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ABSTRACT

This content analysis introduces a genre of film that paralleled the rise of conservatism in the United States (1979–1996). Based on the words of Hobbes, the films are perceived to represent the world in its natural state, absent the proper social and law enforcement authorities within existing civilized society. Prior literature on this topic and subject are examined, as are the real measures of criminal justice system breadth over this period, including crime, victimization, arrests, imprisonments, police staffing data, and information on dollars spent. The results of the content analysis reveal the cold, harsh, brutal, nasty, and short world of Hobbes, with murder the main method of conflict resolution and with police, courts, and prison systems noticeably absent. The crimes visualized in this sample are compared to the reality; the differences are as stark as the images of a Hobbesian world and leave the viewer thankful for the systems we do have after seeing what life would be like without them.

KEY WORDS Crime; Film; Hobbes; Conservatism

Whatsoever therefore is consequent to a time of war, where every man is enemy to every man ... there is no society, and which is worst of all continual fear, and danger of violent death; and the life of man solitary, poor, nasty, brutish and short. ... To this war of every man against every man, this also is consequent; that nothing can be unjust. The notions of right and wrong, justice and injustice there have no place.

—Thomas Hobbes, *Leviathan* XIII.9:83; XII.13:85

When the going gets tough ... the tough take the law into their own hands.

—Tagline for Harley Davidson & the Marlboro Man

In a town with no justice, there is only one law ... Every man for himself.

—Tagline for Last Man Standing

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> *The rules are simple: kill or be killed.*
>
> —Tagline for Surviving the Game

> *These are the Armies of the Night. They are 60,000 strong. They outnumber the cops three to one. They could run New York City. Tonight they're all out to get the Warriors.*
>
> —Tagline for The Warriors

For a long time, Americans have been reached through films. According to the Motion Picture Association of America (2007), the domestic box office reached $9,629,000,000 in 2007, a 111% increase from 1992, not accounting for inflation, while 1.4 billion tickets were sold in 2007 compared to 1.1 billion in 1992. Furthermore, the Motion Picture Association of America (2007) notes that in the past four years, total DVD rental and sales totals averaged about 1,255.8 units per year in millions, not counting downloads, pirated movies, and television airings on network and cable. In 2013, the gross U.S.–Canadian market box office had revenues of $10.9 billion, with 1.34 billion admissions (Motion Picture Association of America 2013). Americans receive many messages through film; this study explores one particular Hobbesian message—life in the natural state of man as solitary, poor, nasty, brutish, and short within existing civilized societies—in the context of the American political environment from 1979 through 1996. This follows the framework created when Gerbner (1970:80) asked, "What kinds of violence are shown, what for and in what contexts?"

The genre studied here contrasts from the postapocalyptic world of today's films such as *World War Z*, *The Road,* and *I Am Legend* as well as films that depict a man against his government (or its criminal justice system) such as *1984, Enemy of the State,* and *Cool Hand Luke*. This genre is presented in a frame that depicts the lawless life of the natural state within the existing, civilized, modern world. This work looks at 11 films fitting this description. Modern America *does* have a quite punitive and expansive criminal justice system, however; thus, it is important to look at the reality of crime and its outcomes over time before revealing the crimes and outcomes found in the Hobbesian world, absent the proper authority in the throes of chaos, anarchy, and death amidst civilization. This leads to a discussion about the genre and its message as contrasted to the world in which we live. But first, and perhaps most importantly, the films of this era (1979–1996) are placed within their political and cultural context, which mirrors the rise of modern conservatism in the United States.

THE RISE OF CONSERVATISM, THE THOUGHTS OF HOBBES, AND THEIR REFLECTION IN FILMS, 1979 THROUGH 1996

Hobbes expressed an extremely conservative view of the social contract in *Leviathan*, a seminal work that sought to legitimize governmental authority in contrast to the harshness and brutality of an existence without it. Sayre-McCord (2000:251) succinctly states that "as long as the state of nature represents a genuine threat, and as long as

staying out of that situation requires mutual cooperation in support of government conventionally established, the real people facing the threat will find that they have reason to recognize the authority of the state." After the ascendency of conservatism with the election of Ronald Reagan in 1980, the modern conservative movement reached its first congressional apogee in 1994 behind the Contract with America, of which one policy focus was dealing with the growing threat of crime in America (Gayner 1995) through a goal of constructing prisons and adding more police ("Contract with America" 1994). Walker (2006) calls the worst nightmare of the conservative crime ideology "unchecked criminality that leads to anarchy and the death of freedom" (p. 25), or the natural state of man as described by Hobbes. Thus, the connection between Hobbesian philosophy, conservatism, crime, and safety is quite salient relative to this view of the social contract.

