

When Love Hurts:

How romance depictions in film contribute to relationship abuse

Alexandria Hatten

University of North Georgia - Senior Psychology Student

February 2022

Abstract

There is a strong relationship between media and the belief systems we hold. The film industry, for example, has great influence on ideals, perceptions, and expectations of human life. While the effects of film content are widespread, it is especially important to examine the specific implications film has on our ideas about relationships. Romance, as a prevalent aspect of our lives, is commonly depicted in films across genres. Consistent to most film content, there is great debate about how accurately these depictions translate to real life. Even with great efforts made by producers to create plotlines that are realistic, various factors compete to create the content we consume. To be successful, producers and screenwriters have to create stories that sell—adding embellishments that keep audiences engaged and spark emotional responses. This work will look at how the depiction of romance in film affects and influences beliefs and perceptions of audience members.

The purpose of this research is to identify how romance in film contributes to relationship abuse. Several psychological concepts will be used to consider an explanation. These include cultivation theory, homophily, social learning theory, desensitization, and script theory. I hypothesize that both relational and physical abuse are in part derived directly from the media we consume, specifically what is seen in film. Since beliefs are created over time and impacted by a myriad of environmental/other factors, it is challenging to prove a causal relationship between film content and abuse. However, this research will analyze relevant literature to examine the strength of the connection. Using existing research, I will present an argument for how relational abuse is connected to romantic film content. This literature review is a needed and relevant addition to the existing research for several reasons. While there is ample research that seeks to explore the effects film and television content on viewers, many works are limited to

analyzing within the confines of specific genres. The present study differs in that it considers the broader perspective of romance in film across all genres. Romance plots or subplots in film often involve unrealistic portrayals of relationships. This includes endorsement of flawed romantic ideals, lack of realistic conflict shown, and unhealthy behaviors (such as abuse) rewarded. Unrealistic depictions of romance in film affects viewers by shaping beliefs and expectations about healthy relationships. In turn, this leads to behavior that reflects these beliefs and expectations.

With established psychological concepts, I will thoroughly explain how media influences beliefs and behavior. Abuse will then be defined and analyzed in its many forms. This section will look at the literature that has explored personality and situational domains as well as various patterns found within the study of abuse. Next, research surrounding romantic ideals and romantic media content will be considered. Several studies have created a foundation of content analysis in film, which will aid in determining common themes that are most prevalent in the top-grossing movies. Finally, the concepts will be applied more specifically to romance in film to establish the effects on viewers.

How are we affected by media?

When looking at various media types and how they affect consumers, it is helpful to consider the most extreme and explicit content areas, as it would be assumed they would have the most considerable influence.

One important form of extreme media to consider is violent video games. Results from many studies have agreed that exposure to and engagement with violent video games increases aggression and the likelihood of violence occurring. According to the General Aggression Model (Anderson & Bushman, 2001), violent media teaches viewers how to aggress by priming scripts and schemas, influencing affect, and causing higher arousal levels. This, in turn, leads to an overall negative association between viewing violent video games and engaging in prosocial behavior. Effects remain consistent among both males and females, but are most damaging to children, youth, and college-aged consumers (Driesmans et al, 2016). Violent media creates violent thoughts (Bushman & Green, 1990), which often lead to violent behavior.

Effects of aggressive media content elicit more than just violent cognitions, with physical changes of increases in systolic blood pressure, heart rate, and galvanic skin response measured upon viewing violent videos (Bushman & Green, 1990) (Coyne et al., 2018). While immediate physical effects experienced during and after viewing violence help explain the subsequent aggressive behavior that has been observed in various experiments, it should be noted that research also exists exploring these effects outside the laboratory. Huesmann et al. (2003) conducted a longitudinal study finding that the viewing of TV violence during childhood was significantly correlated with aggression in adulthood fifteen years later.

If viewing on-screen violence can lead to violence in real life, it is logical that other types of harmful messaging might also have an impact on behavior. Even music with sexually explicit

content (such as rap or hard rock) increases sexual aggression in laboratory settings (Hall & Hirschman, 1991) by further solidifying negative gender role stereotypes (Lawrence & Joyner, 1991) and cognitive distortions about violence against women (Barongan & Hall, 1995). This is important especially because music lacks the visual component of media consumption. If simply listening to music can negatively impact an individual's beliefs and actions, imagine the implications this might have for more involved types of media.

