

DEPICTIONS OF INTIMATE PARTNER VIOLENCE: A QUALITATIVE
ANALYSIS OF THRILLER & DRAMA FILMS OVER THE LAST
TWENTY YEARS

by

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to Yolie Jackson and Liliana Almeda, they both live forever in our hearts.

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ABSTRACT

Studies show that images of gender and sexuality, specifically hegemonic masculinity at an early age (Signorielli 2009, Connell 2001). Few studies have examined how thriller and drama genres display images of violence, however, few found that images of violence are exaggerated in these films (Constanza del Rio Alvaro 2004). The purpose of this research is to examine images, scenes, and discourses of intimate partner violence. Using a two-step qualitative method, this study examined five thriller and drama films produced over the last twenty years. A content analysis of the films' images, scenes and discourses of hegemonic masculinity in intimate partner violence (IPV) is reflected in thriller and drama films. The findings of this study identified violent words and language, demeanors and social interactions, and intimacy and affection reflect acts of male dominance and control over women. Films from late 1990s reflected intimate relationship with more imagery of violence compared to more recently published films. Although, images of agency in femininity has changed over time with women having more agency in intimate partner relationship, thriller and drama films continue to depict women experiencing some form of intimate partner violence. In conclusion, images and discourses in thriller and drama films reflected intimate partner violence and reinforced images consistent with reinforcing hegemonic masculinity.

I.

INTRODUCTION

Films are a very powerful medium that can be used to communicate information to viewers through the representations of images and gestures films convey messages about gender, love, intimacy and romance (Segrin and Nabi 2002). The stories tend to influence people's attitudes about relationships and intimacy by showing depictions of social norms for acceptable behaviors in relationships (Aubrey, Rhea, and Segrin and Nabi 2002). Researchers have found that depictions of Intimate partner violence (IPV) may influence individual's attitudes towards violence in relationships (Bell and Naugle 2008; Bell and Rhodes 2012; Johnson 2011; Mullin and Linz 1995 and Duncan Wheeler 2012). Through depictions that are portrayed in films about violence viewers can shape and form perceptions about what they would identify as violence.

Additionally, research has indicated that perceptions of viewers can become impacted because they are watching and examining dialogues of films and often can take information out of context (Wheeler 2012). Quantitative research has been conducted to show how perceptions will be impacted to intimate partner violence when individuals questioned had exposures to violence. Research conducted by Mullin and Linz (1995) showed that respondents had less influence by the depiction of violence when viewers were de-sensitized to violence and had been acclimated to violence. The gaps in the literature consisted of not looking at all scenes and images showing intimate partner violence while analyzing films that met the category of having intimate partner violence depictions in them.

Furthermore, popular cinematic representations of how relationships are presented can influence viewers to have more comfortable positions of woman as victims and males as being abusers in relationships (Shoos 2003). In addition, in scripts show instances of intimate partner violence while building plot and storylines. Films tend to show a clear chemistry amongst two characters, prior to showing any hints or foreshadowing that violence is about to take place. Films have also shown children at an early age that there is a clear distinction amongst gender roles and social behavior. Signorelli (1997) did research that examined how Disney showed children at an early age that occasions of violence are acceptable. Films all tell a story and sometimes the story can be compared to real life (Slocum 2000). Escalations of physical and emotional instability lead researchers to study and further explore examine how violent images and discourses are written into film scripts.

In addition, researchers such as social scientist David Slocum (2000) have discussed impacts media can have on social changes and argue that; “Traditionally conceptualized media ... serving one of two functions in society: media can affect social change or media can further the social control of predominant ideologies and social structures” (649). Slocum discussed how societal ideals are shaped and modeled through viewing of media, more specifically, movies can shape perceptions about emotions towards intimate partner violence. The images of interactions depicted in films amongst intimate partners, have displayed intimate partner violence, and imagery has become status quo because often scripts display images of behavior of heartbreak and betrayal with violence acts that are being committed as story and plot unfolds through the scenes and discourses in various films (Johnson 2011). Drama and thriller genres show more

serious societal concerns and problems in ways that are exaggerated, through movie scripts in-depth and descriptive imagery and dialogue which showed intimate partner violence.

According to World Health Organization (WHO), Intimate Partner Violence is a behavior by a current or former intimate partner that causes physical, sexual, or psychological harm, including acts of physical aggression, sexual coercion, psychological abuse, and controlling behaviors (McLennan and MacMillan 2016:2). Media in the United States over twenty years has shown more instances of heterosexual couples who are in a monogamous commitment with each other committing acts of violence that negate and reinforce societal standards that show what a healthy marriage or relationship should look like. Often scenes show violence through: hyper-exaggerated situations where one hyper-exaggerated situations, in which one partner is extremely violent against other partner with undertones of hostility and rage often being written into dialogues

