



BASED ON THE BEST-SELLING
WORLDWIDE PHENOMENON

**A representative film analysis
of the film *After We Collided***

*How a youth Hollywood film
establishes stereotypes around
domestic violence and alcoholism*

Lucie Lammers

After
We Collided

1. Summary

This analysis attempted to answer the question, "In what way does the youth film *After we collided* represent domestic violence and alcoholism?". To answer this question, the film *After we collided* was examined using a representative film analysis. The analysis was conducted using the three levels of media scholar John Fiske's codes of television called the level of representation, ideology, and reality. The examinations of the three levels of the codes of television were conducted through two protocols. By using this technique, it was possible to discover how the film represents domestic violence and alcoholism by analyzing how the four concepts of ideological gaslighting, hegemonic masculinity, victim blaming, and alcoholism bias are positioned in the film.

The research concept of ideological gaslighting revealed that *After we collided* provides insight into the psychological experiences of an abused woman and fully displays the abusers' strategies as the production is not limited in point of view shots from Hardin. The downplaying of abusers' behaviors and the addition of a male character function to confirm the ideology of patriarchy as women choose the wrong man and therefore have a skewed sense of judgment. These findings show the ideological gaslighting that *After we collided* performs. The ideological gaslighting in *After we collided* functions to pass on the conviction that only a small group of women awaits a fate as victims and to banish the idea that it is an increasing supremacy of male power. Analyzing the concept of hegemonic masculinity reveals that *After we collided* represents hegemonic masculinity through the performance of gender by the male character and by portraying the female partner in an underdog position to increase the male's dominance. Thus, the ideology of patriarchy is established as the feelings and rights of women are downplayed. The concept of Victim blaming revealed the film uses black costumes to represent Hardin as different'. So on, the film blames women for not recognizing and avoiding domestic violence. The woman is also positioned as 'other' for continuously going back to an abusive partner and represented as she enjoys the abuse. This accomplishes both the ideology of patriarchy and the ideology of sexual objectification. The concept of alcoholism bias reveals the film establishes the ideology of patriarchy as it confirms the idea that only some types of women fall for alcoholics.

The results of analyzing all four concepts show the ideology of patriarchy is established with all four of the concepts. It seems, therefore, that *After we collided* makes great efforts to perpetuate gender inequality. The representative film analysis thus indicates that alcoholism and domestic violence are represented in a harmful way in *After we collided*. Examining these results using the codes of television makes it possible to make a small contribution to the debate on domestic violence and alcoholism in film.

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2. Introduction

“Relationships should be easy,” actress Josephine Langford told fashion website *StyleCaster* after the youth film *After we collided* premiered.¹ Langford, who portrays main character Tessa Young, refers to the fact that the film portrays the unsafe relationship between main characters Hardin Scott and Tessa Young.² It is referred to as unsafe as alcohol use and domestic violence are an everyday thing. She describes the relationship between characters Hardin and Tessa as a ‘very difficult and challenging one’ referring to the large number of arguments the two lovers have. She even warns her fans by saying: “Their relationship is not the norm. If you’re in a similar situation, you must be very aware of what is going on”. This comment refers to Hardin's excessive alcohol use and the unsafe environment that is thereby created when he becomes aggressive. These quotes show that the actress of *After we collided* sees urgency in highlighting the representation of these topics in movies.

The *After*-film series is based on young-adult books written by Anna Todd and consists of four parts of which *After* is the first. The volume introduces the viewer to Tessa Young, a devoted student and dutiful daughter. It also introduces Hardin Scott, a dark, mysterious boy.³ It is interesting to discuss that these external features and behaviors already withhold stereotypes and contribute to the representation of alcoholism and domestic violence. For example, Tessa is portrayed as innocent by her behavior and therefore can be considered naive or stupid for falling for Hardin. The film ends with their breakup when Tessa finds out that Hardin only slept with her (initially) to win a bet with a friend to deflower her. This bet is made at a drunken game of truth or dare. The film *After we collided* is the sequel of teenage film *After* and follows the lives of Hardin Scott and Tessa Young after they broke up. While a depressed heartbroken Hardin falls back into old habits such as excessive drinking and aggression, Tessa enthusiastically starts her dream internship as an editor. The two continually get caught up in arguments due to jealousy, drinking and miscommunication. Although Tessa's friends and mother keep mentioning that their relationship is not going to end well, the blonde keeps going back to what is familiar to her: the unstable relationship with Hardin. This summary of the storylines of *After* and *After we collided* clearly shows the relationship between Tessa and Hardin as unsafe and unstable. As the concepts of alcoholism and domestic violence have been introduced, now the urgency of discussing the presence of these representations becomes clear.

Actress Josephine Langford sees urgency in warning her fans they should be very careful of being in similar situations like Hardin’s and Tessa’s. One reason Langford warns her fans could be that the film's target audience includes teenagers.⁴ This audience is very susceptible to representations, media scholar

¹ Jason Pham, “‘After We Collided’s Josephine Langford on If She Would Want a Relationship Like Tessa & Hardin’s,” *StyleCaster* (*StyleCaster*, October 23, 2020), <https://stylecaster.com/josephine-langford-after-we-collided/>.

² *After we collided*, directed by Roger Kumble. 2020; Los Angeles, CA: Open Road Films, DVD.

³ *After*, directed by Jenny Gage. 2019; Los Angeles, CA: Aviron Pictures, DVD.

⁴ Elle Hunt, “After We Collided: Does This Shock Hit Point the Way to Cinema's Future?,” *The Guardian* (*Guardian News and Media*, September 18, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/film/2020/sep/18/after-we-collided-ya-romance-cinemas-future>.

Veronica Hefner argues.⁵ She further argues this by stating that teens are sensitive to the beliefs that movies communicate. Teenagers could thus start believing that relationships like Hardin and Tessa's are the norm. Romantic media can therefore cultivate idealistic or even unrealistic relationship beliefs among audiences. Hefner continues arguing the association between viewing and beliefs is the strongest when youth watches romantic films to learn.⁶ While not every young person will watch *After we collided* to find out how a romantic relationship works, for those who do watch to learn the representation of the unsafe and unstable love relationship shown might be harmful. Young people may evaluate these representations as an ideal relationship. The audience even compares their own relationships to the represented love on screen, media scholar Jono van Belle agree.⁷ Media scholar Timothy Shary argues that teen movies are made by adults and that they are therefore unrepresentative of youth. Films seem to reflect teenagers' life and therefore, teenagers compare what is represented to their own life. However, this is in fact not even accurate. As young people are more susceptible to be influenced by representations in stories, they might conclude that their own relationship is not sufficient. Young people might adopt these ideas because their relationship is not like Tessa and Hardin's. This possibly causes cultivate idealistic and unrealistic relationship beliefs. Based on the narrative elements in the film, which will be discussed later, this influence on teenagers may seem unrealistic. It can be argued for viewers how undesirable this relationship is. However, if a film adds elements that romanticize physical and psychological abuse, it is already much more plausible that young people (may) adopt these beliefs. *After we collided* accomplishes this with situations such as passionate sex after arguments (a reward for inappropriate behavior). This romanticizes the relationship between Hardin and Tessa.

Teenagers might take on how gender roles in *After we collided* are distributed, allowing domestic violence and destructive alcohol use in relationships to be normalized. Tessa's actions (like passive acceptance of the abuse) and Hardin's actions (alcohol abuse and violent abuse) represent gender stereotypes and so on establish the ideology of patriarchy. Media scholar Tessa Perkins argues that stereotypes are not merely reflections of ideologies, but 'selections and arrangements of values and their relevance to specific roles'.⁸ These ideals and beliefs that are established through films are strongly related to the concept of ideology which social scholar Malcolm B. Hamilton argues as 'a system of collectively held normative and reputedly factual ideas and beliefs and attitudes advocating a particular pattern of social relationships and arrangements, and/or aimed at justifying a particular pattern of conduct, which its proponents seek to promote, realize, pursue or maintain'.⁹ It is interesting to analyze

⁵ Hefner, Veronica, "From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate: The Influence of Romantic Ideals in Popular Films on Young People's Beliefs about Relationships," *Communication Monographs*, no. 2 (October 3, 2011): 25, <https://doi-org.proxy.library.uu.nl/10.1080/03637751.2013.776697>.

⁶ Hefner, Veronica, "From Love at First Sight to Soul Mate," 25.

⁷ Belle, Jono van. 2022. "Love: Interpretative Film Strategy," in *Mediatization of Emotional Life* (London, London: Routledge): 75–90.

⁸ Tessa E. Perkins, "Rethinking Stereotypes," in *Ideology and Cultural Production*, red. Michele Barrett, Philip Corrigan, Annette Kuhn and Janet Wolff (London: Croom Helm, 1979): 141.

