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WHAT YOU READ AND WHAT YOU BELIEVE: GENRE EXPOSURE AND
BELIEFS ABOUT RELATIONSHIPS

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DEPARTMENT OF PSYCHOLOGY

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Abstract

Research has shown that exposure to specific fiction genres is associated with theory of mind and attitudes toward gender roles and sexual behavior (e.g. Fong, Mullin, & Mar, 2013, 2015); however, relatively little research has investigated the relationship between exposure to written fiction and beliefs about real-world relationships. Here, participants were asked to complete both the Genre Familiarity Test (Black, Capps, & Barnes, 2017), an author recognition test that assesses prior exposure to seven different written fiction genres, and the Relationship Belief Inventory (Epstein & Eidelson, 1982), a measure that assesses the degree to which participants hold five unrealistic and destructive beliefs about the way that romantic relationships should work. After controlling for personality, gender, and exposure to other genres, three genres were found to be significantly correlated with different relationship beliefs. Exposure to Classics and Fantasy predicted less support for unrealistic relationship beliefs, while exposure to Romance predicted more support for the belief that the sexes are inherently different. A second study was conducted to examine whether exposure to different subgenres of romantic media exerted a causal effect on relationship beliefs. Participants viewed movie trailers from romantic comedies, romantic tragedies, or nature documentaries. After controlling for gender and lifetime exposure to written romance fiction, participants in the nature documentary control condition were more likely to support the belief that sexual perfectionism is necessary for a satisfying relationship. KEY WORDS: Relationships, Fiction, Genre

Introduction

Relationships play a central role in the human experience. The need to belong and form relationships with others is universal (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Perceived social support is a predictor not only of psychological well-being, but also of physical health (Uchino, 2009). Notably, relationship quality depends heavily on a person's experiences and the way they view their social world (Holmes, 2007; Baucon, 1996; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). One important factor that may influence our expectations about and satisfaction with relationships is media exposure. Prior research suggests that exposure to fictional media—in the form of books, movies, and/or television shows—is related to social cognitive ability, relationship satisfaction, and feelings of belonging (e.g., Derrick, Gabriel, & Hugenberg, 2009; Fong et al., 2013; Holmes, 2007; Heferkamp, 1999, Hefner & Wilson, 2013; Mar et al, 2006). Although fiction exposure may provide practice for deploying our theory of mind abilities (Mar & Oatley, 2008), research in media psychology suggests that exposure to fictional media may also engender unrealistic beliefs about the way that relationships—particularly romantic relationships—work (e.g., Epstein & Eidelson, 1982; Hefner & Wilson, 2013).

Strikingly, however, much of this research has focused on exposure to films and television shows (e.g., Holmes, 2007; Haferkamp, 1999; Hefner & Wilson, 2013). To the extent that prior work has studied the correlation between exposure to written fiction and beliefs about relationships, research has focused almost exclusively on the Romance genre (e.g., Shapiro & Kroeger, 1991). Thus, there very little research focusing on the degree to which exposure to other genres of written fiction may be associated with realistic or unrealistic beliefs about the way that social relationships

work in the real world. The purpose of the current research is to examine the association, if any, between exposure to an array of written fiction genres and participants' beliefs about how romantic relationships do and should work.

Individual genres, such as Mystery, Romance, or Science Fiction, are associated with specific character archetypes and plot conventions, such that readers largely know what to expect when they choose to read a given genre (Carroll, 1994). Many books clearly advertise their genre, allowing readers to choose their next book based on their preference for these conventions (Dixon & Bortolussi, 2009). Although prior research on fiction and relationship beliefs has focused largely on romantic fiction, relationships—and particularly romantic relationships—play a central role in fiction across genres. To the extent that fiction serves as social simulation (Mar & Oatley, 2008), a significant subset of what is being simulated likely involves not just individuals and their mental states and emotions, but also how they relate to and form intimate connections with others. Significantly, both the role that relationships play in a narrative's plot and the way that relationships are depicted may vary from genre to genre. Thus, although prior work has shown that exposure to romantic fiction per se is related to romantic idealism, the belief in soul mates, and expectations about relationships (e.g., Haferkamp, 1999; Hefner & Wilson, 1999; Holmes, 2007), it is unclear whether exposure to written fiction more broadly would be associated with increased or decreased endorsement of unrealistic relationship beliefs.

The current research is focused on the degree to which exposure to different literary genres is associated with participants' endorsement of the beliefs that the sexes are inherently different, that all disagreement is destructive, that one's romantic partner

should be able to know one's thoughts and feelings without being told, that romantic partners cannot change, and that sexual perfection should be expected in relationships (Epstein & Eidelson, 1982). Specifically, the current research aims to test whether exposure to written fiction is associated with more realistic or less realistic beliefs about relationships and whether this effect varies by genre and the nature of the beliefs in question.

It is possible that written fiction exposure, in contrast to other forms of media, will be associated with more realistic relationship beliefs. It has been argued that written fiction focuses on internal thoughts, while screen media focuses more on external behaviors. Thus, it is possible that written fiction, across genres, may provide readers with more access to the internal mental states of one or more relationship partners, thereby increasing readers' understanding of the way that relationships function. In line with this idea, Mar, Oatley, Hirsh, de la Paz, and Peterson (2006) found that lifetime fiction exposure was related to participants' performance on an emotion-reading task, an effect that has been replicated many times (e.g., Black & Barnes, 2015; Kidd & Castano, 2013; Panero et al., 2016). Other research has found associations between reading fiction and empathy (Bal & Veltkamp, 2013), self-transformation (Djikic, Oatley, Zoeterman, & Peterson, 2009), and a tolerance for open-endedness and ambiguity (Djikic, Oatley, & Moldoveanu, 2013). Moreover, it has been suggested that reading fiction can involve a suspension of the self, thereby allowing readers to view the world through the perspective of others (Kaufman & Libby, 2012). To the degree that fiction is associated with personal transformation, sensitivity toward others, and the ability to consider multiple perspectives, people who read more fiction may therefore

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have a better understanding of the complexity of romantic relationships. For example, avid readers of fiction may be more likely to understand that a lack of open communication about one's thoughts and feelings can lead to unnecessary conflict, or they may be more open to the idea that all humans, regardless of gender, share fundamental similarities. In line with this idea, Fong and colleagues (2015) found that lifetime fiction exposure was negatively correlated with gender-based stereotyping. In short, given that written fiction has been shown to increase our understanding of social others, it may also be associated with a better understanding of how people interact with and relate to one another in romantic relationships the real world.

