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**Domestic Violence in Mass Media: An Analysis of Messages, Images,
& Meanings in Motion Pictures**

by

Renee Liana Delcambre

**Thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree**

of

DEPARTMENTAL HONORS

in

**Communication Studies
in the Department of Languages, Philosophy, and Communication Studies**

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Abstract

The overarching goal of this research was to discover the framing strategies employed within depictions of domestic abuse and/or violence through mass media outlets and what potential impact that can have on the audience, particularly in assigning meaning to the topic. Specifically, this research analyzed the choices made in *how* domestic abuse/violence is framed within four popular motion pictures and the subsequent messages and meanings communicated. Findings from this qualitative analysis reveal common depictions of fictional victims being young, beautiful, naïve, and fully responsible for ending the abuse. In contrast, fictional abusers are depicted as young, handsome, wealthy and/or in a position of authority, with each being provided a pathological reason for their behavior. Finally, the depicted abuse in each film followed a similar path of predictable behavior from psychological manipulation and abuse to physical harm. The research method used in this analysis is derived from rhetorical criticism which examines communication symbols within an object or subject to reveal insights that ideally will aid in understanding and improving human communication. Media have the ability to impact an audience's construction of serious social topics and issues. That makes this type of analysis vital in revealing communication strategies used by film producers as they depict partner abuse and the unavoidable, subsequent effects it has on viewers, such as in the formation of cultural beliefs and attitudes. Finally, analyzing the communication of a serious, deviant practice like domestic abuse, depicted in popular films, can assist in directing needed attention to a major social issue and provide readers the opportunity to "see" and discuss what is normally hidden and left unspoken within most cultures.

Keywords: Domestic Violence, Intimate Partner Abuse, Mass Media, Motion Pictures, Qualitative Method, Rhetorical Criticism, Framing Strategies

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It's likely that we all know someone who has been a victim of domestic violence or is currently involved in an abusive relationship. If this seems unrealistic or impossible, take a look at the most recent statistics wherein we learn that "More than 1 in 3 women (35.6%) and more than 1 in 4 men (28.5%) in the United States have experienced rape, physical violence, and/or stalking by an intimate partner in their lifetime" (Black et al., 2011, p. 2). One troubling aspect of this statistic is that most initial victimizations occur before the age of 25 (Black et al., 2011). Furthermore, this data only reveals the numbers of those who were willing to report this type of crime on the survey. The United States Department of Justice supports this hesitancy of victims to report domestic violence by claiming that nearly half of all domestic violence crimes never get reported to the authorities (Durose et al., 2005).

These staggering figures reveal the ugly truth that domestic violence is still prevalent within our society. Sadly, at this very moment, many friends or family members are potentially experiencing heinous acts of abuse and violence. Gaining an understanding of this behavior can help us identify those who are vulnerable or in danger and possibly help prevent our own victimization. The question is, how do we become informed about such a sensitive and taboo subject? Many people turn to the internet, newspapers, magazine articles, and/or television to provide vital information. That reliance on mass media exhibits a level of trust and expectation for truth.

Mass media, in turn, have a curious and powerful position of influence within our culture, making them a critical component in creating, altering, and/or mimicking current ideologies within society. According to Dakroury (2014), "media and culture [are] interconnected," influencing "cultural perceptions and practices of both those who produce and consume them" (p. 1). In other words, social ideologies and behaviors are influenced by the narratives and

discourses emitted from mass media. Typically, the primary function of mass media is to inform and/or entertain and is inevitably intertwined with the necessary goal for financial success. Those who create fictional stories for the widescreen find themselves in the unenviable position of trying to create an artistic story that will appeal to vast audiences and make a significant profit. It is a risky proposition and one seemingly worth taking as is evidenced when looking at the number of successful films each year. In fact, the movie industry's reported gross revenue in 2014 (United States and Canada) reached \$10.4 billion (*Theatrical market*, 2015). Not surprisingly, young people aged 12-24 represented the majority of moviegoers, with 57% of all viewers being female- a relevant fact when looking at the content of films such as those included in this analysis (*Theatrical market*, 2015).

Some films try to incorporate life-like situations or plots into their stories and in doing so, producers can find themselves entering into areas that may be controversial and/or uncomfortable for viewers. One of these situations involves the topic of abuse within intimate, adult relationships. This sensitive subject requires a careful approach by producers as they strive to depict and incorporate realistic elements or images of domestic abuse or violence into the narrative without causing extreme or undue distress to the audience or film critics. If the "invisible line" of appropriate representation is crossed, it could result in negative reviews and the film being avoided by moviegoers. This effort to frame the story is an intentional, albeit subtle, technique meant to lead an audience's understanding in a certain direction (McManus, 2012).

The term "domestic abuse" is typically used to reference behavior from an intimate partner or loved one that is emotionally or psychologically harmful to the victim. These actions are often referred to as, nonviolent abuse (*Domestic violence*, 2012). In contrast, the term "domestic

violence” is behavior from a partner or loved one that is intended to physically harm, damage, or kill and is considered a criminal act (*Domestic violence*, 2012). This distinction is important when considering the type of abuse someone has endured. Patterns of abuse are well-documented and reveal that controlling behaviors usually begin slowly and over time escalate from verbal and/or emotional abuse to physical violence (*Recognizing domestic partner abuse*, 2006; *What is domestic violence*, n.d.). These terms, definitions, and patterns for abuse will be applied to the analysis in this paper. Further, domestic abuse and violence will be examined within the context of mass media, taking a closer look at the framing of this personal and social issue within four popular motion pictures. The potential messages and meanings communicated (intentional or not) are included within this paper to further support the analysis.

The first section will examine the findings from an extensive literature review which highlights a few predominant framing techniques used within mass media. Following that section will be an explanation of the chosen method used to analyze the selected artifacts. The third section will be an introduction to the artifacts including a short synopsis of each film. The findings from my analysis will be the fourth section, which delves into the construction and framing of the fictional victims, abusers, and abuse itself. The paper will conclude with a summation and include insight into the contribution this analysis provides to the area of Communication Studies.

