgressive, including horror movies (Weaver, 1991), violent cartoons (Aluja-Fabregat & Torrubia-Beltri, 1998), and an unwillingness for tragedy films (Weaver, 1993). The conceptualization for the personality trait of extraversion suggests that those who are in high extraversion will expose themselves to media, such as movies, that are consumed in social settings more frequently than will those low in extraversion (Hall, 2005). The personality trait of extraversion also suggests that it will be associated with preferences for media genres that have social utility.

Neuroticism also plays a role in selecting the type of media audience members choose. Those who are high in neuroticism are particularly likely to feel affected by violent or disturbing media content (Hall, 2005). Neurotics may be more likely to avoid a disturbing matter because they are extremely bothered by the substance of the topic.
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Personality as an antecedent of media use has tended to evaluate consumption of particular media genres (Weaver, 1991, 2000). An audience as well as media factors that contribute to the impact of personality traits will vary depending on the trait. Since specific media genres offer different satisfactory opportunities, it can be said that both the use of a particular media and the preference for a specific media genre within a media can be sensitive to audience members’ personality attributes.

Therefore, the following hypothesis can be posed:

H1: There will be a relationship between temperament and the liking and consumption of horror films.

The idea that cultivation effects are somewhat dependent on personality traits has been brought up in several studies. According to Eysenck (1990), “personality traits represent internal factors that affect one’s unique life history and social encounters and, therefore, promote chronic construct accessibility” (p. 295) The idea that exposure to threatening and violent media messages can result in negative feelings has come about in research, which connects to the fact that neuroticism is linked to emotional instability. The proposal that personality traits might obstruct the cultivation process has been brought up by researchers. The cultivation theory emphasizes on the fact that ordinary conceptions of violence effects the perceptions of real-world occurrences which can be portrayed through certain traits.

Therefore, the following research question can be posed:

H2: There will be a relationship between the score of neuroticism and the scores of cultivation effect of social violence.

Gerbner’s (2000) definition of cultivation theory involves the unbiased and uncategorized viewing of television. Although Cohen and Weimann’s (2000) exploration of genre specific
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cultivation effect proved inconclusive, Rossler and Brosius’ (2001) study proved enlightening. Rossler and Brosius’ investigation into the cultivation effects present with teens that are exposed to specific issues within a specific genre shows that a specific message sent by a genre will only effect the viewer’s perceptions of that particular message. Horror films typically deal with violence and crime in some way, whether it be the supernatural or natural sort. Cultivation effect is often more notable in the sub sections concerning society, as personal experience will often outweigh the experiences viewed in the media (Shrum, 2001). In this line of thinking and because a majority of horror films deal with violence and crime, the following hypothesis can be posed:

H3: There will be a positive relationship between scores on the enjoyment of horror movies, consumption of horror film and cultivation effect.

Previous research has shown that moods induced by depressing films produced reduced judgments of interpersonal attraction, and those who are in a pleasant affective state give more positive evaluations, judgments, and evaluations (Fiedler, Pampe, & Scherf, 1986; Forgas & Bower, 1987; Forgas, Bower, & Krantz, 1984; Mayer, Mamberg, & Volanth, 1988). These previous studies indicate that depression and fear seem to obscure perceptions, and this impact can be attributed to film exposure (Tamborini & Salomonson, 1992). Mainstreaming is defined as the process of viewers from varied social backgrounds coming to share a common set of beliefs due to the consistent set of messages sent by television (Huston, Donnerstein, Fairchild, Feshbach, Katz, et al., 1992). Resonance is defined as the process of people responding to themes and messages that are congruent with their everyday experience or perceived as highly realistic (Huston et al., 1992). These definitions of mainstreaming and resonance illustrate that a
viewer’s perception it correlated with exposure, and in turn enjoyment of horror films. Therefore the following hypothesis can be posed:

H4: There will be a negative relationship between perception of violence and liking of horror films.

