

# Concordia Journal of Communication Research

---

Volume 5

Article 3

---

6-1-2018

## Swiping Left or Right? Effective and Ineffective Dating Profiles

Jordan Gray

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Taylor Difronzo

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Cassandra Panek

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Tom Bartel

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/comjournal>

 Part of the [Social Media Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Gray, Jordan; Difronzo, Taylor; Panek, Cassandra; and Bartel, Tom (2018) "Swiping Left or Right? Effective and Ineffective Dating Profiles," *Concordia Journal of Communication Research*: Vol. 5 , Article 3.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/comjournal/vol5/iss1/3>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by DigitalCommons@CSP. It has been accepted for inclusion in Concordia Journal of Communication Research by an authorized editor of DigitalCommons@CSP. For more information, please contact [digitalcommons@csp.edu](mailto:digitalcommons@csp.edu).

# Swiping Left or Right? Effective and Ineffective Dating Profiles

*Presented to*

*Kim Flottesmesch*

*Concordia University, St. Paul*

*In Partial Fulfillment*

*Of the Requirements for the Course*

*COM: 442 Communication Theory*

*By:*

*Jordan Gray*

*Taylor Difronzo*

*Cassandra Panek*

*Tom Bartel*

*December 12th, 2017*

## **Introduction**

### **Purpose and Overview of Contents**

With the use of internet growing, online dating applications are becoming more relevant in today's society. With the ever-evolving technology of today's world, there is still much to be researched and learned. Due to the connectedness of the world shifting from face to face communication to technology based communication, the online dating world is growing rapidly. Online dating has become prevalent in today's society as a means to meet others. Online dating applications allow users to share information and describe themselves and to be able to choose who they want to pursue as a romantic partner based on the information shared.

This study focused on online dating, particularly on the effectiveness and ineffectiveness of an online dating profile. Various levels of self-presentation and self-disclosure were used to examine how they impacted people's favorability to certain online dating profiles. Self-presentation focused on profile pictures and how participants convey themselves and the deception of online dating. Self-disclosure focused on how positively or negatively the amount of disclosure or lack thereof can affect the dating profile. The study focused on the dating profile itself and what content the user decides to share.

### **Literature Review**

Investigating the world of online dating and online dating profiles comprises multiple subcategories of exploration. Online dating sites and profiles are used to assist individuals in finding partners over the internet and other technological applications. In today's world, people are meeting significant others through different forms of communication-- compared to the traditional face to face interactions. When creating an online dating profile, there are many different aspects that help the overall effectiveness of the profile such as self-presentation and the

amount of self-disclosure on a profile. This study focused on what makes a profile appealing, what makes a profile unappealing, and how self-disclosure and self-presentation influences the effectiveness of online dating profiles.

### ***Online Dating***

“The Internet has become a common tool used to seek friends and romantic and sexual partners” (Anderson, 2005 pg.268). According to Anderson (2005), since the 1960s, online dating was used more than the average person gave it credit for. Matchmaking started with simple questionnaires completed by individuals, but later evolved into in-depth profiles with more self-disclosure and information. Today, there are many dating websites, applications, and programs that are used to help people meet from all over the world.

There are many reasons why the internet has become a commonplace in the dating world. Online dating has become more prevalent and acceptable due to a “variety of factors, including widespread availability of dating services and technological affordances such as real-time chat and digital cameras” (Jin & Martin 2015 pg.320). Despite the many negative connotations that have surrounded the use of the internet to find partners, there are many upsides to this new-age way of thinking. Data suggests that individuals are using online dating sites and programs for its “ability to search for potential contacts and dates at their leisure; a way to pass time; quick and easy; meet great people and make good friends; and rejection at first contact is not as personal” (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008 pg.272). Couch and Liamputtong (2008) support this, “The reasons participants gave for using online dating were varied, and included seeking a soul mate, seeking sex, looking for fun, relaxation, to ease boredom, or because it seemed like an easy way to meet people” (pg.271).

“Little is known about attitudes related to online close relationships. What is known is that, in general, people tend to perceive negatively both online romantic relationships and the people who engage in them” (Anderson, 2005 pg.523). However, the current number of online daters is increasing each year. Jin and Martin (2015) state “In 2007, seven million online daters had met another user offline, and three million had already formed long-term relationships. In 2009, about half of adults in the United States reported knowing at least one person who had dated someone they met online. In 2014, 11% of American adults used dating sites, and 4 out of 10 singles looked for a partner online” (pg.320). Despite the recent surge of popularity in online dating, there are also potential risks and downfalls when disclosed information is shared with others. The majority of participants shared that the biggest downfall about online dating was the lies, deceit, and the number of people using fake profiles and/or misleading pictures (Couch & Liamputtong, 2008 pg.272).

### ***Computer Mediated Communication***

Communication taking place through a computer is known as computer mediated communication. Computer mediated communication, or CMC for short, is defined as, “any human communication that occurs through the use of two or more electronic devices” (Rosen, 2007, p. 5). CMC can take place through sources such as texting, email, and social network sites. CMC makes getting to know a partner through online dating possible. “We live in a world which is more connected than ever before. We can now send messages to a friend or colleague with a touch of a button, can learn about other’s interests before we even meet them, and now leave a digital trail behind us, whether we intend to or not” (Lopato, 2016, p. 1). CMC allows online daters to get to know and gain information about a potential partner before ever meeting face to face.