Literature Review

This portion of the paper was prompted by my own research inquiry into discovering the role mass media plays in framing domestic violence. Framing an idea or topic is a strategic process by which the intended meaning or message is sometimes deliberately constructed and carefully presented. This tactic for relaying information can produce positive or negative results,

but it always works to present a decided view while excluding other details that may be important. Exposing how this sensitive social problem is framed can help researchers to identify a possible source for current cultural ideologies surrounding abuse. This review is a synthesis of current research published in journal articles which delved into the framing efforts predominately used in television programs, feature films, documentaries and news reporting. This review will begin by discussing the somewhat conflicting roles that mass media play in society. Following that will be the revelation of three predominate and universal framing themes used in portraying domestic violence in mass media, which are: (1) patriarchal hegemony, (2) individualizing the problem, and (3) assigning blame to women. This review will work as a foundation for the subsequent analysis of mass media representations of violence against women by an intimate partner as depicted in motion pictures.

Mass Media

Mass media is the primary means for disseminating cultural information to broad audiences and is capable of doing so at a rapid pace. Its choice in what topics deserve attention, which person or which entity to interview and how to present information places media in a powerful position (Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006). Media representations of social issues tend to rely more on dominant perspectives while other perspectives may be completely ignored, which means a person could seek out multiple sources and only get a limited view of the issue (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007). This selective process leads to the concept of framing effects, which occurs when a message, whether delivered by words or images, suggests a “particular meaning or interpretation of an issue,” which can introduce a new belief or reinforce established ideas (Tewksbury & Scheufele, 2009). As a result, media has the ability to impact an audience’s construction of these issues even when it is only attempting to mimic “reality” through the use of

entertainment channels. One unique characteristic of mass media is its offering of content as a source as well as a mirror or manifestation of popular culture (Bullock, 2008). This multifaceted setting provides a realm wherein people can interpret messages, assign meaning(s), and make some sense of their own experiences and that of others within society. In this regard, society is heavily influenced by media in the formation of cultural beliefs, attitudes, and ideas (Flood, 2009).

It's important to note that mass media is the most frequently used resource for gathering information on socially important issues (Berns, 2001). The way an issue or topic is presented by mass media can play a role in shaping the way people think and act (Scheufele & Tewksbury, 2007). Therefore, representations of sensitive issues like domestic violence, are critical for examination. Depictions of domestic violence can influence how the public view appropriate and acceptable relations between men and women (Malamuth & Briere, 1986). Some critics have already raised serious concerns over media portraying violence against women as a form of entertainment and, to some degree, normalizing it as just a part of the way society works (Convenor & Weaver, 2003). Another concern for critics is the influence media representations work to formulate social beliefs regarding the seriousness of violence against women, dictating who or what is to blame, and how such problems should be addressed (Nettleton, 2011). Mass media serves two conflicting roles, that of providing audiences with both fact and fiction (Wheeler, 2009). This becomes extremely important when looking at representations of domestic violence.

Research has unveiled the somewhat conflicting motivations for mass media- gaining and entertaining audiences, providing useful, relevant information (in the form of news, documentaries, etc.), all the while making a profit (Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006). This

conflict can sometimes influence the presentation of material, especially when it contains a significant social problem like abuse. That influence can be perceived through the framing of topics. According to Bullock (2008), media frames operate by providing the viewer with a selected interpretation of an event or issue by giving emphasis to some elements and not to others. Often, discourse surrounding domestic violence is presented in a simple, less confusing frame which helps the audience categorize the event, yet it does not delve into the complexities of a lived experience (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007). One way this is accomplished in film and television is by the use of formula stories which create “stock” victims (Berns & Schweingruber, 2007). These efforts keep the story line and “victim” predictable; allowing the audience to view what is normally hidden and witness a justified happy ending.

Patriarchal Hegemony

The United States can be considered a patriarchal society since many of the controlling systems like law enforcement, court systems, and politics are male dominated. These entities, though seemingly less sexist than in previous years, still contribute to the ideology of subjugating women. This gendered power structure, especially the system of law and order, mainly serves and supports the patriarchal elements of society (Bullock, 2007). Mass media also contributes to this ideology by reframing domestic violence: (1) as human violence by depicting men as equal victims; (2) as having pathologies that explain (or excuse) male violence; (3) as making light of physical violence perpetuated by men through humor and sarcasm; and (4) by focusing attention on the female victim, thus deflecting attention away from the man and removing the potential for the perpetrator(s) to accept responsibility for the violence (Berns, 2001; Consalvo, 1998; Nettleton, 2011; Wheeler, 2009).

As Berns (2001) noted in her research, degendering the problem (of domestic violence) and calling it “human violence” works to undermine the role of gender and power in abuse. This type of framing obscures men’s responsibility for their acts of violence, reinforcing and maintaining the patriarchal status quo (Berns, 2001 & Nettleton, 2011). Pathological explanations for domestic violence can be found in all areas of mass media. Newspaper articles, documentaries, television and movies tend to offer palatable reasons for abuse, such as alcohol, drugs, poverty, irrationality, the volatile nature of relationships, or that he was justified (Consalvo, 1998; Convenor & Weaver, 2003; Wheeler, 2009). Making light of domestic violence, as discovered by Nettleton (2011), is a tactic found most often in articles published in men’s magazines. Common are articles that have a dismissive tone, or only mention abuse in passing, relate it to less significant problems such as comparing it to a sports penalty, and professing that domestic violence statistics are exaggerated (Nettleton, 2011). Finally, research has concluded mass media has a propensity for focusing attention on the female victim rather than the perpetrator (Berns, 2001 & Wheeler, 2009). Narratives that highlight the victim’s story deflect attention and responsibility away from the abuser and society at large. All of these framing efforts indirectly support patriarchal hegemony within mass media and society as a whole.

Individualizing the Problem

In portraying an actual, isolated incidence or by creating a fictional example of domestic violence, mass media shifts the responsibility for the abuse and for the solution from society to the individual (Palazzolo & Roberto, 2011). According to research, reporters of such crime often focus on the sensational, like a tragic love story gone wrong, which narratives will be framed as an isolated and individual incident, rather than as a social problem (Ryan, Anastario, &

DaCunha, 2006). Other depictions (fiction or nonfiction) typically and inaccurately portray domestic violence as a woman's private, individual problem, which leaves little room for approaching the wider and greater social or cultural questions regarding abuse (Gillespie, Richards, Givens, & Smith 2013; Park & Gordon, 2005; Wheeler, 2009). The focus in these (re)presentations leads the viewer to believe that the violence stems from personal dysfunction(s) and/or a strained relationship, leaving out concerns over the criminality as well as the exertion and abuse of male power (Convenor & Weaver, 2003). Nettleton (2011) revealed that media coverage of high profile cases, such as abuse incidents involving sports figures or other celebrities, depicts the actions of a few troubled men while ignoring the larger problem. As Wheeler (2009) points out in his research, portraying abuse as an individualized problem reassures the audience since they are not a part of the problem nor do they have any responsibility for a solution. As a side effect, domestic violence in the media tends to be portrayed as being easily solvable, which ignores the complex circumstances of abuse (Consalvo, 1998 & Convenor & Weaver, 2003). This then poses the need for individualized solutions to what is actually a social and political problem (Columpar, 2007).

