Romantic Relationships in Movies and Television:

Interpretations and Effects

By

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Abstract

Two studies examined the implications of media depictions of romantic relationships for viewers' satisfaction with their own romantic relationships. Both used adult samples that were heterogeneous in terms of gender and age distributions.

In Study 1, 210 participants read short, researcher-created plot summaries, described as either from a romantic movie or television show, either a comedy or drama. They rated their expectations for the central couple and then rated their perceptions of relationship themes in familiar, popular examples of actual movies and television shows. Participants' responses indicated that they perceived romantic movies (vs. fictional television) to depict romance as more idealized, less problem-filled, and less uncertain.

Study 2 examined the implications of exposure to these different types of content for individuals' satisfaction with their romantic relationships. Using the framework of the General Learning Model, the study examined both short-term experimental effects and long-term associations with habitual, self-selected exposure. A total of 306 participants were randomly assigned to see one of four 3-minute clips (romantic movie vs. television; comedy vs. drama). Afterwards, they reported their emotions and their satisfaction with their romantic relationship. Additionally, they answered survey questions about their beliefs about romantic relationships and their probable attributions for their partners' behavior.

The experiment indicated small but significant, indirect-only effects of random assignment to television versus romantic movie clips on relationship evaluations, via emotional responses. Those who saw romantic movie and comedy (vs. fictional television and drama) clips experienced more positive emotions, and these positive emotions were associated with more

positive relationship evaluations. This effect was, in the case of amusement and hope, stronger

for individuals who had higher levels of initial relationship satisfaction.

Contrary to predictions, the associations between relationship satisfaction and habitual

romantic movie and fictional television viewing were remarkably similar. Exposure to both types

of media was positively associated with relationship satisfaction both directly and indirectly (via

belief in romantic ideals). Additionally, exposure to both types of content was associated with

smaller negative indirect paths via uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias.

Relationship length, but not extent of coviewing, moderated some of these paths.

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CHAPTER 1

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Perhaps the most ubiquitous reason researchers cite for examining romantic relationships

is "the divorce rate." Approximately 40 to 50% of American married couples divorce, a

phenomenon that affects many given that over 90% of people get married by the age of 50

(American Psychological Association, 2014). Thus, there is a large body of research that focuses

on factors that either keep a couple together or drive them apart. Over the years, media use has

occasionally been cited as one such factor. For example, a longitudinal study by clinical

psychologists Rogge et al. (2013) found that instructing participants to watch romantic movies

and discuss them afterwards was equally effective in keeping couples together as other more

intensive treatments. Based on that study, *USA TODAY* ran a headline that declared, "Professor:

Couples can avoid divorce by watching movies" (Palma, 2014). But what are the effects of

watching romantic movies themselves on relationships – apart from researcher-directed post-

viewing discussions? A few studies have provided preliminary answers through examinations of

the associations between media use and relationship satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction is a critical outcome for researchers to consider for multiple

reasons. First, the majority of American adults (approximately 67%) are in committed romantic

relationships (Madden & Rainie, 2006). For those numerous individuals to find satisfaction in

their relationships is a desirable social goal in and of itself. Additionally, satisfaction with one's

relationship has other important consequences. At the individual level, relationship satisfaction is

associated with personal wellbeing (e.g., self-esteem, physical health, and global happiness)

(Proulx, Helms, & Buehler 2007). At the relationship level, satisfaction is associated with greater

stability and lower rates of dissolution (e.g., divorce) (Gottman & Levenson, 1992). Taken

together, relationship satisfaction is important to the healthy functioning of individuals and relationships. Recognizing this significance of satisfaction with one's relationship, some media researchers have examined the associations between relationship satisfaction and media use, particularly movie and television viewing.

One such study by Holmes and Johnson (2009) found that viewing a romantic comedy movie in the context of an experiment increased relationship satisfaction amongst undergraduates who were currently in a relationship. In contrast, surveys of college students by Holmes and Johnson (2009) and Reizer and Hetsroni (2014) found that watching television, overall and relationship-focused shows respectively, was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction. These findings paint an interesting picture of possible contrasting effects of romantic movies and television on relationship satisfaction. However, the picture is yet incomplete with several gaps in the extant literature.

First, research regarding the relationship-related content of romantic movies and fictional television programs is limited with scant studies comparing the two. Therefore, it is not clear that these media actually do vary in regards to how they depict romantic relationships. Second, we do not yet know why potentially contrasting effects may occur. While researchers have investigated the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and other relationship-related outcomes like relationship beliefs (Holmes & Johnson, 2009) and conflict behaviors (Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014) there are divergent results between studies and no study to date has explicitly examined these variables as underlying mechanisms that would help explain media effects on relationship satisfaction. Finally, the prior studies described all relied on samples of college students, a relatively homogenous group, which significantly limits the generalizability of those results. Whether the same associations between media use and relationship satisfaction

would be found amongst a broader sample of adult participants and if those associations would be the same across participants or if they would vary based on relevant individual differences were not thoroughly investigated in prior studies.

This dissertation project sought to fill these gaps and expand on the prior research by addressing these core research questions:

1) What differences are there between romantic movie and fictional television portrayals of romantic relationships (as perceived by viewers) that could underlie varying effects?

2) Are there indeed contrasting effects (both short- and long-term) of romantic movie versus fictional television viewing when assessed concurrently and amongst adults who are more representative of the general population?

3) What cognitive and affective mechanisms may underlie the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction?

4) Are the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction relatively consistent across population sub-samples or do they vary based on individual differences?

To that end, the current project included two studies, each with an experiment and survey. Both studies employed convenience samples of adult participants who were heterogeneous in terms of gender and age ranges. The purpose of Study 1 was to establish differences in viewer perceptions of and expectations for romantic movies versus fictional television shows. These findings then provided the foundation for Study 2, which was an examination of the impacts of such content on relationship satisfaction. The experimental part of Study 2 examined immediate, short-term effects on relationship evaluations, while the survey part of Study 2 investigated the associations between habitual, self-selected viewing and

relationship satisfaction. Study 2 focused not just on the direction of effects, but also on better understanding the cognitive and emotional mechanisms that may underlie them. Individual differences, including relationship length and coviewing, that may moderate the associations between viewing and relationship-related outcomes were also evaluated.

Theoretical Framework

The present investigation of the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction relied on the General Learning Model (GLM), proposed by Gentile et al. (2009), as a theoretical framework. The GLM is a macro-level theory, adapted from the General Aggression Model (GAM) proposed by Anderson and Bushman (2002), that describes how media may impact users.

According to Gentile et al. (2009), there are five dimensions of media use (in their case, video game use) that should be considered when examining the impact of media: amount, content, context, structure, and mechanics. Of these five dimensions, the first four are relevant to movie and television viewing and thus to the present project.

Translated into the context of the current project, these dimensions of media use are 1) amount – time spent watching movies and television, 2) content – the nature of the particular romantic relationship depictions viewed, 3) context – whether media are watched alone or with one's partner (coviewing), and 4) structure – the narrative form of the media viewed (self-contained vs. serialized). These dimensions were all considered in the present project. However, as in the GLM, the primary focus of the present project is on the effects of particular media content, that is, different depictions of romantic relationships.

There are three features of the GLM that were specifically used to guide the present study: short- and long-term processes, the inclusion of "person factors" or individual differences

in those processes, and the integration of mid-level theories. The following is a description of how these features of the GLM were applied within the present project.

Explaining short- and long-term effects. The GLM characterizes each media experience as a "learning encounter," that is, an opportunity to acquire, rehearse, and reinforce knowledge structures (Barlett & Anderson, 2013). According to the short-term processes component of the GLM, exposure to media content may lead to: cognitive responses, emotional responses, and physiological arousal. These states may then lead to varying appraisals, decisions, and behaviors. Put differently, the GLM proposes that media content may have cognitive and affective priming effects (as described in detail in Chapter 3), as well as effects of arousal. In the current project, the Study 2 experiment explicitly examined viewers' emotional responses to depictions of romantic relationships and effects on their immediate evaluations of their relationships, thus testing the short-term, affective priming proposition of the GLM. See Figure 1A for the conceptual model of the Study 2 experiment.

Additionally, according to the long-term processes part of the GLM, immediate responses may lead to effects over time. Repeated exposure to the same type of media content and thereby repeated activation of the same cognitions, emotions, or arousal is proposed to have a cumulative effect, building knowledge structures that impact future behavior. What types of knowledge structures might be built? The GLM suggests three types: pre-cognitive and cognitive constructs, cognitive-emotional constructs, and emotional constructs. Pre-cognitive and cognitive constructs include expectations, beliefs, and scripts; cognitive-emotional constructs include attitudes and stereotypes; and emotional constructs include conditioned emotions and affective traits. This part of the model thus predicts that repeated exposure to particular media content leads to knowledge structures that are consistent with perceptions of those portrayals.

According to the model, these knowledge structures are then expected to lead to personality alterations, for example, changes in attribution biases, which then impact how media users respond to social situations. Together then, repeated media exposure is proposed to have effects that are serially mediated by changes in knowledge structures first and then personality. This proposition of the GLM was tested in the Study 2 survey as depicted in Figure 1B. That part of the project examined the associations between habitual (repeated) romantic movie and fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction as mediated by participants' beliefs about relationships and subsequent biases in their attributions for their partners' behaviors.

Individual differences. The GLM also proposes that the effects of media use may not be the same across all users. Each person brings individual factors to the learning encounter that may impact how they respond in terms of cognitions, emotions, and arousal. The GLM does not, however, do much to indicate what these person factors may be. Other theorists, namely Valkenburg and Peter (2013), have proposed that there are three types of individual differences that are worthy of investigation because they may create "differential susceptibilities." These include dispositional, developmental, and social factors. Important to the present study, social susceptibilities include factors related to one's relationships and watching media with others (consistent with the argument by Gentile et al. (2009) that context may have unique effects).

In the Study 2 experiment, the potential moderator (or person factor or social susceptibility) that was examined was pre-exposure relationship satisfaction (see Figure 1A). The question considered was whether viewers' emotional responses to romantic movies and fictional television depictions would vary by their initial levels of relationship satisfaction. Perhaps, for example, those less satisfied initially would respond less positively to idealized, highly romantic portrayals.

In the Study 2 survey, two moderators were examined (see Figure 1B). One focused on the context of viewing as suggested by Gentile et al. (2009), in this case, the proportion of time that was spent coviewing. Perhaps, for example, the effect of viewing negative depictions would be less powerful if such depictions were watched more frequently with one's partner than if they were watched alone. The second potential moderator was the length of the participant's current romantic relationship. Perhaps the cumulative evidence about the nature of their particular partner and relationship would serve as a buffer against the effects of media depictions on beliefs, attributions, and relationship satisfaction.

Explanatory theories. The predictions of the GLM as described are based on the integration of numerous theories used in media effects research including cognitive neo-associative theory, social information processing theory, excitation transfer theory, social learning theory, and script theory (Barlett & Anderson, 2013). These mid-level theories can be specifically applied to better understand the mechanisms by which effects occur. As described in Chapter 3, in the experimental investigation of short-term effects, the main theory used to form predictions was cognitive neo-associative theory, with additional predictions afforded by social comparison theory. As described in Chapter 4, in the investigation of long-term associations, cognitive neo-associative theory was again the main theory used to form predictions with additional predictions afforded by social information processing theory.

Chapter Overview

This dissertation proceeds as follows. The first task was to describe the nature of the content being investigated. Chapter 2 reviews prior research on the depictions of romantic relationships in romantic movies and fictional television. I then argue that these systematic, quantitative examinations of the content can be usefully supplemented by research on viewers'

interpretations of the content – what themes they perceive in such depictions and what expectations they have for new content. Accordingly, Chapter 2 presents the results of an initial study, in which I examined participants' perceptions of depictions of romantic relationships in familiar romantic movies and fictional television shows. Additionally, to strengthen the argument that viewers have, in fact, quite robust expectations regarding these portrayals, I conducted a small, initial experiment, in which participants read plot summaries (labeled as a romantic movie or television series) and rated their expectations of the nature of the depictions. Again, the goal was to build the argument that there are consistent, predictable depictions of romantic relationships, which differ between romantic movies and fictional television.

The second task was to examine the short-term effects of such portrayals on relationship satisfaction. Chapter 3 describes the experimental part of Study 2. Participants were randomly assigned to see prototypical romantic movie and fictional television content (as identified in Study 1). Consistent with the overarching framework of the GLM and based on affective priming theory, an extension of cognitive neo-associative theory, viewers' emotional responses to the content were examined as mediators of the effects of exposure on relationship evaluations. Social comparison theory is also discussed as a mechanism by which individual differences, specifically pre-exposure relationship satisfaction, may create differential susceptibility to the short-term effects of exposure.

The third task of the project was to examine the long-term associations between relationship satisfaction and habitual exposure to romantic movie and fictional television portrayals. Chapter 4 describes the survey part of Study 2. The implications of cognitive neo-associative theory for the formation of knowledge structures is discussed, and the connection between these knowledge structures and attribution bias is described using social information

processing theory. The extant literature regarding media viewing and relationship-related outcomes, especially beliefs, is also reviewed.

The final task of any project is to synthesize and review the findings. Chapter 5 contains a general discussion of the project including a summary of how the project addressed the general research questions posed above. Limitations are highlighted, especially the cross-sectional nature of the survey portion of Study 2, and directions for future research are proposed.

CHAPTER 2

STUDY 1:

VIEWER PERCEPTIONS AND EXPECTATIONS OF RELATIONSHIP-RELATED

MEDIA CONTENT

The purpose of Study 1 was to establish ways in which viewer expectations and

perceptions vary for romantic movies and television shows. In separate studies, prior research

pointed to varying effects of these media on relationship satisfaction (Holmes & Johnson, 2009;

Reizer & Hetstroni, 2013), the current study investigated whether varying effects might stem

from different viewer perceptions of the content of romantic movies and fictional television.

Were viewers seeing different messages about romantic relationships, and if so, what were those

messages? I expected that viewers' expectations and perceptions would be consistent with the

nature and objective content of these media. While the extant literature provides some

indications of what such content differences might be, it does not provide a complete picture.

Prior Analyses and Descriptions of Depictions of Romantic Relationships

Romantic movie depictions. A core consideration of romantic relationship content in

movies and television has been whether these depictions are "idealized" because such content is

expected to cultivate related beliefs and expectations regarding relationships (Galician, 2004).

While there is no clear consensus regarding what makes a portrayal idealized, scholars have

noted that movies, romantic comedies in particular, simultaneously depict relationships as filled

with problems and yet highly romantic. For example, Johnson and Holmes (2009) examined 40

romantic comedy movies that were top-grossing in the U.S. from 1995 – 2005 and were more

likely appeal to adolescents based on ratings and the time period in which they were set (also

from 1995 – 2005). They found that these romantic comedies tended to feature romantic

gestures, affection, understanding, and support between couples in the early stages of their relationships. While these couples often encountered problems like conflict or cheating, those problems had no long-term effects within the narrative. Similarly, an analysis of 52 top-grossing romantic comedies from 1998 – 2008 by Hefner and Wilson (2013) found that characters in these movies frequently explicitly endorsed romantic notions like the existence of soul mates and love at first sight. In addition, they also found that "love conquers all" was the most frequent overarching theme. Perhaps this is in part due to how romantic comedies typically end.

Movies are notorious for their happy endings. Critical scholars have described movie happy endings using terms like "standard," "predictable," "typical," "inevitable," and "requisite" over and over, and one of the most notable features of the movie happy ending is the coming together of a romantic couple (MacDowell, 2013, p. 1). Furthermore, while movies vary in the extent to which they focus on romance as a storyline, the convention of a movie ending with a united romantic couple has commonly been associated with movies of all kinds, across genres (MacDowell, 2013, p. 11).

Qualitative research suggests that this convention is both expected and desired by female viewers. In interviews with 18 college-educated women aged 21 to 35 who were currently in committed relationships, Caperello and Migliaccio (2011) found that all of them had intense feelings about the idea of "happily ever after" and expected it when they watched a romantic comedy movie. Indeed, those that ended otherwise were considered "bad movies" (p. 212). Thus, even though couples in movies often experience relational problems (Johnson & Holmes, 2009), viewers appear to expect and want the central couple to experience a positive outcome in the end.

Television depictions. In contrast, there is little evidence regarding whether television portrayals of romantic relationships are idealized. Very few content analyses have focused on the relationships portrayed on television (besides research on the nature of sexual content and endorsement of traditional gender roles). However, a few studies do point to frequent portrayals of relationship problems in television content featuring couples, including frequent conflict and infidelity. Further, there is some indication that these conflicts are not always resolved within the episode.

An early study by Comstock and Strzyzewski (1990) examined family interactions in primetime television and found frequent depictions of family conflict (about nine instances per hour) with roughly 20 percent of that conflict occurring between married partners. There were also three instances per hour of jealousy, most frequently between romantic partners. A more recent study by De Souza and Sherry (2006) focused on conflict between couples in the 10 shows most watched by adolescents. The shows analyzed were of various genres including those as different as *Gilmore Girls* and *WWF Smackdown*. The principal findings of this study were that many (46%) of the couples depicted engaged in conflict, primarily about relationship quality, although most conflicts were satisfactorily resolved.

Another feature of television depictions appears to be the prevalence of infidelity. Kim, Sorsli, Collins, Zylbergold, Schooler, and Tolman (2007) in their research regarding the heterosexual script in the 25 primetime network shows most popular with adolescents, found that male infidelity was "rampant" in these shows. Significantly, the authors also noted that dramas and comedies dealt with infidelity differently with dramas portraying it as a serious matter and comedies treating it in a humorous, light-hearted way. On the whole, these findings regarding

television shows point to frequent depictions of relationship problems albeit with varying levels of gravity.

Additionally, positive outcomes may not be as ubiquitous for television couples as for movie couples. Like movies, television depictions might arguably be considered idealized if, despite conflicts and other relationship problems, love ultimately conquers all with couples shown having happy endings. However, television shows often feature an ongoing story (serialization) that need not depict a "happily ever after" or an ending at all for that matter. According to critical scholar Jason Mittell (2010):

> A successful television series lacks a crucial element that has long been hailed as of supreme importance for a well-told story: an ending. (p. 81)

U.S. television shows generally continue for as long as they garner satisfactory ratings, in some cases for over a decade. In this way, any temporary happiness in a televised couple's relationship may lack finality. This is of course by design. Ongoing storylines provide outcome uncertainty for the viewer, keeping them engaged with the series episode after episode and season after season.

In fact, in DeSouza and Sherry's (2006) study, there was no clear resolution for almost one-fourth of the depicted conflicts (24%). It is conceivable that those conflict storylines continued beyond one episode. In the remaining instances, the conflict was most often resolved in a way that appeared to be satisfactory to both parties. However, in about 1 out of 10 cases (11%) the resolution of the conflict was a break up. Although the number of breaks ups was small in comparison to the number of conflicts, this finding is nonetheless important because it demonstrates that breaking up is a plausible outcome for television couples. Because the analysis

was conducted on the conflict level rather than at the relationship level, it is possible that many relationships ultimately dissolve (after much conflict) over the course of multiple episodes.

Summary of romantic movie versus television depictions. To summarize, while movies, especially romantic comedies, are regarded by scholars as presenting idealistic depictions of relationships in the sense that they portray relationship problems but also romanticized notions and ultimately love conquering all, it is less clear whether relationships depicted on television are equally idealized. Television couples are frequently shown experiencing problems, but whether these shows also endorse romantic ideals is unknown and the typicality of positive outcomes for television couples seems less likely.

The Current Study

As described, prior research regarding relationship depictions in movies and television has focused on quantifying various aspects of those portrayals through content analyses. However, viewers' interpretations of this content may be more relevant to the effects of relationship depictions than tallies of content features. In a review and expansion of disposition theory, Raney (2004) suggested that:

> Through repeated exposure, we learn how similar stories are constructed, how typical actions relate to one another, how scenes and settings are constructed, and *how themes are repeated* [emphasis added], among other things. (p. 353)

To summarize, over time, viewers develop schemas regarding media narratives and genres. Raney further argued that these schemas then impact viewers' interpretations of and expectations for media viewed in the future. That is, when watching a new movie or show, viewers tend to interpret the characters' words and actions and the story in ways that are consistent with their existing schema regarding the themes of such media. Thus, viewers' interpretations of what they

have seen may be more closely tied to the outcomes of viewing than "objective" content measures. Consequently, the present study investigated viewers' perceptions of relationship themes in extant romantic movies and fictional television shows that they had already watched with the expectations that viewers' perceptions would be relatively consistent across various exemplars of a given genre. The study also examined participants' expectations regarding relationships in unfamiliar content that was labeled as from a movie or television series, thus implicitly asking them to rely on their existing schema related to these media, which may also be associated with viewing outcomes.

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Research Questions and Hypotheses

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The following is an explanation of the research questions and hypotheses that guided the two-part Study 1.

Experiment: Expectations Regarding Relationships in Movies versus Fictional Television

The experimental portion of the study asked participants to read two experimenter-created advertisements and to make predictions about the advertised media content. The plot description was the same across conditions, but participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions, which differed in the medium in which the content would supposedly appear (movie vs. television) and the genre (comedy, drama, romantic comedy, romantic drama). As described in the methods section, medium and genre cues were given in the description text and were signaled in an accompanying image (movie poster or television promotion).

Selection of conditions. Given the realities of the media landscape, this was not a fully crossed design (medium by genre). Romantic comedies and romantic dramas are two distinct, clearly labeled movie genres. When deciding what movie to watch at the theater (moviefone, 2014) or at home (Netflix, 2014), viewers can browse titles within these genres. Additionally,

box office results are tabulated for these genres separately (IMDb.com, 2014). However, there are no equivalent genres of romantic comedy and romantic drama television programming. Even when television storylines deal with romantic relationships extensively, they are popularly referred to by other sub-genre titles like "cop workplace show" (Rosenberg, 2014). Further, popular media streaming services, Netflix (2014) for example, do not include "romantic comedy" or "romantic drama" in their lists of television genres that users are able to browse.

Given the absence of television romantic comedy and romantic drama genres that viewers might reasonably be expected to know, the experimental design in Study 1 was not fully crossed. Rather, participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions: comedy movie, drama movie, romantic comedy movie, romantic drama movie, television comedy, and television drama. These six conditions allowed for comparisons by medium (movie / television) and by genre (romantic / non-romantic and comedy / drama) regarding two key dependent variables, expectations of romance and certainty of a positive relationship outcome.

Expectations of romance. Participants were predicted to expect content labeled as a romantic comedy or romantic drama movie to be more romantic than content labeled simply as a comedy or drama movie or comedy or drama television show.

H1: Participants in the romantic movie conditions will expect more romance than

participants in the general movie conditions or the television conditions.

Certainty of a positive relationship outcome. Given the different narrative structures of movies versus fictional television programs, participants were predicted to have different expectations for the outcome of the central couple. Specifically, given that movies more frequently end with the union of a romantic couple (MacDowell, 2013), but TV programs have characters face ongoing, unresolved problems, participants were predicted to be more certain of a

positive relationship outcome when they were told that the characters appeared in a movie versus a television show.

H2: Overall, participants in the movie conditions will be more certain of a positive relationship outcome for the depicted couple than those in the television conditions.

Whether viewers would expect differences in relational outcomes between comedies and dramas was less clear. On the face of it, comedies (particularly romantic comedies) seem unlikely to end with a couple breaking up, and dramas (particularly tragedies) seem more likely to contain sad or negative outcomes. However, as Oliver (2008) noted, the label "drama" does not refer only to sad movies but rather to movies about the human condition and relationships, and it is possible for dramas to have positive endings for central couples. With regard to fictional television, it is unclear whether couple outcomes should be predicted differently by genre. There are no content analyses to point to substantive differences.

RQ1: Are there differences in viewers' expectations regarding level of romance and certainty of a positive outcome between comedies and dramas within each type of media?

Survey: Perceptions Regarding Themes in Romantic Movies versus Fictional Television

The survey portion of Study 1 further explored the romantic relationship depictions of movies and television. The survey addressed several gaps in the literature. Specifically, it provided a needed comparison of movies and fictional television (comedies and dramas) regarding the extent to which viewers perceived that they featured romantic relationships, relationship problems like conflict and jealousy, and romantic ideals.

Selection of included genres. When having participants rate their perceptions of familiar movies and television shows, two considerations were balanced against each other. One was the need to avoid participant fatigue. The other was the need to have enough movies and television

shows rated to feel confident that these were meaningful samples. As a result, participants only rated extant romantic comedy movies, romantic drama movies, television comedies, and television dramas. The reason these four specific types of media were selected was two-fold. First, popular romantic movies and fictional television shows are the media most often discussed in the literature to date, and second, these four types of media were planned to be used as conditions in the experimental portion of Study 2.

Participants were asked to reflect on examples that they were already familiar with and to indicate the extent to which the example addressed the relevant themes. Examples were selected that were the top grossing within that media type and genre from 2004 to 2014. The goal of this part of the study was to investigate viewers' retrospective perceptions of how prominently relationship problems and romantic ideals were featured in these media, rather than quantifying the relationship problems or verbalized romantic ideals depicted, because viewer perceptions might underlie the findings of prior research regarding varying associations between romantic movie and television viewing and relationship satisfaction.

Perceived prominence of romantic relationships. Given that romantic relationships are the primary focus of romantic movies it was expected that viewers would perceive that romantic movies featured romantic relationships more prominently than fictional television shows. Thus, when asked about specific, highly popular exemplars of romantic movies versus specific highly popular fictional television shows, participants were expected to rate the romantic movies higher in romantic relationships as themes than the television shows.

H3: Participants will rate the romantic movies higher in romantic relationship themes than the television shows.

Perceived prominence of relationship problems. Based on the previous research discussed (Comstock & Strzyzewski, 1990; De Souza & Sherry, 2006; Kim, Sorsli, Collins, Zylbergold, Schooler, & Tolman, 2007; Johnson and Holmes, 2009), participants were expected to perceive that both romantic comedy movies and fictional television shows featured relationship problems. However, given that relationship problems in movies are typically speedily resolved and of little consequence (Johnson & Holmes, 2009), participants were predicted to perceive relationship problems as more prominent in television shows than romantic movies.

H4: Participants will rate the television shows higher in relationship problems than the romantic movies.

Perceived prominence of romantic ideals. Previous research indicated that romantic comedy movies strongly endorse romantic ideals (love finds a way, one and only, partner idealization, and love at first sight) (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). Furthermore, in previous research, television sitcom viewing was associated with lower endorsement of romantic ideals (Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook, 2014), which might reflect viewers' perceptions of fictional television content. Thus, participants were expected to rate the romantic movies higher in romantic ideals as themes than the fictional television shows.

H5: Participants will rate the romantic movies higher in romantic ideals than the television shows.

Finally, the survey component also examined potential differences between viewers' perceptions of comedies and dramas. Given the lack of previous research that made this genre distinction, whether viewers' perceptions would vary by genre was unknown.

RQ2: Are there differences in viewers' perceptions regarding the prominence of romantic relationships, relationship problems, and romantic ideals by genre within each type of media?

Methods

In order to address these research questions and hypotheses, the following methods were used.

Participants

A sample of 210 adults aged 18 – 64 who reside in the U.S. was recruited by an online panel service through Qualtrics. A screening process was used to obtain a sample that included both men and women and heterogeneity in age. Thus, the sample was evenly divided by gender and the ages of participants were widely distributed between 18 and 64 ($M = 40.9$, $SD = 13.56$).

Regarding race and ethnicity, 153 were white or European-American (72.9%), 30 were black or African-American (14.3%), 11 were Asian or Asian American (5.2%), seven were Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o (3.3%), two were American Indian or Alaskan native (1%), four were a combination or these categories (1.9%), two were none of these categories (1%), and one did not respond. Regarding education, five did not complete high school (2.4%), 56 completed high school or GED (26.7%), 77 completed some college or a 2-year degree (36.7%), 45 completed a four-year college degree (21.4%), 25 completed a graduate degree (11.9%), and two did not respond. Regarding sexual orientation, 198 identified as heterosexual (94.3%), 7 as gay or lesbian (3.3%), 2 as bisexual (1%) and 3 as other (1.4%). Current relationship status was split relatively evenly between those who were single (45.2%) and those in a relationship identified as exclusive dating (7.6%), engaged (1%), or married (45.7%) with one participant not responding.

Participants were offered an incentive for their participation, most frequently points that could later be redeemed for rewards.

Design

Participants were randomly assigned to view media advertisements, and the manipulation focused on medium and genre. As discussed, there are no clearly defined "romantic comedy" or "romantic drama" genres for television (as there are for movies), so this was not a factorial design with medium crossed with genre. Rather, participants were randomly assigned to one of six conditions: comedy movie, drama movie, romantic comedy movie, romantic drama movie, television comedy, and television drama. Within each condition, participants viewed two advertisements that included text and an image (to increase external validity), and the order in which the exemplars were presented was counterbalanced.

