

Marthe Ligaard

Beyond the script:

A critical discourse analysis of how
conversational practices reflect societal attitudes
in the portrayal of women in horror films

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education

Supervisor: Tatjana Juliana Shannon Schnellinger

May 2024

Marthe Ligaard

Beyond the script:

A critical discourse analysis of how conversational practices reflect societal attitudes in the portrayal of women in horror films

Master's thesis in Language Studies with Teacher Education
Supervisor: Tatjana Juliana Shannon Schnellinger
May 2024

Norwegian University of Science and Technology
Faculty of Humanities
Department of Language and Literature



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology

Abstract

This thesis investigates how female characters within the horror genre speak by analysing different conversational practices. These six forms or conversational practices are hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, politeness, taboo language (swearing) and minimal responses. The presence of these conversational practices within horror movies has been the main subject of analysis. To explore this, the four horror movies *The Babadook* (2014), *Scream 4* (2011), *Jennifer's Body* (2009) and *Ginger Snaps* (2000) have been used for data collection. This thesis is qualitative, and Critical Discourse Analysis has been the primary method. The research question is therefore how can conversational practices or linguistic forms reflect societal attitudes in the portrayal of female characters within the horror genre?

The results of the analysis show that the six features are present in horror movies, with minimal responses, taboo language and hedges being the most popular. However, women use them in a multitude of different ways and for different purposes, which shows their communicative competence. Factors that can impact language are contextual, sociocultural and related to the characters' identities. The traits associated with the six conversational practices can show the attitudes people have towards the characters. This analysis discusses how language and gender interact with each other in contemporary media, and shows how some attitudes are prevailing, while others show attitude shifts.

Sammendrag

Denne oppgaven undersøker hvordan kvinnelige karakterer innenfor skrekkfilm-sjangeren snakker ved å analysere ulike samtalepraksiser. Disse seks formene eller samtalepraksisene er hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, politeness, taboo language (banning) og minimal responses. Temaet for analysen har vært hvordan disse praksisene opptrer i skrekkfilmer. For å utforske dette har de fire skrekkfilmene *The Babadook* (2014), *Scream 4* (2011), *Jennifer's Body* (2009) og *Ginger Snaps* (2000) blitt brukt til datainnsamling. Denne oppgaven er kvalitativ, og Kritisk Diskursanalyse har vært den primære metoden. Problemstillingen omhandler hvordan samtalepraksiser eller språklige former kan reflektere samfunns holdninger i fremstillingen av kvinnelige karakterer innenfor skrekkfilm-sjangeren.

Resultatene av analysen viser at de seks trekkene er til stede i skrekkfilmer, med minimal responses, taboo language og hedges som mest populære. Kvinner bruker disse på mange forskjellige måter og til ulike formål, noe som viser deres kommunikative kompetanse. Faktorer som kan påvirke språket er kontekstuelle, sosiokulturelle og knyttet til karakterenes identiteter. Egenskapene knyttet til de seks samtalepraksisene viser holdningene folk har overfor karakterene. Denne analysen diskuterer hvordan språk og kjønn samhandler med hverandre i moderne media, og viser hvordan noen holdninger er vedvarende, mens andre viser endringer i holdninger.

Acknowledgements

I would like to thank all the people in my life who have helped and supported me during this period of writing. Firstly, I want to express my gratitude towards my supervisor Tatjana Juliana Shannon Schnellinger for the guidance, understanding and interesting talks. It has been greatly appreciated. Secondly, I would like to thank my fellow students and friends Anna-Marie, Daniel, Miriam, Nikolai, and Tilde for the constant support and for letting me infodump about horror and gender on our coffee breaks. I could not have asked for better company during this time. I also have to thank my friend Hanne for the needed movie, baking and gaming breaks, as well as the proofreading and for helping with the editing. Thirdly, I would like to thank my family, uncle John Ivar and stepdad Benny for the proofreading and support prior to the impending deadline. A special thanks goes to my mom Stina for all the help, editing and conversations. Lastly, I would like to thank my grandparents, Brita and Ulf, for always believing in me. All of you have made this thesis possible, so thank you!

Marthe Ligaard
Trondheim 2024

Table of Contents

List of tables	
1 Introduction.....	1
1.1 Aim and scope	1
1.2 Why sociolinguistics and (horror) film?.....	1
1.3 Research question and relevance	2
2 Theoretical background	3
2.1 Feminist Film Theory and horror.....	3
2.2 Gender and language: attitudes and stereotypes.....	6
3 Method and data collection	9
3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis	10
4 Presentation and analysis of data	12
4.1 Movies and the chosen characters	12
4.1.1 HEDGES	16
4.1.2 TAG QUESTIONS.....	18
4.1.3 INTENSIFIERS	19
4.1.4 TABOO LANGUAGE	20
4.1.5 POLITENESS.....	22
4.1.6 MINIMAL RESPONSES.....	23
4.2 Linguistic forms	25
5 Discussion	26
5.1 Contextual factors: Genre and topic.....	26
5.2 Sociocultural and identity factors: Gender roles and stereotypes	28
5.2.1 Conversational practices among the protagonists.....	28
5.2.2 Conversational practices among the victims	29
5.2.3 Conversational practices among the antagonists	30
6 Conclusion.....	31
7 References	32
Appendix 1	34
Relevancy for the teaching profession	34

List of tables

Table 1: Overview of words included in the data analysis.....	12
Table 2: Overview of results of features found in The Babadook.	13
Table 3: Overview of frequency of female features in Scream 4.....	14
Table 4: Overview of results of features in Jennifer’s Body.	15
Table 5: Overview over results of features in Ginger Snaps.....	15
Table 6: Total overview of results regarding feature usage in The Babadook, Jennifer’s Body, Scream 4 and Ginger Snaps.....	25

1 Introduction

1.1 Aim and scope

Conversations in film can offer insight into how language can support accepted societal ideas or perpetuate stereotypes (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 149-150). This can for instance be when examining how women and men use language by exploring how the differences can reflect societal views on gender and language. The aim of this thesis is to explore how women are linguistically portrayed in movies. The phrase 'linguistically portrayed' refers to how female characters speak and how it can shape the viewer's impression of said characters. Research within linguistics usually concerns itself with 'natural language data', which refers to unscripted data that occurs naturally in interaction. Film is a type of media that is rich with scripted data. However, this scripted data is intended to reflect common everyday interaction and social practices. This is the basis for why films are the chosen subject to explore the relationship between gender and language. These films are all from the horror genre because horror has become and has always been a popular genre among the female film viewers, contrary to popular belief (Schubart, 2018). Women have long been the subject of horror movies, as a victim, the survivor and the villain. Therefore, this thesis will focus on movies within horror, specifically four movies. These are *The Babadook*, *Scream 4*, *Jennifer's Body* and *Ginger Snaps*. The thesis will attempt to illustrate how the image of the protagonists, antagonists and victims within these films changes based on the way they act and talk. Specifically, it will explore the presence of six language features, namely hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, politeness, taboo language and minimal responses. These are disputed conversational practices that Lakoff (1975) associated and attributed with women and female speech. This thesis aims to explore whether these are linguistic forms commonly found within horror movies and how the presence of said practices can expose the characters' roles and the stereotypes associated with them.

1.2 Why sociolinguistics and (horror) film?

We watch movies when we are children, teens, and adults. It has become a popular type of media that is likely to impact the viewers in some manner, whether it be the characters, the story, or the language. Although the relationship between film and the viewer is hard to concretize (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 1), film presumably impacts the viewer. This impact is subjective, and likely changes based on the genre. Elsaesser and Hagener (2015) discuss whether cinema is a form of art that will "elevate and educate, or distract and corrupt" (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 1). This idea can be applied to the horror genre, and its function. Horror is commonly known as a genre that intends to scare the viewer in some way, whether it be through the tense atmosphere or the uncertain presence of some monster. Since films attempt to mirror reality, it is likely the language does this as well. Language is usually our main mode of communication, but films do not only rely on language, but also visuals and sound. They also rely on the viewer's understanding of the characters and the world understand the film's intention. Every character in the movie has their own personality and characteristics that the actor is concerned with embodying and getting across to the viewer. Since movies try to reflect reality, they can be considered a representation of societal values and ideas. These values and ideas will depend on the time period the films were released in, which is why the selected movies are from the same period. For the viewer to understand what is happening on the screen, filmmakers often rely

on stereotypes. These stereotypes can be anything, but within this thesis stereotypes associated with gender and gender roles is of the most significance. Additionally, linguistic forms and features performed by the characters can help “reveal character traits of social and regional differences” (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 148), which means film can be a useful tool for studying aspects of sociolinguistics.

When there are so many different movie genres, why choose horror? Horror is a genre that has evolved significantly over time, moving from mainly focusing on typical monsters, such as *Dracula* (1958), to more abstract fears, like *Midsommar* (2019). It is likely because of this the genre has been able to stay relevant and current (Holland, 2019, p. 1). As previously mentioned, horror has included women in the roles of the victim, the heroine and the killer. It has therefore given us several iconic female roles, like Marion Crane in *Psycho* (1960). The forementioned people are the female protagonists and victims in the movies, who experience the worst trauma in the movies. In other words, one could argue the price of agency comes with the worst fate. The genre still allows women to be complex characters and are allowed traits that are often associated with male gender roles, such as aggressiveness and confidence. They have even been allowed to be killers, like in the 1980s movie *Friday the 13th*. Researching how these complex women, in the roles of heroines, victims and even killers is represented in horror movies might shed some light on attitudes regarding who women are allowed or supposed to be.

1.3 Research question and relevance

The research question for this thesis is: *How can conversational practices or linguistic forms reflect societal attitudes in the portrayal of female characters within the horror genre?* In her book *Language and Woman's Place* (1975), Robin Lakoff presented nine features that are characteristic of female language, namely hedges, tag questions, (rising intonation on) declaratives, empty adjectives, intensifiers, super-polite forms, avoidance of (crude) swear words, hypercorrect grammar and emphatic stress (Lakoff, 1975). Although the extent of how present these conversational practices are in female speech is disputed, they make a concrete foundation for features to explore and analyse the frequency or presence of. This thesis will include six features instead of nine, as they appear to be of more relevance when analysing horror, i.e. due to the genre limiting vocal aspects with screaming. These six features are hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, politeness, taboo language (swearing) and minimal responses. Body language and facial expressions are included when appropriate. Minimal responses are also included, as research shows that women use them more than men (Coates, 2004). The way these women are expected to talk will be the basis of the understanding of the attitudes associated with them. Perhaps some women are allowed to diverge from these language features because they happen to be in a different role than others. The societal attitudes and roles refer to gender stereotypes, possible objectification and agency, combined with language. In other words, how can the language associated with these female characters, both used by them and about them, reflect the societal expectations of them. As horror movies are continually produced, analysing how they can affect the viewers societal attitudes is relevant.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Feminist Film Theory and horror

As previously mentioned, horror as a genre has changed over time and is therefore able to stay current. It is a genre with many subgenres for people to discover, such as psychological, gothic, paranormal and slasher to name a few. Some genres include more gore and splatter, e.g. *Evil Dead*-franchise, while others barely have any blood, e.g. *The Blair Witch Project* (1999). These aspects make horror a somewhat diverse genre, that can be suitable for any audience. Schubart (2018) argues that horror is especially suitable for women, although people tend to consider it male in nature (Schubart, 2018, p. 4-6). This might be because of its brutal and crude characteristics. Carol Clover and Barbara Creed both argued that horror was "an expression of a patriarchal and misogynist society" (Schubart, 2018, p. 7). In other words, they state horror is a genre that exploits women to a certain degree. To provide some background for the horror genre, a section on how women are represented in films is provided. This section will also provide an insight into the popular tropes within horror.

