



## Halloween: an Evolving American Consumption Ritual

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HALLOWEEN: AN EVOLVING AMERICAN CONSUMPTION RITUAL

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Halloween is a little studied consumption holiday that is in several significant respects a mirror image of the other consumption holiday: Christmas. In the contemporary American Christmas celebration adults wear costumes (costumes) and threaten children with threats that rewards of durable goods will be withheld (Belk 1987, 1989). In Christmas celebrations, American children wear costumes (often of "evil" beings) and extort treats of nondurable goods from parents. In Halloween rituals children leave home and family to join other children for an evening of pranks in or focus. In Halloween rituals children leave home and family to join other children for an evening of pranks in or sweets in a decidedly nonreligious atmosphere. In Christmas rituals gifts are exchanged within the family and each gift is acknowledged. In Halloween rituals non-family members provide gifts to masked and anonymous children who accounts for this opposing symbolism? What is Halloween all about? How is it changing? What do Halloween costumes represent? And what do contemporary celebrations of this holiday tell us about consumer behavior.

In this paper I attempt to answer such questions using a combination of secondary data and both qualitative and quantitative data. The paper is a work in progress and is based on primary data collected over the past two Halloweens in a city of the western United States. Participant observation was used to study a variety of child and adult Halloween practices: costume contests, trick-or-treating, parties, dances, and a race for costumed runners. Depth interviews were conducted with children and adults and a written questionnaire was administered to undergraduate university students. The observations were recorded both verbally (fieldnotes, journals, tape recording) and visually (photography, videotaping). A variety of

consulted in popular literature and the literatures of a variety of social sciences. Relevant topics in these literatures include play, games, children's stories, sex role socialization, rites of passage, liminality, mysticism, magic, masks, costumes, myths, fairy tales, horror movies, performance, drama, Halloween history, American holidays, the ritual calendar, and different cultures.

Besides relying on multiple sources of evidence, a deliberate attempt was made to avoid a priori theorizing and to move between the primary and secondary sources as new interpretive themes emerged. Beginning with participant observation of Halloween celebrations, the project has developed via an interactive and continuous process of theory formulation, modification, and expansion (see Belk, Wallendorf, and Sherry 1989). What began as a simple investigation of the consumption of candies by children, soon became an investigation of the mysteries of a rich and evolving social phenomenon for adults, and community.

## AN HISTORICAL ACCOUNT

Certain aspects of Halloween can be traced, through surviving remnants, as far back as prehistoric Celtic celebrations (Samon, Samain, Semuin, Samhuinn). Winkler and Winkler (1970) suggest that Samhain celebrated the harvest and the Babylonian harvest festivals, but Frazer (1959; original 1890) argues that Samhain was instead a pastoral festival bringing the herds back from pastures to their winter stalls. In addition to being a seasonal harvest or herding festival, it was also a new year's festival and a day of the dead involving Celtic ancestor worship (Ward 1981). Samhain was the Lord of the Harvest (which means "summer's end") and sacrifices made to him included human sacrifice by the Celt's Druid priests (Myers 1972). Halloween practice in Europe substituted black cats to be burned in the wicker cages that would have contained the human sacrifices the Romans banned in 61 A.D. (Linton and Linton 1950). On Samhain night the ghosts of the dead roamed old homes. Witches and hobgoblins with more orgiastic, mischievous, or malevolent intent also roamed the earth to scare these ghosts and witches away with their purifying flames (Myers 1972). These associations with spirits, the dead, and the occult remain attached to contemporary Halloween celebrations.

There may also have been precedents for trick-or-treating and Halloween costumes in Samhain celebrations. In the ancient Gallic celebrations of Samhain, the skins of slaughtered animals were worn as a disguise to invoke the spirits of the dead. This masquerade feature continues to survive in the Scottish Highlands. According to Myers (1972) banquet tables were set for the ghosts and after the feast the ghosts were led out of town by costumed villagers. Harvest beggars are also thought to have been a trace of a masked procession that asked for contributions in the mysterious name of "Muck Olla" (Linton and Linton 1950, Ward 1981). In Christian times, this practice became transmuted into souling (in which special souls were given to the poor) and eventually into children's bearing "a penny for the Guy" (Fawkes) in England and trick-or-treating for candy in America.

