

CONTROVERSIAL CINEMA: HOW PR INFLUENCES AN INDUSTRY

by

Ann Wallace Scott

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for Departmental Honors in
the Department of Strategic Communication

Texas Christian University

Fort Worth, Texas

May 8, 2023

CONTROVERSIAL CINEMA: HOW PR INFLUENCES AN INDUSTRY

Project Approved:

Supervising Professor: Jacqueline Lambiase, Ph.D.

Department of Strategic Communication

Stephen Levering, M.S.

Department of Strategic Communication

Charity Robinson, M.A.

Department of Film, Television and Digital Media

ABSTRACT

Controversial films are important; they “push the creative and political envelope for future generations” and work as a “barometer for the deeper cultural pressures surrounding issues of... sex or race or violence” (Phillips, 2008, xv).

Controversies occur when groups of people are provoked so much so that they abandon their normal routines and take meaningful action. Typically, moments of controversy are able to be resolved quickly as people have a predetermined set of authorities to turn to: the police, a specified email, a principal, etc. The Production Code, implemented by the Catholic Church from 1934 to 1968, provided filmmakers with a strict set of guidelines for the content that could be shown on screen. Though an infringement on First Amendment rights, the Production Code allowed individuals who were offended or discomfited by a film to contact a set of authorities to resolve the problem quickly. Now, in contemporary America, guided by the MPAA’s age-based ratings, there are no singular authorities to contact when an individual feels offended by a film (Phillips, 2008, xix).

In June 2004, filmmaker Michael Moore released his documentary film, *Fahrenheit 9/11*, as an indictment of President Bush and his decision to go to war in Iraq. The film was explicitly designed to influence the upcoming election (Phillips, 2008, xi), (Wilshire, 2005). Moore’s efforts backfired when the purposefully created controversy worked instead to motivate conservatives to support President Bush and reelect him. Some critics believe the “relentless anti-Bush stance” was potentially off-putting to some undecided voters, benefitting Bush on polling day (Wilshire, 2005). The misstep in Moore’s plan to produce a documentary aimed at unseating a president was “his belief that he could control a controversy” (Phillips, 2008, xiii). There are countless instances where a controversy is manufactured for the sake of gaining or

diverting attention, but once provoked, a controversy is an unstoppable force incapable of being controlled. Moore's *Fahrenheit 9/11* did not create the long-lived political division between conservatives and liberals, but rather, the film was able to reveal to the public how deeply that division was felt. *Fahrenheit 9/11* is an atypical example of a film created to instigate a reaction; more common are films that provoke controversy not by instigating, but by "stepping... too firmly upon some existing cultural fault line" (Phillips, 2008, xiii).

To be a controversial film, there must be more than a simple dislike or refusal to watch something; an individual must "emerge from their normal lives to actively engage in the politics of their world," acting and vocalizing their concerns through petitions, picketing, writing letters, boycotts, and so on (Phillips, 2008, p.157).

Using the lens of strategic and crisis communication, controversies in film may serve as instructive case studies for finding patterns in responses that are effective, useful, damaging, or capable of prolonging controversy.

Starting in 1895, the public screenings of films in movie theaters changed the way individuals consumed media. The increased financial prosperity of the 1920s generated more disposable income for entertainment and leisure, creating new patterns for consumption, and allowing the popularity of moving pictures to grow at an unprecedented rate (Khan Academy, 2023). Movie palaces capable of seating thousands of individuals cemented films as a form of mainstream entertainment, providing a place for Americans to "escape from their problems and lose themselves in another era or world" (Khan Academy, 2023). By the end of the decade, more than 90 million people were going to the movies each week.

The silent movies of the 1920s "gave rise to the first generation of movie stars," characterizing Hollywood with a series of scandals: comedian Fatty Arbuckle was accused of

raping and murdering a young actress, director William Desmond Taylor was found murdered, actor Wallace Reid died of a drug overdose, and beloved actress Mary Pickford divorced and remarried matinee idol Douglas Fairbanks (Khan Academy, 2023). These scandals began causing permanent damage to Hollywood's sparkling image, forcing film leaders to hire the industry's first ever public relations man, Will Hays, to repair the industry's tainted reputation.

Hays was tasked with "convincing the nation that Hollywood was not all scandalous and that the movie industry [could] censor itself" ("Culture Shock," 2023). But, as he was only a spokesperson, Hays had little power in actually changing the content of films. In the late 1920s, criticism of film content escalated into a national crisis when "sound technology gave movies a voice" through talkies ("Culture Shock," 2023). Without dialogue, silent film "actors had only body language and expression to tell a story;" the technology of talkies allowed for the power of voice to help tell a story. This led Catholic religious leaders to urge for a strict "code of conduct for movie content based on the premise that 'no picture shall be produced which will lower the moral standards of those who see it'" ("Culture Shock," 2023), ("The End of an Era," 2012).

In 1930, Hays convinced the studios that accepting the Catholics' Production Code was the safest and cheapest answer to their problems. From 1934 to 1968, film industry executives followed The Production Code, a strict set of guidelines created to mitigate censorship concerns and govern filmmakers in avoiding controversies. The Production Code prohibited nudity, suggestive dances, the ridicule of religion, the depiction of illegal drug use, venereal disease, childbirth, miscegenation, and offensive words and phrases; brutal killings could not be shown in detail, adultery and illicit sex could not be explicit or justified, and the sanctity of a marriage was to be upheld. Hays believed that if the movie industry policed itself by adhering to The Production Code, it could ward off future government intervention (Phillips, 2008, p.25).

However, as the Great Depression endured, moviemakers subsequently slacked off in their adherence to the Code. The brief era from 1927 to 1934 is considered Pre-Code Hollywood, marking the time between the widespread adoption of sound in film and the rigorous enforcement of the Production Code. During this time, many films depicted controversial ideas: sexual innuendo, infidelity, abortion, homosexuality, and violence. Gangsters in films such as *The Public Enemy* and *Scarface* were heroic, not evil, and strong women leads in films such as *Red Headed Woman* presented “women using their sexuality to get ahead” (“Culture Shock,” 2023).

In 1933, angered by the disobedience to the Code, American Roman Catholics launched a campaign against the “immorality of American cinema” (Doherty, 2009). Pressure from the Catholic Church and “the growing threat of federal censorship [ultimately] forced Hays and the studios to change their ways” (“Culture Shock,” 2023). In 1934, as a way to implement greater oversight of the Code, strict Catholic moralist Joe Breen was hired to run Hollywood’s Production Code Administration (PCA). The PCA had authority to review all movies, demand script changes, and fine theaters who showed a movie without PCA approval, giving the Code a real power that moviemakers were therefore forced to adhere to. “The films released after July 1934 were radically different from those that had come before,” drawing an abrupt end to the mischievous nature of Pre-Code Hollywood films (“Culture Shock,” 2023).