⁹ B. Hamilton, Malcolm, "The Elements of the Concept of Ideology," *Political Studies* 35, no. 1 (1987): 23, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-9248.1987.tb00186.x>.

which cultivative idealistics *After we collided* establishes since this allows a statement to be made about how the film represents alcoholism and domestic violence. Film scholar Danny Wedding argues about alcohol use in films that positive references about alcohol use outnumber negative references, and the potential risks of alcohol abuse and alcoholism are seldom portrayed in his opinion.¹⁰ Drinkers are characterized as more attractive, more romantically active and as people with a higher socioeconomic status than nondrinkers. On the other hand, they are represented as more aggressive. The tendency to portray alcohol use in films in a positive way has due to trends extended to teenager films as well. Alcoholism is romanticized by casting high status figures, which teenagers look up to. This is problematic, media scholar Wedding argues, as binge drinking is a serious health problem among U.S. youth.¹¹ Media scholar Norman Denzin agrees as he argues that the number of popular films made about alcoholism even qualifies the alcoholic film as an independent genre.¹² Unlike this, feminine studies scholar Diane L. Shoos argues that within mainstream Hollywood cinema the domestic violence film does not exist.¹³ Popular Hollywood film genres such as the Gothic romance, the suspense thriller, the horror film, the musical biopic, the maternal melodrama, and the female action film have been used as vehicles for domestic violence stories. Although the "domestic violence" film does not exist, according to Shoos, other genres are "packed" with the subject matter. As in alcoholic films, well-known actors are used to attract audiences.¹⁴ In this way, alcoholism and domestic violence integrate as topics in the Hollywood film circuit.

It is thus interesting to explore alcoholism and domestic violence in the sequel film *After we collided* because the representation of these concepts increases in teen movies. I chose the sequel as my case study as the film represents the relapse of Hardin into old harmful habits, such as aggression, drinking and manipulating. Since this movie is a popular film among teenagers and was released recently in 2020, it is natural to analyze this movie. The film represents domestic violence, disparity between genders, and alcoholism and so on establishes stereotypes. Stereotypes are based on an ideological point of view and as teenagers might adopt these beliefs, these ideologies might be problematic. How the film *After we collided* reinforces ideologies thus must be analyzed. Based on the research question 'In which way does the youth film *After we collided* represent domestic violence and alcoholism?' To answer this research question, a theoretical framework must be developed first. In this framework the stereotypes surrounding domestic violence, alcoholism and genders are discussed. Secondly, the method of this representative film analysis is explained, which includes the explanation of selecting scenes. Thirdly, an

¹⁰ Wedding, Danny, "Alcoholism in the Western Genre: The Portrayal of Alcohol and Alcoholism in the Western Genre." *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education* 46, no. 2 (December 22, 2000): 4. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ648436>.

¹¹ Ibid, 5.

¹² Norman K. Denzin, "Reading the Alcoholism Film," in *Hollywood Shot by Shot: Alcoholism in American Cinema* (New Brunswick, Aldine Transaction, 2017), 13.

¹³ Diane L. Shoos, "introduction; Representing Domestic Violence, Regalvanizing the Revolution," in *Domestic Violence in Hollywood Film: Gaslighting* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), 175.

¹⁴ Ibid, 176.

Lucie Lammers, 2197693
MA Film and television Cultures ((MCMV22008)
Philipp Keidl
Wordcount 10127

analysis elaborates how the film *After we collided* represents domestic violence, alcoholism, and genders. Lastly, a conclusion is formulated.

3. Theoretical framework

The mid-1990s is marked as the start of a steady stream of subplots and backstories produced for countless films and television dramas about intimate partner violence, media scholar Diane L. Shoos argues.¹⁵ Most of these Hollywood films establish the representation of men as abusers and women as victims. This emerges when films stereotype abusive men as monstrous “others”. This otherness is linked to stereotypes of race, ethnicity, and class. Stereotypes around domestic violence are established by portraying abusers as outside the bounds of normality and abused women as responsible for abuse. By “outside the bounds of normality” is meant that the person is clearly different from ordinary people.¹⁶ For example, by becoming publicly stupidly drunk or differently than the standards prescribed by society. This is what Shoos means by the concept of ideological gaslighting, namely constructing contradicting messages that merge into humans’ attitudes and biases.¹⁷ An example of a bias is the unfair idea that an abused woman created the situation herself by choosing the wrong man. In the film *Gaslighting* main character Candy is doubting her mental health because she is psychologically manipulated by her boyfriend (Sikes and Mays 2021).¹⁸ However, it is her boyfriend that falls outside the bounds of normality, the film blames Candy for staying with him by clearly making visible that her boyfriend is unsafe for her. Media scholars Tikik Indriyana and Choirul Ulil Albab argue that film carries out socialization and social change, gives status, and encourages stereotypes.¹⁹ The most important function of stereotypes is to define who is clearly within and who is clearly beyond it, insisting on non-existing boundaries, film scholar Richard Dyer continues to argue. This is especially clear with stereotypes dealing with social categories that are invisible, like alcoholism.²⁰ It is impossible to tell by the way someone looks that she or he belongs in a certain category. Alcohol use is clearly in this category as it is difficult to draw a line between harm-free and harmful drinking. Yet, stereotypes can. Both the ongoing stream of films about intimate partner violence as well as the stereotypes they establish therefore confirm why it is important to understand how *After we collided* represents domestic violence and alcoholism.

That it is important to analyze these subjects in *After we collided* is evidenced as it regularly represents domestic violence based on hegemonic masculinity. Gender scholar Neşe Şenel argues the dominant masculinity model is among others expected to be strong, powerful, heterosexual, respected and honored.²¹ Although hegemonic masculinity is a form of masculinity attractive to only a few, it

¹⁵ Shoos, “introduction,” 175.

¹⁶ Ibid, 178.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *Gaslighting*, directed by Mays, Mariah, and Samantha Sikes (Pictures N Atlanta, 2021).

<https://www.amazon.com/Gaslighting-Nicholas-Sikes/dp/B08TT5JCT4>

¹⁹ Indriyana, Tikik and Ulil Albab, Choirul, “Blaming the victim: Representation the victim of rape in M.F.A film,” *Informasi* 50, no. 1 (2020): 47-8, doi: <http://doi.org/10.21831/informasi.v50i1.27861>.

²⁰ Richard Dyer, “The role of stereotypes,” in *The Matter of Images: Essays on Representations* (London: Routledge, 2002), 16-17.

²¹ Şenel, Neşe. “From Hegemonic Masculinity to Masculinity Crisis: The Exploration of the Failure of Idealized Masculinity on the White Screen,” *A Journal of Identity and Culture*, no. 8 (February 20, 2017): 30. <https://dergipark.org.tr/en/pub/mjic/issue/43442/530115>.

dominates other forms of masculinities and women through power. Gender scholar Javaid argues hegemonic masculinity in film is portrayed through a male protagonist who invokes heterosexual privileges and hegemonic masculinity to maintain power and dominance over "his" property. A film hereby emphasizes the protagonist's dominance and power. These aspects are necessary for men to construct hegemonic masculinity. The representation of hegemonic masculinity in *After we collided* means for the representation of women that they are shown in an underdog position in intimate relationships, gender scholar Abigail Reed argues. This is harmful as they imply that the male is dominant, and the female body is meant for him.²² On a different note, media studies show exposure to these kinds of gender stereotypes may have a positive effect on the increase of sexism, gender scholar Dana Och argues.²³ An example from *After we collided* contains a scene where Hardin uninvited and unannounced visits Tessa's hotel room and almost attacks a colleague of Tessa for being in Tessa's bathroom. However, they broke up, Hardin still checks on Tessa. Before hearing the real story, being that the colleague spilled red wine and Tessa was trying to help him, Hardin is already furious. Hardin takes no account of Tessa in his (aggressive) actions. It seems as if Tessa agrees to this meddling and Hardin's need to control her.²⁴ Shoos description of an abused woman seems very applicable to Tessa: 'a woman who is exposed to any forcible physical or psychological behavior by a man to get her to do what he wants without considering her rights'.²⁵ Since the arguments above about how hegemonic masculinity is represented in film are clearly recognizable in *After we collided*, it is interesting to analyze how the film establishes these stereotypes.

It is important to study ideology in *After we collided* as the costumes function as a way of victim blaming Tessa and so on contribute to sustaining a patriarchal ideology. Victim blaming refers to assigning fault to the people who are the victim of violence or wrongdoing. It is accomplished by representing women as objects, media scholars Indriyana and Albab argue. Heterosexual relationships are characterized by the ideology of sexual objectification. This supports sexual violence against women as films portrays men as subjects/masters and women as objects/slaves.²⁶ Women are represented in films like they should accept all the behavior they have to deal with. The victim is portrayed like she enjoys the abuse, like the moments when she genuinely does receive love. Therefore, the victim must be responsible for the sexual violence that befell her and so on the female victim is pressured by patriarchal ideology that in fact she really wants it, Indriyana and Albab continue to argue. Films communicate personal characteristics including the distinction of gender, for example, through the way a character is dressed. This is why costumes are very suitable for instilling ideology.²⁷ Social scholars

²² Reed, Abigail, "Fifty Shades of Grey: Representations and Merchandising," *The Political Economy of Communication* 7, no. 2 (2019): 13, <http://polecom.org/index.php/polecom/article/view/112>.

