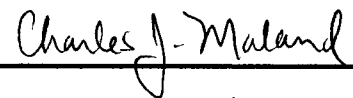


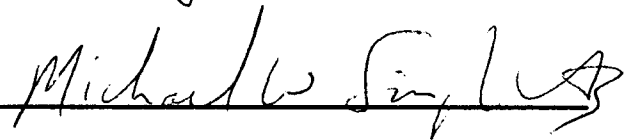
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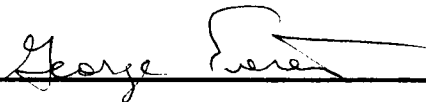
I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by David Pierson Badger entitled "Effects of Film Criticism on Audience Interest, Attendance, and Evaluation." I have examined the final copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Communications.


M. Mark Miller, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation
and recommend its acceptance:







Accepted for the Council:


Vice Provost
and Dean of the Graduate School

EFFECTS OF FILM CRITICISM ON AUDIENCE INTEREST,
ATTENDANCE, AND EVALUATION

A Dissertation
Presented for the
Doctor of Philosophy
Degree
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

David Pierson Badger

August 1987

DEDICATED TO
SHERRY AND JEFFREY

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ABSTRACT

The influence of arts critics has been debated for centuries, but there is little scientific evidence on the subject. This research brings a variety of data to the issue via a laboratory experiment with both attitudinal and behavioral measures.

In April 1985, 318 Middle Tennessee State University students were randomly assigned to four treatment conditions, in which they read either a positive, mixed, or negative review, or a non-evaluative description (non-review) of the motion picture Butley. Before exposure to treatments, subjects reported interest in seeing the movie; after exposure, they rated the reviews for appeal, credibility, and informativeness and again reported interest in seeing the movie. These self-report measures were supplemented with behavioral measures. Subjects were provided with opportunities to take a free pass for a subsequent screening of Butley, to attend the screening, and to bring a guest. Subjects and guests who attended screenings also evaluated the film.

The results showed review condition significantly affects audience interest, with interest increasing most in the positive condition, least in the negative condition, and in between in mixed and non-review conditions.

Factor analysis of subjects' evaluations of reviews revealed two underlying dimensions: appeal and credibility-informativeness. Review condition was significantly related to appeal, with positive and non-reviews more appealing than mixed and negative reviews. However, condition was not related to credibility-informativeness.

Review condition did not significantly affect the taking of a free pass; however, trends were in the expected direction, with subjects exposed to the positive review most likely to take a pass, and those exposed to the negative review least likely.

Because only 12 subjects attended screenings, inferential statistics were not applied to attendance or post-viewing film evaluation. However, 6 of the 12 who attended were from the positive review condition and only 1 from the negative.

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CHAPTER I

STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Sneer: But surely, Mr. Puff, there is no great mystery in your present profession?

Puff: Mystery! Sir, I will take upon me to say the matter was never scientifically treated, nor reduced to rule before.

--Richard Sheridan, 1781,
The Critic, Act I, Scene 2

Introduction

Despite a rich vein of studies of mass media audiences mined by communications scholars over the years, surprisingly little scientific research has been published about audiences for motion pictures. In fact, scholarly interest in movie audiences "has waned greatly since the advent of television" (Bannerman & Lewis, 1977, p. 129), and emphasis on TV and newspapers as primary media sources "has reduced film to a second-class medium for communication research" (Elliott & Schenck-Hamlin, 1979, p. 546).

Forty years ago, in his first annual report to the Motion Picture Association of America, MPAA President Eric Johnston declared: "The motion picture industry probably knows less about itself than any other major industry in the United States" (cited in Handel, 1950, p. 93). Nearly

30 years later, the president of the National Association of Theatre Owners echoed that verdict when he confessed: "We simply do not have hard data on who goes to movies and who doesn't, much less why they go and don't go, and how we motivate more to do so" ("Motivational Research," 1974, p. 7).

Between 1935 and 1952, George Gallup's Audience Research Institute conducted regular studies for a variety of Hollywood and independent producers. "The motion picture industry is threshing about in ignorance of what the public really likes," opined a youthful David Ogilvy (founder of Ogilvy & Mather), prior to going to work for Gallup in the mid-1930s. "I swear it is possible to eliminate the blind ignorance and false statistics which are throttling this giant industry" (1978, p. 74). But, as Ogilvy later recalled, "Once [Gallup] had worked out the methodology of the research, he lost interest and moved on to something new" (p. 82). Scientific research about film audiences has been sparse ever since--reserved, for the most part, for proprietary purposes (Fiske & Handel, 1946; Austin, 1981; Kilday, 1983).

Inadequate as film audience research in general may be, it easily eclipses the aggregate of scientific studies of film criticism. In fact, according to Austin, "systematic, empirical investigation of the public's use of movie reviews is virtually nonexistent" (1983a, p. 158).

While scholarly studies of film criticism and its effects on potential and actual audiences may be wanting, there has been no shortage of public debate over the years concerning the perceived impact of mass-communicated arts criticism on its consumers.

"Now, in reality, the world have [sic] paid too great a compliment to critics and have imagined them men of much greater profundity than they really are," English novelist Henry Fielding carped in 1749. "From this complaisance the critics have been emboldened to assume a dictatorial power, and have so far succeeded that they are now become the masters" (p. 176).

Although the "prevailing tendency" among English literary and drama critics in the century that followed "was to indulge in slashing personalities," sarcasm, and censure (Salmon, 1923, p. 302), the tendency among the earliest American critics was "towards undue praise" (p. 304). Nonetheless, the putative power of American critics was deemed a potential threat by some members of society, and one Boston magazine editor observed with relief:

It is very gratifying to think that the influence of reviewers upon society is every day becoming more and more limited. . . . [Even] the most indefatigable of the scribes of darkness can scarcely flatter himself that he has done any single act of successful mischief. (cited in Salmon, 1923, p. 307)

Throughout the 20th century, film critics in particular have been singled out--and frequently reproved--

for their so-called power over mass audiences. When, for example, the Chicago Tribune established its first motion picture review column in 1914, staff critic "Kitty Kelly" (a pseudonym for Audrie Alspaugh), "by reason of being the first independent motion picture critic, attained a remarkable power over pictures in Tribune territory. . . . Kitty Kelly could make or break a picture in the Middle West . . . [and] she became the best disliked name in the world of the film makers" (Ramsaye, 1926, p. 681).

Among contemporary film critics, Pauline Kael of The New Yorker, Andrew Sarris of The Village Voice, John Simon of New York and The National Review, and Vincent Canby of The New York Times have all been accused at one time or another of wielding too much power.

"The holy trinity of popular film criticism is composed of Sarris, Kael and Simon," New York Post entertainment reporter Helen Dudar wrote in 1976, "the first two because they profoundly influence the way many of us see movies, Simon because he . . . has no peer in his gift for inciting hostility" (p. 153). Dudar claims that "Hollywood reads [Kael] obsessively and courts her approval out of all proportion to the size of The New Yorker's audience" (p. 156). Show business reporter David Handelman argues that Kael has "dominated film criticism in a way that no star has dominated Hollywood" by becoming "a mother

hen for many respected and important critics" and having "a tight clique of disciples over whom she holds powerful sway" (1985, p. 242). And, free-lance film critic Stephen Farber contends, "Kael's reviews influence many of the movie feature stories and personality profiles in the mass circulation newspapers and magazines, and her opinions affect all her fellow critics. . . . [Her] ability to intimidate other critics seems alarming" (1976, pp. 420-421).

Los Angeles Times press critic David Shaw agrees that East Coast critics have clout, especially those based in New York City. "There is no question that critics are more influential in New York than in any other single American city," he asserts. "New York is the media-conscious media capital of the United States, a city with a large, concentrated, sophisticated moviegoing audience" (1976, p. 141). Shaw continues:

The New York critics influence not only New York moviegoers but, indirectly, moviegoers elsewhere simply by creating a climate in which theater owners feel safe in playing a given movie.

This influence need not even be immediate; it can be cumulative The influence of the New York critics is even more pervasive . . . for their impact is felt--at least subconsciously--by critics in other cities. . . .

A favorable review by Vincent Canby in the New York Times can mean more to a movie than almost any other single review . . . [and] four stars--the top rating--from the Daily News can mean almost as much as a Canby rave

Because most movies . . . open in New York first, the New York critics--those who write for

New York publications and those who write for national magazines based in New York--tend to be quoted more copiously in ads in other cities, thereby compounding their influence: First they provide the initial impetus (or impediment) for New York audiences; then, as advertising surrogates . . . they continue to provide momentum, in varying and lesser degrees, for audiences in other cities. (pp. 137, 141)

Recently, Canby has been called "one of the dozen or so most powerful and influential men in the world of film" (Carney, 1986, p. 25), reputedly endowed with "the ability to make or break the fortunes of scores of films every year" (p. 25).

But Canby denies he has influence "beyond the power of the Times" (cited in Carney, 1986, p. 26), and Kael contends that audiences "don't listen to the critics--they listen to the advertising, [which] seeps through everything" (1976, p. 313). She continues:

A reviewer speaks out once, or maybe twice. The advertisers are an invisible force pounding at the public day after day. Unfavorable reviews are almost never powerful enough to undo the saturation publicity

People often . . . raise the question, "Don't movie critics have too much power?" But in movies it's the businessmen who have the power. A reviewer's words can't be heard above the din (pp. 320-321)

One national survey of critics found that "more than two-thirds believed they did have some effect on their readers or viewers" (English, 1979, p. 115), but a nationwide Harris poll for the National Research Center of the Arts found that only 37% of Americans cited "what

critics said about a film" as "very important" or "somewhat important" in deciding whether to go to a movie (61% responded that what critics said was "not very important" or "not important") (1975, p. 420).

Farber asserts that "reviews carry little weight at the box office" (1976, p. 420), and the chief film buyer for the National General theatre chain told the Los Angeles Times, "If you think people who want to see films . . . are going to change their minds because the critics pan the movie, you're crazy" (cited in Shaw, 1977, p. 135). One frustrated former film critic for Newsweek complained: "Reviewing films, then, is like reviewing or criticizing a blizzard or war. The critic is laughably impotent [and] has no influence with the film-makers or with the film audiences" (Slavitt, 1967, p. 337).

"Critical remarks about film don't seem to have anything, or very little, to do with its success or failure," concludes Joy Boyum of the Wall Street Journal. "In fact, it is an illusion to believe that critics have any kind of real weight in the market. That great mass of audience does not read the critics" (cited in English, 1979, p. 126).

Meanwhile, the controversy over critical influence persists. Moreover, the specific issue of whether a film review can enhance or reduce filmgoer interest in seeing a particular film, motivate attendance, or prejudice post-

viewing evaluational response remains open to question. Virtually no empirical studies measuring attitudinal effects of film criticism, and apparently none measuring behavioral effects, have been conducted--a deficiency this investigation seeks to correct.

If, as some observers insist, film reviews do influence moviegoers, the phenomenon merits study. Empirical evidence of the effects of film criticism on audience interest, attendance, and evaluation might help to untangle the myths and cultural folklore from the salient facts about criticism's potency. A controlled laboratory experiment, embracing supplementary behavioral measures in the field, would generate findings not only of interest to critics who review the popular arts for a galaxy of print and broadcast media, but also of import to editors, publishers, and corporate owners. The patriarchs of the American film industry--from studio chiefs and marketing executives to distributors and exhibitors--should have an even keener interest in such findings, for theirs is a multibillion-dollar-a-year business which accounts for a staggering 46% of total U.S. spectator amusement expenditures, including spectator sports (Gertner, 1986).

Since moviemakers cherish the belief that the recommendations and opinions expressed by audiences--known in the trade as "word of mouth"--are among the most

important determinants of the success or failure of a film in general release (Handel, 1950; Jowett & Linton, 1980; Lees & Berkowitz, 1981), an experimental study of the impact of film criticism on moviegoers' post-viewing evaluations might also invite attention. "A lot of readers don't want to make up their own minds," argues New York Times critic Vincent Canby (1975, p. 11); experimental evidence might substantiate or rebut his claim.

Finally, filmgoers and communications scholars alike could benefit from information that enhances their understanding of the role and importance of motion pictures and critics in society today.

Need for the Study

"If one expects the cinema audience to be a well researched one, disappointment is in the offing," Jarvie observed in 1970 (p. 108). Ten years later, Jowett and Linton echoed that verdict:

It is rather difficult to believe, but movie scholarship has tended to neglect the audience entirely, and there is very little literature which adequately deals with the subject. (1980, pp. 79-80)

The insufficiency of film audience research may largely be due to a prevailing Hollywood maxim that "the movie business, by its unique nature, defies polls and projections" (Gillette, 1975, p. 3). One film-industry analyst charges that studio heads are to blame for scanty

research, because they "have always seen research as a threat when they haven't actually held it in contempt. After all, it is intuition and insight that allows executives to command high salaries" (Simonet, 1978, p. 72). When asked in 1983 whether his studio found audience research "useful," MGM/United Artists Vice Chairman Frank Yablans responded: "It's dangerous because it's an ephemeral area" (cited in Kilday, p. 76). Yes, Yablans conceded, MGM/UA does "rely on" research, "but as to how we use it, that's a trade secret" (p. 76).

Outside the motion picture industry, the mainstream of social science research has also been fickle in its approach to studying film audiences. When Noelle-Neumann wondered, nearly 30 years ago, whether motion pictures were "possibly just a transitory entertainment" (1959, p. 405), she voiced the misgivings of many scholars dubious about taking films seriously. Fearing, on the other hand, who for decades defended the need for film-audience research, declared:

Whatever the character of pictures . . . may be . . . the term "entertainment" as commonly used is constricting in its implications and confusing in its assumptions. Its use when coupled with the term "escapist" subtly devalues both the media and their audience. (1947, p. 3)

After conducting a comprehensive survey of the social science literature published over a 20-year period, O'Brien concluded:

Curiously, despite its central place in American popular culture for over seventy years, film has been relatively little studied as a medium. A great deal of social science research regarding films involves experimentally produced film stimuli or "single concept" teaching films, having very little generalizability to the theatrical motion picture experience (1977/1978, p. 12)

Serious examination of the critic-audience relationship, as noted earlier, is even more scarce, despite the ongoing debate over critics' clout at the box office.

"Isn't there a cause-and-effect relationship between the critics' revilement of movies like Gable and Lombard, Lucky Lady and At Long Last Love and the public's subsequent reluctance to see them?" Shaw asked a decade ago (1977, p. 135). And one CBS vice president mused:

Films on which were bestowed brilliant reviews may fail dismally at the box-office, while the popular imagination may be titillated by a movie that suffers nothing but slings and arrows from the critics. All of which raises several interesting questions, the most fundamental of which is precisely how effective is the motion picture critic? How much impact does his review have on the newspaper reader and moviegoer? Do audiences go to movies because of, or in spite of, good or bad reviews? (Steinberg, 1972, p. 239)

To answer these and other questions, an experiment was designed to measure the effect of positive, mixed, and negative reviews on (1) potential audience members' interest in seeing the film reviewed; (2) audience evaluations of film reviews; (3) audience retention of free

passes; (4) audience attendance at the film reviewed; (5) audience bringing of guests to screenings; and (6) audience post-viewing evaluations of that film.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

"Critic, review thyself."

--Eve Sample to critic Max
Jamison in Wilfrid Sheed's
Max Jamison, 1970

Complaints about the scarcity of available audience research may well outnumber the body of published film audience studies, and Hollywood itself is largely to blame. Data generated from industry-financed research efforts are treated "secretively" (Jowett & Linton, 1980, p. 28), and film scholars and social scientists are therefore cut off from valuable archival resources and in-house research material.

Nonetheless, the film industry has, in its own inimitable fashion, conducted a variety of studies--from planting microphones in theatre restrooms during the 1920s (Simonet, 1978) to testing titles and story ideas before production and sampling viewer reactions after production (Handel, 1950).

There was a time, however, when Hollywood's "market research" consisted chiefly of the personal opinions and emotions of high-ranking studio executives.

"When I'm alone in a projection room, I have a fool-proof device for judging whether a picture is good or bad,"

Columbia Pictures boss Harry Cohn once told his studio associates. "If my fanny squirms, it's bad. If my fanny doesn't squirm, it's good. It's as simple as that" (cited in Kael, 1971, p. 30).

Measures of a less subjective and more mechanical nature followed, including electromagnetic devices to study audience body movements, actometers to measure wrist and ankle activity, pneumatic floor pads to count footsteps, motion-sensitive chairs, sound-wave generators, polygraphs, reactographs, and a host of other electric, electronic, and photosensitive devices (Webb, Campbell, Schwartz, Sechrest & Grove, 1981; Handel, 1950).

Film audience researcher Austin, who has conducted the most exhaustive review of the literature to date for his volume The Film Audience: An International Bibliography of Research (1983b) and its recent update, "Research on the Film Audience: An Annotated Bibliography, 1982-1985" (1986b), characterizes the existing body of film audience research as "unstructured and unfocused" and concludes: "Neither Hollywood nor film historians have been very helpful in detailing what was done or what was found in the way of film audience analysis" (1983b, pp. xxiii, xxviii).

Examinations of the role of the film critic and the impact of film criticism on motion picture audiences are even rarer. In fact, Austin reports, empirical studies of

the public's consumption and assimilation of movie reviews are "virtually nonexistent" (1983a, p. 158).

Scholars have conducted a number of surveys of critics, however, over the past three decades. Albert and Whitelam surveyed 58 leading literary, film, drama, radio-television, ballet, and fine-arts critics in the early Sixties and reported that "critics believe they are moderately effective in influencing public opinion concerning artistic mass communications" (1963, p. 155). A nationwide survey of more than 250 critics by Louis Harris and Associates in 1969 for the Office of Communication of the United Church of Christ reported the following conclusions:

In sum, the critical profession believes they have considerable impact in our society, and although some have mixed feelings about it (particularly their economic impact), they generally feel the effect is for the good and are in favor of increased influence. . . .

[Those] who feel that critics have too much influence point to the laziness of the public in not thinking for themselves and not sampling various opinions, and thus allowing criticism to have an unhealthy, overly powerful economic influence on the sale of tickets and books.

Those who feel critics have too little influence point to the success of expensive promotion of inferior work, the public's susceptibility to shallow fads, and the deadening effect of television on standards. (p. 28)

Brown conducted a nationwide survey of newspaper reviewers and their editors nine years later, but his findings are primarily descriptive and concentrate on the academic backgrounds, practices, functions, and appropriate

skills and training reported by respondents (1978). In 1979, English published the results of his 1974 poll of critics of the popular arts and reported he found a broad spectrum of opinions among film critics regarding their perceived influence on readers and viewers, ranging from "very strong influence on the box office" to "one large drop in the bucket" (p. 116). He added:

Many critics admit that the evidence of effects of their reviews is often inconsistent and indirect . . . [and] most of the feedback on critics' effects comes to them as letters, phone calls or meetings with artists or producers. Little concrete evidence actually exists on effects. (1979, p. 116)

In his essay "The Power of Critics," Farber asserts that "the critics do have power . . . [but] the actual extent of the critics' power is difficult to calculate" (1976, pp. 420-421). Measurement of this "power" is rarely attempted, some scholars argue, because reviews "reside in a journalistic high-rent district where quantifiable responses to art are gross violations of the zoning laws" (Kleinfeld, 1985, p. 90). Hirsch explains further:

The relation between social science and popular culture is best characterized as one of long-standing and mutual incomprehension and distaste. . . . In most cases, when popular culture has been approached by social researchers, they resemble a delegation of tourists on a short visit. (1977, pp. 401, 404)

Wanderer (1970) assembled correlational data from professional critics' film reviews, originally published in

magazines and newspapers and compiled by Consumers Union editors, and from consumers' ratings of movies, published in Consumer Reports, over a 22-year period. The record, he concluded, "shows a disproportionately large number of identical ratings of motion pictures among professional critics of popular culture and a lay audience composed of CU members," (p. 267). Wanderer added:

There is undoubtedly some interaction between professional critics and CU readers, at least to the extent that the latter read critics' reviews in magazines such as the New Yorker or Parents' Magazine. Some proportion of identical ratings between critics and readers can be attributed to CU readers' attempts to imitate professional judgment. The proportion, however, is likely to be relatively small. (pp. 267-268)

Evidence of readers' "imitation" of professional critics' opinions, however, is nowhere to be found in this article.

Austin replicated Wanderer's study utilizing more recent data from Consumer Reports and Consumers' Research Magazine (January 1976 through January 1981) and found, instead, a negative correlation, or a "modest inverse relationship," between the two groups' aggregate evaluations of 636 movies (1983a, p. 162). "Consumers evaluated the movies significantly more positively than the critics," Austin concluded; "the critics were significantly more critical than were the consumers" (p. 162).

Unlike Wanderer, however, Austin does not suggest causal relationships in his correlational data. "Armchair observation generally suggests that critics have little

influence on consumers," Austin declares (1983a, p. 158).

