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Swipe Up and Break Up: A Grounded Theory Study Exploring the Impact of TikTok on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

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Swipe Up and Break Up: A Grounded Theory Study Exploring the Impact of TikTok on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

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Dedication

To my family, I dedicate this dissertation to you with heartfelt gratitude for your unwavering support, encouragement, and love throughout my academic journey. To my beloved mother (Mama) and father, your endless belief in me has been my guiding light. Your encouragement and sacrifices have shaped me into the woman I am today. Thank you for cutting me fruit on the late nights when I struggled on an assignment and the times when you put my needs before yours. Thank you for your overwhelming love, your belief in me, and your sacrifices—they have been my guiding force. I am deeply grateful for the encouragement and inspiration you have provided.

To my sister, without your ambition and belief in my capabilities, I would not have had the confidence to achieve the success I have today. To my brother, your constant inspiration and companionship have fueled my determination to pursue excellence in all endeavors. To my Masi, your wise counsel and encouragement have been a source of strength during challenging times, reminding me of my potential even when doubt crept in. And to my loyal companions, my three beloved dogs Momo, Preston, and Milo, whose wagging tails and comforting presence provided solace during the toughest of days.

This dissertation is a testament to the love, guidance, and inspiration I have received from each of you. Your unconditional love and unwavering support were the emotional backbone that sustained me throughout this journey. I am forever grateful for the role you have played in shaping both my academic achievements and the person I am today. I love you always.

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Swipe Up and Break Up: A Grounded Theory Study Exploring the Impact of TikTok on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

Abstract

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Adolescence is a time period when major developments occur with respect to adolescents' physical, emotional and cognitive capabilities, and such developments ultimately make it a pivotal time for a person's identity formation and understanding of interpersonal relationships. In today's world, social media is extremely popular, especially among adolescents, and it has influenced their behaviors, perceptions and interactions with others. With TikTok, a social media platform, gaining popularity in recent years and overwhelmingly so among adolescents, researchers began researching the general impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health. Some researchers have begun exploring niche research topics related to the impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health, including body dissatisfaction.

One subtopic that remained largely unexplored is TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships irrespective of the fact that adolescence is a pivotal developmental time for individuals. Thus, this study examines TikTok's influences on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. It also sought to understand the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

The researcher designed this study as an exploratory grounded theory research. The researcher recruited 30 participants from the study site between the ages of 13 years old and 17 years old. Out of the 30 participants, 19 participants were female (63%) and 11 participants were male (37%). The participants completed surveys with open-ended questions on TikTok content related to love and romantic relationships. Using the Ünlü-Qureshi instrument to analyze the data, the researcher found that TikTok has an impact on adolescents' romantic relationships and self-image in relationships. Through a review all

codes, concepts and categories and corresponding data, the researcher also found that adolescents were aware of how TikTok's portrayals of love and romantic relationships do not reflect reality and how behaviors or ideas learned from TikTok were unfair, and certain perceptions of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships differed between male and female adolescents.

These findings may serve as a basis for further research on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and relationship satisfaction. These findings may also help mental health practitioners determine how to properly assess, consider, and address such influences through psychological services for adolescents and other individuals with adolescents in their lives (e.g., individuals working with adolescents and parents) better support the adolescents in their lives.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

TikTok, a social media platform that emerged in 2016, allows users to make, share and discover short-form videos. From the start, the popularity of TikTok among adolescents—individuals between 13 and 18—was overwhelmingly high (Guo, 2022). In 2018, half of TikTok users were adolescents (Guo, 2022). The popularity of TikTok among adolescents has persisted over the years—in 2023, Pew Research Center found that TikTok is one of the most widely used online platforms among adolescents in the United States, with over 60% of adolescents indicating use of TikTok (Anderson et al., 2023).

With adolescents making up a huge majority of TikTok active users, it is important to assess the impact of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This is especially important because, during the time between childhood and adulthood, adolescents experience major developments in their physical, cognitive and psychosocial functions and develop a better understanding of their own identities, including their sexual identities (Steensma et al., 2013). Due to their developmental stage, adolescents are particularly vulnerable to the effects of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships.

Although there is a current body of research on the impact of social media on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and TikTok's impact on adolescents' mental health, the research has not expanded to assess the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This study seeks to understand how TikTok impacts adolescents' views on love and romantic relationships through thematic coding of data from surveys with open-ended questions completed by 30 participants between the ages of 13 years old and 17 years old who are aware of TikTok trends regarding love and romantic relationships. To analyze the survey data, the researcher uses the Social Impact Theory—a theoretical framework to understanding why people conform to a group's thinking and set of behaviors (Harton & Latané, 1997).

Background

Social Media

Social media platforms reign as the most popular and widely utilized applications on the internet (Kircaburum et al., 2018). Feelings of connection are fostered by maintaining relationships through online platforms, and such desire for connection may lead to high usage (Hernandez & Chalk, 2021; Marino et al., 2017; Taylor-Jackson & Moustafa, 2021). Social media can serve as a tool for validation and learning about identity (Hernandez & Chalk, 2021).

In particular, social media has played a major role with adolescents' social interactions and perspectives (Smith et al., 2021). Many adolescents use social media platforms as a source to create connections while sharing experiences and learning more about their own likes and dislikes (Smith et al., 2021). Furthermore, the more time users spend online the more likely they are to have altered viewpoints, such as their perspective on romantic relationships (Smith et al., 2021). This type of exposure can impact adolescents' psychological behaviors (Smith et al., 2021). The use of social media among adolescents is impacted by several factors (Smith et al., 2021). Their experiences can be altered by their age, especially given that this is the transitional period where they are more likely to try new things or take interest in their peers' likes and dislikes (Smith et al., 2021).

Social Media's Impact on Adolescents' Mental Health

Although social media has transformed the way that we connect with each other, current research has shown that social media has had a negative impact on adolescents' mental health (Alonzo et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2020; Allen et al., 2014). A lot of research has focused on how the use of social media for adolescents is disrupting essential activities such as sleep and exercise and leading to depression and anxiety (Alonzo et al., 2021; Allen et al., 2014). For example, one study found that teens who spent three or more hours per day on social media had twice the risk of having depression and anxiety symptoms (Allen et al., 2014). Other research has focused on the impact of particular social media content on adolescents' mental health (Qutteina et al., 2022; Liu, 2021). For example, research studies have shown how influencers have created unrealistic body standards for adolescents, leading to

body dissatisfaction and an increase in eating disorders (Qutteina et al., 2022; Liu, 2021). Many studies

have pointed out that the ages of 13 years old and 17 years old in particular is a sensitive time period

because it is the stage that individuals are experiencing major developments in their identities and feelings

of self-worth (Alonzo et al., 2021; Liu, 2021; Smith et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2020; Allen et al., 2014). Some

research has even focused on how social media impacts adolescents' mental health by physical changes to

the developing brain (Anderson, 2023; Achterberg et al., 2022; Steensma et al., 2013). For example, a

recent study used MRI scans of the brain to find that adolescents who checked their social media more

frequently were more likely to have higher activation in parts of the brain that are associated with

decision making in social situations and feelings of motivation and reward (Steensma et al., 2013).

Social Media's Impact on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

Social media platforms have impacted adolescents' romantic relationships and general perception

of love and romantic relationships (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et

al., 2020). Studies focused on social media and adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic

relationships have pointed out that understanding this topic is in the public's interest because early

relationships: (1) are developmentally important for understanding one's identity and sexuality and about

interpersonal relationships; *and* (2) serve as precursors for adult relationships (Anderson et al., 2022;

Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). For example, studies have focused on how

social media use impacts adolescent's romantic relationships with respect to initiating and maintaining the

relationship (de Lenne et al., 2020; Garcia, 2022). Other studies have focused on how social media has

become a lens for viewing other people's relationships, including those of strangers (de Lenne et al.,

2020; Roberts & David, 2016). For example, one study found that couples may post happy, unrealistic

content regarding their relationship despite their dissatisfaction in the relationship as a compensatory

mechanism or as a way to self-present their relationship satisfaction (Roberts & David, 2016). Other

research has focused on how social media shapes adolescents' views on what a relationship should look

like and leads to unrealistic expectations (de Lenne et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2015). For example, one

study found that these unrealistic expectations of relationships led to low relational satisfaction for adolescents and ultimately led to a decreased sense of well-being (Galloway et al., 2015).

TikTok

TikTok stands out as one of the most triumphant social media platforms globally (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). TikTok allows users to watch, share, save, comment on, and create videos that range from 15 seconds to three minutes (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). There are three components to the TikTok app: (1) the "For You" page; (2) the "Following" page; and (3) the "Discover Page" (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). The "For You" page includes a stream of videos that, based on a user's past interactions with the videos (e.g., clicking the "like" button), become more and more tailored (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021).

TikTok Compared to Other Social Media Platforms

TikTok is similar to other social media platforms such as Instagram, Facebook and X (formerly known as Twitter) in that it has a "like" button, which provides insight into the existing societal views of particular ideas that are posted on social media and, in turn, further influences individuals (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). For example, studies have shown that people look at the amount of "likes" to evaluate the amount that people endorse particular ideas and that the "like" button satisfies people's need to feel accepted by others (Hernandez & Chalk, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020). The "like" button also allows algorithms to further tailor content to the specific user (Hernandez & Chalk, 2021; Lee et al., 2020; Xu et al., 2020). A study has shown that the "like" button on social media platforms leads to a habit and addiction loop and that, from a review of MRI brain scans, increases the parts of the brain associated with feelings of reward (Steensma et al., 2013). TikTok is also similar to other social media platforms in the manner that it induces people to be in a flow-like state, which further renders social media platforms to be addictive (Chao et al., 2023).

TikTok is different from other social media platforms in numerous ways. First, TikTok centers around short video content while other social media platforms center on other aspects such as text, hashtags, pictures, etc. (Chao et al., 2023). TikTok is also unique in that the influencer marketing favors more raw and authentic content rather than curated content (Chao et al., 2023). Most importantly, TikTok

differs from other social media platforms in the sense that the "For You" page is not personalized because of active choices made by the user on the content that they would prefer to view (Li et al., 2023). Instead, the personalized "For You" page is generated by artificial intelligence, which shows the user a variety of content and, based on their interactions with such content, determines what content to continue to place on the "For You" page (Li et al., 2023).

TikTok's Impact on Adolescents' Mental Health

With the rise of TikTok and its overwhelming popularity among adolescents, researchers in the field of psychology quickly began exploring TikTok's impact on adolescents' mental health, finding that TikTok content has promoted self-harm behaviors to young people, body image issues and increased eating disorders and an increase in self-diagnosis of medical conditions (Millah & Hasanah, 2024; Bahnweg & Omar, 2023; Chao et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022). Some research has focused on the general impact of TikTok on adolescent well-being, finding that increased TikTok use leads to more depression and anxiety symptoms (Kaur et al., 2022; Liu, 2021). For example, a recent study focused on TikTok and adolescents found that "addictive users" of TikTok have poorer mental health outcomes (Chao et al., 2023). The study surveyed 1,346 adolescents in China who, based on their TikTok use, were grouped into "non-users," "moderate users," and "addictive users" (Chao et al., 2023). The research delved into different topics regarding such adolescents' mental health such as academic stress, relationship with parents, bullying, etc. (Chao et al., 2023). The study reported that addictive users had an increased level of depression and anxiety symptoms (Chao et al., 2023). The study also found that addictive users also experienced more issues with their academic performance (Chao et al., 2023). The researchers highlighted the need for further research with more age groups and within different cultural contexts (Chao et al., 2023).

TikTok's Impact on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

A lot of content on TikTok revolves around love and romantic relationships. For example, in a series of videos under the hashtag #toxictiktok, creators advised followers on how to manipulate or gaslight someone in the dating context (e.g., toxic ways to get into someone's head or best ways to play

hard to get) (Upton-Clark, 2022). A licensed psychologist and relationship expert, Dr. Kathy Nickerson, commented on how she worries that TikTok users exposed to such toxic advice will apply it to their relationships: "I love a good joke, I am a big fan of sarcasm, and I understand the desire to push back on negative relationship advice online. However, we have to be mindful that some people will not understand our true intentions and if someone uses some of the toxic advice, they are likely to get hurt" (Upton-Clark, 2022, para. 14). Nickerson also discussed the impact of behaving in a toxic manner, saying, "Behaving in a toxic way undermines trust. So I would always prefer that someone be authentic, honest and kind and say how they truly feel. I also think it makes it hard for inexperienced daters, or people on the autism spectrum, to understand what to do" (Upton-Clark, 2022). Nickerson underscored how the impact is particularly complicated for inexperienced daters—a category that adolescents often fall into (Upton-Clark, 2022). Although psychologists like Nickerson have indirectly or directly commented on TikTok's impact on adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships, there is little empirical research on TikTok's impact on adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships.

Additionally, a recent narrative review recapped the current empirical literature on TikTok such as the people who use TikTok, the reasons people use TikTok and the ways that people use TikTok (Montag, 2021). The researchers ultimately conclude that the research questions regarding TikTok should be further explored because TikTok users are overwhelmingly adolescents, which is a "group of potentially vulnerable individuals" (Montag, 2021). The researchers also suggested that researchers use the Social Impact Theory—a theory used to understand conformance which has been widely applied to social media generally—to understand *why* people are using TikTok (Montag, 2021).

Description of the Problem

TikTok is overwhelmingly popular among adolescents and studies have found that TikTok impacts adolescents' mental health. Early relationships for adolescents are developmentally important to understanding one's identity and sexuality and about interpersonal relationships and serve as precursors for adult relationships. Additionally, research has shown that romantic relationships for adolescents not only plays a vital role developmentally, but it is also a source of well-being and negative outcomes (Li et

al., 2023). For example, research has shown that healthy romantic relationships for adolescents are important for emotional bonding, positive self-esteem, personal happiness, feelings of safety and life satisfaction and achievement of goals on the personal and relational level (Li et al., 2023). As already mentioned, TikTok has a lot of content on love and romantic relationships that adolescents are inevitably exposed to, and psychologists like Nickerson have already commented on how TikTok may have a negative impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships (Upton-Clark, 2022). Thus, due to adolescents' inevitable exposure to TikTok content on love and romantic relationships and the impact it ultimately has on their development of self-identity and sexuality and, in turn, overall well-being, it is imperative to explore how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

Purpose of the Study

Because TikTok is a social media platform that gained popularity in recent years, there is justifiably less empirical research on the impact of TikTok. Additionally, researchers in the field of psychology noted the need for empirical research on the impact of TikTok and started filling the gap in the literature. Researchers have set a foundation in literature on the general impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health. Some researchers have begun exploring more niche research topics related to the impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health such as body dissatisfaction (Qutteina et al., 2022; Liu, 2021). One subtopic that currently remains largely open is TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships—this gap in the literature exists despite numerous psychologists like Nickerson commenting on the impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships (Upton-Clark, 2022). The purpose of this study is to add research related to the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships to the existing body of literature on the general impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health.

Significance of the Study

This study is significant because it can serve as a starting point to understanding how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This study may serve as a basis for

other researchers to further explore the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, and some of these researchers may have resources to conduct an even more in-depth exploration and add to the findings. In general, this study, including any future research related to this topic, will help those in the field of psychology better understand how TikTok—a social media platform that has a notable existence in adolescents' lives—impacts their perceptions of love and romantic relationships. And, because early relationships for adolescents have an impact on their development of self-identity and sexuality and, in turn, overall well-being, this study may lead to future discussions on how to mitigate the negative consequences of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships.

This study is also significant because it can help mental health practitioners supporting adolescents understand the impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health, especially considering that mental health practitioners may not be as aware of TikTok because it is not as popular among their age group. Understanding TikTok will help mental health practitioners better tailor their counseling services, especially with respect to love and romantic relationships, a topic that comes up often during counseling services for adolescents. For example, the understanding of TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships may help mental health practitioners ask clients more relevant probing questions, relate better to their clients and build stronger trust with clients during counseling services.

Another significance to the study is that it may help others beyond individuals in the field of psychology such as individuals who work with adolescents, like educators and parents. Similar to mental health practitioners, other individuals with adolescents in their lives may not be TikTok users or users as active as adolescents. Understanding TikTok will help these other individuals better understand the adolescents in their lives and provide appropriate support. For example, it may help these individuals realize what questions to ask adolescents regarding their TikTok use.

Research Questions

The study aims to answer the following overarching research question: Does TikTok influence adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and, if so, in which ways? Additionally, the

study aims to understand the following: What are the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships?

Chapter Summary

This chapter introduced the phenomenon of social media, with emphasis on TikTok, and the prevalence of its use among adolescents. Despite TikTok's widespread popularity among adolescents, little research has focused on its specific impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Accordingly, this research aims to delve into the underexplored realm of TikTok's influence on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and add to the existing body of literature on the general impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health. Through two exploratory research questions, the investigation aims to understand the role of TikTok in shaping adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This chapter also highlights the significance of this research. First, it serves as a basis for further empirical research on the topic of TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, which has important implications for adolescents' understanding of their identity and sexuality and, in turn, implications for adolescents' overall well-being. Second, the study may inform current mental health practitioners of how TikTok impacts adolescents' mental health, especially with respect to their perceptions of love and romantic relationships, which can help mental health practitioners better tailor their counseling services for adolescents and create a stronger relationship with their adolescent clients. Lastly, it can also help other adults with adolescents in their lives better understand such adolescents and provide appropriate support.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

Introduction

TikTok is classified as a social media platform that was developed in 2016 by ByteDance, a technology company, and it became the most downloaded app in 2018 after merging with Musical.ly, another social media platform (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). The videos on TikTok are between 15 seconds and three minutes, and the platform allows its users to watch, share, save, comment on and create videos (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). As mentioned in the last chapter, TikTok has three parts: (1) the "For You" page; (2) the "Following" page; and (3) the "Discover Page" (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). The "For You" page presents a stream of videos that the algorithm tailors to the specific user based on their past interactions with other videos (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). For example, if a user interacts more with basketball videos, the "For You" page will suggest more basketball videos. TikTok is unique in the way that its "For You" page is generated. The "For You" page is not personalized because of active choices made by the user on the content that they would prefer to view (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). The personalized "For You" page is generated by artificial intelligence showing the user a variety of content and, based on their interactions with such content, determining what content to continue to place on the "For You" page (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). The "Following Page" presents videos from content creators that a user has actively decided to add to their following list (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). Lastly, the "Discover Page" allows users to search for sounds, videos titles, or keywords to find specific content (Wang et al., 2022). Users can also make their own videos and use a variety of different sounds, filters, and other features (Wang et al., 2022).

TikTok has become one of the most popular social media platforms, with one billion active users reported in 2022 (Wang et al., 2022). Adolescents are frequent users of TikTok; in 2018, half of TikTok's users were between the ages of 13 and 18 (Wang et al., 2022). The popularity of TikTok among adolescents has persisted since then, and in 2023, Pew Research Center found that TikTok is one of the most widely used online platforms among adolescents in the United States, with over 60% of adolescents

indicating that they use TikTok (Anderson et al., 2023). With the rise of TikTok, many researchers sought

to understand its impact on users' mental health (Liu, 2021; Wang et al., 2022; Omar & Dequan, 2020).

While there is an established body of research on how adolescent's perceptions of love and romantic

relationships can be impacted by social media platforms (Garcia, 2022; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016) and

media such as movies (Driesmans et al., 2016; Galloway et al., 2015), there is limited research on the role

of TikTok in adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, despite the existence of many

trends around love and romantic relationships on TikTok. Thus, this study focuses on the role of TikTok

in adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships and the Social Impact Theory.

This literature review provides an overview of the existing research relevant to the role of TikTok

in adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This literature review first discusses the

existing research regarding the impact of social media and media on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors

before discussing the impact of social media and media specifically on adolescents' perceptions of love

and romantic relationships. This literature review then provides an overview of the existing research

regarding the impact of TikTok on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and some research that briefly

discuss, or are relevant to, the context of love and romantic relationships (Wang et al., 2022; Omar &

Dequan, 2020). This literature review then delves into Social Impact Theory because it will serve as the

theoretical framework for this study. This literature review concludes by highlighting the need for further

research on the gap between the research on TikTok's impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and

the impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

Social Media's Impact on Adolescents' Thoughts and Behavior

Generally speaking, there is a vast amount of research showing how social media in general can

shape adolescents' thoughts and behavior (Alonzo et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2020; Allen

et al., 2014). Some studies have examined how social media influences how children may choose to dress

or the way that children speak and can lead to certain slang being developed and popularized (Zhang et

al., 2016; D'Amato, 2012). One study discussed how social media can influence social connections,

social identity, psychosocial wellbeing, and sense of belonging (Allen et al., 2014). An important finding

was that social media can both increase social connections, by making it easier to join groups, and also decrease social connections, by excluding users from groups or making them feel unwanted (Allen et al., 2014). Another study found that social media use can influence social norms (Lutkenhaus et al., 2023). A review article discussed how the different types of positive and negative content and comments in social media can both improve or worsen users' mood, satisfaction with certain aspects in life, self-esteem and psychological health (Webster et al., 2021).

There are also numerous studies on how specific social media platforms have influenced adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and, in particular, feelings on their self-worth and self-esteem (Alonzo et al., 2021; Smith et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2020; Allen et al., 2014). For example, one study explored whether the number of "likes" on Instagram posts impacts adolescents' emotions (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). The researchers conducted a quantitative study on 182 adolescents between 13 and 18 years old to examine factors that may impact Instagram usage level and analyze the moderating role of social-comparison and feedback-seeking processes in the relationship between the number of "likes" on Instagram posts and adolescents' emotions (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). The research concluded that "likes" on an Instagram post have an impact on adolescents' emotions in the sense that they are viewed as a social reward (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021). The researchers explain that this is a product of high social-comparison and feedback-seeking behaviors (Sánchez-Hernández et al., 2021).

Another example of social media platforms' influence on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors with respect to feelings of self-worth and self-esteem is how social media content can increase body dissatisfaction (Qutteina et al., 2022; Liu, 2021). In a study analyzing body dissatisfaction, researchers conducted in-depth interviews with 24 female adolescents between the ages of 14 and 17 in Australia who use either Instagram, Snapchat or Facebook for at least one hour per day (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). Through thematic analysis of the data, the researchers found that participants often compare themselves to images on Instagram, Snapchat and/or Facebook (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). The researchers also found that such images led to appearance-based insecurities and have influenced female adolescents into changing their appearance (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). This study was, however, limited by the fact that

the participant pool consisted of a low number of self-selected participants and cannot be generalized in its applicability (Papageorgiou et al., 2022).