In 1952, *The Burstyn v. Wilson* Supreme Court case finally granted movies free speech protection under the First Amendment. After the New York Board of Regents retracted the license to show the 1952 film, *The Miracle*, claiming it was “sacrilegious,” the film’s distributor, Joseph Burstyn, challenged the ruling. *The Miracle* follows a peasant girl who is seduced by a stranger she imagines to be St. Joseph and births a son she believes to be the Christ child. The

Supreme Court ruled that the New York law allowing a film to be banned for being sacrilegious violated the First Amendment. As the system of self-regulation began to unravel, and the First Amendment gave movies a high level of protection, filmmakers began pushing the previous boundaries of film decorum. In 1955, Otto Preminger's *The Man with the Golden Arm*, which follows a struggling heroin addict, was released without a seal of approval by the Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA). In 1956, Elia Kazan's *Baby Doll*, which deals with a young woman's sexual awakening, was called "the dirtiest American-made motion picture that has ever been legally exhibited" by *Time* magazine (Phillips, 2008, p.16). Mike Nichol's 1966 film, *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* became the final blow to the MPAA system of self-censorship. Based on the popular stage play, screenwriter Ernest Lehman "sought to keep the play's sexual content and graphic language" (Phillips, 2008, p.17). The MPAA's approval of *Who's Afraid of Virginia Woolf* created a "fundamental change in the cultural mood..." opening the floodgates and allowing films to become "increasingly more outspoken in theme, content, and language" (Phillips, 2008, p.17).

After becoming meaningless, The Production Code was fully abandoned in 1968 and replaced with the age-based ratings that exist today. The MPAA created a system of movie ratings "for parents to use as a guide to determine the appropriateness of a film's content for children and teenagers" (Dow, 2009). The ratings system is voluntary; there is no legal obligation for filmmakers to submit their work for rating; however, there are several potential economic sanctions for those who are unwilling to accept a rating: many theaters will not run a film without a rating and many publications will not run an ad for an unrated film. The new MPAA ratings system began with four categories: "G (general audiences), M (mature audiences, changed in 1969 to PG, parental guidance suggested), R (restricted, no children under 17 allowed

without parents or adult guardians), and X (no one under 17 admitted)” (Dow, 2009). In 1984, a new PG-13 label was added, and in 1990, a new NC-17 rating (no one 17 and under admitted) was added. The NC-17 rating replaced the X-rating, which “came to signify pornography” (Dow, 2009).

Understanding the history of American film censorship is important in understanding the common themes in film protest: “sex, violence and crime, race, religion, politics” (Phillips, 2008, p.18). The end of official censorship and adoption of the MPAA ratings system did not mean an end to films being suppressed. Instead, the First Amendment rights that protected the free expression of ideas within a film now extended “to those outside the theater who seek to voice their opposition to it” (Phillips, 2008, p.17).

By recognizing how protection under the First Amendment has shaped the future of film, we can move beyond the censorships, and turn to the controversies that changed cinema, and the people who helped mitigate them.

Crises in all shapes and forms “violate expectations that stakeholders hold about how organizations should act” (Coombs, 2007, p.3). A crisis enacts “a major toll on human lives, property, financial earnings, the reputation, and the general health and well-being of an organization” (Alpaslan, 2009, p. 34-35).

When the stakeholders’ expectations are disrupted, people become agitated and upset, creating a tension between the organization and its stakeholders, and threatening to cause permanent damage to a company’s reputation. To mediate this conflict and repair an organization’s reputation, PR professionals are tasked with managing the crisis, minimizing the actual damage inflicted and “protect[ing] the organization, stakeholders, and industry from harm” (Coombs, 2007, p.5).

Crisis management involves four interrelated factors: 1) prevention, 2) preparation, 3) response, and 4) revision. Prevention involves the steps taken to avoid a crisis altogether, using warning signs to take immediate action. Preparation diagnoses vulnerabilities, trains spokespersons, and includes the creation of a crisis management plan (CMP). Response is the integration of preparation components to the real crisis, focusing on how the organization will publicly respond and react. Recovery is the organization's ability to resume normal operations after a crisis has occurred. Revision is the evaluation of the organization's response, determining mistakes and correcting them for future crises. "Crisis management is a process of preventing, preparing for, responding, and revising from crises" (Coombs, 2007, p.6).

A crisis life cycle divides crisis management functions into segments that are performed in a specific order. The three-stage approach is an organizing framework that breaks a crisis down into three distinct stages: 1) Pre-crisis, 2) Crisis Event, and 3) Post-crisis (Coombs, 2007, p.17).

The pre-crisis phase relies on anticipatory measures, using prevention tactics to locate and reduce future risks, focusing on three substages: 1- signal detection, 2- prevention, and 3- crisis preparation.

Signal detection is "the search for warning signs," looking for early signs of a crisis and evaluating how to use this information to prevent future damage (Coombs, 2007, p.21). A basic element of signal detection is scanning, "an active search for information" (Coombs, 2007, p.22). Some scanning tactics include: issues management (identifying issues and lessening their negative impact), risk assessment (identifying risks and weaknesses to prevent exploitation), and reputation management (working to meet stakeholders' expectations).

Prevention is an organization's ability to monitor threats for potential damage, creating options for an organizational response. The goal of a crisis prevention program is to "eliminate the potential crisis identified during the signal detection stage" (Coombs, 2007, p.50). The crisis prevention program relies on both change and monitoring. Change works to reduce the likelihood of a warning sign becoming a crisis, and monitoring works to evaluate if the change made was effective.

Crisis preparation is an organization's ability to prepare themselves for the inevitability of a crisis by addressing six concerns: diagnosing vulnerabilities (looking at the organization's industry, size, location, operations, personnel, and risk factors to determine the likelihood of occurrence and severity of damage), assessing crisis types (identifying what types of crises can occur and preparing tactics for each), selecting and training a crisis team (the crisis management team is responsible for creating the CMP, enacting it, and dealing with any problems not covered), selecting and training a spokesperson (identifying the spokesperson's responsibilities for the specific organization and selecting one accordingly), developing a CMP (the creation of an organized and efficient response to a crisis), and reviewing the communication system (verify the system put in place is operational) (Coombs, 2007, p.63-97).

The crisis event stage begins when the crisis begins, concluding when the crisis is considered resolved. This stage focuses on two substages, 1- crisis recognition and 2- crisis containment.

Crisis recognition "puts an organization's crisis preparation to the test" (Coombs,

2007, p.103). Because crises are difficult to identify, “a situation becomes a crisis when key stakeholders agree it is a crisis” (Coombs, 2007, p.103). Once a crisis is considered a crisis, team members must collect data, translate the data into knowledge, and then share the knowledge to guide in decision making and create messages for various stakeholders.

Crisis response functions by preventing the crisis from spreading and limiting its duration. During this time, it is important to respond quickly and in a consistent manner.