Political ideologies such as conservatism have an emotional basis "that can be readily activated by appropriate stimuli … and particular individuals are influenced by a variety of informational inputs" (Miller 1973:142) such as film. The films in this analysis were made and/or released between 1979 and 1996, a period in American history reflecting both the rise of political conservatism and the firm implementation of the crime-control model throughout our criminal justice systems. The general consensus from the research is that the media of this period reflected the conservative crime ideology (Broe 2003; Jenkins 1994; Melossi 2000) and this is problematic because the public's knowledge of crime is derived primarily from the depiction of crime in the media, affecting "the public's fear of crime, its opinion of punishment, and its perception of the police" (Muraskin and Domash 2007:1). Broe (2003:2) notes that the 1980s and 1990s witnessed a "reaction to Reagan and Bush administration policies and the conventional Hollywood support for those policies." Thus, the media message, through which many people form their perceptions of crime and its control, is often reflective of the dominant prevailing political ideology in which the content is produced.

Spencer Warren (1994) compiled a list of the "the 100 best conservative movies," noting that the period of the late 1970s until 1994 marked a return of conservative movies, specifically with the Star Wars films, which debuted in 1977, that represented "the triumph of good over evil that would mark the Reagan Eighties." Noting that "few institutions exert more influence over American popular culture than the wildly successful Hollywood dream factory," Smith (1994) surmises that the basis for great conservative cinema in terms of crime and justice is that "the state hardly does anything more important than when it delivers a measured, just response to human evil." A clearly conservative message delivered through the often maligned "liberal" Hollywood, whether through direct or indirect influences, is reflective of both political ideology and policy of this period in American history.

Relative to the present study, Melossi (2000) discusses the "exclusionary penal" model in which the perception is one of anarchy, chaos, and social breakdown that the author relates to the thinking of Hobbes in *Leviathan.* More recently, Halper and Muzzio (2007) looked at what they dubbed "dystopias in the movies," a genre defined as "an imaginary place of oppression or suffering." In discussing the relation to the Hobbesian

perspective, the authors note that although it may appear at first strange to marry the two in thought, "movies do sometimes address the Hobbesian bargain of liberty for security. … If we refuse to submit to authority, they remind us, we pay for our arrogance with anarchy, suffering and death." This view fits with criminal-justice conservatism.

In contrast to the earlier years of conservative film influence, in which family values were the focal point of the message (see Warren 1994), another message clearly emerges in the late 1970s—what the world could be like absent not just authority but *proper* authority. Maslow's famous hierarchy (1943) shows that without security to allow survival, there can be no advancement to attaining higher needs because "practically everything looks less important than safety." Hobbesian movies offer a way out of the natural state: police power and powerful police, more prisons and harsher punishments, all of which form the tenets of the conservative crime-control model. Miller (1973) integrates all of these concepts:

> Of paramount importance is the security of the major arenas of one's customary activity—particularly those locations where the conduct of family life occurs. A fundamental personal and family right is safety from crime, violence, and attack. … Adherence to the legitimate directives of constituted authority is a primary means for achieving the goals of morality, correct individual behavior, security, and other valued life conditions. Authority in the service of social and institutional rules should be exercised fairly but firmly, and failure or refusal to accept or respect legitimate authority should be dealt with decisively and unequivocally. (P. 144)

Lenz (2005) looked at conservatism and its relation to crime control through the lens of two films that epitomize the years preceding the rise of modern conservatism: *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *Death Wish* (1974). Of specific importance to the current work is *Death Wish*, a film that Lenz describes as depicting the personal evolution of the main character from the liberal to conservative view of crime and criminals after his wife is murdered and his daughter is brutalized while the police do nothing. If this film "mirrors the nation's political transformation from liberalism to conservatism" (Lenz 2005), it is logical to believe that another conservative genre that follows would seek to cement that change and to advance crime control policies. *Death Wish 3* (1985) provides a poignant example, with Paul Kersey single-handedly and with increased firepower taking on gang mobs that have terrorized an entire city and all its seniors, who are locked in their homes by fear.