He then speculates that

the mismatch between critics' and consumers' evaluations . . . offers by inference an explanation for the minimal effect that movie critics may have on the public's attendance behavior. The present findings seem to suggest that the public is cognizant of the evaluative mismatch between themselves and professional critics and hence do not rely on critics as an important variable in their movie selection and attendance decision process. (p. 165)

In a study conducted in Poland, entitled "Effect of Criticism on Urban Film Tastes," Falewicz concluded from nonrepresentative survey data that "our respondents are subject to the influence of official film criticism" on the evidence of an apparent "correspondence between the opinions of cinema goers and of film critics" (1964, pp. 94-95). While critics' opinions "may have a weak influence on the choice of films to see," Falewicz concluded, again from correlational data, "they have a strong effect on the evaluation of the films viewed" (p. 95).

Evidence of a more scientifically rigorous nature is rare in the literature of film audiences, in part because laboratory and field experiments are so seldom performed. Another reason for this "dearth of experimental research," Tannenbaum asserts, "rests in the lack of adequate measures" (1956, p. 92).

Hovland, Lumsdaine, and Sheffield conducted scores of scrupulously controlled laboratory experiments for the

Research Branch of the U.S. Army's Information and Education Division during World War II dealing with the effectiveness of training and orientation films on American troops (1949), but effects of film criticism were not examined.

In 1956, however, two Air Force researchers conducted an experiment designed to measure the effect of prior information on film audiences. Staudohar and Smith, investigators at the Air Force Personnel and Training Research Center at Lackland Air Force Base, tested the hypothesis that lecture supplements introduced to stress significant scenes and events in a commercial motion picture would have a significant effect on military trainees' attitudes measured afterwards. The researchers prepared three lectures, comparable in content, which discussed scenes in the film Twelve O'Clock High relevant to the theme of military discipline. One lecture was delivered prior to a screening of the film, another after the film, and the third partly before and partly after. Staudohar and Smith found that

those Ss hearing lectures with the film were generally more favorable in attitude toward military discipline than those who saw the film alone. There were, however, no statistically significant differences between the positions of lectures in their effect on attitude toward discipline. (1956, p. 111)

Lecture supplements, of course, are not the same thing as published film criticism, although in this case at least

one common ingredient was shared: film information. But to generalize from oral lecture supplements to print or broadcast reviews (which are laced with opinion) would be disingenuous, just as generalizing from Air Force trainees to film audiences at large would be scientifically unsupportable.

But the seed of an interesting notion--that a third party's communication might influence a film audience's post-viewing attitudinal responses--was clearly planted here. (The hypothesis of a two-step flow of communication, which proposed that opinion leaders who attend to the mass media exert personal influence on the public's movie-attendance habits, was achieving prominence at roughly this same time, on the basis of widely publicized survey data [Katz & Lazarsfeld, 1955]; post-viewing film attitudes, however, were not measured or linked to opinion leaders' attitudes.)

In 1977, Burzynski and Bayer designed a field experiment which came one step closer to the province of the film critic. To test the hypothesis that "individuals viewing a motion picture would be affected in their appreciation of the same by being exposed to either positive, negative, or no prior information" (p. 215), the researchers exposed film patrons to verbal comments in a theatre lobby prior to matinees of The Sugarland Express.

Three independently operating pairs of confederates were instructed to pose as legitimate theatre patrons and to make comments about the film, while exiting, audible to potential subjects waiting behind a retaining rope in the lobby. After the subsequent screening of the film, a uniformed theatre employee distributed questionnaires "randomly to 10 patrons sitting toward the rear of the theatre" (Burzynski & Bayer, 1977, p. 216) with a rating scale of the film just seen. Subjects exposed to negative prior information about the film, the authors found, "subsequently rated the film lower than did ss exposed to positive prior information" (p. 217), although there were "no significant differences between Negative Prior Information and No Prior Information or [between] Positive Prior Information and No Prior Information" groups (p. 217).

Although Burzynski and Bayer point out some limitations inherent in their study--"mid-week afternoon theatre patrons, in all likelihood, are not representative of movie-goers in general," and "some people exposed to negative comments immediately redeemed their tickets" and hence were not around to fill out questionnaires (1977, p. 217)--they overlook at least two weak points.

First, the researchers do not establish whether the respondents actually heard the negative or positive verbal remarks (patrons may have entered late and missed the

confederates' comments altogether, or they may have been talking among themselves, visiting the rest room, or making a purchase at the concession stand). Secondly, the measurement by questionnaire of patrons seated only at the rear of the theatre was unorthodox and nonrandom sampling: Individuals who sit toward the rear of a movie theatre are often amorously inclined and perhaps less likely to attend to images on the screen than are patrons who are randomly scattered throughout the cinema. Consequently, Burzynski and Bayer's verdict that "audience appreciation of motion pictures is alterable by prior information cues" (1977, p. 215) remains open to question.

Locatis, Smith, and Blake (1980) designed a controlled laboratory experiment to investigate the effects of evaluation information on decision-making, specifically measuring the impact of positive, conflicting, equivocal, and negative information on subjects' overall ratings of an educational film. Graduate students in education and library science were assigned randomly to read two positive reviews, or one positive and one negative review, or two neutral reviews, or two negative reviews, or no review, and then rate the film using "various film evaluation criteria generally considered important in media selection" (Locatis et al., p. 817). The results of this experiment indicated that combinations of evaluative reviews affected viewer

ratings in predictable, but not proportional, ways. Locatis et al. concluded:

Information does have an effect on decisions, particularly negative information. Even equivocal and conflicting information depressed judgments. Positive information inflated judgments, but not to the same degree that negative information depressed them. (p. 819)

The authors suggest the "crucial result" of their study is the finding that "negative information tended to have greater weight than positive information" (Locatis et al., 1980, p. 820), and they hypothesize that

perhaps a kind of law of supply and demand operates. Given the general prevalence of positive information in society, glowing findings may be discounted and inordinate attention may be devoted to the negative. Even neutral judgments may be perceived as of negative character. (p. 820)

Although no ready measures of the "prevalence" of positive information in society exist, anecdotal support for this claim comes from Aronson, who argues that "criticism, as it's practiced today, is a form of hype. Too many critics . . . are too kind to the work they're given to evaluate" (1983, pp. 210-211). And Carney, limiting his analysis to the body of recent reviews by New York Times film critic Vincent Canby, concludes, "Canby . . . sold out his critical standards long ago in order to avoid the hard words and stern judgments that otherwise would be required of him over and over again" (1986, p. 26).

Locatis et al., however, do not attempt to generalize

from the results of their experiment, which used an educational film, to audience response to feature films in theatrical release; instead, they apply their findings to the context of evaluation reports and decision-making and conclude: "The results of this study suggest extra care in reporting negative information . . . [to] help counter over-reaction to and disproportionate emphasis on the negative" (1980, p. 820).

In 1984, Faber and O'Guinn concluded that movie previews (i.e., "trailers" or "coming attractions" screened in theatres) "are much more influential in movie goers [sic] selection decisions" than mass media advertising, critics' reviews, or friends' comments (p. 366). These researchers, however, use survey data (a convenience sample of 295 students in an introductory course at the University of Texas) from which to derive conclusions about the "effect of advertising and other sources" (p. 371) on movie selection decisions.

Faber and O'Guinn asked respondents to rate eight sources of movie information--four mass media sources (critics' reviews, television ads, radio ads, and magazine ads); motion picture previews; and three interpersonal sources (friends, spouse or date, and a film expert known by the respondent)--for usefulness, importance, frequency of consultation, and credibility, and then to indicate likelihood of attending a new movie given the hypothetical

conditions of receiving negative and positive information from each particular source. The impact on attendance was calculated by subtracting the score for likelihood of attending a movie if the source's information were perceived as negative from the score for likelihood of attending if the information were perceived as positive. Mean difference scores for impact of critics' reviews on attendance were significantly lower than scores calculated for all other categories but one--impact of magazine ads.

From these data, the authors conclude:

Previews appear to have the most important influence on the movie attendance decision, followed next by the interpersonal sources, and then the mass-media sources. (Faber & O'Guinn, 1984, p. 366)

Wyatt and Badger (1984), seeking experimental evidence of effects of film criticism on audiences, conducted two separate laboratory experiments on university students and discovered that the direction of a film review (positive, mixed, negative) had a significant effect on a potential audience's self-reported interest in seeing a particular motion picture and on an actual audience's post-viewing evaluation of a motion picture.

For their first experiment, Wyatt and Badger randomly assigned positive, mixed, and negative reviews of a British film (The National Health, or Nurse Norton's Affair) and a placebo review of another British film (Anne of the

Thousand Days) to 89 college students and asked the subjects to rate their level of interest in seeing The National Health (and other films) before and after reading the reviews. One-way analysis of variance indicated that review direction had a significant effect on reported interest in seeing The National Health, but the effect was relative, limited, and not necessarily proportional to the actual differences in review content. Only the negative and positive reviews produced significantly different interest ratings relative to each other, while the mixed and placebo reviews failed to produce interest ratings that differed significantly from other treatments (1984).

For their follow-up experiment, Wyatt and Badger randomly assigned positive, mixed, negative, and no reviews of the film A Separate Peace to 171 college students, then screened the film for subjects in the laboratory setting and asked them to evaluate the film afterwards. A one-way analysis of variance indicated that review direction significantly affected post-viewing evaluation of the film compatible with the direction of the review, but, again, the effect was relative, limited, and not necessarily proportional to differences in review content. The negative and mixed reviews lowered post-viewing evaluation scores significantly compared with the positive review, but only the negative review lowered evaluation scores compared with the control (1984).

Concern over the "realistic" but apparently confusing direction of reviews written for the first experiment and a desire to expand the scope of their research beyond self-report measures of film interest and beyond the laboratory led the authors to call for "future research" to "probe the effect of reviews of films . . . to discern the magnitude of effects under [other] conditions" (1984, p. 878).

That call for future research has been heeded here with an expanded and refined multiple-condition experiment designed to measure the effects of film criticism on prospective audience members' interest in seeing a motion picture, review evaluations, attendance, and post-screening assessments of the film.

CHAPTER III

METHODS AND PROCEDURES

Sneer: And do you think there are any who are influenced by this?

Puff: O, Lud! yes, Sir;--the number of those who undergo the fatigue of judging for themselves is very small indeed!

--Richard Sheridan, 1781,
The Critic, Act I, Scene 2

Experiment Design

To examine how reviews affect audience interest in a film, attendance, and subsequent evaluation of a film, a two-part experiment was performed in April 1985 at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, Tenn. Subjects were 318 undergraduates enrolled in three sections of introductory mass media classes--two sections of upper-division Mass Communications 321 ("Understanding Mass Media") for nonmajors, and one section of lower-division Mass Communications 151 ("Introduction to Mass Communications") for majors.

In each of three administrative sessions of a controlled laboratory experiment, subjects were randomly assigned questionnaire packets that contained the experimental treatment: a positive, mixed, negative, or non-review of director Harold Pinter's film Butley, based

on Simon Gray's hit London play of the same name. (For Butley cast and production credits and a summary of the plot, see Appendix A.) Also included in the packets were: a cover letter; a scale for rating pre-test interest in seeing eight films, including Butley; standard demographic questions; a scale for rating post-test interest in seeing Butley; a semantic differential-type scale for evaluating the review; and a free pass to admit the bearer (and one guest) to a campus screening of Butley. Questionnaires and pass appear in Appendix B; a complete set of review treatments appears in Appendix C.

Subjects who subsequently attended one of four screenings of the film were handed a packet containing a Participant Questionnaire with a semantic differential-type scale for evaluating the film, as well as questions regarding film attendance. (See Appendix D for complete Participant Questionnaire.) Participants' guests were administered a Guest Questionnaire, which included the film-evaluation scale and additional demographic questions. (See Appendix E for complete Guest Questionnaire.)

Research Diagram

The operational plan for this experiment is indicated in Figure 1 in the form of a research diagram that graphically details the experimental procedure in terms of a standard notational procedure (Haskins, 1981).

Figure 1. Notational Design.

Legend:

Population: P1 = Student subjects in 3 introductory
communications classes
P1a-d = 4 random subsamples of P1 (318
students)

Treatments: T1 = Title, cast, capsule plot summary
of Butley and 7 other movies
T2 = Film review of Butley
T2a = Positive review of Butley
T2b = Mixed review of Butley
T2c = Negative review of Butley
T2d = Non-review of Butley
T3 = Free pass
T4 = Screening of Butley

(fx) = Forced exposure to treatment
(ox) = Opportunity for exposure to treatment

Measures: M1 = Interest in seeing Butley
M2 = Interest in seeing 7 other movies
M3 = Background data, film-attendance,
and media-use questions
M4 = Evaluation of Butley review
M5 = Demographic questions
M6 = Taking free pass
M7 = Attendance at Butley screening
M8 = Bringing guest to Butley
M9 = Evaluation of film Butley
M10 = Movie-attendance questions

Times: t1 = Time period before experiment
t2 = Time period during reading of capsule
summaries of films, measuring interest-
in-seeing levels, and providing
background data
t3 = Time period during reading of Butley
review, evaluating review & answering
demographic questions
t4 = Time period during taking/refusing
free pass
t5 = Intervening period
t6 = Time period during screenings of Butley
t7 = Time period during measure of
attendance, evaluating the film, and
answering movie-attendance questions

	t1	t2	t3	t4	t5	t6	t7
P1a	--	T1(fx)/M1-3	T2a(fx)/M1, 4-5	T3(fx)/M6	--	T4(ox)	M7-10
P1b	--	T1(fx)/M1-3	T2b(fx)/M1, 4-5	T3(fx)/M6	--	T4(ox)	M7-10
P1c	--	T1(fx)/M1-3	T2c(fx)/M1, 4-5	T3(fx)/M6	--	T4(ox)	M7-10
P1d	--	T1(fx)/M1-3	T2d(fx)/M1, 4-5	T3(fx)/M6	--	T4(ox)	M7-10

Figure 1

Subject Population

The subject population consisted of 318 Middle Tennessee State University undergraduates enrolled in three sections of introductory mass communications courses during Spring Semester 1985. The population was divided into four random subsamples (P1a, P1b, P1c, P1d) for assignment to review treatments (positive, mixed, negative, and non-review) of the motion picture Butley. The positive-review and mixed-review subgroups consisted of 80 subjects each; the negative-review and non-review subgroups consisted of 79 subjects each.

Treatments

Treatment stimuli introduced in the experiment are listed below. Exposure conditions to all treatments in the laboratory experiment (T1, T2abcd, and T3) are assumed to be "forced exposure" (fx); exposure to the motion picture Butley (T4) is the more naturalistic condition known as "opportunity for exposure" (ox).

(T1) Titles, cast listings, and one-sentence capsule plot summaries of eight "upcoming" feature films, including Butley. (See Appendix B for questionnaire packet, slightly reduced in size, with descriptions of the eight films.)

(T2) A realistically prepared and typeset film review of Butley. (See Appendix C for copies of the four Butley review treatments.)

(T2a) A positive review of Butley. All evaluative adjectives and phrases in this review are favorable.

(T2b) A mixed review of Butley. All evaluative adjectives and phrases in this review are of a mixed or neutral nature.

(T2c) A negative review of Butley. All evaluative adjectives and phrases in this review are unfavorable.

(T2d) A non-review article about Butley. All evaluative adjectives and phrases have been omitted; background detail and plot description remain identical to other review treatments.

(T3) A free pass admitting the bearer (and one optional guest) to one of four "sneak screenings" of Butley in the MTSU Learning Resources Center Multi-Media Room. The pass, designed to simulate an oversized theatre ticket and printed on a half page of blue paper to distinguish it from the other pages of the questionnaire, was attached to the packet with a staple; instructions for its removal were included. Each Butley pass included a unique code number that corresponded to a matching number on the accompanying questionnaire, to permit later classification by review treatment. (See Appendix B for a reproduction of the original pass.)

(T4) The actual screening of a 16mm color print of the theatrical feature film Butley, rented from its sole national distributor, Films Incorporated, in Atlanta. A

total of four separate screenings were held: a 3:45 p.m. matinee and 7 p.m. evening performance on Wednesday, April 17, 1985, and a 3:45 p.m. matinee and 7 p.m. evening performance on April 18, 1985. The running time of the film was 129 minutes.

Independent variable. The independent, or manipulated, variable for this experiment was review direction, or the relative degree of positive, mixed, and negative opinion appearing in a realistically presented film review of Butley. Only the opinion content was systematically varied; all other review-treatment information and components (including headline) were held constant.

Measures

Measures of dependent variables for this experiment were chiefly of two sorts: (1) behavioral measures (e.g., counting the number of free passes torn off the questionnaire packets; counting the number of original participants who showed up for screenings of Butley; and counting the number of guests brought by participants); and (2) attitudinal-opinion measures provided by subjects' pencil-and-paper responses to questions and ratings on scales provided in the questionnaire packets. These measures included rating levels of interest in seeing

Butley (and 7 other films) on 4- and 5-point scales, from "Not At All Interested" to "Very Interested"; evaluating the Butley review for appeal, informativeness, and credibility on a 63-point semantic differential-type scale, which incorporated a set of 9 polar-opposite adjectives separated by 7-point scales with poles randomly reversed; and evaluating the film on a 77-point semantic differential-type scale, utilizing a set of 11 polar-opposite adjectives separated by 7-point scales with poles randomly reversed.

Dependent variables. The specific dependent variables measured in this experiment are itemized below:

- (1) Interest in seeing Butley.
- (2) Evaluation of Butley review: appeal rating.
- (3) Evaluation of Butley review: informativeness rating.
- (4) Evaluation of Butley review: credibility rating.
- (5) Taking a free pass.
- (6) Attendance at a screening of Butley.
- (7) Bringing a guest to a screening of Butley.
- (8) Evaluation of the film Butley.

Other Measures

Numerous demographic, media-use, film-attendance, and other descriptive measures were included in the questionnaires. Some of these questions were included to

mask the true intent of the researcher and to enhance the credibility of the cover story and the authenticity of the questionnaire as an instrument developed by a research team conducting a survey of Americans' filmgoing habits. Other questions were later isolated to determine whether any particular characteristics might have an effect on behavioral or attitudinal responses.

Demographic variables included:

- (1) Age.
- (2) Sex.
- (3) Race.
- (4) University class (freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, other).
- (5) Academic major.

Media-use variables included:

- (1) Frequency of newspaper readership.
- (2) Frequency of magazine readership.
- (3) Ownership of a videocassette recorder.
- (4) Number of hours per day spent watching TV.

Film-habit and attendance-priority variables included:

- (1) Regularity of film attendance.
- (2) Frequency of discussing movies afterwards with other people.
- (3) Preference for film-viewing situations.
- (4) Importance of ads (television, radio, newspaper,

and magazine), critics' reviews, previews in theatre, word-of-mouth comments (from friends, person considered a film expert, and spouse or date), and awards in film-attendance decisions.

(5) Importance of film title/plot, stars, convenience/location, admission price, rating (R, PG, etc.), and director in film-attendance decisions.

(6) Importance of attendance-motivation factors (e.g., review read in class, recommendation by friend, fondness for films, free show, social activity, performance by Alan Bates) in decision to attend Butley screening.

Times

The controlled laboratory experiment was conducted on Tuesday and Wednesday, April 16 and 17, 1985, in three introductory mass communications classes. Each administrative session of the controlled laboratory experiment lasted approximately 20 minutes. Screenings of Butley were held on the afternoons and evenings of Wednesday and Thursday, April 17 and 18, 1985. Time elapsing between exposure to treatments and optional attendance at screenings ranged from 4.5 hours to 55 hours, depending on days and times of class meetings and scheduled showings. The run time of the motion picture was just over two hours. The post-viewing session during which the film was evaluated lasted approximately 10 minutes.

Experiment Administration

Treatments and measures in the controlled laboratory experiment were administered in packets to three large groups of undergraduate students during a two-day period:

Group 1: Mass Communications 321 "Understanding Mass Media," an introductory elective course for nonmajors (158 subjects).

Group 2: Mass Communications 321 "Understanding Mass Media," an introductory elective course for nonmajors (61 subjects).

Group 3: Mass Communications 151 "Introduction to Mass Communications," an introductory course required for mass communications majors (99 subjects).

Each administration lasted approximately 20 minutes and was conducted by this author with assistance from the course instructor. Prior to distributing packets to subjects seated in a multi-tiered auditorium, the author was introduced as a departmental colleague who was assisting a "research firm" with its "important ongoing study of the filmgoing habits of American audiences."

Packets with questionnaires and treatments were then distributed in systematic random fashion according to the following order: 1234432112344321, etc., where "1" represents a non-review; "2" represents a negative review; "3" represents a mixed review; and "4" represents a

positive review. Treatments were assigned in 12344321 order, rather than in 12341234 order, to increase the number of identical treatments (1 and 4) read by students seated next to each other and to minimize awareness of differing treatments. This procedure was also implemented to reduce contamination among students who might discuss the reviews afterwards. Distribution of treatments by this method was uniform, as the following counts illustrate: (1) non-review, 79; (2) negative review, 79; (3) mixed review, 80; and (4) positive review, 80.

Oral instructions were given to subjects to read the cover-letter directions carefully before proceeding with the questionnaire. The cover letter specifically instructed subjects to begin with the first question, to continue to the end, and to be certain to answer all questions. To insure confidentiality, the cover letter requested that subjects not write their names on the questionnaire.