Some of the most common crisis response strategies include: (Coombs, 2007, p.138-141)

- Denial Posture: Seek to remove any connection between crisis and organization.
 - *Attacking the Accuser*: The crisis manager confronts the person or group that claims that a crisis exists. The response may include a threat to use force (a lawsuit) against the accuser.
 - *Denial*: The crisis manager states that no crisis exists. The response may include explaining why there is no crisis.
 - *Scapegoating*: Some other person or group outside of the organization is blamed for the crisis.
- Diminishment Posture: Attempt to reduce attributions of organizational control over the crisis or the negative effects of the crisis.
 - *Excusing*: The crisis manager tries to minimize the organization’s responsibility for the crisis. The response can include denying any intention to do harm or claiming that the organization had no control of the events which led to the crisis.

- *Justification*: The crisis manager tries to minimize the perceived damage associated with the crisis. The response can include stating that there were no serious damages or injuries or claiming that the victims deserved what they received.
- Rebuilding Posture: Seek to improve the organization's reputation.
 - *Compensation*: The organization provides money or other gifts to the victims.
 - *Apology*: The crisis manager publicly states that the organization takes full responsibility for the crisis and asks for forgiveness.
- Bolstering Posture: Seeking to build a positive connection between organization and stakeholders.
 - *Reminding*: The organization tells stakeholders about its past good works.
 - *Integration*: The organization praises stakeholders.
 - *Victimage*: The organization explains how it too is a victim of the crisis.

The postcrisis stage begins when a crisis is considered over, helping to make the organization better prepared for the next crisis, making sure stakeholders are left with a positive impression of the management, and checking to be certain that the crisis is truly over. When the organization returns to business as usual, crisis managers must evaluate their work, learning skills to improve their next crisis management practices, and continue to monitor the crisis, supplying necessary updated information to key stakeholders (Coombs, 107, p.103).

One of the biggest problems with trying to understand controversies is the enormous number of them. There are an overwhelming number of “controversies” around the world, “but the prevalence of controversy should not diminish their importance” (Phillips, 2008, p.157).

Controversy is not an uncommon occurrence for a film; throughout their careers, directors, actors, and producers will likely be a part of some sort of controversy.

Looking at some of the most controversial moments in cinema history will allow an understanding of the common themes surrounding controversial films and how crisis management teams were able to mitigate the damages caused.

- *The Unwritten Law* is a 1907 thriller film produced by the Lubin Manufacturing Company and based on the real-life Stanford White- Harry Thaw 1906 murder case. Covered heavily by the papers of William Randolph Hearst, the case centered on architect Stanford White who was shot in public by Harry Thaw, the husband of Evelyn Thaw whom White was having an affair with. The film received a lot of controversy, becoming the “first film in the United States to be widely constructed as ‘scandalous’” (Phillips, 2008, p.5). The Children’s Aid Society, an organization designed to protect the young, sued several film exhibitors for degrading children in the film. The film caused the first city censorship ordinance directed at film to be established in Chicago in 1907, a direct response to the moral panic experienced by *The Unwritten Law* audience members. *The Unwritten Law* is an excellent example of the power moving pictures hold, even dating back to 1907 (Grieverson, 2004).
- In 1915, one of the United States’ first major releases was D.W Griffith’s silent epic drama, *Birth of a Nation*. The film chronicles the assassination of Abraham Lincoln, and the intertwined relationship between two families in the Civil War over the course of several years. *Birth of a Nation* was influential, incredibly popular, and immensely

controversial with its “wildly progressive cinematic aesthetic and viciously conservative racist depiction of the Reconstruction era” (Phillips, 2008, p.8). With depictions of Ku Klux Klan members as heroes and the use of blackface, the film stirred up controversy, becoming banned in numerous cities and states. Yet, the film was still able to reach impressive box office numbers. Griffith created “a vigorous campaign in defense of his film, claiming his only “regret [was] that it is all so terribly true” (Phillips, 2008, p.8). This film became the leading example of how influential and powerful cinema could be used in propaganda efforts (“The Birth of a Nation (1915),” 2011).

- Released in 1988, *The Last Temptation of Christ* is an epic religious drama film directed by Martin Scorsese. The film, based on the 1955 novel of the same name, depicts the life of Jesus Christ and his struggle with various forms of temptation including fear, doubt, depression, reluctance and lust. Though it received positive reviews from critics (Scorsese even received a nomination for the Academy Award for Best Director), it generated controversy within Christian religious groups because of its departures from gospel narratives; an Integralist Catholic group set fire to a Paris cinema while the movie was playing, Scorsese received death threats, several protests were effective in convincing theater chains to not screen the film, and some countries banned the film altogether. (THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST (1988), 2023).
- Released in 2006, *United 93* is a docudrama thriller film written and directed by Paul Greengrass. The film follows the events aboard United Airlines Flight 93, one of the four hijacked flights during the September 11, 2001 attacks. As the first major film about

9/11, it was one of the most critically acclaimed films of 2006. However, it has since stirred up controversy regarding questions of why the public would pay to see 9/11 on the big screen, Americans' sensibility regarding tragedy as entertainment, and Hollywood's responsibility as an agent of public memory. Additionally, the film has been criticized for taking liberties with the portrayal of passengers, specifically of German passenger Christian Adams ("UNITED 93(15)," 2021).

- Released in 2014, *The Interview* is an action-adventure comedy film co-produced and directed by Seth Rogen and Evan Goldberg. The film follows two American journalists who set up an interview with North Korean leader Kim Jong-un and are recruited by the CIA to assassinate him. Angered by the portrayal, the North Korean government threatened to take action against the United States if Sony, the film's producing studio, released it. At the same time, Sony suffered a computer hack by a group tied to North Korea, leading to stolen data and many leaked emails. Sony Pictures Entertainment CEO Michael Lynton claimed the cancellation of the wide release was a response to the refusal of cinema chains to screen the films, not the hackers' threats, and that Sony would seek out other ways to distribute the film (Holmes, 2015).
- Released in 2020, *The Hunt* is an American horror thriller film directed by Craig Zobel. The film follows a group of high-income liberals who kidnap working class individuals with conservative political views to hunt them for sport. The initial controversy began when conservative outlets became aware of the Hillary Clinton coined word, "deplorables," that would be used to refer to the poor, murdered American in the story.

President Trump used social media to catalyze the public's anger over the use of this word. Next, following the criticism and in the wake of two mass shootings in El Paso, Texas and Dayton, Ohio, Universal suspended the film's promotional campaign and removed it from the release schedule. Finally, as the COVID-19 pandemic caused movie theaters to close, Universal announced the film would be available on video-on-demand (VOD) before the end of the typical 90-day theatrical run ("The Hunt (2020)," 2021).

