

A Thesis Presented to
The Faculty of Alfred University

LOVE SHOULDN'T HURT:

Testing for the Causes
of Emotional Abuse Recognition Ability

by

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Two summers ago, my mother broke up with her long-term, emotionally abusive boyfriend, Tim. The afternoon after she tried to end it, we went through the Power and Control Wheel, a commonly used abuse diagnostic tool, and I watched her circle action after action she remembered from their relationship. In the end, the paper looked like the frothing surface of boiling water. “He has guns,” Mom said. “I don’t know how many. I’m going to the police station to get a restraining order. Can you find somewhere else to stay for a few days?” I remember throwing my bag into her car like a bank robber with a heavy haul, driving to meet my friend at a separate location, scanning around us for Tim’s black pickup truck. I still can’t hear his ringtone on the radio without remembering the terror of that July.

In my first spring semester at AU, in my Women in Society class, I got into a verbal tussle with a girl who was convinced that the focal relationship of the *Fifty Shades of Grey* series was not abusive. “She comes back to him,” she said, “so he can’t be abusive!” Before I could respond, Dr. Eaklor called class back to order. My peer seemed to fundamentally misunderstand the nature of intimate partner violence. Anastasia Steele returning to Christian Grey not only did not preclude his treatment of her from being abusive, it was in fact characteristic of an abusive relationship. Even disregarding the practices masquerading as BDSM which made E.L. James’ erotica series a record-breaking best-seller, Christian and Ana’s relationship is textbook emotional abuse. He isolates her, he gaslights her, he stalks her, he controls her income. In response, Ana becomes depressed, even develops what appears to be an eating disorder so that she has some modicum of control over her life, and is ultimately psychologically dependent on his emotional state. Of course she comes back to him; he has isolated her from every other potential source of happiness. But because *Fifty Shades of Grey* is sold as a romance novel and draped in the tropes of the genre, Christian and Anastasia’s relationship is considered a great

romance rather than a horror story. This debate solidified my interest in the media representation of intimate relationships.

My classmate's conviction is a common one. When many Americans view emotionally abusive actions, particularly those stemming from possessive urges, they typically see an example of a person's dedication for and attraction to their partner. Blatant examples of isolation, stalking, and feelings of ownership are all thought to be swoon-worthy. This conception is undeniably gendered. A woman stalking a man is thought to be doing just that, whereas a man who does the same to his female partner is simply protective. However, no matter the genders of those involved with this action, it is unlikely that either partner will consider it abuse, as this term has been traditionally tied to physical and/or sexual violence. While emotional or psychological abuse has gradually increased in public awareness, it remains an underestimated phenomenon – approximately 50% of American adults have been or will be emotionally abused by an intimate partner at some point in their lifetime. This rate makes it the most common form of intimate partner violence (IPV), and I believe that this is partially due to the lack of recognition.

In November, I presented my methodology for “Love Shouldn't Hurt” at the Penn-York Undergraduate Research Conference, at St. Bonaventure University. During the question and answer period, one of the SBU theology professors who had been sitting in on my talk raised his hand. “How do you know they're not lying?” he asked, referring to the statistic that I'd cited regarding rates of emotional abuse in the American adult population. I saw this comment as fully ignorant, both regarding the inherent risks of a survey research design – of course there's a risk of people lying, that risk can never be fully removed – as well as ignorant regarding the trustworthiness of abuse survivors. There is certainly the chance that someone would be lying

about their victimization status, for some reason or another. However, that chance is tiny, due to exactly what this professor exemplified: the constant doubting and undermining of abuse survivors, which intimidates them into not coming forward, or makes them doubt their own perception of their experiences. Both statistically and ethically speaking, the default reaction towards those who have reported abuse should not be to automatically deny their allegations. When it comes to emotional abuse, it's unlikely that someone even realizes that they've been abused, as the definition of emotional abuse is considered to be so subjective.

Intimate relationships, whether real or fictional, and their potential for abuse have followed me as a topic throughout my undergraduate research career. For my Sociology of Sex and Gender class, my project group conducted research on individuals' experiences with sexual harassment, without using the term "sexual harassment." We knew that the determination of what actions constitute as sexual harassment is frequently questioned, and wanted to avoid this debate in order to objectively report victimization patterns that we may have discovered. My interest in gendered violence became more honed when I presented my paper "No More Mr. "Nice" Guy: Male Entitlement and Character Archetypes" at my Wit and Wisdom Bergren Forum. In this content analysis, I examined masculine entitlement in television shows, and how the character archetype of the "Nice" Guy is romanticized despite its possessive implications. I argued that relationships with "Nice" Guys could very easily become abusive, as "Nice" Guys display a sense of entitlement over their partners – or perceived potential partners – that lends itself to the search for power and control motivating most IPV.

My research has not only been in the same area, it has been progressing towards the topic of emotional abuse recognition, with a focus on romantic narratives and media representation. Before I planned "Love Shouldn't Hurt" to be my thesis, it was already going to be my term

paper/research proposal for my Research Design and Strategies class. I borrowed the methodological concerns from my sexual harassment research (avoiding the subjective term “abuse” and using a survey design focused on abusive actions) and the implications of “No More Mr. “Nice” Guy” (focusing on the perceptions of emotional abuse as romantic and desirable). However, I decided to move the content of my focus forward from casual sexual harassment and attitudes of entitlement to emotional abuse between intimate partners, as abuse in this context is the most likely to be taken as a romantic.

While this research is not groundbreaking, and builds off of existing literature regarding emotional abuse and IPV, it examines emotional abuse in a way that differs from other research in the area. Previously, studies of IPV have been focused on victimization, measuring how many people in a population are IPV victims, as well as observing the effects of said violence. However, “Love Shouldn’t Hurt” focuses on the entire American adult population, rather than picking out victims to examine, and studies their conceptions surrounding emotional abuse, rather than their experiences with it. One other study in the literature – survey research by DeHart, Follingstad, and Fields (2010) – did examine hypothetical emotional abuse rather than real world actions. However, theirs studied emotional abuse defined by general contextual clues, while mine focuses on romantic context.

After analyzing the responses, it appears that critical thinking skills are an essential foundation for one’s Emotional Abuse Recognition Ability (EARA). This theory came about due to the statistically significant performance of sexual minorities when compared to heterosexual respondents, as well as those currently in college or with a graduate education, if compared to those with only a high school or undergraduate degree. According to my critical thinking theory, it is likely that practicing critical thinking while consuming media on a habitual basis will

increase one's EARA. However, this is a recommendation that educators and other intellectual authorities have been making for years, and based on personal experience, the American population is unlikely to reform their media consumption habits anytime soon.

Improvement of critical thinking skills would also be an individual change rather than a structural one. I would rather have media producers take responsibility for their representations of intimate relationships, and the effects that they have. Humans have always been storytellers, empathizing with fictional characters and being strongly affected by their fates. Ideally, instead of relying upon emotionally abusive romantic narratives, writers and producers would derive emotional chemistry between characters from healthy relationship behaviors. When an unhealthy intimate relationship is portrayed, it should be shown realistically, and its negative consequences fully represented rather than being whitewashed from the show's canon. This is not a perfect solution to stop all emotional abuse from happening, but I still believe that it could improve the overall emotional abuse recognition ability of fictional media consumers.

Introduction

One common cultural representation of intimate partner violence (physical, sexual, or emotional abuse from one intimate partner to another) is a beautiful but battered woman, with bruises, cuts, and scratches covering her body. When considering the wide range of IPV, however, abuse is often subtler and less visible. According to a report published in 2011 by the Center for Disease Control and Prevention, approximately 48% of Americans report experiencing some form of emotional abuse from an intimate partner during their lifetime (48.4% of women and 48.8% of men), making psychological abuse the most prevalent form of IPV (Black et al., 2011). However, emotional abuse is studied far less than more physical forms of IPV, such as physical battering, sexual violence, and stalking (Karakurt and Silver, 2013: 805). This may be due to the innately nonphysical nature of emotional abuse, as the harm that is done to the victims is invisible and more difficult to identify, especially when using survey research.

