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The Love Triangle: Reasons Romantic Relationships Don'T Work and How to Attain a Relationship that Does

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**THE LOVE TRIANGLE: REASONS ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIPS DON'T
WORK AND HOW TO ATTAIN A RELATIONSHIP THAT DOES**

**A thesis submitted to
Regis College
The Honors Program
in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for Graduation with Honors**

by

Mary Beth Navo

May 2012

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Chapter I: An Introduction

Take a moment and think about this question: What is one thing you would not want to live without in your life, other than the biological necessities? When people respond to this question their answer would most likely be an important person in their life. Whether it would be their mother, father, sister, brother, best friend or significant other, most people cannot live their life without someone else in it. Imagine your life without the people you treasure the most in it? Do you think that you would live a happy life without them? The answer is probably no.

Relationships seem to be the foundation of people's social lives. Our society in fact even defines people by their relationships to others. Steve is Emily's boyfriend. Mike is Kelly's brother. Tammi is Margo's mom. From the moment we are born we have a relationship with our parents. After that we grow to have relationships with the rest of our family, then to our friends, then to our significant other. Relationships evoke so many emotions (i.e. happiness, sadness, excitement, joy). Relationships, of all kinds, surround us. There are friendships, physical relationships, and intimate relationships. The intimate relationship is the relationship shared with a significant other. Intimate relationships can range from physical intimacy, dating relationships, serious relationships, and marriage. This kind of relationship can be especially demanding. Intimate relationships are different than any other relationship because of the principles that are involved. Intimate relationships involve detailed knowledge, caring, interdependency, mutuality, trust and

commitment to and about another human being (Miller & Perlman, 2009). For the purpose of this paper intimate relationships are defined as dating, or serious relationships not including marriage between a man and a woman.

When someone is in love it affects their whole life. Whether they are happy or sad, their partner is on their mind most of the time. When most people do not have an intimate relationship that is all they seem to be looking for. Relationships make us feel important and loved. Intimate relationships are even more important to most people. “A common thread unifying all relationships is a desire for intimacy –whether emotional or sexual. Involvement in romantic relationships, as a spouse, a cohabitating partner, or in a steady dating partnership, is beneficial to mental and physical health and sense of well-being” (Sassler & Miller, 2011). Think for a minute about how many people go out hoping to find their ‘soul mate’. Dating sites make so much money every year trying to help people find the one they are supposed to be with for the rest of their life. Eharmony.com, an extremely popular dating site, has over 22 million active members, is worth over 700 million dollars and is ranked number 24 in the “World’s Most Valuable Internet Startups” (“The 100 most”, 2011). In addition, every weekend bars across the country are filled with men and women looking for the ‘one’. In our society, many people strive to find that one love that they cannot live without.

It seems that what most people want out of a relationship is happiness. They seem to want to be able to enjoy and be happy with their partner. So why is it that some

relationships do not work out? Many people believe that it is because men and women are simply different. Men have certain characteristics and women have others. Men behave in one way and women behave in another. It is almost as if we are two different species living on the same planet. But is this really the case or do we just make up these ideals in our minds? People have these stereotypes unconsciously. The stereotypes of men and women we have created can many times be a hindrance to a healthy relationship. Stereotypes are different characteristics that we assign others based upon their gender, race, socioeconomic status, etc. Take for example women. If you were to ask someone what are some characteristics of women they might say things like loving, passive, sweet, caring, emotional, sensitive, overdramatic, irrational, dainty etc. On the other hand, they might classify men as aggressive, athletic, logical, impulsive, intelligent, unemotional, etc. However, studies have shown just the opposite; the differences within men and differences within women are actually greater than the differences between men and women (Kimmel, 2002).

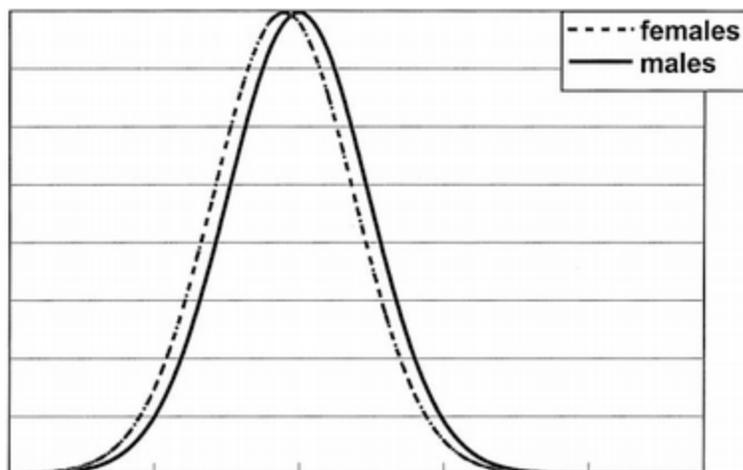


Figure 1. This graph illustrates the differences between men and women.

This graph is a good visual to understand the idea that the difference within men and the difference within women is greater than the differences between men and women (Young, 2006). From my observations, these differences can range from physical differences to personality differences. Take the example of strength. Men are stereotypically stronger than women. However, there are some very strong men and some very weak men. Likewise, there are some very strong women and some very weak women. It does not depend on the gender identity, it depends on the person.

I ran across the perfect example of this the other day. I was at a speaker who was talking about the differences between men and women: what they want and how they are supposed to act in certain situations involved in the college experience. It was called ‘Sex Signals’. While I was sitting there the speaker asked everyone to yell out different stereotypes for women and likewise for men. Many of the characteristics yelled out were the ones mentioned above. The girl sitting behind me when the students were calling out the characteristics for men and women, yelled out ‘this is crap’. The speaker then asked the girls and boys respectively to raise their hands if they believed these characteristics fit them. A few from each group raised their hands. Then she asked people to raise their hands if they believed they did not fall into these categories. An exceedingly large amount of hands went up. The speaker then asked why we have these stereotypes about others. The girl behind me raised her hand and said “Because this is how we are expected to act”.

So why is it that having and expecting these stereotypes is a bad thing? The problem with stereotypes is that it causes people to play out a role in social situations because they believe that is how they are supposed to act. People need to realize that while in every situation people have roles to play out, these roles do not necessarily have to go along with our stereotypical ideals. In every relationship there are roles and each person in the relationship plays out different roles. There are roles such as the caretaker, the cook, the breadwinner, the emotional one, the logical one, the smart alek, the sweet one, the smart one; the list could go on and on. Just because people have these roles in the relationship, it does not mean that the woman always has to be the caretaker and the man the breadwinner. Roles have different actions and characteristics that go along with them. People play out their roles in everyday life. Moreover, people play out different roles in different situations. Kimmel (2002) suggests that people should not be defined by the roles they play in one situation because in another situation they could be someone completely different. Take a man for example, at work he is very sarcastic and jokes around with his friends all the time. However, when he gets home he is the sweetest person to his girlfriend and is never sarcastic to her. Likewise, a woman at work could be very demanding and firm, but when she comes home she is more submissive and calm. Deaux and Major (1987) came up with a model for gender roles. They talk about how there are many different factors that play into people's acting out of roles (Deaux & Major, 1987). Some of these factors are situational cues, and the expectations of the actor and the perceiver (Deaux & Major, 1987). Generally, people act more stereotypically in

their roles if they believe that is how they are expected to act. Take for example a man at work. He is supposed to be hard working and aggressive because that is how people classify whether or not he is a good worker. If he was passive and emotional, traits often associated with women, people might not think he was as capable of doing his job. When the man plays out his role in the first way and gets positive feedback Deaux and Major (1987) say that he will become even more gender stereotypical because he believes that is the proper way to act. Because people think they are supposed to play out certain roles, it could potentially stop them from being who they truly are. This ends up with people pretending to be something they are not, and when this happens in relationships it can spell out disaster. People can only pretend to be someone for so long and when they stop being who their partner expects them to be, the relationships tend to end.

We act out our roles in different situations because that is how we think we are supposed to act. We think this because these stereotypes seem so logical. After all we see examples of stereotypes all over the place. But where do our stereotypes come from? This question elicits the age old debate of nature verse nurture. Some researchers argue that expectations come from the biological difference between men and women. Throughout all of history men have been the hunters and women have been the gatherers (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Men, on average, have about 10 times the amount of testosterone that women have which maybe why they are more aggressive and more athletic than the average woman. Women have more estrogen which may influence their desire to nurture and become more emotional (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). On the other hand, some people

believe that society is the reason for men and women's differences. Boys are taught at a young age to be more aggressive and active, while girls are taught to be more verbal (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Boys are taught to like blue, and girls are taught to like pink. The media helps to increase the notion that men and women are completely different people (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Media enhances the stereotypes and changes people's expectations of the opposite gender. Many television shows make jokes about women cooking or women shopping. They will show the guy working on a car or throwing the football around. Take the show "Modern Family". This has the stereotypical woman who is beautiful and admired for her looks, while the man is the breadwinner and the decision maker of the family. Famous shows like these only help to perpetuate the stereotypes. All of these stereotypes are rooted in theories from biology, psychology, and society.