²³ Och, Dana, "The Mainstream Cult of Fifty Shades of Grey: Hailing Multiple Women Audiences," in *Communication, Culture and Critique* 12, no. 2 (2019): 223, <https://doi.org/10.1093/ccc/tcz017>.

²⁴ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 3.

²⁵ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

²⁶ Indriyana and Albab, "Blaming the victim," 55.

²⁷ Ibid.

Joanne B. Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins argue dress expresses gender differentiations through, for example, color, shape, and texture. Prior to verbal communication humans look at clothing, establish a person's gender identity and make expectations for types of behavior (social roles) based on this identity.²⁸ The color of clothing is important as well for instilling ideology, social scholars Adam L. Alter, Chadly Stern, Yael Granot, and Emily Balcetis argue.²⁹ People associate darkness such as the night with negativity, while lightness is associated with positivity and safety. Which also explains why villains are described as "blackguards". The 'bad is black' association causes dark-clad actors to be seen as bad.³⁰ The scholars continue to argue that physical features are more influential in differentiating people and assessing whether someone is trustworthy than traits and behavior. Media scholar John Fiske agrees as he argues the physical differences costumes offer are used for communicating ideologies by condensing ideologies into material social codes. For example, a hero/ine wears colors and beautiful costumes while the villain wear clothes less tasteful or less expensive. These physical differences are bearers of ideologies of, for example, class.³¹ The Hollywood film *Sleeping with the enemy* stereotypically dresses Martin, its protagonist, in a black blouse with black pants that immediately betrays his abusive side as he never wears anything else (Joseph Ruben 1991).³² This costume communicates that it is stupid of his girlfriend not to have recognized his abusive side from the beginning. The popular image of the abused man is that the abuse is beyond his control, Shoos argues. However, the essence of stereotypes of the abused woman is that she is responsible for or could have prevented the abuse.³³

This formula in which the abused victim gets blamed is also recognizable in the representation of alcoholism in film, as gender also determines what kind of role a person has in an alcoholic relationship, media scholar Norman Denzin argues.³⁴ This means that not only films about domestic violence perform victim blaming, but alcoholism films do as well according to Denzin. This is proven with what Denzel calls the "Alcoholism alibi", which refers to the female partner of the alcoholic. He argues alcoholic films communicate to the audience that only a special type of woman is attracted to alcoholics as only certain types of men become alcoholics. Films communicate that the female partner must also be a sick person, otherwise she would not be in love with an alcoholic.³⁵ Women are often represented in alcoholism films as the long-suffering wife or girlfriend. They form the meter of the effects of alcoholic use on love, work, and intimacy. Women define the alcoholics range in society.³⁶ Is the alcoholic doing well, the woman probably is as well. Does he drink more than he should, the woman

²⁸ Joanne B. Eicher and Mary E. Higgins, "Definition and Classification of Dress: Implications for Analysis of Gender Roles," in *Dress and gender* (Oxford: Berg Publishers, Inc. 1992), 15-16.

²⁹ Adam L. Alter et al., "The 'Bad Is Black' Effect," *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin* 42, no. 12 (November 17, 2016): 1653–65, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0146167216669123>.

³⁰ Ibid, 1655.

³¹ John Fiske, "Some television, some topics, some terminology," in *Television Culture* (London: Routledge, 2011), 3-4.

³² *Sleeping with the enemy*, directed by Joseph Ruben (Twentieth Century Fox, 1991), <https://www.pathe-thuis.nl/film/23421/sleeping-with-the-enemy>

³³ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

³⁴ Norman K. Denzin, "Reading the Alcoholism Film," 13.

³⁵ Ibid, 14.

³⁶ Ibid.

suffers and so does their intimacy, their friendships with others and so on. In *Dolores Claiborne* this stereotype is represented as Dolores kills her alcoholic and abusive husband. The film suggests Dolores must be a sick person, otherwise she would just have divorced her partner instead of killing him and she would not have married an alcoholic in the first place (Taylor Hackford 1995).³⁷ Films first include drinking as a manner to enrich social bonds, but often portray it later in the film as a ‘poison’ that destroys these bonds, media scholars Michael Katovich and Sarah Rosenthal Vaughan argue. In this way the use of alcohol is connected to the protagonists lowest and highest moments and so on blames the person as the problem, and not the alcohol.³⁸ Denzin argues the alcoholics violence, loneliness and desperateness are universal features of social life.³⁹ The argued concepts show how films establish dominant ideologies in society. Indriyana and Albab argue these ideologies can only be broken through reintegrating feminine values into male societies that have been created by patriarchal ideology.⁴⁰

³⁷ *Dolores Claiborne*, directed by Taylor Hackford (Castle Rock Entertainment, 1995), https://www.pathe-this.nl/film/33898/dolores-claiborne?gclid=EAIaIQobChMjKrorfa_wIVvoODBx10-gHIEAMYASAAEglqIPD_BwE

³⁸ Michael Katovich and Sarah Rosenthal Vaughan, “Alcoholism and The Simpsons: Connecting Symbolic Interactionism and Pastiche” in *The Astructural Bias Charge: Myth or Reality?* (Bingley: Emerald Group Publishing Limited, 2016), 191.

³⁹ Norman K. Denzin, “Reading the Alcoholism Film,” 13.

⁴⁰ Indriyana and Albab, “Blaming the victim,” 55.

4. Method

Exploring how the film *After we collided* contributes to the representation of domestic violence and alcoholism is conducted based on a representative film analysis. To elaborate on this, the codes of television according to media scholar John Fiske are applied. For this analysis specific scenes were chosen and therefore these as well as the selection requirements, will now be elaborated. Then, the protocols to analyze these scenes are discussed.

The scenes were selected on ground of the following requirements. A criterion concerned that the scenes I studied to analyze the representation of domestic violence and alcoholism included both Tessa and Hardin, just one of them or at least one of them with someone else. This characteristic is urgent as this analysis involves the representation of alcoholism and the representation of domestic violence in the love relationship between Hardin and Tessa. Scenes without dialogue were analyzed just as well as scenes including dialogue since acts without dialogue such as fighting or getting knocked out by drunkenness can just as easily indicate alcoholism or domestic violence. The fifteen scenes that met these requirements were then analyzed. Conducting an analysis is based on the codes of television according to Fiske. These will reveal which stereotypes *After we collided* represents and how the film reinforces ideologies.

When performing a representation analysis, Fiske separates the codes into the three levels reality, representation, and ideology.⁴¹ These levels conduct multiple codes, like the social, technical, representative, and ideological codes. For example, the representational code is interesting to analyze in scenes where Hardin and Tessa argue and scream as this code includes analyzing conflicts, actions, and dialogues. Analyzing the social codes according to Hardin's (drunk) appearance, environment (wandering bottles of liquor) and behavior (aggression) is as well helpful to analyze the representation of alcoholism and domestic violence in the film. When scenes with arguments are displayed, it is also interesting to study the applied technics, like zooms on alcohol or a faster camera technique during discussions. These technical codes include analyzing camerawork, lighting, editing, music, and sound.⁴² These three codes are all-encompassing because of their diversity.

As ideology is created with reality and representation, it is after analyzing the previously named codes possible to analyze the ideological codes. These include class, gender, and capitalism and are useful to conclude what ideologies the film communicates. Fiske argues that the example of a representative convention where women show a lack of knowledge that men do possess and give it to these women is an example of the ideological code of patriarchy.⁴³ He argues ideological codes work to organize the other codes into a set of meanings that shapes the common sense of a society. The social, technical, representative, and ideological codes of television thus offer a suitable way to study the

⁴¹ John Fiske, "Some television, some topics, some terminology," 3-4.

⁴² Ibid, 5.

⁴³ Ibid, 9.

stereotypes the film establishes. Therefore, the fifteen chosen scenes are now elaborated on according to the codes of television.

Scene number	Active codes	Makes a statement about alcoholism/ domestic violence
1	Social: appearance, speech, expression, dress Technical: camera, music	Alcoholism
2	Social: appearance, environment, dress Technical: sound Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
3	Social: appearance, environment, dress, behavior, speech, expression, make-up Technical: music Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
4	Social: environment, appearance, behavior, speech, expression, make-up Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
5	Social: environment, appearance, behavior, expression, make-up Technical: editing, sound Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
6	Social: appearance, behavior, speech, expression, make-up Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
7	Social: environment, dress, behavior, expression, make-up Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism
8	Social: appearance, make-up, behavior, speech, expression, dress, environment Technical: editing, music Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism and domestic violence

9	Social: appearance, behavior, expression, make-up Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism and domestic violence
10	Social: environment, appearance, behavior, make-up, speech, expression Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism and domestic violence
11	Social: appearance, environment, dress, make-up, behavior, speech and expression Technical: camera, editing Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism
12	Social: appearance, environment, dress, make-up, behavior, speech and expression Technical: editing, camera, music Representational: dialogue	Alcoholism and domestic violence
13	Social: appearance, environment, dress, behavior, speech, expression Technical: editing Representational: dialogue	Domestic violence
14	Social: appearance, environment, dress, behavior, speech, expression, make-up Technical: editing, music, sound	Alcoholism and domestic violence
15	Social: appearance, dress, behavior, expression Technical: editing, music	Alcoholism

It is notable that domestic violence (scenes 2 until 6, 8 until 10, 12 until 14) and alcoholism (scenes 1,7 until 15) appeared together in many scenes. An overlap can therefore be seen in the analysis. The codes of television mentioned above were identified by creating two protocols. One that examines level reality and one that examines level representation. These formats are shown below to support the analysis.