Films have also been known to display patterns exist on people's ideas about intimate interactions and relationships. A constant theme included romance which is often displayed with a plot twist here and there to grab a viewer's attention and keep them entertained. Researcher, Nancy Signorelli gathered data on how films portrayed couples who fell in love and had a "happy ending". In other words, the stories showed characters ending up in romantic relationships. Additionally, Signorelli discussed how images portrayed of females, as being ones who constantly seek and search for an ideal companion (1997). Romance is defined as a variety of gestures that are made to show an emotion for another individual. Intimacy can be seen through a hug or other types of

bodily gesture which indicates emotions or a fondness towards another individual. Romantic intimacy is defined as a feeling of commitment one individual has towards another individual, accompanied by acts of self-disclosure from both individuals in relationships (Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco 1998; Moss and Schwebel 1993; Prager 1989). An example can be purchasing flowers or lighting candles to show that individual characters are attempting to set a mood. In film *Beauty and the Beast*, directed by Gary Trousdale and Kirk Wise, released in 1991 gave viewers an example of intimate partner violence being depicted. In *Beauty and the Beast*, Beast held Belle captive and showed signs of aggression towards her, all while falling in love with her and exhibiting romantic behaviors towards her (Signorielli 1997). Films also reflect patterns of romance and love, companionship, friendship, and sexual desires in heterosexual relationship (Signorielli 1997). Through analyzing past scenes from older films, researchers are able to discuss social norms that have been presented in films over longer than twenty years ago.

Few sociological studies have examined how intimate partner violence is portrayed in film and how images have depictions of gender inequality and hegemonic masculinity. In this study, I focused on describing and examining scenes and discourses utilizing a qualitative methodology to show how images of intimate partner violence were portrayed in films over the last twenty years. Purpose of this study was to analyze images, scenes and discourses that reflected: romance, intimacy, relationships, and sexuality in thriller and drama film. Qualitative methodology was the best method to use, because researchers are able to give clear details, while applying theoretical framework to understand what patterns are showing. A qualitative step I utilized involved

systematically identifying, classifying, and tabulating images in five key thriller and drama genre. In order to be able to understand how films were written I had to understand what genres were and how films genre are used and written. I found that thriller genres according to del Rio Alvaro (2004) can be explained as suspense and elements of criminality will exist in thriller genre. Dramatic scripting will require that there be passion and desire being displayed, Zander Brietzke (2007) discusses how drama is a production that must evoke emotions such as a tragedy that were seen in Shakespeare.

In addition, I used qualitative methods to have a better understanding of existing material about intimate partner violence. A content analysis is a methodology utilized in qualitative methods to analyze the meaning to messages that are conveyed (Signorielli 1997), and understand how imagery shows images of romance, intimacy, relationships and sexuality. The purpose of this study was to conduct an in-depth analysis of images by looking at how images of love, romance, intimacy, relationships and sexuality show intimate partner violence portrayals in thriller and drama genres over last twenty years. I also looked at how images and discourses in thrillers and dramas reinforced hegemonic masculinity and femininity through depictions of intimate partner violence.

Research data were chosen across two genres, thrillers and dramatic genres over last twenty years. Sociologists Claude Rubinson and John Mueller (2016) analyzed how many films were viewed from genres that were popular from 1973- 2013 to find out what popularity of certain genres were. Researchers noted out of the top- 30 films during this timeframe 15.6% were dramas and 6.3% were thrillers. The popularity of dramas have allowed them to thrive, and since access to these stories are broadcast on television and

shown in theatres, many people are exposed to spousal violence in society events that depict women leading protagonist roles.

II

LITERATURE REVIEW

Media technologies consist of: movies, streamed online series, and television shows, which all allow an online interactive portal to accompany show or series. These media outlets can impact people's perceptions and ideas of interpretation of intimate partner violence. Media plays a key role in public ideas of social issues. Researchers have attempted to have a better understanding of how our media is able to impact societal norms. Frus (2001) argued that, "Because Hollywood films are expert at providing illusions of reality, no matter how fantastic the story, Hollywood films are an important source of our mythology about family violence" (p. 227). Plots tend to formulate illusions of reality which tend to have patterns of violence that would not be otherwise accepted in a normal social setting or circumstances.

Sociologists have attempted to better understand intimate partner violence by looking at societal attitudes, cultural influence, and images from media. Gender social norms patterns can be looked for in movies and show that there is a clear imbalance among heterosexual couples. Gender roles that viewers expect characters to play. Typically, woman don't make as much money as a man, and often women will be homemakers that stays in domicile tending to rest of the family, whether it be children or elderly. Images and discourses that were shown included: male roles to have strong dominant traits in relationships and many of images are exaggerated to depict males' figures which are different from your typical male. Sociological theory of hegemonic masculinity was applied to show how media exhibits how our societal norms have

developed images of males are displayed as being strong characters while showing and displaying very little to no signs of weakness and emotions.

Media plays a profound role in our lives because it reflects the culture of a society and shapes people's perceptions and social behavior. "For many people the media is no longer just what the person is watching, listening to or reading the media outlets are now what people do (Meikle, Graham and Young, 2012). I argue that hegemonic masculinity and femininity is reinforced through images of intimate partner violence. Connell's gender theory of hegemonic masculinity showed males being in dominating roles over females and often times are aggressors of violence against their partner (Afroza Anwary 2015). Through interpreting how images of intimate partner violence is depicted in cinema, I argue that we understand how ideas of hegemonic gender and culture is socially constructed and consumed in society. Researchers have found that woman were more often victims of abuse than males, Tolman and Raphael (2016) presented results that stated 34% to 65% of woman receiving welfare report to having experienced domestic abuse in their lifetime. Research also went on to report that 8% to 33% of woman experience some sort of relationship violence each year. This representation of reported violence showed that there are occurrence of violence taking place in the household, and that woman are feeling more compelled to report incidents and occurrences.