These stereotypical ideals are what people conveniently blame for the reason relationships do not work out. After all, these stereotypes do make it seem as if men and women are almost two different species. However, are men and women simply being different the only cause for a relationship not working out? A study done by Grau and Doll (2003) showed that attachment styles also have a big effect on the difference in relationships. What they found was people with a secure attachment style tend to be happy and trusting in their relationship (Grau & Doll, 2003). Secure people are more invested in their relationships and have been strategies when it comes to solving conflicts (Grau & Doll, 2003). Anxious-ambivalent attached people always desire more intimacy, and they tend to be more jealous, clingy and dependent on their partner (Grau & Doll,

2003). Avoidant men and women want to solve everything on their own and they tend to have low emotional intimacy with their partner (Grau & Doll, 2003).

Another reason relationships do not work out is because of the schemas that people have in their minds of what relationships should be like. Some people believe that they have a soul mate somewhere in the world for them, and until they meet that person no other relationship will work. Once they meet their soul mate, they will not ever have to work at the relationship because it will just happen. This is called the 'destiny' schema, and people who have this schema tend to have the most failed relationships (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Yet another reason for relationships not working out is because of the amount of expectations one partner puts on another. Honeycutt and Cantrill (1991) did a study and found that people who had been in more relationships had higher expectations of their partners and therefore had more unhappy relationships because they could not get most of their expectations met. These are just a few of the actual reasons that relationships between men and women do not end successfully. But these reasons can also be influenced by the gender stereotypes people have.

There seem to be many different reasons that relationships might not last. However, many people in the world are in long-term intimate relationships, so there must be a way to make relationships work. There are many different types of relationships in the world. Some relationships are extremely loving. Some relationships are mature, while other relationships seem to consist of only fighting. Other relationships revolve around the physical aspects, while others have little to do with the physical. Some relationships

are happy and some are unhappy. Some relationships are healthy and some are unhealthy. From my observations and experiences I have noticed that there are four components to a healthy relationship. They are love, respect, trust, and happiness. Since people cannot force themselves to love someone, I have combined three tools that can be used to obtain a healthy relationship. They are realistic expectations, good communication, and healthy fighting styles. Expectations are a huge part of our lives. Having our expectations met or not is what makes us happy or sad (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Miller and Perlman (2009) suggest that expectations affect people possibly more than they realize. Everyone has to have comparison levels, or expectations, in relationships (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Comparison levels are what people compare to their current situation to decipher how they are supposed to feel and they are based upon previous experience (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Miller and Perlman use an equation to sum up the satisfaction in a relationship ($\text{Outcomes} - \text{Expectations} = \text{Satisfaction or Dissatisfaction}$). In other words, when the outcomes of a situation are greater than the expectations, people are happy. On the other hand, if the outcomes are less than the expectations, people are unhappy. Depending on the difference, people can range from being a little upset to engaging in a huge fight (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Take for example a story of one of my friends; their names are Bob and Millie. Bob called Millie every morning to tell her hello and to have a wonderful day. This continued on for about two months, until one day Bob overslept and did not call her. Millie went through most of the morning being upset that Bob had not called her. Now even though Bob calling Millie every morning seems out of the ordinary

to most other people, to Millie it had become something that she expected. On the day that he did not call her, her expectations did not exceed her outcomes and therefore she became upset. This happens every day, countless times, for many people. Every single activity we do we have an expectation in our mind and another incident that we compare it too. People need to have realistic expectations of who their partners are and of how their partners are going to act in different situations. Once people have realistic expectations, they are much more likely to be met, which means people will be much more happy and satisfied in their relationships.

Communication is the next most important aspect of a relationship. There are many different communication styles that people have. Each person needs to understand the communication style of their partner in order to be able to communicate effectively (Miller & Perlman, 2009). There are two different types of communication that I delve into more later on in this paper. They are verbal and non-verbal communication (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Both are extremely important in relationships and people have different styles of communication within those categories. There are four main styles of communication: direct, indirect, affiliative, and competitive (Carter, 2011). There are also different types of people when it comes to communication: supporters, promoters, analyzers, and controllers (Endress, 2011). In an unhealthy relationship, many people want their partner to be able to read their mind (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Partner A does not tell partner B what they want or what they need; they just believe that since they are in a relationship partner B should anticipate their needs. Then when partner B does not

come through with what partner A wants, partner A become upset and frustrated.

Sometimes then even partner B gets frustrated because partner A did not communicate what they needed and it ends in a fight (Miller & Perlman, 2009). For example, when you watch a movie or a television show and you see the two characters about to get into a fight because one did not anticipate the needs of others. You sit there and look at them and think, ‘if you had just told him/her what you wanted, then you would not be fighting right now.’ This happens all the time in relationships. When people communicate with each other it seems they tend to be happier possible because they are better able to understand what their partner is feeling and what their partner needs.

When people do not communicate well with each other this tends to lead to an argument. Like communication styles, couples have different types of fighting styles. Also, like communication some of these styles are healthy and others are unhealthy. John Gottman, a relationship researcher, has studied couples fighting styles and has theorized that there are only three types of styles that are conducive to a healthy relationship. His three fighting styles are as follows:

1. Volatile couples. These couples “have frequent and passion arguments...but they temper their anger with plenty of wit and evident fondness for each other” (Gottman, 1993).
2. Validating couples. These couples are more understanding when they fight. They can get into heated arguments, however they also tend to empathize and validate the other person’s point of view along the way (Gottman, 1993).

3. Avoiding couples. These couples hardly ever fight. They like to be able to resolve the conflict on their own or hope that over time the conflict will pass (Gottman, 1993).

These are the three fighting styles that work in couples. He also believes that in order to fight healthy, there needs to be five positive exchanges for every one negative. People who are very hostile fighters, do not have the 5 to 1 ratio. These are the couples who are the most likely to end in divorce (Gottman, 1993).

So if these three characteristics are so important to a happy and healthy relationship then why don't more people try and achieve the healthy aspects of these characteristics? I believe the reason for this is because of the stereotypes that people have about men and women. Because that we have these stereotypes in our society it subconsciously makes us play out roles in our relationships, and since we play out these roles it affects the expectations we have of our partner, which influences our communication, and the way we fight with each other. We need to change our stereotypes and our roles in order to be able to have a happier and healthier relationship.

Where does our fighting come from? It comes from our communication. Where does our communication come from? It comes from our expectations. Where do our expectations come from? They come from our roles. Where do our roles come from? They come from our stereotypes. Human beings like to classify people into perfect molds. However, when we do this we forget to see people for who they truly are. We are looking at their characteristics in certain situations instead of the characteristics of a

person. Many people know deep down that all women are not the same and that all men are not the same. However, because our society likes to highlight our differences we fall into the trap of stereotyping people into certain categories. Once the stereotypes have been made, people then use those stereotypes to understand which roles they are supposed to have in relationships and how they are supposed to play out those roles. Once people have been placed in their roles we expect them to act and behave in certain ways. We expect women to communicate extensively and men to communicate almost not at all. We also expect men to fight aggressively and women to fight emotionally. If we just realized that we are not divided into men and women and that we are all just individual human beings our lives would be so much simpler and happier. We need to bring the unconscious stereotypes that we have to the foreground of our minds and realize how we are expecting others to behave. If we made a conscious effort to recognize these stereotypes and change them, then we would accept our partner for who they were as a person so then they would not feel as if they have to play out a certain role, which in turn changes our expectations of them, which then changes the way we communicate with them, which in turn also gives us better fighting styles, and then once again better expectations. It is an endless circle that all begins with changing our stereotypes.