In contrast, however, it could be that exposure to written fiction is generally associated with less realistic beliefs about romantic relationships. Fiction is designed to deliver highly concentrated emotional experiences (Hogan, 2010). Thus, across genres, many of the relationships readers are exposed to may be unrealistically heightened. Further, the evolution of fictional relationships may serve a specific narrative purpose that does not reflect the way that relationship shift and change in the real world. Prior research suggests that sacrificing realism in favor of narrative function may come at a cost. For example, Appel (2008) found that participants who reported watching more television dramas, in which good frequently triumphs over evil, were more likely to view the real world as a just place. Similarly, there is evidence to suggest that participants may adopt the worldviews of fictional characters (Gerbner et al., 1976), as well as their intellectual dispositions (Appel, 2011). Based on this research, we would predict that to the extent that written fiction tends to depict characters who themselves have unrealistic beliefs about relationships, as well as heightened relationship drama,

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exposure to written fiction may be associated with unrealistic beliefs about the way romantic relationships should and do operate in the real world.

However, although nearly all genres of fiction depict relationships in some way, the manner in which relationships are depicted may vary widely from genre to genre. Thus, it is possible—and arguably likely—that the relationship between written fiction exposure and relationship beliefs will vary by genre. Perse and colleagues (1986) proposed that consuming specific genres produces effects unique to those genres. In line with this idea, genres from multiple media sources have been shown to have divergent effects. For example, Fong and colleagues (2013) found that exposure to the Romance and Suspense/Thriller genres was correlated with better performance on an emotion reading test, the Reading the Mind in the Eyes Test, while exposure to Science Fiction/Fantasy was not. Similarly, Black, Capps, and Barnes (2017) found that genre exposure was predictive of participants' ratings of moral permissibility and physical possibility: exposure to Science Fiction and Fantasy were correlated with higher levels of belief that the physically impossible could become possible and higher levels of tolerance for morally taboo actions, while exposure to the genres of Romance and mystery/thriller were negatively correlated with both moral and modal judgment. Thus, the association between reading and relationship beliefs may also vary based on a variety of genre-specific factors, including the complexity of the characters depicted, the degree of realism, the presence of ambiguity, and how relationships are prototypically depicted within a given genre.

The Romance genre is heavily characterized by unique beliefs about relationships, such as "love at first sight" and "happily ever after's" for romantic

couples (Radway, 1984). Many characters featured in works of Romance focus on a search to find a romantic partner that is destined to be in their lives (Tanner, Haddock, & Zimmerman, 2003; Signorielli, 1997). The development of a romantic relationship— and the resolution of romantic conflict—is not incidental in a Romance novel; it is the core. Unsurprisingly, prior research has shown that exposure to the Romance genre, across media, is correlated with a variety of expectations about romantic relationships. People who watch more soap operas, compared to other genres of television, have been shown to hold beliefs about relationships that harm one's relationship satisfaction and longevity (Haferkamp, 2013). Exposure to romantic comedy movies in young adults has also been shown to correlate with greater support of the relationship ideals common to the genre, such as the belief that love conquers all and the idealization of romantic partners (Hefner & Wilson, 2013). Similarly, in a study by Shapiro and Kroegar (1999), participants who endorsed unrealistic beliefs about relationships scored higher on a measure of exposure to Romance novels and movie romantic comedies. Specifically, exposure to Romance was shown to significantly correlate with greater support of the belief that mindreading and sexual perfectionism should be expected in a relationship.

Taken as a whole, this body of work is consistent with the idea that exposure to Romance fiction, across media, is associated with a variety of unrealistic beliefs about romantic relationships. However, a majority of the studies cited above relied on self-reported exposure to romantic films, magazines, and/or novels. It is possible that individuals who are willing to *report* consuming and enjoying these media may be more likely to hold these beliefs, but that a less direct measure of exposure may yield different results. Further, because these studies focused specifically on the Romance

genre—and often fairly narrow views of what constitutes a Romance (e.g. romantic comedies, but not romantic tragedies; high drama dating reality shows; narrow subsets within the broader category of Romance novels)—it is unclear both whether these results are specific to the Romance genre *and* whether these results would generalize to a measure that captures exposure to Romance novels more indirectly. Here, we have chosen to use a print checklist that assesses participants' familiarity with authors who write in different genres (e.g., Stanovich & West, 1989). This type of measure, taken as an index of cumulative fiction genre exposure, is predictive of real-world buying habits (Rain & Mar, 2014) and may be less subject to any desires that participants have to self-present in certain ways.

In addition to assessing exposure to Romance novels, the measure used in the current research, the Genre Familiarity Test (Black, Capps, & Barnes, 2017) also assesses exposure to six other genres: the Classics, Contemporary Literary Fiction, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Horror, and Mystery/Thriller. In contrast to Romance novels, which follow a defined arc toward a romantic "happily ever after," literary fiction often presents challenging and ambiguous characters, situations, and relationships with no guarantee of neat or happy ending (e.g., Lissa, Caracciolo, van Duuren, & van Leuveren, 2016; Koopman, 2016; Bortolussi, 2003). Indeed, some scholars have suggested that exposure to literary fiction, but not genre fiction, is predictive of social cognition (Kidd & Castano, 2016). Similarly, it is possible that exposure to literary fiction—both classic and contemporary—may be associated with less idealized and more realistic beliefs about how romantic relationships can and should operate. In contrast, genres like Science Fiction and Fantasy, which often contain romantic

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relationships but tend to concentrate more on other elements of the narrative, may be less likely to correlate with real-world relationship beliefs. Past research with children has shown that generalizing problem-solving solutions is more difficult from a fantastical story than a realistic one (Richert & Smith, 2011). Similarly, it is possible that exposure to fiction that focuses on the fantastical or futuristic may be less likely to map onto beliefs about social interactions in the real world.

Finally, it is possible that, rather than some genres corresponding to "realistic" or "healthy" beliefs about relationships and others being associated with unrealistic beliefs or having no association at all, the association of different genres of fiction with relationship beliefs will depend on the specific kind of belief you are assessing. The Relationships Belief Inventory assesses five different unrealistic and unhealthy beliefs about romantic relationships (Eidelson & Epstein, 1982): Sexual Perfectionism, Mindreading is Expected, the Sexes are Different, Partners Cannot Change, and Disagreement is Destructive. A belief in Sexual Perfectionism addresses the idea that sexual activities between partners should always be harmonious and without fault. Individuals who believe that Mindreading is Expected think their partner should know what they are thinking and feeling without having to be told. The belief that the Sexes are Different follows stereotypical gender roles, emphasizing the strict differences between men and women. The belief that Partners Cannot Change takes the view that people are who they are and cannot make decisions to change, while the belief that Disagreement is Destructive captures the idea that partners should always agree with each other and that disagreeing is always bad.