Level of “reality”

Scene	Timecode	Character	Appearance	Environment	Dress	Make-up	Behavior	Speech	Expression

Level of “representation”

Scene	Timecode	Camera	Lighting	Editing	Music	Sound

By examining the level reality, a statement can be made about how the social codes appearance, environment, dress, makeup, behavior, speech, and expression are integrated into this film. By examining the level representation, a statement can be made about how the representational and technical codes of dialogue, camera, lighting, editing, music, and sound are integrated in *After we collided*. As the film reinforces ideologies through various codes a statement can be made about the third level, ideology. Formulating an answer to the central question could be simplified by splitting the main question into sub-questions that help analyze the concepts. The sub-questions are listed below:

1. How is gaslighting represented through the three levels of Fiske?
2. How is hegemonic masculinity represented through the three levels of Fiske?
3. How is victim blaming represented through the three levels of Fiske?
4. How is the alcoholic bias represented through the three levels of Fiske?

5. Analysis

The next chapters are divided in the concepts of ideological gaslighting, hegemonic masculinity, victim blaming and the alcoholic bias. Analyzing the chosen scenes according to media scholar John Fiske's codes of television reveals how the film *After we collided* represents alcoholism and domestic violence. Analyzing these codes shows how ideology in this film is established.

5.1 Ideological gaslighting

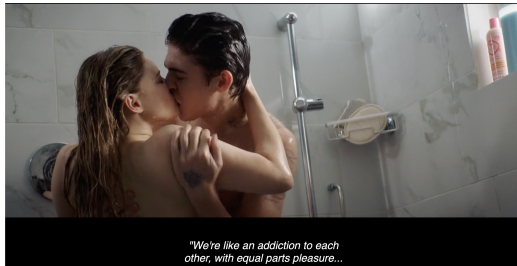
5.1.1 Hardin

In *After we collided*, Hardin's transition into a good person functions as a way of downplaying behaviors like gaslighting and dismissing it as a tool to achieve a goal. The film suggests by using gaslighting in a casual way that it is not related to practicing control or abusive strategies to gender dominance but that it is connected to self-improvement. The representation of abuse by the lead role is that being abusive is something that comes with working on yourself. This is harmful since it is justified as something that should be tolerated by others. *After we collided* thus uses ideological gaslighting to represent abusive behavior, that would normally be considered intolerable, as normal. Shoos argues the identity of the abusive man in film forms a tension as films use ideological gaslighting to imply distinctions between 'real' and 'false' romances and 'abusive guys' and 'normal guys'.⁴⁴ That Hardin's abusive behavior is condoned by the film is evident in the following scene in one of the final parts of the film (still 1). When Hardin breaks up with Tessa, his voice over can be heard while she reads what appears to be his goodbye-letter to her: "We're like an addiction to each other, with equal parts pleasure and pain... And as for that other night, that girl, she was one of my former conquests. I had to apologize for my past to have a future with you, but fate just... seems to get in our way."⁴⁵ These words to Tessa render all his mistreatments to his 'former self'. There is no suggestion of other motives for his behavior like being abusive by nature. This representation nuances his obvious need for control. This behavior appears mainly in the form of continual texting and calling. His actions are however represented as manly and responsible. The film seems to suggest that it is precisely admirable that he works so hard on himself. Thus, although *After we collided* shows how Hardin is an abusive character by representing scenes where he attacks people, his abusive behavior is portrayed as something beyond his control as he merely falls back into old habits that he can't really do anything about. The film suggests that Hardin's desire is to become a better person and so on represents him as a 'normal guy' as discussed by Shoos. However, his relapses

⁴⁴ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

⁴⁵ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 14.

in old habits are portrayed as his problem directly as well, as his 'former self' still gets in the way sometimes. Ideological gaslighting in film is according to Shoos used to establish stereotypes by portraying someone as outside the bounds of normality. In *After we collided* ideological gaslighting is used in reverse as Hardin is abusive but represented as a normal guy.



Still 1 *After we collided*, 01:28:39, Hardin's voice over reads the letter aloud and accompanies flashbacks, Pathé Thisis

5.1.2 Tessa

After we collided establishes the representation that women are incapable in choosing a normal, good man. This, in turn, implies stupidity. The film does this by introducing, in addition to main characters Tessa and Hardin, a savior named Trevor, a gentle, respecting type who is totally into her. According to Shoos, adding savior characters helps construct contradicting messages that merge into humans' attitudes and biases.⁴⁶ The introduction of this intelligent, hardworking colleague of Tessa suggests that Tessa is responsible for her bad experiences as she clearly dates the wrong man. Although Hardin's actions are justified by the perspective that his relapses into old habits are acceptable as he works on himself, many of his actions clearly constitute domestic violence aspects. The addition of a rescuer has an ideological function since adding this rescuer undermines critique of male dominance. After all, there is hardly anything to be said about this savior. He is dressed neat, speaks formal English, and behaves courteously. However, by not allowing the romance to develop far, the ideology of women choosing wrong man is established. The protagonist continues to choose the wrong man herself, despite better options and clear indications that the situation will be different, better, with the second man. Because, although Trevor hints that Hardin is not the right man for Tessa as "his sister has struggled with addiction her whole life and it (Tessa and Hardin's relationship) is not going to end well," Tessa does not follow him when he is transferred to another city for work (still 2).⁴⁷ This takes away the possibility of finding depth in a relationship with Trevor. A narrative like this communicates judgment of the woman for choosing the wrong man. After all, the film thus clearly suggests Tessa should be able to tell the difference between "normal" boy Trevor and "abusive" boy Hardin. This is accompanied with judgement about the victim in how wrong she acts for choosing Hardin instead of a good man, implying that

⁴⁶ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

⁴⁷ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 10.

ideological gaslighting is infrequent and abnormal. Therefore, the film questions woman's reasoning and power of discernment and helps perpetuate the stereotype that women are incapable of picking a good partner. This functions to establish the ideological code of patriarchy to portray women as less intelligent than men, thus contributing to a hierarchy in society in which men are higher than women.



Still 2 *After we collided*, 01:09:35, Tessa stubbornly responds to Trevor's warning, Pathé Thuis

5.1.3 Findings

After we collided provides insight into the psychological experiences of an abused woman and fully displays the abusers' strategies as the production is not limited in point of views from Hardin. Because the abuser has as much as or perhaps even more screentime than the victim, the film positions domestic violence as its main narrative. The downplaying of abusers' behaviors and the addition of a male character to confirm the ideology that women choose the wrong man and thus have a skewed sense of judgment show the ideological gaslighting that *After we collided* performs. The ideology of patriarchy is established as women are represented as stupid for choosing wrong man. The representation that man would never be so stupid, creates gender inequality. This visibility redetermines what viewers define as domestic violence as the film defines psychological abuse as a normal thing and adds a formula in which rescuers fail as potential partners. This in turn communicates that women are really in control of being abused after all. The ideological gaslighting in *After we collided* functions to pass on the conviction that only a small group of women awaits a fate as victims and to banish the idea that it is an increasing supremacy of male power. These representations enter the beliefs of children, the future society, through watching films. As a result, *After we collided* contributes to a problematic image of domestic violence and gender inequality.

5.2 Hegemonic masculinity

5.2.1 Hardin

After we collided represents hegemonic masculinity through the performance of gender by Hardin. This hegemony is demonstrated through interactions and his relationship with Tessa. The easiest to recognize

is the use of costume to stereotype hegemonic masculinity. As social scholars Joanne B. Eicher and Mary Ellen Roach-Higgins argue, films communicate characters characteristics by their costumes.⁴⁸ Adam L. Alter, Chadly Stern, Yael Granot, and Emily Balcetis continue to argue the association of 'bad is black' causes dark-clad actors to be seen as bad. Hardin wears black long-sleeved shirts with black jeans in every scene, which forms a predictability of the man's taste.⁴⁹ The 'bad is black' association emphasizes the storyline, there to help identify Hardin as a dark, untrustworthy man. Another appearance-related way of representing hegemonic masculinity is through Hardin's tattoos. In one of the first scenes Hardin takes another tattoo. He is called a masochist by his tattoo artist for craving the pain (still 3).⁵⁰ His arms, back and torso are full of tattoos of, for example, a dead tree, snake, and black rose. Once again black, relating to the 'bad is black' association. The subjects of his tattoos can be associated with destruction and function to emphasize his masculinity. As Hardin is the only one with many obvious tattoos, it seems like the film uses tattoos and black clothes to establish his dominance and emphasize his abusive side.