Emotionally abusive actions are often not recognized as being toxic or unhealthy, and people may misconstrue the behaviors as normal, romantic, and desirable. This means that being able to recognize emotional abuse as such is an important ability while engaging in intimate relationships. The romanticizing of emotional abuse is formalized in various forms of media, which feature romantic narratives without worrying about the psychological implications for cultural consumers. This “discourse of romantic love” has been used by abuse victims to “frame their experiences” (Hayes and Jeffries, 2013) but may also mask the truth in emotionally abusive actions from those media consumers without response to emotional abuse. The question of my research is this: can portraying emotional abuse as romantic keep those consuming the portrayals

from recognizing actions as unhealthy? Additionally, what elements of a person's identity or media habits contribute to their recognition or lack thereof of emotional abuse?

Literature Review

The sociological literature on intimate partner violence has often focused on physical or sexual abuse, or the emotional ramifications thereof. Even with research specific to emotional or psychological abuse, most of the focus has been on abuse done to young children, and how their childhood emotional trauma affects their behavior as adults (Karakurt and Silver, 2013: 808). For a researcher interested in people's ability to recognize emotional abuse, specifically emotional abuse occurring between intimate partners, there is a large hole in the sociological literature. Emotional abuse is generally considered a topic primarily intended for individually-based, psychological research, and is rarely considered from a structural perspective. Additionally, the focus for any research of abused adults is usually on women, rather than examining all genders and the differences in experiences that may occur. Research regarding abuse could be made structural and degendered by examining people's socialization regarding conceptions of healthy relationship behaviors, and how that is connected to institutional agents of socialization.

According to the literature, emotional abuse is the most frequent form of IPV (Karakurt and Silver, 2013: 807; Black et al., 2011: 2). According to a survey from the Center for Disease Control and Prevention with 16,507 randomly-selected respondents, approximately 57.6 million women and 55.2 million men in the United States have survived psychological aggression from an intimate partner in their lifetime (Black et al., 2011: 45). These experiences with emotional abuse were established during phone interviews, during which researchers asked respondents about their possible victimization, asking questions such as "How many of your romantic or

sexual partners have ever told you that no one else would want you?” (Black et al., 2011: 107)

The word “abuse” does not appear anywhere in Black et al.’s interview questions, so presumably interviewers did not use the term, as it adds a subjective layer to a respondent’s perception of victimization. Karakurt and Silver gave the Emotional Abuse Questionnaire, which also focuses on victimization and was established by Jacobson and Gottman in 1998, to 250 respondents who had been in a romantic relationship longer than a year. They established that younger people tend to undergo more emotional abuse from intimate partners than older people. Younger men reported the highest amount overall. Younger women tended to experience the highest rates of isolation tactics, while older women faced the most property damage as a form of intimidation (Karakurt and Silver, 2013: 815). Karakurt and Silver suggested that while women’s overall risk for emotional abuse may be decreasing, the risk for men is increasing. They hypothesize that this is due to men’s lack of recognition of abusive actions, and the stigmatization of abuse and victimhood among men, which causes them to place the benefits of being in a relationship above the damage resulting from being abused.

Emotional abuse is commonly understood in the literature as tactics used to gain control and power over another person, specifically those tactics not requiring physical contact or abuse. The CDC divided emotional abuse into two kinds of behavior, “expressive aggression” and “coercive control” (Black et al., 2011: 47). Actions identified as expressive aggression are blatantly insulting or threatening, such as “call[ing their partner] names like ugly, fat, crazy, stupid” or “act[ing] very angry in a way that seemed dangerous.” (p. 47) Expressive aggression intimidates the victim into doing as the abuser wishes. However, coercive control is subtler, and includes actions such as threatening “to hurt him/herself or commit suicide because s/he was upset,” or “keeping track of [their partner] by demanding to know where they were and what

they were doing.” (p. 47) Coercive control tactics are intended to isolate the victim from safety nets, and to keep the victim in a relationship with the abuser. Both types of tactics are intended to ascertain power and control over one’s partner, and are frequently accompanied or followed by physical or sexual abuse.

Emotional IPV has negative effects on any survivors, including increased abuse of alcohol and drugs, and the development of eating and sleeping disorders (Hayes and Jeffries, 2013: 57). According to Karakurt and Silver, emotional abuse attacks the “emotional and psychological well-being of the victim” and therefore decreases a victim’s will to take care of and stand up for themselves. Despite these physical detriments, many victims remain in their abusive relationships, much to the confusion of people around them. Addressing the common question, “why did she stay?” in a content analysis study, Hayes and Jeffries studied forum posts written by women, explaining their motives for remaining in abusive relationships. They discovered that what they called “discourse of romantic love” was the most frequently cited and unquestioned motivation to remain in the relationship (2013: 69). In fact, three out of the five forums sampled in the study were specific to LGBTQ+ women, and the “discourse of romantic love” was still a prevalent factor, despite the saturation of heteronormative conceptions of romance in typical romantic narratives.

One illustrative example that Hayes and Jeffries gave was when a forum member wrote, “Why do we stay? Because we are convinced we love this person, that things will change, that it’s our fault, that it will get better and that we are nothing without them.” This sentiment – “I can change them” – is a frequent trope in the “discourse of romantic love” and appears in many romantic stories. The term “discourse of romantic love” as coined by Hayes and Jeffries refers to the “highly gendered” ideals about romantic relationships that “permeate our society and are

reiterated in popular culture,” (2013: 60). Typical Western conceptions of romantic love often distort possessive or controlling acts - many of which are considered emotionally abusive by the general public - and portray them as healthy demonstrations of romantic intentions.

The “discourse of romantic love” has often been reinforced and formalized in narratives used to socialize those in Western societies as they enter the realm of romantic or intimate relationships (Wood, 2001: 244). After interviewing twenty heterosexual female survivors of physical abuse, Wood found that many women used pre-existing romantic narratives to frame their experiences, and in order to explain why the violence against them was understandable and justifiable (2001: 247). This conclusion was reaffirmed in 2013 by Hayes and Jeffries. Heteronormative romantic love narratives traditionally emphasize male dominance, and make any improvement of the relationship the responsibility of the female partner (Fraser, 2003; Wood, 2001). The “discourse of romantic love” also reframes emotionally abusive actions by one’s partner; instead of an unhealthy behavior, or one that threatens future escalation, emotional abuse becomes “a demonstration of true love and commitment,” (Hayes and Jeffries, 2013: 61). Romantic narratives also emphasize the importance of romantic love in one’s life - especially a woman’s life - and portray a life without romantic love as especially pointless (Fraser, 2003: 276). Many of the romantic love narratives prevalent in Western culture follow similar themes, normalizing an abstract link between hatred and passionate love.

Media including romantic plots or subplots serve as formal manifestations of Western love narratives. For one example, the general romantic discourse considers love as essential and all-consuming (Fraser, 2003: 276). As a result, many love stories - especially erotic romance novels - feature the two leads being “swept away” by passion to illustrate how overwhelming their love is for each other (Patthey-Chavez, Clare, and Youmans, 1996: 86). Another common

feature of the romance narrative, related to being “swept away,” is the trope of sexual desire altering a person’s state of mind. In a survey of 97 female college students, Diekmann, McDonald, and Gardner showed that such narrative tropes affected the behavior of the people who habitually read these narratives, finding that “frequency of reading novels was positively correlated with ambivalence towards condoms,” (2000: 183). The romantic narrative that ignores safe-sex practices or seems to portray them as not romantic, when compared to the passion of being “swept away,” possibly lead women who habitually consume traditional romance narratives to view these practices negatively.

