

“Love Will Hurt You, but Limerence Will Destroy You”:  
The Etymology of Limerence & Its Digital Discourse

By

Cassie Joy Sistoso

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
in Sociology

Middle Tennessee State University  
April, 2026

Thesis Committee:

Dr. Rachel E. Davis, Chair

Dr. Ugur Orak

Dr. Jennifer Pettit

Dr. C. Rebecca Oldham

*“Some of us can make a sketch of love to fall in / And I did / But love makes you grow /  
So it never quite fit / That the deeper I'd go / The smaller I'd get”*  
— Katie Gavin, *Sketches*

*“You are a dream; I hope I never meet you.”*  
— Sylvia Plath, *The Unabridged Journals of Sylvia Plath*

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This thesis would not have been possible without the tender guidance of my chair, Dr. Rachel Davis. Her excitement, encouragement, and patience for endless rescheduling/restructuring allowed me to explore this topic to the full extent of my curiosity and gave me the confidence to feel able to continue research past the completion of my degree. Her teaching style and connection with students have impacted me more than I can express and will undoubtedly stay with me in my own professional and academic pursuits to come.

I would also like to thank the host of faculty at MTSU who inspired my application to the Sociology program and helped me make my home in its discipline. The careful attention and interest in my research and personal development has made this work and all future works possible — Dr. Ashleigh McKinzie, Dr. Angela Mertig, and Dr. Ugur Orak, thank you for your mentorship.

MTSU's Women's and Gender Studies program was deeply intertwined in my writing of this thesis and the areas of interest in my research. Dr. Rebecca Oldham's family violence course, Dr. Sage Chevrette's social movements course, and Dr. Marion Hollings' critical theory course ushered me into scholarly life and reminded me what I love about being a student — engaging with a space purely for curiosity, discussion, and community.

My sociological cohort community's impact also has reminded me of my love for academia social scientists. I can hardly imagine an academic space without us wandering the halls together. Special thanks to cohort members Vaun Baltimore, Matine Haizlip, and Mack Hall for their friendship throughout this process, I am so grateful to have met you during such a critical point in our lives.

To my partner in all things, Riley, thank you for your avid interest in all that I do; I would not have been able to work and write so freely if I didn't know I could end each day with your encouragement, support, and laughter. Thank you also to my three cats, Taro, Tuna, and Flower, for their fluffy comfort, even if they did accidentally delete several paragraphs of this thesis during the editing process.

To my mother, thank you for showing me what a life of advocacy and justice looks like, and for raising me to love reading.

And finally, I'd like to dedicate this thesis to my late professor and mentor, Dr. Ashleigh McKinzie. Your presence and absence will forever mark who I am becoming.

## ABSTRACT

The term “limerence” has experienced a resurgence in modern social vocabulary since the early 2020s, long after its coining in 1979 by psychologist Dorothy Tennov, who aimed to distinguish an obsessive, uncertain conception of love (limerence) from authentic, healthy love. While it now is used to define an unhealthy and harmful time period/uncontrollable experience of obsession, it originally circulated among scholarly communities as a mental disorder or illness that could be utilized in psychological and sociological analyses of traits characterized in disorders such as obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), erotomania, autism spectrum disorder (ASD), and others. In 2026, the social media platform TikTok’s psychology and self-help community space has co-opted the rise of interest in this term. Licensed clinicians and random users alike are using the tag #limerence to warn against or commiserate with others who have experienced its intensity. With this new rise in interest and attachment to the term, this thesis aims to identify the connecting and contrasting factors between its current usage and association with scholarly inquiry into its inception and utilization, and aims to understand why its resurgent hazy definition has captured the attention in current online culture. Online TikTok videos were extracted from application programming interface (API) software and then analyzed recurring themes, which were then coded into categories to identify video type/theme. Users on TikTok agree and disagree in ways familiar to scholarly research but prioritize some definitions over others. My findings suggest that while TikTok focuses on the experience and stages of limerent attachment, literature primarily focuses on connection to neural/mental diagnoses. TikTok also almost exclusively focuses on the intersection of sexuality and neurodiversity rather than other marginalizations such as socioeconomic status or gender.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION .....	1
LITERATURE REVIEW .....	1
<i>Origins of Limerence</i> .....	3
<i>Pathologization</i> .....	4
<i>Operationalization</i> .....	5
<i>Limerence and Neurodiversity</i> .....	7
<i>Limerence and Abuse</i> .....	9
<i>Limerence and Deviance</i> .....	10
<i>Limerence and Gender and Sexuality</i> .....	10
<i>Neo-Limeralism</i> .....	11
<i>Resurgence of Limerence in Online Discourse</i> .....	12
METHODS .....	14
<i>Sample and Data Collection</i> .....	15
<i>Data Analysis</i> .....	15
<i>Reflexivity</i> .....	16
RESULTS .....	17
<i>Definitions</i> .....	17
<i>Lived Experiences</i> .....	17
<i>Neurodiversity</i> .....	19
DISCUSSION .....	19
<i>Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research</i> .....	21
<i>Conclusion</i> .....	22
REFERENCES .....	24

## LIST OF TABLES

Table 1. Description of Inductive Codes .....	16
Table 2. Frequency and Percentages of Total Posts (N = 178) Fitting Each Theme .....	17

## LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1. Comparison of Love and Limerence .....	2
Figure 2. Google Trends Chart of Popularity of Limerence Online, 2004 – 2026 .....	14
Figure 3. Comparison of Discourses of Limerence in the Literature and on TikTok.....	20

## INTRODUCTION

Limerence was first coined as a term in 1979 by psychotherapist Dorothy Tennov in her book *Love and Limerence*. The book is structured around 300+ interviews conducted by Tennov (1979:8), 100 in-person and around 200 others recorded from those who either wrote to her, were people she previously knew, or through phone calls responding to ads she placed to recruit participants. The subsequent published work in its entirety aims to explore, explain, and show examples of limerence, though no hard definition is ever truly reached.

Limerence as a word on its own has no etymological meaning beyond being “pronounceable and seemed to [Tennov] and two students to have a ‘fitting’ sound” (Tennov 1979, 16). This neologism has still been abstractly attached to the Latin roots *limen*, meaning threshold, which could be nebulously connected to the limerent experience’s intensity or threshold for pure love or healthy attachment (*Limen* n.d.).

While theorists and authors prior to Tennov showcased their work for more scholarly and academic-facing audiences, Tennov’s conversational writing style became evergreen source for layman consumption. This style can be pointed to many other post-modern styles of therapy-speak/memoir-centered tone in interpersonal social research works and can be directly linked to a large portion of the TikTok discourse of limerence: commentary by psychotherapists and self-help influencers. Be it her writing style or perhaps her endorsement from feminist theorist, Simone de Beauvoir, Tennov’s *Love and Limerence* became popular for the current reader and retained respect from social researchers at once.

