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## Swiping Your Life Away Failing to find love through Dating Apps

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Swiping Your Life Away  
Failing to find love through Dating Apps  
Jesus Alberto Ramirez Martinez  
Division of Humanities and Communication  
Fall 2018

Jesus Alberto Ramirez Martinez  
Senior Capstone  
Peace Studies  
Essay  
Dr. Estella Porras  
Division of Humanities and Communication  
Fall 2018

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## Proposal

1. Jesus Alberto Ramirez Martinez. Peace studies concentration
2. Swiping Your Life Away Failing to find love through Dating Apps
3. This essay focuses on dating experience and interactions in the age of digital technology and dating apps. Through the use of peer reviewed essays and personal narratives of experiences using dating apps, I highlight the dangers of safety and privacy issues associated with location aware apps and data mining. Some have allowed minorities; the LGBTQ community, people of color and other groups, to interact in a platform where they share common interests.
4. Are people truly able to find love through dating apps or have they mostly been used for hooking up? How do systems of oppression, such as sexism, racism, classism, misogyny and others affect the dating market? What are the ethical implications of big data and data mining?
5. This semester, our theme was “Our Digital Lives” with the purpose of bringing awareness to the use of technology and ways in which it has impacted the way in which people communicate. I decided to focus on the use of dating applications primarily in a college campus where people search for a potential partner. With large amounts of data being collected, the ethical complications must come into question.
6. Consulting scholarly peer-reviewed articles, books, and websites.

Blackwell, Courtney, et al. “Seeing and Being Seen: Co-Situation and Impression Formation Using Grindr, a Location-Aware Gay Dating App.” *New Media & Society*, vol. 17, no. 7, Aug. 2015, pp. 1117–1136. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/1461444814521595.

This article is helpful when putting into perspective the way in which technology and dating apps have allowed minorities to interact with one another in one platform. The research is based on the dating/hookup app “Grindr” in which gay men are able to meet one another through location services within the app. A profile is created in which men are able to add a photo to their profile,

bio and personal characteristics. The app then arranges men depending on the geography around them. This allows gay communities to be able to come together into an app where they share common interest. However, the participants in the study felt as though, there is a bad stigma of using Grindr from people outside of the LGBT community. The study also addresses the way in which men present themselves through pictures and what it means in regard to body image and looks.

Hobbs, Mitchell, et al. "Liquid Love? Dating Apps, Sex, Relationships and the Digital Transformation of Intimacy." *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2017, pp. 271–284.

This article talks about dating apps and the way in which technology has affected how people interact with one another in a place where they are looking for; companionship, love and intimacy. People are using the app and technology as a means to look for companionship. For people living in urban areas it allows them to have access to a larger part of the population where they are able to interact with one another. The article also hints at a threat to social norms and people not being able to commit to one relationship and having infinite options through which they have at the palm of their hand. Some of the participants in the study indicated that dating apps created a superficial knowledge of the person based on a picture.

Albury, Kath, et al. "Data Cultures of Mobile Dating and Hook-up Apps: Emerging Issues for Critical Social Science Research." *Big Data & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. Big Data & Society, July 2017, Vol.4(2).

This paper focuses on the understanding of digital hookup and dating data cultures. The author focuses on the culture of producing and data cultivation within the sites. The author advises the reader that further research must be conducted, the way in which these dating app companies are communicating with the outside publics such as health officials, policy makers, etc. Raises the question of personal security in the apps where unwanted sexual harassment occurs. The author

also mentions ‘Big Data’ and how the companies are harvesting data within the apps and the potential use of the data.

Choi, Edmond P.H., et al. “The Association between Smartphone Dating Applications and College Students' Casual Sex Encounters and Condom Use.” *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare*, vol. 9, 2016, pp. 38–41.

This article provides an overview of the health dangers associated with the use of dating apps. The study’s objective is to explore the association between the apps and having unprotected sex. The study is cross-sectional, and students were recruited from universities in Hong Kong. With the use of technology and the facility of the internet people are able to connect with one another faster than ever and apps are used for casual sex. The study points out that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the dangers of dating apps and sexual health of younger people. The technology has caught onto the users before they are able to be informed of the dangers these facilitated technologies may have. Alluring to a bigger health concern in society where dating apps and the internet have affected these trends to increase.

Thompson, Laura. ““I Can Be Your Tinder Nightmare”: Harassment and Misogyny in the Online Sexual Marketplace.” *Feminism & Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2018, pp. 69–89.

This paper addresses the issue of sexual harassment in dating apps and how this harassment primarily towards women has been an addition to the feminist movement. Men use appearance related insults and when rejected begin to “remind” women where they come from and try to keep them oppressed in a sexual market such as dating apps. Certain pickup lines used by men directed towards women are often times over sexualized and puts the women in a position of sexual subjects rather than human beings. The paper also addresses the issues with gender discipline and attempting to shame women because of their physical characteristics. Creating a top down domination between men and women in an online platform such as dating apps. The rejection causes men to react in a way in which they are only able to offend and insult the person

on the other side of the screen. The stigma associated with having a dating app and being labeled based on the use of it.

Noble, Safiya U. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism.*, 2018. Print.

In this chapter of *Algorithms of Oppression* the author discusses the use of google to create systems of oppression in the digital age. By looking at google searches and the way in which these “top hits” have been created making the reader realize that there are darker things to overcome in the age of digital age. She brings light to algorithms and the way in which they reinforce these systems of oppression.