Most research around emotional abuse has focused on whether someone has been victimized, the patterns in the population of who has been abused, and the effects of said abuse. However, DeHart, Follingstad, and Fields (2010) examined hypothetical emotional IPV, in their research into how context alters whether people define an act of psychological aggression as abuse. In their sample of 131 college students, they found that respondents were more likely to identify an aggressive action as abusive if the “recipient’s reaction was emotionally negative,” (DeHart, Follingstad, and Fields, 2010: 468). Therefore, if a victim was to get upset with an aggressive action, respondents were far more likely to see it as abusive. However, in the script of romantic narratives, recipients of psychologically aggressive actions tend to not react negatively, so readers are unlikely to recognize this emotional abuse from context.

There has been very little research to show how non-sexual practices included in romance narratives affect those who consume them, such as emotionally abusive behavior that is normalized, portrayed as romantic and something to be desired. Therefore, this researcher asks: is there a correlation between consumption of fictional media - which usually includes a romantic subplot, even if it is not the main topic - and the consumer’s ability to recognize

emotional abuse? Related to that, how do one's gender, age, sexual orientation, and education affect this ability?

Methods

Mode of Observation

The primary mode of observation - the "Examining Opinions about Romantic Relationship Behaviors" questionnaire - is contained in Appendix A. This research isn't intended to gather data on respondents' experiences with emotional abuse, but rather the respondents' ability to recognize emotional abuse when it is framed by the "discourse of romantic love," and this specific area has not been examined in existing literature. Therefore, an entirely new measure was constructed to gather data on the Emotional Abuse Recognition Ability (EARA) of respondents. This measure is an amalgamation of the interview questions for the CDC's National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, and the questionnaire used by DeHart, Follingstad, and Fields when examining how context contributes to defining emotional abuse (Black et al, 2011: 106; 2010: 468). I took cues from Black et al.'s (2011) lack of the term "abuse," and from DeHart, Follingstad, and Fields' (2010) use of vignettes to illustrate "less problematic content" or "more problematic content" to garner responses to actions and their context.

Dependent Variable

The EARA measure is a composite one, made up of six vignettes with two questions asked of each respondent. Each vignette - except for the first one - contains an action deemed by Black et al. to be "expressive aggression" or "coercive control," and each action is written as if it were a scene in a romantic narrative, to disguise the emotional abuse with "the discourse of romantic love." The two partners in each vignette have unisex names, and do not use singular pronouns, either gendered pronouns (he/she) or the singular, non-conventional "they." During

the construction of the vignettes, signifying the character's gender was avoided, with the intention of placing emphasis on the actions themselves, rather than the gender of the character performing them. This was an attempt to degender the abusive concepts as much as possible, in contrast to previous literature in which intimate partner violence was closely tied to the genders of the abusers or victims. In addition, the later vignettes contained more overtly abusive behavior, mimicking the way in which abusers frequently ramp up their actions over time.

After each vignette, respondents are asked to respond using a Likert scale to the statement, "Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship." The options given are "strongly agree," "agree," "disagree," and "strongly disagree." The focus on power and control in this question is due to the centrality that these concepts have in the study of abuse. Respondents are also asked, "Would you accept this behavior in your own relationship?" with potential answers "yes" and "no," and then are given a text box where they could answer, "why or why not?" The entirety of the EARA measure can be seen in Appendix A.

The Likert scale responses to the first question following each vignette collapse and add up to create the EARA score. Each time that a respondent either "strongly disagreed" or "disagreed" with the statement that a vignette with an abusive relationship represented an equal amount of power and control, one point is added to their EARA score. When they "agreed" or "strongly agreed" with that statement, no points are added. This was true for Vignettes #2 - #6, and reverse-coded for Vignette #1, as this vignette was not intended to contain an emotionally abusive relationship. The scores could range from 0 to 6. The higher a respondent's EARA score, the higher their ability to recognize emotional abuse. A score of 6 requires a respondent to

identify all abusive vignettes as representing unbalanced power and control among intimate partners, and the non-abusive vignette as representing balanced power and control.

Because this is an unestablished measure, it is important to thoroughly analyze its reliability and validity. The test-retest method is built into the measure, in that respondents are asked five times to react to emotional abuse. This method allows the results to illustrate a high level of reliability, as there is strong correlation between respondents' "power and control" statement answers for each vignette, as illustrated in Figure 1.

	Non-Abusive (Vignette 1)	Humiliation (Vignette 2)	Isolation (Vignette 3)	Tracking (Vignette 4)	Possession (Vignette 5)	Violence (Vignette 6)
Non-abusive	1	.14*	.18**	.05	.07	.101
Humiliation	.14*	1	.21**	.19**	.17**	.13**
Isolation	.18**	.21**	1	.27**	.22**	.27**
Tracking	.05	.19**	.27**	1	.30**	.23**
Possession	.07	.17**	.22**	.30**	1	.35**
Violence	.101	.13*	.27**	.23**	.35**	1

Figure 1: Significance Levels of Correlation between EARA Vignettes

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

The only vignette without a significant amount of correlation between its answers and that of the other vignettes was the sole vignette not written to be abusive. As illustrated in the "why or why not" comments portion following this vignette, people's reactions to this vignette were generally driven more by personal taste in relationships, rather than a perception of healthiness or lack thereof in the represented relationship. One respondent who said they would not accept the behavior portrayed in the vignette wrote, "I dislike the phrase "sucks to be you."" Another person who rejected the behavior said that they "hate people talking during movies." The lack of emotional abuse in this vignette explains why responses to it did not correlate with the emotional abuse vignettes, and further indicates the reliability of this measure. A split-half test was also used to illustrate reliability, in which two new variables were created: the sum of the answers to

all odd-numbered vignettes by each respondent, and the same for even-numbered vignettes. The correlation of the two variables ($r = .45$) was highly statistically significant: $p < .001$, in the 99% confidence interval.

As this is the introduction of EARA to the literature, one might argue that there is no way to know how valid this measure is. However, there is also a built-in check for criterion-related validity. In addition to the question that creates the EARA score, there is also the question of “Would you accept this behavior in your relationship?” This check operates under the assumption that respondents would not accept a behavior that they perceive to be emotionally abusive, or unhealthy. Therefore, the EARA score – if the measure is valid – would predict one’s acceptance or non-acceptance of emotional abuse. Independent t-tests illustrate the strong connection between acceptance or lack thereof for each vignette and a respondent’s EARA score, as illustrated in Figure 2. For each of the abusive vignettes (#2 - #6), respondents who accepted the emotional abuse have an average EARA score far lower than those who did not accept it. The opposite is true for the non-abusive vignette.

	<i>Mean EARA of Respondents who Do Accept Vignette X</i>	<i>Mean EARA of Respondents who Do Not Accept Vignette X</i>	<i>Significance level of the difference</i>
Vignette 1 (Non-abusive)	5.13	4.67	.000**
Vignette 2 (Humiliation)	4.19	5.00	.000**
Vignette 3 (Isolation)	4.32	5.03	.000**
Vignette 4 (Tracking)	4.03	5.04	.000**
Vignette 5 (Possession)	4.22	5.22	.000**
Vignette 6 (Violence)	4.00	4.95	.011*

Figure 2: Mean EARA of Respondents who Would Accept or Not Accept Vignettes

* $p < .05$

** $p < .01$

Additionally, there is a high level of correlation (.000 for each vignette) between the components that make up the EARA score – that is, answers that cause one to get a point added to one’s EARA score – and the acceptance or lack thereof of the vignette behaviors. Therefore,

someone's perception of balanced power and control in an intimate relationship directly correlates with whether or not they find that behavior desirable, or healthy. This measure has criterion-related validity.