Another way of contributing to the representation of hegemonic masculinity is the use of fights between Hardin and Tessa. The fights allow the film to develop the romantic relationship between Tessa and Hardin as it shows Hardin's masculinity, but also functions to deepen their bond as they get to comment on each other's lives and become closer when the fight is over. Gender scholar Neşe Şenel argues the dominant masculinity model is among others expected to be strong, powerful, heterosexual, respected and honored.⁵¹ This argument confirms that Hardin's looking for discussions and fights functions to represent the dominant masculinity model. The use of verbal fights is used by Hardin and Tessa and acts to build tension with the audience. However, physical violence is only used by Hardin as he yells to his father and attacks him at the Christmas party (still 4).⁵² The fact that Hardin is never attacked back and is the only one in the film using physical violence establishes his dominance. Hegemonic masculinity is represented by making sure Hardin's sexuality and masculinity are very clear. Hardin and Tessa have sex countless times and Hardin only engages in stereotypical activities like drinking alcohol and partying with hot girls and his male friends. When participating, on Tessa's request, in a hot yoga session, he only lays on his tummy making comments about Tessa's bottom. His apathy shows that he does not think this is a male activity and therefore one he should do. Hardin's masculinity is defined by his relationship with Tessa and his privilege to physical violence.

⁴⁸ Joanne B. Eicher and Mary E. Higgins, "Definition and Classification of Dress," 15-16.

⁴⁹ Alter et al., "The 'Bad Is Black' Effect," 1665.

⁵⁰ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 2.

⁵¹ Şenel, Neşe, "From Hegemonic Masculinity to Masculinity Crisis," 21.

⁵² Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 8.



Still 3 After we collided, 00:08:34, Hardin getting another tattoo, Pathé Thuis



Still 4 After we collided, 01:02:01, Hardin attacking his father, Pathé Thuis

5.2.2 Tessa

Hardin's relationship with Tessa is crucial for the representation of hegemonic masculinity in *After we collided* as Tessa's character functions as a sidekick to increase Hardin's masculinity. Therefore, applicable to Tessa is Shoos' argument for what an abused woman in film includes: 'a woman who is exposed to any forcible physical or psychological behavior by a man to get her to do what he wants without considering her rights'.⁵³ However, Hardin and Tessa are broken up in the beginning of the film, he visits her uninvited in her hotel room after checking her location on his phone.⁵⁴ This threatening behavior establishes his dominance as she does not send him away. Yet, this masculine behavior is portrayed as desirable, as these controlled situations often lead to sex, which confirms his masculinity once again as he is clearly heterosexual, a requirement of being hegemonic masculine. Fight scenes followed by sex scenes suggest that Tessa agrees to Hardin's dominance. She gives him her body whenever he wants it, implying hegemonic masculinity can be gained by overpowering the woman. Therefore, Tessa's character functions as a sidekick to increase Hardin's masculinity and to establish gender inequality as the representation of him overpowering her confirms his hegemonic masculinity.

Representing hegemonic masculinity through the relationship of Hardin and Tessa is furthermore established with dialogues about Hardin's childhood traumas. However, Tessa is made very

⁵³ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

⁵⁴ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 3.

much aware of these traumas through conversations, she stays with him despite the abuse she faces. Staying in a downgrading situation positions the woman as an underdog in her own intimate relationship, gender scholar Abigail Reed argues.⁵⁵ As the film creates empathy through the scenes of Hardin sharing trauma's and by suggesting Hardin tries to improve himself, all downgrading situations towards Tessa function to show it are the traumas, and not the man himself that are wrong. However, Tessa tells him many times throughout their breakup to not call her 'his', Hardin keeps doing it.⁵⁶ His persistence, which is ultimately successful, establishes Hardin's dominance as she does not resist by truly walking away. Tessa by contrast even tries to fix him by showing him her love through giving him much of her time and energy even though he denies her many times. The gender stereotype that men do not have to take women's rights into account is therefore established and increases Hardin's image as dominant.

5.2.3 Findings

After we collided represents hegemonic masculinity through the performance of gender by the male character and by portraying the female partner in an underdog position to increase the male's dominance. Many aspects such as the male protagonist's costumes, the representation of stereotypical masculine activities like partying with hot girls, and fights with his female partner show how *After we collided* function to stereotype the execution of hegemonic masculinity. The underdog position of the female lead is used to confirm the idea that women's rights do not have to be taken in account. Thus, the ideology of patriarchy is established as the feelings and rights of women are downplayed. Downgrading behavior towards women is even rewarded with the idea it is masculine to do so as Hardin's fights with Tessa often end in rewarding sex. The representation of hegemonic masculinity in *After we collided* functions as a manner to establish the ideology that men get many benefits out of being masculine. It also functions as a manner to hide away the idea that (domestic) violence is a result of hegemonic masculinity.

5.3 Victim blaming

5.3.1 Hardin

The representation of victim blaming in *After we collided* supports sexual violence against women as it places women in the position of objects and portrays men as subjects/masters. This behavior is an attempt to blame Hardin's own behavior on his victim, an action that honors the concept of victim blaming. This term, according to Shoos, refers to assigning fault to the people who experience violence

⁵⁵ Reed, Abigail, "Fifty Shades of Grey: Representations and Merchandising," 13.

⁵⁶ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 4.

or wrongdoing.⁵⁷ Indriyana and Albab continue to argue victim blaming is accomplished by representing women as objects.⁵⁸ Scenes including victim blaming function to picture the woman enjoying the love she receives. Therefore, the victim is portrayed responsible for her own abuse. The fact that Hardin impulsively decides to visit Tessa's hotel room uninvited and starts to fight her defines the abuse as out of control.⁵⁹ However, his behavior can be straightened out from the idea that this was just a mistake, something infrequent, during his self-improvement process. This puts it beyond his control and justifies his actions. This behavior positions the woman in a submissive role. The same can be observed when Tessa kisses a stranger. Even though they broke up, he says 'his' Tessa would never kiss a stranger.⁶⁰ Referring to Tessa as 'his' functions to suggest that Tessa is his and thus that Tessa is hierarchically below him (still 5). In this scene is the eroticization of violence to which *After we collided* indulges noticeable as well, as, after their fight, Tessa and Hardin have sex. This is a repeating activity after fights. Tessa is portrayed enjoying their love making and is so on pressured by patriarchal ideology that in fact she really wants the abuse she experiences. She keeps going back to him, which shows that Hardin's mental abuse makes her question herself. A phrase from Hardin that says 'my Tessa would never do this' is an example of an encouragement to question her mental stability. In the narrative, Tessa becomes less confident and increasingly vulnerable throughout the film. Both Hardin's excuse that his relapses are part of self-improvement as well as portraying Tessa like she enjoys the abuse she witnesses, function to justify victim blaming her. This shows that rather than trying to encourage gender equality, the film uses victim blaming to encourage the gender equality gap.



Still 5 *After we collided*, 00:20:04, Hardin trying to attack Trevor; Pathé Thuis

5.3.3 Tessa

Hardin's deviant black costume choice functions to suggest that Hardin is abusive and that despite this obvious hint, Tessa is too stupid to recognize this. In doing so, the film is guilty of victim blaming and establishing gender inequality. Shoos argues that films imply through the appearance of the abuser that

⁵⁷ Shoos, "introduction," 178.

⁵⁸ Indriyana and Albab, "Blaming the victim," 55.

⁵⁹ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 3.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

intelligent women should be able to identify (male) abusers and should therefore have no problem avoiding them.⁶¹ The black clothing establishes this idea. Social scholars Adam L. Alter, Chadly Stern, Yael Granot, and Emily Balcetis argue black is associated with bad as it is affiliated with negativity and dark times.⁶² Costumes are influential in differentiating people and assessing whether someone is trustworthy. The film communicates that Hardin is a dark, troubled boy with his permanent black clothing. No other characters are dressed completely in black. The film suggests Hardin is one of these 'others' as he is portrayed differently than others. For example, the seemingly innocent detail of Hardin's British accent distinguishes his personality as no other characters have this accent. Hardin's clothes communicate Tessa is not intelligent enough to recognize he is a troubled boy since she keeps going back to him even though he always dresses in black.

After we collided suggests that women their selves are responsible for recognizing abusive men, thus using victim blaming to idealize suppressing women. Through the returning to her abusive relationship and the representation of Tessa as helpless and tragic, the film suggests the woman behaves unusual and so portrays Tessa as 'other'. It evokes the reaction that this would never happen to an observant person, blaming Tessa for her own abuse. The film communicates through Hardin's continuous flow of aggression that Tessa could have recognized his violent side and created the situation herself by staying with the wrong man. *After we collided* therefore applies physical features like a black costume to identify Hardin as an abusive guy. *The film* contributes to ideologies surrounding domestic violence by denying the complexity of abuse and by suggesting abused women should be able to solve their own problem.

