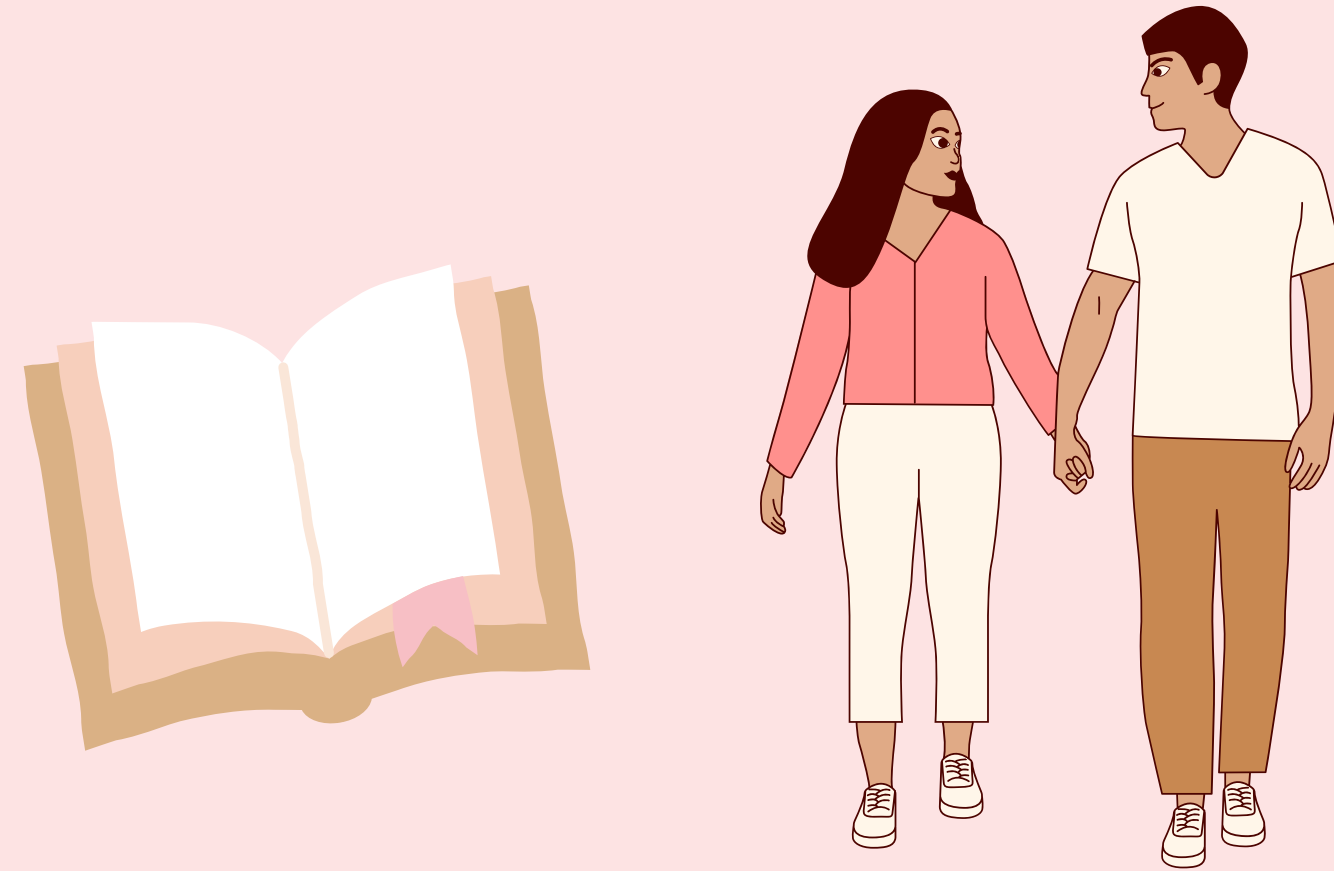




THE INFLUENCE OF ROMANCE NOVELS ON COMMUNICATION IN ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS

a proposed research project
by Gabby Piccirilli

ROMANCE SELLS THE MOST OF THE 8 MAJOR NOVEL
GENRES FOR

\$1.08 BILLION

ANNUALLY



SURGE IN SALES VOLUME TO
19 MILLION UNITS,
A LEVEL UNSEEN SINCE 2014



#BOOKTOK

PRIVATE GUILTY
PLEASURE



CULTURAL
PHENOMENON





1

**Purpose &
Significance**



2

**Literature
Review**



3

**Method &
Results**



4

Discussion

PURPOSE



To examine how romance novel consumption affects romantic communication, including relationship satisfaction, communication dynamics, and idealistic expectations.