Other studies have shown that social media platforms can influence adolescents' thoughts and behaviors regarding risky behaviors (Eleuteri et al., 2017; Zhang et al., 2016). For example, one study explored the impact of X (formerly known as Twitter) on substance use among adolescents (Zhang et al., 2016). The researchers collected 79,848,992 tweets posted between 2015 and 2016 related to substance use; these tweets were collected from users in 48 states in the United States (Zhang et al., 2016). The researchers employed machine learning algorithms to assess the sentiment score for each tweet (Zhang et al., 2016). The study found the following: (1) 97% underage engagement in substance use tweets; (2) 88% underage engagement in alcohol tweets; (3) 86% underage engagement in drug tweets; and (4) 75% underage engagement in smoking tweets (Zhang et al., 2016). The study also reported that 34% of the tweets related to substance use were classified as happy (Zhang et al., 2016). The researchers concluded that online discussions on X (formerly known as Twitter) have an increased ability to normalize and idolize risky behaviors such as substance use (Zhang et al., 2016). The study was limited in the sense that data was collected from only one percent of the data existing on Twitter and the percentage of underage engagement may differ based on certain zip codes, indicating that generalization of the findings may not be accurate (Zhang et al., 2016).

Another more recent study focused on the impact of Instagram and self-harm behaviors in adolescents (Moss et al., 2023). The researchers conducted a systematic review of existing research on Instagram and deliberate self-harm (Moss et al., 2023). Using particular inclusion and exclusion criteria, the researchers selected 15 papers and conducted a thematic analysis of those papers (Moss et al., 2023). The researchers concluded that there is a relationship between the amount of time adolescents spend on Instagram and deliberate self-harm and that Instagram normalizes and desensitizes self-harm among adolescents (Moss et al., 2023). The research is limited in its lack of consideration of whether Instagram use has led to increased self-harm or whether self-harm behaviors existed at the same levels before but were not reported (Moss et al., 2023).

Social Media's Impact on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

There has also been a lot of general research on the impact of social media on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). For example, studies have focused on how social media has become a source to view other people's relationships, including those of strangers (de Lenne et al., 2020; Roberts & David, 2016). For example, one study found that couples may post happy, unrealistic content regarding their relationship despite their dissatisfaction in the relationship as a compensatory mechanism or as a way to self-present their relationship satisfaction (Van Ouytsel et al., 2016). Other research has focused on how social media shapes adolescents' views on what a relationship should look like and leads to unrealistic expectations (de Lenne et al., 2020; O'Reilly, 2020). For example, one study found that these unrealistic expectations of relationships led to low relational satisfaction for adolescents and ultimately led to a decreased sense of well-being (de Lenne et al., 2020).

Another example of how social media influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships is how it leads to jealousy, conflict, and control in romantic relationships (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). For example, one study explored how social media platforms led to jealousy, conflict and control in romantic relationships among adolescents (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). The researchers used qualitative methods for this study with 55 participants from Belgium between the ages of 15 and 18 years old (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). The researchers split the 55 participants into 12 focus groups, with each focus group having around four to five participants (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Six focus groups focused on male participants, and the other six focus groups focused on female participants (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). During the focus groups, which lasted between 43 to 58 minutes, the researchers used a semi-structured questionnaire to collect data on adolescents' social media use and its impact on romantic relationships (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Using thematic analysis, the researchers found that social media can lead to jealousy within romantic relationships (e.g., jealousy from seeing pictures of a romantic partner with other people on social media platforms) or unhealthy monitoring behaviors (e.g., reading romantic partner's messages with other people on social

media platforms) (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Additionally, the research found that social media within the context of romantic relationships influenced the way that they behave on social media (e.g., not posting particular pictures or liking or commenting on other people's content to avoid conflict) (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). The research highlighted the need for further exploration on the topic and more discussions regarding healthy boundaries in adolescents' romantic relationships (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). The study is limited in the fact that it is a convenience sample—individuals self-selected to participate after knowing the topic of discussion—which could mean that only those adolescents with a high interest in the topic were willing to talk to the researchers (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Also, the study is limited in that it focused on participants located in Belgium, which means that the generalization of the findings may not be accurate (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019).

Although most of the research on the impact of social media platforms on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships is applicable to many different social media platforms such as Facebook, Instagram, Snapchat and X (formerly known as Twitter), there are a few studies exploring the impact of particular social media platforms on adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships (Quiroz et al., 2024; Van Ouytsel et al., 2019; Van Ouytsel et al., 2016; Moreno et al., 2012). For example, one study explored young adolescents' sexual and romantic displays on Facebook as a way to express their developing self-identity, including their sexuality (Moreno et al., 2012). The researchers recruited 104 participants between the ages of 11 and 18 years old to conduct a questionnaire (Moreno et al., 2012). Additionally, 25 participants' profiles had 67 sexual references and 27 participants' profiles had 204 romantic references (Moreno et al., 2012). The study found that displayers, in comparison to non-displayers, of sexual and romantic references on Facebook were older, had more sexual experience, and reported more peers that approved of being sexually active (Moreno et al., 2012). The researchers concluded that, although the sexual and romantic references on Facebook are reflective of adolescents' sexual and romantic experiences outside of the social media realm, the references on Facebook may normalize certain behaviors and there is a need to further explore social media and ways to

navigate potential negative consequences such as normalization of sexual references among adolescents (Moreno et al., 2012).

Even though the studies on the impact of social media platforms on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships are limited, there are more studies on the impact of social media platforms on perceptions of love and romantic relationships for other age groups (Axford, 2020; Dunn & Langlais, 2020; Fox & Warber, 2013). For instance, in one study, researchers used a mixed-methods approach to explore the impact of Snapchat on young adults' thoughts and behaviors within the context of romantic relationships (Dunn & Langlais, 2020). The researchers collected quantitative data from 118 undergraduate students completing an online survey and qualitative data from 10 undergraduate students, who participated in in-depth, one-on-one interviews and 11 undergraduate students who participated in two focus groups (Dunn & Langlais, 2020). The researchers found that higher Snapchat use correlates with lower mental health outcomes and that higher Snapchat use such as sending pictures, messaging, using Snap Map—a feature that allows you to view other users' locations if they have turned this feature on—led to higher levels of jealousy within romantic relationships (Dunn & Langlais, 2020).

TikTok's Impact on Adolescents' Mental Health

Although TikTok's rise occurred in the recent years, researchers in the field of psychology quickly made contributions to the existing body of literature of social media impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors with studies on the impact of TikTok (Millah & Hasanah, 2024; Bahnweg & Omar, 2023; Chao et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022). Generally, research on how TikTok influences adolescents has often focused on the positive impact of the application, including the fact that it can be a great source for disseminating information, teaching people, or advertising political campaigns (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Other research has explored the negative implications of the application, such as body image issues, cyberbullying, privacy concerns, and overall impact on adolescents' mental health such as depression and anxiety (Millah & Hasanah, 2024; Bahnweg & Omar, 2023; Chao et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022).

There have been some studies on how TikTok influences adolescents' thoughts and behavior in particular contexts (Liu, 2021; Omar & Dequan, 2020; Wang et al., 2022). For instance, a 2020 study on Algerian teenagers' TikTok use showed that TikTok can greatly influence the way teenagers' think and behave (Omar & Dequan, 2020). The researchers' methodology included online network sampling, wherein they administered a survey to 385 participants who are TikTok users (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Through this survey, the researchers found that TikTok allows for non-verbal videos, which can impact the cultural values of people across the world (e.g., Algerian teenagers watching non-verbal videos of American teenagers engaging in a certain behavior) (Omar & Dequan, 2020). Thus, the impact of TikTok trends can be far-reaching and impact adolescents who may not even share the same native language (Omar & Dequan, 2020).

Another recent study explored how teenagers' interactions with food-related TikTok content influences their eating behavior (Wang et al., 2022). The researchers' methodology included the use of surveys and interviews (Wang et al., 2022). The surveys were conducted on 186 TikTok users, and the interviews were conducted on five TikTok users (Wang et al., 2022). The researchers found that teenagers turn to TikTok for inspiration regarding food, whether that is immediately trying new types of food due to TikTok content or changing their long-term diet due to TikTok content (Wang et al., 2022). For example, a "what I eat in a day" TikTok video of a well-known social media influencer can impact the choices teenagers make regarding the food that they consume daily (Wang et al., 2022).

TikTok's Impact on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

There is little empirical research on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. A couple of studies briefly discuss the impact of TikTok within the context of love and romantic relationships. For example, in 2021, a researcher examined how TikTok can augment body stereotypes and humiliation through trending videos and the corresponding impact on society (Liu, 2021). The researcher's methodology included interviewing several TikTok users and identifying themes between the information shared by each TikTok user (Liu, 2021). The researcher found that TikTok users tend to conform to match the trend to be more attractive (Liu, 2021). One example that the researcher

discussed with TikTok users was the series of trending videos under #KarmaisaBitch, a series of videos about ways that a romantic breakup or some negative experience with another person caused a person to change their appearance to become trendier (e.g., wearing more makeup, losing weight, changing their style, etc.) (Liu, 2021). The researcher found that, as a result of such TikTok trends, TikTok users engaged in certain behaviors to become trendier as a form of revenge after a romantic relationship (Liu, 2021). The researcher also stated that the reason behind how and why TikTok can influence people to change their opinion is the "For You" page tailors the video stream to each person, which, in turn, increases the number of views on the platform (Liu, 2021). Additionally, the researcher discusses how, from the perspective of the Internet age, the collective thinking regarding certain changes to appearance (e.g., body image and diet problems) results from the far-reaching influence of social media, a concept known as "peer infection" (Liu, 2021).

Another relevant study analyzed the sexualization contained in TikTok videos compared to the actual narratives of adolescents about TikTok (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). The researchers conducted a mixed-methods research, which involved (1) a quantitative observational study on 648 TikTok videos posted by 12 TikTok users, mostly followed in Spain, to identify the indicators of sexualization and (2) a qualitative study with 12 interviews of TikTok users with half of the interviewees, half of whom were male and half of whom were female between the ages of 8 and 17 years old (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). The researchers found that, out of the 12 most followed accounts analyzed, 10 accounts revealed hypersexualized behaviors (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). The researchers found a disassociation between a real person and their virtual persona and that these videos have a negative impact on people who do not fit into the stereotypes of the ideal body (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). Ultimately, this research highlights how TikTok can impact the way adolescents perceive themselves (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). However, this research is limited and likely cannot be generalized since they only interviewed 12 TikTok users about their perceptions of certain videos (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022). Within the context of love and romantic relationships, this study is relevant because it highlights the possibility that TikTok is

influencing adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships by normalizing hyper

sexualization (Soriano-Ayala et al., 2022).

<div align="center">**Theoretical Framework**</div>

This study seeks to understand how TikTok—a social influence—impacts adolescents'

perceptions of love and romantic relationships. In order to analyze TikTok, as a social influence, this

study uses Social Impact Theory as a theoretical framework. This section first discusses social influence

generally, including different subgroups that result in social influence. This section then discusses the

emergence of the Social Impact Theory as a theoretical framework to understanding why people *conform*

to a group's thinking and set of behaviors. This section then concludes with a discussion of how

researchers have employed the Social Impact Theory in the context of social media platforms and its

relevance to this study examining TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic

relationships.

Social Influence

Before delving into the Social Impact Theory, it is important to understand social influence and

the different subgroups that result in social influence. Social influence refers to influences that shift an

individual's behaviors or beliefs, and the three subgroups to social influence are: (1) norms; (2)

compliance; and (3) conformity (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Norms refers to social influence on an

individual resulting from customs and the notion that certain behaviors are "the way we do things"

(Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Compliance refers to social influence on an individual resulting from a request

such as a child cleaning their room upon his or her parents' request (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Conformity

refers to social influence on an individual resulting from the individual's desire to match the behaviors or

beliefs of another person or persons (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). To elaborate, an individual may desire to

conform his or her behaviors or beliefs to another person or persons based on external pressure from

others—whether the external pressure is real or perceived or direct or indirect (Perez-Vega et al., 2016).

With respect to conformity, an individual's actual desire to match his or her behaviors or beliefs is rooted

in basic psychological needs (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). First, such desire to conform may be rooted in an

individual's need to assess its external environment in an active and thoughtful manner and, as a result of an individual actively assessing that another person has accurate information, such an individual may change their behaviors or beliefs (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Second, such desire to conform may be rooted in an individual's need for external validation (i.e., to be liked and accepted by others) (Perez-Vega et al., 2016).

The Social Impact Theory

Because this study seeks to understand the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the subgroup of social influence at play is conformity. In 1981, Bibb Latané introduced the Social Impact Theory, a specific theoretical framework to understand how people conform to a group's thinking and set of behaviors (Latané, 1981). The study introducing the Social Impact Theory arose out of Latané's desire to understand earlier studies on conformity following the Holocaust and the way that German dictator, Adolf Hitler, influenced his followers to conform to such anti-discriminatory and violent beliefs and behaviors (Latané, 1981).

In particular, Latané further explored a theoretical framework in understanding conformance to group thinking and set of behaviors by examining how participants would be influenced by Billy Graham, a Christian televangelist in the U.S., and he hypothesized that Billy Graham would lead to more people converting if he was speaking in front of small audiences (Latané, 1981). Latané found that his hypothesis was accurate and that individuals were more willing to allow representatives to contact them later (Latané, 1981). From this study and an exploration of past studies on destructive obedience and Social Identity Theory, Latané developed the Social Impact Theory, which proposes that conformity occurs if the external pressure has three key factors: (1) strength; (2) immediacy; and (3) number of sources, which is discussed in further detail below (Latané, 1981). The Social Impact Theory suggests that, to evaluate the social impact, it is important to evaluate all three factors in light of each other (Latané, 1981). The multiplication of or the interactions between source strength, immediacy and number of sources results in social impact (Latané, 1981) (see Figure 1).

Figure 1

Social Impact Theory
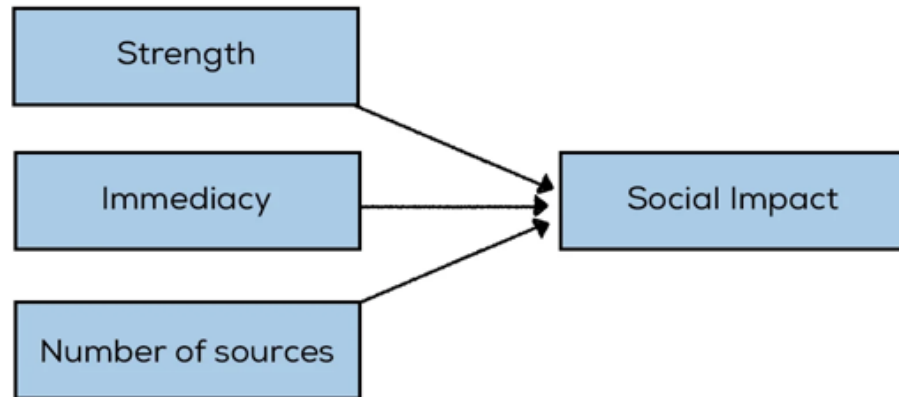
Note. This figure illustrates the Social Impact Theory and how three factors—strength, immediacy, number of sources—are used to evaluate social impact. From "Social Impact Theory in Psychology" by Olivia Guy-Evans on https://www.simplypsychology.org/social-impact-theory.html.

Strength

The strength factor analyzes the influencing source's overall prominence and intensity and, in assessing the social impact, a higher strength correlates with a higher social impact (Xue & Zhou, 2023; Sedikides & Jackson, 1990). When applying the strength factor, the Social Impact Theory considers transitional strength and situational strength (Sedikides & Jackson, 1990). Transitional strength refers to the influencing source's characteristics such as gender, age and physical appearance (Sedikides & Jackson, 1990). On the other hand, situational strength refers to contextual circumstances such as the relationship between the influencing source and the target of the influence (e.g., a teacher speaking to students) or the presence of substances (e.g., alcohol consumption and peer pressure) (Sedikides & Jackson, 1990).

Immediacy

The immediacy factor analyzes the closeness between the influencing source and the target of the influence, whether such closeness is measured in space or time or the clarity of the communication (e.g., lack of barriers such as language) (Xue & Zhou, 2023; Perez-Vega et al., 2016). In assessing the social impact, a higher immediacy correlates with a higher social impact (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). The Social Impact Theory considers three types of immediacy: (1) physical immediacy, (2) temporal immediacy, and (3) social immediacy (Perez-Vega et al., 2016; Sedikides & Jackson, 1990). Physical immediacy refers to the actual physical distance between the influencing source and the target of the source (Xue & Zhou, 2023). For example, a researcher found that physical closeness between a friend group resulted in an increase in shared beliefs (Xue & Zhou, 2023). Temporal immediacy refers to the timing between the interactions of the influencing source and target, meaning that the more interactions in a certain period of time results in a higher social impact (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Social immediacy refers to the target of the influence perceiving the influencing source as similar to them (Perez-Vega et al., 2016). Later studies also found that immediacy may be best analyzed from a subjective lens because immediacy can also refer to psychological distance (i.e., how does the target of the influence *perceive* the closeness between itself and the influencing source) (Xue & Zhou, 2023; Perez-Vega et al., 2016).

Number of Sources

The number of sources factor analyzes the actual number of sources with respect to the influencing source and, in assessing the social impact, a higher number of sources correlates with a higher social impact (Xue & Zhou, 2023). However, some researchers have found that there may be a ceiling to the number of sources leading to a higher social impact (Xue & Zhou, 2023; Perez-Vega et al., 2016). For example, in some cases, an increase in the number of sources may not lead to further social impact or may diminish the social impact (Perez-Vega et al., 2016).

Social Impact Theory and Social Media

Although the Social Impact Theory emerged prior to the social media era, it has been widely applied by researchers as a theoretical framework to understand the impact of social media (Xue, 2019; Winter et al., 2015; Kwahk & Ge, 2012; Mir & Zaheer, 2012). Many studies have focused on the Social Impact Theory to understand the social impact of Facebook, a popular social media and social networking platform created in 2004 (Xue, 2019; Winter et al., 2015; Kwahk & Ge, 2012). For example, one study focused on the impact of "social information" on Facebook News Feed ads on users' advertising responses such as users' attitudes toward the ad and users' intention to click and purchase an item (Xue, 2019). The researcher used the Social Impact Theory as the theoretical framework, testing the strength of the relationships, the physical distance and the number of affiliated friends (Xue, 2019). The researcher conducted this study with 397 participants (Xue, 2019). Each participant was asked to use their imagination to picture themselves in specific scenarios related to advertisements, finding that the relationship strength and physical distance had a significant impact on the participants' advertising responses (Xue, 2019). The researcher concluded that marketers should take advantage of "social information" in Facebook News Feed ads (Xue, 2019). The researcher noted as a limitation the fact that, despite participants being instructed clearly on what to imagine before soliciting their advertising response, field experiments with actual users might be a better indicator of the consumer experience (Xue, 2019).

Other studies have focused on the Social Impact Theory to understand the social impact of X (or formerly known as Twitter)—a social media platform created in 2006 (Lin et al., 2019; Pejić Bach et al., 2020; Garcia et al., 2017). One study examined specific opinion leaders on Twitter during the Iran Nuclear Deal in 2018 (Lin et al., 2019). The study examined the strength of the opinion leaders and the temporal and social immediacy of the opinion leaders (Lin et al., 2019). The researcher suggests that these opinion leaders depended on information seeking and their expertise to exert influence on Twitter (Lin et al., 2019). The researcher also suggests that the temporal immediacy was significant in the sense that opinion leaders that emerged in the early stages of a social event exert more influence (Lin et al.,

2019). The study noted as a limitation that this type of research—applying Social Impact Theory to analyze the social impact of opinion leaders on Twitter—is novel (Lin et al., 2019).

Other studies have focused on the Social Impact Theory to understand the social impact of Instagram, a photo and video sharing social networking platform created in 2010 (Huang, 2021; Esteban-Santos et al., 2018; Teo et al., 2019). For instance, one study examined the influence of fashion bloggers' posts on Instagram on customer's purchasing behavior (Huang, 2021). The researcher employed quantitative and qualitative approaches in their descriptive research design (Huang, 2021). The researcher sent surveys to 150 participants and used a hybrid theory that included the Social Impact Theory and other theories as a framework to analyze the fashion bloggers' posts on Instagram (Huang, 2021). The researcher ultimately found that the fashion bloggers' posts did have an influence on the customer's purchasing behavior based on the sources' strength and immediacy and the number of sources (Huang, 2021).

Social Impact Theory and Current Research

The Social Impact Theory is an appropriate theoretical framework to examine the social influence of TikTok, in the form of conformity, because it proposes that conformity occurs if the external pressure has three key factors: (1) strength, (2) immediacy, and (3) number of sources. In regard to TikTok, strength represents the popularity of the content. Immediacy represents the psychological connection between the TikTok content and its users. The number of sources represents the amount of content creators that have pushed out specific content.

<div align="center">

Implications for Current Research

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There is general research on social media impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and some narrow studies exploring the niche subtopic of social media impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. In a lot of these research studies, the researchers typically point to the Social Impact Theory, through which the actions of adolescents are greatly influenced by the actions of other people (Driesmans et al., 2016; Galloway et al., 2015; Liu, 2021; Omar & Dequan, 2020; Wang et al., 2022).

With the rise of TikTok, psychologists have quickly contributed to the existing body of literature research on the impact of TikTok on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors (Millah & Hasanah, 2024; Bahnweg & Omar, 2023; Chao et al., 2023; Kaur et al., 2022). Because TikTok emerged more recently, there is not much research on the application of the Social Impact Theory in assessing the social impact of TikTok. A recent narrative review recapped the current empirical literature existing on TikTok such as the people who use TikTok, the reasons that people use TikTok, and the ways that people use TikTok (Montag, 2021). The narrative review suggests that, although the Social Impact Theory has been widely used to understand social media, it has not been adequately addressed empirically in regard to understanding why people are using TikTok (Montag, 2021). The researchers ultimately conclude that the research questions regarding TikTok should be further explored because "TikTok users are often adolescents and, therefore, from a group of potentially vulnerable individuals" (Montag, 2021, para.1).