Many previous studies have indicated that there is a difference of perception of violence between males and females. Brosius and Harmann (1988) and Brosius and Schmitt (1990) examined how gender roles embedded, both internally and externally, have historically proven in studies to alter perceptions of violence from male to female. Females expressed horror as more appealing, and more stimulating than other “normal” movies, but were also more likely to react negatively to the fear-inducing film, contrary to males (as cited in Zillmann & Weaver, 1996). Therefore the following research questions can be posed:

RQ1: Will there be a difference in perceptions of violence between males and females?
RQ2: Will females and males differ in their reported liking of horror films and consumption of horror films?

**Method**

In order to complete this study, self-report information was gathered from students at a smaller state school on the East Coast. The researchers distributed 180 surveys to undergraduate students in several different types of classroom settings across campus. Participants were given the option to decline and were made aware that there were no risks from participating in this study. The entire survey took 25-35 minutes to complete.

**Participants**
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The current study consisted of 77 males (42.8%) and 102 females (56.7%). The mean age for the sample was 20.65 (SD = 1.83) with a range from 18 to 34.

Instrumentation

**The EPQ-R Likert Scale.** The Eysenck Personality Questionnaire-Revised (EPQ-R) was developed by Eysenck, Eysenck, and Barrett (1985) to measure three supertraits: extraversion, neuroticism, and lying. The scale also measures socially desirable responding through a subscale called lying. All four of the subscales are each measured using 12 Likert-type statements with a possible range from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*, so the overall measure consists of 48 items. Alpha reliabilities were conducted for the four measures: extraversion .89 (M = 42.29, SD = 8.37); neuroticism .85 (M = 35.21, SD = 8.45); psychoticism .65 (M = 30.58, SD = 5.84); and lying .73 (M = 34.61, SD = 6.80). Higher scores on each of the three instruments are designed to indicate higher levels of that specific supertrait.

**The Perceptions of Media Violence Scale.** The Perceptions of Television Violence Scale was created by Scharrer (2005) to measure perceptions of violence on television. For the purposes of the current study, the measure was retooled to examine perceptions of movie violence. The Perceptions of Violence Scale is comprised of four indexes: responses of audience members (3 items), media’s construction of reality (2 items), embedded values about violence (3 items), and social responsibility of portrayals (2 items). The combined measure consists of 10 Likert-type Scale with a range from (1) *strongly disagree* to (5) *strongly agree*. Alpha reliabilities were conducted for the four measures: responses of audience members .59 (M = 10.28, SD = 2.26); media’s construction of reality .33 (M = 6.86, SD = 1.65); embedded values about violence .67 (M = 9.74, SD = 2.58); and social responsibility of portrayals .48 (M = 6.38, SD = 1.90). While reliability coefficients were not provided in the original article by Scharrer,
the low reliability estimates is not surprising due to the limited number of items on the scale. However, the original study conducted by Scharrer did indicate strong factorial validity for the four factor measure. Higher numbers indicate more agreement with a statement considered a more critical attitude toward media violence (Scharrer 2005).

