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It's a Match:

How Society's Dependence on Efficient Technology Effects the Ways We Date.

I was first introduced to Tinder during my sophomore year of college. Immediately I was hooked and I got all of my roommates hooked on it to. Swiping left and right on an endless number of people became so addicting. Certain people would stand out, either by attractiveness or just because their profiles were so strange and those ones usually got the swipe right of approval. My friends and I would laugh and compare messages we got from guys and the matches that we made. It was also me who decided I would go on my first "Tinder Date", and boy, it was nerve wrecking. The best way I could describe it would be by comparing it to a blind date, except they don't come recommended, they could be lying to you about everything and all you have to go off of is a few text exchanges and maybe a phone call or two. Needless to say, Tinder made me into a serial dater. It was exciting, intriguing and super convenient, and most of all it was like an addicting game that I wanted to keep playing.

In a world where almost everything can be found through the simple touch of a finger or a few clicks on a computer we have become reliant on technology and obsessed with finding results rapidly and efficiently. Videos, tutorials, recipes and shopping all can be conveniently found and completed online. It is not at all surprising that people are now even finding dates and even life partners online. Now a days finding a significant other can be as simple as swiping left

or right on your touch screen phone. With all the hustle and bustle of busy daily life, online dating makes it much easier for people to sift through a worthy pool of other singles in order to find the perfect match.

I want to make an established connection between our society's growing reliance on technology use and the ways in which online dating have shaped dating culture. In a society where we all are so obsessed with instant gratifications, finding matches instantly can definitely be problematic. While many people have found matches on dating websites, I will argue that although online dating definitely does have its various benefits, that it overlooks important parts of the dating experience that can be essential for the growth of a healthy relationship. Dating profiles are made to make the single applicant appear as the best version of themselves, pictures and responses can often be tailored to present an altered image of themselves to the dating scene, which can be harmful when two individuals are trying to get to know each other. I also want to argue that online dating, while convenient, reduces people to mere categorical numbers and dehumanizes the dating experience.

This new form of dating, online dating, is affecting the ways in which we not only date and connect with people but the ways in which we look at people in general. Online dating reduces people to their mere profiles and effectively commodifies the dating experience by turning individuals into objects. We should be weary of this circumstance because when this happens people begin to think of the individuals that they find through online dating as disposable. Since there are more and more people on dating websites and applications everyday, and the scope continues to keep expanding, dating begins to feel like shopping for clothes or picking out a car. Online dating is making the accessibility of people all too accessible and therefore can have a dehumanizing effect on the overall dating experience.

I: The Issues With Online Profiles and the Power of Perception

Since our society is so fast paced, our dating methods have become fast paced as well. When using an online dating website or application, you are first asked a variety of questions about yourself. These compiled responses join to make a dating profile which computers use to compare to other profiles and create matches. So fast. The getting to know each other portions and initial dating acquisition phases are completely bypassed through online dating. Why wait for Mr. Right, when you can join a dating website and find him in minutes.

Dating profiles themselves, are a major area of concern for online dating. When so much emphasis is placed on the first impressions made by a online dating profile, the profile itself becomes the pinnacle point of interest and analysis for other online daters to assess. In a study conducted by Jin, Seunga, Martin and their other colleagues, aimed to look at perceptions of people's online dating profiles. This study ultimately showed that the ways in which people present themselves affect the ways in which people perceive them. Profiles that stuck to minimal detail and seemed more simple, struck people as more uptight and boring. These profiles were more likely to be passed up and overlooked. Profiles that showcased more adventurous details were more likely to be liked and seen as someone of interest (Jin et. al, 2015). This is especially pertinent with online dating because through this form of dating, the online profile is all that other daters have to go off of to select who they would like to communicate with and possibly date.