Independent Variables

The independent variables considered in this research are media consumption habits, gender, sexual orientation, age, highest level of education, and educational concentration. Respondents were given the options of 'Man,' 'Woman,' and 'Other' for their gender and 'Straight/Heterosexual,' 'Gay/Lesbian,' 'Bisexual/Pansexual/Polysexual etc.,' and 'Asexual Spectrum (Asexual/Demisexual/Graysexual etc.)' for their sexual orientation. The options for the highest level of education reached were 'less than high school,' 'high school,' 'less than college,' 'college degree,' and 'graduate degree.' Respondents were prompted to enter their age and academic concentration into text boxes, and the data was later quantified for analysis.

Media consumption habits included time spent consuming media recreationally every week, and the genres that respondents watched – as television or movies – or read. The four weekly media time possibilities included 'less than one hour,' '1 – 5 hours,' '5 – 10 hours,' and 'more than ten hours.' Potential selected watched genres were Realistic/Sports/Historic, Adventure/Action, Romantic Comedy/Romantic Dramas, Fantasy/Science Fiction, Horror/Mystery/Thriller/Crime, and Kids/Family/Animated. Potential selected read genres were Realistic Fiction/Young Adult, Historical/Western, Science Fiction/Fantasy/Adventure, Horror/Mystery/Thriller/Crime, Romance/Erotica, and Fan-created works. Both watched and read genres had the option of "other," in which respondents could add genres left out of the list. Respondents added non-romantic Comedy and Non-fiction/Reality genres to those watched, and Religious and Non-fiction genres to those read.

Sampling Design & Data Collection

For the purposes of easy electronic data collection, the questionnaire was hosted on Google Forms. Due to constraints of financial and personnel resources, I was unable to use a thoroughly random sampling design. Instead, the sample was self-selected, from my Facebook friends, and the Facebook friends of those who shared the survey link. I used a technologically boosted snowball sampling design, as I specifically asked respondents to share the survey with other potential respondents so I could gather a larger sample. On October 26, 2016, I made a Facebook post with the link to the survey, followed by re-posts on October 28, 30, and November 1 and 7. The post read:

After half a semester of project proposals and re-writes, I'm finally putting out the call for people to take my survey for my senior thesis/ honors/ baccalaureate project. That means you! If you can click on the link, it will only take you 15-25 minutes to fill out this survey. It does not record e-mail or IP addresses, so I do not know who the responses are coming from. That means please DO NOT comment on any versions of this post to tell me that you've taken the survey.

If you are willing, please share this link. I'd like as many responses as possible from as many social networks as possible in the two weeks that this link is live. You can take the survey and not share it, or share it and not take the survey, but I'd really appreciate it if you can do both.

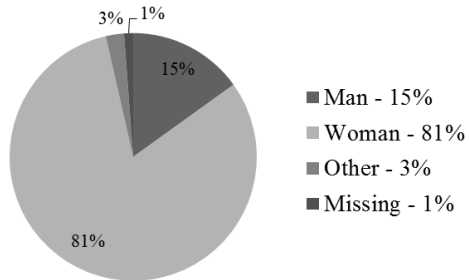
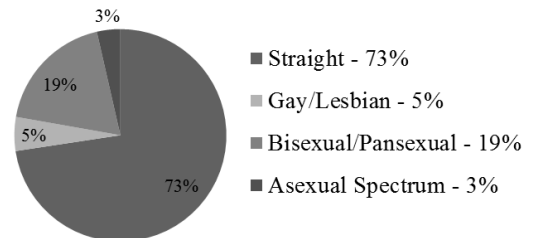
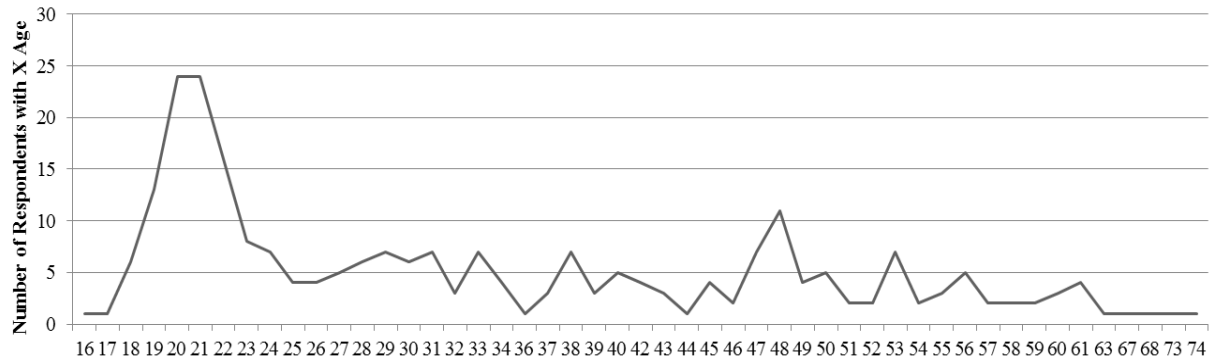
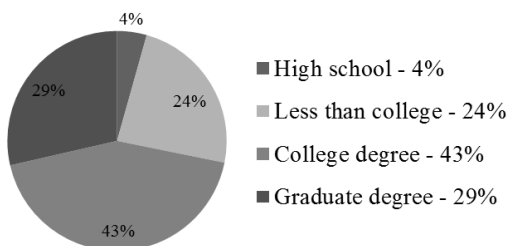
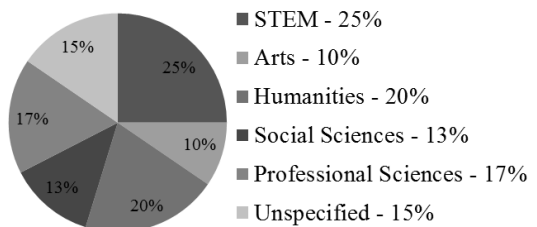
THANK YOU!

Data collection ended on November 9, 2016.

The resultant sample is comprised of 252 respondents. Women make up the majority of the sample at 81%, with men following at 15% and 'other' respondents at 2% (illustrated in Figure 3, on page 15). Three respondents declined to answer this question. Straight respondents make up 73% of the sample, those identifying as bisexual/pansexual/polysexual are 19% of the sample, gay/lesbian respondents comprise 5% of the sample, and 4% are on the asexual spectrum (illustrated in Figure 4). Altogether, sexual minorities make up 27% of the sample, which is highly disproportionate to the American adult population. The youngest respondent reports being

16 years old, and the oldest is 74. The mean age of the sample is 24 with a standard deviation of 14 years, and a median age of 30. The distribution of ages in the sample is shown below, in Figure 5. No respondents report having less education than a high school degree. 4% of the sample graduated high school, 24% have less than a full undergraduate education, 43% graduated with their undergraduate degree, and 29% report having a graduate-level education (illustrated in Figure 6). 16% of respondents did not give their academic concentration, but 25% are in a STEM field, 20% studied/study the humanities, 17% are in professional studies, 13% in the social sciences, and 10% in the fine arts (shown in Figure 7).

My population is Americans age 16 and above. However, almost every independent variable considered in the data collection is affected by under- or over-representation of certain segments of the population. For example, women – who make up roughly 50% of the American population – dominate the sample at 81%. The sample also tends to have generally reached higher levels of education than the American population. According to a census report reporting data from 2015, 12% of the U.S. population 25 and older had attained a graduate education, while in this sample, 45% of respondents age 25 or older have a graduate education (Ryan and Bauman, 2016: 2). On the other hand, heterosexuals – estimated to be approximately 96% of the American adult population – are relatively under-represented in this sample, at 73% (Ward et al., 2014: 1). The lack of representativeness in the sample limits our ability to generalize the results and apply the research to the general American population. However, examining the ways in which the model works is still beneficial to understanding the emotional abuse recognition ability.