**The Cultivation Effect Scale.** The Cultivation Effect scale was created to measure five general constructs: crime, marital discord, vices, occupational prevalence and affluence by Shrum (2007) to measure the theorized cultivation theory of Gerbner (1986). This Likert scale contains eight items concerning societal crime, three items concerning personal crime, three items concerning personal crime in NYC, three items concerning occupational prevalence, three items concerning marital discord, three items concerning vice and three items concerning affluence. These items ask the participant to rate the probability of occurrence of various institutions and situations by percent. Aside from demonstrating validity in the areas of face validity, concurrent validity and retrospective validity, early uses of this scale were shown to have reliable Cronbach scores for each subsection of this scale (Shrum, 2007). This particular scale has been used in genre specific television viewing and genre specific results before including: popular programming among Israeli youth (Cohen & Weimann, 2000), affluence and acquisition (Harmon, 2006) and talk show programming (Bilandzic and Rossler, 2004). Alpha reliabilities for the subscales were as follows: societal crime ($\alpha = .87, M = 279.37, SD = 130.1$), personal crime ($\alpha = .89, M = 35.66, SD = 39.97$), personal crime in NYC ($\alpha = .65, M = 69.28, SD = 49.67$), occupational prevalence ($\alpha = .86, M = 66.81, SD = 40.60$), marital discord ($\alpha = .68, M = 109.58, SD = 45.13$), vice ($\alpha = .78, M = 74.51, SD = 47$), and affluence ($\alpha = .89, M = 105, SD = 70.20$).
The Horror Film Scale. The Horror Film Scale is a scale designed to measure an individual’s liking and consumption of horror films. The Liking of Horror Films Scale is based on the Sad Film Scale designed by Oliver, Sargent, and Weaver (1993). For the current study, the Liking of Horror Films Scale consists of 11 Likert-type items ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (5) strongly agree. The dimensionality of the 11 items was analyzed using an unrotated principle components factor analysis. Four criteria were used to determine the number of factors to extract: sampling adequacy, the a priori hypothesis that the measure was unidimensional, the scree plot, and the interpretability of the factor solution. To examine sampling adequacy, Kaiser’s measure of sampling adequacy (MSA) was used. The MSA obtained was .83, which is considered “meritory” for conducting a factor analysis. The scree plot indicated that our initial hypothesis of unidimensionality was correct. The principle component analysis revealed a strong primary factor accounting for 45% of the variance in the model. The factor loadings and scale items can be seen in Table 1. Alpha reliability for the Liking of Horror Films Scale was .88 ($M = 36.91, SD = 8.46$).

The second half of the Horror Film Scale, the Horror Film Consumption Scale, was measured by asking participants how likely they were to watch various horror genres using a Likert scale ranging from (1) very unlikely to (5) very likely. After combing the horror film literature, fifteen unique genres of horror films were classified (Table 2). Horror Film Consumption was measured by summing the likelihood that individuals would watch horror films across all of the different genres. Higher scores indicate greater consumption of horror films. Alpha reliability for the Horror Film Consumption Scale was .86 ($M = 44.77, SD = 11.04$).
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The first hypothesis predicted a relationship between temperament and the liking and consumption of horror films. A multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables of temperament (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) could predict the dependent variable (an individual’s liking of horror films). The linear combination of the independent variables was significantly related to an individual’s liking of horror films $F(3, 172) = 4.85, p = .003$. The sample multiple correlation coefficient, $R$, was .28, which indicates that approximately 7.9% of the variance of an individual’s liking of horror films could be accounted for by the linear combination of extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism. Extraversion, ($t = 2.9, p = .004, \beta = .25, 95\% \text{ CI} [.08, .41]$) neuroticism, ($t = 2.99, p = .003, \beta = .25, 95\% \text{ CI} [.08, .41]$) and psychoticism, ($t = 2.8, p = .005, \beta = .23, 95\% \text{ CI} [.08, .41]$) all accounted for unique variance in an individual’s liking of horror films.

The second part of the first hypothesis predicted a relationship between temperament and the consumption of horror films. A multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables of temperament (extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism) could predict the dependent variable (an individual’s consumption of horror films). The linear combination of the independent variables was not significantly related to an individual’s consumption of horror films $F(3, 171) = 1.37, p = .25$.

The second hypothesis predicted a relationship between scores of neuroticism and scores of cultivation effect of societal violence. A multiple regression was conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables of cultivation (affluence, personal crime, marital discord, societal crime, personal crime in NYC, and vice) could predict the dependent variable (neuroticism). The linear combination of the independent variables was not significantly related an individual’s level of neuroticism $F(7, 162) = 1.80, p = .09$. 

Comment [APA30]: Reporting Exact $p$-Values – 4.44, p. 117
Comment [APA31]: Reporting Confidence Intervals – 4.44, p. 117
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The third hypothesis dealt with the relationship between cultivation effect and the participant's liking and consumption of horror films. A multivariate linear regression was conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables (cultivation effect in the areas of societal crime, crime in NYC, personal crime, affluence, marital discord, occupational prevalence) could predict the dependent variable (liking of horror films). The linear combination of the independent variables was not significantly related to an individual's liking of horror films, $F(7, 161) = .65, p = .72$.