Depictions in thriller and drama genres can shape perceptions about intimate partner violence. In this research, I examined how images of hegemonic masculinity and femininity showed images that can reinforce societal norms about violence. Films have shown patterns of reinforcing social norms about how woman and men should act. By using this theoretical framework, I systematically gathered information that showed

images of intimate partner violence. Intimate partner violence is a growing concern that has only recently been discussed in large detail (Wheeler 2009). Roles that male and females play in relationships are important to understand due to the importance that our society places on them. Gender role of males and females are depicted completely opposite and by understanding how gender roles were depicted, I began to piece together how images of relationships in these five films showed gender differences that were reinforced in our society.

Gender theory of hegemonic masculinity was written by Connell (1987), a sociologist from Australia conducted research on masculine gender roles and societal norms. She described masculinity as depictions that people see in our society of males. Adeji (2016) quoted Connell (1987) assumption that, “hegemonic masculinity is a dominant ideal of masculinity centered by authority, physical toughness and strength” (Adjei 2016). Literature discussed how dominant acts play a role through intimate partner violence, as this is used to control other partner. Another way that our society also continues to filter dominance in hetero-sexual only couples is because, the concept of masculinity also refers to the idealized form of masculinity that subordinates woman, often excludes gay-men (Anwary 2015). Dominance discussed also resulted in emphasized femininity “patterns of femininity which is given most cultural and ideological support... patterns such as sociability... compliance... and sexual receptivity to men” (Connell 1987, 24). Power struggles in relationships can show intimate partner violence can often have these two concepts working in unison to cause tension and frustration. Hegemonic masculinity and emphasized femininity operate together in the images that are depicted in films that were chosen with more of an importance still being

placed on hegemonic masculinity (Connell 1987, 1990, 1995, 2001; Connell and Messerschmidt 2005; Messner 2002; Yancey Martin 1998). These two gender theories are important in understanding how social norms are impacted.

Understanding masculinity is important because this sociological theory allows research a better foundation of the type of information that is being received by audiences watching films that are dramas or thrillers (Wheeler 2009). Masculinity can be seen in all forms of media including, tv, magazines, ads, and films (Signorelli 2009). Depictions of males in films I chose showed characteristics of hegemonic masculine figure. Connell and Messerschmidt stated, “hegemony works in part through the production of exemplars of masculinity (e.g., professional sports stars), symbols that have authority despite the fact that most men and boys do not fully live up to them” (Connell and Messerschmidt 2005). Another interpretation of masculinity is an idealistic concept of what society intends for men to look like and act like. Much as artwork of renaissance period showed images of perfect male figure as being buff, muscular, handsome and tall, images of man are exaggerated and not normally found in most males.

Furthermore, Images of males displayed in films give viewers impression that all males achieve “the perfect man”. Movie production companies, such as Disney, have shown viewers through images in fairy tales, there is a certain image that has to be obtained to achieve this. In *Beauty and the Beast*, Gaston is tall-handsome, clean kempt, strong and is a white male (Signorielli 1997). In other Disney films such as *Pocahontas*, I viewed John Smith as fitting the role of a hegemonic man that is stoic and strong with courage and bravery, showing little to no fear but preserving through. Various scholars have argued that manhood isn’t just an ingrained trait, but rather is a prize that men often

struggle to obtain, called ubiquity. Males are said to go through rigorous tests of endurance, power, and skill (Gilmore 1990). In other cultures, such as that of Spanish word, “machismo” coined to examine how men must work towards obtaining this perfect image of a man (Donald 1992). Different cultures have different ways to show how gender is portrayed. Through the understanding of how cultural norms about masculinity formed, research can further study and examine pressures men face to conform to their gender roles..

In addition, hegemonic social structure of intimate relationships showed that there are certain social standards which can influence each person in relationships. Gender norms state that females should be viewed as being nurturing and soft in their approach towards conflict. Patterns of images state females tend to show them portrayed as being more nurturing, sensitive and emotional than their male counterpart. In media, hegemonic masculinity is reflected in many different forms, there are images of males which include: endurance, perseverance while having a clean- shaven look and having very successful careers. An image that is painted of masculinity will represent normative ideals in a society through expressions of what is masculine behaviors (Guanio- Uluru 2016). Images of hegemonic masculinity tend to exhibit very exaggerated features and actions, these images of men tend to show them working out, going to work, driving expensive vehicles, and suiting up in business professional attire in moments that are both appropriate and inappropriate social behaviors.

I argue that hegemonic masculinity and femininity work in unison, while helping to explain images and discourses seen that display intimate violence. “Gender relations also are constituted through nondiscursive practices, including wage labor, violence,

sexuality, domestic labor, and child care as well as through unreflective routinized actions” (Connell, 2005). The importance of looking at masculinity and gender relations can also be incorporated into one another with research which allows for a better understanding of how you can see and interpret imagery that depicts the criteria for hegemonic masculinity.

Purpose of Research

The purpose of this research was to analyze depictions contained in films over the last twenty years of intimate partner violence. I extracted the ways in which scenes broke down interactions amongst couples and how movie genres exhibited their actions. I will be looking at how scenes and discourses show intimate partner violence special attention was paid to how images have changed over the last twenty years. I looked at how images of love, romance, intimacy, violent acts, relationships and sexuality show intimate partner violence taking place.

Secondly, I examine at how gender roles influence perceptions about gender norms. Through, looking over patterns of how masculinity and dominance were depicted, and how the entertainment industry continues to perpetuate an acceptance of gender hierarchy. The contribution this research is valuable because there are limited studies available that analyzed and looked at several movies, most studies available were limited to a few films. This research study adds to this growing body of research.

