THE SPARTAN SHIELD

NEW ROMANTICS

ROSES: & THORNS

ROSES & THORN

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In honor of the month of love, the Spartan Shield wanted to highlight the "roses and thorns" of modern relationships. The inclusion of new-age media has permanently changed relationships, for better or for worse, and "New Romantics" is here to delve into these effects.

Tracking Love to a Dead End

By: Anagha Sudhindra

Social media has become a permeating force in practically every aspect of life, practically doing away with any notion of privacy. Location tracking and live action posting trends have been incorporated into popular social media apps, such as Snapchat's SnapMaps and TikTok's TikTok Now. New apps, such as BeReal, furthered the trend of exposing a person's exact actions and whereabouts within an instant. In addition, efforts to reconnect post-pandemic have fostered social trends of sharing live location on apps like Google Maps, Life360 and Find My Friends.

This elevated form of social connection has been beneficial to maintaining many relationships, both platonic and romantic. Brett Kennedy, a clinical psychologist specializing in digital media and device addiction, attested to the positive effects of the lack of privacy. "Privacy is so overrated for a lot of people, so this is sometimes seen as a really nice way to not have to deal with loneliness, isolation," he stated. "It allows you to be with the person and know where they're at. When both people are consenting to it, it can be something playful and fun and a nice way to connect."

Location tracking, when used without ill intent, can be greatly beneficial for safety purposes, offering peace of mind and security to individuals simply worried for their loved ones. But this technology is an inaccurate, one-dimensional representation of the situation. Take, for instance, the deactivation of a partner's live-location. For someone accustomed to viewing and accessing their partner's location at all times, this might seem extremely suspicious. Is their partner engaging in dishonest activity? In some sort of danger? Angry at their partner? Or was it merely that their phone died.

Natasha Schüll, a professor of media culture and communication at NYU articulated this limitation of technology. "When you invite this technology to mediate your care relations of whatever kind, you're also inviting it to do so through its own limited bandwidth, its own limited algorithms. That doesn't always have the contextual clues. It can only monitor certain things."

Extreme access to invasive technology has created a twisted purpose of controlling and overbearing agendas, particularly within romantic relationships. The dread and obsession associated with the stalker-like behaviors of location monitoring often creates an unhealthy, overbearing balance within a relationship—not on purpose, but out of opportunity.

As WIRED writer Elena Lacey aptly phrased, "It's not like I set out to monitor someone's whereabouts at all times. This technology came to me, slithering into my phone as a subfeature of other services." Individuals are not intentionally falling into this vicious cycle, but are sucked in by the profit-centric motives of corporations looking for more clicks, views, and watch hours on their platform.

Access to a face value look at a partner's activities essentially short-circuits the virtue and place of communication within the relationship. Junior Makayla Bush described the role such technology holds in order to maintain a healthy relationship, "I personally think that when it comes down to location tracking, it causes a break in a relationship. Everyone knows relationships are built on trust and if someone is tracking their significant other, there is clearly no trust. There's no point in being in that relationship if [location tracking] is needed. It only causes long term problems."

Long term effects include an extreme deficit of communication and an adoption of the "take-things-into-my-own-hands" mindset. Partner's might become obsessive when granted the liberty of indefinite access to a loved one's every move. This excessive and possessive obsession quickly becomes a direct pipeline to a lack of trust.

An obsessed individual might become accustomed to control within a relationship, demanding irrational and extreme power. This begins to erode trust as the other party in the relationship feels trapped and violated. Their privacy and livelihood begin to be compromised by the obsessed individual, leading to mutual feelings of distrust.

Of course not all individuals who use location tracking in a relationship will end up with such negative consequences. But the access to such powerful, constant, emotion wielding information about a partner certainly makes it easier for individuals to become obsessed and anxious over their partner. Regardless of the relationship status under the use of location-tracking technology, trust should be a cornerstone in order to guarantee and healthy, successful relationship.

Disconnect, Drama, and Dating Shows

By: Makenna Leiby

Heartbreak, betrayal, love, lust and a cash reward.

W h a t do these el- e-ments hold in common? They are the enticing features of television media's latest obsession: reality dating shows.

"Love Island," "Love is Blind," "Too Hot to Handle" and "The Bachelor" are just a few of the hundreds of popular reality dating shows taking over the television landscape. In these series, a group of attractive, young singles are placed in a house, usually residing in a tropical area, and audiences observe as drama ensues over the course of a month.