Eleven years after the society-mirroring transformation from liberal to conservative, and near the middle era of the Hobbesian genre of films being studied (1979–1996), crime and its outcomes were still not being properly addressed by the authorities, requiring people to take matters into their own hands in this absence of proper

authority. *Death Wish 3* depicts a world far worse than the original film of the series and genuinely reflects the natural state of man. Such a state requires a strong authority to control anarchy amidst a message inferring that crime and violence are rampant, severe, frequent, and indiscriminate. It is to the gulf between the reel state of crime (its media depiction) and the real state of crime (its actual prevalence and control) that the current work now turns, with a critical doubt that the two will align.

THE REEL AND REAL STATES OF CRIME

Research with methodologies similar to that of the present study abounds with regard to the crime message of television programming in contrast to the reality of crime and criminals during the periods in which the shows were produced. Yanich (2001) conducted a content analysis on television news and crime in two markets—Baltimore and Philadelphia—and found that the crime message conveyed was greatly exaggerated in terms of the comparative real data available. This analysis looked at crime stories as a proportion of total news stories (minus sports and weather), determining that the two cities, despite having similar criminal patterns, differed in their coverage of crime, thus painting a perception for the public at odds with reality. In a content analysis in the Orlando television news market, Chiricos and Eschholz (2002) compared criminal data to that presented on the news based on race of the offender, finding that the message conveyed is that blacks and Hispanics are more dangerous and more of a threat, based on the manners and frequencies in which they are portrayed

Providing a bridge between the news and entertainment, a span dubbed by Surette (2007) as "infotainment," Kooistra, Mahoney, and Westervelt (1998) conducted a content analysis of police television reality shows. The authors presented real-life crime data compared with crime depiction on the show *Cops* in 1994, finding that violent crime was overrepresented, mirroring the results of a content analysis of crime on *America's Most Wanted* and *Unsolved Mysteries* (Cavender and Bond-Maupin 1993). The same phenomenon has also been reported in Canadian programming, despite the country having much lower rates of crime (Dowler, Fleming, and Muzzatti 2006). In terms of hard data on actual counts of violence on television over time, an average of 22 violent incidents occurred per hour of television before 1980, whereas many shows that aired between 1984 and 1992 averaged more than 40 violent incidents per hour (see Clark 1993). Thus, television has grown more violent in general, and the evidence suggests that violent crime is overrepresented on television news and "infotainment" programming, but messages are also delivered through film. For example, Eschholz and Bufkin (2001) conducted a content analysis of the 50 most popular domestic films of 1996, noting that 45% of the characters identified committed a violent act (as opposed to a criminal act) during the film. Clearly, in this research, violent crime is as commonplace in modern cinema as in television, and both are disconnected from the real world of crime.

Crime films were defined by Rafter (2006) as movies in which crime or its consequences are central. In subsequent work, Rafter (2007) summarized the "law film" genre in which the message was a fight against the system through the courts or policing,

as well as the "sex crime film," a genre in which a sexual crime is the focal point of the movie in some manner. Broe (2003) discussed the crime genre of "film noir," a set of movies that depict a struggle of one man, usually innocent, who is accused of a crime he did not commit, contrasted by a genre termed "film gris," which Maland (2002) defined as "social realist crime films," which are reflective of the political upheaval of their day. Yet another genre, the "detective film," has also been identified and analyzed (Broe 2005). Many recurrent film themes have led to analysis of certain groups of films that all reflect a similar message within a specific period, as this work does.

The present work, which includes the film *Scarface* in the sample, will follow the framework set forth by Martinez, Lee, and Nielsen (2001) in their analysis of the real Mariel Cubans in contrast to the perception caused by the film, dubbed the "Scarface Legacy." They found that the Mariel Murderer was really the Mariel myth, as Cubans from Mariel were actually less likely to be involved in a homicide than were other ethnic groups in Miami over that general period, thus comparing data to a perception created by a widely watched film. Such a study shows the social impact of a single fictional film on an entire community of people. It is within that context of the media message that the discussion now turns to the real state of criminal justice and crime from 1979 to 1996.

