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**Taking a Bite Out of Fiction-Media Effects and**

**Social Fears.**

**A Case Study on**

**‘Jaws’**

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“If a White Shark were music, this would be a solo cello; molto piano.”

RICHARD ELLIS, *Great White Shark* (1991).

## **ABSTRACT**

“Sublime terror”- says W.H. Rockett -“rests in the unseen”.

*W.H. Rockett, 1982*

Say the word “shark” and the first image most people conjure up is a Jaws-inspired white shark devouring unsuspecting bathers while well-meaning authorities and scientists helplessly stand by.

It seems to the author that fear of the unknown is a large part of the human life and thus, when it came to asking about sharks, most people were scared of what they did not know probably because they did not have enough information to judge the animal. The study was created by the author and comprised of a three page questionnaire with nineteen questions. There were 225 participants in this study. Findings show that participants were fearful of swimming out to sea because of the fact that they did not know what lay beneath the surface. Sharks being the most common fear as stated in most of the questionnaires.

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**Declaration**

The undersigned, Alexia Curmi, hereby declares that the research presented in this dissertation is her own and has never been submitted for any degree in any other institution.

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Alexia Curmi

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# CHAPTER 1.

## INTRODUCTION

“This elusive quality it is, which causes the thought of whiteness, when divorced from more kindly associations, and coupled with an object terrible in itself, to heighten the terror to the furthest bounds. Witness..... the white shark of the tropics; what but their smooth, flaky whiteness makes them the transcendent horrors they are? The ghastly whiteness it is which imparts such an abhorrent mildness, even more loathsome than terrific, to the dumb gloating of their aspect. So that not the fierce-fanged tiger in his heraldic coat can so stagger courage as the ... shark.”

HERMAN MELVILLE, *Moby Dick* (1851).

A black triangular fin appears in a tropical bay. The pulsating beat of the soundtrack accelerates as the callous killer locks on to its prey. The fish strikes: cut to a close-up of jaws and hacking teeth. A cloud of blood and a mutilated bather complete the image. This is the shark as a film star; the dominant fish that terrorizes humans.

The jaws of the white shark are the things of legends. A best selling book and a major motion picture made the mouth of this beast the most terrifying image to ever feature in the media. The list of the characteristics of the white shark, existent and professed is endless; savage, fearsome, loathsome, strong, regal, sinister, terrifying, hateful, menacing, malevolent, pitiless, formidable, and insatiable. But this list does not add up to the white shark; it is both a further and lesser amount of the sum of its adjectives, more and less than its reputation and a vast deal more than the miniscule amount that is known about it. It may be the one creature that the human race will never fully understand. The white shark appears with its reputation fully developed, yet the truth remains obscure. In this thesis I will attempt to see if the film

'Jaws' has created a mass phobia of sharks. I would like to know which are the stories that are true and which are those led by phobic fear?

By definition, a phobia is:

“A persistent, abnormal, and irrational fear of a specific thing or situation that compels one to avoid it, despite the awareness and reassurance that it is not dangerous.”

*The American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language (2004)*

If a fear is not irrational then it is simply a fear and not a phobia. For example, if a fear of high places prevents a person from crossing necessary bridges to get to work, that fear is irrational. If certain fears keep person from enjoying life or even preoccupy their thinking so that they are unable to work, or sleep, or do the things they wish to do, then it becomes irrational. One key to diagnosing a phobic disorder is that the fear must be excessive and disproportionate to the situation. Most people who fear heights (but are not phobic of them) would not avoid visiting a friend who lived on the top floor of a tall building; a person with a phobia of heights would keep away. Fear alone does not distinguish a phobia; both fear and avoidance must be evident.

*Selachophobia* is described as being a phobia of sharks. Like all fears and phobias, fear of sharks is created by the unconscious mind as a protective mechanism. At some point in one's past, there was an event that likely linked sharks to emotional trauma. Whilst the original catalyst may have been a real-life scare of some kind, the condition can also be triggered by myriad, benign events like movies, TV, or perhaps seeing someone else experience trauma. So long as the negative association is powerful enough, the unconscious

mind thinks the whole situation is clearly very dangerous. It proceeds to attach terrible feelings to the animal in order to avoid it so that the person will be safe in the future. Attaching emotions to situations is one of the primary ways that humans learn. The actual phobia manifests itself in different ways. Some sufferers experience it almost all the time; others develop it as a response to direct stimuli such as a shark bite or maybe even a horror film.

For a long time the author could not determine why 'Jaws' had such a profound effect on popular culture. Why was there such a fixation with sharks, such an eagerness to be frightened? Journalists, sociologists and psychologists have failed to come up with an explanation. At last an answer was found. A socio-biologist E.O Wilson writes in Richard Ellis' book: 'Monsters of the Sea':

“We are not just afraid of predators, we are transfixed by them, prone to weave stories and fables and chatter endlessly about them, because fascination creates preparedness, and preparedness- survival. In a deeply tribal sense- we love our monsters.”

*E.O Wilson 2001*

## **CHAPTER 2.**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 A BRIEF HISTORY**

The trend for reporting gory and often sensational shark attacks could probably date as far back as 2500 years ago when the Greek historian Herodotus (485-425 BC) described a dreadful sea battle off Athos, in north-eastern Greece, during which many boats sunk and lots of sailors were mauled by sharks (Cawardine, 2004, p.92). Several centuries later, in 77 AD, the Roman naturalist Pliny the Elder reported attacks on sponge fishermen. The sharks' bad reputation continued to gather momentum and by the end of the sixteenth century, the French naturalist Guillaume Rondelet was describing complete human bodies being removed from the stomachs of large sharks, including one (perhaps apocryphal) occasion, a headless knight in full suit of armour. Then, in the summer of 1916, a rogue shark struck the New Jersey shoreline in the Eastern USA, killing several swimmers (Fericola, 2002, p.24). Popular opinion at the time suggested that it was a white, but the shark was never properly identified, and today experts believe it was more likely to have been a bull shark. Whatever it may have been, it caused sensation. President Woodrow Wilson even called a cabinet meeting to discuss ways of dealing with the 'crises'.

One of the first recorded shark attacks took place in 1580, when a sailor fell overboard during a voyage from Portugal to India. He was thrown a rope, but as members of the crew pulled him up, a large shark appeared and tore the poor man apart before he could be hauled to safety. Another famed attack happened nearly two centuries later, in 1749, when Brooks Watson, who later became Lord Mayor of London, had one of his legs bitten off by a shark.

Notwithstanding the risk of shark attack did not really become a significant fear in the minds of the public until the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The Second World War was a major turning point, when servicemen from shipwrecks and downed planes were suddenly thrown into ‘shark-infested waters’. The USS Indianapolis is a classic example of the havoc wreaked by sharks during some of these wartime disasters (Rotman, 1999).

The warship had been to Guam, delivering components for the Philippines. There were 1199 men on board, when, at midnight on July 30th 1945, the ship was torpedoed by a Japanese submarine. There was no time to put life-boats into the water. The stricken vessel sank in only 12 minutes- and the sailors had to leap over-board for their lives. More than 900 managed to get off the ship but only 316 survivors were found. Almost immediately after the ship sank, sharks came to investigate. Eyewitness accounts suggest that they may have been oceanic white-tip sharks, but that has never been verified and indeed there could have been many more possible species to suspect. The men could actually see the sharks circling them in the clear water below for several terrifying days. Then one night there were anguished screams as the sharks began to move in for the kill and slowly but surely, most of the sailors were killed before their shipmates’ eyes.

In recent years, a more cosmopolitan news-gathering system and a greater demand for shocking and titillating stories are partly to blame for our obsession with sharks: a headline reading “Shark Attack” sells newspapers and does little to curtail our fear of them (Rotman, 1999). Another contributing factor is the growing amount of time that people spend by, on or in the sea. In the USA, for instance, the past 25 years or so has witnessed a mass rush for the seashore; more than half of the population of 280 million or so people now lives within 80km of the sea. Many others visit for short periods. Perhaps, inevitably, when so many people are

spending so much time in the water, they take a personal interest in what might be lurking in the hidden depths.

At least part of the blame must be put on the book 'Jaws' published in 1974, and with the high-profile movies that followed. They literally scared audiences out of the water; and many shark conservationists believe they were largely responsible for the anti-shark hysteria that ensued and has gripped the Western world ever since. Even the book's author, Peter Benchley, publicly laments the impact of his book on our attitude towards sharks, and is now actively involved in shark conservation. In the days when 'Jaws' was published, many experts were just as unenlightened (Rotman, 1999). Surprisingly until recently, diving magazines and books used to suggest that the only sensible thing to do if a shark appeared was to leave the water. The mere hint of sharks at a diving resort was enough to drive tourists away and threaten the livelihood of the local operators.

Statistically, even if you spend a great deal of time in the water, the likelihood of being attacked by a shark is miniscule. Here are a few revealing comparisons to put the risk into perspective: there is a far greater chance of winning the lottery than of being attacked by a shark; more than six times as many people are struck by lightning in America; approximately 300,000 people drown for every person who is bitten by a shark; many times more people have been known to be killed by coconuts falling on their heads rather than are attacked by a shark; and, according to figures published by the New York City Health Department; for every person who is bitten by a shark, 25 people are actually bitten by New Yorkers (Matthews, 1996). Perhaps the most shocking statistic (and this really puts things into perspective) is that in an average year, for every person killed by a shark the human race kills as many as 25 million sharks (Matthews, 1996). There are many more weird and wonderful facts and figures,

but they all add up to the same thing; sharks are not intent on hurting people at all. If they were, there would be many, many more fatalities each year due to shark attacks.

Many people have an immense fear of sharks, especially the infamous white. A lot of this stems from movies like 'Jaws' (which is based on a number of attacks that really happened in New Jersey in 1916). Some people think that there are masses of sharks waiting to eat them if they venture out into the ocean, which is simply not true. White sharks rarely ever eat humans and are solitary animals. They travel alone or in groups of two. Shark attacks are quite atypical; in the US there are two to three fatal attacks on swimmers, surfers, and divers per year. By the number of reported incidents, dogs kill more people each year than whites have killed in the last 100 years.

## **2.2 THE BURGEONING AGE OF FEAR**

There is no doubt that signs and symbols with the potential to provoke feelings of fear and anxiety are everywhere. Widespread fear and anxiety is not a new phenomenon, nor is it limited to our little island of Malta. In fact, documented studies of paranoia date back to Freud, and instances of extreme anxiety in society are held accountable for such devastating historical atrocities as the Salem Witch Trials and the Holocaust.