To apply these findings to promote healthier reading habits and advance the studies of interpersonal communication and media effects.

SIGNIFIGANCE



FILLING THE RESEARCH GAP

- Most research on romance novels is over a decade old, highlighting the need for current evaluation
- Limited research on romantic media's impact on partner communication (mostly on satisfaction sexual behaviors, etc)



INCREASING RELEVANCY

- Romance novels are particularly popular among younger readers, making it vital to understand & address possible effects urgently
- Data could prove useful to marriage counselors, relationship experts & the general public

RESEARCH QUESTION

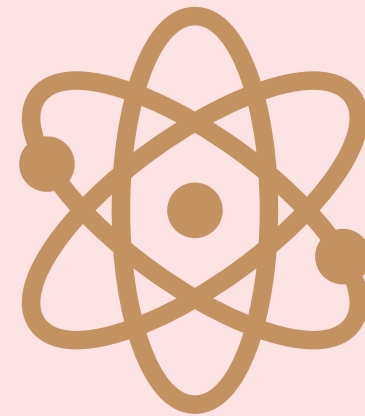
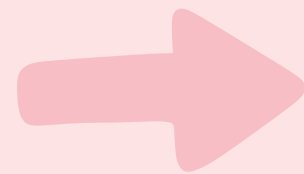


DOES THE CONSUMPTION OF
ROMANCE NOVELS **NEGATIVELY**
IMPACT THE PERCEIVED **QUALITY OF**
COMMUNICATION AMONG
INDIVIDUALS AND THEIR REAL-LIFE
ROMANTIC PARTNERS?

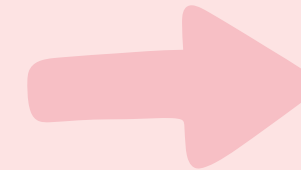
LITERATURE REVIEW



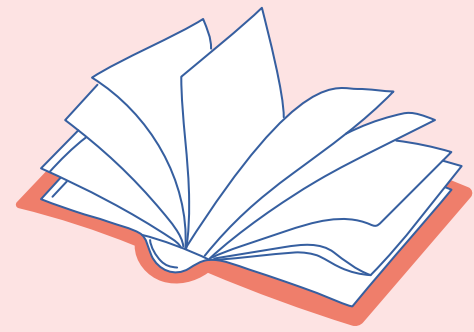
**What is the
romance novel?**



**Theoretical
grounding**



**Romantic
expectations →
communication
practices**



- **Romance novel: “ A specific type of romantic fiction, with a formulaic story chronicling the gradual development of a relationship”** (Long, 2007).



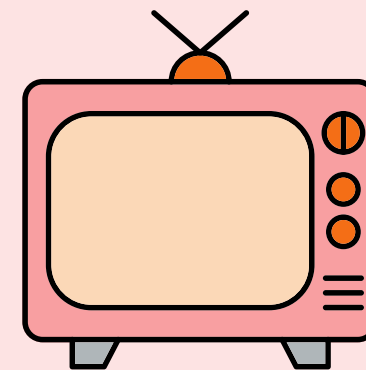
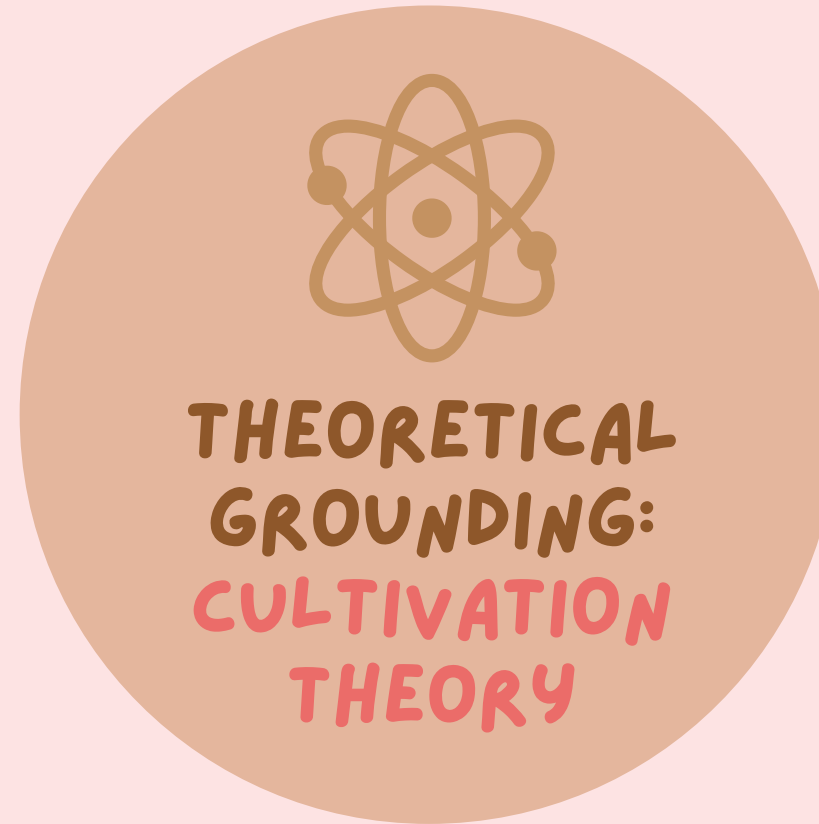
- **Love depicted through the romance novel is...**
 - **ideal**
 - **extremely passionate**
 - **transformational**