The use of CMC to form romantic relationships has raised many questions such as, “how meaningful are these connections? And To what extent can we love another if we only communicate via social technology?” (Lopato, 2016, p. 1). Rosen (2007) stated that, “the amount of affection ascribed to a message was an interaction between time it was sent, the content of the message and the promptness of reply. Subjects felt most affectionate when they received a quick reply to a task message during the day and felt least affectionate if the prompt response was to a night time task message. If the reply was slow to either message they felt only moderate affection,” (Rosen, 2007, p. 6). Computer mediated communication theories help explain how fulfilling these connections over the computer can really be. A CMC theory, known as Social Information Processing Theory, stated that the lack of cues available when communicating online do not usually affect people (Rosen, 2007). Rosen stated that, “people adapt to the medium of online communication to gain information to develop impressions and can do so based on message content, style, and timing” (Rosen, 2007, p. 5). Walther discovered that “online groups’ interpersonal impressions were slower to form than offline groups’ but the depth was the same if given time” (Walther, 2002, p.2129). Walther also found from his study that the questions partners asked each other were about more personal topics in CMC, versus the questions partners asked each other while taking part in face to face communication not being as deep as the CMC communicator questions (Walther, 2002). Walters study also found that computer mediated communication also led to the rate of self-disclosure being higher, as well as deeper questions were asked (Walther, 2002). Due to those results, Social Information Processing Theory stated “people make use of whatever cues they have to acquire information about a person” (Rosen, 2007, p. 6).

Past studies conducted by Walther have speculated that the conversations taking place through CMC are just as meaningful and have the same impact on online daters as the face to face conversations do. CMC makes online dating possible because it allows users to be able to get to know potential partners through computer communication.

### ***Dating Profile***

When it comes to online dating, there are certain aspects that make a person's profile appealing. Some of these aspects are not only someone's physical appearance, but their interests and beliefs. Studies have been conducted to find out what makes an online dating profile appealing and what makes a user click on someone's profile. Like most people, men and women on online dating sites are looking for someone that is more attractive. Although, men consistently display stronger look preferences than women do (Hitsch, Hortacsu, & Ariely, 2010). But when it comes to age, men prefer women their own age or a few years younger; women, on the other hand, want to date a man their age or a few years older (Hitsch et al. 2010). (Hitsch et al. 2010) also found that both men and women responded with the same impressions of those site users who did not post a photo online. Users who describe themselves as very good-looking or above average have a higher chance of receiving a first-contact e-mail than users who state that they have average or "other" looks (Hitsch et al. 2010). Not only do people look for someone who is good looking, they are also looking for someone that meets their weight requirements.

Overall, Body Mass Index has a smaller effect on women's preferences than on men's preferences. This finding is roughly consistent with the results of Tovée, M. J., Reinhardt, S., Emery, J. L., & Cornelissen, P. L. (1998) and Maisey, D. S., Vale, E. L. E., Cornelissen, P. L., & Tovée (1999). In particular, Maisey et al. (1999) show that men's waist-chest ratios, more than their BMI ratings, influenced the attractiveness ratings women give men. Along with weight

preferences, there is also a preference in height. Height preferences of men and women are almost exclusively horizontal, that is, relative to one's own height. These results are consistent with findings on the relative height of married men and women (Gillis & Avis. 1980) and the probability of having children conditional on height (Pawlowski, Dunbar, & Lipowicz. (2000) Nettle, 2002).

Race also plays a role when searching for a mate online. Both men and women have same-race preferences and the same-race preferences of women are more pronounced than the same-race preferences of men (Hitsch et al. 2010). The same-race preferences of women do not differ by age, education, or income. But for men, some differences in same-race preferences across demographics, but the quantitative significance of these effects is small. The absence of a clear relationship between same-race preferences and education, in particular, is one of our most surprising results (Hitsch et al. 2010). Not only do men and women look at physical appearance when finding a mate, they also look at a person's education and occupation.

Men and women both prefer a partner with a similar education level and they also prefer someone with the same occupation (Hitsch et al. 2010). They also prefer someone with a high-income partner vs. someone with a low-income partner. This income preference is more pronounced for women (Hitsch et al. 2010). Men are 3.9% more likely to contact a woman with an income in the range \$150k to \$200k than a woman who earns \$35k to \$50k per year, but for women the corresponding difference in first-contact probabilities is 8.9% (Hitsch et al. 2010).

In conclusion, men and women hold different preferences when looking for a mate online. Physical attractiveness plays a major role when searching for a mate, while online dating. Other preferences such as age, race, height, income, and education also play a very strong role but are similar in their preferences.



### ***Self-Disclosure & Self-Presentation***

Self-disclosure and self-presentation are two components that impact the development of relationships. Traditionally, self-disclosure and self-presentation in relationship development occurs face-to-face, but with the rapid growth of technology, it is becoming more ordinary for the beginning stages of disclosing one's own information and choosing how to present themselves to occur online, such as on dating websites.