Jack-o'-lanterns are another practice that derives from Irish customs and perhaps those of their ancient Celtic forebears. They have long hollowed out potatoes, turnips, and rutabagas, made carved faces on them, and placed lighted candles inside (the practice appears to be an American modification). The related folktale involves a trickster figure: a miserly drunkard Irishman who tricked the Devil into promising not to take his soul. The first time he told the Devil he would accompany him to Hell for sixpence to enjoy one last drink first. The Devil obliged by turning himself into sixpence which Jack immediately hid under his coat. The Devil out when he promised not to claim his soul for ten years. At the end of ten years he asked the Devil if he would let him climb a tree for him before they departed for Hell. When the Devil climbed the tree, Jack used his knife to carve a cross in the trunk of the tree to bar the Devil from descending. This time Jack let the Devil down only after he promised never to claim his soul again. When Jack was barred from Heaven, he appeared at the gates of Hell, only to be refused admittance and doomed to wander the earth as a ghost (the figure). As he was leaving, the Devil threw him a live coal which he placed inside the turnip he had been eating, and it glowed (Tuleja 1987).

Despite the rise of Christianity, Samhain practices continued for hundred of years in the British Isles. Eventually the church decided that it was more effective to try to take over pagan holidays than to oppose them. In order to co-opt the festival of the dead, Gregory IV designated November 1st, Samhain, as "All Hallows" ("All Saints") Day. "After all, the saints themselves were dead" (Myers 1948). The church also imitated the masquerading by encouraging parades in which people dressed as their favorite saints. However, this attempt to quash Samhain failed and led to the addition of "All Souls" Day on November 2nd (first mentioned in the Cluny in 998) to the Catholic calendar by Pope John XIX in 1006. While more successful, since other dead besides

celebrated, remnants of Samhain can still be seen on October 31st, Hallows' Evening or Hallowe'en.

Halloween was known by American colonists, but wasn't celebrated in the United States until after 1840 when the resulted in a large number of Irish immigrants (Santino 1983). Some of the Halloween games of the Irish such as survived, while others such as roasting nuts and fortune telling have largely disappeared. Linton and Linton (195) to the Irish belief that the "little people" come out to do mischief on this night and place the height of Halloween (similar patterns appear in part of Canada-Walden 1987). They also suggest that Halloween has since become a c lost much of its original significance, a view echoed by Rook (1985). Stone (1959) questions whether the holiday l and suggests it may be more for the amusement of adults.

The historical precedents of Halloween explain some icons and historical vestiges of the holiday, but they do not be a popular American and North American holiday, despite it's lack of clear meanings to participants. Nor do tl seem to account for some of the recent changes in Halloween celebrations. One of the most dramatic of these c trick-or-treating due to tales of poisoned candy, razor blades in apples, and hallucinogenic drugs placed in treat Wemhaner and Dodder 1984). In the past two decades such fears have caused parents to prohibit or limit their c have led hospitals to offer free x-rays of Halloween goodies, and has led Brian Sutton-Smith (1983) to suggest th Halloween treats be restricted to "small gifts, small toys, personal parcels, or greeting cards." And yet, such stor broken glass, and pins are urban legends with no basis in fact (Grider 1984, Best and Horiuchi 1985). These tales the media (Best 1985), and are fervently believed. But with the exception of one father who was convicted of killi feeding him trick-or-treat candy laced with cyanide, other reports of contaminated treats turn out to be hoaxes Horiuchi (1985) found that such stories in the popular press peaked in 1969-1971 and again in 1982. They suggest reflection of displaced U.S. anxiety due to the Vietnam war h and domestic riots, and that the was clearly a resul Tylenol murders in the Chicago area that year. Besides lessening Halloween trick-or-treating, these rumors may in institutionalized (i.e., controlled) substitute activities such as parties and "spook houses" (Crader and Wentwo Beginning with the 1978 John Carpenter film, Halloween, several dozen horror films have been produced that at audiences and rentals just before and during Halloween. These too represent another institutional alternative or Halloween traditions.

Although an estimated 93% of U.S. households with children under age 12 still participated in trick-or-treating la another trend in Halloween celebrations is a shift to more adult activities (Demarest 1983, USA Today 1988). Cos growing market for adult Halloween costumes. Clubs, bars, hotels, museums, and other institutions are beginnin costumed adults, and Halloween is reported to be the second biggest U.S. adult party night after New Year's Eve Georgetown closes down its streets for a wild adult Halloween celebration and New York's Greenwich Village H: hundreds of thousands of adult participants and spectators (Miller 1987, New Yorker 1988). Parades like the Greo Francisco Polk Street Halloween events draw substantial participation from the gay community who turn out in costume (O'Drain 1986).