Some types of extreme media have direct implications on relationships rather than just on individuals. Pornography, for example, is known to create unrealistic expectations in viewers that harm real life relationships by decreasing levels of commitment and intimacy, while increasing levels of psychological distress between partners (Lambert et al., 2012). One possible explanation for the change in relationship health and well-being might derive from the idea of cyber infidelity, which posits that there is a perceived feeling of physical and sexual infidelity or disloyalty that arises when one partner engages in the consumption of media like pornography (Adam, 2019).

Pornography has also been linked to physical violence and aggression. One correlational study found that the male partners of female victims of physical abuse consumed more pornographic media than the male partners of unabused females (Sommers & Check, 1987). Similarly, another correlational study (Marshall, 1988) found that rapists and sex offenders used pornographic materials more than the nonoffender control group. Several studies have found that viewing pornographic materials often leads to a belief change, specifically regarding those surrounding rape (Russell, 1993) (Sommers & Check, 1987) (Malamuth & Check, 1985).

Research by Coyne et al. (2008) found that viewing physical aggression in media actually produced higher occurrences of both physical and relational aggression in the laboratory

environment. This opens the door for a whole new avenue of research—one that focuses on the impact of viewing social aggression and how it translates to real life behavior. One study by Mares and Braun (2013) found that young females who watched tween sitcoms containing elements of relational aggression were more likely to endorse social exclusion as an acceptable part of group behavior. In many of these programs, relational aggression is an aspect of humor that adds to a plot and helps the desirable characters be successful. Furthermore, one content analysis in kids' programs found social aggression to be depicted about 14 times each hour (Martins & Wilson, 2012). This is an important concern because kids might learn from this modeled behavior, and relational aggression might be trivialized by the humor that masks it.

Effects of media consumption on behavior and beliefs extend far beyond just violence and aggression. These areas are simply easier to research than other types of cognition and behavior. One study found that children who watched more than two hours of television daily (no restrictions on the genre of content) were more than five times as likely as their peers who watched less than that to begin smoking (Gidwani et al., 2002). Research by Tiggemann (2003) found that although different types of media influence consumers differently, both magazines and television do relate to body dissatisfaction (potentially in varying strengths depending upon the consumer's baseline self-esteem levels).

Whether it is through music, TV, or online videos, the research agrees that media has an impact on our beliefs and behaviors. Certain types of content depicted in media, such as sexual or aggressive, can actually prime us to engage with others in a dangerous and damaging way.

Why are we affected by media?

In order to understand why we are affected by different types of media and their messaging, several cognitive processes must be examined.

Script Theory

One explanation of media's influence involves the consideration of script theory, which posits that memory scripts are activated by exposure to related media content (Hansen & Hansen, 1988). Essentially, what we see in various forms of media can influence the way we perceive our lives. Romantic content in media can give us a reference point from which we draw conclusions and make judgements regarding our own romantic relationships. This ideology is further demonstrated in one piece of research (Holmes & Johnson, 2009), which observed higher levels of dissatisfaction about previous romantic relationships to be reported by single college students after viewing a romantic comedy film. Script theory helps to explain how media influences behavior as well. For example, viewing aggression will activate related (already established) aggressive behavioral scripts that make someone more likely to act aggressively. Josephson (1987) emphasizes that aggressive behavior will be most likely to occur for individuals who already have aggressive personality tendencies. This makes sense because people with more aggressive tendencies have more of those types of behavioral scripts, which would be exercised by viewing violent media.

Parasocial Relationships

Parasocial relationships are those that involve a one-sided interaction. These relationships develop when a viewer gets invested in the plot/characters of film to the point of immersion. This immersion allows the viewer to perceive characters as friends and become distanced from reality. The premise of this immersion is similar to script theory, involving the facilitation of endorsement of the underlying beliefs within the plot. When it comes to romantic media, this means that individuals engaged in parasocial relationships will be less likely to critically analyze or question the health and realism behind on-screen romantic relationships (Driesmans et al.,

2016). Parasocial relationships can also involve the common “celebrity crush,” as these experiences can also maintain a dependence on idolization and fantasy (Erickson & Cin, 2018). Parasocial relationships are not associated with success. In fact, researchers Erickson and Cin (2018) determined that parasocial romances are damaging, emphasizing both gender-related stereotypes and the need for a romantic relationship as means for feelings of self-acceptance and self-worth.