- Released in 2020, *Mulan* is an American fantasy action drama produced by Walt Disney Pictures and directed by Niki Caro. The live-action remake stars Yifei Liu as Mulan, a fearless young woman who disguises herself as a man to battle northern invaders in China. The film received generally positive reviews, but was criticized for its cultural and historical inaccuracies, and its depiction of Chinese people. In the pre-production stages, false rumors that Disney was casting a white lead actress sparked anger, and star Yifei expressed support for the Hong Kong police, leading to boycotts and the trending hashtag #BoycottMulan. Though most of the backlash had dissipated by September, the film faced more public criticism for filming in Xinjiang, a Chinese region where Uyghur are reportedly being detained (Herman, 2016).

From these countless examples, it is important to note the reemerging themes: sex, violence, race, and religion. While some of the films may contain the same arguments and issues at their core, at the end of the day, each situation was different. For example, the struggle over racial oppression in relation to Griffith's 1915 *A Birth of a Nation* was uniquely situated by a different, internal struggle within The Segregation Era in the US when compared to the racial

oppression experienced in Caro's 2020 *Mulan* ("The Birth of a Nation (1915)," 2011), (Herman, 2016). Each film controversy, while walking the intersection between representation and racism, "was also unique, and the arguments and appeals issued were specific to the political contexts within which each controversy emerged" (Phillips, 2008, p.154).

The Conflict Management Life Cycle, created by Dennis Wilcox, is a Public Relations framework that describes the steps a corporation should take to most appropriately manage a conflict. The steps move through time from left to right, showing the "big picture" of how PR professionals deal with a conflict. The steps are categorized into four distinct phases: the proactive phase, the strategic phase, the reactive phase, and the recovery phase (Cameron, 2008).

The proactive phase includes all processes that will work to prevent a conflict from arising. This phase includes environmental scanning, or "constant reading, listening, and watching of current affairs with an eye toward the organization's interests" (Cameron, 2008, p.43). The proactive phase allows PR professionals to prepare for the worst, creating plans should something happen. The strategic phase focuses on when an issue has "become an emerging conflict" that needs concerted action (Cameron, 2008, p.44). This phase includes risk communication and conflict-positioning, tactics used to prepare and position an organization favorably in anticipation of the worst possible outcome. The reactive phase begins when a conflict reaches a critical level, forcing PR professionals to "react to events as they unfold in the external communication environment" (Cameron, 2008, p.44). This phase includes the implementation of a crisis management plan, and all the actual steps taken by an organization to mitigate the damage caused. The recovery phase focuses on the aftermath of a crises, employing strategies that will "bolster or repair [an organization's] reputation in the eyes of key publics" (Cameron, 2008, p.45).

Using the Conflict Management Life Cycle as a lens to examine three different movies, each with their own unique set of controversial themes, we will begin to understand how PR professionals are able to mitigate crises associated with controversial films.

The Exorcist - 1973

Overview

In 1973, *The Exorcist* was nominated for ten Academy Awards and became the first horror film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture. The film's sacrilegious and gruesome nature mixed with reports of individuals fainting, seizing, and vomiting during screenings, created a media frenzy, spiraling the film into unprecedented popularity. Instead of combatting the false rumors, Warner Brothers, the film's distributor, decided to let the media run its course, using the media frenzy as momentum for ticket sales. This case study will examine how Warner Brothers was able to mitigate the crisis with a hands-off approach, choosing to not implement tactics from the Conflict Management Life Cycle.

Background

The Exorcist is a 1973 American supernatural horror film directed by William Friedkin and based on the 1971 novel of the same name. The film follows the demonic possession of a 12-year-old girl (Linda Blair) and her actress mother's (Ellen Burstyn) attempt to save her through an exorcism performed by Catholic priests ("The Exorcist (1973)," 2019). The film was incredibly successful, nominated for ten Academy Awards, becoming the first horror film to be nominated for the Academy Award for Best Picture, and winning for Best Adapted Screenplay and Best Sound. With several sequels, *The Exorcist* was the highest-grossing R-rated horror film until *It* was released in 2017.

The Production Code, a strict set of guidelines in place from 1934 until 1968, “allowed the [Catholic] church to rewrite Hollywood in its own image with its own values and morals at the forefront” (Milne, 2019). After films were granted First Amendment protection in 1952, the Code became meaningless and officially abandoned in 1968. The abandonment of the Code shifted the control of Hollywood from the Catholic Church to the filmmakers, making *The Exorcist* one of the first films to push the envelope of what controversial themes could be shown on screen.

Main Narrative

The Exorcist was theatrically released on December 26, 1973, causing immediate controversy for its gruesome and sacrilegious nature. The MPAA ratings board had accommodated Warner Bros. by giving the film an R-rating (if you are under the age of 17, you can be accompanied by a parent/guardian) instead of an X-rating, giving many children the opportunity to see the film. As a result, several cities attempted to ban the film altogether or find ways to prevent children from attending (“The Exorcist (1973),” 2019). On January 15, 1974, The Catholic Film Newsletter gave the film an A-IV rating (films appropriate for “adults, with reservations”) with a “conservative and negative write-up” (Chambers, 2021, p.38), (*Catholic Church alters moral movie ratings*, 2003)

A media frenzy ensued, with strange behavior such as viewers becoming possessed by demons, fainting, convulsing, vomiting, having heart attacks, shouting, and even suffering from a miscarriage being reported at screenings. On February 11, 1974, Newsweek ran a cover story titled ‘The Exorcism Frenzy,’ featuring detailed stories about the erratic behavior of *The Exorcist* moviegoers. The media stories “were underpinned with narratives about the moral outrage of the Catholic Church,” leading to even more coverage in the press (Chambers, 2021, p.38).

It was not until 2021 that the scientific paper, *History of the Human Sciences*, shared the truth of what the Catholic Church really thought about the film. The official response from The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops' Office of Film and Broadcasting (USCCB-OFB) said that the film was only "unsuitable for a wide audience," but in general, it was a "positive response to the power of faith" (Tsintziras, 2023). The dramatized reports of Catholic outrage "were a means of promoting *The Exorcist* rather than an accurate reflection of the Catholic Church's nuanced response to the film and its scientific and religious content" (Chambers, 2021, p.46). Warner Bros was eager to "exploit reports of fainting fits, demonic possession, and religious outrage to boost sales and news coverage" (Chambers, 2021, p.46). Instead of making public statements in brand defense, Warner Bros. took a hands-off approach, never commenting on or reacting to the different surges in media attention. This marketing strategy contradicted director "Friedkin's respectful and collaborative approach to working with both religious communities and medical professionals" (Chambers, 2021, p.35-36).

Friedkin argued that "most people at the highest levels of the church accepted [the film] totally because the Roman Ritual of Exorcism is still in the New Testament" (Tsintziras, 2023). There were discussions on the use of church locations, detailed communication with medical professionals, and The Catholic Church was even involved in the movie-making: Father Henle (President of Georgetown) was a point of contact for Friedkin, sharing information with him about a real 1949 exorcism case (Chambers, 2021).