The main issue lies is the pitfalls of perceptions. That being said the dating profile in itself becomes a profound issue. When filling out details about yourself, who is to say that a dater may not "beef up" their own profile in order to seem a more worthy applicant. For women they may post more revealing and even enhanced photographs of themselves. Males may

embellish facts about themselves, like their height or professions. They may even include photographs of themselves that make them look much taller and more buff. The possibilities of online dating profile alterations is endless. Ultimately, the dating profile becomes an advertisement for the individual who created the profile. With all of the best features stated and even embellished and the pitfalls deemphasized.

Online daters have no regulations on their abilities to alter their online dating profiles. The profile itself takes on it's own persona and therefore can affect the ways in which other online daters receive the person who made the profile. When there are no regulations or stipulations set on an individual making a profile, who is to say that they would not exaggerate on their profiles. In one study conducted by Guadagno and her colleges, participants who used online dating applications or websites, filled out personality measured surveys in which they were asked to measure the ways they would present themselves in different dating scenarios. The findings were that those who used online dating were more likely to increase the amount that they would self-present and over exaggerate if they felt that there was a chance of meeting face to face. This speaks towards why people "beef up" their profiles when online dating. The more interesting they look or the more fun or especially the more attractive they appear to be on their online dating profiles, the more likely they are to be selected by other online daters. Ultimately, the better an applicant appears to be on their online dating profile, the more worthy of an applicant they become in a pool of other online daters. Dating is all about putting your very best foot forward, therefore online dating is all about detailing the most impressive and interesting points about you out there for other online daters to see.

II: Catfishing, an Ever Growing Threat for Online Daters Everywhere

A bigger concern is the possibility of online daters altogether and outright lying about who they are on their profiles. They could do this by using false photographs of themselves on their profiles, choosing pictures of random attractive strangers available from the internet or even assuming the identity of attractive people from Facebook. They may lie about their location, their job, their background. I am sure that we have all heard of and possibly have seen the MTV TV show, Catfish. It is all too common now a days, with the ability of people to make as many various online dating profiles that they wish to create and with background verifications hard to come by. Online daters can speak to someone they have met online for years and not entirely know who the person truly is or that they have been deceived. Making online dating all the more dangerous.

The "Catfishing" phenomenon is not just something that happens to a select few people who online date. It can happen to anyone who talks to someone who they have met through the internet. It has happened to me and many of my friends. One of the most interesting examples I can think of actually happened to one of my best friends, Ruth. She had been talking to a guy she had met off of Tinder back when she lived in San Diego. She chatted with this person for about a week until they decided to exchange numbers. When she received the guys phone number she realized that she actually already had it and that it was one of her classmates that she had worked on a group project with. His profile featured a clean cut and highly muscled black guy who liked to go to the beach and the gym an awful lot. In reality the guy she had been talking to was a skinny sort of awkward guy who sat in the back of the class and rarely spoke up. She never confronted him because she did not want to embarrass him, but she always worried about who else he might have been lying to and if she should have done something about it when she had the chance. Catfishing can happen on large scales the the examples we see through MTV's

catfish or on smaller scales like what happened to Ruth. It is easy for people to fall prey to catfishing when all they have to go off of is a profile and online conversation.

While catfishing is a large form of deceit and can definitely hurt someone emotionally, catfishing or rather just lying about who you are on a dating website can have far more dangerous implications. With online dating profiles accepting applicants from far and wide, you can literally meet and connect with anyone from around the world. While this makes dating a great way to network and expand your social and dating scene, it also means that the dater can access anyone and that in turn, anyone can access the dater. While the setting of being online can feel like a safe barrier, it still allows for access to information that is willingly provided by the applicants to be reached by strangers from all over. Vincent Hevern and his colleagues conducted a lot of research on deceptive Facebook profiles and the ease of access to other Facebook users. He found through contact with Facebook users that many have come into contact with or heard of other accounts of fake profiles. He found that many of these fake profiles were actually scammers or people trying to obtain information about people online (Hevern, 2011). These findings just further perpetuate the dangers of online dating and the ease of deception that can take place through online dating or meeting people on the internet. We have to be far more aware of this and far more cautious with what we post and share online and through online dating websites as well as who we come into contact with and choose to communicate with.