A multivariate linear regression was also conducted to evaluate how well the independent variables (cultivation effect in the areas of societal crime, crime in NYC, personal crime, affluence, marital discord, occupational prevalence) could predict the dependent variable (consumption of horror films). The linear combination of the independent variables was not significantly related to an individual's consumption of horror films, $F(7, 160) = 1.50, p = .17$.

Hypothesis four wanted to examine the relationship between and individuals' perception of violence (responses of audience members, media’s construction of reality, embedded values about violence, and social responsibility of portrayals) and the liking of horror films. To conduct this analysis, four Pearson product-moment correlations were conducted. Responses of audience members was found to be positively related to liking of horror films, $r(176) = .22, p = .004$, which is considered to be a weak relationship. Media’s construction of reality was not found to be significantly related to liking of horror films, $r(178) = -.04, p = .62$. Embedded values about violence was not found to be significantly related to liking of horror films, $r(178) = .02, p = .77$. Finally, social responsibility of portrayals was found to be positively related to liking of horror films, $r(178) = .16, p = .03$, which is considered to be a weak relationship.
The first research question used an independent \( t \)-test was conducted to determine if an individual’s perceptions of violence (responses of audience members, media’s construction of reality, embedded values about violence, and social responsibility of portrayals) differed based on biological sex (male and female). First, female \((M = 10.29, SD = 2.10)\) and male \((M = 10.20, SD = 2.44)\) levels of responses to violence by audiences members was examined. The Levene’s test for equality of variances was not significant \((F = 2.14, p = .15)\), so equality of variances can be assumed, \( t(174) = .28, \ p = .78, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.58, 0.77] \). Second, female \((M = 6.88, SD = 1.54)\) and male \((M = 6.90, SD = 1.73)\) levels of media’s construction of reality was examined. The Levene’s test for equality of variance was not significant \((F = 1.47, p = .28)\), so equality of variances can be assumed, \( t(176) = -.06, \ p = .95, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.50, 0.47] \). Third, female \((M = 9.88, SD = 2.36)\) and male \((M = 9.55, SD = 2.87)\) levels of embedded values about violence was examined. The Levene’s test for equality of variance was not significant \((F = 1.17, p = .23)\), so equality of variances can be assumed, \( t(176) = .86, \ p = .39, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.44, 1.11] \). Lastly, female \((M = 6.55, SD = 1.57)\) and male \((M = 6.16, SD = 2.07)\) levels of social responsibility of portrayals was examined. The Levene’s test for equality of variance was not significant \((F = 4.47, \ p = .036)\), so equality of variances cannot be assumed, \( t(137.540) = 1.411, \ p = .16, 95\% \text{ CI } [-0.16, 0.96] \).

The second research question examined the differences between females and males and their liking of horror films and consumption of horror films. First, female \((M = 36.65, SD = 9.36)\) and male \((M = 37.32, SD = 7.21)\) levels of liking of horror films was examined. The Levene’s test for equality of variance was not significant \((F = 7.58, \ p = .007)\), so equality of variances cannot be assumed, \( t(174.99) = -0.54, \ p = .59, 95\% \text{ CI } [-3.13, 1.78] \). Next, female \((M = 44.35, \ SD = 12.16)\) and male \((M = 45.67, SD = 8.96)\) levels of social responsibility of portrayals was
The purpose of this study was to examine the relationship among horror film enjoyment, cultivation effect, temperament and perceptions of media violence. Through the course of this study, four distinct hypotheses and two research questions were proposed and this discussion section will examine each of them separately. The discussion of the study hypotheses and research questions will be followed by a discussion of the study limitations and possible directions for future research.