Reduced design given exemplar effects. The purpose of the experimental part of Study 1 was to examine participants' expectations for the included media genres. Participants were expected to rely upon the media genre cues (text and images) when making their predictions.

During preliminary analysis of the experimental data, repeated measures ANOVA were conducted to compare participants' ratings of the two exemplars on seven dependent items. These analyses revealed that the comedy and drama movie conditions functioned differently than the other four conditions. In the two television conditions and the two romantic movie conditions there were no main effects of exemplar and only one interaction between exemplar and condition, which was for humor. However, in the comedy and drama movie conditions, there were exemplar effects for four of the seven items: likelihood that the described couple would begin a relationship, likelihood that the described couple would be together in the end, certainty

of the predicted relationship outcome, and humor. The first three of these were central dependent variables.

These results seemed to suggest that in the comedy and drama movie conditions, participants relied less on genre cues and more on the specific storyline descriptions in order to make their predictions. Given the purpose of the Study 1 experiment and these findings, the comedy and drama movie conditions were excluded from the analyses of the experiment, Hypotheses 1 and 2 and Research Question 1 were addressed by comparing romantic movie conditions to television conditions.

Procedure

After indicating their consent to an information sheet, participants completed an online questionnaire. First, participants were asked their gender and age as a part of the screening process. Next they were asked about their overall movie and television use. Then they completed the experimental portion of the questionnaire, in which they rated the two exemplars. Next participants were asked about their perceptions of themes within popular romantic movies and television shows that they were already familiar with.

Materials

The materials for the experiment were advertisements for "Code Blue" and "My Thirty-Something Life," which were created for the study and are presented in Appendix A. Short storyline descriptions were written that could plausibly be from a movie or fictional television show and a comedy or drama so that the same descriptions could be used across conditions. The plot descriptions were accompanied by images designed to resemble the style of advertisements for the popular real movies and television shows used in the survey portion of the study. To create consistency, the images for all conditions were created from two stock photographs (one

for each exemplar) of groups of individuals. These photographs were then manipulated by adding text and symbols used in movie posters or television promotions, creating a brighter tone for comedies versus a darker tone for dramas, and isolating the couple for the romantic movie conditions.

Measures

The questionnaire used in Study 1 appears in Appendix B. Descriptive statistics for the measures are presented in Table 1. For the experimental part of the study, participants were asked to make predictions about the content of the advertised media.

Expectations of romance for the experimental stimuli. Two items were used to measure participants' expectations of romance. Participants were asked to rate the likeliness of the statements, "At some point during [Title], [character names] will get romantically involved" and "[Title] will be romantic" (1 very unlikely, 7 very likely). The two items were adequately related for both exemplars ($r = .66$ and $.63$ respectively) and were indexed to create a measure of expectations of romance.

Certainty of a positive relationship outcome for the experimental stimuli. There were two items measured to represent certainty of a positive relationship outcome. First, participants were asked to rate the likeliness of the statement, "At the end of [Title], [character names] will be together" (1 very unlikely, 7 very likely). Their response to that item was then carried into the next question, which asked about their confidence in making the prediction on an 11-point slider scale. Participant's ratings of these two items were multiplied to create a variable for certainty of a positive relationship outcome with a potential range of 0 to 70.

Other expectations of the experimental stimuli. Participants were also asked to respond to the following statements: "[Title] will be funny" (humor), "[Title] will be realistic"

(realism), and "You would enjoy watching [Title]" (enjoyment) (1 very unlikely, 7 very likely). Humor was measured as a manipulation check for the comedy / drama conditions, and realism and enjoyment were measured to check for differences between exemplars.

      Familiarity with popular movies and television shows. In order to select relevant media for the survey questions, participants were asked to indicate their level of familiarity with a list of 12 movies and five television shows (1 not at all familiar, 5 extremely familiar).

      For movies, the list included 12 of the most-watched romantic comedies (IMDb.com, Inc.) and romantic dramas (IMDb.com, Inc.) from the last decade with several exclusions. Movies that were categorized as both comedy and drama on Imdb.com were excluded from the list in an effort to examine pure types, two movies that started as a television show (*Sex and the City*) were also eliminated due to that overlap, movies that included the fantasy genre were eliminated due to a potential lack of realism, and one movie was eliminated because its focal relationship was atypical within the genre (*Brokeback Mountain)*.

      For television, the list included five of the most-watched network comedies and dramas from the 2013/2014 television season (through May 23, 2014) for the 18 – 49 year old demographic (DarkUFO, 2014). To locate relevant shows, a full list of top-rated shows was examined and each show's "genres" were identified using IMDb.com (2014). Again, television shows that were classified as both comedy and drama were eliminated. Other excluded shows were animated programs and fantasy / sci-fi shows. Table 2 shows the number of participants who rated the different movie and television show combinations for comedies and dramas.

      Participants were shown either a list of comedy or drama romantic movies and fictional television shows. Participants were considered at least somewhat familiar with a movie or television show if they gave ratings of at least 3 on the 5-point scale. They then rated their

perceptions of one movie and one television show with which they were at least somewhat familiar. If they were not at least somewhat familiar with one movie or television show from their assigned list, they were then presented with the other list to maximize the amount of data collected. If they were familiar with several, one was selected at random.

Perceived prominence of romantic relationships in familiar movies and television. Participants were then asked questions regarding the themes depicted in one movie and one television show that they indicated they were at least somewhat familiar with (three or higher on the five point scale). Regarding the prominence of romantic relationships, they were asked to rate the extent to which dating and marriage are featured in the specific movie or television show (1 not at all, 7 extremely). These two items did not have high internal consistency for either movies or television (Cronbach's α = .61 and .59 respectively). However, this was to be expected. One movie or television show is unlikely to feature both marriage and dating prominently in the same story. Therefore, despite the lack of internal consistency, the two items were summed to create a measure of the prominence of romantic relationships.

Perceived prominence of relationship problems. Regarding prominence of relationship problems, participants were asked to identify to what extent each of these themes were featured in the specific movie or television show: 1) arguing, 2) lying, 3) cheating, 4) jealousy, and 5) breaking up (1 not at all, 7 extremely). Internal consistency for these themes was good for both movies and television (Cronbach's α = .89 and .90 respectively) and factor analyses indicated unidimensionality, so the five items were summed to create a measure of prominence of relationship problems.

Perceived prominence of romantic ideals. Perceptions of romantic ideals in the target media were measured using a modified version of Sprecher and Metts's (1989) Romantic Beliefs

Scale (RBS). To manage the overall length of the questionnaire, only the items with the highest factor loadings representing each of four factors from Sprecher and Mett's study were used. The instructions and scale items were modified to examine the extent to which participants agreed that the target media demonstrated each item (1 strongly disagree, 7 strongly agree). The four items had good internal consistency for both movies and television (Cronbach's α = .70 and .84 respectively) and unidimensionality was suggested by factor analyses. Therefore, the four items were summed to create a measure of prominence of romantic ideals.

Results

The results of the study follow with the results of the experiment presented first and then the survey results.

Experiment Preliminary Analyses

The subset of participants included in the experiment analyses (those in the four included conditions) was generally similar to the overall sample with an average age of 40.9 (SD = 13.3), but it included somewhat more female participants (54%) than male (45%).

Humor manipulation check. To test the manipulation of comedy versus drama, a repeated measures ANOVA was conducted, examining ratings of anticipated humor by exemplar, type (romantic movies versus television), and genre (comedy versus drama). The results indicated that there was no main effect of genre though the means were in the expected direction (comedy M = 4.75, SD = 1.54; drama M = 4.63, SD = 1.47). There was also no main effect of media type on anticipated humor, and the interaction between type and genre was also nonsignificant. It is possible that participants understood the genre manipulation, but were not convinced that the comedies would be funnier. Alternatively, it is possible that many participants did not really notice the genre cues. Given this lack of effects of genre on ratings of humor,

experimental comparisons between genres for other dependent variables should be interpreted with caution. There was also an unanticipated interaction between exemplar and media type, $F(1,140) = 4.49$, $p < .05$. Specifically, in the television conditions, participants expected My-Thirty Something Life ($M = 4.8$, $SD = 1.57$) to be funnier than Code Blue ($M = 4.6$, $SD = 1.54$).

Verifying equivalence of exemplars for dependent variables. Repeated measures ANOVA examining effects of exemplar and condition found no significant exemplar main effects or interactions for any of the dependent variables when the design was restricted to four conditions. Therefore, comparisons between the experimental conditions are presented below with participants' ratings collapsed across exemplar. Having dropped comedy and drama movie conditions, the remaining analyses focused on comparisons of media type (romantic movie / television) and genre (comedy / drama). Descriptive statistics for the dependent variables are given in Table 1.

H1: Expectations of Romance for Romantic Movies vs. Television

To address Hypothesis 1, a two-way ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effect of media type (movies vs. television) and genre (comedy vs. drama) on participants' expectations that the content would be romantic, portraying the coming together of a couple. There was a significant main effect for type, $F(1,139) = 6.83$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .048$. Participants expected romantic movies to be higher in romance ($M = 10.8$, $SD = 2.38$) than television shows ($M = 9.7$, $SD = 2.65$). Therefore, Hypothesis 1 was supported.

H2: Certainty of a Positive Relationship Outcome for Romantic Movies vs. Television

Regarding Hypothesis 2, a two-way independent ANOVA was conducted to evaluate the effect of media type (movies vs. television) and genre (comedy vs. drama) on participants' expectations of a positive relationship outcome. There was a significant main effect for type,

$F(1,139) = 4.41, p < .05, \eta_p^2 = .032$. Participants were more certain of positive relationship outcome in the romantic movie conditions ($M = 41.0, SD = 18.20$) than in the television conditions ($M = 34.5, SD = 17.83$). Thus, Hypothesis 2 was supported.

RQ1: Expectations and Certainty for Comedies vs. Dramas

To address Research Question 1, the genre-related results of the previously reported two-way independent ANOVA analyses were examined. There were no significant main effects of genre or interactions between genre and media type for either of the two outcomes. That is, they did not expect comedies (relative to dramas) to feature more romance, nor were they more assured of a positive relational outcome in comedies (see Table 1).

Characteristics of the Survey Participants

Included in the survey analyses were 82 participants who were at least somewhat familiar with both a romantic comedy movie and a television comedy and 84 participants who were at least somewhat familiar with both a romantic drama movie and a television drama. The subset of participants who are included in the survey analyses was substantially similar to the overall sample in terms of gender (51% female, 50% male) and age ($M = 39.3, SD = 13.43$).

Participants' perceptions of familiar romantic comedy movies, romantic drama movies, television comedies, and television dramas were examined through repeated measures ANOVA using the survey data.

H3: Perceived Prominence of Romantic Relationships in Romantic Movies vs. Television

Consistent with the predictions of Hypothesis 3, participants gave significantly higher ratings of the prominence of dating and marriage in familiar romantic movies ($M = 7.5, SD = 1.81$) than in familiar fictional television shows ($M = 6.8, SD = 2.15$). That is, there was a

significant main effect of media type, $F(1,164) = 18.34$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .102$. Hypothesis 3 was supported.

H4: Perceived Prominence of Relationship Problems in Romantic Movies vs. Television

Consistent with the predictions of Hypothesis 4, participants gave significantly lower ratings of the prominence of relationship problems in familiar romantic movies ($M = 16.1$, $SD = 5.09$) than in familiar fictional television shows ($M = 17.0$, $SD = 5.18$). There was a significant main effect of media type, $F(1,156) = 5.64$, $p < .05$, $\eta_p^2 = .035$. Thus, Hypothesis 4 was supported.

H5: Perceived Prominence of Romantic Ideals in Romantic Movies vs. Television

Consistent with the predictions of H5, participants gave significantly higher ratings of perceived prominence of romantic ideals in familiar romantic movies ($M = 19.7$, $SD = 4.66$) than in familiar fictional television shows ($M = 17.9$, $SD = 5.60$), $F(1,162) = 20.17$, $p < .0001$, $\eta_p^2 = .112$.

To test the hypothesis that positive relationship outcomes are regarded as more prominent in romantic movies than on television specifically, the individual "love conquers all" item was then examined separately. Again, there was a significant main effect for media type, $F(1,163) = 30.33$, $p < .001$, $\eta_p^2 = .159$. Participants indicated that the familiar romantic movie featured the love conquers all theme more prominently ($M = 5.6$, $SD = 1.32$) than the familiar fictional television show ($M = 4.9$, $SD = 1.55$).

RQ2: Perceived Prominence of Each Theme in Comedies vs. Dramas

To address Research Question 2, the between-subject factors and the interaction terms of the previously reported repeated measures ANOVA analyses were examined. Regarding prominence of romantic relationships, there was no significant difference between participants'

ratings of the comedies and dramas, and there was no significant interaction between media type and genre. Participants did not report encountering romantic relationships more often in comedies than in dramas either for romantic movies or fictional television shows.

Concerning prominence of relationship problems, there was no significant difference between participants' ratings of the comedies and dramas, and there was no significant interaction between type and genre. As expected, the average scores across romantic movies and television shows were relatively high as shown in Table 1.

Finally, regarding the prominence of romantic ideals, there was no significant difference between participants' ratings of comedies and dramas, and there was no significant interaction between type and genre. Results were the same for the analysis regarding the "love conquers all" item. In answer to Research Question 2, there were no differences in participants' ratings of comedies and dramas across the investigated themes.

Discussion

The purpose of Study 1 was to identify whether viewers' perceptions and expectations of romantic comedy movies, romantic drama movies, television comedies, and television dramas vary in ways that could underlie different effects on relationship satisfaction, and the findings of the experimental and survey parts of the study were remarkably consistent.

The experimental part of the study demonstrated that participants' expectations of romance (that characters would become romantically involved) were greater for romantic movies than fictional television. Also, as hypothesized, participants were more certain that romantic movies would have a positive outcome for the central couple than they were for the television shows. The survey part of the study showed that, as hypothesized, participants perceived romantic relationships to be a more prominent theme in familiar romantic movies than familiar

fictional television shows. Also, as compared to television shows, participants perceived romantic ideals to be more prominently featured and relationship problems to be less prominently featured in romantic movies.

On the whole, these findings point to romantic movies portraying romantic relationships in a more idealized way with greater emphasis on romance, more endorsement of romantic ideals, and greater certainty of a positive outcome for the central couple, while television shows portray romantic relationships in a less idealized way with greater emphasis on relationship problems (e.g., arguing, lying, cheating, jealousy, and breaking up), less endorsement of romantic ideals, and less certainty of a positive outcome for the central couple.

Furthermore, neither the experimental nor survey parts of the study found differences between comedies and dramas. In the experimental part, it was possible that the lack of differences in expectations of romance and positive relationship outcomes reflected a manipulation failure because participants did not expect comedies to be funnier than dramas. However, similar findings emerged in the survey part of the study, which examined perceptions of familiar, existing content. No differences were found between comedies and dramas regarding perceived prominence of romantic relationships or romantic ideals, which is consistent with participants' expectations of romance, and no differences were found between comedies and dramas regarding the love conquers all item, which is conceptually similar to positive relational outcomes. Therefore, the survey findings lend credibility to the experimental findings regarding comedies and dramas.

Why do these findings matter? As outlined in Chapter 1, the central concern of the project as a whole was to replicate and explain prior findings that exposure to romantic movies has different effects on relationship satisfaction than television viewing. The value of Study 1 is

to demonstrate that viewers do have different perceptions and expectations of romantic movies and fictional television (largely irrespective of comedy vs. drama distinctions). Both retrospectively (thinking about familiar content) and prospectively (assessing unfamiliar content), viewers expect less idealistic depictions of romantic relationships in television than in romantic movies.

What are the implications of exposure, given these perceptions and expectations? Study 2 examines these issues, looking both at short-term, immediate effects (in the context of experimental exposure to prototypical romantic movie vs. fictional television content) and cumulative, longer-term effects (as suggested by associations measured in the survey portion of Study 2). I proceed by laying out the theorizing, methods, and findings for short-term effects (Chapter 3) and then laying out the theorizing, methods, and findings for long-term effects (Chapter 4). As outlined in Chapter 1, both parts of Study 2 fit within the overall framework of the General Learning Model.

CHAPTER 3

STUDY 2 EXPERIMENT:

SHORT-TERM EFFECTS OF DEPICTIONS OF RELATIONSHIPS

The purpose of the present study was to investigate the short-term effects of exposure to typical romantic movie and television depictions on relationship satisfaction. In Study 1, I found that as compared to television comedies and dramas, romantic comedy and drama movies were perceived by participants to have greater endorsement of romantic ideals, such as soul mates and love conquers all, to have fewer depictions of relationship problems (e.g., arguing), and to be more likely to show positive outcomes for central couples. What might the effects of exposure to these very different depictions on viewers' satisfaction with their own relationships be?

As suggested by the broad framework of the GLM (described in Chapter 1), individuals may respond to these different types of relationship content emotionally, and these emotional responses may in turn have implications for their assessments of their relationships. Furthermore, these emotional responses (and therefore, subsequent relationship assessments) may vary depending on individual differences or differential susceptibilities. The experimental part of Study 2 examines such effects.

The key comparisons include prototypical romantic movie versus fictional television depictions and prototypical comedic versus dramatic depictions of romantic relationships, generating a 2 x 2 design. Although in Study 1 no differences were found in perceptions and expectations of romantic depictions in comedies versus dramas, in Study 2, affective responses measured immediately after viewing are predicted to vary based on the levity or gravity of the content.

After completing an initial survey about their romantic relationships (including a measure of relationship satisfaction) and media use, participants were randomly assigned to watch one of four selected clips. They then rated the extent to which they felt amused, sad, romantic, anxious, envious, and hopeful (with multiple items per emotion) and re-assessed their relationship satisfaction using a different measure.

To develop hypotheses for this experiment, I first turn to the affective priming literature for an explanation of how emotions might impact evaluations (given that evaluations of relationship satisfaction are the core outcome of the overarching project). Then I take a step back to examine the literature regarding emotional responses to media to better understand what emotions these different types of media content might evoke. As part of this, I consider the possibility of differential susceptibilities, based on the literature regarding social comparison. The basic model being examined is given in Figure 1A.

Theorizing and Research on Affective Priming and Evaluations

In their review of the literature regarding affect, memory, and social cognition, Bower and Forgas (2000), concluded that individuals tend to make evaluations that are consistent with their current moods, giving more positive or optimistic evaluations when they are experiencing positive affect and more negative or pessimistic evaluations when they are experiencing negative affect. Studies regarding the effect of mood on judgments have primarily employed experimental mood manipulations, and outcomes have included evaluations of personal possessions, life satisfaction, current and future health problems, and the likelihood of positive and negative future events (see Bower & Forgas (2000) for a review). Consistent with this, an early meta-analysis of 84 studies on mood and self-evaluations found that most studies reported mood-congruent effects (Sedikides, 1992).

One theory that attempts to explain such effects of emotion on evaluations is affective priming, a theoretical account that is integrated within the short-term processes of the GLM.

Spreading activation. Affective priming theory (like cognitive priming theory) is built upon cognitive neo-associative theory (Berkowitz, 1984), which suggests that human memory operates like a network, that is, a system of connected nodes. It thus proposes that emotions impact cognitions indirectly by facilitating access to "a network of associations surrounding that mood or emotion" (Bower & Forgas, 2000, p. 97). Affective priming can result in selective attention (more focus on affect-congruent information), selective encoding (better understanding of affect-congruent information), and selective retrieval (greater subsequent access of affect-congruent information) (Forgas, 1995). The process that underlies these effects is spreading activation.

Based on a review of the literature, Arendt (2013) suggested that there are three foundations of spreading activation generally agreed upon among communication researchers: 1) retrieving a concept (in other places referred to as a node) from memory activates its internal representation, 2) such activation also activates related concepts, and 3) residual activation makes concepts more susceptible to subsequent activation. It is because of this "susceptibility" that individuals are expected to make affect-congruent evaluations after an affective prime.

Asymmetrical priming effects. There is some indication that negative affective primes are not as strong as positive affective primes. In summarizing studies related to this phenomenon, Bless and Fielder (2012) wrote:

> Happy moods facilitate the recall of happy memories and inhibit the recall of sad memories. On the other hand, however, sad moods may slightly inhibit the recall of happy memories, but rarely increase the recall of sad memories. (p. 67)

In an example that is particularly relevant to the present study, Forgas and Moylan (1987) conducted a field study wherein they asked moviegoers to make several social judgments (unrelated to the films shown) before exiting the theater. They found that participants who had watched a happy movie made more positive, optimistic, and lenient judgments than those who saw a sad or aggressive movie. However, there was no difference in the judgments made by those who saw a sad or aggressive film from those in a control group. While this study is a compelling and relevant example, this is not to say that eliciting negative emotions never produces effects. However, there is a theoretical reason to expect negative emotions to have weaker effects.

Specifically, Isen and Daubman (1984) suggested that the reason for asymmetrical findings regarding positive and negative primes is that individuals are generally averse to the experience of negative emotional states. Thus they stop the otherwise automatic spreading activation process. Therefore, while individuals are expected to access more positive information after experiencing positive emotions, they are less likely to access more negative information after experiencing negative emotions. Put differently, the effects of positive affective priming are often stronger than the effects of negative affective priming.

Priming discrete emotions. Research has recently shown that discrete emotions of the same affective dimension can have different effects on subsequent tasks, including evaluations. Angie, Connelly, Waples, and Kligyte (2011) conducted a meta-analysis of 76 empirical studies regarding the influence of negative affect on judgments and decision-making. Based on a subset of studies that made discrete emotion comparisons (not control group comparisons), they concluded that anger has a larger impact on judgments and decisions than fear or sadness. For example, De Steno, Dasgupta, Bartlett, and Cajdric (2004) found that priming anger had a

greater impact on unfavorable attitudes toward (randomly-assigned) out-group members than priming sadness. In fact, De Steno and colleagues have completed numerous studies over more than ten years on the subject of out-group attitudes, and based on that line of work, Dasgupta (2013) concluded that emotions that are related to negative intergroup relations like anger and disgust are more likely to induce bias towards out-group members than unrelated emotions like sadness. Thus, there is evidence to suggest that discrete emotions that are more proximate to the judgment being made have a greater impact than emotions that are less relevant but of the same affective dimension.

Media content as affective prime. Experimental research on affective priming often relies on video clips to evoke emotions. In Angie et al.'s (2011) meta-analysis of studies on negative emotions and judgments / decision-making, 18 of the 89 studies used film clips as emotion inductions. In fact, regarding the studies where sadness was manipulated, Angie et al. found that there were stronger effects reported in those that used film manipulations ($d = 0.51$) than those that relied upon recall of an emotional event ($d = 0.31$), a scenario ($d = 0.29$), or other unspecified means of elicitation ($d = 0.05$). This suggests that media can be an effective way to elicit specific emotions and thereby alter evaluations. However, the outcomes found within such research are framed as emotion effects not media effects.

While there is abundant research within the media effects literature regarding media as a cognitive prime (Roskos-Ewoldsen & Roskos-Ewoldsen, 2009), there is much less research on media as an affective prime. The notable exception is research on video game playing. One series of studies has demonstrated that violent video game playing elicits aggressive affect (e.g., Anderson & Dill, 2000) while another has demonstrated that prosocial video game playing evokes prosocial affect or empathy (e.g., Greitemeyer, Osswald, & Brauer, 2010) and these

affective responses mediate effects on aggressive and helping behaviors respectively. To summarize, there is strong evidence that video games serve as affective (in addition to cognitive) primes.

Implications for the current project. We might expect media depictions of relationships to function as affective primes as well, given that such depictions often focus on emotional aspects of the couples' interactions. One social judgment that viewing such portrayals would plausibly impact is the evaluation of relationship satisfaction. More specifically, watching different relationship portrayals (e.g., comedic or dramatic, romantic or problem-filled) could plausibly lead to different emotional responses. According to theorizing on affecting priming (Forgas, 1995), this experience of media-evoked affect would then result in the selective retrieval of affect-congruent information, which would ultimately influence the evaluation of one's own relationship. For example, watching a funny relationship-related clip might evoke positive affect, which would lead to the selective retrieval of relationship information that is associated with positive affect, which would positively influence the evaluation of one's own relationship.

Furthermore, based on the research discussed (Angie et al., 2011), discrete emotions of the same affective dimension may have different impacts on evaluations, with emotions that are more relevant to relationship satisfaction having a stronger effect. Specifically, it seems likely that exposure to romantic content will prime romantic affect (discussed below), which is more relevant to the evaluation of relationship satisfaction than other positive emotions. In fact, feeling loving towards one's partner is frequently used as a measure of relationship satisfaction (e.g., Hendrick & Hendrick, 1997). Given the research (Forgas & Moylan, 1987) and theorizing (Isen & Daubman, 1984) discussed, it is also likely that positive affect would have a stronger impact on the evaluation of relationship satisfaction than negative affect.

To summarize, experiencing any positive media evoked emotions might lead to more positive evaluations of one's relationship, but experiencing the emotion most closely associated with relationship satisfaction, romantic affect, would plausibly have the greatest impact. Similarly, while experiencing any negative media evoked emotions might lead to more negative evaluations of one's relationship, negative emotions would impact the assessment of one's relationship to a lesser degree than positive emotions.

Which Discrete Emotions are Likely to be Primed by Relationship Depictions?

The current study involves comparisons between romantic comedy and drama movies and television comedies and dramas. Previous research provides insight into which emotions might be evoked by these different genres and types of media.

Comedies versus dramas. In one study, Bartsch (2012) found that viewers associated comedy movies with feeling joy and amusement (of ten measured emotions). In contrast, they associated serious movies (dramas and documentaries) with feeling moved and sadness. Similarly, in a study by Nabi, Stitt, Halford, and Finnerty (2006) regarding television dramas, viewers' retrospective ratings indicated that among positive emotions, they reported highest levels of happiness and pensiveness, and among negative emotions, they reported highest levels of sadness and anxiety. Thus, there is empirical evidence that comedies (relative to dramas) tend to produce more positive affect, particularly amusement, and that dramas produce more negative emotions, particularly sadness.

Romantic movies versus television. As previously discussed, one important difference between romantic movies and fictional television is their focus on relationship problems. As found in Study 1 of the current project, popular television shows typically focus on relationship problems like arguing, lying, and jealousy to a greater extent than romantic movies. Another

important difference between movies and television is that movies have complete narratives with endings whereas television shows typically do not. In Study 1, participants in the television conditions reported more uncertainty about the probable outcome for the depicted couple (i.e., whether they would be together in the end) than those in the romantic movie conditions. It is possible that television depictions of relationship problems combined with outcome uncertainty evoke a sense of anxiety in viewers. Consistent with this proposition, the participants in Nabi et al.'s (2006) study also rated television dramas as "suspenseful." Further, television dramas may evoke more anxiety than television comedies because of their more serious treatment of relationship problems (Kim, Sorsli, Collins, Zylbergold, Schooler, & Tolman, 2007).

Regarding romantic movies, it is likely that they elicit romantic feelings, but there is surprisingly little prior empirical examination of that outcome. However, there is evidence that exposure to romantic imagery evokes romantic affect. In a study by Faseur and Geuens (2006) participants were shown one of three print advertisements for a fictitious travel agency that featured a couple walking on a beach at sunset (romantic), a group of friends (cozy), or a man jumping in the air (exciting). Participants in the romantic ad condition reported feeling rather romantic (a mean of 5.2 on a 7-point scale) and significantly more so than participants in the other two conditions. A qualitative study (also discussed in Chapter 2) by Caperello and Migliaccio (2011) provides further support. Caperello and Migliaccio interviewed 18 college-educated women aged 21 to 35 who were currently in committed relationships, and these women reported that while watching romantic comedy movies they felt excitement, passion, and an emotional intensity that everyday life commonly lacks. For example, one participant said:

> I think I love the romance because that movie love, that true love, that sweep you off
>
> your feet love, is like a fantasy so it puts you into like this fantasy world so that's why I

like to watch those movies, I like those love stories that make you feel it; it's very

dreamy. (p. 210)

Taken together, prior research suggests that viewers will experience various discrete

emotions, both positive and negative, based not only on the genre of what they are viewing,

comedy or drama, but also on the type of media they are viewing, romantic movie versus

television show. Specifically: 1) comedies, relative to dramas, are expected to evoke more

positive affect, especially amusement, while dramas, relative to comedies, are expected to elicit

more negative affect, particularly sadness; 2) owing to a focus on relationship problems and

outcome uncertainty, television shows, especially television dramas, are expected to elicit more

anxiety than romantic movies; and 3) romantic movies with their focus on idealized romance are

expected to evoke more romantic feelings as compared to television shows.

Differential Susceptibility to the Effects of Romantic Relationship Depictions

Thus far, the theorizing and research presented has focused on affective responses and on

subsequent evaluations that are congruent with the affective tone of media depictions. However,

consistent with the notion of the importance of individual differences (Barlett & Anderson, 2013)

or differential susceptibility to media effects (Valkenburg & Peter, 2013), there is evidence that

depictions of romantic relationships elicit varying responses from different groups of individuals.

