"Try getting a reservation at Dorsia now, you fucking stupid bastard!" Hegemonic Masculinity in
Slasher Films

a thesis presented by

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Abstract:

This thesis aims to analyze and address the prevalence of hegemonic masculinity in the slasher subgenre of horror films. The research consisted of a content analysis of what the internet deemed the 'best' ten slasher films of all time. The content analysis was based upon R.W. Connell's (2005) theory of hegemonic masculinity which stated the existence of hierarchical standards for masculinity that men are expected to achieve. Hegemonic masculinity was categorized into four themes. The themes were sexist ideology, sexual behavior, and physical and emotional violence. The research indicated that emotional violence occurred at the highest rate among the sample of slasher films, at 44.3% of all four themes at 729 total counted instances. The results demonstrate that hegemonic masculinity exists past a principle of pure physical subordination, but instead in a setting where subordination happens in a more subtle fashion through emotional violence.

<u>Introduction:</u>

Slasher films are one of the most prevalent horror movie subgenres. They are seen at face value as nonsense, an excuse for displaying brutalization to the public. In reality, slasher films are a unique genre that experiments with power dynamics beyond what our society automatically sees, they push past the societal comfort zone surrounding acceptable forms of violence. Hegemonic masculinity is a theory by R. W. Connell (2005), who stated that there was an ideal standard of masculinity that all men should aim to achieve. This creates a hierarchy that encourages competition. The ideal man is a symbol of toxic masculinity where men are superior to women. Additionally, aggression is one of the most important aspects of her theory to maintain order. In order to fit this rigid standard, men are required to obtain absolute dominance which incentivizes a hierarchy that displaces effeminate men and traditionally feminine women.

The aim of this research is to connect hegemonic masculinity to characters' behavior in slasher films. Every character is arguably fighting for dominance over another character. Male characters harm other male characters, female characters sacrifice their femininity in order to dominate other characters. Although it may seem transparent, hegemonic masculinity is very present in slasher films. This research is important because we build our perceptions of the world based on the media we consume. If we consume hegemonic masculinity, we are likely to replicate it in our own lives.

<u>Literature Review:</u>

Carol Clover (1992) states that there are six main elements of a slasher film. Carol Clover is one of the foundations of horror research in the community, her research has influenced the way that many perceive horror films in an academic setting. First, there is a killer who is

psychologically disturbed and usually male (Clover). Examples include Michael Myers from *Halloween* (1978), Norman Bates from *Psycho* (1960), and Freddy Krueger from *A Nightmare on Elm Street* (1984). Second, the victim is usually a beautiful, sexually active young woman, like Tatum from *Scream* (1996) and Marion from *Psycho* (Clover). Third, the survivor is usually a boyish, unique girl known as the Final Girl (Clover). The Final Girl is considered a girl scout, a virginal, and not like her female counterparts. She is argumentative and unafraid to confront her attacker, like Nancy Thompson, a high schooler who antagonizes Freddy Krueger to attack her. This is important because it jumpstarts the final fight of the film. Characters like Laurie Strode in *Halloween* are very resourceful, hyper-aware of their surroundings, and are often teased by their friends for their virginity. "Sexualized females may be more likely to die while the good girls, who appeared as more masculine and less attractive were more likely to live" (Wellman et al. 2020). In the film *Scream*, there is a subplot surrounding the main character, Sidney, and how the loss of her virginity made her lose her safety. She became a target as soon as she had sex. Fourth, the location is not the main character's home and is considered a terrible place (Clover). In *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), a group of young adults are trapped in a killer cannibal family's home in rural Texas, in *Friday the 13th* (1980), the camp counselors are being plucked off one by one in a secluded summer camp in the northeast, called Camp Crystal Lake. Fifth, the weapon is something other than a gun, in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, Freddy Krueger uses a glove with knives for fingers. Sixth, the attack is registered from the victim's point of view and comes with shocking suddenness (Clover). For example, in *Deep Red* (1975) a Lithuanian psychic is suddenly grabbed, slashed, and stabbed by a stranger before being thrown through the window of a friend's apartment. These are all essential pieces of slasher films, but they are not a guaranteed presence: in *Halloween*, Michael Myers stalks and harasses Laurie Strode in her own

neighborhood, eliminating the unknown territory aspect. Likewise, not all of the survivor characters are female, in *Deep Red*: the 'Final Girl' is actually Marcus Daly, a middle-aged male pianist, very different from Nancy Thompson who is a high school girl. Similarly, not all killers are male; in both *Deep Red* and *Friday the 13th* the killers are older women, usually scorned mothers.

Kirkland (2009) looked at the horror video game franchise *Silent Hill*. He found that *Silent Hill* was unique because of its emphasis on ordinary and unremarkable men in main character roles. Similarly, in slasher films, many of the victims are regular men. *American Psycho* specifically follows the life of a Wall-Street businessman. The whole aim of the story is to say that the men at the elite and prestigious levels are carbon copies of one another. Across both video games and film, characters who are ordinary are put in extraordinary situations. Additionally, the horror genre, whether film or video games, is associated with masculinity. Kirkland said,

> "Much work discussing video game representations and constructions of masculinity-admittedly as a sideline to the more usual focus on constructions of femininity-emphasizes the pervasiveness of dominant modes of male gender and sexuality, comparable to the excessive stereotypes of superhero comic books or action-hero cinema."

This quote serves just as fit for representations in slasher films as it does for video games. The research in the field surrounding gender and the genre are surmised around femininity, oppression, and brutalization (Cowan & O'Brien 1990; Wellman et al. 2020). While the literature focuses specifically on feminine brutalization, there is no real discussion on why the brutalization takes place or what purpose it serves. One of the core prospects of hegemonic

masculinity is the domination of others in order to achieve elite status, the brutalization of women is a consequence of men trying to remain in power.