Social Learning Theory

Romantic and sexual media exposure does have an impact on the forming of related beliefs, education, and norms. It might be the case that adolescents learn about these aspects of life in part from what they see on television and in films. After all, we know from social learning theory that media can be instructional for viewers, pointing to the norms associated with beliefs and behavior on a given topic (Bandura, 2001). These ideas fall in line with the overarching concept of socialization, which explains beliefs and behavior to result from norms learned and accepted in society. Sexual socialization, then, would involve the same process but specifically in the context of romantic relationships and sex (Erickson & Cin, 2018). It is logical that if media is socializing in other aspect of life, it would also be a socializing force in a society or individual’s understanding of romance and sex.

Desensitization

The idea of desensitization is crucial in understanding how media affects viewers. Desensitization occurs when viewing something over time produces a numbness or lack of concern about its meaning. It explains how cognitive distortions about what kinds of behavior are acceptable originate. Much research has explored this concept in relevance to violent video games, asserting that the aggression increases after playing are due to the desensitization of

violence from viewing it on the screen (Anderson & Bushman, 2001). This concept has also been used to explain how listening to music with sexually aggressive explicit lyrics leads to sexual aggression in experimental studies (Barongan & Hall, 1995).

Cultivation Theory

Media messaging is very influential in the foundation of a culture's identity, values, and agendas (Gerbner, 1977). Cultivation theory broadly explains the impact of all types of media messaging on our beliefs, perceptions, and behaviors. Essentially, being exposed to messages in media has an effect on the people who use that media (Hammermeister et al., 2002). The definition includes the idea that how people interact with messaging influences the way the messages become manifested in culture and life (Shanahan & Morgan, 1999). Some criticisms of cultivation theory add that it is best used in conjunction with a mental models approach, which takes the specific situational, mental, and cultural aspects of interaction with media into account (Roskos-Ewoldsen et al., n.d.). This addition allows cultivation theory to explain how media messages influence individuals based upon cultural and situational context.

Who is most affected by media?

It is logical that those who consume more TV/film are more likely to hold the views that are reflected in the version of reality that these platforms create. Research by Behm-Morawitz et al. (2016) adds that perceived realism, first person desire, and homophily are also indicators of how much someone will be affected by media. People who perceive what they are viewing to accurately reflect reality are more likely to be influenced by that messaging. Similarly, people with first person desire, or the feeling of media consumption being a shared experience rather than just a one-sided transaction, are more likely to adopt the beliefs presented on screen. Homophily involves the extent to which a viewer relates to media characters. Higher feelings of

similarity are correlated with higher levels of influence from content. Overall, the higher involvement a viewer perceives to have with the characters and plot, the more they will be influenced (in agreement) with that media's messaging and beliefs presented.

Overall, much of the literature on media messaging vulnerability among audiences distinguishes a gender difference, finding that women are more affected than men (Hammermeister et al., 2002) (Driesmans et al., 2016). More specifically, young women (ages 11-14) are the most likely to have beliefs influenced by romantic media content (Driesmans et al., 2016) (Mares & Braun, 2013). This, of course, might be explained by the fact that women tend to consume more romantic media than men. It could also be the case that women are more vulnerable to romantic media messaging because they have been more traditionally socialized to need or want relationships. Regardless, the more significant impact of media on women is a notable difference—especially as we further the discussion about how media shapes and changes beliefs and behaviors regarding relationships.

Young women who perceived reality television to be realistic held stronger gender-related stereotypes and valued social aggression more (Behm-Morawitz et al., 2016). This makes sense because much reality TV content involves the liked characters aggressing against others for means of success. Social learning theory assumes that after seeing the benefits and rewards associated with social aggression, viewers would be more likely to perform or emulate similar behavior as means for advancement in their own lives.

Researchers Bushman and Green (1990) explored various personality variables in relation to media violence and aggression. One personality variable studied is called stimulus screening, which involves the extent to which people naturally block out certain stimuli by using selective attention. Findings included that those who were considered high screeners (those who use

selective attention more) experienced fewer violent thoughts in response to observation of aggressive scenes than did low screeners. These individual differences are worth consideration, as they assist in pointing to personality types that might make someone more vulnerable to being negatively affected by media.