Chapter II: Where It All Begins

“How to impress a woman: Compliment her. Cuddle her. Kiss her. Caress her. Love her. Comfort her. Protect her. Hug her. Hold her. Spend money on her. Wine and dine her. Listen to her. Care for her. Stand by her. Support her. Go to the ends of the earth for her. How to impress a man: Show up naked. Bring beer” (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Although this is meant to be a joke, it really does highlight the ideas of the stereotypes that our society has about men and women. Many people believe that in a relationship people must act like they are supposed to, either very masculine or feminine. There are countless times I have heard “he wasn’t man enough for me; or she was too masculine for me.” People believe that if they, and their partner, play out these roles the relationship

will turn out wonderfully. In a study done by Ickes and Barnes (1978), they actually showed that most people who act stereotypically masculine and feminine do not get along as well as those who are more androgynous. They paired people in groups either with two people acting stereotypically masculine and feminine, or one androgynous and the other stereotypical, or both androgynous. What they found was that the people who were both stereotypical talked less, looked at each other less, and laughed and smiled less than everyone else (Ickes & Barnes, 1978). It seems that acting stereotypical in a relationship might not make for the most healthy relationship. Stereotypes obviously do not make relationships better as seen in the study above. However, are stereotypes the only reason that relationships do not work? No.

In order to change our stereotypes, to achieve healthier relationships, we must first understand where they come from. There are a variety reasons that foster stereotypes. These reasons are biology, psychology and society. First there is biology and psychology. Many people believe that men and women are programmed internally to act a certain way. People believe even before babies are born their sex decides how they will act, what they will be interested in, and what physical capabilities they will have (when in fact the sex just decides the organs of the child in most cases). Boys will be boys and girls will be girls because they were born that way. Whether the differences are evolutionary or biological boys and girls are programmed to be, well, boys and girls. There are many historical theories that support these ideas. For hundreds of thousands of years people have believed that boys and girls are simply born to be different. People

even to this day still talk about how men and women are born to be different. Take for example an incident that happened to me last month. I was helping one of my male friends cook dinner for his family. He was having a really hard time figuring out how to cut the vegetables and how all of the ingredients worked together. When I went up to help him he looked at me and said “this isn’t fair”. I asked him what he meant that it was not fair. I thought he was upset because I had learned how to cook from my family and he had not. That was not his answer. He looked at me and said “It isn’t fair because you’re a woman and all of this stuff is programmed into you already. It’s all programmed into you because you have ovaries and I don’t.” Now I know that during this conversation he was joking about it, but it really made me think about how people today still believe strongly that men and women are simply born differently. In our society, men are programmed to fix cars and women are programmed to cook before they even open their eyes for the first time. Many different theories over time have really shaped and implemented these thoughts and ideas into societies mind.

Take for example the evolutionary theory of biology. When people were first placed on this planet, men and women had different roles. The men were the hunters and the women were the gatherers (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Men were the strong, aggressive humans who went out and searched for different animals to kill and eat for nourishment and who protected the land in which the tribe called home (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). The women were the more passive, caring humans who gathered the berries around the cave and cared for the children until they were old enough to provide

for the tribe (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Because of these roles in early society, some say that has changed the way people mate in today's society. Men are taught to be more aggressive and go after the women they want (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). Women on the other hand, are more passive in their mating rituals. They are not aggressive when they go after men. They are calmer and they tend to accentuate their lips, breasts, hips, and waist (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). These mating preferences could help to solidify the theory of evolution.

These different roles in the past suggest the reason for different mating styles in women and men today. Women tend to look more for a committed partner who has the resources to take care of her and her children (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Men on the other hand look for more of a physical relationship with a number of women (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Men can never actually know if the child is theirs like women can because of their difference in biology. Women know the child is theirs because they carry the baby inside of them for nine months. However, men can never be 100 percent certain that a child is theirs (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). For this reason, parental investment is extremely different for men and women (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). "...Women choose their sexual partners more carefully than men do. They insist on smarter, friendlier, more prestigious, and more emotionally stable partners...and they are less interested in casual, uncommitted sex than men are" (Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 33).

Evolutionary biological ideas are supported by the different characteristics men and women look for in their partner when they are interested in different types of relationships. When women are looking for a non-committed relationship they look for men who are more dominant, confident, and attractive (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). When they are looking for a long lasting more committed relationship, they look for men who have successful jobs, who are emotionally stable, and who create a safe environment for her and her children, even if he is not the most handsome of her prospects (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). When men are looking for a non-committed relationship they tend to look for women who are labeled 'easy' and are quicker to have sex than other women are (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Those same men, when they are looking for a long term relationship, look for women who are not as 'loose' (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Perspective husbands also tend to look for wives who are more beautiful and younger than them no matter their age, and the older a man gets, the age gap between them seems to increase (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009).

Throughout the years different theories have popped up as to why men and women were so different. Some of these theories are skewed because of the fact that much of the research done was to prove a certain idea instead of being objective. Since our society is patriarchal, meaning the lineage is passed down through the father, men have always been seen as the stronger sex. Biologists and psychologists have looked for many different reasons as to why this is the case. For the large part of the nineteenth

century they were trying to find proof as to why men were stronger, smarter, and more capable than women. One of the many theories was that the man's brain was larger than the woman's. They would take the physical mass of the man's brain and compare it to the physical mass of the woman's brain. In most all cases the man's brain was larger.

However, what they did not look at, whether intentional or not, was the mass of the brain in relation to body size. Many years down the road when researchers decided to look at the brain size theory again, what they found was that men and women's brains are roughly the same size when looking at a brain mass to body mass ratio (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). In layman's terms, women are naturally smaller than men therefore their brains are smaller than men's. However, there brain is equal to a man's when compared to the body weight. Another theory that was used to show that women were weaker and not as intelligent as men was the women's menstrual cycle (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). A speaker opposed to women's suffrage in 1880 said,

“Her delicate nature has already enough to drag her down. Her slender frame, naturally weakened by the constant strain attendant upon her nature is too often racked by diseases that are caused by a too severe tax upon her mind. The presence of passion, love, ambition, is all too potent for her enfeebled condition, and wrecked health and early death are all too common”-Reverend Todd (as cited in Kimmel, 2002, p. 21).

Since women's bodies were different than a man's, and since women lost so much blood every month they were naturally not as capable as a man. Women supposedly were incapacitated for one week out of the month and therefore where not able to handle as much as a man.

One of the major theories about the difference between men and women is the different levels of hormones that they each have in their body. Men are known for the amount of testosterone their body produces while women are known for the amount of estrogen they have. Testosterone is a hormone that is supposedly linked with many masculine characteristics including aggression and anger. Estrogen is a hormone that is supposedly linked to many emotional feminine activities. Women and men both have testosterone and estrogen, but since one is more dominant, its characteristics are more subtle (Udry, 2000). Testosterone affects the development of genes and neurotransmitters in the brain (Udry, 2000). In 2000, Udry did a study with monkeys to show that no matter how much an animal is socialized, biology will always put a restraint on it. What he did was gave some female monkeys testosterone when they were fetuses and some not (Udry, 2000). What he found was that the monkeys with more testosterone actually exhibited more masculine behaviors when they grew up, even though all of the monkeys were socialized in the same environment (Udry, 2000). So despite the socialization factor, the biological factor proved to be a strong source for behavior.

“Laymen have always imagined that to some degree humans are ‘born’ with propensities for behavior that are socially undesirable” (Udry, 2000, p. 443). For years and years, people have thought that biology was the source for the differences between men and women. Biological theories coincide with the observations that people make every day. Men and women seem different. The only reason for this difference, many people believe, is because of biology. For years men and women have had different roles

in society based upon their biological differences because people have always believed women to be the inferior sex, but could there be another reason for the differences between men and women?

People believe that men and women are different because of biology. However the main reason they believe this is because of the way society has perpetuated stereotypes. Possibly the biggest social influence of expectations and stereotypes is the media. Think about how often you sit down to watch a television show and there are small jokes often said under the breath about the differences between men and women. There are thousands of jokes out there to increase the stereotypes and intensify the perception of the difference between men and women, such as the joke told at the beginning of the chapter. Even the roles that the women and men portray in many televisions shows are very stereotypical. Normally the man is the one who is not emotional and does not know how to handle things around the house, while the woman is the one who knows everything that is going on with the family and half the time does not work. Even if the mother does work, she still is the one who knows what is going on. Take for example the new hit show *Modern Family*. The married couple, Claire and Phil, fit the stereotypes pretty well. Claire is a stay at home mother who knows everything that is happening. She is the one who always wants to talk about issues either with Phil or with their children, while Phil is the oblivious one. Claire is also the one who always feels as if she needs to dress nicely and look like she has everything put together. The one stereotype that she does not fit is that she is normally the one who is in control. Phil is normally oblivious to his surroundings

and what needs to happen, so Claire is the one who is more aggressive and controlling. Even though in tv shows there are a few examples that go against the stereotypes, many still reinforce them. There are so many jokes made about women going shopping, or men fixing things, or how marriage is the death of men that it gets ingrained into people's subconscious that men and women are different. There is no reason to dispute these reasonings in our mind because it seems to make sense. Men and women seem different so therefore they must be different. Michael Kimmel (2008) brings up the point that the media makes these differences seem 'natural' and not something that has been created over hundreds of years.