Each packet included: a cover letter bearing the name and logo of a Chicago-based research firm ("Audience Research Associates"); six pages of questionnaire; a positive, mixed, negative, or non-review of Butley, typeset at the Nashville Tennessean in 3-column newspaper format with identical 48-point headlines ("British Actor Alan Bates/ Brings 'Butley' To Screen") and a fictitious byline ("Clayton Rice"); an information page with details about the "sneak film showing" of Butley; and a (coded) half-page

free pass to admit the bearer (and one guest) to a screening of Butley. The complete packet, slightly reduced in size, is included in Appendix B. A complete set of review treatments appears in Appendix C.

Questionnaire forms were collected when subjects were finished and later coded for data processing.

A second questionnaire form was administered to subject participants who showed up for "sneak showings" of Butley with free passes (no extra inducements were provided). Two student research assistants collected passes and stapled them to Participant Questionnaires to ensure correct matching. Guests were handed a slightly different Guest Questionnaire, on which their host's code number was recorded.

Audience members were instructed to fill out the questionnaires when the film was over and to return the forms to student assistants before leaving the auditorium.

Preparation of Questionnaire Packet and Review Treatments

Since this experiment was conceived with a college-student sample in mind, it was deemed advantageous to divorce the project from the jurisdiction of the MTSU Mass Communications Department and from the instructors' course requirements to insure candid responses from subjects.

(Hypothetically, students might fear their course grades could be affected by attitudinal or behavioral responses, triggering specious results.) To further distance the two course instructors (both male) and the chief researcher (also male) from the study, a female name ("Deborah Michels") was generated for the cover-letter signatory.

To contribute a professional look, a letterhead was designed in Windsor Elongated type bearing the fictitious name "Audience Research Associates," which was accompanied by a fictitious Chicago address to enhance realism and to distance the experimental proceedings from the Mass Communications Department and the university.

The cover letter and questionnaire were typed on a word processor to facilitate revisions and enhance the appearance of the packet. The questionnaire included standard demographic questions such as might appear on a typical survey or poll (Dillman, 1978), as well as media-use and film-attendance questions relevant to Audience Research Associates' "important ongoing study of the filmgoing habits of American audiences."

The importance of 10 variables affecting movie-choice behavior (TV ads, radio ads, newspaper ads, magazine ads, previews in theatres, awards and honors, critics' reviews, comments from friends, comments from spouse or date, and comments from someone considered a film expert) was rated

on a 4-point scale (from "Not At All Important" to "Very Important"), as were 6 film elements (plot and title, stars, convenience/location, admission price, MPAA rating, and director). These items were adapted from Austin's list of film-attendance variables (1981), Faber and O'Guinn's movie-information source list (1984), and this author's pretest of an exit survey for film patrons.

To measure interest in seeing Butley, a 4-point scale ("Not At All Interested," "Not Very Interested," "Somewhat Interested," and "Very Interested") was provided, similar to Handel's 4-point Interest Intensity Scale (1950). This same scale was used to rate seven other "upcoming" films, to mask the focus of the Butley experiment.

Since the title of a film--unlike, say, a recognized brand name or commercial product--rarely provides a reader sufficient information with which to decide his degree of interest in, or likelihood of attending, that particular film, the names of cast members and one-sentence story descriptions, patterned after the "want-to-see" surveys conducted by Audience Research, Inc. (Handel, 1950), were also included.

In an earlier pilot study, the author furnished one-sentence plot descriptions of 10 motion pictures drawn from capsule treatments published in The New Yorker. (In that experiment, the films listed had already gone into theatrical release.)

For the Butley experiment, however, subjects were given synopses of upcoming films to eliminate prior-exposure biases and to enhance subjects' curiosity. Unbeknownst to the subjects, of course, Butley had already been released in the United States back in 1974 as part of a subscription series sponsored by the American Film Theatre; the remaining seven films, however, were genuine upcoming features which had not yet been released commercially in the United States.

Since plot synopses for these films could not be obtained from The New Yorker or other consumer periodicals, the information was procured from current issues of the film-exhibitor trade magazine Boxoffice. Information for the Butley plot description was adapted from material in the 1984 Films Incorporated movie rental catalogue.

Some fleeting advance studio publicity had already appeared in national publications about several of the other seven films (Jewel of the Nile, Volunteers, Out of Africa, Perfect!, Hot Chilis, Emerald, and The Best of Times), enhancing the authenticity of the study.

Plot descriptions scrupulously avoided opinion or judgmental words or phrases (e.g., "JEWEL OF THE NILE. Starring Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner. The adventures of the reunited twosome from Romancing the Stone after they sail their new sloop towards the shores of North

Africa by way of the French Riviera"). A complete listing of plot synopses and casts may be found in Appendix B.

Creation of the experimental treatment here--a review of a motion picture, varied only in degree of negative or positive opinion with informational content held constant--required a certain inventiveness, for what critic has ever had to write positive, mixed, and negative reviews of the same picture? In this instance, experience gained in two earlier experiments proved invaluable.

For the author's first experiment, a British film--The National Health, or Nurse Norton's Affair, based on the London hit play of the same name and starring Lynn Redgrave, Colin Blakely, and Jim Dale--was selected. The National Health had never been released for national distribution in the United States, and, as a result, subjects were unlikely to have developed any opinions about the production or about their interest in seeing the film. The author, who had seen the film in London, wrote three different film review treatments (positive, mixed, and negative) of the film, using snippets of actual reviews of the stage and screen versions published in British newspapers and magazines. As the author had studied film criticism in graduate school, served a stint as film editor of a now-defunct Nashville publication, and was the film critic for WPLN-FM Public Radio in Nashville, he considered himself qualified to write (and correctly distinguish) a

positive review (in which all opinion statements about The National Health were favorable), a mixed review (with neutral statements, as well as equally balanced favorable and unfavorable statements), and a negative review (opinion statements all unfavorable). A fourth control review, or "placebo" review, was included in the form of a critical piece about another British movie, Anne of the Thousand Days.

That experiment, which included a question requesting subjects to identify the review they had read as either positive, mixed, or negative, yielded an unexpected result: Some subjects had difficulty identifying the direction of the review. Eighty-three percent of subjects reading a mixed review identified it correctly, but only 55% identified the positive review and 52% the negative review.

To alleviate this problem, Wyatt suggested a more "scientific" route: Rather than write three different reviews of the same movie, he proposed, construct instead one review treatment and then systematically vary the opinion adjectives and phrases.

Accordingly, the author selected a new film (A Separate Peace) for the second film-criticism experiment and wrote only one review. Then, after identifying all opinion words and phrases, the author and Wyatt systematically inserted polar-opposite or neutral

adjectives in their place. The results of this experiment, in which 82% of subjects correctly identified the direction of the positive review and 72% correctly identified the direction of the mixed and negative reviews, led the authors to conclude that the second method of writing reviews for experimental purposes was preferable, as it stood to yield more reliable results (Wyatt & Badger, 1984).

Butley--based on a hit British stage play by Simon Gray--had been filmed by director Harold Pinter for release in 1974 under the auspices of the American Film Theatre's first season of subscription-series theatrical films.

Butley was selected for this experiment because of its unusual distribution pattern, its age, and the fact that it had never been shown on network television or been released in videocassette format--likely insuring that most subjects would have neither heard of it nor had a chance to see it. The motion picture starred British actor Alan Bates in the title role, supported by a cast of only six players, thus providing another procedural control to minimize preconceptions brought to the experimental setting.

The author first wrote a positive review of Butley, then constructed a negative review by substituting polar-opposite adjectives culled from Roget's International Thesaurus, 4th edition. All film-background and plot-summary details were held constant. Finally, a mixed review

was produced by substituting mixed or neutral adjectives for all positive or negative adjectives. Words and phrases from actual published reviews of the play and film (Barnes, 1972; Cocks, 1974; Zimmerman, 1974) were incorporated into the text of the reviews to enhance their realism.

The lead, for example, described Butley as a "stunning/uneven/tedious" film, and Bates was judged to be "always/sometimes/never" equal to the challenge of the lead role. Screenwriter Simon Gray's dialogue was styled "sharp and humorous/sharp but unamusing/flat and humorless," and, in conclusion, the film as a whole was judged "rich and compelling/rich but un compelling/empty and un compelling." (For complete versions of the four Butley review treatments, see Appendix C. For a comparison of internal variations in the positive, mixed, and negative Butley reviews, see Appendix F.)

Finally, a non-review was constructed as a control by omitting evaluative adjectives and phrases contained in the full text of the other three reviews, while retaining all background information and identical plot detail. (In the earlier experiments, a placebo review, or no review at all, served as the control; here, some form of published account of Butley was essential--not only to prevent suspicion of experimental manipulation, but, more importantly, to provide sufficient informational messages to expedite

subjects' decision-making processes vis-a-vis film-attendance behavior.)

All four treatments were set in 9.5-point newspaper type and newspaper-column format under a fictitious and neutral-sounding byline ("Clayton Rice"). Also, all four treatments appeared under the same neutral headline: "British Actor Alan Bates/ Brings 'Butley' To Screen." (In the earlier experiments, headlines were varied to correspond to the direction of the accompanying favorable or unfavorable opinion content; this procedure was dropped to eliminate directional cues--and their conceivable effect--as well as the possibility of a subject glancing at a neighbor's page and discovering a different headline.)

Immediately after reading a randomly assigned positive, mixed, negative, or non-review, each subject was asked to evaluate the review on a 7-point semantic differential-type scale designed to explore dimensions such as informativeness, appeal, and credibility. Adjectives on this 9-item scale were randomly ordered with poles randomly reversed (a flip of a coin determined whether the left-hand entry would be the favorable adjective or its antonym).

Adjective pairs selected for the dimension of credibility were: "trustworthy/untrustworthy," "false/true," and "believable/unbelievable." Pairs for the dimension of appeal (or "interestingness") were: "boring/stimulating," "interesting/uninteresting," and

"dull/lively." Adjective pairs for informativeness were: "uninformative/informative," "revealing/unrevealing," and "helpful/useless."

At this point, subjects were again asked to rate their level of interest in seeing the film. The remaining questions collected standard demographic data (age, sex, race, university class, and academic major).

The last full page of the questionnaire packet announced a special free "sneak showing" of Butley on the MTSU campus in appreciation for respondents' participation in the study. The dates, times, and location of the four screenings were listed in boldface type, accompanied by a free pass and instructions for using the pass. This pass--printed on a half page of blue paper--was designed to look like an oversized theatre ticket; it repeated all key information regarding time, place, and dates, and it also included an inconspicuously stamped or hand-printed code number identical to a number on the second page of the questionnaire. The coding system accomplished two things: It matched questionnaires to subjects who later attended sneak screenings, and it classified the questionnaires by review treatment.

Instructions for tearing off the movie pass, which would admit the subject and, "if you wish, one guest," read as follows: "Please remove the pass only if you actually

plan to attend the film, in order that space may be reserved for others. Remove only the pass, not other parts of the questionnaire." Further instructions repeated the location, time, and other key points. (See Appendix B for complete instructions.)

The free "sneak film showings" were never identified as such as "advance previews," since, in point of fact, this movie was not a new film, although students were encouraged to assume it was in order to make the screening appear as realistic as possible and to recreate the usual first-time filmgoer's sense of anticipation. In recent years, studios have sponsored special advance screenings on college campuses in Tennessee and elsewhere (Mathews, 1983a) of such upcoming films as George Roy Hill's The World According to Garp and Woody Allen's Hannah and Her Sisters. The special MTSU screenings were scheduled over a two-day period to emulate the MTSU Film Society's custom of showing films on campus on two consecutive days; matinee and evening performances (3:45 and 7 p.m.) were chosen to approximate the regular screening times for campus films.

When subjects were finished, they signaled the researcher to collect their packets.

While previous laboratory experiments conducted by this researcher customarily ended at this stage, this experiment was different. Now subjects who had retained the free pass to see Butley could exercise the option of

attending any of the four upcoming screenings, alone or with a guest. Those subject participants who later attended screenings of the film were admitted to the same auditorium classroom upon showing a pass. Each pass was stapled to a new, and shorter, questionnaire, which was filled out after the movie. (To match guests to subjects, a student assistant copied down the subject's code number onto the guest's questionnaire.)

Both the Participant Questionnaire and the Guest Questionnaire included cover-letter instructions, a semantic differential-type scale with which to evaluate the film, and questions about film-attendance motivations.

The semantic differential-type scale, similar to ones used elsewhere (Caplan, 1975; Wyatt & Badger, 1984), employed 11 polar-opposite pairs of adjectives separated by 7-point scales, with adjectives randomly ordered and poles randomly reversed. Pairs of adjectives chosen for this scale were:

- (1) Boring/Interesting
- (2) Unappealing/Appealing
- (3) Meaningless/Meaningful
- (4) Pleasing/Annoying
- (5) Worthless/Valuable
- (6) Unforgettable/Forgettable

- (7) Bad/Good
- (8) Entertaining/Dull
- (9) Well-Made/Shoddy
- (10) Moving/Unmoving
- (11) Unpleasant/Pleasant

A 77-point scale was then produced by summing the scores assigned to these adjectives, with positive adjectives assuming the higher score.

This scale was supplemented with a more conventional 5-point film-rating scale ("Terrible/Poor/Fair/Good/Excellent"), similar to that used by Boxoffice ("1984 Review Digest," 1985), and a 3-point scale devised by Handel (1950) to measure the strength of a viewer's recommendation of the film to friends ("Don't See It/Undecided/See It").

Other questions dealt with motivational factors in attending the film, and guests answered standard demographic questions. (See Appendix D for a copy of the Participant Questionnaire and Appendix E for a copy of the Guest Questionnaire.)

Questionnaire Pretesting

Each questionnaire underwent successive cycles of writing, pretesting, and revision. Film review treatments were shown to film, theatre, music, and book critics who worked for the Nashville Tennessean and for Nashville

Public Radio for their suggestions; academic colleagues and a small sample of upper-division mass communications majors knowledgeable in the areas of communications research or film also provided valuable input.

Hypotheses

This experiment was designed to test a series of hypotheses about the effects of film-review direction on: interest in seeing a motion picture; evaluations of review appeal, credibility, and informativeness; taking a free pass; movie attendance; and post-viewing film evaluation. Certain demographic and attendance-priority data were collected for study as well.

Data were first coded, then tabulated and analyzed by computer using the SPSS-X Information Analysis System (1986). Pairwise deletion of cases was used for cases with missing values. The conventional .05 level of significance was adopted for all analyses (except for significance tests of Hypothesis 1, where the more rigorous .01 level was applied).

The specific hypotheses postulated for this study were:

H1: The direction of a film review (positive, mixed, negative) will significantly affect an audience's interest in seeing that film compatible with the direction of the review.

H2: Review direction will significantly affect audience ratings of reviews in such categories as appeal, informativeness, and credibility.

H3: Audiences will rate positive, mixed, and negative reviews significantly higher than a non-review control in the categories of appeal, informativeness, and credibility.

H4: Review direction will significantly affect the taking of a free pass offered for the film compatible with the direction of the review.

H5: Review direction will significantly affect subsequent film attendance by subjects compatible with the direction of the review.

H6: Review direction will significantly affect subjects' bringing of a guest to a screening of the film compatible with the direction of the review.

H7: Review direction will significantly affect audience members' evaluation of the film after watching a screening of the film compatible with the direction of the review they read.

H8: Review direction will significantly affect guests' post-viewing evaluation of the film compatible with the direction of the review read by their host-partner.

CHAPTER IV

ANALYSIS AND RESULTS

You can take Hollywood for granted, like I did, or you can dismiss it with the contempt we reserve for what we don't understand. It can be understood, too, but only dimly and in flashes. Not half a dozen men have ever been able to keep the whole equation of pictures in their heads.

--F. Scott Fitzgerald,
The Last Tycoon, 1941

Introduction

Demographics

The experimental review treatments with corresponding measures and free passes were administered to 318 student subjects during three administrative sessions on two consecutive days. Film-evaluation questionnaires were administered to 12 subject-participants and 7 guests after special screenings of Butley.

In brief, the subjects were overwhelmingly (95%) between the ages of 18 and 24; 56% were male, and 44% female. Ninety-three percent were white, and 5% black; 51% were freshmen, 28% sophomores, 16% juniors, and 5% seniors. Just over one-third (37%) were mass communications majors. See Tables 11 through 15, Appendix G, for summarizations of demographic data.

Media Habits

Roughly half of all subjects reported they go out to see one to two movies per month, and another 20% said they attend three to five per month. Just over one-quarter reported they attend fewer than one movie per month. Only 25% of the subjects said they attend movies on a "regular basis"; the remaining 75% attend "in streaks" (i.e., sporadically, or in clusters).

Two-thirds reported they "usually" discuss movies afterwards with friends or relatives; most of the remaining subjects reported they "sometimes" discuss movies afterwards. Nearly two-thirds said they prefer to watch movies "with one other person," and more than one-third reported they prefer to watch movies "with a small group of friends" (very few said they prefer to view films "alone").

More than one-third of the subjects indicated they read "at least one newspaper" one to two days a week, while roughly one-quarter read a paper three to four days a week. More than three-quarters of subjects reported they read one to four different magazines each month, and nearly half said they watch television two to four hours each day. Just over one-third reported they own a videocassette recorder.

Additional data about film attendance and other media-use characteristics are summarized in Tables 16 through 23, Appendix G.

General Findings

The direction of a realistically prepared review of the motion picture Butley was found to have a significant effect on subjects' interest in seeing the film. Review direction also significantly affected subjects' rating of the appeal ("interestingness") of the review read. However, review direction had no significant effect on subject behavior--either in taking a free-admission pass (which many did) or attending a Butley screening (which few did).

Preliminary analysis found no significant interaction between initial film-viewing interest (measured prior to reading reviews) and review direction in relation to any dependent variables, indicating the effect of review direction is uniform across treatments. Initial interest in seeing Butley--measured after subjects read titles, casts, and plot descriptions of eight upcoming films--was moderate; Butley was ranked fourth, roughly midway between top favorite The Best of Times and the bottom-ranked Perfect!.

Statistical Tests of Hypotheses

H1: Film Interest

The first hypothesis--that review direction will significantly affect film-viewing interest compatible with the direction of the review--was accepted.

That is to say, the answer to the question "Does a positive review of a movie increase interest in seeing a film, and does a negative review decrease interest?" is yes--if the point of comparison is the interest score generated by the pre-test. However, if the comparison includes mixed and non-reviews, the positive review is demonstrably different only from the negative review, while the negative review is demonstrably different from positive, mixed, and non-reviews.

To measure the effect of review direction on film interest, subjects were asked to rate their level of interest in seeing each of eight "upcoming" films on a 4-point scale. Seven of these were bona fide forthcoming theatrical releases; only Butley had previously been distributed. Subjects were presented with titles, cast lists, and one-sentence neutral plot descriptions of a diverse sample of feature films, including Out of Africa, Volunteers, Jewel of the Nile, and other as-yet-unreleased motion pictures. Subjects then indicated their level of interest in seeing each film on a scale from 1 ("Not At All Interested") to 4 ("Very Interested").

Table 1 shows means and rank orders for interest in seeing Butley and seven other forthcoming films, prior to exposure to review treatments.

TABLE 1

RANKS AND MEANS OF INTEREST LEVELS
IN SEEING 8 UPCOMING FILMS

Film Title	Rank Order	Mean Interest
<u>The Best of Times</u>	1	2.87
<u>Jewel of the Nile</u>	2	2.73
<u>Volunteers</u>	3	2.62
<u>Butley</u>	4	2.55
<u>Emerald</u>	5	2.52
<u>Hot Chilis</u>	6	2.50
<u>Out of Africa</u>	7	2.45
<u>Perfect!</u>	8	2.15
N = 308 students		

Each subject then was asked to read a randomly assigned positive, mixed, negative, or non-review of Butley and to indicate again his level of interest in seeing Butley--this time on a 5-point scale. To assure a common metric, since slightly different 4- and 5-point interest-in-seeing scales were inadvertently used in this procedure (the post-test 5-point scale included a neutral step, "Neither Interested Nor Uninterested"), Z-scores were employed to report data. After means of interest scores were converted to Z-scores, gain scores for film interest were calculated by subtracting each subject's adjusted Z-score for pre-test interest in seeing Butley from his adjusted Z-score for post-test interest. In addition, a

higher standard of statistical significance ($p < .01$) was introduced for analyzing these data to minimize attribution of significance to results possibly influenced by procedural irregularity.

A one-way analysis of variance indicated that review direction significantly affected interest in seeing Butley compatible with the direction of the review at the .01 significance level. ANOVA findings are reported in Table 2.

TABLE 2
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR EFFECT OF REVIEW DIRECTION
ON FILM-INTEREST GAIN SCORES

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between groups	3	23.32	7.77	6.90	.0002
Within groups	309	347.99	1.13		
Total	312	371.31			

To test the difference between each set of gain scores, the Tukey-HSD post hoc comparison method--regarded as a relatively conservative procedure for finding significant differences (Huck, Cormier & Bounds, 1974)--was used. The Tukey-HSD procedure revealed that film-interest gain scores computed for groups assigned to read positive, mixed, and non-reviews were significantly higher than the

gain score computed for the negative review group, although they did not differ significantly from one another. The eta-square statistic indicated that review direction accounted directly for approximately 6% of the variance in interest gain scores (eta = .25).

