IDEALIZATION OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS: EXAMINING THE ROLE OF TELEVISION'S INFLUENCE ON ENDORSEMENT OF CONTROLLING BEHAVIORS

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KELLY L. ADAMS

Dr. Julius M. Riles, Dissertation Supervisor

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The undersigned, appointed by the dean of the Graduate School, have examined the dissertation entitled

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presented by Kelly L. Adams, a candidate for the degree of doctor of philosophy of Communication.

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Assistant Professor Julius M. Riles

_____

Professor Elizabeth Behm-Morawitz

_____

Assistant Professor Andrea Figueroa-Caballero

_____

Assistant Professor Kale Monk

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Kelly L. Adams

Julius M. Riles, Ph.D., Dissertation Supervisor

ABSTRACT

Media messages of romantic relationships are prevalent, and these messages can influence how individuals behave in their romantic relationships, as well as influencing scripts and schemas about specific relationship behaviors. Young adults are particularly susceptible to media messages, especially when they are actively seeking messages to learn information about romantic relationships (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Intimate partner violence (IPV) behaviors are ones that young adults are exposed to in media, even in popular television shows and films. IPV occurs in roughly 20-33% of college student dating relationships (e.g., Smith et al, 2005) and is a major public health concern (O'Leary et al., 2008; Zurbriggen, 2009). In the current study, participants were exposed to one of five conditions in a 2 x 2 experiment with a control condition, where relationship behavior (e.g., autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV) and framing of the behavior (e.g., idealized or condemned) were manipulated in clips from popular television programs. Participants then reported on their identification with one of the main characters, self-efficacy of performing both relationship behaviors, third person perceptions, and finally endorsement of both relationship behaviors, in addition to demographic items. The results demonstrated that young adults who viewed the controlling IPV behaviors, especially when those behaviors were condemned by the main female character, were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors in relationships. Results also demonstrated that the more

individuals consumed media, the more they believed others were more affected by media messages (e.g., third person perception) and this led to greater endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. The main findings and implications are discussed, as well as future directions for both scholars and practitioners.

Chapter 1: Introduction

"I wish I had done everything on earth with you." *The Great Gatsby* (2013)

"Sometimes, we do bad things for the people we love. It doesn't mean it's right; it means

love is more important." *You* (2019)

Research shows that people who consistently watch romantically-themed media content,

and learn about romantic relationships from this type of content, often tend to endorse the

romantic ideals they see on screen (Ferris et al., 2007; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Hefner, 2019).

Media, especially television and film, is rife with romantically-themed content (Holmes, 2007;

Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). Media has been viewed by some scholars

as a particularly important socialization agent for young adults (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998;

Jordan, 2004; Navarro & Tudge, 2022). For many individuals, their parents and peers are

important socialization agents for much of their life (Bronfenbrenner & Morris, 1998). Parents

and peers teach and model relationship behaviors. As they do, individuals learn from peers and

parents (e.g., social cognitive theory; Bandura, 1986). While peers and parents are crucial agents

in the socialization process, the focus of the current study is to explore media as a socialization

agent, especially for romantic relationship behaviors. Media messages can affect individuals'

beliefs which can, in turn, influence behaviors in their intimate relationships, sometimes leading

to conflict and relationship dissolution when expectations are not met (e.g., Epstein & Eidelson,

1981; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Fletcher et al., 1999; Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002;

Knee, 1998; Wilcox & Dew, 2010).

One issue in media effects research is to understand what happens when idealized images

of romantic relationship behaviors are endorsed. When these relationship behaviors are toxic and

damaging to relationships, and they are endorsed, does this influence individuals' ideas about

their own romantic relationships? One particularly problematic set of behaviors in romantic relationships pertains to intimate partner violence (IPV). Behaviors in which a romantic partner tries to control and psychologically manipulate a romantic partner can be seen as abusive. The current study explored the influence of media messages, in television programs in particular, on individuals' endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. Specifically, the role of framing in television messages about romantic relationships was explored, including how these messages might influence individuals' perceptions of a particular type of IPV (e.g., controlling behaviors) and its counterpart (e.g., autonomy-promoting behaviors). Previous research indicates that many women are willing to endorse jealous, controlling, and manipulative behaviors by a male romantic partner because they believe that these behaviors protect them, preserve the relationship, and are a sign of love (Papp et al., 2017). In the context of television, portrayals of romantic relationship behaviors, such as controlling behaviors, may influence how viewers think about the behaviors their current partner exhibits that may be similar, or dissimilar, to the relationship portrayed on screen. Endorsement of relationship behaviors (e.g., autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV) occurs when individuals consider those specific behaviors as desirable to them and express wanting their romantic partner to engage in those behaviors in the relationship. Endorsements are a type of belief that individuals hold, which could lead to engaging in specific behaviors. Thus, romantic beliefs from media could lead to the endorsement of romantic relationship behaviors, which is the premise of the following study.

Two important theories that could predict endorsement of romantic relationship behaviors include social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001a) and the influence of presumed influence (IPI; Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Storey, 2003). When individuals see models in media who exhibit romantic relationship behaviors, this might influence individuals to endorse the behaviors they

see on television as they become normalized to the individuals. This may be especially true when individuals identify with the media figures they see on screen and when they feel they have efficacy performing relationship behaviors, both important components of social cognitive theory (Bandura, 2001a). Individuals might also endorse relationship behaviors when they perceive others to be more influenced by the behaviors (e.g., third person effect; Davison, 1983). Believing others are more affected by the representations of relationship behaviors in television programs could potentially lead individuals to engage in actions for normative reasons. The IPI suggests that individuals may assume a relatively pronounced influence of media messages on others after seeing the messages, themselves (i.e., third-person perception). For example, when individuals believe others are more influenced by media messages, they might believe that those individuals will internalize and thus endorse those behaviors. Because those social others are perceived to endorse those relationship behaviors, individuals could be more likely to then endorse those behaviors, even if they are detrimental, or damaging, behaviors. For example, Ogolsky and colleagues (2019) demonstrated that people's views of same-sex marriage, and the policies behind it, might shift depending on if they believe that social others are more accepting (or less accepting) of same-sex marriage. Chia (2006) also demonstrated that perceptions of peers engaging in sexual activity and the perceptions of peers' attitudes toward sexual activity played a significant role in influencing participants' willingness to engage in sexual activity. Individuals, then, respond to this perception by altering their own behaviors as a form of social conformity (Gunther & Storey, 2003). Being exposed to television clips with specific framing (e.g., idealization or condemnation) of specific romantic relationship behaviors (e.g., controlling IPV or autonomy-promoting behaviors) could lead individuals to endorse those relationship behaviors as a function of how viewers perceive those messages to be influencing others.

In the following sections, I expand on the importance of studying perceptions of specific romantic relationship behaviors (e.g., autonomy-promoting vs. controlling IPV) and endorsement of those behaviors by television viewers. I specifically explain the importance of studying IPV, emerging adult relationships and development, and the importance of romantic relationship behaviors portrayed on television.

Importance of Romantic Relationships

Bersheid (1999) explains that we start our lives in relationships when we are born, and we experience many different types of relationships throughout our lives. It is the relationships we have that often shape who we are. Relationships are an integral part of our lives, and, for this reason, relationship science remains a highly important area of study. Throughout life, individuals navigate in and out of relationships, including friendships, familial relationships, and romantic relationships, among other forms. As part of studying relationship phenomena, scholars must take into consideration the importance of the processes that move relationships forward and, sometimes, even hold them back from progressing. Romantic relationships, in particular, are a natural part of many individuals' social lives.

Relationship science scholars place notable import on several perceptual experiences in romantic relationships, including relationship quality, stability, and satisfaction (Karney & Bradbury, 1995; Ogolsky et al., 2017). These outcomes have been shown to predict whether a romantic relationship will continue in the future or dissolve. Many research studies support the benefits of engagement in romantic relationships, especially healthy, successful ones (Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010). For example, when couples are in healthy, satisfying relationships, they experience better health outcomes (Cohen et al., 1998), heal more quickly from illnesses and even superficial wounds (Kiecolt-Glaser et al., 2005), and have been shown to

live longer, in general (Holt-Lundstad, Smith, & Layton, 2010; House, Landis, & Umberson, 1988; King & Reis, 2012), when compared to those in unhealthy or distressed relationships and those who are single. This line of research indicates that healthy and satisfying intimate relationships are highly important for individuals' overall well-being and health. Individuals in strong, satisfying, healthy relationships also show stronger emotional well-being, as well as happiness and joy (e.g., Diener, Suh, Lucas, & Smith, 1999).

On the other hand, when romantic relationships are distressed and unhealthy, negative personal outcomes develop, including unhappiness, loneliness, and sometimes even depression among other emotional problems (Beach et al., 1990). Intimate relationships are such an integral part of life, and the healthier that relationships are experienced, the more couples can be physically and emotionally healthy throughout their lives. Understanding the antecedents to happy, healthy, and successful romantic relationships is imperative for relationship scholars. Therefore, I seek to understand how healthy, successful relationships are achieved in order for more individuals to experience satisfying, high quality relationships with their intimate partner.

Before and as individuals are engaging in romantic relationships with partners, individuals might seek romantic media – defined, in this study, as media that features a romantic relationship as a prominent part of the plot – to both learn from and be entertained by these messages. Previous research suggests that romantically-themed media messages are both popular and prominent in the media landscape (e.g., Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Holmes, 2007; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). As individuals watch media messages about romantic relationships, the norms and behaviors could influence viewers' scripts and schemas about romantic relationships. Thus, media messages about romantic relationships are an important area to explore within media effects research.

Emerging Adulthood and Romantic Relationships

Emerging adulthood is a vital time to understand relationship development. Young adults tend to start engaging in more serious romantic relationships during this time (e.g., Connolly et al., 2004). Romantic relationships start to become situated at the forefront of emerging adults' lives as they begin to think about long-term dating and marriage. Emerging adulthood, according to Arnett (2000), occurs during the developmental period from the late teens through the mid-twenties, with a particular focus on ages 18-25. As adolescents enter adulthood, this transition period of development— where behavior and attitude interventions may be particularly influential—is vital to study (Rhoades & Stanley, 2009). Their relational development continues, and young adults' identity and self-concept become more intertwined with the relationships in which they engage. Romantic relationship behavior during young adulthood can have serious implications for future relationship development, which can lead to both relationship-enhancing and relationship-destructive behaviors (Collins, Welsh, & Furman, 2009; Overbeek et al., 2007). Scholars focus on this period because this is when individuals have not fully solidified relational scripts, schemas, and norms. Young adults' attitudes toward romantic relationships are still malleable during this time. They begin to focus on the prospect of being in a long-term relationship and often can display risky behaviors that may lead to distress later in their romantic relationships (Arnett, 2006; Brown, 1999; Fincham, Stanley, & Rhodes, 2011). Early romantic experiences and relationships can shape future romantic relationship quality and even overall well-being (Furman & Shaffer, 2003; Meier & Allen, 2009).

Vennum, Monk, Pasely, and Fincham (2017) suggest that emerging adulthood is a central time during which scholars should intervene with relationship workshops or seminars to improve romantic relationships. In their study, they were exploring what factors might predict relationship

dissolution and how relationship education might influence decisions to break-up. Using relationship education lessons during the semester in an undergraduate family development course, students participated in two large lectures and a breakout session. The relationship education component consisted of a course called *Relationship U,* emphasizing skills and strategies to help emerging adult respondents evaluate several components of their romantic relationships. These components include participants' compatibility with a romantic partner, commitment to the relationship, and evaluation tendencies in making major decisions during times of relational transition (e.g., sliding vs. deciding). Vennum and colleagues (2017) found that the relationship intervention the students participated in during relationship development influenced participants' relationship formation and break-up decisions. The results of the study, and the intervention, demonstrated that relationship education during emerging adulthood is crucial to help individuals understand how to evaluate their partners and how to see warning signs of unhealthy relationship behaviors (e.g., physical violence, psychological abuse, control of a partner). The researchers, similar to previous scholars, suggest that emerging adulthood is a crucial time in life when these individuals are forming more serious intimate relationships, which create the foundation for relationships and specific behaviors later in life. Emerging adulthood is also a time when individuals are exploring relationships using media messages (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Segrin & Nabi, 2002).

Intimate Partner Violence in Relationships

As emerging adults enter more serious, long-term romantic relationships and solidify their relational scripts, schemas, and norms, it is crucial to intervene and help young adults understand how to create and maintain healthy relationships. Emerging adults are often influenced by media messages about relationships (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Segrin & Nabi,

2002). As an example, in the film series *Twilight*, the main character Edward Cullen, a vampire, falls in love with Bella. In one scene, Edward explains that he likes to watch Bella sleep at night, and he continually keeps an eye on where Bella is at all times to protect her. While many fans of the popular vampire series may believe that Edward loves Bella and will do anything for her, believing that stalking and controlling behaviors are romantic could be detrimental to a relationship in the long-term. These behaviors are considered in the context of IPV.

IPV is defined as physical or sexual violence, stalking, and/or psychological aggression (e.g., emotional violence, manipulation, coercive acts, controlling behaviors) against a current or former romantic partner (CDC, 2019). IPV can be categorized into four distinct types: physical violence, emotional/psychological violence, controlling/manipulative behaviors, and stalking. According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (2019), IPV is common and affects roughly one in four women and nearly one in ten men in the United States. Relationship scholars estimate that IPV occurs in 20-33% of college student dating relationships (e.g., emerging adulthood; Smith, Thompson, Tomaka, & Buchanan, 2005). Relationship scholars strongly suggest that IPV in dating and cohabiting relationships is a major public health issue (O'Leary et al., 2008; Zurbriggen, 2009) and is even more common than IPV in marriages (i.e., domestic violence or marital violence; Straus, 2004). Thus, emerging adulthood can be a volatile time for romantic relationships. More specifically, college can be a volatile time for romantic relationships as young adults learn to be more independent and function away from their parents, guardians, or families. College is also a time when students are experimenting with alcohol, stress, and anxiety (e.g., Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010).

IPV is often associated with psychological distress (e.g., Coffey et al., 1996). Relationship scholars speculate that IPV behaviors in dating and cohabiting relationships

eventually lead to the continuation of these behaviors in marriage (Jose, O'Leary, & Moyer, 2010). Many couples who date in college are likely to end up married after they graduate (Sprecher, 1999), which means that the harmful behaviors in the relationship, if not addressed early on, could continue in the future.

Perceptions of Intimate Partner Violence

Several studies explore the role of young adult's perceptions of IPV in dating relationships (Copp et al., 2019; Jennings et al., 2017). For example, Fincham, Cui, Braithwaite, and Pasley (2008) explored endorsement of IPV behaviors in college dating relationships, specifically examining whether endorsement of IPV behaviors was correlated with the dysfunctional relationship belief that disagreements are destructive. Individuals who endorse this belief think that all disagreements in relationships are negative because perfect partners should never engage in conflict. Endorsement of IPV behaviors was positively associated with this belief. The more that people endorsed IPV behaviors, which included psychologically and physically abusive relationship behaviors, the more they believed that disagreements are destructive in relationships. It is possible that participants believed that if they find their perfect partner, or soulmate, that they will not have disagreements or conflict because the relationship will be "perfect". Conversely, the more participants endorsed constructive conflict behavior (e.g., mutual discussion, mutual expression, and mutual negotiation) in their relationship, the less likely they were to endorse IPV behaviors. When partners are willing to work with one another if they disagree, they are less willing to accept IPV behaviors in their relationship. Instead, they see the need to use effective communication to work out disagreements and conflict rather than resorting to violence or abuse.

Considering emerging adulthood is a crucial time to intervene in romantic relationships (Vennum et al., 2017), more scholars should assess young adults' expectations and perceptions of IPV in their dating relationships. For instance, the International Dating Violence Study (Straus, 2004) demonstrated that when college students endorsed physical aggression (i.e., approval of slapping a partner in the face) the more likely they were to assault a dating partner, even when controlling for social desirability. This study indicates that positive beliefs in physical aggression and IPV could change young adults' perceptions and willingness to engage in certain relationship behaviors. The endorsement of IPV behaviors is concerning because these behaviors lead to negative relationship and personal outcomes (e.g., psychological distress and physical injury). Understanding the role of media messages on perceptions of IPV and expectations of these behaviors in relationships is therefore important in helping young adults maintain healthy, successful relationships over time.

Controlling Behavior as Intimate Partner Violence

Romance, controlling behaviors, and jealousy are often conflated in media, leading some to believe that when men control their female partner's behavior, or display jealousy, it is a sign of love and commitment, especially in heterosexual relationships. Papp, Liss, Erchull, Godfrey, and Waaland-Kreutzer (2017) dive into the origins of these ideas, explaining that traditionally masculine norms often indicate that men have the right to dominate and control their female partners. Along with heteronormative scripts and gender roles, many women who ascribe to the fairy tale narrative (e.g., beliefs in one true love, soulmates, love overcoming all obstacles), sometimes referred to as romanticism or relationship destiny beliefs, may be more likely to think that their love can stop their partner from abusing them. The researchers surveyed a large sample of heterosexual women, assessing romantic ideals, beliefs about jealousy, mate-retention

behaviors (e.g., using coercion to prevent a current partner from leaving the relationship), and experience of abuse (both physical and psychological). The results of the study demonstrated that women often do, in fact, expect IPV in specific contexts (Papp et al, 2017). Higher endorsement of romantic ideals (e.g., traditional romance ideologies, such as romantic love and belief in soulmates, placing high value on romantic relationships, and believing jealousy is good from a partner) was related to endorsement of controlling and mate-retention behaviors. Mate-retention behaviors can lead to controlling and manipulative behaviors by one partner toward another. Endorsement of controlling behaviors was significantly related to reports of physical and psychological abuse in a previous or current relationship, as well. In turn, ascribing to romantic ideals was indirectly related to the experience of physically and psychologically abusive behaviors through the endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. The authors use the terms jealousy, psychologically manipulative, and controlling behaviors interchangeably in the study, suggesting that these behaviors could be categorized under the umbrella term of controlling behaviors. Given that evidence indicates instances in which controlling IPV behaviors are endorsed, and even expected, the current study will extend these findings to examining how such behaviors might be endorsed when encouraged or discouraged by popular media figures.

In the literature, some scholars have divided up the types of IPV by physical and nonphysical behaviors (e.g., Minto, Masser, & Louis, 2020, 2021). Nonphysical behaviors include actions such as coercion, manipulation, control, stalking, emotional abuse, and financial abuse among many other behaviors that are considered to fall under the IPV umbrella. Some research has distinguished between psychological, stalking, physical, and emotional IPV (e.g., CDC, 2019). Previous literature on controlling, manipulative, and coercive IPV behaviors strongly suggest that these behaviors are perceived much differently from physical IPV

behaviors. Papp and colleagues (2017) propose that IPV (both physical and psychological) can be endorsed when individuals internalize romantic beliefs. The media often conflate romance and control, displaying male romantic partners as the perpetrators of control and jealousy as ways to show they "love" their female romantic partner (Papp et al., 2017). These scholars also suggest that this could lead individuals to believe that when a male partner performs controlling and jealous behaviors, these behaviors are, in fact, a romantic gesture and show commitment to the relationship. To support this, the results indicated that those who reported stronger endorsement of romantic beliefs about relationships were also more likely to report endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. To a similar effect, Chung (2005) also concluded that young women often reported that a male partner who exhibited controlling behaviors (i.e., telling his female partner what to wear or how to behave) was demonstrating that the male partner cared for the female partner. These behaviors were reported to communicate romantic intimacy and dedication to the relationship. However, these behaviors more often show ownership and control of a partner as opposed to love and equity. The outcomes from both of these studies support the ideas of traditional masculinity and the male power to control and dominate others, especially women who are often viewed as inferior to men. While traditional gender roles and gender stereotyping in society continues to change/shift and IPV continues to be considered a serious public health issue, recent studies (e.g., Papp et al., 2017; Rhodes, Potocki, & Masterson, 2018; Savage et al., 2017) are still indicating the effects of these toxically masculine behaviors in romantic relationships.

While many couples seek to be connected and dependent upon one another, partners often also want some degree of independence in their relationship. From a dialectical perspective, romantic partners often feel tensions between opposing needs and wants that they

have (Baxter, 1993; Goldsmith, 1990). For instance, one may want to spend time with a romantic

partner but may also feel the need to spend time alone. Autonomy can be described as "the desire

and ability to be self-sufficient, self-contained, self-defined, and accountable only to one's self"

(Goldsmith, 1990, p. 538). Individuals may feel the need to be autonomous, to a certain degree,

in a romantic relationship, spending time working on a new hobby or spending time with friends

without their partner. Individuals may also crave dependency, which can be defined as the desire

to be reliant on another person (Goldsmith, 1990). As part of the tension between autonomy and

dependency, partners may exhibit controlling behaviors as a way to express a need for

dependence on the other partner. One partner might want to know where the other is at all times

because he/she feels the need to be with his/her partner constantly as a way to fulfill the need of

dependence. Individuals might perceive controlling behaviors as a way that a partner is

attempting to care for and love the other partner (Papp et al., 2017). The way a romantic partner

perceives the tension between autonomy and dependence might influence the expectations of

whether the other partner should act in controlling or autonomy-promoting ways in the

relationship.

The need to feel dependent upon one another and to be independent individuals is

inherent in romantic relationships (Baxter & Montgomery, 1996; Rawlins, 1992). To a certain

extent, relationships require partners to give up some autonomy because they must consider the

needs of the other and the impact their decisions have on that other person. However, too much

dependence on a partner can ruin a relationship as partners lose their sense of independence and

self (Baxter, 1990). As couples navigate their relationship, they learn how to balance the tension

between having autonomy and being dependent on the other partner. Couples establish

preferences and expectations for what works for them in terms of their needs as both individual

people and as a couple. In the present study, the expectations of a partner behaving in autonomy-promoting or controlling ways is further examined.

Since IPV, and controlling behaviors, specifically, are common among dating and cohabitating young adults (CDC, 2019; DeKeseredy & Schwartz, 1998; Rosen, 1996), the current study is focused on emerging adults. The transition between adolescence and emerging adulthood is a crucial time for romantic relationships and an important time for intervention (Vennum et al., 2017).

