The Psychological Appeal of Movie Monsters

Stuart Fischoff, Ph.D., Alexandra Dimopoulos, B.A., François Nguyen, B.A.

California State University Los Angeles

Media Psychology Lab

and

Rachel Gordon

Executive Editor, Journal of Media Psychology

ABSTRACT

A nationwide sample of 1,166 people responded to a survey exploring choices for a favorite movie monster and reasons why a monster chosen was a favorite. The sample was comprised of equal but culturally diverse numbers of males and females. Ages ranged from 16 to 91. Results of the study indicated that, for both genders and across age groups, the vampire, in general -- and Dracula in particular -- is the king of monsters.. With a few exceptions (women found vampires and the *Scream* killers more sexy and ranked the demon doll, Chucky, significantly higher than males), males and females were generally attracted to the same monsters and for similar reasons. As predicted, younger people were the more likely to prefer recent and more violent and murderous slasher monsters, and to like them for their killing prowess. Older people were more attracted to non-slashers and attracted for reasons concerned with a monster's torment, sensitivity, and alienation from normal society. While younger people also appreciated the classic film monsters such as Frankenstein and King Kong, a parallel cross-over by older respondents for more recent monsters, like Michael Myers, was not reciprocated. Overall, though, monsters were liked for their intelligence, superhuman powers and their ability to show us the dark side of human nature.

The Psychological Appeal of Movie Monsters

The open secret of why films have been so popular for over 100 years, in venues ranging from the 2-dimensional, black and white, silent films viewed on five-inch screens of the turn-of-the-century nickelodeons to the 21st century, stories-high, 3D IMAX screens which fully immerse audiences in the booming high fidelity, color-saturated action, may lie less in cinematic technology than in what film does for its viewers. Film appeals to viewers' appetites for an extraordinary, vicarious experience, and the convulsion of emotions that it so often delivers.

Given previous results of research on differential viewer reactions to films from differing film genres (cf., Fischoff, 1997, Kaplan and Kickul, 1996), different film genres may be expected to provide different vicarious and emotional experiences. In the case of horror films, it is believed to be the thrill of fright, the awe of the horrific, the experience of the dark and forbidden side of human behavior that lures people into the dark mouth of the theater to be spooked (cf., Zillmann, Weaver, Mundorf, and Aust, 1986).

According to statistics provided by the online archives of the industry newspaper, *Variety*, of the 250 or so top grossing films released by the American film industry each year, approximately 15 films (6%) are of the horror genre. Numerous academics and non-academics have written extensively on the topic of horror films, movie monsters, all-time scary films, and the like. Some, like Michael Apter (1992) and his theory of detachment and parapathic emotions, have looked at theoretical reasons why people seem to enjoy the ostensibly negative experience of being frightened by a movie experience. According to Apter, potential for escape into safe distance is paramount. Others, like Zillmann et al., (1986), for example, have looked at why horror films are good "date" movies or, like Jonathan Crane (1994), have outlined how the horror genre has changed over the years, evolving into a type which is far more violent and explicitly bloody. Researchers like Ed Tan (1996) have demonstrated that film emotions are not ersatz stepchildren of authentic emotions. Rather, film-induced emotions are themselves real experiences because the film, in collusion with the audience eye and audience desire to be transported, can fool the brain. In other words, a horror film can be "really scary" -- if we allow it!

Since the early part of the 20th century, when the horror film genre was born, scary movies have developed into different clusters of themes. Silent film era horror films, primarily European, were a mixed bag of legends and science fiction (e.g., *Metropolis* (1926), *Nosferatu* (1922), *The Golem*(1920), Edison's *Frankenstein* short (1910), and *The Cabinet of Dr. Caligari (1919)*). Following the era of silent films came the now-legendary era of the sympathetic monsters of the 1930's, as exemplified by Universal Studio's monster triumvirate, Frankenstein, Dracula, and the Mummy, and their spin-offs and sequels. According to Crane (1994), these monsters were generally seen as misunderstood outcasts from society, to be pitied, and even occasionally, as with Dracula, found to be attractive. Audiences are said to have identified with these monsters that were portrayed as existing on the outside of the normal community. Perhaps the monsters' onscreen plights tapped into audience feelings of social inequity and recollection of social torment at the hands of their social peers.

The 1950s was awash in science fiction-fantasy monster pictures addressing such things as science run amok, fear of alien invaders (*The Thing [From Another World]*, 1951, *Invasion of the Body Snatchers*, 1956) and the disastrous and unanticipated consequences of radioactive fallout (e.g., *Them*, 1954 and *Godzilla*, 1956). The late 1950s brought a new wave of monsters directed toward a different audience than those who sought out monsters in the earlier decades. The new audience was the youth market, and the monsters and their monstrous behaviors addressed the sensibilities of young males and females. According to Skal (1993), this transition from multi-generational appeal of films in general, and of horror films in particular, to a principally youth-oriented market developed as the buying power of the young began to increase in the late 1950s. Beside youth oriented dramas like *Rebel Without A Cause* (1955), the angst of adolescence was further explored with films like *I Was A Teenage Werewolf (1957)* and *I Was A Teenage Frankenstein (1958)*. Here, the monsters were not "the other" but, "us," possibly in all our adolescent hormonal rage and confusion. Filmmakers Roger Corman and Sam Arkoff, among others, opened up a treasure trove of box office dollars by appealing to this hungry market of young filmgoers and the youth-oriented film market made its move to become the 800 pound behemoth it is today.

Hollywood, helped by the collapse of the old Hayes or Motion Picture Code in the 1960s, issued itself the license to shock, titillate and nauseate. This was coupled with advances in the technology of special effects, and assured that the old tradition of almost sanitary, often unseen horror, and gradual, enveloping, suspense was traded in for a new tradition of horror, one of shock and blood-drenched gore, all to the delight of this bulging youth market (Baird, 2000; Crane, 1994). Extremism in the pursuit of the monster box office by monsters on screen became a mantra, not a vice. It is no wonder that the cinematic vehicles for these emerging horror icons ran with blood, guts, and free-standing heads and limbs. "The central focus are scenes that dwell on the victim's fear and explicitly portray the attack and it's aftermath" (Weaver & Tamborini, 1996, p.38). The slasher movie had arrived. Examples of slasher killers include Michael Myers from *Halloween* (1978), Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1985) and Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974).

As horror films became more gruesome, more explicit, more horrifying than terrifying, more shock than suspense, the older audiences began to stay away in droves. According to research by Fischoff (1998), a trend could be observed: as viewers age, their appetite for violence decreases and their attraction to the new, bloodier horror genre decreases as well. A momentum begins and, in response, Hollywood shifts from targeting adult market audiences to targeting primarily teen market audiences. Box office goals dictate that such movies increasingly and violently focus on the plights of young people, thereby further alienating middle age and older moviegoers, and further locking the horror genre into what has become the youth culture juggernaut.

Film monsters have proven to be such unforgettable characters that in many instances they have become part of our culture. Most Americans would recognize a picture of Frankenstein, Dracula, King Kong, Godzilla or the Mummy before recognizing a Supreme Court Justice. Like so many popular culture figures, these monsters have become such recognizable icons, either through novel characterizations and product merchandising, or through repeated film presentations on TV or via home video. But this phenomenon is not exclusive to monsters from older films. Freddy, Jason, and Michael have made their bid for fright "immortality."