Holmes and Johnson (2009) found that undergraduates who were currently in a romantic

relationship and were assigned to watch a romantic comedy movie subsequently made more

positive evaluations of their relationships than those in a control group who watched a film with

no romantic relationship themes. In contrast, those who were currently single and saw the

romantic comedy made less positive evaluations of a previous relationship compared to those in

the control group. To explain their findings, Holmes and Johnson wrote:

For those in relationships, being presented with a media stimulus portraying positive

relationship experiences may have primed thoughts and feelings about these individuals'

own positive relationship experiences, leading them to report increased satisfaction. For

those not in relationship however, being primed with a media stimulus portraying

positive relationship experiences could instead evoke feelings of dissatisfaction due to a

discrepancy between that which is being viewed and that which is experienced in their

own romantic lives. (p. 130)

In essence, Holmes and Johnson suggested that for satisfied individuals the effects found

were due to priming but for dissatisfied individuals they were due to upward social comparison.

Social comparison theory. Proposed by Festinger (1954), social comparison theory

asserts that individuals rely on comparisons with others to evaluate themselves on any number of

dimensions (e.g., opinions and abilities). Individuals may make upward comparisons, to those

who are better off, or downward comparisons, to those who are worse off in a particular domain.

Both upward and downward comparisons can be contrastive (focused on difference) or

assimilative (focused on similarity), and these different types of comparisons result in varying

emotions and evaluations.

In synthesizing this area of research, Suls, Martin, and Wheeler (2002) argued that a key

predictor of assimilative and contrastive comparisons is whether individuals believe that they can

change their status. In the case of upward comparisons, if the individual making the comparison

believes that achieving what the target has is possible, then an assimilative response is more

likely: feeling positive affect and making more favorable evaluations of one's own situation

(Suls et al., 2002). Indeed, theorizing based on relevant research suggests that such assimilative

comparisons are particularly likely to elicit feelings of hope (Smith, 2000). However, if the

individual does not believe that achieving what the target has is possible, then a contrastive responses is more likely: experiencing negative affect and making less favorable evaluations of one's own situation (Suls et al., 2002). When making these contrastive upward comparisons, theorizing built upon previous research suggests that individuals are especially likely to feel envy (Smith, 2000).

In the case of downward comparisons, according to Suls, Martin, and Wheeler (2002), if the individual making the comparison believes that they could decline to the level of the comparison target, then they are more likely to have an assimilative downward response: feeling more negative affect and making less favorable evaluations of their own situation. If they believe that they will remain superior to the target, then they are more likely to have a contrastive downward response: feeling more positive affect and making more positive evaluations. (For similar arguments and predictions see Smith (2000)). This theorizing seems to suggest that any given media depiction of romantic relationships could evoke very different emotional responses and evaluations, depending on whether viewing elicits a comparison and whether that comparison is upward or downward and assimilative or contrastive.

There are many factors that predict which type of comparison an individual will make. One such factor is pre-exposure satisfaction.

Satisfaction, emotions, and evaluations. There is some empirical indication that level of initial satisfaction with one's self or situation can lead to different emotional responses to a given media depiction and subsequent evaluations of oneself or one's situation.

Nabi and Keblusek (2014) conducted a study of female undergraduates' retrospective reports of watching surgical makeover shows. They found that body satisfaction was positively associated with feeling more hope while watching. This suggests that feeling dissatisfied with

one's own body might inhibit the experience of hope while viewing programs that other viewers find inspiring. Similarly, initial body satisfaction has also been found to moderate the association between exposure to body-focused images and subsequent body satisfaction. In a meta-analysis of studies regarding experimental exposure to thin-ideal images, Groesz, Levine, and Murnen (2002) found that women who were less satisfied with their own bodies were more negatively impacted by exposure to thin-ideal images than women who were more satisfied. Together these findings indicate that participants with higher initial domain-specific satisfaction may respond more positively to idealized portrayals both in terms of affect and evaluations, relative to those with lower initial domain-specific satisfaction.

Regarding romantic relationships in particular, there is further evidence that initial relationship satisfaction is relevant to the types of comparisons that individuals make. Buunk, Collins, Taylor, Vanyperen, and Dakof (1990), conducted a study wherein they asked married adults to report the frequency with which they made upward assimilative, upward contrastive, downward assimilative, and downward contrastive comparisons to others' relationships. For example, regarding downward contrastive comparisons they asked, "How often do you feel *happy* and *pleased* when you compare your own marital relationship with that of others who have a relationship that is *worse* than yours?" (p. 1244).

On the whole, they found that individuals reported making downward contrastive comparisons most frequently followed by upward assimilative comparisons. That is, participants most frequently made comparisons that made them feel better. However, they also found that the more dissatisfied an individual was with their own relationship, the more likely they were to report making downward assimilative comparisons (i.e., to report feeling negative emotions because they felt potentially similar to someone worse off). This study showed that while

individuals may make both upward and downward comparisons in everyday life, initial relationship satisfaction (a social susceptibility) is related to whether one feels better or worse after making the comparison. Those with higher initial satisfaction may subsequently feel even better after viewing; those with lower initial satisfaction may make less-enhancing comparisons and have less positive outcomes.

Summary. Prior research on affective priming (a theory integrated in the GLM) suggests that media exposure can serve as an affective prime leading to affect-congruent evaluations. The discrete emotions that are primed are predicted to vary based on media genre and type. Specifically, comedies tend to evoke more amusement while dramas tend to evoke more sadness; television shows, especially television dramas, may evoke more anxiety; and romantic movies would evoke more romantic feelings than television shows. Furthermore, the research reviewed suggests that affective priming often leads to affect-congruent evaluations. In the context of the current project, the research suggests that exposure to idealized or comedic depictions of relationships evokes positive affect and thereby might improve evaluations of the viewer's romantic relationship. Conversely, problem-filled or poignant depictions might evoke less positive affect and thereby reduce relationship satisfaction.

This picture is complicated by theorizing and research on social comparison. Despite the complexity of possible responses afforded by the combination of upward and downward comparisons that are either assimilative or contrastive, in general, it seems as though those who are more satisfied or in a better situation (e.g., the coupled undergraduates watching romantic comedies in Holmes and Johnson's (2009) study and those with higher body satisfaction in Nabi et al.'s (2014) study) experience stronger positive affect (e.g., amusement and romance) and make more favorable evaluations. In contrast, those who are less satisfied or are in a worse

situation (e.g., the single undergraduates watching romantic comedies in Holmes and Johnson's (2009) study and the dissatisfied individuals in Buunk et. al's (1990) study) experience more negative affect (e.g., sadness and anxiety) and make less favorable evaluations. This is the basis for the predictions of the present study, which were tested via an experiment with a 2 x 2 design including media type (romantic movie versus fictional television) and genre (comedy versus drama) comparisons.

Hypotheses

Based on theorizing about affective priming, as integrated in the short-term processes component of the GLM, and social comparison, I proposed that the effects of condition (media type and genre) on relationship evaluations would involve moderated mediation. Specifically, the prediction is that condition will affect post-exposure evaluations via varying emotional responses and that pre-exposure satisfaction will moderate those emotional responses. Specific predictions follow.

Amusement and sadness. The work of Bartsch (2010) suggests that participants in the comedy conditions will feel more amused than those in the drama conditions. Furthermore, pre-exposure satisfaction is predicted to moderate this effect of genre on amusement. Those with higher (relative to those with lower) pre-exposure satisfaction will be more amused. Based on affective priming, feeling amused will then lead to higher post-exposure evaluations.

H1A: Media genre (comedy vs. drama) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict amusement, such that exposure to comedies (vs. dramas) will lead to more amusement with stronger effects on participants with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

H1B: Amusement will positively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H1C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of genre on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of amusement, with stronger positive effects of comedies for those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

The work of Bartsch (2010) also suggests that participants in the drama conditions will experience more sadness than those in the comedy conditions. Similar to amusement, pre-exposure satisfaction is predicted to moderate this effect of genre on sadness. Specifically, individuals who are less satisfied will be more saddened by the dramas. Based on research regarding affective priming (Bless & Fiedler, 2012; Forgas & Moylan, 1987), feeling sad, as a result of drama exposure, will lead to lower relationship evaluations but to a lesser degree than amusement or other positive emotions.

H2A: Media genre (drama vs. comedy) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict sadness, such that exposure to dramas (vs. comedies) will lead to more sadness with stronger effects on participants with lower pre-exposure satisfaction.

H2B: Sadness will (weakly) negatively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H2C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of genre on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of sadness, with stronger negative effects of dramas for those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction.

Romance. Based on research regarding romantic imagery by Faseur and Geuens (2006) and qualitative research regarding romantic comedy viewing by Caperello and Magliacco (2011), the romantic movie conditions are expected to evoke more romantic affect than the television conditions. Furthermore, individuals with higher pre-exposure satisfaction are expected to experience more romantic feelings than those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction. In light of

research regarding domain-specific effects of affective priming (Dasgupta, 2013), feeling more romantic will then lead to higher relationship evaluations.

H3A: Media type (romantic movie vs. television show) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict romance, such that exposure to romantic movies (vs. television shows) will lead to higher ratings of romantic feelings with stronger positive effects on participants with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

H3B: Romantic affect will positively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H3C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of type on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of romance, with stronger positive effects for those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

Anxiety. While the television conditions might evoke more anxiety than the romantic movie conditions due to outcome uncertainty, the television comedy condition is expected to do so to a lesser degree because of its lighter tone. Supporting the contention that television drama exposure would evoke anxiety, research by Nabi et al. (2006) found that viewers experienced anxiety while watching television dramas. Thus, the television drama condition is predicted to lead to more anxiety than the other three conditions. Additionally, similar to previous predictions, participants with lower pre-exposure satisfaction are expected to experience more anxiety than those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction. Based on findings of relatively weak effects of primed negative affect on evaluations (Forgas & Moylan, 1987), feelings of anxiety are expected to decrease relationship evaluations to a small degree.

H4A: Media type (television drama vs. other conditions) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict anxiety, such that exposure to the television drama clip (vs. the

other three conditions) will lead to more anxiety with stronger effects on participants with lower pre-exposure satisfaction.

H4B: Anxiety will (weakly) negatively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H4C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of type (television drama vs. other conditions) on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of anxiety, with stronger negative effects for those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

Envy and hope. The idealized romantic relationships portrayed in the romantic movie conditions may be regarded as upward comparison targets. The theorizing of Smith (2000) suggests that participants with lower levels of pre-exposure satisfaction (relative to those with higher satisfaction) may be more likely to engage in contrastive upward comparisons and to experience more envy. Conversely, those with higher (rather than lower) pre-exposure satisfaction may engage in more assimilative upward comparisons and experience more hope. Thus, media type is expected to interact with pre-exposure satisfaction to predict levels of envy and hope. Envy is expected to negatively predict post-exposure evaluations and hope to positively predict post-exposure evaluations. The following predictions are made regarding envy.

H5A: Media type (romantic movie vs. television show) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict envy, such that exposure to romantic movies (vs. television shows) will lead to more envy with stronger effects on participants with lower pre-exposure satisfaction.

H5B: Envy will negatively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H5C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of type on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of envy, with stronger negative effects for those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction.

With regard to hope, the following predictions are made.

H6A: Media type (romantic movie vs. television show) and pre-exposure satisfaction will interact to predict hope, such that exposure to romantic movies (vs. television shows) will lead to more hope with stronger positive effects on participants with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

H6B: Hope will positively predict post-exposure evaluations.

H6C: There will be a conditional indirect effect of type on post-exposure evaluations, via feelings of hope, with stronger positive effects for those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction.

Methods

The methods for the experimental part of Study 2 were as follows.

Participants

A sample of 306 adults aged 18 – 64 who were currently in a romantic relationship of at least three months long and residing in the U.S. was recruited by an online panel service through Qualtrics. A screening process was used to obtain a sample that included both men and women and heterogeneity in age. Thus, the sample included 152 men (50.3%) and 154 women (49.7%) and the ages of participants were widely distributed ($M = 41.3$, $SD = 13.93$). A complete breakdown of demographics for the study participants is displayed in Table 3. Regarding relationship status, most participants were engaged, married, or in a civil union / domestic partnership (65%) while the remainder were "in a relationship" (35%). The vast majority of participants identified as heterosexual (92%), but a few participants identified as gay or lesbian, bisexual, or "other" (7%). Education was distributed as expected with most participants having at

least some college education (73%). Finally, the majority of participants reported being white or European-American (71%).

Design

The experimental part of Study 2 used a 2 x 2 design with media type and genre as the independent variables. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four conditions: romantic comedy movie, romantic drama movie, television comedy, and television drama. Within all conditions each participant viewed a video clip that was approximately three minutes long.

Pretest of Stimuli

The video clips were selected for each of the four conditions based on pretest evaluations of potential media clips. Those evaluations were based on the findings of Study 1 regarding the perceived characteristics of typical romantic movie versus fictional television depictions of romantic relationships. Accordingly, the goal was to find romantic movie and television exemplars that were clearly differentiated in terms of 1) endorsement of romantic ideals, 2) depictions of relationship problems, and 3) outcome uncertainty. Within movie and television conditions, the goal was to find an exemplar that was clearly comedic versus clearly dramatic.

A total of 16 total clips were pretested. Each clip contained pre-roll text that included the name of the movie or television show and set the scene for participants. For example, the pre-roll for one of the romantic comedy movie clips read, "50 First Dates. Henry Roth falls for Lucy, who suffers from short-term memory loss. Because she can never remember meeting him, Henry has to romance Lucy every day." The video then began with a scene of Henry introducing himself to Lucy (again).

Pre-testing was conducted in two stages. In the initial stage, 85 adults (undergraduates recruited through the university and others recruited via social media) rated two of the 16 clips,

selected at random. They rated the extent to which each clip depicted romantic ideals, relationship uncertainty, and relationship problems, and the extent to which the clip was representative of the media genre. Based on these ratings, the pool was narrowed down to one romantic comedy movie, one romantic drama movie, two television comedy, and two television drama clips. In the second phase of pretesting, a few of the items were reworded for clarity, and then 45 undergraduates rated two randomly-selected clips from the remaining pool of six clips.

All of the final pre-test measures asked participants to respond on 7-point scales from 1, not at all to 7, very much. Participants rated four items indicating the degree to which each clip endorsed romantic ideals (soul mates, love conquers all, partner idealization, and love at first sight), which were then averaged (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$). They rated three items regarding the extent to which the clip left them with the impression that relationships are uncertain, which were then averaged to create a measure of relationship uncertainty (Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$).

Participants also rated the degree to which each clip featured relationship problems including arguing, lying, cheating, jealousy, tension, breaking up, and divorce. A principal components factor analysis with varimax rotation was conducted on these items. Two factors had eigenvalues over 1 and in combination explained 76.2% of the variance. The items that clustered on factor 1 were arguing, jealousy, and tension, and the items that clustered on factor 2 were lying, cheating, breaking up, and divorce. These factors represent relational conflict (Cronbach's $\alpha = .90$) and relationship deterioration (Cronbach's $\alpha = .84$), and the relevant items were averaged to create a variable for each factor. Finally, participants rated how similar the clip was to a typical romantic movie or television show of the target genre (comedy or drama). The pre-test measures appear in Appendix C and descriptive statistics are shown in Table 4.

Stimulus selection. To examine the desired manipulations, two-way (media type and genre) ANOVA analyses were conducted for each of the outcomes.

As desired, the romantic movie clips were rated higher in romantic ideals than the television clips, $F(1, 56) = 80.80, p = .000$. There was no significant effect of genre and no significant interaction between type and genre.

Regarding relationship uncertainty as a takeaway, there was a significant interaction between media type and genre, $F(1, 56) = 4.96, p = .03$. Simple slopes analysis showed that the television drama clip was rated the highest, followed by the television comedy clip, and then the romantic movie clips, which were equivalent in this regard. Predictably, while both television clips were higher in relationship uncertainty as a takeaway, the television drama clip was higher than the television comedy clip because of its more serious tone.

Regarding relational conflict, there was an expected main effect of media type with the television clips featuring relational conflict to a greater extent than the romantic movie clips, $F(1, 56) = 548.06, p = .000)$. There was no significant effect of genre, and no interaction between type and genre. With regard to depictions of relationship deterioration, there was a significant interaction between media type and genre, $F(1, 56) = 10.18, p = .002$. Simple slopes analysis showed that the television drama clip was rated higher than the other three clips. Notably, while there was a significant difference between the television drama clip and the other clips, ratings for all four clips were below the mid point on the 7-point scale. Thus, the manipulation of media type regarding relationship problems was primarily in regard to the extent the clips depicted arguing, jealousy, and tension.

Finally, regarding the degree to which each clip was representative of that type and genre of media content, there were no significant main effects, and the interaction was not significant.

Thus, all conditions were seen as equivalently representative. The overall average for representativeness ratings was 5.7, SD = 1.24.

Procedure

After participants indicated agreement with an information sheet, all participants completed an online questionnaire with an embedded video clip as the experimental manipulation. Participants went through the following process: 1) answering a series of questions related to the survey part of the study, 2) viewing the video, 3) answering questions regarding the experiment's dependent variables, 4) answering questions regarding the stimulus, and 5) answering demographic questions. There were items included in the questionnaire that were not used in this dissertation, and the full Study 2 questionnaire appears in Appendix D.

Materials

Participants saw one of four 3-minute clips. The romantic comedy movie clip was from *50 First Dates*, and it depicted the main characters' wedding. The clip ended with a scene of the husband greeting the wife with their young daughter. The romantic drama movie clip was from *The Notebook*, and it depicted an elderly married couple discussing the progression of her Alzheimer's disease. The clip ended with a scene of the couple having died sleeping in each other's arms. The television comedy clip was from *The Big Bang Theory*, and it depicted two couples discussing who is the better couple while on a double date. The clip ended with one of the couples disagreeing about taking a test of their compatibility. The television drama clip was from *Grey's Anatomy*, and it showed a married couple arguing about his decision not to take a job located across the country. The clip ended with the husband making a phone call to accept the job and the wife angrily telling him to leave for his new job immediately.

Measures

Emotional responses. Emotional response states were measured using a 17-item mood adjective checklist, adapted from Nabi & Keblusek (2013). Immediately after viewing the clip, participants indicated how much they felt each emotion "right now" (1 not at all, 7 extremely). They rated the extent to which they felt amused (amused, entertained humored, Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .86), sad (sad, blue, gloomy, Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .86), romantic (romantic, loving, warm-hearted, Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .87), anxious (anxious, tense, uneasy, Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .87), envious (envious, jealous, $r = .71, p < .001$), and hopeful (hopeful, encouraged, inspired, Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .91). The items within each emotion scale were averaged to create measures of discrete emotional responses.

Post-exposure evaluations. Post-exposure evaluations of participants' relationships were measured using one section of the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) (Funk & Rogge, 2007). These items were selected because they measured participants' current feelings about their relationship rather than asking them to reflect on their relationship, that is, the measure was more state-like than trait-like.

The instructions for this scale asked participants to, "select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship with your partner. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item." Participants were then presented with seven 7-point semantic differential items (e.g., Enjoyable … Miserable (reverse-coded)). Reliability for the scale was high (Cronbach's $\alpha =$ .95), so the seven items were summed to create an index of post-exposure evaluation of the relationship (consistent with the pre-exposure satisfaction measure) with a range of 7 to 49.

Pre-exposure satisfaction. The scale measuring pre-exposure satisfaction with participants' relationships was embedded in the survey portion of Study 2. Pre-exposure

satisfaction was measured using the seven-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) created by Hendrick (1981). This scale asks participants to think about their relationship with their partner, providing a more trait-like assessment. Each item is a question about the relationship with a specific 5-point scale unique to that item. The seven items had high internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .89) and, consistent with previous studies, were summed to create an index of relationship satisfaction with a range of 7 to 35.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Table 5 shows descriptive statistics for all dependent variables by condition, and Table 6 shows correlations between the dependent variables. I examined the descriptive statistics across conditions for each variable, and there was no significant skew or kurtosis.

The correlation matrix indicates that there were significant correlations between all of the emotion items except amusement and sadness. These correlations point to mixed affective responses. That is, as expected, participants did not feel exclusively positively or negatively in response to the clips, they may have felt, for example, both hopeful and sad. Furthermore, some of these correlations were relatively large. Specifically, the multi-item measures of anxiety and sadness were highly correlated and romance and hope were highly correlated, suggesting that these emotions frequently co-occurred in response to the stimuli. However, they are conceptually distinct and were therefore analyzed separately.

The hypotheses proposed specific interactions between experimental condition and social susceptibility (pre-exposure satisfaction) of the participants. To check for non-hypothesized interactions that should also be taken into account, I conducted preliminary regression analyses that included the full set of possible two- and three-way interactions. For each of the six

measured emotions, I conducted an analysis that tested the main effects of genre, type, and pre-exposure relationship satisfaction, all of the two-way interactions between the predictors, and the three-way interaction between those variables. There were no significant two-way interactions that were not hypothesized, and there were no significant three-way interactions. Similarly, I ran regression analyses to check for any unanticipated effects of gender on each emotional response. There were no main effects of gender and no significant interactions between condition and gender. Therefore, I proceeded with testing the hypotheses as planned.

Analytic Strategy for Hypothesis Testing

To test the first part of each hypothesis that there would be interactions between condition and pre-exposure satisfaction predicting affective responses, I ran separate hierarchical regression models for each emotion. In the first block of each analysis, I entered the continuous measure of pre-exposure satisfaction (centered) and dummy codes for media genre (drama 0, comedy 1) and type (fictional television 0, romantic movie 1). In the second block, I added the hypothesized two-way interaction. To investigate significant interactions, simple slopes analyses were conducted using the MODPROBE macro.

I then used the PROCESS macro to test the hypothesized indirect effects of condition on post-exposure relationship evaluations via affective responses. Depending on the results of the previous regression analyses, I either ran simple mediation models (Model 4) or moderated mediation models (Model 7). I estimated separate models for each hypothesized mediator (i.e., each emotion) for a total of six mediation analyses. In the simple mediation models, pre-exposure satisfaction was entered as a covariate. Indirect effects and conditional indirect effects were tested via bootstrap analyses with 1000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected

confidence intervals. Within the moderated mediation models, moderation was evaluated at three points of pre-exposure satisfaction, the mean and plus and minus 1 standard deviation.

The Effects of Condition on Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Before proceeding with testing the hypotheses, I also ran a two-way repeated measures ANOVA to examine the effects of media type (romantic movie vs. fictional television clips) and genre (comedy vs. drama clips) on post-exposure relationship evaluations. There was no main effect of media type, $F(1, 293) = 2.04, p = .15$, or genre, $F(1, 293) = 1.71, p = .19$, on post-exposure evaluations, and the interaction between type and genre was not significant, $F(1, 293) = 1.33, p = .25$. Furthermore, while there was a significant effect of pre-exposure satisfaction, $F(1, 293) = 1091.13, p < .001$, that result was not interpretable because the two measures were not on the same scale. While acknowledging the lack of effects found in this analysis, the subsequent analyses tested the hypothesis that there were indirect-only effects of condition on post-exposure evaluations via emotional responses as moderated by pre-exposure satisfaction. The results of the analyses in relation to the hypotheses were as follows.

H1: Effects of Condition via Amusement as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis (summarized in Table 7) indicated that the hypothesized interaction between genre and pre-exposure satisfaction predicting amusement was significant. As reported in Table 5 and depicted in Figure 2, those who saw comedies rather than dramas were more amused, and this effect was stronger for those with higher levels of pre-exposure satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 1A was supported.

Next, I ran a moderated mediation model (summarized in Table 10). As predicted in Hypothesis 1B, amusement positively predicted evaluations. As predicted in Hypothesis 1C, there were significant conditional indirect effects as indicated by the index of moderated

mediation. The positive indirect effect of comedy viewing on post-exposure evaluations via feeling amused was stronger for those with higher levels of pre-exposure satisfaction.

H2: Effects of Condition via Sadness as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis (shown in Table 7) indicated that, as predicted, those in the drama (vs. comedy) conditions reported more sadness. However, genre did not interact with pre-exposure satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 2A was partially supported. In addition, there was an unanticipated main effect of media type (romantic movies vs. television). Participants in the romantic movie conditions reported higher levels of sadness than those in the fictional television conditions. Therefore, I also included the interaction of type and pre-exposure satisfaction in the analysis, but it was not significant.

With no support for moderation, I conducted two simple mediation analyses as reported in Table 9 to test the respective effects of genre (hypothesized) and type (unanticipated) on post-exposure evaluations via sadness. While I predicted that sadness would have a weak negative effect on post-exposure evaluations, both analyses indicated that the coefficient was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 2B was not supported. Further, with no support for conditional indirect effects, Hypothesis 2C was not supported either.

H3: Effects of Condition via Romance as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Results of the hierarchical regression analysis (displayed in Table 7) indicated that, as expected, there was a main effect of media type (romantic movies vs. fictional television) on romance. Consistent with Hypothesis 3A, participants in the romantic movie conditions felt more romantic than those in the television conditions. Counter to Hypothesis 3A, there was no interaction between media type and pre-exposure satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 3A was only

partially supported. There was also an unanticipated main effect of pre-exposure satisfaction with higher pre-exposure satisfaction predicting more romantic affect.

I conducted a simple mediation analysis as reported in Table 9 to test the effect of media type on post-exposure evaluations through romance. (As in all the mediation analyses, pre-exposure satisfaction was controlled). As predicted by Hypothesis 3B, feeling romantic led to higher relationship evaluations. Additionally, as predicted in Hypothesis 3C, there was significant indirect effect of media type on relationship evaluations through feeling romantic.

H4: Effects of Condition via Anxiety as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Results of the hierarchical regression analyses (shown in Table 8) indicated that, as expected, there was a main effect of television drama on anxiety. Consistent with Hypothesis 4A, participants in the television drama condition felt more anxiety than those in the other three conditions. However, there was no interaction between condition and pre-exposure satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 4A was partially supported.

Next I conducted a simple mediation analysis to test the effect of media type on relationship evaluations via anxiety. As indicated in Table 9, while anxiety was hypothesized to have a weak effect on evaluations, within the model, the coefficient was not significant. Therefore, Hypothesis 4B was not supported. Accordingly, Hypothesis 4C that there would be a conditional indirect effect of romantic movies versus fictional television on post-exposure evaluations via feelings of anxiety was not supported.

H5: Effects of Condition via Envy as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

Results of the hierarchical regression (shown in Table 7) indicated a significant main effect of media type on envy. As predicted in Hypothesis 5A, participants in the romantic movie conditions experienced more envy than those in the fictional television conditions, but counter to

the prediction, there was no interaction between type and pre-exposure satisfaction. Thus, Hypothesis 5A was partially supported.

I ran a simple mediation analysis to test the indirect effect of media type on post-exposure evaluations via envy as reported in Table 9. Counter to Hypothesis 5B, envy was not associated with lower post-exposure relationship evaluations in the model. Further, with no support for moderated mediation, Hypothesis 5C was also not supported.

H6: Effects of Condition via Hope as Moderated by Pre-Exposure Satisfaction

The results of the hierarchical regression analysis (displayed in Table 7) showed that there was a main effect of media type on hope. Participants in the romantic movie conditions experienced more hope than those in the fictional television conditions as predicted in Hypothesis 6A. Also consistent with the hypothesis, there was a significant interaction between media type and pre-exposure satisfaction. As reported in Table 7 and depicted in Figure 3, the effect of romantic movies was stronger for participants with higher pre-exposure satisfaction than those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 6A was supported.

I subsequently estimated a moderated mediation model, and the results are summarized in Table 10. As predicted in Hypothesis 6B, feeling hopeful positively predicted post-exposure evaluations. As predicted in Hypothesis 6C, there were significant conditional indirect effects as indicated by the index of moderated mediation. The positive indirect effect of romantic movie viewing on post-exposure evaluations via feeling hopeful was stronger for those with higher levels of pre-exposure satisfaction. Therefore, Hypothesis 6C was supported.

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Discussion

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First, it is noteworthy that all of the hypotheses regarding the emotions that would be evoked by the romantic movie and television clips were supported. As expected, the comedy

conditions evoked more amusement and less sadness than the drama conditions, and the romantic movie conditions evoked more romance, envy, and hope than the fictional television conditions. Also as expected, the television drama condition evoked more anxiety than the other three conditions. These differences in emotional responses were elicited with video clips that were quite short, about three minutes long, which speaks to the potency of portrayals of romantic ideals, relationship uncertainty, and relationship problems.

The primary purpose of the present study was to compare the effects of romantic movies and fictional television on relationship evaluations. Based on affective priming theory and research, I predicted that positive media-induced emotions would have a strong positive impact on relationship evaluations and negative media-induced emotions would have a weak negative impact on relationship evaluations. The relative strength of positive versus negative primes was supported in the present study. While positive emotions (amusement, romance, and hope) were all positively associated with relationship evaluations, none of the negative emotions (sadness, anxiety, and envy) were significantly associated with relationship evaluations. Thus, within the present study, it may be said that romantic movie clips had stronger affective priming effects than television clips and comedy clips had stronger affective priming effects than drama clips on relationship satisfaction.