**Discussion of Study Findings**

The first hypothesis predicted a relationship between temperament and the liking of horror films. Overall, an individual’s temperament accounted for seven percent of his or her liking of horror films. Extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism were all positively related to the individual’s liking of horror films. The second part of the first hypothesis predicted that there was no relationship between temperament and the consumption of horror films. Overall, an individual’s temperament accounted for two percent of his or her consumption of horror films. One possible reason for the overall layout of results can be due to the fact researchers have found temperament factors to be associated with media preferences (Weaver, 2000; Zuckerman & Little, 1986). Extraversion captures sociability, neuroticism captures fearful avoidance, and psychoticism captures hostility and aggression (Eysenck, 1960). Temperament can influence an individual’s reaction to different type of media. Each personality trait, extraversion, neuroticism, and psychoticism affects an individual’s perception as well as reaction differently. A relationship was found between temperament and an individual’s liking of horror films which
can support previous evidence that personality is an antecedent of media use that has tended to evaluate consumption of particular media genres (Weaver, 1991, 2000, 2003) or, less frequently, use of particular media (Finn, 1997).

The second hypothesis predicted that there was not a relationship between the scores of neuroticism and the scores of cultivation effect of societal violence. Overall, an individual’s scores of cultivation effect of societal violence accounted for seven percent of an individual’s score of neuroticism. In previous research, individual’s high in neuroticism were found to feel affected by violent or disturbing media content (Hall, 2005). Viewers with high neuroticism scores also have been found to rate specific media texts as more violent and more frightening than those with lower scores (Gunter, 1958). Neuroticism plays a role in selecting the type of media audience members choose. Neuroticism has also been found to be associated negatively with recall of violent news stories (Gunter & Furnham, 1986), which suggests that violent images are more disruptive to memory processing among those high in this personal dimension. In relation to the negative effects an individual may have the violent news, a relationship between neuroticism and crime and/or violence could easily be positive. Also, neurotics may be more likely to avoid a disturbing matter because they are extremely bothered by this type of viewing. However, in the recent study, there was no relationship found between an individual’s score of neuroticism and scores of cultivation effect of societal violence.

The third hypothesis predicted a positive relationship between cultivation effect and the consumption and liking of horror films. In this instance, the null hypothesis was proven correct. There was no significant relationship found between any of the facets of cultivation effect (societal crime, personal crime, crime in NYC, occupational prevalence, marital discord, vice). While there has previously been found to be a relationship in genre specific studies between
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consumption and viewing and cultivation effect there has also been some wariness in accepting
this in a generalizable way. Cohen and Weimann (2000) postulate that “when the cultivation
process occurs, it varies across genres, viewer characteristics, and the beliefs being cultivated” (p.
109). While our study focused on a variety of beliefs, it was also genre specific. Cohen and
Weimann (2000) studied a variety of genres within their study that varied not only in content but
in portrayal as well. However, the conclusion drawn by Cohen and Weimann (2000) that “some
genres by some views has some effects on some beliefs” (p. 109), fits in with our results
excluding ours from being the same. Our results also contradict the findings of Rossler and
Brosius (2001) concerning cultivation of ideas similar to those portrayed on German talk shows
among adolescents. However, in the German study the film in which the researchers were
claiming caused cultivation was shown to the adolescent. It was carefully chosen and clipped
together by researchers whereas in our study we simply asked the participant about their past
viewing habits rather than creating new ones. A commonality between the Cohen and Weimann
(2000) and Rossler (2001) study that also contradicts our own study is the use of adolescents.
Both studies use students on a junior high and high school level, while this study utilized a
college population. Due to the fact that cultivation effect involves the influencing of perceptions
this is a very important difference. Children and adolescents in their developmental years may
be more susceptible to the undue influence of television and media than a college student who
has reached the age of majority. Despite the developmental differences between a college and
junior high school student there is also the availability of information and discussion as
influential factors in deciding statistics found on the cultivation scale. Perhaps our results are
indicative of a well learned college student who has the opportunity to counteract the messages
of horror films as Cohen and Weimann (2000) and Rossler’s (2001) are indicative of junior high students who believe a lot more at face value.

The fourth hypothesis predicted a negative relationship between perceptions of violence and liking of horror films. Overall, a positive relationship was found between responses of audience members and liking of horror films, embedded values about violence and liking of horror films, and social responsibility of portrayals and liking of horror films. All three relationships were weak, and two factors were not significant; media’s construction of reality and embedded values about violence. The positive relationship between social responsibility of portrayals and liking of horror films was significant. A negative relationship was found between media’s construction of reality and liking of horror films, but the relationship was found to be weak and not significant. Based on Sharrer’s (2005) study, students that were exposed to curriculum based on changing attitudes towards media violence during adolescence made measurable progress in their understanding of media’s construction of reality, presences/absence of values in the media, and responses of audience members. The differences in results could be due to a difference in participants’ age and values.