These newer slasher monsters are very different from cinematic horror monsters of the past. As social climates, film technology, and local and national film policies changed, so did monsters, in form, behavior and sensibilities. Are changes always welcome? Are these changing monster types appealing to some groups and not to others? Cowan and O'Brien (1990) found that in slasher monster films, the slashers are primarily men, and sexy women were more likely to die than non-sexy women. Males on the other hand, were targets for death if they possessed negative masculine traits (their sexual allure didn't matter).

One might expect that females would be put off more by slasher monsters than males because women are punished for being sexual while men are merely punished for being arrogant, pushy, or selfish, suggesting an implicit equation between female sexuality and negativity. Yet, Fischoff (1994) found that although females and males do not differ in their attraction to the horror film genre, they do differ in their attraction to violence, males liking violence in movies more than females do. Are females less attracted to violent movie monsters as well?

Further, does age matter? Do people of different ages wax nostalgic about different monsters? If so, why? In other words, what makes horror monsters attractive and what makes them unattractive, to different age groups, to different genders? It is likely the case that, when analyzing people's attraction to the "stars" of this genre called Horror, one size does not fit all. If people are attracted to movies because of what emotions it invites in them, what biographic resonances it incites (Fischoff, 1978), what vicarious payoffs are meted out, it would be of interest to students of the genre as well as filmmakers who keep the genre's pipeline gurgling and churning.

Sadly, there is little empirical research on what or who are people's favorite monsters and what reasons underlie such affections. No study of which the present authors are aware has systematically sampled a national population for their individual preferences on these movie monster matters. This study was designed to explore our favorite monsters and why we feel connected to them. It also sought to explore the following research questions and hypotheses derived from the abundant but solely speculative literature on horror movies and movie monsters.

Hypotheses:

H₁. Young people will prefer more recently conceived movie monsters while older people will prefer vintage film monsters.

H₂. Young people will prefer film monsters that are more violent and disposed to killing large numbers of people than will be older people.

H₃: Young people, rather than older people, will be more likely to prefer film monsters that are attractive because of their killing inclinations.

H₄: Males will prefer more violent movie monsters than Females.

<div align="center">

Research Questions:

</div>

RQ₁. What are the favorite film monsters?

RQ₂. Do males and females differ in terms of the specific monsters they find favorites?

<div align="center">

PROCEDURE AND METHODOLOGY

</div>

Members of the Media Psychology Lab[1] at California State University, Los Angeles under the direction of the first author conducted a year-long, nation-wide survey of (among other things) the preferences people have for certain movie monsters. Data collection took place between September 2000 and August 2001. A variety of direct and indirect contact venues were employed to garner responses from academic and nonacademic settings. This resulted in a cross-sectional, convenience sample of 1,166. This included 597 females, 567 males, and two individuals who withheld gender information.

The participants ranged in ages from 6 through 91 with a mean age of 34.2. The total number of people who were classified as "young," (25 years or younger), "middle" (26-49 years) and "older"(50+) is 531, 371 and 253 respectively. The sample, therefore, is skewed toward younger respondents. These three age range categories were found to be highly effective for comparing age groups in previous research on film preferences (cf. Fischoff, 1998). For those respondents who filled out the long version of the survey, the age distribution was even less representative of those over 50 (n = 38), further attenuating

---

[1] We would like to thank Ana Franco, Angela Hernandez and Leslie Hurry for their assistance on this research.

the proportionate presence of older respondents in our sample. Respondents came from the four major racial/ethnic groups, Caucasian, Asian, Hispanic and African-American. Ethnicity was included to assure sample representativeness rather than as an intended independent research variable.

The survey questionnaire was developed over a number of open-ended pilot studies to elicit a range of items addressing reasons for individual monster preferences[2]. People were asked to respond to potential monster preference reasons on a 4-point Likert-type Scale ranging from 0 (no influence) to 3 (very influential). The final survey contained 43 closed-ended reasons for liking a monster. In order to collect more data on favorite movie monsters citations when people did not have the time to fill out a long list of reasons behind the selection, a short version of the survey was designed and administered in rapid response street interviews.

Slasher Monsters

For purposes of specific hypothesis-related analyses, all monsters cited by respondents were classified into one of two categories: slasher or non-slasher. The operational definition of a slasher monster in the present study was that it was portrayed on screen as a serial or mass murderer, motivated by some deluded or self-justifying revenge or outrage. It was also necessary that the murders committed by the monster generally were unrelated to the monster's actual survival needs (e.g., vampires and blood needs). Further, a slasher monster should be portrayed as generally experiencing no remorse for its murderous rampages. Monsters that murdered for reasons such as fear, survival, or procreational needs and were not necessarily mass murderers, were classified as non-slashers.

Examples of familiar slasher monsters are Freddie Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* series of films, and Chucky, the demon doll from the *Child's Play* series. Examples of familiar non-slasher monsters are Frankenstein, Dracula and Gill Man from the *Creature From the Black Lagoon* film series.

---

[2] The survey also looked at scariest films. That data will be presented at a later date.

The determination of a monster as a slasher or non-slasher was derived from judgments and assessments of film monsters by academics authors such as Crane (1994), Pinedo (1993), Twitchell (1985), and Cowan & O'Brien (1990), comments obtained during pilot studies, and the judgments and observations of the research team. Two members of the research team decided into which category a monster would fall and, if no agreement was obtained, a third team member helped decide the classification. In 95% of the cases, there was no such disagreement. Of the 1, 038 monsters cited, the total number of monster citations falling into the slasher category is 290 while 748 fall into the non-slasher category, $\chi^2 (1, N = 1,038) = 202.1, p < .001$.

Adapting a data reduction procedure employed by Wilkins (2000), an additional classification of the 43 reasons for a monster being a favorite was used for ease of interpretation. Forty-two of the 43 reasons were collapsed into 9 Scales. The number of the scales, their rank in terms of frequency of citation, and their meaning, are presented in **Table 1.** Reasons were placed in scale categories on the basis of shared dimensions of surface meanings. For example, there are two items which comprise the Self-Reference Scale (Scale 1): Reason 2 ("monster reminds me of myself") and Reason 36 ("I first experienced the monster as a child"). Of particular interest in the present study and its hypotheses, Scale 6, Dimensions of Killing, contained nine items with reference to such reasons as "monster enjoys killing" (Reason 11) and "monster kills lots of people" (Reason 14).

Table 1.

Reasons and Rankings for Monsters Being Favorites

All Monsters

Scale Number	Rank	Scale Meaning
1	9	viewer autobiographic reference
2	4	monster's appearance
3	3	**positive psycho-social characteristics of monster**
4	1	**negative psycho-social characteristics of monster**
5	6	supernatural powers
6	5	dimensions of killing
7	7	enlightenment provided by monster
8	8	sex/romance/attractive
9	2	empathy, pity, compassion for monster

For analytic purposes, each respondent's score on a scale was the sum of the scores on each of the reasons comprising the scale. Recall that each reason could range in score from 0-3. Using reason sums allows for comparisons between monsters on each scale, but not for comparisons between scales because scales varied in number of component reasons. The number of items comprising a scale ranged from 2 to 9.