Now the media is not the complete cause of people's stereotypes. It is an endless circle where people's beliefs influence the media and then in turn the media influences people's beliefs (Kimmel, 2008). Media does not just include the television. It also includes the radio, books, and magazines. Magazines such as *Playboy* are perfect examples of how media increases the stereotypes people have. These women are portrayed as objects that sit there and look pretty. They are there to fulfill all of the man's deepest desires and wants. The magazine *Cosmo*, is extremely popular with young girls. This magazine is filled with ways to attract boys and what boys are looking for in relationships. What does *Cosmo* tell girls to do in order to get the boy of their dreams? Act stereotypically. They tell them to dress-up, wear make-up, and let the boy feel masculine while the girl needs to be passive and attentive.

The newest craze in music is hip-hop and rap, which is a type of music that more often than not, depicts women as objects and men are the ones that control these objects. Take two of the most famous rappers of this decade, who like to down play women and perpetuate stereotypes are Chris Brown and Lil Wayne. They collaborated on a song called “I Can Transform Ya” in 2009. Some of the lyrics include “I can change your life. Make it so new. Make you never want to go back to the old you...Anything ya want. I can get it for ya. You’re my baby girl shoulda know I did it for ya...Something like Pinocchio. If you lie down Imma grow. Wanna see me do it big. I can show you how it goes. Take you from an amateur to being professional....” These are just a few of the lyrics that made this song number 11 in December of 2009 (“I can transform”, 2009). Chris Brown and Lil Wayne are still extremely popular today. In fact, Chris Brown’s net worth as of 2012 was 22 million dollars and Lil Wayne’s was 95 million dollars (“Chris Brown net”, 2012; “Lil Wayne net”, 2012). Although, the media does perpetuate stereotypes, it is not totally to blame because they are looking for what the people want to see and hear and it is up to people to choose what they are going to pay attention to.

Media has changed so much over the last 100 years and it shows how much society has changed. In the 1920’s girls never would have thought to show their knees in public and now girls are not afraid to wear mini-skirts to any function. In the 1950’s girls would have never worn anything but high collared shirts and now girls have no qualms about showing their bras in public. The media has changed with society to show what is socially acceptable. Media today is much more diverse than it has been before (Kimmel,

2002). They portray people of all different genders, socioeconomic statuses, races, and ethnic backgrounds (Kimmel, 2002). Yet somehow the stereotypes still seem to creep their way in.

The media also divides its different shows, books, movies, and music into different categories, some more gendered than others. Think about ‘chick flicks’, ‘romance novels’, ‘action movies’, and sports. While both genders watch/read all different types of media, the labels they have for them make them seem more gendered than they possibly could be (Kimmel, 2002). No ‘guy’ and his friends are going to see a ‘chick flick’ together because then they are going to be labeled as feminine. The media also makes it very clear that women can watch guy’s television. Think about how it is almost sexy or a turn on when a girl is really into watching sports and action movies, but when a guy suggests a ‘chick flick’ they are seen as less of a man (Kimmel, 2002). Media has helped increase these stereotypes by showing women dressed as sexy football players, baseball players, fighters, etc. So although the media is not completely to blame for the stereotypes in today’s society, it does help to escalate them.

Stereotypes are increased or decreased in different situations in society. One major reason stereotypes are played out is because of the social phenomenon of the change in the sex ratio in society (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The sex ratio is how many men there are to women in any given society (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The definition in itself is even sexist because it is described in male terms. In a society where the sex ratio

is high and there are more men than women the roles of individuals tend to be more stereotypical (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The reason for this is that men have to work hard to get a woman and once the woman has found a partner they want to keep him (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Since men and women consider themselves lucky to have found someone they do things more stereotypically than normal. The women tend to do more housework and be more dependent on their husbands (Miller & Perlman, 2009). On the other hand, if the sex ratio is low and there are more women than men, men do not need to work as hard and there for people act less stereotypical. It is more socially acceptable for women to work and be a single mother because no one knows when a man is going to show up (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

Biology, psychology, and society are all reasonable explanations for why men and women behave differently. When people see these stereotypes all around them, they believe that they are supposed to fit into these perfect little categories, as should everyone around them. If they have something ingrained into them, even subconsciously, they tend to start behaving or believing that certain way. When they start to believe this it can become dangerous for relationships. If someone's significant other does not fit neatly into the role that that person believes that they should, then their expectations are not met. When their expectations are not met they are not as happy in their relationship. People's biology, psychology, friends, family, and culture all affect a person's expectations of what their relationship is supposed to look like and the characteristics it should have. When those expectations are not met, the outcomes can be disastrous.

Chapter III: A Deeper Look

Achieving a happy and healthy relationship is extremely difficult. There are so many ideas out in the world that work against relationships. Are stereotypical people as happy in relationships? They do not seem to be (Ickes & Barnes, 1978). However, this is not the only cause for relationships not working as many people would like to believe. So what are some of the other causes for relationships not lasting?

One psychological theory about why relationships do not work is because of their attachment styles. In 1958, Harlow did a study on attachment style in young monkeys. He had one monkey in a cage with an imitation mother made of wire (Harlow, 1958). In another cage he had a monkey with another imitation mother who was covered in a blanket (Harlow, 1958). One monkey the one made of wire, had milk for the baby monkey to drink, but it turns out that the baby monkey with the imitation wire mother was much more anxious and uncomfortable than the other monkey (Harlow, 1958). The reason for this was that the monkey with the wire mother did not feel the warmth and comfort that the other monkey received (Harlow, 1958). Harlow's research led to many other studies done on the idea of attachment and development. Using Harlow's research, Mary Ainsworth and her colleagues did another study in 1978 called "The Strange Situation". In this situation they had the child and the parent come in and play. They would play for a while and then a stranger would enter to play with them. Then the parent would leave, then the parent would re-enter a little later on and the stranger would leave. After a while the parent would leave again, leaving the child all alone. Finally, the stranger and then the parent would re-enter (Ainsworth, Blehar, Waters, & Walter, 1978).

What they found in their study was that there were three different attachment styles the children seemed to have. They were classified as avoidant, secure, and resistant (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The secure baby was comfortable when the mother was in the room. They walked around and played with different items. When the stranger walked in they were cautious as all babies are, and played a little less. Once the parent re-entered the room, then the child began to play again (Ainsworth et al., 1978). The avoidant child would play while the caregiver was in the room and were upset when they left the room. However, once the caregiver re-entered the room the child would avoid the parent (Ainsworth et al., 1978). Finally, the resistant child would be happy when the parent was in the room. When the parent left they would hardly notice and when the parent re-entered the room the child would completely ignore them (Ainsworth et al., 1978). All of these different attachment styles were acquired by many different aspects including styles of parenting and the child's temperament.

Ainsworth and her colleagues' research has led into a theory about how the attachment style that children have affects the way they perform in a relationship later in life. People's different attachment styles as a child seems to greatly influence their attachment styles as adults. Their attachment styles in turn affect their ability to connect to others, to trust others, and their expectations out of a relationship with a significant other. Studies have shown that when adults have an avoidant attachment style as a child, they have an extremely hard time being intimate with another human being (McAdams, 2009). They have what researchers call a 'fear of intimacy' (McAdams, 2009). Avoidant

people are characterized by extreme highs and lows in their emotions, and they seem to be extremely jealous (McAdams, 2009). On the other hand, anxious/ambivalent or resistant people want to be close with someone so badly they tend to scare their partner away (McAdams, 2009). They become almost obsessed with their significant other, are always worried they are going to abandon them, and they have severe trust issues (McAdams, 2009). They also seem to fall in love quickly and have extremely strong sexual attractions to their partner (McAdams, 2009). Opposite from the avoidant or the anxious/ambivalent people are the secure people. They do not seem to have any problems with intimacy (McAdams, 2009). They are completely comfortable trusting others and having others rely on them. They are happy in their relationships and do not worry about having people become too close to them, nor do they get overly upset when they lose someone (McAdams, 2009).

Secure people tend to handle situations and conflicts with their significant others in a mature manner (McAdams, 2009). Avoidant people usually classify their partners as not supportive and are also not as supportive towards their significant other either after they have encountered a conflict (McAdams, 2009). Anxious/ambivalent people, after a confrontation, tend to talk negatively about their partner and downgrade their character (McAdams, 2009).