In early cinema, women were often made into objects or traditional roles, like mothers or wives (Kaplan, 2003, p. 16), meaning they were defined in relation to the male role. This is an example of how film will reflect society. Chaudhuri refers to Betty Freidan regarding how "women were defined only in sexual relation to men – this time as 'wife, sex object, mother, housewife' – and never as people defining themselves by their own actions." (Chaudhuri, 2006, p. 17). Consequently, women's presence, character development and agency were limited. To create recognisable characters, directors and writers have relied on stereotypes and recurring archetypes, with roots in the societal attitudes towards women. Some of these archetypes are subgenre-specific, such as 'the final girl' commonly found in slashers. This is the girl that survives the killer, like the famous Laurie Strode from the *Halloween*-franchise. According to Androutsopoulos (2012), the characters have a crucial role to play in how a film portrays language and society, which can highlight social dynamics. This especially when you compare one character to another (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 148). Since it is important for the viewer to have the opportunity to identify with the characters, the characters must be perceived as authentic. This means that the way the characters talk has to seem real, which again will establish their authenticity within the story (Androutsopoulos, 2012, p. 148). To further discuss how women are represented on the screen, the following categories will be presented women as the victim, the protagonist, and the antagonist.

2.1.1.1 *Women as the protagonist: the heroine and final girl*

Similarly to the real world, women are underrepresented on the screen, and having a female protagonist remains more uncommon than a male (Shapiro, 2017, p. 38). According to Shapiro, women in film tend to adhere to traditional feminine ideology, meaning they are restricted to characters that are overemotional and concerned with their appearance and taking care of others (Shapiro, 2017, p. 38). Women are not intended to be dual characters exhibiting growth and agency, but rather inhabit an exhibitionist role where they are perceived and enjoyed by the male audience. Shapiro explains this as the 'male gaze' (Shapiro, 2017, p. 39). The male gaze is a fantasy projected onto the female, often sexual and erotic (Laing & Willson, 2020, p. 3). This means she looks and acts in a way that appeals to men and plays to their desire. The horror genre distinguishes itself from other

genres because it is relatively common to have a female protagonist. According to Williams (1991), viewers are more interested in seeing a woman go through the tribulations they are presented with in horror, because women make the best victims (Williams, 1991, p. 5).

The final girl is the sole, or almost sole, survivor and the one that bests the killer. As Clover says, "She is abject terror personified" (Clover, 1987, p. 201). She is the one finding her dead friends throughout the movie and having to push through it. The final girl stands out from the other female characters in the movie, appearance and personality wise. Holland argues that a key element of the horror genre's success, is that the viewer is able to identify with the protagonist, regardless of gender (Holland, 2019, p. 2), which can be related to 'the final girl's androgenous names. She is inherently more masculine and does not engage in sexual acts (Clover, 1987, p. 204). Clover writes "As slasher director Dario Argento puts it, "I like women, especially beautiful ones. If they have a good face and figure, I would much prefer to watch them being murdered than an ugly girl or a man"" (Clover, 1987, p. 205-206). This means that even though she is the final girl, she still has to adhere to the male gaze to remain interesting for the male viewer. What especially sets her apart and is usually her trick to winning, is her intelligence and resourcefulness. There is some debate regarding whether their victory is simply because they are given more masculine traits and can therefore battle the killer, but she should not be considered a pseudo-man (Chaudhuri, 2006, p. 101).

2.1.1.2 *Women as the victim: 'the slut' and the first kill*

McGillvray states that "The female victim has been a reoccurring cinematic image since the development of the medium." (McGillvray, 2019, p. 7). All the movies mentioned in this thesis so far, has a female victim. This is not to say that men are not victims, but do not undergo the same sexualisation that female victims do. Women are the ones suffering the constant chase, the torture, and the brutal slaughter (McGillvray, 2019, p. 7). They are typically the ones killed first. Brutally murdering attractive women is seen as entertainment. A female victim in horror that has achieved icon-status, appears in the shower scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Psycho* (1962), where Marion Crane is stabbed multiple times and murdered while she is taking a shower. The killing lasts for about 30 seconds (Hitchcock, 1960, 00:47:41-00:48:04), consisting of the passive victim screaming while being stabbed, because she happened to arouse the killer (Clover, 1987, p. 194). She is not the first to be killed because she was beautiful and popular, as it is not uncommon to be 'punished' for this in horror.

The first scene in every *Scream* movie is a girl getting brutally slaughtered. This is commonly followed by the title card, alluding that this scene introduces the franchise. However, the first kill is not necessarily a woman. When it is a man, he is used as a tool to torture the woman in focus during the scene, like in *Scream* (1996), before she is brutally murdered. Women that are sexually active, meaning 'the slut' are particularly in danger within slasher movies. Randy Meeks from *Scream* (1996) specifies this in his tips on how to survive a horror movie. The number one rule is to not have sex (Craven, 1996, 01:31:17-01:31:28), because this is how you get yourself killed. This reflects the patriarchal societal norms that shape the horror genre, as women are 'punished' for engaging in sexual acts (Clover, 1992). Williams states that the women who die are usually surprised by the killer when they believe they are safe, often "at a moment of sexual anticipation when the female

victim thinks she is about to meet her boyfriend or lover" (Williams, 1991, p. 11), again as a punishment for their sexual transgressions (Williams, 1991, p. 11). 'The slut' rarely serves a purpose, other than often being the protagonist's friend, and is sexualised both before and during the killing. Their main purpose is to be slashed. In other words, they are both the killer's victims and victims of the male gaze. In horror, men die because they happen to make a mistake (Clover, 1992, p. 34). Women on the other hand, die because they are women (Clover, 1992, p. 34), especially if they happen to be sexual transgressors or 'sluts'.

2.1.1.3 *Women as the antagonist: the killer and the mother*

The antagonist is crucial within horror to create fear and suspense, and are commonly men (Clover, 1992, p. 30). The antagonists in slasher are usually somewhat big, masked men, such as Michael Myers (*Halloween*-franchise) (Clover, 1992, p. 30). Although they look human, they can withstand incredible amounts of damage. For example, Michael Myers survives everything thrown at him, until Laurie Strode nails him to a table, pushes a fridge onto him, stabs him, slits his throat, breaks his arm and slits his wrists with the help of her granddaughter in *Halloween ends* (2022). Female killers and villains are rarer than male, and their reasons for killing are different from men's reasoning (Clover, 1992, p. 29). For instance, Michael Meyers (*Halloween*, 1978) does not have a reason as to why he kills, as he is simply described as evil. This is not to say women never kill, but they kill because they have been wronged, such as having been cheated on or abused (Clover, 1992, p. 29), like Carrie White (*Carrie*, 1976). Sometimes women become villains after being possessed, like Regan MacNeil (*The Exorcist*, 1973). In this instance, she is not evil herself as she is under someone's control, even though she is actively trying to hurt or kill other people.

As stated, female characters can become antagonists due to possession, for instance by a demon or a ghost (*The Exorcist*, 1973), or transformation, for instance becoming a vampire or a werewolf (*Dracula*, 1958). The possession is often instant, whereas the transformation is gradual. When women are possessed or transformed, they are allowed to transgress significantly more than previously. Creed (1993) explains that these types of possessions or transformations become "the excuse for legitimizing a display of aberrant feminine behaviour which is depicted as depraved, monstrous, abject – and perversely appealing." (Creed, 1993, p. 31). This means that women need an 'excuse', that would absolve them from blame to a certain degree, to engage in behaviour that is not associated with women. Sometimes victims of possession attempt to violate certain taboos. Creed refers to Regan in *The Exorcist* (1973), who ordered her mother to engage in sexual acts with her (Creed, 1993, p. 36). Victims of possession often turn to be sexually aggressive because of its taboo nature and their desire for the offensive. Chaudhuri (2006) notes that the monster in horror, cross 'the border' (Chaudhuri, 2006, p. 93). This 'border' is not fixed and can for instance be the border between normal and abnormal gender behaviour. Another trope that has become prominent in horror is the monstrous or villainous mother (Chaudhuri, 2006, p. 17). According to Creed (2022), "maternal horror is associated with the monstrous mother who loves too much, whose possessive, suffocating attitude towards her infant threatens to inhibit, even destroy the child's development into an independent subject." (Creed, 2022, p. 23). This is something we know for instance from *Psycho* (1960). In horror, the concept of a good and bad mother is based on the idealized version of (Western) motherhood (Schubart, 2018, p. 178). Creed (2022) confirms this and adds this patriarchal ideology of what a single mother should be, namely self-sacrificing, heroic and loving (Creed, 2022, p. 24). This is the

kind good mother, whereas the bad mother is angry, selfish and sadistic. Since we expect the mother to be good and nurturing, including her as a villain is more surprising to the viewer. In short, these different tropes within horror are representations of societal fear.

2.2 Gender and language: attitudes and stereotypes

Language is a big part of our daily life as humans, as we are constantly using it in different ways for different purposes. It is one of our means of communication and a way to create connections with other people. From early in our upbringing, we are told that men and women, or boys and girls, are different just by nature. According to Denmark et al. (2016), the distinction between sex and gender can be confusing (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 3). They explain that sex is "the biological differences in the genetic composition and reproductive structures and functions of men and women." (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 3), which commonly refers to women and men. Gender on the other hand, is determined by social context (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 5). Denmark et al., explain this social context as their personal history, society, immediate situation and culture. They present a broader understanding of gender, that emphasises it being experiences and activities tied to being female and male as well. Simply put, it is a social construction regarding differences between men and women created by society (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 5). When 'gender' is applied in this thesis, this refers to social gender.

The characteristics and traits attributed to genders are dependent on the surrounding culture and therefore what people are socialized into. Society's idea of what makes a woman and what makes a man will influence young children and continue to do so due to reinforcement of said values and norms (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 6). This idea is also known as the cultural approach in accordance with a sociocultural perspective. Another aspect of gender that is worth mentioning is stereotyping, which is a "general categorization process that is necessary in order for people to deal with the complexities of human existence." (Denmark et al., 2016, p. 6). This means it is a way to process information into categories to make it easier to understand. With the idea of gender comes stereotypes, which among men consist of men being aggressive, independent, and dominant. Women on the other hand, are portrayed as weaker (than men), dependent, and submissive. It is worth stating that there is debate whether this is due to nature or nurture. This is also applicable to language as language illustrates the extent of inequality between men and women (Lakoff, 1975, p. 39). The idea that women and men should talk a certain way is based on the stereotypes for the genders. Some conversational practices are therefore more commonly used by women and vice versa (Lakoff, 1975, p. 39-40). According to Lakoff (1975) women have a specific type of language, consisting of speech styles that women have been socialized into using, i.e. hedging and tag questions. Other scholars disagree with some of Lakoff's findings and argue that the way people use language is dependent on other factors. Pan (2011, p. 1015) compares the female language Lakoff describes to how other social groups have their own language. This can for instance be people of different classes or different sexualities. Additionally, Levon (2015) stresses that categories like race/ethnicity and social class can impact language use significantly (Levon, 2015, p. 303). As these are aspects tied to identity and impacts the socialisation one is subjected to, people raised in similar places might speak similarly regardless of gender. Coates (2004) states that in Britain, people are raised on the belief that women are generally more polite than men, who tend to use more taboo

language (Coates, 2004, p. 86). She explains that this challenges the cultural stereotypes within Britain, since it does not always prove to be fact.