Discussion/ Conclusion

Twenty-one years before *The Exorcist* was released, films were granted freedom of speech under the First Amendment. This freedom gave moviemakers the ability to tell any story of any nature through moving pictures. *The Exorcist*, with its controversial depictions of

religion, is a prime example of this newfound storytelling freedom, leading to a national media frenzy. After reports that the Catholic Church publicly denounced the film, instead of crafting statements in brand defense, Warner Bros. unconventionally let the media take charge. Warner Bros. strategically used the media momentum to boost sales of the film, taking a hands-off approach.

By enacting a hands-off approach, Warner Bros. had nothing to manage in the Conflict Management Life Cycle. While the movie was being made, Warner Bros. was aware of the film's controversial nature, but they ignored the warning signs, using the controversy as a way to stir up attention. Warner Bros. did not act in denial, never seeking to remove any connection between the crisis and the organization; they did not take a diminishment, rebuilding, or bolstering posture. Warner Bros. allowed the media to control the narrative, riding the controversy out.

The Silence of the Lambs - 1991

Overview

On March 30, 1991, the film *The Silence of the Lambs* became only the third film to win Academy Awards in all the major five categories. Despite its stature as one of the greatest and most influential films of all time, the film has been subject to criticism surrounding its themes of human sexuality and sexual politics, sparking outrage amongst gay rights advocacy groups. The controversy becomes a battle between the LGBTQIA+ groups, who claims the movie works as a medium to promote trans and homophobia, and director Jonathan Demme's justification for his choices. This case study will use the Conflict Management Life Cycle as a lens to examine

how Jonathan Demme was able to employ tactics during the reactive phase to protect the legacy of his film.

Background

The Silence of the Lambs is a 1991 American psychological horror film directed by Jonathan Demme. Adapted from Thomas Harris's 1988 novel, the film follows a young FBI trainee (Jodie Foster) as she hunts a serial killer who skins his female victims. The film was incredibly successful, becoming only the third film to win Academy Awards in all the major five categories: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay (BBFC, 2022).

The global epidemic of HIV/AIDS (human immunodeficiency virus infection and acquired immunodeficiency syndrome) began in 1981, becoming one of the most prevalent and deadliest ongoing world health issues. HIV is “a virus that attacks the body’s immune system” that can lead to AIDS, disproportionately affecting specific populations: sex workers and their clients, men who have sex with men, people who inject drugs, and transgender people (*About HIV/AIDS*, 2023), (“Global HIV & AIDS statistics,” 2021). The national prominence of the AIDS crisis during the mid-1980s facilitated a dramatic rise in gay, lesbian, and transgender activism. By the early 1990s, numerous LGBTQIA+ activism groups (ACT-UP, Gay Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), Queer Nation) began taking vocal stands against both legal and cultural forms of discrimination, centering on Hollywood as their main target (Phillips, 2008, p.18, 39).

Main Narrative

On March 30, 1991, outside the 64th annual Academy Awards ceremony, hundreds of gay-rights protestors and advocacy groups stood behind a police barricade “chanting, picketing,

[and] defacing the giant golden Oscar statues” (Phillips, 2008, p.18), (Watkins, 2016). Fueled by the underrepresentation and frivolous depictions for their community on screen, the LGBTQIA+ protestors were angered by the transphobic depiction of the *Silence of the Lamb*’s vicious serial killer, Jame Gumb/ Buffalo Bill. The various gay-rights advocacy groups argued that the character is a “walking, talking gay stereotype,” and will ultimately work to encourage audiences to treat gay people in real life accordingly (Bloomer, 2017). Some A-list attendees even wore red AIDS ribbons on their gowns and tuxedos in allyship with the protestors.

In response to the outrage, Director Jonathan Demme quickly launched a public apology saying he “knew it was tremendously important to not have Gumb misinterpreted by the audience as being homosexual. That would be a complete betrayal of the themes of the movie. And a disservice to gay people” (Sitompul, 2021). The film’s distributor, Orion, attempted to reduce the uproar by “loaning prints of the movie for AIDS fundraisers,” but protestors’ demeanors toward the film did not change (Bloomer, 2017). Demme spent the next several years “justifying and apologizing for the film’s portrayal of the character,” using the outrage as inspiration for his next film in 1993, *Philadelphia* (Phillips, 2008). Starring Tom Hanks, *Philadelphia* was one of the first mainstream Hollywood films to mention AIDS. Demme claimed there was no correlation between the backlash he received for *The Silence of the Lambs* and the themes for *Philadelphia*, but many critics believe the film was used as a half-witted apology. In 1994, Demme said “it’s the job of militants to demand more of anything... there could have been more of this, or more of that, but now, maybe another film will take it further” (Colangelo, 2021). In 2014, over 20 years since the film’s initial release, Demme began to apologize and understand why activists were so angry, saying “Gumb isn’t gay. And this is my

directorial failing in making *The Silence of the Lambs*- that I didn't find ways to emphasize the fact that Gumb wasn't gay" (Bloomer, 2017).

Discussion

After LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups publicly criticized and rioted against the movie, *The Silence of the Lambs*, a future for the film and its director, Jonathan Demme, seemed impossible. Yet, over thirty years since the film's release, it is still considered one of the greatest of all time, ranked the fifth- greatest and most influential thriller films by the American Film Institute (BBFC, 2022). However, director Jonathan Demme still spent the rest of his career justifying his decisions. Demme was able to navigate the crisis by relying on tactics employed during the reactive phase of the Conflict Management Life Cycle.

Reactive Phase

In this crisis, Jonathan Demme used a combination of the diminishment posture, justification, and the rebuilding posture, apology, to communicate with his publics during this phase. In 1991, during his first public statement, Demme told Film Comment that he "knew it was tremendously important to not have Gumb misinterpreted by the audience as being homosexual. That would be a complete betrayal of the themes of the movie. And a disservice to gay people" (Sitompul, 2021). By explaining and justifying his actions at the forefront, Demme was steadily mitigating the unexpected interpretation his movie was conveying to audiences. Demme wanted to defend the film he had spent so long creating, while also acknowledging the misinterpretation of the film by the LGBTQIA+ community.

In 1994, Demme made another statement saying that "it's the job of militants to demand more of anything. If these people were satisfied, change would be hard to get through. Every one of them is right. There could have been more of this, or more of that, but now, maybe another

film will take it further” (Colangelo, 2021). By commenting on the film a second time, Demme reopened the controversy that was just beginning to settle.

In 2014, Demme makes yet another statement on the film, saying “Juan Botas, who was one of the inspirations for ‘Philadelphia’ said, ‘You can't imagine what it's like to be a 12-year-old gay kid, and you go to the movies all the time and whenever you see a gay character, they're either a ridiculous comic-relief caricature, or a demented killer. It's very hard growing up gay and being exposed to all these stereotypes.’ That registered with me in a big way. It's now become a part of the dialogue on stereotypical portrayals of gays in movies” (Colangelo, 2021). Commenting on the film a third time, nearly twenty years after the initial release, Demme finally relied on the accommodative tactic, apology, to explain his actions.

