

## **OBSERVING SIDNEY PRESCOTT IN *SCREAM***

For American society entering the last decade of the twentieth century, slasher films were solidly formulaic. They followed a trusted blueprint to which audiences would respond. As they stayed popular, filmmakers of the genre worked to keep the slasher film feeling fresh and innovative. Director Wes Craven of the *Nightmare on Elm Street* franchise helmed a new story that featured a subversive and self-referential take on the slasher film. The 1996 film, *Scream*, both toyed with well-known slasher tropes, such as the Final Girl, and exposed a social anxiety growing in American society. The fear of being watched and judged is not a new one. However, *Scream* delicately plays with the idea of panopticism to evoke the same kind of fear that audiences would have been accustomed to when viewing horror. In doing so, he was able to simultaneously revive the genre and comment on social anxieties.

It is necessary to ask what horror films expose for us as viewers. And in particular, what is it about 1996's *Scream* that causes us to confront our social anxieties? Horror films involve a production of knowledge and truth through the use of fear and surveillance. For slasher films, they produce ideas of what female behavior should look like. Slasher films are reinforcing and sustaining knowledge about gender behavior which is then perpetuated afterward as a truth. Looking back at previous slasher films, one can easily see the patterns of behavior of female characters. *Scream* tries to subvert those expectations and give audiences a newer, more modern Final Girl. In doing so, the film also works in producing a new truth about gender, that it is aware of outside influences and that it is easily changed due to said surroundings. Proving Judith Butler's concept of gender performativity, *Scream* exposes a social anxiety that contains within it a fear of being watched and a fear of what happens when one crosses the boundary of socially established gender roles.

This social anxiety is evident throughout the characters' behaviors in the film. First, I dive into the film's text and show how this film utilizes the concepts of panoptical discipline and gender performativity within their characters. To understand this, I look at both how this film complicates the slasher genre and how the marketing materials of this film illustrate and explicate the cultural fear of being watched. In addition, I examine the character of Ghostface and how he functions as an all-seeing character that observes and tracks the movements and behaviors of the other characters. To do this, one needs to determine what tools are at Ghostface's disposal and how those allow him the mobility of an omnipresent slasher. With Ghostface acting as a central observer in this film, it causes an awareness in the other characters about how they should act. It is necessary to view films like *Scream* through a panoptical lens because they directly reflect our own cultural worries.

#### **4.1 SELF-REFLEXIVITY AND INTERTEXTUAL REFERENCES**

The film achieves its chief motivation of terrifying its audience through its subversive rendition of a slasher. As mentioned earlier in a previous chapter, slasher films follow a set of well-established rules. These genre rules involve a Final Girl, a slasher antagonist, and a locale that appears to be a place of refuge but instead becomes a place where the climax of the film takes place. (Clover 30-31) As more and more slasher films were released, it was inevitable that audiences would pick up on the rules and predict exactly who would die and who the slasher would be. It became harder and harder to keep the genre fresh and to come up with new ideas. The popularity of traditional slashers began to wane during the early to mid-nineties, but *Scream* disrupts the genre with a film that was aware of its role as a slasher film. Its awareness as a meta-

slasher lent itself to the film's success. Heralding a new era of horror, the *Scream* franchise inspired countless re-creations of self-aware films.

In "The Scream Trilogy, 'Hyperpostmodernism', and the Late-Nineties Teen Slasher Film," Valerie Wee argues that the *Scream* trilogy revived the slasher genre in the nineties due to its self-reflexive nature and that it is because of the self-referentiality that forms the text itself.

Wee lays out their argument, stating that:

[A] significant proportion of the intertextual referencing in the *Scream* films functions as *text*. The films consist of multiple sequences in which characters engage in self-conscious, highly self-reflexive, sustained discussions and commentaries on the nature and conventions of the genre itself. The characters in all three films obsessively and self-reflexively discuss other media texts, particularly teen slasher films. They are all media-saturated individuals who are self-consciously conversant in the signs and codes of the classic slasher film. (Wee 47)

While the text of the film does come from the intertextual references, the film uses this style of storytelling specifically to expose a social anxiety among nineties audiences. Self-reflexivity and self-consciousness are the product of self-surveillance. The self-consciousness that Wee speaks of is clearly seen in Final Girl Sidney Prescott. By viewing her behaviors through the lens of panoptical discipline, we can begin to understand her motivations.