Media Use and Perceptions of Romantic Relationships

Many scholars have explored the influence of media on perceptions of romantic relationships. Johnson and Holmes (2009) analyzed 40 top-grossing Hollywood romantic comedy films to understand and classify relationship-oriented behaviors. Based on their findings, they discovered that romantic comedies, in particular, often portray relationships as novel and exciting, as well as emotionally meaningful for the characters. Taking this study a step further, Hefner and Wilson (2013) assessed more than 50 top-grossing romantic comedies, and they found that nearly all the films featured a romantic ideal in some way. Romantic ideals are sets of beliefs about what it means to be in the "perfect" or optimal romantic relationship (Bell, 1975; Lantz et al., 1968; Walster, 1976). Some scholars have chosen to assess romantic ideals using Sprecher and Metts' (1989) original four romantic ideals: idealization of other, soulmate/one and only love, love at first sight, and love conquers all. These romantic ideals can be found in various media, and they have been used as main concepts to understand media effects of romantically-themed media messages (e.g., Hefner et al., 2017; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Kretz, 2019). Idealizing romantic behaviors includes rewarding rather than punishing the relationship behaviors. Romantic behaviors can be idealized by characters in media, specifically films

(Hefner & Wilson, 2013), thus endorsing and perpetuating those specific romantic behaviors in viewers' minds.

Romantic ideals remain some of the most researched concepts when it comes to exploring the effects of media on individuals and their relationships. Idealized representations of relationships could potentially lead individuals to create unrealistic expectations for their romantic partners, and, when romantic expectations are not met, this may lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction. On the other hand, positive expectations make a difference in the relationship and lead to more stable relationship satisfaction over time when compared to less positive expectations of a romantic partner (McNulty & Karney, 2004). Being exposed to patterns of behaviors associated with romantic idealization in media messages has the power to influence relationship satisfaction, commitment, and quality for both romantic partners (Reizer & Hetsroni, 2014; Segrin & Nabi, 2002). Some research suggests that having unrealistic beliefs about romance, love, and romantic relationships can be harmful to individuals and their relationships and can lead to unrealistic expectations of a partner, more relationship conflict, and even relationship termination (e.g., Epstein & Eidelson, 1981; Eidelson & Epstein, 1982; Fletcher et al., 1999; Knee, 1998). Believing in soulmates, in particular, can be damaging to romantic relationships, especially in the long-term (Franiuk, Cohen, & Pomerantz, 2002; Wilcox & Dew, 2010) because romantic partners who strongly believe in soulmates may be less likely to put effort into their relationship when they hit turbulence and conflict. Many partners believe that finding the perfect soulmate means the relationship will be perfect. When conflict arises, partners may choose to give up easily and walk away from their relationship, believing their current partner is not a true soulmate if they have problems.

Most recently, Hefner (2019) studied how romantic comedies differ from other films in their effects on viewers. In a multiple-message design experiment, participants watched one of three full-length popular movies and reported their idealistic romantic relationship beliefs and life satisfaction. Three conditions (two experimental and one control condition) were implemented in the study, and participants were asked to watch one film. In condition one, the ideals challenged condition, two films were included (e.g., *The Breakup* and *500 Days of Summer*) that essentially challenged romantic ideals because the couples did not end up together in the end. Two films were included in the ideal film condition (e.g., *Hitch* and *The Story of Us*), which portrayed the couple blissfully happy and overcoming all obstacles (e.g., idealized relationship process with a happy ending). The control condition (e.g., *John Q*) had a drama film that did not have a romantic relationship as central to the plot. The results from the experiment indicated that exposure to idealistic content was strongly related to Western, heterosexual romantic ideals and increased life satisfaction in participants. More specifically, the results of this study demonstrated that male participants, along with those who reported being in a romantic relationship, held the strongest romantic beliefs and life satisfaction regardless of the films they watched though, overall, romantic comedies positively influenced these beliefs. A similar recent study suggests that television viewing and film can predict romantic ideals and relationship satisfaction. Kretz's (2019) results from a survey suggest that several genres of television and film were positively related to romantic ideals, including relationship reality television shows, television comedies, television dramas, soap operas, and romantic movies. Television drama and romantic film viewing were the strongest predictors of certain romantic ideals (in this case, the belief that love conquers all), as well as relationship satisfaction. Soap

operas were strongly related to the belief in soulmates (e.g., one and only perfect love/perfect

romantic partner).

Even previous work has demonstrated that viewing romantic movies can strengthen

relationships by promoting relationship awareness in couples. Rogge, Cobb, Lawrence, Johnson,

and Bradbury (2013) used romantic movies in their intervention with married couples. Through

relationship education methods, the researchers placed couples in several different groups to

understand how certain interventions might change the outcomes of the relationships. The

researchers implemented several different types of interventions, including a social learning

model intervention (i.e., Prevention and Relationship Enhancement Program, or PREP) along

with an acceptance-based model of relationships (i.e., Compassionate and Accepting

Relationships Through Empathy, or CARE). The PREP intervention addresses the specific

relationship skills married couples might need to engage in conflict and negotiating different

ways to change in a relationship (i.e., social learning theory guided program). CARE is an

intervention in which individuals learn to better work with their romantic partner through the use

of prosocial, empathy-based skills (i.e., building empathy skills and listening to their romantic

partner better). These are considered to be skills-based interventions designed to increase

relationship awareness in married couples. In their relationship awareness-only intervention,

they asked couples to watch a romantic movie and discuss the story in the film and its

association with their own relationship with their partner. Rogge et al. (2013) found that

watching a romantic movie with a spouse enhanced their relationship. This intervention was

especially true when partners were given a list of relationship-specific probing questions (i.e.,

questions about the couple's interaction and engagement in conflict, as well as themes in the

film). This list helped the couples understand the narrative in the film and their relationship in

respect to what they were watching. The intervention worked to keep couples satisfied and happy in the long-term when compared to their two other more intense, skills-based interventions (e.g., PREP and CARE). This study demonstrates the capacity for media use to inform relational outlooks of couples, by revealing how romantic movies and discussion of relationships, by themselves, can influence individuals in their romantic relationships.

Much of the research in this area focuses on romantic comedy and drama films. However, some research has been conducted to understand the influence of idealized representations of relationships on television. For instance, Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, and Smith (2007) studied reality dating television shows. They indicated that men tend to believe reality shows are more real, and participants who watched reality dating shows were more likely to endorse the dating behaviors performed by the media figures. Romantic relationships are prevalent on television and in film, in general, and are not always the sole focus of the narrative; yet, they are nonetheless influential (Hefner, 2019). Previous research shows that young adults may use romantic media specifically to learn about romantic relationships, especially when they start dating in adolescence (Wood et al., 2002). Romantic comedies and dramas are widely consumed, and young adults commonly refer to them when they describe their ideas of what a romantic relationship should be (Bachen & Illouz, 1996). Media content is crucial to study since young adults and adolescents are often choosing to seek this media in order to learn about romantic relationships during development.

Driesmans, Vandenbosch, and Eggermont (2016) studied the effects of romantic movies on romantic ideals among teenage girls in Belgium. In their experiment, the researchers had participants watch a full-length movie, either *Over the Hedge* or *High School Musical.* The former film (*Over the Hedge*) is a children's movie with animated animal characters that served

as a control video, and the latter film (*High School Musical*) had themes of romance as the two main characters meet one summer, fall in love while attending the same high school, and perform in the school musical. After watching the full-length films, the adolescent participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire. The authors found that endorsement of romantic ideals were related to engagement in parasocial interactions (i.e., the interactions individuals have with a media persona while engaged with media messages) while viewing the film in the experimental condition (romantically-themed film *High School Musical)*. This study suggests that media figures are an important component when it comes to the endorsement of romantic ideals and relationship behaviors and informs the value of assessing the role these figures play in romantically-themed media content processing, especially in the context of identification with the media figures. Audience members may learn from the characters in a film, which influences their endorsement of romantic relationship behaviors.

Intimate Partner Violence and Media

Several studies have explored IPV as it is portrayed in news media, including reports of domestic violence and fatalities (Bullock 2010; Bullock & Cubert, 2002; Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006). Along with examining news media, some scholars have looked at the effects of media, in general, on perceptions of relationship violence. Specifically, Manganello (2008) created a conceptual model to help scholars understand how adolescents, and even emerging adults, might be influenced by media messages that portray IPV. Adolescents, and emerging adults, select media to view, are presented with representations of dating violence, and interpret those messages. They can then be influenced to perceive IPV in the same ways that media portray instances of relationship violence. Media use, in conjunction with other factors, can contribute to adolescents' and emerging adults' perceptions and endorsement of IPV behaviors.

These other factors include exposure to violence (e.g., in the home, community violence, media violence), individual factors (e.g., beliefs about violence, religion, relationship status), network factors (e.g., peer influence, social norms), and relationship factors (e.g., jealousy, aggressive romantic partner, relationship conflict). Media use, along with these other contributing factors, combine to change adolescents' behaviors and perceptions of IPV. Research such as this provides a global overview of the individual, mediated, and societal factors that play a role in how media messages about IPV could then influence adolescents' and emerging adults' perceptions and endorsement of IPV behaviors in their own relationships.

Manganello (2008) suggests that adolescents often report that media messages affect their views of dating violence, or IPV, indicating that what they see in pornography and movies are behaviors that they should emulate in their own relationships. The selection of media content (e.g., pornography, movies, television), portrayal of relationship violence in media, and interpretation of media messages by adolescents and young adults are all integral parts to understanding the overall factors that contribute to IPV behaviors in relationships. Since media is a place for adolescents to learn about relationship behaviors, media could be a source for information about IPV behaviors in emerging adulthood romantic relationships, as well. Emerging adults are still exploring and have not yet solidified their relational scripts and schema and, as such, they may be influenced by the relationship violence they see portrayed in media. Manganello's (2008) research provides a foundation for understanding the capacity of media messages to influence perceptions of IPV and even aid in understanding how individuals might endorse IPV behaviors.

It is possible that there may be a link between media message exposure and expectations of relational behaviors that may impact couples' perceptions of their relationships. In a study of

aggression in relationships, Coyne and colleagues (2011) surveyed young adults and found that

mere exposure to both physical and relational aggression in media was related to reports of

actual tendencies to engage in those aggressive behaviors. Using social cognitive theory as the

foundation for the study, the authors found that the relationship between seeing physical

aggression in media and engaging in physically aggressive behaviors was strongest for men,

while both men and women were more likely to report engaging in relational aggression after

being exposed to it in media. Although this study was correlational in nature, it does provide

scholars with an understanding to further expand on how media messages may influence IPV

behaviors in romantic relationships.

In entertainment media, specifically, controlling IPV along with other nonphysical IPV

behaviors can be seen and influence how individuals perceive specific victims of abuse and

couples. Rhodes, Potocki, and Masterson (2018) studied the role of music videos in perceptions

of psychologically controlling and demeaning behaviors. This study shed light on how

individuals who watch music videos featuring clearly abusive lyrics and images might still

minimize the abusive nature of the behaviors featured in the videos. Respondents in their

experiment indicated increased minimization of IPV behaviors (i.e., seeing them as not abusive

or not a problem), especially when they were transported into the narrative and they enjoyed the

music video content. Music videos are relatively short clips that are made to create a visual

representation of the lyrics music artists write, but they can be as powerful as a full length film or

television program in influencing perceptions of relationship behaviors. In another previous

study by Franiuk, Coleman, and Apa (2017), the scholars found similar results. Through their

experiment to test the effects of a misogynous song, they found that when a song was critical of

IPV, respondents reported more sympathy for the victim and had more positive perceptions of

the couple in the song. However, when the song was an ambivalent representation of IPV, the results were mixed (both positive and negative) in terms of sympathy and perceptions of the relationship.

Research focusing specifically on media messages and how media via parasocial interactions can affect individuals' relationships shows that adolescence and emerging adulthood may both be especially important times when ideas about romantic relationships are formed (Erickson & Dal Cin, 2018). Many media scholars also examined how media messages influence both adolescents' and young adults' perceptions of romantic relationships, especially when they seek to learn from media representations of romantic relationships (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Wood, et al., 2002). In the current study, I focused on emerging adults to explore how the content of television messages might lead individuals to endorse controlling IPV behaviors.

Current Study Overview

In the following chapter, I explore the theoretical underpinnings of the current study. I examine the importance of modeling behaviors in media through social cognitive theory. Then, I explain the importance of three components of the theory—including rewards and consequences, identification with a media figure, and self-efficacy of being able to perform relationship behaviors— each serve to contextualize how mediated relational behavior exposure may influence relational behavior endorsement. Here, I discuss the role of framing theory as it relates to associating rewards or consequences with behaviors and how this could influence behavior modeling. Finally, I discuss the IPI theory as another mechanism to explain how individuals relatively perceive relationship behaviors on television to affect themselves and others and how this may influence media users' own behavioral endorsements. In the subsequent chapter, a study

is offered to examine the proposed theoretical arguments. Following the literature review, I

provide the methods for the current study, which includes a pilot study along with the final

experiment. I provide the results of the experiment in the fourth chapter, and finally end the

study with a discussion and implications of the results, limitations, and future directions.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

The goal of the current study, broadly speaking, is to enhance understanding of the effect of screen media messages (specifically, television) on relational perceptions. A number of media scholars have studied romantic relationship portrayals on television and how these portrayals influence how individuals perceive romantic relationships (e.g., Anderegg, Dale, & Fox, 2014; Osborn, 2012; Segrin & Nabi, 2002; Signorielli, 1991). However, this previous research demonstrates that more research needs to be conducted to understand both the perception of specific relationship behaviors (particularly intimate partner violence, IPV, behaviors) and the endorsement of those behaviors, as well as how media use influences these perceptions and inclinations via experimental design. Furthermore, this previous research could be further extended using the influence of presumed media influence (IPI) theory to understand the influence of perceptions of others' media influence susceptibility on individuals' willingness to endorse specific romantic relationship behaviors seen on television. With access to new streaming sites and the ability to watch television programming on multiple devices, individuals have access to television anywhere and anytime. In 2020, the average U.S. adult (i.e., ages 18 and up) spent roughly four hours per day watching television, which includes streaming (Nielsen, 2020). Given that emerging adults are prone to look to media representations for information about romantic relationships (e.g., Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Wood et al., 2002), it is important to understand how representations of specific romantic relationship behaviors might influence individuals to endorse those behaviors in their own relationships. In the case of IPV behaviors, Manganello (2008) clearly states that media is a place in which seeing violence in relationships on screen could impact the way individuals, especially young adults, understand violence in their own relationships.

IPV AND TELEVISION

     In the following study, I will notably explore how portrayals of specific romantic relationship behaviors on television might influence the endorsement of those relationship behaviors. These two behaviors include controlling IPV and autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors. Johnson (1995, 2008) suggests a typology for intimate partner violence that consists of coercive controlling violence (CCV), situational couple violence, separation-instigated violence, violence resistance, and mutual violent control. For the purposes of the current study, Johnson's (1995, 2008) conceptualization of CCV is explored. CCV refers to a type of violence that is emotionally abusive and includes intimidation, coercion, and control, often combined with a physical violence component all intended to harm an intimate partner. Often, this type of violence stems from one partner wanting to hold more power in the relationship. Controlling IPV behaviors can also include actions such as surveillance of a partner, manipulation, and acts of jealousy when a partner is interacting with others (e.g., friends, family, co-workers; CDC, 2019). While these behaviors might be subtle at first, they can grow in severity over time and can lead to future psychological distress for one or both partners (e.g., Coffey et al., 1996). Previous research shows that many heterosexual women are willing to see controlling behaviors as appropriate because men are expected to exert dominance and control in their relationships (Papp et al., 2017). Autonomy-promoting behaviors are those associated with emphasizing relative independence within the relationship (Baxter, 1993). These behaviors can be characterized by a partner promoting the other's need for space, for example, encouraging a partner to take up a new hobby alone, or providing time to spend with friends and family without the partner. These two relationship behavior categories represent both sides of a dialectical tension (e.g., independence vs. dependence). As partners navigate their relationship, they begin to show their preference for the amount of autonomy and control they need from the other person.

Individuals who see specific controlling and autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors being modeled by media figures might be more likely to endorse those behaviors in their own relationships as media provide salient exemplars of action (e.g., social cognitive theory, SCT). Framing theory explains how individuals may perceive behaviors differently depending on how those behaviors are framed (i.e., behaviors being rewarded and idealized or punished and condemned). Identification with a television character may also play a role in the endorsement of specific relationship behaviors, as well as an individual's self-efficacy perceptions of being able to perform those behaviors in their own relationship.

Additionally, when watching television shows with romantic relationships, individuals may believe that other people are more affected by the messages of relationships than the individuals, themselves. Due to perceptions of societal influence, individuals may be correspondingly influenced. As such, the role of the IPI will be examined. Finally, I explore the means through which relational media exposure can influence relational behavior endorsement and expectations.

Models of Relationship Behaviors and Social Cognitive Theory

Social cognitive theory (SCT) has been used in media effects research to examine the functions and mechanisms of vicarious learning (Bandura, 2001a). Individuals observe media figures performing behaviors and develop their own rules to guide their behaviors in their own lives. Bandura (2001a) indicated that observational learning has several factors that might lead individuals to choose to perform certain behaviors. These include, among many others, the rewards and consequences individuals see media figures receiving for the behaviors they perform, identification with a media figure, and self-efficacy, or an individual's beliefs about their capability of performing the same behaviors they see someone else perform. When a

television character is rewarded for behaving in a particular way toward his/her partner, viewers may see this as an acceptable behavior to endorse in their own relationship. However, if this behavior is punished, viewers may not want to also be punished for performing the same relationship behavior toward their own partner and, therefore, will not endorse the behavior. If viewers identify with a character on television, they may want to endorse the same or similar behaviors because they recognize the utility of those actions for people like them. Lastly, if viewers feel as if they have the ability to perform the modeled relationship behaviors in their own romantic relationships, they may be more likely to endorse those behaviors. These three components are each assessed, in turn, in the current study to theorize about the conditions under which individuals might choose to actively endorse specific romantic relationship behaviors.

Several studies have addressed the role of SCT and social learning theory (SLT) as theoretical explanations in the specific context of IPV. When thinking about young adults who may experience what is termed as "dating violence," several scholars have used SCT and SLT to understand how individuals might learn IPV behaviors that they then exhibit in their relationships (Cate et al., 1982; Chung, 2005; O'Keefe, 1997; Pipes & LeBov-Keeler, 1997; Riggs & Cauield, 1997). Specific types of IPV, such as stalking, have also been examined to understand the role of IPV in relationships and how individuals might learn and perpetuate those behaviors with a romantic partner (Fox, Nobles, & Akers, 2011). Given this research is about modeling behaviors seen performed by peers and other individuals, the studies could be extended into a mediated context to explain how individuals might choose to endorse certain IPV behaviors they see being performed by models in media.

In the most basic sense, when individuals see a behavior being performed by a model, they may be more likely to learn that behavior. In terms of media exposure, individuals may be

more likely to imitate behaviors seen on screen when they see notable examples of that particular

behavior simply because they are more accessible. For instance, if individuals see controlling

behaviors being performed on a popular television show, those individuals may be more likely to

endorse those behaviors because they are more salient. Young adults watching television shows

that showcase certain behaviors may be particularly vulnerable to such influences because this is

the time in life when young adults are building and solidifying their relational scripts (Fincham,

Stanley, & Rhoades, 2011; Rhoades & Stanley, 2009; Vennum et al., 2017). In the current study,

when young adults are exposed to controlling IPV and autonomy-promoting behaviors on

television, due to enhanced accessibility, they may be more likely to endorse those behaviors. As

such, the following hypothesis was formed:

> H1: Exposure to (a) autonomy-promoting and (b) controlling IPV behaviors in a
>
> television clip will lead to greater endorsement of those behaviors.

Rewards/Consequences of Relationship Behaviors

As indicated in SCT, observational learning has several factors that can lead individuals

to perform a modeled behavior. One of these factors includes rewards and consequences

associated with the behaviors that a model performs. For instance, when one romantic partner

brings another flowers, that behavior might be rewarded with a "thank you" or a hug from the

partner receiving the gift, thus positively reinforcing the specific behavior. This behavior can

also be admonished as not being a particularly personalized gift. Seeing this behavior being

rewarded in a television show might lead viewers to also engage in this behavior because of the

association with positive outcomes. The framing of specific relationship behaviors might lead to

those behaviors being seen as rewarded or punished. When a specific relational behavior is

idealized (i.e., one character rewards the behavior of the partner by giving that person a hug or

admiration), this behavior may be endorsed by viewers. Several studies have looked at SCT as it relates to sexual behaviors (Nabi & Clark, 2008), gender development (Bussey & Bandura, 1999; Dill & Thill, 2007), and in the context of romantic-related media (Ferris, Smith, Greenberg, & Smith, 2007; Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Johnson & Holmes, 2009). For instance, Ferris et al. (2007) found in their study of the content in reality dating television shows that heavier viewing of this type of content was related to increased reports of performing the behaviors, especially when participants saw those behaviors being rewarded by the media figures on the show. When behaviors are rewarded in media messages by media figures (in this case, the contestants on the show), rather than punished, these behaviors may be deemed as appropriate to exhibit in relationships.

A content analysis conducted by Hefner and Wilson (2013) indicated that idealistic relational themes were more commonly reinforced, as well as rewarded, in films, as compared to more realistic relational themes. Ideal expressions, or expressions by characters that endorse ideal behaviors, were rewarded more often than challenged. These ideal expressions included the characters expressing love at first sight of the character with whom they were involved and verbally stating a character was the perfect partner or soulmate. In essence, viewing media with predominantly idealistic messages about romantic relationships could result in stronger endorsement of these romantic ideals when compared to viewing more realistic, or pragmatic, media messages of relationships (e.g., SCT; Bandura, 2002). The effects of seeing idealized romantic relationship behaviors may be short-term; however, repeated viewing of these ideas and messages in the long-term, or repeated activation, may lead to greater endorsement of certain behaviors seen idealized in media (Valkenburg et al., 2016).

The two studies by Ferris et al. (2007) and Hefner and Wilson (2013) provide support and important insights into how viewers may internalize and, thus, endorse certain relationship behaviors. It could be that when specific romantic relationship behaviors are idealized, and thus rewarded, by characters on television, these behaviors could be seen as appropriate and the norm for romantic relationships. When behaviors are rewarded, they are more likely to be performed and endorsed (Bandura, 2001a). In the current study, the framing of relationship behaviors might play a significant role in the endorsement of those behaviors. For instance, individuals who view idealized television messages (rather than punished, or condemned, messages) about both controlling and autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors might be more likely to endorse these behaviors since they are rewarded on screen.