7. Deadlines were set by professor Porras as well as personal goals for the project. Focus group and questions are my top priority, in order to connect the information from articles and the answers participants were giving. The poster was one of the last things to finish, once all of the paper had been done and information had been solidified.



## Abstract

This essay focuses on examining the dating experience and interactions in the age of digital technology, specifically where social disempowered users of dating applications tend to reinforce systemic social oppression. This research draws from literature about communication ethics, critical theory studies, digital media studies and includes personal observations and experiences. Even though some apps have allowed minorities; the LGBTQ community, people of color (POC) and other groups, to interact in a platform where they share common interests, there are still some dating apps which are more mainstream. Dating within the same platform where ethical communication and intent has been swayed to a hook up culture online where people run high risks of safety and damage communication ties with other potential partners. Through meeting with strangers, the potential for physical abuse rises and communication strains are at a high rate through the use of dating apps. Besides the communication and personal risks aspects that face disenfranchised communities, I also highlight in this paper the dangers of safety and privacy issues associated with location- based geosocial networking smartphone applications also known as “GSN apps” (Rice et al 1) and the ethical implications of data mining.

My research process includes peer review articles that address angles of experience and risk from different minority groups as well as the general public. I examine studies about particular apps such as Grindr, Tinder, Chispa and Bumble where the authors highlight some of the dangers associated with data mining and data sharing by the use of GSN apps. I also include the voices of participants, highlighting their experiences while using the given dating application. This essay highlights how systems of oppression such - racism, sexism, classism and misogyny have carried over into the digital age, where; POC and the LGBT community have been victims of discrimination based on sexual orientation, stereotypes and assumptions about ethnicity.

During a three-week period, I conducted interviews and a focus group with college students, including POC and LGBT community members in California, about their experiences using dating apps such as, Tinder, Grindr, Bumble and Chispa. The insight from interviews, plus my observation and articulation with recent scholar work create the foundation for this study.

Growing up in the age of technology where the use of dating apps has grown over the years I wanted to understand its purpose in the college sphere, I began to indulge in the use of dating apps and engaged in conversations with friends and peers about the use of a dating app in hopes of creating connections. These conversations sparked my interest in dating apps and the way they are used by adults and young adults, specifically in a college campus while thinking about the implications of data collected by dating app companies from its users.

## History of Dating

Technology has influenced the way in which humans communicate with one another, the same way the printing press affected the way others interact with the community. With the use of these apps, the lack of personal conversation has decayed, making dating more private through the use of a smartphone. Some of the first dating sites did not benefit women and the LGBT community in between other groups, they were mainstream sites primarily used by the cis gendered population. For years, POC and LGBT members were at a disadvantage meeting a potential partner through the use of media in a cisgender dominant community. Dating has been around for many years, dated back to 1965 where personal ads began to appear on newspapers, “Before the Internet, there were personal ads, and before that, lonely shepherds carved detailed works of art into tree bark to communicate their longing for human contact” (Lee 2017). As a way to communicate and meet other people, means have evolved when it comes to finding a potential partner. When newspapers were widely used many made personal ads, a way to reach

out to someone, looking for love, sex and personal needs. The ads were written on a newspaper column where there were multiple ads, given ads including small details about the person for others to see. This was used as a way for people to meet one another and promote themselves, with the goal of potentially finding someone who wants to be with the person as a partner. However, late in the 1800s, personals became highly popular and some began to take advantage of the ad making, many setting false hopes, “Scam artists caused a scandal that many newspapers ran with, and personals disappeared practically overnight as public attitudes became more cautious” (Lee 2017). People began to lose respect and humanity for others who were seeking a life partner, pretending to be a certain way through the personals but different in person. The age of the internet has now allowed us to have a term, defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary, *catfish* is “a person who sets up a false personal profile on a social networking site for fraudulent or deceptive purposes.” This led to a fracture in communication with the use of personals, trust had been broken and used for personal needs, using the other people. As explained by H.G. Cocks a lecturer in History at Nottingham University in his book *Classified The Secret History of the Personal Column*, “By the early eighteenth century, matrimonial advertising was booming, along with the expansion of print and the proliferation of newspapers, pamphlets and periodicals” (Cocks). This model has shaped and remained particularly intact, however enhanced by the use of dating applications and the capabilities of GSN apps, people are still able to self-advertise through their profiles.

In 1965, Jeff Tarr, Dave Crump, and Doug Ginsberg, all Harvard students created Operation Match, consisting of a computer collecting information from the user through the form of a questionnaire (Mathews 1965). The questions primarily focused on the user’s idea of an idea date as well as a personal description, the user would then pay \$3.00 at the time, to have the

answers analyzed by the 1401 (computer used in 1965) and compared against other users' answers, giving a match and printing the results (Hernandez 2017). Since the service was created by college students most of the advertisement and use was primarily coming from other Harvard students who would send in their questionnaires to be analyzed by Tarr, Crump and Ginsberg. The only downside to this method was the wait time for answers to be mailed back.

Later on, in 1995 founded by Gary Kremen and Peng T. the first online dating service ([www.Match.com](http://www.Match.com)) was launched in which people were able to register on the internet and Match.com. Online dating, defined by the Cambridge Dictionary, "a way of starting a romantic relationship on the internet, by giving information about yourself or replying to someone else's information." With given framework, most dating apps operate by responses from other users based on its promotion. This site became so popular that, "According to Internet data provider [comScore](http://comScore), Match attracts more people than any other dating site in the U.S., with over 5 million unique visitors per month" (Kauflin 2011), allowing many to begin their search for a potential partner.