Figure 3: Gender Distribution of Sample**Figure 4: Sexual Orientation Distribution of Sample****Figure 5: Age Distribution of Sample****Figure 6: Highest Education Level Distribution of Sample****Figure 7: Major/Concentration Distribution of Sample**

Hypotheses

Where certain respondents see power balance in a relationship, other see imbalance, likely due to sensitivity to cues of emotional abuse causing them to recognize these behaviors as undesirable. The research was intended to examine how the recognition of emotional abuse within a romantic context – that is, as described in romance novels and portrayed in romantic movies – is affected by the independent variables. In my model of EARA, one's score is affected by one's gender, sexual orientation, age, educational attainment, academic concentration, and media consumption habits. A respondent identifying as a woman, or in the category of "other" genders, would have a higher EARA score than men; as Hayes and Jeffries theorized, men are likely less able to recognize abusive actions and act on that knowledge. According to the model, respondents identifying as heterosexual or straight would have a lower EARA score than those identifying as any LGBTQ+¹ group. Additionally, younger respondents would have a higher EARA score than older respondents; Karakurt and Silver found that younger people tend to have a higher risk for emotional abuse than their older counterparts. Respondents who had reached lower levels of education would, on average, have a lower EARA score than those who had reached higher levels. My hypothesis regarding one's academic concentration was that those in the Humanities and Social Sciences would have significantly higher EARA scores than those STEM, Fine Arts, or Professional Sciences fields.

Concerning media consumption, my first hypothesis is that the more hours a week that one spends recreationally consuming media, the lower one's EARA score was likely to be. Specifically regarding genres, my research hypothesis is that consumption of romantic genres decreases one's EARA score, as implied by Diekmann, McDonald, and Gardner, and the

¹ "Transgender" is not included in this acronym, as it is a gender identity, and this study examines that separately from sexual orientation.

consumption of non-fiction media increases the score. In the model, the number of genres that one habitually consumes media from also affects their EARA score. If one only consumes media from a singular genre – a habit referred to as “pure media consumption” – they would likely have a lower EARA score than one who consumed media from more than one genre. Similarly, one who consumes five or more genres on a habitual basis – “diverse media consumption” – will have a higher EARA score than a person who consumes from fewer genres. The research hypotheses are illustrated in Figure 7, on page 18, with μ_x representing the mean EARA score of group with X characteristic.

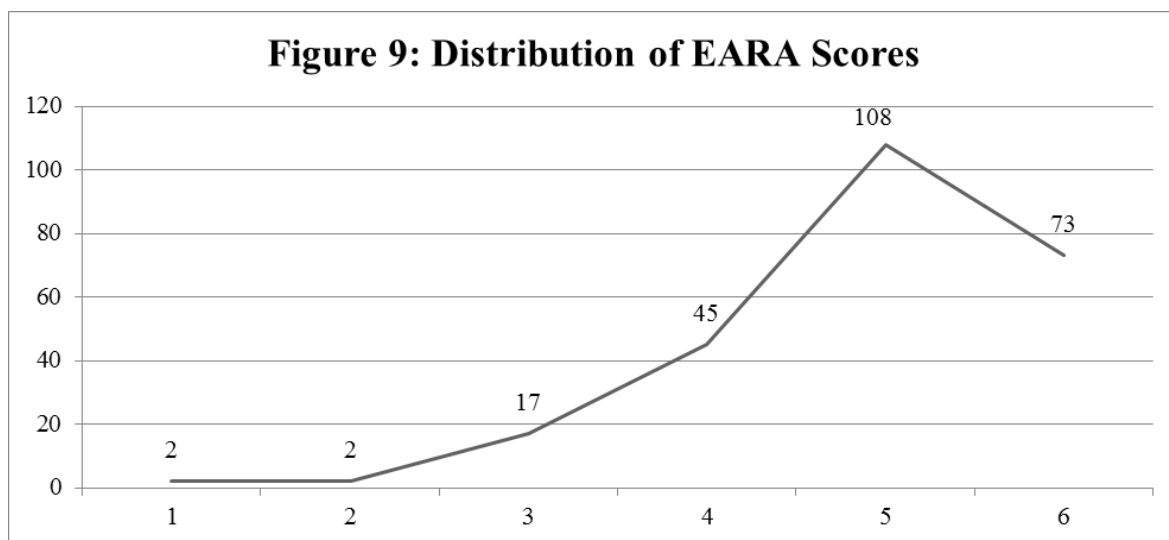
<i>Independent Variable</i>	<i>Groups</i>	<i>Research Hypothesis</i>
Gender	Group 1: Men Group 2: Women (and Other)	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Sexual Orientation	Group 1: Heterosexual/Straight people Group 2: LGBTQ+ individuals	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Education Level	Group 1: Respondents with “less” education Group 2: Respondents with “more” education	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Academic Concentration	Group 1: STEM, Fine Arts, and Professional Sciences majors Group 2: Humanities and Social Sciences majors	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Media Consumption	Group 1: Respondents who consume media less frequently Group 2: Respondents who consume media more frequently	$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2$
Romance Consumption	Group 1: Respondents who consume media from romantic genres Group 2: Respondents who do not consume media from romantic genres	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Non-fiction Consumption	Group 1: Respondents who consume non-fiction media recreationally Group 2: Respondents who do not consume non-fiction media recreationally	$H_1: \mu_1 > \mu_2$
Purity of Media Consumption	Group 1: Respondents with pure media consumption habits Group 2: Respondents who habitually consume more than one genre of media	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$
Diversity of Media Consumption	Group 1: Respondents who habitually consume fewer than five genres Group 2: Respondents with diverse media consumption habits	$H_1: \mu_1 < \mu_2$

Figure 8: Research Hypotheses Referenced in Data Analysis

Findings

The entire sample's average EARA score was 4.92, and the median and mode were 5.

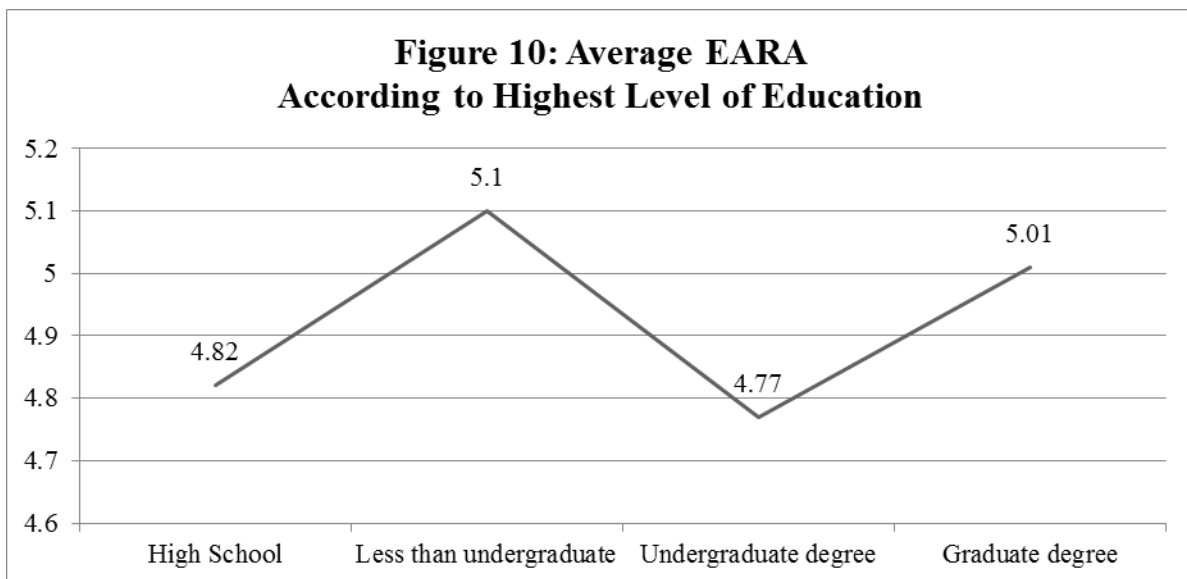
The distribution of EARA scores is illustrated in Figure 9.