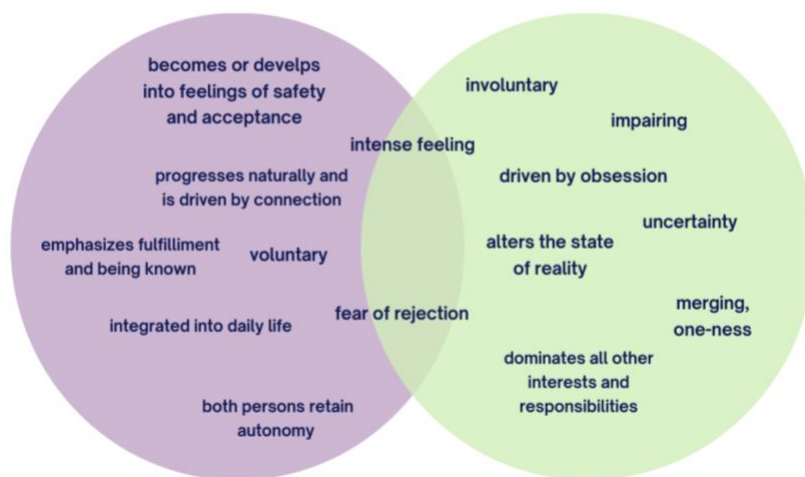
## LITERATURE REVIEW

While this thesis is focused on the slippery nature of the term limerence, there are several key characteristics differentiating limerence from love. Generally, limerence is distinguished by

its consuming (Evans 2023:64), impairing (Bradbury, Short, and Bleakley 2025:419), and involuntary (Shmidt 2018:138; Wakin and Vo 2008:3) nature, whereas love (though often containing these same feelings) provides a sense of safety, fulfillment, and autonomy (Acevedo et al. 2012). Limerence is loosely defined by an overall experience of involuntary, obsessive romantic attachment to another individual that is not rooted in true connection or personality compatibility, but instead remains fixed in fantasy, delusion, and projection. Limerence is high-strung and anxiety-driven, grasping for “a kind of merging, a one-ness,” rather than a shared experience or interpersonal relationship (Tennov 1979:118). Instead of following patterns of bonding, romance, and commitment as observed in Sternberg’s (1986:119) influential triangular theory of love, limerence and the behaviors associated with it serve as an escape, rather than a source of authentic bonding and intimacy. A visual comparison of conceptualizations of love and limerence is found in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1. Comparison of Love and Limerence

## Love vs Limerence



### *Origins of Limerence*

While the inception of limerence is largely credited to Tennov (1979), *Love and Limerence* hedges any definitive claims around how it should be implemented in psychological or social science fields. Tennov (1979:xi) instead often emphasizes the necessity of further theorizing on limerence and describes her book as a “preliminary report that only scratches the surface of understanding of one of the most potent forces affecting human existence.” Social science at the time had not yet adopted the now widely used tools measuring obsessive love and infatuation (e.g., Gamache et al. 2022; Hatfield, Bensman, and Rapson 2012), which established more concrete and seminal definitions of obsessive love behaviors. Still, social science had reached an era of distinct fascination with love and relationships, especially as the feminist movement began to address issues in the domestic sphere.

Sigmund Freud (1922) authored one of the earliest popular works on obsessive love, investigating similar categorical terms for obsessive love or infatuation, though linked more closely with sexual relationships than interpersonal ones. Freud’s (1922:74) comparison of love and hypnosis foreshadows Tennov’s (1979) assertion that the obsessive objectification of another person is rooted in a kind of delusion or faulty reality:

From being in love to hypnosis is evidently only a short step. The respects in which the two agree are obvious . . . no one can doubt that the hypnotist has stepped into the place of the ego ideal. It is only that everything is even clearer and more intense in hypnosis, so that it would be more to the point to explain being in love by means of hypnosis than the other way round.

Decades later, Pitirim Sorokin (1950:45) coined the term “soiled love,” which he describes as, “always fragile, weak, and short-lived . . . [conspicuously] selfish, utilitarian, [and] hedonistic.” Sorokin (1950) identified emotional transaction as an aspect of obsessive love and attachment, which previous literature had not fully examined. This “soiled love” is repeatedly compared to the act of “being in love for the sake of love . . . motivated by utilitarian

considerations . . . and advantages . . . [that] as soon as they cease are replaced by their opposites, such love dries up and dies” (Sorokin 1950:55). It could be argued that one of the core tenets of limerence is a longing for transactional reciprocation, attention, or mutual obsession.

Though these conditions were considered involuntary and all-consuming for those suffering from them, they were simultaneously steeped in shame and negatively stereotyped as predominantly female diagnoses. This is evident in the description of these conditions by some scholars as “old maid’s insanity” (Kelly 2018:15). To the extent that such conditions impacted men, they were associated with homosexuality, which, in turn, was also pathologized. For example, Lepp (1963:xi) wrote, “There are many different forms of abnormal love, homosexuality, sadism and masochism, impotency and frigidity are so many different types of emotional illnesses.” In another example, Freud (1922:9) wrote:

The ‘perverse,’ have, as it were, crossed off the difference between the sexes from their program . . . We call such persons homosexual or inverted. Often, though not always, they are men and women of high physical, intellectual and ethical development, who are affected only with this one portentous abnormality.

### *Pathologization*

Since its inception, discrepancies have arisen in scholarly work—psychotherapists, sociologists, and psychiatrists alike disagree on whether or not limerence is pathological. As the field of psychiatry gained prominence, researchers and practitioners began pathologizing and categorizing limerent patterns of thought and behavior. Peele and Brodsky’s (1975) conceptualization of obsessive love as a type of addiction is representative of this shift. Peele and Brodsky (1975:17) describe an “interpersonal addict” as someone “unsure of his own identity, [seeking] other people as objects to serve his needs.” In the decades that followed, diagnoses related to limerence proliferated. In 1994, the persistent belief “that another person, usually of higher social status, is in love with the patient” was added to the DSM-IV as erotomania or de

Clérambault's syndrome (Berrios and Kennedy 2002:381). Other dubious diagnoses related to limerence include delusion disorder, "an uncommon condition characterized by the presence of one or more nonbizarre delusions and the relative absence of associated psychopathology" (Manschreck 1996:32); perturbation, a "mental state in which insistent motivators or alarms distract or otherwise influence executive processes in a manner that is difficult for reflective processes to suppress or control" (Beaudoin, Pudło, and Hyniewska 2020:32); and lovesickness, a condition "that . . . shows the outward signs of [melancholia] in its depressive phase" (Toohey 1992:268).

Throughout the book, Tennov (1979) oscillates between pathologizing and normalizing her patients who experience limerence. For instance, she writes:

To outside observers, limerence seems pathological . . . it also follows immutable rules: it endures as long as the conditions that sustain both hope and uncertainty; it is a unique human experience for its control over our thought processes; and . . . limerence may produce such severe distress as to be life threatening. (Tennov 1979:x)

Additionally, she claims that her book "is aimed at taming a madness" (Tennov 1979:173).

However, she later resists pathologization of limerence, describing her patients as

"psychologically normal people who without treatment-produced damage might have suffered only transient disturbances of customary well-being" (Tennov 1979:187).