RESULTS

Data was collected from a respondent pool of 1,166. However, as only a subset of this total answered the long form of the survey with the 43 reasons, the N for analysis of reasons why a person liked a particular monster was limited to 700 survey protocols while the tally of favorite monsters is based on an N of 1,034.

Favorite Monsters

Tables 2, 3, and 4 contain, respectively, the "Top 25" favorite monsters for All Respondents, for Males and Females separately and for Young, Middle and Older Respondents separately.

Table 2.

Frequency Citations for "Top 25" Monsters for All Respondents

All Respondants

Monster	Rank
Vampires (Dracula)	1
Freddy Krueger	2
Godzilla	3
Frankenstein	4
Chucky	5
Michael Myers (Halloween)	6
King Kong	7
Hannibal Lecter	8
Jason Voorhees (Friday 13th)	9
Alien (Alien series)	10
Exorcist girl (Linda Blair)	11
Scream killers	12
Predator	13
E. T.	14
Mummy	15
Darth Vader	16
Shark from Jaws	17
It (The Clown)	18
Jack Nicholson (The Shining)	19
Werewolf	20
Blob	21
Gill-Man (Creature From the Black Lagoon)	22
The Thing	23
Beast (Beauty and the Beast)	24
Candyman	25

All Respondents

There were 205 different, favorite individual movie monsters cited ranging from Freddy Krueger, Frankenstein, and the Werewolf to facetiously nominated outliers such as Shelley Winters, Barbra Streisand, and Michael Jackson. Ten percent (132) of respondents reported no favorite movie monster. Of that number, 78 were female (60%) and 54 were male (40%). Thus, 6.7% of females and 4.6% of males had no favorite monsters, $\chi^2(1, N = 1,166) = 3.63$, p< .06. While previous research (Fischoff, Antonio, and Lewis, 1997) has shown that females and males do not significantly differ in terms of preference for films of the Horror genre, results from this study suggests that they <u>do</u> differ in terms of likelihood of having a favorite movie monster.

Age and Vintage of Favorite Monster

H_1 predicted that young people will prefer more recently conceived movie monsters while older people will prefer monsters of an earlier vintage. The correlation between the average age of the respondent selecting a monster and the year that the film introducing the monster was initially released (or, if the there were many sequels, the average year of release of the sequels) is r = -.63, p < .001; as the monster film's release year increases, the average age of the respondent selecting it decreases, supporting H_1.

Taking another angle of regard and looking more closely at the 25 most favorite monsters in terms of citations frequencies, **Table 3** contains data arranged according to the average or mean age of respondents selecting one of these monsters, as well as the standard deviation of the age mean. The monsters are ranked from the lowest mean age of respondents selecting them to the highest mean age.

Table 3.

Mean Age of Respondents Choosing Individual Monsters

Monster	Mean Age of Selecting Respondents	SD	Film Source Release Year
Scream killers [s]	18.4	4.9	1996
It (The Clown) [s]	19.7	2.9	1990
Candyman [s]	20	2.3	1992
Chucky [s]	21.9	6.5	1988
Michael Myers [s]	22.7	5.5	1986
Exorcist Girl	24.2	10.6	1973
Freddy Krueger [s]	24.6	8.8	1989
Jason Voorhees [s]	25.8	11.9	1987
Hannibal [s]	28.8	12.8	1996
Predator [s]	29.5	12.6	1988
Darth Vader	29.6	13.7	1980
Jaws shark	32	8.9	1975
Beast (*Beauty and the Beast*)	33.1	20.7	1991
Werewolf (Chaney)	33.5	17	1941
Vampire (Dracula-Lugosi)	33.6	16.7	1931
Godzilla (Japanese)	34.3	14.7	1975
Alien Creature	35.6	13.2	1982
Terminator	36.9	18.1	1988
The Thing	37.1	16.3	1951
Mummy (Karloff)	39.9	21.9	1932
Blob (*The Blob*)	40.6	16.3	1958
E.T.	44.1	15.9	1982
Frankenstein (Karloff)	44.3	20.5	1933
Jack Nicholson (*The Shining*)	46.4	14.8	1980
Gill-Man (*Black Lagoon*)	48.9	18.1	1954
King Kong	52	18.1	1933

s = slasher monster

It is clear that, with minor exceptions, monsters from the 1980s and 1990s dominate the top or younger domain of the list, and monsters from the 1930s through the 1950s, again with minor exceptions, occupy the bottom or older domain of the list. In other words, younger respondents, who dominated the sample, were partial to more

recent vintage movie monsters while older people, who were in the minority of the sample, were partial to earlier vintage movie monsters.

Looking at the adjacent standard deviation (SD) statistics (degree of dispersion of individual scores around the mean of all the scores) in **Table 3**, another trend emerges. The five monsters which topped the list (Scream Killers, It [The Clown], Candyman, Chucky, Michael Myers) fall into the slasher monster category. These slasher have both the lowest average age (ranging from 18.4 to 22.7) of respondents selecting them, and the lowest SDs (e.g. SD = 2.9 when compared with a mean of 44.3 and a SD of 20.5 for Frankenstein). By contrast, the more classic non-slasher monsters have yielded data with higher average ages but also have larger SDs. The implication here is that earlier, more classic Hollywood monsters have a broader age appeal than do later Hollywood monsters.

Monster preferences by respondents in the Middle Age range show the broadest generational straddle, finding monsters from the '30s to the '80s very appealing but, with the exception of Hannibal Lecter, finding few '90s monsters with any appeal.

Monster and Violence

Age and Monster Violence

H_2 predicted that young people will prefer more violent, slasher-type monsters than will older people. Results provide strong and consistent support for this prediction. As predicted, 45.4% of younger people cited monsters classified as slashers while the figures were 21% and 9.7% for Middle and Older people respectively, χ^2 (2, N = 1,034) = 104.59, p < .001. Each age group was significantly different from each other and in the expected direction.

Table 4.