As previously mentioned, sometimes Final Girls are not women, but men instead. Research suggests characteristics of survivors and nonsurvivors found there was a notable difference in both genders (Cowan & O'Brien 1990; Hernandez & Raya, 2021). Male survivors showed more positive female qualities like empathy and the ability to express themselves, they were also considered more physically attractive. The feminization of male survivors is important because in many instances they are naturally like their male victim counterparts. They are not traditional heroes, but they are feminized because of the narrative, design, and location (Pugh 2007; Kirkland 2009; Hernandez & Raya 2021). For example, an article by Pugh (2007) discussed the character Ash Williams from the *Evil Dead* franchise and his position as a gentler and more feminine man. Compared to the other male character in the film who was not. Male victims, however, displayed more instances of negative male-coded behaviors like dictatorship or being egotistical. Being in the position of the killer, the killer is similarly comparable to male survivors. Killers are often males in some form of gender distress and effeminate, but an important distinction to draw, between both survivor and killer positions, is the fact that they are nonmasculine and not a woman. (Rieser 2001). Killers and survivors are interesting because what allows a male survivor to survive is his femininity. Antithetically, the aspect that portrays a killer's monstrosity is his femininity.

Alternatively, female survivors were perceived as less attractive than nonsurvivors and displayed more masculine characteristics like assertiveness, resourcefulness, and heroism. In order to protect the children she is babysitting in *Halloween*, Laurie sternly raises her voice saying, "Do as I say!" This scene demonstrates how acting untraditionally masculine as a woman

actively saves Laurie and the children. An article by Mee (2013) evaluated the relationship between aggression and victimization within a film under the rape-revenge sub-genre. While the author primarily compares the two iterations of the film *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978), they make an important note on the victim-turned-killer, Jennifer Hills, and her relationship with violence as a rape survivor. Jennifer sacrifices her femininity for revenge to behave masculinely. While this is completely different from Laurie Strode or any of the Final Girls that are mentioned, it also is not at the same time. Jennifer and Laurie, or substituted by any Final Girl, are both young women who were terrorized by men. The main difference between the two is the severity of physical and emotional violence experienced. Jennifer was brutally raped and tortured and Laurie was stalked and threatened. None of the Final Girls experience the magnitude of violence that Jennifer endured. That is where the line blurs between victim and perpetrator based upon the vehemence of masculinity used in fighting back. Jennifer goes to the extent of revenge that no other Final Girl gets remotely close to.

> "If the fates of her rapists result in them being demasculinized, then Jennifer as their torturer surely runs the risk of becoming phallicized, not just the ultimate Final Girl (Clover 1993), but a near monster who stalks, captures and tortures her prey with practically superhuman strength and prowess."

The author's point is that Jennifer is both predator and prey, she fully crosses over into the territory that Final Girls are unable to. She passes the threshold of masculinity that further separates her from Final Girls.

Theory:

Hegemonic masculinity is the theory by R.W. Connell (2005) suggests that there is a hierarchy of masculinity. At the top, there is an idealized male, that men are expected to strive towards being and are shamed when they are not. Within slasher films, there is an egregious amount of hegemonic masculinity where characters are in competition with one another in order to achieve the dominant position. That dominant position is staying in control of the situation or staying alive. A significant amount of hegemonic masculinity exists beyond the killer character who physically dominates or victimizes the other characters. In actuality, the attempts to scale the hierarchy exist within conversations between other characters, especially male characters who are at equal social standing. Among the films analyzed throughout this research, the film *American Psycho* was the closest representation of hegemonic masculinity. All of the men in the film are forgettable, often confused with their coworkers. To cope with this, these men will often tear each other down by insulting one another and casually acting aggressively. The main character, Patrick Bateman, is culturally idealized as the pinnacle of masculinity, but Bateman himself feels inferior to Paul Allen, one of his coworkers. A quote by Patrick Bateman that represents the theory,

> "There are no more barriers to cross. All I have in common with the uncontrollable and the insane, the vicious and the evil, all the mayhem I have caused and my utter indifference toward it I have now surpassed. My pain is constant and sharp, and I do not hope for a better world for anyone. In fact, I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape. But even after admitting this, there is no catharsis; my punishment continues to elude me, and I gain no deeper knowledge of myself. No new knowledge can be extracted from my telling. This confession has meant nothing."

Bateman is wishing for an equalization among everyone. The aforementioned quote is an inner monologue, the scene looks around the room Bateman is in. The lounge is filled with white businessmen in suits who all look the same. By saying "In fact, I want my pain to be inflicted on others. I want no one to escape." is arguably admitting that Bateman aims to bring others to his level of depravity and admits an inferior position wanting to neutralize the hierarchy. The utilization of violence at its most basic principle demonstrates a 'higher position' on the scale of masculinity. At the same time, the need for violence suggests a lower position. The withstanding of his pain inherently puts him lower than the men around him. Throughout the film, you discover that Bateman is not the elite that we perceive him as.