- **Dialogue in the romance novel...**
 - **is often unnatural**
 - **reinforces extreme expectations, like violent protectiveness**
 - **repetition may distort views of healthy relationships**
(Signorelli & Morgan, 1990).



- **Media shapes social reality → heavy romance novel consumers may adopt symbolic ideals, causing dissatisfaction when real-life interactions fall short**



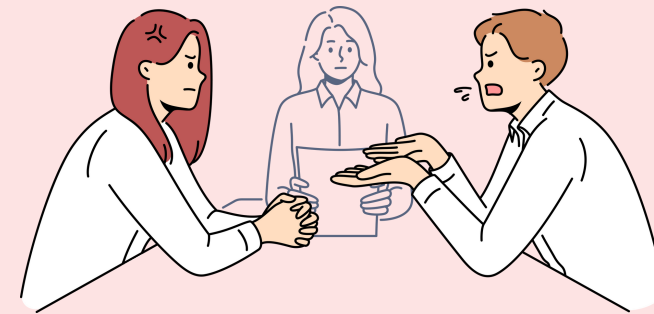
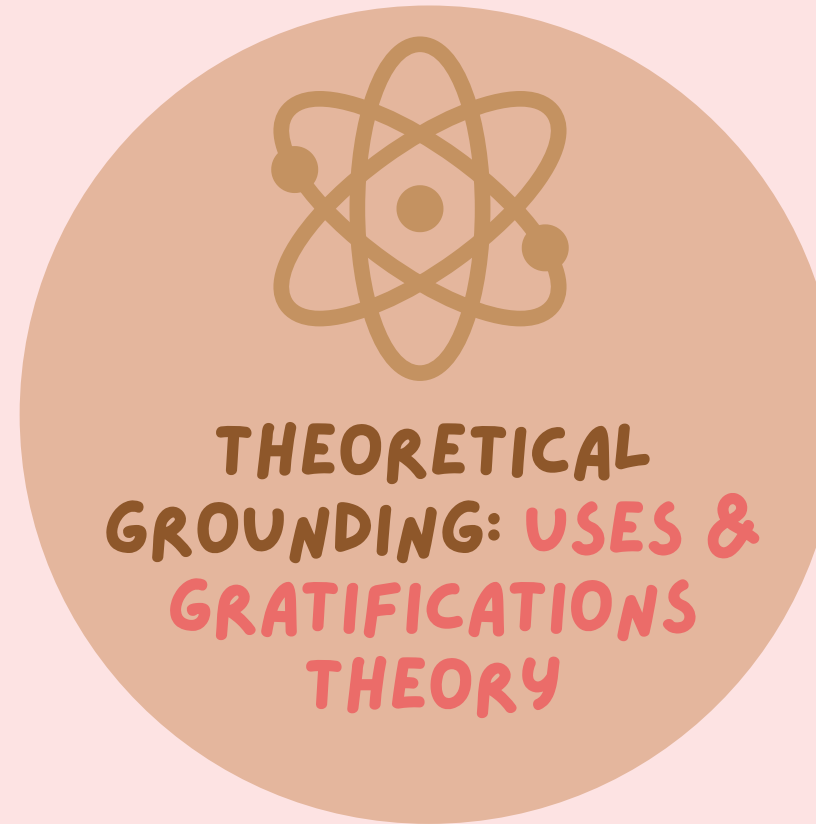
- **Frequent viewers of romantic programs often expect marriages to be functional with minimal effort** (Zondarak, 2012)



- **Romance novels can shape a reader's perception of what constitutes a healthy, fulfilling relationship & imply guidelines for romantic success**
(Burnett & Beto, 2000)



- People utilize media to meet their needs & feel satisfied when they are met → romance novels fulfill unmet relational needs
- Romance reader: an active consumer, aware of their reasons for choosing the genre & therefore, of a lack in their romantic life
(Garciano et al., 2023)



- Significant correlation exists between motivation to read romance novels & low relationship satisfaction
(Long, 2007).