Is fear of the shark something that goes deeper into our collective psyche? A glimpse at some dark and summoning evil, heedless of restraint, emerging unpredictably from the blackness and returning just as silently from whence it came? Is it our atavistic fear of being eaten that lends detachment and disquieting proximity to the white shark? It is the only beast

in our reckoning that we fear can and worse *will* eat us, and that is the substance of legends. At any rate, there is something about the shark that has caused communal tremors ever since we have had the impudence to occupy its domain (Benchley, 1973). Shrewd of Peter Benchley to name his novel 'Jaws' and consequently establish the business end of the white shark as an enduring fixture in the language of fear.

Since 1971, with the release of Gimbel's film 'Blue Water, White Death', the seeds were planted for the growth of the phenomenon that became 'Jaws'. The novel and the films, or perhaps just a mass mindset established by the films, sustained in large measure by the reality of the white shark, have made each of us pause, if only for a moment before entering the water. And anything that can provoke that same brief, dark thought in all of us is a powerful force indeed. After 1975, in the wake of 'Jaws' the novel and 'Jaws', the movie there was a phenomenal increase in white shark hunting which encouraged deep-sea anglers to test their mettle and skill against the so-called '*man-eaters*'. The white shark was on its way to the pantheon of renowned savage beasts, and with the publication of 'Jaws', its front rank place was secured.

### **2.3 ATTITUDES AND FEAR**

Has a film genre experienced a more miserable devolution than the shark movie? After beginning so deliciously with 'Jaws'; Steven Spielberg's high-seas Hitchcock with Roy Schneider, Richard Dreyfuss, and a mechanical first-time SAG-card holder named Bruce, the shark movie rapidly spiraled into Jaws 2, 3 (in 3-D), and 4 and pulpy derivations like 'Deep Blue Sea' (with LL Cool J) and 'Night of the Sharks', which sounds like a Charles Laughton film but actually involves drug-smuggling sharks feeling peckish for Treat Williams. Terrible shark movies have also chomped the credibility of Samuel L. Jackson (devoured in 'Deep

Blue Sea'), Louis Gossett Jr. (nearly digested in 'Jaws 3') and Michael Caine, who was spared in 'Jaws: The Revenge' but not before missing his Oscar for 'Hannah and Her Sisters' while marooned on location. The bad-shark-movie genre may have reached its nadir in 2000 with 'Red Water', a made-for-TV extravaganza featuring Lou Diamond Phillips, Coolio and the guy who played the principal on 'Saved by the Bell' fumbling along a Louisiana river, hunting what looks to be a mildly irritable bar of soap. A new trend has also emerged: "Shark Attack 1, 2 and 3". The third deals with the now more popular image of megalodon, a larger ancestor of the white. There are already 2 movies dealing with this huge 20 metre plus monster.

The reason for such an attitude towards sharks may stem from myriads of things- fear of the unknown, fear of things that are not within our control, or even the very lucid fear of being eaten alive. Attitudes are evaluative judgements about an object, issue, and person and so on. According to Allport (as cited in Hogg & Vaughan, 2002), attitudes are:

"A mental and neutral state of readiness organised through experience, exerting a directive or dynamic influence upon the individual's response to all objects and situations with which it is related"

There has been much debate regarding what constitutes an attitude. One accepted view is that of McGuire who suggests that an attitude comprises of the affective, behavioural and cognitive mechanisms (1989) (as cited in Wiggins, Wiggins & Vander Zanden, 1994). This three-component attitude model accentuates the significance of thought, feeling and action as fundamental to the human experience. Attitudes have certain definable characteristics for example; they are comparatively lasting (a person who does not like sharks now will probably still not like them in ten years time), they are limited to publicly significant events or objects; and they are generalisable (for a person who has seen 'Jaws', the experience may have led

him/her to fear all sharks, not just the one depicted in the film and therefore develop an attitude towards them). Attitudes influence how we process information, remember events, and shape our view of the world. There have been various theories put forward on what attitudes are and how they affect man, some of which I shall now explain.

Devine (1989) has suggested that attitudes are implicit and automatic judgements of which the person holding them is unaware (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). Attitudes may be affected by classical conditioning-, which is possible in the case of 'Jaws'. Assuming that a shark was a neutral stimulus beforehand, through repeated association of the film 'Jaws' with frightening stimuli, blood and gore, the neutral image of a shark would now bring about fear and anger. Attitudes are also very much affected by the mass media, particularly in cases where that certain attitude is not as yet strongly held (Goldberg & Gorn, 1974).

Most psychologists such as Allport and Bandura concur that attitudes are learned through mere exposure, conditioning, and socialization. Specifically, attitudes can be acquired from others (i.e. social learning) in the form of classical conditioning, instrumental conditioning, and modelling; as well as being acquired via direct experience. Daily exposure to television provides a centralized mass media production of a coherent set of images and messages produced for total populations, and in its relatively non-selective, almost ritualistic use by most viewers. This total pattern accounts for the historically new and distinct consequences of living with television as a cultivation of shared conceptions of reality among otherwise diverse populations. Compared to other media, television provides a relatively restricted set of choices for a virtually unrestricted variety of interests and public gratification. Most of its programs distribute material by commercial necessity designed to be watched by large and heterogeneous audiences in a relatively non-selective fashion. Media tends to have a long and lasting effect on the way our attitudes are formed and kept intact.

The *Source Credibility* theory states that people are more likely to be persuaded when the source presents itself as credible (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). Therefore if news casters present themselves, and the information they are giving as credible, people are more likely to believe what they are saying. The theory is broken into three models that can be used to more aptly apply the theory. The names of those models are: the factor model, the functional model, and the constructivist model. The three models help to narrow the wide scope of the source credibility theory, while also making it a much more focused strategy to use when studying communication. The factor model (a covering laws approach) helps determine to what extent the receiver judges the source as credible (Hovland., Janis & Kelley, 1953). The functional model (also a covering laws approach) views credibility as the degree to which a source satisfies a receiver's individual needs (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953). The constructivist model (a human action approach) analyzes what the receiver does with the source's proposal (Hovland, Janis & Kelley, 1953).

*Priming* is a term used to describe incidents when people witness, read or hear of an event via the mass media, ideas having a similar meaning are activated in them for a short while afterwards, and these thoughts in turn can activate other semantically related ideas and action tendencies (Reber & Reber, 1995). This theory derives from a cognitive-neo-associative perspective that regards memory as a collection of networks, with each network consisting of units or nodes that represent substantive elements of thoughts, feelings and so forth, linked through associated pathways. The presentation of a certain *stimulus* primes other semantically related concepts, thus heightening the likelihood that thoughts with much the same meaning as the presented stimulus will come to mind. Priming in the media refers to a process by which certain portions of media content are brought to the forefront and certain other portions are relegated to the back ground. This process allows the media to exercise control over public opinion.

## 2.4 CULTURE OF FEAR

Fear is a word familiar to everyone. At one time or another, something has caused one to be “afraid,” claim that one is “scared” or given one the “creeps.” But what, exactly, is fear? The two-and-a-half pages that it takes the Oxford English Dictionary (1961) to properly define the word, in all its forms and uses, are a good indication of the complexity of the term. The word originates from the old English “faer” for sudden calamity or danger, and was later used to describe the ensuing emotion. Fear can encompass various feelings and emotions; fear may have an explicit meaning for one person but may signify something entirely different for another. Some people fear the dark, others are afraid of drowning, and still others simply fear failing a test.

Psychological science has identified four influences on our intuitions about risk and fear. First, we fear what our ancestral history has prepared us to fear. Human emotions were tried and tested in the Stone Age. Yesterday's risks prepare us to fear snakes, sharks, and spiders. Secondly, we fear what we cannot control. Skiing, by one estimate, poses 1000 times the health and injury risk of food preservatives. Yet many people gladly assume the risk of skiing, which they control, but avoid preservatives. Third, we fear what's immediate. For example; teens are indifferent to smoking's toxicity because they live more for the present than the far distant future. Fourth, we fear what's most readily available in memory. This would explain why thousands of safe car trips have extinguished our initial anxieties about driving. In less familiar realms, vivid, memorable images dominate our fears. We can know that unprovoked white shark attacks have claimed merely 67 lives worldwide since 1876. Yet after watching ‘Jaws’ and reading vivid accounts of the 2001 Atlantic coastal shark attacks,

individuals may feel chills on entering the water, for fear of coming across something that may harm or worse, kill them.

Fear can be what keeps you up at night, what prevents you from participating in certain activities or what motivates you to strive harder. Fear is timeless; it is an intrinsic human emotion that has been used for different means throughout history, for both good and bad. For example, many societies used the fear of God or some other supernatural entity to keep people in line. Fear is also a mechanism used to bind cultures together; certain societies can be defined by what instils fear in them. Fear can be as much of a tradition as an emotion, as much of a unifier as a divider. However, most generally and for the purposes of this thesis, fear is meant to describe:

“The emotion of pain or uneasiness caused by the sense of impending danger or by the prospect of some possible evil”.

*The Oxford English Dictionary, 196, pp. 114–116*

Although people generally regard fear with a negative connotation, it is fundamentally a valuable protective response. In the words of Marks:

“Fear is a vital evolutionary legacy that leads an organism to avoid threat, and has obvious survival value. It is an emotion produced by the perception of present or impending danger and is normal in appropriate situations. Without fear few would survive long under natural conditions. Fear girds our loins for rapid action in the face of danger and alerts us to perform well under stress. It helps us fight the enemy, drive carefully, parachute safely, take exams, speak well to a critical audience, keep a foothold in climbing a mountain.”

*Marks, I.M 1987, p.3*

Both literature and films dealing with the subject of fear offer interesting viewpoints, and each work brings up different and interesting perspectives on the matter. However, there is not much argument about whether we are living in a fear-saturated society, or whether our fears are often disproportionate to the actual risks. All seem to agree on this. Nor is there much dispute that too much fear over wrong things is bad both for individuals and for society. The principal disagreement is over what shapes these fears, where they originate from and why they become so menacing to some people. Many media theorists claim that fears are primarily a product of society and the current environment of the time. Furedi (2002) contends that while disasters and catastrophes have happened throughout history it is the mood of society at that time determines how people react to these events.