III

METHODOLOGY

Qualitative researchers often use content analysis as a tool to analyze meaning of textual data or latent content (Esterberg 2002). Sociologists utilize qualitative methods to gather smaller samples of data, types of these data included: samples, interviews, articles, films to conduct systematic analysis to understand cultural representations in the media in greater depth and describe how images and discourses are depicted in films. Through the application of qualitative methodology researchers are able to make inferences from data and add to the development of theory. In addition, researchers have analyzed how films use depictions to display and tell stories about various social issues and concerns (Slocum 2000). One of the most important steps in qualitative research processes is it to apply the grounded theory approach to ensure all bias are omitted.

This study employed a systematic qualitative content analysis of thriller and drama films. I decided on five films to ensure I was able to give right amount of time to data and not get tied down with too many different discourses and themes. In order to get these films, I first looked for all films that had been categorized as films that had domestic violence. After I found films that pertained to domestic violence I then had to look at those films that had only intimate partner violence, versus the whole family unit being involved through actions of violence. I was able to narrow my search down to the five films I used. I looked at films that were popular and chose them. I wanted films that also had females listed as having a strong role and stance against the violence they were experiencing. I selected films that showed females standing up for themselves and films that didn't show murders due to intimate partner violence over the last twenty years. The

films selected for this study were: *Sleeping with the Enemy*, produced by 20th Century Fox (1991); romantic thriller, Brian Gibson's Drama *What's Love got to do with it*, produced by Touchstone Pictures (1993), Michael Apted's thriller/ drama *Enough*, Columbia Pictures (2002), Dough Liman's Crime Film/ Thriller *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, produced by 20th Century Fox (2005), and David Fincher's Drama *Gone Girl*, produced by Regency Enterprises and TSG Entertainment (2014).

Through analyzing data, patterns about intimate partner violence emerge from the data analysis process. I used a two-part qualitative method of research which I did so by analyzing the content in five films from the thriller and drama genre. I observed the films in their entirety and identified how scenes and discourses reflected intimate partner violence and how these images changed over the last twenty years. Through utilizing this method of research, I identified forms of intimate partner violence and created themes according to the theory hegemonic masculinity and femininity. This process entailed a process of watched and re-watched the movies while looking for themes and common occurrences of violence in scenes.

Next, I created graphs that showed images of violence and types of violence depicted over the last twenty years. The reason I created graphs to show types of violence, was to show the different types of violence that took place, as well as showing imagery through explaining types of violence shown. I watched and re-watched these films. I found patterns that showed gender roles were important in terms of what was socially acceptable behavior and mannerisms. I also chose two- fold research method because graphs alone couldn't describe the scope of social issue of intimate partner

violence. I decided that I would display scenes and images from each film to show how they met the criteria I was looking for.

Consistent themes emerged from the research I conducted. These themes included: relationships, violent acts, violent words, intimacy, sexuality and affection. For the purpose of my research, I defined relationships as two individuals that are in a monogamous commitment with one another (Frus 2011). The next theme I collected these data for romantic intimacy, which I defined as an affect and feeling of commitment one individual had towards another individual, accompanied by acts of self-disclosure from both individuals in relationships (Laurenceau, Barrett, and Pietromonaco 1998; Moss and Schwebel 1993; Prager 1989). Through gathering data on relationships and romantic intimacy I was able to find more consistent patterns in the films.

Depictions of hegemonic masculinity behavior was coded as: authority, physical toughness and strength (Adjei 2016). Through looking for patterns in these five movies, I began to find patterns of how depictions of male roles were reinforcing socially acceptable ways of depicting masculine character. I also collected data that showed how feminine roles were being depicted alongside with masculinity.

Research Questions

1. How are images of violent acts, romance, intimacy, relationships, and sexuality showing intimate partner violence portrayals in thriller and drama films in the last twenty years?
2. How do images and discourses in thriller and drama films analyzed reinforce hegemonic masculinity and femininity through the depictions of intimate partner violence?

Codes

After I watched the films I made decisions about what codes I would use and how I would gather and present the research data. I coded these data by looking at how the characters acted toward each other. I gathered data about instances that showed violent words, which included: times that the characters raised their voice and times that characters were acting confrontational with one another. The codes I used included: violent acts, romance, intimacy, relationships, sexuality and hegemonic masculinity to located instances throughout the scenes.

Table 1
Number of Times Violence Occurred

Movie Title	Times Event Occurred
<i>Sleeping with the Enemy</i>	22
<i>What's Love got to do with it</i>	24
<i>Enough</i>	29
<i>Mr. and Mrs. Smith</i>	43
<i>Gone Girl</i>	15

Table 1, titled Number of Times Violence Occurred, was conceptualized by discovering that violence was important to discuss and evaluate considering the intimate partner violence. I found it important to discuss because we are looking at violence in the relationship. I wanted to separate this from my other themes so that I could look solely at how many times we saw violent occurrence. Genres of thriller and drama historically generally have shown social issues in a serious fashion. Images of violence was conceptualized by looking at any time there was physical contact amongst the characters that wasn't warranted and often was very discomfoting for the person receiving the act.