Another representation of hegemonic masculinity in the films that were analyzed is the physical domination of characters in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. The group of killers in the film are constantly at odds with each other for their position of power. Insults and threats are thrown around which shifts the dynamics between the group. The characters, the Hitchhiker, the Cook, Leatherface, and Grandpa are a family of cannibals in rural Texas. Within the family, there already exists a hierarchy. Leatherface is at the bottom, despite his large stature, he is mentally disabled and cross-dresses to appear feminine. Femininity is an automatic disqualification for placement on the hierarchy. Effeminate men are of a slightly higher status than women, but overall his lack of masculinity provides him with no power. The only masculine power that Leatherface has is his physicality, which he masks behind femininity. The literal mask that he uses when cooking is reminiscent of a woman. Hitchhiker is a young man who is very frequently delusional, immature, and is usually in charge of Leatherface. Making him further on the hierarchical ladder than his brother. When the events of the movie begin to take off, the Cook scolds Hitchhiker for not having control over his brother. He says, "Look what your brother did

to the door!" and proceeds to physically attack both Hitchhiker and Leatherface with a broom handle. The Cook is the second highest in the household and is the most 'normal' of the family. He runs a gas station and is often the lurer of victims. Between the Cook and Hitchhiker, there is a multitude of arguments between the two, "He's nothing! He's just a cook!" Hitchhiker tries to discredit the Cook's masculinity because he feels threatened by his position of authority. This is an attempt to disrupt the power dynamic, but the Cook regains power by threatening physical violence. Grandpa is the patriarch of the family, he has a history of being a capable killer and is highly regarded by the others. "I been thinking about letting Grandpa have some fun. You always said he's the best!" They say this, despite Grandpa's clear old age and incapacity. When their need for violence is not met, they verbalize their eagerness to elevate their own power, trying to prove themselves to Grandpa.

Methodology:

Ten slasher films that the internet deemed 'the best,' were examined by searching from various sites to generate a list of films from the search engine, Google. From there, each of the films was cross-referenced on the number of times they appeared. From that list, the sample was obtained. The movies were Psycho, Peeping Tom (1960), Deep Red, The Texas Chainsaw Massacre, Black Christmas (1974), Halloween, Friday the 13th, A Nightmare on Elm Street, Child's Play (1988), Scream, and American Psycho (2000). The method that was used to obtain the sample was replicated from Wellman et al's (2020) article that examined women's roles in slasher films.

The ten movies that were analyzed were replicated from Harringer et al's article (2021) that examined masculinity in children's animated films. The authors had a total of twenty-six

themes which were condensed into four, broader themes. The four themes utilized were sexual behavior, sexist ideology, and physical and emotional violence. One methodological problem that arose was the cross-reference process and collection of my sample. While cross-referencing the lists, several movies like *Peeping Tom*, *Saw* (2004), *American Psycho*, and *I Spit on Your Grave* (1978) were mentioned an equal amount of times. To rectify this, movies were randomly selected from the list. Another problem that occurred as a result of this process, was the classification of movies within the random selection. When watching *Peeping Tom*, it was difficult to discern whether or not the film could be classified as a slasher film. As previously mentioned, some movies do not follow Clover's formula.

The question that came with the analysis is what films could be perceived as outliers, making them too different from the other pieces of the sample? Some movies are not immediately thought of when envisioning slasher films, yet an argument can still be made for their inclusion. For example, *American Psycho* is occasionally understood as a thriller or just a horror movie. According to Clover's classification, a man who is psychologically disturbed is required (Clover). In one of the film's most iconic lines, the killer, Patrick Bateman says, "I like to dissect girls. Did you know I'm utterly insane?" He is comparable to Norman Bates, the character who is seemingly normal by societal standards, but has an invisible mask that hides his true sadistic nature. Next, there must be sexually active victims which are significantly present throughout the film. There must be a survivor who, in this case, is a boyish woman who is resourceful and different from other women. Patrick Bateman's secretary, Jean, falls under this category. Jean in her first appearance is dressed masculinely, which gets her scolded by Bateman: "Don't wear that outfit again. Wear a dress, a skirt, or something." Next, normally Final Girls will have a 'lap,' where traditionally they are chased by the killer and come across the victim's

bodies. While this never explicitly occurs in *American Psycho*, in an attempt to understand where Bateman is after receiving a concerning phone call, she opens his datebook. His book is riddled with crudely done drawings of all of the women he has killed, increasingly getting more disturbing as it progresses. Killings usually happen in an unfamiliar place, which takes place in either Bateman's apartment or the apartment of a man he killed earlier in the film. Bateman never uses a gun when killing women and most of the killings come at unsuspecting times. Because of the fact that it abstractly follows the normal guidelines of other slasher films, it still can be argued to categorize it as a slasher film. *Peeping Tom*, however, was a unique film because it did not follow Clover's themes of a slasher film. The time spent in the film is surrounded mostly by the building of suspense for kills, not focusing on the kills themselves. The film fell too much in line with a thriller and the argument to constitute it as a slasher felt inapplicable.

With the sample and methodology considered, the data collection allowed an analysis of the ten slasher films. Sexist ideology was coded as any time when men specifically objectified, mocked, or insulted women. Sexual behavior was making out, engaging in sexual intercourse, expressing the desire for sexual acts, or making lewd comments. Physical violence was coded for physically violent behaviors such as hitting, slashing/stabbing, shoving, pushing, etc. Emotional violence was seen for emotionally violent behaviors like mocking, insulting, yelling, and instilling fear. To instill fear included threatening physical violence and chasing. With those definitions in mind, scenes, dialogue, and actions were collected to analyze.