### *Operationalization*

As evidenced above, a more rigorous operationalization of limerence is needed. Tennov (1979:24) compiled a lengthy list of behaviors that characterize limerence, including:

intrusive thinking about the object of your passionate desire (the limerent object or 'LO') . . . acute longing for reciprocation; dependency of mood on LO's actions . . . fear of rejection . . . unsettling shyness in LO's presence . . . an aching of the 'heart' (a region in the center front of the chest) when uncertainty is strong; buoyancy (a feeling of walking on air) when reciprocation seems evident; a general intensity of feeling that leaves other concerns in the background; a remarkable ability to emphasize what is truly admirable in LO and to avoid dwelling on the negative.

Tennov (1979) largely relied on testimonials from her patients and left readers to draw their own conclusions about what constitutes limerence.

Wakin and Vo (2008) operationalized limerence as a combination of initiating, driving, and resultant forces. Initiating forces refer to a “pervasive longing for emotional reciprocation” (Wakin and Vo 2008:2). Driving forces include “intrusive and obsessive thinking, constant replaying and rehearsing, acute sensitivity to behavioral cues, strong tendency to over-interpret LO’s behaviors, strong fear of rejection by LO, situational barriers, and uncertainty” (Wakin and Vo 2008:2). Resultant forces refer to “fluctuation in mood, feelings of ecstasy, feelings of depression, anxiety, cognitive coping strategies, shame/guilt, and impaired functioning” (Wakin and Vo 2008:2).

Bradbury et al. (2025) operationalized limerence as a linear process, characterized by distinct limerent attachments and behaviors escalating in severity at each stage. While these conceptual models help categorize the effects of limerence, such as “pervasive longing,” “intrusive thinking,” and “impaired functioning,” there is still considerable overlap—both definitionally and temporally—between various characteristics (Bradbury et al. 2025:417; Wakin and Vo 2008:4).

Though no other operational models of limerence have been developed, scholars have developed instruments to measure similar emotional, cognitive, and behavioral phenomena, including Hatfield and Sprecher’s (1985) Passionate Love Scale. Potential scores include “wildly, recklessly, in love . . . passionate but less intense . . . occasional bursts of passion . . . tepid, infrequent, passion . . . the thrill is gone” (Hatfield and Sprecher 1985). Gamache et al.’s (2022:9421) Obsessive Relational Intrusions Questionnaire (SORI-Q) measures “perpetration of stalking-like behaviors . . . along with measures of dark personality traits, insecure attachment

dimensions, and intimate partner violence.” The stark contrast between the SORI-Q’s descriptions of violence, stalking, and behavioral deviance and the Passionate Love Scale’s more amenable language reflects the haziness of definitions of limerence in the literature overall.

Nevertheless, studies utilizing functional brain imaging suggest that the region of the brain associated with early-stage romantic love (posterior cingulate) is also “implicated in obsessive compulsive disorder” and dopamine seeking, whereas long-term romantic love was associated with “opioid and serotonin-rich neural regions . . . [that have] the capacity to modulate anxiety and pain” (Acevedo et al. 2012:155–56). The region of activation in obsessive love and infatuation responds “across various domains of rewarding experiences, such as money, cocaine, and sex” and is associated with “obsessive and euphoric behavior” (Shih et al. 2022:11). While neuroimaging work assists in our understanding of the physiological experience of love and obsession, both of these studies fail to account for “developmental experiences such as formation of social attachments in childhood” alongside “neuro-biological factors” (Sussman 2010:35). These limitations are significant, as literature suggests that the escapist element of limerent fantasy may particularly attract those experiencing marginalization, financial and social stressors, and trauma.

### *Limerence and Neurodiversity*

Research suggests that neurodiverse individuals are particularly susceptible to obsessive love and limerent attachments in adolescence and adulthood as a result of stigmatization and infantilization (Al-Yagon, Forte, and Avrahami 2020; Antshel, Hier, and Barkley 2014; Trundle et al. 2023; Webb et al. 2024). The “othering” of neurodiverse individuals may lead to feelings of rejection and anxiety in adolescence and early adulthood, which may contribute to the development of unhealthy attachment styles and susceptibility to intimate partner violence

victimization (Douglas and Sedgewick 2024). For neurodiverse individuals with a history of marginalization, limerent attachment may feel natural or even “safe” due to its familiarity (Pearson et al. 2024).

Limerence is frequently linked to particular psychiatric diagnoses in the literature, namely obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD), and autism spectrum disorder (ASD). OCD is linked to limerence by the cyclical nature of “intrusive and persistent fantasies, both retrospective and anticipatory,” which only “enhance the limerent longing for mutuality” (Banker 2010:36). Evans (2023) identifies commonalities between limerence, OCD, ADHD, and ASD. Individuals struggling with ADHD or OCD may be more likely to engage in limerence, and the effects of limerence likely exacerbate the pitfalls of these disorders, creating a kind of ouroboros cycle (Bradbury et al. 2025; Ghomian, Shaeiri, and Farahani 2022; Wymbs et al. 2021). Similarly, autistic individuals may be hyperanalytical, hypercritical, and hyperobservant of behaviors and traits in others, which can be connected to the mirroring and fantasy characteristic of limerent attachment (Floek 2025). Difficulties discerning social cues and differentiating healthy and unhealthy relationship patterns may also prime autistic individuals for limerent attachment as well as abuse (Trundle et al. 2023).

Neurodivergent individuals are also less likely to leave abusive relationships due to social isolation and difficulty participating in friendships or community-based environments:

[Unable to] check whether the treatment from the abuser was normal, [neurodivergent individuals] often end up stay[ing] in abusive relationships longer than they feel they should . . . because they lack the social support to recognize domestic violence and then to end the relationship – a crucial factor in leaving safely. (Douglas and Sedgewick 2024:1734)

Additionally, deficits in the parasympathetic nervous system, specifically issues with inhibiting fight or flight responding during social interactions, are also believed to place neurodivergent individuals at risk of abuse victimization as well as limerence (Wymbs et al. 2021).

### *Limerence and Abuse*

The persistent pathologization of limerence coexists alongside its misguided romanticization. In a culture rife with “head over heels” love stories, limerence sometimes “has the appearance and veneer of falling in love,” even when it is destructive (Evans 2023:64). Tennov (1979:120) herself wrote, “surely limerence is love at its highest and most glorious peak.” She also writes of the normalization of instability in popular depictions of love:

In its involuntariness, limerence conflicts with the fundamental position of the Judeo-Christian philosophy. . . It is an idea so subversive to traditional belief systems that this may be an important reason why limerence and nonlimerence were not isolated and defined sooner. Visible as both states are in fiction and poetry, their existence in fiction and poetry does not force resolution of the philosophical problems they pose. (Tennov 1979:172)

In Tennov’s (1979) view, love aims to understand and share its power reciprocally, whereas limerence is unbalanced and seeks to consume and/or be consumed. In this sense, limerence acts as a kind of complex disappearing act—common amongst individuals with mental health risk factors, who have experienced abuse, and those socialized as women, suggesting that these factors may increase one’s risk of limerence or limerent behaviors (Badenes-Sastre et al. 2025:23; Pearson et al. 2024:11).