Altheide (2002) believes that fear is a social product and not an individual failing. Specifically, he believes that “fear is a manufactured response that has been produced by a mass-mediated symbol machine.” (Altheide, 2002). His main argument is that the mass media and popular culture are the most important contributors to fear. He explains that fear defines a certain cultural space that is shaped by experiences, interpretations, and narratives conveyed through storytellers like parents, journalists, and others who uncannily connect something new with something old. ‘Jaws’ was an example of just that- a terrifying new blockbuster that brought the old fear of being eaten alive back to the surface. Altheide (2002) refers to fear as:

“The pervasive communication, symbolic awareness, and expectation that danger and risk are central features of the effective environment or the physical and symbolic environment as people define and experience it in everyday life.”

*Altheide, 2002, p.23*

## 2.5 LEARNING FROM THE MEDIA

Words like fear, terror, evil, anxiety, paranoia, risk, threat, enemy, victim and the like permeate the media. Before the invention of mass media, the individual's imagination and fears were primarily shaped by personal experiences. However with the surge in electronic and wireless communication, people in the developed world have access to sophisticated media outlets bringing that world directly to them, forcing them to increasingly rely on the media to keep them informed about that world. Altheide (2002) holds that the mass media and popular culture are part of our environment, and believes that the mass media provide for citizens the bulk of cultural experiences about crime and fear (Altheide, 2002). Although it is difficult to gauge the actual power the media has in determining people's perception of the world, studies suggest that repeated exposure to consistent media portals and themes influences people's perception of those items in the direction of media portrayals (Wimmer & Dominick, 2000).

Altheide (2002) further contends that the fear that has consumed today's society has been produced through the interaction of commercial media, entertainment formats and programming, and the rise of the problem frame. He describes the problem frame as:

“Promoting a discourse of fear that may be defined as the pervasive communication, symbolic awareness and expectation that danger and risk is a central feature of the effective environment. The mass media, in general, and especially the electronic news media, are part of a ‘problem generating machine’ geared to entertainment, voyeurism and the quick fix.”

*Altheide, 2002, p.41*

Fear seems to be the great engine of news and the media. It focuses and engages the mind. It demands a ranking of dangers. It searches close and far paths for safety. This is why reports of terror trump the fear of growing fat, and as the fear recedes into the blackness of the mind, so will the thirst for relevant news. Once the fear returns, so does the demand for terrifying news related to it. This could be an explanation as to why people hardly ever hear of shark attacks in the winter. There are much less people in the water and the fear has gone into hibernation; only to return the next summer, as will the sensationalism of the news. "*If it bleeds it leads*" (Young, 2003).

The media like to appeal to emotions because they cause arousal, and we generally like to be aroused whether it is happiness, sadness or fear. The easiest emotion to arouse is fear, so it makes sense that a vast amount of what the media produces attempts to strike a cord with our fears. It is also not the intent of this thesis to debate what the media's motives are in doing this, whether for advertising demands, to drive in consumers, save money or meet corporate demands. The point is to understand how the trend for the media to present increasingly negative stories may affect viewers, and to calculate what the consequences may be in regard to instilling fear and anxiety. So, if people often learn about the world from the media, and which often portrays graphic and fearful images, how might this be a cause for increased, prolonged fear and anxiety in individuals?

Despite evidence that people increasingly learn about the world from media sources, few people seem to think the media influence them. In her book 'Screened Out', Brooks Johnston (2000) warned:

“The tragedy is that most of us have no idea how much the media influence, often control, our feelings and behavior. True to the definition of propaganda, people today do not realize they are being programmed any more than did the people of Germany, Italy, Japan and the Soviet Union.”

*Brooks Johnston, 2000, p. 11*

The frequency and recency of construct activation can have significant influence on a person’s cognitions. Generally, the more frequently and recently a construct is activated, the easier it is to recall and recognize. The *Recency* theory of social cognition is intrinsically linked with frequency. In regards to media effects, particularly considering cultivation theory, heavy media consumers should more frequently activate constructs portrayed on television than light consumers, especially if those constructs are portrayed more on television than occur in the real-world situations. Moreover, given that heavy viewers have a higher probability of having viewed recently than light viewers; accessibility may be enhanced for heavy viewers through the recency of viewing as well. Recency theory suggests that images seen most recently dominate people’s thoughts. In effect, things that are shown frequently are often also seen recently since the chances of incidence of viewing are heightened (Haberlandt, 1997, pp. 231-236).

Considering that most of what we know is learned from personal experience or from information presented by the media, the media have great potential to influence people’s perception of reality. It has also been demonstrated that if an individual sees something frequently, he or she tends to assume it has a high rate of occurrence. In effect, if the media routinely reports regularly a sensational news item, audiences are likely to believe that the

problem is prevalent and a serious threat to society. An example of such a thing is the summer of the shark news bonanza in 2001 which will be discussed shortly.

Closely related to social cognition theory is cultivation theory, which suggests that repeated exposure to consistent media outlets and themes influences our perception of these items in the direction of media portrayals (Gerbner, Gross, Morgan, Signorielli & Shanahan, (Ed). 2002). As a result, audience perception of the real world is often skewed towards the media's representation of the world instead of their actual social environment. Therefore, if the media present sharks as being instinctively driven toward the pursuit of human flesh- then that is how people will view them.

## **2.6 SUMMER OF THE SHARK**

Unfortunately fear, not respect, is what makes news. And the summer of 2001 was no exception. Fear reached an all time high as a direct result of a media feeding frenzy that had not been seen before and has not been seen since. It began at dusk on July 6<sup>th</sup> 2001, when an eight-year-old boy by the name of Jesse Arborgast lost an arm and a third of one thigh during an attack by a 2.1m bull shark in shallow water off Pensacola Florida. His quick thinking uncle somehow managed to wrestle the shark ashore and, with the help of a park ranger, retrieved Jesse's severed arm from its mouth. He survived, and doctors even managed to re-attach his arm. Time magazine proclaimed it the 'summer of the Shark' on the cover of its 30th July issue. Then, on Labour Day weekend that September, a ten-year-old boy was killed by a shark at Virginia Beach in Virginia, and a 28-year-old man was killed in North Carolina.

Shark attacks became a major news item, until September 11<sup>th</sup>, when international news took the centre stage (Strano, 2004).

Almost instantly, the world had been led to believe that 2001 was an exceptional year for the shark attack, with the press keeping count of the supposed carnage rampages, particularly along the east coast of the USA. Self-proclaimed experts came up with various theories to explain the non-existent problem, ranging from a lack of fish prey to a population explosion of bull sharks. There was even a story on CNN 2001 claiming Fidel Castro had concocted a scheme to breed dangerous sharks and let them loose on an unsuspecting American public. As Peter Benchley, the author of 'Jaws' commented; "Never before has so much ink and so much airtime been devoted to so few events of little national or international consequence". The 'summer of the Shark' was complete fiction. By US standards, 2001 was an average year; by international standards, it was actually below average (Miller, 2003).

The facts proved that the hysteria was completely and utterly generated by the media. As a result, there was no summer of the shark. Around the world, the number of unprovoked shark attacks recorded in 2001 was 68, down from 78 in the previous year; the number of serious shark attacks was down too: there were 4 fatalities in 2001 and 11 the year before. In the USA, the number of unprovoked attacks was 53 in 2001, exactly one less than in 2000. Many more statistics, based on data recorded over the years, support the view that 2001 was a fairly normal year by any standard. What should have made the headlines, perhaps, was the fact that 4000 people drowned in 2001 in the USA alone. That should have put things into perspective. But even if 2000 had been an exceptional year with a record number of shark attacks, experts do not assign too much significance to year-by-year variability. They view short term trends- up or down- with a certain amount of caution. There are simply too many

variables, from the weather to the economic climate that can influence the local abundance of sharks and the number of people in the water (and therefore the odds of an attack).

(Cawardine, 2004).

## **2.7 THE OMNIPRESENT MEDIA**

Considering that today's society is the most media-saturated in the developed world, and that media messages are increasingly more realistic, more graphic and more negative, it certainly seems possible that the media may be at least somewhat responsible for the present state of heightened fear and anxiety. Media images invade homes through an endless number of television channels, radio stations, Internet connections, print publications and even telephone outlets. In the car, people listen to the radio, pass elaborate billboards, see buses adorned with advertisements, stop by numerous news-stands and encounter the occasional political bumper sticker.

In the office, waiting room, café, shopping centre and even classroom, there is usually a television and sometimes a computer. There is almost always a newspaper or magazine nearby, and as long as there are other people around, someone is likely to be talking about something they heard or saw from the media. Clearly, there are increasingly fewer places where media messages are not in our face, or at least easily accessible. Not only are media messages increasingly disturbing, but with the rise of non-stop live coverage of events and breaking news reports, audience exposure to media images is often unplanned and incidental. Scary stories about 'new dangers' do not simply make people more anxious or fearful. Such stories often reinforce pre-existing apprehensions and help to shape and even alter the way in which people conduct their lives.

Anxiety about the impact of the mass media on children has increased over the last few years. As more and more evidence comes to light that TV, movies and videos can have a harmful effect, and as the media are becoming more invasive, more intrusive, and more unsettling in content, many parents are at a loss as to what to do to protect their children. Television seems to be an especially intimidating form of media because it brings into the home that which parents would never actually allow their children to be exposed to. No one would deliver anything unordered to any given home, but television provides content that is sometimes disturbing and this content is readily available, day or night at the touch of a button.

In an American study conducted by Harrison and Cantor (2002), 90% of the participants reported an intense fear reaction to something in the media. This number is especially telling, since the respondents could have received full extra credit for participating in the study if they simply said “no,” meaning they never had such an experience, and thereby avoid writing a paper and filling out a three-page questionnaire (Cantor, 2002). Joanne Cantor researched the prevalence of enduring fear responses to television or film. They asked 103 first year college students to fill out a questionnaire dealing with lasting impressions that a fearful film or television programme had left on them.

Ninety six people completed the questionnaire and reported a lingering fright reaction. Here are some statistics Cantor compiled: students recounted many enduring effects: 22% stated mental preoccupation with what they had seen. In their words they "couldn't get the movie off their mind" or they "couldn't get those disturbing images out of their head." Forty

percent evaded or dreaded the situation depicted in the movie or program; effects like declining to swim in the ocean after seeing 'Jaws', being hesitant about taking a shower after watching 'Psycho', or spiders after any number of arachnid-infested horror films (Cantor, 2002: 56 ).