Additionally, despite the existing research on the impact of TikTok on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors and the highlighted need for more research, there is very limited empirical research on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships. Yet, many psychologists have commented on particular TikTok trends that influence adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships (Scanlan, 2022; Upton-Clark, 2022). As mentioned above, Nickerson commented on how TikTok trends pushing followers to engage in manipulative behaviors in relationships will undermine trust and have a particularly negative impact on followers who are adolescents (Upton-Clark, 2022). Another example of how TikTok trends may shape adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships is videos trending under the hashtag #staytoxic, in which people give advice on how to reel in potential love interests or reel back in ex-partners through manipulative behaviors (Upton-Clark, 2022). For example, one piece of advice that has popped up in under the hashtag #staytoxic is to text a person who you want to attract at 1:00 a.m. stating "I'm here" (Scanlan, 2022). The idea is that the person you are trying to attract will then be under the impression that you have another person to replace him or her or that you simply have other dating options, which will then, in turn, cause them to give the person sending this text more attention (Scanlan, 2022). Psychologists have warned that these manipulative

behaviors are becoming more normalized and acceptable when they are part of a viral trend on TikTok

and that this can be very damaging to the way that adolescents engage in romantic relationships (Scanlan,

2022; Upton-Clark, 2022).

Another recent example was psychologists' comments on how a particular TikTok trend called

the "Ick" impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships (Schroeder, 2020). The

"Ick" is a phenomenon where a current or potential romantic partner's behavior or action such as an

obnoxious laugh causes the other partners' attraction to suddenly flip into feelings of disgust; during this

trend, adolescents shared certain actions and behaviors that gave them the "Ick" (Schroeder, 2020). Some

psychologists have analyzed the "Ick" and have speculated that it is a self-defensive mechanism or

strategy to protect against fear of intimacy or commitment or that it highlights peoples' misinterpretation

of healthy as boring and toxic as exciting (Schroeder, 2020). The "Ick" has transformed the dating world

and influences how young adolescents decide whether they are attracted to their partner (Schroeder,

2020). Instances of psychologists discussing the importance of understanding the impact of TikTok tends

such as those videos under the hashtag #staytoxic and the "Ick" coupled with the lack of relevant

empirical research highlights the need for further empirical research on the topic.

To elaborate, exploring adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships is essential

because of its impact on one's psychological functioning as they transition into adulthood (Alonzo et al.,

2021; Liu, 2021; Smith et al., 2021; O'Reilly, 2020; Allen et al., 2014; Ryan et al., 2011). For example,

healthy adolescent romantic relationships have been linked to many psychological benefits, such as higher

self-esteem and overall happiness and life satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2011). Additionally, studies have

shown that relationships in early adolescent years can also shape how one views commitment and

attraction in their relationships during adulthood (Allen, 2014; Ryan et al., 2011). This research is also

important because it focuses on not only adolescents' views on love and romantic relationships, but the

impact of TikTok—an increasingly popular social media platform—*on* their views of love and romantic

relationships. The research shows the strength of the Social Impact Theory and its relationship with

TikTok. In all, the rise of trending ideas on TikTok, such as the videos under the hashtag #staytoxic and

the "ick," presents an interesting opportunity for academic investigation into the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, with an auxiliary focus on themes for female adolescents and themes for male adolescents.

Chapter Summary

This chapter began with a more in-depth discussion on the history and functionality of TikTok. It then led into a discussion of the existing research on social media impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors generally before discussing research conducted on social media impact on adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships specifically. This chapter explained how, despite TikTok being a relatively new social media platform, researchers have quickly made contributions to the existing research with studies on TikTok's impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors. Then, this chapter discussed the Social Impact Theory, an important theoretical framework used by a lot of the existing research on social media impact on adolescents' thoughts and behaviors. The literature review concludes by highlighting that there is very little empirical research on the subtopic of the impact of TikTok on adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships despite psychologists commenting on harmful TikTok trends related to love and romantic relationships. It also concludes by explaining that the Social Impact Theory—a widely used theoretical framework to understand social influence and conformance—is an appropriate theoretical framework to understand how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

CHAPTER 3: METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Adolescence is marked as the transition time between childhood and adulthood and a particularly critical life stage due to the rapid development in an individual's physical, cognitive and psychosocial functions (van Doeselaar et al., 2020). An individual's experiences during adolescence often impact the way such an individual interacts with the world and their general emotions and thoughts (van Doeselaar et al., 2020). During adolescence, individuals also develop a better understanding of their own identities, including their sexual identities (van Doeselaar et al., 2020). Because an individual's experiences during such critical years of their life span often impacts how they interact with the world and it is generally a time for an individual to solidify and understand their sexual identities, there is much to be learned about the influences impacting adolescents' experiences and perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Some examples of such influences include adolescents' interactions with their parents, siblings, and classmates, involvement in religious institutions, consumption of television, and use of social media, an influence that has become highly prevalent in the past couple of decades (van Doeselaar et al., 2020). Although researchers have explored the influence of social media on adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships, very little research has focused on the influence of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Adolescents' use of TikTok is very likely to be an important influence impacting their experiences and perceptions of love and romantic relationships because, not only is TikTok rapidly gaining popularity, but also half of TikTok's users were reported to be between the ages of 13 and 18 years old (Wang et al., 2022).

This study aims to add TikTok to the current body of research of variables that predict adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships. This study is significant because adolescence is a life span stage where individuals' experiences shape and solidify their identities, including their sexual identities (van Doeselaar et al., 2020). At a panoramic level, this study is not only necessary because adolescents are in a critical stage of an individual's identity formation, but also because

experiences with love and romantic relationships impact psychological functioning and well-being into adulthood (Ryan et al., 2011). Specifically, healthy adolescent romantic relationships have been linked to many psychological benefits that carry into adulthood such as higher self-esteem and overall happiness and life satisfaction (Ryan et al., 2011). Studies have demonstrated that relationships during adolescence can also shape how one views commitment and attraction in their relationships during adulthood (Allen, 2014; Ryan et al., 2011). Accordingly, the findings on how TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships serve as a basis for further exploration by researchers and mental health practitioners on how to properly assess, consider, and address such influences through psychological services provided to adolescents. It may also help other individuals with adolescents in their lives (e.g., educators and parents) better support the adolescents in their lives.

Research Question

This study seeks to understand how TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. It also seeks to understand what prevalent themes exist regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. These topics were investigated empirically through an inductive research study. For the purposes of this study, the term "adolescents" and "sex" shall have the same meaning ascribed to such terms by the National Institute of Health: "adolescents" refers to individuals between the ages of 13 years old and 17 years old, and sex typically refers to categories of male or female. This information was gathered during the survey completed by participants. This survey is attached here as Appendix A and will be referred to as "survey." Additionally, references to "TikTok" refer to a social media application, developed in 2016 by a technology company called ByteDance, that allows users to watch, share, save, comment on, and create short videos. It contains three main components: (1) the "For You" page, (2) the "Following" page, and (3) the "Discover" page. Because this study only focused on *how* TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, including whether prevalent themes exist regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents and female adolescents, only adolescents who had viewed particular TikTok trends related to love and romantic partners were considered a participant (see Table 1 below for

a summary of these particular TikTok trends). Lastly, to better understand the construct of an adolescent's

"perceptions of love and romantic relationships," the adolescents answered questions exploring popular

TikTok trends regarding love and romantic relationships in the survey.

Table 1

Description of Specific TikTok Trends

Trend	Description
"Ick"	The "Ick" trend describes a series of videos of people describing or showing certain behaviors or acts from their romantic partner or potential romantic partner that have repulsed them and caused them to lose romantic feelings suddenly.
"Loyalty Tests"	The "Loyalty Tests" trend describes a series of videos where a person tests their partner to assess whether they are loyal (e.g., a person may ask someone to attempt to flirt with their partner to see if the partner will reject the person).
"Villain Era"	The "Villain Era" trend describes a series of videos of ways people abandoned their people-pleasing behaviors and now prioritize themselves.
"Mastermind"	The "Mastermind" trend describes a series of videos that emerged after the release of Taylor Swift's "Mastermind," in which she discusses how she planned out in detail a romance but made it look like it happened as a product of being in the right place at the right time. The series of videos that emerged to this sound were people sharing how they planned out their particular relationship or a run in with their current romantic partner but made it seem like them meeting or falling in love was a coincidence.
"Stay Toxic"	The "Stay Toxic" trend describes a series of videos giving toxic dating advice on how to attract someone. For example, one particular "Stay Toxic" video advised people to send a person that they are romantically interested in a message with just their name at night and then respond in the morning that they do not remember what they meant to say.

Design and Methodology

This study used a descriptive research design to explore how adolescent male and female TikTok

users described their expectations and perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Due to the limited

research on this topic, this study was specifically designed as an exploratory grounded theory research

with the primary goal to investigate how TikTok may impact adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships in a preliminary and open-ended manner. This study type does not include a pre-determined hypothesis or any outcome measures because such a study design may oversimplify or overlook the nuances related to TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Instead, this study sought to analyze data to generate insights and identify themes to introduce findings on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships to the current body of research.

Participants

Additionally, because understanding adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships is not a variable that can be truly measured, this research study was qualitative in nature, and only a sample of adolescents who have come across the five specific TikTok trends regarding love and romantic relationships set forth in Table 1 above were deemed participants. The researcher randomly selected such TikTok trends to ensure that adolescents completing the survey are TikTok users who have had exposure to TikTok content regarding love and romantic relationships. Qualitative research and use of surveys are also particularly helpful as this study involves adolescents, and, in comparison to adults, adolescents may not be able to easily verbalize their perceptions of love and romantic relationships. The survey, compared to interviews, also limits the risk of the researcher injecting any potential bias into the data collection (e.g., asking leading questions) and limits the risk of the age and role difference between the researcher and participants impacting the data. This study will seek to identify common themes across participants' open-ended responses to the survey rather than generalize the findings across the adolescent population. Thus, for the reasons mentioned above, this study is classified as a grounded theory study, and theoretical sampling will be used as data collection progresses.

In the first step, the researcher identified 30 participants for the survey who met the following inclusion criteria: (1) they were enrolled at the school site located in Stockton, California—such school site will be referred to as the "study site"; (2) they were between the ages of 13 and 17 years old; (3) they indicated on the survey an awareness of all five TikTok trends listed on Table 1 above; (4) they returned a

signed copy of the Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Teen Participant Consent Form (attached here in

Appendix B); (5) they provided assent to participate in the study after the survey provided another

breakdown of the Teen Participant Consent Form (attached here in Appendix B); and (6) they provided

assent to the understanding that they do not need to answer any questions or continue the survey after the

survey provides an overview of the topics and explanation that some questions may bring to mind

uncomfortable topics. Another inclusion criteria was that, if the researcher determined that there is a need

to recruit an additional round of participants to reach data saturation, the participant must be an adolescent

who had yet to participate in this study. To recruit participants, the researcher sent out the

Parent/Guardian Recruitment Email (attached here in Appendix C) with the Parent/Guardian Consent

Form to the parent emails provided by the study site, delineating the study design and objectives,

participants' rights and participant criterion (i.e., age and exposure to specific TikTok trends). After

receipt of the signed Parent/Guardian Consent Form, the researcher sent out the Participant Recruitment

Email (attached here in Appendix C) with the Teen Participant Consent Form. After receipt of the signed

Teen Participant Consent Form, the researcher sent out the Participant Survey Email. The researcher

closed the survey link after 30 participants completed the survey, answering all of the initial questions

that assessed whether they met the inclusion criteria.

After the survey was closed, the data were analyzed. As mentioned earlier, the researcher

evaluated whether the results from the data analysis reached data saturation to determine whether this

study needed to identify 30 more participants solicited in the same fashion as the initial round. The

researcher determined that an additional recruitment round was not necessary because the data collected

in the initial round reached data saturation, the point where the survey failed to collect information that

was not already identified in other participants' survey. Thus, the size of the sample was 30 participants.

Instrumentation

This study includes two variables: TikTok use and adolescents' perception of love and romantic

relationships. Due to the nature of the grounded theory model (see Figure 2), the variables cannot be

classified as an independent variable, dependent variable, predictor variable, criterion variable, or control

variable. To elaborate, the grounded theory study is about exploring the variables on a case-by-case basis and assumes that the variables interact in complex ways. Therefore, it would be impractical to quantify or measure adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

Figure 2

Grounded Theory Model
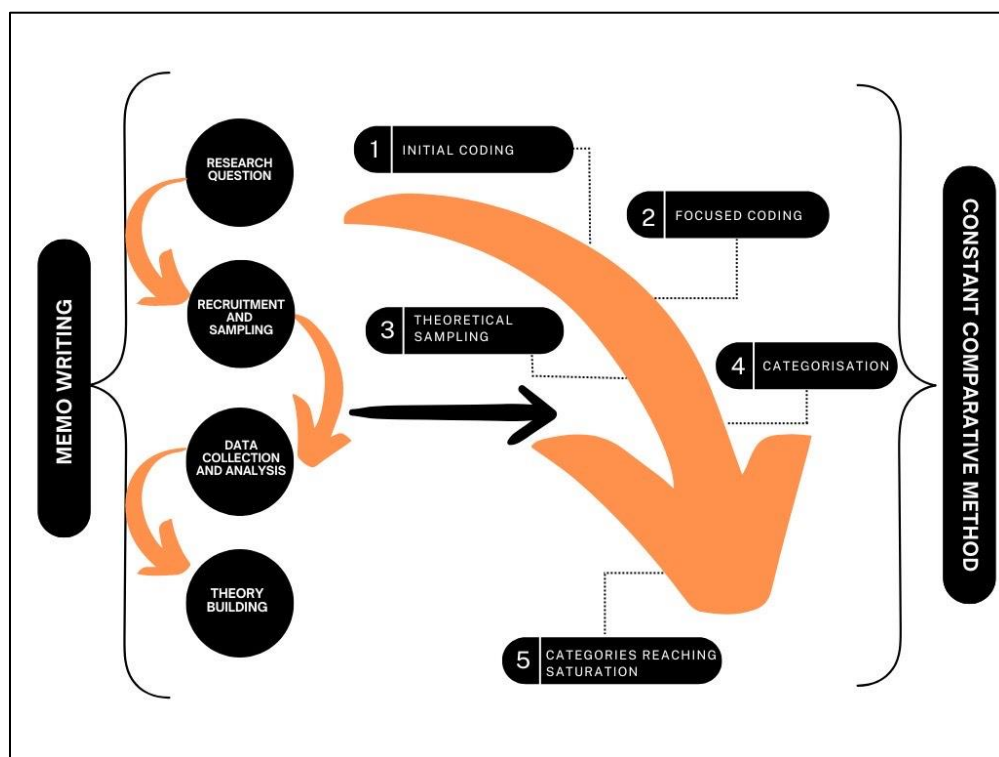
Note. This figure shows the Grounded Theory Model with a brief description of its process.

The survey began by assessing the adolescents' understanding of key topics such participation being completely voluntary, the estimated time it would take to complete the survey and adolescent may change their mind despite completing the Teen Participant Consent Form or during the survey if they experience discomfort. Additionally, the survey also asked the adolescent to indicate that they understand that their responses are confidential, unless the researcher determines that someone is being neglected or abused or in the event that the researcher determines that the adolescent may harm themselves or others.

The survey also asked the adolescent to indicate that they understand that if a question causes them stress or makes them emotional, they should stop and may also contact the researcher to get connected to the right resources to navigate such emotions.

Next, the survey asked the adolescents questions to determine that they meet the study inclusion criteria: age, sex and awareness of the five specific TikTok trends on Table 1 above. The survey asked about the participant's sex to identify prevalent themes among female adolescents and male adolescents. The survey then asks general questions on TikTok and love and romantic relationships to assess their general perspectives. This allowed the researcher to gain insight into the participants' overall feelings about TikTok's impact on their perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Because the researcher only selected participants who have had exposure to the five specific TikTok trends set forth on Table 1 above, asking participants about their overall feelings gave insight into the impact of other TikTok trends on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Lastly, the survey delved into five popular TikTok trends set forth on Table 1 above to assess the impact of such trends on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. The survey also assessed how such trends impacted the participants' personal romantic lives. It was estimated that the participants would allocate 30 minutes to an hour to complete the survey. All information obtained from the survey will be kept confidential and were used only for the purpose of this study.

Procedures

This is a grounded theory study, and such studies cannot be classified as experimental in the traditional sense because it does not start with a hypothesis and data collected is analyzed to ultimately develop a theory. Grounded theory studies are rather classified as inductive research because the method involves a researcher's analysis to go back and forth between specific and general to draw conclusions.

To recruit participants, the researcher sent out the Parent/Guardian Recruitment Email with the Parent/Guardian Consent Form to the parent emails provided by the study site, delineating the study design and objectives, participants' rights and participant criterion (i.e., age and exposure to specific TikTok trends). After receipt of the signed Parent/Guardian Consent Form, the researcher sent out the

Participant Recruitment Email with the Teen Participant Consent Form. After receipt of the signed Teen

Participant Consent Form, the researcher sent out the Participant Survey Email. The researcher closed the

survey link after 30 participants completed the survey, answering all of the initial questions that assessed

whether they met the inclusion criteria. The researcher used non-probability/convenience sampling

because the study site was located near the researcher's location and all adolescents meeting the study

inclusion criteria were allowed to complete the survey until the researcher reached 30 completed surveys.

After the researcher reached 30 completed surveys, the survey was closed and the researcher

sorted and analyzed the data using the Ünlü-Qureshi instrument (Qureshi & Ünlü, 2020), an analytic tool

for grounded theory studies, which included four distinct steps: (1) code, (2) concept, (3) category, and

(4) theme (further discussed under *Data Analysis and Presentation*). The Ünlü-Qureshi instrument will be

referred to as "UQI." The researcher used Microsoft Excel and Microsoft Word to organize, record and

analyze the qualitative data using the UQI. The researcher determined whether, to reach data saturation, it

was necessary to recruit an additional 30 participants in the same fashion as the initial round with the

additional criteria that the adolescent did not participate in the initial round and refine or restructure the

survey to improve the relevance of the questions to the specific themes. After analyzing the data from the

initial round, the researcher determined that data saturation was achieved, the point where the survey

failed to collect information that was not already identified in other participants' survey.

Using the UQI, the data were analyzed from a broad perspective, and short labels were assigned

to data excerpts. For example, if a participant stated that they feel guilty for judging someone and losing

romantic feelings after the person accidentally tripped and fell, a label of "Feeling guilt for loss of

romantic feelings based on an action not in a person's control" might be developed. After the codes were

assigned, the codes were reviewed and compared against each other to identify similarities and

differences and, when there were similarities between certain codes, a broader label called "concepts" was

noted. Once concepts were developed, the concepts were reviewed and compared against each other to

identify similarities and differences and, when there were similarities between certain concepts, an even

broader label called "categories" was noted. Once these steps were completed, the data underwent the last

step of the UQI, which involved a comprehensive review of all the codes, concepts, and categories developed to identify overarching groupings and such identification was labeled as the themes.

Data Analysis and Presentation

The steps in UQI serve as a guardrail for understanding, analyzing, and ultimately organizing data in a thematic way and are easily applicable for each step of the data collection (e.g., initial round of data and each subsequent round of data collection). The UQI is an appropriate method for data analysis because it helps illuminate the complex themes of adolescent perceptions of love and romantic relationships among TikTok users. With qualitative research, a research type that focuses on themes and context, validity is not related to measurements and takes on a form of theoretical validity. This is especially true for grounded theory studies because the objective is not necessarily to generalize the findings among a certain population but to understand whether the findings accurately represent settings in the real world. Importantly, this research study will test ecological validity which measures whether the findings are close to real-world settings. Reliability of a grounded theory study can be evidenced by the consistency of responses among participants, which are then coded and used to establish a theme. Evidence of the UQI's reliability and validity is established because the UQI required the development of codes and the sorting of data collected from surveys under the developed codes; thus, validity and reliability is ensured because a code was thrown out when enough data did not fall under such code.

As described in the *Procedures* section, reliability and validity are established through each step of the UQI because it required the development of codes, concepts, categories, and themes, and if data was not consistent among the responses, it was not developed into a theme. On top of the analysis process requiring an extensive iterative process, the reliability and validity were established due to procedures requiring multiple rounds of surveys until data saturation was achieved. Here, an additional round was not necessary because the initial round reached data saturation and ensured reliability of codes and themes because the application of the UQI established a high degree of agreement among the participants' responses. See Figure 3 below for a sample table to present the codes, concepts and categories.

Figure 3

Presentation of Codes, Concepts and Categories

Codes

Concepts

Category
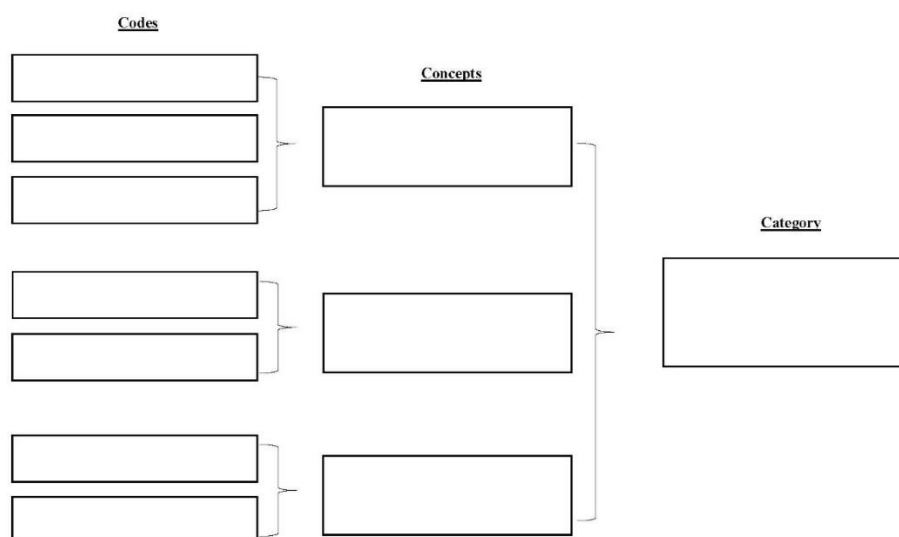
Note. This figure assumes that the first three codes were similar and resulted in one concept, the fourth and fifth codes were similar and resulted in one concept and sixth and seventh codes were similar and resulted in one concept. This figure also assumes that the three concepts resulted in one category. The actual figure used may vary depending on the data and the funneling of such data from codes to concepts to categories.