Conklin (2003) noted that crime rates, for several reasons, follow a cyclical pattern over time. In terms of historical perspectives on crimes and their outcome, the periods of the 1920s through 1930s and the 1970s through early 1990s were at their peak within a larger crime cycle (Justice Research and Statistics Association 2000). Not surprisingly, these are the same periods noted earlier by Warren (1994) as peaks of conservative influence on films and their messages. We will now explore the real-crime picture in the United States over the study period from a variety of angles: crime data, victimization rates, arrest rates, clearance rates, police staffing levels, and incarceration data. This will show the reality of the authority, power, and scope of crime and its outcomes in our current political state and will provide context for the content analysis of a sample of films from the same period.

Using the years 1979, 1984, 1990, and 1996 as a baseline sample of the years being studied, the comparative crime picture in the real United States can be derived from statistical data. In these four years, an average of 13,000,990 index crimes were reported, 11 percent of which were violent and 89 percent of which were property crimes (see U.S. Department of Justice FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics 2010b). Of the violent index crimes, 55.7 percent were assaults and 36.8 percent were robberies, while just 1.5 percent of all crimes reported were murders and 6 percent were rapes. Clearly, violent crime consists mainly of assault and robbery, with murder being the rarest of all index crimes, comparatively speaking. In fact, in each of the five years, murder never represented more than .002 percent of all reported crimes, while burglary (23.6 percent) and larceny (55.1 percent) comprise almost 8 of every 10 crimes reported. Thus, despite violence being present and fairly commonplace in American society, in the real world, property is victimized much more often than the person. This fact is not portrayed often in the media.

The Florida Department of Law Enforcement (FDLE) maintains a "crime clock" that breaks down the crime totals for a given year in the State of Florida by the minute as a method of conveying crime information. Based on this framework, and utilizing mean data from the four years above, in the United States, about 25 crimes per minute are reported, three of which are violent. On average, one murder occurred every 28 minutes nationwide, despite murder's high prevalence in television news and film. Thus, one way to judge the crimes in the film sample to crimes in real life is through dividing the images by the time of the presentation in the manner of the FDLE crime clock (2015). This will be discussed further in the next section.

Reported crimes tell one part of the story, and victimization rates add yet another important piece. In 1979, 51.7 violent victimizations were reported per 1,000 people, nearly the same as in 1994 (51.2 per 1,000), according to the National Crime Victimization Survey (see Klaus and Maston 2008), around the time that crime rates began to drop (Conklin 2003). This means that toward the end of the sample being studied, crime, which had been high and steady, began to fall, with victimization holding steady. Whatever else ailed society at this time, crime was declining overall even if not portrayed that way through popular cultural mediums such as film.

Reported crime and victimization data do not provide the full picture of known offenses. Thus, it is important to look at arrest data over time as well. According to the Bureau of Justice Statistics Arrest Data Analysis Tool (N.d.), there were 10,205,800 arrests in 1979, for a rate of 4,544.6 per 100,000; by 1996, there were 15,168,100 arrests, for a rate of 5,763.4 per 100,000, marking this as a high-water year, with arrest totals and rates dropping the next year in line with the drop in crime and victimization rates. Clearly, as the period progressed, one stood a greater chance of arrest in American society as a whole. There was indeed an authority imposing its will to control crime.

Another important aspect to explore is the number of police over time in the United States to the extent possible, as police and their actions are "the force of power" that a government uses to control crime. According to data aggregrated by Reaves (2003), there were 437,000 total sworn police officers in the United States in 1979 and 595,170 by 1996, for an increase of 36.2 percent, while the population increased by 20 percent. Even as crime continued to decline in the late 1990s, more officers were added each year, as a whole, in the United States. Thus, police presence through numbers and arrest establish the vastness and depth of the criminal justice system over this time frame, as does the evidence of Gifford (2001) that government spending on "criminal justice" increased 235 percent to $120,194 (in millions) from 1982 to 1996, with the increases seen at federal, state, county, and city levels.