In 1990, another study was done looking at the attachment styles of adults (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). What they found was a fourth attachment style called

dismissing. These people seem to be extremely comfortable not having a close relationship with anyone (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). They are comfortable being alone and self-regulating; they are only dependent upon themselves (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). An important characteristic to note about attachment styles is that they can be changed over time. A situation can arise and the attachment style will change over time (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Take for example an insecure person who finds someone who truly loves them and is loyal to them, their attachment style can change over time to become more secure (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). In addition, insecure attachment styles are more likely to change than secure attachment styles (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Because the secure attachment styles show the insecure that having intimacy in a relationship can be helpful and make their lives more fulfilled (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009).

Attachment styles seem like a plausible reason for relationships not working out. Is it possible though that these are also affected by gender stereotypes? Giudice (2011) found that men and women seem to be the most different when it comes to insecure attachment styles. What he found in his study was that men tend to have a more avoidant attachment style in relationships (Giudice, 2011). Could the reason for this be that men are taught from a young age that 'boys don't cry' and that they are not supposed to be emotional and share their feelings with others? Is it possible that these ideas they plant into little boys' minds help them to grow up to be more avoidant of intimacy in relationships? Also, Giudice (2011) found that women tend to be more anxious in

relationships. One possible cause for this could be that little girls are taught to be intimate and form relationships with others early on. They are taught that they need to find a husband and have a family and have those relationships with other people, which might be one reason women are the ones who want the intimacy in the relationship.

Another reason relationships do not work out is because of the expectations people have of their partner before they start dating. People who have been in numerous relationships before, actually have more expectations than others who have only dated a few people (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 1991). Honeycutt and Cantrill (1991) did a study with various individuals and what they found was “when comparing individuals who have never been in an intimate relationship with those reporting having been in one or more relationships, the inexperienced individual has few expectations of what should happen in a developing relationship, engages in small talk, and expects that marriage is the criterion of a bonded relationship. Yet, this individual does not talk about future plans, does not mention the display of physical affection to one’s partner, and does not mention a verbal declaration of love compared to more experienced relational partners” (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 1991, p. 20). This study shows that people need expectations in order to define their perfect relationships, and experience can help that. On the other hand, if someone has a long list of expectations, it may become too many for the partner to live up to and when all of the person’s set out expectations are not met, the relationship will tend to end.

One of the biggest predictors of whether or not a relationship will work might be the perception people have about relationships. What people think about relationships influences how they feel and how they act in their relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Also, it is very hard for people to change their perceptions of relationships. The reason for this is that people look for events and actions that confirm their beliefs. This is called a 'confirmation bias' (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Take for example a woman who is in a relationship. She has a preconceived notion that men do not talk about their feelings and never will. Even if her significant other talks openly about his feelings most of the time, if there are a couple of times in which he does not want to talk about his feelings, she is going to hold on to those moments because they confirm what she believes about relationships. People additionally seem to be overconfident about their perceptions. They believe that what they believe and what they perceive is always right (Miller & Perlman, 2009). "People may see what they want to see and hold confident judgments that aren't always right" (Miller & Perlman, 2009, p. 112).

Relationships are also influenced by how much a person likes his or her partner. When people love their partner they tend to idealize them (Miller & Perlman, 2009). How many times have you had a friend who cannot see what is wrong with their significant other? When people are in love they seem to wear rose colored glasses. Even if their partner does something horribly wrong, they tend to play it off because they romanticize them. This can be a good and a bad thing. It is bad because it hinders them from seeing their true partner. On the other hand, this can be a very good because this allows people

to overlook the few mistakes their partner makes and still have a wonderful relationship with them. Many people also see the positive attributes that their partner has as something that many people do not have (Miller & Perlman, 2009). It is something that others cannot attain and they are lucky to have found someone with those characteristics (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Also, if something does not fit their expectations, over time people will change their expectations so then their partner will fit them (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The problem with these is when people do not accept their partner for who they are to be able to idealize them. Instead, they hold on to their stereotypes of their partner. In psychology there is this term called a self-perpetuating prophecy. It means that people not only look for what they want to find in relationships, like the confirmation bias, but they also then treat that person the way the stereotype says too. Think about it this way. If you are the female in a relationship and you believe that men do not communicate their feelings, you are not going to expect your boyfriend to talk about his feelings. Because of this you might not express your feelings to him because you believe you will not get any feedback from him. Since you do not express your feelings, even if he wants to express his feelings he may not because you did not. When he does not express his feelings to you, this just adds even more reason for you to believe that men do not talk about their feelings. It all goes back to the idea of the chicken and the egg. Which comes first the stereotypes or the actions?

Perceptions of relationships can also be influenced by the person's past relationship or by the relationships that a person has seen their whole life such as their

parents. The beliefs that people have about relationships are called their 'schemas' (Miller & Perlman, 2009). There are many different schemas that people can have about relationships. Some of these schemas are healthy and other ones are dysfunctional (Miller & Perlman, 2009). People who have a really romanticized schema of relationships believe that relationships will just happen, they are not something that has to be worked for (Miller & Perlman, 2009). They is a very dysfunctional view of relationships because once someone with this mentality has their expectations diminished they believe the relationships is not meant to be and they shut down (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Some of the beliefs that form a dysfunctional schema are as follows: "Disagreements are destructive....; mindreading is essential....; partners cannot change....; sex should be perfect every time....; men and women are different....; and great relationships just happen..." (Miller & Perlman, 2009). These beliefs are dysfunctional because they lead people to believe that they do not have to work for their relationship (Miller & Perlman, 2009). They avoid problems instead of solving them, and they only want to end their relationship to find the one they are destined to be with (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

People have two different types of beliefs when it comes to relationships, growth and destiny (Miller & Perlman, 2009). The growth belief is all about working for relationships. They know that their expectations are not always going to be met, but they are willing to make their relationship great (Miller & Perlman, 2009). On the other hand, the destiny belief does not subscribe to the fact that people can change and that relationships require work. People with this belief believe they are destined to be with

one person and one person only, and no amount of work will make a relationship work if you are not already destined to be with them (Miller & Perlman, 2009). If people have unrealistic expectations of how a relationship should be, then it is going to be hard for their expectations to be met and they will find disappointment often. When this happens relationships tend to end. What is interesting about the destiny and growth schemas is that an equal number of young boys and young girls have this schema and it is unhealthy for either sex (Meier, Hull, & Ortyl, 2009).

These are just a few of the many reasons that relationships do not always work out. It is because people are different, for millions of different reasons, it is not simply because men and women are different. These other reasons could include someone cheating on the other, financial problems, psychological issues etc. People need to understand the reasons for relationships not working. Once people educate themselves on these reasons, they will be able to combat them. People also need to realize that the gender stereotypes they have about their partner can really influence these other reasons as well. However, if they keep thinking that differences between men and women are the only reason then they will not put effort in to make the relationship work, as seen above in the destiny schema. If people believe a relationship is doomed from the beginning then what is the point of wasting time and effort to make it work? People need to realize that if they believe these stereotypes they will act in a way that increases these stereotypes, which will lead them to treat their partner in a way that is not conducive to the relationship, and so when it ends it will then increase their beliefs about stereotypes. It is

a never ending circle of relationship doom which can only be stopped through understanding what happens in relationships, the many reasons that cause them to end, and the components to a healthy, happy relationship.

Chapter IV: The Love Triangle

There are thousands and thousands of books and websites dedicated on how to have a healthy and happy relationship such as eharmony.com, match.com, “An Idiot’s Guide to a healthy relationship”, “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” etc. There are thousands of different characteristics that people believe others need in order to have a healthy relationship. They range anywhere from communication, to respect, to a good sex life. Counselors make many every year trying to help couples have a healthy relationship. The one problem I find with a lot of these books is that they are very stereotypical. They tend to clump all of the men into one group and all of the women into another group. Helping woman figure out men and men figure out women is not the way to a healthy relationship between the two of them. Every relationship is different because every person is different. However, from observations and experience I have come to

realize there are four components to a healthy relationship, and three tools to achieve those components.

When I was looking at all of the different reasons relationships did not work out, I began thinking that there had to be a way that relationships do work out and what those relationships had in common. I believe, from my observations and research, that there are a few characteristics all healthy relationships have. These are love, trust, respect, and happiness. While these are key to a relationship, you cannot just force someone to love and respect another person. I believe that there are three tools to finding love, respect, trust and happiness. All three of these tools affect one another and I believe without one people cannot have the others. These tools are realistic expectations, good communication, and healthy fighting styles.

