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The forecast is 105 plus degrees in Paris today, and 112 in Las Vegas. Global warming and summer are here, and it's time for the latest issue of *Popular Culture Review*. While we won't claim to cool you off, we will try to take your mind off the heat.

This issue is rich with diversity. In "Dating in the Digital Age: A Research Experiment," Marci Mazzarotto explores some of the ways in which human relationships and communication are impacted by technology, with emphasis on the popular culture phenomenon of app-based dating. In turn, Keith Moser asks "Has True Romance Disappeared in Consumer Society?" in his Morinian and Baudrillarian reflections on the "acute crisis of simulation."

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Dating in the Digital Age: A Research Experiment

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by Marci Mazzarotto

ABSTRACT

This article explores various facets of dating in the digital age in order to highlight the ways in which technology has impacted human communication and relationships. Taking together the personal accounts of individuals' online dating experiences, customized survey data, as well as the first-hand experiments of using Tinder in New York City, the primary goal herein is to offer a unique and multi-faceted look into the popular culture phenomenon of app-based dating.

Keywords: Tinder, dating apps, online dating, app-based dating, digital communication, experimental research

Citas románticas en la era digital: un experimento de investigación

RESUMEN

Este artículo explora varias facetas de las citas en la era digital para resaltar las formas en que la tecnología ha impactado la comunicación y las relaciones humanas. Reuniendo las cuentas personales de las experiencias de citas en línea de los individuos, los datos de las encuestas personalizadas y los experimentos de primera mano sobre el uso de Tinder en la ciudad de Nueva York, el objetivo principal aquí es ofrecer una visión única y multifacética de la cultura popular. fenómeno de las citas basadas en la aplicación.

数字时代恋爱：一项研究实验

摘要

本文探索了数字时代约会的不同方面，以强调技术通过哪些方式影响了人类传播和关系。通过将个人在网上约会经历的陈述、个性化的调查数据、和在纽约市使用Tinder软件的第一手实验进行综合考虑，本文主要目的在于，为研究"基于应用程序的约会"这一流行文化现象提供一个独特和多面的视角。

关键词：Tinder，约会应用程序，网络约会，基于应用程序的约会，数字传播，实验研究

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The proliferation of digital technologies has fundamentally altered the landscape of human communication, from easily facilitating business meetings across continents to allowing for a simultaneous group chat with a dozen people to carrying around hundreds of choices in possible romantic partners right in our pockets. Having a background in psychology and media studies, it is not too far-fetched to understand my fascination with human communication when it goes digital. While the arena of digital communication is vast and constantly changing—thus in need for ongoing evaluation

by scholars across various disciplines—I became interested with the specific concept of app-based dating, and just what kind of mental and emotional effects such online apps can have on our ability to communicate and relate to one another —online and off.

The popularity of online dating makes sense, as does the increasing ubiquity of dating apps like Tinder, Bumble, and OkCupid. Tinder, which launched in 2012, still remains one of the most popular dating apps (Fruhlinger). The app offers users an addicting and easy-to-use platform: simply connect the app to your Facebook account, choose up to six photos to display on your Tinder profile, write a short bio, and then you may begin swiping through potential partners. Users swipe left to reject someone, while swiping right to "like" them. If two individuals swipe right on one other, it is considered a "match," which then allows either party to message the other. Without a mutual like or match between two people, the messaging option does not unlock, therefore preventing any form of communication from occurring.

Undoubtedly, there is great appeal to being able to quickly judge potential partners through a short bio and a few photos, and to do so while comfortably lounging at home. The process not only requires minimal effort, it eliminates the risk of direct rejection, awkwardness, and the initial guessing game of whether or not someone finds you attractive. However, with the ease of dating apps, what happens to human communication? What impact does it have on the direct/indirect accountability for the ways we speak and act toward another person?

Communicating primarily via technologically mediated means can act as a barrier to real human communication, in turn, preventing or truncating the formation of a deep,

meaningful connection among two people. Communication via a digital screen appears to easily and unwittingly transform the otherwise thoughtful actions of an individual into uncaring and disrespectful acts, simply due to how easy it can be to forget there is a real person on the other side of that digital device. While Tinder may eliminate the fear of rejection, it can also encourage an overinflated sense of self. The abundance in contemporary dating options can lead anyone to fall prey to the vicious cycle of FOMO, or fear of missing out, which can leave us with the idea of yearning for someone or something better, with a good chance that it never materializes.