Clearance rates are an interesting statistic to peruse as well. Although not perfect, they provide a rough estimate (or range) of the probability of arrest for a certain crime prima facie. Using data from 1979 to 1996 (Bureau of Justice Statistics Arrest Data Analysis Tool N.d.; U.S. Department of Justice FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics 2010a), both violent and property generic clearance rates (calculated as arrests or reported offenses within each year) were consistent over time, with means of 39

percent and 17 percent, respectively. To show the prevalence of the crime-control model, just 5 percent of arrests per year are for violent index crimes and about 16 percent are for property index crimes. There are real probabilities of arrest for an offense of any kind in the real world of policing and investigation.

Incarceration is a very real possibility in the United States, and the system began its current boom around the same year as the film sample starts: 1979. According to the U.S. Department of Justice Bureau of Justice Statistics (1982), in 1979, there were 274,563 inmates in the United States. By 1995 there were 1,125,874 inmates (Beck and Mumola 1999), marking a 310% increase. Currently, there are more than 1.5 million inmates in the United States (Carson 2014), so while the U.S. population has increased by approximately 36 percent from 1979, the incarcerated population has experienced a nearly 400% increase. Conklin (2003) postulated that the reason for the decline of crime in the United States starting in the mid-1990s was the effect of the mass incarceration policy of the 1980s. With such an impact on crime and the nation, the crime-control model most often associated with conservative politics is founded upon this policy and was dominant from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s. Chermak (1998; as cited by Surette 2007) noted that just 4.2 percent of newspaper and television criminal-justice stories related to corrections despite this explosion. When prisons are portrayed, their image is as "harsh and brutal" (Surette 2007), similar to the natural state of man *within* society. Thus, in the real world, there are very real and perceived consequences to all types of crime. Man is in a civilized state with strong justice, especially since 1979.

SAMPLE AND DATA

Table 1 details the sample chosen for this content analysis, which was purposively selected along several dimensions. First, the widest possible audience was considered along with the box office data. By considering this aspect of the sample, the Hobbesian message being studied is generalizable to the wide audiences that could have watched one, many, or all of these movies rather than being narrow in focus, to classic Westerns, for example. Thus, our sample takes us in time from the 1920s to the mid-1990s; from movies released from 1979 to 1996; from settings as diverse as West Texas, South Central Los Angeles, the wilderness of Alaska, and Jasper, Missouri; and from cult classic *Scarface* to the lesser-seen drama *Miller's Crossing,* all while providing characters from many backgrounds, races, and statuses. In keeping with the systematic suggestion of film selection by Rafter (2007), the movies chosen were released between 1979 and 1996, the height of American political conservatism. This sample is similar to that of Maland (2002), who examined 13 movies of the "film gris" genre reflective of a certain period. In box office alone, the films in the present sample grossed $252,795,909 (Internet Movie Database 2015) and have been rented and shown on television countless times since. This sample is not meant to be exhaustive of an entire genre but representative of one.

Table 1. Sample Information

Film	Released	Time and Place Depicted	U.S. Box Office Total[a]
The Warriors	1979	New York City, mid 1970s	$22,490,000
Thief	1981	Illinois, late 1970s	$4,300,000
Scarface	1983	Miami, early 1980s	$44,942,821
Road House	1989	Jasper, MO, 1980s	$30,050,028
Miller's Crossing	1990	Late 1920s	$4,693,759
Boyz n the Hood	1991	South Central LA, 1984, 1991	$56,190,094
Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man	1991	Las Vegas, after 1991	$7,018,525
Carlito's Way	1993	New York City, early 1980s	$36,516,012
Jason's Lyric	1994	Galveston, TX, 1980s	$20,788,730
Surviving the Game	1994	Alaska, unknown	$7,690,013
Last Man Standing	1996	West Texas, 1920s	$18,115,927

[a] Sources: Internet Movie Database (2015); Numbers (2015).

Now that prior studies and real-world data have been explored, it is crucial to turn to the content analysis of crime and its outcome in the natural state. Each film was viewed carefully by a single rater and coded in terms of crime committed, type of offender (system representative or not), whether an arrest occurred, and the type of weapon used/brandished. The results are discussed below.