Assumptions and Limitations

One threat to internal and external validity for this study is researcher bias, which questions whether a researcher has intentionally or unintentionally focused on data that supports the researcher's theory and ignored data that does not support the researcher's theory. To minimize this threat, a detailed record of the data was maintained and a valid justification for certain data not developing into a concept, category, or ultimately a theme was confirmed each time. For example, a valid justification could include that there were no similar responses to such data.

For this study, there is an assumption that content on adolescents' TikTok is similar. The "For You" page on TikTok includes a stream of videos that, based on a user's past interactions with videos, become more and more tailored (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). For example, if a user interacts more with basketball videos, the "For You" page will suggest more basketball videos (Sarnou & Dekhi, 2021). This assumption likely did not impact the findings because the surveys explored content that has gone viral, meaning it only explored content that had already achieved a significant level of awareness.

Another limitation is that the recruitment of participants did not result in an appropriate balance of the ages and sex of the participants. For example, the participant pool ended up having more female adolescents than male adolescents. It is important to note that, due to the lack of existing empirical research on this topic *and* the limited resources available, this study was designed specifically as an exploratory study to identify prevalent themes regarding how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of loved and romantic relationships. As mentioned above, the purpose of this study is to serve as a basis for other researchers to further explore the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships; some of these researchers may have resources to conduct an even more in-depth exploration and add to the findings. Another purpose of this exploratory research is to help mental health practitioners better understand TikTok and tailor their counseling services, especially with respect to love and romantic relationships, a topic that comes up often during counseling services for adolescents. Thus, even though the recruitment process did not result in a perfect balance of the ages and sex of the participants, the findings still serve the study's purpose.

Ethical Considerations

To ensure that the rights of human subjects were protected, this study was reviewed and approved by University of the Pacific's Institutional Review Board (IRB) before data collection began. The study was also conducted in strict accordance with the IRB's approval. Additionally, this study involved children, a particularly vulnerable and protected population. Prior to collecting data from participants, informed consent of the parent or guardian, as applicable, of the participant *and* the participant was obtained through the IRB-approved Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Teen Participant Consent Form

(attached here as Appendix B). The IRB-approved consent forms explain in a digestible way the following: the study structure, extent of collection and use of data, and voluntary nature of this study. The researcher also made herself available to field any questions from parents or guardians, as applicable, and potential participants.

As another measure to protect the rights of human subjects and in conjunction with obtaining parent or guardian and participant informed consent through the IRB-approved Parent/Guardian Consent Form and Teen Participant Consent Form, the survey began by assessing the adolescents' understanding of key topics such participation being completely voluntary, the estimated time it would take to complete the survey and adolescent may change their mind despite completing the Teen Participant Consent Form or during the survey if they experience discomfort. Additionally, the survey also asked the adolescent to indicate that they understand that their responses are confidential, unless the researcher determined that someone is being neglected or abused or in the event that the researcher determined that the adolescent may harm themselves or others. The survey also asked the adolescent to indicate that they understand that if a question caused them stress or makes them emotional, they should stop and may also contact the researcher to get connected to the right resources to navigate such emotions.

Lastly, to ensure that the rights of human subjects are adequately protected, this study implemented data-protection measures in accordance with applicable laws and regulations to maintain the confidentiality of participants' personally identifiable information. For example, there is a very minimal risk of loss of confidentiality because the only personally identifiable information involved in this study is the list of participants who were invited to complete the survey. However, all the surveys were completely anonymous on Microsoft Forms, a platform that is encrypted both at rest and in transit and is compliant with the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). Additionally, all study information will be kept in Microsoft OneDrive, which is also a secured platform that is compliant with HIPAA. Additionally, information (e.g., parent and student emails) was permanently deleted as soon as it served its purpose.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first delineates how adolescence is a critical time period for identity formation and adolescents' understanding of interpersonal relationships. It also covers the ways that researchers have explored the impact of social media on adolescents' perception of love and romantic relationships, but they have not investigated the role of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This chapter also explains how—because this research is exploratory and the researcher is only exploring how TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, including whether prevalent themes exist regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents and female adolescents—the researcher employed grounded theory methodology. The researcher used the survey to collect data and the UQI as instrumentation to sort data and funnel out themes among the data. Additionally, this chapter summarizes the way that data was collected and presented for this study. Although there are some potential limitations and assumptions to this study, the findings add to the current research on the factors influencing adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships during a critical developmental period in their life. The findings serve as a basis for further research and as a resource to help other individuals with adolescents in their lives (e.g., individuals working with adolescents and parents of adolescents) to better support the adolescents in their lives. Lastly, this chapter summarizes the ethical considerations presented by this study, such as protecting participants' rights and the researcher's efforts to uphold ethical standards by obtaining informed consent from parents and guardians and the participants and implementing measures to maintain confidentiality.

CHAPTER 4: RESULTS

Outcomes and Analysis of Research

Even though TikTok is overwhelmingly popular among adolescents and there is general research on its impact on adolescents' mental health, there has been little research on TikTok's specific impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This gap in social media research is likely related to TikTok's relatively recent rise in popularity. Accordingly, the purpose of this qualitative study was to serve as a starting point to understanding how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and ultimately lead to future discussions on how to mitigate the potential negative consequences of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships. The purpose of this research was also to serve as a resource for adults such as mental health practitioners, educators, and parents, to better support adolescents as they navigate TikTok.

Given that this research is exploratory in nature, there were no hypotheses or specific outcomes delineated before data collection; rather, the goal of this study was to analyze data examining the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Through the collection of adolescents' survey responses regarding TikTok in the context of love and romantic relationships and specific TikTok trends related to love and romantic relationships, the research sought to explore: (1) perceptions of love and romantic relationships of adolescent TikTok users and (2) specific perceptions of love and romantic relationships of male and female adolescent TikTok users.

To explore the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the researcher, after obtaining proper consent, collected data by asking adolescents to complete a survey with open-ended questions about TikTok within the context of dating and specific TikTok trends related to love and romantic relationships. Once the researcher received 30 surveys from participants who met the study criteria, the survey was closed, and data were sorted and analyzed using the UQI. The UQI requires the researcher to identify additional rounds of participants if required to reach data saturation; however, this study did not require additional recruitment of participants. Using UQI to group and analyze data led

to the identification specific codes, which were then analyzed to identify concepts. In the next step of the UQI, the researcher analyzed concepts to develop categories. Once the categories were established, the researcher looked at the codes, concepts, and categories to identify themes common among the participants' responses. Before presenting the main findings on this study's research questions, procedures related to the recruitment process and the participant demographics will be reviewed.

Recruitment Process

All participants were recruited from the study site located in Stockton, California. In order to protect adolescents' rights, such as confidentiality, the recruitment process moved in stages. First, the researcher contacted all parents/guardians of adolescents enrolled at the study site and, if the parent was interested, they reviewed and completed the Parent/Guardian Consent Form. After receipt of the Parent/Guardian Consent Form, the researcher proceeded to contact the adolescent to complete Teen Participant Consent Form and, upon return of a signed copy, the researcher provided the adolescent with the survey link. However, even at this stage, the adolescent was not considered a participant because the survey link was branched, meaning that it asked participants to answer questions regarding study criteria and automatically ended if the adolescent provided an answer that indicated that they did not meet the study criteria. For example, one of the initial questions asked if the adolescent's age, and if they selected "Other" because their age was not 13, 14, 15, 16 or 17, the survey would automatically end. If the adolescent's survey ended because they did not meet the criteria questions at the beginning of the survey, they were not considered a participant. Upon receipt of 30 completed surveys, the researcher manually closed the survey.

The recruitment of adolescent participants resulted in 46 parent/guardian consents; however, only 39 adolescents consented to participate in the study. Out of the 39 adolescents who consented to participate, 33 adolescents sought to complete the survey. Three out the 33 adolescents did not meet the criteria to participate. The researcher then manually closed the survey. As aforementioned, the UQI requires the researcher to identify additional rounds of participants if required to reach data saturation; however, this study did not require additional recruitment of participants because the data set led to

identification of prevalent themes and data saturation, meaning that an analysis of the data revealed that the surveys failed to collect information that was not already identified in other surveys.

Participant Demographics

The total number of participants was 30. Table 2 below presents a visual breakdown of the participant demographics based on age and sex.

Table 2

Breakdown of Participant Demographics

Age	Male	Female
13	2	3
14	2	4
15	3	3
16	1	6
17	3	3
Total	11	19

This study involved participants taking a survey that was specifically designed with open-ended questions to assess participants' general perspectives on the TikTok content related to love and romantic relationships. The survey approach was appropriate because it resulted in longer responses by participants with accounts of their personal experiences. Additionally, when comparing a participant's responses to another participant's responses for all 30 participants, the researcher found that no new information, themes or insights emerged. To elaborate, the researcher found that every theme was supported by multiple instances or examples of such theme being present across participants' responses. Additionally, the number of participants under each age across the ages of 13 to 17 was fairly consistent and ranged between five and seven participants. For these reasons, the data collected from the 30 participants was comprehensive enough to capture the range and depth of TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

The study did not require participants to disclose information beyond their age and sex such as cultural background. There were also more female participants than male participants (i.e., 63% female and 37% male). However, the data is still adequate to serve the study's purpose: to explore TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and to note any notable thematic differences between female and male participants if such differences exist. Given that there is little research on the particular subtopic of how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the study was specifically designed to undertake such exploration of TikTok's impact on adolescents in a preliminary and open-ended manner with the hope that it may serve as a basis for further research into the nuances of this topic (e.g., consideration of how TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships varies based on sex or cultural background).

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

The following sections will include the findings for each of the research questions.

Research Question 1

"Does TikTok influence adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and, if so, in which ways?"

To analyze whether and in which ways TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the researcher exported all of the survey responses and began identifying potential codes based on each response. If a particular code was developed on one response and no other data fell under the code, the UQI required the researcher to remove the code. A set of codes with sufficient data are analyzed to develop concepts and concepts are then analyzed to develop categories. This sorting method ensures that only codes that have sufficient data to support the data would be presented as a finding and used to identify themes. For this reason, the sorting method ultimately establishes reliability and validity of the findings. Additionally, compared to a research method with the goal to generalize findings among a certain population, grounded theory which has a goal to understand whether findings accurately represent settings in the real world. Understanding whether the findings accurately represent settings in the real world is most appropriate for this study given that there is limited research on the

impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Reliability and validity were also established because the researcher reached data saturation from the survey responses from the 30 participants, meaning that the data failed to collect information that was not already identified in other survey responses.

Using the UQI, the researcher identified two categories to answer if TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and, if so, in which ways: (1) adolescent relationships (see Figure 4) and (2) self-image (see Figure 5).

Figure 4

Adolescent Relationships
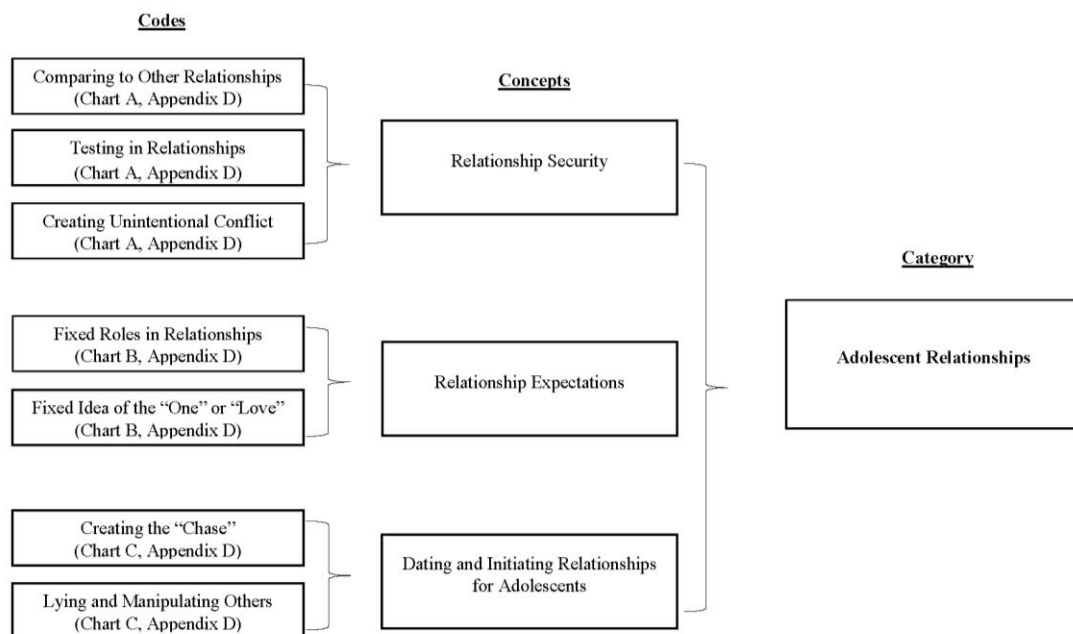
Figure 5

Self-Image
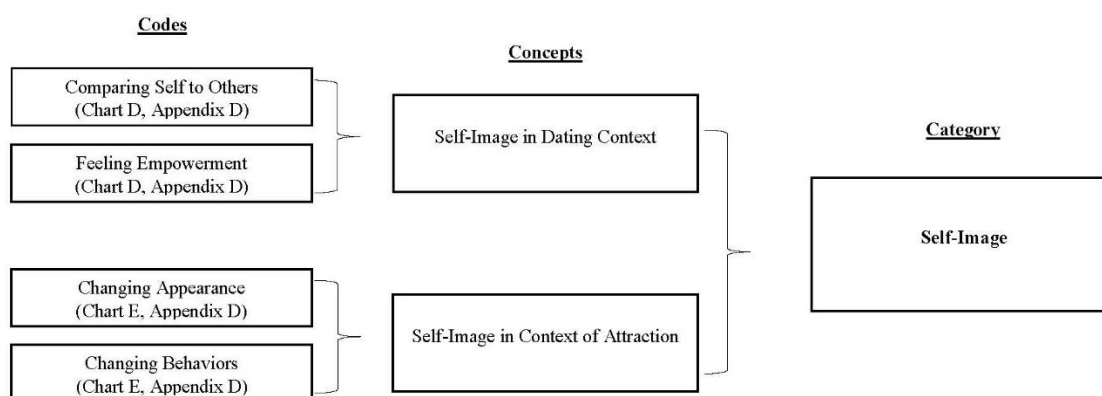
        As illustrated in Figures 4 and 5, the researcher found sufficient data under the following codes:

(1) comparing to other relationships, (2) testing in relationships, (3) creating unintentional conflict, (4)

fixed roles in relationships, (5) fixed idea of the "one" and "love," (6) creating the "chase," and (7) lying

and manipulating others, (8) comparing self to others, (9) feeling empowerment, (10) changing

appearance, and (11) changing behaviors.

        The first three codes—comparing to other relationships, testing in relationships and creating

unintentional conflict—resulted in the concept of relationship security. The fourth code (fixed roles in

relationships) and fifth code (fixed idea of the "one" and "love") resulted in the concept of relationship

expectations. The sixth code (creating the "chase") and seventh code (lying and manipulating others)

resulted in the concept of dating and initiating relationships for adolescents. All three of these concepts

have one common thread: adolescent relationships, which is a resulting category from the data analysis of

participants' responses. The eighth code (comparing self to others) and ninth code (feeling empowerment)

resulted in the concept of self-image in the dating context. The tenth code (changing appearance) and

eleventh code (changing behaviors) resulted in the concept of self-image in the context of attraction.

Below is a further breakdown of how the data analysis led to the development of each code, concept and

category, which ultimately answers, in detail, the first research question on whether TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and in which ways.

Category 1: Adolescent Relationships

As mentioned above, three concepts—relationship security, relationship expectations, and dating and initiating relationships for adolescents—led to the development of the first category: adolescent relationships. Below is a description of the codes that led to the development of each concept under the overall category of adolescent relationships.

Concept: Relationship Security. The first three codes—comparing to other relationships, testing in relationships and creating unintentional conflict—resulted in the concept of relationship security.

Code 1: Comparing to Other Relationships. The first code (comparing to other relationships) contributes to the concept that TikTok impacts adolescents' relationship security because many participants described how they compared their relationship to relationships displayed on TikTok and how such comparison led to relationship insecurities. For example, one student response stated:

> sometimes I know better but I still somehow end up doing things in my relationship based on tiktok *[sic]* trends like the time I asked my ex if we woud *[sic]* love me if I was a worm like idk *[sic]* all these boyfriends online have this perfecft *[sic]* answer on how they would still love the worm and like take care of the worm but like my ex was like uhm no. part of me is like is this even right to ask or get mad about other part of me still thinks he was wrong for it like just say yes even if it is a lie.

Similar to the response above, other responses discussed TikTok trends that led the participants to ask their partners or ex-partners certain questions and led them to compare their partner to how other people's partners behave on TikTok. Some responses also highlighted generally the concept that, although the participants feel like comparing their relationships to what they see on TikTok, they are aware that the portrayals of other relationships on TikTok might not reflect reality.

Code 2: Testing in Relationships. The second code (testing in relationships) contributes to the concept of relationship security because many participants described how TikTok has resulted in them feeling the need to test their partners' or ex-partners' loyalty to them. Notably, one participant wrote:

I have never done a loyalty test and I don't think anyone has ever done one on me. I do have a friend who caught his girl cheating on him by asking a person he met online to do a loyalty test. He messaged her on insta *[sic]* and she immediately caved into the guy that was hitting on her I felt super bad for him. I don't think he was being toxic tbh bc *[sic]* he was right about her.

Similar to the participant's response above, participants echoed the idea that testing in relationships is acceptable because if the other partner is truly loyal, there would be no issue with passing the test presented to them (e.g., loyalty test, asking partner to share location and asking partner to put anniversary date on social media biography). Only one participant deviated from the concept that testing is acceptable, arguing that if a person does not trust their partner, they should leave them, and if a person feels like putting your partner through tests, they should work on themselves and determine the root cause of why they feel the need to test their partners before dating other people.

Code 3: Creating Unintentional Conflict. The third code (creating unintentional conflict) contributes to the concept of relationship security because many participants discussed how TikTok trends and content on love and romantic relationships have led to unintentional conflict in their relationships. For instance, one participant wrote:

it *[sic]* can make you really paranoid and insecure in your relationship when you see other people commenting things like oh I had the most perfect boyfriend who gave me his password, bought me flowers, never fought with me blah blah but even he ended up cheating and usually comments on those posts say the same thing or something like the same thing and it is hard not to compare so even if I feel like everything is going right sometimes I get into my own head. Its *[sic]* even caused me to snoop before and then I felt bad because I didn't find anything.

Many participants also discussed how other TikTok trends have led them to leave a potential partner for baseless reasons (e.g., losing feelings for a person and finding such person unattractive because of the

way that they swim); further, female participants found that losing feelings for someone for a baseless reason is acceptable because of the notion that "nothing meant for you will pass you by" while male participants found it problematic and unfair.

Concept: Relationship Expectations. The fourth code (fixed roles in relationships) and fifth code (fixed idea of the "one" and "love") resulted in the concept of relationship expectations.

Code 4: Fixed Roles in Relationships. The fourth code (fixed roles in relationships) contributes to the concept that TikTok impacts adolescents' relationship expectations because many participants discussed how TikTok content often displays each partner as having a fixed role. For example, one female participant wrote:

> There are videos on tiktok *[sic]* that talk alot *[sic]* about how to get into feminine energy and how
>
> that attracts boys like it is good to make him feel like he is helping you and the man around you
>
> so sometimes i ask for more help or almost act a little ditsy and i know it sound sbad *[sic]* but it
>
> really works i feel like i get way more attention now.

Other participants have commented that the fixed roles are problematic. For example, one male participant commented: "I think tiktok *[sic]* is making feminism go backwards because it feels like all the videos on there are about how guys should always be the one paying for things and that just seems unfair"

Code 5: Fixed Idea of the "One" and "Love." The fifth code (fixed idea of the "one" and "love") contributes to the concept of relationship expectations because many participants discussed how TikTok portrays fixed ideas of the "one" and "love." For example, one female participant stated:

> I really believe in the idea that if he wanted to he would. Titkok *[sic]* kinda *[sic]* proves the point
>
> too like if he is iffy about you from the start why would you want someone like that like don't
>
> settle for less or for someone who makes you feel like youre *[sic]* an option. It is better to wait for
>
> the guy that sees you as his dream girl. The right guy will always pursue you and not be unsure.

Many female participants echoed the same concept, saying that if a person wanted to do something for you, that person would do so. The only response from a male under this code (fixed idea of the "one" or "love") had a different perspective:

I hate how tiktok *[sic]* changed girls like they all think that boys are the same and like if youre

[sic] not immediately into them then youre *[sic]* not the one or sometimes they expect you to do

things without even tellin *[sic]* you what they want like one time this girl ended things with me

because I didn't get her flowers and I asked her why she didn *[sic]* tell me and she said if I really

liked her I would have done it without her having to ask me because that is what guys just do for

girls they like and I thought that was so toxic.

Concept: Dating and Initiating Relationships for Adolescents. The sixth code (creating the

"chase") and seventh code (lying and manipulating others) resulted in the concept that of dating and

initiating relationships for adolescents.

Code 6: Creating the Chase. The sixth code (creating the chase) contributes to the concept of

dating and initiating relationships for adolescents because many responses discussed advice or ideas from

TikTok on how to reel in a potential partner. A lot of female participants discussed how such advice or

ideas from TikTok were useful. For example, one female participant wrote:

I remember there was a stay toxic advice to post a private ig *[sic]* story with your crush in it with

photos hinting that your with another guy even if it literally your girl best friend like taking a

picture of her from behind. This is supposed to make you seem more wanted by making the other

person jealous almost like if they might lose out on you if they don't act right. Tbh *[sic]* I have

done it and my friends do it all the time. I don't see it as bad I mean you aren't dating them its

[sic] just trying to get your crushs *[sic]* attention.

Similar to the response above, other female participants shared other advice and ideas from TikTok, such

as keeping a roster of potential partners, not texting potential partners back too quickly, creating mystery

to make a potential partner obsess with you, etc. On the other hand, male participants generally shared

advice and ideas from TikTok, commenting that they are problematic and make them lose feelings for the

potential partner implementing the advice from TikTok. For instance, one male participant wrote: "Stay

toxic on tiktok *[sic]* I feel like is teaching girls to make guys chase them but I don't feel like that is the

right way to go about it like I don't want a girl that is talking to all of these other guys I feel like I like it

more when the girl doesn't make me chase after her." Other male participants echoed a similar disapproval of TikTok advice and trends discussing how to reel in potential partners.