This imbalance, or distortion of reality, in limerence is reflective of adverse childhood experiences and abuse victimization, which may lead to “a sense that victimization was typical within close personal relationships and . . . should be accepted . . . ma[king] it difficult to recognize abuse for what it [is], leading to multiple abusive intimate relationships” (Pearson et al. 2024:11). This pattern also feeds into the cycle of polyvictimization, making “distortions . . . a key feature of [intimate partner violence], with both (higher power) perpetrators and (lower power) victim-survivors engaging in minimization, rationalization, and denial of violence with both parties often blaming the victim-survivor for the abuse” (Badenes-Sastre et al. 2025:23).

### *Limerence and Deviance*

Notably, limerence is often associated in social scientific literature with stalking, primarily “cyber-stalking” or “online stalking” (Bradbury et al. 2025; Willmott and Bentley 2015). The normalization of cyber-stalking poses a particular risk for limerent individuals::

Thanks to the internet, the act of observing another person without their knowledge or consent has become ubiquitous and normalised—it is, in effect, the operating business model of many popular social media platforms and apps . . . For most of us, this behaviour does not go beyond natural curiosity and devolve into the kind of states observable in people experiencing limerence, whereby the object of interest begins to consume a person’s everyday lives and thoughts become obsessive and/or intrusive. (Bradbury et al. 2025:424)

While Tennov (1979) does not note this connection, several of her patients confessed to criminal acts that they attributed to limerence. While scholars largely reject the assumption that “limerence is a precursor to stalking” (Bradbury et al. 2025:424), diagnoses associated with limerence, including erotomania (Mullen and Pathé 1994), obsessional relational intrusion (Spitzberg and Cupach 2014), and lovesickness (Bleakley and Cupano 2023), have been linked to stalking .

### *Limerence and Gender and Sexuality*

Despite the historical characterizations of limerence as a feminine condition, existing scientific studies of limerence primarily focus on males and children, limiting our “understanding of adult life experiences, such as romantic or sexual relationships, and especially those of women and non-binary people” (Douglas and Sedgewick 2024:733). Patriarchal socialization also is critical in understanding how much more emphasized love and romantic relationships are deified and idolized throughout childhood, adolescence, and adulthood. Female socialization favors power imbalances, common in abusive and limerent relationships. Feminist scholar Simone de Beauvoir description of this phenomenon is quoted by Tennov (1979:209):

She clutches at the straw of falsehood. She fancies that the man's love is the exact counterpart of the love she brings to him; . . . she takes desire for love, erection for desire, love for a religion . . . The woman finds grounds for hope under every leaf and on grounds invisible to the observer. She makes trophies of the extorted replies; and if there are no replies. She takes silence to mean what she wishes; every woman in love is more or less a paranoiac.

This inherent victimization with the social expectation of oppression amongst women and gender non-conforming individuals feeds limerent obsession and self-debasement that can easily be exploited in abuse. It can be inferred that the same fears and risks surrounding hiding identity, being othered by society, and being misunderstood or harmed in childhood are concurrent with LGBTQIA+ individuals and can also be experienced simultaneously to other levels of marginalization.

### *Neo-Limeralism*

The pathologization of limerence occurred alongside the resurgence of biological determinism, or the “tendency to seek biological explanations for human social phenomena,” in the social sciences (Ellison and de Wet 2018). The social sciences and humanities were devalued in the aftermath of the Cold War, incentivizing researchers, psychologists, and psychotherapists alike to adopt biological determinist perspectives—transforming the role of researchers from observers to inventors (Solovey 2013:3). Tennov's (1979) invention of the term “limerence” and the popularity of the inward-facing attitude it suggests are indicative of a neoliberal shift away from the proletariat ideal of “the oppressed and abused alienated labor of Marxian lore” (Rose 1989:428) and toward the entrepreneurial ideal of “selfhood, culture, and belonging” (Foucault 1976:226). However, “the promise of neoliberal freedom comes with costs that (at the extreme) include an antagonism toward social commitment that erodes democratic participation” (Adams et al. 2019:191).

Tennov (1979), who was known to attend feminist conferences, likely witnessed such erosion during the fracturing and frustration of the women's movement following the 1977 National Women's Conference and the failure to ratify the Equal Rights Amendment (Boissoneault 2017). These failures diminished the feminist movement's cultural and political power, while neoconservative ideals regained popularity and prowess (Prendergast, Hill, and Jones 2017).

As social scientists transposed to individualism and selfhood, studies of love and intimate relationships began to emphasize self-improvement and self-help rather than collective action and structural policies. By romanticizing the loneliness and pitfalls that accompany neoliberal selfhood, limerence became a psychological state rather than a consequence of social and systemic influences on love, power, and relationships. In short, the rise of neoliberal attitudes introduced “a host of policies that figure and produce citizens as individual entrepreneurs and consumers whose moral autonomy is measured by their capacity for ‘self-care’—their ability to provide for their own needs and service their own ambitions” (Brown 2006:694).

### *Resurgence of Limerence in Online Discourse*

In many ways, limerence defies codification as a diagnosis or pathology because it has been embraced online by people, mostly women, seeking to explain failures and delusions of love and dating in a society that romanticizes obsession, romance, and violence. Social media short-form content has had increasing relevance in daily life for the modern proletariat and culture at large, especially since the invention TikTok and its large scope since the pandemic (Xu and Zhao 2025:27). Reportedly, “as of March 2023, the platform had approximately 150 million Monthly Active Users (MAUs) in the United States alone, with user scale and engagement growth significantly outpacing those of other social media platforms in the U.S. during the same

period” (Xu and Zhao 2025:26). This is likely due to the user-friendly platform that encourages a user to scroll between short-form videos successively, “allowing users to consume diverse content across genres—comedy, education, fashion, fitness, cooking, news, and more—within minutes” (Xu and Zhao 2025:28).