Although all of these beliefs are unrealistic in a romantic relationship, it is possible that some may be more strongly related to fiction exposure—and exposure to different genres of fiction—than others. In particular, work on the relationship between genre fiction exposure and theory of mind (e.g., Kidd & Castano 2016; Fong, Mullin, and Mar) suggests that different genres may be differentially associated with the belief that partners should be able to mindread. Any association between fiction exposure and the beliefs that the Sexes are Different and that sex between partners should be perfect may also depend on how the different genres tend to depict gender roles and sexual encounters. In contrast, given that *all* fiction focuses on conflict, and that character arcs are defined by how the characters in relationships change, a wide variety of genres may be associated with beliefs about relationship conflict and personal change.

To address these possibilities, participants were asked to complete both the Genre Familiarity Test (GFT, Black, Capps, & Barnes, in press) and the Relationship Belief Inventory (RBI, Epstein & Eidelson, 1982), and prior exposure to seven genres of written fiction (Classics, Contemporary Literary, Mystery/Thriller, Romance, Horror, Science Fiction, and Fantasy) were compared to participants' endorsement of the five unrealistic beliefs about relationships outlined above. It was predicted that the relationship between fiction exposure and relationship beliefs would depend both on genre—and the way that different genres depict relationships—and on the specific content of each of the five beliefs.

Study 1

Method

Participants

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Participants were 409 adults recruited through Amazon's Mechanical Turk (mTurk) online crowdsourcing interface (230 females, 179 males) aged 19 to 77 ($M =$ 35.2, $SD = 10.87$). Each participant responded to a job posting on mTurk and were paid fifty cents for participation. Data from five participants was thrown out, due to incomplete responses, leaving a final sample of 404 participants.

Materials

Genre Familiarity Test. Black, Capps, and Barnes (2017) adapted Stanovich and West's (1989) original Author Recognition Task to test for exposure to seven different genres (see also Fong, Mullin, & Mar [2013, 2015,] for use of author recognition tests to assess genre exposure). The GFT presents 15 author names from each of seven genres (Classics, Contemporary Literary Fiction, Romance, Fantasy, Science Fiction, Suspense/Thriller, Horror). It also includes 45 foil names, for a total of 150 names. Participants were informed that some, but not all, of the names listed were the names of authors and were asked to select each name they recognized as belonging to an author. Names were presented in random order to each participant. A score for each genre was generated by summing the number of authors selected within each subscale. The number of foil names participants selected was use as a control in later analysis.

Big Five Personality Inventory. A measure of personality was incorporated to function as a control, as other studies have found some correlations between personality traits and genre preference (Weaver, 2003; Fong, Mullins, & Mar, 2013; Shim & Paul, 2007). Personality was measured using the Big Five Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991), in which participants respond to 44 phrases that correspond with either neuroticism, conscientiousness, openness, extroversion, or agreeableness. Participants

were asked to read each phrase and record how like them each statement was. Responses were recorded on a 5-point Likert scale, with 1 being "disagrees strongly" and 5 being "agrees strongly". Internal consistency reliability was good for Extraversion (r_α= .891), Agreeableness (r_α= .827), Conscientiousness (r_α= .876), Neuroticism (r_α= .873), and Openness (r_α= .827).

Relationship Beliefs Inventory. Endorsement of unrealistic perceptions of romantic relationships was measured by a modified version of the Relationship Beliefs Inventory created by Epstein & Eidelson (1982). The inventory contains five 12 item subscales assessing for the degree to which participants support maladaptive beliefs about relationships: Disagreement is Destructive (r_α= .760), Mindreading is Expected (r_α= .680), romantic Partners Cannot Change (r_α= .588), the Sexes are Different (r_α= .657), and the expectation of Sexual Perfectionism (r_α= .718). Wording of the items was altered slightly to sound more hypothetical, allowing for the possibility that participants would not have direct experience in a romantic relationship. Examples of items are as follows: "When couples disagree, it seems like the relationship is falling apart" (Disagreement is Destructive subscale) and "People who have a close relationship can sense each other's needs as if they could read each other's minds" (Mindreading is Expected scale). Participants respond to each item on a six-point scale to indicate the extent to which they believe each statement is true. Higher scores on this measure indicated higher endorsement of unrealistic romantic relationship beliefs. Participants also took the Adult Attachment Scale.[1]

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[1] Although Attachment style (Colling & Read, 1990)) is related to parasocial relationships (Cohen, 2004), it was unrelated to GFT scores.

Scale Scores

An average of 19.83 authors (SD = 14.78) and .51 foil names (SD = 1.18) were

selected on the ART (Classics M = 7.22, SD = 4.23; Literary M = 1.82, SD = 2.78;

Fantasy M = 2.61, SD = 2.83; Mystery M = 3.28, SD = 2.98; Romance M = 1.64, SD =

1.83; Science Fiction M = 1.69, SD = 2.53; Horror M = 1.57, SD = 1.35).

Correlations

Pearson correlations were conducted to look at the relationship between the Big

Five Inventory, Relationship Belief Inventory, and Genre Familiarity Task. Three of the

Big Five personality traits correlated with exposure different genres of the GFT.

Extraversion was significantly correlated with exposure to Classics (r = -.164, p = .001),

Contemporary Literary Fiction (r = -.201, p < .001), Fantasy (r = -.217, p = .000), and

Science Fiction (r = -.207, p < .001). Conscientiousness was significantly correlated

with exposure to Science Fiction (r = -.098, p = .049). Openness was significantly

correlated with exposure to Classics (r = .260, p < .001), Contemporary Literary Fiction

(r = .218, n = 401, p < .001), Fantasy (r = .221, p < .001), Mystery (r = .140, p = .005),

and Science Fiction (r = .242, p < .001). There were also significant correlations (.337 ≤

r ≤ .757) between each genre, wherein exposure to any one genre made a participant

more likely to have read all other genres, as well as RBI and GFT scores. Table 1 shows

the different patterns that emerged between individual genre exposure and relationship

expectations. There were no significant correlations between genre exposure and scores

on the Adult Attachment Scale, so it was excluded of further analysis. Due to high

collinearity between Science Fiction and Fantasy (r= .757), the two genres were

combined into Science Fiction/Fantasy in all further analysis. No significant

correlations were found between participants' score on the Adult Attachment Inventory

and genre familiarity.

Regression Analysis

As there was a correlation between genre exposure, relationship beliefs,

personality, and sex, five regression analyses were conducted to partial out the direct

relationship between genre exposure and each subscale of the Relationship Belief

Inventory. The result for each regression can be found in Table 2.