Then, in 2005, Farmers Only was created by Jerry Miller, who's tag line states, 'City folks just don't get it', the dating site was created primarily for those who did not consider themselves a city person (Oskman). Farmers Only was so popular at one point, "The website's first commercial, which has now been viewed over 1m times on YouTube, was made by going around local farms with a digital camera and asking the farmers he met to play its loveless subjects" (Oskman), through the use of a media platform like YouTube they were able to disperse the information quicker, reaching a broader audience. Humans have now adapted a new way of advertising themselves through the media, when at first was through newspaper, users are now able to use the internet to meet others. Miller encouraged the idea of meeting

others who are in near distance because the possibilities of finding a partner are low where neighborhoods are miles away.

At first some of these applications were simply websites where people could sign up and create a profile to communicate with others. Developers then moved to creating an application of the dating site in order to make it easier for people to use. The introduction of smartphones has made it simple for people to; download the application, fill out personal characteristics, add a bio, attach a picture and begin their search for a potential partner. All which can be achieved in a short period of time and has instant results once the user begins to use the application. Through GSN apps, people are able to connect with multiple potential partners from 1mile up to 100 miles radius (Tinder). The intent behind the idea to expand the radius of people available for the user to interact with, making it easier to find a date.

Moving through the years, from personals to dating applications as the common public knows them now, the goal has always been to reach out of the community and self-promote in order receive feedback from other users in hopes to find a partner. Dating applications have allowed many to meet within a larger radius, now implemented by subscriptions where users are able to change their location in order to find potential partners in other states and even countries. Tinder and Grindr for example have a travel mode, where the user pays a subscription and allows them to change the location, giving them a higher probability of meeting someone who lives further away.

## Collection of Data and Usage

Everything a user does through the app or website is collected in the form of data, where does the information go and who protects such data is important to maintain a company. When the user agrees to the terms and conditions many important notes and clauses are overlooked, all

in order for users to have access to the application. Some privacy and policy pages are more explicit than others when explaining the data collected from the user and what the data will be used for. Others use words that may not be understood by the general public and are imbedded in a way of hiding its true causes when collecting data. For example, looking at the privacy and policy from Grindr, who collects “Personal Data” from the user including; account credentials referring to log in information including email and password for the account, device information and the collection of “Device ID”, location and distance information collected with the aid of GPS, Wi-Fi and other tracking technology within the device, cookies and log files including IP address and cookie collections, messages sent through the application are also stored, profile information, HIV status and purchases (Grindr.com). The site then goes on to explain “third parties”, “If you use or connect to the Grindr Site or download the Grindr Services through a third party platform, such as Facebook, you allow us to access and/or collect certain information from your third party platform profile/account” (Grindr.com). The information has not only been used for Grindr but may also be shared with others who are affiliated with the company. Safety issues arise, including the collection and sharing of data with other companies who have their own safety terms, making the collection of information harder for the user to understand the multilevel complexity of data collection.

Collected information through Grindr and shared; user profiles, distance information, third party tracking companies, third party advertising companies, third party service providers, partner promotion and affiliates and acquisitions in between others (Grindr.com). Any information made public by the user at the time of creation may be shared including name and picture and any other characteristic added to the profile. Since the application collects distance information and other Grindr users are able to see the distance from one user to the another, this

information is therefore considered public. Within the privacy policy and terms, under the “Distance Information” section, “Sophisticated users who use the Grindr App in an unauthorized manner, or other users who change their location while you remain in the same location, may use this information to determine your exact location and may be able to determine your identity” (Grindr.com). However, nowhere in the website has ‘sophisticated user’ been defined, giving a sense danger to know there may be other users who are able to misuse the ability of the application to collect data based on their own purposes. All three sections including information about third parties primarily use the “Device ID” attached to each user and used for advertising purposes and analytics for Grindr to use.

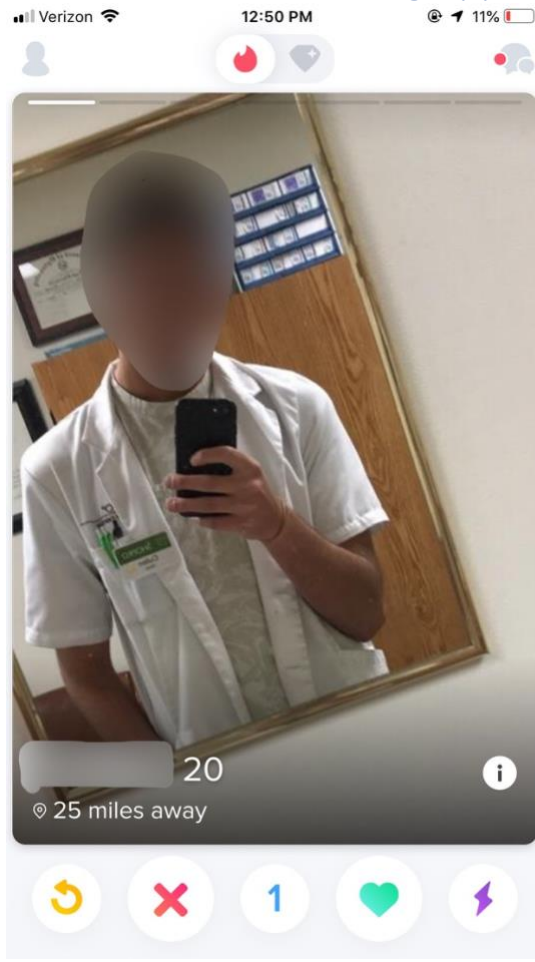
With Tinder the privacy terms and conditions are similar to those of Grindr’s with the exception of ‘Usage Information’:

“We collect information about your activity on our services, for instance how you use them (e.g., date and time you logged in, features you’ve been using, searches, clicks and pages which have been shown to you, referring webpage address, advertising that you click on) and how you interact with other users (e.g., users you connect and interact with, time and date of your exchanges, number of messages you send and receive)”  
(Tinder.com)

Having an application track a vast majority of information from the user, ranging from date and time logged in to clicks and other features used is a lot of data to be collected from a given user. Not to mention that many of this information is shared with a third party, making this information spread through multiple levels that the user might not even be aware of. Humans are now being used as means to the companies ends, manipulating the data collected, often times to target ads which are geared towards the user. Data breaches have happened in previous years for

example, the scandal with Facebook and Cambridge Analytica in 2018, danger of this data leaking out with data breaches, or the information being accessed by a malicious user can have major implications to the privacy of the user. The amount of data Tinder collects from their users must become transparent for the user to understand.

## Tinder and use of Dating Apps



*Figure 1. Tinder home page screenshot*

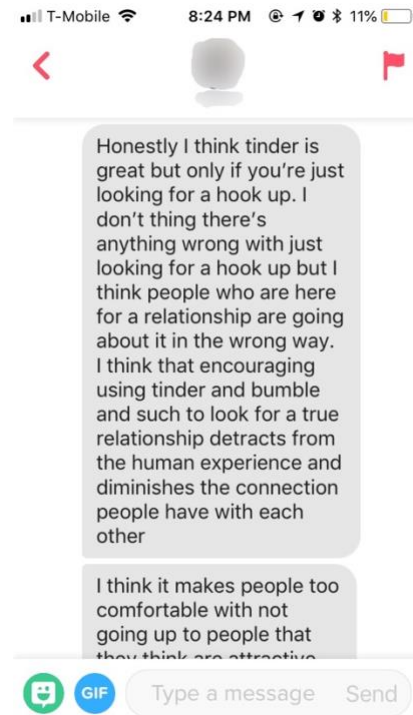
Tinder was introduced to the public on September 12, 2012 the first-time users are able to create a profile by the simple use of e-mail or Facebook profile to link information with Tinder. The dating site accommodates mostly everyone, from POC to gay and lesbian folks in the community as well as the general public, however leaves out minorities such as the trans



community. After the profile has been created, the user is able to add a bio and pictures to their profile, the application also allows the users to link their Instagram handle for other users to have more pictures available to look at. After the profile has been created according to the user, users are then taken into the main screen, in the middle (Figure 1), the picture of another person displayed, including name and age. At the bottom of the screen, underneath the picture there are three bubbles; an 'X' on the left to mark that person as a non-match, a star in the middle to indicate that the user "super likes" the person, and a heart on the right to indicate that the user likes the person. If the user wants to know more about the person, they are able to click on the persons profile to read more about them, browse through more pictures and access their Instagram if the user has allowed to share the information publicly. Bios may include a person's hobbies, interest, school, work, etc. To make the use of the app easier for users, Tinder has allowed the user to swipe left if they don't like the person and swipe right if they like the person, this feature has made it easier for the user to find a match quicker by only basing their decision on the first picture they see.



*Figure 3. Screenshot of user's profile*



*Figure 4. Screenshot of conversation between Bri Martin and user*

In these bios a user's intention may also be stated, for example an interaction by Bri Martin, a sophomore at Cal Poly San Luis Obispo (Figure 3), where a twenty-year-old student at the same university writes in his bio, "surf, sun, sex? Haha / snap me! / also on bumble." Through his bio the user is able to communicate with potential love partners prior to their matching, his bio quickly explaining he enjoys surfing, the sun and sex followed by him letting others know that he also on a different dating app called Bumble. His bio, one of many, which quickly indicate all the user looks for, sex. However, there are many other profiles belonging to users who are looking for a serious long term relationship (LTR) and those who are looking to meet new friends. After a match has been made, both users are able to engage in a dialogue, usually leading to one of them asking for the others social media or Snapchat, then conversation diverges into a different path, now including pictures and or video. Since Tinder does not allow

its users to send pictures or videos within the app, once conversation progresses, one of the users typically moves the conversation to an app in which they are able to send pictures of one another, making it more personal. Bri then engaged in a conversation about the current use of Tinder in a college campus with another user, a twenty-three-year-old at Cal Poly (Figure 4), *“Honestly I think tinder is great but only if you’re just looking for a hook up. I think that encouraging using tinder and bumble and such to look for a true relationship detracts from the human experience and diminishes the connection people have with each other.”* He further on adds, *“Apps like tinder make people too comfortable to not go meet strangers which used to be the only way to meet people,”* through the use of dating apps, the user can be anywhere a Wi-Fi or phone signal becomes available, instead of physically going out to engage in a conversation with someone. Being behind a screen has given anonymity to some users, giving them a form of courage to say things they generally wouldn’t say in person, hiding behind a screen. However, Tinder has made efforts to shift away from its social stigma as a hooking up app, *“The app requires users to connect their accounts to Facebook to limit anonymity, offers simple abuse reporting tools (which can be used to call out offline behavior as well), and has a policy of banning repeat offenders”* (Titlow). Tinder has made a step toward removing anonymity and adding more originality to their platform creating a safe environment for its users.