Framing of Relationship Behaviors on Television

The framing of a relational behavior as idealized or condemned could be akin to rewarding or punishing that behavior. This framing of the behaviors in two different ways might lead to individuals choosing to endorse, or not endorse, certain relationship behaviors they see performed on television. The way messages are framed provides media consumers with a lens through which to understand those stories and events (Gamson & Modigliani, 1987). This lens, in turn, influences their interpretations of the message content (Scheufele, 1999). For instance, news stories are framed in specific ways to highlight certain political, economic, or social concerns. Gamson and Modigliani (1987) suggest that media producers frame issues around a central idea that shapes the meaning of events and situations occurring in society. The way media messages are framed depends on which interpretive schemas are applied to the message (Scheufele, 2008). Entman (1993) argues that individuals make sense of issues and events through applying schematic interpretations (e.g., associating prior mental representations) to

them. Viewers see information attributes that media outlets present to them, and they associate

that information to issues and ideas when constructing inferences about it (Scheufele, 1999).

An example of the framing of romantic relationships in research can be seen in the study

conducted by Knee and Boon (2001) who investigated the role of framing effects on how

individuals evaluated a hypothetical scenario with an imaginary romantic partner. The

evaluations had two outcomes, the future success of the relationship and perceived importance of

the hypothetical partner's attributes (i.e., characteristic or inherent trait of a person). Using two

frames of a hypothetical romantic partner (e.g., gain vs. loss framing), the participants were

asked to imagine they had been dating this hypothetical partner for a couple months and now

they were "at a crossroads in the relationship" (p. 252). Participants reading the gain frame were

provided with information that the hypothetical partner had all but one of the ideal attributes laid

out at the beginning of the experiment. Those who read the loss frame scenario were told that

partner was missing one of the ideal attributes. In study one, the researchers controlled the

importance ranking of the attributes for the participants, but in study two, participants were able

to generate their own ideal attributes for a romantic partner. This provided insights into not only

what ideal attributes were most desirable to respondents in the study but also what participants

personally reported as attributes they wanted in the ideal partner, rendering the ideal attributes in

the study more or less salient. Overall, participants' perceptions of the hypothetical relationship's

future were more optimistic when the imaginary partner was described with the gain frame (e.g.,

having all but one of the ideal characteristics) rather than the loss frame (e.g., missing one of the

ideals), despite the attributes of the partner remaining the same in both scenarios. Participants'

perceptions were influenced by how the hypothetical partner was framed. This study provides

crucial insights into how framing can affect how individuals view another person (in this case, an

imaginary romantic partner) based on how a single relational incident is presented. If perceptions

of a hypothetical romantic partner can be influenced by different framing choices, it is possible

that the framing of specific relationship behaviors might affect people's endorsement of those

behaviors.

Two types of framing are routinely discussed in research: emphasis and equivalence

framing. Equivalence framing is when message producers offer different, yet logically

equivalent, presentations that influence perceptions about a scenario or topic (Scheufele &

Iyengar, 2012). For example, Knee and Boon (2001) used equivalence framing and provided

individuals with a hypothetical dating scenario. The framing of the hypothetical dating partner

was logically equivalent, or the same, but the phrasing (i.e., gain vs. loss) was altered slightly

(i.e., hypothetical partner had all but one of the desired traits as opposed to the frame that the

partner was missing a desired trait, respectively). In equivalence framing, the information (i.e.,

having a hypothetical partner) is the same but the phrasing is different (i.e., partner is missing a

trait vs. having all but one of the desired traits).

Emphasis framing is when a message highlights, or stresses, a specific aspect of a

scenario (Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012). The information about the issue is altered and presented to

individuals, highlighting different aspects of the issue. Savage and colleagues (2017) used

emphasis framing methods to understand individuals' perceptions of IPV. Their focus was to

examine perceptions of IPV in news stories on several outcomes, including judgments of

punishment for the perpetrator and sympathy toward the victim. In the experiment, the scholars

implemented a 2 x 3 design where they manipulated the sex of the perpetrator (e.g., man or

woman) and the severity of the IPV (e.g., weak, strong, or fatal). The severity manipulation

emphasized different types of physical violence from using a household object to hit and bruise,

physically hurting/inflicting pain on the victim to physical violence that leads to death of the victim (e.g., type of behavior and severity). These emphasize different types of physical violence that might be perceived in very different ways by respondents. The other factor was the sex of the perpetrator manipulation in the experimental stimuli (e.g., man or woman), which would lead to different perceptions of the punishment and sympathy for the victim. Savage and colleagues (2017) found that the news stories that featured a male perpetrator were rated higher in terms of the seriousness of the situation as compared to the conditions with the female perpetrator. The male participants reported greater sympathy for female victims of IPV in the study; overall, participants indicated that they wanted stronger punishments for the male perpetrators in the new stories, especially the male participants. The emphasis framing led to different outcomes depending on the perceived severity of the violence and who was enacting the violence. Using emphasis framing allowed the researchers to highlight certain aspects of news story in order to elicit different emotions and perceptions from participants.

In the current study, the issue revolves around two specific romantic relationship behaviors (e.g., controlling vs. autonomy-promoting), and, more specifically, how characters communicate about relationship behaviors on television. Two frames (e.g., idealized vs. condemned) that describe romantic relationship behaviors in qualitatively different ways were implemented. Specifically, a television character might condemn his/her partner for performing controlling IPV behaviors. The same behavior might be idealized by a character in another scene, thus emphasizing the same behavior in two distinct ways for viewers. In one message, the relationship behavior is being rewarded (e.g., idealized framing), and in the other, the behavior is being punished (e.g., condemned framing). Emphasis frames allow researchers to understand how people make different judgments depending on the attributes of the event or situation that

are being highlighted. Relative to equivalence framing, emphasis framing is arguably more

representative of the way competing interpretations of a phenomenon are more prototypically

presented in the media landscape, thus increasing ecological validity in the current experiment

(Liu & Scheufele, 2016; Scheufele & Iyengar, 2012). Pertinent to emphasis framing, television

producers highlight the interpretations they believe are important of specific messages or issues.

In television news, certain aspects of a story might be highlighted to influence the way viewers

think about that particular news issue (e.g., gun control being described as about enhanced safety

or limits on freedom). In this study, different romantic relationship reactions will be emphasized

to explore how individuals might choose to endorse those specific behaviors based on whether

they are rewarded or punished (e.g., SCT).

      Idealized versus Condemned Framing of Partner Behaviors. Idealizing relationships

in media "exclude[s] or minimize[s] conflict and mundane [relationship] behaviors and

interactions" (p. 249). Essentially, media representations often romanticize what relationships are

like for many couples (Segrin & Nabi, 2002). If a romantic partner behaves in ways that the

other partner highly desires, this could lead the partner to idealize those behaviors by praising

and encouraging the partner's actions. This praise for the behavior could be perceived as a

reward from one partner to the other, thus integrating the component of rewards into the design

of the television clips of the current study (e.g., SCT). Idealizing a romantic partners' behaviors

could be closely associated with emotional and romantic fantasies individuals hold about love

and romance (Illouz, 1997; Koontz, Norman, & Okorie, 2019; Turner & Stets, 2005). This

romanticizing of behaviors could possibly lead to internalizing these beliefs (i.e., integrated into

scripts and schemas about relationships), which could then lead to the endorsement of

relationship behaviors. On the other hand, framing behaviors as condemned might be perceived

as a punishment, and thus individuals would not want to emulate those behaviors due to the frame-setting of those beliefs.

Research has indicated that idealized perceptions of a romantic partner are related to satisfaction in dating relationships and marriage (Murray, Holmes, & Griffin, 1996). Idealization of a romantic partner can, indeed, aid in relationship maintenance as negative relationship events (e.g., problems and conflict) are woven into a more favorable relationship story as part of an individual's specific relational script (Murray & Holmes, 1994). Thus, when a romantic partner's behaviors are idealized, this may help with relationship maintenance and influence overall relationship quality. It is important to probe further into the framing of relationship behaviors in television shows to understand how idealized and condemned framing of relationship behaviors might lead to the endorsement of those behaviors by viewers. When romantic relationship behaviors are idealized, and people believe they are accurate to everyday life experiences, individuals' may be influenced to internalize and expect them as a perceived relationship standard or norm.

The expectation of behaviors stem, in part, from an individual's ideas about norms in an intimate relationship. In general, norms encompass what behaviors are commonly used and approved (or disapproved) in society (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). This idea of expecting certain relationship behaviors can be linked to an overarching idea of normativity. Normativity refers to the idea that individuals have expectations of how something *should* be (Cialdini, Kallgren, & Reno, 1991). Individuals might interpret the two frames (e.g., idealized and condemned) as what is suggested *should* be expected in a romantic relationship (e.g., what norms exist in relationships). Idealized relationship behaviors are what romantic partners should be expected to exhibit in their relationship, often stemming from ideal standards partners hold for

each other. Condemned behaviors are what romantic partners should not do in their relationship because these behaviors are rejected by others. When an individual is exposed to one of these frames, this could influence perceived norms for romantic relationship behaviors and interpretations of what a romantic partner should do. Individuals may begin to believe that controlling IPV behaviors *should (not)* be expected, or they may believe that autonomy-promoting behaviors *should (not)* be expected in their relationship based on which interpretive schema of normativity is associated with relational behaviors. The representation of romantic relationship behaviors on television might shape individuals' willingness to endorse those behaviors. The following hypotheses were formed based on the predicted effects of framing of controlling and autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors in the current study:

H2a: Exposure to a television clip that uses the idealized frame of autonomy-promoting behaviors will lead to the greatest level of endorsement of that behavior, relative to all other conditions.

H2b: Exposure to a television clip that uses the condemned frame of autonomy-promoting behaviors will lead to lowest level of endorsement of that behavior, relative to all other conditions.

H3a: Exposure to a television clip that implements the idealized frame of controlling IPV behaviors will lead to greatest level of endorsement of that behavior, relative to all other conditions.

H3b: Exposure to a television clip that uses the condemned frame of controlling IPV behaviors will lead to the lowest level of endorsement of that behavior, relative to all other conditions.

Identification with Media Characters

In addition to seeing behaviors being rewarded and/or punished, individuals are more likely to perform behaviors when a model is seen as being similar to themselves (Bandura, 2001a). One of the factors that could also play a prominent role in the endorsement of specific romantic relationship behaviors is idenitifcation with a media figure. If individuals identify with a character in a television show, they may be more likely to endorse a specific relationship behavior performed by that character. Cohen (2001) defined identification with a media figure, specifically, as the imagining of one's self as that specific character and replacing one's personal idenity with that of the character's within the context of the media message. The process of having empathy for a character, or placing one's self in the position of that person, is crucial to this definition of identification. In a sense, identifiying with a media figure means that an individual is able to transport themselves into the figure's place to understand that figure better.

Identification may increase the likelihood that individuals will perform a behavior they see the figure doing. For example, scholars have found that individuals who identify with celebrities who promoted health messages increased those indiviudal's endorsement of the message behaviors (Basil, 1996). Andsager, Bemker, Choi, and Torwel (2006) studied the effects of an anti-alcohol magazine message on college students. Participants were placed in groups and asked to read stories in which the main character's level of alcohol consumption varied. The researchers found that when individuals identified with the main character in terms of consuming the same level of alcohol, the main message to not engage in consuming alcohol was more effective. The participants who identified with the main character also reported the message being more useful to them. Perceiving similarities with characters and identifying with them can lead to individuals' willingness to perform, or not perform, certain behaviors. This effect is also

stronger when the character with whom an individual identifies directly reinforces, or punishes, the behavior, leading individuals to either want to model those behaviors or not engage in them. Ortiz and Harwood (2007) found identification to be important within the context of their study to increase positive intergroup contact and reduce intergroup anxiety. When individuals watched an episode of the popular television show, *Will & Grace*, they reported less intergroup anxiety and less social distance preferences with regard to individuals who identify as LGB, especially when individuals identified with one of the main characters in the program. When individuals identify with a media figure, they are able to perceive that they understand that figure better, have greater empathy for their situation, and imagine themselves in the figure's place (Cohen, 2001). These factors can influence individuals' willingness to engage in certain behaviors because they feel closer to the media figure. This could lead to indiviudals' willingness to endorse certain behaviors they see media figures performing on screen.

In the current study, identification may act as a moderating factor in the endorsement of specific romantic relationship behaviors. For instance, when the main character in a television show peforms controlling IPV behaviors in the context of a romantic relationship, individuals who identify with that particular media figure might choose to endorse those controlling behaviors because they feel close to that particular media figure. Individuals may be able to put themselves in the figure's place, thus leading to the endorsement of the behaviors being performed on screen. This effect might also be increased when the behaviors are idealized since the behavior is being rewarded and the viewer identifies with the character. For this reason, the following hypothesis was formed:

H4: Identification with the main character in the television clip will moderate the effects

proposed in H2 and H3, such that greater identification will be related to greater

behavioral endorsement.

Self-efficacy in Romantic Relationships

Within SCT, Bandura (1986) defined self-efficacy as an individual's judgements about

his/her capability to perform specific behaviors. Whether an individual actually has the required

skills or not, self-efficacy is focused on the judgements people make about whether they believe

they are capable of performing a specific behavior. Those who perceive their own efficacy as

heightened in a situation are more likely to put forth greater effort and work harder when the

situation presents challenges and difficulties. Within the context of romantic relationships, self-

efficacy of performing relationship behaviors would be represented in individuals' beliefs of

their own capabilities of interacting with their romantic partner successfully. Perceiving self-

efficacy of various constructive relationship behaviors may influence the quality and

continuation of the romantic relationship in the long-term. In fact, perceptions of self-efficacy

are positively associated with interpersonal competence, feelings of personal control, higher self-

esteem, and higher ability to cope (Bandura, 1997).

In romantic realtionships, specifically, researchers explored the role of self-efficacy of

specific relationship behaviors and how those perceptions might influence an individual's ability

to resolve conflict with a relationship partner (Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008; Fincham, Harold,

& Gano-Phillips 2000), as well as the ability to engage in specific, relationship reinforcing

behaviors overall (Lopez, Morúa, & Rice, 2007). Cui, Fincham, and Pasley (2008) explored the

relationship between parental divorce and marital conflict on conflict behavior in children's

romantic relationships. Using a short term, three-wave longitudinal design, the researchers

assessed parent's engagement in marital conflict, relationship self-efficacy (i.e., the extent to which participants believed they had the ability to resolve conflict in their relationship), participants' conflict with their romantic partners, and relationship quality. The results of the study demonstrated that parent's marital conflict was strongly associated with relationship self-efficacy beliefs, such that more parental conflict was associated with lower relationship self-efficacy for particpants. This, in turn, influenced both participants' engagement in more conflict with their current romantic partner and decreased relationship quality. When individuals felt that they were not capable of resolving conflict in their relationship, this led to more engagement in conflict with a partner and lower relationship quality because the conflict was not being remedied. Thus, perceiving self-efficacy of engaging in behaviors to resolve relationship conflict is an important factor in the ability to successfully perform these behaviors and in the overall perceptions of relationship quality.

If indiviudals believe they are capable of performing specific behaviors, they may be more likely to engage in those behaviors and, even, endorse those behaviors (Cui, Fincham, & Pasley, 2008). This may also occur for other relationship behaviors. For instance, if individuals believe they are capable of performing autonomy-promoting behaviors in their relationship, then they may be more likely to perform those behaviors with a romantic partner. Individuals may also endorse those relationship behaviors, even if they do not directly perform them. Cui et al. (2008) focused on parental conflict as an important contributing factor to how individuals perceive their own efficacy in resolving conflict in their relationships. It could be plausible to extend this to media models as well (e.g., a main character in a television show). If parental conflict (i.e., parents modeling conflict behaviors) could influence how individuals perceive they can handle relationship conflict with their current partners, perhaps media figures could act as

models in a similar way. If individuals believe they are capable of performing behaviors made salient by media exposure (e.g., controlling or autonomy-promoting behaviors), they may be more likely to endorse those behaviors overall.

In the current study, self-efficacy of performing both controlling and autonomy-promoting behaviors may be an additional moderating factor in the relationship between seeing media figures perform specific romantic relationship behaviors (e.g., autonomy-promoting or controlling) and endorsement of those behaviors. It is possible that when individuals feel as though they can perform the behaviors they are exposed to in the clip that this could strengthen the relationship between exposure to the television clip and the behavior being performed on screen. While it is feasible that self-efficacy can be learned from the television clips, it is included as a moderator in the current study because both behaviors are being assessed in terms of self-efficacy, independent of the respondents being exposed to the television clips. If individuals believe they are capable of performing both relationship behaviors effectively in their everyday lives, they might be more likely to endorse the behaviors after seeing them being performed on television. The way these behaviors are framed (e.g., idealized or condemned) might also influence the extent to which individuals feel they are capable of engaging in the behaviors and the subsequent endorsement of the behaviors. As such, the following hypothesis was formed:

H5: Self-efficacy of the relationship behavior will moderate the effects proposed in H2

and H3, such that greater self-efficacy will be related to greater behavioral endorsement.

Mediated Relational Behaviors and the Influence of Presumed Influence

The third person perception (TPP) has been examined in media effects research to explain the perceived influences of media on others' perceptions. TPP was first developed by

Davison (1983), who observed that the perceived effects of persuasive messages seemed to often

be more pronounced on others than they were on the self. Individuals reported being less

influenced by persuasive media messages but reported that others would be more affected by

those same messages. TPE is the differential between perceived effects on the self and others.

The greater the differential, the more individuals believe others are affected by persuasive media

messages than the individual is. In general, individuals are more likely to believe that others are

more affected by media messages than the individuals themselves are. Part of this stems from the

idea that people are motivated to see themselves more favorably rather than as people who are

prone to be affected by media messages, especially socially undesirable messages (Alicke et al.,

1995; Hoffner et al., 2001). Perceptions of the influence of exposure to violence and aggression

(Hoffner et al., 2001), dramatized portrayals (Lasorsa, 1989), pornography (Gunther, 1995), and

mental illness (Diefenbach & West, 2007) have been the topics of focus in the TPP research, all

finding that people tend to believe others are more affected by these messages on television than

the individuals, themselves, are.

   For example, in a study of the perceived influence of television depictions of mental

illness on individuals, Diefenbach and West (2007) demonstrated that participants reported

believing that others' attitudes would be more influenced by representations of mental illness in

media messages than their own would. In another study of the TPP, conducted by Hoffner and

colleagues (2001), on the influence of television violence on perceptions of aggression and mean

world perceptions, researchers further demonstrated support for the TPP. The results indicated

that participants believed that others were more affected than they were in terms of aggression

and mean world perceptions when exposed to television violence. The social distance of the

percieved other was an important factor in the manifestation of the TPP. In general, participants

were more likely to indicate that the effects of television violence on aggressive tendencies were stronger for others who were more socially distant from the participant, which is congruent with previous research on the TPP (Diefenbach & West, 2007; Peiser & Peter, 2000). IPV is one specific type of violence that individuals might be exposed to in media. Similar to the study by Hoffner and colleagues (2001), individuals might believe that abstract others are susceptible to being influenced by IPV in media. Individuals may believe that seeing IPV behaviors on screen could influence others more than themselves. They may also perceive that others may be more inclined to endorse IPV behaviors in their own relationships, as a result. While TPP has typically been studied as the independent variable or even within moderation analyses, some previous research has indicated that TPP can mediate certain relationships. For example, TPP has been shown to mediate the relationship between seeking electronic word of mouth for products on YouTube and sharing YouTube product review videos. Bi, Zhang, and Ha (2018) demonstrated that when consumers sought word of mouth reviews on YouTube about a product, this led to participants indicating they would be more likely to share positive video product reviews with others on YouTube as a function of the TPE. This did not function in the same way for negative product reviews as the outcome. While the current study is more focused on message exposure to romantic relationships in popular television programs, this study by Bi, Zhang, and Ha (2018) does provide insight into how seeking information—in the current study participants seeking information about romantic relationships from popular messages on television—could lead to the perception that others may be more influenced by the media message than the self, which in turn leads to effects on endorsement of a product (research study example) or specific relationship behavior (current study).

Stemming from the TPP, the influence of presumed influence theory (IPI; Gunther, 1998; Gunther & Storey, 2003) suggests that individuals think about how messages influence other viewers. The perception of how others are influenced by a media message then influences how individuals perceive and react to that same message. IPI research tends to focus on the consequences, or behavioral outcomes, of the perceptions of the influence media has on others. Often this takes the form of adherence to perceived mediated influences to cultural and social norms (Gunther & Storey, 2003). For example, Chia (2006) studied the effect of perceptions of peers engaging in sexual activity and the perceptions of peers' attitudes toward sexual activity through a survey. Participants were asked about the frequency with which they were exposed to sexual content on television, what they believed peers thought about sexual content on television, and their own attitudes toward sexual activity. The results of the study demonstrated that media influence coupled with peer influence complemented each other and changed how participants' expressed their attitudes toward their own sexuality and sexual activity. Participants reported perceiving peers' exposure to television to be greater than their own exposure, and this then led to perceiving more sexual permissiveness in peers than in the self in the study. Overall, participants' perceptions of media influence on peer norms regarding sexual issues were positively associated to participants' own attitudes toward sexual permissiveness, which predicted possible engagement in sexual activities. When individuals believed that their peers were affected by the sexual content they were seeing on television, their own attitudes became more permissive, supporting the IPI.

IPI theory could be explored in a new context to understand how individuals might come to endorse certain behaviors they see in media based on whether they believe that others are more affected by those particular messages. Seeing television portrayals of romantic relationship

behaviors, especially socially undesirable behaviors like controlling IPV (CDC, 2019; Papp et al., 2017), may lead individuals to believe other people who watch those portrayals are more influenced. If individuals believe others are more affected by the television portrayals of relationship behaviors, they may be more likely to endorse those particular relationship behaviors due to perceptions about their cultural normativity, especially if those behaviors are framed as idealized. In the current study, the TPP may play a mediating role in the path between seeing television characters peforming specific relationship behaviors and the endorsement of those relationship behaviors (e.g., controlling and autonomy-promoting), as a function of IPI processes. Controlling and autonomy-promoting behaviors may be endorsed by individuals, especially if they believe others are more affected by seeing those IPV behaviors on television. As such, the following hypotheses were formed:

> H6: The third person perception (TPP) will mediate the relationship between exposure to controlling orientation (i.e., idealized controlling behavior or condemned autonomy-promoting behavior) and behavior endorsement, such that greater TPP following exposure will be positively related to endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors.