Data:

Total Themes

Sexist Ideology
8.0%

Sexual Promiscuity
8.2%

Emotional Violence
44.3%

Physical Violence
39.5%
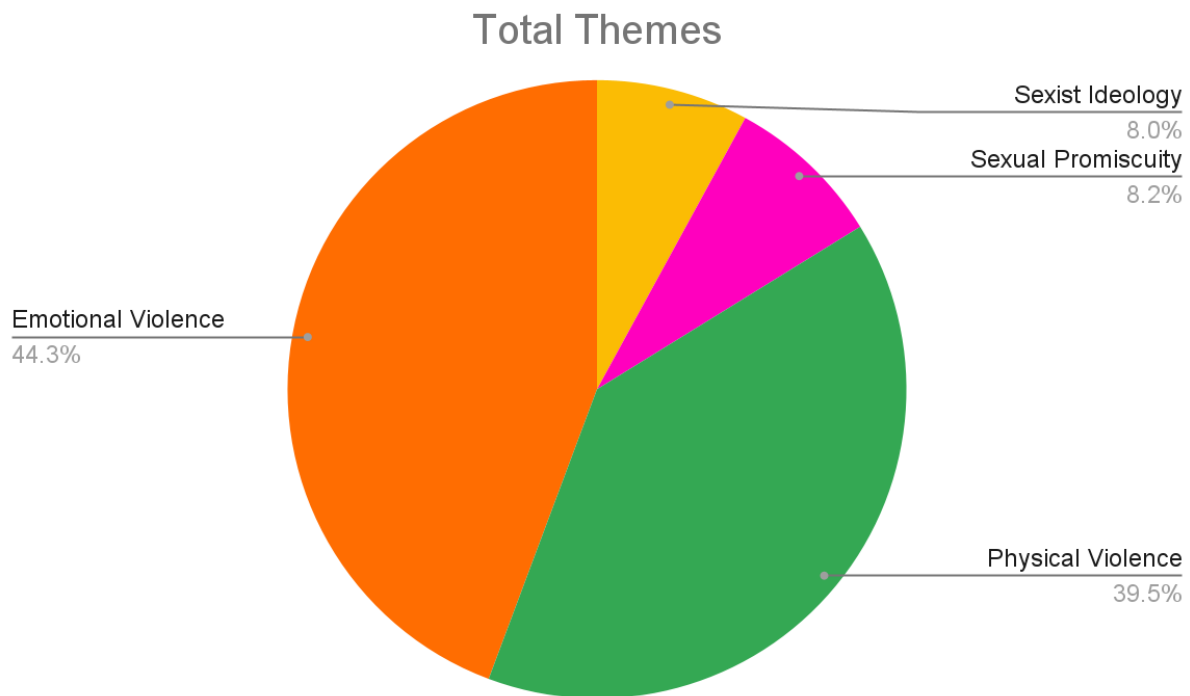
Overall, there were 729 total instances recorded between the four themes: Sixty instances of sexual behavior, fifty-eight of sexist ideology, 288 instances of physical violence, and 323 of emotional violence. It is important to note that emotional violence had the highest prevalence among all of the themes. Specific movies added significant data to certain categories, *American Psycho* in particular was an outlier in terms of data. The film had significantly higher prominence in emotional violence, sexual behavior, and sexist ideology.

These movies were released over forty years, which affected the data collected. There is a difference between *Psycho* and *American Psycho* because of the times they were released. *Psycho* was considered particularly scandalous upon its release in 1960 for the amount of physical violence despite its low counting of seven instances. In comparison, *American Psycho* had significantly more data due to its release forty years later. The film industry had different

standards in specific periods. For example, the ending period of the slasher film concluded in the late 1980s. This is likely because of the Reagan administration's conservative perspective on media (Hernandez & Raya 2021). This is supported by the statistics between the two movies analyzed that were released post-Reagan administration. Both *Scream* and *American Psycho* have higher rates of violence than the other eight films.