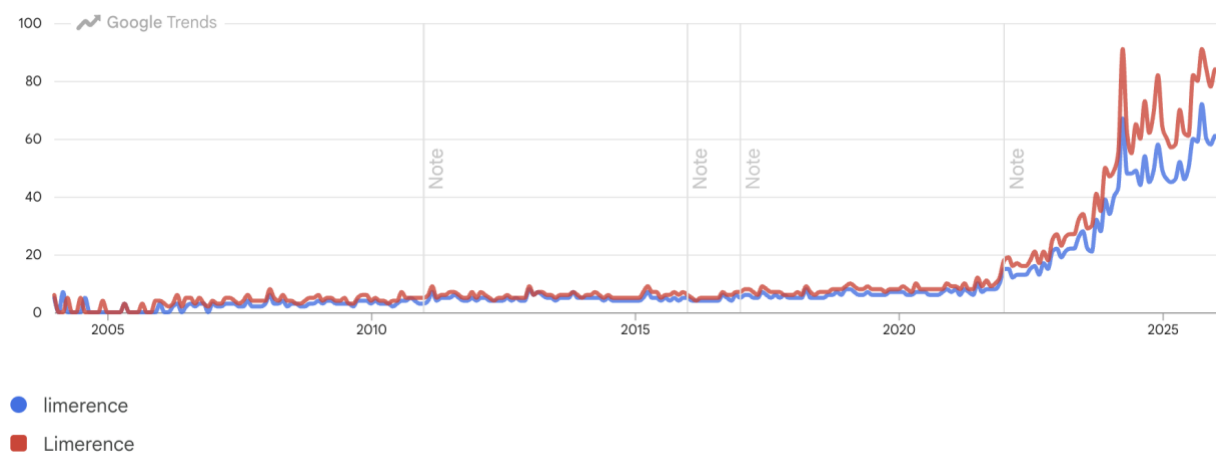
This diversity of genres allows niche audiences or communities to emerge, bolstered by follows, likes, comments, and engagement in the TikTok algorithm to retain user attention and connection between other pages. It is through online communities like these that users feel comfortable talking about their own experiences and share tips, tricks, and commiserate with one another in relative anonymity due to the oversaturation of videos. Mental health particularly is discussed in subgroups online, as “the wide reach near ubiquitous use of social media platforms may afford novel opportunities to address these shortfalls in existing mental health care,” particularly for those who have no access to mental health services in their area, or affordable treatment (Bhandari and Bimo 2022:2–3).

The drawbacks can be significant in a market such as this, however, as many self-help and therapy pages capitalize on “performances of neoliberal ideology” over research-backed solutions (Kartalija 2024:11). As observed by (Bhandari and Bimo 2022:2), “social media spaces constitute sites of self-presentation and identity management” rather than a site for support. This can be directly connected to neoliberal attitudes around identity politics and the “modern self [as] a reflexive project” can also be associated with the upsurge in interest in limerence over time as neoliberal ideals and social media platforms become intensified and more addictive (Giddens 1992:14).

As an indicator of recent public interest in limerence, I utilized Google Trends’ “fine-grained time and geographic units” measurement of terms searched over time, beginning in

2004, to showcase the term’s rise in intrigue and use. Scholars warn against the “misuse of Google Trends data in social science,” as data constructed through Google may not accurately “reflect the constructs of interest” (Hözl, Keusch, and Sajons 2025:1) in full and will not account for “account accents, plural or singular forms, and spelling mistakes” (Mavragani and Ochoa 2019:2). This figure is also only limited to the term and the “topic” of limerence, as is an option on their website. Due to these limitations, this trend data cannot be completely relied upon. However, it can be useful in identifying the upward trajectory of interest since 2021, as displayed in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2. Google Trends Chart of Popularity of Limerence Online, 2004 – 2026



## METHODS

For this study, I utilized Foucauldian discourse analysis to critically inspect the discursive construction of limerence on TikTok (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017). Discourse, in this context, refers to “institutionalized patterns of knowledge that govern the formation of subjectivity” (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017:110) and is best understood as “a social

rather than a linguistic category” (Kress 2012:2). Foucauldian discourse analysis, then, is “a method of exposing the historical conditions through which psychological knowledge has played a part in shaping the conduct of individuals in Western societies” as well as “a method of understanding the contemporary practices through which individuals constitute themselves as subjects of knowledge” (Arribas-Ayllon and Walkerdine 2017:110).

### *Sample and Data Collection*

Using TikTok’s application programming interface (API), and API extraction software developed by David Teather (2026), I collected a corpus of the top 89 videos under each of the hashtags #limerence and #limerent ( $N = 178$ ), along with their associated time stamps, captions, numbers of likes, shares, and comments, and URLs. This method of API extraction is not influenced by an individual user’s algorithm, but as a safeguard, a separate “THESIS9000” account was created with no viewing history to minimize the impact of undisclosed algorithmic curation. Some videos were translated into English using Google Translate after initial data collection to enable analysis, though I do not use any of these videos as exemplars in the results section below.

### *Data Analysis*

I coded the data inductively, identifying themes as they emerged and refining codes across three passes. A description of each theme is found in Table 1 below. In my analysis, I interpreted each theme through a Foucauldian lens, paying particular attention to the relationship between discourses of limerence and hegemonic power relations.

Table 1. Description of Inductive Codes

Theme	Qualifications
Psychology	Made by a psychotherapist or psychology-focused account online, decided by profile information and video tone
Podcast	Recorded clip from a podcast, usually with more than one host, conversational but with the professional undertone of podcast content.
Personal Advice	Usually made by an individual alone talking about their own experiences with limerence, or someone hoping to share tips/motivation about how to escape limerent attachment
Music Promotion	Clips made to promote independent music or music videos, not related specifically to limerence content except for titles, in some cases
Affective	Characterized by chaotic, abstract, sad, slow, isolating but beautiful images and use of the word or quotes about limerence — rarely has any narration or context
Other	Videos that fit into multiple or no categories were placed here, lots of trending audios and hashtags adjacent to limerence but not directly related
Unavailable	After data collection, these videos were taken down by users or by the platform and could not be analyzed due to unavailability

### *Reflexivity*

The inspiration for this thesis originated from my informal observations on social media, where the term *limerence* appeared frequently on my feed, likely due to its algorithmically determined association with my personal and scientific interest in trauma, abuse, and attachment theory. Additionally, the singer-songwriters Lucy Dacus and Katie Gavin have recently used the term as a springboard to explore obsession in queer relationships. My interest in and understanding of limerence is undoubtedly steeped in this queer discursive framework.

My understandings of social science, obsessive love, and cultural attitudes are also shaped by my experience as a self-identified middle-class neurodivergent woman of color (WOC). I may, for example, be more inclined to resonate positively with narratives that center neurodivergent, WOC, or queer perspectives as especially negatively impacted, based on my own experiences/standpoint.

## RESULTS

The frequency and percentages of each theme in the data are reported in Table 2 below.

Table 2. Frequency and Percentages of Total Posts ( $N = 178$ ) Fitting Each Theme

Theme	Frequency	Percentage
Psychology	30	17%
Podcast	13	7%
Personal Advice	33	18%
Music Promotion	22	12%
Affective	33	18%
Other	39	22%
Unavailable	9	5%

### *Definitions*

Many users expressed frustration with the difficulty of describing limerence, particularly as the term's recent popularity has led to distortions in its meaning. For instance, various users defined limerence as “way too premature to be love, way too intense to be casual,” “a purgatory,” “relief from the feelings of rejection and loss,” and “the act of taking and putting back relief.” Many users emphasized the despair of limerence, using anguished language to describe it as debilitating. One user wrote in a poem that limerence is “not gentle, not safe, not nurturing.” Another writes that “limerence is a human glitch . . . love that burns fast and fades fast but teaches slow.” Another describes the differences between love and limerence by warning others, “Love will hurt you, but limerence will destroy you.”

### *Lived Experiences*

Since Tennov's publication in 1979, most discourse on limerence has not been primarily constructed through testimonials. The advantage of TikTok videos and online short-form culture

is the “advice/conversational” videos that center around the lived experience and mental sensation of limerent attachment. In a way, this digital discourse is directly reflective of the format in which Tennov originally investigated limerence.