> H7: The TPP will mediate the relationship between exposure to the autonomy-promoting orientation (i.e., idealized autonomy-promoting behavior or condemned controlling behavior) and behavior endorsement, such that greater TPP following exposure will be positively related to endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors.

In addition, when individuals feel they have the ability to perform specific behaviors (e.g., high self-efficacy), and they identify with the main character in a television program, this could potentially strengthen the relationship between being exposed to specific relationship behaviors framed in specific ways and the TPP. Message content immersion has been

demonstrated to produce resistance to message influences (Kim & Shapiro, 2016). Perhaps, it may be that when individuals feel capable of performing autonomy-promoting behaviors (or even controlling IPV behaviors) that they perceive they are less affected by media examples of these behaviors. If someone feels as if they are confident in performing certain behaviors, they would possibly feel as if they are not as susceptible to behavioral information from a media message. It might be that individuals feel capable, but perhaps they do not see others as similarly equipped to resiliently process the depiction. Therefore, these individuals believe that since they are capable (but others are not) that other people are more affected by the media messages and are more likely to learn how to perform the behaviors from those messages. For example, if individuals feel that they are able to perform autonomy-promoting behaviors in their relationships (e.g., high self-efficacy), they might be inclined to believe that others are more influenced by the television portrayals of relationship behaviors than the individual is his/herself because that individual is already more knowledgeable than others about how to perform the behavior. Higher self-efficacy on these behaviors may lead to the false sense that the individuals are not influenced but that other people will be based on level of capability.

It is similarly possible that immersion in media examples of a behavior, due to identification with characters, could produce message resistance leading viewers to feel as if others would be more affected by seeing the behavior in a television program. Identification with a character in a television show is associated with the type of active audience immersion (de Graaf et al, 2012; Moyer-Gusé, 2008) that could lead to real or perceived resilience to message effects due to greater engagement with the television clip relationship behaviors. As such, if participants identify with those enacting relationship behaviors, they may feel as if others are more likely to be affected by the relationship behaviors peformed in the television clip. Of

course, this is all speculation based on prior research of message influence under circumstances of active engagement. As such, the following research questions are posed:

RQ1: Will self-efficacy of the relationship behavior moderate the relationship between exposure to television clips and the TPP for (a) autonomy-promoting and (b) controlling IPV behaviors?

RQ2: Will identification with the main character in the television clip moderate the relationship between exposure to television clips and the TPP for (a) autonomy-promoting and (b) controlling IPV behaviors?

Current Study

In the following study, I propose conducting an experiment to examine how the framing of television clips might influence individuals' endorsement of controlling and autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors. Specifically, I seek to understand how television characters idealizing a romantic partner's behaviors could influence whether or not viewers endorse controlling and/or autonomy-promoting behaviors in romantic relationships. The type of behavior along with the type of framing (i.e., idealization or condemnation of the behavior) could then influence endorsement of these behaviors. The strength of individuals' identification with the character in a television scene performing the targeted relational behavior and their perceived self-efficacy to perform those behaviors could moderate the relationship between exposure to the television clip and endorsement of the behaviors performed in the scene. The relationship between exposure to a television clip and an individual's endorsement of specific relationship behaviors may be mediated by the third person effect, such that individuals who perceive others to be more affected by television messages may be more inclined to eventually

endorse those behaviors (See Figures 1 and 2 for full models). In the next chapter, I lay out the

proposed methods for an experimental investigation of the abovementioned predictions.

Chapter 3: Methods

Participants

Research has shown that emerging adulthood is a crucial time for the development and exploration of more serious romantic relationships (Arnett, 2000, 2006; Fincham, Stanley, & Rhoades, 2011). Adolescents and young adults tend to be the ones who seek media for education and to learn about romantic relationships (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Wood et al., 2002), and they tend to endorse the beliefs and behaviors they see in media (Ferris et al., 2007; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). Scholars have indicated that many young adults experience this transitional time from adolescence to adulthood within the context of college (e.g., Braithwaite, Delevi, & Fincham, 2010). According to the National Center for Education Statistics (2020) roughly 19.4 million students attended colleges and universities in 2020, with a majority of those students being in the 18 to 19 year old age range. Thus, the current study included young adults from a college sample (both undergraduate and graduate level to capture the 18-25 age range of young adulthood). The current study was conducted as an online experiment via *Qualtrics* and focused on the emerging adult population (e.g., young adults) between the ages of 18-25, specifically. Students were recruited through the help of several instructors within the author's network at several universities and colleges in the Midwest from various psychology, journalism, sociology, education, and communication courses. Participants were randomly assigned to one of four experimental conditions and one control condition, which was administered through *Qualtrics*.

Demographics

In the current study, there were 800 total participants. This pool of participants passed several attention check items to ensure that they were careful and attentive to all of the statements in the survey portion of the study (e.g., asking participants to "click on 'strongly

agree' for this question"; Hauser & Schwarz, 2016). These participants were also within an

acceptable range in terms of time it took them to complete the online experiment (15 minutes to

one hour). While this is a large range of time, this was considered acceptable due to the

participants having to watch the television clip and then answer questions on seven measures, as

well as many demographic questions. When asked about gender, 69.9% identified as female,

28.5% male, 1.1% gender non-conforming, and 0.5% gender queer. The racial and ethnic

makeup of the participants was relatively homogeneous with 82.8 % of participants identifying

as White, 6.3% Black, 2.5% Latinx/Hispanic, 0.5% Native American, 3.6% Asian, 3.9% biracial,

0.4% multiracial. Participants were all between the ages of 18 and 25 and indicated their specific

age in the survey (age breakdown can be viewed in Table 1). Respondents indicated their current

relationship status with many reporting being single (55.6%) and many dating (39.4%). Under

2% of the respondents indicated being engaged or married, and 3.4% indicated being in a

committed partnership (i.e., committed to one another, long-term relationship but not formally

married or engaged). For a full summary of the demographic data, see the demographic figures

and tables (Table 2 in Appendix II).

Stimuli

A 2 (idealized vs. condemned frame) x 2 (controlling vs. autonomy-promoting behavior)

experimental design with a control condition was implemented. Several television clips that were

similar in nature were gathered and pilot tested for this experiment and a control condition was

created using a clip not showing a romantic relationship. The IPV message included controlling

behaviors (e.g., constant surveillance, overly protective behaviors, controlling a partner's contact

with friends and family) or autonomy-promoting behaviors (e.g., giving a partner space to spend

time with others, encouraging a partner to be independent, encouraging a partner to start up a

new hobby for his/herself) by the main male character. These behaviors were either idealized or condemned by the main female character via association of the behaviors with explicit reactions indicating reward or sanctioning of a particular behavior.

All stimuli were tested for realism, coherence, and plausibility in a pilot study. The clips were from several different television shows and were roughly the same in nature (i.e., displaying similar characters and stories from the same genre of programming). Creating the clips for the experiment, as opposed to having participants watch an episode of a television program, provided the opportunity to hone in specifically on the elements being tested (e.g., framing and specific relationship behaviors). If participants watched a whole episode of a television show, they would be exposed to all aspects of the romantic relationship. By picking the scenes with specific behaviors and framing of the behaviors, this allowed me to specifically expose participants to only those elements of the relationship, leading to increased internal validity and confidence in the outcome of endorsement of the behaviors based solely on the behaviors and framing to which the participants were exposed.

Pilot Test Results

During initial pilot testing, 14 television clips were assessed. Three clips for each experimental condition and two clips for the control condition were tested. Due to initial selection issues with the autonomy-promoting conditions, a second round of pilot testing was undertaken. In follow-up pilot testing, only the clips for the autonomy-promoting conditions were included, and eight new clips were tested. Each television clip ranged from eight to 12 minutes in length, and the clips included some scenes that provided enough background for the romantic relationship and basic plot for each television program. This ensured better clarity of the situations and scenes for participants to be able to follow along.

When initially constructing stimulus clips from television programs for the pilot study, several parameters had to be met in order to include the clips in the testing. First, the television shows had to have a romantic relationship with a prominent role in the storyline. For example, in the first round of pilot testing, clips from the television show *You, Chicago Fire, Made for Love*, and *Kingdom* were included. In *You*, the story revolves around a young couple as they progress from meeting each other to bonding then eventually dissolution of the relationship. Second, the television clips had to be similar in demographics. While participant demographics cannot necessarily be determined beforehand, the researcher took into account the demographics of most college student populations in the Midwest. The characters in the television shows had to be young adults (roughly between the ages of 18 and 25 with the higher end being about 30), white, heterosexual, and middle class. These demographics are consistent with most college student samples (NCES, 2020). All relationships in the television clips pilot tested fell within these parameters.

These criteria provided enhanced opportunities to detect notable constructs central to social cognitive theory and identification. When individuals perceive characters to be similar to themselves, they may be more likely to identify with them (e.g., Andsager et al., 2006). This would then increase the likelihood that the individuals would endorse the relationship behaviors viewed in the clips. For consistency, the lead male character in the television clip always had to be the one to perform either the controlling or autonomy-promoting behaviors and the framing was exhibited by the female partner in the relationship (e.g., idealizing the male partner's behaviors or condemning them). The female partner's framing of the male partner's behaviors would then be either a reward (idealized frame) or punishment (condemned frame) for the

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behavior performed. Theoretically, when a behavior is rewarded, typically viewers are more

likely to endorse those behaviors as opposed to behaviors that are punished (Bandura, 2001a).

In the first round of pilot testing (see Table 3), the television clips were taken from

several programs including, *You* (Netflix program premiered in 2018 and in its third season),

Chicago Fire (NBC Universal program premiered in 2012 and currently in its tenth season),

Made for Love (HBO program premiered in 2021 and renewed for a second season), and

Kingdom (Direct TV program 2014-2017). In the second round of pilot testing, three new shows

were added including *Trying* (Apple+ TV program premiered in 2020 and recently renewed for a

third season), *Chicago PD* (NBC Universal program premiered in 2014 and currently in its ninth

season), and *One Tree Hill* (CW program 2003-2012). These television shows are all broadly

considered dramas that feature romantic relationships as part of the main plot. The control

conditions were clips from National Geographic documentaries about animals and wildlife in the

ocean and Siberia. These clips served as controls because they lacked content that could be

linked to romantic relationships, the types of framing used in the study, or the specific

relationship behaviors themselves. The control condition clips did not have any human

characters in them with whom participants could identify. This provided a solid comparison with

the experimental conditions.

The pilot test had 116 total participants (64 in the first round and 52 in the second round

of pilot testing) who watched two different clips and answered questions on their perceptions of

the clips (see Table 4). The questions included open ended (thought listing) questions about ideas

that come to mind in terms of controlling IPV behaviors, autonomy-promoting behaviors, and

overall romantic relationships. Some participants in the pilot test were familiar with the clip they

watched with 58.1% indicating they were not familiar with the clip and 38% indicating they

recognized the clip in the first round, and 85.8% indicating unfamiliarity and 9.4% familiarity

with the clips they watched in the second round. Participants were familiar with some of the

television shows from which the clips were taken. Of the 64 participants in the first round of

pilot testing, 26.4% had seen *Chicago Fire*, 3.4% had seen *Kingdom*, 3.4% had seen *Made for*

Love, and 66.7% had seen *You*. The clips from *You* were then eliminated from the final

experiment because too many people were already familiar with the program. Of the 52

participants in the second round of testing, 21.2% had seen *Chicago PD*, 28.8% had seen *One*

Tree Hill, and 7.7% had seen *Trying*.

Main Study Stimuli

The final numbers are displayed in Tables 3 and 4 for means. The television clips

included in the final experiment were from *One Tree Hill, Chicago PD,* and *Made for Love*.

These particular clips had the highest means for the desired category and comparably low means

for their counterpart (i.e., the controlling-condemned final stimulus had a high mean on ratings

for condemnation and presence of controlling IPV behaviors and correspondingly low means for

idealization and presence of autonomy-promotion).The autonomy-promoting and idealized video

was a clip created from *One Tree Hill* season 6, the autonomy-promoting condemned condition

clip was from *Chicago PD* season 3, and both the controlling condemned and controlling

idealized condition clips were created from the first season of *Made for Love*. These clips were

all within roughly eight to ten minutes in length.

In the *One Tree Hill* clip (Table 4, API-5), the participants followed Lucas and Peyton's

relationship as he realizes he loves her. As the relationship evolves, the participants viewed

Lucas promoting Peyton's independence in the relationship, especially when she finds out she

was accepted for an internship across the country in Los Angeles. In the *Chicago, PD* clip (Table

4, APC-6), participants followed the relationship between officers Adam Ruzek and Kim

Burgess, who both work in the Intelligence Unit in the Chicago Police Department. Participants

viewed the two characters become engaged, talk about moving in together, and eventually

ending their relationship. As Adam wanted connection with Kim but kept putting off wedding

plans, Kim consistently condemns how Adam is acting toward her, especially when he wants too

much connection without putting in the effort. Throughout the entire relationship, the

participants see Adam providing Kim with the support and space she needed to advance in her

position within the Intelligence Unit. Kim eventually ends the relationship at the end of the clip,

and Adam gives her autonomy and accepts the decision. *Made for Love* is the television show

that was used for both controlling condemned and controlling idealized. In the clips (Table 3,

CC-4 and CI-1), the two main characters are Hazel Green and Byron Gogol. Byron is a tech

billionaire who created a place called "The Hub" that allows for the viewing of a romantic

partner's brain so that one can see, hear, taste, touch, etc. everything that the partner is

experiencing. In the controlling idealized clip, participants saw Hazel and Byron first meet and

get married. They then see them in their daily lives as Hazel wants to become close to Byron, she

rewards the idea of living in the Hub and having a lot of money. In the controlling condemned

clip, participants view Hazel at the end of the relationship as she fights to get a divorce from

Byron. She explains that she is both miserable and angry about the controlling behaviors.

Questions about the degree to which the male partner promoted the

autonomy/independence of the female partner, the degree to which the male partner controlled

the female partner's behaviors, the degree to which the female partner idealized the male

partner's behaviors, and the degree to which the female partner condemned the male partner's

actions were all asked immediately after watching the clips. To assess the realistic nature of the

clips, several questions were asked to understand the coherence of the story, the clarity of the

story, and the realism of the situation. These items were averaged to create a composite score to

determine the overall acceptability of the television clips, as opposed to only providing scores in

the separate items (e.g., coherence, realism, story structure, etc.). This composite realism scale

could help determine which television clip to choose from if two clips in one condition were very

similar in their scores on framing of the behavior and the clarity of the actual behavior perceived.

One item was used to assess the degree to which the clip featured a relationship that is typical of

real life. Across all the clips, the scores on the typicality of the romantic relationship, as well as

the composite realism scale scores, tended to be low. This could be due to the fact that only

specific behaviors were focused on in the study rather than providing a holistic picture of the

relationship. The strength of the framing of the behavior and the clarity of the relationship

behavior perceived were the primary determining factors in which clips were included in the

final experiment.

Experimental Procedure

First, participants were asked to read and agree to the informed consent. Then,

participants were asked to watch a television clip in one of the five conditions, to which they

were randomly assigned via *Qualtrics*. After watching the television clip, participants were asked

to fill out questions in the survey with the following measures. They were then debriefed.

Measures

Several measures were included in the current study (see Table 5 for descriptive statistics

of each variable). Almost all of the measures were adapted from existing measures. Several items

were integrated throughout the survey portion of the experiment as attention checks to see if

participants were truly reading the statements as they participated in the experiment.

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Identification with Main Television Character

In the current study, identification with the characters in the clip was assessed using Cohen's (2001) measure. After watching the television clip, participants were asked to indicate which character (i.e., the name or the specific gender, male or female, of the main character) they most identified with in the clip. Some participants indicated that they did not identify with one of the main characters, which was mostly indicated by those in the control condition in which the video was a clip from a nature documentary. This scale measures the intensity and frequency of the identification with media characters, as well as absorption of the text (in this case the television clip), empathy toward the characters, and adoption of characters' goals. This measure contained statements such as "I think I have a good understanding of the character," and "While viewing the clip, I felt as if I was part of the action." The scale consisted of ten items assessed on a 7-point scale from strongly agree to strongly disagree. Cronbach's $\alpha = .87$.

Self-efficacy of Relationship Behaviors

As part of the current study, it was important to understand the connection between self-efficacy of relationship behaviors to the endorsement of controlling or autonomy-promoting behaviors in romantic relationships. When individuals believe that they can perform certain behaviors, in this case either controlling or autonomy-promoting behaviors, they may be more likely to endorse those behaviors in their own relationships. The self-efficacy in romantic relationships scale, originally created by Riggio and colleagues (2011), was adapted and used to assess participants' abilities to perform either controlling or autonomy-promoting behaviors in their own lives, depending on their condition. Items included statements such as "If a romantic partner needs some space, I would be able to give it to him/her," and "I would be capable of controlling a romantic partner's behaviors." This scale only assesses how individuals feel about

their own capability of performing both controlling and autonomy-promoting behaviors,

regardless of the television clips to which they were exposed in the experiment. This allowed

participants to think about their own relationships in regard to how confident they would feel

engaging in both relationship behaviors. The scale consisted of 10 items in total and was

assessed on a 7-point scale (1; strongly disagree to 7; strongly agree), with higher scores

indicating higher beliefs of self-efficacy for the relationship behaviors. Cronbach's α = .71 for

autonomy-promoting behaviors and α = .75 for controlling IPV behaviors.

Third-person Perceptions

Several items in the survey were used to assess both the perceived effect of the media

message on the self and others. This differential is a way media scholars often assess the third-

person perception (Hoffner et al., 2001; Lim, 2017; Sun, Shen, & Pan, 2008). In order to

measure perceived effects of the television clips on participants, eight items were included that

asked to what extent do the participants imagine these television clips to have an influence on

others' relationship behaviors. Items include statements such as "Television shows, like the one I

just viewed, about romantic relationships affect how I do or will behave in my own relationship,"

and "Television shows, like the one I just viewed, influence others' perceptions of romantic

relationships." Several items were also used to assess both the perceived effect on others and the

self by switching the "I" to "others" in the items. The difference between the scores of perceived

effects on the self (four items) and others (four items) was calculated to measure the third-person

perception. The larger the score, the greater the magnitude of bias in perceiving the effects of the

television clips on the self relative to other people. Cronbach's α = .91 for self and α = .90 for

others.

Endorsement of Controlling Behaviors

The Intimate Partner Violence Attitude Scale (IPVAS; Smith et al., 2005) was adapted to assess endorsement of controlling behaviors from a romantic partner. The scale originally assessed three types of IPV (e.g., psychological, physical, and controlling behaviors). One factor of IPV (e.g., controlling behaviors) was included in the current study and included items such as "I would not be likely to ask my partner what they do every day," and "It would be okay for me to tell a partner not to talk to someone of the opposite sex". These items focused solely on whether individuals would accept these behaviors in their current or a future romantic relationship, not about whether participants felt they were capable of engaging in the behaviors (e.g., self-efficacy of controlling IPV behaviors). All items were assessed on a 7-point scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree, and the adapted scale consisted of eight items in total. The items were averaged and made into a composite variable with the higher numbers indicating higher endorsement of controlling behaviors and lower scores indicating less endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. Cronbach's $\alpha = .71$.

Endorsement of Autonomy-promoting Behaviors

Autonomy-promoting behavior endorsement was assessed by using an adapted version of the scale created by Duran, Kelly, and Rotaru (2011). This scale is originally comprised of 13 statements that assess the dialectical tension of connection versus autonomy in relationships. After assessing reliability, seven items were included in the final analyses. Items were measured using a 7-point scale, ranging from (1) strongly disagree to (7) strongly agree. Items included statements such as "Partners should spend time away from one another sometimes," and "Romantic partners should have time to be with their friends outside the relationship." The items were averaged to create one autonomy-promoting behavior variable. Cronbach's $\alpha = .75$.

Demographic Variables

It was assessed how often participants watch television by asking how many hours per day and per week they typically spend watching both live television and streaming platforms, as well as specific genres of television programming. Overall media use questions were included (i.e., TV habits, film viewing habits, social media use, etc.). Several items for participants to indicate whether they have been a victim of IPV in their romantic relationships were included. Several questions were asked about specific IPV behaviors experienced in their current relationship, past relationship, and how often the IPV behaviors occurred. Questions about parental IPV were asked as well to gauge how much experience individuals have with IPV in their personal lives, and questions about whether participants have seen peers engage in or be a victim of IPV were included as well. Several demographic questions about parents and peers, as well as personal relationships were assessed and included as control variables. Some of these were highly personal questions and included the option of "prefer not to disclose" or "I don't know" as part of the question. Questions about age, race and ethnicity, total household income, religious affiliation, education, sex, and sexual orientation were also included as demographic variables.

Chapter 4: Results

A correlation table was created to see the relationships among all the variables in the study (see Table 6). ANCOVAs were used to address H1-3, Hayes (2022) Process moderation models were used to assess H4 and 5 and RQ1, and Process mediation models were used to examine H6 and 7. In the Process models where the five conditions were tested, the conditions variable was treated as multi-categorical, thus creating four dummy variables to be compared to the control condition (e.g., the reference group).

To address H1, which proposed that exposure to autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors in a television clip will lead to greater endorsement of those behaviors, respectively, a one-way ANCOVA was used for analysis. In all the ANCOVA analyses, four control variables were used, including parental relationship status, number of past relationships (which speaks to experience in romantic relationships), general media use, and religious affiliation. All other covariates were not observed to systematically influence chief perceptual outcomes. These were included as covariates in order to factor out potentially confounding influences (e.g., demographic factors) in the ANOVAs, moderation, and mediation analyses. The independent variable in this analysis was the specific behavior (i.e., autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV conditions). This provides an insight as to how the observed behavior generally influenced participants rather than each separate condition. Results indicated that this hypothesis was not supported. Being exposed to autonomy-promoting behaviors in a clip did not lead to higher endorsement of those behaviors. Being exposed to controlling IPV behaviors also did not lead to greater endorsement of those specific behaviors. In fact, the one-way ANCOVA indicated that being exposed to controlling IPV behaviors led to the greatest level of endorsement for autonomy-promoting behaviors, $F(2,781) = 4.24$, $p = .02$, $\eta^2 = .012$. While this is a small effect

size, it is still a unique pattern that was not originally hypothesized in the study. The post hoc

analyses (LSD criterion, which is a less conservative post hoc test than others in ANOVA;

Hayes, 2009) indicated that the controlling IPV behavior conditions ($M = 5.97$, $SD = .67$)

significantly differed from the control condition ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .73$) but not the autonomy-

promoting behavior conditions ($M = 5.87$, $SD = .70$) in terms of endorsement for autonomy-

promoting behaviors (See Table 8). The autonomy-promoting conditions and controlling IPV

condition differences were approaching significance ($p = .06$), which is important to note.