Additionally, based on the proposition of the GLM that individual differences may impact affective responses to media, I predicted that pre-exposure relationship satisfaction would create differential susceptibility to the emotional effects of romantic movie versus fictional television and comedy versus drama exposure. Specifically, I predicted that those with lower satisfaction would respond more strongly when negative emotions were evoked, while those with higher relationship satisfaction would respond more strongly when positive emotions were

evoked. This prediction was not supported in the case of negative emotions. Pre-exposure relationship satisfaction did not moderate the effects of condition on sadness, anxiety, or envy. However, the prediction was supported in regards to two of three positive emotions, amusement and hope, but not romantic affect.

Romantic movies did have an effect on relationship evaluations via romantic affect, but pre-exposure satisfaction did not moderate the effect. This finding speaks to the power of portrayals of romantic ideals to evoke romantic feelings. Romantic movie exposure had a positive impact on relationship evaluations via feeling romantic regardless of initial level of relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, there was an unexpected main effect of pre-exposure satisfaction on feeling romantic, which reinforces the close association between relationship satisfaction and romance. Even when romantic feelings were not strongly evoked by the clips (as reflected by the averages for the television conditions) individuals with higher pre-exposure satisfaction reported feeling more romantic than those with lower relationship satisfaction.

Romantic movies also had a conditional indirect effect on relationship evaluations via hope. Individuals with higher pre-exposure satisfaction experienced more hope as a result of watching the romantic movie clips than those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction. This points (indirectly) to social comparison effects. Because the romantic movie clips contained idealized depictions, I predicted that they would serve as upward comparison targets. This hypothesis was consistent with previous qualitative research that found that women compare their relationships to romantic movies even while acknowledging that such portrayals are unrealistic (Caperello & Migliaccio, 2011). The present study did not directly assess comparisons made by participants (in order to limit the number of items assessed between exposure and the evaluation of relationship satisfaction). However, participants did report more envy in the romantic movie

conditions than in the television conditions. Envy is by definition the outcome of comparing oneself to a superior other (Parrott, 1991). Thus, greater reported envy in the romantic movie conditions signals that the romantic movies elicited stronger upward comparisons on the whole.

Based on the theorizing of Smith (2000), we might then conclude that these upward comparisons were contrastive. However, participants also reported feeling more hope after watching the romantic movie clips than the television clips. According to Smith (2000), feeling more hope suggests upward assimilative comparisons. Might some participants have experienced envy while others experienced hope? That is plausible. However, in the present study envy and hope were moderately correlated. It is possible that in the context of romantic movie viewing that envy and hope are both evoked for some viewers. For example, when participants watched the ending of *The Notebook* (the romantic drama movie stimulus), perhaps they felt envious of the ideal love and commitment between the elderly couple but also inspired by their shared death. In fact, the average scores for hope were much higher than the average scores for envy in the romantic movie conditions, which points to more assimilative responses.

Additionally, viewers with higher pre-exposure satisfaction felt more hopeful than those with lower pre-exposure satisfaction after viewing the romantic movie clips. Feeling more hopeful then mediated the association between romantic movie viewing and relationship evaluations. This suggests that viewers with higher initial satisfaction engaged in even stronger assimilative comparisons than those with lower relationship satisfaction or that having lower initial satisfaction inhibited feeling hopeful while watching the otherwise inspirational clips. Future research should address these social comparison mechanisms more directly.

Finally, comedies also had a conditional indirect effect on relationship evaluations. Individuals with higher pre-exposure satisfaction were more amused by the comedies than those

with lower pre-exposure satisfaction as expected. Given that the humorous aspects of the comedy clips were about relationships, it seems that individuals with lower satisfaction are less amused by relationship-related comedy or that having higher satisfaction makes relationships a safe topic to joke about. Furthermore, comedy exposure evoked more amusement, which led to higher relationship evaluations. This support for conditional indirect effects of comedies on evaluations speaks to the fact that priming positive affect that is not relevant to the domain of evaluation can have an impact on relationship evaluations, especially for those in more satisfying relationships.

On the whole, these findings suggest that media-induced positive emotions can lead to positive short-term effects on relationship evaluations when measured almost immediately after viewing, which supports the short-term processes component of the GLM. The findings regarding romantic movies are particularly important in light of the fact that individuals are encouraged to watch movies as a way to improve their relationships (Palma, 2014). This study supports the notion that viewing a romantic movie in and of itself can be beneficial for relationship satisfaction, at least in the short term, and even more so for viewers who already feel relatively satisfied (an example of "rich getting richer" media effects).

Regarding fictional television viewing, this study showed that watching depictions of relationship problems with outcome uncertainty (i.e., the television drama condition) can cause viewers anxiety. However, feeling anxious was not related to relationship evaluations. Thus, while previous research has shown a negative association between habitual television viewing and relationship satisfaction, this study points to the continued need to seek an explanation for those findings. The second part of the present study, a survey regarding habitual use, was intended to examine potential explanations.

CHAPTER 4

STUDY 2 SURVEY:

ASSOCIATIONS BETWEEN RELATIONSHIP SATISFACTION AND HABITUAL

VIEWING OF ROMANTIC MOVIES AND FICTIONAL TELEVISION

The purpose of the survey part of Study 2 was to explore the associations between relationship satisfaction and habitual, self-selected exposure to media depictions of romantic relationships (romantic movies and fictional television) with particular attention to the mechanisms that may explain these associations. As previously discussed, a few studies have examined media use and individuals' levels of satisfaction with their own romantic relationships, and these studies suggest differing associations for romantic movies versus television.

To remind the reader briefly, two studies of television exposure found that college students' relationship satisfaction was negatively related to television exposure, assessed both as overall television viewing (Holmes & Johnson, 2009) and viewing of relationship-related programs such as reality shows, dramas, and sitcoms (Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014). In contrast, college students currently in a relationship experienced increased satisfaction after experimental exposure to a romantic comedy movie. Thus far, however, no research has examined these differing associations simultaneously or directly tested explanatory mechanisms.

The central argument of the current project is that viewers perceive very different portrayals of romantic relationships in romantic movies (whether comedies or dramas) than in fictional television shows (whether comedies or dramas) and that these portrayals may affect viewers' satisfaction with their romantic partners. Study 1 established that potential viewers are more certain of positive outcomes for romantic movie couples than television couples. Participants also perceived that popular romantic movies (relative to popular television shows)

focused more on romantic ideals and focused less on relationship problems like arguing and jealousy.

In the short-term, these different depictions were hypothesized to produce different affective responses that may affect relationship evaluations. The experimental part of Study 2 established that exposure to a romantic movie clip had an immediate indirect effect on relationship satisfaction via positive emotional responses, an effect that was moderated by pre-exposure relationship satisfaction. Specifically, individuals who had higher levels of initial satisfaction responded even more positively to romantic movies clips, and thus their post-exposure relationship evaluations were impacted to a greater extent. Regarding fictional television, participants who watched the television drama clip experienced greater anxiety. However, anxiety was not associated with relationship evaluations, and thus there was no indirect effect.

What about long-term effects of exposure? Based on the long-term processes of the GLM (as described in Chapter 1), repeated exposure to depictions of relationships is hypothesized to create or reinforce knowledge structures that impact relationship satisfaction via personality changes. Specifically, it is proposed that the beliefs that are formed as a result of repeated exposure will alter viewers' attributions for their partners' behaviors and thereby their relationship satisfaction.

Theorizing the Effects of Repeated Exposure to Depictions of Romantic Relationships

Habitual media use may impact relationship satisfaction in the long term by impacting viewers' knowledge structures and personalities. Such effects are proposed by the GLM and based in part on cognitive neo-associative theory and social information processing theory, both of which are incorporated within the GLM.

Cognitive neo-associative theory (as laid out by Barlett and Anderson, 2013) suggests both short-term (described in Chapter 3) and long-term media effects (of interest in this chapter). Barlett and Anderson (2013) contend that the process of spreading activation (described in Chapter 3) may lead to the formation and reinforcement of knowledge structures over time. They argue that repeated exposure to linked concepts creates links in memory between the related concepts (i.e., knife and murder). The more frequently individuals have been exposed to the linked concepts, the more likely they are to have them linked in memory and the more likely that their knowledge structures include the depicted components. Related to the present study, the knowledge structures that result from repeated exposure to depictions of romantic couples may include a series of beliefs about the nature of romantic relationships. (They may also include affective associations between romance and relationships, resulting from repeated activation of emotions, but those structures are not examined in this chapter, given measurement issues discussed later.)

How might these beliefs affect individual's assessments of their own romantic relationships? One potential explanation comes from social information processing theory (SIP). SIP, as proposed by Crick and Dodge (1994), suggests that individuals have stored memories, rules, schema, and knowledge about the social world. That is, they have a social information "data base." This data base influences how they 1) encode and 2) interpret cues, 3) select goals, 4) access possible responses, and ultimately 5) choose and 6) enact behaviors within social interactions. This theory underlies the proposition of the GLM that beliefs lead to changes in "personality," or specific tendencies (e.g., being empathetic) (Barlett & Anderson, 2013).

There is considerable empirical support for the proposition that media use can lead to attribution biases, that is, the tendency to explain the behaviors of others in a way that is more

positive (e.g., he didn't mean to hurt my feelings) or negative (e.g., he hurt my feelings on purpose). For example, a longitudinal study by Gentile, Coyne, and Walsh (2011) found that exposure to violent media was positively associated with physical and relational hostile attribution bias, which was related to more physical and relational aggression. In contrast, a survey of adolescents by Gentile et al. (2009) indicated that prosocial video game playing was negatively associated with hostile attribution bias. Based on these lines of research, it appears that different types of media content can have either positive or negative impacts on the types of attributions individuals make for others' behaviors.

Taken together, cognitive neo-associate theory and social information processing theory provide possible mechanisms by which habitual media exposure may impact relationship satisfaction. Media exposure may (over time) lead to knowledge structures regarding relationships that serve as a "data base," and this data base may alter the attributions viewers make for their partners' behavior. These attributions may in turn impact their experiences of relationship satisfaction.

I proceed by reviewing prior evidence that habitual media exposure predicts viewers' beliefs about relationships. I then argue that these beliefs may shape viewers' attribution biases towards their partners and review evidence that attributions predict relationship satisfaction.

Prior Research on Effects of Habitual Viewing of Romantic Relationship Depictions

Prior research has attempted to link media exposure to a variety of beliefs about romantic relationships. Some of these beliefs may be maladaptive in that they may lead to negative attributions and behaviors that reduce satisfaction. Other beliefs may be adaptive, that is, they may lead to positive attribution bias and behaviors that increase satisfaction.

Viewing and maladaptive relationship beliefs. Research regarding romantic relationships has established that a variety of specific beliefs are associated with less satisfaction. The most commonly studied beliefs are captured in Eidelson and Epstein's (1982) Relationship Beliefs Inventory (RBI). As outlined in Table 11 with sample items, the RBI includes the beliefs that: 1) disagreement is destructive to relationships, 2) mindreading is expected or partners should just know each other's needs without stating them, 3) partners cannot change, 4) sexual perfectionism or that one must be a perfect sexual partner, and 5) the sexes are different or that gender stereotypes are accurate, stable factors.

Eidelson and Epstein created this scale to capture beliefs that were already considered maladaptive by marital therapists, oftentimes because of their role in conflict. For example, Eidelson and Epstein (1982) noted that that expecting mindreading results in "disappointment, misperception, and escalation of conflict" (p. 715). Moreover, the negative association between these beliefs and lower relationship satisfaction is well documented across different types of romantic relationships (i.e., dating, married, heterosexual, and homosexual) (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Haferkamp, 1994; Kurdek, 1992; Stackert & Bursik, 2003).

Thus far, five media studies have examined the associations between the maladaptive beliefs measured by the RBI and media use. However, as summarized in Table 12, the results vary. The only entirely consistent result was that endorsement of disagreement is destructive was not significantly associated with any of the media use variables. The most common significant result across studies was regarding endorsement of mindreading is expected, which was positively associated with four of six media use variables. The other beliefs, partners cannot change, sexual perfectionism, and the sexes are different, were only significantly associated with media use in one or two instances.

These inconsistencies may be, in part, because of differences in the conceptualization of media use. Some studies have measured media use broadly while others have examined very particular types of media viewing like soap operas or romantic movies. Furthermore, there is little reason to expect, given the nature of media portrayals, that these particular beliefs would be related to media use (broadly or specifically defined). As reviewed in Chapter 2, none of the content analyses regarding romantic relationships depicted in movies or television suggested that media content emphasizes or endorses these specific themes (e.g., mind-reading is expected or partners cannot change).

What maladaptive beliefs might more plausibly be endorsed by media depictions? Television depictions are of particular interest, given prior evidence of television viewing being associated with lower relationship satisfaction in previous research.

Study 1 established that viewers perceived popular television shows to feature relationship problems including arguing, lying, cheating, jealousy, and breaking up – more so than romantic movies. Participants were also less certain of a positive outcome for the central couple when they were told that the couple appeared in a television show versus a romantic movie. Taken together these findings suggest that television shows portray relationships as much more volatile and unstable than romantic movies do. It is plausible that repeated exposure to such depictions would lead to the belief that relationships are uncertain, which could be maladaptive in the sense that it may make viewers uncertain about the future of their own relationship.

Based on the propositions of SIP, as previously described, it is plausible that individuals who believe that relationships in general are more uncertain (i.e., relationships can quickly turn from strong to deteriorating) will think less positively about their own partner's behaviors. Such

negative attribution bias would then result in decreased relationship satisfaction. However, thus far, research has not examined these associations.

Viewing and adaptive romantic ideals. There are also relationship beliefs that may appear unrealistic but which may actually be adaptive because research suggests that they are positively associated with long-term relationship satisfaction. Romantic ideals as represented by Sprecher and Metts' (1989) Romantic Beliefs Scale (RBS) and mentioned previously (in Chapter 2) fall into this category. As summarized in Table 11, the RBS is comprised of four beliefs: love finds a way, one and only, partner idealization, and love at first sight. Prior research established that romantic ideals, as assessed by the RBS, were positively associated with relationship satisfaction, at least when assessed concurrently (Jones & Cunningham, 1996; Sprecher and Metts, 1999). Despite the lack of longitudinal research establishing temporal precedence, it seems possible, based on SIP, that romantic ideals, when a part of individuals' data bases, serve to facilitate more favorable attributions about a romantic partner's behavior and hence more satisfaction with that partner.

Thus far, only a few media studies (conducted exclusively with undergraduate samples) have examined the relationship between media exposure and these beliefs. As described in Table 12, Hefner and Wilson (2013) measured all four romantic beliefs and found that overall movie watching was positively related to total romantic ideals scores as well as the partner idealization subscale, while romantic comedy movie viewing was positively related only to partner idealization. In another study, Holmes (2007) measured the belief in soul mates and found that it was positively related to preference for romance media. Most recently, Lippman, Ward, and Seabrook (2014) investigated the associations between romantic ideals and exposure to movies with romantic themes, marriage-themed reality television, and sitcoms. They found that romantic

movie and marriage-related reality television viewing were associated with *more* endorsement of specific romantic ideals (see Table 12), while sitcom viewing was associated with *less* endorsement of romantic ideals. Together these findings suggest that movie viewing reinforces romantic ideals (at least some of them) while fictional television viewing undercuts romantic ideals for undergraduates.

While the idea that these beliefs would be associated with positive relationship outcomes may seem counterintuitive (i.e., how would any real relationship measure up?), perceptual and behavioral confirmation may explain why beliefs like these increase satisfaction. Individuals who have idealized views of romantic relationships may perceive their interactions in a more positive way and behave toward their partner in a manner that creates positive self-fulfilling prophecies (Bradbury & Karney, 2010). This explanation is consistent with SIP. Positive attribution bias might be a specific form of perceptual confirmation that stems from endorsement of romantic ideals.

Media Use and Attributions

Effects of beliefs about relationships on attributions. Although the GLM suggests that viewers' beliefs will shape their personalities (predispositions towards others) and hence the nature of their social interactions, little research has examined these propositions in the context of romantic relationships. Researchers have examined the associations between media exposure and beliefs about relationships, but none have examined how those beliefs predict viewers' attributions for their partners' behaviors.

As noted earlier, SIP suggests that viewers develop data bases that serve as perceptual filters, altering attributions for others' behaviors. In the context of the current study, exposure to fictional television depictions is argued to foster a data base including maladaptive beliefs and

negativity regarding romantic relationships, while exposure to romantic movies is argued to foster a data base that includes adaptive beliefs and positivity regarding romantic relationships.

Attributions and relationship satisfaction. The association between attributions made for a partner's behavior and relationship satisfaction is well documented across numerous studies (see Fincham (2001) for a review). In fact, in 1990, there were already 23 studies that examined the topic, and about 80 percent of them found a strong connection between attributions made and relationship satisfaction. Since then, researchers have turned to better explaining the association, including establishing temporal precedence.

It has been hypothesized that 1) attributions influence satisfaction, 2) satisfaction influences attributions, or 3) attributions and satisfaction are related bi-directionally (Fincham, 2001). However, McNulty and Karney (2001) found in a longitudinal study of newlywed couples that positive attributions served as a buffer against changes in global evaluations of relationship satisfaction. That is, making more positive attributions led to continued high relationship satisfaction over time. In the context of the current study, we might tentatively conclude that individuals who make more positive attributions will also experience more relationship satisfaction, and the cited longitudinal study suggests that it is not inappropriate to consider attributions as preceding satisfaction.

Differential Susceptibility to Portrayals of Relationships

As described in Chapter 1, Valkenburg and Peter (2013) suggest that there are dispositional, social, and developmental susceptibilities that may moderate the effects of media use on relevant outcomes. Similarly, Barlett and Anderson (2013), in their discussion of the GLM, note that individual differences may impact how viewers respond to content and thus the formation of knowledge structures via repeated exposure. Related to the present study, the length

of one's current relationship and the extent to which one views media alone versus with a partner (coviewing) are expected to have such moderating effects on the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and beliefs and attributions.

Relationship length. In their study regarding media use and endorsement of romantic ideals amongst undergraduates, Lippman et al. (2014) also examined the associations between endorsement of romantic ideals and relationship status, virginity status, and amount of dating experience. They found no significant associations. However, they noted:

> It may be that the shorter-term relationships that likely comprise the bulk of these college students' relationship experiences do little to affect endorsement of romantic beliefs, and that the ebbs and flows more characteristic of longer-term relationships contribute more strongly to romantic belief endorsement. (p. 138)

In keeping with Lippman et al.'s suggestion, it is plausible that the length of time individuals have been with their partners will affect the extent to which they are influenced by media depictions of romantic ideals as well as other relevant outcomes. Specifically, it seems possible that individuals who have been with their partners for longer periods of time will be less susceptible to the knowledge structure and personality changes that theoretically result from media use. For example, it seems likely that having a long-term relationship would serve as a counter factual to the depiction of fictional television that relationships are uncertain. However, given that research regarding media viewing and relationship outcomes has almost exclusively relied on undergraduate samples, it is unsurprising that no other research thus far appears to have examined the moderating influence of variables like relationship length.

Coviewing. Coviewing may also be a source of differential susceptibility. In their description of the GLM, Gentile et al. (2009) noted that the viewing context can have unique

effects on media users. Similarly, Valkenburg and Peter (2013) argued that coviewing is a social susceptibility, that is, viewing with someone else (in this case one's partner) can dampen or enhance cognitive and emotional responses. According to the GLM, the repeated activation of such responses is what leads to knowledge structure changes over time. Thus, we might predict that coviewing could lead to either weaker or stronger knowledge structure reinforcement.

A few studies have examined how couples use media, specifically television, together. In an early study on the topic, Gantz (1985) conducted a survey of married adults. He concluded that most couples regarded television as a positive force in their relationships and that "coviewing, even without communication interaction, may be sufficient to reinforce the sense of togetherness valued in close relationships" (p. 75). Years later, Finucane and Horvath (2000) built on this study with the aim of further elucidating why couples regard television positively. In a qualitative study of 14 married individuals they found that couples reported using coviewing for bonding and communication facilitation. Thus, Finucane and Horvath (2000) also concluded that television viewing was positively regarded by couples.

As previously described, research regarding television viewing and relationship satisfaction generally points to a negative association, which stands in stark contrast to viewers' perceptions that television viewing is a positive force in their relationships. Thus, when considering the associations between media viewing and relationship satisfaction, it is important to consider coviewing. It is plausible that watching with one's partner amplifies the impact of positive portrayals and decreases the impact of negative depictions. However, there appear to be no prior studies that have addressed the possible impact of coviewing on the associations between media use and these relationship outcomes.

Summary

Based on the propositions of the GLM and, more specifically, cognitive neo-associative theory, individuals who are repeatedly exposed to specific media content are expected to develop knowledge structures that are consistent with the messages or themes of that content. Although there is some prior empirical work examining the associations between media use and beliefs about romantic relationships, that body of research has been plagued with inconsistent conceptualizations of relevant media use and inconsistent findings. Additionally, researchers have almost exclusively relied on undergraduate samples.

SIP theory suggests that one way beliefs may impact relationship satisfaction is through attribution bias with maladaptive beliefs leading to more negative attributions and adaptive beliefs leading to more positive attributions. Related to the present study then, romantic movie and fictional television viewing would plausibly lead to more and less relationship satisfaction respectively and these associations would be mediated by maladaptive and adaptive beliefs and the tendency to make positive or negative attributions for one's partner's behavior.

The Current Study: Survey

The central concern of the present part of this study is to look for evidence that would be consistent with long-term, cumulative effects of exposure to media depictions of romantic relationships. The key questions investigated are as follows. First, whether prior findings (by other researchers) of different associations between relationship satisfaction and romantic movie versus television exposure are replicated when assessing habitual exposure to both types of content within the same sample. Second, whether those same associations are replicated with a sample of participants who are not undergraduates, that is, individuals with more diverse relationship experiences. Third, what mechanisms may underlie potential differences in associations with relationship satisfaction based on the long-term processes of the GLM. Finally,

do differential susceptibilities moderate the associations between use of these media and the formation of knowledge structures and attribution bias.

Participants were asked to complete a survey about their current relationship and media use habits. They were asked about their relationship length, relationship beliefs, attributions for their partner's behavior, relationship satisfaction, overall media use, frequency of watching movies and television with their partner, and frequency of romantic movie and fictional television viewing. Additional questions were asked about their experiences of romantic affect while viewing, but those are not analyzed here, given measurement issues.

Hypotheses

According to the GLM, repeated learning encounters, including media use, may influence social outcomes. In the current study, the social outcome of concern is the experience of relationship satisfaction as reported by participants. Based on the long-term processes component of the GLM, it is via cognitive and emotional pathways that media use may influence one's satisfaction.

Within the GLM, repeated exposure is first expected to lead to the development of cognitive and emotional constructs as explained by cognitive neo-associative theory (Gentile et al., 2009). Consistent with this proposition, repeated viewing of romantic movies and fictional television is expected to be associated with different levels of endorsement of relationship beliefs, specifically romantic ideals and the uncertainty of relationships, in the present study. Additionally, according to the GLM, the development of beliefs (and other cognitive and emotional constructs), may then lead to changes in personality such attribution biases, as explained by social information processing theory. Thus, in the present study, the endorsement of

romantic ideals and uncertainty of relationships is expected to be associated (contrastingly) with negative attribution bias.

Furthermore, consistent with the proposition of the GLM that person factors may lead to different responses to media, individual differences may moderate these mediated paths. Specifically, in the present study, social susceptibilities, including relationship length and coviewing, were expected to moderate the associations between romantic movie and television viewing and endorsement of relationship beliefs and negative attribution bias. Ultimately then, these theoretical propositions lead to moderated mediation predictions regarding the impacts of romantic movie and fictional television viewing on relationship satisfaction. The specific hypotheses of the present study follow.

Romantic movies. The predictions regarding the outcomes of romantic movie viewing are depicted in Figure 4. To preview very briefly, exposure to romantic movies is expected to be associated with greater belief in romantic ideals, lower endorsement of the uncertainty of relationships, and less negative attributions for one's partner's behavior. These outcomes are expected to predict more relationship satisfaction, but the strength of the indirect paths is expected to vary by relationship length and frequency of coviewing. Thus, the hypotheses build to moderated mediation paths between romantic movie viewing and relationship satisfaction.

Romantic ideals. Based on cognitive neo-associative theory as described in the GLM (Barlett & Anderson, 2013) and findings of prior research (Hefner & Wilson, 2013), repeated exposure to romantic movies is expected to lead to greater endorsement of romantic ideals. As previously described, this association may be stronger for those who are in newer relationships and for those who coview more frequently.

H1:   Romantic movie viewing will be positively associated with endorsement of

romantic ideals, and this association will be stronger for participants in newer

relationships or who coview more frequently.

Based on the propositions of SIP (reviewed earlier), greater endorsement of romantic

ideals is expected to lead to more positive attributions for one's partner's behavior. Additionally,

it is likely that romantic movie exposure will affect attributions directly, given that the present

study did not assess all of the possible knowledge structures that might affect attributions (e.g.,

affective traits). This association might also, following the preceding logic, be moderated by

relationship length or coviewing.

H2:   Romantic movie viewing will be negatively associated with negative attribution

bias, and this association will be stronger for participants in newer relationships or

who coview more frequently.

Individuals who make more positive attributions are expected to experience higher relationship

satisfaction than those who make more negative attributions, consistent with prior research

(McNulty & Karney, 2001). Thus, Hypothesis 1 and Hypothesis 2 lead to two further hypotheses

about the indirect paths from romantic movie viewing to relationship satisfaction. One is a

moderated, multi-step indirect path: romantic movie viewing ➜ (moderated) greater

endorsement of romantic ideals ➜ less negative attribution bias ➜ higher relationship

satisfaction (see Figure 4A). Additionally, the model contains within it a simpler path: romantic

movie viewing ➜ (moderated) less negative attribution bias ➜ higher relationship satisfaction.

H3:   Romantic movie viewing will lead to greater endorsement of romantic ideals

(moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will lead to less negative

attribution bias, which will lead to greater relationship satisfaction. This positive

multi-step path will be stronger for those in newer relationships or those who coview more frequently.

H4:   There will also be a simpler path whereby romantic movie viewing will be associated with less negative attribution bias (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will predict greater relationship satisfaction (even controlling for endorsement of romantic ideals).

Uncertainty of relationships. Analogous to the hypotheses regarding romantic ideals, repeated exposure to romantic movies with their emphasis on love conquering all (Hefner & Wilson, 2013) is expected to reduce belief in the uncertainty of relationships. This association may be stronger for those who are in newer relationships and for those who coview more frequently.

H5:   There will be a negative association between romantic movie viewing and endorsement of relationship uncertainty, and this association will be stronger for those participants who are in newer relationships or who coview more frequently.

Also parallel to the predictions regarding romantic ideals, less endorsement of uncertainty of relationships is expected to predict greater relationship satisfaction, an association that may be partially explained by attribution bias. Specifically, less endorsement of uncertainty of relationships may be associated with making less negative attributions for a partner's behavior. Furthermore, individuals who make less negative attributions are expected to experience greater relationship satisfaction than those who make more negative attributions. Taken together, the prediction is of a moderated, multi-step path: romantic movie viewing ➜ (moderated) less endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➜ less negative attribution bias ➜ higher relationship satisfaction (see Figure 4B). As in the previous model, there is also the simpler path:

romantic movie viewing ➔ (moderated) less negative attribution bias ➔ higher relationship satisfaction.

H6:   Romantic movie viewing will lead to lesser endorsement of uncertainty of relationships (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will lead to less negative attribution bias, which will lead to greater relationship satisfaction. This positive multi-step path will be stronger for those in newer relationships or those who coview more frequently.

H7:   There will also be a simpler path whereby romantic movie viewing will be associated with less negative attribution bias (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will predict greater relationship satisfaction (even controlling for endorsement of uncertainty of relationships).

Fictional television. Contrasting predictions are made regarding fictional television as depicted in Figure 5. There are seven more hypotheses of parallel form to the seven hypotheses regarding habitual exposure to romantic movies. Exposure to fictional television is expected to be associated with lesser belief in romantic ideals, greater endorsement of the uncertainty of relationships, and more negative attributions for one's partner's behavior. These outcomes are expected to predict less relationship satisfaction, but the strength of the indirect paths is expected to vary by relationship length and frequency of coviewing.

Romantic ideals. Based on cognitive neo-associative theory as described in the GLM (Barlett & Anderson, 2013) and findings of prior research (Lippman et al., 2014), repeated exposure to fictional television is expected to lead to lesser endorsement of romantic ideals. This association may be stronger for those who are in newer relationships and for those who coview less frequently.

