

Effects of Morbid Curiosity On Perception, Attention, and Reaction to Bad News

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Past media effects research suggests a relationship between morbid curiosity and processing of television news; however, the cognitive and emotional processes involved are little understood. This study compared physiological effects with self-reported reactions of viewers exposed to negative news stories. Fifty adults were shown eight news stories ranging from morbidly negative to positive topics. Participants' responses to morbid curiosity and sensation-seeking scales along with physiology data were recorded. Participants' degree of morbid curiosity significantly predicted physiological arousal to negative stories. It did not predict attention or perceptual measures. Instead, negativity of the stories consistently drove perceptual and arousal measures.

Introduction

Over the last four decades, negativity has become the prevalent tone of television news stories. Previous media effects research has indicated that morbid curiosity plays a role in selection and processing of negative television news stories. A *morbid curiosity* is recognized in conventional society as a mixture of compulsion, excitement, and fear, indicated by a longing to know about macabre subjects such as death and terror (Zuckerman, 1984). In its milder form, however, this can be understood as an instinctive, cathartic form of behavior, utilized by all types of personalities. According to Aristotle, humans “enjoy contemplating the most precise images of things whose sight is painful to us” (Zuckerman & Litle, 1985, p. 49). A degree of curiosity about morbid events may be found across a wide spectrum of society, but more so within sensation-seeking individuals (Zuckerman & Litle, 1985).

This study was designed to test the physiological effects of exposure to negative news stories on viewers, and their perception of these stories. Participants were tested for prior behavioral inclination to negative media, to determine varying degrees of sensation-seeking and morbid curiosity in the test population. In particular, we sought the correlation, if any, between the morbidly curious viewer's self-reported assessment of negative television news, and physiological measures of the effects of such exposure to negative news content.

Overview

The concept, espoused by journalists and media critics alike, that bad news makes for good news is one that has long been analyzed by media researchers, and there is evidence this trend towards negativity in the news has increased in recent decades. Content analysis has shown that negativity in the media increased sharply during the 1970s, jumped again during the 1980s, and continues to rise (Patterson, 1996). This has occurred across the spectrum of news media, including print and radio, but the most dramatic example may be found in broadcast television news. Perhaps a new low for negative news was reached when Pennsylvania State Treasurer Budd Dwyer, on the eve of his conviction for embezzlement, chose to commit suicide during a televised news conference in 1987 -- and the graphic footage was broadcast in several markets.

Even a casual consumer of TV news from the past decade can quickly recall images such as the collapse of the World Trade Center, night vision missile strikes over Baghdad, or corpses floating in the wake of Hurricane Katrina. Since the 1960s, bad news, characterized as violent, tragic or morbid in tone, has increased by a factor of three and is now the most prevalent tone of TV news coverage (Patterson, 1996).

What are some possible explanations for this trend? Statistically speaking, negative events worldwide have not increased to fill a news void. One simple theory could be that since sensationalized TV news garners ratings (Zurawik & Stoehr, 1994), negative stories must have some base, broad appeal. This assumes that consumption of TV news may be viewed as affecting all viewers in the same way, however, and such a *transmission belt* (Severin & Tankard, 2001) model of mass media effects ignores the vastly different personalities that process the same information.

The reality is that economics necessitate that television programmers must be cognizant of viewer diversity. In fact, studies have shown that content priorities in local TV news can be traced to the first use of targeted audience research by news consultants. So-called *downmarket standards* (the aforementioned base appeals) were not a function of broadcasters'

ratings demands but reflected characteristics of TV's majority viewers (Allen, 2005).

Through audience research, certain consumers became an active part of the news process, by choosing which programs appealed to them most. Research is used by networks and affiliate stations to predict television ratings, which in turn influence programming. Given a choice, the majority of viewers chose in favor of negative programming (Allen, 2005). Who are these consumers, and why are they so curious about morbid stories?

Research into Morbid Curiosity and the Media

Zuckerman and Litle (1985) conducted the first landmark study of morbid curiosity and media at the University of Delaware. They chose the term *curiosity about morbid events* (CAME) rather than morbid curiosity because they saw the latter term as strongly value-laden; they felt the term carried an implicit hypothesis about the personalities of consumers, in effect, that to exhibit this behavior must be "sick or perverted" (Zuckerman & Litle, 1985, p.50). Zuckerman and Litle argued that the sheer mass consumption of negative media should refute the notion that such media appealed to only a limited, sick segment of the population. Rather, the researchers' assumption was that this type of curiosity is related to normal dimensions of personality such as extraversion and sensation-seeking (SS) (and in the excess, to pathological conditions of neuroticism and psychoticism).