In the film *Sleeping with the Enemy*, I saw twenty- two instances of violence, *What's Love Got to Do with It* had twenty- four, *Enough* had twenty-nine, *Mr. and Mrs.*

Smith had forty-three, and *Gone Girl* had fifteen (see Table 1). Through gathering of data, I found patterns of struggles in the relationship were written into the scripts. The number of times violence was shown, also depended on the story plot and what the writer was showing in the story. I found that instances of violence throughout years didn't have a consistent upward or downward trend. Therefore, I discussed how imagery was given instead.

Table 2
Types of Violence Presented

MOVIE TITLE	TYPES OF VIOLENCE
<i>Sleeping with the Enemy</i>	Slapping, mental abuse, controlling mannerisms, attacking, strangling, choking, hair pulling, shooting
<i>What's Love got to do with it</i>	Slapping, punching, kicking, pulling hair, tossing, attacking, yelling, cussing
<i>Enough</i>	Kicking, punching, hair pulling, strangling, mental abuse
<i>Mr. and Mrs. Smith</i>	Shooting, punching, kicking, hair pulling, strangling, choking
<i>Gone Girl</i>	Slapping, emotional abuse, punching, yelling

Types of violence I found included: kicking, punching, yelling, tossing, attacking, shooting, choking, hair pulling, and in a few of these stories I saw one partner shoot another to kill them (See Table 2). There were instances of emotional abuse as well, this included: occasions of conflict amongst the characters. Mental abuse shown was emotional rather than physical and through scenes and images there is a representation of a clear conflict amongst gender roles that characters are being pressured into conforming to.

Table 3

Representations of Intimate Partner Relations in the Films

Intimate Partner Violence Action	<i>Sleeping with the Enemy</i>	<i>What's Love Got to do with It</i>	<i>Enough</i>	<i>Mr. and Mrs. Smith</i>	<i>Gone Girl</i>	Total
Sexuality	5	7	3	12	6	33
Violent words/ demeanors	12	17	12	17	10	68
Violent Acts	22	24	29	43	15	133
Intimacy	17	13	12	22	37	101
Affection	12	18	9	12	14	65

Additionally, I observed the number of times sexuality, violent words/ demeanors, violent acts, intimacy and affection took place in scripts. The literature on intimate partner violence discussed how different interactions amongst partners could constitute the turmoil and conflict in the relationship (See Table 3).

Through these data collected I found: In *Sleeping with the Enemy*, there were five occasions of sexual acts, twelve of violent words/ demeanors, twenty-two of violent acts, seventeen discourses of emotional turmoil and disturbance, and twelve times affection could be seen. In *What's Love Got to do with It*, I saw seven sexual acts, seventeen violent words/ demeanor, twenty-four violent acts, thirteen emotional turmoil and disturbance and eighteen times affection was seen. In *Enough*, three occurrences of sexual acts, twelve violent words/ demeanors, twenty-nine violent acts, twelve emotional turmoil and disturbance, and nine times affection was shown. *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* showed us twelve sexual acts, seventeen violent words/ demeanors, forty-three violent acts, twenty-two instances of emotional turmoil and disturbance, and nine occurrences of

affection. The last film analyzed was *Gone Girl* which showed six sexual acts, ten violent words/ demeanors, fifteen violent acts, thirty-seven emotional turmoil and disturbance and fourteen instances of affection.

IV

RESULTS

From conducting this research, I found that there were images of love, romance, intimacy, relationships and sexuality that showed how intimate partner violence was portrayed in thriller and drama films over last twenty years. Another key finding, I explored was images and discourses in thriller and drama genres that reinforced hegemonic masculinity. Patterns of imagery continued to consistently show males as being strong authoritative figures in their relationships, while feminine roles showed patterns of submission and acceptance of violent behavior. However, the films showed many strong female roles as females showed that fighting back was the only way that they would be able to get out of violent situations they were facing.

Results of research reflected patterns of hegemonic masculinity and gender inequity in the following ways, which included looking at violent acts, romance, intimacy, relationships, and sexuality. I found patterns that men were portrayed as dominant characters while exhibiting high masculinity; and women were also portrayed as being very slender and good looking. In times of emotional tranquility, the woman acted very traditional. Female characters had their hair and makeup done lightly, always wearing tight outfits that would appear attractive to their male counterpart.

Hegemonic Masculinity and Femininity

Through applying the sociological theory of hegemonic masculinity and femininity I was able to find patterns of social norms about gender theories present in films. Roles of males in these movies displayed that over last twenty years, the stories continued to perpetuate certain stereotypes of the male including the males being strong and dominating.

Through the usage of imagery, the male roles, consistently showed very strong personalities. In *Sleeping with the Enemy*, Martin's male character showed a very powerful and influential figure who held a position of leadership and authority in his work life.

In *Gone Girl*, the scene shows Amy and Nick getting to know each other, Nick and Amy were explaining to each their backgrounds. Through the scene the dialogue stated:

Amy: "Oh so you write for a men's magazine. God does that make you an expert of being a man?"

Nick: "Uhh! No. It's you know.. what to wear.. what to drink.

Amy: How to bullshit?"

Nick: "Never, with you."

Amy: "Uhh huh!!"

Nick: "No I mean it."

Amy: "It's hard to believe you."

Nick: "Why?"

Amy: "Look at your chin."

Nick: "My chin?"

Amy: "(touches Nicks chin) Quite villainous."