By continuing to justify and apologize for the misinterpretation of his film, Demme remained in open dialogue until his death in 2017, never able to leave the Reactive Phase of the Conflict Management Life Cycle.

Conclusions

The recovery phase happens when the crisis dies down, allowing the company to focus on their reputation management and image restoration strategies. Because Demme spent years in open dialogue about his actions, he was never able to reach the Recovery Phase. Though Demme was never able to begin his image restoration and carried the weight of his controversy throughout the remainder of his career, his use of the Reactive Phase of the Conflict Management Life Cycle did not let him down entirely. After all, *Silence of the Lambs* is still considered one of the greatest films of all time, and Demme was able to lead an extraordinarily successful career. However, through his public statements, Demme was never going to be able to

satisfy everyone. A more beneficial route would have been to stand by his original statement, move on, and never comment on the issue again.

Alec Baldwin Shooting - 2021

Overview

On October 21, 2021, actor Alec Baldwin fired a prop gun on the set of the movie *Rust*, killing cinematographer Halyna Hutchins and injuring director Joel Souza. The incident sparked outrage over film set safety protocols and put Rust Movie Productions (RMP) at the center of the controversy. This case study will use the Conflict Management Life Cycle as a lens to examine how Rust Movie Productions was able to employ tactics during the proactive and reactive phases to successfully resume filming.

Background

Rust is an American Western film written and directed by Joel Souza. The film is set in 1880s Kansas and follows outlaw Harland Rust (Alec Baldwin) who must rescue his thirteen-year-old grandson Lucas (Brady Noon), who has been sentenced to murder after an accidental shooting (“Rust (upcoming film),” 2022).

From 1990 to 2014, there have been over 194 serious film and TV set accidents in the United States, resulting in 43 deaths (Taylor, 2021). The industry-wide guidance for actors and film crews when a scene calls for the use of prop guns is to “treat all firearms as if they are loaded” (Mulvihill, 2021). According to the IATSE, “Armorerers are responsible for the transport, storage, and safe use of all weaponry and firearms on film sets” (Portantino, 2022). It is illegal to use firearms on set unless a licensed Armorer is present.

Protected by the Second Amendment to the United States Constitution, gun ownership in the U.S. is the highest in the world, commonly used for self-defense, hunting, and recreational purposes (“Gun culture in the United States,” 2022). The use of guns in Hollywood has a long tradition dating back to 1930s gangster movies and 1950s Western TV shows. Gun violence has dramatically increased in movies accessible to teens with “gun violence in PG-13 movies nearly tripl[ing] over the 30 years between 1985 (the year after the rating was introduced) and 2015” (Bushman, 2022). The gun industry also pays production companies to put guns in their movies, improving specific model sales. “There is a danger that Hollywood is not merely reflecting society- it is encouraging firearm sales” (Bushman, 2022).

Main Narrative

On October 21, 2021, the twelfth day of a twenty-one day shoot, six crew members walked off set to protest the poor working conditions. Later that day, while rehearsing a gunfight scene, firearms and ammunition were retrieved from a locked safe by Armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed who placed three prop guns on a cart. Assistant director Dave Halls took the .45 Colt revolver from the cart and handed it to actor Alec Baldwin for his scene. Baldwin pointed the gun at the camera when it fired a single time, striking Hutchins in the chest and Souza in the shoulder. Rust Movie Productions paused production “to comply with the investigation and to provide counseling to people working on the film” (Curto, 2022), (“Rust shooting incident,” 2022).

The incident quickly went under investigation by the state’s First Judicial District Attorney, the New Mexico Occupational Health and Safety Bureau, and the Federal Bureau of Investigation. On February 15, 2022, four months after the incident, the Hutchins family filed a wrongful death suit naming Baldwin, Halls, Gutierrez-Reed, prop master Sarah Zachry, and

others as defendants. On April 21, 2022, the state of New Mexico fined production company RMP \$137,000 for ignoring firearm safety regulations (“Rust shooting incident,” 2022). In October 2022, the Hutchins family settled the lawsuit. *Rust* is set to resume filming in California in January 2023 with widower Matthew Hutchins as executive producer. Matthew said in a statement following the case’s dismissal that “all of us believe Halyna’s death was a terrible accident. I am grateful that the producers and the entertainment community have come together to pay tribute to Halyna’s final work” (Hernandez, 2022).

Discussion

After two principal production members were shot on the set of the movie *Rust*, a future for the film seemed highly inconceivable. Yet, only a year after the incident occurred, the film is set to resume shooting with the majority of the original crew. RMP was able to expertly navigate the crisis by relying on tactics employed during the proactive and reactive phases of the Conflict Management Life Cycle.

Proactive Phase

“While accidental discharges like these are rare on movie sets, such an event, as a matter of prudence and safety, is to be anticipated” (Van Wyngarden, 2022). In this crisis, RMP took the preventative steps necessary to handle the unforeseen shooting on set. As written in RMP’s official answer to the administrative complaint, RMP “hired and relied upon Ms. Gutierrez-Reed, an independent contractor, to perform and supervise all functions related to the use of firearms” (Van Wyngarden, 2022). By delegating the firearm safety to a “highly recommended,” specialized independent contractor, RMP took the right steps during the proactive phase to put preventative measures in place to prepare for the crisis before it occurred (Van Wyngarden, 2022).

Reactive Phase

The reactive phase includes all of the actual steps taken by a company leading to the conflict resolution. While addressing the crisis publicly for the first time, a spokesperson for RMP said “the safety of our cast and crew is the top priority... we will be conducting an internal review of our procedures... [and] we will continue to cooperate with the Santa Fe authorities” (Saperstein, 2021). By promising to examine the situation through an investigation, RMP created a level of vulnerability for the organization to act as the discovered facts warranted, slowly beginning to repair the damage caused.

In a different public statement, a spokesperson from RMP said “we send our deepest condolences to Halyna’s family and loved ones...we will be providing counseling services to everyone connected to the film as we work to process this awful event” (Nardino, 2022). RMP used concern to convey that it was not indifferent to the situation and condolence to express “grief over someone’s loss or misfortune” (Tipurić, 2013). Despite harsh accusations about RMP’s responsibility for the incident, both of the vocal commiseration strategies (concern and condolence) employed were done strategically without admitting guilt. By not admitting guilt, RMP was able to position itself in a positive light, successfully laying the foundation for future image and reputation repair.