Assigning Blame to Women

Mass media not only portray domestic violence as an individual problem, they typically present it as the *victim's* problem and that she is also responsible for solving it (Wheeler, 2009). Berns (2001) refers to this abnormality as "gendering the blame," wherein domestic violence is reframed in order to side-step discussions about the violence perpetrated by men and assign the responsibility for such acts upon female victims. As highlighted by several researchers, women are held accountable for their status as a victim, for ending the abuse, and for advocating for change (Berns, 2001; Consalvo, 1998; Wheeler, 2009). Looking closer at this

phenomenon within women's magazines, Nettleton (2011) unveiled the blame frame, which makes the victim responsible for avoiding violent men, preventing abuse, helping others leave dangerous situations, knowing how the legal system works, knowing where to find help (like shelter locations), and being responsible for leaving home after abuse begins. The depth of such a responsibility leaves the woman absorbing all the financial consequences, disrupting her local ties in order to flee, and ensuring her own protection, since leaving is known to increase the risk of violence and even death (Nettleton, 2011). Newspaper accounts are hardly better in their portrayals, insinuating that victims are responsible for their fate (possibly due to a masochistic tendency), that she provoked the attack, or that she simply failed to leave before it got so bad (Ryan, Anastario, & DaCunha, 2006). Police statements either made in reality television programming or as a source in newspaper articles further perpetuate victim blaming by pointing out that had the woman taken preventative action, such as leaving or filing charges, she would not have experienced such abuse (Consalvo, 1998; & Convenor & Weaver, 2003). As if being responsible for their own safety weren't enough, women are more often held responsible for the safety of children who are present in the home (Convenor & Weaver, 2003 & Wheeler, 2009). Whether they stay or leave, women are solely responsible for their children, placing the burden of family safety squarely on the victim's shoulders. Women are blamed for their own abuse, expected to end the violence, and heavily scrutinized for their choices while very few in media address the responsibility of men who batter and abuse.

Literature Review Summary

As discussed above, mass media play an influential role in the establishment and characterization of social issues. Media producers choose how to depict serious events like domestic violence through the use of fact or fiction. They can attempt to entertain, providing

simple plots, formula stories, and “stock” victims in order to efficiently tell a story and resolve it within the length of a television show or feature film. Conversely, fact-based stories printed in newspapers and magazines still have the option of focusing on the issue as a societal problem or as an isolated incident. All media depictions utilize framing techniques to focus the audience’s attention on a particular theme or explanation. Three frames discussed and delivered by previous research include: (1) patriarchal hegemony; (2) individualizing the problem; and (3) assigning blame to women. As detailed in this literature review each framing tactic contributes to a social understanding of domestic violence. Patriarchal hegemony relieves male perpetrators from blame, obscures the role of gender and power, and supports pathological explanations for the abuse. As media individuate the problem, society is reassured and allowed to remain silent. Focusing on sensational, seemingly unusual stories of abuse, media indirectly deflect attention away from domestic violence being a social disorder. Finally, by assigning blame to female victims, the media represent abuse as a woman’s problem. She must avoid abuse, prevent abuse, protect herself and her children, and should she leave, she will be responsible for reconstructing her life. The totality of the situation falls on the victim, leaving an already battered woman further beaten by mass media.

My study is intended to extend this foundation of research by looking at the framing efforts within the motion picture medium. It is an analysis of the depicted domestic abuse and violence in films and how the subsequent messages may impact the understanding of this harmful behavior within individuals and society at large.

The Method

According to Sonja Foss (2009), rhetorical criticism is a research method which allows for the analysis and explanation of communication symbols with the designed purpose of

“understanding rhetorical processes” (p. 6). It is this process of examining communication symbols that brings forward the potential for revealing new insights within a chosen artifact (an object or subject of study) or selection of multiple artifacts. Beyond just looking at the unique features of an artifact, rhetorical critics seek to discover how the communicated message(s) of the object or subject of study works to provide a better understanding of the world (Foss, 2009). Finally, Foss (2009) reminds that for researchers, rhetorical criticism is intended to be a tool used in improving human communication skills.

Rhetorical criticism affords numerous methods for analysis and depending on the artifact chosen, a critic may choose a method with specific guidelines and processes or a method with fewer formal boundaries. The method chosen for this paper is called generative criticism, which is aptly named due to the analysis process. This method allows the critic to generate his/her own “units of analysis” which are derived from discovering what is unique, most interesting, and significant about an artifact (Foss, 2009, p. 387). Most often, this method is employed when the critic comes across an artifact that spurs interest, ideas, and/or fuels questions. The artifact or multiple artifacts become the subject of analysis and the critic can then determine the best process and criteria for examination.

The artifacts chosen for this analysis were prompted initially by my curiosity with depictions of domestic violence within films, especially major motion pictures produced in the United States. Later, as I sifted through countless movies dating back to the 1980s, I realized my curiosity also revolved around the subsequent messages received by audiences and how that influenced their understanding of intimate partner abuse. Specifically, I wanted to investigate how these films depicted domestic abuse/violence- namely, what framing techniques were used

to characterize the victims, the abusers, and the abuse itself and how the messages from those narratives have the potential to influence the values, morals, and beliefs of an audience.

In selecting artifacts, the decision was made to focus on feature films that ideally met all of the following criteria: (1) presented thematic elements of partner abuse which was either implied or depicted; (2) used a cast of well-known actors which I felt would lend some credibility to the film; (3) a high level of popularity based on box office sales and/or media coverage of the film and (4) must have been released to theatres within the past ten years to allow for a more current look into the cultural relevance and/or potential for social impact. Films were favored over any other medium because of the length of time an audience will spend getting to know the characters and becoming engrossed in the plot. This enables viewers an opportunity to emotionally relate to or connect with characters and identify with the narrative, giving it the best potential, over something like a television episode, of influencing the viewer.