Frequency Citations for "Top 25 Monsters for All Age Groups

Young		Middle		Older	
Monster	**Rank**	**Monster**	**Rank**	**Monster**	**Rank**
Freddy Krueger	1	Vampires	1	Vampires	1
Vampires	2	Godzilla	2	Frankenstein	2
Chucky	3	Frankenstein	3	King Kong	3
Michael Myers	4	Freddy Krueger	4	Godzilla	4
Godzilla	5	Alien	5	E. T.	5
Jason Voorhees	6	Shark from Jaws	6	Mummy	6
Hannibal Lecter	6	King Kong	7	Jack (The Shining)	7
Exorcist Girl	8	Jason Vorhees	8	Gill-Man	7
Scream Killers	9	Hannibal Lecter	9	Alien	7
Frankenstein	10	Michael Myers	10	Freddy Krueger	10
It (The Clown)	11	Chucky	10	Hannibal Lecter	10
Predator	12	Predator	10	Blob	10
Candyman	13	Jack (The Shining)	10	The Thing	10
Mummy	14	E. T.	10	Jason Vorhees	14
Darth Vader	14	Blob	10	Werewolf	14
Beast (*Beauty and*)	14	Darth Vader	16	Predator	14
Alien	17	Werewolf	17	Exorcist girl	14
Werewolf	18	Mummy	17	Darth Vader	14
King Kong	19	Gill-Man	19	Beast (Beauty and)	14
E. T.	19	Exorcist girl	19	Michael Myers	0
The Thing	19	The Thing	19	Chucky	0
Shark from *Jaws*	22	It (The Clown)	22	Shark from *Jaws*	0
Gill-Man	22	Beast (Beauty and)	22	*Scream* Killers	0
Jack (*The Shining*)	24	*Scream* Killers	24	Candyman	0
Blob	24	Candyman	25	It (The Clown)	0

Gender and Monster Violence

When it comes to gender, results were opposite to that predicted in. It was predicted in H_4 that males would prefer the more violent and rapacious movie monsters, the slashers as it were. Surprisingly, results show that females, not males, cited the

higher percentage of slasher movie monsters, 34.5% compared with a male citation percentage of 27.9%, χ^2(1, N = 1,034) = 5.23, p < .02. This is a complete reversal of prediction.

Table 5.

Males and Female "Top 25" Monster Rankings Based on Citations Frequencies

Monsters Cited - Males	Rank	Monsters Cited - Females	Rank
Vampires	1	Vampires	1
Godzilla	2	Freddy Krueger	2
Frankenstein	3	Godzilla	3
Freddy Krueger	4	Chucky	3
King Kong	5	Frankenstein	5
Michael Myers	6	Hannibal	6
Alien	7	Michael Myers	7
Jason Voorhees	8	Exorcist girl	7
Hannibal	9	Jason Voorhees	9
Predator	9	*Scream* killers	10
Darth Vader	11	King Kong	11
Chucky	12	E.T.	12
Mummy	12	Alien	12
Jack (*The Shining*)	14	It (Clown)	14
Exorcist girl	14	Mummy	15
Jaws	16	Beast (*Beauty and*)	15
E.T.	16	Jaws	17
The Thing	16	Werewolf	18
Werewolf	19	Predator	18
Gill Man (*Black Lagoon*)	19	Candyman	18
Blob	19	Blob	18
Scream killers	22	Jack (*The Shining*)	22
It (Clown)	22	Gill Man (*Black Lagoon*)	22
Candyman	24	Darth Vader	24
Beast (*Beauty and*)	25	The Thing	24

Similar gender results are obtained when viewed from a slightly different angle. **Table 5** shows the top-ranked monsters cited by males and females. The Spearman rank

order correlation for male and female rankings of Top 25 Monsters is significant, $\underline{r}_s = 68$, $p < .001$. Males and females essentially tallied similar lists of favorite monsters with minor exceptions in terms of the ranking of certain monsters, specifically Chucky (ranked 4th for females and 12th for males) and Regan, the possessed girl in the original *Exorcist*, played by Linda Blair (ranked 7th for females and 14th for males). Furthermore, females were about 40% more likely to mention vampires than males and twice as likely to mention killers from *Scream*.

But, other than shifts in rankings, males and females were effectively in agreement when it came to favorite monsters. H_4 - females will prefer less violent monsters than males - seems to have found no support. Moreover, in response to **RQ2**, "do males and females differ in terms of the monsters they find favorites?" The answer appears to be not much.

What differences there are between males and females may be more readily found when looking at reasons for selecting a monster as a favorite.

Rationales Behind Favorite Monster Choices: Scale Scores

Space limits a detailed presentation and discussion of the nine scale variables developed for the present study. Focus will be confined principally to Scale 6, Dimensions of Killing. H_3 predicted that, compared with older people, younger people will be more likely to prefer film monsters that are attractive <u>because</u> of their killing inclinations. Results cited above concerning H_2 established that there is essentially a negative relationship between age and preference for very violent film monsters such that as age goes up, preference for violent, murderous film monsters goes down. But as to the reasons for preferring a monster, comparisons between genders and between age groups are instructive.

Gender

Scale 6 of the 9 scales developed for analysis of reasons concerns all items concerned with reasons underlying dimensions of killing, e.g., monster enjoys killing, kills many people, kills deserving people, etc. ANOVAS reveal significant differences between age groups and genders in scores on this scale. Males were significantly more likely to favor monsters <u>because</u> of their killing capacity than were females, t (577.5) = 1.99, $p < .05$. Males had a mean score on Scale 6 of 9.83, SD = 5.82 while females had a

mean score of 8.91, SD = 5.94. Thus, although females were somewhat more likely to prefer monsters that were classified as slashers, they were somewhat less likely to prefer them for their wide range of killing parameters as expressed in Scale 6. Instead, women were more likely to prefer monsters because of positive psycho-social characteristics (Scale 3), e.g., monster has a sensitive side or shows compassion.

Age

Regarding age, an ANOVA for age on Scale 6 yielded a statistically significant effect for age, $F(2,687)= 13.55$ p < .001. A post hoc comparison of significance of differences between Young, Middle and Older age group means supports the hypothesis, $M_{young} = 10.07$, SD = .27, $M_{middle} = 8.33$, DF = .42, $M_{older} = 6.09$, DF = .86. Each age group is significantly different from each other at alpha levels greater than .05. Thus, age and preference for a monster because of the variety of ways and the variety of types of people it kills were, as predicted, inversely related. Hence data support prediction of $H_{3:}$ young people prefer monsters more for their dimensions of killing than do older people.

Slashers and Non-Slashers

Looking the data in terms of how citers of slasher and non-slasher monsters scored on Scale 6, results indicate that, as might be expected, persons who selected slasher monsters, such as Freddy Kreuger or Michael Myers, had significantly higher scores on the Dimensions of Killing scale than those who selected non-slashers, such as Dracula or Godzilla. Slasher citers obtained a mean score on Scale 6 of 12.27, SD = 4.35 while Non-Slasher choosers had a mean score of 7.84, SD = 6.03, $t(627.8) = 11.01$, p < .001.

Rationales Behind Favorite Monster Choices: Reason Scores

All Monsters

Table 6 contains an overall rank ordering of reasons why a monster was chosen as favorite. Ranking was derived from computing the mean of all respondents rating of that reason as it applied to their monster choice. The top five reasons have nothing explicitly to do with degree of monster murderousness. Rather, the qualities of intelligence, superhuman strength, embodying pure evil, not being inhibited or morally constrained, and showing us the dark side of human nature, garner the most appeal. Thus, a theme running across most monster preferences concerns issues regarding evil,

absence of moral inhibition, and an exploration of the dark side of human nature. Only in later reasons offered do we find dimensions of killing to be of primary importance. But, for young men, recall, this is an extremely potent rationale.

Table 6.