Code 7: Lying and Manipulating Others. The seventh code (lying and manipulating others) contributes to the concept that of dating and initiating relationships for adolescents because many responses discussed TikTok trends and ideas that required some form of lying or manipulation with partners or potential partners. To elaborate, many participants discussed TikTok trends or advice they have implemented in their own personal life. For example, one participant commented:

> Before I ended things with my gf *[sic]* I felt like something was off and that she was cheating. But to know for sure I actually did this thing i *[sic]* saw on tikttok *[sic]* where i *[sic]* paid my homie $20 bucks to dm *[sic]* her and see if she loyal to me or nah. I felt bad after but atleast *[sic]* i knew for sure that she wasnt *[sic]* cheating on me.

Other participants shared how they have used lying and manipulation with their partners or potential partners (e.g., leaving an item in a potential partner's car so they return the item to get them to meet you again or making a fake social media account to test if a partner would follow it).

Category 2: Self-Image

As mentioned above, two concepts—self-image in dating context and self-image in the context of attraction—led to the development of the second category: self-image. Below is a short description of the actual codes contributing to the specific concepts under the overall category regarding self-image.

Concept: Self-Image in Dating Context. The eighth code (comparing self to others) and ninth code (feeling empowerment) resulted in the concept that TikTok has an impact on adolescents' self-image in the dating context.

Code 8: Comparing Self to Others. The eighth code (comparing self to others) contributes to the concept of self-image in the dating context because many participants discussed how TikTok trends and content on love and romantic relationships has led them to question themselves. For example, one participant commented:

My bf *[sic]* had been talking about prom-posals *[sic]* with prom coming up. I kept showing him

really cute promposals *[sic]* for his to like do. It seemed like he understood—but it was bad. My

promposal *[sic]* what I wanted or expected. It was hard hiding my disappointment. It made me

wonder if I wasn't enough or like if I was a different girl if things would have been different. We

fought about it a lot.

Similarly, other participants discussed how certain TikTok trends and content led them to question their

personal self-worth. Other participants mentioned that they do not let TikTok trends and content make

them question themselves. For instance, one participant wrote:

you see a lot of stuff on tiktok *[sic]* about couples like I see how other girls make their boyfriends

handmade gifts but my girlfiend *[sic]* doesn't do that but I don't really care to be honest it doesn't

make me feel bad about myself I know we have something special between us and that is all that

matters.

Other participants also echoed the idea that, although they come across TikTok trends and content that

might make a person question their romantic life, they know that portrayals of love and romance on

TikTok are not good depictions of reality.

    Code 9: Feeling Empowerment. The ninth code (feeling empowerment) contributes to the

concept of self-image in the dating context because many participants discussed how the "Villain Era"

TikTok trend, as described on Table 1, trend left them feeling empowered. For example, one participant

noted: "The villain era to me is prioritizing my own self care *[sic]*!! It helped focus on my self growth

[sic] with grades and softball rather than dealing with my ex boyfriends *[sic]* needs. I'm better with living

that era. It also has made me so much more confident in myself." Similarly, many other participants

discussed how the "Villain Era" (as described on Table 1) TikTok trend helped them break people-

pleasing tendencies, feel more confident, and prioritize self-care.

    Concept: Self-Image in Context of Attraction. The tenth code (changing appearance) and

eleventh code (changing behaviors) resulted in the concept of self-image in the context of attraction.

Code 10: Changing Appearance. The tenth code (changing appearance) contributes to the concept of self-image in the context of attraction because many participants discussed how TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led them to change their appearance. For some participants, TikTok led to changes to hairstyles, clothing styles or makeup. For example, one participant wrote: "This was a while back but when i was new at school I really wanted to change my style to impress the girls. I looked up trendy streetwear on tiktok *[sic]* and tried to change up my style. I even got into skateboarding." In contrast to such examples of changes to appearance, some participants wrote about how TikTok led to more permanent or semi-permanent changes to appearance, such as dying their hair, perming their hair and getting a tattoo.

Code 11: Changing Behaviors. The eleventh code (changing behaviors) contributes to the concept of self-image in the context of attraction because many participants discussed how TikTok's content on love and romantic relationships led them to change their behaviors. For example, one participant wrote: "ya *[sic]* I listened to a lot of advice on Tiktok *[sic]* on how to be more girly around boys and it kind of really works like it might not seem like it but things like having a softer voice and being graceful actually makes you mreo *[sic]* attractive." Other participants disclosed other TikTok content or trends that led them to change their behaviors to appear more attractive, such as playing hard to get, using a different cologne, and learning how to bake.

Common Themes in Participants' Responses

After the identification of codes, concepts and categories, the researcher applied the last step of the UQI—a comprehensive review of all codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data—to identify prevalent themes. To elaborate, the last step of the UQI requires a synthesis and integration of the findings into coherent themes, especially themes that are present among all the codes, concepts and categories that emerged from the prior step. To enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the researcher employed a careful focus on the quality and depth of the gathered data to identify prevalent themes. Even at the last step of the UQI, the researcher reviewed all of the participant data again in light of the codes, concepts and categories that were developed, with a focus on identifying relationships

between the categories. In the process of completing the last step of the UQI, the researcher noted such

relationships between the categories, and relationships that reoccur a significant amount of times are used

to develop a theme. As further detailed below, two prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on

adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships emerged from an analysis of the participants'

responses using the UQI.

Theme 1: Adolescent Awareness on How TikTok's Portrayals of Love and Romantic Relationships Do

Not Reflect Reality

   The first theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and categories and the

corresponding data is that, even if TikTok has an influence on adolescents' perceptions of love and

romantic relationships, male and female adolescents were both generally aware of the concept that

portrayals of love and romantic relationships do not reflect reality. Some participants' responses

commented on such awareness. For example, one participant commented: "I don't really compare my

relationship to those on the app bc *[sic]* it is not showing real life." Another participant wrote:

   I have compared my relationship to the ones that are shown on TikTok but then I remember that

   social media is a filtered version of reality. I know that because so many couples seem perfect

   online but then when they break up they all of a sudden throw shade at the other person and its

   [sic] like I would never have guessed. Im *[sic]* in a relationship right now and sometimes stuff

   online makes me get in a weird mind set where im *[sic]* comparing but then I try to just distract

   myself too.

Other participants echoed this struggle, showing how TikTok did have an impact on their perception of

love and romantic relationship, which was simultaneously challenged by their awareness that TikTok

does not reflect reality.

Theme 2: Adolescent Awareness on How Behaviors or Ideas Learned from TikTok Are Unfair

   Similar to the first theme, the second theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and

categories and the corresponding data is that male and female adolescents were both generally aware that

certain behaviors or ideas learned from TikTok are unfair, even though such behaviors or ideas learned on TikTok impacted the adolescents. One participant explained:

> sometimes I know better but I still somehow end up doing things in my relationship based on tiktok *[sic]* trends like the time I asked my ex if we woud *[sic]* love me if I was a worm like idk *[sic]* all these boyfriends online have this perfecft *[sic]* answer on how they would still love the worm and like take care of the worm but like my ex was like uhm no. part of me is like is this even right to ask or get mad about other part of me still thinks he was wrong for it like just say yes even if it is a lie.

In the participant's response above, she clarified that she was aware that the line questioning might lead her then-partner to give an answer that would disappoint her. Despite her awareness, she still continued to ask her then-partner the question and expected him to give her a crafted answer even if it was lie (i.e., a response that he would still love her if she was a worm). Other participants have also illustrated this struggle between awareness and the impact of TikTok on their actions. For example, one participant mentioned how they lost feelings for a potential partner because of the "Ick" (as described in Table 1) even though they realize that the reason they lost feelings was baseless. Another participant wrote how TikTok advice to act more girly to attract potential partners was wrong but ultimately effective.

Research Question 2

Research Question 2 explored, "What are the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships?"

To analyze the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the researcher again applied the last step of the UQI—a comprehensive review of all codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data—to identify prevalent themes between male and female participants. The steps are substantially similar to those discussed under Research Question 1, provided that the researcher divided the participants' responses based on sex when rereviewing all participant data in light of the codes, concepts and categories. Again, to enhance the reliability and validity of the findings, the researcher employed a careful

focus on the quality and depth of the gathered data to identify prevalent themes in a similar fashion as discussed under Research Question 1. As further detailed below, four prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships emerged from an analysis of the participants' responses using the UQI.

Theme 1: Divide on Male and Female Adolescents' Perceptions of TikTok Content on the "Ick"

The first theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data is that male and female adolescents' perceptions of TikTok trends on losing feelings for a potential partner or partner for because of the "Ick" (as described in Table 1) differed. For example, as seen on Appendix D, Chart A-3, a common thread among the female participants responses on the third code (creating unintentional conflict) was that getting the "Ick," as described on Table 1, from a partner or potential partner was generally acceptable and not necessarily problematic. One female participant wrote that, even though it seems unfair to lose interest in a partner due to a baseless reason such as "jumping on a trampoline with your hands flying" or "riding a bicycle," the concept is generally acceptable because of the notion that "nothing that is meant for you will pass you by." Other female participants echoed this thought process. On the other hand, male participants commenting on the topic disagreed with the concept of losing interest due to the "Ick" (as described on Table 1). For example, one male participant commented:

> the ick on tiktok *[sic]* is so dumb especially for the boys because girls literally are calling everything we do an ikck *[sic]* like you can breathe and that is seen like an ick.i *[sic]* know it is super dumb but it really has changed the way i am around girls that i am interested in now i usually am paranoid i am going to do something to give someone the ick i don't think thiks *[sic]* trend should have ever been a thing.

Along with this participant, other male participants also commented on how the concept of losing interest due to the "Ick" (as described on table 1) is unfair and can lead to issues in relationships.

Theme 2: Divide on Male and Female Adolescents' Perceptions of TikTok Content on Having a Fixed Mindset

Similar to the first theme, the second theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data is that male and female adolescents' perceptions of TikTok trends on fixed mindset with respect to love and romantic relationships differed. As seen on Appendix D, Chart B-1 for the fourth code (fixed roles in relationships), the data analysis identified responses from many female participants that showed the general acceptance of the concept that there are specific roles in a romantic relationship. For example, female participants commented on how it is acceptable to act ditsy—a feminine quality—and make a male feel like he is helping you—a masculine quality. To contrast, a lot of male participants commented on how TikTok portrayals of having a fixed role in a relationship were problematic. For example, one male participant wrote: "I think tiktok *[sic]* is making feminism go backwards because it feels like all the videos on there are about how guys should always be the one paying for things and that just seems unfair."

Additionally, as seen on Appendix D, Chart B-2 for fifth code (fixed idea of the "one" and "love"), the data analysis identified many female participants' responses showing this fixed mindset (e.g., "nothing that is meant for you will pass you by," "the right guy will always pursue you," and "when you know you know"). On the other hand, only one male participant's response that was identified under the fifth code (having fixed idea of the "one" and "love"), and the response mainly expressed his disapproval of having a fixed mindset.

> I hate how tiktok *[sic]* changed girls like they all think that boys are the same and like if youre *[sic]* not immediately into them then youre *[sic]* not the one or sometimes they expect you to do things without even tellin *[sic]* you what they want like one time this girl ended things with me because I didn't get her flowers and I asked her why she didn *[sic]* tell me and she said if I really liked her I would have done it without her having to ask me because that is what guys just do for girls they like and I thought that was so toxic.

Theme 3: Divide on Male and Female Adolescents' Perceptions of TikTok Content on Creating a "Chase"

Similar to the first and second theme, the third theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data revealed that male and female adolescents' perceptions of TikTok content promoting tactics on how to lure in a potential partner or increase a potential partner's interest by creating a "chase" dynamic differed. As seen on Appendix D for the sixth code (creating the "chase"), Chart C-1, a lot of female participants discussed how TikTok led them to implement advice or ideas on how to increase potential partners' interest in them (e.g., not texting potential partners back, creating mystery on where you are and who you are with, acting disinterested or as if you have other options, etc.). Conversely, the male participant responses identified for the sixth code (creating the "chase") expressed their disapproval of tactics learned from TikTok on increasing potential partners' interest in them. For example, one male participant commented:

> tiktok *[sic]* is fun but can be really dumb I can totally tell that girls nowadays will fake it and act like they don't care when they really do because right when they act like they don't want me I get turned off and don't chase them and then I feel like they come back and are consistent with texting and act right basically.

Several other male participants echoed their disapproval of chase tactics, commenting that they prefer that a partner is consistent and truthful about their feelings.

Theme 4: Female Adolescents Feeling Empowered by the "Villain Era" TikTok Trend

The fourth theme that emerged from analyzing the codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding data is that female adolescents felt empowered by the "Villain Era" (as described on Table 1) impacts adolescents. As seen on Appendix D, Chart D-2, several female participants' responses were identified under the ninth code (feeling empowerment) that showed how the "Villain Era" (as described on Table 1) trend on TikTok led them to be more confident, break people-pleasing tendencies and engage in self-care. Although several female adolescents commented on the impact of the "Villain Era" (as described on Table 1) on TikTok, there were no responses identified from male participants.

Chapter Summary

This chapter first discussed the recruitment process for this study and the participants'
demographics before presenting the study findings. Then this chapter described how the research
questions were analyzed through UQI, an instrument for grounded theory research.

For the first research question on whether TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and
romantic relationships and in which ways, this chapter presented the codes, concepts and categories that
were developed from the data analysis. First, the researcher found the following category: adolescent
relationships. Second, the researcher found the following category: self-image. From a comprehensive
review of all of the codes, concepts and categories and the corresponding participant data, two prevalent
themes emerged among all of the participants' responses: adolescents are aware that (1) TikTok's
portrayals of love and romantic relationships do not reflect reality and (2) behaviors or ideas learned from
TikTok are unfair.

For the second research question, this chapter presented the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's
impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships
identified through a comprehensive review of all codes, concepts and categories and corresponding
participant data. The researcher found that male and female adolescents' perceptions on TikTok content
on love and romantic relationships differed on certain topics, such as losing feelings based on baseless
reasons, having a fixed mindset, tactics used to create the "chase," feeling empowered by the "Villain
Era" TikTok trend (as described on Table 1).

The next and last chapter sets forth a discussion of the findings, including limitations of the study
and recommendations for future research.

CHAPTER 5: DISCUSSION

With TikTok gaining popularity in recent years and overwhelmingly so among adolescents, researchers began researching the general impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health. Some researchers have begun exploring niche research topics related to the impact of TikTok on adolescents' mental health, such as body dissatisfaction. However, one subtopic that remained largely unexplored is TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, even though research indicates that early relationships have an impact on the development of adolescents' self-identity and sexuality and, in turn, overall sense of well-being (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). For these reasons, this study examined if TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and in which ways. It also sought to understand the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

This chapter first summarizes the findings from study before delving into the potential implications of the findings. Then the chapter addresses the limitations of this study and delineates recommendations for future research on this topic and related topics.

Summary of Findings

To analyze the research questions, the researcher recruited 30 participants between the ages of 13 and 17 to complete a survey answering open-ended questions on TikTok content that relates to love and romantic relationships. Below is an overview of the findings for each research question explored by this study.

TikTok's Influence on Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

For the first research question on whether TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, the researcher used the UQI to sort and analyze participants' responses to identify prevalent codes. Once the researcher identified codes, the researcher then compared codes to develop concepts. The codes and concepts were then analyzed once again to develop categories. Through UQI's

funneling technique, the study found that TikTok did have an impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

First, findings suggest that TikTok impacts adolescents' romantic relationships. Specifically, TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led adolescents to compare their relationships to other relationships on TikTok, test their partners' loyalties in relationships, and create unintentional conflict. Findings further suggest that TikTok influenced adolescents' relationship expectations in that TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led adolescents to having a fixed mindset on roles in a relationship and ideas of the "one" and "love." TikTok also appears to influence dating and initiating relationships for adolescents in that TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led adolescents to implement advice or tactics to create the "chase" and manipulate others.

Second, findings suggest that TikTok impacts adolescents' self-image in romantic relationships. For example, TikTok appears to influence adolescents' self-image in the dating context in that TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led adolescents to compare themselves to others in relationships and feel empowered. TikTok also influenced adolescents' self-image in the context of attraction because TikTok content on love and romantic relationships led to changes in their appearance and behaviors.

General Themes

The researcher used the last step of the UQI—a comprehensive review of all codes, concepts and categories and corresponding participant data—to identify prevalent themes. The researcher found that adolescents are aware that TikTok's portrayals of love and romantic relationships do not reflect reality and that behaviors or ideas learned from TikTok are unfair.

Themes Regarding TikTok's Impact on Male and Female Adolescents' Perceptions of Love and Romantic Relationships

For the second research question on the prevalent themes, the researcher again applied the last step of the UQI—a comprehensive review of all codes, concepts and categories and corresponding participant data—to identify prevalent themes among male and female adolescents. The researcher found

that male and female adolescents' perceptions on TikTok content on love and romantic relationships differed on certain topics, such as losing feelings for someone based on baseless reasons, having a fixed mindset on roles and the "one" or "love," and using tactics to create the "chase." Lastly, the researcher found that female participants, unlike male participants, felt empowered by the "Villain Era" TikTok trend (as described on Table 1).

Implications of Findings

TikTok is overwhelmingly popular among adolescents, with over 60% of adolescents indicating that they use TikTok, rendering it inevitable that a majority of adolescents will have exposure to TikTok content on love and romantic relationships (Anderson et al., 2023). Additionally, early relationships are developmentally important to understanding one's identity and sexuality and interpersonal relationships (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). These early relationships serve as precursors for adult relationships and, in turn, impact individuals' overall sense of well-being (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022; Garcia, 2022; de Lenne et al., 2020). Despite the popularity of TikTok among adolescents and the fact that adolescence is a critical development stage for understanding one's identity and sexuality, there is little research on the subtopic of the ways that TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

For the reasons mentioned above, this study was specifically designed as an exploratory grounded theory research with the primary goal to investigate how TikTok may impact adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships in a preliminary and open-ended manner. This study type does not include a pre-determined hypothesis or any outcome measures because such a study design may oversimplify or overlook the nuances related to TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Instead, this study sought to analyze data using the UQI to generate insights and identify themes to introduce findings on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships to the current body of research.

TikTok and Relationships

The study found that TikTok had a negative impact on adolescents' adolescents' relationships in numerous ways. One of the findings suggests that TikTok influences adolescents' relationship security. For example, the study found that adolescents compare their relationships to those portrayed on TikTok. This finding is consistent with prior research on how social media's portrayals of relationships can lead others have unrealistic expectations (de Lenne et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2015). Additionally, this prior research found that such comparisons lead to low relational satisfaction and lower well-being for adolescents (de Lenne et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2015). Because this study also found that adolescents tend to compare their relationships to those portrayed on TikTok, this study underscores the need for further research into the ways that such comparisons may potentially lead to low relational satisfaction and a decreased sense of well-being among adolescents.

Results from this study also found that TikTok leads to relationship testing and creating unintentional conflicts. For example, the study found that TikTok led adolescents to test their partners' loyalty and commitment. This is consistent with prior research on adolescents that highlighted the ways that social media platforms can lead to testing of their partners' loyalty (e.g., checking their locations on a social media platform) and unintentional conflict (e.g., unhealthy monitoring of a partners' messages on a social media platform) (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Similar to the prior research's conclusion (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019), this study's findings on how TikTok leads to testing and conflict in relationships highlight the need for more discussion regarding healthy boundaries in adolescents' romantic relationships.

The study also found that TikTok influences adolescents' relationship expectations. In particular, the study found that adolescents who use TikTok tend to have a fixed mindset on roles in relationships and ideas of the "one" and "love." Although no prior research has discussed the concept of social media leading to a fixed mindset on roles in relationships and ideas of the "one" and "love," there have been studies discussing how comparisons to portrayals of love and romantic relationships have led to unhealthy expectations (de Lenne et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2015). Similar to prior research on social media and unhealthy expectations (de Lenne et al., 2020; Galloway et al., 2015), this study highlights how: (1)

TikTok may limit adolescents' openness to more equal and flexible relationship dynamics and understanding that humans are dynamic and (2) adolescents' idealization of finding the "one" or "love" may lead to formation of unhealthy expectations and inevitable disappointment following such expectations being unmet.

The study also found that TikTok impacts dating and initiating relationships for adolescents. For example, it was found that adolescents adopt lying and manipulation tactics such as playing hard to get or creating the "chase" based on TikTok content. Although other research has not discussed the exact concept of creating the "chase," prior research has discussed how social media platforms lead to adolescents using lying and manipulation tactics (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019). Similar to this prior research (Van Ouytsel et al., 2019), this study's findings show how TikTok may discourage authenticity in relationships. Additionally, authenticity is essential for building healthy and meaningful relationships (Anderson et al., 2022; Bouffard et al., 2022).

TikTok and Self-Image

Another major finding of the study is that TikTok impacts adolescents' self-image in the dating context. For example, many participants discussed how TikTok trends and content on love and romantic relationships has led them to question themselves. This is consistent with prior research that found that social media platforms portrayals of relationships led adolescents to question their personal self-worth (Papageorgiou et al., 2022). Unlike other studies on the impact of social media platforms on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, this study also found that one particular TikTok trend—"Villain Era" (as described on Table 1)—led to female participants feeling empowered. This particular finding highlights the need to evaluate how content on love and romantic relationships on TikTok and other social media platforms may positively impact adolescents' self-image.

Along with finding that TikTok impacts adolescents' self-image in the dating context, the study also found that TikTok impacts adolescents' self-image in the context of attraction. To elaborate, the study found that TikTok content on love and romantic relationships has led to adolescents changing their behaviors and appearance. For example, one participant mentioned how TikTok content led her to start

dressing more feminine to attract boys while another participant discussed how TikTok content led her to start acting ditsy to attract boys. These findings are consistent with recent research on the impact of TikTok on *adult* TikTok users, which found that TikTok users tend to conform themselves to match trends to appear more attractive (e.g., wearing more makeup, losing weight, changing their style, etc.) (Liu, 2021). Prior research on adult TikTok users (Liu, 2021) and this study's findings taken together highlight the need for further research into whether and how TikTok may potentially impact TikTok users' self-esteem.