5.3.3 Findings

That the films main narrative is domestic violence is not only evidenced by the application of ideological gaslighting but as well from the victim blaming to which *After we collided* is guilty of. Using the black costumes and thereby representing Hardin as "different," the film blames women for not recognizing and avoiding domestic violence. The woman is also positioned as 'other' for continuously going back to an abusive partner. This accomplishes the ideology of patriarchy as women are represented as stupid. The representation establishes a difference in gender equality as women are seen as inferior in this way. On top of this, as shown earlier, in *After we collided*, women are placed in an underdog position, representing women hierarchically below men. Therefore, supporting the ideology of sexual objectification and reaffirming that in *After we collided* domestic violence is considered a normal situation. It is represented in such a way that it seems that the woman would have left if she no longer thought it was okay. It thereby redefines what is meant by domestic violence.

⁶¹ Shoos, "introduction," 180.

⁶² Alter et al., "The 'Bad Is Black' Effect," 1665.

5.4 Alcoholic bias

5.4.1 *Hardin*

Hardin's trauma that provokes many different behaviors is used as a manner to criticize alcoholics and the society that interacts with these people. This is achieved by allowing alcohol to be a topic of conversation only once and not giving it any further attention through dialogue. Rather, it shows Hardin in plight as this confirms that it is Hardin's own fault for being an alcoholic. It also establishes the belief that alcoholism is not something that can just happen to anyone. With this, the film establishes that alcohol consumption is represented as something that does not need to be contained if you are not a geek like Hardin. The film confirms what Norman Denzin argues to be the alcoholism alibi, which concerns the ideology that only a particular class of drinkers become alcoholic.⁶³ For example, one scene displays a conversation between Hardin's mom and Tessa about the reason he started drinking, namely being an eyewitness to abuse.⁶⁴ Here, the trauma, thus the reason he started drinking, is what they are concerned about and not his drinking per se. Hardin is often shown drinking alcohol without any attempts of making him stop drinking. He does one attempt himself at the end of the film by pouring his bottles away, but whether this is successful is never made clear. Furthermore, he never has to test whether he is under influence and is never suggested by friends or Tessa that it might be smart to stop drinking. However, his drunken behavior and/or his drinking does receive angry looks as he, for example, drunkenly hits his dad on Christmas day ending in his car keys being taken, he is never corrected by words. The film therefore gives ideological critique on alcoholism as it sets the alcoholic against himself by communicating that it is the alcoholic himself who is the problem. By affirming the ideology of alcoholism bias, Hardin is portrayed as a sick man who creates his problems himself and alcoholism itself is swept under the rug.

Another way in which Hardin's trauma is used as a manner to criticize alcoholics through representation is by indulging his desire for alcohol through two technical aspects. Media scholars Valerie Bolivar, Annabel Cohen and John C. Fentress argue music affects the meaning of a displayed part of the film as it draws attention to a certain happening.⁶⁵ Media scholars Clemens Wöllner, David Hammerschmidt and Henning Albrecht continue to argue slow motion scenes are typically accompanied

⁶³ Norman K. Denzin, "Reading the Alcoholism Film," 13.

⁶⁴ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 7.

⁶⁵ Valerie J. Bolivar, Annabel J. Cohen, and John C. Fentress, "Semantic and Formal Congruency in Music and Motion Pictures: Effects on the Interpretation of Visual Action.," *Psychomusicology: Music, Mind and Brain* 13, no. 1-2 (January 1, 1994): 28-59, <https://doi.org/10.1037/h0094102>.

by emotional music.⁶⁶ The stretched time in these scenes seems to mirror inner processes of heightened emotional states. The application of these two technical aspects can be observed in the scene of the Christmas party organized by Hardin's father, functioning as a typical and obvious affair to demonstrate the alcoholic's lack of willpower and solidarity. The desire to drink is encouraged by a situation that triggers his trauma, namely the scene where Hardin's mother, the victim of the abuse, embraces his father to say hello. The slow piece of Christmas music, called "Deck the Halls" by Andy Quin, swells as Hardin, his mother and Tessa enter (still 6).⁶⁷ The application of music and slow-motion techniques refer to Hardin's trauma. It is used to indicate what must be going on inside of Hardin. The sleazy music represents the alarm bells going off in Hardin's head just like his distraught facial expression as the reunion is something very uncomfortable for him. The application of slow music and slow-motion techniques thus functions to change the perception of the scene. It allows us to know that what is happening is not festive at all, but rather a trigger for the uncontrolled behavior that follows. However, music is regularly implemented in the film, this soundtrack functions to draw attention to the trauma as it specifically starts on high volume when Hardin's mother and father see and hug each other and is lowered in volume when the scene transitions into another happening on the occasion. As the camera's perspective switches between his parents and Hardin the camera technique directs the audience's attention to Hardin's mental state. His distraught facial expressions are lavishly displayed. The scene ends with Hardin spoiling it for everyone by giving in to his desire for alcohol at the family party and confronting his father aggressively (still 7). This confrontation reveals that Hardin blames his father for the abuse his mother faced. The use of slow-motion filming techniques and music to draw attention to Hardin's mental status acts to show that the alcoholic himself is the problem.



Still 6 After we collided, 00:59:02, Hardin's mother and father reunite, Pathé Thuis

⁶⁶ Clemens Wöllner, David Hammerschmidt, and Henning Albrecht, "Slow Motion in Films and Video Clips: Music Influences Perceived Duration and Emotion, Autonomic Physiological Activation and Pupillary Responses," *PLOS ONE*13, no. 6 (June 22, 2018): e0199161, <https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0199161>.

⁶⁷ Quin, Andy. Deck the Halls. Hudson Music Co Ltd, 2020, Accessed June 13, 2023.



Still 7 *After we collided*, 01:00:57, Hardin drinking away his sorrows at his father's Christmas party, Pathé Thuis

5.4.2 Tessa

Tessa's presence has a dual function as it both forms the barometer of the effects of Hardin's alcohol use on family, their relationship and health as well as it forms the confirmation of existence of the alcoholism alibi. Norman Denzin argues Hollywood spreads the idea that only certain types of women fall for alcoholics.⁶⁸ This is being done by portraying the woman as a sick person as well. This also applies to Tessa's representation as evidenced by the scene where Tessa and Hardin are at a New Year's Eve party (still 8).⁶⁹ Hardin is only sometimes portrayed with a glass in his hand. The focus, in contrast, is on Tessa's alcohol use as she is portrayed getting drunk playing drinking games. Drinking alcohol excites them and they end up having sex upstairs. However, this pleasure ends quickly as the two get into a fight a few scenes later. It seems like the film tries to blame Tessa for drinking and starting a fight by focusing on her drinking based on more shots in which she consumes alcohol. Tessa is also looked at strangely by bystanders during her drunken argument. As this behavior is represented to be improper, Tessa is portrayed as sick and different, just like Hardin. Tessa and Hardin fall outside the social order and deviate to using alcohol to cope with the environment. Therefore, the film meets the concept of alcoholism bias as *After we collided* represents Tessa and Hardin as if the problems they get into while drunk are primarily self-inflicted rather than from the alcohol.

That Tessa functions as a barometer of the effects of Hardin's alcohol use becomes clear as (drunken) sex after an argument is sold as a sign that things are going well between the two main characters. Denzin argues women are always represented in alcoholism films as the long-suffering wife or girlfriend. She forms the meter of the effects of alcoholic use on love, work, and intimacy.⁷⁰ The sex scenes that often follow, after Hardin, Tessa or both drink alcohol, create illusions of intimacy portraying drinking as the short cut to sexual interaction.⁷¹ Alcohol is portrayed as a substance to use to regain joy in life. After all, sex follows afterwards. Once Tessa and Hardin have sex after arguing, Tessa is happier, her internship proceeds successfully, and she has better contact with Hardin. However, this is represented as a substance that helps to regain joy, it is an illusion as this representation glorifies sex but skips intimacy, thus constraining emotionality. The sexual pleasure that follows due to their drinking makes

⁶⁸ Norman K. Denzin, "Reading the Alcoholism Film," 13.

⁶⁹ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 3.

⁷⁰ Norman K. Denzin, "Reading the Alcoholism Film," 14.

⁷¹ Appendix 1: selected scenes, scene 11.

them sexually fulfilled but is not long-lasting as the alcoholic or mentally ill partner eventually becomes aggressive again. In contrast, as soon as Hardin drinks a lot again, such as at the Christmas party, it is evident from Tessa's bedraggled behavior that the alcoholism influences their relationship, relationship to family and his health (still 9).