Rank Ordering of Reasons for a Monster Being a Favorite

Mean	Rank	Code Meaning
2.08	1	superhuman strength
1.97	2	very intelligent
1.84	3	monster is pure evil
1.8	4	monster is not inhibited or morally constrained
1.79	5	shows us dark side of human nature
1.78	6	monster enjoys killing
1.74	7	monster never ages or dies
1.74	7	monster is an outcast
1.7	9	looks realistically horrifying
1.64	10	monster kills lots of people
1.64	10	monster kills good people
1.61	12	monster acts out of self-protection or rage
1.6	13	monster has serious psychological problems
1.59	14	never know who monster is going to kill
1.57	15	monster has own subculture
1.57	15	monster has a sense of humor
1.52	17	helps us understand evil
1.48	18	I enjoy being frightened and this monster really frightens me
1.45	19	helps us understand insanity
1.44	20	monster is misunderstood by society
1.42	21	monster has a sensitive side
1.41	22	can't control his violence
1.33	23	monster can disguise its evil ways
1.3	24	monster can alter his/her body shape
1.3	24	monster can take control of victim's minds
1.16	26	like different ways monster kills people
1.14	28	I like what the monster wears
1.01	29	monster consumes human flesh/blood

1	30	monster is compassionate
0.99	31	reflects ancient myths
0.93	32	monster can fly or levitate
0.87	33	monster can become invisible
0.87	33	monster can read a person's mind
0.8	35	turns victim into monster
0.75	36	monster reminds me of myself
0.71	37	reassures me there's life after death
0.71	37	monster is sexy, charming
0.69	39	can have sex whenever he/she wants
0.67	40	kills deserving teenage males
0.65	41	kills deserving teenage females
0.55	42	experienced it first as a child
0.42	43	like the way monster uses humans for reproduction

Reasons by Gender

Male and female participants answered with similar reasons as to why a monster was their favorite. When analyzed by multiple t-tests, in only three instances were significant differences revealed. But three reasons out of 43 being significantly different could have easily occurred by chance and only one of the three reasons was related to violence while the other two dealt with identification. Males were more likely to explain their selection of Godzilla (M_{males} = 1.15, $M_{females}$= 0.25, $t(691)$ = 3.42, $p<.001$). and King Kong (M_{males} =1.71, $M_{females}$ = 0.43, $t(691)$ = 2.14, $p<.05$) because they felt the monsters "reminds me of myself." As regards reasoning related to violence, Chucky was selected by males more often than females because "I like the way the monster kills people" (M_{males} = 2.67, $M_{females}$ =1.00, $t(691)$ = 6.5, $p<.001$). All other monster comparisons showed little difference or no discernible pattern of differences in selected reasoning among males and females. Consequently, Hypothesis 4 predicting that males would be less attracted to monsters that were violent than would females was not supported by the present data.

Reasons by Age

Hypothesis 3 predicted that young people would prefer film monsters for different, more violent reasons, than older people. Four items address the issues surrounding killing or dimensions of killing: Monsters enjoy killing, monsters kill lots of people, monsters kill deserving teenage males, and monster kills deserving teenage females. Results of an ANOVA of the mean of the sum of these four variables supports the prediction. In contrast to respondents of middle and older age ranges, younger respondents find a monster attractive because of the numbers of people it kills and who in particular it kills to a significantly greater degree $F(2,683) = 11.29$, $p < .001$. A post hoc analysis revealed the differences between Older ($M = .77$) and Younger ($M = 1.24$) to be significant and that between Younger and "Middle" ($M = .96$), to be significant. The differences between Older and Middle, while in the predicted age direction, were not statistically significant. Older people, by contrast, found reasons of social rejection and alienation to be the bulwark for their monster preferences.

Reasons by Individual Monsters

Table 7 displays the mean scores on all 43 reasons for the Top 10 Favorite Monsters. Recall the scores o each reason can range from 0 to 3. Any mean score less than one would indicate that that reason was not particularly important in that monster being considered a favorite. Hence, data discussion will generally be restricted to reasons with mean scores above 1.

Table 7

Mean Reason Scores* for "Top 10" Favorite Movie Monsters

Reason	Vampire N = 134	Freddy Krueger N = 87	Frankenstein N = 61	Jason Voorhees N = 29	Michael Myers N = 37	Godzilla N = 75	Chucky N = 39	Hannibal Lecter N = 30	King Kong N =34	Alien N = 26
turns victim into monster	**2.24**	0.49	0.29	0.4	0.16	0.22	0.75	0.56	0.23	1.1
monster reminds me of myself	0.95	0.46	0.79	0.43	0.25	0.68	0.28	0.84	**1.07**	0.47
reassures me there's life after death	**1.26**	0.72	0.68	0.9	0.62	0.49	0.97	0.24	0.08	0.27
monster is compassionate	1.33	0.28	**2.25**	0.4	0.28	1.2	0.59	1.08	**2.5**	0.33
monster is pure evil	1.72	**2.54**	0.66	**2.5**	**2.75**	1.31	**2.56**	**2.12**	0.54	1.73
monster never ages or dies	**2.48**	2.19	0.79	**2.7**	**2.47**	1.93	**2.47**	0.68	0.85	1.33
monster has own subculture	**2.39**	1.24	0.54	1.1	1.19	1.56	1.22	1.44	0.92	**2.13**
monster has a sensitive side	1.97	0.49	**2.25**	0.4	0.42	1.74	0.78	1.68	**3**	0.6
Monster has a sense of humor	1.5	**2.17**	1.61	0.75	0.38	1.22	**2.19**	1.96	1.9	0.33
monster is not inhibited or morally constrained	1.9	**2.12**	1.18	0.95	1.97	1.54	**2.06**	**2.28**	1.77	1.5
monster enjoys killing	1.69	2.35	0.64	**2.55**	**2.53**	1.8	**2.53**	**2.44**	0.62	1.47
Monster is sexy, charming	**1.86**	0.26	0.07	0.2	0.5	0.41	0.22	1.12	0.62	0.33
like different ways monster kills people	0.96	**1.81**	0.39	**2.1**	**1.56**	1.05	1.31	**1.48**	0.46	1.44
monster kills lots of people	1.53	**2.28**	0.61	**2.85**	**2.64**	1.78	**2.37**	1.76	1.1	1.6
kills deserving teeage females	0.76	**1.26**	0.14	**1.5**	0.97	0.68	0.84	0.32	0.23	0.33
kills deserving teeage males	0.72	**1.25**	0.39	**1.45**	1.06	0.71	0.81	0.4	0.46	0.33
superhuman strength	**2.36**	2.15	1.79	**2.55**	**2.47**	2.32	1.91	0.84	2.15	**2.4**
monster can become invisible	1.19	**1.25**	0.5	1.1	0.5	0.41	0.47	0.4	0	0.27
helps us understand evil	1.77	1.25	1.5	1.8	1.41	1.22	1.62	**2.08**	1.1	1.2
helps us understand insanity	1.28	1.81	1.32	1.95	2.13	0.88	1.97	**2.24**	0.62	0.87