Why is the U.S. Halloween changing in these ways? Why does a holiday that seems detached from its historical r: celebrated? What functions does Halloween serve and does it serve different functions for males and females, cl children of different ages? What is the role of Halloween in the family, neighborhood, and larger community? W particular types of costumes? Why do we frighten ourselves with "Halloween movies?" To begin to answer these consider some of the primary data of this study.

## STUDY 1: THE GHOSTS OF HALLOWEENS PAST AND PRESENT

The first study sought descriptive data on Halloween activities from U.S.-born senior undergraduate business st females). These students were asked to describe how they spent the most recent Halloween (the data were colle spent Halloween when they were teenagers, and how they spent Halloween as pre-teenagers in grade school. Th verbatim responses (although see others in Ainsworth 1973, Hunter 1983, McDowell 1985, and Mook 1969), but t into categories as summarized in Figures 1, 2, and 3 for the three age periods involved in the questions.

Pre-teenage Halloween activities by these students showed little variation. Eighty-five percent of females and 87%

treating as their primary activity. Another 7% of each sex reported that they went to parties primarily. And the rest (males) reported either no activity or one of a variety of other activities (scary movies, pranks, costume parade, decorations, or participating in Halloween activities at school) as the major focus of their Halloweens. As seen in Figure 1, Halloween activities have changed considerably during teenage years. Only 14% of females and 18% of males reported trick-or-treating and 10% of females and 12% of males respectively reported being in costume in some other context. For both sexes partying and drinking alcohol were the most common activities. Pranks were slightly more common among males (16%) than females (13%) and watching scary movies was slightly more common among females. Less than 10% of the sample reported no Halloween activities. Among the prominent "other" activities were watching scary movies, passing out candy at home, hayrides, visiting "spook houses," and telling ghost stories. For the present period of recent Halloweens, there is another dramatic shift in activities. About one-fourth of each sex now do nothing special. Trick-or-treating, which lingered into teenage years, is almost nonexistent among these young adults (but see Hunter et al. 2002 for trick-or-treating for alcoholic drinks). More than one-fifth of females and one-third of males still report partying and drinking alcohol, significantly more than during teenage years--26% of females and 13% of males--report costumed activities. Unlike in the past, on college campuses, those studied had no local tradition of street partying. Smaller numbers now give out candy to neighbors (and their siblings) trick-or-treating, and pranks are virtually non-existent. Thus, while some young adults "drop out" of Halloween, the majority continue in some way, supporting secondary data of more active adult participation in Halloween. The results of these activities will be considered in the interpretation section.

## STUDY 2: HALLOWEEN COSTUMES

An observational study was conducted of children's and adult's Halloween costumes, with photographs taken of 102 children and 102 adults. The sample included 6, 102 ages 6 to 11, 32 ages 12 to 17, and 32 ages 18 and older. Sex was approximately evenly balanced in each age group. These costumes were photographed included trick-or-treaters in an upper middle class neighborhood, a costume parade in a shopping mini-mall, a rural small town Halloween parade, a Halloween running race, and several adult private clubs. Costumes were categorized into 9 categories that were collapsed into the 9 shown in Figure 4.

Sex differences were prominent. Females were much more likely to be dressed as a witch/wizard, an inanimate object (e.g., doll, star) or as a stereotypical female role character (e.g., nurse, Snow White, harem girl, cheerleader, ballerina). Males were more likely to be dressed as a superhero- (e.g., Superman, Batman), monster (e.g., Dracula, Freddy Krueger, zombie), or as a stereotypical male role character (e.g., hobo, sports player, cowboy), or as a scary animal (e.g., dragon, lion, leopard).

It can readily be seen that these costumes correspond to culturally stereotyped sex roles. The youngest (under 6) are most often chosen by parents who dressed them either in "cute" costumes or in animal costumes (as if the child is a pet). Children start at this age to be dressed in "feminine" outfits, while "masculine" outfits for boys become common in grade school. Children in grade school age also begin to wear the aggressive outfits of fierce animals. At older ages they are more likely to be superheroes or other characters. On the other hand continue in grade school in "feminine" outfits and as witches. As older adolescents (12 to 17) and adults are more likely to adopt objects or adopt minority ethnic roles (e.g. Gypsy, Chinese coolie). It should be noted however that these data were collected in a culture where traditional sex role stereotyping remains especially strong. Nevertheless, the extent to which children identify with these costumes may be seen in the following quotes from interviews asking other children "What are you going to be?"