Sexist Ideology
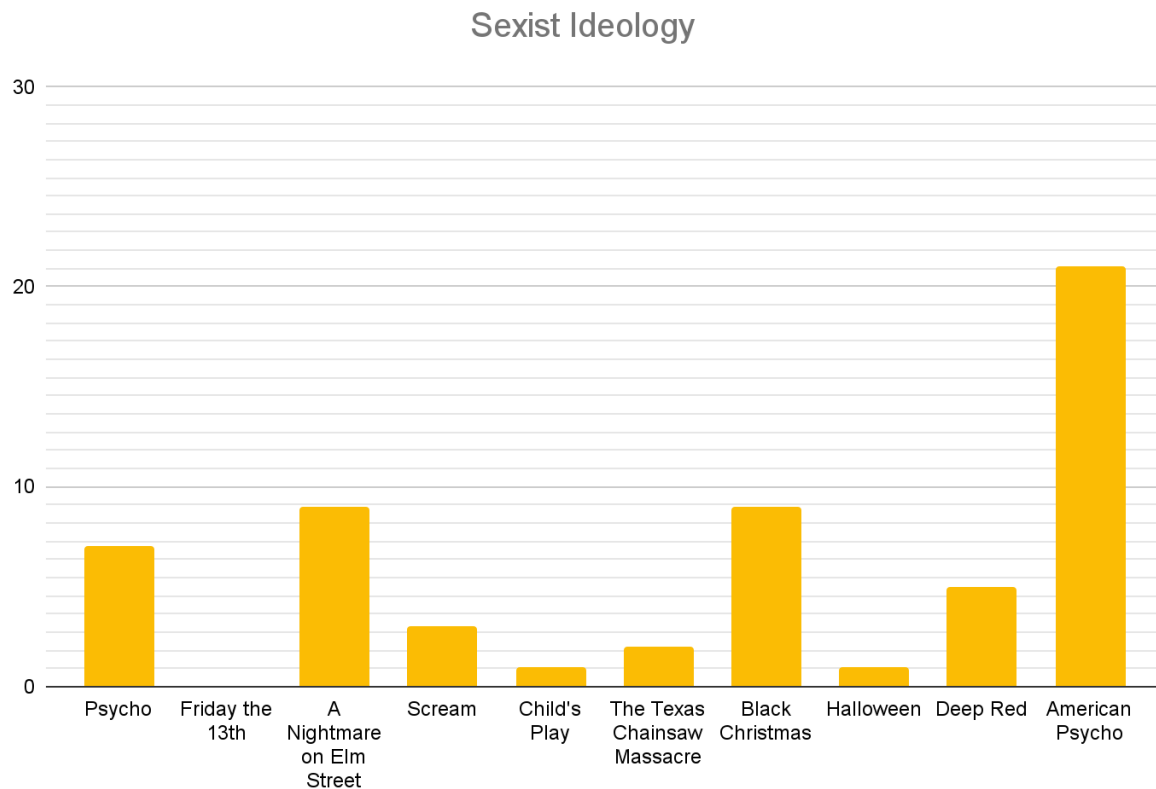
Sexist Ideology

One of the essential pieces of hegemonic masculinity is the subordination of women. Sexist ideology is the belief that women are inferior to men and that women are objects to women (Hernandez & Raya, 2021). Any time during a film where a man specifically objectified, mocked, or insulted women was counted. For example in the film *Deep Red*, the main character

says to a female journalist, "Don't start with me about all that woman stuff. It is a fundamental fact: Men are different from women. Women are weaker." Another example of blatant sexist ideology is represented in a quote in American Psycho, one of the unremarkable supporting characters, Craig McDermott states,

> "A good personality consists of a chick with a little hard body, who will satisfy all sexual demands without being too slutty about things, and who essentially will keep her dumb fucking mouth shut."

In *Child's Play*, Chucky's first words as a sentient being are, "You stupid bitch! You filthy slut!" This quote directly demonstrates the objectification and devaluation of women as the quote is said to one of the only female characters, Karen, in the entire film. When Chucky revealed his true identity to any of the male characters, it was an automatic attempt at physical violence. An important note about this interaction is that Karen was threatening to harm Chucky unless he complied with her wishes. That is relevant and important because Chucky insults her because she threatens his position of power as a man, despite being a doll.

A lot of moments in slasher films that have sexist ideologies will often belittle women's existence. In the case of *Deep Red*, the main character insults the journalist's career because she directly challenged his masculinity. The character proceeds to get more sexist when the journalist beats him in arm wrestling not once, but twice. He feels especially upset because his masculinity has been discredited. Similarly in *Scream*, there is a conversation between the main cast about two of their classmate's deaths where they discuss the brutality of the slaughter. One of the characters, Stu, states that only a man can commit murders. The exchange he has with his girlfriend, Tatum, debates women's capability of doing heinous acts. "Casey and Steve were completely hollowed out. Takes a man to do something like that." This quote believes that

women cannot complete an act so cruel and brutal. However mentioned previously, killer characters are almost always men. Even when the killer is not a man, it is assumed that they are until a grand reveal, like Martha in *Deep Red*. In the film, it is first believed a male character is the perpetrator of the killings. After the suspect gets killed, it is suddenly revealed that the killer was actually the suspect's mother. The argument suggests that only men are capable of doing evil and women are either physically weaker or morally incapable, a stereotype.

This theme also has an enormous impact in *American Psycho* where it occurs twenty-one times. The male characters in the film are all what society would call the elite. They are successful businessmen, also known as yuppies, working on Wall Street, have beautiful girlfriends or wives, are dressed in designer suits, and have luxurious apartments. Demonstrating this is a quote from Patrick Bateman after he killed Paul Allen, "There is a moment of sheer panic when I realize that Paul's apartment overlooks the park... and is obviously more expensive than mine." The quote shows how significant material possessions are to people of that status. They are competing amongst themselves to wind up exactly where they already are, they are stuck in their own lives under the conception they are moving up. In order to remain on top, you have to hurt others, whether it be amongst themselves or to attack women. By demeaning women or just objectification in general, it depersonalizes the individual and ensures men that they are better.

This plays less of a role in most other films, in *Black Christmas* there was a bit of haziness in determining if certain actions/words were sexist or if they were just cases of emotional violence. What made it difficult was the fact that throughout the film there was a subplot surrounding the main character, Jess, wanting an abortion and her boyfriend forbidding her. The insistence that Jess is forced to keep the pregnancy she does not want in of itself is

sexist. It objectifies her and insinuates she is incapable of making rational decisions surrounding

her own health. At numerous points, her boyfriend threatens her, raises his voice, and goes so far

as to quit his career as a musician to marry Jess. For being a film in the 1970s, a storyline that

consisted of women's bodily autonomy was unexpected.