Every test of statistical significance used an alpha of .05, or the 95% confidence interval. Taken on their own, no independent variables have a statistically significant relationship to EARA at the 95% confidence level. The two most significant independent variables appeared to be Sexual Orientation and Highest Level of Education. A one-way ANOVA resulted in $p = .13$ between EARA and sexual orientation, and was reinforced by the result of $p = .16$ in an independent samples t-test splitting the sample into two groups, straight respondents (mean EARA = 4.87) and LGBTQ+ respondents (mean EARA = 5.07).² These results approach significance. Comparing bisexuals, the largest sexual minority group of the sample, (mean EARA = 5.21) and heterosexuals in an independent t-test results in a significance level of .03, indicating that sexual orientation is a significant predictor of EARA. Therefore, the research hypothesis is accepted.

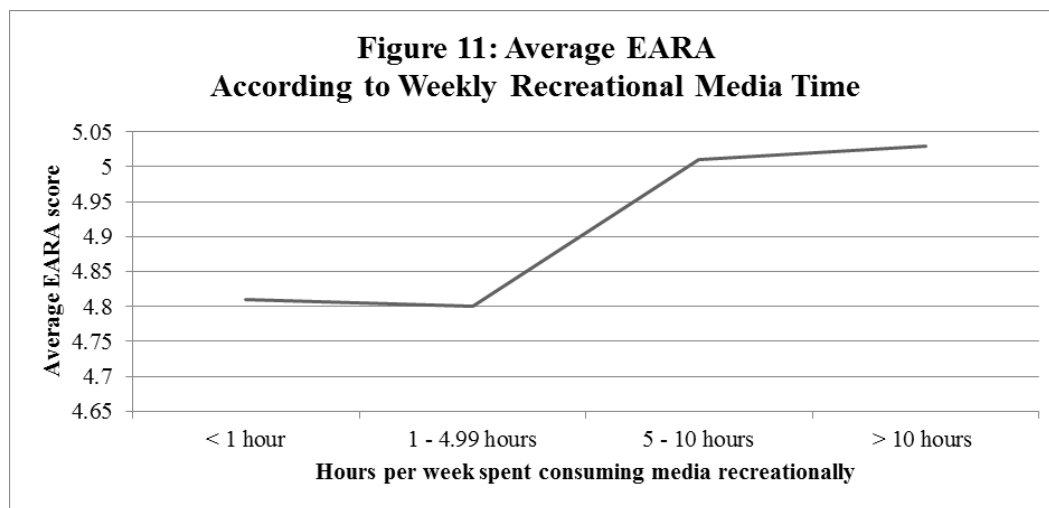
² All t-tests assume equal variances.

Another significant/approaching-significance independent variable is a respondents' highest level of education reached. The distribution of EARA scores according to educational attainment is below as Figure 10. An ANOVA showed that differences among education levels have a $p = .14$, which approaches significance. Those respondents who reported having “less than [a] college” degree (assumed to be current undergraduate students) and those who have graduate-level education tend to have a higher EARA score than those with only a high school or an undergraduate degree (assumed to be out of school). This can be seen in Figure 10, and reveals that the exact sentiment expressed in the original research hypothesis cannot be accepted. However, when recoded into a new variable – “less than college” and “graduate” respondents together, compared to “high school” and those with a “college degree” together in a group – the first group has a higher mean EARA score than the latter (5.05 and 4.77 respectively, with a $p = .02$).



Gender differences, illustrated by an ANOVA, are not significant ($p = .47$). When comparing only men and women, the two largest gender groups, the differences became even less significant, at a level of $p = .54$. As this test removed the “other” section from the consideration of gender, and every respondent who identified themselves as an “other” gender identified themselves as bisexual (or in one case, asexual) it is likely that the significant differences between sexual orientations explain the change. Either way, the significance level regarding gender and EARA is nowhere near significance. Differences between age ranges and academic concentration or major are similar, with slight differences between groups, and $p = .93$ and $p = .98$, respectively. Therefore, one cannot accept the research hypotheses regarding gender, age, and academic concentration.

A respondent’s time spent consuming media recreationally appeared to make a difference at the cut-off point of 5 hours (as seen in Figure 11). If a respondent’s maximum amount of recreational media exposure is 5 hours or fewer every week, they are likely to have an EARA score around 4.8. However, if the number of hours spent consuming media weekly are greater than 5, the likely EARA score increases to around 5. This change approaches statistical significance, with a .09 significance level in an independent-sample t-test. However, this is not in favor of the research hypothesis.



<i>WATCHED media</i>			<i>READ media</i>		
Genre	Did watch	Didn't watch	Genre	Did read	Didn't read
Realistic/Sports/ Historic	4.93	4.91	Realistic/Young Adult Fiction	4.94	4.86
Adventure/Action	4.95	4.9	Historical/Western	5.15	4.88
Fantasy/Sci Fi	5.03	4.82	Sci Fi/Fantasy/Adventure	4.91	4.93
Horror/Mystery/ Thriller/Crime	5	4.88	Horror/Mystery/Thriller/ Crime	4.82	4.96
Romantic Comedy/ Drama	4.95	4.9	Romance/Erotica	4.95	4.91
Kids/Family/Animated	4.89	4.93	Fan-Created	5.1	4.89
Non-fiction/Reality	5	4.91	Non-Fiction	5	4.91
Comedy	5.15	4.9	Religious	5	4.92

Figure 3: Mean EARA Scores of respondents who did or did not consume specified genres
Bolded genres have a difference greater than or equal to .1.

Regarding genre consumption, only a few have a significant EARA difference between those who consumed and those who did not. The genres with the most sizable difference are watching Fantasy/Science Fiction, Horror/Mystery/Thriller/Crime, or Comedy, and reading Historical/Western or Fan-Created fiction. In each case, the consumption of each of these genres leads to an increased EARA score. The two genres whose differences approach statistical significance are watching Fantasy/Science Fiction ($p = .08$) and reading Historical/Western fiction ($p = .14$). The research hypotheses regarding consumption of romance genres or non-fiction is disconfirmed.

The number of genres that one consumed was also considered. The average respondent watches media from 2.46 genres recreationally, and reads from 1.8 genres. However, looking at the extreme ends of the spectrum lends itself to the study of media consumption. Those who read or watched only one genre – dubbed “media purists” – were compared to those who consumed media from a “diverse” number of genres (more than five). The purity or lack thereof of one’s reading habits appears to be the greatest predictor for the EARA score in media consumption. Respondents who read only one genre, any genre, had an average EARA score of 4.77, while those who read more than one have a mean score of 5. The statistical significance of this

difference is $p = .10$, which approaches significance. The research hypotheses regarding purity or diversity of one's media habits could be confirmed upon further research in this area.

Discussion of Results

I believe that the sample makeup contributes a great deal to the fact that the mean EARA of the sample was towards the top of the possible spectrum. The average respondent is a heterosexual woman between the ages of 20 and 29, with an undergraduate degree. Other than sexual orientation, this sample is dominated by people hypothesized to have a higher EARA score than average, and sexual minorities are represented in this sample far more than in the general American population. Therefore, I would posit that this higher-than-expected mean EARA is in favor of my hypotheses, as the mean is controlled by groups hypothesized to have high EARAs, and that was the result.