H8: Fictional television viewing will be positively associated with negative attribution bias, and this association will be stronger for participants in newer relationships or who coview less frequently.

Lesser endorsement of romantic ideals is expected to lead to more negative attributions for a partner's behavior. It is likely that fictional television exposure will also affect attributions directly, given that the present study did not assess all of the possible knowledge structures that might affect attributions. Furthermore, this association may be moderated by relationship length or coviewing.

H9: Romantic movie viewing will be positively associated with negative attribution bias, and this association will be stronger for participants in newer relationships or who coview less frequently.

Individuals who make more negative attributions are expected to experience lower relationship satisfaction than those who make more positive attributions (McNulty & Karney, 2001) leading to two additional hypotheses about the indirect paths from fictional television viewing to relationship satisfaction. One is a moderated, multi-step indirect path: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) lesser endorsement of romantic ideals ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction (see Figure 5A). Additionally, the model contains within it a simpler path: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction.

H10: Fictional television viewing will lead to lesser endorsement of romantic ideals (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will lead to more negative attribution bias, which will lead to lower relationship satisfaction. This negative

multi-step path will be stronger for those in newer relationships or those who coview less frequently.

H11:   There will also be a simpler path whereby fictional television viewing will be associated with more negative attribution bias (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will predict lower relationship satisfaction (even controlling for endorsement of romantic ideals).

Uncertainty of relationships. Repeated exposure to fictional television, which, based on Study 1, gives the impression that relationships are more uncertain, is expected to increase belief in the uncertainty of relationships. This association may be stronger for those who are in newer relationships and for those who coview less frequently.

H12:   There will be a positive association between fictional television viewing and endorsement of relationship uncertainty, and this association will be stronger for those participants who have been in their relationships for a shorter period of time or who coview more frequently.

Greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships is expected to predict lower relationship satisfaction, an association that may be partially explained by attribution bias. Together with the previous hypotheses, the prediction is of a moderated, multi-step path: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction (see Figure 5B). As in the previous models, there is also the simpler path: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction.

H13:   Fictional television viewing will lead to greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will lead to

more negative attribution bias, which will lead to lower relationship satisfaction. This negative multi-step path will be stronger for those in newer relationships or those who coview less frequently.

H14:   There will also be a simpler path whereby fictional television viewing will be associated with more negative attribution bias (moderated by relationship length or coviewing), which will predict lower relationship satisfaction (even controlling for uncertainty of relationships).

Methods

The methods for the survey part of Study 2 were as follows. For information pertaining to the participants and overall procedure, see Chapter 3.

Measures

The questionnaire including all measures in their presented order is located in Appendix D of this dissertation. Table 14 shows the descriptive statistics for all measures.

Relationship length. Participants were asked to provide the initials of their current partner, which were then used in a number of questions regarding that relationship. One such question asked participants to identify the length of time they had been in their relationship in years and months.

Romantic ideals. Endorsement of romantic ideals was measured using a modified version of Sprecher and Metts's (1989) Romantic Beliefs Scale (RBS). The 15 statements in the original scale are forward-looking and worded in the first person. For example, "When I find my 'true love' I will probably know it soon after we meet." While these statements make sense when administered to undergraduates who presumably have not yet made a life-long commitment to a partner, at face value they do not appear to be as applicable to relatively older adults. For that

reason, the statements were modified primarily with "you" replacing "I" to reflect the same beliefs but more generally. (e.g., "When you find your 'true love' you will probably know it soon after you meet.") Participants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement (1 strongly disagree, 7 strongly agree). The scale assesses four factors: soul mates, partner idealization, love conquers all, and love at first sight. Because there were no hypothesized differences regarding these factors and the scale as a whole had high internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .91), the items were averaged to create a measure of endorsement of romantic ideals.

Uncertainty of relationships. Belief in the uncertainty of relationships was measured using a scale that was created for this study. Five items were written to reflect the nature of romantic relationships as portrayed by television shows. Sample items include, "Even if a relationship seems great today, it could fall apart tomorrow," and "You can never be sure about a relationship's future because relationships are volatile." Participants were asked to indicate the extent of their agreement with each statement (1 strongly disagree, 7 strongly agree). The items had reasonable internal consistency (Cronbach's α = .78) and a factor analysis indicated unidimensionality, so the items were averaged.

Negative attribution bias. Attribution bias toward participant's current romantic partner was measured using a modified version of Fincham and Bradbury's (1992) Relationship Attribution Measure (RAM). The RAM gives participants four scenarios in which their partner has behaved in an ambiguous way. Three scenarios were selected for this study to manage the overall questionnaire length. For each scenario, participants rated how likely they were to: think that the situation reflected a bigger problem with their relationship, think that their partner behaved that way on purpose, think that their partner is being uncaring, and blame the partner for

the behavior (1 very unlikely, 7 very likely). The 12 total items had high internal consistency (Cronbach's α =.95), so they were averaged with higher scores representing more negative attributions.

Relationship satisfaction. This measure was described in the last chapter as "pre-exposure relationship satisfaction." To remind the reader, relationship satisfaction was measured using Hendrick's (1981) Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), which contains seven items. The items were used to create an index of relationship satisfaction with a range of 7 to 35.

Overall movie and television use. A number of questions were asked regarding media use. Participants were first asked how many movies they watch per month (regardless of genre). Their responses indicated that they spent from 0 to 135 hours per month watching movies (presuming an average movie length of 90 minutes) with an average of 13 hours. Similarly, they were asked to indicate the number of hours that they typically spend watching television (regardless of genre) each day of the week. Scores ranged from 0 to 167 hours watching television per week with an average of 40 hours. The movies per month and television per week variables were log transformed to reduce skewness. Then, to create a measure of overall media use that could serve as a covariate, the two measures were converted to z-scores and averaged.

Media coviewing. Participants then indicated what percent of the time they spent watching movies and television with their partner. The two percentages ($r = .76, p < .001$) were averaged to create a variable representing percent of media co-viewed.

Romantic movie and fictional television use. Participants were asked how often they watched romantic comedy movies, romantic drama movies, television comedies, and television dramas (1 never, 8 very often). Because the hypotheses primarily focused on romantic movies

versus fictional television irrespective of genre (comedy and drama), an index for each was created with ranges of 2 to 16.

Romantic feelings while viewing. As indicated, participants were also asked to rate the extent to which they felt romantic while watching fictional television shows and romantic movies. Four items asked participants to reflect on how frequently they felt more love, tenderness, warmth, and romantic towards their partners when viewing romantic movies and fictional television shows respectively. This item was initially proposed as a mediator between viewing and relationship satisfaction. However, in retrospect, because the measure asked participants to reflect on the frequency of feeling these emotions when viewing, it did not make sense to treat this item as a mediator of the association between frequency of viewing and relationship satisfaction. Another issue with this item was that it was placed in the questionnaire immediately after similar items regarding coviewing. That participants may have been thinking about coviewing when responding was a concern. Ultimately, this variable was excluded from the analysis.

Results

Preliminary Analyses

Descriptive statistics and correlations for all of the survey variables appear in Tables 14 and 15 respectively. I examined the descriptive statistics, and there was no significant skew or kurtosis with the exception of overall television and movie viewing (as addressed above).

The correlation matrix indicates that there were significant correlations between each of the proposed mediators and relationship satisfaction, all in the expected directions. Endorsement of romantic ideals was positively associated with relationship satisfaction and endorsement of uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias were negatively associated with

relationship satisfaction. Endorsement of romantic ideals was also associated with endorsement of uncertainty of relationships. Also of note, both romantic movie viewing and fictional television viewing were positively correlated with relationship satisfaction.

Before proceeding with hypothesis testing, I conducted preliminary analyses to check for unanticipated effects of gender on endorsement of romantic ideals, uncertainty of relationships, and negative attribution bias using regression models that included the hypothesized predictors (romantic movies or fictional television, relationship length, and coviewing) as well as overall media use. As expected, there were no main effects of gender or significant interactions between romantic movie or fictional television viewing and gender predicting endorsement of any of the three outcomes. Therefore, the hypotheses were tested as planned.

Analytic Strategy for Hypothesis Testing

To test the initial hypotheses that the associations between habitual exposure to romantic depictions (in either romantic movies or fictional television) and each of the mediators would be moderated, I ran 12 hierarchical regression models analyzing: two types of media content (romantic movies or fictional television) two possible moderators (relationship length or coviewing), and three mediators (romantic ideals, negative attribution bias, and uncertainty of relationships). As shown in Tables 16 and 18, in the first block of each analysis, I entered the covariate (overall media use), romantic movie or fictional television use (centered), relationship length (centered), and media co-viewing (centered), which were all continuous variables. In the second block, I added the hypothesized two-way interaction term. To investigate significant interactions, simple slopes analyses were conducted using the MODPROBE macro.

I then used the PROCESS macro to test the hypothesized indirect associations between romantic movie and television viewing and relationship satisfaction. Depending on the results of

the previous analyses, I ran a serial mediation model (Model 6), a simple moderated mediation model (Model 7), or a moderated serial mediation model. Moderated serial mediation model testing was conducted using a method recently suggested by Hayes (2015). This method employs PROCESS Model 6 to generate an index of moderated mediation for each indirect path. Overall media use, coviewing, and relationship length were controlled for where not explicitly included in these models.

All indirect paths and conditional indirect paths were tested via bootstrap analyses with 1000 bootstrap samples and 95% bias-corrected confidence intervals. Within the moderated mediation models, moderation was evaluated at three points of centered relationship length or coviewing, the mean and plus and minus 1 standard deviation. The results of the analyses in relation to the hypotheses were as follows.

H1: Romantic Movie Viewing and Romantic Ideals

Hypothesis 1 predicted that there would be a positive association between romantic movie viewing and endorsement of romantic ideals, and that this association would be stronger for those in newer relationships or who coview more frequently. Results of the hierarchical regression analysis (summarized in Table 16) indicated that, as expected, romantic movie viewing positively predicted endorsement of romantic ideals. Overall movie and television use also positively predicted endorsement of romantic ideals ($b = .12, p < .05$), but the coefficient for romantic movies was substantially stronger ($b = .25, p < .001$). Counter to the prediction in Hypothesis 1, exposure to romantic movies did not interact significantly with either relationship length or coviewing to predict romantic ideals. Thus, Hypothesis 1 was partially supported.

It is worth noting that coviewing in itself was positively associated with endorsement of romantic ideals ($b = .15, p < .01$), even controlling for relationship length. Relationship length was not significantly related to romantic ideals.

H2: Romantic Movie Viewing and Negative Attribution Bias

Hypothesis 2 predicted that there would be a negative association between romantic movie viewing and negative attribution bias, and that this association would be stronger for those in newer relationships or who coview more frequently. Based on the hierarchical regression analysis (reported in Table 16), romantic movie viewing positively predicted negative attribution bias, which was counter to the prediction. Furthermore, there were no interactions between romantic movie viewing and relationship length or coviewing, so Hypothesis 2 was not supported.

Notably, coviewing was not significantly related to attribution bias, but relationship length was. Participants who had been in their relationships for longer periods of time made less negative attributions for their partners' behaviors ($b = -.16, p < .01$).

H3 and H4: Romantic Movie Viewing and Relationship Satisfaction Via Romantic Ideals and Attribution Bias

With no support for moderation of the associations between romantic movie viewing and romantic ideals or attributions, I next ran a serial mediation model (conceptualized in Figure 4A and summarized in Table 17) to test Hypothesis 3: romantic movie viewing ➔ (moderated) greater endorsement of romantic ideals ➔ less negative attribution bias ➔ higher relationship satisfaction and Hypothesis 4: romantic movie viewing ➔ (moderated) less negative attribution bias ➔ higher relationship satisfaction.

It was already clear from the regression analysis that Hypothesis 4 was not supported, given the unanticipated positive (rather than negative) association between romantic movie viewing and negative attributions.

As shown in Table 17, there was a significant positive total effect of romantic movie use predicting relationship satisfaction ($b = .20, p < .05$). Moreover, there was a significant direct effect of romantic movie viewing on relationship satisfaction ($b = .20, p < .05$).

As indicated in the regression analyses, romantic movie use did predict endorsement of romantic ideals. However, contrary to Hypothesis 3, romantic ideals did not significantly predict attribution bias, and thus there was no serial mediation.

There were though two significant indirect paths in the model. In partial support of Hypothesis 3, there was a significant positive path: romantic movie viewing ➔ greater endorsement of romantic ideals ➔ more relationship satisfaction ($b = .07, p < .05$). Contrary to Hypothesis 4, there was a significant negative path via attributions: romantic movie viewing ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ less relationship satisfaction ($b = -.09, p < .05$). In effect, the two indirect paths cancelled each other out, but given the significant direct effect (i.e., the effect not explained by romantic ideals or attributions), the total effect of romantic movies on relationship satisfaction was positive.

H5: Romantic Movie Viewing and Uncertainty of Relationships

Hypothesis 5 predicted that there would be a negative association between romantic movie viewing and uncertainty of relationships, and that this association would be weaker for those in longer relationships or who coview more frequently. The hierarchical regression analysis (shown in Table 16) indicated that, unexpectedly, viewing romantic movies predicted

greater endorsement of the uncertainty of relationships (even when controlling for overall media use).

There was no significant interaction between romantic movie viewing and relationship length. However, there was a significant interaction between romantic movie viewing and coviewing, which is depicted in Figure 6. Counter-intuitively, the positive association between viewing romantic movies and endorsement of uncertainty of relationships was only significant for participants who coviewed more frequently (at or above the mean). Therefore, Hypothesis 5 was not supported.

It is worth noting that overall media use also positively predicted endorsement of the belief that relationships are uncertain ($b = .14$, $p < .05$), but beyond this, romantic movie exposure had an additional positive association of equivalent magnitude ($b = .18$, $p < .05$). Surprisingly, neither relationship length nor coviewing significantly predicted belief in the uncertainty of relationships, although the associations were in the expected negative direction.

H6 & H7: Romantic Movie Viewing and Relationship Satisfaction Via Relationship Uncertainty and Attribution Bias

Given the significant interaction between romantic movie viewing and coviewing, I next ran a moderated serial mediation model. Because of the unanticipated positive association between romantic movie viewing and belief in uncertainty, it was already clear that Hypotheses 6 and 7 were not supported. However, it was worth investigating further whether there was a significant negative indirect path. In the moderated serial mediation model (romantic movie viewing ➔ (moderated) less endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔less negative attribution bias ➔ higher relationship satisfaction), the interaction between romantic movie viewing and coviewing was not significant.

Consequently, I ran a serial mediation model as reported in Table 17. As before, there was a significant positive total effect of romantic movie viewing on relationship satisfaction ($b = .26, p < .05$) and a significant positive direct effect ($b = .31, p < .001$).

Additionally, there were two unanticipated significant negative indirect paths. One was the predicted serial mediation path, albeit in the opposite direction from that expected: romantic movie viewing ➔ greater uncertainty of relationships ➔ higher negative attribution bias ➔ less relationship satisfaction ($b = -.03, p < .05$). The other was a path from romantic movie viewing ➔ greater uncertainty of relationships ➔ less relationship satisfaction ($b = -.04, p < .05$).

These negative paths somewhat suppressed the overall positive effect of romantic movie viewing on relationship satisfaction, in that the direct effect was somewhat larger than the total effect (as noted above).

H8: Fictional Television Viewing and Romantic Ideals

Hypothesis 8 predicted that there would be a negative association between fictional television viewing and endorsement of romantic ideals, and that this association would be stronger for those in newer relationships or who coview less frequently. The hierarchical regression analysis (reported in Table 18) showed that, contrary to Hypothesis 8, fictional television viewing positively (rather than negatively) predicted endorsement of romantic ideals, even when accounting for overall media use. This unanticipated positive association was not moderated by relationship length or coviewing. Therefore, Hypothesis 8 was not supported.

H9: Fictional Television Viewing and Negative Attribution Bias

Hypothesis 9 predicted that there would be a positive association between fictional television viewing and negative attribution bias, and that this association would be stronger for those in newer relationships or who coview less frequently. The hierarchical regression analysis

(shown in Table 18) indicated that although the main effect of fictional television viewing on attributions was not significant, there was the anticipated significant interaction with relationship length.

The simple slopes analysis (shown in the lower half of Table 18) indicated that there was the hypothesized positive association between fictional television viewing and attribution bias for those participants who were in their relationships for shorter periods of time (at the mean or below). For a depiction of this conditional effect, see Figure 7. Thus, more viewing of fictional television was associated with more negative attributions about one's partner's behaviors for participants who were in their relationships for shorter periods of time (even controlling for amount of coviewing and overall media use).

There was no interaction between fictional television viewing and coviewing. Therefore, Hypothesis 9 was partially supported.

H10 & H11: Fictional Television Viewing and Relationship Satisfaction Via Romantic Ideals and Attribution Bias

Given the significant interaction between fictional television viewing and relationship length predicting attributions, I proceeded by running a moderated serial mediation model to test Hypotheses 10: fictional television viewing ➔ lesser endorsement of romantic ideals ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction (see Figure 5A). Additionally, the model contained within it the simpler path predicted in Hypothesis 11: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction.

As reported in Table 19, there was an unanticipated positive (rather than negative) total effect of fictional television viewing on relationship satisfaction ($b = .26, p < .05$) and a

significant positive direct effect ($b = .27, p < .05$). Contrary to prior research, those who watched more fictional television were more satisfied with their relationships.

As in the analyses for romantic movies, romantic ideals did not predict attributions, so there was no serial mediation. However, there was one unanticipated positive indirect path: fictional television viewing ➜ greater endorsement of romantic ideals ➜ higher relationship satisfaction ($b = .06, p < .05$). Thus, Hypothesis 10 was not supported.

Regarding Hypothesis 11, relationship length significantly moderated the indirect path of fictional television viewing ➜ more negative attribution bias ➜ lower relationship satisfaction. In order to explore these conditional indirect effects, I ran a simple moderated mediation model controlling for romantic ideals. The results are included in Table 19. Consistent with Hypothesis 11, there was a significant negative indirect path of fictional television viewing ➜ more negative attribution bias ➜ lower relationship satisfaction, but only among participants with newer relationships (below the mean of relationship length). Amount of coviewing did not moderate this path. Therefore, Hypothesis 11 was partially supported.

To summarize, the total effect of fictional television on relationship satisfaction was positive rather than negative (contrary to the hypotheses and prior research). However, consistent with the theorizing in the current project, there was a smaller, negative indirect path for those in newer relationships, such that more fictional television viewing was associated with more negative attributions and less satisfaction.

H12: Fictional Television Viewing and Uncertainty of Relationships

Hypothesis 12 predicted that there would be a positive association between fictional television viewing and endorsement of uncertainty of relationships and that this association would be weaker for those in longer relationships or who coview more often.

The hierarchical regression analysis (displayed in Table 18) showed that fictional television viewing did not predict greater endorsement of relationship uncertainty. The association was in the predicted direction, but not quite significant ($p =$.08). This is in contrast to the significant positive coefficient for overall media use ($b = .17, p < .05$). Although in Study 1, participants indicated that they were less certain of positive outcomes for television couples and that television depictions prominently featured relationship problems, in this part of the analysis, exposure to fictional television was not associated with the belief that relationships are uncertain.

There were also no significant interactions between fictional television viewing and relationship length or coviewing. Thus, Hypothesis 12 was not supported.

H13 & H14: Fictional Television Viewing and Relationship Satisfaction Via Relationship Uncertainty and Attribution Bias

Hypothesis 13 predicted moderated serial mediation: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction (see Figure 5B). Hypothesis 14 predicted the simpler path: fictional television viewing ➔ (moderated) more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction. As in the test of Hypothesis 11, the index of moderated mediation for the indirect path of fictional television viewing predicting relationship satisfaction via attributions was significant in this model. (The difference is just that the test of Hypothesis 11 controlled for romantic ideals, but this test of Hypothesis 13 controls for relationship uncertainty.) As shown in the lower half of Table 19, there was a significant negative indirect path of fictional television viewing ➔ more negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction, but only for those participants with newer relationships (below the mean). Therefore, Hypothesis 14 (which was virtually identical to Hypothesis 11) was partially supported.

Given the near significance of fictional television viewing predicting endorsement of uncertainty of relationships in the hierarchical regression analysis (and no indication of moderation for that association), I proceeded to test a simple serial mediation model: fictional television viewing ➔ endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction (controlling for overall media use, relationship length, and coviewing) as shown in Table 19. In this model, there was one significant negative indirect path: fictional television viewing ➔ greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ lower relationship satisfaction ($b = -.03, p < .05$). Thus, there was a weak negative effect of fictional television viewing on relationship satisfaction via greater uncertainty of relationships, and Hypothesis 13 was partially supported.

Furthermore, in the pretesting of the stimuli for the Study 2 experiment, participants rated the television drama clips higher than the television comedy clips in regards to how strongly they endorsed uncertainty of relationships. Therefore, it seemed prudent to test the specific effects of television drama viewing (rather than only fictional television viewing) ➔ endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction. In this model, there were two significant negative indirect paths: television drama viewing ➔ greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ lower relationship satisfaction ($b = -.04, p < .05$) and television drama viewing ➔ greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships ➔ negative attribution bias ➔ lower relationship satisfaction ($b = -.03, p < .05$). While the unique effects of television dramas on uncertainty of relationships appear to be slightly stronger than the combined effects of television comedies and dramas, the total effects of television drama viewing on relationship satisfaction were still positive and rather strong ($b = .40, p < .05$).

Again, while the negative indirect effects of fictional television viewing had a small suppressive effect, the total effect of fictional television on relationship satisfaction was positive across these analyses.

Summary

The results indicated significant associations between media viewing and relationship satisfaction. Contrary to the overall argument of the project, the observed patterns were virtually the same for romantic movie viewing and fictional television viewing. Exposure to romantic movies and exposure to fictional television were both positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Positive indirect paths were indicated for both types of media viewing such that more viewing was associated with greater endorsement of romantic ideals, which was associated with higher relationship satisfaction. Furthermore, there were smaller negative indirect paths for both types of media use, such that more viewing was associated with more uncertainty of relationships and negative attributions for one's partner's behaviors, which in turn predicted less relationship satisfaction (in different parts of the analyses).

<div align="center">

Discussion

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As laid out in the introduction of this chapter, there were four goals of the present study. The first goal was to investigate whether contrasting associations between relationship satisfaction and romantic movie viewing (positive) versus television viewing (negative) were replicated when assessing habitual exposure to both types of content within the same sample. Those contrasting findings were not replicated. In fact, across the analyses, romantic movie and fictional television viewing were both positively associated with relationship satisfaction in the present study.

The second goal was to examine whether the contrasting findings were replicated with a sample of participants who were not undergraduates, that is, participants with more varied relationship experiences. Again, on the whole, in the current study both types of media use were associated with higher relationship satisfaction. Why might this be? Perhaps the negative effect of television viewing on relationship satisfaction suggested by prior research only occurs amongst individuals with less relationship experience. There was some initial support for that conclusion in the present study. The results showed that viewing more fictional television, led to decreases in relationship satisfaction via increased negative attribution bias (if one accepts that theoretically-driven causal order), but only for those participants who had newer relationships. This points to differential susceptibility to media effects. More specifically, in the present study individuals who had been in their relationships for a shorter period of time appeared to be more susceptible to some negative effects of fictional television viewing.

The third goal of the present study was investigate mechanisms that may underlie contrasting associations with relationship satisfaction based on the long-term processes component of the GLM. While those contrasting associations were not found, the current study nonetheless provided important insights. Notably, all of the proposed mediators were associated with relationship satisfaction in the expected directions. Endorsement of romantic ideals was associated with greater satisfaction, while endorsement of uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias were associated with less satisfaction.

Regarding romantic ideals, both romantic movies and, unexpectedly, fictional television viewing were associated with greater endorsement of romantic ideals, regardless of relationship length and percent of media time spent coviewing. Likewise, presuming the theoretically-proposed causal order is correct, both romantic movie and fictional television viewing led to

greater relationship satisfaction via endorsement of romantic ideals, even when controlling for overall movie and television use.

Counter intuitively, romantic movie viewing was also associated with greater endorsement of the belief that relationships are uncertain in addition to fictional television. Furthermore, (again presuming the theoretically-proposed causal order) romantic movie viewing led to decreased satisfaction via uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias. Based on these findings related to endorsement of romantic ideals and uncertainty of relationships, romantic movie viewing led to the endorsement of both adaptive beliefs and maladaptive beliefs. Further supporting this conclusion, there was a correlation between endorsements of the two sets of beliefs within the present study. Perhaps romantic movies actually send mixed messages regarding romantic relationships.

The final goal of the survey part of the study was to investigate the role of differential susceptibilities in the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing, beliefs, and attribution bias. As noted, relationship length did moderate one of those associations, between fictional television viewing and attribution bias, which does point to differential susceptibility. Surprisingly, the other social susceptibility variable, coviewing, did not moderate any of the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and beliefs or attributions. While it was plausible that individuals who more frequently watch with their partners would be more impacted by positive relationship content and less impacted by negative relationship content, that prediction was not supported in the present study.

Together, the findings of the current study shed some light on the questions of whom romantic movie and fictional television viewing impact and how such effects might occur. Overall, the effects were somewhat mixed, but more positive than negative.

As with all research, the current study has some limitations, which point to directions for future research. First, the current study was cross-sectional, which provides no evidence of causal order. Future studies should examine these associations over time in order to establish whether repeated viewing leads to the formation of particular beliefs or if holding particular beliefs leads to viewers seeking out specific types of media content. Second, the present study only considered two differential susceptibility variables. While these were chosen because they were thought to be the most relevant to the outcomes investigated, future research should examine additional individual differences. These may clarify the mixed associations with media viewing found in the present study. Perhaps there are additional population subgroups that are impacted by romantic movies and fictional television in different ways.

Finally, the current analyses did not test the GLM's proposition that repeated viewing leads to changes in emotional constructs. Given the findings of the experimental part of the present study, repeated exposure (particularly to romantic movies) may repeatedly evoke romantic affect, which may lead to changes in emotional constructs that are associated with attribution bias and subsequently relationship satisfaction. However, investigating this multi-step path is challenging. In the context of survey research, viewers would necessarily be asked to reflect on the emotions that they felt while watching specific types of media in the past. Such a measure may not be very reliable and is difficult to construct (e.g., should it include frequency of romantic affect or strength of romantic affect, should participants be explicitly asked to assess their emotional responses to the content independent of context, and so on). In fact, such a measure was included in the present study, but it was ultimately deemed unsuitable for analysis.

Additionally, apart from evaluating retrospective emotional responses researchers could attempt to assess emotional knowledge structures resulting from repeated exposure. The logical

choice would be to assess romantic feelings towards one's partner that may result from repeated elicitation of romantic affect. However, the challenge here is that romantic affect towards one's partner measured globally can overlap with the assessment of relationship satisfaction. To disentangle the two might be a goal of future research.

CHAPTER 5

GENERAL DISCUSSION

The overall aim of the present project was to build upon prior research that found associations between media use and relationship satisfaction. This is an important goal because if media use does contribute (either positively or negatively) to relationship satisfaction, it has the potential to indirectly affect both individual and relationship wellbeing (Gottman & Levenson, 1992; Proulx, Helms, & Buehler 2007). However, there are many gaps in the extant literature regarding the associations between media use and relationship satisfaction. To speak to these gaps, particularly regarding romantic movie and television viewing and relationship satisfaction, four general research questions were posed at the outset of this dissertation, which guided the project. The following is a review of how those questions were addressed.

Romantic relationship depictions. Because the focus of the GLM is on the effects of particular content, Study 1 sought to investigate differences in participants' interpretations of romantic relationship portrayals in romantic movies versus fictional television. Specifically, the study looked for varying interpretations that might underlie contrasting effects. Several important differences were found in participants' perceptions and expectations of these different types of media content. Regarding popular, familiar examples of romantic movies and fictional television shows, participants perceived romantic relationships to be a more prominent theme in romantic movies than fictional television, and, as compared to fictional television, participants perceived romantic ideals to be more prominently featured and relationship problems to be less prominently featured in romantic movies.

Participants were also given unfamiliar (researcher-created) plot summaries that were described as romantic movies or fictional television shows. Regarding these unfamiliar

examples, participants' expectations of romance and certainty that the central couple would be together in the end were greater when they were told the storyline was from a romantic movie versus a television show. Together, I argued, these findings indicated that romantic movies portray romantic relationships in more idealized, positive ways than fictional television shows.

Study 2 then examined both short- and long-term effects of viewing these types of media content on relationship satisfaction with an emphasis on the mechanisms that might underlie such effects. Short-term effects were investigated in the Study 2 experiment. Based on the short-term effects proposition of the GLM, this part of the study examined participants' affective responses to prototypical relationship portrayals (indicated by the results of Study 1) as well as the subsequent effects on their evaluations of their own relationships (affective priming effects). The effects of genre (comedy vs. drama) were also considered. Long-term effects were investigated in the Study 2 survey. Based on the long-term effects proposition of the GLM, this part of the study examined the changes in knowledge structures (beliefs) and, subsequently, personality (attribution bias), that might occur as the result of repeated exposure to romantic movie and fictional television content.