My intent is not to vilify Tinder, dating apps or online dating; rather, it is to provide another angle in which those who choose to use such apps can adapt to the technology smartly and responsibly, instead of surrendering to it. In order to accomplish this educational goal, I decided to spend some time directly experimenting with Tinder. I set out to see what happens when we carry around a multitude of dating options right in our pockets. What kind of psychological, emotional, or even physical effects does app-based dating elicit? How does it destroy or enhance our ability to communicate? Does the technology itself influence who may or may not become our potential partners? If so, how?

My attempts in answering the above questions came from not only my direct user experimentation on Tinder itself, but also in asking willing (sometimes anonymous) participants, both in-person and online, to share their personal stories and experiences with dating in the digital age. Consequently, the focus on this article is not in providing a systematic conclusion to the underlying science of dating, as such a feat would prove difficult to accomplish. Nor does this article seek to

give dating advice, talk about the dos and don'ts of love and relationships, nor place judgment on an individual's dating decisions. What I set out to do was a bit different than most *Sex and the City* type material, as this experiment was focused on the technological apparatus and its influence on the ways in which we communicate, specifically within the context of dating. With that, there are few disclaimers I would like to share:

1. This was an artistic experiment coupled with academic curiosity, and it is not reflective of my personal life nor should it be interpreted as empirically driven scientific inquiry.

2. The Tinder experiments discussed throughout were purposely absurd in order to test the limits and nuances of the app; thus, I strongly advise against using any dating apps in the ways described herein.

3. There are a lot of research materials and advice columns on the various facets of online dating—this article serves to add another dimension and voice to that ongoing discourse.

The initial idea behind this project was partly driven by a desire to better understand human communication and its complex relationship with technology. Having recently moved to New York to conduct some research and writing, I was artistically inspired by the city's bedlam and the seemingly endless pop culture references to its preoccupation with sex, love, and dating.

The initial findings of this project were presented at the *Far West Popular Culture Association* conference, and this article serves to provide a more comprehensive explanation and contextual analysis of that preliminary presentation.

THE BACKGROUND

One of the key elements of my academic research is the premise that research and experimentation are foundational in the pursuit and creation of knowledge, which is derived from the philosophical underpinnings of avant-garde movements such as Futurism, Dada, Surrealism, and Fluxus. One does not need to be familiar with the inner working of the avant-garde to be impacted by these movements' extended influence on popular culture practices, technological advancements, and academic discourse.

What is important to note is that research and experimentation, particularly through an arts-based perspective, can provide tools that enable us to create a more robust understanding of ourselves and our relationship with the world. Often, we acquire knowledge through our failures, and we can apply the "research/experiment/fail/repeat" dynamic to most aspects of life, including dating. It is not a novel concept, but one that is important to recognize. Research becomes part of the dating process, for example, not so much in researching the person you are about to meet in real life (although that does happen), but more about researching logistical information in order to determine a good meeting spot (e.g. location, cost, vibe, etc.).

While we may fail to realize it much of the time, we share an ongoing relationship with the process of research and experimentation and how it applies/influences our personal and professional contexts. The key then is to capitalize on the research and experimentation process by making it more active, relatable, and effective to whatever context we choose. That is part of the reason that I decided to experiment with dating in the digital age, which in turn has allowed me to develop a creative, yet scholarly product immersed in first-hand experiences.

THE PROJECT

As mentioned earlier, the initial idea for this project came about after my move to New York, where I quickly harnessed a greater fascination with the various aspects of daily life in the city. I also came to realize how obsessed New York, as a pop culture identity, seems to be with the concept of dating, as there are many films and television shows dedicated to addressing the plight and hilarity of finding love in the city. To name just a few cinematic examples: *The Seven Year Itch* (1955), *Breakfast at Tiffany's* (1961), *Annie Hall* (1977), *When Harry Met Sally* (1989), *You've Got Mail* (1998), *Serendipity* (2001), *Hitch* (2005), and *Friends with Benefits* (2011), along with television shows like *Living Single* (1993–1998), *Friends* (1994–2004), *Sex and the City* (1998–2004), *How I Met Your Mother* (2005–2014), *Girls* (2012–2017), and *Master of None* (2015–2017).