Ellison, Hancock & Toma (2011), described self-presentation as “strategically disclosing and/or concealing information in order to portray the self in a desirable way” (p. 47). Nicole Ellison, Rebecca Heino and Jennifer Gibbs (2006), claim that self-presentation can be used in a strategic manner to give an impression that would be of interest to other individuals. According to Ellison et al. (2011), individuals, in the context of online dating, are motivated to portray themselves in a desirable way on their profile because users check out other dating profiles with only a quick glance. The desire to pursue further communication after glancing at one's profile, whether it be computer-mediated conversation, or face-to-face interaction, comes from what they find appealing in the limited individual's profile and how they present themselves.

Often times, online daters struggle to find a balance of presenting themselves in the most desirable way, and displaying themselves truthfully and accurately. Though users may not be actually lying, embellishing personal characteristics, or choosing to highlight positive connotative qualities and hide negative connotative qualities, in order to present one's self in what as seen as most appealing, is common. Ellison, Hancock & Toma (2011). stated that even though users want to be seen as desirable, users also want to be honest in the way they present themselves because they hope to avoid their profiles being portrayed as inaccurate when meeting

another user who has viewed their profile. People also usually hope that in a romantic relationship, partners will accept one's true self. Lastly, honesty is usually seen as a desirable trait, and is a characteristic that potential romantic partners look for (p. 46).

Nicholas David W. Smith and Mandy B. Medvin (2016), the authors of *The Role of Self-Disclosure in Buffering Relationships*, define self-disclosure as “a behavior in which a person tells someone else private information about themselves that generally deals with emotions” (p. 12). Smith and Medvin claimed that being able to mutually share personal information with another person leads to a high level of emotional satisfaction (2016). Jennifer L. Gibbs, Nicole B. Ellison, and Rebecca D. Heino (2006) claim that self-disclosure tends to have a positive effect on relationship development, but if too much self-disclosure occurs in the beginning phases a relationship, then it can have a negative effect on relationship development. Although, self-disclosure can occur through the traditional route of face-to-face interaction, it can also occur through online mediums as well. The experience of disclosing information may be different and different experiences occur because of these alternative options. Espana (2013) claimed, that in the traditional face-to-face interaction, the amount of information disclosed can vary from day to day, weeks, or even months, while through computer-mediated conversation, there is usually more information disclosed upon meeting face-to-face, which can create more in depth conversations and communication. Espana (2013), also stated that when looking at the social penetration theory, the amount of information disclosed between two individuals will increase as relationships develop, whether it be offline or online.

Another experience of self-disclosure that varied from face-to-face interaction and computer-mediated conversation is the rate at which information is disclosed. Espana (2013) claimed that because there is already available and accessible to individuals prior to

communicating through any medium, information is disclosed at much faster rate. He also stated that in online communication, the first layer of the onion, in the metaphorical idea of the social penetration theory, is already peeled upon the first encounter of communication between two individuals.

Another reason why self-disclosure can occur at a faster rate online than through face-to-face interaction is because the environment of online. Espana (2013) stated that the online environment can stimulate more questioning and probing, which enhances the amount of information disclosed by an individual, therefore the uncertainty reduction theory occurs sooner than it would in face-to-face interaction (p. 24[WU1] ).

Self-presentation and self-disclosure can go hand-in-hand in the context of online dating. The way one chooses to portray themselves on their profile, may affect the amount of personal information they disclose about themselves through computer mediated conversation.

### ***Research Question/ Justification***

*RQ1: What makes an online dating profile effective and ineffective?*

Current research has failed to focus on what makes an online dating profile effective and what makes it the least effective. This study would survey adults of all ages from 18 years and older to find out what make a dating profile most effective and least effective when trying to find a significant other through the internet. Unlike the previous research, this study will look at different levels of self-disclosure and self-presentation and examine how those affect other's perceptions of effective and ineffective online dating profiles.

## **Methodology**

### ***Participants***

Students from a Midwest University will be used to conduct the survey. Participants will be college-aged students from all different races as the University is very diverse. Participants will most likely range from middle to upper class due to the fact that they are attending college. Participants will be sent a link to an online survey through their e-mail. The e-mail will give a short explanation about the survey, why the study is being conducted, and how long the survey will take to complete. There will be no incentive to get participants to take the survey. The entire traditional student body of the university was surveyed asking 22 questions to determine what makes a dating profile effective and ineffective. Of the 1,145 traditional students that were sent the survey at the university in the fall of 2017, 188 participated in this study by responding to the survey (a response rate of 16%). This study is cross-sectional and field independent. The survey is broken down into three categories for analysis--dating profile, self-presentation, and self-disclosure in order to observe what participants view as crucial aspects of an online dating profile that determines whether it is effective or ineffective.

### ***Dating Profile***

The questions from this section of the survey focused on basic dating profile information such as websites and applications used, what makes an appealing profile, and the purpose behind using an online dating profile. A Chi-Square test, along with descriptive statistics will be used for the statistical analysis.

### ***Self-Presentation***

Three five-point Likert scale questions will be used to examine how self-presentation affect the overall effectiveness of an online dating profiles. The scale will range from 1 to 5. The scale will be used to determine the different types of self-presentation and how effective each presentation is. One short answer question will also be used along with one yes or no

question. The questions focused on profile pictures, how online participants convey themselves, and the deception on online profiles.