Religion ($p = .001$), parental relationship status, ($p = .03$) and general media use ($p = .03$) were

all significant covariates in predicting endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. This

pattern suggests that the more individuals consume general media, the stronger the effects of the

endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. Participants' religiosity and the relationship

status of their parents (e.g., married parental status) lead to greater endorsement of autonomy-

promoting behaviors.

Exposure to the IPV behaviors in a television clip (H1b) did not lead to greater

endorsement of IPV behaviors and was, therefore, not supported, $F(2,779) = 2.66$, $p = .07$ (See

Table 9). The control condition ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .76$) did differ significantly from the controlling

IPV behavior conditions ($M = 2.06$, $SD = .80$), while the autonomy-promoting conditions ($M =$

2.12, $SD = .77$) did not significantly differ from either the control nor the controlling IPV

conditions.

To analyze H2a, a one-way ANCOVA was again used to determine which specific

condition led to the greatest endorsement of the autonomy-promoting behaviors. In the H2 and

H3 analyses, the independent variable was assessed using all five conditions, which included

both the relationship behavior (e.g., autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV) and framing of

the behavior (e.g., idealized and condemned) and the control condition. The idealized framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors did not lead to the greatest level of endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors and was therefore not supported. The results of the ANCOVA indicated that the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors led to significantly higher endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, $F(4,781) = 2.63$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .014$. The post hoc analyses (LSD criterion) indicated that the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors ($M = 6.01$, $SD = .68$) significantly differed from the condemned framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors ($M = 5.85$, $SD = .74$) and the control condition ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .73$) (See Table 10 and Figure 6). None of the other conditions significantly differed from one another. This pattern suggests that when participants viewed the female partner condemning the male partner's controlling IPV behaviors, they were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors than when those specific behaviors were idealized. A few of the covariates were significant in this particular ANCOVA, including religiosity, ($p < .001$), parental relationship status (e.g., married parents), ($p = .03$), and general media use, ($p = .03$). This pattern suggests that the more individuals consume general media, the stronger the effects of the endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, depending on the experimental condition (condemned controlling IPV condition led to the greatest endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors in this ANCOVA test). Participants' religiosity and the relationship status of their parents (e.g., married parental status) lead to greater endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors.

In addressing H2b, which suggested that the condemned framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors would lead to the lowest level of endorsement of that particular behavior, a one-way ANCOVA was used. This hypothesis was not supported by the results. The condemned framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors did not lead to the lowest level of endorsement of that

particular behavior. The results of the ANCOVA indicated that the control condition led to the lowest endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .73$). As indicated in the previous hypothesis, the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors led to significantly higher endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, $F(4,781) = 2.63$, $p = .03$, $\eta^2 = .014$. The post hoc analyses (LSD criterion) indicated that the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors ($M = 6.01$, $SD = .68$) significantly differed from the condemned framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors ($M = 5.85$, $SD = .74$) and the control condition ($M = 5.76$, $SD = .73$) (See Table 10 and Figure 6).

To test H3a and H3b, a one-way ANCOVA was used to determine which condition led to the lowest level of endorsement of the controlling IPV behaviors and the highest level of endorsement of that behavior. H3a was not supported. The idealized framing of the controlling IPV behaviors did not lead to the highest level of endorsement of that particular behavior and the ANCOVA was not significant, $F(4,779) = 1.97$, $p = .10$. The control condition had the highest mean score for endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .76$) (See Table 11 and Figure 7). The second highest endorsement score was found for those in the idealized framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors condition ($M = 2.18$, $SD = .79$). Although the model was not significant, the control condition ($M = 2.25$, $SD = .76$) did significantly differ from the condemned framing of controlling IPV behavior condition ($M = 2.02$, $SD = .82$). The condemned framing of controlling IPV behavior condition ($M = 2.02$, $SD = .82$) was close to being significantly different from the idealized framing of the autonomy-promoting behavior condition ($M = 2.17$, $SD = .79$). This pattern suggests that when participants viewed a clip where the female character condemned that male character's controlling IPV behaviors, relative to the control, they were less likely to endorse controlling IPV behaviors, and when they saw the

autonomy-promoting behaviors idealized, participants were more likely to endorse controlling

IPV behaviors, relative to the control condition. H3b was also not supported using this same

ANCOVA test, $F(4,779) = 1.97$, $p = .10$. However, the condemned framing of the controlling

IPV behaviors did lead to the lowest level of endorsement of that particular behavior ($M = 2.02$,

$SD = .82$) (See Table 11 and Figure 7).

A few key variables were included in the study to understand their mediating or

moderating role in the relationship between exposure to the experimental conditions and

endorsement of both autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors in romantic

relationships. H4 suggested that identification with a main character in the television clips would

play a role as a moderating variable. In order to test this moderation effect, Hayes' (2022)

Process macro was used (Model #1).

H4 predicted that identification would moderate the effects of H2 and H3. A chi-square

analysis [X^2 (1, $N = 799$) = 145.13, $p < .001$] revealed that female participants were more likely

to identify with the main female character, but the male participants identified with both female

and male main characters comparably (see Figure 3 and Table 7). After treating the experimental

conditions as a multi-categorical variable (i.e., IV was separated into five conditions with the

control condition as the referent group) in Process, the results indicated that there was no

significant main effect or interactions in the model, and identification ($b = -.04$, $p = .66$) did not

moderate the relationship, $R^2 = .05$, $F(13,757) = 3.27$, $p < .001$. There was an effect of the

condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors condition ($b = .34$, $p = .01$) in this particular

moderation model, a pattern which can be seen in the ANCOVA implemented in H2. When the

outcome of endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors was tested in the moderation model, the

results were also not significant. While the overall model was significant, the only factors that

were significant in the results of the analysis were two covariates (general media use and religiosity) along with the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors condition, which accounts for the variance in the overall model. Identification with the main character did not moderate the effects proposed in H2 and H3 and did not lead to greater endorsement of those behaviors.

Diving deeper into understanding identification with the main characters, the identification variable was recoded, and moderation analyses were run. The identification variable was coded such that participants who identified with the main female character were placed into a new variable and the same for those who identified with the male character in the study. Participants who identified with the main female character in the television clips were not more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting, $R^2 = .06$ $F(13,511) = 2.57$, $p = .001$. There was no main effect of identification with the female character on endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors ($b = -.02$, $p = .90$) nor were any of the interactions significant in this particular model. Identification with the main female character was also not significant in the moderation model with controlling IPV behaviors as the outcome, $R^2 = .04$, $F(13,510) = 1.60$, $p = .08$. No interaction effects were present, and identification with the female character did not have a main effect ($b = -.15$, $p = .28$) on endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. The same moderation analyses were used for identification with the main male character specifically in addition to the female character. Identification with the male character did not play a moderating role in the endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, $R^2 = .07$, $F(13,132) = .79$ $p = .67$. There was no main effect for identification with the main male character ($b = -.06$, $p = .86$) on the outcome. The moderation model for identification with male character was not significant, $R^2 = .09$, $F(13,131) = .96$, $p = .50$; however, it does indicate an interesting pattern. In this model, there was

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a main effect for identification with the main male character on endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors, such that identification with the male character led to a direct negative relationship (b = -.57, p = .03) and significant interaction with the controlling IPV condemned condition (b = .88, p = .04), indicating that the more participants identified with the main male character, the less likely they were to endorse controlling IPV behaviors.

H5 included the variable of self-efficacy of the relationship behavior (i.e., controlling vs autonomy-promoting) as a moderator between the effects of H2 and H3 and greater behavioral endorsement of autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors. This hypothesis was again tested using a moderation model (Process model #1 in Hayes, 2022). In terms of self-efficacy of autonomy-promoting behaviors moderating the effect of exposure to the television clips on endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, the model was significant, R^2 = .26, $F(13,763)$ = 20.91, $p < .001$. There was a main effect for the condemned framing of controlling IPV behaviors (b = .21, p = .04) and a main effect for self-efficacy of autonomy-promoting behaviors (b = .52, $p < .001$). However, there were no significant interaction effects in the model. This hypothesis was not fully supported by the results.

In terms of self-efficacy of controlling IPV behaviors moderating the effect of exposure to the television clips on endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors, the model was significant, R^2 = .22, $F(13,765)$ = 16.19, $p < .001$. There was a main effect for self-efficacy of controlling IPV behaviors (b = .41, $p < .001$). However, there were no main effects for the television clip exposure or significant interaction effects in the model. This hypothesis was not supported by the results. The two self-efficacy variables had significant main effects in the moderation models, suggesting that individuals who felt as though they could perform either autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV behaviors were more likely to endorse those specific relationship behaviors.

However, self-efficacy did not strengthen the relationship between exposure to the television

clips and endorsement of either autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV behaviors in the study.

In terms of H6, Hayes (2022) Process (model 4) was used to test TPP as a mediator.

Previous research has indicated that TPP could function as a mediating variable when it comes to

media effects in endorsing a product (e.g., Bi, Zhang, & Ha, 2018). The hypothesized

relationship was such that TPP was predicted to mediate the relationship between exposure to the

controlling orientation (i.e., idealized controlling behavior or condemned autonomy-promoting

behavior conditions) and behavior endorsement, such that greater TPP following exposure will

be positively related to endorsement of controlling behaviors. This hypothesis was not supported,

$R^2 = .02$, F(6, 766) = 1.99, $p = .06$. There was no direct effect of the controlling orientation [$b = -0.06$, $p = .41$] on endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors, and TPP did not act as a mediator [$b = 0.01$, $p = .84$].

For H7, the Hayes (2022) Process (model 4) was also used to test TPP as a mediator. The

hypothesized relationship was such that TPP was predicted to mediate the relationship between

exposure to the autonomy-promoting orientation and endorsement of autonomy-promoting

behaviors, such that greater TPP following exposure will be positively related to endorsement of

autonomy-promoting behaviors. This hypothesis was not supported, $R^2 = .04$, $F(6, 767) = 5.90$, $p < .001$. There was a direct effect of the autonomy-promoting orientation [$b = 0.16$, $p = .03$] on

endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, and TPP had a main effect on the outcome [$b = 0.08$, $p = .02$], such that the more individuals believed that others were influenced by the

relationship behaviors they saw in the clips, the more likely they were to endorse autonomy-

promoting relationship behaviors (See Figure 4). However, TPP was not a mediator between

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exposure to the autonomy-promoting orientation and the endorsement of autonomy-promoting

behaviors.

An interesting finding from the TPP mediation model was that general media use

predicted TPP and autonomy-promoting behavior endorsement. After running the Hayes (2022)

Process (model 4) using general media use as the independent variable, and TPP as the mediator,

the model was significant, $R^2 = .02$, $F(4, 769) = 3.53$, $p = .01$. The model accounts for roughly

3.81% of the variance in explaining endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. Overall, the

direct effect of general media use on increased autonomy-promoting behavior endorsement was

observed [$b = 0.03$, $p = .04$, 95% CI (0.001, 0.063)]. General media use led to greater

endorsement of autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors, such that general media use

produced enhanced endorsement as a function of TPP (See Figure 5).

RQ1 questioned the moderating role of the self-efficacy of relationship behaviors

between exposure to the television clips and TPP. This research question was tested using a

simple moderation model (Process model #1 in Hayes, 2022). Self-efficacy of autonomy-

promoting behaviors did not moderate the relationship between exposure to the television clips

and TPP, $R^2 = .03$, $F(13,762) = 1.74$, p = .05. There were no interaction effects in the model or

main effects of the conditions or self-efficacy ($b = -.01$, $p = .93$) on TPP. Self-efficacy of

controlling IPV behaviors also did not moderate the relationship between exposure to the

television clips and TPP, $R^2 = .03$, $F(13,766) = 1.88$, p = .03. There were no interaction effects in

the model or main effects of the conditions or self-efficacy ($b = .09$, $p = .33$) on TPP.

RQ2 inquired about the moderating role of the identification with a main character

between exposure to the television clips and TPP. This research question was tested using a

simple moderation model (Process model #1 in Hayes, 2022). Identification did not moderate the

relationship between exposure to the television clips and TPP, $R^2 = .09$, $F(13,759) = 5.75$, $p <$

.001. While the model was significant, identification was not a significant moderator, nor did it

have a direct effect on TPP ($b = .11$, $p = .15$) on TPP. There were no interaction effects in the

model either for identification and the four dummy variables on TPP.

Chapter 5: Discussion

The issue of endorsing controlling IPV behaviors, in comparison to autonomy-promoting behaviors, as they are observed on television was at the foundation of the current study. In an experiment, portraying two different types of relationship behaviors (autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV) and two types of framing (idealizing or condemning of either behavior), emerging adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years old were exposed to television stimulus clips. They, then, responded to items representative of several key perceptual variables in order to ultimately predict endorsement of both types of relationship behaviors. Specifically, the roles of identification with a main character in the clip, third person effect (TPE), and self-efficacy of performing the two relationship behaviors were all assessed. The overall goal was to understand under what conditions young adults might endorse autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV behaviors when those behaviors are framed to emphasize them in a highly idealized or condemned manner. Though a number of anticipated outcomes were not observed, several unique patterns emerged. In the following sections, implications of findings are discussed along with speculation of the phenomena that might be underlying the patterns found.

Observed Patterns and Implications

The overall goal was to understand how young adults might choose to endorse the two specific relationship behaviors in the study when those behaviors were also framed in two distinct ways. The first three hypotheses suggested direct influences of exposure to the two behaviors, and the framing of those behaviors, on the degree to which participants would endorse both autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors. This was such that those who were exposed to autonomy-promoting behaviors would then be more likely to endorse those behaviors, and the same for controlling IPV behaviors, particularly when they were associated

with reward, rather than punishment. A few interesting patterns emerged for these first three

hypotheses when considering behaviors and frames.

Outcomes of Relationship Behaviors

The first hypothesis predicted that exposure to the specific behavior would have an effect

on the degree to which participants would endorse that action. However, the results indicated that

being exposed to autonomy-promoting behaviors did not necessarily lead to greater endorsement

of those behaviors, relative to those who received no relationship exposure, and the same for

controlling IPV behaviors. In fact, the results indicated that the controlling IPV behavior

condition differed significantly from the control condition. Those who were exposed to the

controlling IPV behaviors in the television clips were actually more likely to endorse autonomy-

promoting behaviors as compared to the control condition, the opposite as to what was originally

predicted to occur. The post-hoc analysis did not show a significant difference between those in

the controlling IPV and autonomy-promoting behavior conditions. However, it is an interesting

result that those in the controlling IPV conditions did have a higher mean when compared to

those who were exposed to the autonomy-promoting behaviors on endorsement of autonomy-

promoting behaviors, specifically (see Table 8 and Table 9).

Perhaps, part of the explanation lies in the schematic perceptions of controlling IPV

behaviors and autonomy-promoting behaviors. As previous scholars have suggested, a common

desire in romantic relationships is having some independence in the relationship to grow and

change with a romantic partner fostering those autonomy behaviors (e.g., Hui, Molden, & Finkel,

2013). Promoting the independence of a relational partner could be seen as a normative behavior

(i.e., something that is normal and *should* be expected in most romantic relationships). As such,

when individuals in the current study were exposed to controlling IPV behaviors, this may have

produced a boomerang effect, leading them to want to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors

most likely out of the increased salience of controlling IPV behaviors as outside the norm of

what is to be expected from a romantic partner. When looking at the reported scores, participants

in the control condition ($M = 2.25$; see Table 9) for controlling IPV endorsement reported lower

endorsement (baseline comparison) when compared to the control condition for the autonomy-

promoting endorsement scores ($M = 5.76$; see Table 8). This indicates that participants did not

perceive controlling IPV behaviors as the norm or behaviors to be expected from a romantic

partner because the endorsement score for controlling IPV behaviors was much lower among

those not exposed to relational behaviors. In total, the overall means of both endorsement scores

indicate that participants were less willing to endorse controlling IPV behaviors over autonomy-

promoting behaviors ($M = 2.11$ and $M = 5.89$, respectively; see Table 5). Since this was the case,

when exposed to controlling IPV behaviors, individuals might have accessed innate perceptions

of autonomy-promoting behaviors as associated with less stigma and deviation from norms

relative to controlling IPV behaviors.

Another reason why individuals may have reported endorsing autonomy-promoting

behaviors when exposed to the controlling IPV ones could be because of the dialectical tension

between controlling and autonomous behaviors. These behaviors were chosen for the current

study because they are seemingly opposite behaviors on the interpersonal dialectical tension

binary. While many individuals want to be connected, and to a certain degree dependent upon,

their romantic partner, they have an associated need or desire to also be autonomous (Baxter,

1993; Goldsmith, 1990). This dialectical tension between dependence and independence could

explain why individuals reported higher endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors after

seeing the controlling IPV behavior television clips overall. When exposed to the controlling IPV

behaviors, participants might have felt that the main male character had too much dependence on the female partner in the television clips, violating participants' ideas of freedom in a relationship, and this may have led participants to endorse autonomous behaviors to balance their own relational dispositions.

The results have important implications for the theoretical foundation used in the current study. What is interesting to note is that social cognitive theory (SCT) predicts that individuals would see a model performing a behavior and then the individual might be more inclined to perform the behavior after viewing (Bandura, 2001a). However, in the current study, results indicated that when individuals were exposed to the controlling IPV behaviors, they were more likely to endorse the opposite (e.g., autonomy-promoting behaviors). This suggests a new area of study for SCT. Scholars might question when exposure to one behavior could produce inclinations toward conceptually opposite actions. For instance, what are other situations in which individuals might be led to endorse an opposite behavior, especially when that behavior is seen as being punished by others? Future studies will want to explore this further, especially as a function of the rewards and punishment aspect of SCT.

Outcomes of Framing: Idealized versus Condemned

The second and third hypotheses add the element of framing to the examination of the influence of relationship behavior exposure, such that particular framing of the two behaviors was expected to condition endorsement of the relationship behaviors (e.g., autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV). A pattern emerged such that the condemned framing of the controlling IPV behaviors led to greater endorsement of autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors. What was originally hypothesized was that the controlling IPV behaviors that were idealized would lead to the greatest endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors (and condemned would lead to the least

endorsement). However, the two conditions (e.g., idealized and condemned controlling IPV) were not statistically significantly different from one another in predicting endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. What is interesting to note is that when participants saw the main female character condemning the controlling IPV behaviors of the male partner, they were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors, relative to those who received no relationship exposure. This indicates that the condemning of a counter-behavior could, in some circumstances, serve as a more powerful antecedent to endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors than idealizing those behaviors. It may not be enough for behaviors to be idealized or to be simply present for individuals to want to promote specific relationship behaviors (e.g., independence from a romantic partner) but perceived hostility toward a dialectically opposite behavior may influence actions.

The results of the chi-square analysis indicate that most of the participants identified with the main female character (see Figure 3 and Table 7), which also could have led individuals to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors when the main female character condemned the male character's controlling IPV behaviors. Although identification was not a significant moderating variable in the analyses, empathy toward the lead female character could, in part, explain why participants were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors after being exposed to the condemned controlling IPV behaviors. Participants who identified with the female character may have felt some empathy for her and felt for her in that situation when watching the television clips. This may have led to the endorsement of seemingly more healthy relationship behaviors, specifically because of empathy for the lead female character.

When the controlling IPV behaviors were condemned by the female lead character, participants were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors. When behaviors are

clearly condemned by a character on screen, this may signal viewers that these behaviors are not acceptable, creating less chance of minimization of those behaviors. A previous study by Franiuk, Coleman, and Apa (2017) found similar results that support this current study's findings. Through their experiment to test the effects of a misogynous song, they found that when a song was critical of IPV, respondents reported more sympathy for the victim and had more positive perceptions of the couple in the song. The condemned framed condition, especially for the controlling behaviors, may have functioned similarly to the idea of critique in this study (Franiuk, Coleman, & Apa, 2017). Outright disapproval for behaviors could lead to greater perceptions of stopping those behaviors and seeing them as abusive.

What was also unexpected was that the idealized controlling IPV behaviors did not lead to greater endorsement of those behaviors, relative to the condemned framing or the control conditions, nor did it influence endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. If controlling IPV behaviors are presented as socially undesirable (CDC, 2019; Papp et al., 2017), it would be reasonable for participants in the study to indicate greater endorsement of the dialectically opposite autonomy-promoting behaviors because they perceive controlling IPV behaviors as negative, or undesirable. However, if controlling IPV behaviors are idealized, it is plausible that individuals might see controlling IPV behaviors as less of a problem, and they thus might be more likely to minimize the abusive nature of these behaviors when exposed to them in the television clips. This was originally predicted in the current study, but the results did not demonstrate support for this prediction. In the current study, the idealized controlling IPV condition was not significantly different from the condemned framed condition or even the autonomy-promoting idealized condition. Perhaps, idealizing controlling behaviors does not necessarily lead to greater endorsement of those behaviors, especially when the behavior might

be perceived as socially undesirable or against societal norms (CDC, 2019; Papp et al., 2017).

Endorsement of the controlling IPV behavior in the idealized framing condition had a low score

($M = 2.09$), which was not much higher than the condemned framing of the controlling IPV

behaviors ($M = 2.02$). It could be that participants in this study perceived the controlling IPV

behaviors, even when they were idealized, as undesirable and thus did not endorse the behaviors.

Both the idealized and condemned framed controlling IPV behavior conditions might have led to

stronger perceptions of controlling IPV behaviors as abusive and possibly less minimization of

these behaviors.