#### **4.2 PANOPTICISM AS IT RELATES TO GENDER PERFORMATIVITY**

Panopticism refers to the feeling of being watched and adopting one's behavior in response. This internal surveillance is well-documented in philosopher Michel Foucault's book, *Discipline and Punish*. He postulated that discipline could be administered against individuals

using an alternative method as opposed to physical punishment. In *Discipline and Punish*, Foucault illustrated his theory on the development of the panopticon. In a panoptical prison, cells filled with people are arranged in a circle with only one guard in the middle. The theory states that because of supposed surveillance, the people in the cells are less likely to commit acts of criminal behavior, and therefore “power should be visible and unverifiable. Visible: the inmate will constantly have before his eyes the tall outline of the central tower from which he is spied upon. Unverifiable: the inmate must never know whether he is being looked at at any one moment; but he must be sure that he may always be so.” (Foucault 201) Foucault’s thought experiment theorizes that power is distributed through visuals. It is this reason why panoptical discipline shows up often in film. A visual form of storytelling that revolves around the actions of characters, specifically characters that fall into heavily gendered roles, lends itself well to panoptical lens. This applies itself easily to society and gender performance. Based on set societal norms for gender roles, one feels one must always adhere to their prescribed gender role in society and perform accordingly. There is a sense that one is constantly being watched, and if they do not behave according to those standards, they might be punished by that society. Using the panopticon as a guide, he argues that surveillance is a greater form of discipline because “visibility is a trap.” (200) This surveillance is evidenced in Neve Campbell’s portrayal of Final Girl Sydney in Craven’s *Scream*.

While one could argue that all Final Girls essentially perform gender via panopticism, it is precisely Sydney’s subversive character that shows the limits of the Final Girl. Throughout the film, Sydney is aware that she is a target of Ghostface, the masked slasher. Based on a knowledge of previous slasher movies, including *Halloween* and *Friday the 13th*, she knows that her gender role marks her as the main focus of Ghostface. In her development of the theory of

gender performativity, Judith Butler writes that gender is constituted through a “stylized repetition of acts.” (Butler 179) The stylized aspect of the act is what could be interpreted as what happens because of panopticism. The only reason that instinct to perform gender a certain way is there is due to the feeling of being watched, either by society at large or something specific externally. Without the surveillance, what other motive could there be for gender performativity? As seen in Sydney’s character, she performs in a specific way because she knows she is being watched. This cause and effect of surveillance and performativity lead to the Final Girl trope manifesting in Sydney’s character.

#### **4.3 FIRST ENCOUNTER**

Setting the stage for the slasher and Final Girl, their encounter begins in a similar way to the opening scene. In their first interaction with each other, Ghostface calls Sidney to mock, harass, and threaten her. Immediately, Sidney behaves differently than the Final Girls that have come before her. Alarmed but determined to keep her wits about her, she is aware of her main character role and tries not to fall into the Final Girl trope of “running up the stairs when she should be going out the front door” because “it’s insulting.” (*Scream*, 0:26:16-0:26:24) Due to Sydney’s aforementioned knowledge of the Final Girl trope, she attempts to do the opposite in the hopes of not falling to the slasher film plot. However, because this *is* a slasher film, a genre that historically relies on well-established conventions, Sidney’s character does exactly what she disavowed because she is forced to. When Ghostface breaks into the house and chases her, Sidney goes upstairs instead of heading outside through the front door. (*Scream*, 0:29:02-0:29:14) In fact, there are several instances throughout the film where Sydney fails to do the opposite and ends up doing exactly what Final Girls have done in films before her. Her efforts at

subversion only succeed toward the end of the film where she engages in sexual intercourse with her boyfriend, an act that is viewed as a mark of death among slasher films. Despite this, she lives and does not succumb to the bloody murder that is often handed to American young women who have sex in horror movies. Her actions in this particular scene with Ghostface are indicative of an internal surveillance and based on a knowledge of other slasher films. The first encounter between a Final Girl and the antagonist is important because it establishes the pace and atmosphere of a true slasher movie. For *Scream*, this scene not only achieves this, but it also solidifies the theme of panopticism that was marketed before and during the film's release. In film, the use of visuals is vital in conveying the story as well as any underlying message. It is imperative and necessary to include the film's marketing materials and images in the analysis of panopticism.