Film-interest gain scores by treatment and other details of significance tests for the effect of review direction on interest in seeing Butley are reported in Table 3, employing Z-scores.

TABLE 3
STANDARDIZED FILM-INTEREST GAIN SCORES
BY REVIEW TREATMENT

	Treatment Groups			
	Negative Review (n=78)	Non- Review (n=76)	Mixed Review (n=80)	Positive Review (n=79)
Gain Score	abc -.45	a .08	b .10	c .28

Note. Gain scores with the same superscript differ significantly by Tukey-HSD multiple-range procedure.

Graphic representation of the effect of review direction on film interest by treatment is displayed in Figure 2, employing a bar chart plotted on the same page with standardized scores for review appeal.

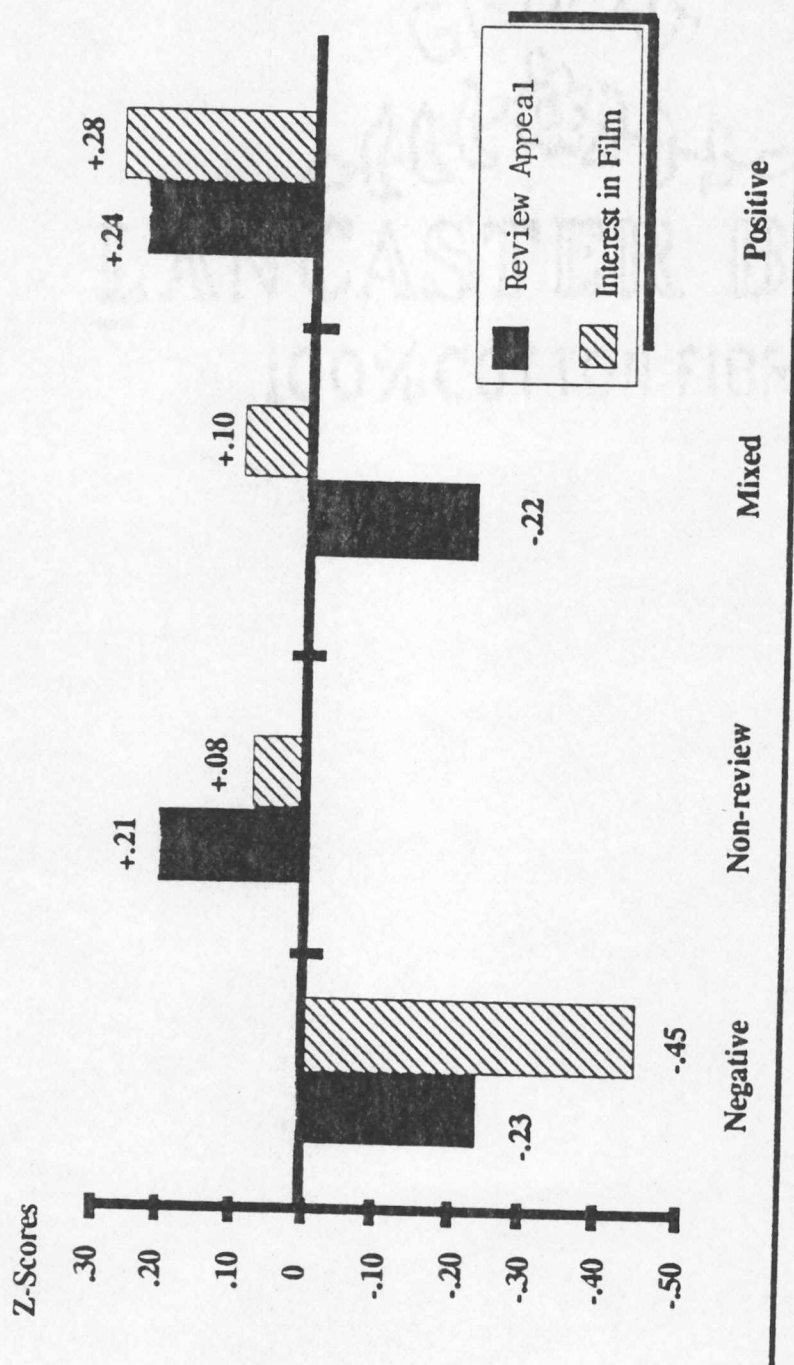


Figure 2. Effects of Review Direction on Film Interest and Review Appeal.

Results of these tests of the effect of film-review direction on interest in seeing Butley support the first hypothesis. These findings indicate that an unfavorable review (or "pan") can diminish subjects' self-reported viewing interest when compared to a favorable review (or "rave") written about the same motion picture.

H2: Review Appeal, Credibility-Informativeness

The second hypothesis--that review direction will significantly affect subjects' evaluations of reviews with regard to such characteristics as appeal, informativeness, and credibility--was accepted, with modification.

To evaluate reviews, subjects were asked to rate the treatments on a semantic differential-type scale with nine pairs of polar-opposite adjectives separated by 7-point scales. Adjective pairs were randomly ordered, and their poles were randomly reversed. Subjects were instructed to mark an "X" on the blank nearest to the term that reflected their opinion about the review they had just read. In the analysis, positive adjectives took on the higher score.

Adjective pairs were selected to explore three dimensions: appeal, informativeness, and credibility.

To evaluate appeal, three pairs of adjectives were chosen: "boring/stimulating," "interesting/uninteresting," and "dull/lively." To explore the dimension of informativeness, the adjective pairs selected were:

"uninformative/informative," "revealing/unrevealing," and "helpful/useless." For the last dimension, credibility, the adjective pairs chosen were: "trustworthy/untrustworthy," "false/true," and "believable/unbelievable."

Reliabilities were calculated for each subscale in the semantic differential-type scale. The reliability for the review-appeal index was high ($\alpha = .89$, $p < .001$), but the other two reliabilities were marginal.

Accordingly, in an effort to produce reliable indices, factor analysis was used to extract underlying dimensions. This procedure ultimately yielded a two-factor solution with a high composite reliability ($\theta = .83$, $p < .001$). Both a scree test and a conventional eigenvalue stop criterion of 1.0 suggested the two-factor solution. Varimax rotation, using the principal components method, extracted the factors, and factor scores were calculated using the regression method.

Factor 1 was labeled Review Appeal because of high loadings of adjectives intended to measure the appeal or interestingness dimension. (The adjectives "revealing/unrevealing" also loaded moderately here.)

Factor 2 was called Review Credibility-Informativeness, since adjectives selected to measure the credibility and informativeness dimensions both loaded high here. Subjects apparently perceived credibility and informativeness as operating on the same underlying dimension.

The two factors produced in this analysis were employed throughout further explorations of the data.

Loadings for each of the nine pairs of adjectives are presented in Table 4.

TABLE 4
ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR
REVIEW-RATING ADJECTIVES

Adjective Pair	Factor 1 (Review Appeal)	Factor 2 (Credibility- Informativeness)
Boring/Stimulating	<u>.89</u>	.15
Dull/Lively	<u>.88</u>	.18
Interesting/Uninteresting	<u>.85</u>	.21
Believable/Unbelievable	.07	<u>.75</u>
False/True	.08	<u>.71</u>
Uninformative/Informative	.27	<u>.66</u>
Trustworthy/Untrustworthy	.20	<u>.64</u>
Helpful/Useless	.35	<u>.62</u>
Revealing/Unrevealing	<u>.41</u>	.36
Eigenvalue	3.86	1.35
Percentage of Variance	43%	15%

Note. Loadings underlined at the .4 level and higher.

To determine whether review direction significantly affected subjects' evaluations of reviews for Factors 1 and 2, one-way analysis of variance tests were performed on the mean review-evaluation subscale scores. The first ANOVA

indicated that the effect of review direction on review appeal was significant at the .001 level. The eta-square statistic indicated that review direction directly accounted for approximately 5% of the variance in review appeal (eta = .22). The second ANOVA established that the effect of review direction on credibility-informativeness was not significant at the .05 level. See Table 5 for ANOVA results for effect of review direction on review appeal.

TABLE 5
ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR EFFECT OF REVIEW DIRECTION
ON REVIEW-APPEAL FACTOR SCORES

Source	<u>df</u>	<u>SS</u>	<u>MS</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>p</u>
Between Groups	3	15.67	5.22	5.42	.001
Within Groups	306	294.87	.96		
Total	309	310.54			

To test for significant differences between treatment groups' mean scores on the review-appeal index, the Tukey-HSD post hoc comparison method was employed. According to this procedure, the mean review-appeal score for the group reading a positive review was significantly higher than the scores for groups reading mixed and negative reviews, but

not higher than the score for the group reading a non-review. In addition, the mean score for the group reading a negative review was significantly lower than the mean scores for groups reading positive and non-reviews, but not for the group reading a mixed review.

Means of standardized factor scores by treatment and details of significance tests for the effect of review direction on review appeal are reported in Table 6.

TABLE 6
MEANS OF STANDARDIZED FACTOR SCORES FOR REVIEW APPEAL
BY TREATMENT

	Treatment Groups			
	Negative Review (n=75)	Non- Review (n=77)	Mixed Review (n=78)	Positive Review (n=78)
Mean score	ab -.23	ac .21	cd -.22	bd .24

Note. Means with the same superscript differ significantly at $p < .05$ level.

Graphic representation of the effect of review direction on review appeal by treatment is displayed in Figure 2, employing a bar chart plotted on the same page with film-interest gain scores.

Hypothesis 2, then, was accepted with modification. Review direction was found to exert a significant effect on review appeal but not on credibility-informativeness.

H3: Appeal and Credibility-Informativeness of Non-Reviews

The third hypothesis--that subjects will rate positive, mixed, and negative film reviews significantly higher than a non-review in appeal, credibility, and informativeness--was not supported.

To test this hypothesis, scores were obtained from the appeal and credibility-informativeness indices. One-way analysis of variance, reported earlier, indicated that a review treatment that includes positive, mixed, or negative opinion will not be rated significantly higher in credibility-informativeness than a non-review.

But a second ANOVA, also reported earlier, showed a significant difference in review-appeal ratings ($p < .001$). According to the Tukey-HSD procedure, the mean review-appeal score for the group reading the non-review was actually significantly higher than the mean scores for both the mixed and negative review groups (but not significantly different from the mean score for the positive group).

See Table 6, displayed in the preceding analysis under Hypothesis 2, for means of factor scores by treatment group and details of significance tests.

The third hypothesis, then, which proposed that

positive, mixed, and negative reviews will be rated significantly higher for appeal and credibility-informativeness than non-reviews, was not supported.

H4: Taking a Free Pass

The fourth hypothesis posited that the direction of a review will significantly affect subjects' taking of a free pass compatible with the direction of the review. That is, subjects who read positive reviews will be more likely to take free passes than those who read mixed, negative, or non-reviews, and so on. This hypothesis was not supported.

Chi-square analysis found no statistically significant differences between groups in the taking of free passes ($\chi^2 = 2.75$, $df = 3$, $p = .43$). The pass-retention rate, however, was in the predicted direction. Percentages and frequencies for pass taking by treatment are displayed in Table 7.

Ultimately, two-thirds of all subjects took free passes. (It is noteworthy to recall that the directions appended to the pass specifically instructed subjects to remove the pass "only if you actually plan to attend the film, in order that space may be reserved for others.")

The results of this behavioral measure, although not statistically significant, nonetheless suggest a trend in the anticipated direction: Subjects exposed to correspondingly more favorable reviews are more likely to take passes than those exposed to less favorable reviews.

TABLE 7
PERCENTAGES FOR TAKING A FREE PASS
BY REVIEW TREATMENT

	Treatment Groups			
	Negative Review (n=79)	Non- Review (n=79)	Mixed Review (n=80)	Positive Review (n=79)
No. of <u>Ss</u> taking a pass	49	50	53	58
Percent who took a pass	62.0%	63.3%	66.3%	73.4%
No. of <u>Ss</u> not taking pass	30	29	27	21
Percent who didn't take pass	38.0%	36.7%	33.8%	26.6%

Note. Distributions not significant at the established .05 level by the chi-square statistic.

As Table 7 indicates, subjects who read positive reviews of Butley were slightly more likely to take a pass than those who read mixed, non-, or negative reviews; subjects who read mixed reviews were slightly more likely to take a pass than those who read non- or negative reviews; and so on. These percentages of pass retention by treatment group were not, however, statistically significant at the established $p < .05$ level.

In conclusion, Hypothesis 4--which stated that review direction will significantly affect taking a free pass compatible with the direction of the review--was not supported.

H5: Film Attendance

The fifth hypothesis--advancing the next step beyond the behavioral measure of taking a free admission pass--postulated that the direction of a film review will significantly affect film attendance compatible with the direction of the review. In short, subjects who read a positive review of Butley would be more likely to attend a screening of the film than those who read a mixed, non-, or negative review, and so on. This hypothesis was not supported.

After a conspicuously high response rate by subjects who tore off Butley admission passes (66% of all subjects), the actual attendance rate reflected a dramatic falling off: a very low 4% of all subjects. Out of the original 318 subjects, only 12 turned up for special campus screenings of Butley.

Of these 12 subjects (who attended screenings freely and by choice, without pressure exerted by their course instructors), 6 had read positive reviews, 3 had read mixed reviews, 2 had read non-reviews, and 1 had read a negative review. (Two other individuals who were not guests of

subjects also showed up for screenings: One professed to have "forgotten" his pass, and the other--a junior faculty member of the Mass Communications Department--presented an uncoded pass, apparently pinched from the departmental conference room where questionnaire packets were collated. Neither individual was included in the final results.)

A chi-square test revealed that the differences between expected and observed frequencies for attendance by treatment groups were not statistically significant at the established .05 level ($\chi^2 = 4.76$, $df = 3$, $p = .19$).

Percentages and frequencies for Butley film attendance by review-treatment group are reported in Table 8.

While Hypothesis 5 was not supported at the established level of significance, the trend among film attenders was in the predicted direction. Subjects who read positive reviews were twice as likely to attend as those who read mixed reviews, three times as likely to attend as those who read non-reviews, and six times as likely to attend as those who read negative reviews. Or, from another perspective, 50% of those students who attended screenings of Butley had read positive reviews; 25% of those who attended had read mixed reviews; 17% of those who attended had read non-reviews; and 8% had read negative reviews.

TABLE 8
PERCENTAGES FOR FILM ATTENDANCE
BY REVIEW TREATMENT

	Treatment Groups			
	Negative Review (n=79)	Non- Review (n=79)	Mixed Review (n=80)	Positive Review (n=80)
No. of <u>ss</u> who attended	1	2	3	6
Percentage who attended	1.3%	2.5%	3.8%	7.5%
No. of <u>ss</u> not attending	78	77	77	74
Percentage who did not attend	98.7%	97.5%	96.3%	92.5%

Note. Distributions not significant at the established .05 level by the chi-square statistic.

The fifth hypothesis, then, which proposed that the direction of a film review will significantly affect film attendance by subjects compatible with the direction of the review, was not supported.

H6: Bringing a Guest

The sixth hypothesis posited that review direction will significantly affect subjects' bringing of a guest to a screening compatible with the direction of the film

review. In other words, subjects who read positive reviews would be more likely to bring a guest than those who read mixed, non-, or negative reviews, and so on. This hypothesis was not supported.

Chi-square analysis showed no differences between groups in the bringing of guests at the established .05 level of significance ($\chi^2 = 3.61$, $df = 3$, $p = .31$).

A limitation on using the chi-square statistic here should be noted: The small cell sizes, by treatment group, for subjects who brought guests to Butley screenings may skew the results, as the conventional cell size for this procedure is five observations or more (Wimmer & Dominick, 1983).

Of the original 318 subjects, only 12 attended special screenings--and of those 12, only 7 brought guests. (By percentages, only 2% of the original subjects attended with guests.)

Percentages and frequencies of subjects who brought guests to screenings are reported in Table 9.

It is of interest to note that of the seven subjects who brought guests to screenings, four had been exposed to positive review treatments (57% of those attending), while only one each had read a mixed, negative, or non-review.

TABLE 9
PERCENTAGES FOR BRINGING A GUEST
BY REVIEW TREATMENT

	Treatment Groups			
	Negative Review (n=1)	Non- Review (n=2)	Mixed Review (n=3)	Positive Review (n=6)
No. of <u>Ss</u> who brought a guest	1	1	1	4
Percent who brought a guest	100%	50%	33%	67%
No. of <u>Ss</u> who didn't bring guest	0	1	2	2
Percent who didn't bring guest	0%	50%	67%	33%

Note. Distributions not significant at the established .05 level by the chi-square statistic.

Confronted with such humble numbers, however, Hypothesis 6--that review direction will significantly affect subjects' bringing of guests compatible with the direction of the review--was not supported. In fact, it was not adequately tested here, because of the extremely small size of cells.

H7: Film Evaluation by Subjects

The seventh hypothesis--that review direction will significantly affect subjects' post-viewing evaluation of the film compatible with the direction of the review--also was not subjected to a reasonable test under conventional statistical assumptions, because of the small size of cells. Thus, whether audiences who have read positive reviews of a film prior to attending that film are likelier to report favorable opinions afterwards than audiences who read mixed, negative, or non-reviews, respectively, could not be determined here with any degree of confidence.

Nonetheless, both the procedure used to measure reactions to the film and the results merit some attention here.

Subjects who attended screenings of Butley were asked to fill out Participant Questionnaires afterwards that included a 77-point semantic differential-type scale for evaluating the movie, as well as a straightforward 5-step "Terrible" to "Excellent" rating scale. (A copy of this questionnaire appears in Appendix D.)

The mean of all subject-participants' evaluations of Butley on the 77-point scale (with 77 representing the high, or most approving, end of the scale) was only 21.27--an indication of less-than-favorable response. Evaluations on the 5-point scale were equally blunt: No one rated the movie "excellent" or "good"; 18% rated it "fair"; 27% rated

it "poor"; and 55% rated it "terrible." Discussion of the audience's lopsided assessment of the film will be found in Chapter 5.

In any event, the seventh hypothesis--which proposed that review direction will significantly affect subjects' post-viewing evaluation of the film compatible with the direction of the review--was not adequately tested here because of limited cell sizes.

H8: Film Evaluation by Guests

The eighth hypothesis stated that review direction will significantly affect guests' post-viewing evaluation of the film, compatible with the direction of the review. This hypothesis was designed to test indirectly the impact of word of mouth from subjects to guests--in short, to determine whether guests of subjects who had read favorable reviews of Butley would be significantly more likely to rate the film higher than guests of those who had read mixed or negative reviews, and so on. Once again, this hypothesis could not be subjected to an adequate test, because of the small size of samples.

Only 12 of the original 318 subjects showed up for screenings, and only 7 brought guests. (According to percentages, only 4% of the original subjects attended screenings, and an even smaller 2% of the original subjects attended with guests.)

These numbers, although too small to be subjected to conventional statistical tests, seem to suggest some evidence of the drawing power of a positive review: Of the seven guests who attended screenings, four were guests of subjects who read positive reviews, and one each was a guest of a someone who had read a mixed, a negative, and a non-review. Furthermore, it could be said that of those 12 subjects who attended screenings of Butley, more than 50% brought guests (invariably of the opposite sex). However, no statistical significance can be attached to these findings.

Across treatments, the guests' reactions to the film were remarkably similar to those registered by subject-participants: 33% rated the film "fair," 17% rated it "poor," and 50% rated it "terrible" (none rated it "good" or "excellent").

On the same 77-point semantic differential-type scale used by subjects, guests tended to report higher evaluation scores than their hosts: The mean score for guests was 42.0, compared to 21.27 for subjects. However, the guests' mean score remained in the middle range and could not be construed as a favorable endorsement of the motion picture.

Hypothesis 8, then, which postulated that the direction of a film review will significantly affect guests' post-viewing evaluation of Butley compatible with

the direction of their subject-host's review treatment, was not adequately tested here.

Exploratory Analysis of Demographic and Attendance-Priority Variables

It was conjectured that the effects of review treatments on interest in seeing Butley, on ratings of the reviews for appeal and credibility-informativeness, and on pass taking, attendance, and post-viewing film evaluation would be enhanced or diminished by various demographic characteristics and self-reported film-attendance priorities. In the absence of guiding theory, however, a priori hypotheses were not generated with regard to specific variables. Demographic characteristics included age, sex, race, college class, and academic major; film-attendance priorities included 16 selected variables identified in previous research as factors contributing to moviegoers' attendance decisions.

To test for effects of demographic variables by treatment condition on dependent variables, two-way analyses of variance were conducted. Age, college class, and academic major were found to have no significant main effects on subjects' attitudes or behavior.

Subjects' gender, however, had a significant main effect on ratings of review appeal ($F = 5.10$, $df = 1/302$, $p < .05$, $\eta^2 = .12$). Females were found to rate the Butley

film review significantly higher on the dimension of appeal than males: The mean score for females on the review-appeal subscale was .13, for males -.09.