### FIGURE 1

#### PRE-TEEN HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES (U.S. BORN BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS)

### FIGURE 2

#### TEENAGE HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES (U.S. BORN BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS)

### FIGURE 3

#### YOUNG ADULT HALLOWEEN ACTIVITIES (U.S. BORN BUSINESS SCHOOL STUDENTS)

### FIGURE 4

WM 6--I want to be a wizard 'cause they can do magic like make bats and have their own castles.

WF 5--A fairy princess, because I didn't like the costume that my Mom gave me...a pumpkin all st  
towels and not comfy.

WM 3--A bumblebee because the penguin is too big for me to wear.

WF 7--I'm going to be Lady Lovelylocks. It's this girl who has pixie-tails in her hair; she's really be

WM 6--Dracula...because I like him because he's scary and cool. I like scary things.

WF 5--A bride--because it makes me happy.

BM 3--A dinosaur, because it's on TV. A big dinosaur-Rex. It has sharp teeth.

WF 8--I'm going to be a skeleton. I like them.

## INTERPRETATIONS

### Some Rejected Prior Interpretations

As has already been noted, historical explanations of Halloween no longer seem very applicable to the American urban society, celebrating harvest and the return of the flocks no longer have much meaning even as nostalgic and also no longer our New Year celebration as it was for the Celts and has remained for some Celtic descendants to be that Halloween marks a seasonal change, but it is a quarter-day and not an equinox or a solstice. Furthermore such as Labor Day, the start of School, and Christmas or New Year's are closer to marking seasonal changes and important in a largely industrial society.

Several psychoanalytic explanations of Halloween have also been offered that seem less than compelling. In one repressed fear of death by symbolically sacrificing our children in order to mollify the spirits of the dead (Sterba this argument, that Halloween involves a repressed fear of death, may have some merit, it is not as plausible that symbolic sacrifices by sending them out dressed in various death masks such as skeletons, ghosts, and zombies. in selecting costumes for preschool children, and are much more likely to select cute or animal costumes than do when "real" death threats to these children are perceived, as with the poison candy and razorblade-in-the-apple protect their children from these threats.

Another set of psychoanalytic interpretations have been offered by Fraiberg and Fraiberg (1950). They suggest the totem feast which enacts the Oedipal killing and eating of the father by the brother horde. The products of the feast and their consumption also represents the possession of the women by the brothers. Another part of their involves the symbolism of the door, at which treats are sought, as a symbolic vagina, the windows that are soape voyeuristic fetishism, and Halloween pumpkins as pregnant bellies. Even if there were not more plausible explanations Halloween celebrations, it seems strange that Oedipal conflicts with parents would be enacted with strangers out

### Emerging Interpretations

The Nature of Contemporary Halloween Celebrations. Caplow, et al. (1982) note that Halloween is in several ways holidays. If the witch is the central figure of the holiday, she may be considered the inversion of the American middle ugliness, age, nocturnal preference, and malevolence also stand in opposition to the traits of Santa Claus, Cupid, reign during other major U.S. holidays. They also suggest that Halloween is an anti-festival that burlesques Easter resurrection with ghosts and skeletons and burlesques Thanksgiving by turning the edible pumpkin pie into a horrible Thanksgiving and Christmas celebrate family, Halloween mocks it. Caplow, et al. (1982) conclude that "...at Halloween nonbeings demand and receive nonmeals from nonrelatives in a nonneighborly way" (Caplow, et al. 1982, 232-23

antifestival, and is specifically anti-home, anti-family, anti-nourishment, and anti-religion.

The only part of this characterization that might be questioned is the "nonneighborly" quality of Halloween. While characteristic of Halloween in the late 19th century and the vandalism associated with Devil's night in the Detroit nonneighborly, Stone (1959) found that trick-or-treating youngsters had little intention of delivering tricks and it constituted a trick. While the current data suggest some incidence of pranks during teenage years, the extent and generally quite limited. While there remain some elements of mischievousness in Halloween celebrations, it cannot truly be extorted from those whose houses are visited. Rather, in an opposite sense, trick-or-treating and neighborhood provide a sense of community (Brown and Werner 1985) and demonstrate to children that the world outside the home and acts as a quasi-family. As Sutton-Smith (1983) observes:

We say to our children, in effect, that your neighbors are to be trusted. They are nice people. If you knock on their scary door along their scary path dressed up as a scary person, nevertheless they will treat you as if you were a neighbor and give you candy and food (p. 64).