To summarize, there are many explanations as to why women and men talk the way they do. These can be related to the ways people are socialized and the cultural world they are exposed to at a young age, being taught to act and talk a certain way that is associated with the gender they are assigned. Another aspect is relationship building and expressing emotion. Relationship building is often prioritized higher among women than men, which means they are likely to use language to establish and foster connections with others (Coates, 2004). This might lead to speech styles that express empathy and understanding, which is easier when socialized into a social gender that is associated with openly expressing emotion. Additionally, language is influenced by power dynamics found in social contexts. Dewaele and Pavlenko (2002) note that language, especially emotional language, can be tied to extraversion and introversion. This is because extraverts, are more inclined to speak more freely and therefore less likely to stray from emotional topics (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002, p. 297). Further, brief explanations of the relevant conversational practices will be provided.

Hedges

Hedges are words or short phrases that convey a level of uncertainty (Pan, 2022, p. 1016). Lakoff (1975) stated that women use this more frequently than men, due to them being associated with weakness (Lakoff, 1975). Coates (2004) state that this is a claim without any evidence, as it is not definite whether women or men use them more (Coates, 2004, p. 88). According to Lakoff, using hedges is valid when the speaker is uncertain of the utterance (Lakoff, 1975, p. 79). For instance, if someone asks you if you are attending their party and you are uncertain if you will be able to and reply 'maybe', this would be a valid response. Hedges can also be used to soften the utterance, for instance when criticizing or disagreeing (Miskovic-Lukovic, 2009, p. 603). Coates refers to a study by Janet Holmes (1984, 1987) that analysed women and men's use of hedges in a corpus with equal amounts of male and female speech (Coates, 2004, p. 88). This study challenges Lakoff's (1975) claims on hedges being used to convey uncertainty, as she analyses the different functions of hedges. While the study showed that women use hedges more frequently, it also showed they use it more to express confidence (Coates, 2004, p. 89). Additionally, there is some research on young people using 'like' as a form of hedging. This is a feature more commonly used by young middle-class women, according to Coates (2004, p. 90). Another aspect might be the topic of the conversation. As women are more likely to enjoy talking about sensitive and personal topics (Coates, 2004, p. 90), hedges are a valuable way to soften the utterance to ensure that neither speaker nor listener is offended.

Tag questions

Tag questions are questions that follow an utterance and establish it as "a midway between a statement and an outright question" (Pan, 2011, p. 1016). This is because it is not assertive like the statement, yet more confident than a question (Lakoff, year, p. 48). An example of a tag question can be 'You haven't seen him, have you?'. According to Lakoff, tag questions carry a level of uncertainty, as the speaker is not confident enough in their utterance to leave it as a statement, similarly to hedges. The function of tag questions is to attain confirmation from the listener (Lakoff, 1975, p. 48). Coates (2004) asserts that

research both confirms and challenges Lakoff's (1975) theory about tag questions. This means that some studies affirm that women prefer sentences with tag questions, like Siegler and Siegler (1976), while others declare that men use tags frequently as well (Coates, 2004, p. 90-91). Coates (2004) illustrates that tag questions have different purposes, and men use them to express uncertainty more commonly than women (Coates, 2004, p. 91). This means that the way Lakoff (1975) describes tag questions is more commonly found in men's speech. These tags are modal, or speaker-oriented (Coates, 2004, p. 91). When women use tag questions, they are often affective or addressee-oriented, as they intend to either support the addressee or soften negativity in speech acts (Coates, 2004, p. 91). In short, the total usage of tag questions does not differ significantly between men and women, but the function does. As women are more likely to take the relationship with the listener into account, they tend to use affective tags to facilitate.

Intensifiers

According to Lakoff (1975) and Pan (2011), women use intensifiers more often than men (Lakoff, 1975; Pan, 2011). Intensifiers are words like so, much, really, very, etc. Lakoff (1975, p. 48) especially denotes 'so' as a word women are likelier to use. Intensifiers are used to strengthen the utterance (Pan, 2011, p. 1016), considering both the speaker's position and their attitude (Fuchs, 2017, p. 345). Fuchs state that intensifiers are used more frequently by women in every age group (Fuchs, 2017, p. 350). However, among middle class speakers intensifiers have become more popular after the 1990s (Fuchs, 2017, p. 365). Additionally, it is more popular among adolescents. Fuchs states that gender is not the only variable that impacts frequency of intensifiers, and argues that it is in the interaction with the other variables, such as socioeconomic background, that gender is evident (Fuchs, 2017, p. 365). Regarding film a study by Nemati and Bayer (2007) reported that there are not any gender differences within film scripts for usage of intensifiers (Fuchs, 2017, p. 350).

Politeness

A well-known claim is that women are more polite than men, in both behaviour and speech. Coates refers to Brown and Levinson's studies (1978, 1987, as cited in Coates, 2004, p. 105) that explain the term 'face', when referring to politeness. To be polite, one must respect face, which in short is to respect other people's feelings when speaking. Coates further explains that negative face is based on the need to "not be imposed on" and positive face is the need to be liked (2004, p. 105). When the speaker respects these two needs when speaking, they are polite. Pan asserts that women use euphemisms frequently to avoid crude expletives (2011, p. 1016). This can for instance be to either respect or save face. Women do tend to adhere to politeness patterns more frequently than men, because they are more sensitive to the face needs of the listeners (Coates, 2004, p. 107).

Taboo language (swearing)

Taboo language or swearing is usually characterised by the possibility to offend, and can serve several functions, as expressing positive or negative emotions, adding verbal emphasis, bonding and construction or display of identity (Stapleton, 2020, p. 382). As previously mentioned, swearing and taboo language is commonly associated with men. Several researchers agree with this, like Lakoff (1975), but most of the early research on swearing is based on cultural stereotypes (Coates, 2004, p. 97). More recent studies reflect that women and men both use taboo language, and more so in the company of the same

sex, while in conversations with the other sex, the frequency of swear words drop (Coates, 2004, p. 97-98). Coates (2004) argues that class and upbringing are factors in frequency of swear words in speech. Adolescents from working class backgrounds are more likely to swear and girls from these backgrounds attempt to disrupt the traditional gender stereotypes, leading them to swear more (Coates, 2004, p. 98). Stapleton reinforces this and states that swearing is often associated with adolescents (2020, p. 390), but also people of lower socioeconomic standing or lower level of education (Stapleton, 2010, p. 291). Frequent swearing among adolescents might be tied to the function of establishing identity. Stapleton states that swearing can be perceived as persuasive and less persuasive, depending on the context and reader/listener (Stapleton, 2020, p. 383). In a formal context, swearing might be considered less persuasive, whereas in a casual conversation it might be persuasive. Although studies show both women and men swear, it is still considered more socially acceptable for men to swear than women (Stapleton, 2010, p. 293). When female teenagers swear, the frequency increases or decreases depending on context, and particularly increases when talking about sex (Stapleton, 2010, p. 293).

Minimal responses

According to Coates research on who uses minimal responses the most, is unanimous in showing this is women (2004, p. 87). Minimal responses are words like 'yeah', 'right' or 'mhm'. They are used as a very brief response while the speaker is talking, to show the listener is listening. Coates (2004, p. 87) presents this as something women use skilfully, knowing exactly when to use them without interrupting the speaker. On the other hand, when men use minimal responses, it is often to undermine the speaker (Coates, 2004, p. 87). Minimal responses are typically a type of interruption that does not violate the turn-taking rules of conversation. According to Coates (2004), men have not mastered minimal responses as well as women, and end up interrupting the conversation and dominating it. Coates explains that when men do this to control the conversation and are less concerned with infringing on the other speaker's turn than women are (Coates, 2004, p. 116). Reid (1995, p. 508) specifies how the listener, regardless of gender, will increase their use of minimal response when the speaker is a woman. This seems to indicate a knowledge of women's preference for an active listener, compared to a silent one.

3 Method and data collection

As previously stated, four movies have been selected to shed some light on how conversational practices and linguistic forms reflect attitudes in the portrayal of women's roles within the horror genre. These are *The Babadook*, *Scream 4*, *Jennifer's Body* and *Ginger Snaps*. This thesis will be focusing on films released between 2000 and 2015, as it intends to explore how societal attitudes can be reflected in movies and having a set period is crucial to be able to do this. Picking the movies meant following certain criteria. One of these is the spoken language being English, so translation would not impact the data. Another criterion is the inclusion of women in several different roles, both as the protagonist and as the antagonist, to include both perspectives. Since the thesis focuses on the women in the movies, it includes movies created by both sexes. Therefore, two of the movies, *The Babadook* and *Jennifer's Body*, are written and directed by women. *The Babadook* is written and directed by Jennifer Kent, whereas *Jennifer's Body* is directed by Karyn Kusama and written by Diablo Cody. The movie *Scream 4* is written and directed by men, Kevin

Williamson and Wes Craven. Lastly *Ginger Snaps* is written by a woman, Karen Walton, and directed by a man, John Fawcett. The movies are similar in some ways, but still significantly different. They all have some manifestation of a monster, but the manifestation differs from movie to movie. Since horror has been around for a little while and some of the 'classic' movies have already been analysed quite frequently, the choice of more modern movies might reflect some more 'modern' fears (Holland, 2019, p. 1), or attitudes.

The goal of this thesis is to discuss how the language in movies can reflect societal attitudes, and will therefore use a quantitative method that suits this goal, namely Critical Discourse Analysis. This method will be used to shed some light on how conversational practices can reflect attitudes by looking at discourses in the movies. Typically, this method is suited for analysing 'naturally occurring language' (Wodak, 2012, p. 627), meaning language that is produced by speakers engaging in unscripted conversations. However, as film attempts to mirror how people talk to appear authentic (Androutsopoulos, 2012), my hypothesis is that they also mirror and ascertain certain attitudes towards specific groups of people depending on the language used and associated with said groups. This can for instance be by relying on stereotypes or gender roles, for instance how mothers are supposed to act. Since the focus remains on the power of language, Critical Discourse Analysis, CDA, is appropriate.

The data for this thesis is the spoken, and sometimes unspoken, and written material originating from the four movies. In other words, the lines, how they are delivered, any improv by the actors in the specific scenes and body language. The data is therefore verbal and non-verbal, although the focus will be on the spoken words. Visual cues are mostly taken into consideration when they add to the spoken data, for instance if the actor's facial expression does not match the utterance. Originally, the data was intended to be the written scripts, but as they differ significantly from the movies with the exclusion or addition of scenes, they are not used to collect speech data. Therefore, the data is collected by watching the movies and noting anything of importance, which could be anything that can be tied to the theory presented above. It is possible that some data has been overlooked or that the understanding of importance is coloured by a bias. However, the subtitle tracks of the movies were utilized to search through the data as an attempt to minimize the effect of this error source. This proved useful when sorting through data as well. The basis for the data collection was these six linguistic forms, and counting how many times they appear in the four movies. Additionally, the speech of nine essential women in the movies has been analysed and the frequency of the six linguistic forms has been counted. This is to explore whether there is a difference within the stereotypes within horror, tied to the protagonist, the victim and the antagonist.