Participants; David Rodriguez, John Lopez and Emily Mendoza, all students at Cal State Monterey Bay have described how people interact with one another through dating apps, stating that some people are extremely direct with the particular things they are looking to get out of the app. For example, some are looking for friends, long term relationship (LTR), fun and or hook ups, these preferences are explained through their profile bios. The next step for them, to find someone who they are interested in talking to, often times not taking into consideration the

information about the person but basing it simply on their profile picture. From then as explained by John, “*you message them to see what’s up? If they are trying to do something or just talk*” and depending on what the other person is looking for, the opportunity for something in common arises. I asked him to elaborate on how he knew who would be interested in just a hook up or if they are looking for a potential relationship. He responded, “*Well sometimes they are straight with you or some other times you have to be straight with them*”, they all agreed to have had a conversation with the other person in order to find out what was going to happen. By making this agreement both people knew what to expect, reducing the likelihood of developing feelings for one another.

## Grindr and Oppression

Grindr, however, changes the game, through this app; gay, bi, trans and queer people are able to interact with one another, giving a sexual minority group the ability to interact on the same platform. Grindr is described as, “Since launching in 2009, Grindr has grown into the largest social networking app for gay, bi, trans, and queer people. We have millions of daily users who use our location-based technology in almost every country in every corner of the planet” (Grindr.com). Through Grindr the user has the ability to create a profile through e-mail, Facebook or Google+ account. Once the profile has been created, the user fills out personal information, including; picture, name, height, age, weight, ethnicity, body type, sexual position and even HIV status. The app then arranges users, displayed on the screen as squares and arranges each square based on location, putting those who are closer to the user towards the top, and those who are further towards the bottom. The screen filled with multiple boxes throughout the screen, each representing a user in the nearby area. Grindr is different from Tinder in the sense that it is highly used for hooking up, an app which works best for those who are just

looking for 'fun'. The users in this app seek one thing only, casual sex, which may have detrimental effects on communication with other potential partners. Issues of safety and data mining also arise when using the app since it collects information about each user including their location. Taken from the Terms and Conditions section from Grindr.com, "When you use the Grindr App, we will collect your location to determine your distance from other users ("Distance Information") through the GPS, Wi-Fi, and/or cellular technology in your Device. Your last known location may be stored for the purpose of calculating Distance Information between you and other users." The collection of location from users can be dangerous for those who are near someone else without knowing the true identity of the given person. A sense of need for safety needs to come from the user specially when meeting in real person. Later on, in a different section, the website states, "Sophisticated users who use the Grindr App in an unauthorized manner, or other users who change their location while you remain in the same location, may use this information to determine your exact location and may be able to determine your identity" (Grindr.com). Many users overlook the dangers of the app all in order to meet with others. This relates to a statement from participant Jared Medina, "*It is hard to find other gay people around you, there is not many of us on this campus*", who decides to use the app in order to meet other people. However, he later on stated, "*most of these pictures are torsos, no one shows their face*", Grindr has a lack of identity when it comes to the profiles, most of the information on the bios are vague and only some information shared. Most users on the app don't have a picture or a torso displayed, with the exceptions of a few face pictures. The psychological oppression gay, trans and bisexual people face may be similar to the struggle women face in a patriarchal society, as explained by Sandra Lee Bartky, who was a professor of philosophy and gender studies at the University of Illinois Chicago, "To be psychologically oppressed is to be weighed down in your

mind; it is to have a harsh dominion exercised over your self-esteem” (Bartky 26). Some of the participants felt as though they were being watched and therefore needed to act a certain way on the dating app. Communication with a potential partner may decrease when users are worried about their bodies and the way in which users present themselves. Medina later explains, “... *it’s like I need to fit in with the rest, I can’t have a face picture when the rest, you know, don’t have one*”, a statement including fear and disappointment, dominated by a dating app with the ultimate goal to connect people with one another. Bartky also explains that, “The psychologically oppressed become to themselves their own oppressors”, in this case, queer people coming together in the same app, having been oppressed become their own oppressors, with fear to be who they are as people, stripping them away from their humanity.

Dangers associated with the use of drugs and unsafe sex, a major risk faced when using apps such as Grindr where some people use, “Teena,” or “Tina” another term used in the gay community when referring to crystal methamphetamine. Some of the users on Grindr display their name as, “PnP” an acronym which stand for “Party and Play”, these are long erotic sexual encounters with other users, “In this context, to "party" means to take illegal drugs, typically meth, and to "play" means to engage in high-risk sexual behaviors, including unprotected sex or group sex” (Hartney, PhD). The euphemism has been created in order for those who are looking for the same to identify one another without explicitly naming drugs. Drug use and unprotected sex have several implications, mentally and physically, not to mention the high risk of contracting an STD or have something bad happen during the time of the encounter. However, by being direct in the app, it narrows the amount of people reaching out to the user, primarily those who are willing to do drugs and have sex at the same time. The use of the drug bloomed years ago, “Meth, this cheap-to-produce and easy-to-procure drug, allowed these partygoers to

dance the night away with tons of energy, to hook up with other men for sex, to have sex for hours, and to not have to sleep” (Amico & Rizzo), something the gay community is not proud of but has been seen in current years as something gay men still use. The use of the drug, also associated with body image at the time, “one lost weight on the drug, which contributed to its popularity in a culture obsessed with body image” (Amico & Rizzo), men saw two advantages by using the drug which caused it to prevail until today. As more awareness about HIV and AIDS bloomed, people became aware of the dangers associated with this behavior, causing this practice to be diluted. However, as previously stated, the use of crystal meth is still seen in today’s use of Grindr, other gay dating apps and chat rooms.