Romantic movie outcomes. Regarding romantic movies, prior research found that watching a romantic comedy movie increased relationship satisfaction evaluations amongst undergraduates in an experimental setting (Johnson & Holmes, 2009). One goal of Study 2 was to find out whether those findings would be replicated amongst a sample of adults who were more representative of the general population. By in large, those findings were replicated.

In the Study 2 experiment, when comparing the romantic movie and fictional television conditions there were no direct effects on relationship evaluations. However, there were three emotional responses that indirectly led to higher relationship evaluations in the romantic movie

conditions (relative to the television conditions) and comedy conditions (relative to drama conditions). Consistent with affective priming theory, as integrated in the GLM, experimental exposure to romantic movie clips (vs. fictional television clips) increased romantic affect, which was associated with higher post-exposure relationship evaluations. Likewise, when comparing the comedy and drama conditions there were no direct effects, but exposure to comedy clips (vs. drama clips) increased amusement, which was associated with higher relationship evaluations. These results were indicative of positive affective priming.

Additionally, as predicted by social comparison theory, exposure to romantic movie clips (vs. fictional television clips), which were regarded as upward comparison targets, also increased envy. Feeling envious was not associated with relationship evaluations. However, exposure to romantic movie clips (vs. fictional television clips) also increased hope, to a greater degree than envy on average, which was associated with higher relationship evaluations. From these results regarding envy and hope, it may be inferred that participants experienced more upward assimilative responses (feeling more hopeful and better about one's own situation) than upward contrastive responses (feeling more envious and worse about one's own situation) in response to the romantic movie clips. This was consistent with prior research (Buunk et al., 1990) that indicated that, on the whole, people tend to make more comparisons that make them feel better when comparing their relationships to others'. These findings of the experiment were novel in that they documented individuals' actual, immediate emotional responses to depictions of couples in romantic movies as a result of social comparisons, which was not examined in any prior studies.

To summarize, the experiment provided evidence of small, indirect-only differences between romantic movie versus fictional television exposure in relationship evaluations:

romantic movies, relative to fictional television, led to higher post-viewing relationship evaluations, controlling for initial satisfaction. Those changes occurred to the extent that viewers experienced positive affect, romance, amusement, and hope, while viewing. Thus, the results of the experiment support the proposition that media exposure can influence emotions, which can lead to varying appraisals, as outlined in the short-term processes part of the GLM.

Positive associations between romantic movie viewing and relationship satisfaction were also expected in the Study 2 survey regarding long-term effects. More specifically, based on the results of Study 1 and of prior research (Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson & Holmes, 2009), romantic movie viewing was expected to be associated with greater endorsement of romantic ideals, lesser endorsement of uncertainty of relationships, and lesser endorsement of negative attribution bias, which would be associated with higher relationship satisfaction. On the whole, the association between romantic movie viewing and relationship satisfaction was indeed positive as reflected by positive direct and total effects.

This association was mediated, in part, by greater endorsement of romantic ideals, as expected. Across the sample, participants who watched romantic movies more frequently were more likely to endorse romantic ideals, including soul mates, partner idealization, love conquers all, and love at first sight. Endorsement of these beliefs in turn predicted more satisfaction. Thus, the fear amongst some scholars that idealized representations of romance set viewers up for dissatisfaction with their partners because of disillusionment was not supported in this data set. Related findings were observed in earlier studies (Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Holmes, 2007; Sprecher & Metts, 1999), but the current project is unique in two ways.

First, this project, unlike prior research, observed not just parts of the proposed path – romantic movie viewing associated with romantic beliefs or romantic beliefs associated with

relationship satisfaction – but the whole path – romantic movie viewing leading to greater endorsement of romantic ideals and subsequently more relationship satisfaction. Second, this project observed these associations not only amongst adults with the relationship experiences typical of undergraduates, but also amongst middle-aged and older adults. Indeed, the strength of the indirect path was unaffected by the length of the participant's relationship. Thus, the positive association between viewing and satisfaction via romantic ideals is not simply a phenomenon of viewers who lack relationship experience. Conversely, the fact that the indirect path was not moderated by or explained away by levels of coviewing suggests that it is not the act of viewing romantic movie content together that produces more idealized beliefs and more satisfaction. Rather, the data are consistent with the possibility that romantic movie exposure fosters relationship satisfaction by reinforcing idealistic relationship beliefs. These survey findings are consistent with the proposition of the GLM that repeated exposure can lead to content-consistent changes in beliefs, a part of the long-term processes outlined in the model.

The results also showed that there was a smaller significant negative path from romantic movie viewing to relationship satisfaction via greater endorsement of the uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias. This finding supported the proposition of the GLM and social information processing theory in particular that cognitive constructs, in this case beliefs, can lead to personality changes or attribution bias within a given relationship.

Fictional television outcomes. What about the effects of fictional television exposure? In prior survey research the association between television viewing (conceptualized generally and as relationship-focused viewing) was associated with lower relationship satisfaction. Generally, that finding was not replicated in Study 2, and, in fact, the exact opposite association was found in the Study 2 survey.

Regarding short-term effects, the Study 2 experiment did not provide much evidence that fictional television (or television drama) viewing had negative effects on relationship evaluations via priming of feelings of anxiety. The television drama clip did evoke more anxiety than the other three clips, but feelings of anxiety were not associated with relationship satisfaction. Without a control group that did not see any media content, what the experiment allows us to conclude is that the television clips induced less romantic affect than the romantic movie clips and that the experience of romantic affect while viewing was associated with more satisfaction. However, it is worth noting that the average for romantic affect even while viewing the conflict-focused TV drama clip was 3.0 on a 7-point scale – below the mid-point of 4, but not at 1 (not at all). Thus, it is possible that watching television also increases satisfaction (relative to not watching at all), via romantic affect, but that possibility was not investigated in the current study.

On the other hand, it is striking, given the positive indirect paths to relationship satisfaction via romantic affect, amusement, and hope, that none of the indirect paths via negative emotional responses were significant. Drama clips did evoke more sadness than the comedy clips, and romantic movie clips did evoke more envy than the fictional television clips, and (as noted) TV dramas produced more anxiety than the other clips. However, none of these emotions were associated with post-exposure relationship evaluations.

As reviewed in Chapter 3, research regarding affective priming has found somewhat mixed evidence regarding the effects of priming negative emotions (Bless & Fielder, 2012; Angie et al., 2011). Some studies have found significant results while others have not, but Isen and Daubman (1984) theorized that negative primes have weaker effects than positive primes because individuals are averse to the experience of negative emotions and are more likely to stop the spreading activation that underlies negative priming. There is some support for this

possibility in that the scores for negative affect (sadness, anxiety, envy) were lower than for positive emotions. Thus, it may be that individuals suppress and terminate negative emotions as quickly as possible and reduce their effects on evaluations.

The survey part of Study 2 then examined the long-term effects of fictional television exposure. Based on the findings of Study 1 and of prior research, fictional television viewing was expected to be associated with lower endorsement of romantic ideals, greater endorsement of uncertainty of relationships, and greater endorsement of negative attribution bias. However, those patterns did not emerge. Not only was fictional television associated with higher relationship satisfaction in terms of the direct and total effects, but there was a positive indirect effect of fictional television viewing via endorsement of romantic ideals. There were smaller but significant negative indirect paths from viewing to relationship satisfaction, via endorsement of uncertainty of relationships and negative attribution bias, but the total effect of fictional television viewing was positive. While the findings were generally not consistent with the predictions made, they nonetheless point to the potential for repeated viewing to lead to changes in cognitive constructs and personality, as outlined in the long-term processes of the GLM.

The puzzle. At this point, it is worth summarizing the surprising findings across the different components of the project. In Study 1, participants indicated that they perceived very different themes and depictions of relationships in romantic movies as compared to fictional television shows. In the Study 2 experiment, there were significant differences between romantic movies and TV clips in the amount of romantic affect and hope experienced by viewers, and romantic affect and hope predicted relationship satisfaction. Nonetheless, in the survey component of Study 2, television viewing and romantic movie viewing had almost completely parallel associations with relationship satisfaction. Controlling for overall media exposure,

viewing both types of media content more frequently was associated with higher relationship satisfaction, and the indirect paths were substantially similar in direction and magnitude: positive paths via endorsement of romantic ideals, weaker negative paths via belief in uncertainty of relationships and negative attributions.

Why is there a disconnect between the Study 2 survey findings and those of prior studies (i.e., of negative associations between television viewing and relationship satisfaction), and why is there a disconnect between the findings of the Study 2 survey and those of Study 1 and the Study 2 experiment? The most obvious answer has to do with the conceptualization and measurement of exposure to romantic movies and fictional television. The argument has been that there are broad, prototypical characteristics of these two types of media content that cut across genres and individual exemplars, and that these broad, prototypical characteristics differ. While there is support for this in the experimental part of Study 1, there may nonetheless be important variations within these broad categories that were not captured by the survey measures of exposure. Perhaps tragic romantic movies foster the belief that relationships are uncertain, and perhaps there were recent, salient examples of such movies that affected participants' responses at the time they were completing the survey. Similarly, it is possible that although fictional television programs tend to feature uncertain, problem-filled romantic relationships, that there are exceptions and that these exceptions matter for viewers' beliefs about relationships and their assessments of their own relationships. As discussed in the "future research" section below, these findings strongly suggest the importance of probing further into viewers' exposure to romantic movie and television depictions of romantic relationships.

Differential susceptibilities. The present project also investigated whether differential susceptibilities played a role in the associations between relationship satisfaction and romantic movie and fictional television viewing.

To that end, the Study 2 experiment examined whether individual differences impacted participants' emotional responses as predicted by the GLM and social comparison theory. Indeed there was a social susceptibility, pre-exposure relationship satisfaction, that moderated the associations between exposure and emotional responses. Two of the significant indirect effects, those via amusement and hope, were moderated by pre-exposure relationship satisfaction. Individuals with higher pre-exposure satisfaction (relative to those with lower initial levels of relationship satisfaction) experienced more hope when watching the romantic movie clips and thus showed stronger gains in post-viewing satisfaction. Additionally, those with higher pre-exposure satisfaction (relative to those with lower initial satisfaction) experienced more amusement while watching the comedy clips, and thus showed stronger gains in post-viewing satisfaction. This suggests that individuals who are more satisfied with their current relationships are more "susceptible" to the positive effects of romantic movies, a "rich get richer" effect.

Another social susceptibility, relationship length, was found to be a significant moderator in the Study 2 survey. As noted briefly, fictional television viewing was negatively associated with relationship satisfaction via attributions, but only for those participants who were in newer relationships. In fact, this finding provides a possible explanation for why the results of this project diverged from those of prior studies regarding fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction.

Nearly all of the relevant previous studies were conducted with undergraduates who presumably have more limited relationship experience than the broader adult population. Perhaps

the negative association between television viewing and relationship satisfaction is unique to them. It is possible that watching portrayals of relationship problems (fictional television) leads to being more suspicious and thus making more negative attributions for a partner's behavior, but only amongst individuals who do not have the counter factual of long-time experience with that partner. However, the fact that relationship length did not moderate the positive path via romantic ideals, and the fact that this positive path was quite a bit stronger than the negative path, still leaves a mystery regarding differences between the current findings and prior findings.

Notably, another potential social susceptibility, coviewing, was also investigated in the Study 2 survey, but it did not moderate any of the paths between media viewing and relationship satisfaction. Surprisingly, context did not play a role in the associations between viewing, beliefs, and attributions. Nonetheless, together the findings of Study 2 related to individual differences demonstrate that some social susceptibilities may moderate the effects of romantic movie and fictional television viewing on relationship satisfaction in both the short and long terms.

Future Research

The current project provided some insight into the associations between romantic movie and fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction in a large, cross-sectional sample. However, there are still many avenues for further work.

Media viewing measures. One area for development is to capture more nuanced information regarding participants' media viewing habits. As noted, in the Study 2 survey, exposure to romantic comedy and drama movies and television comedies and dramas was measured broadly by asking participants to indicate how frequently they viewed each genre. Participants themselves defined what those genres were when they responded to the items.

Perhaps there are subgenres of these media that viewers interpret differently than the popular examples that were included in Study 1, or perhaps there are particular exemplars within these genres that are most salient and influential.

Future research might ask about participants' current, favorite television shows and movies and might supplement such measures with retrospective data about influential depictions (along the lines of work by Harrison & Cantor (1999), on frightening movie depictions). It may also be useful to use checklists of movies and television shows (as in some prior studies) or daily diaries of media use to capture what content participants are viewing more precisely. Such measures would then be usefully supplemented by asking participants to indicate how relationships are depicted in that content, in order to examine whether they are self-selecting content that offers positive depictions (despite the availability and prevalence of more negative ones), or they are selectively interpreting the content as reflecting positively on romantic relationships (despite the objective presence of negative themes).

Temporal precedence. Furthermore, studies that establish causal order, particularly longitudinal and additional experimental studies, are needed. Of particular importance is further investigating whether romantic movie and fictional television viewing leads to greater satisfaction or if those individuals who are more satisfied seek out romantic movies and fictional television. The experiment in Study 2 offered useful evidence that individuals who were randomly assigned to see either romantic movie or fictional television clips showed small, but significant, indirect-only differences in post-exposure relationship evaluations, particularly via differences in levels of romantic affect. Further work is needed to replicate and extend these findings, including using longer clips that might evoke stronger affect and more identification

with the characters, and the addition of a control group that would allow for examination of the effects of both types of content relative to no media exposure.

Additionally, longitudinal research is crucial for examining temporal sequences in longer-term associations. While the argument that media viewing leads to changes in knowledge structures and personality over time is supported by theory, specifically the GLM, it is possible that relationship-focused media appeal to individuals who are more satisfied with their current relationships to a greater degree. In the Study 2 experiment, I found that participants who were more satisfied with their relationships were more amused by the romantic movie and television comedy clips than those who were less satisfied. Perhaps then, those individuals who are more satisfied with their relationships choose these media more frequently because they enjoy them more. Such self-selection of this content may, in turn, foster more favorable beliefs about relationships.

Differential susceptibilities. In the present project, differential susceptibility proved to be a useful concept in investigating the associations between media viewing and relationship satisfaction.

Relationship satisfaction might impact how viewers interpret media depictions of romantic relationships. Study 1 did not include an examination of whether individual differences played a role in viewers' expectations or perceptions of romantic movie and fictional television depictions. However, the Study 2 experiment suggested that individuals with higher satisfaction responded more positively to the relationship-related content than those with lower relationship satisfaction. Perhaps individuals who are happy or secure in their relationships interpret the content quite differently than those who are less happy or more uncertain of their relationships.

Relatedly, attachment orientation is a dispositional individual difference that might be included in future studies. Individuals' orientations towards relationships more generally might influence how they interpret and respond to media depictions of romantic relationships. For example, individuals who fear rejection in their own relationships might be more susceptible to the potentially negative effects of portrayals of relationship problems like infidelity.

Regarding social susceptibilities, while the results of the Study 2 survey regarding coviewing were generally not significant, continued investigation of coviewing would be valuable. Researchers might investigate how viewing together impacts other relationship outcomes, like intimacy. While qualitative research has indicated that couples may use television for bonding and communication facilitation, it would be useful for researchers to explore this possibility on a broader scope and in consideration of relationship satisfaction. Additionally, the measures used in this study assessed coviewing of movies and television (in general). It would be beneficial to measure the frequency of coviewing particular media genres. This would allow for the examination of the interactions between specific types of content and coviewing, which might have distinct outcomes.

Explanatory mechanisms. Finally, additional cognitive and emotional mechanisms that may underlie the associations between media viewing and relationship satisfaction should be considered. Regarding cognitive mechanisms, further investigation regarding social comparison seems warranted. The results of the Study 2 experiment provided indirect evidence that participants made upward assimilative comparisons to the romantic movie clips. However, whether participants made such comparisons was not measured explicitly. Likewise, the Study 2 survey did not measure whether participants compared their relationships to those they saw in romantic movies or television shows. Assessing such comparisons might help us better

understand why fictional television viewing, at least in the survey of this study, was positively associated with relationship satisfaction. Perhaps viewers regularly compared their relationships to the problem-filled ones on television and made contrastive downward comparisons, which made their own relationships seem better.

As noted in Chapter 4, given the findings of the Study 2 experiment, it would also be worthwhile to measure the frequency of particular media-induced emotions (particularly romantic affect), over time. Such an investigation was intended in the present study, but was not completely successful and the data are not analyzed here. As previously discussed, there are challenges associated with measuring repeated media-evoked emotional responses in cross-sectional studies, but other methods would be particularly well suited to capturing such effects. For example, a daily diary study could be used, allowing participants to record their emotional responses as they view over a period of time.

Within the survey part of the present study, the most robust association with relationship satisfaction found was with negative attribution bias. That measure may have been particularly salient because it asked participants to indicate their probable behaviors within their relationships, which may have stronger impacts on the experience of relationship satisfaction than more general beliefs. Future research regarding the impacts of media on relationship outcomes should consider additional behavioral measures. For example, the assessment of conflict-related behaviors might be useful.

The value of broader samples. Within this dissertation, it was repeatedly emphasized that prior research regarding media viewing and relationship outcomes (beliefs and satisfaction) has almost exclusively relied on undergraduate samples. The results of this project, which in some ways diverge from those of prior studies, underscore the importance of investigating the

impacts of media viewing with adults who are more representative of the general population. While it is certainly important to examine the experiences of young adults, the present project showed that the findings of those studies may not be widely applicable. Future research that endeavors to address questions that remain regarding media viewing and relationship outcomes should include broader adult samples, as the studies within this project did.

Romantic relationships play an enormous role in most people's lives as mentioned in the introduction of this dissertation, and media has the potential to impact these relationships in multiple ways, whether through spending time with a partner or via media content. Thus, it is important for researchers to continue to study the role of media in people's romantic lives.

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Table 1

Descriptive Statistics of Study 1 Dependent Variables

	M	SD	Actual Range	Possible Range	Skewness
Experiment: Ratings of Expectations of Researcher-Created Exemplars					
Expect romance	10.3	2.57	2 - 14	2 - 14	-0.78
Couple gets together	5.2	1.45	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.77
Will be romantic	5.1	1.35	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.59
Certainty of a positive outcome	37.8	18.24	0 - 70	0 - 70	0.26
Couple ends together	5.0	1.49	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.44
Certainty of ending together	7.2	2.07	0 - 10	0 - 10	-0.63
Realism	4.5	1.49	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.25
Enjoyment	4.6	1.64	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.44
Survey: Ratings of Perceptions of Familiar Exemplars					
Movie – romantic relationships	7.5	1.80	3 - 10	2 - 10	-0.21
Dating	3.7	1.09	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.48
Marriage	3.7	1.04	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.41
TV – romantic relationships	6.8	2.15	2 - 10	2 - 10	-0.19
Dating	3.5	1.22	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.43
Marriage	3.2	1.33	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.15
Movie – relationship problems	16.1	5.09	5 - 25	5 - 25	-0.14
Arguing	3.6	1.10	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.50
Lying	3.2	1.18	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.25
Cheating	2.8	1.34	1 - 5	1 - 5	0.09
Jealousy	3.2	1.26	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.21
Breaking Up	3.3	1.20	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.27
TV – relationship problems	17.1	5.18	5 - 25	5 - 25	-0.36
Arguing	3.7	1.10	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.54
Lying	3.6	1.14	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.59
Cheating	3.1	1.32	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.16
Jealousy	3.4	1.26	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.31
Breaking Up	3.4	1.24	1 - 5	1 - 5	-0.37
Movie – romantic ideals	19.7	4.70	9 - 28	4 - 28	-0.09
One and only	4.5	1.77	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.32
Partner idealization	4.6	1.77	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.36
Love finds a way	5.6	1.32	1 - 7	1 - 7	-1.02
Love at first sight	4.9	1.54	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.49
TV – romantic ideals	17.9	5.60	4 - 28	4 - 28	-0.29
One and only	4.1	1.82	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.18
Partner idealization	4.3	1.79	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.28
Love finds a way	4.9	1.55	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.69
Love at first sight	4.5	1.67	1 - 7	1 - 7	-0.48

Table 2

Study 1: Number of Participants Rating Each Romantic Movie and Television Show

	Television Show					
	Comedies					
Movie	2 Broke Girls	Modern Family	The Big Bang Theory	The Millers	Two and a Half Men	Total
27 Dresses	2	0	3	1	1	7
50 First Dates	0	0	4	0	1	5
Along Came Polly	0	1	5	4	2	12
Failure to Launch	1	1	3	1	4	10
Hitch	1	2	4	1	0	8
It's Complicated	0	1	3	1	0	5
Just Go With It	1	0	0	1	2	4
Norbit	0	1	1	1	3	6
The Ugly Truth	0	1	0	3	1	5
Think Like a Man	1	1	0	0	2	4
Valentine's Day	3	2	2	1	0	8
What Happens in Vegas	0	2	2	1	3	8
Total	9	12	27	15	19	82
	Dramas					
	Criminal Minds	Grey's Anatomy	NCIS: Los Angeles	Scandal	The Blacklist	Total
Dear John	2	1	0	1	2	6
Nights in Rodanthe	1	2	1	0	0	4
P.S. I Love You	2	1	2	0	1	6
Safe Haven	0	2	3	0	0	5
The Fault in our Stars	2	1	0	0	2	5
The Great Gatsby (2013)	2	3	2	1	2	10
The Last Song	3	1	0	2	2	8
The Lucky One	3	0	1	1	0	5
The Notebook	5	3	4	5	1	18
The Reader	2	2	1	0	2	7
The Vow	0	2	3	2	0	7
Water for Elephants	0	1	0	2	0	3
Total	22	19	17	14	12	84

Table 3

Study 2 Participant Demographics

	Frequency	Percent
Relationship Status		
In a relationship	108	35.3
Engaged	15	4.9
In a civil union or domestic partnership	15	4.9
Married	168	54.9
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual (straight)	282	92.2
Gay or lesbian	9	2.9
Bisexual	7	2.3
Other	5	1.6
No response	3	1.0
Education		
Less than high school	8	2.6
High school or GED	75	24.5
Some college	79	25.8
2-year college degree (Associate's)	50	16.3
4-year college degree (Bachelor's)	71	23.2
Master's degree	20	6.5
Doctoral degree (PhD, JD, MD)	3	1.0
Race / Ethnicity		
White or European-American	217	70.9
Black or African-American	38	12.4
Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o	15	4.9
Asian or Asian American	23	7.5
American Indian or Alaskan Native	2	0.7
White or European-American & Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o	7	2.3
Black or African-American & American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.3
White or European-American & American Indian or Alaskan Native	1	0.3
White or European-American & Black or African-American & Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o	1	0.3
None of the above	1	0.3

Table 4

Pre-Test of Stimuli to be Used in the Study 2 Experiment: Descriptive Statistics by Media Type

	Romantic Comedy Movie	Romantic Drama Movie	Television Comedy	Television Drama
Romantic Ideals				
M	**5.0**	**5.2**	**2.8**	**2.2**
SD	1.17	1.09	1.25	0.92
Actual Range	3 - 6	3 - 7	1 - 5	1 - 4
Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
Skewness	-0.80	-0.15	0.30	0.01
Relationship Uncertainty				
M	**2.5**	**2.1**	**4.3**	**5.2**
SD	1.26	1.36	1.09	0.96
Actual Range	1 - 4	1 - 5	3 - 7	3 - 7
Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
Skewness	0.06	1.08	0.68	-0.64
Relational Conflict				
M	**1.4**	**1.1**	**5.2**	**5.5**
SD	0.66	0.19	0.85	0.82
Actual Range	1 - 3	1 - 2	3 - 7	5 - 7
Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
Skewness	1.55	2.92	-0.64	0.97
Relationship Deterioration				
M	**1.3**	**1.1**	**1.8**	**3.2**
SD	0.58	0.26	1.00	1.56
Actual Range	1 - 3	1 - 2	1 - 4	1 - 7
Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
Skewness	1.28	3.53	1.28	0.99

Table 5

Study 2 Experiment: Descriptive Statistics of Responses by Condition

		Romantic Comedy Movie	Romantic Drama Movie	TV Comedy	TV Drama
Amusement	**M**	**4.8**	**3.2**	**4.6**	**2.9**
	SD	1.65	1.59	1.86	1.66
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	-0.66	0.68	-.57	0.85
Sadness	**M**	**2.9**	**4.2**	**2.5**	**3.9**
	SD	1.84	1.63	1.63	1.76
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	0.75	-0.33	0.79	-0.23
Anxiety	**M**	**2.5**	**3.1**	**2.5**	**3.9**
	SD	1.66	1.73	1.65	1.71
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	1.05	0.54	1.07	-0.08
Romance	**M**	**5.4**	**5.2**	**3.4**	**3.0**
	SD	1.57	1.64	2.02	1.72
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	-1.28	-1.14	0.25	0.47
Envy	**M**	**2.7**	**3.2**	**2.3**	**2.5**
	SD	1.86	1.79	1.67	1.71
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	0.85	0.41	1.14	1.15
Hope	**M**	**4.9**	**4.8**	**3.4**	**3.2**
	SD	1.68	1.66	1.95	1.77
	Possible Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Actual Range	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7	1 - 7
	Skewness	-0.81	-0.74	0.25	0.39
Post-Exposure Evaluation	**M**	**40.6**	**40.1**	**40.3**	**37.5**
	SD	10.17	9.49	8.73	10.51
	Possible Range	7 - 49	7 - 49	7 - 49	7 - 49
	Actual Range	7 - 49	7 - 49	10 - 49	7 - 497
	Skewness	-1.44	-1.06	-1.60	-0.90

Table 6

Study 2 Experiment: Bivariate Correlations

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Pre-Exp Satisfaction								
2	Amused	.10							
3	Sad	-.09	.02						
4	Romantic	.19**	.57***	.27***					
5	Anxious	-.08	.16**	.75***	.18**				
6	Jealous	-.10	.38***	.52***	.47***	.59***			
7	Hopeful	.15*	.58***	.32***	.90***	.28***	.54***		
8	Post-Exp Evaluation	.80***	.20**	-.05	.28***	-.05	-.06	.24***	

Note. * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$, *** $p < .001$

Table 7

Study 2 Experiment: Effects of Condition and Proposed Moderators on Emotional Responses

	Hierarchical Regression Analyses				
	Amusement	Sadness	Romance	Envy	Hope
	β	β	β	β	β
Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	.07	-.08	.15**	-.10	.11*
Genre (0 drama, 1 comedy)	.43***	-.37***	.04	-.11	.02
Type (0 TV, 1 romantic movie)	.07	.11*	.51***	.18**	.42***
Adj. R^2	.19	.14	.29	.04***	.19
F	24.33 (3, 296)***	17.81(3, 295)***	41.18 (3, 296)***	5.28 (3, 295)**	23.84 (3, 295)***
Genre * Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	.24**	.05			
Type * Pre-Exposure Satisfaction		-.11	.11	.02	.19**
ΔR^2	.03	.01	.01	.00	.02
ΔF	10.68**	1.11	2.90	.06	7.39**
	Conditional Effects of Exposure on Emotional Responses				
Values of the Moderator	b (SE) 95% CI				b (SE) 95% CI
-1 SD	1.00 (0.27) [0.46, 1.53]				1.07 (0.29) [0.51, 1.63]
Mean	1.61 (0.19) [1.22, 1.99]				1.62 (0.20) [1.22, 2.01]
+1 SD	2.22 (0.27) [1.68, 2.76]				2.16 (0.28) [1.60, 2.72]

Note. All coefficients are standardized and reported within the step they were entered; Empty cells indicate comparisons that were not a part of that particular analysis; * *p* = .05 ** *p* < .01 *** *p* < .001

Table 8

Study 2 Experiment: Effects of Condition and Proposed Moderators on Anxiety

	β
Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	-.04
Condition	.29***
Adj. R^2	.08
F	14.71 (2, 296)***
Condition * Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	.07
ΔR^2	.00
ΔF	1.07

Note. Condition = television drama (0) vs. romantic comedy movie, romantic drama movie, and television comedy (1); All coefficients are standardized and reported within the step they were entered; * p = .05 ** p < .01 *** p < .001

Table 9

Study 2 Experiment: Mediation Analyses Predicting Post-Exposure Evaluations

	Drama (0) vs. Comedy (1)	Television (0) vs. Romantic Movie (1)	Three Conditions (0) vs. Television Drama (1)	Television (0) vs. Romantic Movie (1)	Television (0) vs. Romantic Movie (1)
	Sadness	Sadness	Anxiety	Romance	Envy
Mediation Model					
Condition ➜ Emotion	-1.32***	0.40	1.18***	2.04***	0.61**
Emotion ➜ Evaluations	0.18	0.10	0.18	0.79***	0.09
Direct Effect					
Condition ➜ Evaluations	0.75	0.39	-0.80	-1.17	0.38
Indirect Effect					
Condition ➜ Emotion ➜ Evaluations	-0.24	-0.11	0.21	1.60*	0.05
Total Effect					
Condition ➜ Evaluations	0.51	0.43	-0.59	0.43	0.43

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Controlling for pre-exposure relationship satisfaction.