Sexual Behavior

Sexual Behavior
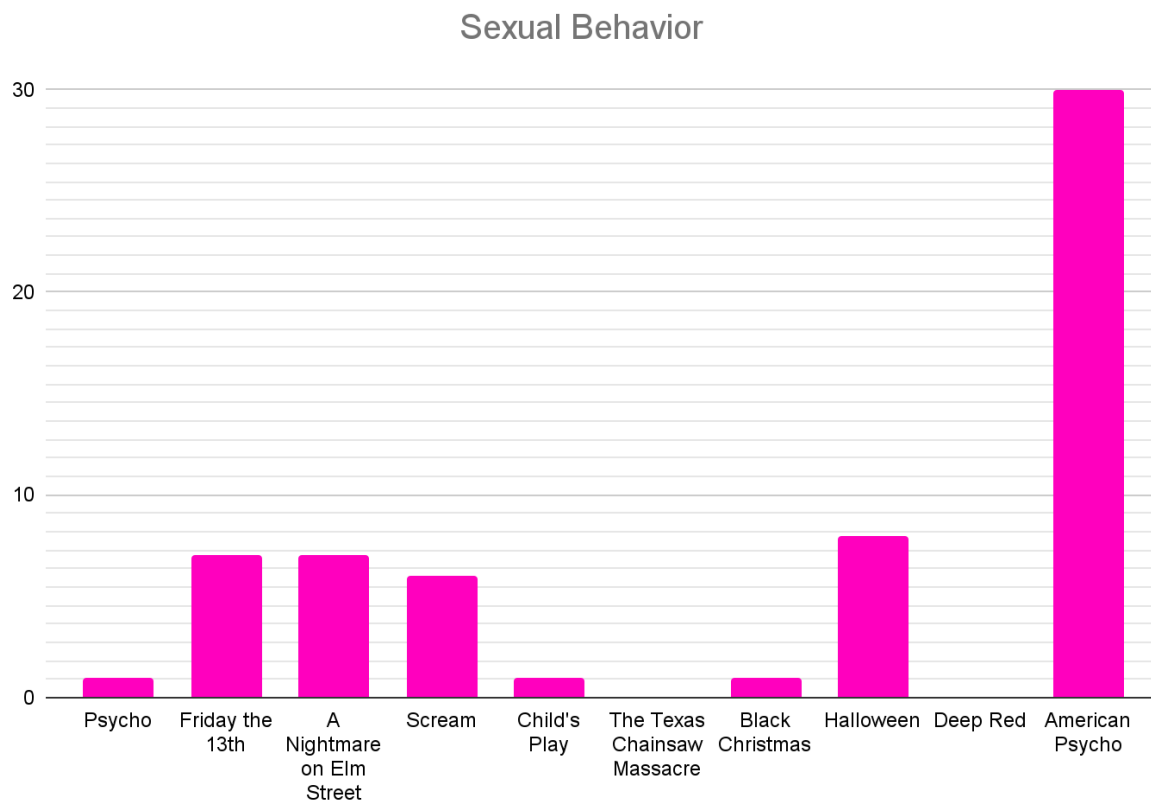
In films, teenage boys in couples are often pressuring their girlfriends to have sex with

them. In *Scream*, Billy Loomis on numerous occasions asks his girlfriend Sidney to have sex

even after they agreed that they would abstain until she was ready. Sexual behavior was making

out, engaging in sexual intercourse, expressing the desire for sexual acts, or making lewd

comments they were marked. Rod in *A Nightmare on Elm Street* talks about having sex with his

girlfriend, Tina, in her parent's bed at numerous points. The main age demographic of male characters in slasher films is usually ranging from high school to early college.

This theme was noticeably present in some movies and completely absent in others. For example, there were thirty instances of sexual behavior in *American Psycho*. An impressive outlier when the next highest occurrence was eight on Halloween. Sexual behavior is a significant part of hegemonic masculinity because to have sex as a man is to have power (Riccadelli, Clow, & White 2010). Sex is used as a physical representation of social capital. An article by Riccadelli, Clow, & White (2010) stated,

> The magazines not only suggested that a man has a better chance of being successful in relation to other men by 'dressing the part', they also suggested that men can be dominant over women should they do so. In the laddist magazines, the fashion spreads portrayed the men as sexually dominant. In the metrosexual magazines—including *Esquire* and *Men's Health*—the fashion models often appeared as attracting the attention and interest of women, which also put them in a position of power and control.

Throughout *Halloween*, Laurie Strode is teased by her friends for being a virgin and for having no active interest in dating other boys. In *Scream*, Sidney expresses guilt to her best friend about how she is depriving her boyfriend, Billy, of sex. Because Billy has been so patient, she feels she owes him. Similar to Laurie, her friends tease her. Sidney, herself, says "How many guys will put up with a girlfriend who's sexually anorexic?" In reality, Sidney's mother only a year prior was raped and murdered, making her fearful of sex. In *Child's Play*, there is a scene where a homeless man attempts to rape one of the main characters. The fact that the rapist is a vagrant supports the argument surrounding hegemonic masculinity. One of the most important aspects of masculinity is the primacy of work, something that homelessness prevents. The act of sexual

aggression is an attempt at regaining some masculinity that homelessness has stolen from him.

Most of the aforementioned scenes, even scenes not mentioned had a theme of coercion.

Coercion is a violent attempt at upward mobility in masculinity.

