

## Introduction

Development, maintenance, and deterioration are inevitable phases of any relationship, whether it be friendship, romance, or family. It is vital to understand that all relationships are effectively dying or developing. In this study, we will be focusing on romantic relationships and the role of interpersonal communication within the relationship. “Romantic relationships have been found to impact physical and psychological wellbeing, as individuals in healthy relationships report heightened emotional support, self-esteem, and quality of life” (Sedikides et al., 1994; Voss et al., 1999; Pateraki and Roussi, 2013). This is the positive perception of romantic relationships and the habitual foundation in our society. On the contrary, “...relationship distress and discord has been linked to heightened levels of psychopathology, including mood and substance use disorders, and poorer health outcomes (Lebow et al., 2019; Whisman and Uebelacker, 2006).” This is the negative perception of romantic relationships. According to the studies of James A. Cranford, negative relationships affect a wider range than positive ones. I have been appointed a Toxic Relationship (an unhealthy relationship where either or both sides feel drained, trapped, and manipulated by the opposite side, it might be physically, mentally, or emotionally abusive altogether or either of them). According to an article on Coachwalid.com, “The evidence suggests that many of us are willing to tolerate and compromise in a relationship even if we’re not happy. Around 60 percent of us stay in bad relationships that we do not find fulfilling at all...” I have more than one participant in this assignment: one from Lincoln, Alabama, one from my hometown Laurel, Mississippi, and one from Jackson, Tennessee. The analysis in my paper will explore the stages of romantic relationships and how far I got with each of them, the conflict managing styles we used, the amount of disclosure that was allowed, the deceptive communication we used, styles of expressions, and how I positively and negatively triggered my partners.

My first partner was Jerrica from Lincoln, Alabama so this was a long-distance relationship also. She is 34 and a single parent of one child. Our initiation started on BLK. We exchanged social media and started small conversations. Through the experimenting phase, I found her pleasant to talk to. Later as we intensified, I added her to my close friends on Instagram. I posted a video of me in the shower to see what she would say, this led to our first conflict. She claimed I was “thirst trapping” and asked to be removed. I then proceeded to play the victim by calming “...it is how I show self-love...” She then went on a rant about how she does not want to be sexually active, see the body, or talk sexually to someone she does not plan on marrying. I then would say, this is a paraphrase, I would never lead her on, I would respect her boundaries, and we then continued with our relationship. As we progressed, we started calling and face timing each other and planning weekends to visit each other. She would often send me money to spoil me and even offered to see me while paying for everything. We eventually got comfortable enough to disclose information about our past, traumas, and what we go through now. Knowing that she is now emotionally and mentally invested in me, I sent her a picture of me in the shower again. This time she sent some back and said, “Why did I let your toxic ass drag me back into this life.” The next week I posted a picture of me and one of my Female friends that were hugging me in the photo. She then would accuse me of cheating but would later laugh it off. I let her know that I have other women I entertain. She accepted it by saying, “I understand that you are young, but you are the best man I’ve met so I will wait for you.” I would then “ghost” her for three days. She texted me 3 times a day and called me also. She confronted me about the way I treated her for a week, but I used the avoiding method whether it would be me just dismissing the conversation completely or just telling her how much I love her. I have chosen to keep her around for financial purposes because she seems satisfied with the relationship. But in the mist of this relationship, I started with another woman named Zaria, age 23, from Laurel, Mississippi.

Surprisingly, I had never met this girl before. We met on Instagram and what I immediately noticed was she was insecure and had low self-esteem. Contrary to the first woman I had, I knew it would take more work for her to be fully invested in me, and this made the experimenting and intensifying stages exceedingly difficult. I found a way to speed up the process because with this woman I was able to be my real self (nourisher, lover, encourager, and helper). I used the character traits to my advantage and deceived her into opening to me. We have now grown close enough to where I know when she is having a dreadful day. She becomes passive-aggressive (when one seems passive on the surface, really acting out of anger) and sometimes directly aggressive (one expresses their feelings to advocate their needs in a way that harms others). This gives me the idea to turn it around on her in the future when I needed it too. When I felt the need, I would often guilt trip her and remind her that she is the toxic one in the relationship. Later, she proposed to have an Open relationship (which allows both people to have sex or be in another relationship) I agreed but I did not truly desire to do so. To make her feel uncomfortable, I would send videos of me having sex with another partner (Twitter porn). This resulted in the termination of our relationship.

My last partner was Asia, 19, from Jackson, Tennessee. We met on BLK, and it was rocky to start with this one. She was not particularly good at holding a conversation and it turned me off. This made the intensifying and experimenting stage more rigorous. I eventually got a solid conversation out of her, where she explained that she does not put forth a lot of energy because it always backfires on her. After seeing that I was trying to invest time in her, the next week she took me out to eat at Cheddar's and we had a wonderful time. We would go to Walmart and Target just to mess around, laugh, and pass the time. She then offered to pay for a hotel room to stay in for the night and I agreed. We got to our hotel room, cuddled, and had unprotected sex. She locked her legs around me which I did not mind, I was not pulling out anyway. We then went to Walgreens and purchased a Plan B and pregnancy test for later. We stayed connected but when I saw that the pregnancy test came back negative, I terminated the relationship by ghosting her.

## **Conclusion**

I thoroughly enjoyed this assignment because it allowed me to get out of my comfort zone and execute different facets of a romantic relationship. I would like to bring attention to the age gap I have chosen. I chose a partner born before 1990, a partner born between 1996-1999, and one born in the year I was born, 2003. One of the goals I met was to get multiple reactions, perspectives, and insights from different generations. I also met the goal of not spending any money in this process. A growth I experienced was my level of deceit. I became an exceptionally good liar and usually, my kindness and honesty resulted in the drainage of the relationship. This was an opportunity to gain as much as possible without feeling any pressure. I am satisfied with the status of each relationship which is: Jerrica (still in contact and good friends), Zaria (terminated), and Asia (terminated).

## Reference List

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