Conclusions

Despite expertly navigating through the proactive and reactive phases of the Conflict Management Life Cycle, there are still many areas where RMP fell short and permanently altered its reputation amongst its publics. RMP failed to utilize internal monitoring; a company’s ability to build relationships through two-way discussions with the various stakeholders involved (crew members, department heads, actors, producers, etc.). By refusing to listen or respond to its

stakeholders' complaints about poor working conditions before the incident, RMP added unwanted chaos and confusion to the tragic situation. If RMP had spent time investing in building mutually beneficial relationships with its stakeholders, the internal tension that worked to escalate the crisis later on could have been minimized.

The *Rust* film shooting incident shows exactly how important internal communication and relationships are with stakeholders at all levels of production. If RMP had spent more time communicating with its publics and understanding their concerns, disagreements would have been minimized, leading to less conspiracy and blame shifting, and allowing a tragic accident to be exactly that: a tragic accident.

Recommendations

Films reflect society, telling stories about people in a country, claiming a moment in history. Moving pictures are a bridge between thought and action; a tool used to stir up discussion, promote thought, incite action, and advance freedom. In this environment, it is nearly impossible for a film to be released and not receive any kind of pushback. In order to most appropriately handle a film crisis, moviemakers must be proactive.

First, it is absolutely necessary for moviemakers to understand the societal context they are putting a film into before releasing it. Movies are uniquely poised during specific periods of time and civil disagreement. Outside pressures make each context different. For example, *The Silence of the Lambs* was a byproduct of being released during the AIDS pandemic, *The Rust* tragedy happened during a time of intense national gun debate, and *The Exorcist* was released only a few years after the Catholic Church had lost its control over cinema. A film can never be removed from the culture/context it is released in and moviemakers should be prepared.

Second, there are a million things that can go wrong; expect the unexpected. From a main actor speaking out in an incorrect manner to SONY suffering from a computer hack by a group tied to North Korea, anything can happen and moviemakers should have a plan. Each crisis management plan needs to be customized; there is no cookie-cutter plan. But, knowing your options can be helpful, and moviemakers have more choice than they probably realize.

Using the Conflict Management Life Cycle as a lens, and looking at the case studies discussed, here are three different approaches to mitigating a film-related crisis.

- *The Exorcist- 1973*

After the Catholic Church publicly denounced *The Exorcist* and reports of individuals fainting, seizing, and vomiting during screenings propelled the popularity of the film, Warner Brothers decided to let the media frenzy run its course. By enacting a hands-off approach, Warner Bros. had nothing to manage in the Conflict Management Life Cycle, choosing to let the media control the narrative and riding the controversy out.

- *The Silence of the Lambs- 1991*

After *The Silence of the Lambs* was publicly denounced by LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups for the stereotypical portrayal of serial killer, Buffalo Bill, director Jonathan Demme made use of the Reactive Phase of the Conflict Management Life Cycle, acting as a spokesperson and publicly justifying his actions on three separate occasions in 1991, 1994, and 2014. Because he spent years in open dialogue about his actions, he was never able to reach the Recovery Phase where image and reputation restoration occurs. While Demme strategically established himself as a spokesperson and went on to have a successful career, through his many different public statements, Demme was never going

to be able to satisfy everyone. A more beneficial route would have been to stand by his original statement, move on, and never comment on the issue again.

- *Rust- 2023*

After two principal production members were shot on the set of the movie *Rust*, a future for the film seemed highly inconceivable. Yet, only a year after the incident occurred, the film is set to resume shooting in 2023 with the majority of the original crew. Rust Movie Productions was able to navigate the crisis by relying on the hiring of Armorer Hannah Gutierrez-Reed during the proactive phase, and the expression of concern and condolence employed during the reactive phase. If RMP had spent more time communicating with its publics and understanding their concerns, disagreements would have been minimized, leading to less conspiracy and blame shifting, and the internal tension that worked to escalate the crisis later on could have been prevented.

In the world of Strategic Communications, these three examples reveal just how atypical the response strategies have to be for crisis communication in film. Because there are so many people involved on a film set, it is an impossible task to handle every individual, making movies an inevitable destination for internal conflicts. Regardless of how many preventative steps or preparatory actions are taken, accidents on movie sets are certainly going to happen. Sometimes, you can take a hands-off approach and let the crisis resolve itself like in the *The Exorcist* case study. Sometimes you can bring the movie to a full on stop like in the *Rust* case study. Or, sometimes, you can end up engaging in dialogue for years like Jonathan Demme and his movie *The Silence of the Lambs*. There is no one right way to respond to a film crisis, but by

understanding the societal context a film is being released into and planning for the unexpected, moviemakers can strategically prepare for the inevitable.

Controversial films are important. “In each instance average citizens raised their voices in an attempt to shape the course of their culture, and it is this impulse that seems essential to any concept of a democratic society. That people state their concerns matters, and the ways people express their protests matter, even when it’s only about a movie.” (Coombs, 2007, p.154).

References

- About HIV/AIDS | HIV Basics | HIV/AIDS | CDC.* (n.d.). Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://www.cdc.gov/hiv/basics/whatishiv.html>
- Alpaslan, Can & Green jr, Sandy & Mitroff, Ian. (2009). Corporate Governance in the Context of Crises: Towards a Stakeholder Theory of Crisis Management. *Journal of Contingencies and Crisis Management.* 17. 38 - 49. 10.1111/j.1468-5973.2009.00555.x.
- BBFC. "The Silence Of The Lambs". www.bbfc.co.uk. Retrieved February 13, 2022.
- Bloomer, J. (2017, April 28). Director Jonathan Demme faced down Silence of the Lambs' gay backlash. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://slate.com/human-interest/2017/04/director-jonathan-demme-faced-down-silence-of-the-lambs-gay-backlash.html>
- Bushman, Brad. "Hollywood's Love of Guns Increases Risk of Shootings." *Lockhaven.com*, The Express, 29 Oct. 2021, <https://www.lockhaven.com/opinion/columns/2021/10/hollywoods-love-of-guns-increases-risk-of-shootings/>.
- Cameron, G. T. (2008). *Public Relations Today: Managing Competition and Conflict*. Pearson/Allyn and Bacon.
- Catholic Church alters moral movie ratings.* (2003, August 15). Deseret News. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://www.deseret.com/2003/8/16/19742477/catholic-church-alters-moral-movie-ratings>
- Chambers, A. C. (2021). 'Somewhere between science and superstition': Religious outrage, horrific science, and *The Exorcist* (1973). *History of Human Sciences*, 34(5), 32-52.

10.1177/09526951211004465

Colangelo, B. (2021, November 12). *The Silence Of The Lambs Controversy Explained*. Slash Film. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from <https://www.slashfilm.com/659186/the-silence-of-the-lambs-controversy-explained/>

Coombs, W. T. (2007). *Ongoing Crisis Communication: Planning, Managing, and Responding*. SAGE Publications.