shows us where science and technology can go wrong	0.78	0.87	**2.14**	0.6	0.56	**2.02**	1.44	0.64	1.23	1.94
I enjoy being frightened and this monster really frightens me	1.46	**1.96**	0.86	1.8	**2.25**	1.32	**1.94**	1.6	0.85	2.1
monster has serious psychological problems	1.32	**2.29**	1.21	2.2	**2.75**	0.78	**2.43**	**2.36**	0.62	0.6
monster kills good people	1.72	1.9	1.03	**2.25**	**2.15**	1.5	**2.37**	1.6	0.77	1.82
monster consumes human flesh/blood	**2.33**	0.91	0.29	0.6	0.28	1.02	0.56	**2.56**	0.23	1.13
monster can alter his/her body shape	**2.23**	**1.76**	0.36	0.45	0.13	0.66	1.19	0.36	0	1.8
never know who monster is going to kill	1.67	1.97	1.03	**2.35**	1.81	1.56	2.19	1.52	1.15	**2.47**
looks realistically horrifying	1.27	**2.43**	1.59	1.95	2.1	1.88	2.16	0.84	1.54	*2.93*
monster is an outcast	1.84	2.13	**2.21**	1.8	**2.41**	1.88	2.22	1.46	2.15	0.73
can't control his violence	**1.84**	1.09	**2.1**	1.25	1.41	2.1	1.41	1.16	1.54	0.87
monster is misunderstood by society	1.78	0.85	**2.11**	1.1	1.41	1.71	0.94	1.54	**2.85**	0.8
monster acts out of self-protection or rage	1.57	1.62	1.66	2.1	1.69	*2.38*	1.97	1.44	**2.37**	1.47
monster can disguise its evil ways	**2.1**	1.26	0.43	1.15	0.84	0.8	**2.25**	**2.24**	0.38	0.6
can have sex whenever he/she wants	1.69	0.72	0.43	0.4	0.09	0.5	1.1	0.63	0	0.27
shows us dark side of human nature	**2.28**	1.99	1.43	1.85	**2.66**	1.24	1.94	**2.36**	1.31	1.1
experienced it first as a child	0.5	0.41	0.71	0.3	0.28	0.83	0.47	0.52	0.77	0.27
reflects ancient myths	1.8	0.66	0.57	0.95	0.66	1.17	1.03	0.48	1.15	0.47
very intelligent	*2.55*	1.74	1.1	1.81	1.69	1.46	2.25	*2.76*	1.69	**2.33**
monster can take control of victim's minds	**2.26**	**2.18**	0.32	1.1	0.34	0.59	1.88	1.88	0	0.47
monster can fly or levitate	**2.19**	1.07	0.18	0.35	0.06	0.76	0.53	0.2	0	0.47

monster can read a person's mind	**1.54**	**1.65**	0.14	0.75	0.19	0.27	0.47	1.36	0	0.33
like way monster uses humans for reproduction	0.69	0.35	0.27	0.35	0.09	0.29	0.63	0.28	0	**1.53**
I like what the monster wears	**1.97**	1.22	0.25	1.15	**1.81**	0.54	1.44	0.79	0.33	0

The highest mean reason scores in each row are printed in bold. Suffice it to say here that on matters concerning killing dimensions, slasher monsters generally score highest, something already seen in the presentation of results regarding Scale Scores, especially Scale 6.

Using highest scores in each column to provide a thumbnail characterization of each monster's most salient characteristics which contributed to their being a sample favorite, interpretation of results suggest the following:

1. **Vampires** engage viewers most because of their intelligence and because they never die or age. They are also the sexiest of all monsters, with Hannibal Lecter coming in second. Vampires share another commonality with Hannibal, their taste for humans although Hannibal is noted for sins of the flesh while Vampires drink -- not wine, but blood.

2. **Freddy Krueger**, one of the slasher monsters, is principally highlighted as "pure evil," but a close second is that he is "realistically horrifying."

3. **Frankenstein** scores high on compassion and sensitivity and the fact of is being both an outcast and an example of where science can go wrong.

4. The most outstanding feature of slasher **Jason Voorhees**, of Friday the 13th is that he is an unstoppable killing machine. His cornicopic feats of slicing and dicing a seemingly endless number of adolescents and the occasional adult is impressive to his fans. He scores the highest of all 10 monsters on all relevant killing variables comprising Scale 6, with a mean score of 13.52. His closest rival is Freddy Krueger scores only 12.29 on this Dimensions of Killing variable. Considering that his body count does not compare with those of Godzilla or the creature from Alien, it is an impressive accomplishment to be effectively anointed the King of Killers. Jason's audience appeal

is further abetted by his immortality, his apparent enjoyment of killing and by his superhuman strength.

5. **Michael Myers**, of Halloween fame, is, like Jason Voorhees, a slasher monster extraordinaire. While also the embodiment of pure evil, he also stands apart from others in his highest score for serious psychological problems, M = 2.75. Michael's closest rivals are Chucky, M = 2.53 and Hannibal, M = 2.36. Why Michael is seen as more troubled than Jason is not discernible from the data. That it may be related to his witnessing his sister having sex in the introductory episode of this franchise, which putatively led to his psychotic reaction and murder of his sister, is one possibility.

6. **Godzilla's** most dominant features are that it acts out of self-protection or rage and that it has superhuman strength and that, a result of atomic testing in the Pacific, is a product of science and technology going very wrong. Its destruction of cities and its inhabitants seems "understandable" in this light given her favorite status. Godzilla scores third lowest in penchant for killing, higher only than King Kong and Frankenstein.

7. Another slasher monster, **Chucky**, the demon doll from the *Child's Play* series, was, it may be recalled, picked three times as often by females as males. Enjoying killing, having serious psychological problems, and embodying pure evil are his principal virtues for being a favorite. But, like some other monsters, such as Vampires, Hannibal and Alien, Chucky is considered quite intelligent and appealing for that reason.

8. **Hannibal Lecter**, the most recently minted of the Top 10 monsters, lacks totally any supernatural "gifts," but his intellectual appeal is the highest of all, M = 2.76. Likewise, because of his non-supernatural status, he provides his admirers with an appreciation of the workings of an insane mind. His mean score on this reason of helping us understand insanity is 2.24. Lecter's closest rival on this variable was Michael Myers whose mean score on this reason is 2.13. And, top scorer again, Hannibal is viewed as the monster who is least morally inhibited or constrained. Thus, Hannibal's supernaturally unadulterated, sardonic cannibalism makes him a righteous target for judgment about human failings. At the same time, such failings seem to be part and parcel of his audience appeal.

9. **King Kong** is the king of the sensitivity and the recipient of the most pity. He is rated as having the most Sensitive Side of all the 10 monsters, M = 3.0 is the Most

Misunderstood, M = 2.85 and the Most Compassionate, M = 2.5. He virtually ties with Godzilla as having his violence justified because he acts out of self-protection and rage.

10. Finally, the creature from **Alien** is a favorite in large measure because one never knew the monster was going to kill ("everybody" was usually a safe bet) and because it was so horrifying looking, M = 2.93. Freddy Krueger's score on this reason, M = 2.43, was a distant second. Intelligence was also a strong point. So, intelligence, unpredictability and sheer physical horrific all teamed up to place the lizard mother from Alien in the current pantheon of movie monsters.