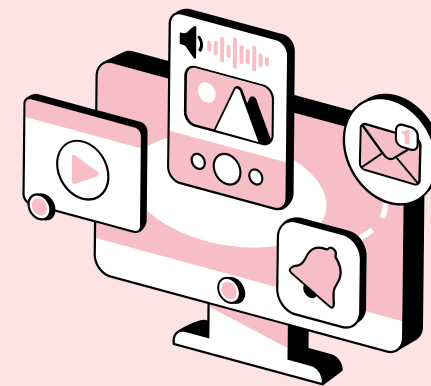


- People turn to media and other sources for guidance on romantic expectations and decisions
- Characters “give rise to certain beliefs, or changes in beliefs, towards one’s romantic partner” (Zondorak, 2012).



- Existing research has not fully explored how altered romantic expectations impact partner communication
- Shifting beliefs about relationships can alter communication patterns, suggested by Relational Dialectics Theory

(Baxter & Braithwaite, 2008)



- Social media offers insights into how romance readers' communication expectations manifest in real-life (Arttime, 2016)



- Readers may mimic dramatic fictional interactions, such as grand declarations or ultimatums, disrupting authentic communication
- Some women lashed out at partners for not meeting heroic standards set by novels (Burnett & Beto, 2000)

H1: HIGHER CONSUMPTION OF ROMANCE NOVELS IS ASSOCIATED WITH MORE IDEALISTIC EXPECTATIONS OF REAL-LIFE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS.



**IV: NOVEL
CONSUMPTION**



**DV: IDEALISTIC
EXPECTATIONS**

H2: INDIVIDUALS WHO FREQUENTLY CONSUME ROMANCE NOVELS WILL REPORT LOWER RELATIONSHIP COMMUNICATION SATISFACTION COMPARED TO THOSE WHO CONSUME ROMANCE NOVELS LESS FREQUENTLY.



IV: NOVEL
CONSUMPTION



DV: RELATIONSHIP
COMMUNICATION
SATISFACTION

VS.

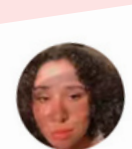


IV: NOVEL
CONSUMPTION



DV: RELATIONSHIP
COMMUNICATION
SATISFACTION

H3: SOCIAL MEDIA ENGAGEMENT, PARTICULARLY COMMENTS ON PLATFORMS LIKE TIKTOK, WILL REFLECT DISTORTED PERCEPTIONS OF HEALTHY ROMANTIC COMMUNICATION AMONG ROMANCE NOVEL READERS.



savannnaaa

It kills me when I finish a book. The characters only exist on the pages. A love like that is only written in fiction. It's not real. It's not fair.

2023-8-28 Reply



14



Sarah Woodward

my standards been getting awfully high lately

2023-10-13 Reply



MaggieLynnAuthor

Sending this to my husband so he can take notes 🤔

2023-10-9 Reply



1



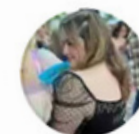
Emma Halbrook · Creator

😂😂 Next time I hear plain old "I love you" I'm rolling my eyes

2023-10-9 Reply



1



ashanty ✨booktok

These men are ✨elite✨

2023-10-9 Reply



4



Emma Halbrook · Creator

The gold standard ⭐

2023-10-9 Reply



1



PROCEDURE



SURVEY RESEARCH IS THE MOST EFFECTIVE METHOD FOR GATHERING DATA FROM GROUPS TOO LARGE TO OBSERVE, LIKE AMERICAN ROMANCE READERS
(BABBIE, 2013).

- **35-QUESTION QUESTIONNAIRE,**
 - **5-POINT LIKERT SCALE, FROM 'STRONGLY DISAGREE' TO 'STRONGLY AGREE,'**
 - **MULTIPLE CHOICE**
- **AFTER IRB APPROVAL, ADMINISTER ONLINE TO VOLUNTARY PARTICIPANTS MEETING THE PARTICIPANT CRITERIA VIA AN ONLINE SURVEY SOFTWARE**

PARTICIPANTS



SAMPLE CRITERIA:

-U.S. RESIDENTS

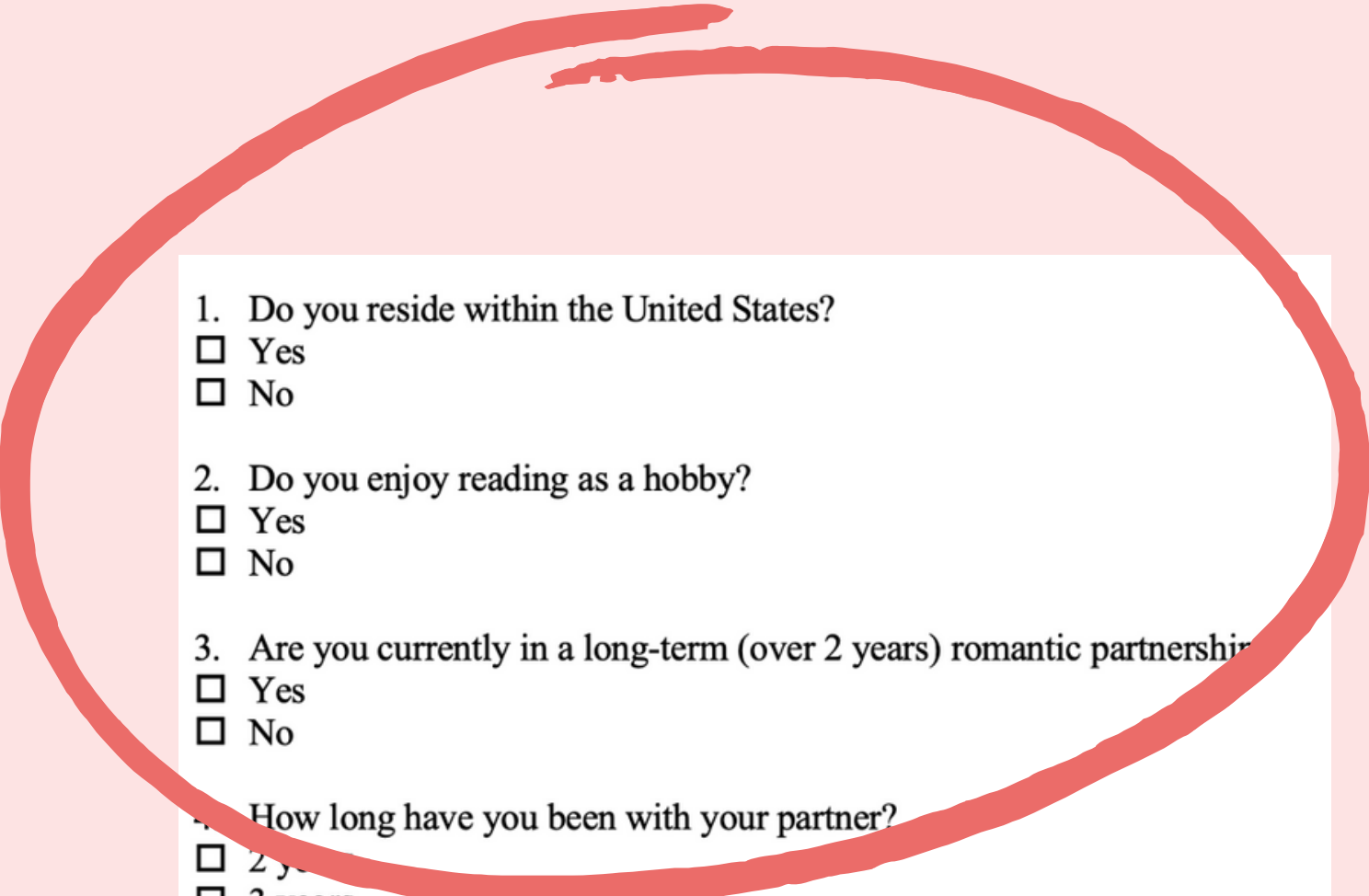
-IN LONG-TERM ROMANTIC
PARTNERSHIPS (2+ YEARS OF
DATING, COHABITING,
ENGAGEMENT, OR MARRIAGE)

-ENGAGE IN READING AS A
HOBBY

GENERALIZABILITY

- GENRE ATTRACTS DIVERSE AUDIENCE (NPD BOOK, 2017)
 - LIMITING TO SAMPLE FROM A SINGLE GEOGRAPHICAL LOCATION
- SHOULD INCLUDE DIVERSE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS, BOTH HETEROSEXUAL & SAME-SEX
- DESIRED SAMPLE SIZE: 400-500 RESPONDENTS, MINIMUM OF 300 RESPONDENTS ACCEPTED