As one informant (WM 10) put it, "If we bring up all those scary things at least once a year, maybe they won't scare us as much" (original 1920) also suggested that children use games that involve the things they fear most in order to gain some control. Horror movies may serve much the same function.

Functions of Halloween for Young Children. There is also another sense in which a feeling of community prevails. It derives from the attitude of the child leaving family and joining masked friends for a dark foray in search of catharsis. Liminality is enhanced because "a touch of sin and evil seems to be necessary tinder for the fires of communitas" (Turner 1972). Turner notes that child trick-or-treaters occupy a position betwixt and between the living and the dead and their masks and costumes with the anonymity needed for a rite of reversal in which the weak become powerful, like the highwaymen whom Shallick (1973, p. 16) suggests this reversal is necessary to relieve pressure because children remain the one rebellious element in our society. But Turner's brief application of his liminality formulation to Halloween fails to note several aspects of the process: the chaos of Halloween as anti-structure, the liminal Halloween season bridging summer and winter, the demons to slip between this seam (Ward 1981), the archetypal struggle between light and darkness at this time of year, the trick-or-treating with comrades as a pilgrimage and a self-imposed rite of passage, children--like gays, hippies, and fringe figures, and the adolescent as nonperson hovering betwixt and between childhood and adulthood.

The essential liminal nature of the trick-or-treat pilgrimage is recounted by Ann Mesko (Hunter 1983)--I have adapted her account as specified by Turner (1972) in brackets:

Group members were allowed to examine treats between stops, but it was frowned upon to sample [asceticism]. Members were allowed to remove their masks while in transport because of the discomfort of breathing through them, but were not allowed to remove the essential costume [uniform clothing]. Disguises had to be replaced before entering a householder's property [transition; ritual preparation]. In these circumstances members were to reveal their true identity to the householder when in his presence [obedience]. And the group had to travel as a unit; that is, the male members were not allowed to fraternize with the females [equality; absence of rank; unselfishness]. All of the rules served to reaffirm group identity and to ensure an orderly progression through the itinerary [communitas; ritual] (p. 40).

For the young child Halloween may thus be seen largely as a sacred pilgrimage. An implicit function served by children's entry into the night, is mastery of fear. It might seem strange that children would dress up as scary monsters and visit their own master fears, but this is the very way these fears are met (Balter 1988; Magliocco 1985). In these contexts fears are met in a situation with safety highly likely; they are bracketed in time and space. For preschool children, both fear master and child roles are generally supervised by parents or older siblings, making the initial experience a pilgrimage with guides.

Functions of Halloween for Adolescents. For adolescent children, one social function of the trick-or-treat ritual is the rejection of acquisitiveness, possessiveness, and gluttony. One informant (WM 12) explained his Halloween procedures this way:

Get all the candy you can when trick-or-treating. Take the candy home, and dump it all onto the table. Separate the good candy bars (Snickers, Mars, Three Musketeers) into separate piles from the rest. Separate the other candy into suckers, gum, etc.. Examine everyone's candy and the one with the most candy has won. Eat the good candy first, and protect your stash from others.

The ethos expressed here was fairly common, especially among grade school age males. Younger children show Halloween and Christmas and sometimes spoke of Halloween trees with candy under them and leaving treats out (seemingly inspired by leaving treats for Santa, rather than similar Samhain practices, as even older children had mistaken ideas about the origins of Halloween). Stone (1959) has also noted this consumer (rather than produce)

Another function of Halloween for adolescent children is to aid in exploring sexuality. While prepubescent children see themselves as children and postpubescents properly regard themselves as adults, children going through puberty are uncertain. One interpretation of the horror films popular in this age group at Halloween is that these films help explore confused identity (Evans 1975, Hogan 1986). As Evans observes:

The adolescent finds-himself trapped in an unwilling change from a comparatively comprehensible childhood to some mysterious new state which he does not understand, cannot control, and has to fear. Mysterious feelings and urges begin to develop and he finds himself strangely fascinated by his new physical characteristics--emerging hair, budding breasts, and others--which, given the forbidden nature of the X-rated American mentality, he associates with mystery, darkness, secrecy, and evil (1975,

Fiedler (1978, p. 28) adds that children wonder "whether they are beasts or men: little animals more like their pet than such a view it becomes more understandable that the half-human/half-animal form of monsters like the wolfman monster should hold a special fascination as their bodies are contorted and transformed. Similarly, the special fascination has been seen as symbolizing menstruation. The monthly timing of these attacks (at full moon) offers further support. Another interpretation that ties more closely to the teenage horror films of the 1970s and 1980s involves caution. In films like Halloween, the heroine/survivor is a teenage female virgin, while those who die are sexually active (L