Granted, New York's iconic scenery and larger-than-life persona offers the audience a unique character in and of itself, which serves as additional appeal in utilizing the city as a backdrop in so many films and TV shows. In turn, the city's persona, coupled with the ongoing popularity of romantic comedies, makes for a successful cinematic formula that has been deployed time and time again. Nonetheless, I can only imagine the real chaotic nature of attempting to navigate the city on a full-time basis, particularly if you are in the market for love, which is one of the reasons I wanted to obtain a greater understanding of the nuances, however topical, of urban life through the intersection of dating, communication, and digital technologies with a specific focus on Tinder.

I set up a Tinder profile using a fake Facebook account that included a fictitious name and age; however, I did use a few real, yet somewhat elusive photos of myself. I created a digital

persona that had elements of the real me (to maintain believ-ability) but was not actually me (to maintain some level of anonymity). In order to test the dynamics of the app itself, including the specific limitations and opportunities in match-ing with potential partners, I conducted several mini-experi-ments. These mini-experiments, such as attempting to match with as many individuals as possible, goes beyond the realm of what I or the average serious user would do under normal circumstances while on Tinder.

I would not directly consider this experiment a social one, due to its personal nature and small scale; however, I did set up my experiment primarily to test out a socially centered hypothesis: app-based dating offers an easily accessible and seemingly endless menu of potential mates, which in turn can create a superficial experience, as well as a breakdown of communication and mutual respect due to the connection being mediated via technology. This, of course, is not to say that app-based dating fails to produce real or meaningful connections, even if such connections fulfill a brief carnal de-sire or offer long-term companionship.

THE RESEARCH

In order to better grasp the nuances of the contemporary online dating landscape, my research comprised of gathering information from individuals willing to speak on and off the record, from my own experimentation, as well as from exam-ining various source materials on the topic. I spent time read-ing a range of various materials from lifestyle and academic articles to viewing numerous videos ranging from the silly to the serious. I also spoke to dozens of individuals who were kind enough to share their dating stories, which presented as an odd combination of the horrifying and the hilarious, with some conversations occurring digitally and/or in-per-

son. Some of the people I spoke with were friends, others were strangers, and sometimes they were friends of friends. I spoke to anyone willing to openly and honestly share details of their personal dating lives and experiences. Lastly, I conducted an online survey of 100 strangers through a paid subscription service via SurveyMonkey.

A helpful and relevant resource was the 2016 book, *Modern Romance: An Investigation*, which was co-authored by stand-up comedian Aziz Ansari and New York University professor and sociologist Eric Klinenberg. The book is a light-hearted, comedic read, while still delivering legitimate, data-driven social science research. While I do not agree with all that the book argues, I still find its nuanced approach to the dilemmas of dating in the digital age both poignant and relatable. The book addresses single life in New York, as well as Los Angeles, Tokyo, Buenos Aires, and Paris, covering a broad, albeit limited, cultural range of contemporary dating mores.

Since I was interested in conducting a creative, hands-on experimental project, while simultaneously fusing together a few elements from my dissertation, the scope herein is a bit more limited, with a lighter overall tone, than that of my other academic work. If a significant level of financial support was existent, the research and experimentation demonstrated and discussed throughout *Modern Romance* is, in many ways, an example of the ideal culmination of an experimental research project such as this one. Nevertheless, I believe a key value to this project is mainly derived from its experimental processes.

THE PEOPLE

My real Facebook account served as the initial go-to place for collecting stories about dating in the digital age. While the

initial response was not overwhelming, I did receive messages from several friends eager to share their experiences. One friend publicly posted an article she had written about a previous dating experiment conducted while living in Las Vegas. Another friend collected an essay that a friend of hers wrote especially for this project, a response of which had been a result of a public appeal within my Facebook network. In turn, this particular friend had shared information about my project with her Facebook community and one man jumped at the opportunity to share feedback regarding his online dating adventures.