3.1 Critical Discourse Analysis

Critical Discourse Analysis is a method used for different purposes and within different fields, according to Johnstone (2018, p. 1). To Johnstone it is important to establish what 'discourse' means. The term usually refers to "instances of communicative action in the medium of language" (Johnstone, 2018, p. 2). CDA is therefore more than analysing strictly grammar aspects of language, and analysts are more interested in how people use the language based on experiences and previous knowledge (Johnstone, 2018). Different researchers have differing ways to describe CDA. To Fairclough, CDA is a method that "brings the critical tradition of social analysis into language studies and contributes to critical

social analysis a particular focus on discourse and on relations between discourse and other social elements (power relations, ideologies, institutions, social identities, and so forth.)” (Fairclough, 2012, p. 9). In other words, it is a method that can provide insight into how society reflects and influences language, and vice versa. According to Wodak, “CDA sees “language as social practice”, and considers the “context of language use” to be crucial:” (Wodak, 2012, p. 630), as it concerns itself with discourse. Metzger and Bahan (2001) emphasize that CDA stands out by exploring how language is used in real-world situations (Metzger & Bahan, 2001, p. 113). As previously mentioned, the data here is created and not naturally occurring. However, films attempt to mirror reality and reflect how people in their situations (the characters) would talk, which in turn makes CDA a suitable method. The subject of the research within CDA can be full conversations and speech acts, as well as other types of interaction, like gestures. These are all aspects that are relevant for this thesis. Film provides us with both audio and visuals, allowing us to analyse gestures, facial expressions and tone as well as strictly the spoken words. The surrounding context of said scene is relevant for CDA. Wodak (2012) specifies seven aspects that characterizes CDA, which are an interest in ‘naturally occurring’ language, a focus on larger units of speech, a focus on the study of action and interaction, inclusion on non-verbal interaction, interest in dynamic and cognitive strategies, functions of contexts of language use and the analysis of phenomena of language use and other sides of text and discourse (Wodak, 2012, p. 627-628). In other words, CDA studies complex social phenomena. CDA can lend itself useful to the analysis of any social phenomenon. The researchers who apply CDA have to “attempt to make their own positions and interests explicit while retaining their respective scientific methodologies and while remaining self-reflective of their own research process” (Wodak, 2012, p. 628). This means that it is important to be transparent and open about personal positions. As the subject of this thesis is related to gender and film, it is a likely assumption that the researcher is interested in this.

Wodak (2012) describes CDA as a less traditional academic discipline as it does not have a fixed set of research methods. Rather, it is a method that allows the researcher to analyse how language is used in a larger context and explore how language influences other social discourse (Wodak, 2012, p. 627). Therefore, the process began with reading the scripts to gain insight, followed by watching the movies. While watching, notes were taken of instances where the characters used the six linguistic forms, as well as the context. Since, CDA is not only concerned with language (Wodak, 2012), the context and topic are relevant for the analysis. Timeslots were also written down to make sorting through data easier. While watching the movies, it became clear that the scripts were significantly different, making it hard to determine which data would be up for analysis. Therefore, the subtitle tracks were downloaded and chosen as the main data, as it represents what the characters say. The search function was also helpful when ensuring error sourcing. This method proved to be the most helpful when attempting to explore and analyse the discourse, as CDA is used for (Wodak, 2012). Additionally, it allows the researcher to uncover any hidden, perhaps subconscious, biases conveyed by certain utterances (Wodak, 2012). Specific words and phrases were chosen to represent the different linguistic forms or conversational practices, which can be found in table 1. This does not mean that i.e. other forms of hedging will be excluded, but rather used as a safety net to ensure that some are. The category related taboo language is broad and therefore split into two parts in table 1. Words pertaining to the body are not necessarily swear-words, but they are used as such in the

context. After noting down the frequency of the linguistic forms, manual counting and analysis was performed. As the counting was manual, there is a possibility that some linguistic forms are overlooked. However, manual proved easier when ensuring that context was included, as is important for CDA (Wodak, 2012). According to Wood and Kroger (2000), CDA analysts do not concern themselves with the criteria of reliability and validity (Wood & Kroger, 2000, p. 163). As this type of analysis depends on the researcher, it is hard to say for certain that another researcher might encounter the exact same results. However, the transparency provided and the clear criteria might make it possible for another researcher to repeat the data collection and analysis and get similar results. The conclusion likely depends on the researcher's bias and understanding of said data (Wood & Kroger, 2000).

Table 1: Overview of words included in the data analysis.

Features	Words and phrases
Hedges	Maybe, perhaps, think, probably, possibly, seem, might, you know, I mean and well
Tag questions	Isn't it, aren't we, right (universal tag), do you, will it, can you and don't you
Intensifiers	So, pretty, really, very, totally, absolutely and utterly
Taboo language 1 (profanity and excretory)	Fuck (fucking, fucked, fucks), damn (goddamn, damnit, dammit), hell, shit (bullshit), bitch (bitching), slut and whore
Taboo language 2 (sexual)	ass (asshole), penis (dick, cock), breasts (boobs, tits) and vagina (pussy, cunt)
Politeness	Please, sorry, excuse me, thank you and kindly
Minimal responses	Yes, uh, oh, no, yeah, right, I see, mhm, that's right, hmm and alright
Empty adjectives	Nice, pretty, gorgeous, beautiful, good, great, bad and sweet

4 Presentation and analysis of data

4.1 Movies and the chosen characters

As previously stated, the four movies selected for this thesis are *The Babadook* (2014), *Scream 4* (2011), *Jennifer's Body* (2009) and *Ginger Snaps* (2000). A brief summary of these will be provided below, before moving on to the results and analysis regarding the presence of female linguistic features. Some of the results will be presented in tables. These

tables are similar for each movie and contain the frequency of the specific language feature in total, and the characters that remain the focus for the analysis.

The Babadook (2014) directed and written by Jennifer Kent. It centres around a mother, Amelia, and her son Samuel, who end up being psychologically tortured by the creature known as the Babadook. Amelia gets possessed by the Babadook, which changes her mild-mannered demeanour to a vicious one. She is considered both the protagonist and the antagonist of the movie, and the analysis portion will mainly focus on her.

Table 2: Overview of results of features found in *The Babadook*.

Features	Amelia	Total
Hedges	8	21
Tag questions	4	7
Intensifiers	18	33
Taboo language	4	6
Politeness	15	21
Minimal responses	41	54
Total	90	142

Amelia exhibits all of the forementioned linguistic features commonly tied to women. As the table illustrates, the most frequent features are minimal responses and intensifiers by everyone in the movie, Amelia included.

Scream 4 is written by Kevin Williamson and directed by Wes Craven and belongs within the slasher genre. The act centres around the town Woodsboro being haunted by the notorious Ghostface, whose identity remains a mystery until the end. Sidney 'Sid' Prescott and Gale Weathers are recurring characters, 'the final girls' from the first movie. Jill Roberts is the new antagonist, and Kirby Reed is 'the slut'.

Although not part of the main data, it is worth noting that the four first people killed in the movie are women that adhere to the typical victim formula in slashers. Jill's friend Olivia is brutally murdered while in her underwear in her own bedroom, while Jill and Kirby are watching. Although Olivia does not explicitly do anything that would brand her as 'the slut', the viewer gets the impression from her attitude and her being introduced as "Olivia 'Don't-Look-At-My-Tits-I-Have-A-Mind' Morris" (Craven, 2011, 00:17:22-00:17:28). This is similar to the second victim in the movie, Jenny. The first kill in the movie happens off-screen and is

again used to torture the main victim, Jenny. Example 8 is a phone call between Jenny and the killer.

Example 8

Ghostface: You're in my movie. You got a fun part, so don't blow it.
Jenny: What movie?
Ghostface: Same one Marnie's in. Only her part got cut way back.
 But you, *you're the dumb blonde with the big tits.*
 We'll have some fun with you before you die.
Jenny: I have a 4.0 GPA and a 135 IQ, *asshole*. What did you do
with Marnie?

Ghostface proceeds to throw Marnie through a glass door and start chasing Jenny throughout the house. This shows that the characters within the movie are aware of this trope as well.

Table 3: Overview of frequency of female features in *Scream 4*.

Features	Sidney	Jill	Gale	Kirby	Total
Hedges	5	24	4	10	78
Tag questions	-	2	1	-	8
Intensifiers	3	7	4	8	51
Taboo language	6	15	6	6	77
Politeness	10	6	3	12	66
Minimal responses	13	17	16	37	248
Total	37	71	34	73	528

As *Scream 4* includes three final girls and a female killer, these four have been included in Table 3. Kirby exhibits the most features, with Jill closely behind. Minimal responses, hedges and taboo language are the most frequently used.

Jennifer's Body is directed by Karyn Kusama and written by Diablo Cody. The movie is considered a horror comedy. It centres around Anita "Needy" Lesnicki and her best friend Jennifer Check. When the pair attends a concert, Jennifer becomes the victim to a Satanic ritual, which turns her into a flesh-eating succubus. Needy dresses somewhat 'feminine', but tones it down by putting a hoodie over a dress. She is also known for having a close relationship with Jennifer, as illustrated by a classmate calling her "totally lesbi-gay"

(00:06:18-00:06:20). Needy is both the narrator and the central protagonist of the movie, whereas Jennifer becomes the antagonist.

Table 4: Overview of results of features in *Jennifer's Body*.

Features	Needy	Jennifer	Total
Hedges	27	21	67
Tag questions	-	2	3
Intensifiers	14	27	65
Taboo language	12	17	43
Politeness	8	8	26
Minimal responses	35	22	98
Total	96	97	302

In *Jennifer's Body*, the most frequently used features are minimal responses, hedges and intensifiers, as seen in table 4. Needy and Jennifer exhibit almost the same number of linguistic features.

Ginger Snaps is directed by John Fawcett. Both John Fawcett and Karen Walton are given writing credit for the movie, and it is therefore the only movie directed by a man and co-written by a woman in this thesis. It centres around the two outcast sisters Brigitte Fitzgerald and Ginger Fitzgerald. The pair is fascinated by death and gore and take pictures of each other imitating death scenes. As they are somewhat disliked by their weird interests by their peers, they experience some bullying. When attempting to take revenge on their bully, Ginger is attacked by a werewolf and starts transforming into one. Together, the two sisters try to fight her werewolf transformation. Brigitte is painted as the main protagonist. She is generally shyer and quieter than her sister. Her intelligence is apparent, as she skipped a grade to be in the same grade as her older sister. Even before the start of her transformation, Ginger is more dominating than Brigitte. Throughout the movie, she becomes the antagonist due to her transformation.

Table 5: Overview over results of features in *Ginger Snaps*.

Features	Brigitte	Ginger	Total
Hedges	6	23	53
Tag questions	-	1	4
Intensifiers	2	11	19
Taboo language	17	64	129
Politeness	12	6	26
Minimal responses	18	28	67
Total	55	133	298

The table shows that the most frequent features in *Ginger Snaps* are taboo language, minimal responses and hedges, with Ginger exhibiting more than Brigitte.

4.1.1 HEDGES

Example 1

Principal: Mrs. Fanning, the boy has significant behavioral problems.
 Amelia: *You know*, Sammy doesn't need a full-time monitor.

Example 2

Teacher: Do you want me to put them all at risk because of your son?
 Amelia: *I think* I'll just find another school.

As mentioned in chapter 2, hedges can convey both insecurity and confidence (Coates, 2004). In the data material, Amelia will use hedges for both purposes. When Amelia uses 'you know' or 'well' as hedges, she appears to intend to express confidence. This is seen in example 1 and 2, where she is in a meeting with the principal regarding Samuel's behaviour. In example 1, Amelia uses 'you know' to assert herself and show the principal how confident and serious she is. She knows what her son needs, and it is not a full-time monitor. Her tone and voice is stern, affirming the function as confidence. In example 2, she appears less confident, as she has become smaller in her seat and sounds tired. However, it can also be interpreted as an attempt to manipulate the listener, as Amelia assumes the teacher does not want her to find another school. In this case, Amelia would be taking advantage of the hedge 'I think' being commonly associated with uncertainty, to manipulate the teacher into finding another way of helping them.

Example 9

Jill: I was so believable today, *wasn't I?*
I mean, I told so many lies, I actually started to believe them.

Example 10

Jill: Yeah, us two. "What's your favorite scary movie?"
 Kirby: It was the killer's voice. From Stab.
 From, *I mean, you know*, from your life.