Findings seemed to support expectations that extroverted, high sensation-seeking individuals scored higher for morbid curiosity; high scores for psychoticism were an indicator for CAME as well, while neuroticism showed the inverse. Scores for males were higher than females for CAME across all ages (Zuckerman & Litle, 1985).

A biological model for SS (Zuckerman, 1984) suggests that arousal experience is sought by high sensation seekers to activate catecholamine in the brain, from initially low levels found in unstimulating conditions. If Zuckerman's theorized correlation between SS and CAME exists, then a similar arousal experience may be evident in the morbidly curious as well.

Aluja-Fabregat (2000) replicated the Zuckerman-Litle CAME study but modified the tests to observe morbid curiosity and sensation-seeking in Catalan teens. (Zuckerman's subjects were all adults.) The tests were translated with only slight modification, in particular the questions regarding bullfighting gore, as this would not carry the same morbid connotation in Spain. The protocol was designed to test perception of violent television and film viewing by adolescents. The study determined

that the sensation-seeking scale was the personality variable most closely related to the CAME scale in both genders, although boys as a whole again scored higher on both. The study seemed to lend credence to Zuckerman's theory that violent media provoke interest and arousal, perhaps providing an "intrinsic reward in the form of releasing catecholamines in the brain" (Aluja-Fabregat, 2000).

Bennett, Swensen, and Wilkinson's (1992) study of curiosity about morbid events focused on the medium as a variable, in particular viewer exposure to this type of content on television. Might the media, as Marshall McLuhan suggested, *be* the message (McLuhan, 1964)? In other words, is the effect of morbid curiosity more pronounced when negative news stories are presented on television, as opposed to print or still photo accounts of the same story (Bennett, Swensen, & Wilkinson, 1992)?

This University of Georgia study concluded that subjects exposed to various negative media showed no significant difference in curiosity towards morbid news, with one notable exception: TV footage of the Challenger shuttle disaster elicited more morbid curiosity than other medium presentations of the story. Subjects indicated interest in repeated viewings of the Challenger TV footage (above the average self-reported interest for other stories), while showing little or no interest in rereading a print synopsis or reexamining still photos of the same incident (Bennett et al., 1992).

A more recent study (Hoffner, Fujioka, Ye, & Ibrahim, 2003) examined determinants of how people selected and responded to news coverage of the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Morbid curiosity in this case was defined as "curiosity about or the desire to vicariously experience tragic events" (Hoffner et al., 2003, p. 5). Subjects divided responses among casualty (negative) news, positive news, or emotion-neutral news reports. This study was limited to participants' reactions to multiple accounts of one specific news story, however, so it may not be as easily generalized to a wider spectrum of negative news.

As the story centered on a terrorist attack, however, and was thus (by design of the perpetrators of the 9/11 strikes) intended to invoke intense fear, one result of this research stands out as perhaps somewhat counterintuitive. Subjects who indicated more interest in negative news also self-reported more personal distress and marginally more fear of the events themselves. Instead of being repulsed and turning away from this type of content, these subjects seem to have been drawn to the more morbid news.

Hoffner et al.'s study offers some theories of negative news selection, such as *surveillance*, or an evolved biological response to perceived threats in the environment. Early humans' attention to violent events

outside the protection of their shelter might have decided their chances of survival from attack or natural disaster. Yet another theory is described as *misery loves company*, such as when a romantically rejected teen seeks out popular music about loss and rejection.

The latter theory reflects the disparity between media choices that correspond to conventional mood management and those choices indicating an apparent appeal to morbid curiosity, and the Hoffner et al. (2003) study hypothesized that emotions may be experienced both directly and reflexively, inducing anxiety and empathetic pleasure simultaneously. Subjects in fearful or sad moods typically avoid bad news (Zillman, 1998), yet the authors presented evidence that indicates viewers often seek news that actually *induces* a negative affect. This appears to contradict the premise of mood-management theory.