QUESTIONNAIRE

- 
1. Do you reside within the United States?
☐ Yes
☐ No
 2. Do you enjoy reading as a hobby?
☐ Yes
☐ No
 3. Are you currently in a long-term (over 2 years) romantic partnership?
☐ Yes
☐ No
 4. How long have you been with your partner?
☐ 2 years
☐ 3 years
☐ 4 years
☐ 5+ years
☐ 10+ years
☐ 15+ years
☐ 20+ years
 5. Which of the following best describes your relationship status?
☐ Engaged to be married
☐ Married
☐ Living with partner
☐ Dating (not living together)
☐ Not listed above. Please specify: _____

- THREE CONTINGENCY MCQS AT START WILL INDICATE IF PARTICIPANT FITS DESIRED SAMPLE

- IF "NO" IS RECEIVED FOR ANY, SURVEY WILL CONCLUDE

QUESTION
BREAK
DOWN



QUESTIONS 6-11:

- data set for the variable NovelConsumption
- higher score = higher consumption

	Strongly Disagree 1	Disagree 2	Neither agree or disagree 3	Agree 4	Strongly Agree 5
6. If I sit down to read a book, I am likely to select a book from the romance genre.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
7. I read almost daily.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
8. If I have free time, I am likely to read a book.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
9. I actively seek recommendations for romance novels.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
10. I often purchase or borrow books from the romance genre	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
11. I read 3 or more romance novels a month.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

QUESTIONS 23-32

- data set for the variable CommSatisfaction
- higher score = higher satisfaction

23. I feel that my partner and I communicate openly and honestly with each other.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
24. My partner and I can discuss difficult topics in our relationship without conflict.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
25. My partner listens attentively and understands my perspective when I communicate with them	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
26. I feel comfortable expressing my emotions and thoughts to my partner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
27. I am satisfied with the way my partner and I resolve disagreements through communication.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
28. I feel heard and valued when I talk to my partner.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
29. My partner is responsive and empathetic when I share my concerns and feeling.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
30. I feel that communicating with my partner strengthens our relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
31. My partner and I regularly have meaningful conversations that deepen our connection.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
32. I am happy with the frequency of communication in my relationship.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

QUESTIONS 12-22

- data set for the variable IdealisticExp
- higher score = more idealistic expectations

12. A romantic relationship should always feel exciting and passionate.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
13. Conflict in a romantic relationship is a sign that the relationship is not meant to last.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
14. In a strong romantic relationship, grand gestures are more important than everyday actions.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
15. I believe true love should overcome obstacles effortlessly.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
16. My partner should prioritize my happiness over everything else.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
17. I believe in love at first sight.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
18. My partner should know how to make me feel specific without guidance.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
19. I expect my partner to understand my needs without me having to communicate them.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
20. I expect my partner to make every special occasion unforgettable.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
21. The best relationships are those where both partners are completely dependent on each other.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐
22. In true love, partners should never feel the need for personal space.	☐	☐	☐	☐	☐

QUESTIONS 33-35

- gathers optional demographic data
- i.e. age range, gender, sexuality, household income, race

Please answer the following demographic questions. Your responses are confidential and will be used solely for research purposes. If you feel uncomfortable answering any question, you may select "Prefer not to answer."

For each question, select the option that best applies to you. If an "Other" option is available, you may provide additional details in the space provided.

33. What is your age?

☐ 18-24

☐ 25-34

☐ 35-44

☐ 45-54

☐ 55-64

☐ 65 and over

☐ Prefer not to answer

34. What is your gender?

☐ Female

☐ Male

☐ Other: _____

☐ Prefer not to answer

35. What is your sexuality?

☐ Heterosexual or straight

☐ Gay

☐ Lesbian

☐ Bisexual

☐ Not listed above. Please specify: _____

☐ Prefer not to answer

STATISTICAL TESTING

H1:

PEARSON'S R-TEST

to test the correlation between
NovelConsumption &
IdealisticExp

H2:

INDEPENDENT T-TEST

to compare the mean
CommSatisfaction scores between
frequent and infrequent romance
readers



- NovelConsumption → into FrequentReader & InfrequentReader categories using median split
 - FrequentReader: above median score
 - InfrequentReader: at or below median score

TRIANGULATION



H3:
CONTENT ANALYSIS
of the social media platform
TikTok, focusing on posts
hashtagged BookTok.