DISCUSSION

Previous research has shown that females are less likely than males to prefer movies that show violence and gore. The present study found no evidence for consistent and systematic differences between the genders in terms of monster choices. Therefore, no support for our third hypothesis could be confirmed regarding greater or lesser preferences for murderous monsters. Nevertheless, the study did find that females were less likely to have a favorite monster than males. It may be that females, particularly the younger women and those who did choose a monster and enjoy horror films, are just as "blood thirsty" a cast of viewers as their male counterparts. Further research might examine if other factors influence the responses of female subjects such as the presence of a self-reliant, briefly victorious, female protagonist in the horror films chosen such as Sigourney Weaver's Ripley in the *Alien* series and the women who live to scream another day in another film, in so many slasher horror films, women such as Jamie Lee Curtis in *Halloween* I and II.

In terms of favorite monsters, most **emphatically the fictional vampire species in general, and Bela Lugosi's Dracula in particular, is the king of the netherworld of film monsters.** This may be due to the timeless nature of the story as well as the countless vampire remakes that have flooded cinema over the years and the popularity of imitating Bela Lugosi. Moreover, F. W. Murnau's Bram Stoker rip-off, *Nosferatu,* notwithstanding, Dracula has most often been played by very attractive men who serve to increase the sexual power of the character in prowess and romance. This has served to boost the monster's appeal for both men and women, although women, understandably rated vampires significantly more sexy than did males, $M_{male} = 1.29$, $M_{female} = 2.11$,

$t(49.2) = 3.03$ p < .001. In the Top 10 list of monsters, for all respondents, vampires were rated as the sexiest (M = 1.86), followed a distant second by Hannibal Lecter (M = 1.13). With high ratings on looks and brains, and an appeal to both men and women, it is perhaps no wonder that the vampire (and Dracula especially) is the most popular movie monster.

Why is a serial murderer like Dracula considered sexy and attractive? Psychological research has reaffirmed conventional wisdom repeatedly in studies showing that we are more ready to empathize with and excuse handsome or beautiful people when they commit crimes than is our disposition when it comes to the non-handsome, the non-beautiful defendants. (Stewart, 1980). We also tend to attribute more positive personality characteristics to attractive people (Tesser, 1995). Even in "monsterland," it seems, it pays to be beautiful or handsome --and sympathetic! Recent films on the Ann Rice literary creation, Vampire Lestat, prompt both sexual and sympathetic responses from fans of her books and the derivative movies.

Vampires have an additional virtue … of sorts. As a western society, to a likely neurotic degree, we fear aging and death and the Vampire character is ideally tempting in both regards. He never ages and never dies completely. He also has supernatural powers that may be appealing to those who feel powerless.

The results of our study support the hypotheses that younger moviegoers prefer more recent horror film monsters and are far more partial to slasher monsters than are older moviegoers. Results also support our hypothesis that younger viewers prefer a newer generation of horror monster and, it may be surmised, a cinematic style and storyline drenched in the sensational and novel forms of bloodletting and mortal dispatch favored by the likes of Freddy, Michael, Jason and their brethren of evil. Slasher - monster storylines place the acts of murder in the foreground. What little there might be in terms of rationale for the seemingly endless orgies of death in which these films commerce, is unceremoniously relegated to the background, as if to say, "Why ask why?"

Contemporary monsters might easily be considered psychopathic in their bloodlust as they eschew even a scintilla of remorse. In other words, older monsters struggled with their stature as deviants and killed for survival (Dracula), out of fear-induced rage (Frankenstein), search for a loved one (Karloff's Mummy) or, as with the

Wolf Man, bestial possession. This monster quartet, in their original film appearances, often yearned for the deliverance of death. Indeed, according to Crane (1994), it was Lugosi's 1931 Dracula who uttered the plaintive lines "To die. To really be dead. That must be glorious."

But the *modus operandi* of contemporary monsters? Contemporary monsters seem to kill because…they kill. Even though brief psychological explanations are given in various modern slasher films, such as revenge against their original aggressors, they do not seem to stand as important during the subsequent installments. These psychological motivations, mentioned in the premier episodes of the series films seem obligatory rather than substantive and frequently exercises no palpable influence on character motivation or behavior. It is not surprising then, that in subsequent iterations of the movie (sometimes called sequels), motivation for murder all but disappears.

These changes in film styles (quick, bloodless dispatch vs. explicit slaughter) and reinvention of the formulae for character motivation (existential despair vs. sheer nihilism) may reflect altering value trends in popular culture. Or, they may bespeak a culture which itself was or is still reflecting social and political nightmares in contemporary society, as has been argued by Crane (1994), Pinedo (1997) and Waller (1987).

Yet, whether legendary *horrormeisters* such as George Romero, Tobe Hooper or Wes Craven were (and are) speaking <u>for</u> a post-Viet Nam war, politically cynical generation, as they have claimed in film interviews, or are merely people <u>of</u> a generation, is a moot point. But the explicitness of their filmic violence in the 70s seemed to be echoed in the 80s and 90s in other horror franchises series like *Scream* and the Hannibal Lecter oeuvre, and in the explicitness of music lyrics, body adornments, piercings, and the clothing styles for the culture of youth. Lecter continues to mimic the prevailing culture of America, both civilized and savage. He looks, according to David Skal (1996), very much like us. A monster for the millennium, Lecter wears his evil on the inside not on his face. His disfigurement is spiritual, not physical. He is Jeffrey Dahmer meets Norman Bates with a seductive panache of *Wall Street's* Gordon Gekko.

For once, it seems, Hollywood got it right. The respondents in our survey saw Lecter as pure evil; not evil in looks, but in deed and conscience. Thus, evil is the

charming gentleman next door, not the freak in the circus or the drooling psychotic off his meds. In the tradition of Pogo, we've come to know the monster and the monster is very often, us.

Lecter still carries on the tradition of Freddy and Jason. He kills for pique and pleasure, gamesmanship, hunger and lust, not for moral outrage, self-protection or persecution. He is remorseless and asks the viewer to share, or at least overlook his peculiar tastes. Charm, Hollywood would have us believe, excuses almost everything. Lecter's insouciant airs make him a monster for the the 21st century and beyond—Id incarnate. Greed is good and murder can be fun…and filling too. As Crane (1994) would have it, "violence in the contemporary shocker is never redemptive, revelatory, logical, or climactic (it does not resolve conflicts.)" (p. 4). Violence simply is.

There is clearly a cultural as well as generational gap between those under 25 and those over 40. The horror films and favorite monsters reflect this gap. So did results from research by Fischoff and his students on favorite film quotes (Fischoff *et al*, 2000), which indicated that young people favored more violent and vengeful quotes from movies than did older respondents.

CONCLUSIONS

In general, different monsters are adored for different reasons but, overall, characteristics such as superhuman strength, intelligence, luxuriating in the joy of being evil and being unfettered by moral restraints, are some of the most popular reasons favored by the sample. Moreover, monsters are admired for holding a mirror up to our darker sides and assisting us in understanding evil. Perhaps it is the evil that we fear lurks in all of us, the evil that, in reality, dares not show its face or speak its name. But it is an evil that does dare parade itself across the movie screen for our vicarious enjoyment and delectation.