Eleven percent generalized these aversions to associated circumstances -- for example, it was surprising how many people recall giving up swimming in lakes or even pools after seeing 'Jaws'. The most regular outstanding effects involve 45 % more trouble with eating or sleeping. More common effects were nightmares, insomnia and the refusal to sleep alone. In fact, the phrase "I slept with my parents for two whole weeks" was so common in such retrospective reports that Cantor called the first chapter of her book 'The Suddenly Crowded Queen-Size Bed.'

The most notable data to emerge from this study is related to the extent of these residual effects. Figure 1 overleaf shows this data. Only one-fifth of these students said the effects lasted less than a day, and only a third said the effects lasted less than a week. An astonishing 33% said the effects lasted more than a year. Finally, one fourth of these students said that the effects of what they had seen (an average of six years earlier) were still ongoing.

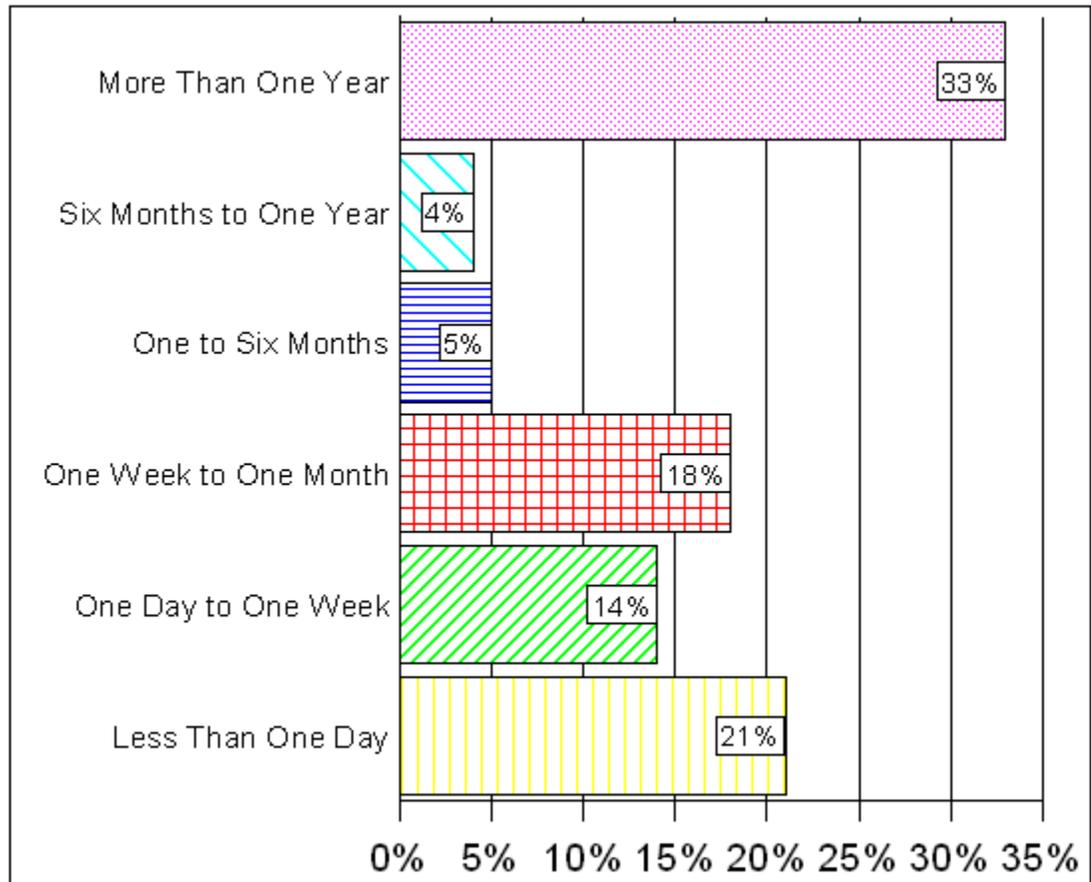


Figure 1- Lasting affects of frightening media messages

Cantor 2002

It is no wonder now, three decades after its release, with ‘Jaws’ still being shown as a television movie, that children continue to be afraid of sharks and believe that what they see is actually real. Whilst playing a game called ‘what sound does that animal make?’ with my three nephews and nieces I proceeded to ask what sound sharks make- knowing full well that they don’t make any noise whatsoever (except for the slight “whoosh” sound when they swim past). They immediately began to recite the score from ‘Jaws’; the pounding “Da Dum Da Dum”, even though they have never seen any of the films. Thanks to the film ‘Jaws’, whites are considered to be the serial killers of the sea (not to mention the only predators that attack to their own universally recognized theme music).

One of the most salient negative cognitions in fear is the sense of uncontrollability. This feeling is typified by a state of helplessness due to a perceived inability to predict, control, or obtain desired results. Does it ever seem that the victims in ‘Jaws’ appear ridiculously helpless, succumbing to the sheer power and might of the shark? In fact, most anxiety disorders seem to be rooted in these thoughts of helplessness, unpredictability and uncontrollability. Overwhelming fears about flying, cancer, being eaten alive or natural disasters, to name but a few, usually revolve around a person’s sense of inevitable victimhood. The way that the media present these things as not only unpredictable, but also highly probable only serves to accentuate these anxieties. People may attempt to engage in activities that will decrease their vulnerability, such as the bubble curtains used to ward off sharks from Australian beaches. However, when these people realize that such actions do not protect them they feel even more helpless and their fear may become more acute.

## **2.8 MEDIA, FEAR AND ANXIETY**

“I am seriously considering eliminating television watching and newspaper reading from my daily experience – at least for a while. Every time I turn on the television to watch the news or open the *Washington Post* to catch a glimpse of current events while drinking my morning coffee, I end up with a nauseating pain in the pit of my stomach. It is not the coffee; my reaction is caused by the news. It has been this way for several months now, and the stories are getting increasingly worse – more gruesome, more unbelievable, more devastating, more hopeless, and just sad.”

The preceding quote was obtained from an article in the winter 2002 issue of the American Psychological Association of Graduate Student’s (APAGS) newsletter. The author, Carol Williams-Nickelson, is the associate executive director of the APAGS. The media in general seem to portray such an array of dismal and unpleasant images that increased exposure

may negatively affect some people. One media scholar George Gerbner, defined a specific syndrome that results from excessive exposure to harmful media images: Gerbner's 'mean world syndrome'. From his studies, George Gerbner concluded that growing up with this "unprecedented diet of violence" has three consequences, which he calls the "mean world syndrome." (Gerbner, 1994). The basic assumption is that if you grow up in a home where you watch more than three hours of television per day, for all practical purposes, you live in a meaner world and act accordingly, rather than your next-door neighbour who lives in the same world but watches less television. In other words, watch enough brutality on TV, and one comes to believe one is living in a cruel and gloomy world in which one feels vulnerable and insecure. As a result, television programming reinforces the worst fears and apprehensions and paranoia of people. Gerbner maintains that television is more than just programs. Rather, he believes, "television is a mythology – highly organically connected, repeated every day so that the themes run through all programming and news have the effect of cultivating conceptions of reality." (Gerbner, 1994).

The most debilitating consequence that Gerbner observes is the pervasive sense of insecurity and vulnerability that television watching instills. It should be reiterated here that increased vulnerability, or helplessness, are good indicators that a person is at risk of developing an anxiety disorder. The aim of this study is to define what role the media in particular may play in intensifying, sometimes even instigating these emotions. From media content to media effects, several ideas and theories about fear and anxiety in relation to the media will be explored.

Generally, the term 'media' is meant to include all means of mass communication that facilitate the dissemination of information. The most popular media are film, television, print,

radio and the internet. Whether they offer news items regarding health, politics, and current affairs, or entertainment pieces about recreational activities, celebrities and fiction, millions of people each day are exposed to their messages on a daily basis. Media content dealing with news probably has the most potential to invoke fear and anxiety because it purportedly offers fact-based information about the world around us, and more often than not paints quite a bleak picture of that world. Although all media forms essentially relay information to the public, they all have a unique quality and distinct characteristics that separate them from one another. While newspapers can offer daily accounts of news, and sometimes even a late second edition, they cannot provide the most up-to-the minute reporting that radio, television and the Internet can produce. Print media also requires a literate audience, and is limited to publishing still images and photographs. Radio can report events as they are happening and have a basically unlimited group of potential listeners.

It is also probably the cheapest and easiest medium to access. People can listen to the radio in the car, while in the shower, while running, at work or even at sea. People can listen to the radio virtually anywhere so long as there is a receiver that can pick up a signal. Radio can also utilise sound and music to enhance its messages, and the tone of the announcer's voice can influence how the message is received. Despite all its advantages, radio lacks any visual capabilities. As a result, it cannot impose any graphic images on its listener; only the imagination of each listener can create visuals, which are the key to a lasting impression. The Internet, the latest medium of mass communication has basically all the capabilities of any other media portal. It can serve as a newspaper, radio, telephone and even television. It enables users to conduct their own research, access multiple sources of information, and communicate with both other users and media organizations.

While the internet is constantly growing in user activity and in capabilities, it has yet to replace television as the most customary medium for obtaining information. Studies have shown that most people will get their information from more traditional media first and use the Internet to gain background or more specific in-depth coverage of a certain issue. Also, access is still somewhat limited, especially in times of crisis, (for example: following September 11 attacks, servers became overloaded and not all users may have been able to obtain access). Hence film and television are the remaining modes of popular mass communication. The nature of visual media often makes its messages more salient than those received via audio or print formats. Technological advances have given images unprecedented power to depict events as if they were happening in front of the viewer. Film in particular can include high-tech visual graphics and sound rivalled by no other medium.

While some argue that it is inappropriate to apply technically medical terms like anxiety or paranoia to people's reactions to the media, the author disagrees and would argue that the media has the potential to cause real psychological responses in individuals. All people are unique, and the risk of being affected by media images and messages differs according to a variety of factors. It is also true that although the media may exaggerate or overplay certain problems, their reports are usually grounded in legitimate concerns. However, my previous discussion holds that the media plays a significant role in creating a heightened sense of fear and anxiety in today's society. I also contend that, in some instances, media images have the potential to cause extreme psychological reactions in certain individuals like those in Cantor's study. Finally, it seems that media-induced fear and anxiety could be harmful, and that while there are some reasonable things to be worried about, our biggest dilemma may, in fact, be fear itself.