Finally, another covariant to be considered in assessing a subject's emotional response to morbid media is that of *empathy*, defined as the multidimensional construct by which an individual reacts emotionally to the observed experiences of another (Tamborini, Stiff, & Heidel, 1990). A 1990 study utilized Zillman's three-dimensional theory of empathy in response to horrific images, which asserts that emotional behavior is the result of the interaction of three behavior-controlling forces: *dispositional*, *excitatory*, and *experiential* (Zillman, 1990).

The dispositional response to morbid media may be reflexive or learned; some individuals, for example, turn away from negative images, which is a learned coping response. Conditioned and unconditioned response to the media should provide an excitatory or arousal response, which is viewed as a necessary component of empathy. Individual degrees of relation to events onscreen lead to differing experiences, according to whether or not viewers identify with the plight of the people in the negative news media. Morbid curiosity seems to provide a kind of override of the empathy response, a correction or redirection of affect that inhibits concordant reaction. Typical empathy response seems to prohibit enjoyment of any type of such media (Tamborini et al., 1990).

Another promising avenue for media effects research is physiological measurement of subjects actively processing media, in combination with paper and pencil methodology. In his research synthesis essay, Niklas Ravaja (2004) observes that a "paucity of studies on communication, media, and media interfaces ... have taken advantage of this approach" and calls for such a gap to be filled (p. 293). While there are notable exceptions (e.g., Lang, Zhou, Schwartz, Bolls, & Potter, 2000), in which skin conductance and heart rate sensors measured theoretical constructs such as attention, arousal, and cognition, more psychophysiological testing is needed to cut across aspects of the biological, behavioral, and social sciences.

Current Study on Morbid Curiosity and the Media

The present study accepted Zuckerman and Litle's (1985) CAME as its model for the psychological/emotional construct known as morbid curiosity, in conjunction with the assertion that negative television news appeals not only to the prurient or gruesome interests of those with this inclination. In effect, this study was concerned with learning more precisely how *all* individuals attend to negative news, with the hypothesis that there would be a measurable difference in attention and arousal between the morbidly curious and the typical viewer. Also, would the self-reported data correspond to the electronic data generated from the subjects' unconscious responses?

It was our assumption that the combination of real-time physiological response data and self-reported behavioral and attention levels could illuminate those factors which differentiate between the morbidly, and the merely, curious. Specifically, it was anticipated that a sub-group of participants would emerge who scored positive on the CAME scale, and that a corresponding physiological response model might indicate elevated levels of attention and arousal in this sub-group when exposed to negative news. Accordingly, we proposed the following specific hypotheses:

- H1: Viewers high in CAME will exhibit higher attention to negative stories than those low in CAME.
- H2: Viewers high in CAME will find negative stories more arousing than those low in CAME.
- H3: Viewers high in CAME will find negative stories more appealing than those low in CAME.

Methodology

Design

This study took the form of a repeated measure 2 x 2 x 8 fractionally factorial experiment. The three factors of this experiment were valence (negative, positive stories), CAME (high, low), and eight news stories, held as a repeated measure.

Participants were measured for tendency toward sensation-seeking and curiosity about morbid events using the SS and CAME scales (Zuckerman & Litle, 1985), respectively. (A third subset of questions, designed to test curiosity about sexual events, or CASE, was left in with the CAME scale in Zuckerman and Litle's original order for continuity.) The Zuckerman and Litle scale was modified from true-false response to a Likert scale,

because it was decided the Likert scale could provide more variance in responses. Likewise, the median was chosen to divide participants into groups high and low in morbid curiosity, due to indications from initial analysis that few participants scored at the low end of the scale.

Following are some examples of questions from the sensation-seeking scale:

1. I enjoy attending “wild” uninhibited parties.
2. A sensible person avoids activities that are dangerous.
3. I like to try new foods I have never tasted before.
4. I would not like to try any drug that might produce strange and dangerous effects on me.
5. When I go on a trip I like to plan my route and timetable carefully.

Following are some examples of questions from the curiosity about morbid events scale:

1. I like to watch sports like boxing or ice hockey that sometimes get a bit violent.
2. Most horror movies are fairly amusing.
3. I would like to see an autopsy performed.
4. I enjoy being mildly frightened by horror movies.
5. If I could travel back in time to ancient Rome, I would be curious enough to visit the coliseums to watch gladiators fight each other and wild animals to the death.