Beyond what a monster may show us about ourselves and our darker side, our results indicate that what monsters must do above all is behave horrifically and evoke in us extreme emotions, especially the adrenalized emotion of fear. Looking scary is useful as well. Moviegoers also relish their monsters displaying such positive traits as compassion, sensitivity, humor, and intelligence. Regardless of age, members of all age groups in this study, in varying degrees, liked characters who were sympathetic because

of their afflictions and torments. Moreover, the supernatural powers that the monster possesses are attractive. Our modern and classic literature and legends show that we humans fantasize about having powers beyond the normal. Whether we're rooting for Superman or Dracula, good or evil, superhuman powers are an audience favorite.

It is worth noting that over 90% of the people who cited classic monsters who were reprised in modern remakes, specified their favorites to be the original, not the remakes. Remakes tend to disappoint. Remakes of films such as *Godzilla, The Thing* and *King Kong*, for example, were each singled out for particular rejection by respondents. The myriad of actors portraying Dracula over the decades once Bela Lugosi's star went into decline, including such notables as Jack Palance, Christopher Lee, Frank Langella and, most recently, Gary Oldman, seemed to carry on the tradition of the romantic vampire, but Lugosi's Dracula was still the most frequently mentioned incarnation.

A closing thought about the monster preferences of the young versus the older viewer. Younger viewers do celebrate the riot of blood and dismemberment unleashed by contemporary film monsters. But it must be noted that the more classic film monsters have appeal across generations - an appeal far broader than the appeal of later monsters. Modern respondents clearly like classic monsters. They like them almost as much as do older respondents and, as evidence shows, for many of the same reasons: outsider, misunderstood, sympathetic, frightened, and compassionate. Perhaps those qualities are most exquisitely represented in the monster who is taken from his home, placed in an environment he doesn't understand and is brought to his iconic demise because of the love <u>for</u> but not <u>of</u> a woman—King Kong. Kong is a monster with whom people of all generations can identify and sympathize. And the youth of today is no exception.

Remarkably, though, it would appear that younger movie goers have another set of criteria that they invoke for the modern movie monsters, the Freddys, the Michaels, the Jasons: who they kill, how they kill, and how often they kill counts for a lot, and the bloodier, the better.

This mass murderer dimension of monster appreciation is largely absent from the metrics and aesthetics employed by older respondents. This may reflect a co-existing set of preferences in younger minds that they handle easily, a set of tastes that straddle

generations of popular culture and film monsters. Jenkins (2000) offers the suggestion that violent entertainment like this serves four functions for young people including fantasies of empowerment, of transgression, intensification of emotional experience, and acknowledgement that the world is not always a safe, friendly place. This youthful juggling act, this plasticity of filmic preference, may both astonish and offend older people but it's one that younger people have come to find rather normal. Whether it means something deeper and more disturbing about real life tolerances for rape and murder and real life appetites of younger viewers for death sports and snuff films, is open to speculation.

When these younger viewers approach middle age, whether they continue to find such explicit violence and mayhem as appealing as they do now is another open question. Research cited earlier suggests that time alters such appetites. But perhaps times have changed and, like greed on Wall Street, a monster mired in murder, mutilation and mayhem will remain an allure not to be outgrown but, rather, a timeless source of an evening's entertainment for the entire family.

REFERENCES

Apter, M. (1992). The psychology of excitement*, in *The Dangerous Edge*, The Free Press-Macmillan, New York,

Baird, R. (2000).The Startle Effect, *Film Quarterly*, *Spring,* p.p.1-18 ,

Cantor, J. (1994). Fright reactions to mass media*, in *Media effects: Advances in theory and research,* J. Bryant & D. Zillmann (Eds.), Erlbaum Publishing, Hillsdale, NJ, pp. 213-245,

Cantor, J., & Oliver, M.B. (1996). Developmental differences in responses to horror, in *Horror films: Current research on audience preferences and reactions,* J.B. Weaver III & R. Tamborini, (Eds.), Erlbaum Publishing, Mahwah, NJ,

Cowan, G. & O'Brien, M. (1990). Gender and survival vs. Death in slasher films: A content analysis, *Sex Roles*, <u>23</u>: 3, p.p 187-196.

Crane, J. L. (1994). *Terror and everyday life: Singular moments in the history of the horror film,* Sage Publishing*.:* Thousand Oaks, Ca,

Fischoff , S., Cardenas , E., Hernandez , A. Wyatt, K., Young, J. and Gordon, R. (August 2000). *Popular movie quotes: Reflections of a people and a culture*, Paper presented at annual meeting of APA, Washington, D.C, ,.

Fischoff, S. (August, 1998). *Favorite Film Choices: Influences of Beholder and the Beheld,* Paper presented at annual meeting of APA Convention, San Francisco.

Fischoff, S., Antonio, J., & Lewis, D. (August, 1997). *Favorite films and film genres as a function of race, age, and gender,* Paper presented at annual meeting of APA, Chicago.

Fischoff, S. (August, 1994). *Race and sex differences in patterns of film attendance and avoidance.* Paper presented at annual meeting of APA, Los Angeles.

Jenkins, H. (Winter *2000).* Lessons from Littleton: What Congress doesn't want to hear about youth and media, *Independent School*. http://www.nais.org/pubs/ismag.cfm?file_id=357&ismag_id=14 (accessed 90/19/02).

Kaplan, M. & Kickul, J. (May, 1996). *Mood and extent of processing plot and visual information about movies*, Paper presented at annual meeting of Midwestern Psychological Association, Chicago,.

Pinedo, I. (1997). *Recreational terror: Women and the pleasures of horror film viewing,*
    State University of New York Press, Albany, N.Y.

Sparks, G. & Miller, W. (1998), as cited in *Purdue News*,
    http://news.uns.purdue.edu/uns/html4ever/981016.Sparks.films.html,.

Stewart II, J. E. (1980). Defendant's attractiveness as a factor in the outcome of trials,
    Journal of Applied Social Psychology, <u>10</u>, p.p. 348-361.

Skal, D. (1993). *The Monster Show: A cultural history of ho*rror, W. W. Norton & Co.:
    New York.

E. Tan, E., (1996). *Emotion and the structure of narrative film*, Erlbaum Publishing,
    Mahwah:, N.J.

Tesser, A. (1995). *Advances in social psychology*, McGraw-Hill Publishing, New York,
    N.Y.

Twitchell, J. B. (1985). *Dreadful pleasures: An anatomy of modern horror*, Oxford Press:
    N.Y.

Waller, G. A. (1987). *American Horror: Essays on the modern American horror film*,
    University of Illinois Press: Urbana, Ill.

Weaver, J.B , & Tamborini, R. (Eds. (1996). *Horror film: Current research on audience*
    preferences and reactions, Erlbaum Publishing, Mahwah: NJ.

Wilkins, K. G. (2000). The role of media in public disengagement from political life,
    Journal of Broadcasting & Electronic Media, <u>44</u>(4), pp. 569-580.

.Zillmann, D.,Weaver, J. B., Mundorf, N., & Aust, C. F. (1986). Effects on an opposite-
    gender companion's affect to horror on distress, delight, and attraction, *Journal of*
    Personality and Social Psychology, <u>51</u>, pp. 586-594.

.