The most significant relationships are between EARA scores, and educational level or one's sexual orientation. This may be explained by critical thinking skills inherent in both. Examining the differences in mean EARA scores between education levels makes this apparent. Those still completing their undergraduate degree and those with a graduate education have a significantly higher mean EARA score than those who have completed high school or completed their undergraduate degree. Someone completing their undergraduate degree are routinely required to think critically about what they read. Similarly, someone with a graduate-level education is likely to be even further trained to think critically, as well as to be likely to use these skills in their employment. In contrast, those with only a high school education have been primarily trained in education requiring memorization, rather than ingestion and analysis. Also, those who have graduated from their undergraduate degrees and have not pursued more education likely do not use critical thinking in their jobs, and the skills they learned in their

college education have grown rusty. One's close proximity to critical thinking skills, as inferred from respondents' highest education levels reached, appears to be a significant predictor for a high EARA. A respondent's sexual orientation is also likely a predictor due to critical thinking skills. A member of the LGBTQ+ population is plausibly more likely to think about heteronormative romantic traditions and narratives in a critical way, as they automatically deviate from heteronormativity.

This theory regarding critical thinking is also illustrated in the comments; specifically, in the responses to "why or why not?" following the last two vignettes, which contained the most intense emotional abuse. Many indicated that in addition to recognizing the behaviors as psychologically damaging, they also saw the clear potential for escalation of emotional abuse to physical or sexual abuse. One respondent who indicated that they would not accept behavior in Vignette #6 – containing one partner destroying another's belongings – and said as justification, "If they would get angry and hurt the things that matter to me, eventually, they will skip the materials and just hurt me." In addition to indicating emotionally abusive behavior as unacceptable, such respondents could follow the interaction through to the conclusion that most authorities on the subject agree will occur – physical harm to psychologically battered partner. Additionally, in the comments at the end of the survey, fourteen separate respondents indicated that they noticed the non-gendered characters, illustrating that they had thought about the vignettes thoroughly in addition to reading them.

However, many respondents still applied genders to the characters in the vignettes, and clearly made their decisions based on these applied genders. In response to Vignette #4, which contains stalking, one respondent wrote, "If Morgan is a man, and Drew is a woman, it would signal an abusive relationship. Not sure it means that when a woman does it to a man..."

Similarly, in the end comments a different respondent wrote, “I think some of the behaviors would be unacceptable and/or frightening when it's done by a man to a woman, but not necessarily so if done by a woman to a man or in a same-sex couple.” While most respondents did not overtly assign blame based on gender as this respondent did, the answers to “why or why not?” consistently contained gendered pronouns when none were used in the vignettes.

The null findings in the areas of gender and age could be possibly explained by the underrepresentation of certain groups (men, and those not between the ages of 20 and 29), and this cannot be known until the research is repeated with a more representative sample. However, the distribution of academic concentrations appeared to be relatively even, so it is unlikely that this will ever be a significant variable. Regarding media, it was apparent that the more one consumed media, and the more genres consumed, the more likely one was to have a high EARA score. However, none of the media variables had a significance level equal to or less than .05, so it does not appear that media consumption is as significant a variable as previously expected.

Considerations for Future Research and Conclusions

In continuing this vein of research, researchers should be sure to alter the sampling design, as to gather a more proportionate sample, especially concerning gender. While this research was limited by the researcher's position as an undergraduate student with no substantial financial resources for sampling, if this is ever repeated by a researcher or a group with more resources, these should be dedicated to random sampling. Additionally, future researchers using the EARA measure should also consider adding political affiliation as an independent variable. For example, a respondents' philosophy on personal responsibility – a hallmark of conservative thought – could influence their perspective on abusive actions. Similarly, because abuse is considered a gendered topic in political discourse, and political philosophy generally includes

perspectives on gender issues, political affiliation is a potentially strong addition to the EARA model. Another suggestion is to focus on the critical thinking concept as a more well-defined independent variable, possibly using a previously defined measure to measure a respondent's critical thinking ability and comparing that to their EARA score.

My research should be followed and developed by those with more resources, either to replicate this survey methodology or to follow and study media consumers to view the cause and effect of the romantic representation of unhealthy relationship behaviors in a more direct manner. Despite the null findings, I still believe that research in this area is necessary. The necessity for emotional abuse recognition ability is exemplified by many comments. In the “why or why not?” comments of Vignette #6, one respondent wrote, “I say yes [to accepting the behavior] because both of them still have the power to leave and yes, Jordan reacted in a way that caused harm to an inanimate thing, but that doesn't automatically mean they are going to hurt their significant other.” The respondent is blaming Jordan's partner for not leaving, not recognizing Jordan's violence against their partner's belongings as the intimidation tactic that it is, and denies the reality that it is more than likely that Jordan will eventually physically harm their partner. This flavor of comment, featuring victim-blaming as well as denying the realities of emotional abuse and psychological intimidation, peppered the comments section. It was most abundantly featured in the section after the most intensively abusive vignette, the sixth.

This research is not intended to have the goal of censoring the representation of intimate or romantic relationships. However, if my hypothesis eventually proves to hold true through further research, and an individual's ability to recognize actions that could harm them is hampered by the content of many romantic narratives, I would hope that the creators of these fictional narratives consider the effects of what they write. Media is a powerful agent of

socialization, and should be both consumed and created critically. A writer who is being careful to avoid emotionally abusive narratives can help prompt those who read them to redefine what makes an intimate relationship healthy or desirable.

APPENDIX A:
Survey: Examining Opinions about Intimate Relationship Behaviors

Dear respondent,

I'm Lydia Galarneau, a senior at Alfred University working on my Baccalaureate Honors project. I am conducting a survey of American adults which examines opinions about behaviors that take place within intimate relationships. Your response will remain strictly confidential. I do not need any personal identifiers, so please do not enter your name, address, or phone numbers into any text boxes. IP addresses will NOT be recorded.

This survey consists of 22 questions. Completing the survey will take approximately 15-25 minutes. This project has been approved by the Human Subjects Research Committee of Alfred University. Should you have any questions or concerns about participating, please contact me at lag6@alfred.edu, my faculty sponsor, Dr. Porter, at fporter@alfred.edu, or the chair of the Human Subjects Research Committee, Dr. Stephen Byrne, at byrne@alfred.edu. If you become distressed by the content of this survey and do not wish to reach out to any of the above contacts, you can visit www.thehotline.org or call 1-800-799-7233 for assistance.

Clicking the "continue" button at the bottom of this form gives me your informed consent to use your responses for my project. You can exit the survey at any time by closing the tab or window, which will mean that your data will not be recorded.

Thank you for participating in my study. I am relying on you and the information that you are providing to complete my senior year thesis project. You can help me to understand behaviors in intimate relationships.

-Lydia Galarneau
 Alfred University Class of 2017

* * *

Section 1: Vignettes

Below are various snapshots of the lives of six hypothetical couples. You should assume that the conflict is characteristic of their relationship.

After you read each vignette, you will be asked whether or not you would accept the behavior in an intimate relationship that you were in. Please be honest in your responses; there are no right or wrong answers in this survey.

=

Vignette #1: Avery and Bailey

“But I wanted to see the new Avengers movie,” Bailey said, arms crossed and eyebrows furrowed.

“Sucks to be you, then,” Avery said, “because we’re seeing Furious 7.”

“But you hate those movies!” Bailey looked around, saw that people had looked over because they’d heard loud voices, and then said in a lower tone, “why are you going to make me sit through a dumb action movie that you don’t even like?”

“I don’t like the Transformers movies,” Avery said, tone remaining even. “And we’re seeing Furious 7 because you picked last time, and we take turns picking. That’s the rule that *you* put in place, remember?”