Romantic Media

One researcher examined the popular Disney film *Beauty and the Beast* and argued that violence and abuse are justified within the movie (Olson, 2013). By analyzing the central romance, Olson asserts that the film romanticizes unhealthy relationship behaviors—specifically that the beast’s episodes of anger could be detrimental to Belle’s life, and closely resemble repeated patterns of abuse. This is significant because, as Olson later explains, the classic film has affected many generations, and could potentially shape poor expectations and perceptions of what should be tolerated in healthy, loving relationships.

Another study narrows its focus to romantic media’s effect on the fear of being single (Timmermans et al., 2019). Results showed that viewing media of this sort did not influence everyone the same, but correlations with intensified concern about being single was most prominent within young women viewers who were already single.

In order to properly trace unhealthy depictions of relationships back to specific beliefs or agendas that are portrayed, many studies rely on a psychological structure called the Romantic Beliefs Scale (RBS) (Sprecher & Metts, 1999), which identifies set themes that most romantic beliefs (commonly found in media) fall into. These include: soulmate, idealization of partner, love conquers all, and love at first sight. Recent research helped to further define the categories in the RBS by watching, rating, and sorting romantic aspects of films into pre-determined themes (Hefner & Wilson, 2013) (Moore & Ophir, 2021). To demonstrate that these beliefs are relevant,

it should be clearly noted that this same scale was also used in a longitudinal study of individuals' changes of romantic experiences over time (Sprecher & Metts, 1999). Essentially, researchers followed real relationships, and related positive or negative outcomes according to beliefs held. Results found that beliefs do serve as predictors of behavior, ultimately influencing success of relationships. This being said, it is logical that society would hope to have the most common romantic beliefs depicted in film correlate with positive behavior and success regarding relationships.

Several pieces of research have used the Romantic Beliefs Scale to identify how viewers are influenced by ideals represented in film and television. For example, one study by Lippman et al. (2014) included an analysis of certain genres, finding that comedies are more likely to have lower correlations with idealization or "soulmate" themed tropes, and wedding reality television shows are more likely to have higher correlations with the "love conquers all" category. These findings are consistent with others, especially that wedding reality television (and those who view it) correlates highly with the ideal from the RBS that "love conquers all" (Hefner, 2016). These results suggests that certain genres are more likely to include certain types of romantic themes. Lastly, another study used the RBS and concluded that the influence of romantic portrayals is more prominent in film rather than television (Kretz, 2019). This might be due to the fact that films have a longer amount of time to develop more complex plots that reflect certain beliefs or ideals.

A collection of notable studies involving the Romantic Beliefs Scale and film share an author. In one previously mentioned study with undergraduates watching, sorting, and rating films, there was a follow-up component where participants also completed surveys about their romantic beliefs (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). Results showed that there was significant

endorsement of the beliefs in the RBS, which was linked directly to viewing romantic comedies. There is some debate about whether or not endorsement in the ideals leads to negative outcomes. Another study contradicts the assumed hypothesis that content in romantic comedies negatively impacts audiences (Hefner, 2019). Instead, findings from this research suggest that content in this genre does not actually create unhealthy expectations for real life. There was actually a positive relationship found between idealist content, beliefs held, and life satisfaction. While holding unrealistic beliefs about marriage and romantic relationships might have some benefits, some would argue that there are negative consequences. Driesmans et al. (2016) found that these unrealistic beliefs do bring about marked disappointment in relationships, leading to higher levels of negative emotionality and behavior in reaction to unmet expectations (Baucom et al., 1996). More research needs to be conducted to determine which perspective is more accurate.

Relationship Abuse:

Researchers Maldonado and Murphy (2020) explored a cognitive coping mechanism termed power and control, linking it to trauma and intimate partner violence. According to social cognitive approaches to PTSD, power and control is thought to derive as a trauma response that operates as an individual's desire for control. Power and control has been correlated positively with emotional abuse in particular, which makes it a potential explanation for why relationship abuse occurs.

Another portion of research has given needed attention to the prevalence of domestic violence and abuse in teenage relationships. Findings by Griffiths (2019) pointed to two major reasons for why abuse in this demographic occurs: lack of understanding about healthy relationship behavior and lack of a trusted person to talk to. These findings reflect a need for better education about the difference between healthy and unhealthy relationships, as well as

finding these individuals professional outlets that can aid them in processing relationship issues.

Since much of our understanding about relationships comes from childhood, personal experience, and media, there is great confusion about what types of behaviors are healthy.