Physical Violence
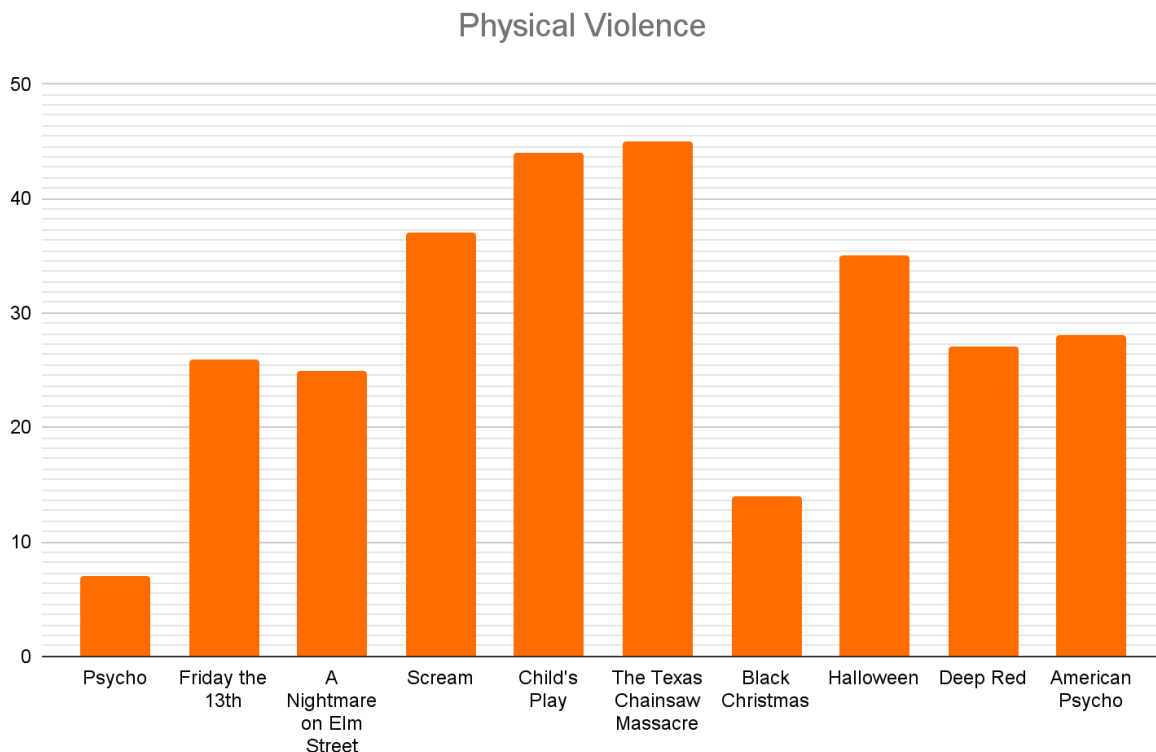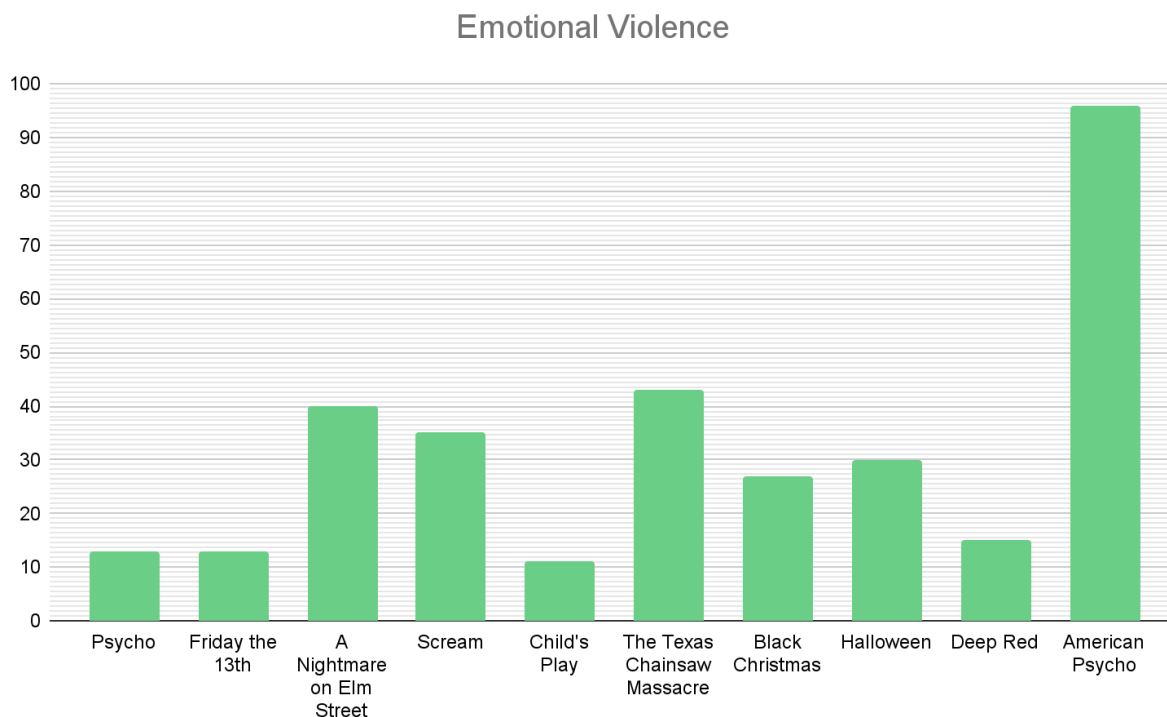
Physical Violence

A more obvious theme in slasher films is physical violence, within the name of the

subgenre itself suggests the existence of violence. Any moment where a physically violent act

occurred was counted. Examples of physical violence were hitting, slashing, stabbing, shoving,

pushing, etc. It is important to note that the threat of physical violence was not coded in this

category, even if a weapon is used. Threats of physical violence were categorized as emotional

violence because threats instill fear into the receiver. As mentioned before, slasher films are an

exceptionally violent genre. One of the questions researched vaguely touched on was who was

the perpetrator. A common misconception is that the killer is the only character who commits violent actions, but between the ten films that were watched, there were a lot of instances where other characters are perpetrators. In *Friday the 13th* the Final Girl, Alice, shares multiple scenes with the antagonist, Pamela Voorhees, where they equally use physical violence to ensure their survival. Alice delivers the final killing blow to Pamela, decapitating her at the end of the film. Victims, whether or not they are Final Girls or not, will fight back when they are attacked which makes up for a significant amount of acts of violence. At its simplest principle, physical violence is the easiest way to enforce hegemonic masculinity. An example of how important physical violence is to emasculation is the act of castration. Castration is the most direct fashion to deny someone of their masculinity.