Two-way analysis of variance also showed that race (black, white, or other) had a significant main effect on review credibility-informativeness ($F = 5.05$, $df = 2/298$, $p < .01$, $\eta^2 = .18$). The Tukey-HSD post hoc procedure indicated that white subjects as a group rated review credibility-informativeness significantly higher (mean score = .06) than did blacks (mean score = -.68).

To analyze interrelationships within the set of attendance-priority variables for use in subsequent exploration for effects, factor analysis was performed on scales that measured the importance of 16 items in deciding whether to go to a movie.

Subjects rated the 16 variables on 4-point scales, from 1 ("Not At All Important") to 4 ("Very Important"). The importance ratings assigned to the selected variables were then factor-analyzed, and both a scree test and a conventional eigenvalue stop criterion of 1.0 suggested a four-factor solution. (The principal components method with varimax rotation was used to extract factors, and the regression method was employed to calculate factor scores.)

Factor 1 was styled Expertise because of high loadings of critics' reviews and film experts' comments, as well as moderate loadings of awards/honors and film director.

Factor 2 was labeled Advertising because of the high loadings of radio, newspaper, and magazine ads and the moderate loadings of television ads and previews in theatres.

Factor 3 was called Acquaintances' Comments because of the high loadings of comments from spouse or date and comments from friends.

Factor 4 was named Convenience because of the high loadings of admission price and convenience/location. Motion Picture Association of America (MPAA) film rating (G, PG, PG-13, R, or X) also loaded moderately here.

Loadings of variables representing attendance priorities on all factors are displayed in Table 10.

Of the 16 attendance-priority variables, only 2--plot and title, and film stars--failed to load even moderately on any of the 4 factors. Loadings reported in Table 10 are underlined at the .4 level and higher.

Analyses of covariance treating the metric factor scores and the categorical review treatments as independent variables showed no significant interactions with any dependent variables.

These analyses, however, did reveal significant main effects on interest gain for two factors.

TABLE 10
ROTATED FACTOR LOADINGS FOR 16
ATTENDANCE-PRIORITY VARIABLES

Variable	Factor 1 (Expertise)	Factor 2 (Advertising)	Factor 3 (Acquaintances' Comments)	Factor 4 (Convenience)
Critics' reviews	<u>.76</u>	.05	.03	-.06
Experts' comments	<u>.70</u>	-.01	.13	.06
Awards & honors	<u>.68</u>	.14	.09	-.08
Director	<u>.59</u>	-.04	-.39	-.05
Radio ads	.10	<u>.72</u>	.00	.11
Newspaper ads	-.03	<u>.72</u>	.09	-.10
Magazine ads	.30	<u>.69</u>	-.07	.06
Television ads	-.24	<u>.52</u>	.17	.10
Comments from spouse or date	.06	.00	<u>.77</u>	.08
Friends' comments	.14	.09	<u>.74</u>	-.01
Previews in theatre	.05	<u>.41</u>	<u>.44</u>	.05
Admission price	.06	.13	.11	<u>.72</u>
Convenience/ location	.08	.07	.25	<u>.67</u>
Rating (PG, etc.)	.03	-.06	-.24	<u>.57</u>
Plot & title	.32	-.08	.22	-.17
Stars	.27	.05	.23	.05
Eigenvalue	2.58	2.14	1.47	1.23
Percentage of variance	16%	13%	9%	8%

Note. Loadings underlined at the .4 level and higher.

Analyses of covariance revealed significant main effects on interest gain for both the Expertise factor

($F = 3.97$, $df = 3/304$, $p < .05$) and the Acquaintances' Comments factor ($F = 4.41$, $df = 3/304$, $p < .05$) when controlled for review treatment.

Follow-up tests for correlations between interest gain and both the Expertise and Acquaintances' Comments factors, however, revealed extremely weak relationships.

Expertise correlated positively with interest gain scores ($r = .11$), while Acquaintances' Comments correlated negatively with interest gain scores ($r = -.12$).

Correlations between interest gain scores and the two remaining factors, Advertising and Convenience, were not significant.

Mean scores of importance ratings assigned to all 16 attendance-priority variables, listed in rank order, are reported in Table 24, Appendix G. On a scale of 1 ("Not At All Important") to 4 ("Very Important"), the mean score for critics' reviews was 2.26, placing critics' reviews 12th in order of importance among the 16 variables.

In sum, two demographic characteristics (sex and race) were shown to have significant effects on two dependent variables (review appeal and credibility-informativeness, respectively). In addition, two attendance-priority factors--Expertise (critics' reviews, experts' comments, awards and honors, and director) and Acquaintances' Comments (comments from spouse or date, and friends'

comments)--had significant main effects on one dependent variable, interest gain, when controlled for review treatment. Correlations between these two factors and interest gain, however, were extremely weak. Finally, the importance of critics' reviews, when isolated from other attendance-priority variables loading on the Expertise factor, was found to be relatively low.

CHAPTER V

SUMMARY AND DISCUSSION

It is the will of God that we must have critics and missionaries and congressmen and humorists, and we must bear the burden.

--Mark Twain, 1917,
Autobiography

Introduction

During the summer of 1986, Tom Shales, television critic for The Washington Post and film commentator for National Public Radio, bemoaned the state of the American cinema and styled the condition "movie malaise" (p. 93).

"When did movie malaise settle in?" Shales asked. "It's hard to say, but it's here" (1986, p. 93). He continued:

The crisis is more than financial; it's spiritual. Movies don't have the place in the national heart that they did twenty, ten, maybe even five years ago. There's been a loss of faith. We are a nation of lapsed moviegoers. The signs are everywhere. But why? Why, why, why? (p. 93)

Shales wasn't the first to grouse (New Yorker film critic Kael registered her gloomy assessment in a 1980 magazine piece titled "Why Are Movies So Bad?"), nor was he the last. Shortly after Shales' article appeared in Esquire, film critic David Denby wrote an extended essay for New York magazine titled "Can the Movies Be Saved?" His pessimism was ubiquitous:

Even if we're aware of the dangers of prophecy, it's been hard not to feel, in recent years, that something portentous and truly awful has been happening. Critics are not the only ones who say so. Many adult moviegoers--and perhaps some of the kids, too--look at what's playing and feel abandoned and betrayed. They continue going, of course, because they have to go to something, but they aren't necessarily happy. American movies, the liveliest in the world a decade ago, have become an object of contempt. Judging from what I hear . . . almost everyone, at some level, senses that our movies have been trivialized, infantilized, massified, and marketed to death. . . . And we're not just talking of a bad season or year, but of every season and every year. . . .

The American cinema, in its current state, is a pathetic invalid. . . .

The number of tickets sold has remained fairly stable (around a billion a year) in recent years. But this healthy-sounding figure is misleading. According to a recent study commissioned by Columbia Pictures, three out of four Americans never go to a movie. (1986, pp. 25-26)

Why, why, why? Surely now--when the medium's plight is beginning to receive national attention and the conglomerates and studio bosses are being upbraided publicly--is the ideal time to seek some answers.

Historically, of course, Hollywood has always been notorious for its "complacency" and "short-sightedness" (Austin, 1983b, p. xxiii), and resistance to scientific audience research is still the rule. "The position of chance as a motivating factor sets the business of movies apart from almost any other economic enterprise," observe Lees and Berkowitz. "There are no statistical norms to measure performance Research and development is nonexistent" (1981, p. xviii).

But a business in which research is "nonexistent" (an exaggeration, to be sure, but an indictment nonetheless) is a risky business indeed--and one which spawns anxiety, uncertainty, and vulnerability. A better understanding of film audiences would be a logical place to begin.

Determining with some degree of accuracy who constitutes the mass audience ("basically a back-burner project," report Lees and Berkowitz, "since it's not associated with a specific film, [and] its lack of urgency causes it to get lost in the shuffle" [1981, p. 144]) would make creative and financial sense.

More than three decades ago, Lazarsfeld observed that "the executives in the movie industry are probably more individualistic and more distrustful of systematic research than those in any other communication industry" (1950, p. xii). His explanation was that industry executives assumed "that each film presented a new problem and could not be considered a typical product" (p. xii)--and hence did not warrant research. But, as Austin points out, the assumption that "research results gathered from the study of any single film and its audience cannot be generalized to the next feature that unspools, i.e., every picture has to be sold and researched independently, . . . belies the notion that . . . the releasing pattern for most future films" is usually determined by the box office results of antecedent films (1983b, p. xxiv; also Lees & Berkowitz, 1981).

This argument for avoiding audience research, Austin concludes,

can be seen as tautological: film audience research cannot be conducted in a general sense (or the value of such research would be minimal) since the "product" is unique and the uniqueness of the product, together with its short shelf life, makes such research of limited value. In short, research has been traditionally neglected since its benefits have not been revealed--or, perhaps more accurately, given a chance to be revealed. (1983b, p. xxv)

Research probing the psychology and behavior of the American "mass audience," then, is not the only variety needed by communicators; smaller-scale studies may also yield fruitful results.

Which brings us back to Butley and the results of experimental manipulation of evaluative commentary in film reviews read by student subjects. What do the results really tell us? Can the results be generalized? And what suggestions for further research might be offered?

Summary

Purpose and Procedure

This experiment was designed to determine whether different levels of critical commentary (positive, mixed, negative) in a professionally written film review would have corresponding effects on audience attitudes and behavior, compatible with the direction of the review. Audience attitudes included self-reported ratings of the

review for appeal, credibility, and informativeness; interest in seeing the film; and post-viewing evaluations of the film. Behavioral measures included taking a free pass, attending the film, and bringing a guest.

Four different versions of a realistic film review were prepared and tested by professional critics, then typeset in standard newspaper-column format with identical two-line neutral headlines. All background information and plot detail remained constant; only the evaluative adjectives or phrases were systematically varied (or, in the case of the control review, deleted altogether). The only variable was the relative direction of critical commentary (positive, mixed, negative, or absent) embraced by the review.

The film chosen for this experiment was a full-length British feature called Butley, directed by Harold Pinter and starring Alan Bates, which had been distributed in the United States some 11 years earlier in limited subscription-series engagements and was therefore unlikely to be known to college-age students.

The 318 undergraduates who participated in the experiment were asked to rate on scales their level of interest in seeing Butley (along with seven other upcoming films). Subjects then read randomly assigned positive, mixed, negative, and non-reviews; rated the

reviews on a semantic differential-type scale designed to explore the dimensions of appeal, credibility, and informativeness; and indicated again their level of interest in seeing the film. In addition, various demographic and media-use characteristics of respondents were recorded. The subjects were not informed they were reading different versions of the Butley film review.

Attached to each questionnaire was a free pass admitting the subject (and one optional guest) to any of four on-campus "sneak screenings" of Butley--a token of "appreciation" for participation in this "important ongoing study of the filmgoing habits of American audiences," conducted by the fictitious "Audience Research Associates" of Chicago. Subjects were instructed to remove a pass only if they actually planned to attend the film. The taking of a pass constituted the first behavioral measure.

The second behavioral measure was attendance by subjects at any matinee or evening performance of Butley. (Coded passes permitted the researcher and two student assistants to match subject-participants to their film review treatments and to questionnaire responses.) A third behavioral measure was the bringing of a guest to a sneak screening.

Afterwards, subject-participants and their guests evaluated the film on a semantic differential-type scale.

Results and Conclusions

Three of the eight hypotheses adopted for this study were supported, two of them with slight modification. All in all, film reviews used in this experiment were found to have a significant effect on audiences--specifically, on audience interest in seeing the feature film Butley and on audience ratings of review appeal.

Conclusion 1: The first major conclusion of this study is that the direction of a film review (positive, mixed, negative) significantly affects subjects' interest in seeing the film reviewed compatible with the direction of the review.

The effect, however, is relative and not necessarily proportional to the actual differences in review-direction content.

Conclusion 2: A negative review significantly decreases subjects' interest in seeing a film when compared to a positive review, a mixed review, and an informational control review. (Or, from the opposite perspective, a positive review, a mixed review, and a descriptive article without opinion significantly increase film-viewing interest when compared to a negative review.)

Conclusion 3: Subjects rate film reviews on at least two attitudinal dimensions: (1) appeal and (2) credibility-informativeness.

Conclusion 4: Subjects find positive reviews and descriptive non-opinion articles (non-reviews) significantly more appealing (i.e., interesting) than mixed and negative reviews, though not significantly more credible-informative.

Conclusion 5: Subjects' expressed interest in seeing a movie and the behavioral measure of taking a free pass to that movie are weak to poor predictors of subsequent attendance.

Conclusion 6: Putting free passes in the hands of student subjects for sneak screenings of a motion picture generates remarkably high rates of retention, regardless of whether those students were exposed earlier to positive, mixed, negative, or non-reviews of the movie.

Conclusion 7: Female subjects tend to rate review treatments significantly higher on the dimension of appeal than do their male counterparts. And white subjects as a group rate review credibility-informativeness significantly higher than do blacks.

Conclusion 8: Subjects ascribe only moderate to low levels of importance to film critics' reviews when deciding whether to go to a movie.

Discussion

Film Interest

The results of this experiment show that the direction of a film review (positive, mixed, negative) does have a significant effect on film-viewing interest compatible with the direction of the review.

These results confirm the findings of an earlier laboratory experiment by Wyatt and Badger (1984), which used reviews of an altogether different film (The National Health, or Nurse Norton's Affair). In that experiment, however, the viewing-interest mean scores of only the positive- and negative-review groups were significantly different; in the Butley experiment, gain scores for the positive, mixed, and non-review groups were significantly different from the score for the negative review group.

One reason for the apparent difference in results is that, for the first experiment, only three levels of review treatment (positive, mixed, and negative) of The National Health were prepared, then supplemented with a placebo review of an entirely different film (Anne of the Thousand Days), while for the current experiment four review treatments (positive, mixed, negative, and an informational non-review, with opinion deleted) of the same movie (Butley) were prepared. (Since the Butley experiment involved a follow-up behavioral measure of attendance, as

well as post-viewing evaluations of the film, a placebo review of another film would have been inappropriate.)

Another plausible reason for the difference in results is that the distinctions between positive, mixed, and negative reviews of The National Health were not nearly as apparent to the subjects as they were to the researchers. When asked later to identify whether they had read a positive, mixed, or negative review, only 52% of those exposed to a negative review identified it appropriately, 55% identified the positive review appropriately, and 82% identified the mixed review appropriately. The error here could be explained by this author's decision to write three unique reviews of The National Health, utilizing his own subjective reactions and excerpts from film and theatre reviews published in Great Britain. The resulting review treatments were highly realistic--but also difficult, apparently, for some readers to distinguish clearly.

Of course, such confusion may not be all that unusual in the real world--witness this recent letter from a reader of The New Republic:

To the editors:

I really enjoy reading Stanley Kauffmann's reviews of films. I have to admit it's the first thing I turn to. Actually, the very first thing is the "Films Worth Seeing" insert so that I can finally figure out if Stanley thinks the film I read the review on the week or so before is really worth seeing!

CAERL PAYNE
The Dalles, Oregon
(1986, p. 42)

Nevertheless, to reduce possible confusion in subjects' minds regarding the direction of a film review, a more systematic procedure was employed in the subsequent Separate Peace film-evaluation experiment (which did not measure viewer interest in seeing the film, since the film was shown to everyone) and in the Butley experiment. This refined procedure entailed first writing a positive review of the movie, then substituting polar-opposite adjectives (to create a negative review) and mixed or neutral adjectives (for a mixed review) selected from a thesaurus, while holding background detail and plot summary constant. Final versions of the review treatments were then shown to selected critics and journalists in Nashville and Murfreesboro for suggestions and improvements.

While these methodological differences--i.e., the number of review treatments of the same film (three vs. four) and the procedure for review preparation (individualistic vs. systematic)--help to explain variations in findings, it is the similarities which are the more telling. In both controlled experiments, which were designed to measure film-viewing interest before and after exposure to manipulated review treatments, negative reviews produced significantly different results from positive reviews.

This suggests, on the one hand, that negative reviews

read by prospective film audiences in the real world of filmgoing may have discernible impact by depressing or curtailling interest (every movie producer's fear); on the other hand, this also means that positive reviews may well heighten or intensify interest (every moviemaker's dream). And it's all relative: Results are significant when measures for one review group are compared to another.

Furthermore, as the Butley experiment shows, positive reviews do not have a significantly different effect from mixed reviews or non-opinion film articles. This suggests that a mixed review is really just about as good as a positive review, from the standpoint of a movie producer, and that any descriptive feature stories about films (omitting critical verdicts) may prove equally desirable.

It is obvious that movie studios do put stock in critical notices--why else would they quote them so extensively in movie advertisements? But Hollywood marketing executives signal in other ways as well their tacit belief that critics do count--such as by scheduling private screenings for critics, arranging for free theatre passes, providing access to stars and directors for exclusive interviews, mailing out expensively packaged press kits, and doling out movie-related trinkets, soundtracks, T-shirts, posters, and the like. One Boston film reviewer asserts that "criticism is a vital support wing of the industry, as well as its bete noire"

(McGilligan, 1979, p. 6), and he goes on to describe film junkets as the ultimate "temptation":

Having been to countless of these extravaganzas, I am continually amazed at the shifting patterns of sycophancy. Here's how it works. A studio flies 400 movie writers, first-class, to, say, New Orleans. The writers get to meet the star of the film, eat Creole cuisine, bask in the sun. They may not all be critics; some are feature writers who double as critics or who are perceived by the public as critics. They may hate the movie, but hopefully they will return home with feature copy that is a bargain by any advertising standard. Hollywood prefers a cheery feature to the wild card of a critical review, anyway.
(p. 7)

Other signs which suggest the studio bosses reckoned long ago that film critics must have clout include unsubstantiated reports of bribery and anecdotal evidence of altered distribution-exhibition arrangements.

"It used to be, in the bad old days, that the movie companies would try to bribe the critics," former Newsweek film critic David Slavitt asserted nearly two decades ago. "Not directly, of course, . . . but through the papers, by pulling ads from papers that had tough critics. They still do it, from time to time" (1967, p. 344). Then, too, industry insiders have suggested that some producers may indirectly try to co-opt, or at least neutralize, particular critics by commissioning screenplays from them on the side (Monaco, 1975; Denby, 1979).

As for recent anecdotal evidence of the impact of critics on the public, Kearney reports:

Several years ago, a negative review of Tron by a Wall Street Journal reporter who attended an advertised production sneak not only sent Disney stock plummeting, but poisoned the box office at Tron's opening

Now, nervous publicity department staff members guard the doors at research sneaks (1985, pp. 46-47)

Similarly, after another sneak preview, a New York magazine article proclaiming Close Encounters of the Third Kind a "colossal flop" apparently triggered a decline in the value of Columbia stock and a heavy influx of sell orders; a day and a half later, however, a Time magazine article pronouncing Close Encounters a "dazzling" movie apparently eased the panic and nudged stock prices back up (McClintick, 1982, pp. 203, 204).

Lees and Berkowitz explain that these sneak previews are primarily marketing aids, but, "once again, there are exceptions. Reactions by the New York critics to the preview of Heaven's Gate caused the film to be yanked from the lucrative Christmas release for extensive repairs" (1981, p. 146). When Heaven's Gate was later re-released, United Artists Senior Vice-President Steven Bach maintains, "No one saw it. They saw, instead of the movie on the screen, the movie they had been told about by forests of newsprint, by cascades of critical condemnation" (1987, p. 439).

Some studios now deliberately withhold certain films from critics, hoping to minimize early (and presumed

negative) critical response. Executives from MGM/United Artists, Universal, and Warner Bros. denied critics advance-screening privileges to Jaws 3-D, Cujo, and other pictures in 1983 out of fear that early negative reviews might cause film attendance to drop (Mathews, 1983b). "Our policy is very simple," Universal's promotion and publicity chief told USA Today. "When we feel the film may suffer from reviews--that the public will respond, but the critics won't--we don't screen it in advance" (cited in Mathews, p. 1D). In 1986, a Chicago Tribune columnist learned that the latest Stephen King film, Maximum Overdrive, was not being screened for reviewers, "which gives you a clue as to what the studio thinks critics will do to it" (Beck, p. 39).

Yet perhaps moviemakers need not be quite so alarmist. While producers and distributors "would prefer to have good critical reviews than bad ones" (Jowett & Linton, 1980, p. 64), the Butley experiment suggests that mixed reviews and informational non-review articles may have nearly as much effect on filmgoer interest as positive reviews.

Furthermore, no evidence surfaced to indicate that reviews produce a "boomerang" or "reaction formation" effect--that is, a "reverse barometer" effect prompting subjects to respond in a direction opposite that of the review read.

A cautionary reminder, however, should be added here that the procedural error involving use of 4- and 5-point

interest scales in the original questionnaire may have contributed to changes in film interest despite transformation of mean scores to standardized Z-scores. In short, subjects who reported particular interest levels on the pre-test 1-to-4 scale may have had their scores raised or lowered slightly when they reported interest in seeing Butley on the post-test 1-to-5 scale.

Review Appraisal

The finding that audiences rate film reviews on at least two dimensions (credibility-informativeness and appeal) makes a good deal of sense, and exploration with even more sophisticated scales might turn up other dimensions as well. Curiously, there have been "virtually no studies in this area," according to English. "Communications researchers have avoided studying critical writing because of its highly subjective nature" (1979, p. 120). Yet the discovery here of a dimension of appeal (or "interestingness") should confirm newspaper and magazine editors' hunches that readers enjoy arts criticism and that the space devoted to review columns is justified.