RESULTS

All told, 665 total crimes were noted in the 11 films, ranging from a high of 94 in the cult classic *Scarface* to a low of 34 in *Jason's Lyric.* The mean number of crimes per film was 60.45. Springhall (1998) noted a 1935 study of 115 random films in which 445 crimes were committed, for an average of *four* per film. All told, in the current sample, violent crimes (against persons) accounted for 66.2 percent of the crimes (440), nonviolent crimes accounted for 25.7 percent (170), and weapons violations for 7.7 percent (51). (See Table 2.) Crime against the person was much more often portrayed in the natural state than was crime against property. This did not include justified killings, such as those of self-defense, meaning there was more overall violence than the crime total indicates. Furthermore, this analysis did not concentrate on age, but it became clear that youth and families were underrepresented while the solitary man was often the noticeable focal

point, as family is noticeably absent in the natural state of man within society lacking the proper justice authority.

Table 2. Results of Content Analysis

Variable	Attributes	Frequency	Percentage
Type of Crime Observed ($N = 661$)	Nonviolent	170	25.7
	Violent	440	66.2
	Weapons	51	7.7
Criminal by Type ($N = 665$)	Non-Law Enforcement	626	94.1
	System Actor	39	5.9
Arrests Observed ($N = 665$)	Yes	9	1.4
	No	656	98.6

If both murder and attempted murder are combined (202; 30.4 percent), they represent the most frequently occurring crime in the sample, with assault (combined with assault with a deadly weapon) occurring 177 times (26.6 percent). (See Table 3.) Murder alone represents 21.7 percent (144) of all crimes. After murder and assault, crime in the natural state involves weapons possession (53; 8.0 percent), threats of death or intimidation (45; 6.8 percent), drugs (29; 4.4 percent), and conspiracy (24; 3.6 percent). The least occurring crimes were sexual assault (1; 0.1 percent); prostitution (1; 0.1 percent); gambling (7; 1.1 percent), and property destruction (9; 1.4 percent). Robbery, burglary, and arson each occurred 11 times (1.7 percent each), while only 18 thefts (2.7 percent) occurred. This picture belies the actual state of crime in America explored earlier, while being consistent with previous research.

Based on the length of the films (1,279 minutes), an actual murder (144) occurred every 8.9 minutes. At this pace, there would be 59,056 murders a year in the United States, more than twice the highest total on record in the era being studied, which was 24,526 in 2003 (U.S. Department of Justice FBI Uniform Crime Reporting Statistics 2010b), or 1 every 21.4 minutes. Furthermore, according to historical Uniform Crime Reports data, murder represents the least common reported crime, in direct contrast to the crime as depicted in the natural state, but one consistent with the findings of Yanich (2001), in which murder represented 50% of news stories; Kooistra et al. (1998), who noted that murder represented 25 percent of all television crime; and Cavender and Bond-Maupin (1993), who found that murder was the subject in 52 percent of the vignettes of their content analysis sample. This movie sample yielded similar results but was not attached to any consequences in the films.

Table 3. Frequency Distributions of Crime by Category

Category	Frequency	Percentage
Murder	144	22
Attempted Murder	58	9
Rape	1	0
Robbery	11	2
Assault	177	27
Burglary	11	2
Theft	18	3
Arson	11	2
Drugs	29	4
Prostitution	1	0
Public/Police Corruption	18	3
Weapons Possession	53	8
Minor Offenses	17	3
Conspiracy	24	4
Threats	45	7
Destruction of Property	9	1
Minor Property Crimes	10	2
Gambling	7	1
Kidnapping	11	2
Total	655	

Classified by type of offender, 626 (94.1 percent) of the crimes noted were committed by non-criminal-justice-system actors, with 39 (5.9 percent) linked to characters in the justice system. These characters ranged from a district attorney to police detectives, a mayor, one defense attorney (to whom eight of the offenses could be attributed), federal officials, and Mexican troops, thus running the gamut of system representatives, though overall, this type of character was underrepresented as a valid authority or power. This portrayal also belies the power of the system explored earlier and separates this genre from others in which the system is central to the story or in which the police are heroic.