Once the artifacts were selected, I began by analyzing each film, looking for points of intensity or aspects that seemed relevant, important, and memorable. Next, I transcribed necessary portions of the films and coded them for commonalities. I looked specifically for frequency and types of abuse within scene events, and/or patterns within the scenes and noted whether they were visual or spoken. Within this process I developed my own explanatory schema for which the points of interest naturally aligned. The analysis schema is delivered through three main sections; (1) Fictional Victims; (2) Fictional Abusers; and (3) Fictional Abuse. The framing techniques discovered within the artifacts work to explain the primary messages about the identity and qualities of a fictional victim, the key role of the fictional abuser, and the function of abuse within the narrative. This schema also highlights the narrow view of domestic violence due to the chosen framing strategies employed in these films.

The Artifacts

As mentioned above, the artifacts chosen had to meet most or all of the preset criteria. The primary requirements involved thematic elements of partner abuse, well-known actors, popularity based on box office sales, and release to theatres within the past ten years. The following paragraphs will give a short introduction and summary of each film selected.

The first film chosen for analysis is titled Safe Haven (Bowen, Godfrey, Kavanaugh, & Tooley, 2013)¹, which, according to the International Movie Database (IMDb), was released in February 2013. It was based on the novel of the same title by Nicholas Sparks. Starring in the primary roles were Julianne Hough of Dancing with the Stars (Barkan, 2006-2015) fame and Josh Duhamel who starred in the Transformers trilogy (Bay, Goldner, Spielberg, & Vahradian, 2007-2014) as well as numerous television shows. According to IMDb, the total gross earnings for this film exceeded \$71 million.

The second artifact is a film that was released in the United States on December 3, 2010, and is titled, All Good Things (Papandrea, 2010). The film was based on the real-life events surrounding the still unsolved disappearance of a young woman who had married into a very wealthy and influential New York family. The two main characters are David Marks, played by Ryan Gosling, and Katie Marks, played by Kirsten Dunst. Gosling has over 40 actor credits to his name and Kirsten Dunst has been acting for many years, starring in numerous roles. According to IMDb, this film grossed over a half million dollars. While it did not reach the gross income status of the other films, it did meet the other selection criteria which made it a good candidate for analysis.

¹ Due to the high frequency of the listing of film titles within the body of this work, subsequent entries will be referenced without the in-text citation.

Third to be included in this analysis is the much publicized motion picture titled Fifty Shades of Grey (Brunetti, De Luca, James, & Schlessel, 2015). This film followed the explosive popularity of the novel with the same title. The primary character is Ana, played by Dakota Johnson, who is the daughter of Melanie Griffith and Don Johnson. The character of Christian Grey was played by Jamie Dornan, who has been in a few films and television shows. As anticipated and recorded on IMDb, this film racked up over \$166 million in the U.S. alone.

Finally, the fourth film chosen for analysis is Temptation: Confessions of a Marriage Counselor (Aren & Hall, 2013), hereafter referred to as Temptation. The film was released in March 2013. The cast is led by Jurnee Smollett-Bell who plays Judith, a marriage counselor and the eventual victim. Opposite her is the abusive Harley, played by Robbie Jones. Both actors have been involved in numerous roles in film and television. As listed on IMDb, gross sales in the U.S. reached nearly \$52 million making over \$30 million in profit.

The Analysis

Each one of the artifacts is unique in story line and end product, yet there are numerous similarities among them when it comes to the framing of characters and the depicted abuse. For these films, the victims are young women who are beautiful, and somewhat ignorant and naive. Each female character makes changes and engages in activities that she would not normally do in order to please the abuser. Finally, all but one of the women must take action to make the abuse stop and prevent dangerous encounters with the abuser in the future.

The abusers in each film are handsome men of extreme wealth and/or in a position of authority within the community. All of the characters are highly influential, extremely manipulative, and lacking in self-control. Each abuser reaches the point of exercising control over his victim and engages in psychological abuse, with most engaging in some form of

physical and/or sexual abuse. Curiously, each abuser is assigned a reason for his abusive behavior, such as mental illness, being a past abuse victim himself, and/or abuse of drugs and alcohol. Adding to their advantage, each man has a high level of privilege or position which aids him in his quest to control and dominate the victim.

The following units of analysis contain specific observations that reveal, define, or highlight claims within the established schema. First, the analysis will uncover the framing strategies used to construct the fictional victims in each narrative. The second unit of analysis explores the portrayal of a fictional abuser and how that is framed within the context of the story. The final unit of analysis uncovers the framing tactics used to depict the fictional abuse itself and how it may be in line with or vary from real-life abuse.

Fictional Victims

The female characters in all four films share some distinctive similarities. All four are young (early to mid-twenties), are feminine in appearance and behavior, with their weight in proportion to height (or even a bit thinner). The women chosen to play the characters are also extremely beautiful. Each victim makes changes in her life and/or behaves differently to either conform to the abuser's wishes or to avoid abuse. At some point, each woman faces uncertainty in how to respond to the abuser's behavior, with some making dire choices. Most of the female characters start out resisting the persuasive and manipulative efforts of the abuser, yet they prove to be highly vulnerable to his charms and eventually succumb to his influence. All of the characters endure differing levels of psychological and physical abuse, with various end results. Eventually, the women develop enough courage to confront and resist the abuse and all of them end up "paying the price" for the abuse inflicted upon them, with one paying the ultimate price with her life.

Appearance

The visual aspects of the women are relevant when assessing what type of victim the producers have chosen to depict. The primary theme is young and beautiful with all of the characters seemingly in their twenties. All but one of the characters is Caucasian, which may be a signal that fewer African-American women are represented in the cinema. The three Caucasian women are petite with blond or brown hair and blue eyes. Interestingly, Katie in Safe Haven changes her appearance when she escapes, cutting her long, simply-styled brunette hair to a short, flattering style and bleaching it blonde. This change in appearance is suggested as a way for her to live undetected, but it is necessary to consider the transformation as evidence that she is no longer her past self. She is no longer seen as the plain and frumpy wife- she is now the hip and self-assured newcomer. Another possible message is that one can become whole and new simply by changing appearances and location, something most real-life victims would struggle to accomplish. Judith from Temptation also makes changes to her appearance, but she does it to signify an alliance with her new lover, Harley, in order to please him and fit into his "world." Judith is mocked by her coworker for dressing modestly and not wearing current fashions, so when she falls for Harley (her eventual abuser), she begins dressing more provocatively. She pays attention to the style of her hair and begins wearing makeup. This change in Judith can be viewed as a physical representation of her desire to be seen differently by her husband, as well as to be accepted by her coworker and lusted after by Harley. Coincidentally, or not, Judith is sexually attacked by Harley on the very first day of her new image.