The reason this is important to look at is because magazines tend to influence perceptions of men who read magazines. Nick wrote for a Men's magazine and telling the reader what they should wear and drink. Media sources are going to be outlets for men to gather insight as to how they should be acting.

Another image that I found in all the scripts was that there is a display of money, power and dominance exhibited by male figures. In *Enough*, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, *What's Love got to do with It*, and *Gone Girl* the main male character showed that they could display emotions for the actions that female counterpart were showing. Although, I saw emotions being displayed, I also saw a clear distinction between the men and woman in regard to the type of emotions that the five films showed. Through stalking, aggression and violence male asserts control of their relationships.

Affection

The first theme I collected data for was affection. I looked for instances characters showed a sign of affection towards the person they were romantically pursuing. Types of affection I found included: images of flowers, gifts, and other small items to show endearment to the partner. Another thing I looked at when collecting my data was how subtle signs of affections were shown that included: admiration of the partner, touching, caressing, hugging, and a display of admiration amongst the two individuals. Additional signs of affection also included: hugging, dancing, brushing their hand through the hair and smelling one another. Through the last twenty years types of affection signs shown in the five films stayed consistent, with little to no change in the way the characters showed affection towards each other.

An example of affection that I found was in the film *Enough*. In this story I saw the main characters Slim Hiller and Mitch Hiller. *Enough*, showed patterns of small signs of affection. The role that Slim, female lead, takes on is one of nurturing and taking care of Mitch and Gracie. Mitch's role took was more of a strong and powerful individual who wanted to have dominance in his relationship. A scene early in the film *Enough*, showed Slim and Mitch dancing at their wedding and also showed that they were truly in love there were images of romantic intimacy towards one another.

Sexuality

Another theme I collected data for was sexuality. Sexuality explored physical connections couples had with one another. Sexuality consisted of: kissing, groping, and having sexual intercourse. As I collected these data I saw that in all five films over the last twenty years showed couple engaging sexually. In *Enough*, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*,

Sleeping with the Enemy, *What's Love got to do with It* and *Gone Girl*, I found patterns of couples being sexually connected and exhibiting signs of sexuality and lust towards each other. Types of sexual acts I saw included: sexual and sensual interaction.

An example of sexuality found in the films, *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*. The story had a scene that showed two having sexual intercourse and being very attracted physically and emotionally. This movie also showed a reinforcement of hegemonic masculinity. John Smith is thin, white, wears business professional clothing, and had a very clean-shaven appearance. Jane Smith was displayed as having a sex appeal to her and clearly trying to conform to feminine expectations and social norms. The ways in which she attempted to conform to her gender role included: applying makeup, making sure she cooked dinner and cleaned the home and kept her hair well-kept and taken care of. Jane and John are shown making love all over the kitchen and downstairs of their home, while they are destroying everything in their home. The scene showed the couple was attracted to each other and there was an acceptance of violence as they continued to make love. Jane is shown running around in John's long white button and collared shirt as they continue to have sex.

Another example of sexuality was in *Sleeping with the Enemy*, when Martin and Laura Burney were shown making love. The scene began with him coming home and bearing gifts for Laura. The scene prior, showed acts of violence, as Martin beat Laura up and left her laying in the middle of the floor after he had kicked her many times. After having beat her up and attempted to assert his dominance and control over her he had left the house. When Martin came home he brought Laura a piece of lingerie that was bright red and red roses, which are used to symbolize romance and love. Connell's theory of

hegemonic masculinity can be applied to the interaction that Martin and Laura are having because this scene shows power that he has over her. The imagery showed a moment where she was visibly upset and still gives in to her gendered role to satisfy him sexually.

Violent Words/ Demeanor

The next theme I looked for and collected data on was violent words/ demeanors shown in the stories. The way in which I did this was look for patterns and signs of consisted of: subtle queues between two partners which shows male acting very stern, reinforcing hegemonic masculinity, while the female was more soft-spoken and willing to empathize with the male. Violent words and demeanors toward the partner were shown in all five films over the last twenty years. The patterns of this behavior included: various words and actions both through voice and body language that the partner showed. A sample of the words used included: fucking, bitch, kill, threatening, threaten, fear, violent, violence, harm, nothing can keep me away.

In *Enough*, the dialogue for the violent words included:

Mitch: "Listen to me, bitch. If you value your children, don't call anybody. It's over okay? It's all over (He throws the phone on the couch and moves back toward Slim, lamp clenched tight into his fist)."

The word bitch, and the threat gave portrayed signs of violent demeanor towards his partner. Another example included in *Sleeping with the Enemy*, when Martin is talking to Laura about the conflict and about how he entered her new home as an intruder.

Martin: "I know your every thought, Laura. You're wondering if they can protect you."

"Who knows?"

"They may issue an order instructing me to stay away from own wife."

"Nothing can keep me away."

"I love you, Laura."

"I can't live without you."

"And I won't let you live without me."

In that scene, images showed Laura holding a gun shaking moving towards Martin. His demeanor and words inflict a tone of violence towards Laura. Behaviors changed only slightly over time in the communication techniques used by characters. The films from the 1990s showed more body language being used, while the films in 2000s showed us more implied emotional turmoil and less interactions that were negative amongst the partners.

Another example of violent words/ demeanors was seen in: *What's Love Got to Do with It*, I saw that Tina is forced to go on stage after falling ill, and the imagery showed her singing her heart out, even though she had just told Ike that she was feeling ill and that she didn't think she would be able to put on a good show. Ike, showing a strong male personality through the depiction of hegemonic masculinity, indicated no remorse or understanding for Tina but rather told her she was ruining his mood on one of the biggest nights of his career.