Consistent to the research about power and control, some situations involve individuals endorsing unhealthy or unrealistic beliefs about relationships for deeper reasons like trauma responses and emotional coping. The research about teen relationships adds that lack of knowledge and education about how to maintain a healthy relationship is also relevant. These explanations for abuse and tolerance of abuse are also of use when considering why people hold idealistic views about romance and marriage. In some cases, idealizing marriage or relationships to this extent might serve as protection, inflating levels of partner satisfaction, commitment, and feelings of love in the beginning of a relationship (Sprecher & Metts, 1999).

From an evolutionary psychological perspective, the pressure of romance and marriage might be stronger for women due to the traditional ideas about women needing to reproduce and be mothers. This means that women would be more attuned to the romantic messaging in film, which would explain why they might stay in unhealthy relationship patterns. To follow this thought, male abusers should be considered next. From a biological standpoint, men have more testosterone than women. Since higher levels of testosterone elicit higher levels of violence and aggression (Cohen et al., 1996), aggression in film might make men more likely to act in violence against their partners. While this perspective provides important insight into why men physically abuse women and why women might stay with their abusers in romantic relationships, it fails to give an inclusive explanation for the opposite occurrence. This is important to consider because men are also victims of abuse by females. Perhaps unhealthy/unrealistic romantic film

content is also explained by desensitization, and both men and women don't recognize the abusive patterns or behaviors they see on the screen after seeing it all the time.

Conclusion:

Effects of exposure to romantic film content have been shown to decrease as we get older (Driesmans et al., 2016). While this is encouraging to know that we are not always heavily influenced by these aspects of media, it further echoes the need for monitoring media, especially for children and early adolescents.

In one of the first pieces of research that has sought to explore the psychological benefits of life without television, Hammermeister et al. (2002) found that individuals who watch more TV experienced more feelings of depression, loneliness, and shyness than non-viewers did. While it is unrealistic and nearly impossible to avoid the consumption of all media including television, these results can remind consumers to be conscious of the media they consume and to consider how media might be affecting them negatively.

Knowing that a large portion of our education about relationships and romance comes from media (Griffiths, 2019), there is a clear and timely need for improvement. Since media comes in many forms and cannot always be regulated or censored, education might be the greatest defense against relationship abuse. By implementing psychological research in education systems, knowledge would combat the unrealistic and unhealthy portrayals of romance as they begin to form. Simply increasing awareness about how to recognize abuse or unhealthy relationship patterns could make a difference, especially if implemented in younger age groups. With high divorce rates across the United States, many children do not grow up in homes that display a healthy example of romance or marriage. So, education could fill in the gaps.

The best way to prevent and stop relationship abuse (along with related thinking patterns) would be a combination of educational efforts alongside mindfulness about what media is being consumed. In this context, mindfulness would empower users to maintain more personal control over what they see each day. After knowing why and how media is being consumed, efforts to limit screen time or filter what kinds of content an individual is seeing would potentially be helpful. It is so important to understand that all types of media are socializing forces that teach us about the world and prime our behavior. Parental considerations are key in this regard, as platforms like Netflix have decreased in censorship over the years.

Several gaps in the literature around relationship abuse exist. In order to really understand how romantic media content impacts the development of relationship abuse, more longitudinal research is needed in about abusers (rather than victims). The literature is lacking with inclusion of men as victims as well. With media consumption growing and changing each year, new research that includes social media platforms like TikTok and algorithms is also needed. Lastly, social psychology has distinguished a difference between passionate and companionate love. Passionate is the “honeymoon phase” of relationships that dies out after a few years, while companionate love is grown over time. From personal experience, most romantic film content I have seen depicts passionate love. Since passionate love is not a predictor of relationship success, research that explores that connection would aid the scholarly understanding of how media portrayals of romance lead to success or failure in relationships.