The shows each hold their own slight variant of the same premise, but the end result is always a season's worth of unfounded arguments and crocodile tears, and viewers are devouring it. The shows blur the line of "reality," couples break up once the final episode airs and the next series in the Netflix lineup provides the same outcome, so why are reality dating shows continuing to grow in popularity?

The answer is deep-seated in human psychology. It is no coincidence that the shows all feature the same repetitive algorithm, producers mold the content based on a formula that attracts the human brain. Romantic reality television provides a key-hole view into the romantic lives of others and allows viewers to understand the ups and downs of relationships, without having to actually experience the pitfalls.

Senior Katia Zemo is an avid watcher of reality dating shows, but even she could recognize that viewers have ulterior motives, "Dating shows help cure the epidemic of loneliness," she explained. The shows are not popular simply because of their lighthearted, fun nature, rather they invite viewers into a community-based environment and allow them to pretend they are creating relationships alongside the contestants.

Humans are hardwired to desire affection and passionate relationships, but the idea of approaching potential partners creates an overwhelming sense of nervousness for modern singles. Therefore, reality dating shows gain another viewer each time someone tries to take note of how a suave TV persona wins over the contestant of their attention. These series teach romance newbies how to navigate their new world.

Contestants that implement certain pick-up tactics are villainized, while others are idolized by the community of spectators. The societal reaction to specific situations in the shows, teach attentive observers the dos and don'ts of current age dating.

Viewers not only learn from dating show contestants, but they eventually begin to relate to them. These shows feature a wide cast of characters with every personality type across the board, so viewers are bound to find a relatable contestant. From then on they can root for that contestant, and uncover comfort when they realize they, like their favorite contestant, will be able to find true love.

T h e popularity of these shows is founded in the drama surrounding them as well, from screaming matches over who deserves the boy to cheating with her best friend, it is all caught on camera. The outlandish actions of contestants leave viewers on the edge of their seats waiting for a blowout reaction from the season's resident dramatic persona.

Senior Jessica Parker avoids drama in real life, but she often seeks out exaggerated television, "I enjoy some good drama as long as I'm not involved in it because I get stressed if I have drama, but I can laugh at others' misfortunes." Dramatic spectacles are all fun and games when you are not the one that has to clean up the mess.

Dating show contestants are noticeably instructed to amplify their emotions to make "good television", but most viewers are satisfied with taking the series with a grain of salt. The love between the couples is often fake, or at minimum exaggerated, and the "enemies" often miraculously make up after the show. Therefore, the appeal of the genre is found in its emphasis on stimulating human interaction, the situations may not be real, but they could be, and that is enough for viewers.

Zemo acknowledged the faults in the execution of these shows, "How can you truly get to know someone when there are cameras following you around 24/7?" But she, like many others that can grasp this principle, continues to stay updated on the newest "Love Island" or "The Bachelor" couples.

The popularity of reality dating shows demonstrates the lack of real-life connection modern romantics are experiencing and disconnect new-age dating strategies has caused. Dating shows are far from "good television," but they satisfy an audience of hopeless romantics dreaming of stumbling across their success story.

Interracial and Interfaith Relationships: True Labors of Love

By: Ayah Alsheika

The number of interracial and interreligious romantic relationships has vastly increased since the Loving v. Virginia rule in 1967, in which a unanimous court struck down the ban on interracial relationships. This event marked a significant advancement in relationship norms and dynamics. Despite legal restrictions being lifted, the remaining struggles of these relationships often go unaddressed and disregarded.

Interracial relationships take place between two people of different races, a seemingly simple concept to execute. Yet race is deeper than just the color of one's skin. Along with race comes different tendencies, cultures and traditions, and the gap in understanding between different cultures can often cause friction within interracial relationships.

Often, the underlying friction of interracial love begins to reveal itself in the wedding planning stage, the first true public depiction of each party's different cultures. If these cultures do not find a way to meld, it almost directly leads to a path of tension and conflict. Jane Wheeler, a cross-country coach at Pleasant Valley, is in an interracial marriage with Kenny Wheeler. "As a white female who grew up in a predominantly white rural town in Iowa, I was very naive and uneducated when it came to racial issues in America. So when I began dating a black man (who became my future husband), I naively believed there wouldn't be any struggles." Proceeding to marriage amid these struggles is challenging, and even then, over 64% of interracial couples are subjected to negative bias and discrimination according to the National Library of Medicine.

The idea that the individuals in an interracial marriage believe in different traditions and values leads to the idea that compromise is not only necessary, but absolutely vital—and sometimes begrudgingly difficult. All marriages require compromise, but this is amplified in an interracial marriage when deciding what aspects of whose cultural will be upheld in the union. Ultimately, each party is bound to sacrifice some aspect of their culture in order to reach compromise in a relationship.