Another example of violent demeanors I found patterns of was in the film, *Sleeping with the Enemy*, which showed images of emotional turmoil in Laura and Martin's marriage. This story showed the married couple Laura and Martin relationship. The movie started by showing Laura trying to relax and find serenity in her stay at home wife. There is a conversation between Martin and Laura that shows an image of their social reinforcing of hegemonic masculinity through their conversation.

Martin: "You sneaked off."

Laura: "I didn't sneak off"

Martin: "Need I remind you how I work?"

Laura: "No, you reminded me enough the night I came back."

Martin: "You're not suggesting I enjoy that.."

Laura: "Oh, god no! That would make you a monster."

Martin: "If I didn't know you better you are deliberately invoking a quarrel, so you would be unable to sail tonight. Now this is a useful

discussion but one best postponed until after our sail.” (1991:3:18:43) Through the conversation that Martin and Laura patterns of turmoil were displayed, while he asserted his dominance, and let Laura know that if she went against his wishes there would be consequences. In the story we find out that she already tried to leave him, but he had found her, and she ended up coming back home. So, when he says, “Need I remind you of how I work?” He was referencing the way he treated her in that time after she came back home. The script cannot show you is the imagery that were around them while having this discussion. The characters were sitting outside on a very nice day and he is very cleanly dressed and shaven.

Violent Acts

The next theme I collected data for was how violent acts were depicted in the films. Violent acts that I collected data for included: slapping, kicking, strangling, and physical dominance by the males. I took acts of violence and dissected them amongst every film until I had counted each time the acts had taken place. These data showed that there were many occasions of violent acts, with both female and male engaging in violence against one another.

Another example of violent acts in the films was seen in *Gone Girl*. Characters Amy and Nick Dunne had marital troubles, yet the story is written from the voice of Amy. Therefore, many times the plot built by us hearing her interpretations of the events rather than Nick’s. This limited the ability for me to have a true scope of the full relationship because I was only getting one side of the story.

There were instances of violence that took place, as the character conflict began to form. The scene showed us.

Amy: “Hey I been thinking something positive. Maybe it’s time!”

Nick: (hands up angrily) “Now is literally the worst time.”
 Amy: “Well it will be a new start for us and for me I would have a real purpose here.”
 Nick: “A child is not a hobby.”
 Amy: “Not a hobby... an inspiration.”
 Nick: “We could have had this fight four hours ago (starts walking downstairs). I’m late!”
 Amy: (follows down the stairs) “I didn’t know it was going to be a fight.”
 Nick: “You really want to be the couple that has a baby to save their marriage?”
 Amy: “Save?!”
 Nick: “I.. reboot, retool, rekindle... whatever.”
 Amy: (walking toward Nick down the stairs) “And you’re going to walk out the door now?”
 Nick: (looks at door) “Ya, I am.”
 Amy: “You fucking coward. We can’t go on like this.”
 Nick and Amy are beginning to have a confrontation.
 Nick: “Oh .. really?”
 Amy: “I won’t.”
 Nick: “You won’t? Why this is not good enough for you?”
 Amy: (knocks Nick’s chest with both hands) “It’s not even close.”
 Nick: (grabs Amy and throws her down, towards stair banister)
 Amy: “What scared me wasn’t that he pushed me. What scared me was how much he wanted to hurt me more. What scared me is I finally realized I’m frightened of my own husband.”

The depiction of the physical turmoil shown in the film *Gone Girl*, displayed patterns of strength and weakness in the relationships. Amy tried to get Nick to stay, patterns of frustration and violence emerged. Through Amy stating, “What scared me wasn’t that he pushed me. What scared me was how much he wanted to hurt me more...” This scene of intimate partner violence showed depictions to the viewer of what the physical turmoil was that was happening in their marriage.

In the film *Sleeping with the Enemy*, Martin Burney, the husband, slapped and beat Julia Robert’s character Laura Burney and made her feel trapped by controlling the way that she would organize simple items such as the pantry. A scene that was slightly alarming and showed the stressors of gender roles, was a scene that showed her re-organizing and meticulously placing labels of cans in a certain fashion, as well as

ensuring that she approached her husband in just a way as to not disturb the order that they had created in the relationship. Through the stress of this relationship I saw a very unhappy woman that plotted her own demise as a way out of her relationship. This film depicted intimate partner violence through sexual encounters, violent acts towards each other and controlling mannerisms. At the end of this film, the image showed her killing her ex-husband as a sign of self- defense.

Intimacy

The last theme I gathered data for was intimacy. Through the past twenty years the images of emotional turmoil and disturbance used symbols to display imagery that showed turmoil. The images in the 1991 film *Sleeping with the Enemy*, showed the viewers a strong sign of physical violence with seventeen occurrences of emotional turmoil transpiring. As I continued to look for patterns through the years I saw a slight decrease in emotional turmoil with *What's Love Got to Do with It*, had thirteen occurrences. The films showed an increase of emotional turmoil from years between 2005- 2014. The imagery presented between 2005-2014 was different from what was seen in the 1990's.