General Implications of Findings

Researchers and other psychologists may use these findings to further explore how TikTok content on love and romantic relationships impacts adolescents' development, self-esteem and relationship satisfaction. Along with researchers and psychologists adding to the current body of research, adults with adolescents in their life such as parents, educators, and school counselors may use these implications or draw their own implications from the findings to understand TikTok's impact on their adolescents. Thus, this research may help adults better support adolescents in developing and maintain healthy relationships, including healthy expectations and behaviors.

In both cases, researchers and psychologists and other adults should bear in mind two additional implications of the findings on which prior research on social media and adolescents has not focused. First, the study found some divisions in male and female adolescents' interpretation of TikTok content and ultimately their perceptions of love and romantic relationships. For example, male adolescents, unlike female adolescents, generally expressed disapproval of lying and manipulation tactics to initiate and maintain relationships. This means that researchers or individuals using these findings as a resource to help adolescents with their socio-emotional needs should be cognizant of potential differences in TikTok's impact on male and female adolescents. Second, the study found that adolescents have critical awareness that TikTok's portrayals of love and romantic relationships does not reflect reality and ideas and behaviors learned from TikTok can be unfair. This means that researchers or individuals using these findings as a resource to help adolescents with their socio-emotional needs should be cognizant of

adolescents' complex internal struggle. Oftentimes, TikTok content on love and romantic relationships still has an impact on adolescents, despite their awareness that it does not reflect reality and/or is unfair.

Guidance for Parents and Guardians, Schools and Mental Health Practitioners

As seen from the study findings, TikTok has an influence on adolescents' romantic relationships and self-image. Addressing the impact of TikTok will require a multifaceted approach involving both the home and school environment. It is also important to note that social media such as TikTok are ever evolving; thus, individuals looking to better support adolescents should stay informed on how social media functions and how trending content on social media platforms can impact adolescents. To be aware, individuals may research current news on the intersection of adolescents' mental health and TikTok. Below is a discussion of specific strategies for parents and guardians, schools and mental health practitioners. This study highlights the need for parents and guardians, schools and mental health practitioners to take some steps, whether it is the steps outlined below or the implementation of other strategies, to mitigate the negative impact of TikTok on adolescents.

Parents and Guardians

To begin, parents and guardians may use the findings of this particular study to better understand such impact of TikTok on their adolescents. As seen from the findings, TikTok impacts adolescents' relationship expectations, self-image and behaviors.

In order to support their adolescents, parents and guardians should continuously educate themselves and their adolescents on media literacy, emphasizing how it is normal for social media portrayals and real life to look quite different because social media portrayals are not full and accurate portrayals of real life. Parents and guardians can encourage and challenge their adolescents to use critical thinking skills when it comes to social media content. For example, parents and guardians may help their adolescents recognize and challenge unrealistic expectations that they may develop from viewing social media content. Additionally, parents and guardians can create open lines of communication with their adolescents. Instead of brushing off TikTok content as something that they may not understand and that the younger generation is more focused than adults are, parents and guardians can encourage their

adolescents to share their experiences with and emotions about TikTok content. Parents and guardians may be able to pinpoint issues and provide guidance on healthy relationship dynamics and self-image. Also, they can also model healthy relationship behaviors and realistic expectations to counteract any potentially negative influences of TikTok. Parents and guardians are also in the best position to create and enforce boundaries with respect to social media use. For example, parents and guardians may monitor the type of content that their adolescents may consume on TikTok. Parents and guardians may also limit their adolescents' social use.

Parents and guardians play a pivotal role in adolescents' lives and are in a key position to promote safe social media use and critical thinking for adolescents (Mekonen et al., 2024). To elaborate, parents and guardians are uniquely positioned to mitigate the impact of social media such as TikTok for the following reasons: (1) social media influence is an ongoing influence through life, and parents and guardians have the most time with their adolescents to create an open line of communication; and (2) parents and guardians have a better understanding of their family values and can give more personalized guidance (García-Ruiz et al., 2016).

Schools

Teachers and school staff also play a critical role in supporting adolescents' social-emotional development and addressing the impact of social media on their relationships and self-image (Aviles et al., 2006). Thus, schools should also consider ways to address the negative impact of social media, such as the negative impact of TikTok, as seen from this study's findings.

First, schools should consider integrating media literacy into their curriculum. Media literacy may include lessons on how to analyze social media messages, how to understand the impact of social media on self-esteem and relationships, and how to promote the responsible use of social media (Zhang et al., 2020). Media literacy is an effective way to foster critical thinking skills with respect to social media content and educating adolescents on the difference between social media portrayals and real-life expectations (Zhang et al., 2020). Generally speaking, this strategy may mitigate the negative influences of TikTok found from this study, such as negative influences on relationships and self-image. Schools

should also consider professional development for teachers and other school staff to understand the impact of social media on adolescents and brainstorm ways to mitigate potential negative influences of social media, which is an effective way to address the impact of social media on adolescents (Fancera, 2022). This would be a hands-on approach to training teachers and school staff on social media and developing tools to appropriately support students (Fancera, 2022).

In addition to media literacy and training, teachers and other school staff should foster an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences with TikTok and other social media platforms (Fancera, 2022). This may come in the form of workshops where students think critically about specific experiences with social media. For example, a particular workshop could ask students to reflect on a time where social media content made them have negative feelings about themselves and, looking back on such time, consider why it made them have negative feelings. To make it relevant to their particular subjects, teachers can consider ways to get their students to reflect on social media use and still cover their particular subject (e.g., an English teacher can assign students an essay prompt on social media, or a history teacher can assign students a prompt on the history of social media and the current implications in today's world). These workshops or assignments can make students think critically about social media and provide a safe place to discuss their experiences and develop healthier attitudes toward social media.

To increase media literacy through training and fostering an environment where students feel comfortable sharing their experiences with social media, schools should also brainstorm ways to engage parents and guardians. As mentioned above, parents and guardians are in key positions to help their adolescents think critically about social media and navigate its potential negative influences (García-Ruiz et al., 2016). This engagement with parents will also help schools and parents stay on the same page on their message about social media and create a robust support system for adolescents.

Mental Health Practitioners

Effective mental health practitioners stray away from a one-size-fits-all approach and typically tailor their counseling services to their clients (Dimmitt, 2009). In order to tailor counseling services to

their adolescent clients, it is important to understand the major influences in their life (Dimmitt, 2009). Some influences are always present, such as ethnic background, gender, etc. (Dimmitt, 2009). On the other hand, some influences change from time-to-time based on what is popular during that specific time (Dimmitt, 2009). TikTok, in particular, is one influence that gained popularity in recent years (Anderson et al., 2023). Thus, mental health practitioners can use the findings of this study as a starting point to understand the way that TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love, romantic relationships and self-image and, in turn, tailor their counseling services more effectively.

To elaborate, mental health practitioners may incorporate questions about social media use, including TikTok use, in their regular assessments of their adolescent clients' mental health. These types of assessment tools can provide valuable insight into how TikTok influences their adolescent clients' perceptions, self-image, and relationships (Plaisime et al., 2020).

Additionally, mental health practitioners can provide individualized support for adolescent clients struggling with self-image or relationship issues influenced by TikTok. For example, mental health practitioners may integrate cognitive-behavioral therapy (CBT), which has been effective in challenging and reframing unrealistic expectations and improving self-esteem (Holtzheimer, 2024). Mental health practitioners such as school counselors may also facilitate group sessions focused on media literacy, as discussed above. The group sessions may also focus on healthy relationships and self-esteem and the role of social media, such as TikTok. As shown by the theoretical framework of this study—Social Impact Theory—the impact of TikTok can be attributed to the concept of conformity. Using group sessions may be powerful in detangling the negative impact of social media such as TikTok because adolescents may realize that they are not alone in their internal monologue. For example, as found in this study, adolescents have a critical self-awareness—group sessions may help them understand that they are not unique in their internal struggle to adopt behaviors that they know are not healthy.

Along with assessment tools, individual counseling and group counseling, mental health practitioners serving as school counselors should also collaborate closely with school leaders and other

school staff to integrate social-emotional learning (SEL) into the curriculum with a special focus on addressing the impacts of social media.

<div align="center">**Limitations of the Study**</div>

While this study generated valuable insights into how TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, there are several limitations to the use of the findings.

Generalizability

Because this is an exploratory grounded theory study to explore adolescents' experiences and perspectives as they relate to TikTok content on love and romantic relationships, the findings cannot necessarily be generalized to all adolescents. It is also important to note that this study recruited 30 participants from the study site, and the survey did not request participants background information beyond age and gender (e.g., ethnicity, race, and sexual orientation). The sample size also included more female participants than male participants (i.e., 63% female and 37% male). There were also no participants who answered "other" for the question on gender. Thus, the participant demographics may also impact the participants' responses and, in turn, impact the applicability of these findings to a wider population.

Lack of Causal Inference

Similar to the issue of generalizability, this grounded theory study is exploratory in nature and does not establish causal relationships. The study also does not consider other factors influencing adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, such as family dynamics, interactions with peers and other media consumption such as content on television or other social media platforms. Therefore, the findings cannot be construed to mean that TikTok causes adolescents to behave or think in a particular way. However, the findings are useful in understanding associations between TikTok use and adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and may serve as a starting point for further research that has a hypothesis.

Contextual Specificity

The findings may be heavily influenced by the specific timeframe, cultural norms and prevailing TikTok trends at the time the data was collected. The contextual specificity influencing the findings is also implicated by the fact that the study criteria required adolescents' knowledge of specific TikTok trends and the survey also asked questions with respect to such specific TikTok trends. This contextual specificity means that changes in TikTok content may result in different findings if a similar study was conducted in the future.

Overemphasis on Negative Impact

Results of this study predominantly highlight the negative influences of TikTok on adolescents' relationships while only one finding suggested a positive influence. Specifically, the TikTok trend known as the "Villain Era" generated responses from female participants on how it helped them become more confident, break people-pleasing tendencies, and engage in self-care. Thus, it is possible that the findings of this study overlook other potential positive impacts of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This limitation can inform how future research on this topic is designed and ultimately deepen our understanding of how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships.

Despite these limitations, grounded theory studies such as this study on TikTok's impact on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships provide valuable insights, as discussed previously, to help other researchers develop hypothesis for further research or help adults with adolescents in their life better meet such adolescents' socio-emotional needs.

Recommendations for Future Research

Given the limitations of the current study, it would be pertinent to create a longitudinal study to better track the changes in adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships over time as they engage with TikTok. Such a longitudinal study would help in understanding what the long-term effects of TikTok are on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and, in turn, the long-term effects of TikTok content on love and romantic relationships on adolescents' psychosocial development.

Other researchers may also use quantitative methods to better evaluate the impact of TikTok on adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. For example, qualitative measures may be employed to investigate the relationship between TikTok use and relationship satisfaction. The quantitative methods may also be combined with qualitative methods such as interviews to provide statistical insights with qualitative data that offers depth and context to quantitative results. Also, further research with interviews can be helpful because the researcher can ask further probing questions based on participant responses that are shared during the interview.

Because the current study found some divisions in male and female adolescents' interpretation of TikTok content and ultimately their perceptions of love and romantic relationships, further research could also focus on the differences between TikTok's impact on male and female adolescents. Similarly, the study design did not require participants to disclose information on other aspects of their identity (i.e., race, ethnicity and sexual orientation), and no participants answered "other" for their gender. Future research can begin exploring how these other aspects of an adolescent's identity may impact their interpretation of TikTok content and perceptions of love and romantic relationships. Additionally, further research can delve further into the critical awareness that adolescents have in terms of understanding that TikTok's portrayals of love and romantic relationships does not reflect reality and ideas and behaviors learned from TikTok can be unfair. For example, researchers might explore why TikTok content on love and romantic relationships still has an impact on adolescents' behaviors and thoughts despite their critical awareness around the nature of TikTok.

Researchers may also focus further research on educational interventions. For example, researchers might explore the effectiveness of educational interventions aimed at empowering adolescents to critically evaluate and navigate TikTok content related to love and romantic relationships. This research might also identify educational strategies for adults with adolescents in their lives such as parents, educators and school counselors to encourage critical thinking about TikTok content on love and romantic relationships and, generally speaking, healthy relationships.

These recommendations for further researcher can lead to a more nuanced understanding of how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and their satisfaction in relationships. This, in turn, can help researchers or others develop tailored interventions, policies and initiatives to promote critical thinking about TikTok content on love and romantic relationship and development of healthy relationships.

Conclusion

This study focused on how TikTok influences adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and in which ways. It also sought to understand the prevalent themes regarding TikTok's impact on male adolescents' and female adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. This was especially important given that TikTok gained popularity in recent years, overwhelmingly so among adolescents coupled with the fact that early relationships have an impact on the development of adolescents' self-identity, sexuality, and overall sense of well-being.

The study found that TikTok has an impact on adolescents' romantic relationships and self-image in the context of romantic relationships. Some of the implications of the findings are that TikTok may lead to relationship insecurity, promotion of unhealthy tactics and relationship dynamics, changes in appearance and behaviors, and fixed ideas of relationship roles and the "one" and "love." It also found that one TikTok trend—the "Villain Era"—led to a positive impact on female adolescents with respect to their confidence and self-care behaviors.

Additionally, the study found that adolescents are aware of how TikTok's portrayals of love and romantic relationships do not reflect reality and how behaviors or ideas learned from TikTok are unfair. The researcher also found that male and female adolescents' perceptions on TikTok content on love and romantic relationships differed on certain topics.

The findings highlight the need for further research. Researchers may use the findings to conduct further research to gain a more nuanced understanding of how TikTok impacts adolescents' perceptions of love and romantic relationships and their satisfaction in relationships. This type of research may, in turn, help researchers or others develop tailored interventions, policies and initiatives to promote critical

thinking about TikTok content on love and romantic relationship and development of healthy relationships. Adults with adolescents in their lives—such as parents, educators and school counselors—may use the implications of the findings provided in this study or draw their own implications from the findings to better support adolescents in developing and maintain healthy relationships, including healthy expectations and behaviors.

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Appendix A: Participant Survey

UNIVERSITY OF THE **PACIFIC** | Benerd College

Participant Survey on TikTok's Impact on Teen's Views of Love and Romantic Relationships ⅋

My name is Amitoj Kaur, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific. I am writing a paper on a psychology-related research topic. Because of how popular TikTok is among young users, I have decided to look at how TikTok content impacts teens' views on love and romantic relationships. The findings might help other researchers, mental health practitioners and other adults with teens in their life better understand TikTok's impact and how to better support the teens that they interact with. At this stage, you and your parent or guardian have agreed for you to participate in this study.

* Required

1. Do you understand that participating in this study is completely optional and that not agreeing will not negatively affect you in any way? Check "Yes" or "No". *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

2. Do you understand that participating in this study includes completing one survey on TikTok content about love and romantic relationships that will take about 30 minutes to an hour to complete? Check "Yes" or "No". *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

3. Do you understand that, even though you and your parent or guardian have provided permission to participate in this study, you still do not need to complete this survey if you have changed your mind? Check "Yes" or "No". *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

4. The survey will cover a lot of questions related to TikTok trends. Some of the questions that the survey asks might relate to your current or past dating experiences or romantic involvements. It might also involve questions about your peer's dating experiences or romantic involvements. It is possible that some of these questions might make you uncomfortable. Do you understand that it is totally ok to stop the survey or skip questions that you don't feel like answering? Check "Yes" or "No". *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

5. Do you understand that, even though the survey answers are anonymous, I may need to report or share information to the appropriate agencies (e.g., in the event that we believe you or someone else is being neglected or abused or in the event that we believe that you may harm yourself or others)? Check "Yes" or "No". *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

6. There is also a possibility that a question might make you think of something that stresses you out or makes you emotional. Do you understand that, if this happens, you should stop? Check "Yes" or "No".

   IMPORTANT NOTE: Although not required, you can also contact me at amitojsandhuUOP@hotmail.com, so I can connect you to the right resources to deal with any stress.
   *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

7. Please check below your current age. *

   ◯ 13

   ◯ 14

   ◯ 15

   ◯ 16

   ◯ 17

   ◯ My age is not listed here

8. Have you heard of the TikTok trend called "Ick"? Check "Yes" or "No".
   *

   ◯ Yes

   ◯ No

9. Have you heard of the TikTok trend called "Loyalty Tests"? Check "Yes" or "No". *

◯ Yes

◯ No

10. Have you heard of the TikTok trend called "Mastermind"? Check "Yes" or "No". *

◯ Yes

◯ No

11. Have you heard of the TikTok trend called "Stay Toxic"? Check "Yes" or "No". *

◯ Yes

◯ No

12. Have you heard of the TikTok trend called "Villain Era"? Check "Yes" or "No". *

◯ Yes

◯ No

13. What gender do you identify with? *

◯ Man

◯ Woman

◯ Other gender

14. How does TikTok describe love and romantic relationships?

15. How do you feel TikTok influences your perception of love and romantic relationships?

16. Can you describe a time where you tried to copy behaviors or relationships seen on TikTok in real life?

17. Can you describe a time when you changed your appearance in an attempt to attract someone based on a trend or advice you found on TikTok?

18. Do you ever find yourself comparing your own experiences of love and romantic relationships to what you see on TikTok?

19. You answered that you have heard of the "Ick" trend on TikTok. What do you think about the trend?

20. What are some things that you personally might consider as an "ick"?

21. Has anyone ever given you the ick? Can you describe that experience?

22. Do you think it is fair for someone to leave their partner because of an ick?

23. You answered that you have heard of the "Loyalty Tests" trend on TikTok. What do you think about the trend?

24. Have you ever done a loyalty test or helped someone with a loyalty test? Can you describe that experience?

25. Has anyone ever done a loyalty test on you? Can you describe that experience?

26. Do you think it is fair for someone to do a loyalty test on their partner?

27. Do you think it is fair for someone to do a loyalty test on their partner?

28. You answered that you have heard of the "Mastermind" trend on TikTok. What do you think about the trend?

29. Have you ever done anything to "Mastermind" your way into someone's life / into a relationship with them?

30. What do you think of people who have shared stories about when they were a "Mastermind"?

31. Do you think it is fair to "Mastermind" your way into someone's life / into a relationship with them without them knowing the truth?

32. You answered that you have heard of the "Stay Toxic" trend on TikTok. What do you think about the trend?

33. What are some "Stay Toxic" tips you have seen on TikTok?

34. Have you ever used a "Stay Toxic" tip from TikTok to attract someone? Can you describe that experience?

35. Do you think that "Stay Toxic" tips are fair to the other person?

36. You answered that you have heard of the "Villain Era" trend on TikTok. What do you think about the trend?

37. Have you ever considered yourself to be in a "villain era"? Can you describe that experience?

38. Do you think it is possible that people who are genuinely "good" might get hurt because someone is in their "villain era"?

Appendix B: Informed Consent Forms

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC | Benerd College

Informed Consent Form of Legal Guardian for Participation in Study Titled:

"SWIPE UP AND BREAK UP:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK ON ADOLESCENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF LOVE AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS"

Lead Researcher:	Amitoj Kaur (209) 858-8846 a_kaur27@u.pacific.edu
Dissertation Advisor:	Justin Low, Ph.D. jlow1@pacific.edu
Institution:	University of The Pacific, Benerd College

This Informed Consent Form has two parts:

- **Information Sheet** (to share information about the study with the legal guardian of the potential participant)
- **Certificate of Consent** (for signatures if the legal guardian agrees that the potential participant may participate)

You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form.

PART 1: INFORMATION SHEET

Introduction
I am Amitoj Kaur, and I am the Lead Researcher for this study. I am a doctoral student at the University of Pacific (UOP), Benerd School of Education. This study is part of my dissertation requirement for my doctorate in Counseling Psychology. This study might help researchers understand how TikTok impacts adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships. It might also help mental health practitioners and other individuals with adolescents in their lives better support adolescents. In this study, we will talk to many adolescents between the ages of 13 and 17 and ask them a number of questions through an anonymous survey.

Whenever researchers study children, we talk to the potential participant *and* legal guardian and ask them for their permission. Both have to agree independently before I can begin. You, as the legal guardian, do not have to decide today whether or not you agree to the potential participant participating in the study. Before you decide, you can talk to anyone you feel comfortable with.

University of the Pacific
IRB2024-147
Approved on 6-5-2024

There may be some words that you do not understand. Please ask reach out to me with any questions through one of the contact methods listed above, and I will take time to explain.

Purpose of Study
This study seeks to understand how TikTok impacts adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships. This study might help researchers understand how TikTok impacts adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships. It might also help mental health practitioners and other individuals with adolescents in their lives better support adolescents.

Description of Study
This study will involve data collection solely through open-ended, anonymous surveys with participants. It may take participants between 30 minutes to an hour to complete the survey.

Selection of Participants
I want to talk to many adolescents about whether and how TikTok impacts their views of love and romantic relationships. I plan to ask participants about their thoughts on particular TikTok trends. I would like to ask the potential participant to participate because he or she is an adolescent and has viewed the particular TikTok trends that this study seeks to explore.

Voluntary Participation and Right to Refuse or Withdraw
You, as the legal guardian, do not have to agree to the potential participant's participation in this study. You can choose to say no. Your decision whether or not to agree to the potential participant's participation in this study will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which you or the potential participant are otherwise entitled. We know that the decision can be difficult especially when the study includes sensitive topics like love and romantic relationships. You can ask as many questions as you like and we take the time to answer them. Additionally, if you decide to agree to the potential participant's participation in this study, you are free to discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you or the potential participant are otherwise entitled.

Risks and Discomforts
We are asking the participant to share with us some very personal information, and he or she may feel uncomfortable talking about some of the topics. Although not the purpose of this study, some of the questions might lead to disclosures on uncomfortable topics such as sex, manipulation, etc. You must know that he or she does not have to take the survey or any answer all questions to the survey if he or she doesn't wish to do so. He or she does not have to give us any reason for not responding to any question, or for refusing to take part in the survey.

Benefits
There will be no immediate and direct benefit to the participant or legal guardian, but the participant's participation is likely to help researchers, mental health practitioners or other individuals with adolescents in their lives find out more about the impact of TikTok on adolescents' views of love and romantic relationships to meet adolescents' mental health needs better in the future.

Confidentiality
I will not be sharing any personally identifiable information learned from this study. Because the surveys are anonymous, there will be no personally identifiable information connected to the actual survey responses.