Information regarding participants’ age, gender, education level, and news media habits was also gathered. A stimulus DVD was created, and shown to participants while they were monitored for physiological response. A pretest of the stimulus DVD was conducted using the same stories from the full experiment but only the emotional/attitudinal measurement scales, no CAME or physiological data. Responses to the stories were entered into SPSS to determine if the stories had been correctly categorized as negative or positive. Evaluation of standard deviations indicated a uniform response to the stimuli consistent with their classification, so research proceeded to the next stage.

Attention was measured by heart-rate monitoring of cardiac deceleration, as demonstrated in previous studies (Lang, Newhagen & Reeves, 1996). Arousal was measured using self-reported data using

the pictorial SAM (self-assessment mannequin) scale (Lang, Dhillon, & Dhong, 1995) as well as with skin conductance data (Hopkins & Fletcher, 1994).

Procedures and Materials

Ninety participants (40 pre-test, 50 full test) were recruited from the University of Alabama College of Communication & Information Sciences research participant pools. This was done by the Principal Investigator using sign-up sheets passed around classes, as designated by the Committee for the Assignment of Research Participants (CARP) in the college. None of the students recruited were under 19 years of age, and the oldest was 40. All participants received credit toward a class requirement or extra credit. All participants were told that the study would take approximately 60 minutes.

Researchers solicited and received IRB approval for testing. Risks were minimal, but participants were informed that alternate testing methods were available in case of allergies or embarrassment regarding the procedure. Involvement was voluntary, and if the participants became uncomfortable or disturbed by the images on the stimulus DVD, they were free to withdraw from the study at any time and still receive credit for participation.

To ensure successful manipulation, these stories were pretested on valence, as well as a host of other possible confounds such as professionalism, arousal, informativeness, degree of difficulty, and appeal. A total of 40 undergraduates from the University of Alabama took part in the pretest. Participants were seated in a media classroom and shown the stimulus DVD, then asked to fill out the self-reported emotional assessment in between each news segment. These were the same emotional scales used during the full test, except that the CAME and SAM scales were not given. No physiological data were recorded during the pretest.

For the full test, participants entered the lab in The Institute for Communication and Information Research. Subjects were separated from researchers by a two-way mirror, to facilitate discreet observation of participants as well as monitoring of software and the stimulus DVD. Participants followed this general protocol:

Upon arrival, participants were greeted and taken into the testing room. Participants were told that they would be completing an experiment about how people process television news. The procedures for measuring heart rate and skin conductance were explained at this point. All participants were given informed consent statements to read and sign.

The participants completed the 40-item CAME (Curiosity About Morbid Events) scale designed to measure predisposition toward negative stimuli. They also completed a 30-item SS (Sensation-Seeking) scale, discussed previously, designed to measure individual orientation to seeking stimuli (Zuckerman, 1985).

The participants watched eight television news stories, ranging in duration from 47 to 93 seconds. Physiology data were collected while the participants watched. Following each news story, the stimulus and physiology data collection were stopped. This procedure was repeated for all eight stories. Participants filled out self-report measures of emotional response and attitudes. After participants completed the dependent measures, they were thanked, debriefed, and dismissed.

Stimulus Materials

All news stories were assembled from raw footage shot for local (WVUA, Tuscaloosa, Alabama) or national (CNN PathFire) television news, some edited with new voice-overs and storylines. A limited amount of deviation from the actual broadcast stories was necessary to reduce local participant knowledge or bias toward the stimuli. All stories had been previously broadcast as part of a news program. There were four negative-themed stories and four neutral-to-positive-themed stories.

Content of the stories included a fatal NASCAR helicopter crash, a house fire aftermath where two dead puppies are shown being buried, an accident scene where a young boy was crushed beneath a flipped SUV, and two pit bulls that mauled a young girl and her pet (all negative); a Krispy Kreme cheeseburger promotional stunt, a hot-air balloon race, children interviewed at a state fair, and elementary school regional cheerleading champions (all neutral or positive). Story order was varied, but always with alternating positive and negative content.

Data Collection

Physiological data were recorded with the BioPac MP150 modular data system. ECG (electrocardiogram) and skin conductance, or electrodermal activity (EDA), input was amplified by the MP150 and fed into a Dell Inspiron 1150 laptop computer. Heart rate was measured as milliseconds per beat and then transformed into average heart rate per second. Skin conductance was collected as an analog signal with a sample rate of 20 times per second. Participants form their own baseline.

Perceptual response to the stimulus was self-reported on appeal, enjoyment, entertainment value, and arousal. SAM pictorial scales were employed to gauge participants' self-assessment of sadness and arousal.