CODEBOOK

Preliminary criteria:

- References a romance novel or trope
- Flagged as “distorted perception” if aligning with distortion types
 - i.e. idealized miscommunication, conflict as passion
- Distortion types will include definitions/examples for consistency & inter-coder reliability

CODING

- Analyze posts/comments for distortion frequency, patterns, themes & trends

CONNECTING SURVEY DATA TO CONTENT ANALYSIS

- Incorporate social media engagement questions in survey
 - "Do you use TikTok to engage with book-related content?"
- Optional user tagging
 - Ask respondents if they are comfortable sharing TikTok handle for research purposes
 - To identify if participants are active on #BookTok & compare behavior with survey responses

POTENTIAL FINDINGS



H1 supported if the data reveal a statistically significant correlation between higher levels of reported romance novel consumption and idealistic expectations



H2 supported if the CommSatisfaction mean score for the FrequentReader group is significantly lower than that of the InfrequentReader group



H3 supported if analysis reveals significant frequency & clear pattern of comments/posts that align with predefined "distorted perceptions" & if there is high inter-coder reliability

POTENTIAL FINDINGS



IV: NOVEL
CONSUMPTION



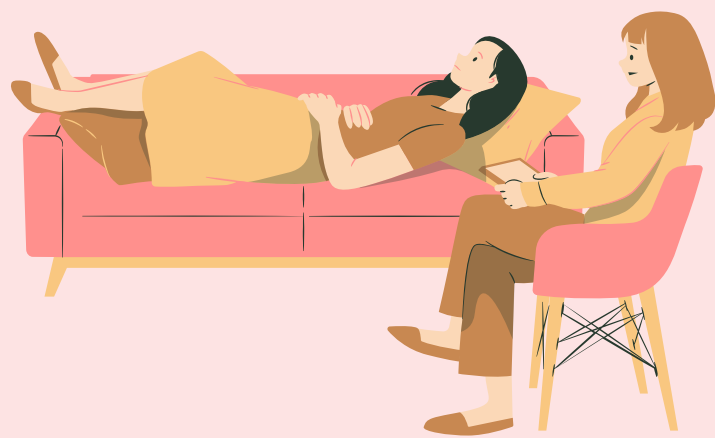
DV: IDEALISTIC
EXPECTATIONS

H1 VERY LIKELY TO BE
ACCEPTED

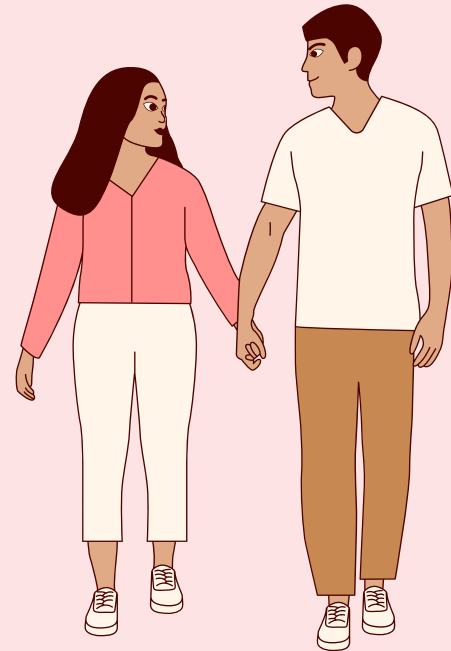
- AMPLE PREVIOUS RESEARCH
ALIGNS
- ROMANCE NOVELS ARE
INHERENTLY IDEALISTIC

POTENTIAL IMPLICATIONS

IF SOME OR ALL HYPOTHESES ARE ACCEPTED,
THESE INSIGHTS CAN CONTRIBUTE TO...