Culture Shock: The TV Series and Beyond: Hollywood Censored: The Production Code. (n.d.). PBS. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.pbs.org/wgbh/cultureshock/beyond/hollywood.html>

Curto, Justin. "Alec Baldwin Is Suing Crew Members for Negligence in Rust Shooting." *Vulture*, Vulture, 12 Nov. 2022, <https://www.vulture.com/2022/11/alec-baldwin-rust-shooting-what-happened-gun-details.html>.

Doherty, Thomas Patrick. *Hollywood's Censor: Joseph I. Breen and the Production Code Administration*. New York: Columbia University Press 2009; ISBN 0-231-14358-3.

Dow, D. C. (2009). *Motion Picture Ratings | The First Amendment Encyclopedia*. Middle Tennessee State University. Retrieved April 26, 2023, from <https://www.mtsu.edu/first-amendment/article/1247/motion-picture-ratings>

"Global HIV & AIDS statistics - 2021 fact sheet". www.unaids.org. UNAIDS. Retrieved 17 July 2021.

Grieverson, Lee, 1969- (24 May 2004). *Policing cinema : movies and censorship in early-twentieth-century America*. Berkeley: University of California Press. p. 39. ISBN 978-0-520-93742-0. OCLC 56713994.

Gun culture in the United States. (2022, Nov. 24). In *Wikipedia*.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gun_culture_in_the_United_States#:~:text=Gun%20ownership%20in%20the%20United,uses%2C%20such%20as%20target%20shooting.

Herman, Doug. 2016. How the Story of “Moana” and Maui Holds Up Against Cultural Truths. Smithsonian.com. Washington: Smithsonian Institution.

Hernandez, Joe. “Halyna Hutchins' Family Settles with Alec Baldwin over Cinematographer's Death.” *NPR*, NPR, 5 Oct. 2022, <https://www.npr.org/2022/10/05/1126940511/halyna-hutchins-rust-alec-baldwin-settlement>.

Holladay, S. J., & Coombs, W. T. (Eds.). (2012). *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*.

Holmes, Brent (January 4, 2015). “The Interview: Satire is the Greatest Enemy of Tyrants”. *Westergazette.ca*.

Movies, radio, and sports in the 1920s. (n.d.). Khan Academy. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://www.khanacademy.org/humanities/us-history/rise-to-world-power/1920s-america/a/movies-cinema-sports-1920s>

Milne, A. (2019, February 19). *Hays Code: The Catholic-Backed Censorship That Tamed Early Hollywood*. All That's Interesting. Retrieved May 4, 2023, from <https://allthatsinteresting.com/hays-code>

Mulvihill, Geoff. “Gun Safety on Movie Sets? States Mostly Follow Guidelines Set by Studios, Unions.” *Times*, Chicago Sun-Times, 23 Oct. 2021, <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/2021/10/23/22741990/gun-safety-rules-movie-sets-state-regulations-brandon-lee-alec-baldwin-rust-accidental-shooting>.

Nardino, Meredith. "Alec Baldwin Shares Photo of Halyna Hutchins on Anniversary of Her Death." *Us Weekly*, 21 Oct. 2022, <https://www.usmagazine.com/celebrity-news/pictures/alec-baldwin-shooting-on-rust-set-everything-to-know-so-far/>.

Portantino. "Motion Picture Production: Armorers: Firearm Safety." Senate Committee on Public Safety, 16 Mar. 2022.

Rust shooting incident. (2022, Nov. 12). In *Wikipedia*.
https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rust_shooting_incident

Rust (upcoming film). (2022, Nov. 28). In *Wikipedia*.
[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rust_\(upcoming_film\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rust_(upcoming_film))

Saperstein, Pat. "'Rust' Production Was Chaotic Prior to Fatal Prop Gun Accident, Producers Launch Internal Safety Review." *Variety*, Variety, 23 Oct. 2021,
<https://variety.com/2021/film/news/rust-crew-members-safety-issues-alec-baldwin-1235095828/>.

Sitompul, D. K. H. (2021, June). The Interpretive Controversy of LGBTQ Defamation in The Silence of The Lambs (1991): Inescapable Nature of Heteroglossia. *ResearchGate*.
10.13140/RG.2.2.34136.62722

Taylor, Derrick Bryson. "Recent Accidents on TV and Movie Sets." *The New York Times*, The New York Times, 22 Oct. 2021, <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/10/22/movies/accidents-movie-sets-tv.html>.

“The Birth of a Nation (1915)”. *Filmsite.org*. Archived from the original on September 3, 2011.

The End of an Era: From Silent Film to Talkies | ETEC540: Text, Technologies - Community

Weblog. (2012, October 28). UBC Blogs. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from

<https://blogs.ubc.ca/etec540sept12/2012/10/28/the-end-of-an-era-from-silent-film-to-talkies/>

"The Exorcist (1973)". *AFI Catalog of Feature Films*. Archived from the original on February 17, 2019. Retrieved October 27, 2019.

"*The Hunt (2020)*". *Box Office Mojo*. IMDb. Archived from the original on February 18, 2021.

Retrieved July 17, 2020.

"THE LAST TEMPTATION OF CHRIST (1988)". *American Film Institute*. Retrieved April 13, 2023.

Tipurić, Darko & Skoko, Božo & Jugo, Damir & Žagar, Marina. (2013). Crisis Management

Dilemmas: Differences in Attitudes towards Reactive Crisis Strategies among future

Business Professionals in Croatia. *MONTENEGRIN JOURNAL OF ECONOMICS*. 9.

27-37.

Tsintziras, A. (2023, March 6). *Why Was The Exorcist So Controversial?* Game Rant. Retrieved

May 2, 2023, from <https://gamerant.com/the-exorcist-horror-movie-controversy-explained/>

"*UNITED 93 (15)*". *United International Pictures*. British Board of Film Classification. May 11, 2006. Retrieved September 11, 2021.

Van Wyngarden, Thomas L. “Answer Of Rust Movie Productions, LLC To Administrative

Complaint.” Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP, 6 Sept. 2022.

Watkins, G. (2016, February 24). *Before #OscarsSoWhite: The Forgotten Story of Queer Nation's 1992 Academy Awards Protest*. yahoo!news. Retrieved May 2, 2023, from https://www.yahoo.com/news/before-oscarssowhite-the-forgotten-story-of-201810336.html?guce_referrer=aHR0cHM6Ly93d3cuZ29vZ2xlLmNvbS8&guce_referrer_sig=AQAAABFBh6EPFUXBz8p2ZWCTuAD1o3d9aUa7IODKXZXDMFNLXv_qUeJnPTzzquJD_73OBDwbJkzMoNmj6kEI01dheAUZv4A2uz96I16jiC

Wilshire, P. (2005). *Gale Academic Onefile*. go.gale.com. Retrieved April 24, 2023, from <https://go.gale.com/ps/i.do?id=GALE%7CA135579537&sid=googleScholar&v=2.1&it=r&linkaccess=abs&issn=14431629&p=AONE&sw=w&userGroupName=anon%7Ef18949b7>