### ***Self-Disclosure***

In the last portion of the survey, three five-point Likert scale questions will be used. It will also consist of one open-ended question and three multiple choice questions. The questions examined how self-disclosure and the amount of self-disclosure positively or negatively affects the dating profile. The data collected from the open-ended questions was evaluated by four coders, looked over for patterns and themes, and then tried to separate the answers into main categories.

### **Hypothesis & Analysis**

Online dating users with a greater amount of self-disclosure and a positive self-presentation will lead to a higher effectiveness level of the dating profile. A chi-square test was used for statistical analysis to determine whether there were significant differences among participants. Descriptive statistics will also be used.

188 participated in this study by responding to the survey (a response rate of 16%). Of the 188 participants, 62 were males and 126 were female. Age breakdown were as follows: 99 participants were aged 18-20, 64 participants were aged 21-23, 12 participants were aged 24-26, and 12 participants were aged 27 and older. Race breakdown were as follows: 127 participants were Caucasian, 19 participants were African-American, 26 participants were Asian-American, 7 participants were Hispanic, and 8 participants were other. The results of the 188 participants were then analyzed.

### **Results**

To test the hypothesis, the researchers first compared what participants found to be the most appealing aspect of online dating profiles. The majority of participants (48.91%) stated that the profile picture was the most significant. This was followed closely by similar “Commonalities” (29.35%) between themselves and the profile they viewed and “Amount of Self-Disclosure” (8.15%). Two chi-square tests were used to evaluate this data. The first chi-square test compared age to the top three most appealing aspects of a profile. The test indicated no statistical difference between these barriers ( $P > .05$ ) (see figure:1). These findings failed to reject the null hypothesis. The second chi-square test compared male and female participants to the top three most appealing aspects of a profile. The test indicated a statistical difference between these variables ( $P < .05$ ) (see figure:2). These findings supported the hypothesis and rejected the null.

Researchers wanted to know what participants found to be the most bothersome or ineffective aspects of online dating profiles, The majority of participants (35.52%) responded with “The profile picture does not have a picture” and (33.88%) responded with “Their picture is taken with others (you don’t know who’s profile it is). Again, the data suggests how crucial a profile picture is to others when viewing profiles.

Researchers were interested in how important a profile picture is to the effectiveness of a profile, participants used a scale of 1-5, to show the importance of a profile picture. The majority of participants (41.85%) responded with “Moderately Important” and (34.78%) responded with “Very Important”.

To determine what amount of self-disclosure is most effective within an online dating profile, participant were asked “What amount of self-disclosure is most appealing in an online

dating profile?”. A majority (44.83%) responded with “Mild Disclosure” and (36.21%) responded with “Moderate Disclosure”.

Researchers were interested in what participants felt to be the most important piece of information to disclose to others through their online dating profiles. Participant answers were split among “Interests/Hobbies” (36.57%), “Values/Morals” (29.14%), “Profile Picture (what you think is your best picture)” (25.14%).

Researchers were interested in what participants viewed as the most effective strategy regarding the way in which self-disclosure is revealed to attract others to their dating profile, participants were asked “What strategy do you prefer? 1) Disclose all information right off the get go 2) Disclose enough to reel someone in, then disclose more information with an interested party when comfortable.” The majority of participants (82.76%) responded with “Disclose enough information to reel someone in, then disclose more information when an interested party when comfortable”.

## Discussion

To further discuss the findings of the study, three theories were used as lenses from which to look through to analyze the data. The theories are Social Penetration Theory, Social Information Processing Theory, and the Impression Management Theory.

### Social Penetration Theory

Jih-Hsin Tang and Cheng-Chung Wang explained that social penetration is accomplishing a deeper level of intimacy with another individual through the use of self-disclosure (Tang & Wang, 2012). To achieve the highest level of intimacy, disclosure should be mutual. Tang and Wang also describe that there are levels of self-disclosure that take place and compare humans to a multilayered onion. When comparing the onion to a person, the outer

layers are more relevant to light, shallow, and superficial information about an individual. This information is shared easier and usually faster than information that is deeper-rooted. The more information that is being disclosed, the more “layers that are being peeled back,” until the inner core is reached. As individuals disclose information, they start to feel more comfortable with each other and start to disclose deeper information about themselves. Some of this deeper-rooted information includes, one’s religious views, values and morals, and self-concept (Tang & Wang, 2012).

Self-disclosure occurs more in the beginning of a relationship than a relationship that has been further developed, as there are more aspects of the person to learn about. In the online dating world, one can choose the amount of personal information they disclose on their profiles. Looking at the effectiveness in an online dating profile, the results of our study suggests that self-disclosure, initially on one’s profile, which leads to the process of social penetration between individuals, is moderately important. 33.71% (N=59) of the respondents of the survey answered that self-disclosure is moderately important. Our study also suggests that the most effective amount of self-disclosure in an online dating profiles contain a mild to moderate amount of self-disclosure, as 81.04% (N=141) selected these two options of the five-point Likert scale.