Still 8 After we collided, 01:22:28, Hardin and Tessa fighting, Pathé Thuis



Still 9 After we collided, 01:27:11, Tessa coming home in an empty apartment after Hardin left her, Pathé Thuis

5.4.3 Findings

Using Tessa's functioning as a barometer of the effects of alcoholism on Hardin's well-being and the sneaky purpose of Hardin's trauma to criticize alcoholics confirms the presence of the alcoholism bias in *After we collided*. It was already apparent that women are portrayed as retarded for going back to their abusive boyfriend. Depicting Hardin as 'different' functions to alert the audience that Hardin is an abusive guy. So, this involves yet another method of victim blaming. With this, the film establishes the ideology of patriarchy as it confirms the idea that only some types of women fall for alcoholics. Therefore, women are judged as crazy and thus more inferior than "normal" men. The results of analyzing all four concepts show that different ideologies are established. For example, the ideology of sexual objectification and the ideology of patriarchy were found when analyzing the presence of the concept of victim blaming in *After we collided*. The ideology of patriarchy was also discovered when analyzing the presence of the concepts of ideological gaslighting, hegemonic masculinity and the alcoholism alibi. It seems, therefore, that *After we collided* makes great efforts to perpetuate gender inequality.

6. Conclusion

In this analysis the next research question is answered using the composite theoretical framework: *In which way does the youth film After we collided represent domestic violence and alcoholism?* To answer this question, the film *After we collided* was examined using a representative film analysis. Using John Fiske's *codes of television*, this film analysis was conducted. First, feminine studies Diane L. Shoos' theory about domestic violence has been discussed. According to her, the mid-1990s marked the start of a stream of stories about intimate partner violence. Although the 'domestic violence' film according to Shoos does not exist, other genres are "packed" with the subject matter. Shoos links this notion to the concept of ideological gaslighting. She argues domestic violence films show the image of an abused woman who created her situation herself by choosing the wrong man. These films propose abused women must solve 'their' own problem, therefore denying complexities and contradictions of abuse. This analysis shows how *After we collided* shapes this concept. The downplaying of abusers' behaviors and the addition of a male character to confirm the ideology that women choose the wrong man and thus have a skewed sense of judgment show the ideological gaslighting that *After we collided* performs. The ideological gaslighting in *After we collided* functions to pass on the conviction that only a small group of women awaits a fate as victims and to banish the idea that it is an increasing supremacy of male power. As a result, *After we collided* contributes to a problematic image of domestic violence and gender inequality.

In addition to Shoos' theory of ideological gaslighting, gender scholars Abigail Reed and Aliraza Javaid's theory of hegemonic masculinity was discussed. Javaid discusses the aspects necessary for men to construct hegemonic masculinity, arguing it is represented through a male protagonist who invokes heterosexual privilege and hegemonic masculinity to maintain power and dominance over "his" property, his girlfriend. Reed continues to argue the image of the woman in an underdog position in intimate relationships is harmful as it implies the male is dominant and the female body is meant for him. *After we collided* represents hegemonic masculinity through the performance of gender by the male character and by portraying the female partner in an underdog position to increase the male's dominance. Downgrading behavior towards women is rewarded with the idea it is masculine to do so as fights often end in rewarding sex. Thus, spreading the idea that men get many benefits out of being masculine. The representation of hegemonic masculinity in *After we collided* therefore functions as a manner to establish the ideology of patriarchy.

That the film's main narrative is domestic violence is not only evidenced by the application of ideological gaslighting but as well from the victim blaming to which *After we collided* is guilty of. This third concept is discussed by Diana L. Shoos and media scholars Tikik Indriyana and Choirul Ulil Albab. Building on the concept of ideological gaslighting, Shoos argues that the essence of stereotypes of the

abused woman is that she is responsible for or could have prevented the abuse. Victim blaming is accomplished by representing women as objects, media scholars Indriyana and Albab continue to argue. In the film studied, this concept establishes not only the ideology of patriarchy, but also the ideology of sexual objectification. Therefore, it redefines what is meant by domestic violence as it is claimed that a woman who does not want to be in a situation would have left. Since this is not the case, domestic violence is considered normal and even glorified.

The alcoholism bias is the last concept and is discussed by media scholar Norman Delzin. He argues alcoholic films communicate to the audience that only a special type of woman is attracted to alcoholics as only certain types of men become alcoholics. The wife must be a sick person, otherwise she would not be in love with an alcoholic. By affirming the ideology of alcoholism bias, Hardin is portrayed as a sick man who creates his problems himself and alcoholism itself is swept under the rug. *After we collided* represents Tessa and Hardin as if the problems they get into while drunk are primarily self-inflicted rather than from the drink. Tessa's presence has a dual function as it both forms the barometer of the effects of Hardin's alcohol use on family, their relationship and health as well as it forms the confirmation of existence of the alcoholism alibi. That Tessa functions as a barometer of the effects of Hardin's alcohol use becomes clear as (drunken) sex after an argument is sold as a sign that things are going well between the two main characters. The film establishes the ideology of patriarchy as it confirms the idea that only some types of women fall for alcoholics. As the ideology of patriarchy was also discovered when analyzing the presence of the concepts of ideological gaslighting, hegemonic masculinity and the alcoholism alibi. It is proven that *After we collided* makes great efforts to spread the ideology of patriarchy and to perpetuate gender inequality. This finding indicates that the movie is harmful to teenagers as they are susceptible to the ideas that movies spread.

The versatility of the three levels of codes of television offered a comprehensive understanding of how the film represents alcoholism and domestic violence. As a result, what needed to be examined was examined. This analysis allows for a small contribution to the academic debate on the representation of alcoholism and domestic violence. Moreover, the research offered new insights in the face of representations in teen films. Regardless, new insight also offers the realization that some features from the research turned out to be less successful than desired. First, the focus of the theoretical framework was on the four concepts. Although the *codes of television* allow me to make a statement about the representation of ideology in film, I did not discuss ideology itself in detail. Although I have an idea of what ideology the film represents, I did not expand on this. Moreover, although the three levels of the codes of television provided answers to my research question, I paid little attention to any counterarguments. I therefore suggest a cognitive film analysis that delves into in what ways narrative and cinematic elements in the film *After we collided* direct engagement to the main characters Hardin and Tessa. This is interesting as the current analysis raises the question of how the film invites spectator teens to fill out the relationship to Tessa and Hardin and then build connections to alcoholism and domestic violence. This is interesting to explore because it was previously shown that teens are

Lucie Lammers, 2197693
MA Film and television Cultures ((MCMV22008)
Philipp Keidl
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susceptible to adopting representations in films. By examining how the film directs commitment to alcoholism and domestic violence, a small contribution can be made to reducing gender inequality.

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8. Appendix

Appendix 1: selected scenes

Scene number	Timecode	Description
1	00:02:19	Scene with Hardin waking up in his car next to a bottle of liquor. Looking broke. Aggressive to a homeless man
2	00:08:30	Hardin getting a tattoo quoting: 'I like the pain', being called 'a little masochist' by his tattoo artist.
3	00:20:01	Hardin almost attacks Trevor when he finds him in Tessa's bathroom, even though they broke up after which they have sex. Then he asks her in the heat of the moment to tell him he is the only one.
4	00:23:59	Tessa and Hardin arguing. Hardin gets mad when he hears 'his' Tessa kissed a stranger. Tessa throws bread at him when he says he was 'fucking Molly when she was kissing that stranger'.
5	00:30:55	Tessa comes home to Hardin's apartment finding booze on the table and the apartment in a chaotic state.
6	00:43:02	Tessa's mom warns her once again for Hardin as he is 'not good for you and just like your father'.

7	00:45:56	Hardin has nightmares. Hardin's mom tells Tessa about how she was assaulted and Hardin being there. However, she took him to therapists, Hardin started self-medicating with alcohol. However, the nightmares stopped when Hardin met Tessa.
8	01:02:01	Hardin's dad has invited Tessa, Hardin's mom and Hardin to celebrate Christmas over there. Hardin holds hard feelings against his dad and gets drunk and starts fighting his father.
9	01:05:57	after getting home from the Christmas party, he throws and destroys a lamp and finds himself booze.
10	01:09:47	Trevor tells Tessa that his sister has struggled with addiction her whole life. He believes it is not going to end well.
11	01:18:23	Tessa fights Molly when playing drunk truth or dare.
12	01:21:52	Tessa and Hardin get into another fight when Hardin interprets a text wrongly. Just like Tessa does when overhearing a conversation between Hardin and another girl. Ending the fight with

		Hardin grapping another bottle and walking away.
13	01:26:20	Trevor tells Hardin he is bad news to Tessa and should let her go.
14	01:28:01	Hardin drinking away his sorrows in the airplane.
15	01:29:26	Hardin throwing away booze.