Physically harming another individual ensures submission because strength is an indicator of masculinity. As previously mentioned, Leatherface from *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is an effeminate man who is on the lower end of the scale of masculinity. In one of the most recognizable scenes, the Final Girl, Sally, and her brother, Franklin are being chased by Leatherface. It is important to discuss that Franklin uses a wheelchair and is characterized as more feminine than his other male counterparts in the film. Franklin is arguably at the lowest level of masculinity. He is physically disabled, overweight, and is always the butt of every joke. Franklin meets his demise with Leatherface's chainsaw, the only chainsaw kill in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*. This physical altercation is valuable to the conversation surrounding hegemonic masculinity because it is an example of the struggle to overcome emasculation. Another example of this within *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* is when the Cook physically harms the Hitchhiker. As previously mentioned, the two characters are often at odds with each other and often compete over who is superior. The Cook physically attacks Hitchhiker

significantly more than Hitchhiker hits the Cook. This observation supports the argument that physical violence impacts masculinity, the Cook is the more 'normal' character of the family and he is in charge of the house. The ability to incite physical violence allows one to remain in control of their environment.

Emotional Violence

While physical violence is the mark of slasher films, emotional violence is an important theme that allows analysis of subtle ways of harm. An example of emotional violence in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, one of the most memorable scenes is known as the "Dinner Scene." The Final Girl, Sally, is subjected to emotional torture for six minutes in the film. She is tied to a chair in the dining room, forced to endure insults while being mocked for her terror by a family

of redneck cannibals. A vital note is that a good majority of emotional violence manifests itself as insults to other characters.

Two examples of this are in American Psycho, "You're a fucking ugly bitch! I want to stab you to death and play in your blood!" in which the lead character, Patrick Bateman says to a female bartender that humiliates him in front of his male colleagues. Another quote from Bateman, "Try getting a reservation at Dorsia now you fucking stupid bastard!" he says as he kills Paul Allen, a colleague that Bateman feels especially intimidated. Paul Allen is the idealized masculinity that Bateman is close to achieving, but never quite meets. Killing him while using one of the things that especially upset Bateman, Dorsia, an incredibly luxurious restaurant, allows him to prove his masculinity to Allen. The data shows the extreme prevalence where *American Psycho* had a massive ninety-six counts of emotional violence. There were many instances where the men would insult each other, in most cases insulting their sexuality, and therefore their masculinity, within predetermined hierarchical structures. As previously mentioned, the film harps on the characters feeling inferior, attempting to superiorize themselves. Emotional violence is subtle violence because it is a way to harm someone without having to physically violate them. Similar to *American Psycho* and *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, there are numerous occasions in *Black Christmas* where there is a hierarchy already in place between a detective and a police officer. "Nash, I don't think you could pick your nose without written instruction." Very frequently, the detective talks condescendingly to the officer, insults his intelligence, and often makes fun of him.

importance of the data is the fact that it occurs at such a higher rate aside from physical violence, more than what was expected. The data shows how much of an impact *American Psycho* has on the results. The film is riddled with abusive comments from characters. "Well, for

one thing, I think he was probably a closet homosexual who did a lot of cocaine. That whole Yale thing." That quote is just one example of the emotional abuse that is present in the film. The quote is from Patrick Bateman about Paul Allen. This comment is demeaning not only to Allen's character and his sexuality but also demeans his college education. Bateman is making an attempt at lowering Allen's hegemony, making him appear weaker by belittling him. As mentioned previously, there are a lot of examples of hegemonic masculinity within *American Psycho*.

Anger is a tool to demonstrate masculinity, it is a way to maintain control of a situation. The most common form of masculine anger is yelling and threatening. This is seen multiple times in *Black Christmas* when the Final Girl, Jess, and her boyfriend Peter argue over Jess wanting an abortion. He frequently raises his voice and destroys things in the environment to upset Jess. At one point, he says, 'You selfish bitch,' and he breaks the glass ornaments to scare his girlfriend. He attempts to coerce Jess into keeping the pregnancy she does not want and each time she does not comply, he acts out in rage. His inability to control Jess makes him feel emasculated and weak. At another point in the film where Peter is alone, he destroys his grand piano in the conservatory where he resides in. This scene is after Peter plays for a group of older men who judge his performance. The judges show clear disappointment and unhappiness with Peter's performance. Their judgment further emasculates Peter because their disappointment actively demeans his ability to play piano, something that he clearly great pride in. Peter's rage at breaking the piano allows him to feel in control through the utilization of destruction where he can display his strength without hurting others.

Emotional violence is society's acceptable way of domination, hurting others without physically maiming them.

<u>Conclusion:</u>

Slasher films are more complex movies than they are perceived as. As quoted in *Scream*, "What's the point? They're all the same. Some stupid killer stalking some big-breasted girl who can't act and who is always running up the stairs when she should be running out the front door." This represents a common misconception about slasher films, they have nothing to present except for the simplistic brutalization of women. Slasher films are pieces of media that have depth, that have been analyzed and will continue in the future. They reflect, although via extraordinary circumstances, our daily lives. While we are not in situations where we are being hunted by a killer, slasher films show average people, similar to us. Our society relies heavily on hierarchal structures. We have an idea of what masculinity is, and what it should look like. It is often that we put others down to improve our own image and others' images of us. We are not physically harming one another to achieve higher societal status. That is what happens in slasher films, a lot of the attempts to scale the hierarchy are emotionally violent. Just as hegemonic masculinity exists in our society, it exists in this fictionalized world as well. This research does not only provide evidence that slasher films are important pieces of media, but it also confronts the real-world aspect of hegemonic masculinity's prevalence in our own society. With this knowledge we can take steps to eliminate the harmful impacts hegemonic masculinity has had. This research could be expanded on with a different arrangement of films and at a larger scale. Additionally, research would benefit from extending the themes utilized to describe and define hegemonic masculinity. Prior to this research, there has been no other analysis of hegemonic masculinity. Research would also be important because when we confront hegemonic masculinity in the media we consume, the application could be directed to our own lives. Discussion around hegemony within our society will benefit those marginalized by being at the

bottom of the hierarchy. We can improve our perceptions of masculinity and how it is weaponized to brutalize and subordinate others.

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