Despite the fact that several movies in this genre had a police presence, even if it was only in distant sirens occasionally sounding, arrests in the natural state were rare, indeed. Just nine arrests were made for 665 reported crimes, a clearance rate of 1.4 percent, though three of those arrests were of the wrong people, for a more accurate 1 percent. For murder/attempted murder, a single arrest was made for 202 offenses, for a clearance rate of 0.4 percent, though many offenders faced "street" or "natural" justice instead. There were two arrests for assault of a police officer, constituting 22 percent of all arrests shown. One of the "arrests" (*Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man)* was actually foreplay between a female officer and one of the criminal actors. In terms of the types of people arrested (visually), all nine were non-criminal-justice-system actors and

three were killed by police rather than being taken into custody. In all, a clear pattern emerged of the natural state, absent police intervention and often with police collusion, though some actors, such as the sheriff in *Last Man Standing,* acted to survive. Crimes were neither reported nor solved, and the police were clearly outmanned, an observation noted by the gang leader Cyrus in the tagline of *The Warriors.* Furthermore, the pattern that emerged was that criminal-justice actors were about 4.3 times more likely to commit a crime than to make an arrest or act "justly."

Regarding the earlier discussion of arrest and clearance, there was a wide gulf between the real penal America and the one as portrayed in the natural state, in which it is nearly impossible for an arrest to occur. In essence, the criminal justice system and all of its components are noticeably absent in this sample in proportion to their real world presence. Justice is obtained at the individual level and society is abstract and opaque, a place where there is no system and life is violent and short.

With regard to weapons to be feared in the natural state absent murders, in 38 incidents, people had guns pointed at them and not used (5.7 percent of crimes), whereas 33 assaults with deadly weapons (4.9 percent of crimes recorded) occurred, including such weapons as knives (6), baseball bats (6), bottles (3), and pool cues (2). Other weapons used in assaults were pointed cowboy boots, circular saws, chairs, chainsaws, pianos, and a cane. When weapons were possessed and/or brandished (49 offenses), a gun was the most common (41; 5.5 percent of all crimes), followed by a knife (3) and a bat (2). Chains, knives, and pipes were also carried. It is much less common in the natural state to threaten someone (verbally or with a gun) than to kill the person. Such a state, in which actual violence is much greater than threatened violence, is simply not realistic, except in the natural state of man that yearns for proper control and authority to reduce both.

LIMITATIONS

The major limitation of this work to be addressed is the sample selection, which was purposive in nature according to a certain type of film during a certain period. Certain criteria were employed to limit making this a convenience or biased sample, including consideration of the widest possible viewership through diversity of characters and box office receipts.

The next limitations to be addressed are threats to reliability and validity. First, with a single coder, or rater, there is always less reliability than with several. In terms of validity, a single coder is also problematic in terms of what is being coded. For instance, almost all of the acts committed by Jack Mason (*Surviving the Game*) were not coded as crimes because they were in self-defense. Observations and objective coding were the only safeguards employed. To overcome these limitations, no overgeneralizations have been made about the message except the differences between crime and its consequences in real America and the America portrayed in this sample of films. Additionally, no causation is implied, lessening the implications of these limitations.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The content analysis reveals the nightmare via a visual world in which violence is more commonplace than nonviolence, where murder occurs more often than assaults or threats of harm, in direct contrast to the real United States, in general, over the past 30 years. In the natural state, few consequences come from any authority for a criminal actor, as the law is nonexistent, evidenced by the corrupt detective in *Scarface* who warns, "I have eight killers with badges working for me, Tony." The natural state is a world so corrupt that Johnny Casper warns in *Miller's Crossing*: "I mean, if you can't trust the fix, what can you trust? You start leaving it to random chance, and that's anarchy. We're back in the jungle." The message both visually and subtly is clear: Authority alone is not the answer, but submission to the proper authority can provide security for which one will exchange one's liberties; otherwise, life in the natural state, as depicted in this sample, would indeed be brutal and short. According to Minino, Heron, and Smith (2006), the life expectancy in the United States in 1978–1981 was 70.82 years. By 1996, that had increased to 74 years, so life was not shorter in reality but was depicted as brutal and short in this film genre.