First, a regression was conducted with the subscale Disagreement is Destructive

as the outcome. Gender, Extraversion, Conscientiousness, and Openness were entered

into Block 1 as controls, as well as total foil names selected on the GFT. Extraversion,

conscientiousness, and openness were all significant predictors of score on this

subscale. Genre scores from the GFT were then entered into Block 2. Partial

correlations revealed that Classics ($sr^2 = .016$, $p = .006$) and Science Fiction/Fantasy

($sr^2 = .016$, $p = .008$) remained significant predictors of score of the Disagreement is

Destructive subscale, such that individuals who reported greater exposure to both

Classics and Science Fiction/Fantasy scored significantly lower on this specific

subscale, after controlling for individual differences in personality, gender, and other

genres.

The next analysis focused on the subscale Mindreading is Expected. The same

variables were entered into Block 1 of this regression. Extraversion and Openness were

significant predictors of score on the subscale. Genre scores from the GFT were then

entered into Block 2. Science Fiction/Fantasy was the only significant predictor of score

on Mindreading is Expected, such that participants with greater exposure to the genre scored lower on the scale, $sr^2 = .019$, $p = .006$.

A third regression was conducted to analyze the subscale Partners Cannot Change. Once again, the same variables were entered into Block 1. Conscientiousness and Openness were the only significant predictors of performance on the subscale. Genre scores from the GFT were once again entered into Block 2 and again, Science Fiction/Fantasy remained a significant predictor of score. Participants who reported more exposure to Science Fiction/Fantasy scored lower on the subscale "Partners Cannot Change", $sr^2 = .026$, $p = .001$.

The fourth subscale analyzed measured agreement with the belief that the sexes are different. Once again, personality and gender were entered into Block 1, resulting in Conscientiousness and Openness as significant predictors. After entering Genre scores from the GFT into Block 2, Science Fiction/Fantasy was once again a predictor of performance on the scale. Participants who report reading more of this genre were less likely to support the belief that the Sexes are Different, $sr^2 = .050$, $p < .001$. On the other hand, Romance was also a significant predictor, such that participants who reported reading more Romance scored high on the belief that the Sexes are Different, $sr^2 = .014$, $p = .013$.

The last subscale analyzed was Sexual Perfectionism. After entering gender and personality into Block 1, gender was the only significant predictor of scores on this subscale. Genre scores from the GFT were then entered into Block 2. No genres significantly predicted scores on this subscale, however gender remained a significant

predictor, such that males (coded as 1) scored significantly higher than females (coded as 2) on this belief, above and beyond the impact of personality, $sr^2 = .026$, $p = .002$.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to investigate the relationship between fiction exposure and the beliefs we hold about real-world romantic relationships. The results showed that the relationship between written fiction exposure and beliefs about romantic relationships differed by genre. Specifically, individuals who scored higher for exposure to Classics and Science Fiction/Fantasy were less likely to endorse the beliefs that disagreement is destructive (both Science Fiction/Fantasy and Classics), that sexual perfectionism should be expected in relationships (Classics), and that partners cannot change and the sexes are different (Science Fiction/Fantasy). In contrast, prior exposure to the Romance genre was positively correlated with the belief that the sexes are different, but not with any other subscale of the Relationships Belief Inventory.

It is important to note that the current results are correlational. While it is possible that exposure to fiction causes readers to change their beliefs about relationships, it is also possible that, when selecting what type of book we want to read, we are more likely to choose a genre that supports the beliefs we already hold about relationships. For example, to the extent that characters in romance novels display strong traditional gender roles, this could appeal to a reader who already believes that the sexes are different. Similarly, a third variable— such as education, imagination, prior experience with romantic relationships, and transportation —could underlie the relationships found in this experiment. Study 2 was conducted in order to address these questions.

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Study 2

In Study 1, a correlation was found between exposure to written fiction in three genres (Science Fiction/Fantasy, Classics, and Romance). Study 2 was designed to further investigate the nature of this relationship, by focusing on a single genre (Romance). Specifically, this study looks at whether maladaptive beliefs about relationships can be primed by exposure to romantic movies.

Methods

Participants

Participants were 130 students taken from the introductory Psychology subject pool at the University of Oklahoma, ranging in age from 18 to 31. Each participant received class credit for participating in this research. After removing incomplete responses from 11 participants, 116 subjects remained (94 females, 22 males).

Materials

The same Genre Familiarity Task (Black, Barnes, & Capps, 2017) and Relationships Beliefs Inventory (Epstein & Eidelson, 1982) were use from Study 1. However, the RBI was used as a pre- and post-test measure of relationship beliefs, to see if there was a change in score associated with condition. Internal consistency reliability was good for all pre- and post-test subscales: Disagreement is Destructive (pre-test r_α=.784 , post-test r_α= .818), Mindreading is Expected (pre-test r_α = .731, post-test r_α= .78), Partners Cannot Change (pre-test r_α= .641, post-test r_α= .644), Sexual Perfectionism (pre-test r_α= .714, post-test r_α= .794), and the Sexes are Different (pre-test r_α = .772, post-test r_α= .834).

Romantic Beliefs Scale. In order to have an alternative measure of beliefs about relationships that the participants had not seen before, the Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989) was used. This 15-part questionnaire assessed for four romanticized beliefs about romantic relationships: Love Conquers All, Soul Mate/One and Only, Idealization of Partner, and Love at First Sight. Overall internal consistency reliability for the RBS was good, $r_\alpha = .868$. The beliefs represented in this scale are widely promoted in popular movies, specifically movies where the plot is focused primarily on romance.

Trailers. Each participant viewed movie trailers from one of the following genres: romantic comedy, romantic tragedy, nature-focused documentary. The romantic comedy trailers were taken from the movies *The Proposal*, *The Wedding Planner*, and *You've Got Mail*. The romantic tragedy trailers were taken from *Atonement*, *The Notebook*, and *The Fault in Our Stars*. The documentary trailers were *African Cats*, *Mission Blue*, and *Frozen Planet*. Combined, the three trailers in each condition lasted around seven minutes. These trailers were selected for their focus on relationships and content consistent with genre norms, such as character sickness and initial dislike between the main characters.

Procedure

Prior to coming into the lab, participants completed the pre-test as a part of a larger online study. The pretest included general demographics, the Genre Familiarity Task, and the Relationships Beliefs Inventory. Participants then came in to the lab in groups of up to three people. After consenting to participate, they sat down at a desktop and viewed the trailers together. Each set of trailers lasted approximately seven minutes.

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Once the trailers ended, each participant returned to his or her own computer and completed the online survey, which consisted of the post-RBI test, along with the Romantic Beliefs Scale.

Results

Initial Analysis

Due to the small number of men in each condition (six in condition 1, six in condition 2, and nine in condition 3) we were unable to reliably use gender as a covariate. As such, only data from female participants was included in further analysis.