Additionally, I will take reasonable steps to keep confidential any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be used to identify the participant. For example, all study information will be

kept in a secured location – on my personal computer that only I have the password too. For two added layers of protection, all study-related documents will be password protected and will be uploaded to a secure, password protected folder. No personally identifiable information will be uploaded to any cloud-based platform or exchanged on any online platform (e.g., email). Additionally, information will be permanently deleted as soon as it has served its purpose.

Additionally, measures to protect the participants' confidentiality are: we will not include participant's name in any reports, records will be kept in secured locations, the number of researchers or persons with access to the records will be limited to the extent reasonable, records will be de-identified, no/limited material will correlate the consent form to the research data.

Upon conclusion of the research study, the data obtained will be maintained in a safe, locked or otherwise secured location and will be destroyed after a period of three years after the research is completed. A password-protected storage option for all digital files and survey responses or any other data pertaining to our study will be used. Data may be kept for further research or will otherwise be destroyed within 3 years.

We may need to report some of the information shared by your child to the appropriate authorities and this may involve criminal or civil liability. For example, we may share information if it led us to believe that your child may harm themselves or others or that your child is being abused, neglected or exploited.

Sharing of Study Results
At the end of the study, participants will not be informed of the details of any specific study results. Once the study is complete and the dissertation will discuss the results generally, which will be published on UOP's Scholarly Commons, which is a library of UOP students' Theses and Dissertations and which can be found at https://scholarlycommons.pacific.edu/uop_etds/.

Contact Information
If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later, even after the study has started. If you wish to ask questions later, you may contact me, the Lead Researcher, at (209) 858-8846 or by email at a_kaur27@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Justin Low, my Dissertation Advisor, at jlow1@pacific.edu. If you have any questions about the potential participants' rights as a participant in a research project or wish to speak with an independent contact, please contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, UOP at 209-946-2562 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

PART 2: CERTIFICATE OF CONSENT

I, as the legal guardian, have been asked to give consent for the potential participant to participate in this study which will involve them completing one survey. I have read the foregoing information. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it and any questions that I have asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I, as the legal guardian, consent voluntarily for the participant to participate in this study.

_____   _____
Print Name of Legal Guardian   **Print Name of Child**

_____
Signature of Legal Guardian

_____
Date

UNIVERSITY OF THE **PACIFIC** | Benerd College

Assent Form of Teen Participant for Participation in Study Titled:

"SWIPE UP AND BREAK UP:
A GROUNDED THEORY STUDY EXPLORING THE IMPACT OF TIKTOK ON ADOLESCENTS'
PERCEPTIONS OF LOVE AND ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS"

Lead Researcher: Amitoj Kaur
(209) 858-8846
a_kaur27@u.pacific.edu

Dissertation Advisor: Justin Low, Ph.D.
jlow1@pacific.edu

Institution: University of The Pacific, Benerd College

Why am I being asked to be in this study?	A research study is usually done to find a better way to help or treat people or to understand how things work. You are being asked to take part in this research study because you are a teen who has had exposure to TikTok content on love and romantic relationships.
Why is this study being done?	This study is being done to find out more about how TikTok impacts teens' views of love and romantic relationships. The findings might help other researchers, mental health practitioners and other adults with teens in their life better understand TikTok's impact and how to better support the teens that they interact with.
How long will the study?	I expect that you will take about 30 minutes to an hour to complete the study survey.
What will I be asked to do in this study, if I agree to be in this study?	If it is okay with you and you agree to join this study, you will be asked to take a survey on TikTok trends about love and romantic relationships, which should take you about 30 minutes to an hour to complete. The survey will ask about your exposure to and experience with the following trends: "Ick"; "Mastermind"; "Loyalty Tests"; "Villain Era"; and "Stay Toxic".
What should I know about a research study?	Your participation in this study is completely up to you. It is your choice whether or not to be in this study. If you decide you do not want to

	participate, no one will be upset and there will be no penalty. You can ask all the questions you want before you decide.
What other choices do I have?	Your other choices are to not take part in this study. You should know that this study is completely voluntary.
What happens if I say "Yes", but I change my mind later?	If you say yes know, you can still change your mind later without any penalty. Specifically, your choice not to be in this study will not negatively affect you in any way.
Could bad things happen to me if I join this study?	There is nothing bad that will happen to you although you may feel uncomfortable sharing on some of the topics on love and romantic relationships. You must know that you do not have to sign this form. Even if you sign this form, you do not have to complete the survey. If you decide to take the survey, you must know you also do not have to answer all of the questions if you don't feel like it. You can skip any or all questions, and you do not have to explain why.
Could this study help me?	This study will not help you but we do hope to learn something new from this study. Someday we hope the information from this research will help other researchers, mental health practitioners and other adults with teens in their life understand how TikTok impacts teens' views of love and romantic relationship. The findings might help these people understand how to better support the teens that they interact with.
What happens to the information collected for this study?	The survey is anonymous, meaning that no one will know that you submitted those particular answers – the Lead Researcher will only get your responses to the survey question, and your name will not appear anywhere. Also, I will take steps to limit the use of your personal information to only the people who have a need to see this information. I cannot promise complete secrecy. There is a possibility that the Lead Researcher may need to report or share information shared during the survey. For example, if you tell us or we learn something that makes us believe that you or others have been or may be abused or neglected, we may, and in some cases must, report that information to the appropriate agencies. Another example is that we may need to share information with appropriate authorities if we think that you may harm yourself or others.
Will I receive anything for being in this study?	No, you will not receive anything for being in this study.
Who can I talk to?	If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, you may ask them now or later by contacting me, the Lead Researcher, at (209) 858-8846 or by email at a_kaur27@u.pacific.edu, or Dr. Justin Low, my Dissertation Advisor, at jlow1@pacific.edu. If your questions, concerns or complaints are not being answered by me or my Dissertation Advisor, or you want to talk to someone besides us, or you have questions about your rights as a study participant, you may contact the Office of Research & Sponsored Programs, UOP at 209-946-2565 or by email at IRB@pacific.edu.

Do you understand that participating in this study is completely optional and that not agreeing will not negatively affect you in any way? Check "Yes" or "No".

_____ Yes

_____ No

Do you understand that participating in this study includes completing one survey on TikTok content about love and romantic relationships that will take about 30 minutes to an hour to complete? Check "Yes" or "No".

_____ Yes

_____ No

Do you understand that, even if you sign this form, you do not have to take the survey and, if you do take the survey, you do not have to answer every question? Check "Yes" or "No".

_____ Yes

_____ No

Do you understand that, even though the survey answers are anonymous, the Lead Researcher may need to report or share information to the appropriate agencies (e.g., in the event that we believe you or someone else is being neglected or abused or in the event that we believe that you may harm yourself or others)? Check "Yes" or "No".

_____ Yes

_____ No

By signing below, you are agreeing that you have had the opportunity to ask questions about this form and have gotten answers to questions that you have asked (if any). Also, by signing below, you are agreeing to participate in this study. Once this form is returned to me, I will provide you with a survey link.

_____
Print Name of Teen Participant

_____
Signature of Teen Participant

_____
Date

Appendix C: Recruiting Emails

Parent/Guardian Recruitment Email

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC | Benerd College

Hello Parent/Guardian,

My name is Amitoj Kaur, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific. I am conducting a study for my Ed.D. program on the impact of TikTok on teens' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. I have picked ABLE Charter as the site to recruit study participants between the ages of 13 and 17, and ABLE Charter provided your email as a parent or guardian of an ABLE Charter student between those ages.

I cannot reach out to your child to see if they are interested in, and willing to participate in this study until I have obtained your consent. If you are interested in having your child potentially participate in this study, please see the attached Informed Consent Form for you to review and sign. _**IMPORTANT NOTE:**_ _**Participation in this study is completely optional, and you do not have to sign the Informed Consent Form if you do not want your child to participate in this study. Your child will only be contacted if you return a signed Informed Consent Form. After that stage, I will then contact your child and also obtain their consent to participating in this study.**_

Briefly-put, this study will involve teens completing an online survey with questions on their experiences with, and thoughts on, particular love-related or dating-related TikTok trends (i.e., "Ick", "Loyalty Tests", "Villain Era", "Mastermind" and "Stay Toxic"). The survey may take anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of TikTok on teens' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, as the findings might help other researchers further explore this topic and help other people with teens in their lives better support them (e.g., educators, mental health practitioners and parents). The Informed Consent Form provides a lot more details on the study.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of participating in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or the Informed Consent Form, please do not hesitate to reach out to me by replying to this email address.

Sincerely,
Amitoj Kaur

Participant Recruitment Email

UNIVERSITY OF THE PACIFIC | Benerd College

Hello [STUDENT NAME TO BE INSERTED],

My name is Amitoj Kaur, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific. I am conducting a study for my Ed.D. program on the impact of TikTok on teens' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. I have picked ABLE Charter as the site to recruit study participants between the ages of 13 and 17. I'm reaching out to you in particular because your parent or guardian has provided consent for you to participate in this study.

Please note that, even though your parent or guardian has provided consent for you to participate in this study, you may decline to participate if you are not interested or do not feel comfortable with participating in this study. However, if you are interested in participating in this study, please see the attached Assent Form for you to review and sign. ***IMPORTANT NOTE:*** *Again, participation in this study is completely optional, and you do not have to sign the Assent Form if you do not want to participate in this study. If you sign the Assent Form, but later feel uncomfortable with, or uninterested in, participating in this study, you may change your mind.*

Briefly-put, this study will involve completing an online survey with questions on your experiences with, and thoughts on, particular love-related or dating-related TikTok trends (i.e., "Ick", "Loyalty Tests", "Villain Era", "Mastermind" and "Stay Toxic"). The survey may take anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour. You may even skip questions that you do not feel like answering. The purpose of this study is to explore the impact of TikTok on teens' perceptions of love and romantic relationships, as the findings might help other researchers further explore this topic and help other people with teens in their lives better support them (e.g., educators, mental health practitioners and parents). The Assent Form provides a lot more details on the study.

We greatly appreciate your consideration of participating in this study. If you have any questions or concerns about this study or the Assent Form, please do not hesitate to reach out to me by replying to this email address.

Sincerely,
Amitoj Kaur

Participant Survey Email

UNIVERSITY OF THE
PACIFIC | Benerd College

Hello [STUDENT NAME TO BE INSERTED],

My name is Amitoj Kaur, and I am an Ed.D. student at the University of the Pacific. I am conducting a study for my Ed.D. program on the impact of TikTok on teens' perceptions of love and romantic relationships. You and your parent have provided consent for you to participate in this study, which involves completing an online survey with questions on your experiences with, and thoughts on, particular love-related or dating-related TikTok trends (i.e., "Ick", "Loyalty Tests", "Villain Era", "Mastermind" and "Stay Toxic").

If you are still interested in participating in this study, please complete this survey through this link: [LINK TO OUTLOOK FORM]

The survey may take anywhere between 30 minutes to an hour.

Kind regards,
Amitoj Kaur

Appendix D: Survey Data Excerpts

CHART A

Chart A-1
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationship Security
Code: Comparing to Other Relationships

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "Tiktok trends can make you feel like your relationship isn't as good as another relationship. Like this question makes me thinks about the trends where you are supposed to ask your boyfriend trick questions like who would you rather kiss me or the hottest girl alive and some boys will get it right and say well kiss you because you are the hottest girl alive but if your boyfriend says without thinking of course you then you might think your boyfriend is not as good as the ones you see in the videos just because they understood the trick. Im not going to lie Ive done it before too and it did make me sad when he didnt answer how I wanted him to but like maybe looking back I should never have even asked dumb questions so I can aboid comparing him to other boys online who seem better" ● "it can make you really paranoid and insecure in your relationship when you see other people commenting things like oh I had the most perfect boyfriend who gave me his password, bought me flowers, never fought with me blah blah but even he ended up cheating and usually comments on those posts say the same thing or something like the same thing and it is hard not to compare so even if I feel like everything is going right sometimes I get into my own head. Its even caused me to	● "Iv seen tiktoks where they test there relationship and it shows how perfect they are and how everyone wants to be in a relationship like that. But i think thats toxic and not real life. How can it be??" ● "I have compared my relationship to the ones that are shown on TikTok but then I remember that social media is a filtered version of reality. I know that because so many couples seem perfect online but then when they break up they all of a sudden throw shade at the other person and its like I would never have guessed. Im in a relationship right now and sometimes stuff online makes me get in a weird mind set where im comparing but then I try to just distract myself too" ● "I try not compare my relationship with my gf to other people's relationship but sometimes I do. Sometimes its caused some fights between us" ● "I don't really compare my relationship to those on the app bc it is not showing real life" ● "Sometimes I compare my relationship to what I see on all of these TikTok trends but it just makes things depressing so it is best just not to"

• "snoop before and then I felt bad because I didn't find anything" • "sometimes I know better but I still somehow end up doing things in my relationship based on tiktok trends like the time I asked my ex if we woud love me if I was a worm like idk all these boyfriends online have this perfecft answer on how they would still love the worm and like take care of the worm but like my ex was like uhm no. part of me is like is this even right to ask or get mad about other part of me still thinks he was wrong for it like just say yes even if it is a lie" • "I don't really compare in relationships or listen to what Tiktok says about other people's relationships because we all know that it isn't what is really happening behind the scenes" • "I think tiktok is a good way to check your own relationship like whether or not youre getting what you deserve in a relationship. For example there is a trend that is on orange peel theory. Basically a person asks their partner if they would peel their orange because they don't like doing it themselves and like the right partner would likely say yes even though they don't have to do anything they do it out of care and love for their person"	• "Yeah me and my girlfriend have been together for 6 months now and tiktok has made us fight a lot because she will see something on there and then expect that from me too but like one thing she doesn't really get is that everyone has a different relationship also it is kind of funny because we are just in high school it isn't like we have full on jobs and can do the things that other people who are in college or are even older are doing"

Chart A-2
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationship Security
Code: Testing in Relationships

Female Participants	Male Participants
• "I haven't done a loyalty test. People around me do it all the time though and I don't think it is a bad thing. There should be a way to know if someone is a cheater. This way you	• "I have never done a loyalty test and I don't think anyone has ever done one on me. I do have a friend who caught his girl cheating on him by asking a person he met online to do a loyalty test. He messaged her on insta and she

can save yourself from a toxic thing sooner than later"

- "I was talking to this guy for a minuteee and things seemed fine. But I didnt like all the girls he was following. It made me think hes the type to cheat. So this girl I follow said she made a fake instagram to test him. Thats exactly what i did...turns out my boo is a keeper!! <3"

- "my boyfriend had just got a car and it was cool because we could go on actual dates. But then I started to freak bc i didnt know where he would go when i went to work. It gave me trust issues. There is a couple on tiktok who i am obsessed with and they talk about sharing locations to be more honest and how it isn't really controlling because it is about safety. So i ened up asking my bf to do it too and he was fine with it and we have been together for almost 7 months"

- "I learned the whole if he wanted to he would logic from tiktok advice. I felt like he was keeping me a secret or didnt want everyone to know we were dating. So i told him to put my name in his bio with our anniversary date. He didnt so i broke up with him. im staying standing on business."

- "I did use a loyalty test on my ex bf. I just asked my best friend to try to text him in a flirty way. At first, he was passing the test because he wasn't really flirting back but just was confused. But he also didn't tell me that she was texting him weird stuff so I told her to keep going and trying to flirt and he finally started flirting back and basically cheated. People might say it is toxic but I don't think it really is because he ended up being a cheater? So I saved myself from being with a cheater longer"

- "I have heard of people doing loyalty tests I think it is super dumb like if you don't trust

immediately caved into the guy that was hitting on her I felt super bad for him. I don't think he was being toxic tbh bc he was right about her"

- "Before I ended things with my gf I felt like something was off and that she was cheating. But to know for sure I actually did this thing i saw on tikttok where i paid my homie $20 bucks to dm her and see if she loyal to me or nah. I felt bad after but atleast i knew for sure that she wasnt cheating on me"

- "there was this rumour that the girl i was talking to had a dude on the side at another school. i was tired of it. So i told her during lunch that we should exchange phones if she really trusts me and has nothing to hide. Tiktok said that if they agree youre good and got nuthin to worry about. But she didn't...so i broke up with her. Turns out she was cheating on me. But im good off all that now"

- "ive never heard of anyone doing the loyalty test. Im not in a relationship but I think if I was in one I wouldn't think it is a bad thing for me to do it or for her to do it because if youre not cheating you have nothing to hide"

the person you are with then you should leave them either there is a reason why you feel the need to do it or you need to work on yourself before you go around dating"	

Chart A-3
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationship Security
Code: Creating Unintentional Conflict

Female Participants	**Male Participants**
● "sometimes I know better but I still somehow end up doing things in my relationship based on tiktok trends like the time I asked my ex if we woud love me if I was a worm like idk all these boyfriends online have this perfecft answer on how they would still love the worm and like take care of the worm but like my ex was like uhm no. part of me is like is this even right to ask or get mad about other part of me still thinks he was wrong for it like just say yes even if it is a lie" ● Tiktok trends can make you feel like your relationship isn't as good as another relationship. Like this question makes me thinks about the trends where you are supposed to ask your boyfriend trick questions like who would you rather kiss me or the hottest girl alive and some boys will get it right and say well kiss you because you are the hottest girl alive but if your boyfriend says without thinking of course you then you might think your boyfriend is not as good as the ones you see in the videos just because they understood the trick. Im not going to lie Ive done it before too and it did make me sad when he didnt answer how I wanted him to but like maybe looking back I should never have even asked dumb questions so I can aboid comparing him to other boys online who seem better"	● "Yeah me and my girlfriend have been together for 6 months now and tiktok has made us fight a lot because she will see something on there and then expect that from me too but like one thing she doesn't really get is that everyone has a different relationship also it is kind of funny because we are just in high school it isn't like we have full on jobs and can do the things that other people who are in college or are even older are doing" ● "I try not compare my relationship with my gf to other people's relationship but sometimes I do. Sometimes its caused some fights between us" ● "the ick on tiktok is so dumb especially for the boys because girls literally are calling everything we do an ikck like you can breathe and that is seen like an ick.i know it is super dumb but it really has changed the way i am around girls that i am interested in now i usually am paranoid i am going to do something to give someone the ick i don't think thiks trend should have ever been a thing" ● "I don't think that the idea of the "Ick" is fair at all. I feel like it is always the men that are seen as the ick I remember on tiktok when boys started making videos like girls did

- "it can make you really paranoid and insecure in your relationship when you see other people commenting things like oh I had the most perfect boyfriend who gave me his password, bought me flowers, never fought with me blah blah but even he ended up cheating and usually comments on those posts say the same thing or something like the same thing and it is hard not to compare so even if I feel like everything is going right sometimes I get into my own head. Its even caused me to snoop before and then I felt bad because I didn't find anything"

- "yeah I kinda find the ick thing unfair because it is always the dumbest things that people get turned off by like jumping on a trampoline with your hands flying everywhere or a guy riding a bicycle it is hard to see a guy almost being like a child lol but I also think that everything happens for a reason so if you broke up with a guy or stopped talking to him bedcause you got the ick more power to you like nothing that is meant for you will pass you by"

- "I have def gotten the ick by boys like one time I went over to this guys house to go swimming and I really liked him a lot but I lost feelings after I saw him swimming and like treading water. I don't know why it made me feel like that but it was instant like feelings were there and then the next minute they were gone. I told him the truth and he didn't understand. We ended up not talking for that much longer after that. Idk if it was fair but like I didn't find him attractive anymore"

- "My bf had been talking about prom-posals with prom coming up. I kept showing him really cute promposals for his to like do. It seemed like he understood—but it was bad. My promposal what I wanted or expected. It was hard hiding my disappointment. It made

about boys giving them the ick the story switched up and girls were like oh clearly boys don't get what the ick means. I don't even think the ick should exist? Why was it even a popular trend? It seems like a way for girls to lose feelings if they don't find a guy manly enough for them"

- "I don't think the ick is fair and it causes problems in relationsihps and people who are in the talking stage and it usually baseless and really doesn't even make sense"

me wonder if I wasn't enough or like if I was a different girl if things would have been different. We fought about it a lot"

- "My faav tiktok couple did this cute couples date where they paint each other and surprise each other in the end. But my bf kept saying it was lame. That's when I realized how different my elationship was to the one I wanted on tiktok. It made me wonder if he even likes me or sees value in me or if he is just dating me to date me. Things have gotten better between us but we still fight alot"

CHART B

Chart B-1
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationship Expectations
Code: Having Fixed Roles in Relationships

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "this makes think about the black cat and golden retriever trend on tiktok. I think the whole ever black cat girl needs a golden retriever boyfriend is cute and all its this concept of how the black cat gf is an introvert and not very friendly while the golden retriever bf is always fun and goofy. I don't like that assigns a very specific role in a relationship. How can everyone match up with the same theory? I think it limits genuine relationships.. like what if a golden retriever bf is also a black cat sometimes and the other way too " ● "ya I listened to a lot of advice on Tiktok on how to be more girly around boys and it kind of really works like it might not seem like it but things like having a softer voice and being graceful actually makes you mreo attractive"	● "I think tiktok is making feminism go backwards because it feels like all the videos on there are about how guys should always be the one paying for things and that just seems unfair" ● "I hate how tiktok changed girls like they all think that boys are the same and like if youre not immediately into them then youre not the one or sometimes they expect you to do things without even tellin you what they want like one time this girl ended things with me because I didn't get her flowers and I asked her why she didn't tell me and she said if I really liked her I would have done it without her having to ask me because that is what guys just do for girls they like and I thought that was so toxic" ● "I don't think that the idea of the "Ick" is fair at all. I feel like it is always the men that are

- "There are videos on tiktok that talk alot about how to get into feminine energy and how that attracts boys like it is good to make him feel like he is helping you and the man around you so sometimes i ask for more help or almost act a little ditsy and i know it sound sbad but it really works i feel like i get way more attention now"

- "yeah I kinda find the ick thing unfair because it is always the dumbest things that people get turned off by like jumping on a trampoline with your hands flying everywhere or a guy riding a bicycle it is hard to see a guy almost being like a child lol but I also think that everything happens for a reason so if you broke up with a guy or stopped talking to him bedcause you got the ick more power to you like nothing that is meant for you will pass you by"

- "I really believe in the idea that if he wanted to he would. Titkok kinda proves the point too like if he is iffy about you from the start why would you want someone like that like don't settle for less or for someone who makes you feel like youre an option. It is better to wait for the guy that sees you as his dream girl. The right guy will always pursue you and not be unsure"

seen as the ick I remember on tiktok when boys started making videos like girls did about boys giving them the ick the story switched up and girls were like oh clearly boys don't get what the ick means. I don't even think the ick should exist? Why was it even a popular trend? It seems like a way for girls to lose feelings if they don't find a guy manly enough for them"

Chart B-2
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationship Expectations
Code: Having Fixed Idea of the "One" and "Love"

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "It describes it like how lana puts it when you know you know so I will know exactly when I find the person I am supposed to be with"	● "I hate how tiktok changed girls like they all think that boys are the same and like if youre not immediately into them then youre not the one or sometimes they expect you to do things without even tellin you what they want like one time this girl ended things with me

- "tiktok isn't always right I think about how it describes love because they make it seem like a person will just read your mind and know what you want and if they don't do that than they aren't right for you. Its like how everyone says that if he wanted to then he would to basically say if he wanted to treat you right he would but also how would he know how to treat you right if you never tell him so I don't think tiktok is good at explaining love to us"

- "I really believe in the idea that if he wanted to he would. Titkok kinda proves the point too like if he is iffy about you from the start why would you want someone like that like don't settle for less or for someone who makes you feel like youre an option. It is better to wait for the guy that sees you as his dream girl. The right guy will always pursue you and not be unsure"

- "I was talking to this guy for like a week and out of nowhere he ghosted me. I really didnt know what do and felt like that he ghosted me because i was giving him too much attention. so i decided to find advice on tiktok so i know what to do. I found a video where it basically said that when your showing interest to the RIGHT person, its never wrong. so when he finally texted me again I just dropped him!"