References

- Adam, A. (2019). Perceptions of Infidelity: A Comparison of Sexual, Emotional, Cyber-, and Parasocial Behaviors. *Interpersonal*, 13(2), 237–252. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.5964/ijpr.v13i2.376>
- Anderson, C. A., & Bushman, B. J. (2001). Effects of violent video games on aggressive behavior, aggressive cognition, aggressive affect, physiological arousal, and prosocial behavior: a meta-analytic review of the scientific literature. *Psychological Science*, 12(5), 353–359. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-9280.00366>
- Bandura, A. (2001). SOCIAL COGNITIVE THEORY: An Agentic Perspective. *Annual Review of Psychology*, 52(1), 1. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev.psych.52.1.1>
- Barongan, C., & Hall, G. C. N. (1995). The influence of misogynous rap music on sexual aggression against women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly*, 19, 195-207.
- Baucom, D. H., Epstein, N., Daiuto, A. D., Carels, R. A., Ranklin, L. A., & Burnett, C. K. (1996). Cognitions in marriage: The relationship between standards and attributions. *Journal of Family Psychology*, 10, 209-222. <https://doi:10.1037/0893-3200.10.2.209>
- Behm-Morawitz, E., Lewallen, J., & Miller, B. (2016). Real mean girls? Reality television viewing, social aggression, and gender-related beliefs among female emerging adults. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 5(4), 340–355. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000074>
- Bushman, B. J., & Green, R. G. (1990). Role of cognitive-emotional mediators and individual differences in the effects of media violence on aggression. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 58, 156-163.

- Cohen, D., Nisbett, R. E., Bowdle, B. F., & Schwarz, N. (1996). Insult, aggression, and the southern culture of honor: An “experimental ethnography.” *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 70(5), 945–960.
- Coyne, S. M., Nelson, D. A., Lawton F., Haslam, S., Rooney, L., Titterington, L., & ... Ogunlaja, L. (2008). The effects of viewing physical and relational aggression in the media: Evidence for a cross-over effect. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, 44, 1551-1554.
- Driesmans, K., Vandenbosch, L., & Eggermont, S. (2016). True love lasts forever: The influence of a popular teenage movie on Belgian girls’ romantic beliefs. *Journal of Children and Media*, 10(3), 304–320. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-ngal.galileo.usg.edu/10.1080/17482798.2016.1157501>
- Erickson, S. E., & Dal Cin, S. (2018). Romantic Parasocial Attachments and the Development of Romantic Scripts, Schemas and Beliefs among Adolescents. *Media Psychology*, 21(1), 111–136. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-ngal.galileo.usg.edu/10.1080/15213269.2017.1305281>
- Gerbner. (1977). *Mass media policies in changing cultures*. Wiley. 199-205.
- Gidwani, P. P., Sobol, A., DeJong, W., Perrin, J. M., & Gortmaker, S. L. (2002). Television viewing and initiation of smoking among youth. *Pediatrics*, 110, 505-509.
- Griffiths, A. (2019). Domestic violence in teenage intimate relationships: Young people’s views on awareness, prevention, intervention and regaining one’s sense of wellbeing. *Educational & Child Psychology*, 36(1), 9–26.
- Hall, G. C. N., & Hirschman, R. (1991). Toward a theory of sexual aggression: A quadripartite model. *Journal of Consulting and Clinical Psychology*, 59, 6620-669.

Hammermeister, J., Brock, B., Winterstein, D., & Page, R. (2005). Life Without TV? Cultivation Theory and Psychosocial Health Characteristics of Television-Free Individuals and Their Television-Viewing Counterparts. *Health Communication*, 17(3), 253–264.

https://doi.org/10.1207/s15327027hc1703_3

Hansen, C. H., & Hansen, R. D. (1988). How Rock Music Videos Can Change What Is Seen When Boy Meets Girl: Priming Stereotypic Appraisal of Social Interactions. *Sex Roles*, 19(5–6), 287–316. <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF00289839>

Hefner, V. (2019). Does love conquer all? An experiment testing the association between types of romantic comedy content and reports of romantic beliefs and life satisfaction.

Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 8(4), 376–384. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000201>

Hefner, V. (2016). Tuning into fantasy: Motivations to view wedding television and associated romantic beliefs. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 5(4), 307–323. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000079>

Hefner, V., & Wilson, B. (2013). From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate: The Influence of Romantic Ideals in Popular Films on Young People’s Beliefs about Relationships.

Communication Monographs, 80(2), 150–175. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1080/03637751.2013.776697>

Holmes, B. M. & Johnson, K. R. (2009). Where fantasy meets reality: Media exposure, relationship beliefs and standards, and the moderating effect of current relationship. In E. P. Lamont (Ed.), *Social psychology: New research* (pp. 117-134). New York, NY: Nova Science. <https://eds.s.ebscohost.com/eds/ebookviewer/ebook/bmxlYmtfXzU0MDU3N19>

[fQU41?sid=8f3bf842-d33d-4832-93ca-85a120ee5174@redis&vid=0&format=EB&rid=1](https://doi.org/10.1080/10510974.2019.1595692)

Huesmann, L. R., Moise-Titus, J., Podolski, C. L., & Eron, L. D. (2003). Longitudinal relations between children's exposure to TV violence and their aggressive and violent behavior in young adulthood: 1977-1992. *Developmental Psychology, 39*, 201-222.

