

Call for Papers

Special issue of Journal of Social and Personal Relationships on Psychobiographies of Love

Rationale for Special Issue:

Love is a universal, but individual and culture-specific phenomenon which is experienced, communicated and expressed differently across cultures (Karandashev, 2015). How individuals live their love relationships with family, friends and lovers varies across individual lives and across cultures. While previous research often focuses on romantic love, love between parents and children, theories and philosophies of love (Mayer, 2025; Mayer & Vanderheiden, 2021), love has hardly been researched in psychobiographies (Kelley, 2023) or with regard to the relationship of the psychobiographer and their subjects (Singer, 2025).

Psychobiographies, often conducted as single or comparative psychological case studies (Schultz, 2005), explore the life, the biography or life narration of individuals while applying psychological theories when describing, analyzing, discussing and interpreting the life developments of extraordinary individuals (Chenail, 2022; Elms, 1994; Mayer & Kovary, 2019; Schultz, 2005). While exploring the individual's life, the impact of the socio-cultural environment, of time and space, is taken into consideration (Adler & Singer, 2022; Martin, 2024; Mayer et al., 2021), as well as the development of personalities (Wrightsman, 1994).

Psychobiography and the in-depth analysis of individual's lives can provide rigorous knowledge and understanding of the life, its development, but also of the relevant relationships of the life of a person and how these relationships create meaning (Mayer et al., 2021). Often, psychoanalytic-orientated psychobiographers have focused on the influences of early relationships in one's life (Elovitz, 2018). The contributions to this Special issue may go beyond love in early childhood, and may include love experiences, expressions, concepts with regard to self-love, teenage love, love across generations, love and romance, passionate love, friendship love or the love of the world in the lives of extraordinary individuals. Thereby, contributions should emphasise how individuals create meaning throughout their lives in and beyond love relationships (Mayer, 2021). Further, these psychobiographies may either explore love in the life of extraordinary individuals holistically and across the lifetime, or may focus on a specifically chosen life sequence of love in the life of an individual. This Special Issue will provide new and original insights and will contribute to developing psychobiographies and well as love theories, thereby expanding the field, since only very few psychobiographies exist that focus on love in particular (Androutsopoulou et al., 2019; Kelley, 2023; Singer, 2025). It will contribute further to explore the connection of love, personalities and and specific cultural surroundings.

The editors of this Special Issue invite authors to submit "Psychobiographies of Love", focusing on life narrations that explore and discuss love in the life of extraordinary individuals with a person-orientated approach. Thereby, authors are invited to focus on different types or forms of love, such as self-love, love between children and parents, romantic love, agape, eros or philia. However, the love concepts might also go beyond WEIRD (Western, educated, industrialised, rich and democratic) contexts (Heinrich et al., 2010) in psychobiographies (Mayer et al., 2023), and take indigenous psychological concepts of love, such as, Ubuntu, Karuna and Maitri, as theoretical foundations into consideration to explore love.

“Psychobiographies of Love” can increase reflection, discourses and new perspectives for psychobiographers, interdisciplinary and intercultural scientists and readers of biographies and life narrations. They might become practical examples of how to conduct love relationships constructively and/or how to deal with and overcome unhappy love relationships constructively. “Lessons learned” from psychobiography and extraordinary individuals’ loves may be presented (Mayer & Fouché, 2021).

Guidelines for contributions:

The guest editors will review abstracts (approximately 500 -750 words) and invite full submissions based on abstract review. Abstracts are due January 15, 2026. Please email abstracts to Dr. Claude-Hélène Mayer at cmayer@uj.ac.za

If invited, full manuscripts will be due June 15, 2026.

All full submissions must adhere to the journal guidelines and will undergo peer-review. Please find information about the journal here: <https://journals.sagepub.com/home/spr>

About the editors:

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