#### **4.4 MARKETING THE GAZE**



Figure 5: *Scream* 1996 Movie Poster.

The movie poster is one of the first pieces of media that audiences interact with before seeing the film. In one snapshot, it must properly capture the essence of the film and hook the viewer without giving away spoilers and ruining the viewing experience. For film, the poster, which is often displayed outside of movie theaters and in shopping malls, gives filmmakers and marketing officials the opportunity to entice potential audiences. For 1996's *Scream*, their choice of movie poster was a thoughtful and strategic one. First, the use of Drew Barrymore on the poster leads a first-time viewer to believe that she is the main character and the supposed Final Girl. Not only is she in the front of a group of teenagers and young adults, but it is also her eyes that grace the top three quarters of the poster. With a wide-eyed expression of shock and fear, it grabs the attention of passersby and also tricks them into thinking they know how this slasher movie is going to play out. Instead, Williamson's screenplay kills off Drew Barrymore's

character in the first scene and viewers are left with the immediate impression that this particular film will toy with established genre rules.

*Scream* is a subversive slasher, and the filmmakers have hinted at that in the poster. However, upon closer inspection, the poster also reveals the film's heavy use of panopticism. For the size of the poster itself, which typically spans twenty-seven inches by forty-one inches, it is large enough to catch the eye of anyone that walks by. (Scream) But, it is the position and size of Drew Barrymore's eyes at the top of the poster that cause a second-glance. The gaze looms large over the entirety of the cast, suggesting that they are all being watched from an outside vantage point. It is inescapable and omnipresent. The constant surveillance puts forward a belief that there is no safe space away from the gaze. The characters have to learn how to function underneath said gaze. In the film, Sidney Prescott, played by Neve Campbell, is the focus, and audiences see how she navigates her gender performativity and subsequent survival under the gaze of her antagonist. Yet, the gaze of Ghostface is shrouded and hidden beneath a mask. It performs a different function than the larger than life eyes on the movie poster.



## 4.5 GHOSTFACE'S MASK



Figure 6: Ghostface Enters.

As the film opens with a phone ringing, viewers are immediately introduced to Drew Barrymore's character, Casey Becker. An unknown male caller toys with Casey, making her believe that he is a harmless person who simply called the wrong number. As their conversation continues, Casey's fear grows, and she realizes that she is probably being watched. (*Scream*, 0:02:34) She immediately begins to check the windows of her house. The hyper awareness of Casey's character marks the beginning of the theme of surveillance that ties the film together. For Ghostface, being on the outside looking in, quite literally, gives him a distinct power advantage. Casey does not know who she is speaking to, where this speaker is located in relation to her own home, or what this person looks like. She simply knows that there is a real possibility that she is being watched by a stranger. It is only when Ghostface makes an accurate remark about the color of her hair that causes Casey to run throughout the rest of the house, frantically

locking each door. (*Scream*, 0:03:47-0:04:00) Specifically, Ghostface asks as Casey looks out of the window above the front door, “Can you see me?” (*Scream*, 0:04:00-0:04:01) By doing so, he is making two things clear. The first is that he is letting Casey know that he can see her looking out of the window, searching for him and that he is still surveilling her every move as she tries to secure her home and herself. Second, he is cluing audiences in on his own identity. For the first few minutes of the film, as he has been talking to Casey on the phone, viewers never see his face and therefore never even know if he is wearing a mask. The question Ghostface asks Casey can be asked of the audience.

When Ghostface is finally shown in his hooded cloak, Casey, and by extension the audience, is still unaware of his identity because of his mask. As filmmakers worked to sketch out Ghostface’s physical identity, they found a mask created by the costume company, Fun World. (Barton) The costume itself leads police to more dead ends as it is sold “at every five-and-dime in the state” and can not be tracked by police. (*Scream*, 0:35:02-0:35:10) Ghostface’s choice of costume is purposeful. By selecting a Halloween costume that can be bought by anyone at any party supply store, it succeeds in keeping Ghostface anonymous for as long as possible. Yet, it is the mask that gives Ghostface his name and is a true instrument of surveillance. As shown in Figure 6, the mask is primarily white and elongated like a ghost with a large, gaping mouth. The mask’s shape does not indicate the gender of the wearer, giving viewers no extra information on who Ghostface really is. Additionally, it is the black, seemingly endless eye holes that hold the power of fear. When Ghostface shows up after terrorizing Casey over the phone, there is no possibility of knowing his true identity. I argue that the eyes are one of the first things a person sees and that eye contact is important in discerning a person’s character. If Casey and the viewers are not afforded that ability when encountering Ghostface,