Analysis

In order to determine whether scores on the Relationship Beliefs Inventory changed as a function of trailer condition, repeated measures ANCOVAs were conducted predicting post-test score on the RBI with pretest scores entered as a covariate. Separate analyses were conducted for each of the five subscales, controlling for condition, pre-test scores on the RBI, personality, and gender. Lifetime Romance exposure, as measured by the Genre Familiarity Task (Black, Barnes, & Capps, 2017), was also included in the analyses as a covariate. Figure 1 shows the average mean change for RBI Total and each subscale of the RBI.

RBI Total. The first regression analysis looked at participants' overall score on the Relationship Beliefs Inventory. No difference was found between participants who viewed the nature documentary trailers ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .461$), romantic comedy trailers ($M = 3.38$, $SD = .415$), and romantic tragedy trailers ($M = 3.37$, $SD = .446$), $F(2,89) = .604$, $p = .549$.

Disagreement is Destructive. Next, we conducted a regression analysis looking at the subscale Disagreement is Destructive. Again, no difference was found between participants who viewed the nature documentary trailers (M = 3.83, SD = .705), romantic comedy trailers (M = 3.81, SD = .607), and romantic tragedy trailers (M = 3.67, SD = .682), $F(2,89)$ = .072, p = .931.

RBI Mindreading is Expected. The next analysis looked at the subscale Mindreading is Expected and, once again, the same patterned emerged. No difference was found between participants who viewed the nature documentary trailers (M = 3.42, SD = .701), romantic comedy trailers (M = 3.46, SD = .531), and romantic tragedy trailers (M = 3.42, SD = .612), $F(2,89)$ = .196, p = .822.

RBI Partners Cannot Change. The analysis for the subscale Partners Cannot Change was also non-significant, with no difference found between participants who viewed the nature documentary trailers (M = 3.13, SD = .407), romantic comedy trailers (M = 3.34, SD = .668), and romantic tragedy trailers (M = 3.20, SD = .661), $F(2,89)$ = 2.136 , p = .124.

RBI Sexual Perfectionism. The next subscale was Sexual Perfectionism and once again the results were not significant (nature documentary trailers (M = 3.30, SD = .797), romantic comedy trailers (M = 3.15, SD = .835), and romantic tragedy trailers (M = 3.19, SD = .687)), $F(2,89)$ = 1.227, p = .298.

RBI The Sexes are Different. The analysis of the last subscale, the Sexes are Different, also did not yield a significant difference between nature documentary trailers (M = 3.19, SD = 1.061), romantic comedy trailers (M = 3.10, SD = .565), and romantic tragedy trailers (M = 3.30, SD = .815), $F(2, 89)$ = .691, p = .504.

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Romantic Beliefs Scale. Similarly to four out of the five sub-scales on the RBI, differences between scores on the Romantic Beliefs Scale also failed to reach statistical significance. Despite the novelty of this measure, participants in the documentary condition ($M = 4.58$, $SD = .976$), romantic comedy condition ($M = 4.71$, $SD = .558$), and romantic tragedy condition ($M = 4.38$, $SD = 1.015$) did not differ in their beliefs about romance, $F(2,89) = 1.178$, $p = .313$.

Discussion

In this experiment, participants were randomly assigned to view movie trailers from romantic tragedies, romantic comedies, or nature documentaries and subsequently reported on their own beliefs about romantic relationships. No significant differences were found between the scores of different trailer conditions in Study 2. Participants also did not differ in their scores on a new assessment of relationship beliefs they had not previously seen, the Romantic Beliefs Scale.

Although Study 1 showed a significant correlation between exposure to different genres and beliefs about relationships, in Study 2 randomly assigning participants to different types of romantic movie genres did not yield an increase in any maladaptive beliefs. This could be due to the short period of exposure, as participants were only engaged with their assigned genre for around seven minutes. Preexisting relationship beliefs may be too strong to be overcome by a one time exposure. The study also did not incorporate a measure of transportation, or how absorbed the participant was in the story. It may be the case that only participants who become adequately absorbed in a work of fiction are impacted by it.

General Discussion

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The purpose of these studies was to investigate the relationship between exposure to genre and the beliefs we hold about real-world relationships. Study 1 suggests that there is a correlation between what we read and what we expect from our romantic partners, specifically with respect to three genres of written fiction: Science Fiction/Fantasy, Romance, and the Classics. However, Study 2, which explored whether randomly assigning people to view either romantic movie trailers or a nonfiction control, found no causal effect of romantic fiction on participants' beliefs about a wide range of relationship beliefs. This research is an important step forward in understanding if and when fiction impacts our beliefs about real-world relationships.

The correlational findings from Study 1, in addition to suggesting that a wider variety of genres may be associated with beliefs about relationships than previously studied, also differ from past research on the Romance genre in several ways. For example, Fong et. al. (2015) found no significant correlation between exposure to romantic books and attitudes about sex and gender, while the current research found that individuals who read romance novels are more likely to assert that the sexes are inherently different. Conversely, research on other forms of media has shown various correlations between Romance and maladaptive relationship beliefs, such as the belief that mind reading is expected and stronger idealization of relationships as a whole (Shapiro & Kroegar, 1999; Hefner & Wilson, 2013), while our study showed no relationship between exposure to the romance genre and these beliefs. This difference may be due, in part, to the present study controlling for exposure to other written fiction genres. One notable aspect of our current findings is that, unlike the beliefs and behaviors found to correlate with Romance exposure in past research, the belief that the

sexes are different does not have as inherent relationship-focused component to it. It is also interesting to note that exposure to Science Fiction/Fantasy was associated with more realistic views on the world, even though these stories, by their nature, take place in unrealistic settings.

One key aspect of this study was the separation of the Classical and Contemporary literature genres. Past measures of exposure to written fiction grouped these two genres together, as they do share some characteristics. The Genre Familiarity Task (Black, Capps & Barnes, 2017) separates these two genres, since there are unique qualities each one possesses that the other does not. The current findings further support the validity of separating classical and contemporary fiction, since a correlation was found for one and not the other. However, it is possible that a relationship was found between classic books and relationship beliefs because participants reported significantly more exposure to this genre and much of their exposure likely took place as a part of their formal education.