As presented in table 3, Jill is the most frequent user of hedges in *Scream 4*. Although Coates (2004) presents 'like' as a popular hedge among teens, the data material here shows a preference for 'I mean', as seen in both example 9 and example 10. Example 9 happens after Jill's unmasking as the killer, and includes both the hedge 'I mean' and the tag question 'wasn't I?'. Kirby is the second most frequent user of hedges, as seen in table 3. In example 10, she is talking to her idol Sidney, 'the final girl'. Kirby uses two hedges back-to-back, indicating her uncertainty and nervousity. The topic of conversation is something uncomfortable for Sidney, so Kirby might be trying to accommodate or facilitate for her by using this unassertive hedge and tone, as Coates (2004, p. 90) states women tend to do. However, the male characters in *Scream 4* use hedges frequently as well, which is in line with the study performed by Holmes (1987) (Coates, 2004, p. 88).

Example 15

Chip: What?
 Needy: *Well*, you know how last night we were talking and someone came to my house?
Well, it was Jennifer!
I mean, she looked like she'd been beaten up or shot or something.

Example 16

Teacher: 3% of the profits will go to local families who have been affected by loss.
 Needy: What about the other 97%? *I mean*, that's just crass

Needy, *Jennifer's Body*, is also a frequent user of hedges, used similarly to Amelia. Example 15 is taken from a conversation between Chip and Needy, where Needy is explaining her weird experience with a flesh-eating Jennifer the day before. Needy is still unsure about what she saw and why Jennifer was weird, and her rapid usage of hedges indicate uncertainty and nervousity. In example 16 on the other hand, Needy expresses confidence, as she is aggravated by how Low Shoulder is taking advantage of the situation, as understood from her tone. This instance of hedging/filling can be used to introduce her following point too.

Example 30

Brigitte: *I mean*, what if they just... laugh?
 Ginger: They'll be in awe. B, suicide is like the ultimate "fuck you".

Example 31

Ginger: *Well*, you always wanted to be me!
 Brigitte: *Well*, this isn't you, so.

Similarly to Needy and Amelia, Brigitte, *Ginger Snaps*, uses hedges to convey either uncertainty or certainty. In example 30, the hedge 'I mean' is used by Brigitte to convey her uncertainty about the suicide pact the two made together, whereas the 'well' used by both Brigitte and Ginger in example 31 indicates confidence. Brigitte might also be using the hedge to mock Ginger, as her tone sounds sarcastic.

To summarize, hedges are frequent in male and female speech (Coates, 2004). Although Lakoff (1975) stated that hedges were commonly found in female speech, the data material presented here shows a tendency to them being used by men too, as well as not entirely due to uncertainty. On the contrary, the results presented in this thesis prove that women use them just as often to convey confidence, like when Amelia is talking to the principal (Example 1) and when Needy is expressing anger as a response to her teacher (example 16). Needy is a frequent user of hedges, as seen when she uses three hedges in a row (example 15). Rather than this being due to her gender as Lakoff (1975) argues, it is likely due to the context and topic. As women are more likely to use hedges when talking about a sensitive topic (Coates, 2004, p. 129), such as Jennifer covered in blood, to avoid being too forceful. Sometimes the frequency of hedges will increase in line with embarrassment with the speaker (Coates, 2004), which might indicate that Needy is trying to save face. This is similar to when Kirby (*Scream 4*) talks to Sidney (example 10) and uses two hedges back-to-back. As these instances are both face-threatening, the frequency of hedges increases, like Coates (2004) states. This indicates that hedges are more multifunctional than early research deduced. According to the data material, women use hedges in a multifunctional way, for conveying uncertainty, confidence and to save face.

4.1.2 TAG QUESTIONS

Example 3

Amelia: If the Babadook was real, we'd see it right now, *wouldn't we?*
Samuel: He wants to scare you first.

Example 4

Amelia: Samuel.
Bugsy is hurt, we need to get help.
You don't want him to die, *do you?*

In *The Babadook*, women will often use tag questions when addressing children. An example is when Amelia and Samuel meet a mother and daughter at the grocery store, where the mother uses tag questions when addressing her daughter and Samuel ("We have to go home and see daddy though, haven't we?"/"Well, your mum is very lucky to have you then, isn't she?" (Kent, 2014, 00:07:37-00:07:55)). In example 3, Amelia attempts to soothe Samuel and logically dissolve of his fear of the Babadook. The use of tag question can be interpreted as an attempt to gently nudge Samuel in the thought-direction she wants him, namely that the Babadook is not real. Her gentleness is likely rooted in the relationship with the addressee. In example 4, Amelia has become possessed and the tag functions as a way to manipulate Samuel into opening the door. She is aware that Samuel cares for the dog and is therefore intending to make him feel guilty. Amelia's tone changes from the first line to the third, becoming more accusatory and aggressive. Both examples are instances where Amelia tries to control a situation.

Example 9

Jill: I was so believable today, *wasn't I?*
I mean, I told so many lies, I actually started to believe them.

In *Scream 4*, tag questions are rare. In example 9, Jill is asking a rhetoric question. She is happily surprised by her performance, but knows it was believable. Therefore, it functions more as a statement than a question. This might indicate a preference for tag questions, like Coates (2004) refers to, as she opts for a tag question instead of a statement.

Example 20

Needy: They killed you.
Jennifer: Oops! I'm still here, *aren't I?*

Similarly, tag questions are rarely used in *Jennifer's Body*. As table 4 shows, there are only three instances in total. In example 20, Jennifer is talking about what happened during the failed ritual. Tag questions can have several functions (Coates, 2004), i.e. to soften utterances. This is the function the tag question in example 20 has, as Jennifer is still there and does therefore not believe she was killed. Additionally, it can be an invitation for Needy to continue engaging with the conversation. It is likely that this is how Jennifer shows her love for Needy too. Tags are often addressee-oriented (Coates, 2004, p. 91), meaning Jennifer is taking her relationship with Needy into account and intends to calm her and ensure her that she is okay. She is therefore using the tag to facilitate for Needy. Tag questions are rarely used in *Ginger Snaps*. Male characters happen to be more frequent users, as seen in table 5. Ginger uses a tag question once as a rhetoric question regarding a plan not working out.

This means that the data material is a contrast to what Lakoff (1975) declared, that women are frequent users of tag questions. The reasoning is rarely to convey uncertainty, but rather used as a tool for leading the conversation in a certain direction (example 4), convey a point (example 9), softening an utterance (example 3) or to facilitate the conversation for the addressee (example 20). Additionally, the antagonists Ginger and Jill, will sometimes use tag questions as a rhetorical question (example 9). In short, tag questions are not commonly found in this data material. As this is a contrast to Lakoff (1975), it can indicate a change in societal attitudes. Although women were previously thought to be uncertain and unassertive (Denmark et al., 2016, 7), these richer functions of tag question can indicate an attitude change, whereas women are considered certain and helpful instead. As women often use tags to facilitate (Coates, 2004), women might be seen as good conversationalists. However, it is worth noting that this depends on attitudes towards tag questions.

4.1.3 INTENSIFIERS

Example 5

Claire: He insisted on talking to this bloody Babadook thing all day.
Just talking to the air, even freaked me out.
Amelia: I'm so sorry.

Intensifiers proved to be frequent among some characters, i.e. Amelia, Jennifer, Needy and Ginger. Lakoff (1975), Pan (2011) and Fuchs (2017) state intensifiers are more common among women, but the data material reflects little gender difference regarding usage,

especially seen in table 3. This might be an outcome of circumstance, as the data material is not broad enough to generalize further. Intensifiers are usually used to strengthen the utterance (Pan, 2011), which is the function they serve in the data material. Amelia often uses intensifiers in the company of politeness phrases, such as in example 5. Here she is apologizing for Samuel's behaviour. According to Fuchs (2017), intensifiers are more popular among adolescents, which is true for Jennifer, Needy and Ginger.

Example 19

Jennifer: You play instruments *really... super* good.
Nikolai: Thank you, we're professionals.

Jennifer often uses "really" and "so", like in example 19.

Example 32

Brigitte: I know, but think about it.
Ginger: Well, thank you for taking my total fucking nightmare *so* seriously!

Ginger will sometimes use intensifiers for sarcastic effect, like in example 32. Here she means that Brigitte is not taking her issue seriously and is therefore angry with her. Nemati and Bayer (2007) discovered that there is little to no gender difference in usage of intensifiers in film (Fuchs, 2017, p. 350), which rings true in this data material as well. Amelia happens to be the most frequent user of intensifiers, even though Fuchs (2017) deduced intensifiers were more popular among adolescents. On the other side, this might be because she is the character with the most lines in the movie and consequently dominates the dialogue. *Scream 4* includes female adolescents and adults, in which adolescents are more frequent users. This thesis does not include enough data to generalize whether this is true for all movies with adults and adolescents, or if it is just in *Scream 4*.

4.1.4 TABOO LANGUAGE

Example 7

Amelia: Are you listening to me? Let me in, *you little shit!*

As stated above, Amelia is a polite woman, but post-possession she will use expletives. This is a contrast to her previous polite behaviour, clearly showing a change in language due to change in personality as name-calling is unordinary behaviour for her.

Example 14

Gale: Mind turning it off? A little old school, off the record?
Robbie: Can't. Owe it to my audience.
Gale: Turn that *fucking* thing off.

Most of the characters in *Scream 4* will use taboo language. Similarly to Amelia, Jill curses after being revealed as the antagonist. Prior to this, she adheres to expectations of her, i.e. to be kind and unassertive (Denmark et al., 2017), while the other teens are more likely to curse. It is worth mentioning that the women in the first kill sequences curse frequently as well, likely because they are often categorized as 'the sluts' (Clover, 1992). Swearing can have functions (Stapleton, 2020), which is true in the data material as well. Sidney will swear when expressing strong emotions, whereas Gale will curse to appear intimidating. According to Coates (2004) and Stapleton (2010), swearing is associated with adolescents.

The data material reflects that teens swear more often, but adults will not avoid it in its entirety. Example 14 illustrates Gale swearing to be persuasive, as Stapleton (2010) state swearing can. It is worth noting that Gale's method works, but likely due to the informal situation (Stapleton, 2010). Her tone is also an important aspect of this threatening behaviour.

Example 21

Jennifer: I'm like... unkillable. Like, I can do *shit* like this. Watch!

Example 24

Needy: You killed my *fucking* boyfriend!
You *goddamned* monster!
You...*Zombitch!*

In *Jennifer's Body*, Jennifer swears the most. She uses taboo language often and appears to not take herself so seriously, especially when exclaiming "My tit" (Kusama, 2009, 01:37:17-01:37:19) after being stabbed in the chest. In Example 21, Jennifer is showing off her healing powers. Jennifer uses the word 'shit' to approximately talk about something without specifying what. It could for instance be replaced by 'stuff'. In example 24, Needy is attempting to kill Jennifer, and she curses three times in a row. Jennifer mentions never hearing Needy "drop the F-bomb" (Kusama, 2009, 01:01:12-01:01:15) before, meaning she has changed significantly. Needy also comments on her sudden frequent use of taboo language in her narration (Kusama, 2009, 01:38:36-01:38:39), as a tool to illustrate change in personality.

Example 26

Ginger: *Fuck!* Wrists are for girls...
I'm slitting my throat.

Example 27

Ginger: Yeah.
Brigitte: *Shit*, it's stuck! Hold still.

Most of the characters in *Ginger Snaps* will use swear words frequently, although Ginger does it the most. Ginger swears both before and after being infected by the werewolf, similarly to Jennifer and a contrast to Jill and Amelia. She uses variations of 'fuck' often, likely to stress her negative emotions, like Stapleton (2010) says. Swearing can also assist in establishing identity and to disrupt stereotypes (Stapleton, 2010), which might be what Ginger is attempting to do. Brigitte on the other hand, swears less. If she does, it is likely as the result of being under extreme pressure. In example 26, Ginger curses after pressing a blade to her wrist. This is Ginger's first line in the movie. Example 27 is from a scene where Brigitte is attempting to pierce Ginger's navel with a needle, but curses in frustration.