then Ghostface is the one who holds power in his interactions. He is given the ability to monitor and surveil those around him at all times without the same being given in return. Therefore, the mask itself is a tool that Ghostface uses that is just as important as his cell phone as it affords him the mutability and mobility to move about the film as an all-seeing character.

#### **4.6 A SECOND TOOL OF SURVEILLANCE: GHOSTFACE'S CELL PHONE**

*Scream* relies upon an analog form of surveillance in the Ghostface mask, but one cannot rule out the importance of technology as another source. In *The Journal of Kitsch, Camp and Mass Culture*, Sini Mononen argues for the pan-auditory power that lies at the heart of slasher films like *Scream* and *When A Stranger Calls*. As they put it, “pan-auditory power is the sonic equivalent of panopticism.” (Mononen 18) The difference is that the “surveilled subject is constantly being listened to as well as addressed auditively,” and the resulting “surveillance is in essence about virtual imprisonment, a theatre of power.” (18) The ubiquity of the cell phone lends itself well to surveillance analysis. The sound of a phone ringing and breaking the silence is a theme that is started at the very first second of the film. As mentioned, when Ghostface is first introduced, it is through a phone call only. Over the course of five minutes at the film’s start, Casey begins to dread the sound of a phone call. The phones Casey uses in the film are distinctly landlines, a cellular technology that was firmly established by the mid-nineties. As Casey answers the phone and speaks to the male caller, it is easy for the viewer to assume that this phone call comes from another landline, putting distance between the two callers. The “landline telephone does not reveal the caller’s identity in the same way as the mobile telephone does,” but a mobile phone allows the other caller “to change location and follow the victim while creating an ongoing sense of constant (interpersonal) surveillance.” (5)

The phone is a surveillance tool that gives Ghostface the ability to monitor many different characters from a distance. Similarly, a mobile phone that functions as a “burner phone” gives the caller another degree of privacy. Unlike a landline that comes with the possibility of showing up in a phone book, a mobile phone that is also a burner phone does not come with such transparency. A burner phone can be purchased and used without being tied to a specific identity, giving Ghostface exactly the amount of obscurity he desires. After Sidney, the main character, is attacked by Ghostface for the first time, her boyfriend, Billy Loomis is brought in for questioning by police due to his possession of a mobile phone. When asked, “[w]hat're you doin' with a cellular telephone, son?” Billy replies that everyone has them now and that he did not make those calls. (*Scream*, 0:33:10-0:33:20) The sheriff also says the police department is waiting on phone call records to see if Billy had indeed made those calls as Ghostface. Later in the film, when the phone call records come back, the police conclude that Billy must not be the one who made those calls as they did not match with his phone. Instead, they find that “those calls are listed to Neil Prescott, Sidney’s father.” (*Scream*, 0:59:43-0:59:48) The new technology of cloning a cell phone is questioned by Deputy Dewey, played by David Arquette, but his accurate claim is ignored by his former superior. (*Scream*, 0:59:53-0:59:55) What Dewey closely predicted has proved that Ghostface is working with technology that has enabled him to have those calls traced to another person. Of course, viewers become aware at the end of the film that there are two Ghostface killers working together which explains Billy’s supposed innocence after the first interaction with the police.