Expectations

Fighting Styles

Communication

Figure 2. The love triangle. The three tools that lead to the four components of a healthy relationship.

I have come to realize that these three tools interact with each other all of the time. Take expectations first. From my observations, expectations are in every aspect of life. People have expectations about how situations are going to turn out, about how

people are going to act, and so much more. People have expectations of their partners in every situation. When these expectations are not met people become unhappy and even angry at times. When expectations are not met, the best way to work through them is by communicating. In order to communicate well, people need to understand their partner's communication style. When people do not communicate well, many situations can end up in a fight. The way people fight is also crucial to a relationship. When people do not fight healthy, it tends to disrespect their partner, which in turn just upsets their partner even more. It works the other way as well. When people communicate well and they understand each other, they tend to fight in a more respectful way. When people communicate well, and fight healthy, it gives their partner healthy expectations of them. It is an endless process. Over time, these three tools make people happier, which leads them to respect their partner, which then leads them into a deeper and deeper love of them.

So what are the tools for a healthy relationship? The first one is realistic expectations. Almost every instant of a person being unhappy in a relationship can come down to expectations. I have seen girlfriends and boyfriends get so upset at their significant other, not because they did something wrong, but because they did something their partner did not expect. Just the other day my friend got upset with his girlfriend because they were not able to talk because she went out with her friends. It might seem that he is upset because they did not talk, but all in all it boils down to it being something he did not expect. He expected to talk to her, and she changed the plans on him without

communicating to him beforehand (see all three tools are constantly working together all of the time). If she had told him before hand, he still might have been a little disappointed, but he would have understood and moved on. It was the fact that she did not tell him ahead of time for him to be able to change his expectations of his night.

Happiness in a relationship comes down to the outcomes and the expectations. Miller and Perlman (2008) came up with an equation to describe what happens with satisfaction in relationships. $\text{Outcomes} - \text{expectations} = \text{satisfaction or dissatisfaction}$ (Miller & Perlman, 2008). If the outcomes are greater than the expectations then the result is happiness. If a girl comes home and her boyfriend has made dinner, something she is not expecting, then she is really satisfied and happy. On the other hand, if a person's outcomes are lower than their expectations, then people are not satisfied and unhappy (Miller & Perlman, 2008). If a girl is expecting to go on a date with her boyfriend, but then he cancels at the last minute, her outcomes are lower than her expectations and that leads to dissatisfaction. In psychology there is a term for these two equations: positive and negative contrast. Positive contrast is where someone starts out with a low reward for doing something and then all of a sudden they get a higher reward, they will perform better than if they had gotten the high reward to begin with (Crespi, 1942). Negative contrast is when someone starts off with a high reward and all of a sudden gets a low reward (Crespi, 1942). They perform worse than if they had just received the low reward to begin with (see Figure 3).

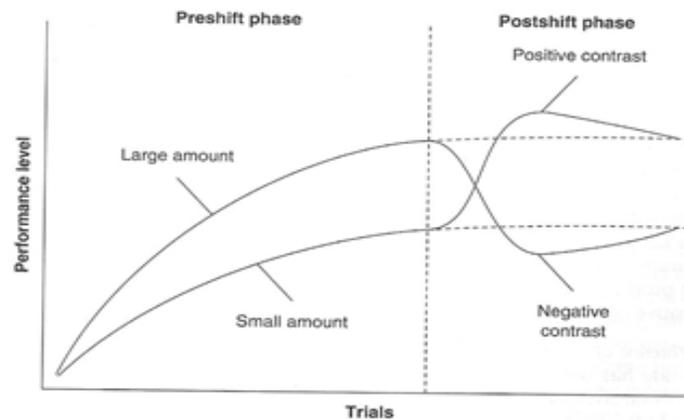


Figure 3. The idea of positive and negative contrast

This graph shows the performance level of a rat over a different amount of trials. In 1942, Crespi originally came up with this idea. He placed rats in either a low or a high reward group. Then in the middle of the trial he would switch the low group to a higher reward and the high group to a lower reward (Crespi, 1942). What he showed over and over again was that rats did not perform well when they are in the negative contrast group, and perform exceedingly well when they are in the positive contrast group (Crespi, 1942). Now these exact studies might not be able to be applied directly to the idea of expectations, but the basic principles can be. Think of a person who is satisfied in

a situation with a low reward as the positive contrast group. What they initially expected was some low reward, but what they actually received was something much better which lead them to be happier than if they got the high reward to begin with. On the other hand, if someone is expecting something good to come out of the situation and they receive something less than what they expected, they fall into the negative contrast group and therefore are less happy than if they had just expected the low outcome first. Take the example of getting gifts in a relationship. If someone does not ever get a gift in their relationship, but is still happy and then one day their partner surprises them with a gift they are exceedingly happy (positive contrast). However, if someone receives gifts every day, and then all of sudden does not receive a gift one day, they are unhappy and upset (negative contrast). Now I am not saying that in order to have a happy relationship people need to have exceptionally low expectations of their partners, because that would not work well either. What I am saying is that people need to have realistic expectations in a relationship. There is no way your partner is going to buy you flowers every day in your relationship. There is a balance when it comes to expectations. When people have too long a list of what they expect from their partners (unrealistic expectations), then they are more likely to end up disappointed (Honeycutt & Cantrill, 1991). If they have realistic and healthy expectations about characteristics they look for in a partner, then this can benefit them in finding a partner, and in their relationships.

In order to have realistic expectations, people must also have good communication. Good communication is how people have healthy expectations. People

need to be able to communicate what they need, what they want and how they feel so the other partner can understand and respond to them. A model for communication was studied by Gottman, Notarius, Gonso, and Markman (1976). What they came up with was as follows:

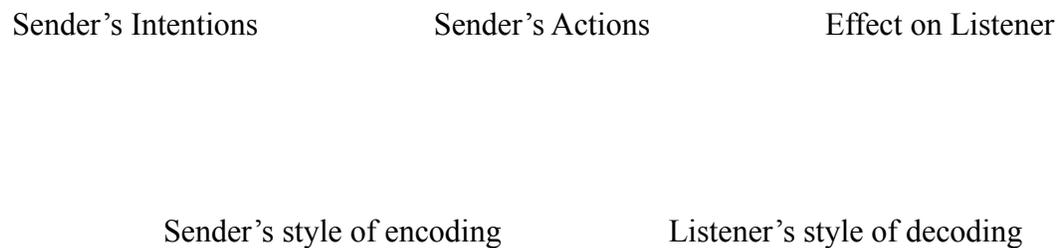


Figure 4. The path of communication.

The sender's intention is what the sender wants to convey to another person and it is only known by the sender. They encode their meaning in a certain way and then state it either verbally or non-verbally. Then the listener must decode what the sender's actions mean, and finally it creates an effect on the listener (Gottman et. al, 1976). The problem with communication is that the listener does not always decode the meaning behind the sender's actions correctly (Miller & Perlman, 2008). Think about when someone comes up to you and asks "What are you doing tonight?" They may be inquiring because they would like to ask you to do something; however you might take that as them making casual small talk and not understand their meaning behind it at all.

A major part of figuring out the meaning behind someone's statement is their non-verbal communication. Non-verbal communication can range anywhere from facial expressions, to gazing, to body movement, to touch, to mimicry. Non-verbal cues can really help a listener decode the sender's meaning. Noller (1981) found that both men and women in unhealthy relationships have a hard time decoding each other's messages. In fact, both men and women in unhappy relationships did a better job decoding a stranger's message than each other's (Noller, 1981).

There are four different communication styles according to Dr. Sherrie Carter (2011). These communication styles are: direct vs. indirect, and affiliative vs. competitive. It is important to note that the different communication styles fall along a continuum. Not everyone is either direct or indirect, or affiliative or competitive. There are different degrees to each style, and these styles can interact with each other. The direct style of communication is very straight-forward. People say exactly what they mean and there is very little room for misinterpretation, but a lot of room for offending the other person. In the indirect communication style, people are more vague with their messages and do not come right out and say what they mean. A lot of the times people need to read between the lines to understand what this person is saying. With the affiliative communication style, they want to bring people together and work problems out together. It is all about understanding the other person's opinion and working together to come to a conclusion. On the other hand, competitive styles are more directed towards goals and power. They are more direct, assertive and challenging (Carter, 2011).