The lack of condom use in these encounters are also important to analyze, Jared Medina states, *“the first time I received a message saying, ‘bb fun?’ I had to look up the acronym and then realized he was talking about unsafe sex”*, “BB” stands for “bareback”, another term used in the gay community when referring to unprotected sex. In the same way PnP users are able to interact with one another, men who are willing to have unprotected sex with each other, will state so in their bios or screen name. Some other men however, will wait until the conversation has started in order for them to ask what the other person is looking for on the app. A recent article, *“Online dating is associated with sex addiction and social anxiety”* by Yoni Zlot, Maya Goldstein, Koby Cohen and Aviv Weinstein, from the Department of Behavioral Science, at Ariel University, Ariel, Israel where their goal was to “investigate the contribution of social anxiety and sensation seeking ratings of sex addiction among those who use dating Internet sites” (Zlot et al 821). The study consisted of 279 participants (128 males and 151 females), and the results of the study indicate that there is a rise of ratings of sex addiction among those who used dating apps for sexual purposes on the Internet.

## Bumble and Feminism

Bumble has declared itself a feminist app, where women have most of the power when matches are made with potential partners. The developers at Bumble have changed the game, empowering women to make the first move, “We’ve made it not only necessary but acceptable for women to make the first move, shaking up outdated gender norms” (Bumble.com) providing women with the tools they need in order to feel safe finding a partner through the application. In a world where the patriarchy has been put in a pedestal for many years, aiding and being the primary cause of women oppression. A society in which women are still trying to fight for equal rights and moving towards change, a need for an application like Bumble was needed, women face from social oppression to psychological oppression. They are seen as less than competent and to a degree less capable of performing certain tasks in comparison to men. The age of the internet has provided great aid to the feminist movement, now in fourth wave feminism, stories of sexism and misogyny from women arise such as the #MeToo movement which led many of women to tell their sexual assault stories, attaching a hashtag for people to identify the post. More women have begun to use technology to their advantage, for example, the creation of an Instagram account “Bye Felipe” run by Alexandra Tweten, her goal is to “calling out dudes who turn hostile when rejected or ignored” the account now containing over 650 posts of screenshots from women who have been harassed by men through dating apps and other messaging means (Thompson). Bumble wants to help solve an issue Tinder contains, through the matching system incorporated in the apps, the users are swiping based on looks and going with the first image seen, “a marketised logic in which a woman's “worth” in the online sexual marketplace is rooted in patriarchal ideals of feminine beauty and sexual propriety” (Thompson) associated with the psychological oppression women receive in a patriarchal society. Some of the content which



women receive put into question communicational ethics and anonymity through dating applications, a research study the Pew Research Center in 2013 found that 42% of women reported, “contacted by someone through an online dating site or app in a way that made them feel harassed or uncomfortable.” Bumble aspires to close the gap in order for women to feel comfortable meeting with someone through the application, the feature included in Bumble only if the woman says yes to the man, then it’s a match. It does not work in the way in which both users must like each other in order to be a match.

## Racism

Racism was primarily directed toward the black community, two students at Cal State Monterey Bay, have received racist messages through the use of dating apps. One of them recalls receiving a message calling her a “*chocolate momma*” but she never replied to the message since she considered it disrespectful. Her friend on the other hand received a message, “*you better make some bomb cornbread*” associated with the stereotype of a food some members of the black community eat. With the anonymity some of the users feel on the dating app, they tend to send messages with content they generally wouldn’t say in person. Dehumanizing someone and reinforcing the stereotypes associated with different groups of people.

## Chispa for the Latinx Community

Chispa, one of the many applications where a racial minority has the ability to come together on the same platform and interact with other users. Chispa allows users from the Latinx to create a profile and begin swiping in order to find a potential partner, what sets this application from the rest, it only lets people who consider themselves Latino(a) to create a profile. The layout and concept, highly similar to Tinder, having the ability to swipe right or left on a user to

indicate the user has liked the other user and vice versa. Once a match has been made, the user is notified, and the two users are able to engage in a conversation. The amount of people in the app was not high according to Neyva Martinez, a senior at Sacramento State University, *“the app was trying to match me with people who were 200 plus miles away”*, to her the app seemed obsolete when creating a match, since the people who were being matched were significantly farther apart from one another. The app however accommodates the gay and lesbian folks using the application as well within the same platform.

Due to the lack of users in the application it becomes hard to engage in a conversation with some of the other users. Many of the profiles contain an image of some sort of photograph that does not contain the person with whom the user tries to converse. The many miles of distance each user is from one another brings implications, having to drive 100-300 miles to meet someone through the app makes it hard for people to meet up for a date. User Luis Arevalo matched with someone in Sacramento, *“I talked to him for about 3 weeks over snapchat, but I didn’t see a point. So I stopped it.”* The conversation was not able to be substantiated and therefore no real connection was made after the 3 weeks. Responses from both users indicate a lack of users on the application making it hard to meet someone.