Simply stated, fear is the usually unpleasant feeling that arises as a normal response to realistic danger. Anxiety is an emotion similar to fear, but it arises without a clear, objective source of danger. Compared with anxiety, fear has more physiological associations and its cause is more obvious. Unlike fear, anxiety is not aroused by predictable threats. Fear is usually short-term and involves specific phobias, while anxiety is more long-term and typically generalized. It could be said that if fear refers to something definite, then anxiety has a quality of indefiniteness and lack of object. Anxiety feeds upon our unknown elements of our fears.

Sharks get all the publicity; even kids' movies love them for example 'Bruce' in 'Finding Nemo'. There are plenty of other things that can eat you too. 'Alligator' (1980): A cute baby alligator is flushed down the toilet that grows up to be 36-foot mutant monster, thanks to a steady diet of research lab animals. Problems arise when he develops a taste for sewer workers. Other films that include monstrous animals are: 'The Birds' (1963). 'Cujo' (1983) where rabies makes all the difference between man's best friend and worst nightmare. 'The Ghost and the Darkness' (1996) where in Africa, 1898, two lions actually killed 130 people in less than a year with demon-like intelligence. The truth is honestly much scarier than fiction. 'Night of the Lepus' (1972), Dr. McCoy (DeForest Kelley) battles mutant bunny rabbits. 'Orca: Killer Whale' (1977)-the movie that dares to reverse 'Moby Dick'. The late, great Richard Harris is relentlessly pursued across time and space by a killer whale bent on revenge. 'Piranha' (1978) includes flesh-eating fish are released into the river and spawn many happy beginnings and many happy meals out of men.

A lot of what people know or think they know comes from stories they hear or programs they see rather than from personal experience. This phenomenon not only refers to

factual news information, but also to entertainment. Today, storytelling is in the hands of global commercial interests and information is often packaged and circulated by commercial television, movies, books, magazines and newspapers. To start with, news agencies have creatively adjusted news work and news production with entertainment formats. Television stations have attracted their viewers with the melodrama, violence and entertainment of action news formulas, the frivolity of happy talk among their anchors and the technological gimmicks of computer graphics and live remote broadcasting. Ideas are suppressed and news programs often provide visually impressive graphics that take precedence over what the anchor is actually saying.

As the news media become more and more concerned with drawing in viewers, they focus on dramatized, fragmented bits that often follow the entertainment formats of a short film or sitcom. The author tends to believe that news programs survive on scares, and is reminded of the popular notion that in the news, “if it bleeds, it leads.” (Young, 2003). This statement may seem a bit overused now, but it is no less true, and still highlights an important point; stories about violence, mayhem and disorder dominate news coverage. The news starts to look more like entertainment, and entertainment looks more like the news. In an effort to be more entertaining, the news offers visually appealing images and high tech graphics.

The news reports about the things we ‘should’ be afraid of and entertainment media often serve to reinforce these fears. As a result entertainment magnifies our perceived notion of risk and we find ourselves feeling far more susceptible to horrors than we really are. For example, people who worry about being bitten by a shark and proceed to watch such films may either be reminded of previous attacks or assume that they are more common than they really are. It is typical for entertainment to reflect what is going on in the real world, and as

images become more and more realistic, the potential for entertainment to influence public sentiment is amplified.

Why, do people react with fear or anxiety when they understand that what they are watching is fictitious, and know that they are in no immediate danger? The author believes that a few factors seem to have a significant impact on the viewers' tendency to react emotionally to mediated fear-evoking stimuli. Namely, they are the similarity of the depicted stimuli to real-life fear evokers, viewers' motivation for media exposure and factors generally affecting emotionality. To start, realistic depictions of threatening events are more similar to events occurring in the real world than are animated or stylized depictions of the same events. Thus, the *stimulus generalization* notion would predict more intense responses to live-action violence than to cartoon violence for example (Atkinson, Atkinson, Smith, Bem & Nolen-Hoeksema, 2000, p. 247)

Cantor asserts that,

“Anyone who has ever been to a horror film or thriller appreciates the fact that exposure to television shows, films and other mass media presentations depicting danger, injury, bizarre images, and terror-stricken protagonists can induce intense fright responses in an audience.”

*Cantor, 2002, p. 82*

Images from such films can result in the manifestation of irrational fears in real life and make certain beings; issues or occurrences take on an entirely new meaning. For example,

movies like 'Jaws' or Stephen King's 'It' are the main films responsible for the sudden fear of sharks and clowns respectively. (Cantor, 2002) Cantor states that:

“Most of us seem to be able to remember at least one specific program or movie that terrified us when we were children and that made us nervous, remained in our thoughts, and affected other aspects of our behaviour for some time afterward. And these happened to us even after we were old enough to know that what we were witnessing was not actually happening at the time and that the depicted dangers could not leave the screen and attack us directly.”

*Cantor, 2002, p. 104*

The more realistic the program or movie, the more likely its impact will last past childhood or affect individuals as an adult. Unlike the fantastical werewolf or alien, a deadly spider or predatory shark is more likely to pose a real threat because they are real.

## **2.9 SHARKS - THE FACTS**

I will proceed to give a detailed factual description of the 'terror' of the sea... the white shark. White sharks are a very large species of shark, typically growing to about 6 metres in length. They are streamlined swimmers, and have a torpedo-shaped body with a conical snout. The teeth are triangularly shaped with serrated edges, and arranged in 4 to 7 rows. The first two rows are used for grabbing and cutting prey, while the teeth in the last rows rotate into place when front teeth are broken, worn down, or fall out. They make use of about 3000 teeth in their lifetime. The shark's back is a dull grey colour and the underside is white. They have three main fins: the dorsal (on the back) and two pectoral fins (on the sides). The tail is crescent shaped. There are five gill slits on white sharks. Their favourite prey are seals and sea lions. However, in the Mediterranean, where this kind of prey is short they tend to feed on other fish and mammals. As juveniles they eat fish and rays. When they become fully grown they eat marine animals such as whales, seals, dolphins, large tuna fish,

sea otters, and dead animals that they find floating on the surface. In order to catch its food a shark will prowl the sea bottom and look for shapes at the surface. If a shark sees something similar to the shape of a seal or food it would approach cautiously and give an investigatory bite. However if their target is moving they charge full speed. They ram the prey and give it a first bite in one swift motion, which stuns and injures the prey. It then disappears and allows the prey to bleed to death. When it's certain the prey's dead it begins to feed. Sharks don't chew their food; they just rip it into mouth-sized pieces and swallow it whole. A big meal can last a shark up to two months so the shark is not such a voracious eater. In general, sharks have the ability to gauge the calorie content of their food in the first bite. If they see that the fat and calorie content of what they are eating is not worth a full scale attack then they will just spit the food out and leave the prey alone. That is why most people are not eaten, just tasted since they do not have the nutritional value a shark needs in order to survive.

White sharks live in all coastal temperate waters, and have been known to occasionally make dives into the deep water of open oceans. They can be found in water as shallow as three feet, and as deep as 1280 metres. They can be found on the following coastlines: California to Alaska, the east coast of the USA, most of the Gulf coast, Hawaii, most of South America, South Africa, Australia (except the north coast), New Zealand, the Mediterranean Sea, West Africa to Scandinavia, Japan, and the eastern coastline of China up to Russia. These sharks are oviparous; they give birth to 2-14 fully formed pups which are up to 1.5m (5ft) long. Fertilization of the eggs occurs in the female, and later the eggs actually hatch within the female. The young are nourished by eating unfertilized eggs and smaller, weaker or sick siblings in the womb. The female gives birth to live young, unlike many other sharks who lay eggs. The newborn gets no help from its mother and as soon as it's born it swims away to begin living its life independently. A newborn is about 4ft long, and grows 25cm (10inches)

each year, reaching maturity at approximately 17 years. The reason I am focusing on this particular shark is because it is the shark depicted in 'Jaws'.

Sharks have some of the most highly developed senses of any creature. Their primary sense is the ability to smell. The nostrils can smell a drop of blood in 100 litres (25 gallons) of water. Their next important sense is the ability to detect electric charges. They can pick up electrical charges as small as 0.005 micro-volts. The prey can be detected by the electrical field generated by a beating heart or gill action. Fish in hiding can also be detected this way.

Provoked attacks are caused by humans touching sharks. Often this involves unhooking sharks or removing them from fishing nets. However, recently there have been a number of incidents involving divers who were attacked after grabbing or feeding a shark while underwater. Unprovoked attacks happen when sharks make the first contact. This can take three forms: Hit and run attacks happen near beaches, where sharks try to survive on fish. In pounding surf, strong currents, and murky water, a shark may mistake the movement of humans, usually at the surface, for those of their normal food, fish or seals for example. The shark makes one grab, lets go, and immediately leaves the area. Legs or feet are often bitten; injuries are usually minor, and deaths rarely occur. Sneak attacks take place in deeper waters. The victim doesn't see the shark before the attack. The result can be serious injury or death - especially if the shark continues to attack. Bump and bite attacks happen when the shark circles and actually bumps the victim with its head or body before biting. As in the sneak attack, the shark may attack repeatedly and cause serious injury or death. You are more than 1,100 times more

likely to die in a bicycle accident than in a shark attack. Your odds of a drowning death: 1 in 3 million. Your odds of a shark attack death: 1 in 265 million.

Most sharks reproduce slowly, some species only every third year. The white shark for example, rarely exceeds seven pups per litter and takes approximately seventeen years to reach maturity. The knowledgeable agreement is that white sharks have been killed off at a rate which is twice as fast as their capacity to reproduce. One reason sharks have slipped comparatively unobserved into decline is that, until recently they had no constituency. They are not cute like dolphins or intelligent like whales. They do not sing or suckle their young. Science has largely ignored them; this study seems to be the first of its kind in Psychology. And governments, if they regard them at all, see them as an underutilised resource.

## **CHAPTER 3.**

### **DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **AIM AND OBJECTIVES**

The main aims of this dissertation were:

- To ascertain whether or not the film ‘Jaws’ had a significant effect on the way people view sharks and their attitudes towards them.
- To find out whether or not this film has literally scared people out of the water.
- To discover if the age at which one watches the film influences the degree of fear and *simultaneous attitude formation*.
- To establish whether or not the amount of information participants had about sharks was related to the level of fear of the animal. That is: if one had a lot of relevant information and statistics would they be as frightened of sharks as someone who just knew that they had a lot of teeth.
- To determine whether the music was what created the actual fear or whether it was the lack of scenes actually involving the shark.
- To discover whether men fear sharks more or less than women do.