- "yeah I kinda find the ick thing unfair because it is always the dumbest things that people get turned off by like jumping on a trampoline with your hands flying everywhere or a guy riding a bicycle it is hard to see a guy almost being like a child lol but I also think that everything happens for a reason so if you broke up with a guy or stopped talking to him bedcause you got the ick more power to you like nothing that is meant for you will pass you by"

because I didn't get her flowers and I asked her why she didn't tell me and she said if I really liked her I would have done it without her having to ask me because that is what guys just do for girls they like and I thought that was so toxic"

CHART C

Chart C-1
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Dating and Initiating Relationships for Adolescents
Code: Creating the "Chase"

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "Some tips on tiktok to get people say to not be too available for them like if they don't text back for a few hours then I am not texting for at least a day. I don't see it as really toxic because im just matching their energy and it makes them realize you wont always be there. One time I did this to a guy who wasn't acting right and guess what he started double triple texting me thinking I was with someone else which was funny because we weren't dating" ● **"**I remember there was a stay toxic advice to post a private ig story with your crush in it with photos hinting that your with another guy even if it literally your girl best friend like taking a picture of her from behind. This is supposed to make you seem more wanted by making the other person jealous almost like if they might lose out on you if they don't act right. Tbh I have done it and my friends do it all the time. I don't see it as bad I mean you aren't dating them its just trying to get your crushs attention" ● "I have used some tiktok staytoxic tips like if your crush is on your sc and they can see your location then you should spend time at other places like your best friend's place. It drives them crazy not knowing what youre doing and who youre with and you don't owe them any answers" ● "The villain era is powerful because the less I care the more I feel like people want me I feel like it is because people want people who	● "I was texting back forth with this girl. and she was talking forevaa to respond. It was kinda a turn off. This guy on tiktok had said thats how girls play the game and that if I wanted her to like me I needed to wait as long as she did to respond." ● "Stay toxic on tiktok I feel like is teaching girls to make guys chase them but I don't feel like that is the right way to go about it like I don't want a girl that is talking to all of these other guys I feel like I like it more when the girl doesn't make me chase after her" ● "tiktok is fun but can be really dumb I can totally tell that girls nowadays will fake it and act like they don't care when they really do because right when they act like they don't want me I get turned off and don't chase them and then I feel like they come back and are consistent with texting and act right basically" ● "I feel like tiktok makes you feel like you always need to have a roster and be a player and that is what all guys want but tbh I just want one girl I don't want ot have to feel like she iksnt interested or is making me go crazy. But tbh I feel like because that is just normal now even I feel like I cant talk to one girl and one girl only but I always have a favorite and if I felt like I could I would probably only talk to her but I even know that she is talking to other guys." ● "yeah so many girls keep saying they are in their villain era which basically means they

don't want them back or seem to not care that much. Honestly I feel like im in my villain era and this is so much better than being hung up on boys" ● "ive seen some psychology tips on tiktok on how to get any guy like acting mysterious and not posting that much on socials and act like you don't want a relationship and are just exploring bc that is somehow more attractive" ● "there are a lot of videos on how to make them chase you like sending a text and then unsending it so that way your name pops up to the top but there is no message so it will make them wonder what you were saying and they will definitely message you or like another way to make them chase you is to say hey with another name and then say wrong person" ● "tiktok made me realize you should always have a roster and never give all your attention to one person until they ask you to be your girlfriend i agree wsith having a roster because you should keep your options open and the other person will realize they sort of have to compete with other people to get you"	are just mean to guys and act like their heartless and disinterested its always after one guys messed up and broke her heart I don't think it is fair honestly to then treat others in a bad way bc you got hurt by one person not all guys are the same. Honestly right when a girl sys that I just don't feel like talking to her anymore" ● "TikTok is out here telling girls that they need to aCt like they don't care about what we think and that will make us obsessed with them I feel like it changed the dating game in a bad way I don't like when this happens to me I don't do it to people. But I feel like nowadays it is nrmal to say all men suck"

Chart C-2
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Dating and Initiating Relationships for Adolescents
Code: Lying and Manipulating Others

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "I remember there was a stay toxic advice to post a private ig story with your crush in it with photos hinting that your with another guy even if it literally your girl best friend like taking a picture of her from behind. This is supposed to make you seem more wanted by making the other person jealous almost like if they might lose out on you if they don't	● "I think the toxic trend is messed up and ends up hurting the person that you like. I saw where it was saying that girls only like you for the money or like what you can get for them. It basically had pictures of cash and like Gucci belts that the boys can post to flex on something they don't even have. I would never do it tho."

act right. Tbh I have done it and my friends do it all the time. I don't see it as bad I mean you aren't dating them its just trying to get your crushs attention"

- "mastermind trend is where people like plan ahead and sometimes even lie to get they guy or girl they like. I saw video where a girl said that she left her lip gloss in his car after the first date so this way he had to call her to return it..genius."

- "I rmr my friend wanted to stalk this guy to see what his type is based off the girls he was following. She found this tip where it says to make a fake account with a bunch of pics and wait for a bit and then to request him and then stalk him. I think it was messed up because your being shady and not being yourself."

- "I think the word stay toxic is toxic but sometimes it can give you pretty solid advice. When he sends youj a pic, save it and go on your camera roll press the info and shows you how many times he sent the pic, the time, date and even the place he took it…#staytoxiccc"

- "you shouldn't take a trend too serious. Sometimes its just jokes and giigles typa a thing. Like if you are ever stuck between two guys…the advice was to just get a third one. When I saw it I laughed but also I see people in my generation doing stuff like that like lying to get their way"

- "I haven't done a loyalty test. People around me do it all the time though and I don't think it is a bad thing. There should be a way to know if someone is a cheater. This way you can save yourself from a toxic thing sooner than later"

- "I was talking to this guy for a minuteee and things seemed fine. But I didnt like all the girls he was following. It made me think hes

- "Tiktok shows ways for everyone to be fake and I think that's y a lot relationships never work. In the stay toxic trend it teaches guys to lie about their current relationship status so they can keep building up a roster. I see my friends do it all of the time too."

- "The mastermind trend isn't as bad lying to someone sounds like. When my gf and I started dating she would always text me at 11:11. She did it like a lot of times and one day she stopped and it was all I could think about so I texted her instead and she asked if I missed her…I guess I did. She told me she planned it that way hoping that I would text her first."

- I have never done a loyalty test and I don't think anyone has ever done one on me. I do have a friend who caught his girl cheating on him by asking a person he met online to do a loyalty test. He messaged her on insta and she immediately caved into the guy that was hitting on her I felt super bad for him. I don't think he was being toxic tbh bc he was right about her"

- "Before I ended things with my gf I felt like something was off and that she was cheating. But to know for sure I actually did this thing i saw on tikttok where i paid my homie $20 bucks to dm her and see if she loyal to me or nah. I felt bad after but atleast i knew for sure that she wasnt cheating on me"

- "there was this rumour that the girl i was talking to had a dude on the side at another school. i was tired of it. So i told her during lunch that we should exchange phones if she really trusts me and has nothing to hide. Tiktok said that if they agree youre good and got nuthin to worry about. But she didn't...so i broke up with her. Turns out she was cheating on me. But im good off all that now"

the type to cheat. So this girl I follow said she made a fake instagram to test him. Thats exactly what i did...turns out my boo is a keeper!! <3"

- "my boyfriend had just got a car and it was cool because we could go on actual dates. But then I started to freak bc i didnt know where he would go when i went to work. It gave me trust issues. There is a couple on tiktok who i am obsessed with and they talk about sharing locations to be more honest and how it isn't really controlling because it is about safety. So i ened up asking my bf to do it too and he was fine with it and we have been together for almost 7 months"

- "I learned the whole if he wanted to he would logic from tiktok advice. I felt like he was keeping me a secret or didnt want everyone to know we were dating. So i told him to put my name in his bio with our anniversary date. He didnt so i broke up with him. im staying standing on business."

- "I did use a loyalty test on my ex bf. I just asked my best friend to try to text him in a flirty way. At first, he was passing the test because he wasn't really flirting back but just was confused. But he also didn't tell me that she was texting him weird stuff so I told her to keep going and trying to flirt and he finally started flirting back and basically cheated. People might say it is toxic but I don't think it really is because he ended up being a cheater? So I saved myself from being with a cheater longer"

- "I have heard of people doing loyalty tests I think it is super dumb like if you don't trust the person you are with then you should leave them either there is a reason why you feel the need to do it or you need to work on yourself before you go around dating"

- "ive never heard of anyone doing the loyalty test. Im not in a relationship but I think if I was in one I wouldn't think it is a bad thing for me to do it or for her to do it because if youre not cheating you have nothing to hide"

CHART D

Chart D-1
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Romantic Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Dating Context
Code: Comparing Self to Others in Relationships

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "my boyfriend is honestly perfect he is not like other boys at our school he truly cares about me and like always listens to me when i don't like things like if I ask him not to talk to another girl he doesn't make me feel bad. Before I used to be with a cheater, I constantly felt insecure and bad about myself and it wasn't easy when you see all these really good boyfriends on tiktok videos. But my current boyfriend made me realize my ex's issues weren't caused by me like I was always enough I just was with the wrong person." ● "this is kinda embrassing to say but ex started dating this new girl. She looked like the opposite of me. This girl popped up on my fyp and she looked just like her. I couldn't stop watching this influencers videos. I ended up getting eyelash extensions because of her." ● "My bf had been talking about prom-posals with prom coming up. I kept showing him really cute prompsals for his to like do. It seemed like he understood—but it was bad. My promposal what I wanted or expected. It was hard hiding my disappointment. It made me wonder if I wasn't enough or like if I was a different girl if things would have been different. We fought about it a lot" ● "My faav tiktok couple did this cute couples date where they paint each other and surprise each other in the end. But my bf kept saying it was lame. That's when I realized how different my elationship was to the one I	● "you see a lot of stuff on tiktok about couples like I see how other girls make their boyfriends handmade gifts but my girlfiend doesn't do that but I don't really care to be honest it doesn't make me feel bad about myself I know we have something special between us and that is all that matters" ● "Tiktok and all the other apps are pretty fake like I know so many of my boys that make it seem like they have perfect relationships on tiktok or ig but I know that the couple is super toxic so I don't really compare to others online but I am single right now so who knows but that is what I feel about it" ● "I have compared my relationship to the ones that are shown on TikTok but then I remember that social media is a filtered version of reality. I know that because so many couples seem perfect online but then when they break up they all of a sudden throw shade at the other person and its like I would never have guessed. Im in a relationship right now and sometimes stuff online makes me get in a weird mind set where im comparing but then I try to just distract myself too" ● "I try not compare my relationship with my gf to other people's relationship but sometimes I do. Sometimes its caused some fights between us" ● "I don't really compare my relationship to those on the app bc it is not showing real life"

wanted on tiktok. It made me wonder if he even likes me or sees value in me or if he is just dating me to date me. Things have gotten better between us but we still fight alot"

- "you see on tiktok that some boys always do the most for their girl and are super loyal like they will give there girls their pws to social media and phone and wont follow random girls on social media. Ive never had a boy do that for me I always wonder what is wrong with me its rally hard not to question if its because of who you are and how you look."

- "Tiktok trends can make you feel like your relationship isn't as good as another relationship. Like this question makes me thinks about the trends where you are supposed to ask your boyfriend trick questions like who would you rather kiss me or the hottest girl alive and some boys will get it right and say well kiss you because you are the hottest girl alive but if your boyfriend says without thinking of course you then you might think your boyfriend is not as good as the ones you see in the videos just because they understood the trick. Im not going to lie Ive done it before too and it did make me sad when he didnt answer how I wanted him to but like maybe looking back I should never have even asked dumb questions so I can aboid comparing him to other boys online who seem better"

- "it can make you really paranoid and insecure in your relationship when you see other people commenting things like oh I had the most perfect boyfriend who gave me his password, bought me flowers, never fought with me blah blah but even he ended up cheating and usually comments on those posts say the same thing or something like the same thing and it is hard not to compare so even if I feel like everything is going right sometimes I get into my own head. Its even caused me to

- "Sometimes I compare my relationship to what I see on all of these TikTok trends but it just makes things depressing so it is best just not to"

- "Yeah me and my girlfriend have been together for 6 months now and tiktok has made us fight a lot because she will see something on there and then expect that from me too but like one thing she doesn't really get is that everyone has a different relationship also it is kind of funny because we are just in high school it isn't like we have full on jobs and can do the things that other people who are in college or are even older are doing"

snoop before and then I felt bad because I didn't find anything" ● "sometimes I know better but I still somehow end up doing things in my relationship based on tiktok trends like the time I asked my ex if we woud love me if I was a worm like idk all these boyfriends online have this perfecft answer on how they would still love the worm and like take care of the worm but like my ex was like uhm no. part of me is like is this even right to ask or get mad about other part of me still thinks he was wrong for it like just say yes even if it is a lie" ● "I don't really compare in relationships or listen to what Tiktok says about other people's relationships because we all know that it isn't what is really happening behind the scenes"	

Chart D-2
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Romantic Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Dating Context
Code: Feeling Empowerment

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "Its funny bc the villain era sounds like it is negative but its really about being selective with their vulnerability. Sometimes it helps people be more guarded emotionally and protecting themselves from some kind of heartbreak." ● "The villain era is powerful because the less I care the more I feel like people want me I feel like it is because people want people who don't want them back or seem to not care that much. Honestly I feel like im in my villain era and this is so much better than being hung up on boys"	*No responses*

● "I love the vilian era! Its such a girls empowerment type vibe! It lets them take bafck power in a relationship and protect themselves from being manipulated and standing on business. I used to get really insecure when talking to guys… ive never been in a relationship. And now that I am in my villain era I feel like I don't look at myself as a problem if a boy is being toxic" ● "The villain era to me is prioritizing my own self care!! It helped focus on my self growth with grades and softball rather than dealing with my ex boyfriends needs. I'm better with living that era. It also has made me so much more confident in myself" ● "I use to be the biggest people pleaser especially when it came to the guys I dated. I hated that feeling. I kinda used my villain era as a crutch to stop pleasing my boyfriend and really work on bettering myself. I think it really saved me. I feel a lot better about myself now"	

CHART E

Chart E-1
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Romantic Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Context of Attraction
Code: Changing Appearance

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "I tried out the strawberry makeup look to get my crushes attention in class. it worked!!! he told me I looked different and then we ended up geting each others instagrfms. we even dated for a minute but he ended up cheating on me....so yeah." ● "Theres this new guy at school (he fineeee) and he mentioned to my friend and I how he	● "My girl is really big on skin care so to impress her I looked up products and routines to do for guys. I wanted my skin to look clear and now we do skin care masks together" ● "This was a while back but when i was new at school I really wanted to change my style to impress the girls. I looked up trendy

likes girls with really nice eyebrows. I never really thought about mine before, so i went on tiktok and used that eyebrow mapping filter to make mines nice. I liked it because it made me feel confident after when i talked to him."

- "After my bf and i broke it off. I felt really sad and wanted to change or like have big glow up and get other peoples attention. So i searched it on tiktok to find ways to make me feel better and look good. I ended up dying my hair for the first time to blonde it looks fine and I feel like boys are into blondes more bt it doesn't feel lik,e me I miss my brown hair."

- "I wanted to do something nice to look prettier and impress my bf. Iv been seeing videos of girls dying their hair cherry red and it looks soooo so good. So I did it!!! He def like it too."

- "My crush once told me that he thinks I have curly hair. I was really confused so I looked up curly hair tuts. I wanted to have something to talk to him about he has curly hair to So I learned a new hair care routine to get his attention lol"

- "A guy I thought was fine said he only likes Latinas. So embarrassing but I ended up searching up Latina makeup tutorials on tiktok."

- "This girl I follow on Tiktok recently dyed her completely blonde and in the comments, it kept saying how guys like blondes better than brunettes. It totally made me want to bleach my hair. It took some begging but my mom finally agreed to highlights."

- "I want better myself to get that glow up guys like. So I started following this girl who

streetwear on tiktok and tried to change up my style. I even got into skateboarding."

- "This girl I had a crush on told me her celebrite crush was Jacon Elorde. I couldnt be as tall as him but it made me want to start working out. So i started hitting the gym over the summer learning new splits from tiktok."

- "I wanted to do something different with my look to get more female attention. I follow this tiktoker that does tattoos. I decided that I wanted to get a sumthin to make me look more masculine. My mom finally came thruu and told me that I could get one my junior year!"

- "My homie had real nice beard and the girls always be talking about it. So i decided to look up on tiktok ways to groom and shave my beard. I even considered oiling it to make it grow faster. But it doesnt look like my friends."

- "IDK if this is right but iv been seing alot of videos on burst fades and saw in the commants about how all the girls liked it. I the girl i was talking to back then and she said she liked it too. she was feelin it too after I got it done."

- "I went on a double date with friend and his girlfriend. His gf pointed out how basic my pandas were. The girl that i was talking kinda laughed. I dont think it was in a mean way but it made me feel a type of way. So i searched up trending sneakers and ended up buying sambas with my birthday money."

- "so everyone thinks that my hair is curly but it really isn't I just got a perm and always get one I feel like that curly light skinned vibe became so popular on tiktok and that is what girls are into now"

teaches how to do pilates so I can get more fit." ● "I decided to try out new nail art techniques I learned from tiktok to catch a boy's attention." ● "My boyfriend once mentioned how he thinks bangs would look good on me. So I choose a tutorial on tiktok and learned to cut my bangs at home." ● "tiktok tlaks a lot about guys like it when girls are more feminine like by wearing milk made dresss and clothes im pretty tomboy but ive been trying to be girlier so I can get a bf at some point"	

Chart E-2
Category: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Romantic Relationships
Concept: TikTok Impact on Adolescents' Self-Image in Context of Attraction
Code: Changing Behaviors

Female Participants	Male Participants
● "I was talking to this new guy like right after my break up. I didnt want to mess things up. So i used tha t tiktok video that gives texting tips to keep the talking stage exciting. and it told me to play iMessage games and send voice notes to make it more fun! It made it easier talking to him." ● "There are videos on tiktok that talk alot about how to get into feminine energy and how that attracts boys like it is good to make him feel like he is helping you and the man around you so sometimes i ask for more help or almost act a little ditsy and i know it sound sbad but it really works i feel like i get way more attention now"	● "I got my girl mad and wanted to do something to say i was sorry. So i made her a boo basket with her favortie candy and snacks. I tried to make it just like how i saw it on tiktok. she was really into it and i feel like it made her fall more in love w me" ● "My fyp showed me this video of mens cologne that girsl are into. One of them my pops wears, the sauvage cologne. The girls loved it! Thats how i got current gf" ● " I wanted to get this girls attention. I heard about how girls love dogs and cats and that they always will want to talk to you. I saw a video of it on tiktok. So i borrowed my

- "Last summer my friends and I found a video and put in the group chat. It gave beauty tips to get our crushes to like us (it was even called school edition) It gave us tips on being confident with our body types, being healthy, signature scent. But tbh I forgot the rest."

- "I wanted to pull my crush. Tiktok showed me that I shud play hard to get and that he will chase me. So I showed my crush that I was rlly busy and didn't have a lot of time to text back and stuff. I felt like it worked"

- "This stay toxic trend taught me that I shouldn't talk to much about other guys bc it will make my crush loose feelings. And the best way to make him jelous is to show him that he cant have me bc I know my worth. And that I wouldn't just get with anyone. I noticed that this really works to get the guy you want"

- "ya I listened to a lot of advice on Tiktok on how to be more girly around boys and it kind of really works like it might not seem like it but things like having a softer voice and being graceful actually makes you mreo attractive"

- neighbors kitten and posted a pic hoping she wud message me"

- "My lab partner mentioned how cool it is when guys have special talents. So i learned a few magic tricks on tiktok to impress her. But later I found out she was already talking to someone else."

- "I saw this tiktok where a girl said she thinks its attractive when her boyfriend cooks for her. So for valentines day I tried to bake my girl some cupcakes to give to her at school. All her girl friends were impressed and were talking about it."

- "There was time where a girl who I thought was cute did dance and even went viral on one of her videos. I wanted to get her attention so I tried to learn some dance moves for beginers—but I was really bad at it."

- "I saw on my fyp wher it said if she sends u a message don't respond to fast. It will make her feel challenged. I do this all the time."

- "I saw this video that talks about psychology tricks so it has be legit. And it basically said to say their name as much as possible. So I always say the girls name when ever im flirting with them. They all seem to like it too"

- "the ick on tiktok is so dumb especially for the boys because girls literally are calling everything we do an ikck like you can breathe and that is seen like an ick.i know it is super dumb but it really has changed the way i am around girls that i am interested in now i usually am paranoid i am going to do something to give someone the ick i don't think thiks trend should have ever been a thing"

	● "This was a while back but when i was new at school I really wanted to change my style to impress the girls. I looked up trendy streetwear on tiktok and tried to change up my style. I even got into skateboarding."