Another example of Intimacy is in Film directed by David Fincher, *Gone Girl*, which displayed a lead female character, Amy Dunne. She was shown as being emotionally unstable and distressed. The film started off with Amy being compassionate, caring and happy but the film shortly takes a turn. The interactions that Amy and Nick have with one another show that there is a distance and a rift between them. Prior to being a housewife Amy was a successful publisher who came from an upper-class family. In the scene she is shown as feeling down and depressed looking. Prior to getting married

Amy was embracing her femininity and making a name for herself. The film reinforced hegemonic masculinity by showing a well-kept and thin looking handsome male as the main character who throughout has woman still attempting to swoon over him.:

DISCUSSION

Previous research has shown images can shape perceptions individuals have about social issues. Signorelli (1997) discussed how images from Disney films shape how viewers looked at the social norms of men and woman. Attention was paid by other research such as the way that images were interpreted and represented. Film genres such as thriller and drama tended to show images in an exaggerated manner, especially when it came to societal issues (Constanza del Rio Alvaro 2004). Intimate partner violence is displayed in the films that I watched in such a way that doesn't leave any of the details to the imagination.

Through research that evaluated movies to determine how the images of love, romance, intimacy, relationship and sexuality showed intimate partner violence. I observed some change in the types of images that were shown over the last twenty years. The images in the films were consistent showing love, romance, intimacy, and sexuality over the last twenty years. The patterns of behaviors in the stories, tended to show have more inferences of woman exploring their sexuality. In the film *Mr. and Mrs. Smith*, I saw Mrs. Smith in clothing that consisted of fishnet hose, leather coats, and high heels, while being very clean kempt but still showing a strong confidence in her sexuality. While the earlier films showed the woman in more "conservative" fashions.

I also looked for patterns of hegemonic masculinity and feminine depictions to gather an understanding of how these films reinforced social norms about gender. The data showed that gender norm data was important to contribute to further research and a further understanding of how gender norms influence films. Through the images and

discourses in films over the last twenty years I conveyed depictions of patterns of consistency for unacceptance of the violence, and many scripts and scenes showed one partner killing the other partner. As I conducted my research I also realized that a lot of research done outside of the discipline of Sociology. The reason why I found that important sociologists to also look at intimate partner violence in films is to understand how gender roles impact relationships. Another reason it is important for Sociologists to look at how images portray intimate partner violence, is to understand what messages and perceptions people can have after watching the movies.

In other disciplines, researchers have discovered correlations that show how perceptions about romance, can be shaped through the movies that viewers watch. Through gathering more research on intimate partner violence, we can better understand and gain more knowledge to people who can implement social justice policy for victims who may not have the means to do so themselves. The significance of conducting this type of research is that it will add to the research on intimate partner violence in sociology by analyzing data that are known to have scenes and discourses that have not been previously analyzed together. Another important contribution that my research can make is to give a better understanding of how thriller/drama scripts were written. The reason this is important is because these genres tend to show violence and sadness in a way that genres like action and comedy won't. The film industry constantly changes, and I saw that over twenty years the imagery and depictions of the themes changed. *Gone Girl* and *Mr. and Mrs. Smith* both films from the 2000s. I showed patterns of changes towards emotional disturbances and turmoil. These movies both displayed patterns of

emotional turmoil through deception and lies. The patterns in both showed intimate partner violence adding to the disturbances shown.

The ever-evolving writing of scripts in Hollywood lead to an important understanding of how scripts are showing societal issues that involve violence. There will be a need to consider same sex couples in the future and we may see that they are going to be shown in films that have intimate partner violence written into the script. It is important to understand that there are all type of relationship dynamics and the films that I chose didn't show inter-racial couples, which is another set of research that can be conducted to see how these couples are being impacted by societal norms.

Future Research Possibilities

The importance of being able to understand how stories influence and impact societal norms and the attitudes that adults have about intimate partner violence and what it means. The scenes and discourses that I collected in data I collected represents a time were changes to the gender structure were taking place in the United States and all over the world. Reform was beginning to take precedent for violence in the household and the concept of Intimate Partner violence emerged.

Limitations of Study

My research is limited with the type of data sample that was collected due to the genres I used being drama and thriller, as well as only looking at the last twenty years, and can't be used to imply that individuals' perceptions will be impacted towards the social issue of intimate partner violence by just looking at how they are depicted. Films cannot be attributed to be the cause of violence and cannot be implied to have an impact on one's decision to be violent. The gender theory of hegemonic masculinity cannot be

assumed in all films as there are other genres that may or may not show an exaggerated version of this. The theory cannot be applied to all genres watched because we didn't do any research on other genres. The genres that I have selected, drama and thrillers, are closely defined and are written in such a way as to show and display serious social issues and concerns, but once again not all thrillers and dramas are going to exhibit these types of images.

Another limitation of my study is that the depictions only show heterosexual spousal or partner abuse and there's no information or data that I used that showed same sex- couples or the struggles that are experienced in non-heterosexual relationships. In order to gain a better insight into that type of relationship, the research would need to analyze and look at movies that also had gay couples to gather a better understanding of how intimate partner violence is displayed.

APPENDIX A

List of Films

Movie Title	Producer	Director	Year
Sleeping with the Enemy	20 th Century Fox	Joseph Ruben	1991
What's Love got to do with it	Touchstone Pictures	Brian Gibson	1993
Enough	Columbia Pictures	Michael Apted	2002
Mr. and Mrs. Smith	20 th Century Fox	Doug Liman	2005
Gone Girl	Regency Enterprises/ TSG Entertainment	David Fincher	2014

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