Example 28

Ginger: *You know, we're almost not even related anymore.*
Brigitte: *You're fucked!*
Ginger: *You'd love it. Should come for the ride.*

An aspect of taboo that is not present in the other movies, is the incestuous subtext established by Ginger in example 28. After Ginger transforms, she loses herself entirely and their codependent bond has evolved into something else in Ginger's mind. Although the incestuous nature is not explicitly stated by Ginger, she is seen pinning her sister down and crawling on top of her in the scene.

This high frequency of taboo language contradicts Lakoff's (1975) ideas of women supposedly avoiding taboo language, but the results show that women in horror will not shy away from this. Its intended use is not always to offend, but often to express strong emotions or add verbal emphasis (Stapleton, 2010). Some characters will avoid swearing, like Needy (example 22), and some engage in taboo language because of possession, like Amelia (example 7). Similarly, Jill will curse after her reveal. Although her transformation is not physical or comes in the form of possession, it is a transformation as a character. The case for her and Amelia might show how women are allowed to use taboo language more frequently after transgressing and becoming a villain. Ginger's frequent use of taboo language can be due to her need to stand out and be different. There are different ways to disrupt traditional stereotypes (Stapleton, 2020), and according to this, taboo language might be a way for Ginger to display her identity. A more apparent change for Ginger after starting her transformation, is her body language becoming more confident. She devotes herself more to her appearance than previously, meaning her new sexual feelings might cause her to feel like she has to adhere to this stereotype, namely that women are concerned with their appearances. Additionally, she accepts a boy's advances towards her and engages in sexual activities with him (Fawcett, 2000, 00:39:02-00:39:49), meaning she transgresses further from how she is expected to be. This adds to the notion of taboo language, spoken and physical, being associated with antagonists. In the data material, age appears to be a factor in frequency of swearing, similarly to Stapleton's (2010) claims.

4.1.5 POLITENESS

Amelia is very polite, as seen when she uses 'please' when correcting Samuel's behaviour. She will often speak in a low and soft-spoken voice, as well rarely speaking out of turn.

Example 11

Kirby: And, um, *may* I ask what the hell you are doing here?
Trevor: Why? Didn't I find the after-party?

On the other hand, few characters in *Scream 4* can be heard uttering politeness phrases. Sidney exhibits the most politeness features. This is usually in the form of apologizing, such as when she forgets the name of a person. The characters will often beg and use 'please'. As it is usually in the form of pleading for their life, its use is not necessarily to be polite. Kirby also apologizes profusely after not opening the door for a suspected killer. Some of the teens use words or phrases that are typically tied to politeness in a sarcastic or rude manner, such as in example 11.

Example 12

Sidney: You know when people say "I know how you feel", but you know they're just saying that because they really have no *frigging* idea how you feel? I know how you feel. *I am so sorry* about Olivia.
Jill: *I'm sorry* about your publicist.

Some characters will be more genuine, such as Sidney and Jill in example 12. The cousins are talking about the homicides and exchanging condolences. It is also an example of substituting swear words, which Lakoff (1975) stated women would do. This substitution might be due to the sensitive topic or their relationship with each other, where Sidney wants to remain a good example as she is the oldest.

Example 22

Needy: Oh, *cheese and fries!* There's somebody here.

Example 23

Chip: I'm not saying that to be a dillhole.

Needy: Yeah, but I don't tell *whoppers* and I'm not crazy.

Similarly, Needy will use substitutions for swearing, as seen in example 22. Needy is startled by the doorbell, causing her to 'swear'. As the movie progresses and in her narration, she will swear. Additionally, Needy uses phrases or terms not usually associated with teens, such as in Example 23. This might weaken the authenticity of speech, as Androutsopoulos (2012, p. 148) notes as important.

Example 32

Brigitte: I know, but think about it.

Ginger: Well, *thank you* for taking my total fucking nightmare so seriously!

Ginger Snaps does not include many politeness phrases. In example 32, the phrase 'thank you' is used in a sarcastic way, meaning she is not appreciative of Brigitte's help. Ginger does this several times and does not seem concerned with positive face.

Generally, politeness does not appear to have a place in horror. Some of the characters will make an effort to respect face in conversation, but it appears to depend on contextual factors, i.e. topic and identity factors, i.e. personality. Amelia apologizing often is likely tied to respecting face, negative and positive. Whereas Ginger is less likely to be bothered with this. Politeness, on the other hand, is something the characters are seemingly less concerned with. Positive face is tied to wanting to be liked (Coates, 2004), which Ginger seems less interested in based on her aggressive behaviour. The characters who use substitutions are seemingly more concerned with politeness. In this data material, that is Needy. Although adolescents are usually the most frequent users of taboo language (Stapleton, 2020, p. 390), Needy purposefully avoids this, regardless of who the listener is. Some characters will also use phrases commonly associated with politeness, i.e. 'please', 'sorry', etc., to offend or mock, as in example 32. Due to the tone and context, the listener is able to deduce that Ginger is being ironic, which changes the meaning. Jennifer will do this too, so it might be something more common among adolescents than adults, but lack of data makes it challenging to generalize.

4.1.6 MINIMAL RESPONSES

Example 6

Robbie: Are you alright?

Amelia: *Yeah yeah no, I'm fine*

The feature Amelia uses the most is minimal responses. She tends to use these to convince people or downplay something, like in example 6. As this allegedly is a female trait (Lakoff, 1975), Amelia might be exhibiting it to be seen as a polite and good-natured woman. Even after being possessed by the Babadook, she is sensible enough to act like everything is normal in conversation with outsiders by using minimal responses.

Example 13

Charlie: I've gone through everything. We're definitely good on timeline.
Jill: *Oh yeah, we're perfect.*

Similarly, minimal responses are frequent in *Scream 4*. They are usually used to ensure the speaker is listening (Coates, 2004) or to show agreement. In example 13, Jill is showing agreement with the previous statement by using a minimal response and consequently continuing the topic.

Example 17

Chip: You guys don't have anything in common.
Needy: *Yeah, okay, joke.*

Example 18

Needy: I'm going to call the police.
Jennifer: *Oh, okay! Why don't you narc me out?*

Disagreement can also be seen in example 17, where Needy's boyfriend is stating she is different from Jennifer. Needy responds with a minimal response, but contrary to example 13, it shows disagreement. Similarly, in example 18 Jennifer's dialogue conveys disagreement, but also sarcasm. The words she is saying are not negative, but the tone and body language indicates sarcasm. However, she is seemingly not attempting to be cruel. She says it with a smile on her face and Needy does not seem to have a negative reaction to the response either (Kusama, 2009, 01:01:20-01:01:33). She does, however, end up steering the conversation in a different direction because of the statements that follow. This way of using minimal responses might be more typical of men, as a way to assert their power or dominance (Coates, 2004).

Example 29

Ginger: I'll kill her for you, B.
Brigitte: Whatever.
Ginger: *No, not whatever. This isn't whatever.*

Using minimal responses to confirm or deny something is also common in *Ginger Snaps*. This feature is used by all characters, regardless of gender. Example 29 shows Ginger denying what Brigitte stated, spoken so fast it is almost an overlap. Ginger will also use 'oh' similarly to Jennifer in example 18.

As mentioned, minimal responses are the most frequent features, in line with Coates's statement regarding women's preference for this feature (Coates, 2004, p. 87). In the data material, the function of minimal responses is usually to let the other person know they are listening, as Coates (2004) states usually is the function of minimal responses. They can also be used to downplay something, like Amelia in example 6. Instead of indicating that the

speaker should continue, as minimal responses often do (Coates, 2004), she is using them to indicate the end of the topic. This response comes fast and almost becomes an overlap. Sometimes, the antagonist will use minimal responses to undermine the speaker, such as Jennifer does in example 18. In short, minimal responses can be used in numerous different ways, by different characters in different situations. As minimal responses are tied to support and recognition (Coates, 2004), this frequent usage can indicate that society views women as supportive, or at the very least active listeners.

4.2 Linguistic forms

As presented in the second chapter, the results present the frequency of six forms that Lakoff tied to female speech. These are hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, taboo language, politeness and minimal responses. The results are presented in Table 6 below. Since the subjects are from the horror genre, it is also unlikely that any of the characters will be exhibiting specialised vocabulary and will have their intonation and emphatic stress affected by the current pressure and danger they are all under. Therefore, this has not been included as a main aspect within the analysis, but rather to add to the chosen features in some manner, such as if they e.g. are always yelling when cursing. The percentages are rounded to one decimal.

Table 6: Total overview of results regarding feature usage in *The Babadook*, *Jennifer's Body*, *Scream 4* and *Ginger Snaps*.

Features	Usage by the nine women	Percentages nine women (%)	Usage by all characters	Percentages all characters (%)
Hedges	128	18,7%	219	17,2%
Tag questions	10	1,5%	22	1,7%
Intensifiers	94	13,9%	168	13,3%
Taboo language	147	21,4%	255	20,1%
Politeness	80	11,7%	139	10,9%
Minimal responses	227	33,1%	467	36,8%
Total	686	100	1270	100

The results presented in the table above illustrate the frequency of the female features hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, taboo language, politeness and minimal responses across all four movies. "Usage by the nine women" refers to the characters specified in Table 2-5. Across movies, the language features used the most are minimal responses, taboo language

and hedges. The percentages of usage is provided to clarify the differences between how often women use said features compared to the total instances of the presence of said features. This category called "*Usage by all characters*" includes other female characters as well as male, meaning it reflects the whole instead of comparing men to women.

5 Discussion

This thesis has attempted to explore how conversational practices or linguistic forms reflect societal attitudes in the portrayal of female characters within the horror genre. The notion some forms that convey tentativeness and uncertainty are associated with women due to their innate insecurity, as according to Lakoff (1975), has been challenged. This is both by other researchers, like Coates (2004), and the data material presented here, as it is unlikely that women use these forms because they are women. However, in this data material, women usually have a higher frequency of these conversational practices and forms, as Lakoff (1975) claimed. The difference lies in the function of these practices and forms, as they often do not convey uncertainty. Since these features have different functions, they can reveal perspectives or personal relationships. Some of the dialogue reproduces current discourses, while others create new patterns. As mentioned in chapter 2 and 4, the functions of these features have changed or been researched further, like by Coates (2004). In other words, the claims made by Lakoff (1975) might have been an accurate representation at that point in time, whereas it is not as relevant for modern sociolinguistics. As presented in table 6, minimal responses are overall the most popular practice, followed by taboo language, hedges, intensifiers, politeness, empty adjectives, and tag questions. This does not mean there is an absence of these features in male speech, as the results presented in table 6 show that e.g. tag questions were more popular among men than women. Yet, there is a difference in usage among the nine women especially analysed. For instance, Kirby swears six times throughout the entire film, whereas Ginger swears 64 times. Amelia exhibits politeness 15 times, but Gale on the other hand, only does it three times. Since these characters are all women, it is unlikely that social gender is the only factor impacting speech. It seems to be in the combination with other factors that gender becomes significant, such as class, upbringing, etc. (Levon, 2015). The following sections will address contextual and sociocultural and identity related factors, considering the analysis provided in chapter 4. It is important to note that the dialogue in these movies is often dominated by women, as the bigger roles are usually played by women.

5.1 Contextual factors: Genre and topic

People tend to change their conversational practices depending on the context. It is possible that both the media and the genre impacts the data, especially when considering its intention. Film might elevate and educate or destroy and corrupt (Elsaesser & Hagener, 2015, p. 1), and horror is a genre that has traditionally been accused being an expression of the patriarchal society (Schubart, 2018). Therefore, it might be sensible to assume that horror might do the latter, namely corrupt. However, as the dialogue presented in these movies is sometimes representative of a modern woman that is not defined in relation to the male character, as they traditionally were (Kaplan, 2003; Chaudhuri, 2006). It is important to note that this is not a general tendency, as the sexualised victim, 'the slut', is still treated like a sex object, in line with Chaudhuri's (2006) claims. The genre often intends to challenge the viewer (Schubart, 2018), as it does not stray away from any taboos (Creed,

1993). A consequence of this is the inclusion of taboo language. Since the genre intends to push or cross the border (Chaudhuri, 2006) of comfortability, the language will reflect this. However, it appears more acceptable for certain characters to use taboo language.