Table 10

Study 2 Experiment: Moderated Mediation Analyses Predicting Post-Exposure Evaluations

	Drama (0) vs. Comedy (1)	Television (0) vs. Romantic Movie (1)
	Amusement	Hope
Predicting Emotional Response		
Condition	1.61***	1.59***
Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	0.02	0.04*
Condition * Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	0.10**	0.09**
R^2	0.22***	0.21***
Predicting Post-Exposure Evaluations		
Emotion	1.02**	1.23***
Condition	-0.16	-0.32
R^2	0.04**	0.06***
Index of Moderated Mediation		
	.10*	.11*
Conditional Indirect Effects of Condition on Post-Exposure Evaluations via Emotion		
-1 SD Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	1.03*	1.27*
Mean Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	1.64*	1.96*
+1 SD Pre-Exposure Satisfaction	2.24*	2.65*

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$

Table 11

Measures of Maladaptive and Adaptive Relationship Beliefs Used in Prior Research

Maladaptive Relationship Beliefs
Relationship Beliefs Inventory (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982)

Factor	Sample Item
Disagreement is destructive	When my partner and I disagree, I feel like our relationship is falling apart.
Mindreading is expected	People who have a close relationship can sense each other's needs as if they could read each other's mind.
Partners cannot change	I do not expect my partner to be able to change.
Sexual perfectionism	A good sexual partner can get himself/herself aroused for sex whenever necessary.
The sexes are different	One of the major causes of marital problems is that men and women have different emotional needs.

Adaptive Relationship Beliefs
Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989)

Factor	Sample Item
Love finds a way	If a relationship I have was meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.
One and only	Once I experience 'true love', I could never experience it again, to the same degree, with another person.
Partner idealization	I'm sure that every new thing I learn about the person I choose for a long-term commitment will please me.
Love at first sight	I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I find the right person.

Table 12

Summary of Prior Findings of Associations Between Media Use and Maladaptive Relationship Beliefs

Media Use and Maladaptive Beliefs

Author Sample Media use variables	Disagreement is destructive	Mindreading is expected	Partners cannot change	Sexual perfectionism	The sexes are different
Shapiro & Kroeger (1991) Adults # of specific genres of television, movies, novels, magazines, and music plus newspaper tabloids and fairy tales exposed to	ns	+	ns	+	ns
Holmes (2007) Undergraduates Romance-related TV shows, romantic comedy movies, magazines		+		ns	
Haferkamp (1999) Undergraduates Overall TV exposure	ns	ns	+	+	+
Haferkamp (1999) Undergraduates Soap opera exposure	ns	+	ns	ns	ns
Holmes & Johnson (2009) Undergraduates Overall TV exposure	ns	+	ns	ns	+
Holmes & Johnson (2009) Undergraduates Experimental exposure to romantic comedy movie	ns	ns	ns	ns	ns

Note: * significant positive correlation found, ns no significant correlation found; Empty cells indicate that the study did not examine that variable.

Table 13

Summary of Prior Findings of Associations Between Media Use and Adaptive Relationship Beliefs

Media Use and Adaptive Romantic Ideals

Author Sample Media use variables	Love finds a way	One and only	Partner idealization	Love at first sight	Overall score for romantic ideals
Holmes (2007) Undergraduates Romance-related TV shows, romantic comedy movies, magazines		+			
Hefner & Wilson (2013) Undergraduates Overall movie exposure	ns	ns	+	ns	+
Hefner & Wilson (2013) Undergraduates Romantic comedy movie checklist	ns	ns	+	ns	ns
Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook (2014) Undergraduates Romance-themed movie checklist	+	ns	ns	ns	ns
Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook (2014) Undergraduates Marriage-themed reality TV show checklist	ns	ns	+	+	ns
Lippman, Ward, & Seabrook (2014) Undergraduates TV sitcom checklist	ns	ns	-	ns	-

Note: * significant positive correlation found, - significant negative correlation found, ns no significant correlation found; Empty cells indicate that the study did not examine that variable.

Table 14

Study 2 Survey: Descriptive Statistics

	M	SD	Possible Range	Actual Range	Skewness
Relationship Length	**13.1**	12.08	0.2 –	0.3 – 47.1	0.93
Romantic Ideals	**4.8**	1.09	1 – 7	1 – 7	-0.19
Uncertainty of Relationships	**4.6**	1.12	1 – 7	1 – 7	-0.13
Negative Attribution Bias	**3.6**	1.53	1 – 7	1 – 7	0.15
Overall Movie and Television Use	**0.0**	0.86		-3.1 – 2.3	-0.55
Romantic Movie Viewing	**10.3**	4.01	2 – 6	2 – 6	-0.35
Fictional Television Viewing	**11.5**	3.92	2 – 6	2 – 6	-0.77
Relationship Satisfaction	**27.8**	6.05	7 – 35	7 – 35	-1.06

Table 15

Study 2 Survey: Bivariate Correlations

		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1	Relationship Length								
2	Romantic Ideals	-.07							
3	Relationship Uncertainty	-.09	.34***						
4	Negative Attribution Bias	-.20**	.04	.31***					
5	Overall Movie and Television Use	-.09	.24***	.21***	.23***				
6	Percent of Media Coviewed	.07	.19**	-.03	-.06	-.00			
7	Romantic Movie Viewing	-.17**	.34***	.22***	.24***	.42***	.16***		
8	Fictional Television Viewing	-.06	.29***	.18**	.18**	.41***	.12*	.49***	
9	Relationship Satisfaction	.02	.26***	-.19**	-.40***	-.02	.37***	.13*	.18**

Table 16

Study 2 Survey: Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Associations Between Romantic Movie Viewing, Beliefs, and Attributions

	Associations of Romantic Movie Viewing with:					
	Romantic Ideals		Negative Attribution Bias		Relationship Uncertainty	
Moderated by:	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing
	β	β	β	β	β	β
Overall Media Use	.12*	.12*	.15*	.15*	.14*	.14*
Romantic Movies	**.26***	**.26***	**.14***	**.14***	**.18****	**.18****
Relationship Length	-.03	-.03	-.16**	-.16**	-.04	-.04
Media Coviewing	.15**	.15**	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.06
Adj. R^2	.14	.14	.09	.09	.07	.07
F (4, 294)	12.84***	12.84***	8.37***	8.37***	6.23***	6.23***
Romantic Movies * Relationship Length	-.01		-.09		-.04	
Romantic Movies * Coviewing		.03		.06		**.13***
ΔR^2	.00	.00	.01	.00	.00	.02
ΔF	0.03	0.25	2.58	1.18	0.42	5.14*
	Conditional Effects					
Values of the Moderator						b
-1 SD of Coviewing						0.02
Mean of Coviewing						0.05*
+1 SD of Coviewing						0.09*

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Empty cells indicate variables that were not included in that particular analysis.

Table 17

Study 2 Survey: Serial Mediation Analyses of Romantic Movies Predicting Relationship Satisfaction via Beliefs and Negative Attributions

	Romantic Movies Predicting Relationship Satisfaction via:	
	Romantic Ideals	Uncertainty of Relationships
Step 1: Predicting Beliefs		
Romantic Movies ➔ Belief	0.08***	0.05**
Step 2: Predicting Negative Attributions		
Romantic Movies ➔ Attributions	0.05*	0.03
Belief ➔ Attributions	-0.08	0.36***
Step 3: Predicting Relationship Satisfaction		
Romantic Movies➔ Satisfaction	0.20*	0.31***
Belief ➔ Satisfaction	0.98**	-0.74*
Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	-1.64***	-1.53***
Direct Effect		
Romantic Movie Use ➔ Satisfaction	0.20*	0.31***
Indirect Effects		
Romantic Movies ➔ Belief ➔ Satisfaction	0.07*	-0.04*
Romantic Movies ➔ Belief ➔ Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	0.01	-0.03*
Romantic Movies ➔ Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	-0.09*	-0.05
Total Effect		
Romantic Movie Use ➔ Satisfaction	0.20*	0.26**

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Controlling for overall media use, percent of media co-viewed, and relationship length.

Table 18

Study 2 Survey: Hierarchical Regression Analyses of Associations Between Fictional Television Viewing, Beliefs, and Negative Attributions

Moderated by:	Associations of Fictional Television Viewing with:					
	Romantic Ideals		Negative Attribution Bias		Relationship Uncertainty	
	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing	Relationship Length	Media Coviewing
	β	β	β	β	β	β
Overall Media Use	.15**	.15**	.17**	.17**	.17**	.17**
Fictional Television	**.19**	**.19**	.11	.11	.11	.11
Relationship Length	-.06	-.06	-.18**	-.18**	-.07	-.07
Media Coviewing	.17**	.17**	-.06	-.06	-.04	-.04
Adj. R^2	.11	.11	.08	.08	.05	.05
$F(4, 293)$	10.30***	10.30***	7.69***	7.69***	4.93**	4.93**
Fictional Television * Relationship Length	-.02		**-.15**		-.03	
Fictional Television * Media Coviewing		.07		.01		.04
ΔR^2	.00	.00	.02	.00	.00	.00
ΔF	0.14	1.61	7.10**	0.01	0.21	0.54
	Conditional Effects					
Values of the Moderator			b			
-1 SD of Relationship Length			0.11*			
Mean of Relationship Length			0.05*			
+1 SD of Relationship Length			-0.01			

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Empty cells indicate variables that were not included in that particular analysis.

Table 19

Study 2 Survey: Moderated Serial Mediation Analysis of Fictional Television Viewing Predicting Relationship Satisfaction via Beliefs and Negative Attributions as Moderated by Relationship Length

	Fictional Television Predicting Relationship Satisfaction via:		
	Romantic Ideals	Uncertainty of Relationships	Uncertainty of Relationships
Step 1: Predicting Beliefs			
Fictional Television ➔ Belief	0.05**	0.03	0.03
Step 2: Predicting Negative Attributions			
Fictional Television ➔ Attributions	0.04	0.03	0.02
Belief ➔ Attributions	-0.07	0.36***	0.37***
Fictional Television * Relationship Length ➔ Attributions	-0.01**	-0.01**	
Step 3: Predicting Relationship Satisfaction			
Fictional Television ➔ Satisfaction	0.27**	0.34**	0.35***
Belief ➔ Satisfaction	1.01**	-0.69*	-0.69*
Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	-1.58***	-1.47***	-1.53***
Direct Effect			
Fictional Television ➔ Satisfaction	0.27**	0.34**	0.35***
Indirect Effects			
Fictional Television ➔ Belief ➔ Satisfaction	0.06*	-0.02	-0.03*
Fictional Television ➔ Belief ➔ Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	0.01	-0.02	-0.02
Fictional Television ➔ Attributions ➔ Satisfaction	-0.07	-0.04	-0.04
Total Effect			
Media Use ➔ Satisfaction	0.26**	0.26**	0.20*
Fictional Television and Relationship Satisfaction via Negative Attributions Moderated by Relationship Length			
Index of Moderated Mediation	.01*	.01*	
Conditional Indirect Effects			
-1 SD of relationship length	-0.17*	-0.13*	
Mean of relationship length	-0.07	-0.04	
+1 SD of relationship length	0.03	0.05	

Note. * $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$; Controlling for overall media use and percent of media co-viewed.
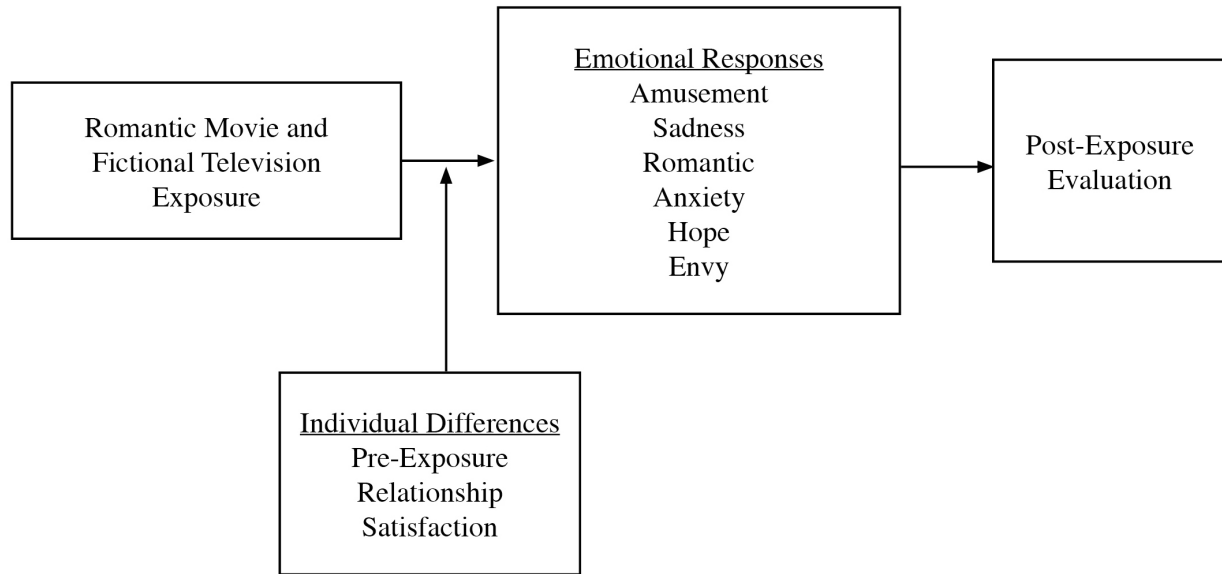
Figure 1A. Conceptual diagram of Study 2 experiment.
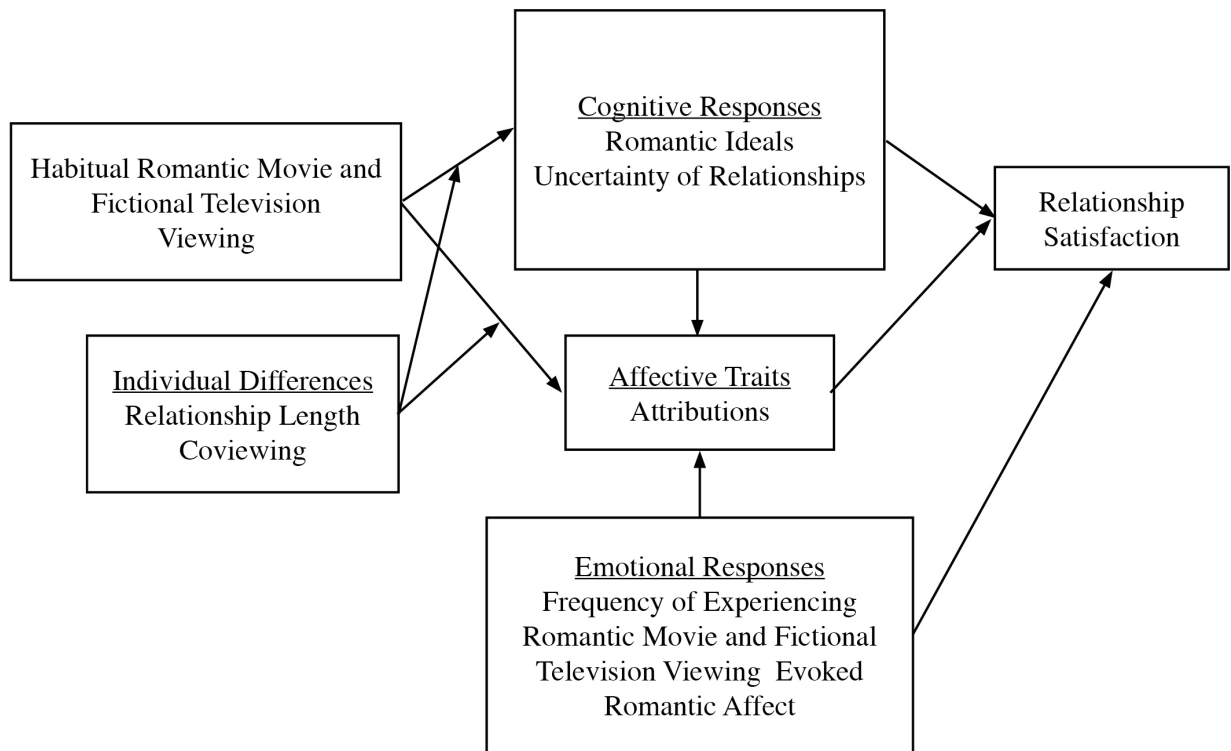
Figure 1B. Conceptual diagram of Study 2 survey.
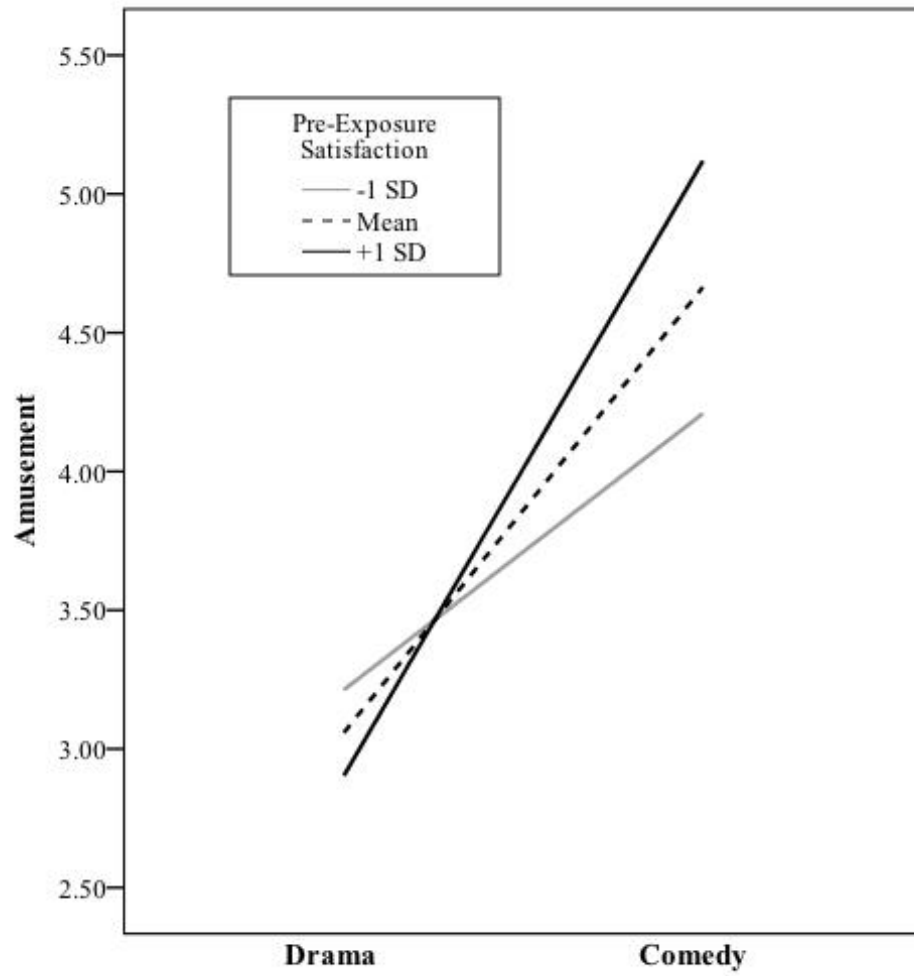
Figure 2. The effect of drama versus comedy clip exposure on amusement at three values of pre-exposure relationship satisfaction.
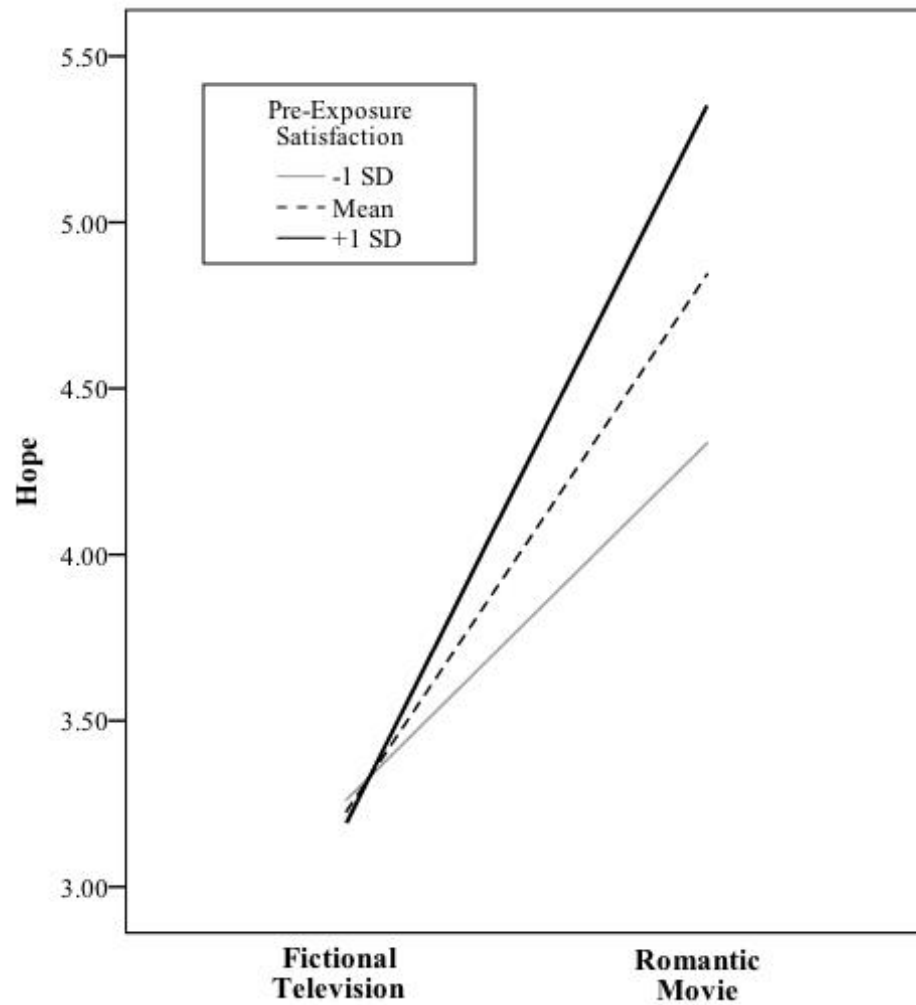
Figure 3. The effect of fictional television versus romantic movie clip exposure on hope at three values of pre-exposure relationship satisfaction.
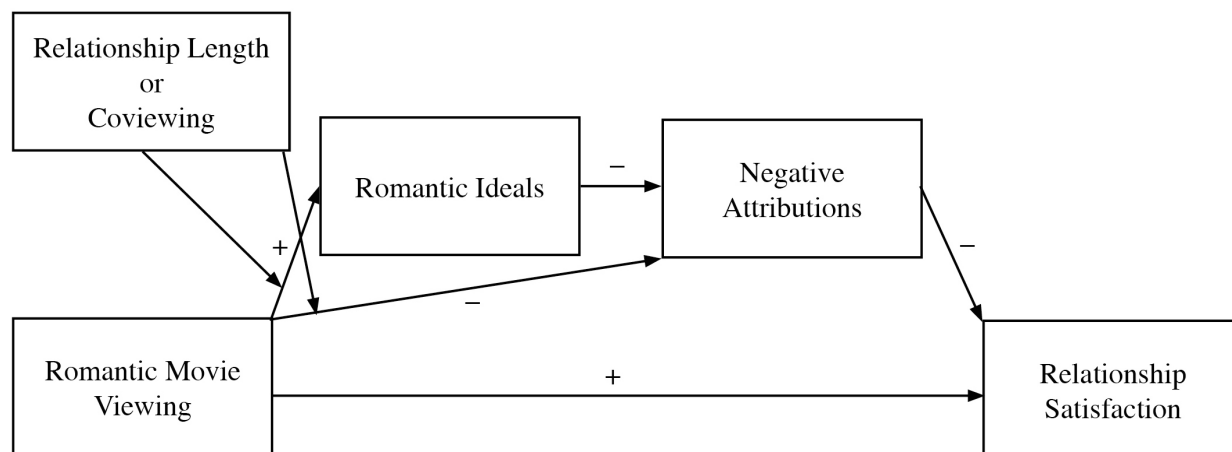
Figure 4A. Proposed associations between romantic movie viewing and relationship satisfaction via romantic ideals and attributions.
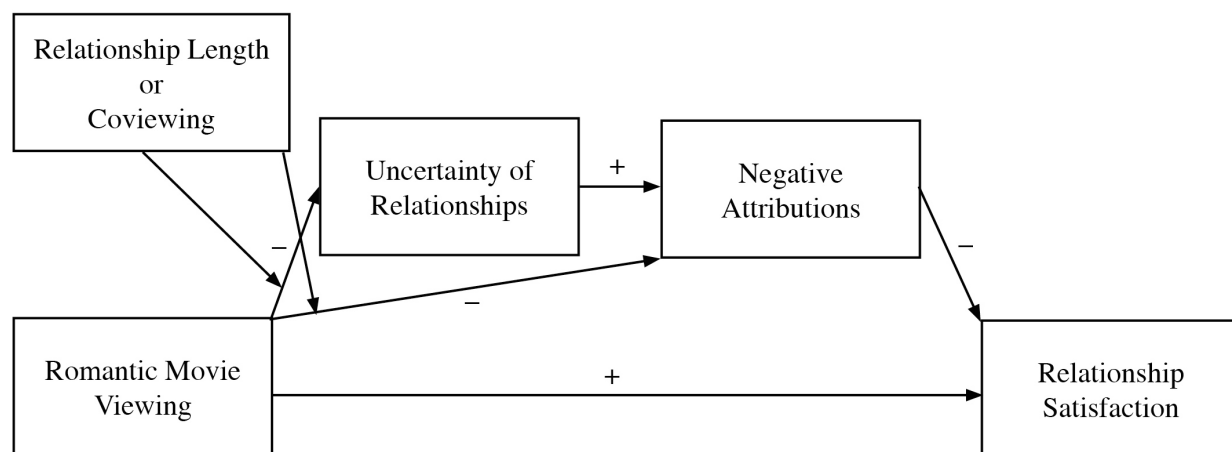
Figure 4B. Proposed associations between romantic movie viewing and relationship satisfaction via uncertainty of relationships and attributions.
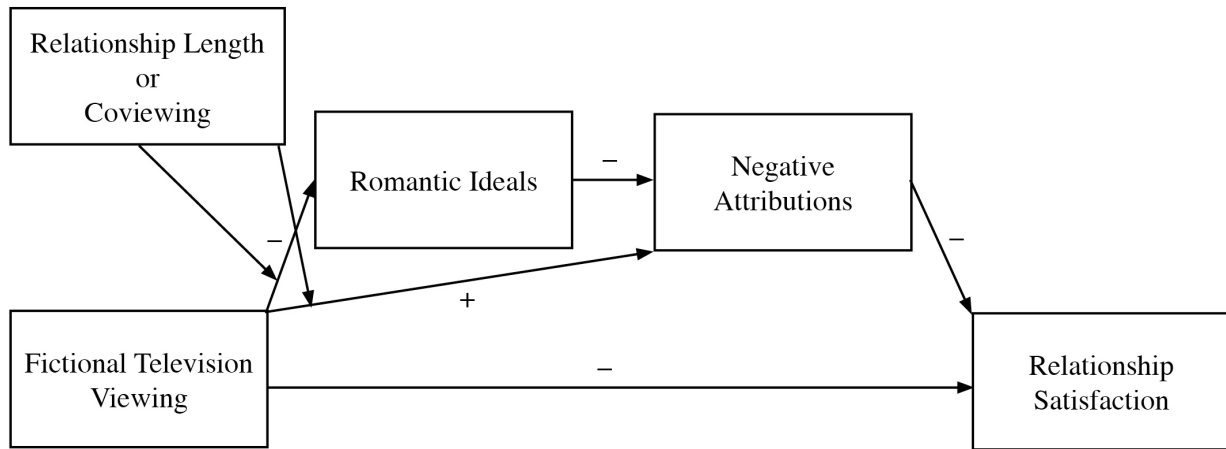
Figure 5A. Proposed associations between fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction via romantic ideals and attributions.
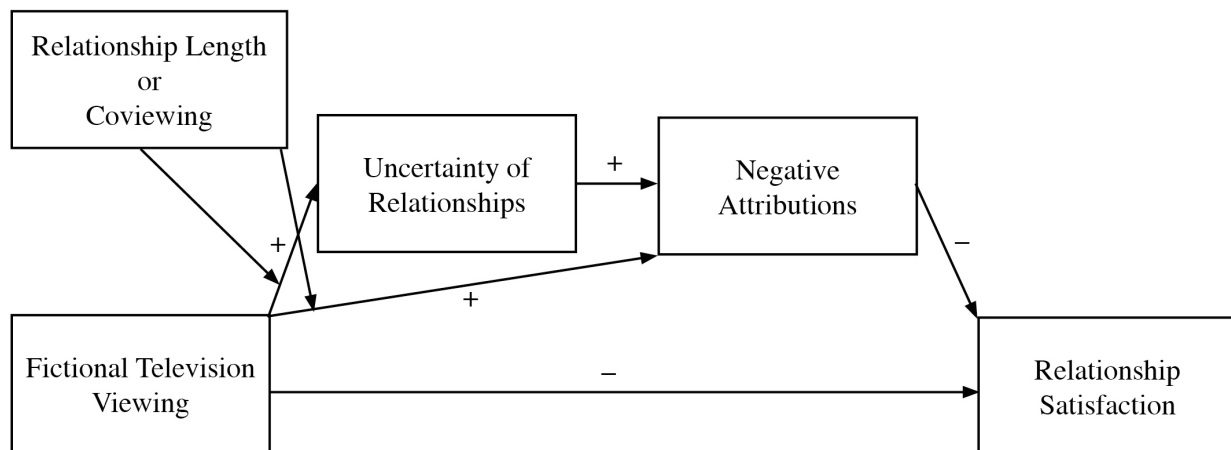
Figure 5B. Proposed associations between fictional television viewing and relationship satisfaction via uncertainty of relationships and attributions.
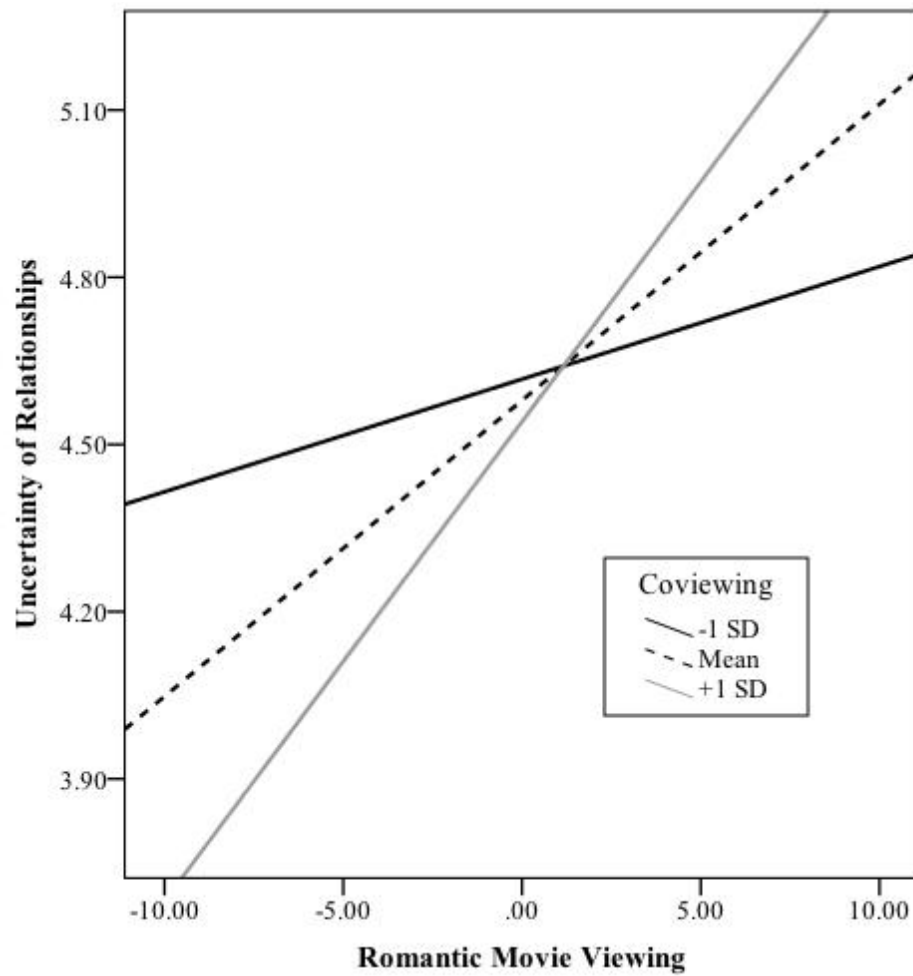
Figure 6. The associations between romantic movie viewing and uncertainty of relationships at three values of coviewing.
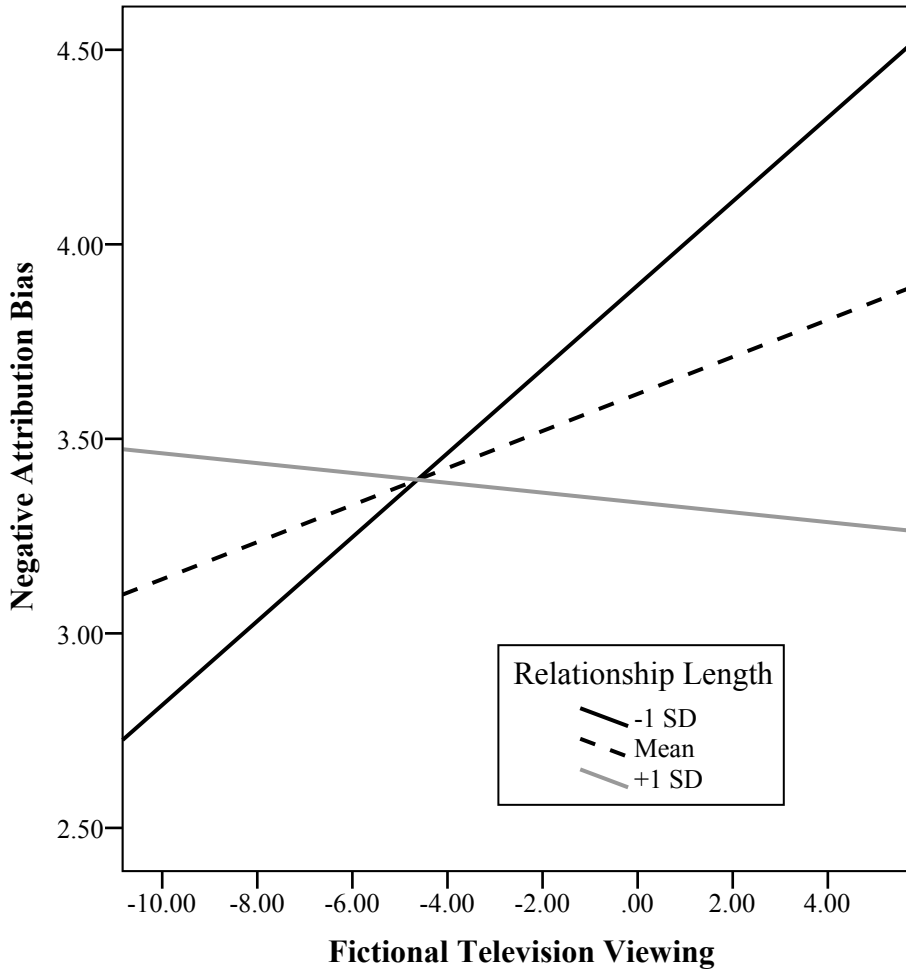
Figure 7. The associations between fictional television viewing and negative attribution bias at three values of relationship length.