I also had several of my personal friends message me privately sharing their experiences about the good and bad of dating in the digital age. Although successful stories of people meeting through more serious sites like match.com are fairly common, I was surprised that I did not receive messages from anyone who had such positive experiences. Ultimately, individuals were more open to share their funny, quirky, sad, and sometimes disturbing stories of navigating the facets of online dating, rather than sharing their successes of finding love in the digital era.

THE STORIES

I am grateful to the individuals who allowed me a quick peek into their personal dating struggles and victories. While I have heard many stories—good, bad, happy, and sad—I chose only four of these to share here. The stories below were written by the individuals themselves, and all besides one remains anonymous. Since I wanted the stories to be told in their original voice, I have left their writings unedited (with the exception of formatting and/or bracketed information), hence any errors in spelling, grammar, or syntax that may appear in the text below.

Male #1:

Circa 2005 I was on Match.com. I don't know if apps like Tinder make it any easier since they bring people to your attention rather than have you hunt for them but being on Match was hard in a smallish college town. I was around 24 and everyone on it was either late thirties or 18–21. Once I found someone who was a great match and just slightly younger than me. I thought I recognized her but couldn't place her. After indicating interest (I can't remember but maybe Match's metaphor for this was a wink?), it hit me: she was a former student of mine from when I taught freshman comp. I was just horrified.

I stopped paying for Match because it just wasn't working for me. From late 2004 to early 2005, I was still technically married and from then on I was divorced. I'm pretty sure I was simply filtered out of many peoples' searches because of that. FB played a big part in the early part of my relationship with my current wife. [It abruptly ends here, as there was no further discussion of his current relationship.]

Female #1:

I went on two dates. One was good, I thought. The second was weird because his sexual preference seemed questionable. I did have phone conversations with at least 4 of the guys I interacted with. I'm only friends with one, on FB.

I went on two dates with the first guy. He was funny, attractive, smart. The time I met him at his house and his ex was there. He said she really wanted to meet me. I felt like she was seizing [sic] me up if that makes sense. He was still very much in love with her I think. So that was a dud. The next guy I met had a humorous personality which I love so we met up. We had only texted prior to meeting but he was completely gay and totally not into chicks. At least that's the vibe I got.

I've never actually met my friend. We chatted for a month or so and then started to talk on the phone. He was easy to talk to like a friend, funny, sweet. There were so many creepers that would message me about what they would do to me sexually. That was repulsive. Both old guys and young guys.

I also met a guy who I chatted with and he seemed normal and nice. Cute profile pic. We began to talk on the phone, but his voice didn't match his pic. With determination I persuaded him into sending me a pic of himself at that very moment. He stammered and had excuses until he gave up and sent it. He was clearly not the person he was in his profile. He either aged 30 years or it was a picture of his son. I'll never know.

After about 4 months I wasn't even going on the site [Plenty of Fish] *anymore but started receiving phone calls from around the country. I never answer calls if I don't know the phone number. No voice messages were ever left. I also got weird texts asking me for sexual favors.*

This had gone on for about a month. Calls almost every other day. I finally answered a call and this guy was trying to meet up with me for sex. I confronted him and asked him where he got my #. He said he had the wrong number. I finally got him to admit he found my # on back page which is an escort site. I truly believe someone from POF that I had engaged in phone conversations with put my # up on that site. I ended up changing my # and inactivated my POF account. It was a mess.

Male #2:

So a little background about me, I'm 31 a male and bisexual [sic]. *Being single for most of the last 15 years, I can say that single life is not all it's cracked up to be. I will say that Tinder and other dating sites have made the process much easier in terms of finding a match. The use of immediate judgement on*

personal appearance in photos plays a major [role] in that process. Letting the other person know that you are also attracted to them on a physical level releases some of the worry in normal dating.

I took a long break from the dating scene after college. After experimentation I surmised that although I like men, I can't see myself happy in a long term relationship with a man. For the past few years I have exclusively dated women or tried to that is [sic]. I have only been on Tinder for a couple months now, it has been hit and miss for me. No lasting relationships, just fleeting romantic adventures mostly. Although I did just have a second date, who knows maybe this could be something lasting. I did try OKCupid a little over a year ago, the first date was a train wreck. She told me the worst sob stories of her actual life, [worse] than I have [heard in] my entire life.