One reason why exposure to idealized framing of relationship behaviors did not

uniformly predict the highest degree of endorsement of those behaviors in the current study

could be because of the quantity and quality of romantic relationships participants are routinely

exposed to, already, in media. Romantic relationships are often highly romanticized and

idealized on many popular television programs, whether they are the center of the storyline or in

the background. Because individuals are constantly exposed to idealized romantic relationships

in media, including on television, in film, and even on social media (e.g., #relationshipgoals),

individuals might be experiencing an inoculation effect. Inoculation theory posits that message

influence can act as a protective measure against future message influences (McGuire, 1964). A

common media trope is for creators and producers to consistently present messages featuring

romantic relationships associated with positive resolutions (e.g., "…happily ever after")

culminating from prior relational behaviors (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). Exposure to the

idealization of romantic behaviors in an experimental setting may not be effective in creating

more endorsement of those behaviors. This could possibly be due to frequently viewing these

idealized romantic behaviors in media, which can influence the way individuals perceive

romantic relationship behaviors or relationships, in general. In the current study, individuals

indicated a high frequency of watching soap operas and romantic comedies on television (see

Table 1). Because these types of television shows typically feature romantic relationships as a

main part of the narrative, participants in this study are likely constantly inundated with

messages of romantic relationships, especially highly idealized ones. Therefore, the idealized

television clips in the study, especially the idealized autonomy-promoting clip, would not have

an additional effect on endorsement of those behaviors.

Idealized images are not uncommon in film and on television. A plethora of examples

from previous studies provide insights into this finding of potential inoculation (Holmes, 2007;

Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). Hefner and Wilson (2013) indicated in

their content analysis of more than 50 top-grossing romantic comedies that those films featured

romantic ideals in some way, leading to views of those relationships being the "perfect"

relationship examples. Because young adults are exposed to idealized romantic relationships

overall in many media messages, they may be less influenced by exposure to idealized

relationship behaviors in television programs, leading to a more neutral response or even lack of

stimulus-induced endorsement of those behaviors.

The idealized framing of the relationship behaviors did not lead to the greatest

endorsement of those same behaviors; however, the condemned framing also did not predict the

least endorsement of those behaviors as compared to the idealized framed and control conditions.

Previous research on using emphasis framing of IPV behaviors did not find qualitatively similar

outcomes as this current study. Savage et al. (2017) tested the severity of the violence that took

place between heterosexual romantic partners in news stories to understand IPV seriousness,

sympathy for the victim, and punishment preferences for the perpetrator. The emphasis framing

did end up contributing to the outcomes such that negative descriptions were associated with increasingly negative evaluative outcomes. For instance, respondents indicated a stronger punishment preference for the perpetrators of IPV, especially when the IPV was presented as strong (e.g., injuring a partner badly by shoving or hitting that partner) and fatal in severity and behavior type (e.g., using a weapon to ultimately kill a romantic partner). The lethal framing of the violence also led to more sympathy toward the victim of IPV and higher ratings of the seriousness for IPV as a public health concern. Condemned controlling IPV behaviors did lead to endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, as aforementioned. Perhaps, the condemned framing of the autonomy-promoting behaviors did not lead to the least endorsement of those behaviors because this may be relatively less typical of relationship depictions (e.g., Holmberg & MacKenzie, 2002). What are ultimately and intrinsically perceived as normative behaviors might be playing a role in the lack of support for the original hypothesis. It might be that the condemned framing of autonomy-promoting behaviors may not have been sufficient for participants to see these as typically undesirable behaviors, and therefore, did not produce lower endorsement. The condemned autonomy-promoting behaviors condition ($M = 5.85$) was actually higher than the control condition ($M = 5.76$) and only slightly lower than the idealized autonomy-promoting condition ($M = 5.88$).

In the case of the condemned framing of the controlling IPV behaviors, perhaps the condemning did not lead participants to endorse these behaviors the least because they already perceived these as negative behaviors. The mean score of controlling IPV behavior endorsement for the condemned framed condition was low ($M = 2.02$). The control condition indicated that scores on endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors was also low ($M = 2.25$) as compared to endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors (e.g., control condition, $M = 5.76$). The

condemned framing for the controlling IPV behaviors was significantly different from the control condition on endorsement scores but did not significantly differ from the idealized controlling IPV condition on endorsement scores for controlling IPV behaviors (see Table 11). The overall scores for the endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors were generally low across all five conditions. It seems like overall, participants were not willing to endorse controlling IPV behaviors based on the statements answered in the measure, thus potentially revealing floor effects on this outcome variable.

The framing in the television clips was meant to elicit positive or negative feelings about the outcomes of the behaviors that the lead male character was performing. When the behaviors were idealized, this meant that the lead female character was rewarding the behaviors of the male partner, and when the behaviors were condemned by the female partner, this meant the male partner was being punished for his behaviors. The framing of the clips did not have the intended effects in the study. Theoretically, the idealized behaviors should have been endorsed and the condemned would not be endorsed (or would be the least endorsed behaviors). However, it is interesting to note that when participants saw the female condemning the male partner's controlling behaviors, this led to greater endorsement for autonomy-promoting behaviors. This finding implies that when characters model a behavior that is punished, it could lead to viewers wanting to endorse opposite behaviors (or ones that are not congruent with the behaviors being modeled by the character on screen). Media scholars should explore these findings in future studies to examine if these findings might occur when other behaviors are presented in media messages. Perhaps, when individuals view behaviors they perceive as detrimental and these behaviors are clearly punished by social others, this may lead to individuals behaving in a different way or endorsing an opposite or different behavior.

Future research should continue looking at emerging adults' perceptions of coercive, manipulative, and controlling IPV behaviors on different platforms (e.g., social media, film, video games, etc.). Content analyses on how often these types of nonphysical IPV behaviors occur on television, in film, and in video games would help scholars better understand how often individuals are exposed to these specific behaviors. Follow-up studies and experiments to the content analyses would help media and interpersonal scholars understand not only how often young adults are seeing these behaviors but also how they perceive and perhaps endorse these specific types of nonphysical IPV.

Identification Moderation Findings

It was hypothesized in the current study that identification with a main character in the television clip would moderate the relationship between exposure to the clip and endorsement of both autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors. This hypothesis was not supported by the results. Overall identification with a main character did not lead to greater endorsement of either relationship behavior. When the identification variable was broken up by identification with either the lead male character or the lead female character, the results were also not significant. The chi-square analysis indicated that female participants more often identified with the lead female character, and male participants identified with both the male and female main characters (see Figure 3 and Table 7). Although identifying with the female character could possibly have led to more empathy toward her situation in the relationship—depending on the experimental condition to which participants were exposed—identification did not necessarily lead to greater endorsement of either autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV behaviors.

Previous research suggests that identification with models is a key factor in SCT outcomes, or observational learning, such that when individuals identify with a media figure,

they are more likely to behave in similar ways to that figure (Bandura, 2001a). Several scholars have studied the effects of identifying with a media figure in varied contexts and have demonstrated that identification can lead to effects like greater endorsement of media messages (Basil, 1996), performing detrimental health behaviors (Andsager et al, 2006), and even reducing intergroup anxiety and prejudice toward minority group members (Ortiz & Harwood, 2007). However, Ortiz and Harwood did find that identification only played a significant role in specific contexts.

For instance, heterosexual individuals who identified with Grace (e.g., main heterosexual character from *Will & Grace*) reported less intergroup anxiety and less social distance toward those who identify as LGB. Identification with the ingroup character was not a significant factor, however, when White participants identified with Wes (e.g., the White lead in *Real World: Austin*) in reducing social distance and intergroup anxiety toward Black individuals. The participants had similar identities to the character and reality actor who were in the television shows. Identification played a role in the non-realistic, fictional scenario (e.g., *Will & Grace*) but did not factor into the reality television scenario (e.g., *Real World: Austin*). This may be due to viewers perceiving that sitcoms have the fictional element to them, especially with sitcoms that have a traditional "laugh track" element that is timed for specific moments. However, the current study did not find that identification with a fictional character led to greater endorsement of either relationship behavior. All the television clips were from drama/fictional programs and the characters were fictional in the current study, so in theory, stronger identification should have led to greater endorsement of both relationship behaviors. This might be partially explained by the more realistic feel to the television clips included in the current study. Perhaps, participants perceived these clips to be high quality drama television programs, which could explain why

individuals might have identified with one of the main characters in the clip, but this did not necessarily lead to greater (or even the least) endorsement of either controlling IPV or autonomy-promoting behaviors.

Part of this could also be explained by SCT and with whom participants identified during the experiment. Most of the participants identified with the main female character in the clips. According to Bandura (2001a), individuals may be more likely to perform the behaviors they see a model perform if they identify with that particular model. This can extend to endorsement of relationship behaviors, such that individuals who identify with a model who is performing a particular relationship behavior may be more likely to endorse that behavior. The way that the television clips were created was such that the lead male character in the relationship was always the character who performed the relationship behaviors, and the female character in the relationship was the one who either idealized or condemned the male character's behaviors. This may be the reason why identification did not act as a moderator. Since most of the participants in the study identified with the female character and not the male character in the television clips, identification did not lead to endorsement because the female character was not the one performing the behaviors.

Identity salience might also play a role in explaining the results. To a certain degree, participants did identify with a main character in the television clip but that identification did not necessarily lead to greater endorsement of either relationship behavior because this was perhaps not necessarily a salient part of the participants' identity. In this sample, many of the participants indicated that they were single (not currently in a relationship; see Table 2).

It is also possible that the respondents in this study did identify with the character to a certain degree, but this did not make them want *to be like* the character and endorse the

relationship behavior, especially in the idealized framing, or not endorse the behavior, as predicted for the condemned framing. It could be that wishful identification (i.e., wanting *to be like* a fictional character) might strengthen the relationship but not general identification (Hoffner, 1996). When individuals want to emulate the actions of a media figure, this might lead to greater endorsement of specific relationship behaviors. It is also possible that this lack of significant finding for identification was due to study design. The television clips were shorter than most media individuals might encounter in their everyday media use. Each clip was between eight to ten minutes in length, and this might have not been enough time for individuals to truly follow one of the lead characters enough to be influenced by their actions. However, since many of the participants indicated identifying with one of the main characters, it is more likely that the moderation model was not significant due to most of the participants identifying with the lead female character who was not the one performing either relationship behavior.

Identification with a character could be further explored in the context of romantic relationship research. Other variables that might be considered are wishful identification (i.e., wanting to *be like* a media figure; Hoffner, 1996) and parasocial attachment (i.e., the bond or attachment individuals feel as they form a relationship with a media figure; e.g., Erickson & Dal Cin, 2018) when it comes to understanding whether young adults are willing to endorse specific relationship behaviors.

Self-efficacy of Relationship Behaviors Moderation Findings

Self-efficacy has been shown to aid in the learning process. When individuals feel they have the ability to engage in particular behaviors, they may be more likely to perform those behaviors (Bandura, 1986). In the current study, self-efficacy was hypothesized to be a

moderator of the relationship between exposure to the television clips and endorsement of both

relationship behaviors portrayed (e.g., autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV).

The results demonstrated that self-efficacy did have a main effect on both endorsement of

autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors but did not act as a moderator. This is to

say, it did not strengthen the relationship between exposure and endorsement of either autonomy-

promoting or controlling IPV behaviors. Participants felt confident in engaging in autonomy-

promoting behaviors but did not indicate feeling efficacious for the controlling IPV behaviors

(see Table 5 for means). It seems like participants were relatively more confident in promoting a

partner's independence regardless of exposure to the television clips, which could be because

these behaviors are often seen as typical, or normative, in romantic relationships (e.g., Hui,

Molden, & Finkel, 2013), but participants did not indicate higher self-efficacy on controlling IPV

behaviors perhaps because these are typically seen as socially undesirable behaviors (e.g., CDC,

2019; Papp et al., 2017).

It could be that when young adults are exposed to television clips with specific romantic

relationship behaviors, they do not perceive that they could emulate those behaviors and,

therefore, would not necessarily endorse those specific relationship behaviors. Even if young

adults feel confident, or have higher self-efficacy, perhaps if they perceive the television clips to

be high quality and realistic, this may lead to the perception that these behaviors would be either

difficult or unattainable to emulate. For the controlling IPV behaviors, perhaps individuals

believe these *should* not be replicated, even if individuals report higher self-efficacy on the scale.

For the autonomy-promoting behaviors, especially if they were framed as idealized by the female

character, this may lead to the feeling of being unattainable and therefore participants' self-

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efficacy would not have strengthened the relationship between the television clips and

endorsement of that behavior.

One factor that might be contributing to this outcome is that participants may not be

motivated to endorse particular behaviors, especially if they do not perceive the benefits in

endorsing those behaviors in their relationship (Bandura, 2001a & b) after being exposed to them

in the television clips. Perhaps in the current study, the participants were not motivated to

endorse controlling IPV behaviors, even if they indicated being somewhat efficacious in

performing those behaviors, because the participants do not perceive how these behaviors could

benefit them in any way in their specific romantic relationship (or even future relationships). In

SCT, rewards and consequences play a significant role in whether or not individuals are willing

to engage in the behaviors they see being performed by a model. For instance, in the television

clips that portrayed a controlling IPV behavior, the participants may have perceived that this

actually hurt the relationship rather than benefiting the romantic partners. This could be part of

the reason why self-efficacy did not strengthen the relationship between exposure and

endorsement, especially for the controlling IPV behavior conditions. While having higher self-

efficacy does typically lead individuals to choose to engage in particular behaviors and activities

(Bandura, 2001b), it might not always strengthen the relationship between exposure to a model

performing a behavior and endorsement of that behavior, especially when the benefits, or

rewards, of these behaviors are not perceived by viewers. Part of this explanation may be due to

the way that self-efficacy was measured in the current study. The measure used in the study

(adapted from Riggio et al., 2011) only included statements that asked to what extent participants

felt they could engage in either autonomy-promoting or controlling IPV relationship behaviors.

The two measures did not include the perceived benefits of the outcomes, or engaging in either

behavior, which could take into account the confidence to engage in the behaviors along with the motivation and perceived outcomes of endorsing both behaviors.

In terms of autonomy-promoting behaviors, it could be that self-efficacy did not lead to strengthened endorsement of these behaviors because they are seen as normative and integral to perceivably healthy romantic relationships (Feeney, 2007). As previously argued, young adults are consistently exposed to romantic relationships in media (Holmes, 2007; Johnson & Holmes, 2009; Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). Many of these relationships include an element of independence from the partner (i.e., the characters going to work separately, spending time with friends outside the relationship, and having different hobbies or interests that they engage in separate from one another). For example, in *One Tree Hill*, Peyton and Lucas are often shown spending time with their friends. Peyton spends time drawing and creating other works of art, and Lucas practices basketball with his teammates and friends, both independent of each other. Perhaps since these behaviors are often seen as normative for most relationships, self-efficacy did not strengthen the relationship between exposure to autonomy-promoting behaviors and endorsement of the behaviors because these behaviors are already part of participants' scripts and schemas for relationships. For the participants who indicated they were in romantic relationships, this might already be a norm for them, which could also explain why self-efficacy did not work as a moderator for autonomy-promoting behaviors.

This finding has additional implications for SCT. Self-efficacy plays a role in the learning of behaviors, especially when individuals feel as though they are capable of performing those behaviors (Bandura, 2001b). While self-efficacy did not act as a moderator in the relationship between exposure to the television clip and endorsement of both relationship behaviors, this does provide an opportunity for future researchers to further explore self-efficacy as a moderating

variable within the framework of SCT. In the results, a direct effect of self-efficacy on

endorsement of both relationship behaviors was significant. This makes logical sense. When an

individual feels capable and confident in performing a behavior, they are more likely to endorse

that behavior. However, including the perceived benefits of engaging in a relationship behavior

could lead to supporting the assumptions of SCT such that when individuals feel capable and

they perceive beneficial outcomes to performing a specific relationship behavior, then they may

be more likely to endorse those behaviors after viewing them being performed by a character in a

popular television program. For example, if participants saw Lucas in the *One Tree Hill* clip

providing Peyton with space and autonomy and perceived that these were beneficial to the

relationship as a whole, this exposure might have led to endorsement of the autonomy-promoting

behavior and self-efficacy might have strengthened that relationship. In future studies, scholars

should combine both perceived capability and perceived beneficial outcomes of performing a

relationship behavior.

Previous research suggests that self-efficacy is an important factor to consider, especially

within interpersonal relationships. Self-efficacy has been shown to be positively related to

interpersonal competence, feelings of personal control, higher self-esteem, and higher ability to

cope with various situations (Bandura, 1997). Within romantic relationships, partners may have

more confidence when they perceive they are more capable of performing many relationship

behaviors. Overall, self-efficacy is a crucial factor in engaging in relationship behaviors, which

can lead to greater relationship satisfaction and quality (Riggio et al., 2013). This can

subsequently increase positive feelings toward a romantic partner and possibly lead to higher

overall life satisfaction in addition to relationship satisfaction. Research also demonstrates that

engaging in quality, healthy romantic relationships can lead to better health outcomes overall for individuals (Cohen et al., 1998).

Among the emerging adult population specifically, self-efficacy is especially important in romantic relationships. As young adults gain more experience in long-term, more committed relationships, the more important self-efficacy, or confidence in performing relationship behaviors, becomes. Weisskirch (2017) found that self-efficacy predicted happiness, low level of psychological distress, and higher self-esteem for emerging adult romantic partners. These outcomes demonstrate the need for more research on the role of self-efficacy in emerging adult romantic relationships. This is also where interventions and relationship programs for young adults can become important to learn to be more confident in certain relationship behaviors. Weisskirch (2017) implied that more relationship education could be provided for young adults to better understand both how to engage in relationships successfully (i.e., increasing relationship quality, satisfaction, and daily interactions) along with feeling more confident in their abilities to perform relationship behaviors to engage in more healthy relationships with a partner.

The role of self-efficacy should continue to be explored in the context of emerging adults' romantic relationships. Future research must include self-efficacy in interventions and experiments to understand how it functions, especially when individuals see behaviors being performed in media messages (e.g., film, television, and social media).

Third-person Effect on Endorsement Findings and Implications

The third person effect (TPE) was tested in the study as a mediator between exposure to television clips and endorsement of the two relationship behaviors (e.g., autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors). The results did not support the TPE as a significant mediator in the two models where exposure predicts endorsement of each relationship behavior. However,

TPE did have a main effect on the endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors, such that individuals who felt that others were more influenced by the television clips were more likely to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors.

It is interesting to note that TPE had a main effect on autonomy-promoting behaviors and not controlling IPV behaviors. Individuals who perceived that others were more influenced by media messages of autonomy-promoting behaviors were more likely to endorse those behaviors, possibly because these behaviors may be relatively more normative to relationships and are perceived to promote the healthy independence of romantic partners. It could be that when individuals see controlling IPV behaviors, they perceive these behaviors as relatively more inherently stigmatized behaviors (CDC, 2019). They may be less sensitive to perceptions of others' social influence and are thus more likely to endorse the opposite behavior (in this case the autonomy-promoting behaviors) as a function of TPE. Independence-promoting behaviors could lead to greater relationship quality and satisfaction for many couples, which is highly beneficial.

An interesting finding that was not originally hypothesized but was included in the results was that TPE was a mediator in the relationship between overall media consumption and endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. The more individuals consumed media, in general, the more they believed that others are more influenced by media messages when it comes to romantic relationships. Subsequently, this led to greater endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors. This was not the case with the endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. It may be that the more individuals consume media, in general, the more they are exposed to broader themes revolving around romantic relationships. For instance, on Tik Tok (Tik Tok, 2021) and Instagram (Hsieh, 2019), plenty of content exists around teaching young adults about romantic relationships or sharing romantic relationship experiences. On television specifically,

young adults have plenty of examples of both reality (e.g., *Love is Blind* and *Are You the One?*) and fictional (e.g., *You* and *Riverdale*) programs that might influence how they think and learn about specific ways to behave and interact with a romantic partner. Even young adult films that focus on romantic relationships might be particularly impactful (e.g., *After*). Beyond relationship content, viewers can see and learn from relationship content in television shows where the plot does not inherently focus on romantic relationships (e.g., *Chicago PD* and *Grey's Anatomy*). Because individuals are inundated with this type of material—even though it is not necessarily categorized as "romantically-themed content" like romantic comedies and dramas are—media consumers may be more likely to endorse the behaviors they see as relatively healthier behaviors or those to which they give positive valence.

Autonomy-promoting relationship behaviors are relationship behaviors that could possibly promote a sense of secure attachment with a partner (Feeney, 2007). Controlling behaviors, while not inherently violent, may be relatively more associated with stigma in the general media landscape. Future research should also look at the implications of TPE when viewing other nonphysical IPV behaviors (e.g., economic/financial abuse, emotional abuse, coercion, and manipulation) in the emerging adult population.

Two research questions inquired about whether self-efficacy of either relationship behavior and identification with the main character would moderate the relationship between exposure to the television clips and the TPE for autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors. The original argument for these research questions was that direct exposure to media examples of the relationship behaviors, when immersive (i.e., associated with greater self-efficacy confidence or identification with characters), could lead to reduced perceptions of self-influence, and thus lead to greater third person perceptions (TPP). This was not the case. Self-

efficacy did not strengthen the relationship between exposure to the television clip and TPE nor did identification strengthen this relationship. It could be that self-efficacy does not necessarily lead to greater internalization of the behavior that would lead to individuals believing others would be more affected by the relationship behaviors to which they are exposed in popular television programs. In terms of identification, this may be explained by the fact that most of the participants identified with the female character. Perhaps if participants identified with the male character in the television clips, they would be more likely to think others would be more affected by the male characters' behaviors.

Limitations of the Current Study

One limitation of the current study is that the sample was not very diverse. While the intended group of study was young adults between the ages of 18 and 25 years old, unfortunately college samples tend to be homogenous, especially in terms of racial and ethnic identities. Different racial and ethnic groups may have different perceptions of both controlling IPV and autonomy-promoting behaviors and different scripts for how to respond to those behaviors in relationships. Although the groups were not equally distributed, participants of different religions did significantly differ in their endorsement of autonomy-promoting and controlling IPV behaviors (an exploratory ANOVA was conducted, but the overwhelming majority of the participants identified as Christian). Since religiosity was a significant covariate in almost all of the analyses in the study, future research should consider looking at how individuals from different religious backgrounds might choose to endorse different kinds of nonphysical IPV behaviors.

Another limitation in terms of diversity is that the main characters in the television clips were young, white, middle class, heterosexual individuals. While this is within the scope of the

current study, it does not provide an understanding of how the relationship behaviors might be perceived in other types of relationships, especially LGB relationships. The television demographic landscape is changing, and more diverse sexual orientations are being represented. In the study, participants were asked to choose which character they most identified with from a heterosexual relationship. While many participants indicated their sexual orientation as heterosexual, this does limit the scope and generalizability of this study to broader society. Future research will want to include LGB couples from television and how those romantic relationships are portrayed.