"The critical review is one of the hallmarks of American journalism, and in recent years it has become not only a print phenomenon but a staple of broadcast journalism as well," Hunt observed in 1972 (p. 2). "Reviews draw gasps," he continued. "They get laughs. And they are

quoted. They are a form of entertainment in themselves" (p. 7). According to one study of daily newspaper readers in a major Southwestern city, where respondents were asked to rank 34 statements regarding the type of content they would "most like to see" in their daily newspaper, the category "movie reviews and schedules" was ranked 4th by the 19-to-24 age group and 12th by the 25-to-34 age group; these same age groups also ranked "entertainment advertising (movies, etc.)" 2nd and 11th, respectively (Larkin & Grotta, 1979, pp. 34-35).

While the finding of a dimension of credibility-informativeness was foreseen, audience perception of credibility and informativeness as part of the same dimension was not. Credibility is of constant concern to all journalists--and the credibility of critics, it turns out, has been in question for decades (if not centuries). Historian Salmon, writing in 1923, remarked: "There is widespread skepticism as to the trustworthiness of newspaper criticism Is this all but universal doubt justified, is it grossly exaggerated, is it entirely negligible?" (p. 329).

That question has never been adequately answered, and the issue of critics' credibility and trustworthiness merits more thorough examination. Today, credibility is likely associated with particular critics or with the

publications they write for--and to avoid any biasing effect in this experiment, the typeset review of Butley was published under a fictitious byline, without citation of any newspaper source.

The informativeness factor is well established, too, widely endorsed by critics and editors alike. From the beginning, American film reviews--first published in theatrical and entertainment trade magazines, later in fan magazines and the popular consumer press--have often stressed the "news" side of the film industry and current films. "In fact," writes one scholar, "most early film criticism was little more than a detailed synopsis of a new film, with no opinion whatsoever expressed" (Slide, 1982, p. ix). Lounsbury explains:

Recognizing the spirit of competition among film companies as a possible source of income, these periodicals began to accept advertisements from movie manufacturers. As an additional service to both their advertisers and readers, the magazines soon provided brief movie reviews of the current films. These "reviews," however, were simply plot summaries of recent films from the major companies. Printed as useful journalistic information, the reviews did not apply any critical standards but left the reader to judge the scenario from the liveliness or sentiment of the action described by the reporter. (1973, pp. 3-4)

The informational side of critical notices remains strong today, and, "the extremes of puffery and sadism aside, the great body of reviews, notices and criticism in the mass media can be characterized as an important public

service Above all, the reviewer informs his readers" (Hunt, 1972, p. 3).

In the Butley experiment, potential audiences distinguished at least two dimensions, appeal and credibility-informativeness, but found positive reviews and descriptive non-opinion pieces significantly more appealing-interesting than mixed and negative reviews (though not significantly more credible-informative). Although more sensitive measures are needed here to expand this line of investigation, this finding suggests that previous assumptions that "the public . . . take[s] more kindly to censure than to praise" and that "mankind takes more pleasure in reading criticism and fault-finding than praise, because it is soothing to individual vanity and conceit to fancy that the reader has become wiser than those about whom he reads" (Salmon, 1923, pp. 329-330) may not be valid.

Furthermore, editors' fears that negative reviews might somehow cause readers to distrust the critic would not seem to be warranted; subjects did not find negative or mixed reviews significantly less credible-informative than positive or non-reviews. (However, Haskins and Miller's finding [1984] that bad news creates negative perceptions of a newspaper might offer an intriguing direction for further study using "bad"--i.e., negative--reviews.)

Film Evaluation

The audience's overwhelmingly negative response to Butley took this researcher by surprise. After all, Butley offered the allure of a movie set in academe--something with which the subjects could ostensibly identify--and it had garnered chiefly favorable and mixed reviews in the mainstream press. Even the notoriously hard-to-please John Simon, a film and theatre critic once labeled "the Count Dracula of critics" by fellow critic Andrew Sarris ("Count Dracula," 1977, p. 34), had this to say:

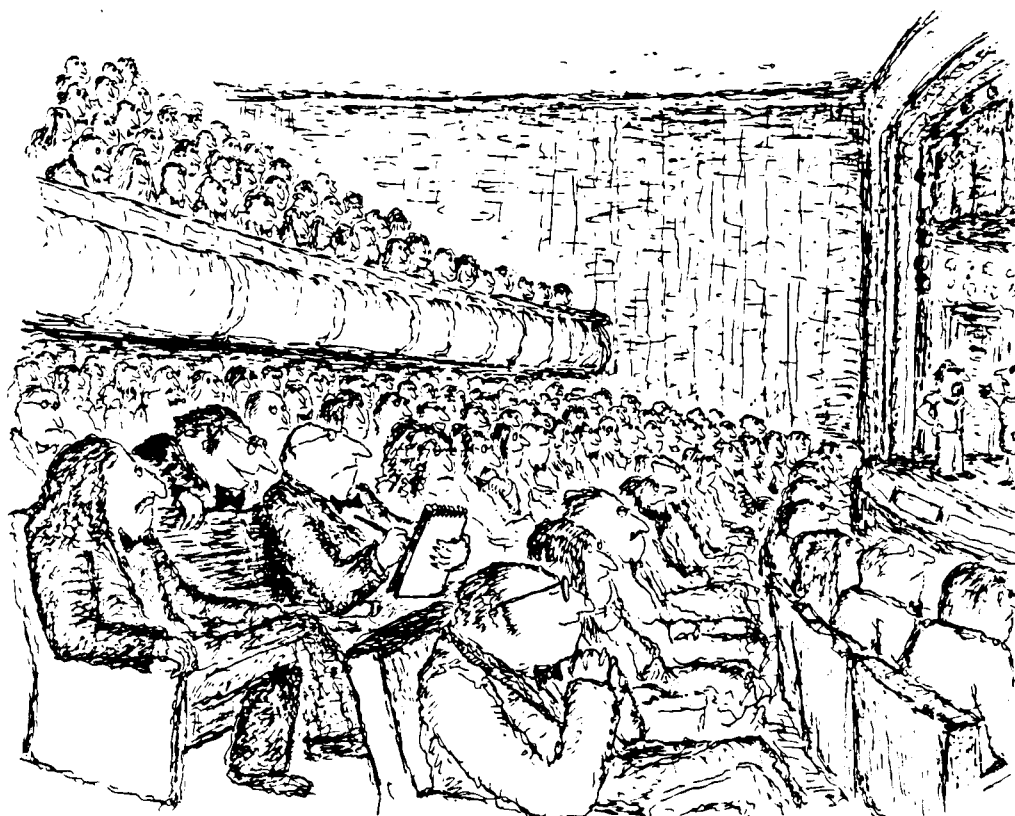
There is meaning and shape in Butley . . . and it is a cornucopia of wit that comes coruscating, cascading, cannonading out In Alan Bates, Butley gets no mere embodiment, but a walking, larger-than-life-size monument. . . . An actor here accomplishes mastery of his craft, and you hang on his every movement as in a rocking hammock, and accompany his dead-shot deliveries with a heart that does not so much beat as applaud

Simon Gray has written a small-scale tragic-comedy, sinewy and insinuating, and Alan Bates fills his protagonist with a stunning mixture of bitchiness and pathos. Together they make self-annihilation strangely exhilarating. (1972, p. 90)

In the Butley study, however, the very small cell sizes precluded meaningful statistical analysis of filmgoers' post-viewing evaluations to determine whether opinions expressed in the review treatments prejudiced subjects' conclusions. In an earlier experiment, review direction was found to exert a significant effect on film evaluation compatible with the direction of the review (Wyatt & Badger, 1984), but more experiments need to be

conducted before generalizations about filmgoer fictility are hazarded.

Critic Alan Rich has alluded to "the insecurity of audiences to arrive at, and then to trust, their own opinions" (1977, p. 77), but more empirical evidence should be collected to test the popular belief that audiences on occasion cede their brainwork to the critic (see Figure 3).



"Tell me, sir Is it good or bad?"

Figure 3. Effects of Criticism on Audience Evaluation.

Drawing by Edward Koren; copyright 1976. Used by permission of the artist.

Behavioral Responses

To expand the scope of this study, attitudinal measures were supplemented with behavioral measures, which were built into both the laboratory experiment and the field portion of the experiment. "Important as is asking about behavior," Kerlinger argues, "there is no substitute for seeing, as directly as possible, what people actually do when confronted with different circumstances" (1973, p. 554). Social scientists have learned, over the years, that "what one will do--as inferred from his expressed opinions--and what he actually does may differ markedly" (Nimmo & Bonjean, 1972, p. 491). Katz goes on to say:

Verbalizations of attitudes represent rationalizations which bear little relation to what the individual will do. The problem is further complicated by the methodological difficulty of equating an attitude expressed in a questionnaire or an interview with an attitude expressed in a natural social situation. (1951, pp. 515-516)

And so the attitudinal measure of interest in seeing Butley was reinforced with the behavioral measure of taking a free pass to the film. The result was that 66% of subjects tore off the passes, which signalled, as per the instructions, they "actually plan[ned] to attend the film." Removing a pass, then, was perceived as a behavioral indicator of intent to attend, to be measured later against actual attendance.

As it turned out, however, taking a pass was neither a significant nor a good predictor of participant attendance.

From this one might conclude that the incentive was so irresistible--a free movie--that the majority of college students in these classes automatically retained their free passes. Indeed, it may be that most college students, when encountering a free offer of anything, are prone to accept the free item, whether or not they intend to use it.

Demographic and Attendance-Priority Variables

This experiment's finding that female subjects tended to rate the Butley review significantly higher on the underlying dimension of appeal (or "interestingness") than did their male counterparts suggests a gender-specific difference approaching that reported by some other researchers. After reviewing the relevant literature, Petty and Cacioppo state:

Previous studies of sex differences in persuasion have provided some support for the view that females are more susceptible to influence than males in some contexts, and one explanation for this effect is based on the idea that females may have been socialized to be more agreeable (i.e., concerned with social harmony) than males. (1986, pp. 166-167)

Over the years, volumes of persuasion studies have endeavored to unearth evidence of gender-related predispositions (see, for example, Andersen & Clevenger, 1963), but the results are far from conclusive.

Relative to film, one recent study of college students' attitudes found males hold "a more favorable

attitude toward movies than females" (Austin, 1984, p. 47).

The author continues:

Such findings are to be expected, given the positive correlation between frequency of attendance and sex: males are more frequent moviegoers than females. Moreover, research conducted prior to 1950 indicated that males were also more likely than females to go to the movies alone. Based upon attitudinal inclination and frequency of attendance, the implication is that males are more ardent movie fans. (p. 47)

On the other hand, Wyatt and Badger found that female subjects in their Separate Peace experiment (1984) evaluated that film significantly higher than did males. Female subjects, however, were not significantly more affected by review direction with regard to dependent variables.

While it is possible that the film's stars (Parker Stevenson and John Heyl) or subject matter (the coming of age of young men) may have interested females more (or, alternatively, interested males less), significant differences between male and female subjects suggest females may enjoy films more or judge them more favorably.

On the other hand, female subjects in the earlier National Health, or Nurse Norton's Affair film-interest experiment did not differ significantly from males in self-reported levels of film-viewing interest. Evidently there are no consistent patterns here on which to base broader sex-related generalizations.

Data from the Butley experiment also show that white subjects tended to rate film reviews significantly more credible-informative than did black subjects. While almost all previously available film audience studies have either ignored or avoided reporting racial distinctions, a simple explanation may in fact operate here:

Black critics [are] virtually nonexistent in the mass media A notable exception is Clayton Riley, who besides serving as arts editor of the Amsterdam News contributes to magazines and appears frequently in the Arts and Leisure section of The Newark Times Sunday edition. . . .

As a black writer in a white world, however, he is often the "man between" two opposing elements. Militant members of the black community attack any black critic who praises black-made films . . . which, to their minds, "co-opt" blacks And white editors tend to assign black writers only to black topics (Hunt, 1972, p. 169)

This near-absence of practicing black critics--of film or other art forms--may well contribute to the tendency among black subjects to rate reviews as significantly less credible than do white subjects.

In the analysis of relationships among 16 attendance-priority variables, 4 underlying factors were suggested: Expertise (critics' reviews, film experts' comments, awards/honors, and film director); Advertising (radio, newspaper, magazine, and television ads, and previews in theatres); Acquaintances' Comments (comments from spouse or date and comments from friends); and Convenience (admission price, convenience/location, MPAA film rating).

Exploratory analysis of the Expertise factor suggested that filmgoers who ascribe high levels of importance to Expertise are somewhat more influenced by positive reviews and informational non-reviews than by negative or mixed reviews, although not at a statistically significant level. Of course, it may be that positive messages predominate (certainly they do in movie ads, which freely quote favorable blurbs from critics' reviews). In addition, awards (with only a few tongue-in-cheek exceptions) are customarily given to "good" films, and remarks from a college student's date may--for social reasons--heavily favor the positive side. Then again, perhaps these individuals are simply inclined to place a greater value on positive reinforcement.

In any event, as film critic Richard Corliss has pointed out,

Most people who go to the movies really want to like what they see. Critics may look for what's good and bad in a film, but civilian audiences look for--hope for--what's good, or at least what can be enjoyed Their demand is simple: they want to have three or four dollars' worth of a good time. (1977, p. 58)

Critic John Simon concurs: "The paying customer, who wants his investment of money and time to repay him in fun, and who wants to protect his good relations with whomever he took to the movie, may well condition himself to like most films" (1982, p. 11).

Yet closer examination of the overall mean score for importance of critics' reviews in deciding whether to go to a movie (2.26 on a 4-point scale) suggests critics are ultimately perceived as not all that important by college students. Students in the Butley experiment ranked critics' reviews 12th in importance out of 16 variables, well behind friends' comments, comments from spouse or date, and many other factors. This finding mirrors the relatively low assessments of importance of critical commentary reported in college-audience film studies by Austin (1981) and by Faber and O'Guinn (1984). Perhaps students do not read published reviews, or listen to radio or TV film critics, on a regular basis, accounting for the low priority ascribed to criticism. Then again, they may just hold critics in low esteem.

Suggestions for Further Research

In view of the rather surprising "dearth of data on film audiences," who practically "beg for scholarly scrutiny" (Austin, 1983b, p. xx), further research of almost any nature would be desirable in this field. To be sure, more frequent publication of privately commissioned studio research would aid the film scholar who wallows about today in a social science sinkhole with unfortunately very little to grab onto.

Clearly, one immediate recommendation would be to conduct more laboratory and field experiments. It stands to reason, the controversy over the "influence" of film criticism continues to this day because virtually the only available evidence has been anecdotal or correlational--but not causal.

Hillwig concluded in 1980, after studying 156 economically successful films released over a 16-year period, that there is "very little evidence that critical appraisal has anything at all to do with box office performance" (p. 98). He elaborated:

Anyone reading a review of a film that was to become a box office success from 1960 to 1975 had an almost even chance of reading either a positive or a negative review. And because critics review films before any determination is made of box office success, it may be concluded that critics had little influence over whether or not the public went to see a film. (pp. 99-100)

Hillwig's frequency data, however, are not persuasive, for he neglects to establish the causal link between box office success and review-reading audiences.

Falewicz, on the other hand, concluded just the opposite: "Our respondents are subject to the influence of official film criticism. While the critics' opinions may have a weak influence on the choice of films to see, they have a strong effect on the evaluation of the films viewed" (1964, p. 95). The Falewicz study in Poland, however, based its conclusions on correlational data.

In the very limited number of instances where experimental designs have been employed, the films chosen have rarely been representative of the sort of popular features that audiences go to see, let alone pay to see. Kinder, for example, tested the effects of prior information on physiological reactivity to a "stressful" motion picture--but he used a film depicting "puberty rites in a primitive tribe" (1967/1968, p. x). And Caplan's efforts to develop an audience-reaction instrument with which students could assess "a first-run motion picture" used "films of no longer than 10 minutes in duration . . . to facilitate using subjects during a class period" (1975/1976, p. 71). A remark by Fiske and Handel more than 40 years ago still bears a good deal of truth today: "What little [research] there is has been financed largely by educational or governmental funds and consequently has been concerned primarily with educational and propaganda films" (1946, p. 129). More research using experimental designs and more "typical" film fare might enhance the prospects for generalizable results.

Other suggestions come to mind for future research on the effects of film criticism on prospective and actual audiences. Different or more precise measuring instruments, alternative incentives or distribution methods of free passes, and reviews covering a spectrum of high-, medium-,

and low-interest feature films which represent other film genres might all be adopted for future studies.

Investigations of effects of writing style and of denotative or connotative informational content also merit examination. Alternative settings and participation of other subpopulations should also be explored.

Generalizability

One drawback to the present study is its use of a "captive" population of college students. The three classes tapped for this experiment are not necessarily representative of students at Middle Tennessee State University, much less of college students in general or the filmgoing public at large, since subjects were not randomly selected from these respective populations. Results reported here, as Haskins suggests, "should be verified by a similar study conducted on a more representative cross-section . . . from the general community" (1982, p. 36).

The external validity or generalizability of almost any study using college students may be jeopardized by relying too heavily on an availability or convenience sample or population. For this experiment, however, there may be some rationale for testing for effects on students:

The advantage of using a college student sample is that it allows for a rough control of both age and education as confounding variables. This advantage may be lost if the sample has no real world parallel. However, for film research, the college student may be more representative than

student samples used in other research. Nearly two-thirds of those attending film in 1976 were between the ages of 16 and 29, and the most frequent attenders of film in 1975 were individuals with at least some college education. (Elliott & Schenck-Hamlin, 1979, p. 553)

Recent evidence indicates that "the 18- to 24-year-old range accounts for nearly 50% of the regular film-going audience . . . [with] college students represent[ing] a large and important segment of the U.S. motion picture exhibition market" (Faber & O'Guinn, 1984, p. 374).

According to Motion Picture Association of America President Jack Valenti, recent privately commissioned surveys of the resident civilian U.S. population show that "moviegoers under the age of 40 account for 85% of total admissions" ("Who Goes," 1985, p. 17).

Furthermore, as Robinson points out, students in college "may be expected to pay attention to and to value as social currency . . . the film medium" (1975, p. 406), since they are

constantly exposed by conversation, campus newspaper, and the need to find places to go on dates to the names of films which are playing locally. Also, films can be used as a handy topic of conversation. (pp. 406-407)

It is, of course, the relative homogeneity of these college students--in age, educational level, social class, perhaps regional origins, and other sociological variables--which makes it difficult to extrapolate to the population at large. Using a more heterogeneous group in

future studies would be one way to enhance the external validity of this experiment. As Kidder explains:

External validity requires that the conclusions be true not only across people but also across conditions. . . . The only way we can objectively assess external validity is to see if the results can be repeated in another time and place with different people and procedures. (1981, p. 8)

Of course, heterogeneity often introduces its own confounding problems, too.

Would another study, under more "natural" conditions (i.e., outside a laboratory setting, with voluntary rather than forced exposure to treatments, with "authentic" film reviews, and with nonintrusive measures), yield similar results? That question cannot be satisfactorily answered without conducting more research.

Still, it is important to recall that the Butley experiment attempted to extend its scope beyond the laboratory and increase the "naturalness" of the study by incorporating behavioral measures and arranging screenings in a familiar locale at customary show times. In the process, it opened itself up to competing sources of influence and activity, as well as possible contamination from classmates and contacts.

In the laboratory, where the researcher has control over the variables, subjects, procedures, and administration, he can impose three conditions vital to establishing a true cause-and-effect relationship:

correlation (covariation) between two or more variables; precedence (cause preceding effect); and elimination of alternative causes or rival explanations. Thus, to be confident that subsequent differences among subjects are caused by treatment stimuli, the researcher can manipulate treatments within the laboratory and maximize internal validity--and provide a highly effective means to study the problem and to determine cause and effect.

Or, outside the laboratory, he can minimize "unnaturalness" and maximize external validity--but find it more difficult to rule out alternative explanations for subsequent differences in behavior or attitudes.

It is the unconventional thesis of one consumer researcher that "no implementable research practice is generally necessary or sufficient to attain externally valid research findings" (Lynch, 1982, p. 225). Instead, he argues,

Samples and populations should not be construed as sets of respondents. The relevant populations in experimental consumer research consist of measures of behavior. Since at least some of these behaviors will occur in the future, true probability sampling is impossible, and no implementable sampling practice can guarantee statistical generalizability to the relevant population. . . .

The "realism" of experimental tasks and stimuli is irrelevant to external validity unless the experiment is unrealistic on a dimension that interacts with the treatment manipulations.