Participants responses suggest that hobbies/interests are the most important information that users choose to disclose on their online dating profiles, as 35.57% (N=64) of the survey participants selected that option out of the five options. This result aligns with the process of social penetration, as this theory tells us that lighter and superficial information is usually shared in the beginning of relationships. Question number 22 of the survey asks respondents when using online dating profiles, whether they prefer to “disclose all information right of the get go,” or to



“disclose enough to reel someone in, then disclose more information with an interested party when comfortable,” and 82.76% (N=144) of the survey participants preferred to disclose more information as they started to feel more comfortable. These two questions on the survey suggests that users prefer to disclose a limited amount of lighter information in the initial process of relationship development by sharing topics such as hobbies and interests on their dating profiles and choose to disclose more personal information as relationships develop and strengthen.

### **Social Information Processing Theory**

Social Information Processing Theory, also known as SIP, was developed by Joseph Walther. SIP is useful for understanding why and how people use cell phones, messaging and social networking sites to build close relationships. SIP was originally developed to explain how people were forming relationships through technology, such as email. Now the theory is easily applicable for technology we use such as texting, social network sites, and dating applications to form relationships. SIP explains how relationships develop in a mostly computer mediated setting. An important part of SIP is computer mediated communication, or CMC, which is text or computer based communication (Lopato, 2016). SIP stated that even due to the lack of face to face interaction and lack of nonverbal clues, relationships forming online through CMC are still able to develop the same level of intimacy as face to face relationships if given adequate time.

People are able to build romantic relationships through online communication. Of the participants, 65% (N=124) replied that they use or have used some form of online dating. The researchers found that 34% (N=64) of the participants have not used any form online dating. By the data collected from this question we were able to see that people do use CMC to build romantic relationships.

Relationships can develop through various types of communication. Face to face communication helps relationships grow faster than online communication, which is known as CMC. Media Richness Theory, which was developed by Richard L. Draft and Robert H. Lengel, stated that face to face communication is the richest form of communication (Draft, Lengel, Trevino, 1987). Face to face communication is the richest form of communication because it provides a mix of nonverbal and verbal cue systems that can help convey emotions and meaning. Relationships with face to face communication develop faster because of the use of nonverbal cues. However, CMC relationships can reach the same level of intimacy if given the appropriate amount of time (Lopato, 2016). Online dating sites and users use CMC to develop relationships through a computer mediated setting. The data collected supports the idea that people do use CMC in online dating to build relationships and meet people. Of the participants, 23.24% (N=43) said they use online dating applications to find relationships, while 30.81% (N=57) use online dating applications to meet people. The data collected supports the idea of SIP that relationships can be formed through CMC.

One of Walther's key points of SIP was the warranting value of the information you receive online. Warranting value of information, is knowing what to trust. Warranting value is the reason to believe that the information is accurate and true, typically because the target of the information cannot manipulate it (Farrer, J., & Gavin, J., 2009). CMC allows users to post information about themselves in the way the user would like to be portrayed. Knowing what to trust on an online dating profile is an important part of what the researchers looked into. Online dating applications allow users to post the information they want to share and how they would like to be seen on their profile. One issue that comes into play with that, is the fact that users are able to lie on their profiles to deceive others. The data collected suggests that 28.33% (N=51) of

participants have been lied to by someone on a dating application or website. 71.67% (N=129) of the participants reported they have not been lied to. This data supported that computer mediated communication does allow for lying to take place. When participants were asked how being lied to affected their perception and interaction with that individual, phrases such as “lack of trust”, “feeling annoyed”, and “stopping the communication all together” were all mentioned repeatedly. This suggests that warranting value is an important factor to look for when using CMC, especially on online dating profiles.

Online dating allows users to communicate and contact other users at any time and from anywhere. This allows for more communication and users to self-disclose more. Compared with face to face communication, participants in CMC conditions have been found to engage in more self-disclosure (Gibbs, Ellison, Lai, 2011). Self-disclosure is an important part of online dating because it is how you get to know other users. Participants were asked how important self-disclosure is in an online profile. 22.86% (N=40) of the participants answered self-disclosure was very important. While only 3.43% (N=6) participants answered that self-disclosure was not important in an online dating profile. A large number of participants stated that mild self-disclosure is the most appealing in an online dating profile. The study suggests that self-disclosure is an important part of online dating. The study also suggests that moderate-mild self-disclosure is most preferred.

Hyperpersonal perspective, which is developed by Walther in 1996, claims that CMC relationships are often more intimate than those developed when partners who are physically together (Lopato, 2016). Walther explained how sender, receiver, and channel have an important impact on the level of an intimacy a relationship is based upon CMC has. The sender using selective self-presentation is able to put a positive portrayal of themselves which allows them to

create a favorable impression of themselves. The sender is able to share positive qualities and filter out the negative. The receiver is more likely to look for someone with similar interests in online dating. Someone viewing an online dating profile will tend to ignore the information on the profile and create an unrealistic image of the owner. Social information processing theory helps to explain the sender/receiver channel relationship. Walther explains how selective self-presentation can affect what people share about themselves. Specifically, in online dating, people tend to share positive qualities about themselves rather than sharing negative qualities.