All of the victim characters are depicted as young and desirable and are absent of any physical flaws. They are the epitome of what most in American culture would define as beautiful. It could be that the producers wanted viewers to feel more sorrow for the victim

because they are so beautiful which contrasts so vividly with the ugliness of abuse. Perhaps, there is an assumption relayed in this framing that because the women are beautiful they do not deserve to be treated this way (not that anyone deserves it). Whatever the actual reason, the women's appearance definitely allows for the viewer to create an emotional connection to the character.

Behavior

Each character's chosen response to her situation was similar in nature and worth evaluating. To begin with, all of the victims dealt with some initial uncertainty when faced with unusual or unexpected behavior from the abuser. Katie in All Good Things finds herself unsure when she repeatedly discovers her husband talking to himself. She is further perplexed when he yells at her and later she appears even more shocked when he abruptly assaults her. She is mentally paralyzed in those moments of his rage and she does not know how to respond. In Fifty Shades of Grey, Ana's uncertainties mainly derive from her ignorance and naivety. She is unable to understand Christian's desires and behaviors, which causes her some anxiety and concern over how to respond to his unusual relationship boundaries and peculiar sexual requests.

These victims are portrayed as being unsure when confronted with what could be considered abnormal behavior. Some of them question the abuser or work to control their facial expressions and tone of voice, while others retreat into silence. To some degree, each victim displays ignorance or naivety, which may allow the audience to distance themselves from the victim by believing that he/she (the audience member) would not be so naïve, or cause the audience to blame the victim for not recognizing the abusive behavior, or for some audience members it may add another layer of sympathy for the victim.

Another element of the victim's behavior is an early resistance and a later submission. Three of the characters find themselves rejecting unwarranted mistreatment and yet they each succumb to the will of the abuser. Katie from All Good Things has a family celebration after she graduates from college. During the party, David wants to leave early and demands that they go. Katie resists and tells him in front of everyone that she will not leave. He replies by grabbing her by the hair and dragging her out. She eventually leaves David, yet she succumbs to his pleadings for a reunion. Unfortunately for her, she disappears on the night that she returns to him. In Temptation, Judith initially rejects Harley's sexual advances and his proposal for an affair. She leans on her values and morals to resist, but her defenses gradually break down after Harley's attentions prove to be more than she can handle. She gives in and submits herself to his lifestyle of unprotected sex, drugs, and alcohol, and she finally abandons her own family.

The final element to the victim behavior is their courage to act, to assert themselves, and to free themselves from the abusive trap. In Safe Haven, Katie literally fights back when attacked by her husband, Tierney, in their home. She eventually gets a knife and stabs her husband in self-defense, giving herself time to escape. At the end of the film when Tierney finds her, she once again must confront him and physically fight for her life. In the scuffle he is shot dead, which proved that, in the end, her courage and willingness to fight back saved her life. Ana in Fifty Shades of Grey takes longer to find her courage. She eventually realizes that Christian will never offer his whole heart and that he will never be able to engage in a traditional relationship. She realizes this after being ruthlessly "punished" with a whip and she knows that she must end their "relationship." She takes that moment to loudly assert that Christian will never touch her again and in the final scene, she walks out on him.

These films framed the victims as being young and beautiful women with each having some level of ignorance or naivety. All of them had to struggle through the uncertainty of how to respond to their abuser's behaviors, with some finding the courage to speak up while others retreated into quiet submission. Initial resistance was worn down by selfish and manipulative tactics, which lead to eventual submission to the abuser. Thankfully, most of the victims find the courage to act in their own best interests. However, all of the women carried the primary burden and pain from the abuse and each one had to be responsible for ending the harmful treatment, though not all survived. This framing supports the research which found that mass media individuate abuse and depict it as the woman's responsibility.

Fictional Abusers

The male abusive characters in these films share similarities in appearance, personality traits, and behavior. Like the victims, the abusers are young and attractive, which helps to frame them as less evil or even somewhat likable. However, the male characters possess something none of the victims had- extreme wealth and/or a position of authority. Each abuser exhibits changes in his behavior which generally swing from kind and loving to controlling and violent. Another distinction for these characters is the pathological reasoning provided to justify their abusive behavior and their lack of responsibility or accountability for their actions.

Appearance

It's essential when analyzing how the abusers are framed to examine their appearance. Instead of casting the roles with scary-looking men, the producers chose four men who were gifted with youth and good looks- a choice that possibly counters and challenges the common stereotype of an abuser being unattractive or mean-looking. The level of attractiveness (of the actors) gives the audience the opportunity to "like" the characters and not see them as

ugly villains. The best examples of this comes from Christian in Fifty Shades of Grey and Harley from Temptation, who share similar physical appearances. They are both young, very attractive, and are muscular. They are both touted as being billionaires and they definitely dress the part- usually wearing very expensive suits.

Good looks and a strong body help these characters to not only be attractive to the victims, but also to the audience. Tierney from Safe Haven may be the only abuser who loses his likeability factor by the viewers, but his addiction likely elicits pity from the audience, providing plausibility for redemption. The men are visually appealing and look approachable and kind. Choosing these actors to portray abusers is an interesting framing technique that quickly narrows the type of men who can be or *are* abusers and excludes the possibility of an abuser being older or less attractive. This selection of actors may also provide shock value as the audience must reconcile the idea that an abuser can be someone who you least expect.

Behavior

In reviewing the behavior of the abusers it was discovered that all of the characters went from initially acting attentive and kind to later being controlling and violent. The differences were primarily in the time it took for each character to travel the behavioral spectrum and in the degree or severity of their abusive behavior. David from All Good Things is somewhat quiet and withdrawn in the beginning. He is enamored with Katie and does everything he can to impress her. As time passes, his attentiveness turns into efforts to control her time and activities. Eventually, he uses physical violence as a means to control her and from that point on, he is rarely attentive or kind to Katie who becomes his wife. In Fifty Shades of Grey, Christian begins by being attentive, generous, and kind to Ana, but he fluctuates unpredictably and becomes more and more aloof. He quickly becomes controlling in all interactions with Ana and is cunning in his

plans to manipulate her into meeting his needs. He rarely shows any genuine interest in fulfilling Ana's needs (exception: when she wants to lose her virginity) and quickly dismisses her desires for a "real" relationship each time she brings it up. Christian persuades only to achieve what he needs and wants and only finds pleasure (usually during a sexual encounter) when inflicting pain on Ana.