The external validity of an experiment cannot be evaluated either a priori or a posteriori . . . in the absence of a fairly deep

understanding of the structural determinants of the behavior under study. . . . Thus, judgments of the external validity of experiments are best made by experts in the substantive area under investigation, rather than by specialists in methodology. (1982, p. 238)

In the framework of this experiment, one important concern was the risk of contamination during the field portion of the study. Once the laboratory controls were removed, students may have discovered from cohorts that they had read reviews of Butley that reached remarkably different conclusions. In addition, any of a number of rival explanations for subject-participant attendance at screenings may have intruded. Did subjects show up because they read positive reviews, for example? Or because they were curious about Audience Research Associates' "important ongoing study"? Or because they wanted to get out of their dorm rooms for two hours? Or because they hoped to impress a date?

And did subjects who read negative reviews deliberately stay away because of the unfavorable criticism, or because they wanted to watch "Dynasty" or "Cheers" or "Hill Street Blues" on television? Or because the rock group Foreigner was performing on campus at nearby Murphy Center on April 17? Or because "The Mousetrap" was premiering on campus at the Dramatic Arts Auditorium on April 18? Or because The Graduate was showing on campus both afternoons and evenings? Or because well over a dozen

theatrical films could be seen in Murfreesboro or nearby Nashville at commercial cinemas? Or because literally thousands of movies could be rented locally in videocassette format? Or because subjects simply had other plans--to study in the library, to attend the Alpha Gamma Rho annual Bar-B-Q, or to engage in myriad other activities? Without adequate controls (or omnipresent measures), this study cannot definitively say why.

Ultimately, so many variables were operating here that the project would seem to have encountered almost insurmountable obstacles outside the laboratory. But similar confounding effects are always present in the real world. In the Butley experiment, the direction of a film review had significant effects on prospective audience members' interest in seeing the motion picture and on their assessment of review appeal (interestingness), but not on the behavioral act of attendance. Where effects were found, they were relative, limited, and not necessarily proportional to the actual differences in direction of review content.

So, too, in a natural environment, the effects of film criticism are likely to be relative and limited--that is, enhanced or reduced by other mitigating factors. The late film director (and former film critic) Francois Truffaut once wrote:

Cinematic success is not necessarily the result of good brain work, but of a harmony of existing elements that we may not have even been conscious of: a fortunate fusion of subject and our deeper feelings, an accidental coincidence of our own preoccupations at a certain moment of life and the public's.

Many things.

We think that criticism should play an intermediary role between the artist and the public, and that is sometimes the case. We think that criticism should play a complementary role, and that is sometimes the case. But most of the time, criticism is only one element among others: advertising, the general atmosphere, competition, timing. When a film achieves a certain amount of success, it becomes a sociological event, and the question of its quality becomes secondary. (1978, p. 15)

Furthermore, these factors which mitigate against the direct effect of a given film review on a prospective filmgoer are joined by what Koch refers to as "multiple breezes" of opinion "blowing through the public prints [which] can make a difference" (1970, p. 13). The effect of two, or half a dozen, or a legion of reviews conveying similar critical evaluations might well carry greater force than a single, isolated piece of writing.

Perhaps, as Kochevar and LePatner playfully propose in their discussion of the "power" of New York drama critics,

the only way to determine with absolute certainty the power of the Broadway theater critics would be through a controlled experiment. That would require three cities of roughly similar population and three carbon copies of the same show opening simultaneously in each city. Reviewers in one city would write a set of raves, in the second city a set of pans, and in the third city no reviews at all. Then the show's length of run in each city would be compared. It is, of course, an impossible research design to execute. (1977, p. 24)

Still, research into film audiences and the effects of film criticism can and should go on. Replicating the results reported here "with samples representing diversity of ethnic, class, and geographical groups . . . to show the range of applicability of these findings" (Cohen, 1964, p. 47) would be one approach. Expanding the research into descriptive or survey studies of audiences' regular contact with and use of film criticism, their predispositions and motivations for attendance, and their criteria for film selection would be another.

Further research employing experimental designs--perhaps to measure the impact of reviews in different media channels (newspapers, magazines, radio, and television), or of individual critics (Canby, Kael, Simon, Sarris) or syndicated pairings (Gene Siskel and Roger Ebert, Rex Reed and Bill Harris, Jeffrey Lyons and Michael Medved), or of particular media institutions (The New York Times, Time magazine, National Public Radio), or of critiques of foreign vs. domestic films, or of blurbs excerpted in ads for film marketing and promotion--might also be productive.

And field experiments in naturalistic settings with unobtrusive data-gathering methods and behavioral measures should be considered as well.

Ultimately, to expand research into the still largely neglected terrain of movies and movie audiences would offer

the potential "for important historical and behavioral explanations regarding large audiences and their interaction with a popular mass medium" (Austin, 1983b, p. xx). Furthermore, such research might open the door to grounding movie audience studies in theory, for "without the guidance of theory," Austin argues, "research falls prey to justifiable and well-deserved criticism aimed at its meaninglessness and unconnectedness" (1983b, p. xxxiv).

Austin, who is unquestionably the leading advocate today of more and better motion picture audience research, calls the need for theoretical underpinnings "urgent" and concludes:

What is being proposed is that film audience research apply the available literature and evidence as a lens through which to focus on the properties of the film audience. This approach allows film scholars to determine what is truly unique to the field and what is shared with other disciplines. From this point the development of a theory of film audience can begin. (1983b, p. xxxiv)

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

BUTLEY PRODUCTION CREDITS, CAST, AND PLOT SYNOPSIS

Production Credits:

Producer: Ely Landau
Director: Harold Pinter
Screenplay: Simon Gray (based on his play)
Cinematography: Gerry Fisher
Editing: Malcolm Cooke
Art direction: Carmen Dillon

Cast:

Ben Butley.....Alan Bates
Edna Shaft.....Jessica Tandy
Joey Keyston.....Richard O'Callaghan
Anne Butley.....Susan Engel
Reg Nuttall.....Michael Byrne
Miss Heasman.....Georgina Hale
Mr. Gardner.....Simon Rouse

Plot Synopsis (quoted from Stanley, 1981, pp. 367-371):

The film Butley was presented as part of the first two seasons of the American Film Theatre. Released in 1973 and 1974, these series of films were produced as an experiment in providing the film viewer the opportunity to see great theatre and great performances. Each of the "seasons" were limited engagement showings for which advance-purchase tickets were required. . . .

Like the play, the film tells the story of a day in the life of Ben Butley (Alan Bates), an instructor of English literature at a university in London. . . . Nearly all the action of the film takes place in the college office that Butley shares with his colleague and lover, Joey Keyston (Richard O'Callaghan).

During the course of the day, Butley learns that his wife, Anne (Susan Engel), from whom he is separated, is going to divorce him to remarry, and going on to new men. Anne comes to tell Butley of her plans to marry Tom, a man who has been their friend. While Butley constantly insults her and repeatedly calls Tom "the most boring man in London," she remains calm and sensible. As Anne, Engel generates quiet control and an intelligent compassion. Butley is bitchy, childish, sloppy, and altogether an

impossible person with whom to live. . . . Anne's decision to cut off her tortuous involvement with Butley is the beginning of the disruption that is to befall Butley throughout the day.

Another affront to Butley's ego is the news, reported by Joey, that Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy), their senior colleague, has at last completed her work of twenty years on Byron and has found a publisher for the book. . . .

The central conflict in the film focuses upon the break-up of the symbiotic relationship--professional and personal--of Butley and Joey, and the most compelling scene in the movie is a confrontation between Butley and Joey's new friend and lover-to-be, Reg Nuttall (Michael Byrne). . . . Towards the end of the film Joey announces that he is going to move in with Reg, and as a final coup in his break with Butley, he moves to an office next to Edna's. . . .

At the end of the film Butley is alone His quick intelligence and ability to utter a fast quip often embellished by nursery rhymes or appropriate allusions to Eliot give him a mordant chic and is the basis of his limited but singular appeal. Butley is a remarkable portrait of the main character as an unbearable personality. He is unfit to live with others, and he does not enjoy his own company. . . .

Although Butley seems determined on a course of professional and personal destruction . . . the tone of the work is one of biting banter, of acid light-heartedness as the proper response to emotional anguish. Every painful move in his life is an occasion for larking about with his nimble wit, for making a wisecrack or a grimace. It is indeed a bitter comedy.

APPENDIX B
QUESTIONNAIRE AND PASS

Audience Research Associates

429 Sheridan Road
Chicago, Ill. 60202

Dear Students:

Your class has been selected to participate in an important ongoing study of the filmgoing habits of American audiences. This part of the study will take only a few minutes of your time, and your cooperation will be appreciated.

To show our appreciation for your assistance, we are happy to provide you with a free pass which will admit you and a friend to a special on-campus sneak showing of an upcoming attraction.

Afternoon and evening performances of this film will be screened in this room on Wednesday, April 17, and Thursday, April 18, to make your attendance convenient.

For this study, you will find a short questionnaire and other material attached to this letter. Please begin with the first question and continue to the end.

Please be certain to answer all questions.

Do not put your name on the questionnaire. Your responses will remain completely confidential.

Attached to the back of the questionnaire you will find a free pass to the film. After you have completed the questionnaire, remove the pass if you (and a friend) wish to attend. Please do not tear off any pages of the questionnaire.

Thank you again for your assistance.

Yours sincerely,

Deborah Michels

Deborah Michels
Vice President for Research

(Please turn the page)

PART I

BACKGROUND DATA QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond to the questions below by circling the number beside the appropriate answer. When you have finished, please check to be sure you have answered every question.

1. Approximately how many movies do you go to see per month?
(Circle the number beside your answer)

- 1 NONE
- 2 FEWER THAN 1 PER MONTH
- 3 1 TO 2 PER MONTH
- 4 3 TO 5 PER MONTH
- 5 6 TO 8 PER MONTH
- 6 9 OR MORE PER MONTH

2. Would you say that, on the average, you attend movies: (Circle number)

- 1 ON A REGULAR BASIS
- 2 IN STREAKS

3. Do you usually discuss movies afterwards with friends or relatives? (Circle number)

- 1 NEVER DISCUSS
- 2 RARELY DISCUSS
- 3 SOMETIMES DISCUSS
- 4 USUALLY DISCUSS

4. In which of the following situations do you prefer to watch movies: (Circle number)

- 1 ALONE
- 2 WITH ONE OTHER PERSON
- 3 WITH A SMALL GROUP OF FRIENDS

5. In general, how many days per week do you read at least one newspaper? (Circle number)

- 1 LESS THAN 1 DAY A WEEK
- 2 1 TO 2 DAYS A WEEK
- 3 3 TO 4 DAYS A WEEK
- 4 5 TO 6 DAYS A WEEK
- 5 EVERY DAY

(Please turn page)

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Card 1

____(1)

____(2)

____(3)

____(4)

____(5)

____(6)

____(10)

6. Approximately how many different magazines do you read each month? (Circle number)

- 1 NONE
- 2 1 TO 4
- 3 5 TO 10
- 4 OVER 10

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____(11)

In deciding whether to go to a movie, how important to you are each of the following items? (Circle one number on each line)

	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	
7. Television ads	1	2	3	4	____(12)
8. Critics' reviews	1	2	3	4	____
9. Radio ads	1	2	3	4	____
10. Newspaper ads	1	2	3	4	____
11. Previews in theater	1	2	3	4	____(16)
12. Comments from friends	1	2	3	4	____
13. Magazine ads	1	2	3	4	____
14. Comments from someone you consider a film expert	1	2	3	4	____
15. Comments from spouse or date	1	2	3	4	____
16. Awards and honors	1	2	3	4	____

17. Do you own a videocassette recorder (VCR)? (Circle number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

____(22)

(Please turn page)

18. How much time do you spend watching TV each day? (Circle number)

- 1 FEWER THAN 2 HOURS
- 2 2 TO 4 HOURS
- 3 MORE THAN 4 HOURS

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____ (23)

Below you will find short synopses of a number of upcoming films which have not appeared in your area. Please indicate your level of interest in seeing each of these films by circling one number for each movie. Use the following scale:

NOT AT ALL INTERESTED	NOT VERY INTERESTED	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED	VERY INTERESTED
1	2	3	4

____ (24)

19. JEWEL OF THE NILE. Starring Michael Douglas and Kathleen Turner. The adventures of the reunited twosome from "Romancing the Stone" after they sail their new sloop towards the shores of North Africa by way of the French Riviera. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

20. VOLUNTEERS. Starring Tom Hanks, John Candy and George Plimpton. Comedy about a spoiled rich kid who joins the Peace Corps to escape mobsters to whom he owes a gambling debt. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

21. OUT OF AFRICA. Starring Robert Redford and Meryl Streep. Adventure film about the experiences in Africa of Swedish writer Isak Dinesen. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

22. PERFECT! Starring John Travolta and Jamie Lee Curtis. Tale of a Rolling Stone reporter researching a story about health clubs who falls for his aerobics instructor. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

23. BUTLEY. Starring Alan Bates and Jessica Tandy. Comic portrait of a university professor who finds it nearly impossible to relate intellectually or sexually to anyone. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

24. HOT CHILIS. Starring Joe Rubbo, Victoria Barrett and Chuck Hemingway. Sex-and-sun comedy about American teenagers on vacation in Mexico. (Circle number)

1 2 3 4

____ (30)

(Please turn page)

	NOT AT ALL INTERESTED 1	NOT VERY INTERESTED 2	SOMEWHAT INTERESTED 3	VERY INTERESTED 4	OFFICE USE ONLY
25. <u>EMERALD</u> . Starring Ed Harris and Max von Sydow. World War II spy drama about an American double agent who infiltrates occupied Paris in 1944 just prior to the Normandy D-Day landing. (Circle number)	1	2	3	4	____(31)
26. <u>THE BEST OF TIMES</u> . Starring Robin Williams and Kurt Russell. Comedy-drama about the restaging of a historic football match 20 years after the original event. (Circle number)	1	2	3	4	____
In deciding whether to go to a movie, how important to you are each of the following items? (Circle one number on each line)					
	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	
27. Plot and title	1	2	3	4	____(33)
28. The stars	1	2	3	4	____
29. Convenience/location	1	2	3	4	____
30. Admission price	1	2	3	4	____
31. Rating (R, PG, etc.)	1	2	3	4	____
32. Director	1	2	3	4	____(38)

(Please turn page)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read the following newspaper article:

British Actor Alan Bates Brings 'Butley' To Screen

By CLAYTON RICE

"Butley" is a new film about a professor of English whose life is, quite simply, a mess.

His suit rumpled, his hair untidy and his eyes bloodshot, Ben Butley (Alan Bates) finds his entire life unravelling—like the end of his shirtsleeve—in a single day.

His ex-wife arrives with the news that she plans to remarry; his office-mate/roommate announces that he is on the verge of leaving him; and his demanding students descend upon his office to inundate him with papers.

Screenwriter Simon Gray, who has adapted his original stage comedy for the screen, offers Bates a challenging role. Gray's script deals with the antic quality of university life.

"Butley" also marks the directorial debut of acclaimed playwright Harold Pinter.

Cinematographer Gerry Fisher's camerawork centers on the physical constriction of the action (which takes place mostly in Butley's office).

"Oh, if only they'd let us get on with it and teach!" Alan Bates, in the role of Ben Butley, moans as he invokes the weight of make-believe administrative duties to dodge yet another session with students.

Can he tear apart his former wife's new relationship with a man he finds boring? Can he sabotage his junior colleague's impending romance with a chap he despises? Now there's work for a day!

And as for those student papers, Mr. Bates sails them high into the air with unconcealed glee.

Of course, Butley's manic behavior only camouflages a self-destructive personality which erupts in his frequent confrontations with officemate Joey Keyston (Richard O'Callaghan) and fellow-worker Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy).

When you have finished reading, please turn the page.

EVALUATION OF ARTICLE

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Now we would like to know how you feel about the article you have just read. A number of words expressing opinions about the article are grouped in pairs below. Each pair of words refers to an opposite characteristic or opinion. These words are separated by seven blanks.

If you feel the movie is very closely related to a word on one end of the scale, place a mark (X) in a blank nearer to that word and further from its opposite. Do not skip any items.

Read each pair of adjectives carefully. Some pairs list the positive or negative rating on one side, while others list it on the other side. You cannot simply go down the page marking the same blank for each question number.

For example, if you felt the article was happy instead of sad, you should place an "X" nearer happy and farther away from sad. If, however, you felt it was sad, then you would place your "X" nearer or next to sad.

If you thought the article was neither happy nor sad, but in between, you would place your "X" near the middle of the line. Mark only one space on each line.

Your Personal Evaluation of the Article:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|---|---------------|------------|
| 33. Trustworthy | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Untrustworthy | _____ (39) |
| 34. Uninformative | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Informative | _____ |
| 35. Dull | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Lively | _____ |
| 36. Revealing | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Unrevealing | _____ |
| 37. Boring | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Stimulating | _____ (43) |
| 38. Interesting | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Uninteresting | _____ |
| 39. Helpful | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Useless | _____ |
| 40. False | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | True | _____ |
| 41. Believable | _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ : _____ | Unbelievable | _____ (47) |

(Please turn page; you're almost through)

INSTRUCTIONS: Please respond to the questions below by circling the number which represents your answer.

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42. How interested are you in seeing "Butley" now? (Circle number)

- 1 NOT AT ALL INTERESTED
- 2 NOT VERY INTERESTED
- 3 NEITHER INTERESTED NOR UNINTERESTED
- 4 SOMEWHAT INTERESTED
- 5 VERY INTERESTED

____ (48)

43. In which age group do you belong? (Circle number)

- 1 UNDER 18
- 2 18 TO 24
- 3 25 TO 29
- 4 30 TO 39
- 5 40 AND OVER

44. Your sex: (Circle number)

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

45. Your race: (Circle number)

- 1 BLACK
- 2 WHITE
- 3 OTHER

46. Your university class: (Circle number)

- 1 FRESHMAN
- 2 SOPHOMORE
- 3 JUNIOR
- 4 SENIOR
- 5 OTHER

47. Your academic major: (Circle number)

- 1 MASS COMMUNICATIONS
- 2 OTHER

____ (53)

(Please turn page)

____ (54)

End
Card 1

FREE SNEAK FILM SHOWING

To show our appreciation for your participation, we have attached a pass which will admit you and, if you wish, one guest not in the class to a sneak showing of "Butley," starring Alan Bates and Jessica Tandy.

Please remove the pass only if you actually plan to attend the film, in order that space may be reserved for others. Remove only the pass, not other parts of the questionnaire.

The film will be shown in this room (LRC 241) at the following times:

Wednesday, April 17, at 3:45 p.m.

Wednesday, April 17, at 7:00 p.m.

Thursday, April 18, at 3:45 p.m.

Thursday, April 18, at 7:00 p.m.

Remove the free pass attached to this page if you wish to attend one of these four screenings. You must present your pass in order to be admitted. This pass will also admit one guest with you.

If you plan to come to the movie with someone else who is in the class, however, please bring your own pass.

Thank you very much for your patience and cooperation.
This is the end of the questionnaire.

FREE PASS

 **FREE MOVIE - "BUTLEY"** 

This pass will admit bearer
(and one guest)
to a free sneak showing of
"BUTLEY"

Wednesday, April 17, 3:45 & 7 p.m.
Thursday, April 18, 3:45 & 7 p.m.
LRC Room 241

 **SNEAK SCREENING!** 

, COURTESY OF *Audience Research Associates*

APPENDIX C

FOUR BUTLEY REVIEWS

(POSITIVE REVIEW)

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read the following newspaper article:

British Actor Alan Bates Brings 'Butley' To Screen

By CLAYTON RICE

"Butley" is a stunning new film about a professor of English whose life is, quite simply, a mess.

His suit rumpled, his hair untidy and his eyes bloodshot, Ben Butley (Alan Bates) finds his entire life unravelling—like the end of his shirtsleeve—in a single day.

His ex-wife arrives with the news that she plans to remarry; his office-mate/roommate announces that he is on the verge of leaving him; and his demanding students descend upon his office to inundate him with papers.

Screenwriter Simon Gray, who has adapted his original stage comedy for the screen, offers Bates the role of his career. And Bates is always equal to the challenge.

Gray is a dazzling writer, and his dialogue here is sharp and humorous. Gray has written about this oddly likable academic figure with enormous sympathy, and his script is genuinely successful at evoking the antic quality of university life.

"Butley" marks a quite superior directorial debut for acclaimed playwright Harold Pinter, who succeeds in grasping a real cinematic mood and style throughout.

The pace of the film is finely measured, and cinematographer Gerry Fisher's camerawork makes the physical constriction of the action (which takes place mostly in Butley's office) work for the movie.

Actor Alan Bates as Ben Butley provides a brilliant performance with plenty of verbal wit and emotional depth.

"Oh, if only they'd let us get on with it and teach!" he moans, as he invokes the weight of make-believe administrative duties to dodge yet another session with students.

Can he tear apart his former wife's new relationship with a man he finds boring? Can he sabotage his junior colleague's impending romance with a chap he despises? Now there's work for a day!

And as for those student papers, Mr. Bates sails them high into the air with unconcerned glee.

Of course, Butley's manic behavior only camouflages a self-destructive personality which erupts in his frequent confrontations with officious Joey Keyston (Richard O'Callaghan) and fellow-worker Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy)—both quite splendid in their roles as academic sparring partners.

Bates' tour de force performance as Ben Butley is ripe with menace and pain; few actors could hope to embody his paradoxical balance as both aggressor and victim of his own insults and other impregnable defenses against lasting personal relationships.