## Big Data, data mining and Ethical Implications

Big data and the ethics behind it may cause implications to the users of dating apps but most importantly to the public, those who continue and agree to use the Internet. Big Data defined by Oracle, “big data is larger, more complex data sets, especially from new data sources. These data sets are so voluminous that traditional data processing software just can’t manage them. But these massive volumes of data can be used to address business problems you wouldn’t have been able to tackle before” (Oracle.com). The amount of data collected from the user,

massively stored, then used for the company(s) purpose. With this in mind, the ethics of big data come into place, the amount of data being collected is used for someone else's end. As explained by Emmanuel Kant, "Act in such a way that you always treat humanity, whether in your own person or in the person of any other, never simply as a means but always at the same time as an end" (O'Neill 285). With Kant's ethical framework, the ethics of Big Data and the internet as a whole become an important question. The amount of data being collected from each user may not always be seen as ethical from different points of view. No one exactly knows where this information is going except for those who are behind big data collection. As Kant explains, everyone should treat everyone with the same level of respect and without dehumanization of another human being:

"If for example, a false promise is given, the party that accepts the promise is not just used but used as mere means, because it is *impossible* for consent to be given to the fundamental principle or project of deception that must guide every false promise, whatever its surface character." (O'Neill 286)

With tech companies, data/means become part to their ends/business, and blurred lines become a reality to both. This large amount of data may benefit the company itself, learn patterns, make informed assumptions and predict behavior (Oracle.com). The same way a user agrees to the terms and conditions of a website or dating application. While this may be beneficial to a company, the ethics behind data collection must come into question for the users. When collecting this data, the user often times informed, has to agree to the terms of service in order to use the app or create an account. However, the information provided may be provided simply as a notice, meaning, if the person does not agree to the terms of service, the user does not have

permission to use the app or create a profile. Users are unable to use the application or website and therefore, forced to click 'Agree' to the terms and conditions a company has set in place.

## Conclusion

Through the use of dating apps people are able to connect with one another, the same way it was possible to meet others many years ago through the use of newspaper columns known as personals. However, systems of oppression – racism, sexism and misogyny have transferred over into the age of the internet and reinforced through dating apps. Ethics of data collection must be addressed and disclosure about data sharing must be available to the general public. Most of the participants indicated the use of dating apps has been swayed into a hook up culture, however, there are many users who are looking for a LTR. Dating applications have allowed many users all around the world meet with each other, the users must be careful with the implications of meeting a stranger from the internet may bring as well as the data being collected. The topic and the implications of the internet are still unclear and have yet to come to light in order for humans to take the right action for the protection and use of personal data. Advise others to act ethically when talking to someone on the internet, specially a potential partner. Find literacy about data collection and spend more time reading the “The Terms and Conditions” section of each website we are creating a profile with. Overall the use of dating applications has its pros and cons, but the user must be mindful of the implications the use of the application may bring.

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Blackwell, Courtney, et al. "Seeing and Being Seen: Co-Situation and Impression Formation Using Grindr, a Location-Aware Gay Dating App." *New Media & Society*, vol. 17, no. 7, Aug. 2015, pp. 1117–1136. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1177/1461444814521595.

This article is helpful when putting into perspective the way in which technology and dating apps have allowed minorities to interact with one another in one platform. The research is based on the dating/hookup app "Grindr" in which gay men are able to meet one another through location services within the app. A profile is created in which men are able to add a photo to their profile, bio and personal characteristics. The app then arranges men depending on the geography around them. This allows gay communities to be able to come together into an app where they share common interest. However, the participants in the study felt as though, there is a bad stigma of using Grindr from people outside of the LGBT community. The study also addresses the way in which men present themselves through pictures and what it means in regard to body image and looks.

Hobbs, Mitchell, et al. "Liquid Love? Dating Apps, Sex, Relationships and the Digital Transformation of Intimacy." *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 53, no. 2, 2017, pp. 271–284.

This article talks about dating apps and the way in which technology has affected how people interact with one another in a place where they are looking for; companionship, love and intimacy. People are using the app and technology as a means to look for companionship. For people living in urban areas it allows them to have access to a larger part of the population where they are able to interact with one another. The article also hints at a threat to social norms and people not being able to commit to one relationship and having infinite options through which they have at the palm of their hand. Some of the participants in the study indicated that dating apps created a superficial knowledge of the person based on a picture.

Albury, Kath, et al. "Data Cultures of Mobile Dating and Hook-up Apps: Emerging Issues for Critical Social Science Research." *Big Data & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. Big Data & Society, July 2017, Vol.4(2).

This paper focuses on the understanding of digital hookup and dating data cultures. The author focuses on the culture of producing and data cultivation within the sites. The author advises the reader that further research must be conducted, the way in which these dating app companies are communicating with the outside publics such as health officials, policy makers, etc. Raises the question of personal security in the apps where unwanted sexual harassment occurs. The author also mentions 'Big Data' and how the companies are harvesting data within the apps and the potential use of the data.

Choi, Edmond P.H., et al. "The Association between Smartphone Dating Applications and College Students' Casual Sex Encounters and Condom Use." *Sexual & Reproductive Healthcare*, vol. 9, 2016, pp. 38–41.

This article provides an overview of the health dangers associated with the use of dating apps. The study's objective is to explore the association between the apps and having unprotected sex. The study is cross-sectional, and students were recruited from universities in Hong Kong. With the use of technology and the facility of the internet people are able to connect with one another faster than ever and apps are used for casual sex. The study points out that there is a lack of knowledge regarding the dangers of dating apps and sexual health of younger people. The technology has caught onto the users before they are able to be informed of the dangers these facilitated technologies may have. Alluring to a bigger health concern in society where dating apps and the internet have affected these trends to increase.