Impression Management Theory refers to the many ways by which individuals attempt to control the impressions others have of them: their behavior, motivations, morality, and a host of personal attributes like dependability, intelligence, and future potential. The impression management perspectives assumes that a basic human desire is to be viewed by others in a favorable manner (Rosenfeld, Giacalone, & Riordan, 1994). The data collected suggests that pictures were what made dating profiles most appealing when looking at first impressions of someone. 48.91% (N=90) of the participants said that pictures were what makes an online dating profile most appealing. When participants were asked what bothered them most about others' profiles, 35.52% (N=65) said that they were most bothered when the profile did not have a picture. While 33.88% (N=62) participants said they were both bothered when a profile had other people in their profile pictures. This data suggests that people are basing their first impressions of an online dating profile through pictures. 34.78% (N=64) of participants stated that pictures on the dating profile are very important.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, participants answers suggested that the most important aspects of an online dating profile are the profile picture, commonalities between users, and the amount of self-

disclosure. Pertaining to participants view on self-disclosure, a mild to moderate amount of self-disclosure shown on a profile was the most appealing to the vast majority of participants.

Participants answers also suggested the most effective way to disclose information on your dating profile was to disclose enough information to get other parties interested and then release more information the more comfortable one gets in the relationship.

### **Limitations**

Limitations that this study encountered trying to find participants that fit the needs for the survey. Students who have not used online dating websites may have different perceptions of effective and ineffectiveness than students who have had first-hand experience with online dating profiles.

Another limitation of this study was the participant's honesty and willingness to share about their dating life—which may include self-presentation and self-disclosure. Participants may not have been willing to disclose the information needed. For instance, online daters may not be willing to share the information about what they choose to share as well as what they truly look for in a profile to consider it effective or ineffective.

This study is not applicable to a nation-wide use because of the survey size and location of the participants.

### **Suggestions for Future Research**

The results of the survey have provided a solid base for further research. Studies done focusing on online dating profiles' effectiveness and ineffectiveness should be administered in a different location in the U.S. to provide a more accurate representation of undergraduate students. The trends found regarding effective and ineffective online dating profiles in this area of the United States may differ from trends and tendencies found in a different location.

Future research could take a closer look at whether or not people prefer traditional dating vs. online dating and why. With the technological advancements of today's world, how has mobile phones, video chat, and live-chat affected the way people meet one another. With the growing size of the online community, more and more people look to online dating as a way to meet others.

## **References**

- Anderson, T. L. (2005). Relationships among Internet Attitudes, Internet Use, Romantic Beliefs, and Perceptions of Online Romantic Relationships. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior*, 8(6), 521-531. doi:10.1089/cpb.2005.8.521
- Couch, D., & Liamputtong, P. (2008). Online Dating and Mating: The Use of the Internet to Meet Sexual Partners. *Qualitative Health Research*, 18(2), 268-279. doi:10.1177/1049732307312832
- Daft, R. L., and Lengel, R. H and L. K., Trevino (1987), "Message Equivocality, Media Selection, and Manager Performance Implications for Information Systems," *MIS Quarterly*.
- Ellison, N., Heino, R., & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 11(2), 415-441. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x
- Ellison, N. B., Hancock, J. T., & Toma, C. L. (2012). Profile as promise: A framework for conceptualizing veracity in online dating self-presentations. *New Media & Society*, 14(1), 45-62. doi:10.1177/1461444811410395
- Espana, A. C. (2012). Self-disclosure and self-efficacy in online dating. ProQuest Dissertations & Theses Global. (1284159167). doi:10.15760/etd.889
- Farrer, J., & Gavin, J. (2009). Online Dating: A Test of Social Information Processing Theory. *Cyberpsychology & Behavior : The Impact of the Internet, Multimedia and Virtual Reality on Behavior and Society*, 12(4), 407-12.
- Gibbs, J. L., Ellison, N. B., & Heino, R. D. (2006). Self-Presentation in Online Personals. *Communication Research*, 33(2), 152-177. doi:10.1177/0093650205285368
- Gibbs, Jennifer L., Ellison, Nicole B., & Lai, Chih-Hui. (2011). First comes love, then comes Google: An investigation of uncertainty reduction strategies and self-disclosure in online dating. (Author abstract). *Communication Research*, 38(1), 70-100.
- Griffin, Em. (2011) *A First Look at Communication Theory*. McGraw-Hill Companies
- Hitsch, Günter J; Hortaçsu, Ali; Ariely, Dan (2010). What makes you click?--Mate preferences in online dating. *Quantitative Marketing and Economics*; Dordrecht, 8.4, 393-427.
- Jin, S. V., & Martin, C. (2015). 'A Match Made...Online?' The Effects of User-Generated Online