All things considered, "Butley" is a rich and compelling film.

When you have finished reading, please turn the page.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read the following newspaper articles:

British Actor Alan Bates Brings 'Butley' To Screen

By CLAYTON RICE

"Butley" is an uneven new film about a professor of English whose life is, quite simply, a mess.

His suit rumpled, his hair untidy and his eyes bloodshot, Ben Butley (Alan Bates) finds his entire life unravelling—like the end of his shirtsleeve—in a single day.

His ex-wife arrives with the news that she plans to remarry; his office-mate/roommate announces that he is on the verge of leaving him; and his demanding students descend upon his office to inundate him with papers.

Screenwriter Simon Gray, who has adapted his original stage comedy for the screen, offers Bates the role of his career. And Bates is sometimes equal to the challenge.

Gray is a decent writer, and his dialogue here is sharp but unamusing. Gray has written about this oddly ambivalent academic figure with some sympathy, and his script is intermittently successful at evoking the antic quality of university life.

"Butley" marks a fairly routine directorial debut for acclaimed playwright Harold Pinter, who occasionally grasps a real cinematic mood and style throughout.

The pace of the film is acceptably measured, and cinematographer Gerry Fisher's camerawork makes the physical constriction of the action (which takes place mostly in Butley's office) work for and against the movie.

Actor Alan Bates as Ben Butley provides an adequate performance with plenty of verbal wit but no emotional depth.

"Oh, if only they'd let us get on with it and teach!" he moans, as he invokes the weight of make-believe administrative duties to dodge yet another session with students.

Can he tear apart his former wife's new relationship with a man he finds boring? Can he sabotage his junior colleague's impending romance with a chap he despises? Now there's work for a day!

And as for those student papers, Mr. Bates sails them high into the air with unconcealed glee.

Of course, Butley's manic behavior only camouflages a self-destructive personality which erupts in his frequent confrontations with officemate Joey Keyston (Richard O'Connell) and fellow-worker Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy)—both just adequate in their roles as academic sparring partners.

Bates' middling performance as Ben Butley is ripe with menace and pain; few actors could hope to embody his paradoxical balance as both aggressor and victim of his own insults and other impregnable defenses against lasting personal relationships.

All things considered, "Butley" is a rich but un compelling film.

When you have finished reading, please turn the page.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read the following newspaper articles:

British Actor Alan Bates Brings 'Butley' To Screen

By CLAYTON RICE

"Butley" is a tedious new film about a professor of English whose life is, quite simply, a mess.

His suit rumpled, his hair untidy and his eyes bloodshot, Ben Butley (Alan Bates) finds his entire life unravelling—like the end of his shirtsleeve—in a single day.

His ex-wife arrives with the news that she plans to remarry; his office-mate/roommate announces that he is on the verge of leaving him; and his demanding students descend upon his office to inundate him with papers.

Screenwriter Simon Gray, who has adapted his original stage comedy for the screen, offers Bates the role of his career. But Bates is never equal to the challenge.

Gray is an inferior writer, and his dialogue here is flat and humorless. Gray has written about this oddly unlikable academic figure with little sympathy, and his script is never successful at evoking the antic quality of university life.

"Butley" marks a clearly insignificant directorial debut for acclaimed playwright Harold Pinter, who never grasps a real cinematic mood or style throughout.

The pace of the film is poorly measured, and cinematographer Gerry Fisher's camerawork makes the physical constriction of the action (which takes place mostly in Butley's office) work against the movie.

Actor Alan Bates as Ben Butley provides a lackluster performance with scant verbal wit and no emotional depth.

"Oh, if only they'd let us get on with it and teach!" he moans, as he invokes the weight of make-believe administrative duties to dodge yet another session with students.

Can he tear apart his former wife's new relationship with a man he finds boring? Can he sabotage his junior colleague's impending romance with a chap he despises? Now there's work for a day!

And as for those student papers, Mr. Bates sails them high into the air with unconcerned glee.

Of course, Butley's manic behavior only camouflages a self-destructive personality which erupts in his frequent confrontations with office-mate Joey Keyston (Richard O'Callaghan) and fellow-worker Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy)—both quite unsatisfactory in their roles as academic sparring partners.

Bates' disastrous performance as Ben Butley is ripe with menace and pain; few actors could hope to embody his paradoxical balance as both aggressor and victim of his own insults and other impregnable defenses against lasting personal relationships.

All things considered, "Butley" is an empty and un compelling film.

When you have finished reading, please turn the page.

INSTRUCTIONS:

Please read the following newspaper article:

British Actor Alan Bates Brings 'Butley' To Screen

By CLAYTON RICE

"Butley" is a new film about a professor of English whose life is, quite simply, a mess.

His suit rumpled, his hair untidy and his eyes bloodshot, Ben Butley (Alan Bates) finds his entire life unravelling—like the end of his shirtleeve—in a single day.

His ex-wife arrives with the news that she plans to remarry; his office-mate/roommate announces that he is on the verge of leaving him; and his demanding students descend upon his office to inundate him with papers.

Screenwriter Simon Gray, who has adapted his original stage comedy for the screen, offers Bates a challenging role. Gray's script deals with the antic quality of university life.

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Can he tear apart his former wife's new relationship with a man he finds boring? Can he sabotage his junior colleague's impending romance with a chap he despises? Now there's work for a day!

And as for those student papers, Mr. Bates sails them high into the air with unconcealed glee.

Of course, Butley's manic behavior only camouflages a self-destructive personality which erupts in his frequent confrontations with officemate Joey Keyston (Richard O' Callaghan) and fellow-worker Edna Shaft (Jessica Tandy).

When you have finished reading, please turn the page.

APPENDIX D
PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

Audience Research Associates

429 Sheridan Road
Chicago, Ill. 60202

FILM AUDIENCE STUDY--PART II

PARTICIPANT QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Please do not open this questionnaire until you are instructed to do so after the movie is over.

This is a special showing of "Butley" for participants in the Audience Research Associates survey of American filmgoing habits. After the film is over, you will be asked to fill out this short questionnaire, which will only take a few minutes of your time.

We hope you enjoy the movie.

Again, we thank you for your time.

Do not turn this page until instructed after the movie.

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CARD 2
 _____(1)
 _____(2)
 _____(3)
 _____(4)

____(3)

____(4)

____(3)

____(4)

____(3)

____(4)

____(3)

____(4)

____(3)

____(4)

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------------|----------|
| 1. Boring | _____ | Interesting | ____(5) |
| 2. Unappealing | _____ | Appealing | _____ |
| 3. Meaningless | _____ | Meaningful | _____ |
| 4. Pleasing | _____ | Annoying | _____ |
| 5. Worthless | _____ | Valuable | _____ |
| 6. Unforgettable | _____ | Forgettable | _____ |
| 7. Bad | _____ | Good | ____(11) |
| 8. Entertaining | _____ | Dull | _____ |
| 9. Well-made | _____ | Shoddy | _____ |
| 10. Moving | _____ | Unmoving | _____ |
| 11. Unpleasant | _____ | Pleasant | ____(15) |

____(3)

____(4)

12. On the whole, how would you evaluate this film? (Circle number)

- 1 TERRIBLE
- 2 POOR
- 3 FAIR
- 4 GOOD
- 5 EXCELLENT

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____(16)

13. If a friend of yours asked you whether or not to see "Butley," what would you say? (Circle number)

- 1 DON'T SEE IT
- 2 UNDECIDED
- 3 SEE IT

14. How would you characterize the tone of the newspaper article about "Butley" which you read in class? (Circle number)

- 1 NEGATIVE (UNFAVORABLE)
- 2 POSITIVE (FAVORABLE)
- 3 BOTH NEGATIVE AND POSITIVE (MIXED)
- 4 NEITHER NEGATIVE NOR POSITIVE (NEUTRAL)

15. Did you bring a guest with you to see this film? (Circle number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

____(19)

In deciding whether to attend "Butley," how important to you were each of the following items? (Circle one number on each line)

NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT
-------------------------	-----------------------	-----------------------	-------------------

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

16. Newspaper article read in class.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

17. Recommendation by friend who attended earlier showing.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

18. Nothing better to do.

1	2	3	4
---	---	---	---

____(22)

(Please turn page)

	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	OFFICE USE ONLY
	1	2	3	4	
19. Just like to attend movies.					
	1	2	3	4	____(23)
20. The movie was free.					
	1	2	3	4	____
21. Curiosity about audience research study.					
	1	2	3	4	____
22. Wanted to attend movie with a friend.					
	1	2	3	4	____
23. Very fond of actor Alan Bates.					
	1	2	3	4	____(27)
24. Like film comedies.					
	1	2	3	4	____
25. Like movies about college life.					
	1	2	3	4	____
26. What was your initial source of information about "Butley"?					
1 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE READ IN CLASS					
2 A FRIEND					
3 OTHER					
27. Did you discuss the newspaper article you read in class with other people in the class? (Circle number)					
1 NO					
2 YES					____(31)
This is the end of the study. Thank you very much for your cooperation.					END Card 2

APPENDIX E
GUEST QUESTIONNAIRE

Audience Research Associates

429 Sheridan Road
Chicago, Ill. 60202

FILM AUDIENCE STUDY--PART II

GUEST QUESTIONNAIRE

INSTRUCTIONS: Please do not open this questionnaire until you are instructed to do so after the movie is over.

This is a special showing of "Butley" for participants in the Audience Research Associates survey of American filmgoing habits. After the film is over, you will be asked to fill out this short questionnaire, which will only take a few minutes of your time.

We hope you enjoy the movie.

Again, we thank you for your time. Do not turn this page until instructed after the movie.

PASS NUMBER _____

OFFICE
USE
ONLY**Card 3**

(1)

(2)

(3)

 (4)

- | | | | |
|------------------|-------|-------------|----------|
| 1. Boring | _____ | Interesting | ____(5) |
| 2. Unappealing | _____ | Appealing | _____ |
| 3. Meaningless | _____ | Meaningful | _____ |
| 4. Pleasing | _____ | Annoying | _____ |
| 5. Worthless | _____ | Valuable | _____ |
| 6. Unforgettable | _____ | Forgettable | _____ |
| 7. Bad | _____ | Good | ____(11) |
| 8. Entertaining | _____ | Dull | _____ |
| 9. Well-made | _____ | Shoddy | _____ |
| 10. Moving | _____ | Unmoving | _____ |
| 11. Unpleasant | _____ | Pleasant | ____(15) |

12. On the whole, how would you evaluate this film? (Circle number)

- 1 TERRIBLE
- 2 POOR
- 3 FAIR
- 4 GOOD
- 5 EXCELLENT

OFFICE
USE
ONLY

____ (16)

13. If a friend of yours asked you whether or not to see "Butley," what would you say? (Circle number)

- 1 DON'T SEE IT
- 2 UNDECIDED
- 3 SEE IT

14. Did you come to "Butley" as a guest of someone who had a free pass? (Circle number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

In deciding whether to attend "Butley," how important to you were each of the following items? (Circle one number on each line)

NOT AT ALL NOT VERY SOMEWHAT VERY
IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT

1 2 3 4

15. Recommendation by friend who attended earlier showing.

1 2 3 4

____ (19)

16. Nothing better to do.

1 2 3 4

17. Just like to attend movies.

1 2 3 4

18. The movie was free.

1 2 3 4

____ (22)

(Please turn page)

	NOT AT ALL IMPORTANT	NOT VERY IMPORTANT	SOMEWHAT IMPORTANT	VERY IMPORTANT	OFFICE USE ONLY
19. Curiosity about audience research study.					
	1	2	3	4	____(23)
20. Wanted to attend movie with a friend.					
	1	2	3	4	____
21. Very fond of actor Alan Bates.					
	1	2	3	4	____
22. Like film comedies.					
	1	2	3	4	____
23. Like movies about college life.					
	1	2	3	4	____
24. Invited by a friend who had a free pass.					
	1	2	3	4	____(28)
25. Approximately how many movies do you go to see per month? (Circle the number beside your answer)					
1 NONE					
2 FEWER THAN 1 PER MONTH					
3 1 TO 2 PER MONTH					
4 3 TO 5 PER MONTH					
5 6 TO 8 PER MONTH					
6 9 OR MORE PER MONTH					____
26. Would you say that, on the average, you attend movies: (Circle number)					
1 ON A REGULAR BASIS					
2 IN STREAKS					____
27. Do you usually discuss movies afterwards with friends or relatives? (Circle number)					
1 NEVER DISCUSS					
2 RARELY DISCUSS					
3 SOMETIMES DISCUSS					
4 USUALLY DISCUSS					____(31)

(Please turn page)

In deciding whether to go to a movie, how important to you are each of the following items? (Circle one number on each line)

OFFICE
USE
ONLY

NOT AT ALL NOT VERY SOMEWHAT VERY
IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT IMPORTANT

28. Television ads 1 2 3 4 (32)

29. Critics' reviews 1 2 3 4

30. Radio ads 1 2 3 4

31. Newspaper ads 1 2 3 4

32. Previews in theater 1 2 3 4

33. Comments from friends 1 2 3 4 (37)

34. Magazine ads 1 2 3 4

35. Comments from someone 1 2 3 4
you consider a film expert

36. Comments from spouse 1 2 3 4
or date

37. Awards and honors 1 2 3 4 (41)

38. In which of the following situations do you prefer to watch movies: (Circle number)

- 1 ALONE
- 2 WITH ONE OTHER PERSON
- 3 WITH A SMALL GROUP OF FRIENDS

39. In general, how many days per week do you read at least one newspaper? (Circle number)

- 1 LESS THAN 1 DAY A WEEK
- 2 1 TO 2 DAYS A WEEK
- 3 3 TO 4 DAYS A WEEK
- 4 5 TO 6 DAYS A WEEK
- 5 EVERY DAY

(43)

(Please turn page)

40. Approximately how many different magazines do you read each month? (Circle number)

- 1 NONE
- 2 1 TO 4
- 3 5 TO 10
- 4 OVER 10

OFFICE
USE
ONLY

____(44)

41. Do you own a videocassette recorder (VCR)? (Circle number)

- 1 NO
- 2 YES

42. How much time do you spend watching TV each day? (Circle number)

- 1 LESS THAN 2 HOURS
- 2 2 TO 4 HOURS
- 3 MORE THAN 4 HOURS

43. In which age group do you belong? (Circle number)

- 1 UNDER 18
- 2 18 TO 24
- 3 25 TO 29
- 4 30 TO 39
- 5 40 AND OVER

44. Your sex: (Circle number)

- 1 MALE
- 2 FEMALE

45. Your race: (Circle number)

- 1 BLACK
- 2 WHITE
- 3 OTHER

46. Your university class: (Circle number)

- 1 FRESHMAN
- 2 SOPHOMORE
- 3 JUNIOR
- 4 SENIOR
- 5 OTHER

47. Your academic major: (Circle number)

- 1 MASS COMMUNICATIONS
- 2 OTHER

_____(51)

This is the end of the study. Thank you very much for your cooperation.

End
Card 3

APPENDIX F

VARIATIONS IN POSITIVE, MIXED, AND NEGATIVE BUTLEY REVIEW TREATMENTS

- (1) "Butley" is a stunning/uneven/tedious new film....
- (2) ...Bates is always/sometimes/never equal to the challenge.
- (3) Gray is a dazzling/decent/inferior writer....
- (4) ...his dialogue here is sharp and humorous/sharp but unamusing/flat and humorless.
- (5) Gray has written about this oddly likable/ambivalent/unlikable academic figure...
- (6) ...with enormous/some/little sympathy...
- (7) ...and his script is genuinely/intermittently/never successful at evoking...
- (8) "Butley" marks a quite superior/fairly routine/clearly insignificant directorial debut...
- (9) ...Harold Pinter, who succeeds in grasping/occasionally grasps/never grasps a real cinematic mood...
- (10) The pace of the film is finely/acceptably/poorly measured...
- (11) ...Gerry Fisher's camerawork makes the physical constriction of the action...work for/work for and against/work against the movie.
- (12) Actor Alan Bates...provides a brilliant/adequate/lackluster performance...
- (13) ...with plenty of verbal wit and emotional depth/plenty of verbal wit but no emotional depth/scant verbal wit and no emotional depth.
- (14) Richard O'Callaghan...and Jessica Tandy, both quite splendid/just adequate/quite unsatisfactory in their roles...

- (15) Bates' tour de force/middling/disastrous
performance...
- (16) All things considered, "Butley" is a rich and
compelling/rich but unconvincing/empty and
unconvincing film.

APPENDIX G

TABLES

TABLE 11
SUBJECTS BY AGE GROUP

Age Group	No. of Subjects (N = 314)	Percent
Under 18	2	1%
18-24	299	95%
25-29	11	4%
30-39	1	*
40 & over	1	*

*Less than 1%

TABLE 12
SUBJECTS BY SEX

Sex	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Male	177	56%
Female	137	44%

TABLE 13
SUBJECTS BY RACE

Race	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 313)	Percent
White	290	93%
Black	17	5%
Other	6	2%

TABLE 14
SUBJECTS BY UNIVERSITY CLASS

Class Level	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Freshman	160	51%
Sophomore	87	28%
Junior	50	16%
Senior	15	5%
Other	2	1%

TABLE 15
SUBJECTS BY MAJOR

Major	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Mass Communications	115	37%
Other	199	63%

TABLE 16
FREQUENCY OF MOVIE ATTENDANCE

Movies Attended Per Month	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
None	8	3%
Fewer than 1	88	28%
1 to 2	143	46%
3 to 5	63	20%
6 to 8	9	3%
9 or more	3	1%

TABLE 17
MOVIE ATTENDANCE PATTERNS

Attendance Pattern	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 315)	Percent
On regular basis	80	25%
In streaks	235	75%

TABLE 18
LIKELIHOOD OF DISCUSSING MOVIES AFTERWARDS

Discussion Likelihood	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Never discuss	0	0%
Rarely discuss	11	3%
Sometimes discuss	97	31%
Usually discuss	206	66%

TABLE 19
VIEWING-SITUATION PREFERENCE

Movie-Viewing Situation Preference	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Alone	7	2%
With 1 other person	186	59%
With small group of friends	121	39%

TABLE 20
VIDEOCASSETTE-RECORDER OWNERSHIP

VCR Ownership	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 315)	Percent
Own a VCR	116	37%
Do not own	199	63%

TABLE 21
NEWSPAPER READERSHIP HABITS

Days Per Week Read At Least 1 Newspaper	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 315)	Percent
Less than 1 day	75	24%
1-2 days per week	116	37%
3-4 days per week	75	24%
5-6 days per week	25	8%
Every day	24	8%

TABLE 22
MAGAZINE READERSHIP HABITS

No. of Magazines Read Each Month	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 315)	Percent
None	23	7%
1-4	249	79%
5-10	41	13%
Over 10	2	1%

TABLE 23
TELEVISION-WATCHING HABITS

No. of Hours Spent Watching TV Each Day	No. of <u>Ss</u> (N = 314)	Percent
Fewer than 2 hours	108	34%
2-4 hours	145	46%
More than 4 hours	61	19%

TABLE 24
MEANS OF 16 ATTENDANCE-PRIORITY VARIABLES
BY RANK ORDER

Variables	Mean Score	Rank Order
Friends' comments	3.42	1
Plot & title	3.35	2
Comments from spouse or date	3.18	3
Previews in theatre	3.14	4
Stars	3.05	5
Television ads	3.03	6
Admission price	2.83	7
Convenience/location	2.77	8
Awards & honors	2.68	9
Experts' comments	2.63	10
Newspaper ads	2.53	11
Critics' reviews	2.26	12
Radio ads	2.19	13
Magazine ads	2.15	14
Rating (PG, R, etc.)	2.15	14
Director	1.83	15

Note. Scores range from 1 ("Not At All Important") to 4 ("Very Important").

VITA

David Pierson Badger was born in Evanston, Illinois, on November 28, 1949. He attended elementary schools in Wilmette, Illinois, and was graduated from New Trier Township High School East in Winnetka, Illinois, in June 1967. He entered Duke University in the fall of 1967, studied in England at the University of Manchester during the 1969-1970 academic year, and graduated from Duke in June 1971 with a Bachelor of Arts degree in English literature. He received a Master of Science degree in editorial journalism from Northwestern University in June 1972.

In the fall of 1972 he began teaching journalism and English at Western Illinois University in Macomb, Illinois, and four years later moved to Nashville, Tennessee, to accept an appointment as assistant professor of journalism and English at the University of Tennessee-Nashville.

In the fall of 1980, he became Coordinator of Student Publications at Middle Tennessee State University in Murfreesboro, and, after resuming full-time teaching of journalism and mass communications at MTSU two years later, took a series of leaves of absence to begin doctoral studies at The Graduate School of The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He received the Doctor of Philosophy degree with a major in Communications in August 1987.

The author has reviewed films fortnightly for WPLN-FM Public Radio in Nashville since 1977, and he also reviews books for the Nashville Tennessean.

He is a member of Kappa Tau Alpha; the Association for Education in Journalism and Mass Communication; the International Communication Association; and the American Film Institute.

He is married to Sherry Ellen Taggart and lives in Franklin, Tennessee, with one son, Jeffrey Ross.