## 4.7 THE OBSERVER

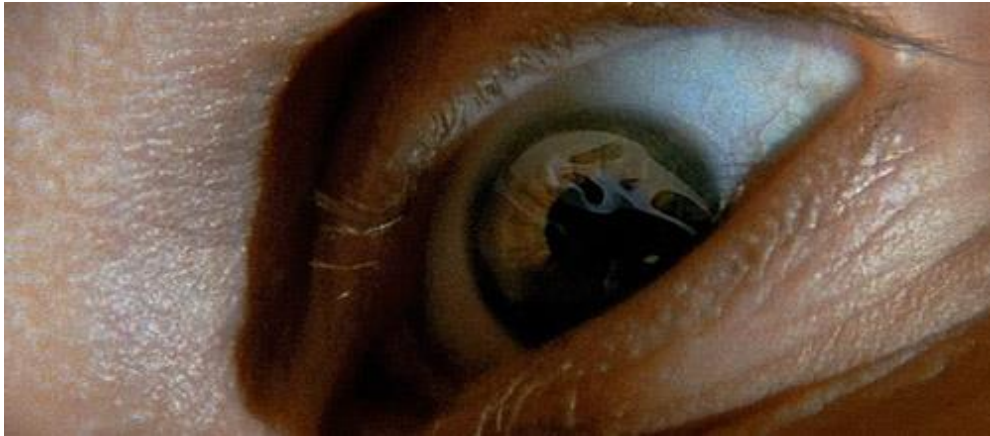


Figure 7: Ghostface's Reflection in the Eye.

After Sidney's encounter with Ghostface, the school decides to release students early due to Sidney's peers who use the situation to further antagonize their peers. Now alone in the school, Principal Himby, played by Henry Winkler, is scrutinizing a replica Ghostface mask that he confiscated when he hears a noise that lures him out of his office. After checking out the noise and believing it to be a janitor, he enters his office again. Ghostface, who had been hiding behind the door, leaps out and stabs the principal. As Principal Himby dies, the camera freezes on a zoomed in shot of Winkler's eye. In Figure 7, viewers can see the reflection of Ghostface. (*Scream*, 0:53:00-0:53:20) This shot perfectly encapsulates the ever-watchful nature of Ghostface. Even after death, Ghostface is exercising a panoptical view of his victims. Therefore, the surveillance never ceases. It is constant and even breaks into the private spaces, not allowing those in the film a chance to escape the gaze. Ghostface's spying does not only exist in the public sphere. It breaks into spaces that characters may have previously considered safe. For example, the home is a location normally associated with safety and security. It is where one may be the

most comfortable. However, throughout the entire film, Ghostface has shown up at the homes of victims and infiltrated that space, both physically and through the use of his mobile phone.

As seen in the next scene only seconds later, a quick shot of Sidney and her friend Tatum having a conversation at her home indicates that they are being watched. The camera flashes from a typical shot of Sidney and Tatum to one that is on the outside of the porch on which they are sitting. The shot moves slowly, suggesting that it is mimicking the observer's stalking prowl. (*Scream*, 0:53:55-0:54:01) As Sidney gets up and walks away, Tatum follows her and looks behind her. (*Scream*, 0:54:12-0:54:22) Tatum's face suggests a hint of confusion at not seeing anything behind her, but it is obvious that she must have felt as if someone was in the bushes watching them. Just as quickly as she looked concerned, it is as if she brushes the feeling away because she is at home in the daylight with another person. She feels safe enough that she does not need to alarm Sidney, who has been oblivious to the gaze of Ghostface in this scene. However, the suspicions of Tatum and the audience are confirmed when Sidney and Tatum go back inside to get ready for the party that evening and Ghostface is seen running through bushes and trees in full costume. (*Scream*, 0:54:40-0:54:41) Since the film's start, both the characters and the audience have been under the impression that Ghostface is one person. If this is true, then the omnipresence of the character cannot be understated. In the span of a few minutes of film time and most likely no more than an hour or two of the characters' time, Ghostface has killed a principal and been spotted in a completely different location. The movability of Ghostface has caused him to appear as ubiquitous as possible. Again, a few scenes later, we see Ghostface in full costume watching Tatum and Sidney in the grocery store. Presumably, there are other patrons in the store who would have seen a person dressed as Ghostface, and therefore, we

can conclude that that specific shot of Ghostface in the reflection of the freezer door is more representative of the kind of character Ghostface is and how he functions.