Attention was measured by heart-rate monitoring of cardiac deceleration, as demonstrated in previous studies (Lang, Newhagen & Reeves, 1997). Heart rate has been shown to reveal details about a subject's attention and cognitive states, as the heart is under the control of the autonomic nervous system. In particular, short-term changes in attention may be indicated by the so-called *orienting response* (Lang, 1994). When an individual orients attention in response to a sufficiently stimulating sensation, his or her heart slows down. In this study, cardiac deceleration was the basis for measuring short-term changes in attention to stimuli.

Arousal was measured using self-reported data using the pictorial SAM (self-assessment mannequin) scale (Lang, Dhillon, & Dhong, 1995) as well as with skin conductance data (Hopkins & Fletcher, 1994). Electrodermal activity (EDA) in test participants is used widely to measure arousal in response to a stimulus (Stern, Ray, & Quigley, 2001). Specifically, this is skin conductance affected by excretion of the eccrine sweat glands, concentrated in the palms of the hands or soles of the feet. Skin conductance has been recorded in thousands of psychophysiological studies (Stern et al., 2001), dating as far back as research conducted by Carl Jung in 1907. Jung's assistant summed up the validity of EDA when he observed of one study that skin conductance in response to the stimuli changed "to a degree of direct proportion to the liveliness and actuality of emotion aroused" (Stern et al., 2001).

Results and Discussion

Data Analysis

In the pretest, T-tests revealed that valence is significant, $t=17.25$, $p=.01$. Bad news stories were rated significantly more negatively ($M=5.44$, $SD=.99$) than positive stories ($M=2.25$, $SD=.91$). No other variables showed significance.

In the full test, hypothesis 1 predicted that participants who tested higher for morbid curiosity according to the CAME scale would exhibit higher levels of *attention* to negative stories than those who exhibited low CAME. Attention was inferred from physiological measurement of heart rate/cardiac deceleration. The main effect for attention was not significant, $F(1, 144) = 1.589$, $p = .214$, $\epsilon^2 = .032$. Those who tested higher for CAME recorded lower heart rate ($M = 67.93$, $SD = 2.5$), but not significantly lower than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 72.32$, $SD = 2.4$). In addition, analysis indicated no significant difference between participants' attention to negative stories ($M = 69.82$, $SD = 1.74$) versus positive stories ($M = 70.43$, $SD = 1.79$).

Hypothesis 2 predicted that those tested higher for morbid curiosity according to the CAME scale would exhibit higher levels of *arousal* regarding negative stories than those participants who exhibited low CAME. This was assessed by physiological measurement of skin conductance response and self-report. The main effect for physiological arousal was significant, $F(1, 141) = 13.58, p = .01, \epsilon^2 = .02$. Those who tested higher for CAME indicated more arousal from negative stories ($M = 6.19, SD = .71$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 5.17, SD = .67$). However, the main effect for the self-reported arousal was not significant, $F(1, 144) = 1.09, p = .30, \epsilon^2 = .02$. Those who tested higher for CAME did not report more arousal from negative stories ($M = 3.67, SD = 2.29$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 3.47, SD = 2.38$).

Analysis also indicated a significant difference, $F(1, 141) = 2.35, p = .02, \epsilon^2 = .07$, between participants' arousal for negative stories, ($M = 5.96, SD = .46$) than for positive stories ($M = 5.41, SD = .57$).

Hypothesis 3 predicted that those who tested higher for morbid curiosity according to the CAME scale would find negative stories more *appealing* than those participants who exhibited low CAME. A number of measures related to story appeal were tested, including ratings of how appealing, enjoyable, entertaining, and stimulating the stories were.

The main effect for *appeal* was not significant, $F(1, 144) = .78, p = .38, \epsilon^2 = .02$, although those who tested higher for CAME indicated more appeal from negative stories ($M = 4.52, SD = 1.59$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.78$).

The main effect for the variable *enjoyable* was also not significant, $F(1, 144) = 2.36, p = .13, \epsilon^2 = .05$. Those who tested higher for CAME did not indicate more enjoyment from negative stories ($M = 4.27, SD = 1.23$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 4.54, SD = 1.28$).

The main effect for the variable *entertaining* was also not significant, $F(1, 144) = 2.00, p = .16, \epsilon^2 = .04$. Those who tested higher for CAME did not indicate more entertainment from negative stories ($M = 4.35, SD = 1.42$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 4.63, SD = 1.48$).