The data material shows a high frequency of taboo language, as illustrated in table 6. This challenges traditional research on taboo language, but is in line with modern research, i.e. Coates (2004) or Stapleton (2020), who reiterate that swearing is common among men and women. When the characters swear, it is likely not surprising in itself. Rather, it is the context that is surprising, like in example 7 when Amelia calls Samuel "a little shit" (Kent, 2014). Due to the relation between the two, this utterance is surprising. Additionally, the fact that Amelia only swears after being possessed, reflects attitudes towards mothers, who are not known to swear. Most of the adolescents in the four movies swear, as is common for this age group (Stapleton, 2020). In this case, it is more surprising that Needy avoids swearing and uses substitutions (example 22) and words not associated with teens (example 23). Jennifer also reacts to this, meaning taboo language might be considered a part of adolescent speech in today's society, as Coates (2004) mentions. This can also reflect that it is more surprising when protagonists, i.e. Needy, transgress, than when antagonists do it, i.e. Jennifer. Antagonists have an 'excuse' to transgress (Creed, 1993), i.e. possession/transformation, meaning their transgressions are somewhat accepted still. An example of an antagonist violating taboos, similar to Regan from *The Exorcist* as mentioned by Creed (1993), Ginger intends to violate the taboo of incest (example 28). From the context, meaning prior talk about masturbation and Ginger crawling on top of Brigitte, the viewer is able to deduce Ginger is talking about engaging in sexual acts with her sister. This type of sexual language is not uncommon for adolescents (Coates, 2004), but the incestuous subtext is a clear transgression.

Coates (2004) stated that people will curse more in the company of the same gender, but the data material can neither confirm nor deny this. Seemingly, it is somewhat equal, but this again might be due to other factors, like topic. A personal or sensitive topic might verdict a softer language approach (Coates, 2004). In example 12, Sidney avoids swearing because she is talking about something sensitive with Jill. Her tone and facial expressions are also gentle. Coates (2004) stated that women do not stray from emotional and personal conversations, which neither did in example 12. This can be interpreted as women being more comfortable with emotional subjects. Similarly, adapting speech to suit the addressee is common for women (Coates, 2004), for instance by using hedges or tag questions. In example 3, Amelia uses a tag question as an attempt to soothe Samuel. Whereas men tend to use modal tags, women use affective tags to facilitate for the addressee (Coates, 2004). This means that Amelia is a facilitator and likely means she feels a responsibility to ensure that the conversation proceeds smoothly, without upsetting the listener. As Samuel is already upset about the Babadook (Kent, 2014, 00:21:07-00:21:19), Amelia is trying to understand her son and soften her utterance. This can reflect how mothers are assumed to be gentle and accommodating. One interpretation of this is that rather than women using tags because they are uncertain, tags are popular among facilitators (Coates, 2004, p. 92). These facilitators often happen to be women. A similar instance can be found in example 20, where Jennifer is attempting to facilitate for Needy, as she still cares for Needy. It is worth noting that their relationship is more than a close friendship, as Jennifer initiates sexual contact, which is reciprocated by Needy (Kusama, 2009, 00:59:00-01:01:10). Jennifer is

typically not the gentlest person, but she changes with Needy. The tag softens the utterance, showing Needy she disagrees but still shows understanding. Although Jennifer is the antagonist, she is also Needy's friend, and this dialogue might indicate that antagonists are not inherently evil.

5.2 Sociocultural and identity factors: Gender roles and stereotypes

Gender is determined by social context, meaning culture, society, immediate situation, etc. (Denmark et al., 2016). This means that the characteristics assigned to women and men can evolve over time, as well as depend on which culture one is part of. Previously, women were portrayed as meek and submissive, which language also would reflect (Lakoff, 1975). The character among these nine women who aligns herself with the traditional idea of woman, is Amelia. She is seemingly soft-spoken and sensitive, although she becomes aggressive after her possession. Still, she will often express empathy and try to foster a better connection with her son, as seen by her use of hedges and tag questions (example 3). As the nine women analysed here are all white and seemingly all working-class, race and class will be excluded here, as the data material is not broad enough to discuss these factors. Following a cultural approach, the different aspects relating to culture can impact stereotypes and gender roles (Denmark et al., 2016). As movies are a part of culture, they have the possibility to reinforce and influence norms, depending on which roles and norms they choose to present and whether it is in a positive or negative light.

Other identity factors, such as age, personality and sexuality, can also impact language use (Pan, 2011; Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002). The data material reflects that age is a significant factors, as adolescents generally use hedges and taboo language more frequently than adults. This can also be due to their differing personalities (Dewaele & Pavlenko, 2002), as there are some exceptions as well i.e. how Amelia is a frequent user of hedges. Another example is the contrast between Gale and Jill. Gale is an outgoing and confident adult, and her speech rarely conveys uncertainty. Jill on the other hand, portrays a more insecure and shy teen by using hedges that frequently convey uncertainty, prior to the reveal. Dewaele and Pavlenko (2002) stated that extraversion and introversion can impact language as well, especially in relation to emotional subjects. The introverts, based on analysis of contextual clues, are Amelia, Sidney, Needy and Brigitte. These introverts happen to be the protagonists of the movies, which could mean there is a preference for the quieter type as protagonists. In other words, the conversational practices the characters use, shape the stereotype or archetype they fit into.

5.2.1 Conversational practices among the protagonists

As briefly mentioned, there are similarities in speech patterns among the protagonists, as well as differences based on the differing tropes they belong to. Shapiro (2017) and Laing and Willson (2020) assert how female protagonists must adhere to the male gaze, to be considered desirable. This might be applicable to language as well, meaning women have to talk in a way that is desirable for men, i.e. by being more soft-spoken or quiet. Perhaps this possible preference for introverts as protagonist reflects this. Gale stands out among the other protagonists because she differs more from traditional gender roles. As assertiveness and confidence are traits commonly associated with men (Lakoff, 1975), Gale's personality becomes more 'masculine' than the other characters. However, she is not considered 'masculine' likely because of her traditionally feminine appearance. One interpretation of

this, is that women are allowed to use language associated with men if they still adhere to the male gaze physically.

Among the protagonists, there are different tropes or stereotypes. The mother, Amelia, is supposed to be self-sacrificing and loving (Creed, 2022). However, Amelia is angry, and at times she hates her son. This is the opposite of how a mother is supposed to act, according to Creed (2022) and Schubart (2018). As horror intends to scare the viewer (Schubart, 2018), one can interpret the 'bad' mother as a representation of societal fear. It is worth nothing that Amelia is not entirely 'bad', seen by how gentle she attempts to be with Samuel (example 3). She is also seen using tag questions as an attempt to facilitate for Samuel (example 3). In example 4, she is trying to manipulate Samuel into opening the door by utilizing his love for their dog to trick him to open the door for her. It is especially shocking when she attempts to kill her son, because of this maternal bond they are supposed to have. The way Amelia uses these six linguistic forms is in line with how society expects her to act pre-possession, and the opposite post-possession. 'The final girls', Sidney and Gale, are both adults with gender-neutral names, as is common for this archetype (Holland, 2019). Otherwise, they are different in personality and appearance. But their conversational practices are similar. They both use minimal responses and taboo language, although Sidney exhibits more politeness than Gale, as seen in table 3. This is likely due to their differing personalities. The teens, Needy and Brigitte, are somewhat different from the other teens. Needy is concerned with politeness, in line with Lakoff's (1975) ideas, and is a frequent user of hedges. In example 15, her hedges can be tied to uncertainty, because she is confused. Although Lakoff (1975) claimed that women used hedges because being assertive is unladylike (Coates, 2004), it is unlikely that Needy used hedges for that effect. Rather, she is uncertain about what she saw and confused. Both Needy and Brigitte use the hedge 'I mean' often, which the other teens in *Scream 4* do as well. This can indicate that this is a popular hedge among adolescents, although the data here is not extensive enough to generalize. In short, differing personalities and ages can impact conversational practices, consequently impacting the attitudes associated with them.

5.2.2 Conversational practices among the victims

Most characters in horror movies can be considered a victim. This section will mainly discuss Kirby and the girls killed in the opening sequence of *Scream 4*. Lakoff (1975) statements regarding women using certain forms to convey weakness and uncertainty might be more in line with the victim category, as they are usually portrayed as weak and desperate. They will often beg for their lives and are considered the entertainment factor (McGillivray, 2019). As these victims are often considered sexual transgressors, or 'the slut', these victims are usually killed due to the patriarchal values in society that state women should not engage with other sexually (McGillivray, 2019). Although views of sexually active women have changed somewhat, they are still being punished for this in modern horror (Creed, 2022). While the women in the opening sequence of *Scream 4* do not engage in sexual acts on screen, they are still treated like objects for entertainment. This is observed in example 8, where Ghostface keeps the victim alive longer because of her appearance and killing someone attractive is more entertaining (Clover, 1987). Willaims (1991) state that women who are attempting to meet their boyfriends are usually killed, which happens to Kirby as well. Though it is not her boyfriend, the guy she is interested in kills her due to her being a

tease. The victims in horror are usually allowed to break conversational rules and use taboo language, which women supposedly rarely do (Lakoff, 1975), likely due to them being 'sluts'.

Although Kirby is not the character sexualised the most, she is treated somewhat like a sexual transgressor, likely due to her appearance and her personality. She flirtatiously teases Charlie throughout the movie and appears to enjoy it, which causes Charlie to call her a tease. The feature used the most by Kirby is minimal responses, followed by politeness and hedges. This indicates that it is important for Kirby to show the speaker that she is listening and often agreeing with what is being said, as is the purpose of hedges (Coates, 2004). An instance where Kirby exhibits politeness is in example 11, where she uses a polite form, but her tone and body language indicate that her intentions are the opposite. She is expressing that the addressee should not be there by reverting the polite form. In example 10, she rapidly uses two hedges in the same sentence, because she is nervous around Sidney and wants to respect her. This can be tied to the notion of respecting face, which is respecting the listener's feelings while speaking (Coates, 2004). As they are talking about Sidney's traumatic experiences, Kirby attempts to avoid being too assertive by using hedges. These aspects presented above reflect how the victims and sexual transgressors are linguistically represented in this data material. They are not expected to act as 'ladylike' as the protagonist, as they are sexual transgressors (Clover, 1992). Kirby's use of hedges that convey uncertainty are not related to her personal identity, but rather the context. In other words, the sexual transgressors are perceived as confident and assertive, somewhat similarly to the antagonists.