According to Paul Endress (2011) there are four types of people when it comes to communication. They are: the controller, the promoter, the supporter, and the analyzer. Each has their place in a relationship and each has different strategies to best understand and communicate with them. The controller is very fact oriented. They are also very goal-oriented and they want to get things done quickly and efficiently. The best way to communicate with this type of person is by getting to the point quickly, setting goals, only give conclusions and less details. The promoter is a very social person. They are very friendly and they like to talk a lot. They are enthusiastic and expressive. The easiest way to communicate with a promoter is by giving them plenty of time to talk. Ask them about their family and friends. Use a lot of examples, especially examples with people and stories. The supporter is calm and collected. They are very well-balanced and happy. They are good listeners and have a lot of friends and they do not like to be involved in a lot of conflict. The way to handle this type of communication is by not coming on too strong and to earn their trust before you ask them to make any large decisions. Finally, the analyzer is very thoughtful and analytical. They love lists and charts and figures. They pay very close attention to detail. The best way to communicate with this person is to have a lot of detail prepared before-hand, answer all of their questions, and be prepared for them to take time to analyze each idea (Endress, 2011). Now people may have different styles in different situations, but it is important to understand which one your partner is because then it is easier to understand how to communicate with them in the best way.

A major part of communication in a healthy relationship is self-disclosure. It is important for both people to disclose a wide variety of information and for the topics they discuss to have a lot of personal significance (Miller & Perlman, 2009). Partners tend to self-disclose the same about of information, especially in the beginning of a relationship. Also, healthy communication in a relationship also holds a certain amount of responsiveness. Partners need to respond and listen to each other, and when they do this their partner feels loved, valued and understood (Miller & Perlman, 2009).

A big problem with communication in couples is that they believe they know what their partner is trying to tell them. When they do this, both men and women, tend to no longer listen to what their partner wants. There are a ton of unhealthy ways to communicate such as complaining about their partner, criticizing everything their partner does, mocking their partner, stonewalling – not talking to the other person, or holding their feelings back – and being belligerent – completely rejecting their partner altogether (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). In healthy communication, on the other hand, partners listen to what each other is saying, they check in with their partners to make sure they understand what they mean, and they use “I” statements when they talk about their feelings instead of blaming it on their partner (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). The biggest part of communication in a couple is validation (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). When each partner feels validated in their discussion, it leads to a healthy respect and love for each other.

Fighting styles go hand in hand with communication. Everyone if they are in a relationship for a while is going to have an argument or a disagreement. They are practically unavoidable. Conflicts and fighting in a relationship is not what is the problem, it is how people handle that conflict. When people have good communication they tend to have healthier fighting styles. In contrast, when people have unhealthy communication it tends to lead to unhealthy fighting styles. John Gottman, a long-time relationship researcher, talks about how in conflicts people need to still be more positive than negative. He believes that in a healthy argument there is a 5 to 1 ratio of positive comments to negative ones. In other words, people who communicate through blaming their partner, being belligerent, criticizing each other, or by bringing up every problem they have ever had in the past –also known as kitchen sinking, do not have healthy styles of fighting. Their fighting is more about being right and getting their point across than coming to a solution that both partners are happy with (Gottman, 1993). In addition, Gottman has studied partners over and over again and has concluded that there are three different and healthy styles of fighting. In fact, with his research he can predict divorce 90% of the time just based off a couple's fighting style. The three types are as follows:

1. Volatile couples. These couples “have frequent and passion arguments...but they temper their anger with plenty of wit and evident fondness for each other” (Gottman, 1993).

2. Validating couples. These couples are more understanding when they fight.

They can get into heated arguments, however they also tend to empathize and validate the other person's point of view along the way (Gottman, 1993).

3. Avoiding couples. These couples hardly ever fight. They like to be able to resolve the conflict on their own or hope that over time the conflict will pass (Gottman, 1993).

Each of these couples is completely different in their styles of fighting, but each couple is as equally successful, because they listen to their partner and they use the 5 to 1 ratio.

One other thing that Gottman talks about is how couples need to be matched correctly. In other words, a person with an avoiding style of fighting would not pair with a person with a volatile fighting style. Couples need to match in order to be able to understand what their partner is trying to get across to them (Driver & Gottman, 2004).

From my observations, in a relationship almost everyone wants to find love, respect, trust and happiness. These are not always the easiest to achieve. It takes a lot of effort and hard work to achieve these components in a relationship. However, using the three tools I have listed: realistic expectations, good communication and healthy fighting styles, it will make it easier to achieve the characteristics to a good relationship. People need to have realistic expectations of who their partner is and how their partner will act in different situations. Also, people need to understand the different communication styles of their partner (direct, indirect, affiliative, competitive) and what kind of communicator their partner is (controller, promoter, supporter, analyzer) to be able to communicate with

them best. Lastly, people need to understand the fighting styles of their partner. They need to understand that there are healthy ways of fighting and unhealthy ways that can really affect a relationship negatively. Although every person and every relationship is different these three tools are universal. It is all about understanding who your partner is and what you both need and want from the relationship.

Chapter V: Tying It All Together

When I first started to write my thesis, I was talking to my grandfather about this paper and what it was all about. The part that he found to be the most interesting was the different gender roles that people have. He told me that the thing that he has observed over his lifetime and something he found to be extremely interesting was that when men and women are in the early stages of dating, they both seem to fall into the stereotypical gender roles. Men are the more aggressive ones. They are the ones who call the girl first, who set up and plan the dates, who drive and pay while on the date. Women on the other hand, tend to be more passive and build up the man's masculinity. They let the men take charge, while they sit back and enjoy. However, once the relationship becomes more

serious, and they have been together longer the roles seem to switch the majority of the time. The women are the ones who become more dominant and aggressive. They change the way the guy dresses, his haircut, the way he thinks about different things, what he does around the house, what he does in his free time and so much more. The women tend to be the ones who run the house and run their lives.

This got me thinking about all of the relationships I have seen throughout my life. I have seen so many different types of relationships throughout my short lifetime and every single one of them is different. There are a few commonalities between them, but by no means do all of the guys act the same and all of the girls act the same. I have seen the very stereotypical relationship where the guy works and the woman stays at home. The woman is the emotional one and the guy is more closed. The man is much more aggressive and controlling, while the woman is much more passive. I have seen relationships where the man works and the woman does not, but at the same time the woman is the one that is more controlling and more outgoing, while the man is more passive. I have seen relationships where the man stays home while the woman works. I have seen the complete opposite of the stereotypical relationship. The woman is controlling, domineering, and logical, while the guy is the one who is passive, talks a lot, and is very emotional. I have also seen relationships right in the middle where both people are caring, controlling on certain aspects of the relationship, emotional, and logical.

I have seen so many different types of relationships and none of them are the same, and most of them do not follow the stereotypical guidelines. I have observed that if a relationship is more stereotypical it tends to be in the older couples. For adults in their 20's, 30's and younger, it has become increasingly less stereotypical. A study done by Meier, Hull and Ortyl in 2009 looked at teenage boys and girls and what they expected from relationships. What they found was that, like many people would believe, girls valued commitment and marriage a little bit more than the boys did (Meier, Hull, & Ortyl, 2009). However, girls did not value wealth or a job as much as they used to (Meier, Hull & Ortyl, 2009). Meier, Hull and Ortyl (2009) speculated that this was because of the growing job market for women. Women nowadays work for themselves and do not necessarily need to rely on a man for their lifestyles (Meier, Hull & Ortyl, 2009). The one thing they found that was unexpected was the number one quality that *both* boys and girls valued the most in a partner was love and attraction (Meier, Hull & Ortyl, 2009). They also found that both boys and girls prescribe to the 'love myth'. That is both boys and girls think of love as this romantic fantasy that does not require hard work and loyalty. They believe everything will just fall into place when they are in love (Meier, Hull & Ortyl, 2009).

In society today, many people do not subscribe to the stereotypes anymore, yet for some reason our ideas still have not changed despite the evidence put in front of us (maybe this has something to do with the confirmation bias). This is the reason I decided to write this thesis was to bring to light something that many people do not pay attention

to. I believe that bringing these stereotypes from the unconscious to the conscious is the only way to start to be able to attain a healthy relationship.