Another limitation is that this study took place amid the COVID-19 pandemic. During the pandemic, more individuals between the ages of 18 and 25 were consuming media, which could play a role in the context of the study and the results found. Many young adults were isolated and consuming more television shows and films. This context of the pandemic could play a role in the outcome of the study.

The last limitation in the study was that individuals did not see the entire relationship progress in the study. The television clips were roughly eight to ten minutes in length, which does limit the content to which the participants were exposed. This does limit the extent to which participants were transported into the narrative of the story of the romantic relationships in the clips. While it was important to control the relationship behaviors and the framing of the behaviors in each condition, these clips do not show the entire context of the television program nor do the clips show the entire progression of the romantic relationship between the two main characters. The goal was to isolate the behaviors and framing in the clips to make sure that those behaviors and frames were the only ones viewed. It is important to consider the limitations of a lab designed study. While participants were able to take the experiment wherever those chose,

the television clips and exposure to the clips were tightly controlled. For example, participants were not allowed to move past the clip until they had viewed it in its entirety. The clips also only featured certain parts of the relationship and not the entire progression of the relationship, which could typically take an entire season to develop the story. This creates an artificial media message environment. Participants who watch the entire season of the shows used in this study would get a broader sense of the romantic relationship and outcomes of the behaviors over time. They would be able to see the progression of the relationship, the ups and downs the characters had to work through together, and the outcome of the relationship.

Considerations for Scholars and Practitioners

Overall, the results of the current study, coupled with previous research, provides an insight into how emerging adults might perceive controlling IPV behaviors along with autonomy-promoting behaviors. These insights have practical along with the theoretical applications previously discussed in this chapter. Scholars in several disciplines, including interpersonal communication and psychology, have expressed concern within the past decade to better understand IPV behaviors as a public health concern (e.g., Carlyle et al., 2008; CDC, 2019; Savage et al., 2017). These behaviors not only include physical IPV (e.g., hitting, slapping, punching, etc.) but also nonphysical IPV (e.g., emotional abuse, manipulation, coercion, control, economic/financial abuse, etc.). As previously mentioned in the introduction, physical and nonphysical IPV can potentially lead to detrimental outcomes such as psychological distress (e.g., Coffey et al., 1996) and the continuation of the IPV behaviors in the future of the relationship (e.g., Jose, O'Leary, & Moyer, 2010). Relationship scholars estimate that IPV behaviors occur in 20-33% of college students who are in dating relationships (Smith et al.,

2005), thus rendering emerging adulthood a crucial time to intervene and provide relationship education.

Research also demonstrates that IPV behaviors, in general, can lead to poorer health status and the development of physical and mental illnesses, eating disorders, substance use disorders, and disability/restricted functions (Cha et al., 2015; Matheson et al., 2015; Out et al., 2012; Sutherland, Fantasia, & McClain, 2013), which can all impact our society. Previous research indicates that IPV has a major impact on women, specifically (Breiding et al., 2014). Thus, both physical and nonphysical IPV are major public health concerns that need to be addressed.

Several media scholars have explored ways in which media portrayals, including the news and social media, can influence how people perceive IPV (Savage et al., 2017; Carlyle et al, 2008), especially seeing it as a public health concern. Few scholars have assessed the representations of IPV, including psychologically controlling and manipulative behaviors, in popular culture (Garland et al, 2019) or in film and on television (Papp et al., 2007). Media scholars have suggested that seeing behaviors being performed in popular media (i.e., entertainment media like film and television) can influence individuals to perform those same or similar behaviors (e.g., SCT; Bandura, 2001a; general learning model; Buckley & Anderson, 2006). Considering this may be the case in many instances, especially for young adults who seek information about romantic relationships from media (Bachen & Illouz, 1996; Wood et al., 2002), scholars and practitioners alike need to further explore how media representations of IPV behaviors, especially the nonphysical IPV behaviors, might influence young adults' perceptions and endorsements of those behaviors in their own relationships.

In the current study, the argument was that individuals who see representations of controlling IPV behaviors on television, especially when these behaviors are framed as idealized by the main female character, would be more likely to endorse those relationship behaviors. As the results demonstrate, this was not the case. The controlling IPV behaviors that were framed as being condemned by the female character led participants to endorse autonomy-promoting behaviors but not necessarily endorse controlling IPV behaviors. This has important implications for studying and testing SCT. As discussed above, in some contexts seeing a behavior being clearly punished by another may not lead to the least endorsement of that particular behavior, but it may lead to greater endorsement for the opposite behavior. Perhaps, when individuals view behaviors they perceive as negative relationship behaviors, or detrimental to a relationship, and these behaviors are clearly punished by social others, media viewers may want to endorse a seemingly more normative behavioral counterpart. This could be particularly important for health communication scholars studying the effects of health-related behaviors in media messages within the framework of SCT. The results did not indicate an effect of framing on the perceptions of the behaviors (or at least, those frames were not significantly different from one another). When psychologically manipulative, emotionally abusive, and coercive relationship behaviors are idealized in popular media, these messages could possibly be subversive enough to influence individuals' beliefs and perceptions of specific behaviors. While this was not necessarily the case in this current study, it is important for media and interpersonal scholars to further examine nonphysical IPV behaviors and their representations in media for various populations.

Another important theoretical consideration for future scholars is to explore how media clips might influence the extent to which individuals believe that others might be more

influenced by media messages (e.g., TPE). The results of the current study clearly indicate that higher media use leads to the endorsement of autonomy-promoting behaviors through greater TPE. This was not the same for the endorsement of controlling IPV behaviors. These findings may suggest that individuals perceived others to be more influenced by the relationship behaviors, and thus endorsed to behaviors themselves because they wanted to be similar to what they perceived others would think about the relationship behavior (e.g., influence of presumed media influence theory, IPI). Within the context of romantic relationships, media and interpersonal scholars have room to explore and understand how perceptions of others might lead to certain outcomes, for instance, endorsement of relationship behaviors.

Frequency and vividness of representations in media could play a role in creating schemas and beliefs about these specific types of more insidious forms of IPV (e.g., cognitive neoassociative theory or CNAT; Bartlett & Anderson, 2013). Media scholars can begin to understand how media can influence individuals' schemas and beliefs about controlling IPV behaviors, both in the short- and long-term. More research on portrayals of nonphysical IPV behaviors (e.g., controlling, coercive, manipulating behaviors) in media should be conducted by both media and interpersonal communication scholars, specifically using content analyses and experimental methods. Communication scholars can also learn about how these behaviors may be prevented in romantic relationships through this research to aid in the creation of healthier, more stable, and functional relationships for emerging adults. In the future, media producers could focus on providing elements to television programs (as well as films, video games, etc.) for viewers. Disclaimers about IPV behaviors could be provided for viewers, along with resources for viewers who may be in IPV situations in their current relationships. Integrating the

condemning of IPV behaviors into the narrative could also be a way to promote healthier

relationship behaviors on screen.

One issue that is brought to light in recent research is the issue of clarity of controlling

IPV behaviors. In two recent studies by Minto, Masser, and Louis (2020, 2021), they assessed

college students' understandings, definitions, and perceptions of controlling IPV behaviors.

Their results from both studies indicate that, overall, young adults (college-aged) were unclear as

to how to categorize and define nonphysical (e.g., controlling, coercive, and manipulative) IPV

behaviors. The authors explored the common conceptions of IPV behaviors, both physical and

nonphysical, and provided an insight into respondents' schemas when it came to perceptions of

what they perceived as "abusive" behaviors. The authors discovered that participants largely

failed to describe nonphysical IPV behaviors when prompted with questions about what they

think constitute IPV in both studies. These two recent studies on the perceptions of emerging

adults when it comes to IPV behaviors suggests that many young adults have limited awareness

of specific behaviors that constitute abuse in romantic relationships. In the second portion of the

study, the results of the survey indicated that participants, again, believed that nonphysical IPV

behaviors perceived as less abusive, especially when individuals strongly endorsed romantic

jealousy. Young adults may not see controlling IPV behaviors as particularly abusive, instead

possibly perceiving those behaviors as a somewhat normal part of romantic relationships.

Controlling IPV behaviors are a significant concern within the broader discourse around

romantic relationship dynamics in society. While this type of behavior has been studied typically

as a gender issue (Chung, 2005; Papp et al., 2017), the broader implication is that these behaviors

display dominance and imbalanced power dynamics in a relationship between partners, no matter

which partner is performing the controlling IPV behaviors. Providing more balanced, equitable

romantic relationships in media may have a more positive effect on emerging adults watching

and learning from those programs.

More relationship education should be provided that focuses on IPV behaviors in

relationships in terms of how to spot these behaviors, what to do if these behaviors are

experienced in a relationship, and how these behaviors may lead to other harmful behaviors in

the future of the relationship. Since emerging adulthood is a crucial period to intervene (Vennum

et al., 2017), I propose that more practitioners provide relationship education that focus on

nonphysical IPV behaviors in relationships, along with physical IPV, for both single individuals

and couples. One such program is *Show Me Healthy Relationships* (University of Missouri,

Department of Human Development and Family Services), which provides relationship

education courses for both couples and singles across the state of Missouri on various

relationship topics to help individuals navigate and create the tools for healthy relationships. This

type of relationship education program could help build a stronger foundation of information

about relationships and provide healthy scripts and schemas of relationships for young adults.

For instance, a program like this could provide the unique tools to recognize both physical and

nonphysical IPV behaviors in a relationship, along with providing resources and support to help

those who are experiencing either type of IPV. Integrating media literacy methods into

relationship education programs would also be key to help emerging adults critically think about

portrayals of romantic relationships in media messages along with understanding why these

behaviors are not healthy for relationships.

Along with more relationship education, practitioners and media producers should

provide more resources for those experiencing IPV in their relationships. Social support is key to

helping victims of IPV leave an abusive relationship (Carlson et al., 2002). This is crucial for

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victims of IPV to have people in whom they can confide or simply know that they have

individuals who can help if victims are in need (e.g., career help, financial help, a place to stay,

emotional support).

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Appendix I: Figures

Figure 1: *Proposed Model of Endorsement of Autonomy-Promoting Behaviors*

Figure 2: *Proposed Model of Endorsement of Controlling IPV Behaviors*
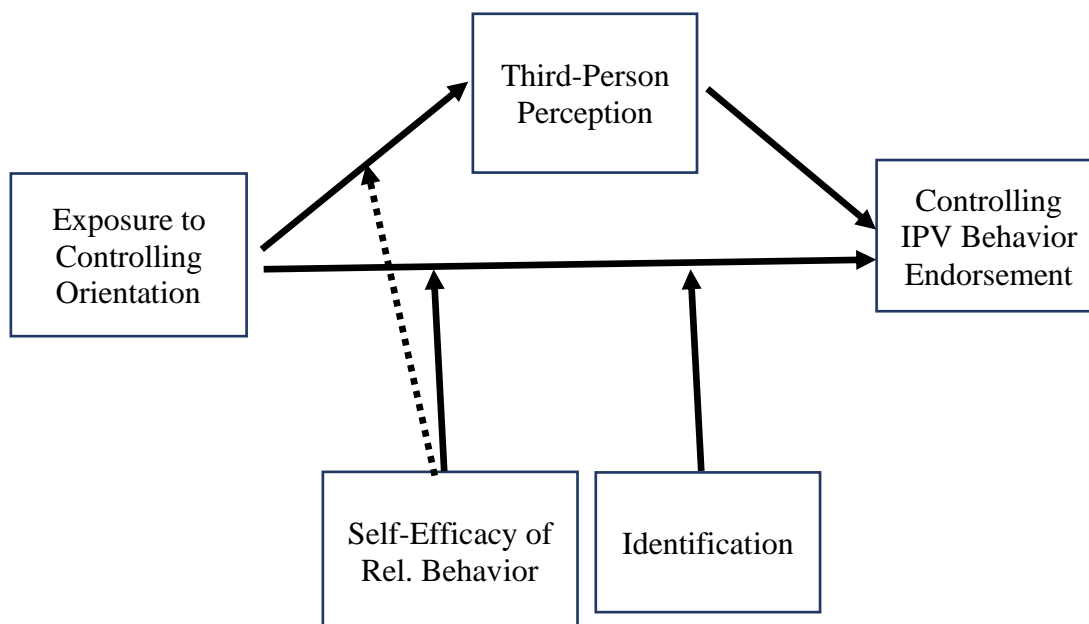
Figure 3: *Participants' identification with main characters in the television clips*
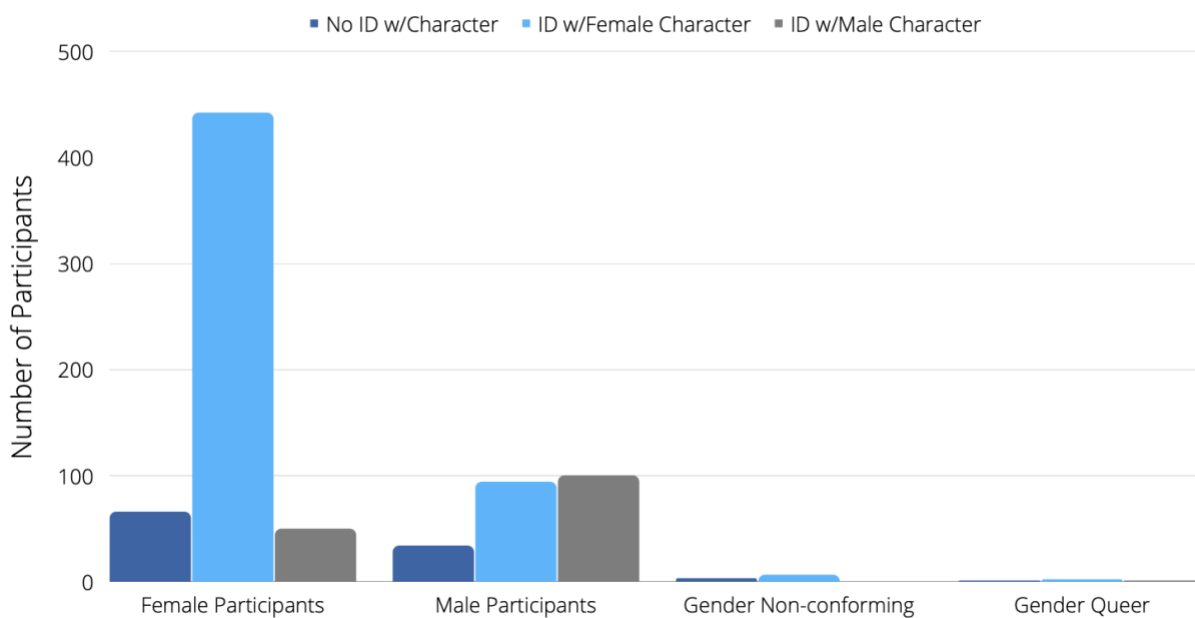
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Figure 4: *Mediation Model of TPP on Endorsement of AP Behaviors*
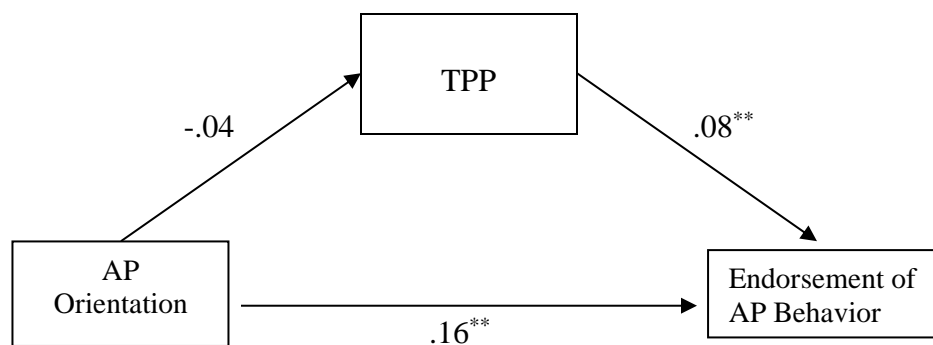
Note. * *p* < .05 ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure 5: *Mediation Model of TPP on Endorsement of AP Behaviors*
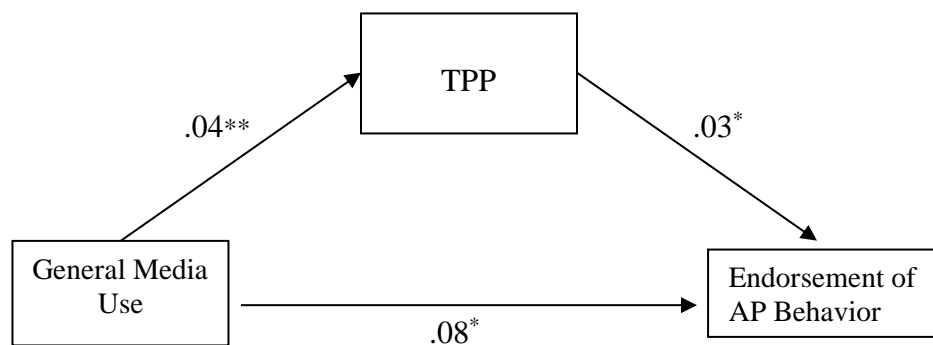
Note. * *p* < .05 ** p < .01, *** p < .001

Figure 6: *Means of Five Conditions on Endorsement of Autonomy-Promoting Behaviors*
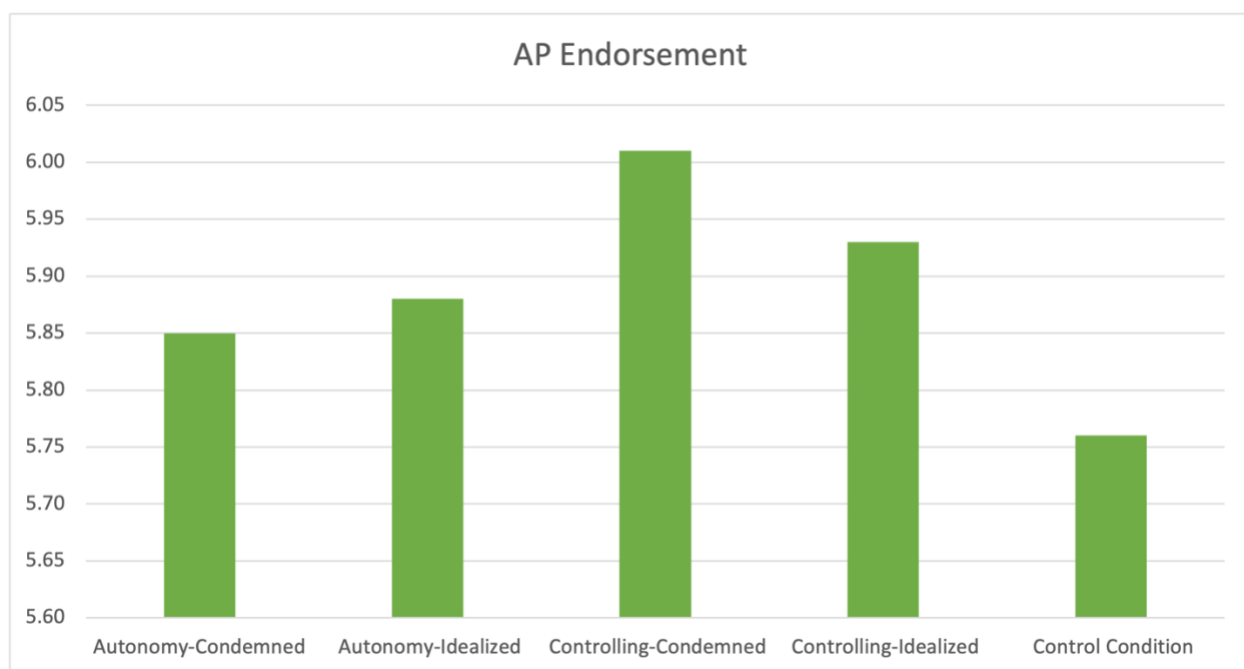
Figure 7: *Means of Five Conditions on Endorsement of Controlling IPV Behaviors*

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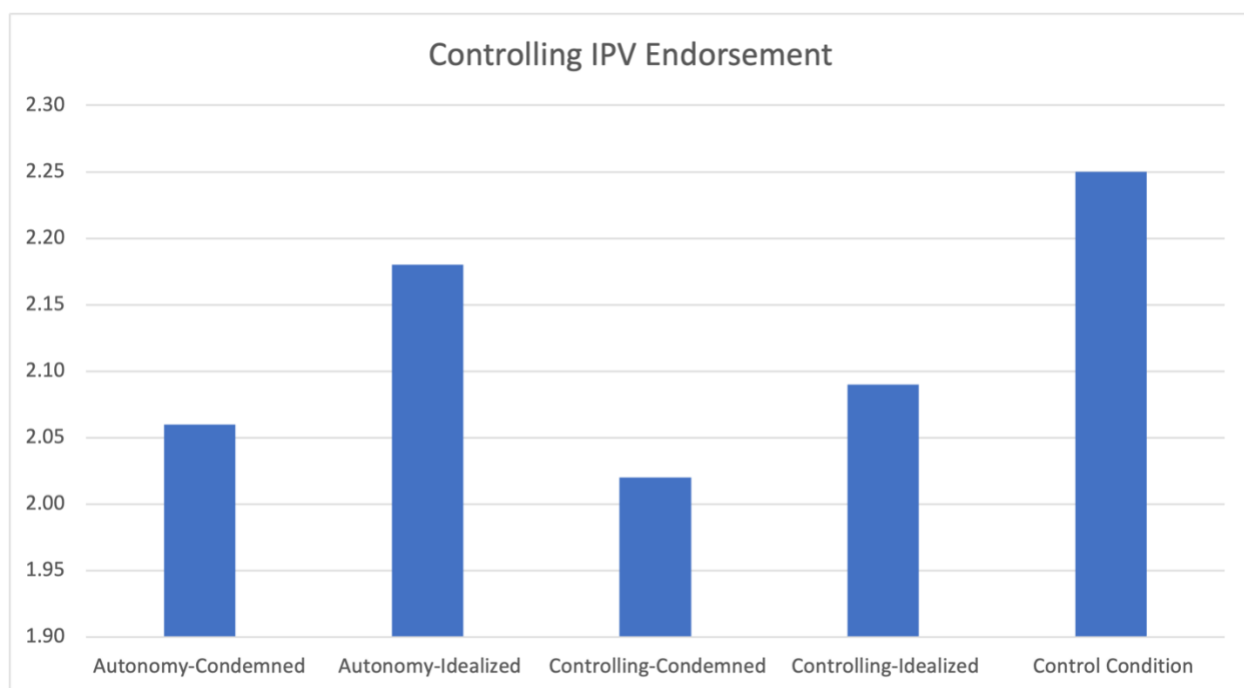
Appendix II: Tables