As mentioned, the characters in this film believe that home is a place of security away from the gaze of Ghostface. Despite evidence to the contrary, Dewey drops off Sidney and Tatum at their friend's, Stu's, house for a party. Sidney believes that she will be safe as she will be in someone's home surrounded by plenty of other people. While sitting on the couch appearing comfortable, journalist Gale Weathers has shown up and discreetly places a video camera next to the television. (*Scream*, 01:04:10-01:04:15) By doing this, Gale has added a second layer of surveillance to the upcoming scenes in which we reach the climax of the film and Ghostface is unmasked. This is important because, as we see as the rest of the film unfolds, Gale will start to function as an additional observer. While her motives differ from Ghostface's in that she only wants to further her own career, the surveillance that occurs is complex. Ghostface's surveillance of the characters is in real time, while Gale's camera captures video and returns it to the receiver less than a minute later. The delay is indicative of the types of surveillance each can perform on the characters. Ghostface's added mask, mobility, and use of a cellular phone give the advantage of real-time surveillance. With the use of Gale's video feed recording the moves of the characters, it has created the "theatre of power" that Mononen spoke of regarding pan-auditory power. (Mononen 18) Gale Weathers and her assistant can see as the audience sees because of the placement of the camera. It faces the characters directly as they watch the 1978 film, *Halloween*. As this scene interlaces with shots of Sidney and Billy having sex upstairs, Sidney's friend, Randy, comments on the survivability of Final Girls based on their virginity. He remarks that is "why she [Jamie Lee Curtis' character] always outsmarted the killer in the big chase scene at the end. Only virgins can do that. Don't you know the rules?" (*Scream*, 01:12:55-

01:13:01) His question can be asked to the audience watching, both the viewers and to Gale Weathers watching from her news van. The implication of Sidney's sexual behavior complicates her position as a Final Girl.

#### **4.8 SIDNEY AND HER GENDER, OBSERVED**

When analyzing the gender performativity and behavior of Sidney, we must first look at her counterpart, Tatum, in order to understand the differences. Tatum follows the typical stereotype of a teenager. She parties, is sexually active with her boyfriend, Stu, and is somewhat vapid. Following the rules of the genre, audiences can assume that Tatum will be a victim of Ghostface. As the film ramps up toward its inevitable climax, Tatum is tasked with grabbing more beer from the refrigerator in the garage. As she does so, the lights go out, and she is met face to face with Ghostface. (*Scream*, 01:05:23-01:05:53) Interestingly, Tatum is not terrified of Ghostface the way Casey was at the beginning of the film. In a playful take at assuming the role of a "helpless victim" in a movie, Tatum proclaims, "[n]o, please don't kill me, Mr. Ghostface. I wanna be in the sequel!" (*Scream*, 01:06:10-01:06:18) Her performance as a Final Girl continues and becomes more real when she tries to fight against Ghostface when she realizes that this masked person really is Ghostface and not an imposter. When she tries to escape the garage, she is inevitably killed. Audiences familiar with the tropes of slasher films may have already seen this coming due to her own character. The difference is that Tatum's character led her to be cast as the helpless victim while Sidney assumes the actual Final Girl role.

Simultaneously, Sidney is ready to return to the presumed safety of her own home before the city-imposed curfew. Instead, she meets with Billy after their continued conflict over his possible involvement in the murders. When Billy remarks that their life is "one great big movie.



Only you can't pick your genre," Sidney asks, "Why can't I be a Meg Ryan movie?" (*Scream*, 01:10:54-01:11:35) Sidney's response proves her awareness of her position as a Final Girl. She knows, based on a knowledge of slasher films, that she is constantly being watched by Ghostface, and she understands his ubiquity as an all-knowing observer. With the added mobility of new technology, Ghostface is given more power as a slasher than his predecessors. With this knowledge, Sidney has tried to go against slasher movie rules. In a move that defies the Final Girl trope of previous slashers, Sidney is the one who instigates having sex with Billy. In slasher films, a woman having sex would have marked her as the slasher's next victim, and audiences would have expected that going into a movie like this one. However, this film has so far subverted the stereotypes based on its awareness as its role as a slasher film, and therefore, audiences no longer know what to expect in the film's finale.

#### **4.9 FINAL GIRL AND SURVEILLANCE**

As Sidney is chased by Ghostface and falls out of a two-story window in a similar way to Michael Myers in *Halloween* and survives, the film cuts to Randy sitting on the couch watching the same film. As a tongue-in-cheek nod to the film's status as a meta slasher, Randy, played by Jamie Kennedy, is telling Jamie Lee Curtis on the screen to "watch out, Jamie. You know he's around." (*Scream*, 01:22:23-01:22:30) Audiences watching *Scream* and Gale's assistant in his van watching Randy could be saying the same thing to their own screens. The awareness of their situation in the statement "you know he's around" has been clear throughout the entire movie. By this point in the film, the characters must assume that Ghostface could always be watching from the shadows, and they will have to monitor and/or alter their own behavior as needed in order to survive the rules of the slasher film.