These differences in practices, traditions and expectations are often perpetuated by the families of each individual in the relationship. More often than not, these families will clash, imposing on the relationship's nature and dynamic with their not-so-passive criticisms. Family disapproval and conflict is one of the many reasons why interracial marriages often end in divorce, as there are an excess of opinions contributing to the status of the relationship.

After an interracial relationship is formed and blossomed, another problem has the potential to surface---raising multiracial children. Cultivating the growth of a multiracial child is one of the most difficult grounds of compromise in an interracial relationship. Family dynamics can be complicated within interracial partnerships, as Wheeler describes. "We also experience things like not being recognized as a family when we check out at a store together. People are often surprised that my children belong to me." Interracial partnerships produce a completely new subculture within their own families by raising new generations of mixed children, which can lead to conflicts in other parts of their lives.

Within their own families, mixed children may feel too dissimilar to either parental side, and may become the outcasts of the family. At school and among friends, mixed children often lack a distinct identity compared to some peers, and this conflicting set of values and expectations at home can be seen affecting their identity issues in other aspects of life. Wheeler's experience with raising interracial children describes the pressure on the parents to raise their children around these struggles. "I wanted to find ways to help work toward a more equitable experience, not only for my children but all children of color. I knew my children would experience things I could not relate to so I wanted to do my best to understand struggles they may face."

Interreligious relationships pose their own issues as well, besides just interracial relationships. Combining two religions or distinct cultures into one family is bound to foster disagreements. Though compromises are often possible, yet still difficult, in interracial relationships, compromises within interreligious relationships are exponentially less successful due to the rigid, un-fusable nature of religions. Some religions even forbid interfaith marriage, showing the extremes to which interreligious relationships are prohibited.

Raising interreligious children is the single most difficult compromise to be made within an interreligious relationship, as children cannot be raised as two religions. This decision can affect every aspect of the child's life, including the reactions of their paternal and maternal families. This decision can lead to disapproval and even estrangement among families.

Some interreligious parents decide to altogether avoid the discussion of the faith of their children. Though this alleviates tension between conflicting ideologies in early stages of childhood development, it often manifests as an identity crisis later in life, with children unable to find a sense of place among children who are typically raised in a mono-religious household. If a child chooses the religions they prefer within their families, often they will lack the guidance from both of their parents, unlike typical mono religious households.

Based on the substantial differences in teaching, raising and advising between two parents in an interreligious marriage, it is not unlikely that the children may have certain preferences between their mother and father. This can cause even more tension and animosity within a family that may already seem superficially divided.

Interracial and interreligious relationships both propose conflicts that settle not only between the partnership, but also on the children in interreligious or interracial families. A child's identity may be affected by the lack of concentration of a certain culture or religion, and this lack of a distinct identity can affect their family dynamics and social lives. Interreligiously-raised children often feel different from their peers, raised under one faith. Junior Ariana Assadi tells her perspective of an interreligious upbringing. "It is interesting to see how my family's habits differ so much from my peers raised under one religion. I can see how the blending of cultures in my family has affected our habits that are so unique from my peers'."

Interracial and interreligious relationships face undeniable struggles, but for those willing to endure these and make compromises to ensure a balance in a family, these relationships can promote new and meaningful subcultures and amity between previously separated cultures. These hardships in interracial and inter-religious love have been used historically to deter the mixing of these cultures, but if both individuals have a mutual respect for the beliefs and traditions of the other, a strong relationship can be formed, undeterred by the prejudice of the past.

F̶NAILED IT

Watch as 3 Spartan couples put their relationship to the test! Did they Nail It or Fail It?

How well do these Spartan couples know each other? Scan here to find out!

Likes Ruin Love

By: Grace Ludwig

Only 25% of all marriages ended in divorce in the 1950's and in 2022, the rate has doubled to 50%. So what factor has changed relationships in the past century? Why are relationships now more destined to fail?

The answer may be the inclusion of social media into modern relationships. While the divorce rate was steadily increasing, so was the popularity of social media. During this time apps such as Snapchat, Instagram and Tinder became an extremely accessible way to communicate with others. These forms of social media allow people to create deceiving profiles and have access to millions around the world at any point and time, including potential romantic partners.

The real question is: is the increased divorce rate directly correlated to the rise of social media? Scientific journal, Computers in Human Behavior, proved that frequent use of social media apps has a direct correlation to increased tension in one's marriage. A partner's constant use of social media can lead to feelings of insecurity and jealousy in a relationship.