One user writes of the loss of executive function in limerent attachment on the screen of the video posted, where you can see them wearing an unidentified work-issued uniform: “No one talks about how hard it is to work when I’m so limerent.” Another writes of their body and mind mentally “screaming” at them in limerent ideation: “‘LOVE ME!’ I’d say it again and again if I didn’t learn previously that loud pleas fall on deaf ears.” This video may also be connecting the experience of limerence with previous childhood experiences, hinting at “previous learning” of not being heard or sought out in love. This is a continuous theme throughout the data, especially as therapists and mental health professional accounts harp on the critical aspect of childhood that undoubtedly shape how people interact/attach in adulthood.

One such video comes from a psychotherapist who says assuredly that limerence “really comes from one of two things: either childhood that didn’t satisfy your needs and so that’s where you learn to fantasize . . . or dopamine [seeking] . . . like an addict.” This type of video was extremely popular in my dataset, as it provided clear cut partitions on the categorical vulnerabilities of limerence, and also places the blame back on the limerent individual, rather than the psycho-social factors affecting them. Many users, predominantly therapists and self-help online creators emphasize the idea of a limerent individual “playing out a narrative of someone choosing [them]” and trying to “rewrite a story that was not [their] fault.” Others frame this conception as something to form community around: “we are creating love and creating affection where it doesn’t exist . . . it’s a complete fabrication” that “represents hope” not just “emotional hunger.”

### *Neurodiversity*

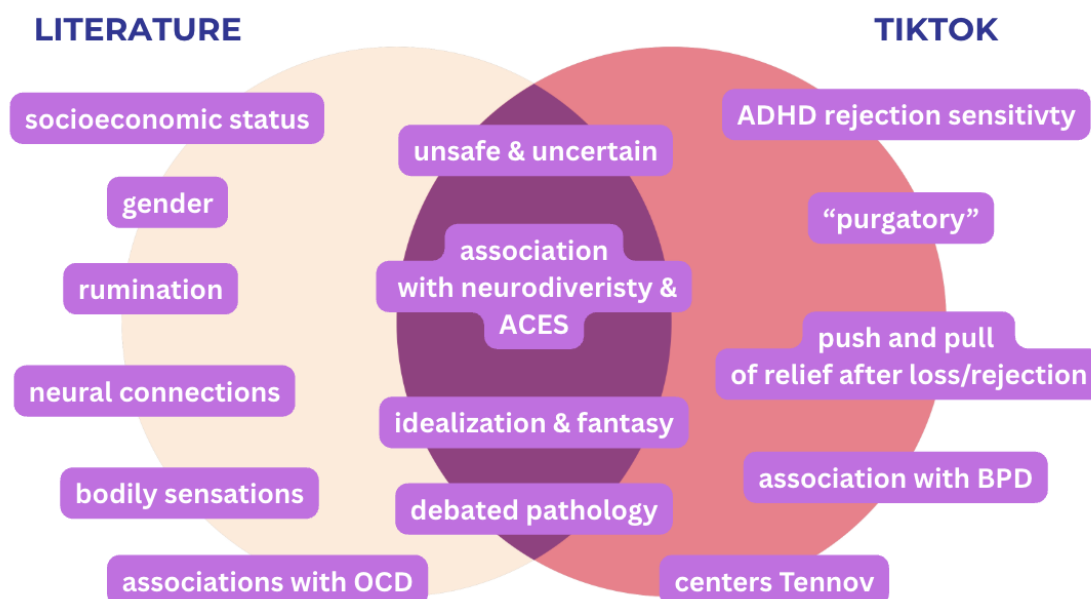
Many users pathologized limerence by conceptualizing it as symptomatic of borderline personality disorder (BPD) and/or ADHD. One video cites limerence as being the “hidden heartbreak of BPD,” while another describes limerence as a manifestation of rejection sensitivity, which is a common experience among people diagnosed with ADHD. While many self-identified neurodivergent users defined limerence using clinical terms, as exemplified in the post caption, “When your hyperfixation happens to be a person,” a minority argued that associating limerence with neurodivergent relationships oversimplifies and stigmatizes them. For instance, one user wrote, “Limerence oversimplifies neurodivergent love,” and another responded to the connections between limerence and neurodiversity by saying, “The Autistic and ADHD experience of love is much more complex than this.” In this way, some neurodiverse individuals resisted the pathologization of both limerence and neurodiversity.

### DISCUSSION

The fanaticism of a resurgent term online also places inherent emphasis on Tennov’s centering in the discourse, based in the neoliberalist ideal of *discovery* rather than *observation* (Plehwe, Slobodian, and Mirowski 2020). This is almost to be expected, as coining such a nebulous term in a neoliberalist culture prompts an attraction to a novel or rare term of pathologic diagnosis to be uncovered.

TikTok also almost exclusively focuses on the intersection of sexuality and neurodiversity rather than other marginalizations such as socioeconomic status or gender, which research points to being at least equally significant (Badenes-Sastre et al. 2025). Out of all 178 videos, the intersection of gender and class was not mentioned once as a main association or vulnerability.

Figure 3. Comparison of Discourses of Limerence in the Literature and on TikTok



### *Solutions & Relief*

While discourse on the intensity and harm of limerence is abundant, resources and ideas for relief for limerent individuals are limited in online spaces, and almost nonexistent in scholarly discussion. Solution oriented approaches on TikTok are largely focused on bolstering of confidence and self-worth, reversing obsessive behaviors back into self. For instance, one user writes, “The positive qualities you are projecting onto the person you like are yours” (emphasis in original). “Shift the focus back to you,” another therapist writes, “instead of asking ‘do they like me?’ ask yourself . . . ‘do I feel safe and seen?’”

Other users approached limerent behaviors and attachment using an addiction recovery model. For instance, one user asserted, “Limerence is a chemical addiction [that you need] to detox from.” Others offered “trigger and reward systems” to “interrupt” the cycle of limerence,

including therapy work, self-talk, and habit tracking. User suggestions included, “Curb your hookups and seek out therapy,” “Say out loud ‘I don’t do this anymore,’” and “Ask yourself, ‘is this the reality?’”

While literature is lacking in understanding what possible intervention practices would be helpful to LIs, and pathology can be debated, options for relief seem at the forefront of individuals discussing their firsthand experiences of limerence, options like cognitive diffusion therapy and cognitive behavioral therapy has been proven to be beneficial to individuals experiencing the obsessive and involuntary thinking patterns shared by OCD (Ghomian et al. 2022:248). Whether or not limerence is later identified as a subtype of OCD or BPD (as suggested by online discourse), its intervention and solution strategies should be framed to be more holistic and interconnected to other pathologized disorders. Overall, further research is desperately needed to prevent and understand limerence more comprehensively.