The first research question asked if there would be a difference in perceptions of violence between males and females. Equality of variance was not significant for three factors; responses of audience members, media’s construction of reality, and embedded values about violence. All three factors were also not statistically significant. Equality of variance was significant for the factor of social responsibility of portrayals. Based on Rosaen, Boyson, and Smith’s (2006) study, gender was a “significant moderator of the relationship between certain personality traits and violence exposure” (p. #). In another study performed by Collins-Standley, Gan, Yu, and Zillman (1996), research demonstrated that two to four year old boys preferred programs with
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violence, while two to four year old girls preferred programs without. This finding would indicate that there is both a difference of perceptions of violence between males and females.

The second research question found that there was no significant difference between males and females in their consumption and liking of horror films. This lack of difference contradicts the findings of many studies concerning the effects of film viewing upon males and females. Oliver, Sargent, and Weaver (1998) found that while watching violent films females reported “experiencing greater disturbance, less enjoyment, and tended to express greater empathetic responsiveness,” (p. 61). The horror genre is often earmarked by violence in varying situations and examples. The finding by Oliver (1998) seems to be in line with gender roles and traits associated with each biological sex; this relationship between gender traits and film enjoyment was also explored by Oliver (1998) and found to have a similar relationship to that of biological sex. Perhaps the results expressed by our study contradict the findings of Oliver (1998) as well as Brosius and Harmann (1988) because these roles are becoming less strictly defined. As we progress further into the future the limitations of gender seem to be coming less and less important, as men and women take on each other’s “assigned roles.” The result of this study found that there was no significant difference between the enjoyment and consumption of horror films by men and women and while the null hypothesis being accepted in this case may be disappointing from a statistical standpoint, it is promising for the world of gender relations.

**Study Limitations**

Although some useful and informative results were found during this study, several key limitations exist. The first limitation is the fact that the sample was gained entirely from the SUNY New Paltz Campus. While the campus itself boasts of a diverse population, the fact of the matter is students who participated in the study either live on campus or in the surrounding
area for a majority of the year. Different geographical locations have different recreational
trends (in this case film watching). Therefore in order for this study to become more
generalizable it would have to be extended over a larger region.

A second limitation of this study concerning the fact that it was completed with a college
sample is that of age. The average age of the sample was 20.6 with the range being from 18 – 34.
This limited sample ignores many age groups and generations can differ greatly in their
interpretation and enjoyment of various types of film. Their perceptions and viewing habits
could differ greatly, again affecting the overall generalizablity of this study.

Lastly, this study utilized a new scale, The Horror Film Scale that was created from the
Sad Film Scale specifically for this study. As with any new scale, there are reliability and testing
issues that could affect overall results. In this case, our inclusion of the various types of horror
film may not have been exhaustive because such a list has not been previously compiled in this
context.

**Future Research Directions**

As with any good research, future directions should become easily noticeable as one
progresses through a research project. This is most certainly true with this study and is also an
important area of concern considering the staying power of the horror genre in Hollywood. As
long as the horror genre exists it will be able to impact different groups, and it is important to
note the studying of these groups would bring invaluable knowledge to society. The first group
that should be looked at in relation to horror film liking and consumption is adolescents. As seen
in Rossler and Brosius (2001) and Cohen and Weimann (2000) there is a greater chance of media
cultivating ideas in the youth of today. Due to their fragile developmental state, they are more
likely to be influenced by media outlets, whether it is in television or film. Therefore it may
prove diligent to explore the relationship between cultivation effect and horror films in youth, as horror films deal with a variety of violence and crime.