Bailey sighed, then shrugged. “Yeah, you’re right... I reserve the right to criticize the movie the entire time, though. And you’re buying the popcorn.”

Avery smiled and pressed a quick kiss to Bailey’s temple. “I think that’s fair.”

Question #1: *Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.*

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #2: *Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?*

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

=

Vignette #2: Sam and Taylor

“Seriously,” Taylor said, voice filled with laughter, “that was so stupid.”

“I know,” Sam said, smile echoing Taylor’s.

“How could you make that mistake? Seriously, I know you failed history in high school, but that’s still ridiculous, babe, I expected better from you.” Taylor sighed dramatically, head shaking.

The waitress came over, beaming at the two of them. “Went to trivia night again?”

“Yeah,” Taylor said, answering for Sam, “and shockingly enough, Sam gave the wrong answer again. I know. Huge surprise.” Taylor’s voice was clearly sarcastic, but still filled with glee. Sam’s eyes remained trained on the menu, with a smile more brittle than usual.

Taylor glanced at Sam, then sighed, reaching out to nudge their feet together. “Baby, don’t be mad. You know I love you, even though you’re stupid.”

Sam glanced up, expression softening. “Yeah, I know.”

Question #3: Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #4: Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

=

Vignette #3: Alex and Charlie

“Hey,” Charlie said from the doorway to their apartment’s living room, and Alex looked up from *Scrubs*. “I was going to go hang out with Jesse, if that’s okay with you.”

Alex paused *Scrubs* and put the laptop aside. “Now?”

“Yeah,” Charlie said, leaning against the door frame, car keys in hand.

Alex pouted in a way that Charlie was always weak to. “Really? Are you sure you don’t just want to cuddle up with me?” Moving to the corner of the couch and sweeping aside a corner of the blanket, Alex looked up at Charlie, batting thick lashes.

Charlie felt weak, but needed to protest at least one more time. This was a habit with the two of them, and both Alex and Charlie knew how it would end. “I haven’t seen Jesse in a really long time.”

“You aren’t dating Jesse,” Alex said, quiet yet firm. “C’mere, sweetheart.”

Charlie put down the car keys and took off shoes, feeling the weight of Alex’s gaze, then went to the couch and sat beside Alex, pulling the blanket back over their laps. Alex beamed at the victory, sliding an arm around Charlie’s shoulder, and Charlie couldn’t help but feel loved.

Question #5: Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #6: Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

=

Vignette #4: Drew and Morgan

When Drew stepped outside of the nightclub, the bass still throbbed underfoot, vibrating with a higher intensity than the phone in Drew's back pocket. Pulling it out, Drew unlocked the iPhone that had been a one-month anniversary gift from Morgan.

'So that I can know you're safe,' the accompanying card had read.

Drew had twenty unread texts and four voicemails, all from Morgan since Drew had left their apartment four hours ago. The latest text read, 'call me back you haven't responded and i need to know where u are.' Drew smiled at the screen and tapped the call back button.

"Babe? What's wrong?"

"Nothing," Morgan said, voice tinny and filtered through the phone's speaker, "now that you called."

"That's sweet," Drew said with a dreamy sigh, eyes drawn to the waxing moon above, still smiling as an image came to mind of Morgan staring at it while they spoke. "You care."

Question #7: *Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.*

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #8: *Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?*

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

=

Vignette #5: Harley and Parker

"Would you ever want to get married?" Parker asked, head resting on Harley's shoulder. The credits began to roll for the movie they had been watching.

"Of course," Harley said, pressing a kiss to the top of Parker's head and briefly tightening the grip of their clasped fingers.

Parker smiled and hoped that Harley didn't see. "So you think... I'm it for you? How can you be sure?"

"I've always been sure," Harley said, then when Parker didn't look up, "Hey, sweetheart, look at me."

Parker obeyed. "What?"

"If I can't have you," Harley said, staring deep into Parker's eyes, "no one can."

Parker began to tear up, caressed the curve of Harley's cheek, and leaned in for a passionate kiss that was interrupted by the smiles on both of their faces.

Question #9: *Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.*

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #10: *Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?*

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

=

Vignette #6: Harper and Jordan

Harper pushed open the door to the bedroom shared with Jordan, and gasped, heart seized by fear. The plant from windowsill was destroyed, its leaves torn off, the pot shattered and dirt scattered across the bed. Some of Harper favorite shirts were in the mess, cut or ripped apart as well.

The door to their bathroom opened and Jordan entered, hands covered in cuts and tiny band-aids, and eyes clear. Jordan's eyes found Harper at once. "I'm sorry," Jordan said. Harper wasn't sure the apology was sincere.

"What happened?" Harper said, voice low and cautious.

"I got mad after our fight earlier," Jordan said, referring to their argument about finances in a cool, collected tone, "and so when you left for class..." Jordan gestured at the destruction around them and had the good sense to look sheepish.

After a moment, Harper reached out. "It's okay," Harper said, pulling Jordan into an embrace. "It's okay."

Question #11: Please select the level to which you agree or disagree with the below statement.

Assuming that the vignette above is a typical interaction between the partners, both partners have an equal amount of power and control over the relationship.

- a. Strongly agree.
- b. Agree.
- c. Disagree.
- d. Strongly disagree.

Question #12: Would you accept this situation in your own relationship?

- a. Yes
- b. No

Why or why not?

* * *

Section 2: Media Usage

Below are a few questions about the types of movies and television shows that you watch, as well as books that you read. Please select the answer(s) that honestly represent your habits.

Question #13: In an average week, how many hours do you spend reading or watching fictional media for recreation?

- a. Less than one hour
- b. 1 - 5 hours
- c. 5 - 10 hours
- d. More than ten hours

Question #14: What genres do you habitually WATCH media from? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Realistic/Sports/Historical Fiction
- ☐ Adventure/Action
- ☐ Romantic Comedy/Romantic Drama
- ☐ Fantasy/Science Fiction
- ☐ Horror/Mystery/Thriller
- ☐ Kids/Family/Animated
- ☐ I don't watch enough movies, television, etc. enough to answer this question.
- ☐ Other:

Question #15: What genres do you habitually READ media from? Please select all that apply.

- ☐ Realistic fiction/YA fiction
- ☐ Historical/Western fiction
- ☐ Science Fiction/Fantasy/Adventure
- ☐ Horror/Mystery/Thriller

- ☐ Romance novels/Erotica
- ☐ Fan-fiction/Fan-created works
- ☐ I don't read enough books to answer this question.
- ☐ Other:

* * *

Section 3: About You

Question #18: What is your gender identity?

Please select the option that aligns the closest to your identity.

- a. Man
- b. Woman
- c. Other

Question #19: What is your sexual orientation?

Please select the option that aligns the closest to your identity.

- a. Straight/Heterosexual.
- b. Gay/Lesbian
- c. Bisexual/Pansexual/Polysexual (etc.)
- d. Asexual spectrum (Asexual/Graysexual/Demisexual etc.)

Question #20: What is your age?

Please enter it using digits (for example, 18 instead of eighteen.)

Question #21: What is your highest level of education?

- a. Less than high school
- b. High school
- c. Less than college
- d. College degree
- e. Graduate degree

Question #22: If applicable, what is your college major or area of concentration?

Additional comments or questions can be entered into the text box below.

* * *

Thank you for completing my survey. The results will be presented at the Alfred University Undergraduate Research Forum in May 2017.

If you have become distressed by the content of this survey, you can contact the primary investigator at lag6@alfred.edu, the faculty sponsor, Dr. Karen Porter, at fporter@alfred.edu, or the head of the Human Subjects Research Committee who approved this research (Dr. Stephen Byrne) at byrne.alfred.edu. Another possibility is visiting *thehotline.org* or calling 1-800-799-7233, if you do not wish to reach out to the above contacts.

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