While Study 2 failed to show a significant difference in the beliefs reported by participants who were randomly assigned to view non-fiction nature documentary and fictional romance movie trailers, this result may be due to a variety of limitations in the study design. For example, this study was limited by its short period of exposure. Each set of trailers participants watched lasted around seven minutes. It is possible that the short period of exposure failed to draw the participants' interest. Moreover, the abbreviated nature of movie trailers—which are advertisements, rather than stories in and of themselves—may have limited the potential for participants to become absorbed in the story (Green, 2000; Bal & Veltkamp, 2013; Johnson, 2012; Hall & Zwarun, 2012;

Taylor, 2015) or form relationships with the characters (Cohen, 1997; Cohen, 2004; Hoffner, 1996; Derrick, Gabriel, & Hugenberg, 2009). It is possible that fiction *can* affect our relationship beliefs, but only with longer-term exposure in which the viewer is cognitively and emotionally involved. Similarly, it is possible that a study investigating written fiction, rather than visual media, or fiction in other genres, such as Science Fiction/Fantasy or the Classics, may have yielded different results.

Nonetheless, it also possible that the correlation found in Study 1 is the result of either the effect of our beliefs on the fiction we choose to consume or a third variable exerting influence over both fiction exposure and relationship beliefs. It is possible that, when selecting what type of book we want to read or movie we watch, we are more likely to choose a genre that supports the beliefs we already hold about relationships. For example, many characters in Romance novels display strong gender roles, which could appeal to a reader who already believes that the sexes are different, while individuals who believe that disagreement can be constructive in relationships may be more drawn to genres like the Classics and Science Fiction/Fantasy, in which relationship conflict may be depicted as normal, rather than an obstacle to the story's goal. Future research is needed to explore whether priming specific relationship beliefs can indeed influence fiction preferences, as well as examining the role that other variables, such as education, imagination, prior experience with romantic relationships, and transportation may play in the relationships found in Study 1.

Taken as a whole, this work adds to the growing body of research on the impact fiction has on our real-world social lives. More importantly, it establishes genre as an

important variable in this relationship, suggesting that the characteristics and focus of each genre have a unique connection to our understanding of the social world.

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Table 1.

Relationship Beliefs Inventory and Genre Familiarity Task: Correlations

Variables	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12
1. Disagreement is Destructive	—	.549*	.453**	.277**	-.266**	-.241**	-.137**	-.226**	-.120**	-.088	-.173**	.055
2. Mindreading is Expected		—	.317**	.271**	.306**	-.273**	-.232**	-.251**	-.197**	-.096	-.261**	.073
3. Partners Cannot Change			—	.339**	.333**	-.099	-.070	-.193**	-.046	-.002	-.123*	-.052
4. The Sexes are Different				—	.172**	-.213**	-.266**	-.312**	-.150**	-.047	-.296**	-.060
5. Sexual Perfectionism					—	-.170**	-.149**	-.088	-.085	-.050	-.063	-.003
6. Classics						—	.691**	.539**	.696**	.478**	.584**	.020
7. Literary							—	.542**	.648**	.416**	.693**	.050
8. Fantasy								—	.514**	.405**	.757**	.149**
9. Mystery									—	.665**	.519**	.052
10. Romance										—	.337**	.135**
11. Science Fiction											—	.151**
12. Foils												—

Note: * = p < .05, ** = p < .01

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Table 2.

Regression models predicting subscales of the Romantic Beliefs scale from genre exposure, controlling for gender and personality.

Variable	Predictors	b	β	sr^2	p	R^2_{CHANGE}
Disagreement is Destructive						
Model 1						
Block 1	Gender	.090	.062	.004	.195	.152
	Extraversion	.097	.121	.013	.014	
	Conscientiousness	-.268	-.276	.071	.000	
	Openness	-.266	-.242	.055	.000	
	Foils	.024	.039	.078	.816	
Block 2	Gender	.100	.069	.004	.171	.048
	Extraversion	.048	.060	.003	.252	
	Conscientiousness	-.282	-.291	.077	.000	
	Openness	-.178	-.162	.021	.002	
	Foils	.039	.063	.004	.118	
	Classics	-.035	-.206	.016	.006	
	Contemporary Literary	.025	.096	.004	.193	
	Mystery	.029	.118	.005	.143	
	Romance	-.015	-.039	.001	.550	
	Science Fiction/d	-.026	-.184	.016	.008	
Mindreading is Expected						
Model 1						
Block 1	Gender	-.094	-.066	.004	.199	.029
	Extraversion	.129	.163	.025	.002	
	Conscientiousness	.009	.009	.000	.861	
	Openness	-.126	-.115	.013	.028	
	Foils	.042	.069	.005	.176	
Block 2	Gender	-.093	-.065	.004	.219	.090
	Extraversion	.060	.076	.005	.157	
	Conscientiousness	-.005	-.005	.000	.915	
	Openness	-.009	-.009	.000	.875	

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		B	β	sr²	p	R²
	Foils	.056	.092	.008	.070	
	Classics	-.026	-.152	.010	.054	
	Contemporary Literary	.000	.002	.000	.984	
	Mystery	-.005	-.019	.012	.821	
	Romance	.031	.082	.003	.231	
	Science Fiction/Fantasy	-.028	-.202	.019	.006	
Partners Cannot Change						
Model 1						
Block 1	Gender	-.004	-.003	.000	.956	.054
	Extraversion	.057	.079	.006	.130	
	Conscientiousness	-.152	-.173	.028	.001	
	Openness	-.167	-.167	.056	.001	
	Foils	-.032	-.058	.003	.251	
Block 2	Gender	-.056	-.043	.002	.423	.072
	Extraversion	.024	.033	.001	.545	
	Conscientiousness	-.169	-.192	.033	.000	
	Openness	-.118	-.118	.011	.033	
	Foils	-.019	-.034	.001	.502	
	Classics	-.005	-.030	.000	.702	
	Contemporary Literary	.018	.079	.003	.313	
	Mystery	.009	.042	.001	.627	
	Romance	.027	.078	.003	.261	
	Science Fiction/Fantasy	-.030	-.237	.026	.001	
The Sexes are Different						
Model 1						
Block 1	Gender	-.205	-.129	.016	.012	.057
	Extraversion	.109	.124	.039	.018	
	Conscientiousness	-.052	-.049	.002	.349	
	Openness	-.200	-.164	.025	.002	
	Foils	-.040	-.060	.003	.239	
Block 2	Gender	-.284	-.178	.025	.001	.162
	Extraversion	.014	.016	.000	.755	
	Conscientiousness	-.088	-.082	.006	.100	
	Openness	-.061	-.050	.002	.347	

		b		sr2	
	Foils	-.016	-.024	.001	.630
	Classics	.001	.003	.000	.968
	Contemporary Literary	-.034	-.121	.006	.111
	Mystery	.013	.048	.001	.558
	Romance	.071	.116	.014	.013
	Science Fiction/Fantasy	-.051	-.330	.050	.000
Sexual Perfectionism					
Model 1					
Block 1	Gender	-.253	-.174	.030	.001
	Extraversion	.077	.096	.009	.066
	Conscientiousness	-.066	-.067	.004	.199
	Openness	-.076	-.068	.004	.191
	Foils	-.001	-.002	.000	.963
Block 2	Gender	-.252	-.173	.026	.002
	Extraversion	.044	.055	.003	.319
	Conscientiousness	-.070	-.071	.005	.176
	Openness	-.018	-.017	.023	.766
	Foils	-.006	-.010	.000	.848
	Classics	-.027	-.156	.009	.054
	Contemporary Literary	-.025	-.096	.004	.232
	Mystery	.020	.083	.002	.340
	Romance	.025	.064	.002	.365
	Science Fiction/Fantasy	.001	.010	.000	.894

Note. N = 409. b = unstandardized slope; sr2 = semipartial correlation.