## **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The main research question was to ascertain whether or not the film 'Jaws' created the fear of sharks. It was also designed to observe whether people who had or had not seen 'Jaws' still had the same reaction to sharks in general. The hypothesis was that the film 'Jaws' has had a negative impact on the way people view the shark, that is, as an animal that was built for the sole purpose of attacking humans and go out in search of human meat to forage on. For the purpose of this dissertation I have drawn up a list of nineteen multiple choice questions. Participants were made to tick the option that most applied to them, or, alternatively, if they do not find an appropriate response, they had the option to write down their own answers.

## **PARTICIPANTS AND VARIABLES**

Participants ranged in age from sixteen to sixty and were a mixture of males and females. 75.1% of participants were female and 24.9% male. Data analysis was carried out using SPSS (Statistical Programme for the Social Sciences). Participants were chosen at random. One hundred and eighty participants were chosen from a charitable organisation. University students and members of the general public were also asked to fill in the questionnaire. An attempt at obtaining equal amounts of people who had and had not seen 'Jaws' had been made so as to be able to compare their reactions and attitudes towards sharks.

Variables under study were;

- Age

- Sex
- Whether or not the participants were afraid of sharks
- What participants thought about sharks
- Whether or not participants watch the animal on television
- Whether they would swim in deep water or in the sea at all.
- How many ‘Jaws’ films participants watched or if they watched any at all.
- The age at which they saw ‘Jaws’ was also asked to see if exposure at a young age has an affect on future attitudes as Joanne Cantor suggested.
- The amount of information each participant had about sharks.
- The effect of the music or score of the film on participants and whether it was the music that caused the fear; in much the same way as that in ‘Psycho’ did.

## **MATERIALS USED**

A questionnaire was purposely constructed by the author as no such tool was available. Said questionnaire consisted of 19 multiple choice questions (see Appendix B). The questions were chiefly close ended with options to write down something if participants felt that the alternatives given, did not exactly express what they wanted to say. The survey was in English and aimed at deciphering attitudes people had toward sharks and if the film ‘Jaws’ had any part to play in the creation of this attitude. The questionnaire was structured in such a way as to enable to participants to give the quickest response possible in order to get the most honest answer out of each of them. The covering letter also asked that the initial response be given, in order to have as accurate an idea as possible (see Appendix A).

The questions were made as simple as possible in order to avoid any misunderstandings or wrong answers. There was no strict order of the questions so that the participant could not foresee where the questionnaire was going and hence give the answer that would most help the researcher. The options for the multiple choice questions- other than yes or no, were graded from most negative to most positive answers (6 being most negative and 1 most positive). When a lot of Yes or No questions followed one another the yes option was not always placed first, to eliminate the possibility that the participants would always mark down the first option given. SPSS (Statistical Program for the Social Sciences) was used in order to interpret the data.

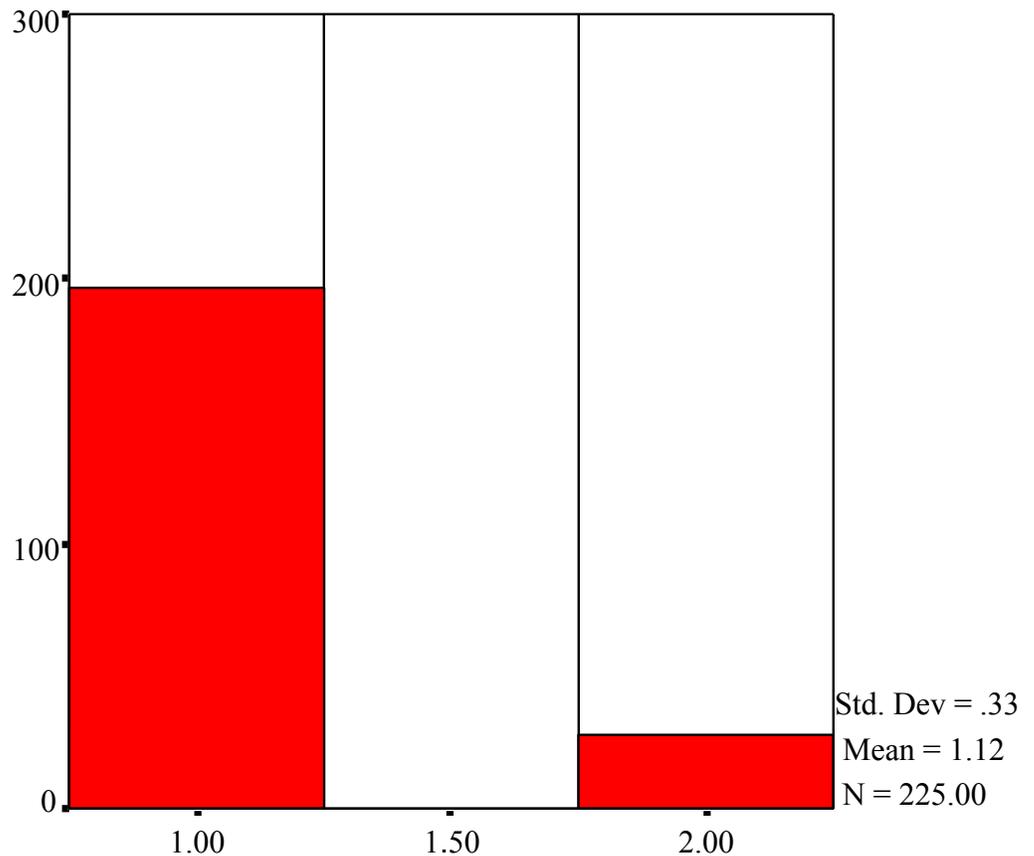
## **PROCEDURE**

The questionnaires were handed out face to face. That way even if the participants do not read the covering letter it would be explained to them, they would know they had to put an 'X' to mark the options that best fit them barring certain exceptions. It was felt that it would be harder to refuse completing a questionnaire if the person was directly approached, rather than via a telephone call or internet survey. The data was then put into SPSS and interpreted as can be seen in the results chapter that follows.

## CHAPTER 4.

### RESULTS

It was first established whether or not the genders of the participants had any effect on the fear being experienced, and so conducted a chi-square test to observe the effects, if any. A histogram separating people who were afraid from people who were not afraid of sharks can be seen in Figure 1 below where 197 participants said 'yes' and 28 said 'no'.



**Figure 1: Histogram of Participants who were and were not afraid of Sharks.**

The diagram below shows the observed numbers of male and female participants as opposed to the numbers that were expected. It explains that the numbers of participants should have been equal and not with this amount of significant difference.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Female	156	112.5	43.5
Male	69	112.5	-43.5
Total	225		

**Table 2: Observed and Expected Number of Men and Women**

Table 2.1 shows the number of participants who are and are not scared of sharks, again as opposed to the expected numbers.

	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Afraid	197	112.5	84.5
Not	28	112.5	-84.5
Total	225		

**Table 2.1: Observed and Expected Number who were and were not afraid of Sharks**

It was found that there is no significant difference between gender and fear of sharks as can be observed in Table 2.2 below. This means that men and women fear sharks more or less equally. However, what was found was that out of those participants who are *not* frightened of sharks (28), most of them (61 %) were female. As can be seen in the Chi-Square test overleaf, there is no significant difference in fear of sharks between men and women.

	Value	df	Asymp. Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (2- sided)	Exact Sig. (1- sided)
Pearson	1.080	1	.299		
Chi-Square					
Continuity	.673	1	.412		
Correction					
Likelihood	1.041	1	.308		
Ratio					
Fisher's				.381	.204
Exact Test					
N of Valid	225				
Cases					

a. Computed only for a 2x2 table

b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected count less than 5. The minimum expected count is 8.63.

### Table 2.2: Chi-Square Test Statistics

Table 3 overleaf shows a case summary- explaining that there are no values missing and all 225 cases are valid.

	Cases		Missing		Total	
	Valid N	Percent	N	Percent	N	Percent
Sex *	225	100.0%	0	.0%	225	100.0%
Are you afraid of sharks						

### Table 3: Cross-tabulation Case Processing Summary

A cross-tabulation for the same two variables mentioned above; that is, gender and whether or not the participant was scared of sharks was then conducted. The results of this cross-tabulation may be seen. Table 3.1 simply shows the proportion of men and women and how many of each are and are not fearful of sharks.

		Are you afraid of sharks		Total
		Yes	No	
Sex	Female	139	17	156
	Male	58	11	69
Total		197	28	225

**Table 3.1: Sex \* are you afraid of sharks Cross-tabulation Count**

It was found that there is a strong correlation between the information one has about sharks and the fear associated with sharks. This means that the more frightened one is, the less information they have on the subject they are anxious about. This relationship is not causal but the strong correlation it is interesting to note that the more facts one has about sharks- the less likely they are to fear them. This is demonstrated in Table 4 below.

		Are you afraid of sharks	Information
Are you afraid of sharks	Pearson Correlation	1	-.926
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	225	225
Information	Pearson Correlation	-.926	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	225	225

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 4: Correlation of information vs. fear of sharks**

It was interesting to see whether those people who admitted to being fearful of sharks perceived the animal as having gender distinctions. When correlating gender of shark vs. gender of person it was found that the participants tended to see the shark that attacks as being the gender opposite to theirs, that is to say that, men believed the sharks to be female and vice versa. Again this result does not prove a causal relationship, but it is interesting to note that the object which causes the anxiety is seen in certain ways, in this case, as being of a particular gender. The results of this correlation can be seen in Table 5. An Independent Samples t-Test for age and fear, to see if younger participants felt less fear than older ones was also conducted. It was thought that perhaps, since ‘Jaws’ came out in the 1970’s, people of that generation may have experienced more fear than did people born 10 or 15 years after the film had been released. However, this test was not significant and showed that there is no difference in fear between generations in relation to date of release of the film. The results of this t-Test are shown in Tables 6 and 6.1.