One dominant behavioral strategy found in each character was the unscrupulous use of manipulative tactics. The actions of being charming, issuing flattery, and giving gifts were enacted only to serve the needs of the abuser, but appeared alluring to the women. In All Good Things, David strives to woo Katie with his playboy charms. To win her over, he offers her anything she wants and treats her with kindness and affection. After David returns to work for his father, he buys Katie a really large house and allows her to furnish it however she likes. He may have had genuine intentions in the beginning, when they met, but not long after their marriage and working in the family business, David's flattery and gift giving becomes restricted and used only to keep Katie appeased and busy. Christian, in Fifty Shades of Grey, is the poster child for manipulation. From the beginning he uses flattery to gain Ana's attention. He quickly manipulates and makes demands on her time and attention. Initially, he teases her with flirty attentiveness and then treats her the opposite way by ignoring her. Later, he buys her expensive gifts like a computer and a new car and takes her on trips in his helicopter. But then, he begins to show up uninvited to places such as when Ana goes to visit her mother in Georgia. His manipulative efforts continue in every scene in which he wants something from Ana- which is every scene. His efforts are only employed to get Ana to satisfy his needs.

The final behavioral observation was that all four characters lacked self-control. Tierney in Safe Haven abused alcohol and would quickly go from being calm to being enraged and

violent. He was completely out of control and did not restrain his impulsive thoughts or behaviors. Christian in Fifty Shades of Grey is driven by his singular sexual desire and cannot seem to alter his focus. Even though it would be better for Ana, he cannot and will not walk away from her. He will not control his urges to dominate and punish Ana even when he knows it will hurt her (physically and emotionally). In the end, it is his lack of self-control that permanently destroys the relationship he does have with Ana. In Temptation, Harley uses alcohol and drugs to control others and to release his own inhibitions. While under the influence, he can and will do anything he wants with anyone he wants. He knows that Judith is married and has a strong religious upbringing yet he will not back down and leave her alone. His obsession grows as does his willingness to do and say whatever necessary to win her over.

Pathological Explanations

An interesting discovery within these films is the offering of a reason, or set of reasons, for the male characters abusing the female characters. Each one is given a justifiable explanation for their abusive behavior, perhaps to make the characters less villainous or to assist the audience in making sense of the abuse and violence. Three of the characters (Tierney in Safe Haven, David in All Good Things, and Harley in Temptation) are depicted as abusing alcohol and/or drugs. This addiction seems to drive their harmful behavior or be the cause of their rage. Mental illness or trauma also come in as reasons for abusing. David, in All Good Things, struggles with mental illness, which the viewer learns began as a boy after witnessing his mother commit suicide. Christian, in Fifty Shades of Grey, reveals that he was sexually abused as a young teenager by his mother's friend, something that continued for six years, well into his early adult life. This explanation is offered as the reason he is unable to have a "normal" or traditional relationship with a woman and why his needs override his partner's needs. All of these men are

portrayed, to some degree, as having a problem managing their emotions. Additionally, their tendency for abusive behavior is brought on by “outside” influences and not because they are mean-spirited. This framing tactic presents some inaccuracy, as mental illness is not present in all cases of abuse, nor are alcohol and/or drugs involved in all cases of partner abuse. A person being mentally unwell may act out in an abusive way, but there is little research actually claiming that one causes the other (Hegarty, 2011). Secondly, abusers who admit consuming alcohol or drugs often use it as an excuse for their becoming violent (*Myths*, 2015). Drinking alcohol provides the abuser justification for the behavior and is not considered a cause (*Myths*, 2015).

The fictional abusers in these films are framed similarly, each one being attractive to the female characters and likely to the audience. Their good looks are accentuated by their charm and flattery, which become modes of manipulation. These characters become likable villains as they strive to lure in the object of their attention. Additionally, the abusers all move through predictable patterns of behavior in order to gain control and dominion over the victim. Unfortunately, each abuser is provided a reason or excuse for his harmful behavior which supports the research revealing a tendency to provide pathological reasoning for abuse. This may suggest that the abusers are also victims and not necessarily fully responsible for their actions. It's not that the characters have a personality flaw or disposition to be cruel; they are compelled to be abusive by these “outside” forces (reasons). This framed presentation of an abuser is narrow and limiting and excludes many other possible realities.

Fictional Abuse

For this analysis, domestic violence depictions within these films are categorized into three groups: (1) Psychological, (2) Stalking, and (3) Physical and/or Sexual. Most of the stories

followed a similar path of predictable behavior from psychological manipulation and abuse to physical harm. The behavior of the abuser escalates within each category of abuse, causing serious emotional and/or physical pain for the victims. This analysis does not attempt to rate the seriousness of each category, but only to highlight the forms of abuse producers chose to depict and how it was framed for the viewers.

Psychological Abuse

This type of abuse, also known as mental or emotional abuse, can consist of a variety of behaviors. According to The National Domestic Violence Hotline, examples of this type of behavior can include criticizing, name calling, isolating from friends and family, possessive behaviors like questioning or monitoring the other's activities, humiliation, blaming the victim for the abuse, and/or making threats (*Warning signs*, n.d.). All of these tactics are used to gain and maintain power and control over a partner (*Warning signs*, n.d.).

In Safe Haven, Tierney's rapid mood swings (likely enhanced by alcohol abuse) prevent Katie from feeling safe in his presence. She must always be on guard with everything she says and does. Tierney produces fear in Katie when in a rage he breaks things and yells, blaming Katie for his anger and outbursts. In one scene, he tries to lessen his own guilt by telling Katie he is sorry, all the while he continues to physically attack her. Threats are used when he finds he does not have enough control over her, such as in the scene where he pulls out a gun and yells, "You don't tell me what to do!"