For the characters, the realization that there are two people masquerading as Ghostface is revealed as Sidney struggles being left alone against Billy and Stu. The reasoning behind their choices to don a Ghostface costume and murder those closest to Sidney is because Sidney's mother was having an affair with Billy's father, and Billy blames them for why his own mother left. After a small diversion created by Gale Weathers, Sidney takes the voice changer Billy and Stu used as Ghostface and hides. In a reversal, she calls the house phone and, with the voice changer, asks, "are you alone in the house?" (*Scream*, 01:38:16-01:38:19) Through taking the tools Ghostface used for surveillance and using them herself, Sidney has upended the slasher film formula. The change in what Sidney can do in this film is notable when one looks at the Final Girl trope. The embrace of Ghostface's former power is what "breaks the orthodox convention that the hero will save the heroine as she cries and pleads for her life." (Ojha 248) In a paper written for the International Journal of Innovative Research and Advanced Studies, Shubham Ojha looks at popular slasher films and analyzes the differences in the female main characters. Sidney's character sticks out for fans because she is one who defies the genre rules set out for her. This is especially evident in the final few scenes.

Enraged and full of fear, Billy rips through the house looking for Sidney. Meanwhile, Sidney has been hiding in the hallway closet, listening and watching in the same manner as Ghostface. The collapse of the Final Girl and slasher is fully realized when she pushes her way out of the closet, donning the costume, and stabs Billy in the chest with an umbrella. (*Scream*, 01:39:52-01:40:05) In this scene, Sidney's gender performativity is subverted according to traditional Final Girl standards. She assumes the place of the slasher in order to vanquish the antagonist.

In a chapter written for *The Cell Phone Reader: Essays in Social Transformation*, author Allison Whitney refers to this specific scene and argues that:

she literally reverses the trajectory of violence, emerging from the enclosed space to defend herself and take control of the scene. Indeed, Sidney makes her relationship to the genre's gender traditions clear by defending herself by both biting and penetrating – forms of attack associated with violent fantasies about female and male sex organs.

(Whitney 136)

Through her taking up the costume, mask, and voice changer, Sidney is successful in fighting against the ever-present surveillance that has occurred since the film's start. She has had the ability to perform her gender in ways that defy socially-entrenched gender roles. Even when she has sex with Billy, it is a choice that she makes because she feels ready to do so, and she does not succumb to the murder that usually awaits sexually active teenagers in these situations. After being attacked by Billy after she thought he was dead, Sidney picks up the gun again and shoots him in the head, exclaiming, "not in my movie." (*Scream*, 01:42:04-01:42:26) Freely taking the gun in another show of power and control, Sidney warps gender performativity expectations.

By viewing these last scenes, audiences come face to face with their own social ideas about gender performativity and surveillance. Just because a woman has sex or dresses a certain way does not necessitate a specific kind of ending, even when they are being watched by other people as closely as someone like Ghostface. There is no need for one to change their own behavior or actions based on the socially-acceptable gender roles constructed and constantly reinforced by society. *Scream* does several things at once. It exposes the social fear of having to fashion one's self in order to adhere to gender standards. By showing what happens when a Final

Girl does perform their gender in a different way, the film also upends the slasher genre and redefines what a Final Girl can do. No longer does having sex in a slasher film mark one for death.

The exercises of power as seen in this film are reminiscent of what Foucault writes in *The History of Sexuality*. Instead of power being an institution that is present and functions from the top-down, he argues that it is “the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization.” (Foucault 92) For *Scream*, the power comes from the relationships between the characters themselves, as well as the characters and the movies they reference. They twist the rules of the slasher movies into rules in which they should live by. The characters are reinforcing these power relations. Specifically, the gender performativity, and the surveillance by which it survives, is another power relation that is only deemed powerful because it is exercised often by the characters in this film. The reinforcement is what is giving the Final Girl trope its power. For Sidney to get around the traditions of the Final Girl and still survive at the end, it shows that this specific representation of gender performativity in film is fluid.