Overall the hardest part I have struggled to get used to is that chivalry is almost dead. There are a few women still interested in hopeless romantic types like myself. But overall it has come to rely on initial pick up lines and jokes to get things started rather than just greetings or normal conversation starters. But I've had fun, so I'll keep on swiping.

Female #2:

A woman went on 8 first dates with 8 different men on 8 consecutive days. She then wrote a wonderful article about it for Las Vegas Weekly.

THE SURVEY

In addition to speaking with individuals in a face-to-face setting, as well as reading their stories in digital format, I conducted an online survey of 100 strangers (plus a few friends) about their experiences with dating in the digital age. The

survey was conducted via a paid service through Survey-Monkey, and they were responsible for identifying individuals who matched specific parameters for acceptable participants (e.g. individuals over 21, with experience in online dating). Unfortunately, much of the data provided by these anonymous SurveyMonkey participants turned out to be insignificant, as many respondents filled out the questionnaire with gibberish and/or provided falsified information. Consequently, I was left to analyze the results with only 57 out of a total of 106 responses.

I asked the anonymous respondents a total of 10 questions, three of which are highlighted in Figures 1–3. The numeric results are telling, particularly because the resulting percentages are split nearly 50/50, an indicator of contrasting experiences happening nearly at the same rate to one another. For example, in question #5, the numbers indicate a high percentage of individuals reporting as having experienced a successful sexual encounter versus those who did not (58% versus 42%). However, in question #6, a split percentage of individuals report having experienced a successful relationship versus those who did not (51%–49%). As for the final question, the general feedback regarding digital dating experiences fell somewhere between successful and depressing, which is yet another indicator of the wide range of individuals' feelings about finding love and companionship in an online platform, be it app-based or not.

It is important to note, however, that the definition and parameters of what makes for a successful relationship or sexual encounter can vary widely among participants. Despite such a definition not being expressly stated within the survey, the results are significant in that they demonstrate a drastic, yet near equal divide between what was perceived as a good versus a bad experience in online dating.

5. Did you ever have a successful sexual

Skipped: 0   Answered: 57

Yes	**58%**	33
No	**42%**	24
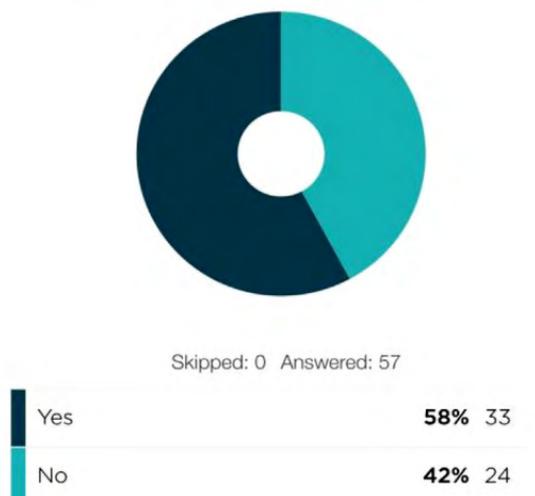
Figure 1. *The Final Word in the Question Should Read "Encounter?"

6. Did you ever have a successful relationship?

Skipped: 0   Answered: 57

Yes	**51%**	29
No	**49%**	28
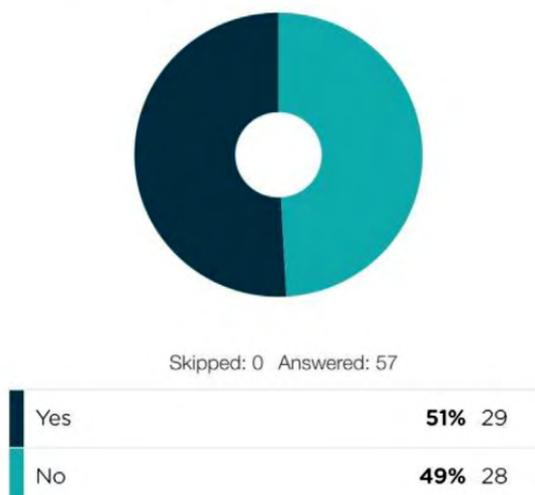
Figure 2. Successful Relationship?