Although our study found no significant difference between males and females in their liking, consumption or perceptions of horror films there are further directions similar to this that may be prudent to continue research. The horror film genre, like any media outlet, deals with the portrayal and relation of males and females and their roles in society. While our study tested for differences between the biological sex a participant identified themselves with, it did not explore the social construct of gender in relation to horror film and the various other variables tested for. When comparing these constructs Oliver (1998) found noticeable differences in reactions to violent and horrific movies. Due to this finding, and our lack of significant finding substituting gender for biological sex may be important for future study.

Lastly, there are some direct modifications our study that could prove enlightening. First, more analysis and research could be done of the horror movie genres, and film scales. For the purposes of our study, we transformed the Sad Movie Film scale to the Horror Movie Film scale, which allows for error while surveying. With more research in the area of horror movies more research can be done on audiences and the effects it has on them.

**Conclusion**

In this day and age, it is easy to write off movies, television and music as forms of entertainment that society can affect and change. However, as academic research has proven over the last century, this media has taken a toll on our emotional states, perceptions of the outside world and perceptions of media itself. The horror genre is no exception to this idea; millions every year flock to movie theaters in order to “elicit and purge fear and disgust, appeal to curiosity and sensation seeking, give viewers the opportunity to practice their gender roles,
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increase arousal and reduce boredom and set up a powerful sense of relief when the film is over” (Goldstein, 1998, p. 155). This current study set out to examine the relationships among horror film enjoyment, temperament, perceptions of media violence and cultivation effect. Hopefully, the discussion provided here will encourage other researchers to reexamine the horror genre as an important catalyst in how we communicate and think about ourselves rather than just a form of entertainment.
References


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Table 1

*Factor Analysis of the Liking of Horror Films Scale*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale Item</th>
<th>Factor Loading</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. I like horror movies because they allow me to become part of another world.</td>
<td>.62</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Horror movies are too simplistic or unrealistic for me to enjoy.</td>
<td>.58</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. I enjoy feeling scared or jumping in response to horror movies.</td>
<td>.63</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. I don’t like horror movies because I would rather feel safe than scared when watching a film.</td>
<td>.74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. One reason I like horror movies is because I get a rush of adrenaline.</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. I enjoy getting wrapped up in the lives of the characters in horror movies.</td>
<td>.73</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Horror movies are too fake for me to enjoy.</td>
<td>.64</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. I find horror movies entertaining because they’re fun.</td>
<td>.77</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Horror movies are too dramatic for me to enjoy.</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. I don’t enjoy horror movies because I like to be entertained or stimulated when I watch a film.</td>
<td>.59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. It feels good to scream or jump when watching a horror movie.</td>
<td>.75</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Table 2

**Horror Movie Genres**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Horror Genre</th>
<th>Sample Films</th>
<th>Favorite Genre (n)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Animal Films</td>
<td>Jaws, Up from the Depths, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. B-Horror Films</td>
<td>Attack of the Killer Tomatoes, The Body Snatcher, etc.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Biological/Body Horror</td>
<td>The Thing, Hellraiser, etc.</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Comedy</td>
<td>Scream, Psycho Beach Party, etc.</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Evil Children</td>
<td>Children of the Corn, Alice, Sweet Alice, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Ghost Movies</td>
<td>The Haunting, The Amityville Horror, etc.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Monster Movies</td>
<td>Dracula, Frankenstein, etc.</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Psychological</td>
<td>The Whicker Man, Cube, etc.</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Satanic/Demonic</td>
<td>The Omen, The Exorcist, etc.</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Science Fiction</td>
<td>Swamp Thing, Invasion of the Body Snatchers, etc.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>11. Slasher Films</td>
<td>Halloween, Friday the 13th, etc.</td>
<td>12</td>
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<tr>
<td>12. Splatter Films</td>
<td>Psycho, Blood Feast, etc.</td>
<td>2</td>
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<tr>
<td>13. Survival Horror</td>
<td>Resident Evil, Alone in the Dark, etc.</td>
<td>8</td>
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<tr>
<td>14. Torture Porn</td>
<td>Hostel, Saw, etc.</td>
<td>20</td>
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<tr>
<td>15. Zombie Movies</td>
<td>Night of the Living Dead, 28 Days Later, etc.</td>
<td>15</td>
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