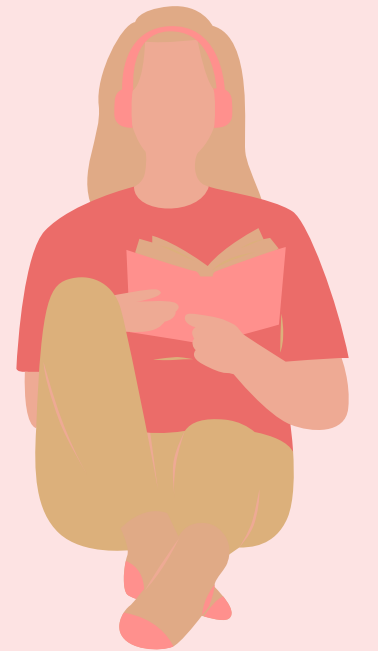
RELATIONSHIP
COUNSELING



IMPROVED
COMMUNICATION
AMONG COUPLES



EMOTIONAL
SELF-AWARENESS



ADOPTION OF
HEALTHIER HABITS

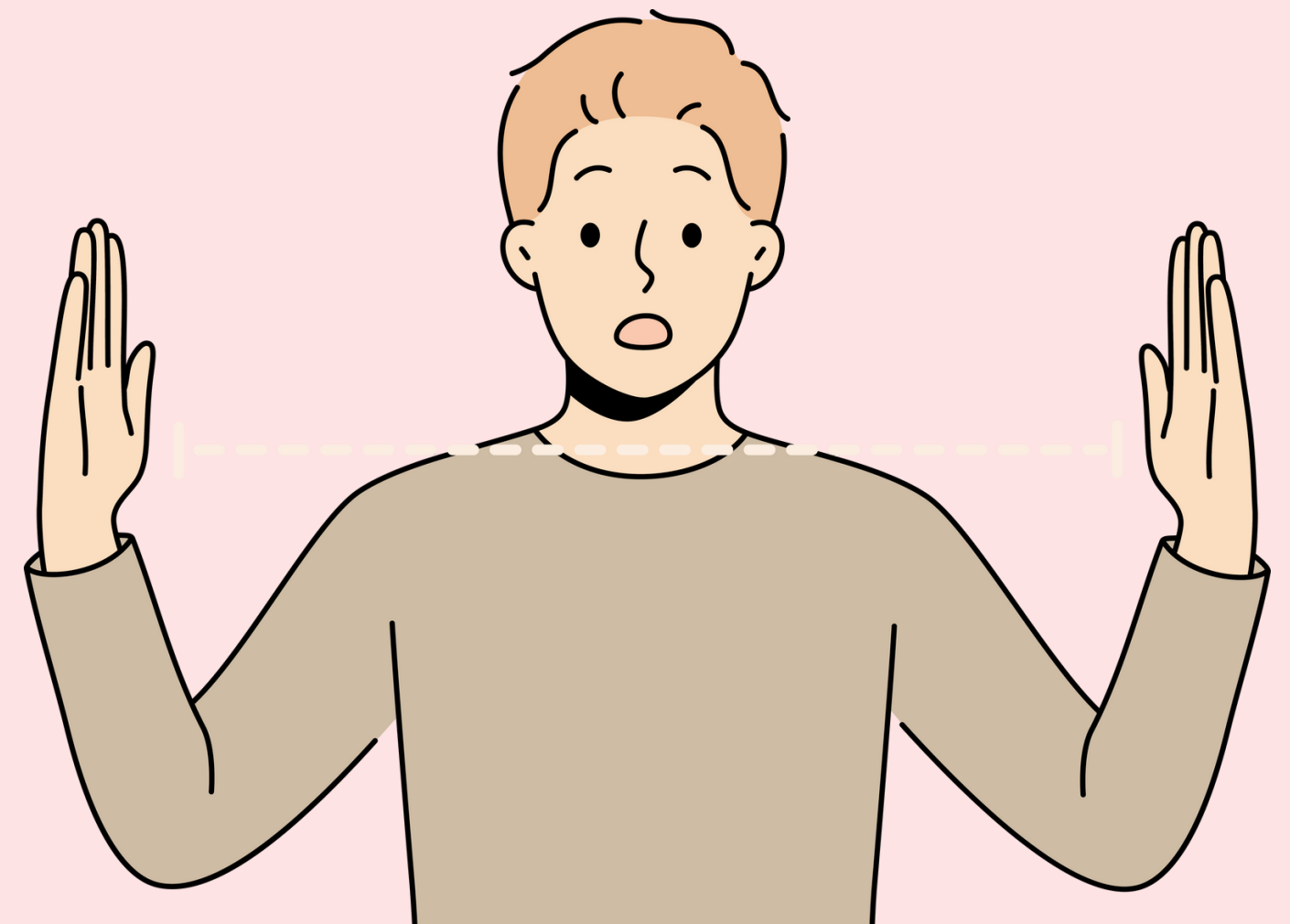
LIMITATIONS

1 ONLINE SURVEY EXCLUDES READERS WITHOUT RELIABLE INTERNET ACCESS

2 MAY BE CHALLENGING TO DEVELOP DIRECT CONNECTION BETWEEN SURVEY DATA & CONTENT ANALYSIS IF PARTICIPANTS ARE UNWILLING TO PROVIDE USERNAMES

3 PARTICIPANTS RESTRICTED TO THE U.S., WHICH MAY LIMIT THE APPLICATION OF FINDINGS TO INTERNATIONAL OR CROSS-CULTURAL CONTEXTS

4 NOT ALL ROMANCE NOVELS ARE IDENTICAL, DIFFERENCES IN SUBGENRES/THEMES ARE NOT ACCOUNTED FOR



THANK YOU!