10. How would you describe your overall online dating experience?

Skipped: 0   Answered: 57

▮	Fabulous	**7%**	4
▮	Successful	**28%**	16
▮	Okay	**30%**	17
▮	Depressing	**30%**	17
▮	Horrifying	**5%**	3
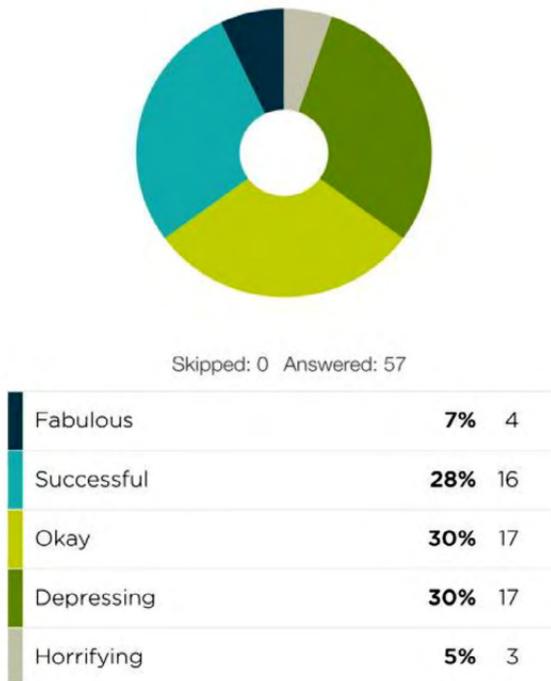
Figure 3. Overall Dating Experience

THE EXPERIMENT

As I sat alone in my New York apartment on rainy Sunday afternoon, this experiment began with a seemingly simple question: in what ways was the latest craze of app-based dating impacting the overall quality of human communication and relationships? And then I thought more specifically about a swipe-style dating app like Tinder and whether or not it was realistically possible that it could offer something more substantial than the ease of casual sex.

In an attempt to shed light on the above questions, I used a fake Tinder profile and spent a total of 35 nonconsecutive days on the app. The psychological and emotional consequences of being on Tinder were both positive and negative, but most of my experiences, albeit fictional, were surprisingly unexpected, and thankfully, short-lived. Throughout the 35 days, I took notes in order to more specifically, although not precisely, track and summarize most of my interactions with the technology and the people within it.

Before I dive into discussing what I term as "soft statistics" of my time on Tinder, I must stress that I am not a professional statistician; therefore, the numerical stats found within this article are estimated and based on various notes I took during my brief time on the app. More importantly, my Tinder experience should not be taken as reflective of the average user experience, as part of my goal was to the push the app's boundaries to absurd levels in order to test the dynamics of the app's design and its real-life applicability, particularly in relation to the intersection of human communication and technology. With that said, however, I do believe the stats below are profoundly indicative of a couple of key issues in today's dating world.

First, a lack of depth. Tinder's swiping design is inherently superficial, as it allows us to quickly judge others based solely on physical appearance and their geographical proximity; hence, why Tinder has a reputation for being a hook-up app. Tinder's design can act as an immediate reward system, much like a game, which is why there are those who have taken to using Tinder for humorous purposes only. If there is no "match" (i.e. the reward of two people liking one another), then the rejection may not feel real, since the rejection was mediated via technology and did not occur in person. In a large, tech savvy city like New York, the options can appear

endless, and particularly for females, it is easy to become overwhelmed with a long list of matches, yet substantial conversation or a real-life meeting may still feel far-fetched.

Second, a lack of respect. Tinder, along with other forms of digital communication (e.g. social media platforms like Instagram), allow for people to disappear without a trace. No awkward conversations, no painful confrontations. However, the lack of respect can happen long before we are ghosted by someone, such as via a barrage of thoughtless, uncomfortable, and sometimes disturbing messages. Digital media technologies and social media platforms have made it easy for us to forget there is a real person on the other side of our mediated conversations. As a media and communications professor, I find the above dynamic disturbing and encourage my students to understand and contextualize media objects in order to become both informed consumers and conscientious citizens.