		Sex	Female vs. Male Shark
Sex	Pearson Correlation	1	-.388
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.	.000
	N	225	225
Female vs. Male Shark	Pearson Correlation	-.388	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	.
	N	225	225

\*\* Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Table 5: Correlation to see what sex a shark is viewed as by men and women**

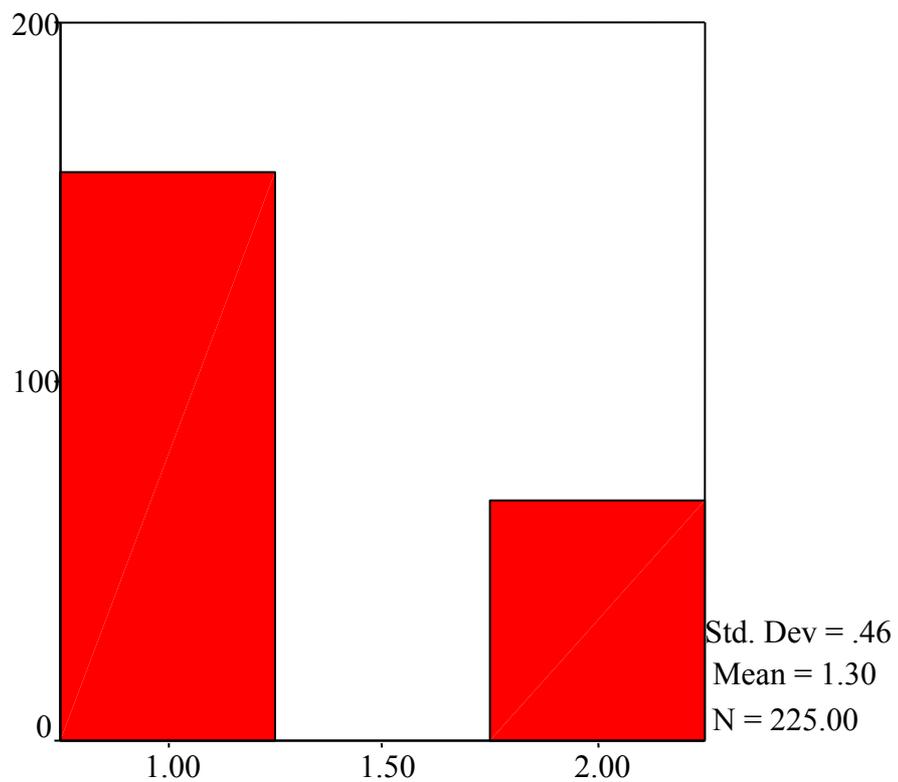
	Are you afraid of sharks	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Age	Yes	196	26.56	8.942	.639
	No	28	23.50	6.856	1.296

**Table 6: Group Statistics for t-Test**

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means				95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
		F	Sig.	t	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper
age	Equal variances assumed	3.341	.069	1.736	222	.084	3.056	1.761	-.414	6.526
	Equal variances not assumed			2.116	41.381	.040	3.056	1.444	.140	5.973

**Table 6.1: Independent Samples Test**

A chi-square test on the participants who answered yes to the question “Did you watch Jaws?” and “Did Jaws have an effect on you?” was performed. Firstly, the histogram providing information regarding participants who did and those who did not watch ‘Jaws’ is shown. The results can be seen in Figure 7. Of the 225 participants, 158 (70.2%) said yes to the question “Did you watch Jaws?”



**Figure 7: Number of participants who did and did not watch ‘Jaws’.**

Of the 158 participants who answered yes to the same question 114 (72.1%) said that ‘Jaws’ affected them in some way. When asked later, in what kind of way, most of the answers explained that for several summers after that, they refused to swim in the sea, and were terrified of being attacked by sharks. Tables 8, 8.1 and 8.2 show the results of the chi-square test conducted.

Did you see Jaws	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	158	112.5	45.5
No	67	112.5	-45.5
Total	225		

**Table 8: Observed and Expected Values of participants who saw and did not see Jaws.**

Did Jaws affect you	Observed N	Expected N	Residual
Yes	114	79.0	35.0
No	44	79.0	-35.0
Total	158		

**Table 8.1: Observed and Expected Values of participants who were affected by the film.**

	Did you see Jaws?	Jaws had an effect?
Chi-Square	36.804	37.947
df	1	2
Asymp. Sig.	.000	.000

- a. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 112.5.
- b. 0 cells (.0%) have expected frequencies less than 5. The minimum expected cell frequency is 75.0.

**Table 8.2: Chi-Square test of the above 2 variables.**

## CHAPTER 5.

### DISCUSSION

The original aim of this study was to ascertain whether or not the film ‘Jaws’ had the effect of shocking people out of the water and creating a phobia of sharks. It was found that the phobia of sharks was not created by this specific film but had just been exacerbated by it. What was interesting to note about the results was that of information and fear between generations. It is fitting to note that even though people who have not watched ‘Jaws’ and were born years after it was released, still have the same fear of sharks. This makes one think that it is something that spans generations and is built into our collective psyche as a form of instinctual survival technique; we fear sharks because they have the ability to kill us and therefore we avoid them. What was found to be most interesting is the almost perfect negative correlation that explains lack of fear and information; the fact that the people who are not fearful of sharks have more information and listen to the data being provided to them. The results of the data analysis provided in the previous chapter will now be discussed with regards to attitudes and psychology.

Many things frighten us, but fear of the shark is somewhat more perceptible and unlike other phobias. It seems weightier, more deep-seated and it often seems to manifest itself as revenge. People cringe at cockroaches and shudder at snakes when they are seen, but *hunt* sharks the moment an accident is heard of. In the water, we imagine imminent attacks, especially when something unknown brushes past us. In this deep, fluid environment we are outclassed and outmanoeuvred, we are slow and above all, totally and dreadfully vulnerable. Perhaps it is this concept of frailty that disturbs us so. Perhaps something in our distant past has impressed upon us a primeval fear of being eaten. Or

perhaps it is not so complicated; perhaps the thought of being devoured alive is so alarmingly blatant that we need not search our anthropological history.

In an interview conducted via email with Peter Benchley, the author of 'Jaws' the novel (see Appendix C) he explained that if he had the same information at the time of writing the novel as he has now he would never have written such a book.

"I couldn't possibly write "Jaws" today ... or anything like it that demonized an animal. Remember, back in 1971 when I began to write "Jaws" there was almost no environmental consciousness awake in the land. We believed, as men have always believed, that the ocean was eternal and invulnerable. Fish populations were so enormous that the very idea of extinction was laughable."

What was mentioned that seems interesting is that Mr. Benchley talks about man as believing that the ocean is invulnerable and therefore something else that one can blunder and be as greedy with as one likes because it cannot be destroyed. Humans have a tendency of being selfish and wanting to control; it is the instinct to survive and propagate the species. Also, as Aristotle so aptly put it, man *is* a rational animal and therefore does not function on instinct alone. Over the years, from the invention of the wheel until now, man has slowly developed a sense of superiority over all animal-kind. This may have led one to be convinced that he can control all. Then, when something comes along that humans cannot control, fear begins to set in. That is why fear of the shark is so different to fear of a snake or cockroach; a cockroach cannot survive a shoe, and scientists have a remedy for snake bites. A shark however, is immune to these things.

You cannot control a shark, you cannot tame it, and a shark bite does more damage than your average dog bite does. The only way to stop a shark is to kill it and that, in itself is not a very easy task either. People are scared of sharks because they cannot be in charge of them, to date they do not know how. Researchers try to appease this fear by creating barriers between sharks and humans. Bubble curtains, shark repellants and the like have all

been tested and have failed. The shark remains an animal that humans have yet to exercise control over and therefore still fear. Films like 'Jaws' and 'Deep Blue Sea' do nothing to appease this fear, they just bring out the worst side of the animal and magnify it so that there is little that Shark Week on Discovery Channel can do to decrease fear of the animal.

Humans love good films about bad sharks. Whether we appreciate these films for their high camp, crummy special effects, or acting; the franchise remains one of Hollywood's most profitable. Films such as 'Deep Blue Sea' made almost \$75 million. There is undoubtedly something primal in our attraction to sharks and shark movies, including badly produced ones. Sharks remain Garboesque beasts and no matter what those good-hearted naturalists tell us on the Discovery Channel during the phenomenally popular Shark Week, humans still dread them. No other animal does more to remind us of our place in the food chain: Despite our computers, and excellent hair products, we are still someone else's potential dinner. Films about other real-life troublemakers; 'Piranha', 'Grizzly', 'Anaconda', fail to capture our psyche. People watched 'Orca', but who's afraid of Shamu?

Orcas are too cute to be *that* dangerous. Maggie White, a shark victim herself, explains this in an interview I conducted with her about her experience and how it affected her (see Appendix D). She talks about how 'Jaws' influenced her perception of the ocean and how bad press and little sympathy for the shark has turned the shark into the most loathed creature of the deep. She says that one of the reasons sharks are massacred is because they are ugly, apart from all the bad press. "Slaughter is more like it for those truly magnificent creatures. The photographer was right; if they slaughter dolphins instead every one would be outraged!" She explains that:

“‘Jaws’ made me want to know the skills to be in the water in the first place. Fortunately my Papa taught me those skills by first floating in ocean then onto swimming in it. The ocean is not a swimming pool it is part of the last most valuable resource in America. I find myself staring into the ocean most days trying to put things in perspective. Sharks have been here way before us and I was hoping that they would be here long after.”

These two interviews beg one question to the author. Where did the terror and the will to hunt such an animal come from? Where did the fear all start? As we have seen from the above narratives- these two people have been impacted significantly by sharks. However, Mr. Benchley, on being asked whether or not he would choose to write something similar would trade in his success as a writer so as not to further demonize an animal that already had a reputation of a savage man-hunter. Benchley was very sorry he wrote this book, or at least was regretful of the repercussions the book, and the movie, had on the public perception of sharks. As a result he has spent the past decades being a spokesperson for the conservation of this animal. The other, having been a victim of this so called beast could never imagine herself destroying such a creature. These two people now, have sufficient information to understand that what they witnessed and written about is not that common an occurrence and is not on the agenda of that shark. In the chapter of results it was seen that those people who have processed the vast amount of information about sharks are less fearful of them as a species than those who choose to ignore the knowledge given them.

It is unclear as to how this fear is manifested. Is it an archaic fear which finds its origins millennia ago, or is it the result of learning processes which the media have drummed up into our consciousness? Most likely proponents of both theories can be found by those who themselves try to explain their fear by one theory or another. Understanding fear and functioning appropriately in spite of it are two entirely different things, probably because fear is irrational and it affects individuals not just logically, but emotionally and physically as well, and not in that order. Human beings respond to almost all stimuli in a

specific order- physically, emotionally, and *then* rationally- it's built into the way one is fashioned. For example, when a paper bag is popped behind you, your first response would be to jump, and as your system gears up to deal with an unexpected threat, you respond emotionally as your physical state changes. By the time you rationally figure out that you were the subject of a harmless paper-bag prank, you've already processed it physically and are emotionally involved as a result of your physical reaction.