Figure 1.

Mean change in Relationship Beliefs Scale total and Subscale, from pre test to post test.
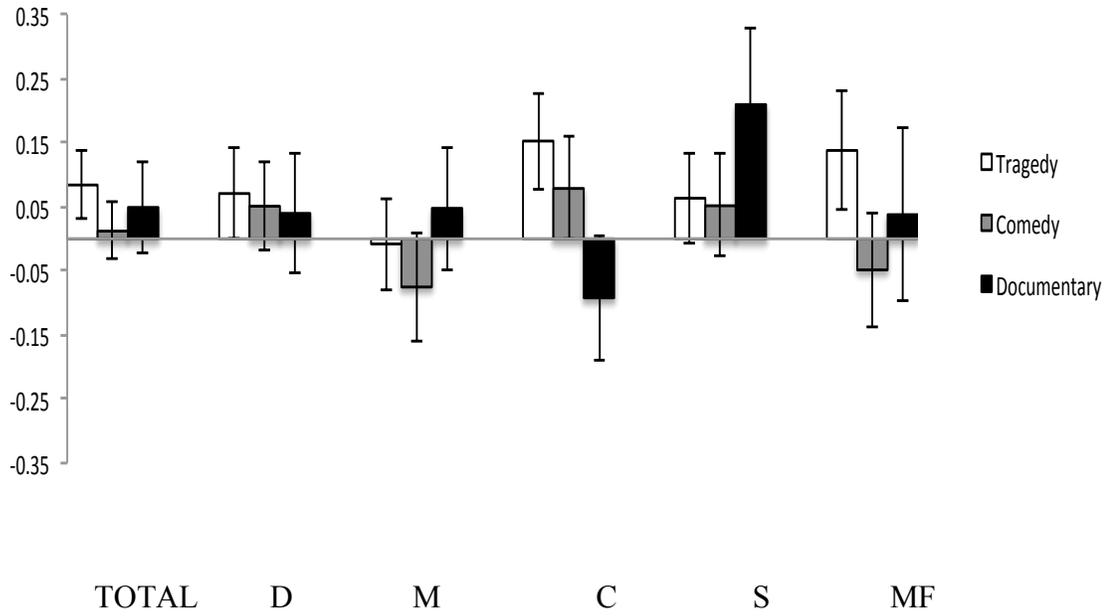
Note: * = P < .05. D = Disagreement is Destructive, M = Mindreading is Expected,
C = Partners Cannot Change, S = Sexual Perfectionism, MF = The Sexes are Different

Genre Familiarity Test

Genre	Author
Classics	
	Charlotte Bronte
	Charles Dickens
	Fyodor Dostoyevsky
	George Elliot
	William Faulkner
	F. Scott Fitzgerald
	Thomas Hardy
	Nathaniel Hawthorne
	Ernest Hemingway
	John Steinbeck
	Leo Tolstoy
	Anthony Trollope
	Mark Twain
	Oscar Wilde
	Virginia Woolf
Contemporary Literary	
	Michael Chabon
	Paulo Coelho
	Umberto Eco
	Gabriel Garcia Marquez
	Michel Houellebecq
	Jhumpa Lahiri
	Cormac McCarthy
	David Mitchell
	Toni Morrison
	Annie Proulx
	Philip Roth
	Salman Rushdie
	Richard Russo
	Jane Smiley
	Amy Tan
Fantasy	
	Terry Goodkind
	Neil Gaiman
	Robert Jordan
	Patrick Rothfuss
	George R. R. Martin
	Terry Pratchett
	Anne Bishop

Mercedes Lackey
Andrzej Sapkowski
David Eddings
Jim Butcher
J. R. R. Tolkien
Raymond E. Feist
R.A. Salvatore
Terry Brooks

Horror

Jack Ketchum
Peter Straub
Sarah Langan
Bryan Smith
Hunter Shea
Robert McCammon
Clive Barker
Ramsey Campbell
Jonathan Maberry
James A. Moore
Stephen King
James Herbert
William Peter Blatty
John Ajvide Lindqvist
Richard Laymon

Mystery/Thriller

James Patterson
Janet Evanovich
Michael Connelly
Harlan Coben
P. D. James
Dennis Lehane
Patricia Cornwell
John Grisham
Sue Grafton
Tess Gerritson
Diane Mott Davidson
Agatha Christie
 Lee Child
Dick Francis
Robert B Parker

Romance

Nora Roberts
Judith McNaught
Julia Quinn
Julie Garwood
Jayne Ann Krentz

Rosamunde Pilcher
Kathleen E. Woodiwiss
Danielle Steel
Debbie Macomber
Robyn Carr
Linda Lael Miller
Susan Elizabeth Phillips
Lisa Kleypas
Johanna Lindsey
Lynsay Sands

Science Fiction

Orson Scott Card
Isaac Asimov
Robert A. Heinlein
Arthur C. Clarke
Frank Herbert
Octavia Butler
Ann Leckie
John Scalzi
William Gibson
Cory Doctorow
Phillip K. Dick
Samuel R Delany
Hugh Howey
Karen Traviss
Connie Willis

Appendix B

Adult Attachment Scale (Collins & Read, 2008)

Depend

1. I find it difficult to allow myself to depend on others. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

2. People are never there when you need them. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

3. I am comfortable depending on others. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

4. I know that others will be there when I need them. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

5. I find it difficult to trust others completely. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

6. I am not sure that I can always depend on others to be there when I need them. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

Anxiety

7. I do not often worry about being abandoned. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

8. I often worry that my partner does not really love me. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

9. I find others are reluctant to get as close as I would like. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

10. I often worry my partner will not want to stay with me. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

11. I want to merge completely with another person. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

12. My desire to merge sometimes scares people away. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

Close

13. I find it relatively easy to get close to others. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

14. I do not often worry about someone getting too close to me. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

15. 1 am somewhat uncomfortable being close to others. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