Thompson, Laura. "'I Can Be Your Tinder Nightmare': Harassment and Misogyny in the Online Sexual Marketplace." *Feminism & Psychology*, vol. 28, no. 1, 2018, pp. 69–89.

This paper addresses the issue of sexual harassment in dating apps and how this harassment primarily towards women has been an addition to the feminist movement. Men use appearance

related insults and when rejected begin to “remind” women where they come from and try to keep them oppressed in a sexual market such as dating apps. Certain pickup lines used by men directed towards women are often times over sexualized and puts the women in a position of sexual subjects rather than human beings. The paper also addresses the issues with gender discipline and attempting to shame women because of their physical characteristics. Creating a top down domination between men and women in an online platform such as dating apps. The rejection causes men to react in a way in which they are only able to offend and insult the person on the other side of the screen. The stigma associated with having a dating app and being labeled based on the use of it.

Noble, Safiya U. *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism.*, 2018. Print.

In this chapter of *Algorithms of Oppression* the author discusses the use of google to create systems of oppression in the digital age. By looking at google searches and the way in which these “top hits” have been created making the reader realize that there are darker things to overcome in the age of digital age. She brings light to algorithms and the way in which they reinforce these systems of oppression.

Albury, Kath, et al. “Data Cultures of Mobile Dating and Hook-up Apps: Emerging Issues for Critical Social Science Research.” *Big Data & Society*, vol. 4, no. 2, 2017, pp. Big Data & Society, July 2017, Vol.4(2).

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## Final Synthesis Essay

I have directly contributed to my HCOM 475 section by bringing in knowledge from other HCOM courses that have taught me the skills to critically think about major issues. Through taking feminist theory courses, I am able to analyze the struggle of women and identify issues in today's society in order to call out misogyny and be an ally for women. The trajectory of women through the different waves of feminism have taught me ways in which a movement can be carried out and tactics to incorporate for future equality battles. In our seminar class we read a few chapters from, Noble Safiya in her book *Algorithms of Oppression: How Search Engines Reinforce Racism*. I made a close connection to the way black women are still being diminished and oppressed in the age of the internet. Detrimental effects happen when a group of people is portrayed a single way in the media, the internet and society, creating and reinforcing the danger of a single story. Through my ethics, theory and philosophy courses I am able to apply and analyze different epistemological views in order to understand and analyze major issues in society. Ethics and ways of knowing are important in order to understand how a different ethnic group and or religious group may view the world in order to be informed and see each other as human.

This semester's theme for my HCOM 475 course was Our Digital Lives, which primarily focus on the way we as humans present ourselves through the use of the internet and implications it has brought in the past years. The internet allows many to engage through social media, chat rooms, gaming, video streaming and pictures but to what cost is it coming to the general public? The internet being something new to our society, we still don't understand all the limits and implications it may bring. Through this course I was able to dive into a major topic, full of subcategories to be studied, from emojis to social media, YouTube, applications and

smartphones. Through our seminar sessions we as a class engaged in intellectual and critical conversations about the use of the internet in ways I had never discussed with anyone else. It opened my eyes to realize that while technology and the use of the internet is great we must be careful with the power it has. Humans created the internet in order to help us, but it has become so developed in the past few years that it has come to a point where the internet has begun to control humans. Humans have become disconnected from one another personally in order to connect with others through the use of a screen, people are no longer having conversation out in the street or at public places because everyone is so caught up on their smartphones and internet presence.

We also talked about the collection of data and the implications it may have to store large amounts of data and the way it is used by companies. Data breaches that have happened in the last few years, such as Facebook and the way it played a role in the presidential elections and I believe not a lot of people are having conversations about this. This is something important and critical that the public must pay attention to, humans are now being used for other purposes without their given consent. But why is no one doing something about it? Why is it that humans don't see the bad effects? But these are only questions that will be answered as we progress in the age of the internet.

With the combination of big data and the use of the internet by current users I decided to focus on the use of dating apps and the implications of data mining. I discovered that people tend to look past the Terms and Conditions section of a website or application prior to the use or creation of an account. The amount of information that a single dating app collects from the user is terrifying to say the least, it stores information such as; name, age, picture, physical characteristics, bio, links to any accounts, times at which a person logged in and for how long.

The list of information goes on, at the same time I was shocked to find out that if a user wants to delete their profile, all of the information collected and made public stays with the company for a period of time, however some companies describe they may hold the information for as long as they consider it necessary. With data breaches, thousands of user's information may be leaked and everyone can have access to something which a user thought would be more private.

New information I found, combined with the content we discussed in class I began to realize multiple systems of oppression had carried over into the age of the internet. Third parties receive a lot of information from the primary source and these third parties are not always explicit with the use of data collected. As a continued on with my search, I began to uncover more information about the topic, ranging from psychology journals to gender studies, feminist studies and even sociology. However, not enough information is available to the public about the implications the use of dating apps may bring in the long run.

In class we also discussed ways in which we (the user) can disconnect from our social media lives and try to live more "in the moment" and I truly believe that is exactly what a lot of us should be doing. We live in a society where people are always on their phones, ignoring their friends or simply the people surrounding them. I don't believe technology is bad for us to use but I am becoming more critical about the information companies are collecting from their users and for what purpose this data is being collected. This project allowed me to critically think about data collection in which I had never done before, I always scrolled all through the terms and conditions without even glancing over them. I believe that by having conversations people will begin to have an interest about their online information in hopes to find a way to keep some of that data protected or at least not collected in order to live more humane.