Appendix 2: representational level

Scene	timecode	camera	lighting	editing
1	00:02:19	trembling hand-held, movement along camera stabilizer	daylight	Films titel appears
2	00:08:30	movement along camera stabilizer	daylight/ production light	music volume reduced/ slow editing
3	00:20:01	hand held, movement along camera stabilizer	production light, lamps	slow editing
4	00:23:59	hand held, movement along camera stabilizer	production light, lamps	fast editing
5	00:30:55	hand held, movement along camera stabilizer	production light, lamps	flashbacks, fade in/ out
6	00:43:02	movement along camera stabilizer	daylight	voice over phone/ fade in of music
7	00:45:56	movement along camera stabilizer	production light	slow editing
8	01:02:01	movement along camera stabilizer	daylight/ production light	slowmotion/ fast editing
9	01:05:57	movement along camera stabilizer	production light, lamps	slow editing
10	01:09:47	movement along camera stabilizer	production light, lamps	slow editing
11	01:18:23	trembling hand-held, movement along camera stabilizer	production light	fast editing
12	01:21:52	trembling hand-held, movement along camera stabilizer	production light	fast editing, fade out
13	01:26:20	movement along camera stabilizer	daylight/ production light	voice over phone, slow editing
14	01:27:01	movement along camera stabilizer	production light	fades, flashbacks, voice-over interspersed by music
15	01:29:30	movement along camera stabilizer	production light	fast editing, pictures of Tessa displayed slow editing

Scene	timecode	music	sound
1	00:02:19	sad love song (You Were Supposed To Be Different, Aron Wright)	dialogue
2	00:08:30	none	dialogue, rockmusic on radio in background (Ulysses Wells - Back with the Peop
3	00:20:01	raising tension soundtrack	dialogue
4	00:23:59	none	dialogue
5	00:30:55	soft soundtrack	voice of Tessa and Hardin from memories
6	00:43:02	soft soundtrack	dialogue/ dialogue through phone
7	00:45:56	soft soundtrack	dialogue
8	01:02:01	slow christmas song (Oh Christmas tree) / slow, soft piano	dialogue
9	01:05:57	soft pop song (Suzy, Crash)	dialogue
10	01:09:47	none	dialogue
11	01:18:23	none	dialogue
12	01:21:52	soft piano	dialogue
13	01:26:20	none	dialogue
14	01:27:01	Love me or leave me, Little Mix	voice over of Hardin
15	01:29:30	Love me or leave me, Little Mix	music

Appendix 3: reality level

Scene	timecode	Characters	appearance	environment	dress
1	00:02:19	Hardin	untended, brackish	parking somewhere unknown	black t-shirt, grey pants
2	00:08:30	Hardin	bent together, depressed	shady tattooshop	black t-shirt, grey pants
3	00:20:01	Hardin, Trevor, Tessa	Hardin: angry Trevor: sidebar Tessa: defensible	Tessa's hotelroom	Hardin: leather jacket, black shirt, grey pants Trevor: underpants Tessa: golden dress
4	00:23:59	Tessa, Hardin	Tessa: angry	hotels hallway	Tessa: black and white dress Hardin: nothing but a towell
5	00:30:55	Tessa	Hardin: angry melancholic, sad, lost	Their apartment, pulled upside down by Hardin	blue coat, orange dress, sneakers
6	00:43:02	Tessa, her mom	Tessa: surprised, upset Tessa's mom: steadfast	In front of her moms house in her office	Tessa: pink dress Tessa's mom: pink top
7	00:45:56	Tessa, Hardins mom	Tessa: unloaded Hardins mom: friendly	In Hardins and Tessas apartment	Tessa: pyjamas Hardins mom: pyjamas
8	01:02:01	Hardins dad, Hardin, Tessa, Hardins mom	Hardin: dismissive, drunken angry Hardins dad: happy, sad Tessa: friendly Hardins mom: happy, afraid	Hardin's dad house	Hardin: black blouse with black neat pants Hardins dad: neat blue suit Tessa: turquoise maxi dress Hardins mom: black leather jacket, plain pants,
9	01:05:57	Hardin and Tessa	Hardin: downcast, disappointed Tessa: disappointed	Hardins and Tessa's apartment	Hardin: black blouse with black neat pants Tessa: turquoise maxi dress
10	01:09:47	Trevor and Tessa	Tessa: friendly	elevator / office	Tessa: red vest, flower shirt and skirt Trevor: neat pants, red sweater
11	01:18:23	Tessa, Molly, Hardin	Trevor: energetic Tessa: purposeful Molly: wary, looks festive Hardin: wary	Someone's house	Tessa: red short dress Molly: sparkly top and pants Hardin: black shirt and black pants
12	01:21:52	Hardin and Tessa	Hardin: drunk, uncontrolled Tessa: drunk, uncontrolled	driveway	Tessa: red short dress Hardin: black shirt and black pants
13	01:26:20	Trevor and Hardin	Trevor: steadfast Hardin: lost	Hardin: in the apartment Trevor: in front of the hospital	Trevor: white shirt, blue blouse, denim pants Hardin: black shirt and black pants
14	01:28:01	Hardin Tessa	Hardin: self destructive Tessa: sad	airplane apartment (bottle on ground)	Hardin: black pants, black long sleeve Tessa: grey sweater, denim pants
15	01:29:30	Hardin	Hardin: lost, sad	mom's apartment	Hardin: black pants, black long sleeve

Scene	timecode	Characters	make-up	behavior	speech	expression
1	00:02:19	Hardin	none, tattoos	aggressive, fussy	rude, voice lift	frown, frustrated
2	00:08:30	Hardin	none, new tattoo	subdued, absent	normal intonation	sad
3	00:20:01	Hardin, Trevor, Tessa	Hardin: none, tattoos Trevor: none Tessa: soft night make-up	Hardin: offensive Trevor: trying to flight Tessa: intervening	Hardin: screaming Trevor: voice lift Tessa: voice lift	Hardin: furious, frown Trevor: sidebar, half smile Tessa: anxious, angry
4	00:23:59	Tessa, Hardin	Hardin: none, tattoos Tessa: soft day make-up soft day make-up	Hardin: offensive Tessa: hurrying, throwing bread at Hardin crying	Hardin: screaming Tessa screaming none	Tessa: angry Hardin: angry sad
5	00:30:55	Tessa	Tessa's mom: soft day make-up	Tessa: defensive, walking away	Tessa: voice lift	Tessa: angry, frown
6	00:43:02	Tessa, her mom	Tessa: soft day make-up	Tessa's mom: frustrated	Tessa's mom: voice lift	Tessa's mom: angry, frown
7	00:45:56	Tessa, Hardins mom	Tessa: none Hardins mom: none	Tessa: careful Hardins mom: emotional, careful, less eye contact	Tessa: soft talking Hardins mom: soft talking	Tessa: shy Hardins mom: shy
8	01:02:01	Hardins dad, Hardin, Tessa, Hardins mom	Hardin: none, tattoos Hardins dad: none Tessa: soft glamlook Hardins mom: soft glamlook	Hardin: punches his dad, drinks alcohol Hardins dad: soothing, engages in conversation Tessa: gives up sussing, step back, takes keys Hardins mom: soothing, ashamed	Hardin: screaming Hardins dad: voice lift Tessa: soft talking Hardins mom: ferm, normal	Hardin: mad, amusement Hardins dad: incomprehension Tessa: stoic Hardins mom: hysterical, disappointed
9	01:05:57	Hardin and Tessa	Hardin: none, tattoos Tessa: soft glamlook	Hardin: throwing a lamp, drinking alcohol Tessa: walks out of the apartment	Hardin: none Tessa: soft talking	Tessa: disappointment Hardin: downcast, in pain
10	01:09:47	Trevor and Tessa	Tessa: soft day make-up Trevor: none	Tessa: devoted, positive, headstrong Trevor: prudent approach	Tessa: normal intonation Trevor: normal intonation	Tessa: friendly, soft smile Trevor: concentrated
11	01:18:23	Tessa, Molly, Hardin	Tessa: soft night make-up Molly: dark night make-up Hardin: none, tattoos	Tessa: provocative, attacks Molly Molly: fights back, gives comments as well Hardin: tries to intervene	Tessa: hysterical screaming Molly: hysterical screaming Hardin: screaming	Tessa: hysterical Molly: hysterical Hardin: purposeful
12	01:21:52	Hardin and Tessa	Tessa: soft night make-up Hardin: none, tattoos	Hardin: accusing Tessa Tessa: accusing Hardin	Tessa: screaming Hardin: screaming	Hardin: mad Tessa: mad, crying
13	01:26:20	Trevor and Hardin	Hardin: none, tattoos Trevor: none	Trevor: dismissive Hardin: begging	Hardin: trembling voice Trevor: normal intonation	Hardin: crying Trevor: tight, serious
14	01:28:01	Hardin Tessa	Hardin: none, tattoos Tessa: soft day make-up	Hardin: drinking away his sorrow Tessa: reading Hardins letter	Hardin: voice over, trembling intonation Tessa: none	Hardin: disgusted Tessa: sad
15	01:29:30	Hardin	Hardin: none, tattoos	Hardin: throwing away booze, taking care of himself	Hardin: none	Hardin: sad