Stereotypes are very real in our society today, and they are rooted in many different ideas. Most stereotypes are rooted in the idea of evolutionary biology and psychology. From the beginning of time men have been the hunters and women have been the gatherers. Men are the ones who are aggressive, while women are the ones who are more passive and who are used for their nurturing manner. These ideas then lead into what men and women look for in relationships. Such as, men are looking for a woman who is young, attractive and fertile, while women are looking for a man who makes money, who is intelligent, and who can take care of her and her children. The fact that our society is patriarchal, meaning that the lineage is being passed down through the man, has influenced past research which has also influenced our stereotypes. Since men wanted to prove that they were the superior specimen, they performed research with that bias. They did studies showing that the male brain was bigger than the female brain. They also did studies showing that because women had a menstrual cycle and so many hormones, they were not as logical or as capable as a man (as cited in Kimmel, 2002). These findings are rather old, yet we still believe them today. One major influence on our continued belief of these stereotypes is the media. Everyone we look there is a stereotype about men and women, whether it is on television, in movies, in magazines or in books, these stereotypes are constantly surrounding us and being planted, almost subconsciously in our minds (Kimmel, 2002).

These stereotypes are what causes people to play out roles in society, whether it goes along with their personalities or not. The following phrases are said or thought so often in America today. “O he never acts that way unless he’s around this certain person.” Or “I don’t know what has gotten into her today, she never acts this way.” Many people act one way in a certain place and then completely different when put in another situation. Take for example children. They are taught from the beginning that during school they are supposed to sit down and pay attention to the teacher and not talk and run around. However, once they get out on the playground they can run around and yell and scream. These are two different situations that they can act completely different in. This ideology transfers from children to adolescence to adulthood. Deaux and Major (1987) constructed a gender roles model that displays how people act differently in different situations. They give the example of college girls. When they are hanging out with their girlfriends or in class or hanging out by themselves they may dress in sweatpants, not care what they look like, be aggressive, and say whatever comes to their mind. On the other hand, if they are going to a party at a fraternity house they may act completely differently. They might take time to do their hair, shave their legs, wear a skirt, and be more passive so the guy controls the situation (Deaux & Major, 1987). I saw this all of the time during my time in high school. I went to an all-girls high school and honestly the girls there were disgusting. They would not shave for weeks on end and half of them would only take a shower once or twice a week. However, once the weekend came around and they were seen outside of school hanging out with guys, they were dressed

up, their hair curled or straightened, and their make-up done perfectly. During the school days the girls would burp and cuss and throw tampons across the room, but as soon as they were out with boys they acted as if they were the perfectly little ladies. It was amazing to see the drastic change from one situation to another and it goes to prove Deaux and Major's point about situations changing people's roles.

Smiler and Kubotera (2010) did a study based off of Deaux's model to see if it held true. They took men and women of all different ages and placed them in different situations (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010). What they were looking at was how both the men and women acted in the different situations and also what the men and women expected from the opposite sex during their interaction (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010). What they found was interesting. As far as the expectations went, men expected women to be aggressive at work. They expected them to be hard workers who fought for what they wanted (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010). However, in a date setting men expected the complete opposite. They expected women to be passive and let them, the men, take the lead (Smiler & Kubotera, 2010). Smiler and Kubotera (2010) observed what how the women acted in each of the separate situations and found the men's expectations to come true in most of the cases.

Meier, Hull and Ortyl (2009) not only looked at the expectations teenagers had of their relationships, but they also looked into the idea of gender performativity. "Gender performativity theories regard gender as emergent in social interaction and therefore as

variable and dependent on situations. This ‘doing gender’ approach suggests individuals adapt their gender presentation to the demands of specific interactions and are aware of the social costs of a failed performance, that is, departing from the dominant gender norms” (Meier, Hull, & Ortyl, 2009, p. 513). They talk about how if girls and boys do not play their roles correctly in each social interaction they face the reality of being rejected from their social group (Meier, Hull, & Ortyl, 2009). Think of it this way. If a boy is the quarterback on a football team, a sport and a position that is considered extremely masculine, and they come to practice and cry when they get hit for the first time, the team is not going to look highly upon that boy and he could be ridiculed or rejected from his fellow teammates.

Since people can see others playing out these roles in society, the stereotypes seem so prominent and seem to be rooted so strongly in ideas that seem logical, it is not hard to understand why people believe men and women are so different. In this paper I am not trying to disprove these stereotypes. What I am trying to do is open the eyes of people to realize that while these stereotypes exist, they are not as prominent as they used to be. It is becoming more and more typical to see and understand that the differences within men and the differences within women are greater than the differences between men and women. Also, I want people to realize that stereotypes are not the only cause for why relationships do not work between men and women.

There are so many reasons for relationships not working. Attachment styles are huge when it comes to relationships not working correctly. If people do not get enough love and affection as a child, then they are going to perform and expect something different than those who did get shown the affection and love that they needed. In addition, the schemas people have about what relationships are and how they should be influences whether or not a relationship is going to work out. If people have the idea that they are destined to be with someone, when the first fight happens they are going to be less inclined to work out their problems and more likely to leave the situation (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Whereas, if someone believes that a relationship requires effort to make it work, they are more likely to stay in the relationship and work to make it grow into a strong, healthy relationship (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Another reason relationships do not work is because people see what they want to see. If they believe that their significant other is cheating on them, all they are going to notice is the evidence that confirms their beliefs (as cited in Miller & Perlman, 2009). Yet even these different reasons are affected by the gender stereotypes that people have.

There are so many reasons for relationships to fail, that it might seem hopeless to even try. However, as I have stated before I believe that there are three tools to help build a healthy, happy, loving relationship. These tools are realistic expectations, good communication, and healthy fighting styles.

These tools are not only influenced by each other, but I believe that they are influenced by something greater: the stereotypes that our society has of men and women. When men and women think they and their partner are supposed to act in a certain way they tend to play out those roles in relationships. Because people play out these roles, that is, what their partner begins to expect from them. This in turn changes their expectations of their partner in situations, and how their partner is going to act. This then changes the way they communicate with each other and their fighting style, just as the diagram below shows:

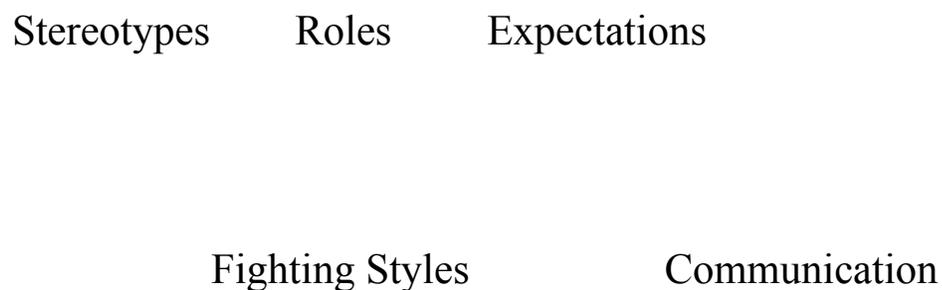


Figure 5. How stereotypes affect the love triangle.

Use this analogy when you think about this: The relationship is like building a house. You need the right tools to be able to build the house. However, if you go to the wrong store to buy the tools, the house will not be as strong as it could be. The house is the healthy relationship. The tools are expectations, fighting styles, and communication. The wrong store is the stereotypes people hold too tightly to. If people would realize that these stereotypes do not hold true in their relationship, then they will have the right way to start to build a good relationship.

These three tools all affect one another and allow the fostering of a healthy relationship. Expectations are what allow us to be happy in our relationships. When our expectations are met or exceeded, then we are happy. Our expectations are more likely to be met when we have good communication with our partner. If we are able to communicate with our partner, they are able to understand what our needs are in a relationship and we can understand theirs. People are also going to get into fights when they have been in a relationship for long enough. However, when people have good communication they also tend to have healthy fighting styles. They are more likely to listen to their partner when they are in a fight, and more likely to try and understand the other person's point of view.

So how do we get the right perspective to have realistic expectations, good communication and healthy fighting styles? I believe we need to undergo a paradigm shift. People need to change their understanding of stereotypes if they even want to be able to have a chance at a healthy relationship. They need to realize that while yes some people do fit the stereotypes, more often they do not. We need to bring the unconscious to the conscious. We put so much emphasis on stereotypes and we need to learn that stereotypes do not hold as much value as we think they do. Once we realize that stereotypes are not the norm in relationships, we can re-evaluate the roles we play out in relationships and the roles we expect our significant other to play out. Once we become who we are instead of who we are supposed to be, our significant other can learn to love us for that and not who they think we are. Once we know who our partner actually is we

can then finally have realistic expectations of them, be able to communicate with them, and be able to fight respectfully with them. If someone asked me what the key to a healthy relationship would be I would answer, “Remember to look at the world realistically, be who you are and not what you are supposed to be, always fight respectfully, communicate thoroughly, and always expect the unexpected”.

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