In a broader sense, everything one experiences follows this pattern; whether the stimulus is a surprise like that of the paper bag, or it's a slow creeping realization that maybe you're in over your head in the ocean with a shark. Perhaps more insidiously, one's emotional response to a stimulus can itself become reactive and self-propagating, the fact that one is scared creating neural pathways in the brain where one is afraid *because* one is afraid. At the same time, it's important that one accepts one's feelings and acknowledges them; after all, they're absolutely real, the thing is that although they're real, the way one relates to the object of one's fear usually doesn't serve one very well- and of course, there's always the possibility that one's fear is rooted in perception, rather than in reality.

Fear is the worrier in man's head that interprets an otherwise ambiguous situation (eg: standing on the back of a boat- looking into a shadowy, bottomless, ocean) to mean that the worst will happen if you try venturing into it. In any story, there's a person's perception of it, and then there's reality. What one concludes and what is real is not the same thing, because conclusions are the product of the way one views one's world. They exist only in the mind. Of course, the way you view the world, through the filters of your conditioning and perceptions, is neither right nor wrong, it's simply your view. Does it serve you, or do you serve it?

It might be simple to conclude that fear is a survival trait; but this is probably an oversimplification. Animal behaviour studies point out that there's a phenomenon called 'the handicap principle' observable in many species, whereby individuals who live

dangerously but survive are favoured when the time comes for mating. Hence, perhaps, our urge to seek thrills and our admiration for strong, fit, or dynamic individuals. The urge to seek a little danger and to live gracefully under stress, lives in our genes due to survival of the fittest. In this sense, acceding to your fear response might be *a* survival trait, but managing your fear and functioning gracefully with it is a different, equally valid one, and it's up to you to determine which one serves you.

In any case, often we rationalize the urge to avoid risk as “good fear” but remember, just because you're afraid of it doesn't mean it's dangerous, and for that matter, your “natural response” to it is not guaranteed to be the best one. After all, some people are deathly afraid of speaking in public. The thought of doing so can lead to a fear response that will actually incapacitate them. In this case it is the reaction to fear itself that is the only undesirable thing, and let us not forget that the reaction can be very injurious indeed. We talk about this as “bad fear” but in the end it's really the same thing. The difference between the two is whether *we think* our reaction to it is appropriate or not, but more often than not, why we think the way we do about our reaction, or its appropriateness, is often left unexplored. Often, we accept our response as 'natural' and we don't question it at all, but one must keep in mind that our response is not natural, we have programmed it ourselves, we have made our response a habit, somewhere in our past.

So we describe our fears, more or less, according to whether we think our response to them is useful to us or not, and because they get to us before we can really think about them rationally. Often we accept our reactions to them as phenomena beyond our control. The author would like to suggest that this is not true. Fear is a conditioned response we have, but it does not logically follow that the way in which we react to it is appropriate. Fear is a universal thing; everybody experiences it, entire regions of the brain appear to be in charge of this system of response- and because we identify with it through our negative personal experiences, we're prone to examining it in a reactive, judgmental, and un-

empowered way. Aversion will strengthen one's fear, despite the temporary relief it may bring, you can run away from the thing that scares you, or you can empower yourself in your relation to the object of your fear, but not both.

## **CHAPTER 6.**

### **CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS**

The aim of this study was to find out whether the film 'Jaws' had significantly affected people so as to create fear and disgust in those who saw it. The results showed that this, however, was not the case. Rather, what this study uncovered was that information is the basis for progress and conservation. The lack of information seems to lead people into their own traps of fear of lack of control. It is not the object itself they fear, but the lack of control they have over themselves and the environment when they encounter it.

#### **LIMITATIONS OF STUDY**

'Jaws' being a rather old film, may not have been the ideal one to conduct a study on since the sample included younger participants as well as those who were present when the film was released in the 1970's. Hence, the younger generation may not have been familiar with the film and consequently it may not have affected them. Also there were no tools available with which to conduct this study, that is, there were no pre-existent questionnaires, interviews and the like. Therefore, since the tools and method for data scoring etc were created by the author there may have been many questions that were not suitable or useful. Also the method of scoring may have also been flawed as a result of the incongruity of said questions. The sample was not representative of the population since there were much less male participants than female (69 versus 156) so the data may not be valid or reliable.

## **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE FUTURE**

Being the first study of its kind in Malta more research is needed. What may be important is the fact that the few people who thought they were knowledgeable about sharks, were less afraid of them than were others with the same data but who refused to acknowledge it. This could be because they feel that they are more in control with the understanding they have. They use their insight and knowledge as a tool and hence their fear does not become irrational or crippling. Therefore it is possible to educate people so that in the future they will see the shark as less of a man-eating animal and as more of a useful and beautiful part of nature and consequently take more steps to protect it. Although the main issue here is education about the animal, there needs to be a desire to have that information and the want to use it. The data is out there, but are people willing to use it to help this endangered animal?

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## **APPENDIX A**

17/08/2004

Dear Sir/Madam,

As part of the Psychology course I am reading at the moment, I am conducting a piece of research with regard to my thesis. I would be very grateful if you would fill in this short questionnaire to enable me to carry out this study.

Please answer the questions by marking an 'X' in the answer box you believe to be most suited to you, or answer in the space provided. There is no need to think too hard before answering any of the questions as your first response is likely to be the most helpful.

Thank you for your time and patience

Alexia Curmi

**Gender of Participant: M/F**

**Age:**

# APPENDIX B

1. What do you think about sharks?

- Sharks are man-eating machines
- Sharks are stupid animals that the world can do without
- Sharks are misunderstood animals
- Sharks are beautiful animals and should be respected
- I don't care much for sharks
- Other- Please Specify

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2. Are you afraid of sharks?

- Yes
- No

3. If yes, why?

- The teeth and the fact that they can do so much damage scares me
- They are large and look like they want to attack all the time
- I don't know
- Other- Please Specify

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4. Are you comfortable watching them on T.V?

- Yes
- No

5. If you see them on T.V what is the first thing you think about?

- The ' Jaws' movies and theme music
- The fact that they are scary animals
- I change channel
- I watch and listen- I enjoy it
- Other- Please Specify

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6. Are you comfortable swimming in the sea?

- Yes
- No

7. Have you ever seen a real, live shark?

- Yes
- No

8. Do you think sharks like to eat people?

- No
- Yes
- I don't know

9. Will you be comfortable swimming far out to sea with your friends?

- No
- Yes
- I don't swim in the sea

10. If no, then why not?

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11. Are you more comfortable swimming in the sea or in a pool?

- In a pool
- In the sea
- I don't mind

12. Did you watch the film 'Jaws'?

- Yes
- No

13. If so, which one of the 5 films did you see? ( you may tick more than one)

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

- Jaws- The Revenge
- All of them

14. How old were you when you saw it?

- Under 5
- 6-10 yrs
- 11-15 yrs
- 16-25 yrs
- 26-35 yrs
- Over 35

15. Do you think 'Jaws' had an effect on your attitude towards sharks?

- Yes
- No

16. If yes, then what effect do you think it had?

- It made me hate sharks
- I never swam in the water after that
- I became interested and wanted to know more about sharks
- Other- Please Specify
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

17. If you hear the theme music from 'Jaws' while you are swimming, would you get frightened?

- Yes
- No
- I wouldn't pay any attention to it

18. Do you think sharks are evil?

- Yes
- No
- I don't know

19. If yes. Then why?

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## APPENDIX C

“I had no idea the book would have *any* effect on *any* audience whatsoever. It was a first novel, and the wisdom was that nobody reads first novels. It was about a fish, and who wants to buy a book about a fish? Finally, they couldn't possibly make a movie from the book because one can't catch and train a great white shark, and the technology wasn't yet good enough to make a believable model of a great white shark.

So much for what *I* knew....

I had been interested in sharks all my life. I spent my summers growing up on Nantucket Island, and in those days the sea around me teemed with sharks. I firmly believe that all young males the world around are at one time or another fascinated by one of two things: sharks or dinosaurs.

Then, in 1964, I read a short item in the New York Daily News about a fisherman out of Montauk who had caught a 4,550-lb. great white shark not far off the beaches of Long Island, and I thought to myself, "What would happen if one of those things came into a community and wouldn't go away?"

I couldn't possibly write "Jaws" today ... or anything like it that demonized an animal. Remember, back in 1971 when I began to write "Jaws" there was almost no environmental consciousness awake in the land. We believed, as men have always believed, that the ocean was eternal and invulnerable. Fish populations were so enormous that the very idea of extinction was laughable.

Very, very little was known about sharks. Virtually every behaviour I described in the book had happened at one time or another -- though not at once or in any one area -- from attacking boats to smashing cages. What I didn't know, however, was the motivation of the animals. Nobody knew that sharks don't 'attack' boats; they bite at them to see what they are, to check if they're edible. Nobody knew that sharks very rarely attack human beings, that they stay away from people, and that the reason that 70% of people bitten by great whites survive (no one knew that figure, either) is that the shark realizes it's made a mistake and lets the human go. And so on and so forth.

Now, the *movie* was something else altogether. The behaviours of the shark in the movie were designed for audience satisfaction, not to mirror reality.”

Personal correspondence  
Peter Benchley August 15<sup>th</sup> 2004

## APPENDIX D

“I can tell you from my own experience being a shark attack survivor that I could never be the instrument of destruction. Personally I am very glad I enjoyed the Atlantic all of my life due to my Navy Papa...one thing he taught all nine of us was the respect for all creatures. I am glad that instead of publicity I know that I saved sharks from being slaughtered here in St. Augustine, Florida. I was very upset when I see how many sharks are being destroyed and before I was attacked there was no information about the balance, just my own heart. ‘Jaws’ made me want to know the skills to be in the water in the first place. Fortunately my Papa taught me those skills by first floating in ocean then onto swimming in it. The ocean is not a swimming pool it is part of the last most valuable resource in America. I find myself staring into the ocean most days trying to put things in perspective. Sharks have been here way before us and I was hoping that they would be here long after. Unfortunately the special I saw on Discovery about the Palau sharks yesterday morning on the east coast was very informative concerning survival issues. I was glad because I try and understand and I was getting downed out about the attacks. Slaughter is more like it for those truly magnificent creatures. The photographer was right; if they slaughter dolphins instead every one would be outraged!”

Personal Correspondence on the 29<sup>th</sup> September 2004  
Maggie White  
904 8260712  
41st International Shark Attack Victim  
On 8-12-2000