#### *Limitations and Suggestions for Future Research*

There are significant drawbacks to collecting data on online discourse, largely due to the ever-changing fast-paced roll over of social media short-form content websites. The date and time at which I ran the API software solidified my results in a past iteration of the discourse surrounding limerence. Similarly, the use of only two hashtags to collect data from significantly limits findings. This decision was made despite original plans for more in-depth quantitative research but was unattainable due to the time constraints of a graduate program.

My data collection was also limited to TikTok’s platform, though limerence is undoubtedly a topic of discourse on other social media platforms, particularly Meta (Instagram Reels) and YouTube. I chose to limit my study to TikTok’s interface due to accessibility of

software, the added anonymity for “participants” on public accounts, and for purposes of time-efficiency.

Additionally, while I originally planned on using a Chi-Square or ANOVA test to discover differences in my coded video types between hashtags, I found during analysis that there was so much overlap and chaos in how limerence was discussed that a larger sample would be needed to compare video type significance statistically.

### *Conclusion*

I originally began my study of limerence under the assumption that this term could be identified and reworked to be adopted into both scholarly and social discourse, following this study, I feel that the slippery nature of this term is exactly what increases its popularity and is what constitutes its significance. Limerence is used as a term that can adapt to the individual using it, making its associations and the social attachment to it even more interesting. In fact, this topic is abundant in how it can be used for analysis of the modern conception of love, dating, and abuse, as it serves as a utilitarian term that can be adopted in adjacency to other more pathologized or legitimized diagnoses/states of being.

Tennov’s inception of this terminology and what she calls “limerent theory” cannot be relied upon in a sociological context, as it has failed the “theoretical feedback loop” in which “new applications . . . improve the tool, not merely reaffirm its utility” (Whetten 1989:493). Online discourse around limerence, specifically on TikTok has done just that—reaffirm utility without providing new perspectives, definitions, or applications in any clear sense. Any sociological theory must be able to be “broadly understood and accepted so that . . . contributors can communicate effectively” (Whetten 1989:492), which is opposite in the case of this term. Since its formation, limerence has existed as a theoretical and psycho-social mystery—a term

loosely thrown into the ether of love research to grasp at the ineffable nature of obsession, dependence, and connection in a capitalist, post-modern society.

## REFERENCES

- Acevedo, Bianca P., Arthur Aron, Helen E. Fisher, and Lucy L. Brown. 2012. "Neural Correlates of Long-Term Intense Romantic Love." *Social Cognitive and Affective Neuroscience* 7(2):145–59. doi:10.1093/scan/nsq092.
- Adams, Glenn, Sara Estrada-Villalta, Daniel Sullivan, and Hazel Rose Markus. 2019. "The Psychology of Neoliberalism and the Neoliberalism of Psychology." *Journal of Social Issues* 75(1):189–216. doi:10.1111/josi.12305.
- Al-Yagon, Michal, Dovrat Forte, and Lital Avrahami. 2020. "Executive Functions and Attachment Relationships in Children With ADHD: Links to Externalizing/Internalizing Problems, Social Skills, and Negative Mood Regulation." *Journal of Attention Disorders* 24(13):1876–90. doi:10.1177/1087054717730608.
- Antshel, Kevin M., Bridget O. Hier, and Russell A. Barkley. 2014. "Executive Functioning Theory and ADHD." Pp. 107–20 in *Handbook of Executive Functioning*, edited by S. Goldstein and J. A. Naglieri. New York, NY: Springer New York.
- Arribas-Ayllon, Michael, and Valerie Walkerdine. 2017. "Foucauldian Discourse Analysis." Pp. 110–23 in *The SAGE Handbook of Qualitative Research in Psychology*, edited by C. Willig and W. S. Rogers. London: SAGE Publications.
- Badenes-Sastre, Marta, Patricia Medinilla-Tena, Chelsea M. Spencer, and Francisca Expósito. 2025. "Cognitive Distortions and Decision-Making in Women Victims of Intimate Partner Violence: A Scoping Review." *Psychosocial Intervention* 34(1):23–35. doi:10.5093/pi2025a3.
- Banker, Robin M. 2010. "Socially Prescribed Perfectionism and Limerence in Interpersonal Relationships." Thesis, University of New Hampshire, Durham.

- Beaudoin, Luc, Monika Pudło, and Sylwia Hyniewska. 2020. "Mental Perturbance: An Integrative Design-Oriented Concept for Understanding Repetitive Thought, Emotions and Related Phenomena Involving a Loss of Control of Executive Functions." *SFU Educational Review* 13(1):29–58. doi:10.21810/sfuer.v13i1.1282.
- Berrios, German E., and N. Kennedy. 2002. "Erotomania: A Conceptual History." *History of Psychiatry* 13(52):381–400. doi:10.1177/0957154X0201305202.
- Bhandari, Aparajita, and Sara Bimo. 2022. "Why's Everyone on TikTok Now? The Algorithmized Self and the Future of Self-Making on Social Media." *Social Media + Society* 8(1). doi:10.1177/20563051221086241.
- Bleakley, Paul, and Gabriella Cupano. 2023. "'Lovesick Women': A Historical Overview of Gendered Conceptualizations of Erotomania, and Their Influence on Responses to Stalking." *Studies in Gender and Sexuality* 24(3):176–88. doi:10.1080/15240657.2023.2243789.
- Boissoneault, Lorraine. 2017. "The 1977 Conference on Women's Rights That Split America in Two." *Smithsonian Magazine*, February 15.
- Bradbury, Paula, Emma Short, and Paul Bleakley. 2025. "Limerence, Hidden Obsession, Fixation, and Rumination: A Scoping Review of Human Behaviour." *Journal of Police and Criminal Psychology* 40(2):417–26. doi:10.1007/s11896-024-09674-x.
- Brown, Wendy. 2006. "American Nightmare: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism, and De-Democratization." *Political Theory* 34(6):690–714. doi:10.1177/0090591706293016.
- Douglas, Sarah, and Felicity Sedgewick. 2024. "Experiences of Interpersonal Victimization and Abuse among Autistic People." *Autism* 28(7):1732–45. doi:10.1177/13623613231205630.

- Ellison, George T. H., and Thea de Wet. 2018. "Biological Determinism." in *The International Encyclopedia of Biological Anthropology*, edited by W. Trevathan. Wiley.
- Evans, Chloe. 2023. "Exploring Obsessive Thinking and Compulsive Behaviour in the Context of Real and Imagined Relationships." Dissertation, University of Sheffield.
- Floeck, Elizabeth. 2025. "Over-Imitation in Adolescents with Autism Compared with Typically Developing Peers: An Expanded Literature Review." Undergraduate Thesis, University of Arkansas.
- Foucault, Michel. 1976. *The History of Sexuality*. Vol. 1: An Introduction. New York: Vintage Books.
- Freud, Sigmund. 1922. *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*. New York: Boni and Liveright.
- Gamache, Dominick, Claudia Savard, Jonathan Faucher, and Marie-Ève Cloutier. 2022. "Development and Validation of the Stalking and Obsessive Relational Intrusions Questionnaire (SORI-Q)." *Journal of Interpersonal Violence* 37(21–22). doi:10.1177/08862605211042808.
- Ghomian, Soheila, Mohammad Reza Shaeiri, and Hojjatollah Farahani. 2022. "Obsession Improvement in Female Patients with Relationship Obsessive Compulsive Disorder: A Single Subject Study 1 ; 2 ; 3." *Journal of Fundamentals of Mental Health* 24(4):241–51.
- Giddens, Anthony. 1992. *The Transformation of Intimacy: Sexuality, Love and Eroticism in Modern Societies*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