Besides their sexual significance, horror films evoke Halloween through the use of masks. Adolescents then adopt costumes for their own Halloween masquerade--e.g., Michael from Halloween, Freddy Krueger from Nightmare on Elm Street, Friday the 13th, The Phantom of the Opera, and others. The films also involve the boundaries between wakefulness and reality, human and nonhuman--all of which have liminal parallels in both nightmares and Halloween (Hartman 1988). The chaos and inversion of these films is very parallel to the chaos and inversion of Halloween. The function of these films during Halloween (but not during "purifying" holidays like Easter) is not at all surprising. The functions are not unlike those more prominently served by fairy tales and ghost stories in the past--they express the collective unconscious (e.g., Bettelheim 1976).

Functions of Halloween for Adults. For adults, the increased participation in Halloween celebrations appears to be a result of the mask and carnival atmosphere of Halloween that allow children to invert the power structure, master fears, and identities, allow the adult to transcend normal rules of propriety and relieve the normal tensions of social order. Similar celebrations have disappeared or substantially changed their character including the Roman Saturnalia, Hilaria, a medieval feast of fools, and Christmas mumming in various locales (e.g., Abrahams and Bauman 1978, Davis 1988, 1923). Surviving carnival festivals besides Halloween include New Year's Eve celebrations, Carnival in Brazil, Trinidad, and predominantly Catholic areas, Mardi Gras in New Orleans, Shrovetide in Finland, St. Peter festival in Columbia, and the Carnival of Denmark and the Netherlands. Reversal rites also survive in certain activities like "monster" car-crushing truck races (Jewett and Lawrence 1978). There appears to be a widespread and longstanding need for such a festival. The symbols may involve debauchery, drunkenness, homosexuality, transvestism, and generally a spirit of play, tricks, and talk (Babcock 1978, Da Matta 1984, Huizinga 1970 [original 1955]). These traits accord well with the gay drag parades and drinking activity associated with the contemporary Halloween.

A part of the license for such activity is granted by the use of costume and mask. The power of masks is to some

audience who assume that the wearer suspends all identity but that of the role (e.g., Hickey, Thompson, and Fos Abrahams and Bauman (1978) note that participants may be those given to bawdiness at other times as well, the celebrants, and the tolerance and sometimes encouragement by the community all enhance such activity during

What remains to be understood is why the current U.S. Halloween celebration seems to be shifting in emphasis. Some clues may be found by returning to the razor-blade-in-the-apple legend and the Halloween horror films of the 1950s. Horiuchi (1985) suggest that the poisoned Halloween treat rumors have actually flourished because we felt such threats with the U.S. loss in Vietnam, the Arab oil embargo, increased crime, the Tylenol poisonings, and increase of child abuse. By confining our fear to a narrower target (the Halloween sadist) and a single day of the year, the parents are able to take action against it by controlling their children's trick-or-treating. But why the increase in Halloween? Noting some of U.S. society's other reactions to a felt loss of control, Wood (1986) argues that the resurgence of Halloween in the 1980s is both an enactment of and a cathartic response to increased political, religious, and sexual repression due to religious fundamentalism, and AIDs during this period.- It seems likely that these same forces could account for the resurgence of Halloween as carnival release. While these interpretations remain tentative, they are also compatible with the evidence of Halloween films during the Great Depression and accounts that Halloween pranks were also much more in evidence during the 1950s (1959).

If these interpretations are correct, the evolving course of the U.S. Halloween celebration may be tied to social forces. Similar shifts in holiday control due to social forces have been detected in Brazilian carnival (Taylor 1982) and Pentecost (1982). Other U.S. holidays also evolve and change (e.g., Belk 1987, 1989), although they may have better articulated their meanings, and thus change somewhat more slowly. While current emphasis is shifting in favor of adults, Halloween in its ambiguity is able to serve children, adolescents, and adults in different ways and with different meanings. Its ability to absorb its recent infusion into the preColumbian Mexican Day of the Dead (El Dia de los Muertos) ritual (Hernandez and others) is clear that with several thousand years of lineage, Halloween is not about to disappear, even though other holidays are losing their earlier functions. As the major non-family holiday, Halloween retains unique characteristics that can not be changed.

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