Demographic Data

Table 1: *Descriptive Statistics of Demographic Data (Media, Age, and Number of Relationships)*

	Mean	SD	Range
Age	19.73	1.53	7.00
# of Past Relationships	2.44	1.89	7.00
Hours_MediaGen	8.51	2.27	10.00
TV Hours_Daily	1.32	1.23	7.00
TV Hours_Weekly	1.48	1.06	5.00
Genre_SoapOps	4.21	1.30	5.00
Genre_Comedy	3.96	1.49	5.00
Genre_Drama	3.69	1.66	5.00
Genre_CrimeDrama	2.38	1.33	5.00
Genre_EdProg	3.35	1.70	5.00
Genre_RealityTV	2.80	1.46	5.00
Genre_News	3.39	1.87	5.00
Genre_Sports	3.84	1.64	5.00
Genre_ RomComedy	5.25	3.01	10.00

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Table 2: *Sociodemographic Characteristics of Participants*

Baseline characteristic	Full sample	
	n	%
Gender		
Female	559	68.3
Male	228	27.8
Gender Non-conforming	9	1.1
Gender Queer	4	0.5
Relationship Status		
Single	445	54.3
Dating	315	38.5
Engaged	7	0.9
Married	6	0.7
Committed Partnership	27	3.3
Relationship Duration		
None	450	54.9
A few months	119	14.5
1 year	86	10.5
2 years	70	8.5
3 years	35	4.3
4 years	18	2.2
5 years	13	1.6
6 years	1	0.1
7 or more years	8	1
Sexual Orientation		
Heterosexual	685	83.6
Gay	19	2.3
Lesbian	16	2.0
Bisexual	69	8.4
Demisexual	3	0.4
Asexual	2	0.2
Other	4	0.5
Parent Relationship Status		
Single	40	4.9
Dating	18	2.2
Engaged	4	0.5
Married	560	68.4
Divorced/Separated	139	17
Widowed	17	2.1
Other	22	2.7
Race/Ethnicity		
White	661	80.7
Black	50	6.1
Latinx/Hispanic	20	2.4
Native American	4	0.5

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Asian/Pacific Islander	29	3.5
Biracial	31	3.8
Multiracial	3	0.4
Religion		
Christianity	562	68.6
Judaism	25	3.1
Islam	2	0.2
Hinduism	3	0.4
Buddhism	5	0.6
Agnostic	103	12.6
Atheism	62	7.6
No Religion	30	3.7
Closed Captioning		
Yes	314	38.3
No	486	59.3
Identification with Character		
Male Character	151	18.4
Female Character	544	66.4
No Character or Had Control Condition	104	12.7
IPV Experience		
Know Anyone who has been a Victim of IPV*		
Yes	478	58.4
No	220	26.9
I don't know	87	10.6
Parent Perpetrator of IPV*		
Yes	80	9.8
No	632	77.2
I don't know	65	7.9
Parent Victim of IPV*		
Yes	132	16.1
No	563	68.7
Close Friend Victim of IPV*		
Yes	315	38.5
No	352	43
Peer Victim of IPV*		
Yes	436	53.2
No	249	30.4

Note: Variables with asterisk also have a "prefer not to respond" option

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Pilot Test Data

Table 3: *First Round Pilot Test Means for Television Clips*

	Typ. Of Rom Rel	Autonomy	Controlling	Idealize	Condemn	Realism Total
APC-3	2.56	2.33	3.11	3.67	2.33	3.52
CI-2	1.56	2.00	4.00	3.33	2.89	3.54
CC-4	1.70	2.3	3.90	2.30	4.20	3.48
API-2	2.29	2.29	3.71	2.86	3.43	3.31
API-4	2.86	2.71	2.71	3.57	2.43	2.88
APC-1	2.90	3.18	2.91	3.82	2.55	3.48
CI-4	2.83	2.42	3.82	3.25	3.33	3.62
APC-2	3.44	3.33	3.22	3.11	3.33	3.35
API-1	2.18	1.82	4.40	3.73	1.55	3.08
CC-1	2.69	2.62	4.00	3.15	3.92	3.47
CC-3	1.64	1.55	4.50	2.45	3.55	3.25
CI-1	1.91	1.91	4.36	3.91	2.73	3.33
Control 1						3.67
Control 2						3.53

APC = autonomy-promoting condemned condition
CC = controlling condemned condition
CI = controlling idealized condition
API = autonomy-promoting idealized condition

Table 4: *Second Round Pilot Test Means for Television Clips*

	Typ. of Rom Rel	Autonomy	Controlling	Idealize	Condemn	Realism_Total
API-5	4.38	4.44	1.53	4.38	1.62	4.03
APC-5	3.11	3.67	2.39	2.67	2.56	3.52
API-6	3.94	4.35	1.82	3.94	2.12	3.98
API-7	4.09	4.18	1.82	3.45	1.73	4.14
APC-6	4.14	4.14	1.43	2.57	3.29	4.21
APC-7	4.00	3.55	2.70	2.82	3.70	3.97
APC-8	3.30	4.10	2.40	2.60	3.60	4.03
APC-9	3.86	4.64	1.64	2.21	4.07	4.05

Table 5: *Descriptive Statistics of Main Variables*

	Mean	SD	Max	Min	Range	Chron. α
EndorseAP	5.89	0.70	7.00	3.29	3.71	0.75
EndorseIPV	2.11	0.79	5.00	1.00	4.00	0.71
Life Satisfaction	4.82	1.23	7.00	1.00	6.00	0.86
Identification	4.84	0.97	7.00	1.00	6.00	0.87
Self-Eff AP	5.95	0.79	7.00	2.80	4.20	0.71
Self-Eff IPV	2.52	1.15	7.00	1.00	5.20	0.75
IPV Experience	2.00	0.95	6.00	1.00	5.00	0.91
Third-Person Effect	9.41	2.12	14.00	2.00	12.00	0.91, 0.90

Table 6: *Correlation Table of Main Variables*

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10
1. Female	---									
2. Heterosexual	.103***	---								
3. White	.085**	.160***	---							
4. Christian	.087**	.313***	.109**	---						
5. Married (Parents)	.055	.125***	.173***	.129***	---					
6. Single (Part.)	.001	.098**	0.03	.035	.041	---				
7. Dating (Part.)	.049	.024	.081*	.01	.063	-.862***	---			
8. Parent Perp. IPV	.083*	-.121**	-.027	-.141***	-.218***	-.078*	.036	---		
9. Parent Vict. IPV	.106**	-.147***	-.055	-.069*	-.230***	-.071*	.049	.706***	---	
10. Close Friend Vic. IPV	.119**	-.132***	.081*	-.05	.02	-.046	.071*	.171***	.227***	---
11. # of Past Rels.	-.011	-.159***	.02	-.002	-.006	-.084*	.06	.099**	.121**	.212***
12. Gen. Media Use	-.005	-.039	-.003	-.053	.039	-.023	.039	-.029	-.009	.068
13. Rom. Com/Drama Freq.	.473***	.042	.045	.036	.108**	-.069	.078*	-.057	-.006	.104**
14. Drama Freq.	.379***	-.008	.033	.013	.031	-.056	.065	-.053	-.002	.099**
15. Soap Opera Freq.	.184***	.042	-.114**	.008	.034	.016	.004	-.005	.008	.035
16. TV Hours (Weekly)	-.027	.027	-.022	0	.02	-.039	.034	-.022	.028	-.006
17. Age	-.138**	-.052	-.066	-.046	-.082*	-.118**	.028	.045	.052	.064
18. Life Satisfaction	.054	.179***	.166***	.211***	.170***	-.143***	.111**	-.211***	-.238***	-.080*
19. IPV Experience	-.062	-.147***	-.066	-.019	-.139***	.098*	-.095*	.159***	.199***	.121**
20. Identification	.068	.009	.033	.095**	.055	-.025	.034	-.033	-.016	.093**
21. Self-Efficacy AP	.091*	-.03	0.01	-.118**	-.035	.018	-.032	-.015	.041	.065
22. Self-Efficacy IPV	-.075*	.067	-.071*	.087*	.002	-.04	.034	.043	.016	-.049
23. Third Person Effect	.149***	.018	.070*	.017	.126**	.120**	-.056	-.035	-.019	.081*
24. AP Endorsement	.214***	-.083*	.096**	-.106**	-.02	.073*	-.068	.009	.044	.094**
25. IPV Endorsement	-.143***	.076*	-.084*	.098**	-.027	-.014	.051	.002	.01	-.078*

	11	12	13	14	15	16	17
1. Female							
2. Heterosexual							
3. White							
4. Christian							
5. Married (Parents)							
6. Single (Part.)							
7. Dating (Part.)							
8. Parent Perp. IPV							
9. Parent Vict. IPV							
10. Close Friend Vic. IPV							
11. # of Past Rels.	---						
12. Gen. Media Use	.014	---					
13. Rom. Com/Drama Freq.	-.048	.081*	---				
14. Drama Freq.	-.048	.077*	.264***	---			
15. Soap Opera Freq.	-.056	.013	.624***	.257***	---		
16. TV Hours (Weekly)	-.016	.243***	.233***	.297***	.095**	---	
17. Age	.180***	-.053	-.092**	-.091*	-.018	.033	---
18. Life Satisfaction	-.02	-.04	.111**	.068	-.047	-.081	-.122
19. IPV Experience	.220***	-.132**	-.062	-.035	.042	-.092	.087
20. Identification	.044	.045	.151***	.128***	.033	.022	-.032
21. Self-Efficacy AP	.024	.034	.016	.055	-.074*	.003	-.069
22. Self-Efficacy IPV	-.017	-.063	.003	-.038	.106**	-.088*	.052
23. Third Person Effect	-.05	.100**	.241***	.229***	.150***	.013	-.057
24. AP Endorsement	.058	.089*	.087*	.085*	-.098**	-.037	-.018
25. IPV Endorsement	-.005	-.071*	-.117**	-.134***	.065	-.059	.023

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	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
1. Female								
2. Heterosexual								
3. White								
4. Christian								
5. Married (Parents)								
6. Single (Part.)								
7. Dating (Part.)								
8. Parent Perp. IPV								
9. Parent Vict. IPV								
10. Close Friend Vic. IPV								
11. # of Past Rels.								
12. Gen. Media Use								
13. Rom. Com/Drama Freq.								
14. Drama Freq.								
15. Soap Opera Freq.								
16. TV Hours (Weekly)								
17. Age								
18. Life Satisfaction	---							
19. IPV Experience	-.253***	---						
20. Identification	.134***	.024	---					
21. Self-Efficacy AP	.157***	-.115**	.087*	---				
22. Self-Efficacy IPV	-.027	.134**	-.027	-.386***	---			
23. Third Person Effect	-.001	.033	.204***	-.003	.057	---		
24. AP Endorsement	.014	-.026	.084*	.489***	-.363***	.085*	---	
25. IPV Endorsement	-.095**	.084*	-.066	-.443***	.460***	0	-.539***	---

$^{*}p < .05.$ $^{**}p < .01$ $^{***}p < .001.$

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Table 7: *Crosstabulation Results for Identification with Television Characters by Gender*

	Endorsement of Autonomy Behaviors		
	No Character/Control	Female TV Character	Male TV Character
Female Participants	66 (63.5%)	442 (81.3%)	50 (33.1%)
Male Participants	34 (32.7%)	94 (17.3%)	100 (66.2%)
Gender Non-conforming	3 (2.9%)	6 (1.1%)	0 (0%)
Gender Queer	1 (1%)	2 (0.4%)	1 (0.7%)

Total $n = 799$

Table 8: *Means and SEs of Behaviors on Autonomy-Promoting Behavior Endorsement*

	Endorsement of Autonomy Behaviors		
	N	Mean	SE
Control Condition	134	5.76 *	0.06
Autonomy-Promoting Behaviors	310	5.87	0.04
Controlling IPV Behaviors	337	5.97*	0.04

Note: Conditions that significantly differed in post hoc analyses *

Table 9: *Means and SEs of Behaviors on Controlling IPV Behaviors Endorsement*

	Endorsement of Autonomy Behaviors		
	N	Mean	SE
Control Condition	135	2.25 *	0.07
Autonomy-Promoting Behaviors	309	2.12	0.04
Controlling IPV Behaviors	335	2.06*	0.04

Note: Conditions that significantly differed in post hoc analyses *

Table 10: *Means and SEs of Conditions on Autonomy-Promoting Behavior Endorsement*

	Endorsement of Autonomy Behaviors		
	N	Mean	SE
Autonomy Condemned	143	5.85*	0.06
Autonomy Idealized	167	5.88	0.05
Controlling Condemned	173	6.01*	0.05
Controlling Idealized	164	5.93	0.05
Control Condition	134	5.76*	0.06

Note: Conditions that significantly differed in post hoc analyses *

Table 11: *Means and SEs of Conditions on Controlling IPV Behavior Endorsement*

	Endorsement of Controlling IPV Behaviors		
	N	Mean	SE
Autonomy Condemned	142	2.06	0.07
Autonomy Idealized	167	2.18	0.06
Controlling Condemned	170	2.02*	0.06
Controlling Idealized	165	2.09	0.06
Control Condition	135	2.25*	0.07

Note: Conditions that significantly differed in post hoc analyses *

Appendix III: Survey Items

Questions to participants about IPV experiences
(Demographic variable for IPV experiences as covariate in study)
1 (Never) to 5 (Very Frequently)

1. Called you a name or criticized you.
2. Tried to keep you from doing something you wanted to do (example: going out with friends, going to meetings).
3. Prevented you from having money for your own use.
4. Ended a discussion with you and made the decision him/herself.
5. Put down your family and friends.
6. Accused you of paying too much attention to someone or something else.
7. Put you on an allowance.
8. Became very upset with you because dinner, housework, or laundry was not ready when he/she wanted it done or the way he/she wanted you to do it.
9. Sad things to scare you (examples: told you something "bad" would happen, threatened to commit suicide.)
10. Check up on you (examples: listened to your phone calls, checked your texts, checked the mileage on your car, called you repeatedly while you were out.)
11. Told you that you were a bad person.

Endorsement of Controlling IPV Measure
(Adapted from IPVAS, controlling statements only)
(Smith et al., 2005)

1. I would be flattered if my partner told me not to talk to someone of the opposite sex.
2. I would not like for my partner to ask me what I did every minute of the day (RC).
3. I don't mind my partner doing something just to make me jealous.
4. I would not stay with a partner who tried to keep me from doing things with other people (RC).
5. I would never try to keep my partner from doing things with other people (RC).
6. I think it helps our relationship for me to make my partner jealous.
7. It is okay for me to tell my partner not to talk to someone of the opposite sex.
8. I think my partner should give me a detailed account of what he or she did during the day.

Endorsement of Autonomy-Promoting Behaviors
(Duran, Kelly, & Rotaru, 2011)

1. Romantic partners should spend the "right" amount of time together.
2. Partners should spend all their time being together. (RC)
3. There is something wrong with partners who spend time apart (RC).
5. Partners should spend time away from one another sometimes.
6. Partners should not have time to be with others outside the relationship (RC).
7. Romantic partners should have time to be with their friends outside the relationship.

8. Partners should have time to have hobbies and activities without their romantic partner.
9. Partners should not contact each other too often during the day.
10. It is acceptable if a romantic partner becomes angry when they can't get a hold of their partner (RC).
11. Partners should contact one another constantly throughout the day (RC).
12. It is okay for partners to become angry when the other partner does activities alone or with others (RC).
13. Partners should have time to spend doing their own hobbies without their romantic partner.

Self-Efficacy of Romantic Relationship Behaviors

AP behaviors
1. I am confident that I could provide my romantic partner with autonomy.
2. If a romantic partner needs some space, I would be capable to give it to him/her.
3. I would find it difficult to give a romantic partner independence when he/she needs it. (REV.)
4. I would be unable to provide a partner with space when he/she needs it (REV.)
5. If a romantic partner asked for time alone, I would be capable of giving it to him/her.

Controlling behaviors
1. I would be capable of controlling a romantic partner's behaviors.
2. I would find it difficult to ask a romantic partner what he/she did every minute of the day. (REV.)
3. I would be capable of tracking a romantic partner's text messages, phone calls, and other electronic communication.
4. I would be able to keep a partner from talking to someone of the opposite sex.
5. I would be capable of preventing a romantic partner from doing things with other people.

Open Ended: Which character in the clip did you most identify with?
(If you don't know names, you can indicate "the male character", "the female character", or some sort of clear description of the character).

Identification with a media character (Cohen, 2001)

1. While viewing the clip, I felt as if I was part of the action.
2. While viewing the clip, I forgot myself and was fully absorbed.
3. I was able to understand the events in the program in a manner similar to that in which the character understood them.
4. I think I have a good understanding of the character.
5. I tended to understand the reasons why the character does what he/she does.
6. While viewing the show, I could feel the emotions of the character portrayed.
7. During viewing, I felt I could really get inside the character's head.
8. At key moments in the show, I felt I knew exactly what the character were going through.
9. While viewing the program, I wanted the character to succeed in achieving their goals.

10. When character succeeded, I felt joy, but when they failed, I was sad.

Third Person Effect Items
A 7-point Likert-type scale was used (1 = *not at all* to 7 = *absolutely*).

Self
1. Television shows about romantic relationships affect how I do or will behave in my own relationship.
2. Television shows about romantic relationships influence how I see my own relationship.
3. Television shows about romantic relationships affect my ideas about romantic relationships.
4. Television shows influence my perceptions of romantic relationship behaviors.

Others
1. Television shows about romantic relationships affect how others do or will behave in their relationships.
2. Television shows about romantic relationships influence how other see their relationships.
3. Television shows about romantic relationships affect others' ideas about romantic relationships.
4. Television shows influence others' perceptions of romantic relationship behaviors.

Media Questions

Approximately, how many hours a week do you spend watching TV? (Drop down box for hours from 0 – 10 hours or more options)

Approximately, how many hours do you spend watching TV each day? (Drop down box for hours from 0 – 10 hours or more options)

How often do you watch the following genres on television? (Never to Very Frequently)
    Soap operas, comedies, dramas, crime dramas, educational programs, reality TV, news,
    Sports, Romantic comedies/dramas

How many hours a week do you spend interacting with media in general (e.g., watching TV, reading the news online, watching YouTube videos, reading online magazines, texting, checking social media, etc.) (Drop down box for hours from 0 – 10 hours or more options)

Demographics

What is your relationship status?   Single   Dating   Engaged   Married   Divorced   Widowed
                                    Other: _____

How long have you and your partner been in the relationship?
Less than 1 year

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1 - 3 years
3 - 5 years
5 - 10 years
10 - 20 years
20 - 30 years
30 or more years

How many past romantic relationships have you had? (Includes people you have casually dated).

What is the current relationship status of your parent(s) or guardian(s)?
(i.e., think of the individuals who raised and supported you for most of your life)

Do you personally know anyone in a relationship who has experienced intimate partner violence (physical or psychological abuse)?

Has a parent or guardian been a <u>perpetrator</u> of intimate partner violence in a relationship?

Has a parent or guardian been the <u>victim</u> of intimate partner violence in a relationship?

Has a close friend of yours been the victim of intimate partner violence in a romantic relationship?

Have you known other peers who have been victims of intimate partner violence in a romantic relationship?

Please indicate your gender:
Male   Female   Gender Nonconforming   Gender Queer   Transgender   Other: _____

Please indicate your sexual orientation:
Heterosexual   Gay   Lesbian   Bisexual   Demisexual   Asexual   Other: _____

Indicate your age in number of years (drop down option).

Please indicate your race/ethnicity background?
- White
- Black or African American
- Non-white Hispanic/Latino
- Native American or American Indian
- Asian/Pacific Islander
- Biracial
- Other

What is the highest level of education you achieved?

- Less than 8th grade completed
- 8th grade completed
- Some high school, no diploma
- High school graduate, diploma or the equivalent (for example: GED) Some college credit, no degree
- Associate degree
- Bachelor's degree
- Master's degree
- Doctorate degree or professional degree

What was your total household income in the past 12 months?
- Less than $25,000
- $25,000 to $34,999
- $35,000 to $49,999
- $50,000 to $74,999
- $75,000 to $99,999
- $100,000 to $149,999
- $150,000 to $199,999
- $200,000 or more

Please indicate your spiritual/religious affiliation.

Christianity (Catholic, Protestant, non-denominational, etc.)

Judaism

Islam

Hinduism

Buddhism

Agnostic

Atheism

Prefer to write in a response

Open ended questions (Thought listing):
RomRelThoughts1 What are your perceptions of romantic relationships on television? List a few thoughts below.

RomRelThoughts2 What are some thoughts you have on controlling/manipulating behaviors in romantic relationships?

RomRelThoughts3 What are some thoughts you have on healthy behaviors in romantic relationships?

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VITA

Kelly L. Adams received her B.A. in Psychology from DePaul University and M.A. in Communication from Illinois State University. She studies both interpersonal and mediated communication, and her research is centered around parasocial relationships, media effects, and the role of media use in romantic relationships. She has worked on several research projects that received grant funding; one project focused on media literacy and received the Inclusion, Diversity, and Equity (IDE) grant, while the other focused on the relationship between the perception of celebrity couple conflict and everyday relationship conflict. The latter project received the Verser Award in the Department of Communication. Kelly currently teaches COMM 3490 (Media Effects Theory) and COMM 1200 (Public Speaking). She also has experience as a teaching assistant for COMM 3050 (Communication Theory and Writing Intensive Course).

Kelly has presented her research at several psychology and communication conferences including the Midwestern Psychological Association (MPA), Central States Communication Association (CSCA), National Communication Association (NCA), and International Communication Association (ICA). She presented on the top paper panel in Sports Communication at ICA in Washington, DC in 2019 with two of her colleagues, a paper for which she and her coauthors received an award. She currently serves as a graduate research associate with the Media & Diversity Center.

Kelly also has experience managing and creating content for social media for the Department of Communication. She served as a graduate student tutor with MU's Writing Center. She volunteered as a social media content creator for Relevate, creating infographics and various other content engaging the public in scholarship about all aspects of interpersonal

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relationships. Last, she recently engaged in research as a regional coordinator with MU's

Interdisciplinary Center for Food Security on their grant funded food insecurity research project.