In Fifty Shades of Grey, Christian exhibits a degree of jealousy right away when he questions Ana on the status of her relationships with her male friends. Early in the film, he criticizes Ana for drinking too much the night before and tells her that, "If you were mine, you wouldn't be able to sit down for a week." Christian easily manipulates Ana by appealing to her

desire for love and romance. He breaks some of his rules and makes her believe that she is the only one he has done that with. Nevertheless, he still remains distant and prevents her from being allowed to touch him or sleep in the same bed. His possessiveness emerges later when he gets angry over her announcement that she is planning a trip out of state to see her mother. He takes her outside and tells her that he is angry and claims, "You're mine, all mine. You understand?"

These examples illustrate the type of manipulation and psychological abuse inflicted upon the victims. While it may seem benign at first, all of these behaviors are considered abusive and are often referred to as "red flags" (*Warning signs*, n.d.) Psychological abuse is difficult to detect by those on the outside of the relationship, however it is harmful and can cause mental or emotional damage to the victim (*Forms of domestic violence*, 2013).

Stalking

While only two of the films included elements of stalking, it is a serious warning sign and was deemed relevant to this analysis. Stalking is a form of abuse and it is most often listed as a separate type of offense, especially now that there is an increase in cyberstalking through the use of modern technologies. Stalking can happen at any point in the relationship and can happen in numerous ways. The most common way is to physically follow someone, showing up where the victim happens to be (unannounced and uninvited); tracking someone to find them; repeated attempts to contact the victim through phone calls, texts, emails etc.; and watching the victim from a distance and/or recording the victim's movements (*Stalking*, 2014).

Tierney in Safe Haven is so obsessed with Katie that he breaks into the neighbor's house to seek information on Katie's whereabouts. Since the neighbor had helped Katie to escape, there was a message on her answering machine from Katie which Tierney uses to begin tracking her down. He travels nonstop to the town where Katie is hiding and once he spots her, he watches

from a distance. He then follows Katie back to her new boyfriend's house and watches her until it's time to confront her.

In Fifty Shades of Grey, Christian begins to become impatient when it seems that he is being ignored by Ana. He begins sending her multiple text messages, questioning her about whether she has completed researching dominance and submission and if she has made a decision. At one point, Ana tells Christian in a message "It was nice knowing you" to which he responds by showing up uninvited to her home. Later, when Ana is visiting her mother in Georgia, Christian again shows up uninvited and watches her from a distance. He texts Ana when she and her mother order another drink, saying, "Another Cosmo?" letting her know that she was being watched.

Physical and/or Sexual Abuse

Physical abuse is an action that causes harm through tactics such as hitting, slapping, punching, kicking, burning, strangulation, coercing another into substance abuse, and/or refusing medical care (*Warning signs*, n.d.). Sexual abuse, which is not about sex, is an action that attempts to control another person by forcible sex when it is unwanted, unsafe, and/or considered by the victim to be degrading; pursuing sexual activity with someone who is not able to consent; hurting the other during sex; interfering with reproductive choices (refusing to use protection, forcing an abortion, etc.); and/or forcing someone to view pornography (*Warning signs*, n.d.). These two types of abuse were combined into one category for this analysis due to the physical nature of the abuses.

Tierney in Safe Haven is shown committing graphic and heinous violence upon Katie. He is shown grabbing her neck with his hands and shoving her into the dining room hutch. He pushes her to the floor, pulls her hair, and then shoves her away. He grabs her arm and takes her

to the floor, where he attempts to choke her. Later, he sprays gasoline on the house while she is inside and while the house burns, he grabs her from behind, takes her to the ground and punches her face.

In All Good Things, David grabs Katie by the hair (in front of her family) and drags her out of her parent's house. Later, he beats her so badly that her face immediately begins to bruise and is cut and bloody. He enforces sexual control by forcing her to have an abortion for which he did not attend, instead making her endure the event alone. Toward the end, David kills their dog and after Katie confronts him, she disappears and it is implied that he killed her, too.

Christian in Fifty Shades of Grey spans Ana while he is angry, which indicates a loss of self-control and is abusive. In one scene, Christian flogs Ana with a whip so hard that it hurts her. Finally, Christian is guilty of sexual manipulation since Ana makes it clear several times that she is uncomfortable with his "play room" and sexual desires/behavior. Knowing her objections, he continues to persuade and manipulate Ana into performing sex acts that she does not necessarily want to do.

Harley in Temptation sexually attacks Judith on the private plane by forcing her legs apart and touching her all over. She fights back and he stops, but only to tell her "Now you can say you resisted." He then continues to have his way with her. In a scene involving her mother, Harley shoves the older woman to the ground and then later fights with Judith over the incident. He follows her through the house, grabbing her arm to stop her. Their final scene together ends with Judith severely beaten with visible scrapes, cuts, and bruises on her face and neck. Sadly, Harley knowingly infects Judith with HIV, as he did with his previous girlfriend, which is a lifelong consequence to being sexually abused.

The overall message with these depictions of abuse can be surmised as being realistic in the pattern and sequence of behaviors. All of the abusers began controlling their victim by utilizing psychological or emotional abuse. As the victims submitted to the pressure and force of the abusers, the harmful behavior escalated into physical and/or sexual abuse. This confirms the idea that most intimate partner abuse is a gradual process of escalating actions. Viewers may be shocked by the graphic images, but it does deliver some elements of truth.

Conclusion

This analysis of domestic abuse and violence within four motion pictures has provided an examination of framing tactics used to depict fictional victims, fictional abusers, and fictional abuse. Further, it has speculated about potential messages being communicated about intimate partner abuse and the influence of those messages on the audience. Findings revealed patterns within these depictions, such as the victims being young, beautiful, and somewhat naïve. Also, it was discovered that the abusers were young, fit, and handsome and had extreme wealth or were in a position of authority. Interestingly, all of the male characters were assigned a pathological reason for their behavior. Finally, the fictional abuse was sequenced with emotional or psychological abuse followed by physical violence.

In some regards, these depictions align well with actual, documented cases of abuse, such as in the depicted abuse. However, the framing of the characters excludes many other possibilities and facts. According to a report published by the Department of Justice, victims of intimate partner abuse can be of either sex, any age, and any ethnicity or race (Truman & Morgan, 2014). Likewise, the profile of an abuser is just as universal, meaning anyone can be an abuser: they can be male or female and belong to any culture, religion, or economic class (*What is domestic violence*, n.d.). When you compare the facts with the depictions, it reveals a very

narrow picture of victims and abusers within these films. Limiting the view of domestic abuse/violence through mass media representations can skew an individual viewer's understanding of the issue- not only in who can be involved, but in what abuse entails. That misunderstanding can then perpetuate stereotypes which are specific types of people who become victims and specific types of people to abuse others. This finite conclusion may create a false sense of security for viewers, particularly when they do not fit within the portrayed demographics. Additionally, this can present a risk, as this false ideation can then permeate society.