Lastly, the main effect for the variable *stimulating* was also not significant, $F(1, 144) = .47, p = .50, \epsilon^2 = .01$. Those who tested higher for CAME did not indicate more stimulation from negative stories ($M = 4.50, SD = 1.90$) than those who scored lower for CAME ($M = 4.31, SD = 1.98$).

Analysis did indicate a significant difference between all participants' self-reported perception of appeal for negative stories ($M = 4.52, SD = 1.78$) than for positive stories ($M = 3.65, SD = 1.59$); enjoyment for negative stories ($M = 5.63, SD = 1.35$) than for positive stories ($M = 3.19,$

$SD = 1.75$), as well as entertainment for negative stories ($M = 5.44$, $SD = 1.53$) than for positive stories ($M = 3.55$, $SD = 1.69$).

Participants high in CAME seem to be more aroused by negative stories than those low in CAME, as indicated by skin conductance responses. This supported previous researchers' findings that the morbidly curious are more aroused upon exposure to negativity. However, their self-reported arousal showed no difference. Results also did not support our hypotheses that individuals high in CAME would pay more attention to negative stories than those low in CAME, nor that individuals high in CAME would find negative stories more appealing when compared to individuals low in CAME. However, negative stories consistently demonstrated more appeal for *all* participants than positive stories, as indicated in the measurements including *appealing*, *enjoyable*, *entertaining* and *stimulating* ratings.

It is interesting that the physiological data on arousal did not correspond to the self-reported arousal in the SAM scale. One explanation of this discrepancy is that arousal is a difficult concept to articulate. One may not be aware that one is experiencing arousal, especially at a low arousal level typical in a lab setting. Another explanation is that skin conductance is a more sensitive measure than self-report. Thus, the nuances of arousal may not be captured by self-report.

It is noteworthy that the morbidly curious did not pay more attention to negative stories. One possible explanation is that the negative stimulus was *not negative enough* to pique morbid interest and thereby cause the physiological attention effects in those exhibiting CAME. All stories used in the stimuli DVD were suitable for broadcast, in spite of strong negative content. It would be interesting to use more gruesome or shocking stories to maximize manipulation, ethical considerations permitting.

Another possible explanation is that our test population did not exhibit enough variance in CAME. As mentioned in the method section, most of the participants scored high in CAME, forcing researchers to use the median as a cut-off point to demarcate participants high and low in this variable. If enough participants were to fall in the low category, results might be different.

It is also interesting that negative stories consistently showed more appeal than positive stories. This somewhat confirms what news producers have always practiced. The implication is that negative news programming works because it may be seen as the widest net with which to capture viewers; while low CAME viewers might be reasonably expected to tune in for a balanced lineup of positive and negative news, many high-scoring CAME viewers would likely be lost. By increasing the negative content, viewers who respond favorably to such media could be gained without the threat of losing a substantial segment of the audience who might be shocked or repulsed by excessive negativity.

Future Research

A marked time discrepancy was observed between participants' responses to positive stories versus responses to the negative ones. This occurred regardless of the length of the news stories, with the only consistent predictive variable being content of the stories. The majority of participants took substantially longer to complete the test sections concerning negative news, in some cases twice as long. One possible explanation is that this phenomenon may be related to the cognitive impairment that follows a horrific visual, as investigated by other researchers (Zillman, 1998). The variables of time delay and duration of responding may be added to further study the effects of morbid curiosity on the processing of negative stories.

Our pretest indicated that the self-reported arousal level in both the negative and positive stories did not vary significantly. In future research, it may be interesting to directly manipulate arousal level on factors such as color, sound, and motion. Such manipulation could function as another potential independent variable, as arousal is often shown to drive attention.

Finally, as previously mentioned, researchers in this study included Zuckerman's CASE (curiosity about sexual events) items, which were integrated into the original CAME scale (Zuckerman, 1985, p. 55). The researchers' plan is that information obtained from this CASE subset of CAME questions may be utilized for secondary analysis or incorporation into a later study.

As more data become available, it is almost certain that this research into curiosity about morbid events and processing of negative media will generate even more questions that were unimaginable before testing began. This may be summed up in a final bit of data, which may in itself explain some of society's fascination with morbid media: while fewer than 10% of participants responded that they had watched a single pornographic movie in their lives, almost 85% reported they had seen *ten or more* gory horror movies.

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