Appendix A

Study 1 Materials

"Code Blue"

Movie – Comedy & Drama

TV – Comedy & Drama

Movie – Romantic Comedy & Drama

There is chemistry between Susan, who is a doctor and Bill, a nurse's aide, but a relationship between them would be challenging because of their different jobs. Their schedules often conflict, Susan makes more money and has higher status, and Susan's doctor friends often make jokes at Bill's expense.

"My Thirty-Something Life"

Movie – Comedy & Drama

Television Show – Comedy & Drama

Movie – Romantic Comedy & Drama

Beth and George have been a part of the same group of friends for years, and they are very close. During that time, Beth has had a string of serious boyfriends, but George has remained committed to his bachelor lifestyle. Now that Beth is engaged to another man, George realizes his true feelings for Beth and why he's been reluctant to commit to other women. George isn't sure what to do since Beth is engaged, so Beth and George's interactions become awkward.

Appendix B

Study 1 Questionnaire

How old are you? _____

What is your gender?
❍ Female
❍ Male

About how many movies do you watch in a typical month? (for example, at home or in the theater) _____

On the average week day, how much time do you watch TV? _____ Hours _____ Minutes

On the average weekend day, how much time do you watch TV? _____ Hours _____ Minutes

We're interested in how people decide which (movies / television shows) to watch. Please read the advertisement below for a new (condition) called Code Blue and then rate the statements that follow.

What are your expectations of this (condition)?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Equally Likely / Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
At some point during Code Blue, Susan and Bill will get romantically involved.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
At the end of Code Blue, Susan and Bill will be together.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Code Blue will be funny.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Code Blue will be romantic.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Code Blue will be realistic.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
You would enjoy watching Code Blue.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

You indicated it is (likelihood) that Susan and Bill will be together at the end of the (condition) Code Blue. How confident were you in making that prediction? _____ %

We're interested in how people decide which (movies / television shows) to watch. Please read the advertisement below for a new (condition) called My Thirty-Something Life and then rate the statements that follow.

What are your expectations of this (condition)?

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Equally Likely / Unlikely	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
At some point during My Thirty-Something Life, Beth and George will get romantically involved.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
At the end of My Thirty-Something Life, Beth and George will be together.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My Thirty-Something Life will be funny.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My Thirty-Something Life will be romantic.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My Thirty-Something Life will be realistic.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
You would enjoy watching My Thirty-Something Life.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

You indicated it is (likelihood) that Beth and George will be together at the end of the (condition) My Thirty-Something Life. How confident were you in making that prediction? _____ %

How familiar are you with each of the following movies?

	Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Hitch	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
50 First Dates	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
It's Complicated	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Valentine's Day	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Just Go With It	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Norbit	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Think Like a Man	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

The Ugly Truth	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Failure to Launch	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Along Came Polly	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
What Happens in Vegas	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
27 Dresses	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

How familiar are you with each of the following television shows?

	Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Extremely Familiar
The Big Bang Theory	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Modern Family	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The Millers	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
2 Broke Girls	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Two and a Half Men	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

We prepared the next few questions based on what you told us so far about television shows and movies you watched. Please continue to the next page now.

Below are romantic relationship themes that some movies may illustrate while others do not. Rate whether you agree that (Romantic Comedy Movie Title) demonstrates each theme using the scale below.

According to (Romantic Comedy Movie Title) …

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Once someone experiences 'true love', they could never experience it again to the same degree, with another person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
In a long-term committed relationship people like every new thing they learn about each other.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If a relationship is meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

overcome.						
Someone is likely to fall in love almost immediately if they meet the right person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Below are romantic relationship themes that some movies may deal with. To what extent are each of the themes below featured in (Romantic Comedy Movie Title)?

	Not at All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
Dating	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Marriage	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Arguing	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lying	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cheating	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Jealousy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Breaking Up	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Below are romantic relationship themes that some television shows may illustrate while others do not. Rate whether you agree that (Television Comedy Title) demonstrates each theme using the scale below.

According to (Television Comedy Title)...

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Once someone experiences 'true love', they could never experience it again to the same degree, with another person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
In a long-term committed relationship people like every new thing they learn about each other.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If a relationship is meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Someone is likely to fall in love almost immediately if they meet the right person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Below are romantic relationship themes that some television shows may deal with. To what extent are each of the themes below featured in (Television Comedy Title)?

	Not At All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
Dating	○	○	○	○	○
Marriage	○	○	○	○	○
Arguing	○	○	○	○	○
Lying	○	○	○	○	○
Cheating	○	○	○	○	○
Jealousy	○	○	○	○	○
Breaking Up	○	○	○	○	○

How familiar are you with each of the following movies?

	Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Extremely Familiar
The Great Gatsby (2013)	○	○	○	○	○
The Vow	○	○	○	○	○
The Fault in our Stars	○	○	○	○	○
The Notebook	○	○	○	○	○
Dear John	○	○	○	○	○
Safe Haven	○	○	○	○	○
The Last Song	○	○	○	○	○
The Lucky One	○	○	○	○	○
Water for Elephants	○	○	○	○	○
P.S. I Love You	○	○	○	○	○
Nights in Rodanthe	○	○	○	○	○
The Reader	○	○	○	○	○

How familiar are you with each of the following television shows?

	Not At All Familiar	Slightly Familiar	Somewhat Familiar	Very Familiar	Extremely Familiar
Scandal	○	○	○	○	○
The Blacklist	○	○	○	○	○
Grey's Anatomy	○	○	○	○	○

Criminal Minds	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
NCIS: Los Angeles	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Below are romantic relationship themes that some movies may illustrate while others do not. Rate whether you agree that (Romantic Drama Movie Title) demonstrates each theme using the scale below.

 According to (Romantic Drama Movie Title)…

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Once someone experiences 'true love', they could never experience it again to the same degree, with another person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
In a long-term committed relationship people like every new thing they learn about each other.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If a relationship is meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Someone is likely to fall in love almost immediately if they meet the right person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Below are romantic relationship themes that some movies may deal with. To what extent are each of the themes below featured in (Romantic Drama Title)?

	Not at All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
Dating	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Marriage	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Arguing	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Lying	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Cheating	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Jealousy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Breaking Up	○	○	○	○	○

Below are romantic relationship themes that some television shows may illustrate while others do not. Rate whether you agree that (Television Drama Title) demonstrates each theme using the scale below.

According to (Television Drama Title)…

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Once someone experiences 'true love', they could never experience it again to the same degree, with another person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In a long-term committed relationship people like every new thing they learn about each other.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If a relationship is meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Someone is likely to fall in love almost immediately if they meet the right person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Below are romantic relationship themes that some television shows may deal with. To what extent are each of the themes below featured in (Television Drama Title)?

	Not at All	Slightly	Somewhat	Moderately	Extremely
Dating	○	○	○	○	○
Marriage	○	○	○	○	○
Arguing	○	○	○	○	○
Lying	○	○	○	○	○
Cheating	○	○	○	○	○
Jealousy	○	○	○	○	○
Breaking Up	○	○	○	○	○

How do you identify with regard to the following categories?
- ○ Heterosexual (straight)
- ○ Gay or lesbian
- ○ Bisexual
- ○ Other

What is your current relationship status?
- ○ I am single.
- ○ I am in an exclusive dating relationship.
- ○ I am engaged.
- ○ I am married.

Please check any of the following that apply to you:
- ○ White or European-American
- ○ Black or African-American
- ○ Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o
- ○ Asian or Asian American
- ○ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ○ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ○ A combination of one or more of these
- ○ None of these

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ○ Less than high school
- ○ High school or GED
- ○ Some college
- ○ 2-year college degree (Associate's)
- ○ 4-year college degree (Bachelor's)
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctoral degree (PhD, JD, MD)

Appendix C

Study 2 Pre-Test Questionnaire

How old are you? _____

You're eligible to complete the survey! We'd like you to watch a video clip and then to answer some questions about it. You'll be asked to watch a total of two clips and to answer questions about each of them.

On the next page, you'll find the first clip and questions. Please make sure the sound on your computer is turned on and watch the clip carefully! Answer the questions afterwards.

Below are some themes or messages about romantic relationships. To what extent were each of these themes featured in the clip you watched?

	Not at All						Very Much
To be truly in love is to be in love forever.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
In a long-term committed relationship people like every new thing they learn about each other.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Love conquers all problems.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Someone is likely to fall in love almost immediately if they meet the right person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Below are some statements about the nature of romantic relationships. To what extent did watching the clip leave you with the impression that:

	Not at All						Very Much
You can never really know whether a relationship will last.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You can never be sure about a relationship's future because relationships are volatile.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ups and downs in a relationship are probably a sign that the relationship is in trouble.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Below are romantic relationship issues that some media may deal with. To what extent were each of the themes below featured in the video clip you watched?

	Not at All						Very Much
Arguing	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tension	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Lying	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cheating	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jealousy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Breaking Up	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Divorce	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How did watching the clip make you feel? Indicate how much you experienced each feeling listed below.

	Not at All						Very Much
Contemplative	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Thoughtful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Pensive	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Hopeful	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Encouraged	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Inspired	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Envious	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Jealous	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Anxious	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Tense	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Uneasy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Amused	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Entertained	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Cheered	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Sad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Blue	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Gloomy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Romantic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Loving	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Warm-hearted	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How much do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I found the clip entertaining.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoyed watching the clip.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be interested in seeing the entire movie or television show.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

What type of media was the video clip from?
- ○ romantic comedy movie
- ○ romantic drama movie
- ○ television comedy
- ○ television drama
- ○ don't know

How similar was the clip to a typical romantic comedy movie?
- ○ Not at All
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○
- ○ Very Much

How many times have you seen the movie or television episode that the video clip is from before?
- ○ 0
- ○ 1
- ○ 2
- ○ 3
- ○ 4
- ○ 5 or more

You're almost done! The last page just asks for some basic demographic information so that we can report on the mix of people who participated.

What is your gender?
- ❍ Female
- ❍ Male

How do you identify with regard to the following categories?
- ❍ Heterosexual (straight)
- ❍ Gay or lesbian
- ❍ Bisexual
- ❍ Other

Which option best describes your current relationship status?
- ❍ Single
- ❍ In a relationship
- ❍ Engaged
- ❍ In a civil union or domestic partnership
- ❍ Married

Please check any of the following that apply to you:
- ❑ White or European-American
- ❑ Black or African-American
- ❑ Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o
- ❑ Asian or Asian American
- ❑ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ❑ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ❑ None of these

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ❍ Less than high school
- ❍ High school or GED
- ❍ Some college
- ❍ 2-year college degree (Associate's)
- ❍ 4-year college degree (Bachelor's)
- ❍ Master's degree
- ❍ Doctoral degree (PhD, JD, MD)

Appendix D

Study 2 Questionnaire

How old are you? _____

What is your gender?
- ○ Female
- ○ Male

Which option best describes your current relationship status?
- ○ Single
- ○ In a relationship
- ○ Engaged
- ○ In a civil union or domestic partnership
- ○ Married

Please enter the initials of the person you are (status) in the box below. For example, JS for John Smith. Do NOT enter their full name. (If you are in a relationship with more than one person, enter the initials of the person you have been with the longest.)

How long have you been in a romantic relationship with (partner initials)?
_____ Years
_____ Months

We'd like to get to know you better! First, we'd like to know your thoughts about romantic relationships in general.

Below are statements about romantic relationships that some people agree with and some people do not. Rate how much you personally agree or disagree with each statement.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
You need to know someone for a period of time before falling in love with him or her.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If you're in love with someone, you should commit yourself to him or her even if your parents and friends disapproved of the relationship.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Once you experience 'true love', you could never experience it again to the same degree, with another person.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
To be truly in love is to be in love forever.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If you love someone, you can make the relationship work, despite any obstacles.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
When you find your 'true love' you will probably know it soon after you meet.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Every new thing you learn about the person you choose for a long-term commitment will please you.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
The relationship you will have with your 'true love' will be nearly perfect.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If you love someone, you will find a way to be together regardless of the opposition to the relationship, physical distance between you or any other barrier.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
There is only one real love for you.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
If a relationship you have was meant to be, any	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.							
You are likely to fall in love almost immediately if you meet the right person.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Romantic love will really last; it won't fade with time.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The person you love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be completely accepting, loving, and understanding.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I believe if you are in love you can overcome any differences and problems that may arise.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You can never really know whether a relationship will last.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Even if a relationship seems great today, it could fall apart tomorrow.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
People often think their relationship is really strong and then suddenly find out it's not.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You can never be sure about a relationship's future because relationships are volatile.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Ups and downs in a relationship are probably a sign that the relationship is in trouble.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please think about how you typically feel in romantic relationships when responding to the statements below.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
It helps to turn to my romantic partner in times of need.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
I need a lot of reassurance that I am loved by my partner.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I want to get close to my partner, but I keep pulling back.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I find that my partner(s) don't want to get as close as I would like.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I turn to my partner for many things, including comfort and reassurance.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
My desire to be very close sometimes scares people away.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I try to avoid getting too close to my partner.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I do not often worry about being abandoned.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I usually discuss my problems and concerns with my partner.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I get frustrated if romantic partners are not available when I need them.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I am nervous when partners get too close to me.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I worry that romantic partners won't care about me as much as I care about them.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

Next, we'd like to know more about your relationship with (partner initials) specifically. As a reminder, we're interested in understanding people's feelings about their relationships, but you will not be asked to provide any information that will allow us to identify you or your partner.

The questions below describe several things that your partner might do. Imagine (partner initials) performing each behavior and then read the statements that follow it. Indicate the likelihood of each statement.

Your partner criticizes something you say.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely

You think that this reflects a bigger problem with your relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner criticized you on purpose.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner is being uncaring.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You blame your partner for criticizing you.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Your partner begins to spend less time with you.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
You think that this reflects a bigger problem with your relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner is spending less time with you on purpose.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner is being uncaring.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You blame your partner for spending less time with you.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Your partner does not pay attention to what you are saying.

	Very Unlikely	Unlikely	Somewhat Unlikely	Undecided	Somewhat Likely	Likely	Very Likely
You think that this reflects a bigger problem with your relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner is ignoring you on purpose.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You think that your partner is being uncaring.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
You blame your partner for ignoring you.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Please think about (partner initials) when responding to the statements below.

	Very Untrue	Untrue	Partly Untrue / Partly True	True	Very True

I feel a strong attraction to my partner.	○	○	○	○	○
I feel sexually aroused by my partner.	○	○	○	○	○
I find my partner sexually attractive.	○	○	○	○	○
My partner and I clearly show each other our love.	○	○	○	○	○
My partner and I always tell each other personal things.	○	○	○	○	○
I tell my partner everything.	○	○	○	○	○
My partner and I tell each other all our secrets.	○	○	○	○	○
My partner understands how I feel.	○	○	○	○	○
I want my relationship to be never-ending.	○	○	○	○	○
I never want to have another partner.	○	○	○	○	○
I want the relationship with my partner to last forever.	○	○	○	○	○
I would rather be with my partner than with anyone else.	○	○	○	○	○

How certain are you that you and (partner initials) will be together:

in one month _____%
in one year _____%
in five years _____%
in ten years _____%
for the rest of your lives _____%

Please think about your relationship with (partner initials) when responding to the questions below.

How well does your partner meet your needs?	○ Poorly	○	○ Average	○	○ Extremely Well
How good is your relationship compared to most?	○ Poor	○	○ Average	○	○ Excellent

How often do you wish you hadn't gotten into this relationship?	❍ Never	❍	❍ Average	❍	❍ Very Often		
To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?	❍ Hardly at all	❍	❍ Average	❍	❍ Completely		
How much do you love your partner?	❍ Not much	❍	❍ Average	❍	❍ Very much		
How many problems are there in your relationship?	❍ Very few	❍	❍ Average	❍	❍ Very many		

In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?
❍ Unsatisfied
❍
❍ Average
❍
❍ Extremely Satisfied

Now we're switching topics! The next set of questions asks about your TV and movie preferences.

Think about the last few months. On average, about how many hours do you spend each day watching television shows on any type of device? (That is, you could watch television shows on a TV but also on a computer, tablet, mobile phone, etc.)

_____ Monday
_____ Tuesday
_____ Wednesday
_____ Thursday
_____ Friday
_____ Saturday
_____ Sunday

How often do you watch each television genre?

	Never							Very Often
Reality TV dating shows	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Reality TV wedding shows	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Television dramas	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Television comedies	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Soap operas	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

About how many movies of any type do you watch in a typical month? Include those you watch at home (on any device) or in the theater. _____

How often do you watch each movie genre?

	Never							Very Often
Romantic comedy movies	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Romantic drama movies	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Of the (sum) hour(s) you spend watching television shows in a typical week, what percentage of that time is spent watching with (partner initials)?
_____ Percent

Of the (sum) movies you watch in a typical month, what percentage of them do you watch with (partner initials)?
_____ Percent

In responding to the following statements, please think about the times you spend watching television shows with (partner initials).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Watching television together brings us closer.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching television is a way for us to spend time together.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching television is a bonding experience.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The television shows we watch together give us something to talk about.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We wind up talking about the television show we watched.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching television together prompts us to talk about other things.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

In responding to the following statements, please think about the times you spend watching movies with (partner initials).

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
Watching movies together brings us closer.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Movie watching is a way for us to spend time together.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Movie watching is a bonding experience.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
The movies we watch together give us something to talk about.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
We wind up talking about the movie we watched.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
Watching movies together prompts us to talk about other things.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

TV shows and movies can trigger lots of different feelings. Do they sometimes impact the way you feel toward (partner initials)?

How often do you feel the following towards your partner after watching fictional TV shows (comedies and dramas)?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Usually	Always
More in love	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More tenderness	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More warmth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More romantic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

How often do you feel the following towards your partner after watching romantic movies?

	Never	Rarely	Occasionally	Sometimes	Frequently	Usually	Always
More in love	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More tenderness	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More warmth	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
More romantic	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

Thanks for telling us about your movie and television viewing preferences!

Now we'd like to know just a bit more about what you like about television. On the next page, we're going to ask you to identify a television character that you like.

Please name the individual who appears on television or in the movies that you feel the strongest about. Choose the person or character who serves as the best answer for you. This could be an actor, actress, celebrity, fictional character, etc.

_____

What television show or movie do you most closely associate this individual with?

_____

Please indicate how much you agree with the following statements.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
(Media figure) reminds me of myself.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I have the same qualities as (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I seem to have the same beliefs or attitudes as (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I can imagine myself as (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I can identify with (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I would like to meet (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I would watch (media figure) in another show or movie.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I enjoy trying to predict what (media figure) will do.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I hope (media figure) achieves their goals.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I care about what happens to (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I like hearing the voice of (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I wish I could handle problems as well as (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I like the way (media figure) handles problems.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I would like to be more like (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel a strong attraction to (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
I feel sexually aroused by (media figure).	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
(Media Figure) is sexually attractive.	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

We've been asking a lot about your thoughts regarding TV and movies. Now we'd like you to *watch* a 3-minute clip. Please make sure the sound on your computer is turned on and watch it carefully!

Please watch the Romantic Comedy Movie / Romantic Drama Movie / Television Comedy / Television Drama clip below.

Next page button appears after the amount of time it takes to watch the video clip has passed.

Please indicate how much you feel each emotion right now.

	Not at All						Extremely
Contemplative	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Thoughtful	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Pensive	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Hopeful	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Encouraged	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Inspired	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Envious	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Jealous	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Anxious	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Tense	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Uneasy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Amused	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Entertained	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Humored	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Sad	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Blue	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Gloomy	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Romantic	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Loving	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍
Warm-hearted	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes how you feel about your relationship with (partner initials). Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.

Interesting	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	❍	Boring

Bad	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Good
Full	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Empty
Lonely	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Friendly
Sturdy	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Fragile
Discouraging	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Hopeful
Enjoyable	○	○	○	○	○	○	○	Miserable

Now please think about the video clip you watched when answering the remaining questions.

What type of media was the video clip from?
○ Romantic comedy movie
○ Romantic drama movie
○ Television comedy
○ Television drama
○ Don't know

The clip you watched is from a television show. How often do you watch the new episodes (current season) of that television show?
○ Never
○ Rarely
○ Sometimes
○ Often
○ Always

How many times have you seen the movie or the exact TV episode the video clip is from before?
○ 0
○ 1
○ 2
○ 3
○ 4
○ 5 or more

To what extent do you agree with the following statements?

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Somewhat Disagree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Somewhat Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree
I like (movies / television shows) that are similar to this.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My partner likes (movies / television shows) that are	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

similar to this.							
The clip was entertaining.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I enjoyed watching the clip.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
I would be interested in seeing the entire (movie / TV episode).	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
My partner and I would watch a (movie / television show) like this together.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If we watched a (movie / television show) like this, my partner and I would probably wind up talking about romantic relationships.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○
If we watched a (movie / television show) like this, my partner and I would probably end up talking about our relationship.	○	○	○	○	○	○	○

You're almost done! The final questions just ask for some basic demographic information so that we can report on the mix of people who participated.

Please check any of the following that apply to you:
- ❑ White or European-American
- ❑ Black or African-American
- ❑ Hispanic or Latina/o or Chicana/o
- ❑ Asian or Asian American
- ❑ American Indian or Alaskan Native
- ❑ Native Hawaiian or other Pacific Islander
- ❑ None of these

What is the highest level of education you have completed?
- ○ Less than high school
- ○ High school or GED
- ○ Some college
- ○ 2-year college degree (Associate's)
- ○ 4-year college degree (Bachelor's)
- ○ Master's degree
- ○ Doctoral degree (PhD, JD, MD)

Which of the following categories best fits you?
- ○ Heterosexual (straight)
- ○ Gay or lesbian
- ○ Bisexual
- ○ Other

How many children (including step-children) do you have? If none, please enter 0.

What is the age of each child (in years)?
_____