The Warriors have to kill or be killed. Frank in *Thief* is a career criminal whom only death can stop. Tony Montana can be stopped only by hundreds of bullets and a small, relentless army, not a weak federal prosecution. In *Road House,* Dalton must kill his way out of a lawless town to survive and does so with only his hands and determination. *Miller's Crossing* takes us to death in the wilderness, while *Boyz n the Hood* shows the urban jungle of death in South Central Los Angeles. *Harley Davidson and the Marlboro Man* shows middle-aged men simply demanding their rightful dues and having to violently fight for them, while *Carlito's Way* gives us a story of a criminal beating the criminal-justice system only to fall prey to the predator Benny Blanco after refusing to submit to the proper authority to save himself. The violence of *Jason's Lyric* ends a family right before it is to begin, while in *Surviving the Game,* human predators end life for sport as they hunt humans plucked from society though in the end they cannot hide in "civilized" society. This Hobbesian message concludes with John Smith showing up out of the blue and annihilating an entire deserted town consisting of two violent gangs in the aptly named *Last Man Standing.* In every film, violence is the only way to survive the natural state of man that accompanies a collapse of the real criminal-justice system. Life in these films without powerful police and growing prisons is portrayed as "nasty, poor, solitary, brutish and short."

The "natural state" genre does not accurately reflect life in America from the late 1970s to the mid-1990s, as explored earlier; nor is it fair to imply that these films are propaganda for a political perspective any more than they are reflections of the time in which they were made or are entirely creative pieces. With that being said, the results of this analysis mirror those of Yanich (2001) in his comparative analysis of crime news in Baltimore and Philadelphia that not only dwarfed all other public issues but was wholly unrealistically unrepresentative of the true crime data of those cities at that time. In the words of Hobbes, "*Fear* of power invisible, feigned by the mind or imagined from tales publicly allowed" (VI:37) accompanies the caveat that "the words good and evil are ever used in relation to the person that useth them; there is nothing absolutely so" (VI.7:35); therefore, as Hobbes knew, the public could be persuaded by subjective interpretation. Current research

finds that to be the case in the portrayal of crime on television and film. As Gerbner (1980) informed us, "In a totally invented world of symbols, nothing happens without purpose or function" (p. 65). The genre thus far explored is the world that "could have been" more than being a reflection of the world that *was*, for this simple reason: Only the conservative crime-control model and proper respected system authority can prevent social collapse into the natural state of man envisioned centuries ago by Thomas Hobbes. There is both political purpose and function in this big-screen symbolism.

At the outset of this work, two famous lines of Thomas Hobbes were linked to this genre of film; that message was apparent in the literature and analysis, and even if the message is detached from reality, it remains a tangible fear mainly because "beliefs about dangers and particularly safety, can arise with little or no reference to the objective world they describe" (Simpson 1996:550). The complete lack of either a hero or any justice in the sample supports the warnings of Hobbes and of conservatives who were espousing their own policies throughout this period; however, the power of the state has never been stronger in terms of retribution or of incarceration of criminals. By linking social breakdown with the annihilation of justice and freedom, these films put the words of Hobbes in a visual medium for a new generation and depict an absence from this model that is quite harsh and unwelcoming. Though an improbability, this world remains a fear because it is far from an impossibility, and as Kenny (2005) noted, people are much more likely to fear the rare, tragic event than the "mundane" of which they are at greater risk. This is coupled with the observation that "victimization that is typical, commonplace or predictable is just not newsworthy" (Karmen 2004:17). Films set in the natural state tap into those human, social, and media conditions.

Most importantly, the criminality and the system portrayed in this genre are the reverse of those in the real world, and that departure is vast in terms of the data explored. In this genre, the impact of police, prisons, and courts is nearly nonexistent and crime is most often violent and without any consequence, save for revenge or the code of the street. A world like these films depict would hunger for a crime-control policy, with people gladly making the Hobbesian trade-off of liberty for security if they lived long enough to decide, and those with an option deciding to eliminate the threat through consent of conservative crime policy before society breaks down. In this predicted vacuum of power and authority, gangs will fill in for society, as in *The Warriors, Boyz n the Hood, Road House,* and *Last Man Standing*, and take control of their small areas by any means they deem acceptable. At this point, Kenny (2005:53) noted that "the dominant risk management strategy has involved the implementation of sophisticated technical mechanisms whose purpose is to check risk by regulation and surveillance" and the conservative crime policy cycle is thus complete.

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