16. I am nervous when anyone gets too close. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

17. I am comfortable having others depend on me. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

18. Often, love partners want me to be more intimate than I feel comfortable being. (1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

Appendix C

Big Five Personality Inventory (John, Donahue, & Kentle, 1991)

(1, strongly disagree; 2, disagree 3, neither agree nor disagree; 4, agree; 5, strongly agree)

1. I am someone who is talkative.

2. I am someone who tends to find fault with others.

3. I am someone who does a thorough job.

4. I am someone who is depressed, blue.

5. I am someone who is original, comes up with new ideas.

6. I am someone who is reserved.

7. I am someone who is helpful and unselfish with others.

8. I am someone who can be somewhat careless.

9. I am someone who is relaxed, handles stress well.

10. I am someone who is curious about many different things.

11. I am someone who is full of energy.

12. I am someone who starts quarrels with others.

13. I am someone who is a reliable worker.

14. I am someone who can be tense.

15. I am someone who is ingenious, a deep thinker.

16. I am someone who generates a lot of enthusiasm.

17. I am someone who has a forgiving nature.

18. I am someone who tends to be disorganized.

19. I am someone who worries a lot.

20. I am someone who has an active imagination.

21. I am someone who tends to be quiet.

22. I am someone who is generally trusting.

23. I am someone who tends to be lazy.

24. I am someone who is emotionally stable, not easily upset.

25. I am someone who is inventive.

26. I am someone who has an assertive personality.

27. I am someone who can be cold and aloof.

28. I am someone who perseveres until the task is finished.

29. I am someone who can be moody.

30. I am someone who values artistic, aesthetic experiences.

31. I am someone who is sometimes shy, inhibited.

32. I am someone who is considerate and kind to almost everyone.

33. I am someone who does things efficiently.

34. I am someone who remains calm in tense situations.

35. I am someone who prefers work that is routine.

36. I am someone who is outgoing, sociable.

37. I am someone who is sometimes rude to others.

38. I am someone who makes plans and follows through with them.

39. I am someone who gets nervous easily.

40. I am someone who likes to reflect, play with ideas.

41. I am someone who has few artistic interests.

42. I am someone who likes to cooperate with others.

43. I am someone who is easily distracted.

44. I am someone who is sophisticated in art, music, or literature.

Relationship Beliefs Inventory (Epstein & Eidelson,1982)

(1, I *strongly* believe that the statement is *false*; 2, I believe that the statement is *false;* 3, I believe that the statement is *probably false,* ore more false than true; 4, I believe that the statement is *probably true*, or more true than false; 5, I believe that the statement is *true*.; 6, I *strongly* believe that the statement is *true*)

1.If your partner expresses disagreement with your ideas, s/he probably does not think highly of you.

2. I do not expect my partner to sense all my moods.

3. Damages done early in a relationship probably cannot be reversed.

4. I get upset if I think I have not completely satisfied my partner sexually.

5. Men and women have the same basic emotional need.

6. I cannot accept it when my partner disagrees with me.

7.If I have to tell my partner that something is important to me, it does not mean that s/he is insensitive to me.

8. My partner does not seem capable of behaving other than s/he does now.

9. If I'm not in the mood for sex when my partner is, I don't get upset about it.

10. Misunderstandings between partners generally are due to inborn differences in psychological makeups of men and women.

11. I take it as a personal insult when my partner disagrees with an important idea of mine.

12. I get very upset if my partner does not recognize how I am feeling and I have to tell him/her.

13. A partner can learn to become more responsive to his/her partner's needs.

14. A good sexual partner can get himself/herself aroused for sex whenever necessary.

15. Men and women probably will never understand the opposite sex very well.

16. I like it when my partner presents views different from mine.

17. People who have a close relationship can sense each other's needs as if they could read each other's minds.

18. Just because my partner has acted in ways that upset me does not mean that s/he will do so in the future.

19. If I cannot perform well sexually whenever my partner is in the mood, I would consider that I have a problem.

20. Men and women need the same basic things out of a relationship.

21. I get very upset when my partner and I cannot see things the same way.

22. It is important to me for my partner to anticipate my needs by sensing changes in my moods.

23. A partner who hurts you badly once will probably hurt you again.

24. I can feel OK about my lovemaking even if my partner does not achieve orgasm.

25. Biological differences between men and women are not major causes of couples' problems.

26. I cannot tolerate it when my partner argues with me.

27. A partner should know what you are thinking or feeling without you having to tell.

28. If my partner wants to change, I believe that s/he can do it.

29. If my sexual partner does not get satisfied completely, it does not mean that I have failed.

30. One of the major causes of marital problems is that men and women have different emotional needs.

31. When my partner and I disagree, I feel like our relationship is falling apart.

32. People who love each other know exactly what each other's thoughts are without a

 word ever being said.

33. If you don't like the way a relationship is going, you can make it better.

34. Some difficulties in my sexual performance do not mean personal failure to me.

35. You can't really understand someone of the opposite sex.

36. I do not doubt my partner's feelings for me when we argue.

37. If you have to ask your partner for something, it shows that s/he was not "tuned

 into" your needs.

38. I do not expect my partner to be able to change.

39. When I do not seem to be performing well sexually, I get upset.

40. Men and women will always be mysteries to each other.

Appendix E

Romantic Beliefs Scale (Sprecher & Metts, 1989)

(Agree strongly = 7, Agree a good deal = 6, Agree somewhat = 5, Neither agree nor disagree = 4, Disagree somewhat = 3, Disagree a good deal = 2, Disagree strongly = 1.)

1. I need to know someone for a period of time before I fall in love with them.

2. If I were in love with someone, I would commit myself to him or her even if my parents and friends disapproved of the relationship.

3. Once I experience "true love", I could never experience it again, to the same degree, with another person.

4. I believe that to be truly in love is to be in love forever.

5. If I love someone, I know I can make the relationship work, despite any obstacles.

6. When I find my "true love" I will probably know it soon after we meet.

7. I'm sure that every new thing I learn about the person I choose for a ling-term commitment will please me.

8. The relationship I will have with my "true love" will be nearly perfect.

9. If I love someone, I will find a way for us to be together regardless of the opposition to the relationship, physical distance between us or any other barrier.

10. There will be only one real love for me.

11. If a relationship I have was meant to be, any obstacle (e.g. lack of money, physical distance, career conflicts) can be overcome.

12. I am likely to fall in love almost immediately if I meet the right person.

13. I expect that in my relationship, romantic love will really last; it won't fade with time.

14. The person I love will make a perfect romantic partner; for example, he/she will be

completely accepting, loving, and understanding.

15. I believe if another person and I love each other we can overcome any differences

and problems that may arise.