Moving back to the statistical discussion of my Tinder experiments, I must admit that after I gathered the stats on the total number of profiles I swiped through, matched and talked with, etc., I attempted to compile a visual graph that could clearly communicate the figures. However, the disparity in the numerical range was so large, that any visual rendition looked bizarre and not in the least bit helpful. Consequently, I decided to write out the stats in a bulleted format and I urge you to pay close attention to figures below, as they may surprise you:

- Over the course of a two-month period, I was actively on Tinder for 35 days.

- Of these 35 days, which equals a total of 840 hours, I spent about 6 hours actively swiping, with addi-

tional time spent on other things such as messaging matches.

- These 6 swiping hours make up roughly 0.7% of my total time in a 35-day period.

- And using only 0.7% of my time, I managed to swipe through an estimated 21,000 profiles of individuals living within less than 5 miles of my Upper East Side apartment.

- Once again, that number is 21,000. Not 2,100. Not 210. Not 21. *Twenty-One Thousand.*

- I understand how the 21,000 may appear unbelievable. Although it is an estimate, it is a realistic number nonetheless. Below is an explanation on how I arrived at that figure:

  - I conducted various 60-second drills to see how fast I could swipe through profiles, while still being able to "judge" them. Sometimes I could swipe through as many as 75 profiles per minute, other times as little as 48. But, the average number of profiles swiped in a 60-second period was 58.5.

  - By swiping an average of 58.5 profiles per minute, one can easily swipe through around 3,500 profiles an hour. At least initially, Tinder can be addicting; thus, spending hours glued to your phone swiping right or left is completely feasible.

- Of the 21,000 swipes, I swiped right (i.e. "liked") on approximately 500 profiles—meaning that I rejected 97.6% of all profiles encountered. However, of those 500 profiles, about 150 of them were right-

swipes-only mini-experiments, which I conducted as another mini-experiment to test my overall match rate. So, I only swiped right on about 350 profiles, which increases the rejection rate to 98.3%.

- My overall match-rate was roughly 80%, meaning that 20% of individuals were not mutually interested in my profile. Thus, rendering about 400 matches out of the 500.

- Of those 400 matched profiles, I likely spoke with about 75 individuals, while generally maintaining only about a dozen matches at a time.

- And out of the 75 individuals I did message, I would say that maybe only 8 or so seemed interesting enough to have possibly met in person.

- Consequently, over the course of 35 days, I was presented with a total of 21,000 prospects and narrowed that down to a mere 8, a rejection rate of 99.96% of all eligible profiles I encountered on Tinder in New York.

If the above scenario took place in real life, I would have encountered a total of 25 individuals every hour for 840 straight hours, which equals 600 people a day for 35 days. These insanely high statistics serve to demonstrate just how absurd and unhealthy our relationship with technology can become and is certainly telling about the technological underpinnings that contribute to app-based dating, particularly Tinder, being perceived as overly superficial.

As I mentioned earlier, these figures are certainly not representative of the real, average Tinder user, as my goal was experimental in nature, but they can nevertheless serve as an

indicator of unrealistic expectations and a harmful dynamic technology can leverage on otherwise healthy and more natural human communication patterns (e.g. meeting face-to-face). Also, it should be noted, had I conducted this experiment in a small rural town, reaching such high match figures would not have been feasible. New York provided a unique cultural space in which to test out these ideas. With that, ask any single New Yorker about their dating experiences and they will likely have a combination of funny and sad stories to share.

CONCLUSION

I am not a dating expert. I set out to experiment with the complex and nuanced relationship between technology and human communication in attempts to gain greater insight into the landscape of dating in the digital age. Online dating, be it through whatever form one chooses, is as diverse as the individuals partaking in the process. Sure, Tinder has rightfully earned a reputation as a hook-up app, but there are many stories of real romance and marriage developing from it as well. Thus, numerous variables must be considered when using technology as a means of pursuing any type of relationship, romantic or otherwise.

Throughout this experiment, I found that my initial hypothesis did ring true: app-based dating can provide a superficial experience, as well as a breakdown in communication and mutual respect, due to the technologically mediated nature of the connections. However, I also learned that the underlying reason people navigate such an exhausting dating landscape is to fulfill the common human goal of sharing mutual love. Because in the end, it really is about finding and maintaining human companionship, and it is up to us to utilize these digital media technologies in way that enhances our various

communication styles and real-life experiences, rather than oppressing them.

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