Investigating and analyzing framing strategies within mass media can provide researchers with insight into the possible messages delivered to an audience and the messages omitted. This knowledge can provide a clearer understanding of how those messages may be interpreted, which then can influence the subsequent formation of cultural ideologies. Analyzing communication through media of popular culture is an important function within the field of Communication Studies especially as our culture has been inundated with more options with which to seek and receive information.

This particular type of analysis is vital in revealing some of the communication strategies used by film producers as they depict partner abuse. It can also offer interpretations of the messages potentially received by audience members. It can also detect patterns within these depictions such as identifying "stock" characters and/or plots which either align with or counter stereotypes. Additionally, this type of research can unveil a possible source of influence which viewers may use to create and/or assign meaning to very complex issues like domestic abuse and violence. Finally, analyzing the communication of a serious, deviant practice like domestic abuse, depicted in popular films, can assist in directing needed attention to a major social issue

and provide readers the opportunity to finally “see” and discuss what is normally hidden and left unspoken within most cultures.

Reflective Writing

The journey towards completing this thesis project was an adventure. Each phase of the research process presented challenges, diversions, and new insights. There were also times of unanticipated personal struggles which threatened the completion of work within the allotted time. Through it all, I learned how to manage the project, set and follow a schedule, and overcome obstacles great and small.

One of the greatest aspects of this project was the structure of the Honors program. It allowed me the freedom to choose a project that I was passionate about and present it in a format that made the most sense to me. Each semester brought the opportunity for a new contract and the time to start a new phase of the project. This was an especially useful element in helping me to learn how to manage the steps of completing my project. It taught me to break the entire process into small tasks and give an assigned timeline for each, which helped me to stay accountable.

Last year, I started my project by researching and writing a literature review. I know people’s opinions vary on what order in which to do things, but I already had an idea of what topic I was interested in and I had already developed some research questions. I was interested in what other researchers had investigated and what was lacking in the research. Gladly, I found exactly what I was looking for and I was able to identify where I could focus and what to base my research on. I was excited to take on the challenge of looking into an area that lacked solid research. Motion pictures were mentioned and/or examined by only a few researchers and I felt I needed to do my part to fill in some of the gaps.

Next, I spent most of my free time in the summer working on the artifact selection process, transcribing and coding of the films, and writing a first draft. When I submitted the contracts for summer, I didn't think it would be too difficult to complete since I would not be enrolled in any classes- boy, was I wrong! Life as a student-mom can get pretty hectic and I found myself juggling a daughter's June wedding (in my yet unfinished backyard) with my research project. The stress was getting to me as I strived to focus on my research, coordinate the wedding plans, and help my husband finish landscaping the backyard. As the summer went on, I started to realize something wasn't quite right, that I wasn't feeling my best.

By the time fall semester rolled around I was spending the majority of my time bedridden. I had appointments with doctors and knew what the ailment was, but I had to wait for the treatment to begin. That semester was the longest of my life! I struggled to attend school, do homework, and take care of my family. My illness severely affected my energy levels, ability to concentrate and remember things. I felt like I had turned into an elderly patient with Alzheimer's disease. I finally began outpatient treatments at the hospital and I slowly began to recover. It took nearly the entire semester before I was well again, but it provided me with some very important life lessons. First, treasure good health when you have it. Take good care of your body and listen to it when something changes. Second, I learned how to let go of everything that didn't meet the maximum priority for that *moment*. Third, I had to accept that sometimes my best effort would be far below what it used to be and that I had to be alright with that. Fourth, I learned how to let others serve me and my family. For the most part, it was my family that picked up my slack, but I realized that that was an important opportunity for them to serve me, especially since I had rarely allowed them to do so. Amazingly, I pulled off a 4.0 in my classes and managed to get the

penultimate draft completed. I was so grateful for the extra time given me from the Honors Department which allowed me to finish my contract for that semester.

This spring semester I have done pretty well. I'm healthy and able to manage all of my responsibilities. I decided to take every possible opportunity to present my research and made that a part of my last contract. I applied and was accepted as one of the students to go to the Research on Capitol Hill. I was able to make a poster representation of my research and talk with politicians, guests, and the general public about my work. It was a great experience; one that put my work into view for others and myself. The next month, I gave an oral presentation at the University of Utah which helped me to prepare for the symposium at USU. The last event I participated in this semester was the Student Research Symposium here on campus. It was a great day (despite the snow) and I felt confident during the poster session and really enjoyed learning about other student's work.

As I stated in the beginning, this entire process was an adventure! I found the challenges of conducting research only motivated me to work harder. I become exposed to theories and conclusions from other researchers that inspired me to be extra inquisitive and meticulous. The personal challenges were a big hurdle for me, but it also drove my level of determination to heights I had not reached before. I could've quit or asked to change my contract, but I knew that I had to move forward and push through the hardships.

If I could give new Honors students some advice it would be this- be creative with your project, maintain an adventurous spirit because you're doing something that most students avoid, and always, always, always be courageous and determined. Life is hard, being a student can be hard, but being excellent only requires a few extra steps and little more effort than the rest. So often, people quit just before success would have found them- don't quit, no matter what is

happening. Seek out mentors and rely on others to help you through this process. I promise, it will be worth it.

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Author Biography

Renee Delcambre was born in Cuyahoga Falls, Ohio in 1966. She spent her childhood and most of her adult life moving around the United States, having amassed over 50 addresses in eight different states. After earning some credits at community college in the mid-1980s, Renee left school to join the military, serving in the United States ARMY Reserves during Desert Storm and was honorably discharged in 1998. During this time, Renee began her family and spent the next 25 years raising her children. After moving to Utah in 2010, Renee decided it was time to go back to school and earn a bachelor's degree. She found her passion was Communication Studies which became her major. As an undergraduate student, Renee won several awards and nominations for her work. She was admitted into the Honors program and participated in numerous research presentation opportunities. After graduating in spring 2016, she will attend graduate school at the University of Hawaii with the goal of obtaining a master's degree in Communication Studies. Her eventual plans include writing, lecturing, and instructing others in the art of positive and productive communication.