- Hatfield, Elaine, Lisamarie Bensman, and Richard L. Rapson. 2012. "A Brief History of Social Scientists' Attempts to Measure Passionate Love." *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 29(2):143–64. doi:10.1177/0265407511431055.
- Hatfield, Elaine, and Susan Sprecher. 1985. "Passionate Love Scale." doi:10.1037/t11423-000.
- Hözl, Johanna, Florian Keusch, and Christoph Sajons. 2025. "The (Mis)Use of Google Trends Data in the Social Sciences: A Systematic Review, Critique, and Recommendations." *Social Science Research* 126:103099. doi:10.1016/j.ssresearch.2024.103099.
- Kartalija, Trevor. 2024. "Neoliberalism and TikTok's Day in the Life Trend." Thesis, University of Oregon.
- Kelly, Brendan D. 2018. "Love as Delusion, Delusions of Love: Erotomania, Narcissism and Shame." *Medical Humanities* 44(1):15–19. doi:10.1136/medhum-2017-011198.
- Kress, Gunther. 2012. "Multimodal Discourse Analysis." Pp. 35–50 in *The Routledge Handbook of Discourse Analysis*, edited by J. P. Gee and M. Handford. London: Routledge.
- Lepp, Ignace. 1963. *The Psychology of Loving*. New York: The New American Library.
- Limen. n.d. *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.
- Manschreck, Theo C. 1996. "Delusional Disorder: The Recognition and Management of Paranoia." *The Journal of Clinical Psychiatry* 57 Suppl 3:32–38; discussion 49.
- Mavragani, Amaryllis, and Gabriela Ochoa. 2019. "Google Trends in Infodemiology and Infoveillance: Methodology Framework." *JMIR Public Health and Surveillance* 5(2). doi:10.2196/13439.
- Mullen, Paul E., and Michele Pathé. 1994. "Stalking and the Pathologies of Love." *Australian & New Zealand Journal of Psychiatry* 28(3):469–77. doi:10.3109/00048679409075876.

- Pearson, Amy, Kieran Rose, Alex Mitchell, Wendy Joseph, Sarah Douglas, Felicity Sedgewick, and Monique Botha. 2024. “‘It’s Not a Physical Prison but You Can’t Get Out’: How Autistic Adults Make Sense of the Experience of Intimate Violence and Abuse.” *Autism in Adulthood*. doi:10.1089/aut.2024.0145.
- Peele, Stanton, and Archie Brodsky. 1975. *Love and Addiction*. New York: Taplinger.
- Plehwe, Dieter, Quinn Slobodian, and Philip Mirowski, eds. 2020. *Nine Lives of Neoliberalism*. London: Verso.
- Prendergast, Louise M., Dave Hill, and Sharon Jones. 2017. “Social Exclusion, Education and Precarity: Neoliberalism, Neoconservatism and Class War from Above.” *Journal for Critical Education Policy Studies* 15(2):23–58. <https://www.jceps.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/10/15-2-2.pdf>.
- Rose, Nikolas S. 1989. *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge.
- Shih, Hsuan-Chu, Mu-En Kuo, Changwei Wu, Yi-Ping Chao, Hsu-Wen Huang, and Chih-Mao Huang. 2022. “The Neurobiological Basis of Love: A Meta-Analysis of Human Functional Neuroimaging Studies of Maternal and Passionate Love.” *Brain Sciences* 12(7). doi:10.3390/brainsci12070830.
- Shmidt, Jane. 2018. “Diagnosing the Will to Suffer: Lovesickness in the Medical and Literary Traditions.” Dissertation, City University of New York, New York.
- Solovey, Mark. 2013. *Shaky Foundations: The Politics-Patronage-Social Science Nexus in Cold War America*. Rutgers University Press.
- Sorokin, Pitirim A. 1950. “Love: Its Aspects, Production, Transformation, and Accumulation.” Pp. 3–73 in *Explorations in altruistic love and behavior: A symposium*, edited by P. A. Sorokin. Boston, MA: The Beacon Press.

- Spitzberg, Brian H., and William R. Cupach. 2014. *The Dark Side of Relationship Pursuit: From Attraction to Obsession and Stalking*. 2nd revised edition. New York: Routledge.
- Sternberg, Robert J. 1986. "A Triangular Theory of Love." *Psychological Review* 93(2):119–35. doi:10.1037/0033-295X.93.2.119.
- Sussman, Steve. 2010. "Love Addiction: Definition, Etiology, Treatment." *Sexual Addiction & Compulsivity* 17(1):31–45. doi:10.1080/10720161003604095.
- Teather, David. 2026. "TikTokAPI."
- Tennov, Dorothy. 1979. *Love and Limerence: The Experience of Being in Love*. New York: Stein and Day Publishers.
- Toohy, Peter. 1992. "Love, Lovesickness, and Melancholia." *Illinois Classical Studies* 17(2):265–86. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23064324>.
- Trundle, Grace, Katy A. Jones, Danielle Ropar, and Vincent Egan. 2023. "Prevalence of Victimization in Autistic Individuals: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis." *Trauma, Violence, & Abuse* 24(4):2282–96. doi:10.1177/15248380221093689.
- Wakin, Albert H., and Duyen B. Vo. 2008. "Love-Variant: The Wakin-Vo I. D. R. Model of Limerence." Pp. 1–11 in *Challenging Intimate Boundaries*.
- Webb, Elanor, Benedetta Lupattelli Gencarelli, Grace Keaveney, and Deborah Morris. 2024. "Is Trauma Research Neglecting Neurodiverse Populations? A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis of the Prevalence ACEs in Adults with Autistic Traits." *Advances in Autism* 10(3):104–19. doi:10.1108/AIA-07-2023-0037.
- Whetten, David A. 1989. "What Constitutes a Theoretical Contribution?" *The Academy of Management Review* 14(4):490. doi:10.2307/258554.

- Willmott, Lynn, and Evie Bentley. 2015. "Exploring the Lived-Experience of Limerence: A Journey toward Authenticity." *The Qualitative Report* 20(1):20–38. doi:10.46743/2160-3715/2015.1420.
- Wymbs, Brian T., Will H. Canu, Gina M. Sacchetti, and Loren M. Ranson. 2021. "Adult ADHD and Romantic Relationships: What We Know and What We Can Do to Help." *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy* 47(3):664–81. doi:10.1111/jmft.12475.
- Xu, Kangwei, and Yu Zhao. 2025. "Analysis Report on TikToks Monthly Active User Attraction (a Case Study of North America)." *Journal of Applied Economics and Policy Studies* 18(5):26–32. doi:10.54254/2977-5701/2025.24544.