5.2.3 Conversational practices among the antagonists

The four antagonists found in the four movies are different from each other. Amelia and Jennifer are both possessed, but by different entities with different goals. Jill kills because of her anger and jealousy tied to living in Sidney's shadow. Ginger is bitten by a werewolf and gradually transforms into one herself. Out of the antagonists, Amelia is the only survivor. Her time under influence is brief and she is able to best it alongside her son, likely because she is the protagonist of the movie. Since Amelia has already been discussed, this section will discuss Jill, Jennifer and Ginger. Clover (1992) stated that women are likely to kill due to an event in their adult life, which is somewhat true for these antagonists. Jill appears to feel like she has been wronged in her life, because her boyfriend cheated on her and of the attention Sidney continuously got (Craven, 2011, 01:29:05-01:29:25). As mentioned in chapter 4, Jill changes her personality significantly after the reveal. Her language changes too, as it now includes taboo language, threats and assertive hedges and tags. This furthers the hypothesis that characters who transgress, sexually or otherwise, are allowed more linguistic freedom. Jill and Amelia's conversational practices changes after their reveal and possession, whereas Jennifer's language is seemingly the same. Creed (1993, p. 31) states that the possession or transformation is an 'excuse' for the woman to behave differently than the norm, such as these antagonists do. This means they cross the 'border' between normal and abnormal gender behaviour (Chaudhuri, 2006), likely due to them being less like women. Ginger's personality changes due to her transformation, but her language remains similar. As Ginger always felt like an outcast, it is possible her conversational practices were a consequence of wanting to establish her identity as different (Stapleton, 2020). In other words, her constant inclusion of taboo language is a way for to disrupt stereotypes (Coates, 2004). As a general tendency among these three, their language is often direct and commanding. The

antagonists are more likely to use conversational practices associated with assertiveness and confidence, similar to the traditional ideas of men. Societal attitudes regarding these antagonists can be that their language represents a more masculine being, or as Creed (1993) would say, monstrous.

6 Conclusion

The goal of this thesis has been to explore how conversational practices or linguistic forms reflect societal attitudes in the portrayal of female characters within the horror genre. *The Babadook*, *Scream 4*, *Jennifer's Body* and *Ginger Snaps* were the movies subject for the analysis. Critical Discourse Analysis was the preferred method for analysis, which in this case consisted of watching the movies, taking notes of contexts and counting the instances of the six linguistic forms chosen. These were hedges, tag questions, intensifiers, taboo language, politeness and minimal responses. The collected data material showed the frequency of these practices and forms, as well as how they were used by the different characters in different contexts. The way the characters use language depends on more factors than their social gender, such as age, personality and the topic of conversation. Usage of these practices indicate some prevailing traditional stereotypes, such as pertaining to the victims, and some contemporary changes in gender roles and cultural expectations. Modern horror attempts to portray protagonists and antagonists as complex characters, whereas the victims often fall into the traditional stereotypes.

As CDA is a method that relies on the researcher's analysis, claiming another researcher would get the same results is hard. However, another researcher would be able to adhere to the same method and the same criteria. The conclusion will depend on the researcher's understanding of the data material and their underlying bias. To generalize further, a larger scale of data material might be useful and needed. This thesis is only able to discuss the data material presented here, as it is limited. Additionally, the movies chosen are from different subgenres of horror. To explore this topic further, one could choose different subgenres and compare these. Comparing how women use one linguistic form to how men use the same one, might provide more insight into how the function of these forms differ. Further research could also compare other genres of movies, or even more contemporary ones. This could help shine light on current attitudes and how they reflect social expectations in a contemporary world.

7 References

- Androutsopoulos, J. (2012). Introduction: Language and Society in Cinematic Discourse. *Multilingua*, 31, 139-154. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1515/mult-2012-0007>
- Nemati, A., & Nemati & Bayer, J. M. (2007). Gender Differences in the Use of Linguistic Forms in the Speech of Men and Women: A Comparative Study of Persian and English. *Language in India*, 7(9).
- Chaudhuri, S. (2006). *Feminist Film Theorists: Laura Mulvey, Kaja Silverman, Teresa de Lauretis, Barbara Creed*. Routledge Critical Thinkers.
- Clover, C. J. (1992). *MEN – WOMEN – AND CHAINSAWS: GENDER IN THE MODERN HORROR FILM*. British Film Institute.
- Clover, C. J. (1987). Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film. *Representations*, 20, 187–228. <https://doi.org/10.2307/2928507>
- Coates, J. (2004). *Women, Men and Language: A Sociolinguistic Account of Gender Differences in Language* (3rd ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Craven, W. (Director). (2011). *Scream 4* [Film]. Corvus Corax Productions.
- Craven, W. (Director). (1996). *Scream* [Film]. Woods Entertainment.
- Creed, B. (2022). *Return of the Monstrous-Feminine: Feminist New Wave Cinema* (1st ed.). Routledge. <https://doi.org/10.4324/9781003036654>
- Creed, B. (1993). *THE MONSTROUS-FEMININE: Film, feminism, psychoanalysis*. Routledge
- Denmark, F., Rabinowitz, V. C., & Sechzer, J. A. (2016). *Engendering psychology: women and gender revisited* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Dewaele, J. M. & Pavlenko, A. (2002). Emotion Vocabulary in Interlanguage. *Language Learning* 52(2), 263-322. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1111/0023-8333.00185>
- Elsaesser, T., & Hagener, M. (2015). *Film theory: an introduction through the senses* (2nd ed.). Routledge.
- Fairclough, N. (2012). Critical Discourse Analysis. In J. P. Gee & M. Handford (Ed.), *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis* (1st ed., pp. 9-21). Routledge.
- Fawcett, J. (Director). (2000). *Ginger Snaps* [Film]. Oddbod Productions.
- Fuchs, R. (2017). Do women (still) use More intensifiers than men? Recent change in the sociolinguistics of intensifiers in British English. *International Journal of Corpus Linguistics*, 22(3), 345–374. <https://doi.org/10.1075/ijcl.22.3.03fuc>
- Hitchcock, A. (Director). (1960). *Psycho* [Film]. Shamley Productions.
- Holland, S. (2019). Introduction. In S. Holland, R. Shail & S. Gerrard (Ed.), *Gender and contemporary horror in film* (1st ed., pp. 1-7). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Johnstone, B. (2018). *Discourse analysis* (Third edition.). Wiley Blackwell.
- Kaplan, E. A. (2003). Women, Film, Resistance: Changing Paradigms. In J. Levitin, J. Plessis & V. Raoul (Eds.), *Women Filmmakers: Refocusing* (pp. 15-28). Routledge.
- Kent, J. (Director). (2014). *The Babadook* [Film]. Screen Australia.
- Kusama, K. (Director). (2009). *Jennifer's Body* [Film]. Fox Atomic & Dune Entertainment.
- Lakoff, R. T. (1975). *Language and woman's place*. Harper & Row.
- Lakoff, R. T., & Bucholtz, M. (2023). *Language and woman's place: text and commentaries* (Rev. and expanded ed.). Oxford University Press.
- Levon, E. (2015). Integrating Intersectionality in Language, Gender, and Sexuality Research. *Language and Linguistics Compass* 9(7), 295-308. <https://doi.org/10.1111/lnc3.12147>

- Metzger, M. & Bahan, B. (2001). Discourse Analysis. In C. Lucas (ed.). *The Sociolinguistics of Sign Languages*, pp. 112-145. Cambridge University Press.
- Miskovic-Lukovic, M. (2009). Is there a chance that I might kinda sort of take you out to dinner?: The role of the pragmatic particles kind of and sort of in utterance interpretation. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 41(3), 602–625.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2008.06.014>
- McGillvray, M. (2019). 'It's so easy to create a victim': Subverting Gender Stereotypes in the New French Extremity. In S. Holland, R. Shail & S. Gerrard (Ed.), *Gender and contemporary horror in film* (1st ed., pp. 1-7). Emerald Publishing Limited.
- Laing, M. & Willson, J. (2020). *Revisiting the Gaze: The Fashioned Body and the Politics of Looking*. Bloomsbury Visual Arts.
- Pan, Q. (2011). On the Features of Female Language in English. *Theory and Practice in Language Studies*, 1(8), 1015-1018. <http://dx.doi.org/10.4304/tpls.1.8.1015-1018>
- Reid, J. (1995). A study of gender differences in minimal responses. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 24(5), 489–512. [https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166\(94\)00066-N](https://doi.org/10.1016/0378-2166(94)00066-N)
- Schubart, R. (2019). *Mastering fear: women, emotions, and contemporary horror*. Bloomsbury Publishing.
- Shapiro, B. (2017). Examining portrayals of female protagonists by female screenwriters using feminist critical discourse analysis. *Te Young Researcher*, 1(1), 37-47. Retrieved from <http://www.theyoungresearcher.com/papers/shapiro.pdf>
- Stapleton, K. (2020). Swearing and perceptions of the speaker: A discursive approach. *Journal of Pragmatics*, 170, 381–395. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.pragma.2020.09.001>
- Stapleton, K. (2010). 12. Swearing. In M. Locher & S. Graham (Ed.), *Interpersonal Pragmatics* (pp. 289-306). Berlin, New York: De Gruyter Mouton.
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214338.2.289>
- Williams, L. (1991). Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess. *Film Quarterly*, 44(4), 2–13.
<https://doi.org/10.2307/1212758>
- Wodak, R. (2012). 21. Critical Discourse Analysis: Overview, challenges, and perspectives. In G. Andersen & K. Aijmer (Ed.), *Pragmatics of Society* (pp. 627-650).
<https://doi.org/10.1515/9783110214420.627>
- Wood, L. A., & Kroger, R. O. (2000). *Doing Discourse Analysis: Methods for Studying Action in Talk and Text* (1st ed.). SAGE Publications, Incorporated.
<https://doi.org/10.4135/9781452233291>

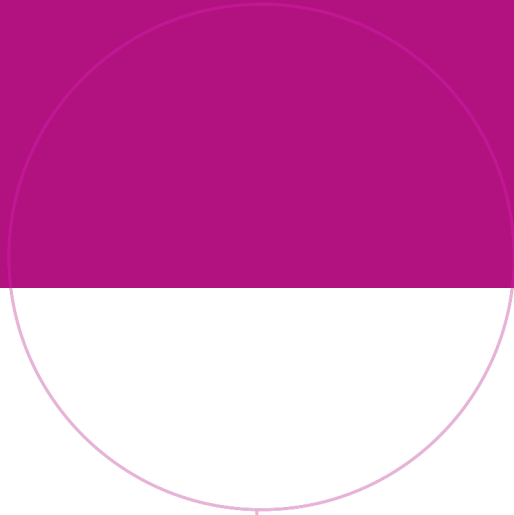
Appendix 1

Relevancy for the teaching profession

This thesis is not very didactical in nature, but it can still be useful within my future profession as a teacher. The topic I have chosen has provided me with more insight into sociolinguistics, which again has caused a greater understanding of awareness of how people talk. Additionally, I have gained an awareness of how the way people talk can evolve and change over time, alongside society and culture. It is also possible that a specialised understanding of a genre within film can aid in establishing connections with some students too, as well as provide insight into how adolescents talk.

As a teacher, I will be engaged in conversations with adolescents in the classroom. These conversations can be subject-related or more informal. While writing this thesis, I have read articles and books regarding both language and gender. The articles relating to linguistics have deepened my understanding of language and language use, as well as made me more aware of aspects of language that makes conversations flow. For instance, being more aware of turn-taking and how well people use minimal responses. These are aspects I might be able to notice more when the students are assessed orally, like in for instance discussions or debates. Conversational competence is important when developing oral skills, which is something students are supposed to do in the English subject. The articles regarding gender has helped me gain a broader understanding of the term, which is useful. It is highly likely that I will be in contact with students of different gender identities, and having a basic understanding of this is good. This can lead to showing more sympathy and empathy for their situation, which is something I would like to do, as I think being able to express oneself freely is crucial. I think the classroom is a suited place for finding yourself and letting yourself evolve in the company of your peers. This can for instance be in the form of exploring your gender identity.

Otherwise, working with this thesis has prepared me for committing to one project for a longer period of time and helped me see the value of doing so. Additionally, I think it has helped me become more structured and realizing how I should manage my time. Hopefully I will be able to transfer some of the content presented in this thesis into the classroom as well. For instance, by combining multimedia with texts and working with these, as 'texts' are more than just written words. I also think writing such a long and challenging thesis is good experience, and I have learned new things about myself.



Norwegian University of
Science and Technology