- Dater Profile Types (Free-Spirited Versus Uptight) on Other Users' Perception of Trustworthiness, Interpersonal Attraction, and Personality. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 18(6), 320-327. doi:10.1089/cyber.2014.0564
- Lopato, M. (2016). Social Media, Love, and Sartre's Look of the Other: Why Online Communication Is Not Fulfilling. *Philosophy & Technology*, 29(3), 195-210. doi:10.1007/s13347-015-0207-x
- Rosen L.D., Cheever N.A., Cummings C., & Felt J. (2008). The impact of emotionality and self-disclosure on online dating versus traditional dating. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24(5), 2124-2157. doi: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2007.10.003>
- Rosenfeld, P., Giacalone, R., & Riordan, C. (1994). Impression Management Theory and Diversity. *American Behavioral Scientist*, 37(5), 601-604
- Smith, N. W., & Medvin, M. B. (2016). The Role of Self-Disclosure in Buffering Negative Feelings within Adolescent Friendships. *Modern Psychological Studies*, 21(2), 11-22.
- Tang, J., & Wang, C. (2012). Self-Disclosure Among Bloggers: Re-Examination of Social Penetration Theory. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior & Social Networking*, 15(5), 245-250. doi:10.1089/cyber.2011.0403
- Tidwell, L. C. and Walther, J. B. (2002), Computer-Mediated Communication Effects on Disclosure, Impressions, and Interpersonal Evaluations: Getting to Know One Another a Bit at a Time. *Human Communication Research*, 28: 317-348. doi:10.1111/j.1468-2958.2002.tb00811.x



## Appendix

1. What is your gender?
2. How old are you?
3. What is your race?
4. What is your major?
5. What is your highest degree or level of schooling?
  
6. What dating website/application do you use? Past or present?
7. Why do you use dating websites/applications?
8. How often do you use dating apps?
9. What makes an online dating profile most appealing?
10. What bothers you most about others' profiles?
  
11. On a scale of 1-5, how important is the profile picture?
12. Have you ever been lied to by someone on your dating website/application?
13. If yes, please explain how this affected your perception and interaction with this person?
14. Have you found that misrepresentation in user's profiles is an issue?
15. How accurate do you think you portray yourself in your dating profile(s)?

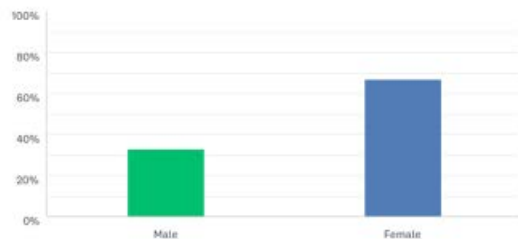
16. If you do not provide accurate information, what areas are you misleading to others?
17. What do you look for most when viewing others' profiles?
18. On a scale of 1-5 how important is self-disclosure in an online dating profile?
19. What amount of self-disclosure is most appealing in an online dating profile?
20. On a scale of 1-5 how important is honesty in an online dating profile?
21. What is the most important piece of information you disclose your profile?
22. What strategy do you prefer?

Disclose all information right off the get go:

Disclose enough to reel someone in, then disclose more information with an information with an interested party when comfortable.

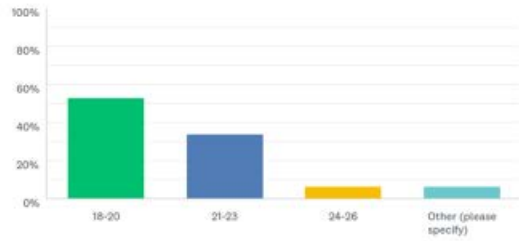
#### Q1: What is your gender?

Answered: 188 Skipped: 0



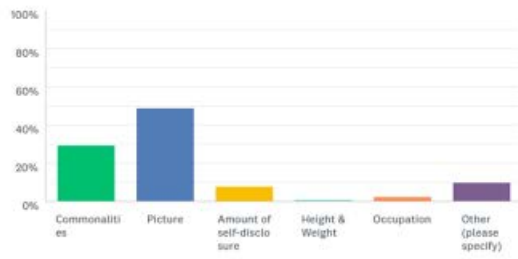
**Q2: How old are you?**

Answered: 187 Skipped: 1



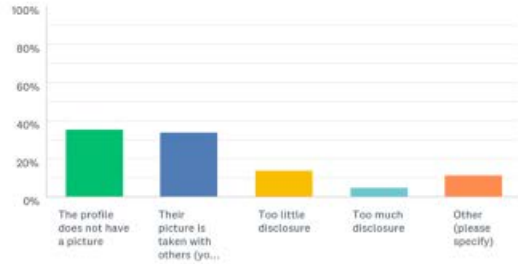
**Q9: What makes an online dating profile most appealing?**

Answered: 184 Skipped: 4



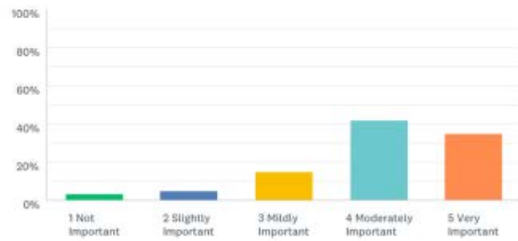
**Q10: What bothers you most about others' profiles?**

Answered: 183 Skipped: 5



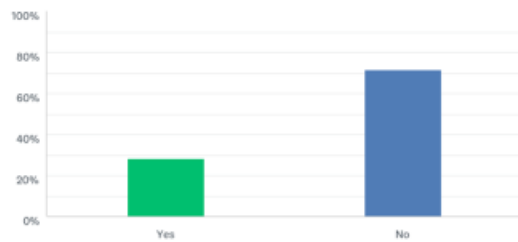
**Q11: On a scale of 1-5 how important is the profile picture?**