Clinical psychologist Dr. Scott Bea found that when social media and social lives become intertwined, it causes jealousy to arise in the relationship. Jealousy is a feeling often present in a relationship when one partner feels as though they are going to lose their significant other due to another "better" person or that their partner has another romantic involvement. The emotion is often exaggerated when constant use of social media is involved in the relationship.

More than ever before people are becoming obsessed with the accounts their partner is following and what social media posts they have liked. According to Pew Research Center 23% of people in relationships whose significant other is involved on social media apps said they have felt jealous or insecure within their relationship.

Various Spartan women in relationships answered the question, "Have you ever felt threatened or insecure because of the people your partner follows on social media platforms?" The answer was commonly an almost immediate yes, followed by a common explanation. One Spartan student said, "I constantly find myself feeling insecure when I see my boyfriend follows a new famous girl. I feel as though they are way prettier than me and I cannot compete. The girls often wear more revealing things, making me feel insecure about my own body and making me question our relationship."

Not only does social media bring the feelings of jealousy and insecurity to the surface within a relationship, but it also holds outlets that enlarge feelings of distrust. In an article in the University of Daily Kansan, Anissa Fritz, talks about the relation between social media and the feeling of distrust. In the article she states, " Social media is now a breeding ground for distrust in relationships."

There is no question that social media has become fundamental in most people's daily lives, However it is a double edged sword. Although it may not be at direct fault for the failure of relationships, it certainly plays a huge role. Social media has changed the way we communicate with one another as well as how society views relationships as a whole.

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The Social Media Fairytale

By: Allyson Lineburg

Everyone searches for their perfect, real-life fairytale ending. But some go beyond mere wishes, doing anything for this reality regardless of the cost.

Domestic violence is an unspoken phenomenon, becoming incredibly normalized. People affected believe that it is simply a way of life that they are forced to come to terms with. Social media tells us a lot of things, sometimes it is things that everyone should be aware of, while other times it causes more harm than good like creating a false reality.

One of Social media's most harmful side-effects is shielding relationships with rose-tinted glasses, making them look so perfect from the outside without allowing audiences to know the true behind-the-scenes of the relationship. It also tends to heavily feature toxic relationships to such a degree that the issue is no longer taken seriously anymore. Senior Caleigh Spinks recognized the unfortunate portrayal of abusive relationships within the media. "Society romanticizes the idea of being in a toxic relationship."

Discussing violence within romantic relationships and recognizing its effects is vital for victims, but when violence becomes such an easygoing conversation topic with friends a problem arises. Spinks identified the issue in relevance in her own life, "I realize—myself—that I have done it and I realize now how wrong it is." When one talks about being in a violent relationship light-heartedly, it can be very detrimental to others who have been victims of violent partners in the past, especially of a partner who caused mental and physical trauma, it displays to victims that their feelings are invalid or dramatic.

Falsely claiming to be in a toxic relationship has become a huge trend in today's media. There are violent relationships displayed in almost every romantic movie, book and TV show. One best-selling book in January 2022, "It Ends With Us" by Colleen Hoover, is a classic romantic story that begins with the main character Lily describing her father violently abusing her mother while she was growing up. Then, throughout the novel Lily goes on to marry a man who physically abused her multiple times. Rather than leaving him, she continued their relationship, furthering the horrible instances of romanticized domestic violence within modern literature and media.

The problem with this plotline is that the novel became so popular and readers were idealizing the character who domestically abused Lily. "It makes it harder to get out of a relationship because people make it feel so normal. I had no idea I was in that type of relationship until I was no longer with my ex, because society makes it feel so normal. You don't actually see the problem until you look at it from a different angle," stated senior Addy Patten. Hoover created a fictional character that people could sympathize with, forgiving the character's inexcusable mistakes. It was hard for many participating members of society, especially young readers, to realize that having empathy for an abuser was inappropriate due to the popularity of this novel and many others, furthering stigmas around the subject of domestic violence.

With modern literature in the picture, the ideal fairytale ending almost has to feature a violent partner, creating turmoil within the relationship. Violent partners are becoming more normalized than ever and, for many, abuse is now considered to be a normal part of life.

No matter who you are, you deserve to be treated with respect and loved by someone who really cares about you. The idea of domestic violence is talking over social media; making things seem so perfect. Modern media does not show the ins and the outs of relationships; it only shows the glamor of them, filtering out the raw, honest and often violent truth.