Josephson, W. L., (1987). Television Violence and children's aggression: Testing the priming, social script, and disinhibition predictions. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology, 53*, 882-890.

Kretz, V. E. (2019). Television and Movie Viewing Predict Adults' Romantic Ideals and Relationship Satisfaction. *Communication Studies, 70*(2), 208–234. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-ngal.galileo.usg.edu/10.1080/10510974.2019.1595692>

Lambert, N. M., Negash, S., Stillman, T. F., Olmstead, S. B., & Finchman, F. D. (2012). A love that doesn't last: Pornography consumption and weakened commitment to one's romantic partner. *Journal of Social and Clinical Psychology, 31* (4), 410-438. <https://doi.org/10.1521/jscp.2012.31.4.410>

Lawrence, J. S. S., & Joyner, D. J. (1991). The effects of sexually violent rock music on males' acceptance of violence against women. *Psychology of Women Quarterly, 15*, 49-63.

Lippman, J. R., Ward, L. M., & Seabrook, R. C. (2014). Isn't it romantic? Differential associations between romantic screen media genres and romantic beliefs. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture, 3*(3), 128–140. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-ngal.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000034>

Malamuth, N. M., & Check, J. V. P. (1985). The effects of aggressive pornography on beliefs in rape myths: Individual differences. *Journal of Research in Personality, 19*, 299-320.

- Maldonado, A. I., & Murphy, C. M. (2021). Does Trauma Help Explain the Need for Power and Control in Perpetrators of Intimate Partner Violence? *Journal of Family Violence*, 36(3), 347–359. <https://doi.org/10.1007/s10896-020-00174-0>
- Mares, M-L., & Braun, M. T., (2013). Effects of conflict in tween sitcoms on U.S. students' moral reasoning about social exclusion. *Journal of Children and Media*, 7, 428-445.
- Marshall, W. L. (1988). The use of sexually explicit stimuli by rapists, child molesters, and nonoffenders. *Journal of Sex Research*, 25, 267-288.
- Martins, N., & Wilson, B. J. (2012). Mean on the screen: Social aggression in programs popular with children. *Journal of Communication*, 62, 991-1009.
- Moore, M. M., & Ophir, Y. (2021). Big data, actually: Examining systematic messaging in 188 romantic comedies using unsupervised machine learning. *Psychology of Popular Media*. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000349.supp>
(Supplemental)
- Olson, K. M. (2013). An Epideictic Dimension of Symbolic Violence in Disney's Beauty and the Beast: Inter-Generational Lessons in Romanticizing and Tolerating Intimate Partner Violence. *The Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 99(4), 448–480. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1080/00335630.2013.835491>
- Roskos-Ewoldsen, B., Davies, J., & Roskos-Ewoldsen, D. R. (n.d.). Implications of the mental models approach for cultivation theory. *Communications: The European Journal of Communication Research*, 29(3), 345–363.
- Russell, D. E. H. (1993). Pornography and rape: A causal model. In D. E. H. Russell (Ed.), *Making violence sexy: Feminist views on pornography* (pp. 120-150). New York: Teachers College Press.

Shanahan, J., & Morgan, M. (1999). *Television and Its Viewers: Cultivation Theory and Research*. Cambridge University Press.

Sommers, E. K., & Check, J. V. (1987). An empirical investigation of the role of pornography in the verbal and physical abuse of women. *Violence and Victims*, 2, 189-209.

Sprecher, S., & Metts, S. (1999). Romantic beliefs: Their influence on relationships and patterns of change over time. *Journal of Social & Personal Relationships*, 16(6), 834.

Tiggemann, M. (2003). Media exposure, body dissatisfaction and disordered eating: Television and magazines are not the same! *European Eating Disorders Review*, 11(5), 418–430.

<https://doi.org/10.1002/erv.502>

Timmermans, E., Coenen, L., & Van den Bulck, J. (2019). The Bridget Jones effect: The relationship between exposure to romantic media contents and fear of being single among emerging adults. *Psychology of Popular Media Culture*, 8(2), 159–169. <https://doi-org.proxygsu-nga1.galileo.usg.edu/10.1037/ppm0000175>