Answered: 184 Skipped: 4



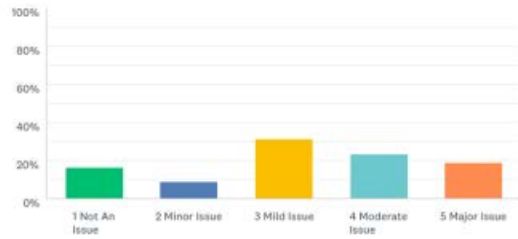
**Q12: Have you ever been lied to by someone on your dating website/application?**

Answered: 180 Skipped: 8



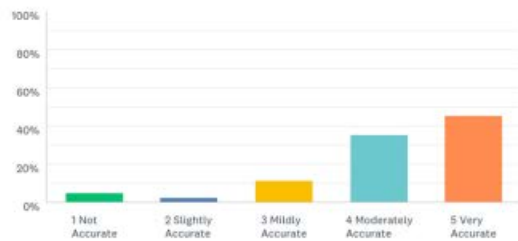
**Q14: Have you found that misrepresentation in user's profiles is an issue?**

Answered: 177 Skipped: 11



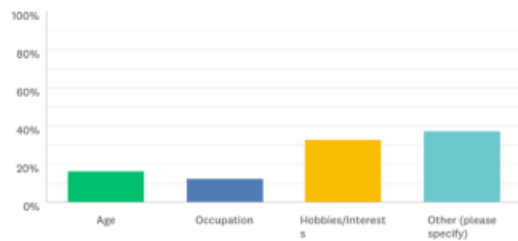
**Q15: How accurate do you think you portray yourself in your dating profile(s)?**

Answered: 174 Skipped: 14



**Q16: If you do not provide accurate information, what areas are you misleading to others?**

Answered: 151 Skipped: 37

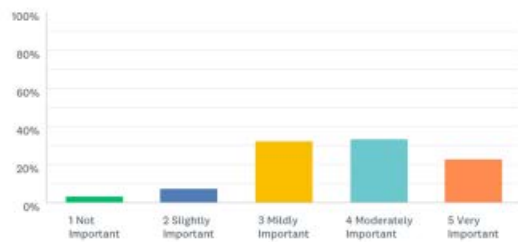


**Q17: What do you look for most when viewing others' profiles?**

- Interests - 22.93% - 36
- Pictures - 13.38% - 21
- Hobbies - 10.19% - 16
- Look - 8.92% - 14
- Attractiveness - 6.37% - 10
- Age - 5.73% - 9
- Bio - 5.10% - 8
- Similar - 5.10% - 8
- Appearance - 2.54% - 4
- Honesty - 1.91% - 3
- Job - 1.91% - 3
- Nice - 1.91% - 3
- Values - 1.91% - 3
- Sense of Humor - 1.91% - 3
- Quality - 1.27% - 2
- Education - 1.27% - 2
- Fun - 1.27% - 2
- Height - 1.27% - 2
- Location - 1.27% - 2
- Self - 1.27% - 2
- Dogs - 1.27% - 2
- Kind - 1.27% - 2

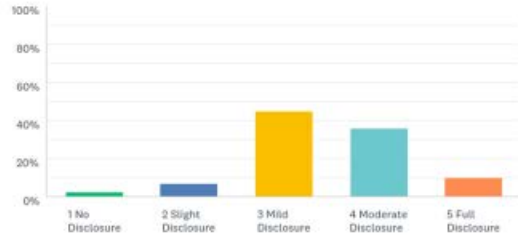
**Q18: On a scale of 1-5 how important is self-disclosure in an online dating profile?**

Answered: 175 Skipped: 13



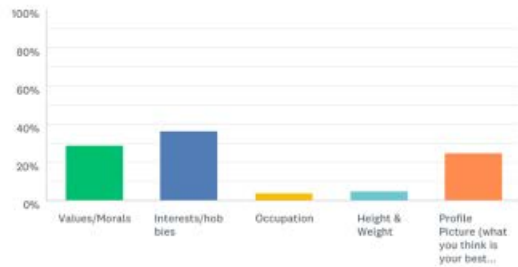
**Q19: What amount of self-disclosure is most appealing in an online dating profile?**

Answered: 174 Skipped: 14



**Q21: What is the most important piece of information you disclose on your profile?**

Answered: 175 Skipped: 13



**Q22: What strategy do you prefer:**

Answered: 174 Skipped: 14



Figure 1:

Q2	Q9	Profile Picture	Amount of Self-Disclosure	Commonalities	Total
Age 18-20		53	10	24	87
Age 21-23		30	1	22	53
Age 24-26		5	2	5	12
Age 27 & Older		2	2	4	8
Total		90	15	55	160

Test Stat	11.2367
D.F.	159
P-Value	.08133



Figure 2:

Q1	Q9	Profile Picture	Amount of Self-Disclosure	Commonalities	Total
Male		37	4	11	52
Female		53	11	43	107
Total		90	15	54	159

Test Stat	6.8711
D.F.	158
P-Value	.032208