

The Influence of Horror Films on Adolescent Audiences

Criticism of Horror Films

“Women in Danger Films” -Siskel and Ebert, *Sneak Previews*, 1980₁

- Women in extreme peril
- The films “hate women”
- Formulaic and often offensive tropes

“Video Nasties₂”

- Violent or obscene content, banned from viewing

Background Research

- Media violence- immediate and long-term influences
 - Increase acceptance of violence₃
 - Decreased arousal/ emotional disturbance, desensitization₄
 - Increased violent behavior, thought, and emotion₃
- Horror film violence- gender, sexual content
 - Female characters in less serious but more sexual violent scenes₅
 - Female characters shown in danger for longer periods of time₆

Evolution of Question

- Gendered Violence
- Tropes, stereotypes, and portrayal of women

Features of this Research

- One of few studies of a specific genre
- Examines differences between genders
- Combines conclusions of research on media violence and research on horror films

Methods

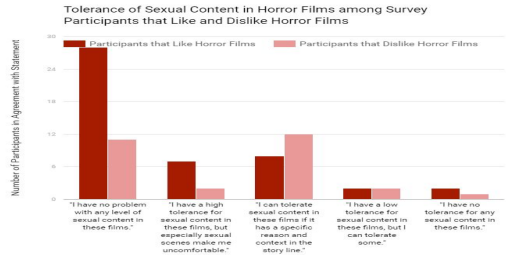
Survey

- 75 high school students
- Age, gender, interest in horror films, opinion of violence and horror films

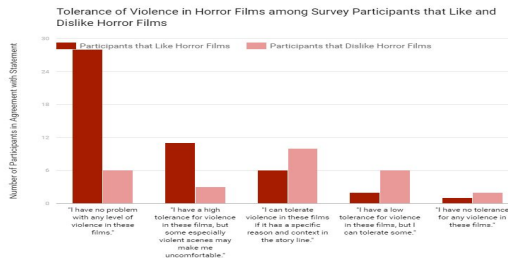
Content Analysis

- 10 news articles, crimes inspired by horror films
- Connection to the world

Survey Results: Tolerance of Sexual and Violent Content



- 60% of participants that liked horror films, 39% of participants that disliked, could tolerate any amount of sexual content in horror films



- 58% of participants that liked horror films, 22% of participants that disliked, could tolerate any amount of violent content in horror films

Survey Results: Acceptance of Violence in Conflict Resolution

- “Violence cannot fully resolve conflicts” agreement rated 1-5
- 52% of participants that liked horror films responded 1-3
- 41% of participants that disliked horror films responded 1-3
- The majority (33%) of females responded 5
- The majority (43%) of males responded 3

Content Analysis Results

- 69% of criminals were minors
- 85% of criminals were under 30
- 100% of criminals were male
- Similar “lonely, troubled” descriptions

Combating the Influence of Horror Films

- Educate audiences
- Parental advisory
- Alteration of film rating system

Further Work

- Interaction of horror films and gender
- Identifying single components' influence

Conclusion

- Influences of horror films parallel to those of other violent media
 - Desensitization or lack of emotional response to violence
 - Acceptance of violence as solution to conflict
- Young males most impressionable

References

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