III: Does Online Dating Really Help Troubled Daters?

While there are many dangers of online dating and many reasons why it should be avoided, a major argument in the favor of online dating is that it helps those who are either too

shy for dating or too self-conscious. Online dating also helps those who are disabled or unable to regularly meet people on a day to day basis (Roth et. al. 2015). In a study conducted by Huang and Ching, teenagers were assessed through a survey for the reasons why they tend to use the internet as a source for socializing and dating. Over 70% of the teenage participants that responded to the survey, stated that the main reasons for wanting to try and find someone to date was because they were lonely, and the reason why they turned to the internet for dating was because they felt like they lacked the confidence to ask someone out or flirt face to face (Huang & Ching, 2013). Online dating acts as a safe barrier for people to connect and communicate with others without their inhibitions and their anxieties holding them back. Because online dating removes the face to face interaction and the outgoing confidence needed to approach someone you like and strike up a conversation, it allows people to have the ability to flirt and talk to people without fear.

While this seems to be beneficial and help people to connect, there is still a concern that this does not actually help, but rather hinder online daters. Since there is a removal of the inhibitions to speak up and flirt or seem outgoing online an individual is able to stay well inside of their own comfort zone. This might help them to build and create relationships online, but what about in the real world? When people eventually do meet and the relationship moves from online to in person, the individual is forced to come out of their comfort zone. Since they have only been operating from within their comfort zone, they may not have the ability or may be too scared to be themselves when they finally meet face to face. Online dating perpetuates the awkwardness. It allows for more and more virtual communication and relationship formation, and deemphasizes the importance of real life interaction. In many ways online dating and

internet communication may not be all that beneficial for these kinds of people, but rather it may be holding them back.

IV: Convenience May Not Be the Key, But Rather the Problem.

Another important point that I want to discuss in this article is the mere efficiency and convenience of online dating as being problematic. While many think that the ease of access of the dating pool is a beneficial aspect to online dating. I want to argue that it actually dehumanizes the dating experience. In a world where time is money, emphasis is placed on obtaining the greatest quality and amount of results in the most efficient and least time consuming way possible. Thus online dating was borne and has thrived. Through online dating the applicant pool is filtered by preferences, and then narrowed down and presented in less than seconds online. This takes the actual aspects of dating out of actual dating. Dating used to be about the spark and getting to know someone. But many, may in fact argue that this takes too much time and effort to put in, especially if it is not known is the person before you is someone worthy of the time spent getting to know them. Dating screens the applicants, and essentially gets rid of the initial getting to know someone phase. Before meeting an individual online, a dater may now know the applicant's occupation, location, favorite books, movies and TV show theme song. Little is left to discover and less is left up to the imagination. (Best and Delmege, 2012). The problem with filtering through so much information is that the details are left out, and these details are what makes dating human. Instead of organically learning the information from the person themselves, online dating makes it so everything is conveniently laid out and already known. An individual can then filter through the things that they like about a person and subsequently dismiss the traits that they do or agree with or like. Oh he likes Star Wars? Next.

Oh he still lives at home? Next. He is a waiter? Next. Filtering through information the way that online dating encourages, ignores a lot about a person. Online dating websites such as eHarmony use filtering and suggested matches so much, that dating becomes pretty much customizeable, like ordering a sandwich at Subway.

V: Does Online Dating Give Daters an Upper Hand?

The answer here is pretty complicated. While online dating gives those who may not otherwise get a shot at talking to the man or women of their dreams, it could actually be setting them up to fail. These individuals who come into contact with someone who they are interested in online, are given a special opportunity in which they can build a relationship based on chatting online. If a meaningful connection can be established, who knows, maybe appearances and perceptions can be overlooked at the initial meeting. While this can be be a great thing initially, it may prove problematic when physically meeting face to face (de Vries, 2016). Socializing solely online is far different from communicating in person. Someone who has only flirted or talked to someone that they are interested online, is less likely to be as bold or as willing to speak up when not behind their keyboards talking to the person of their dreams from miles away.

Knowing these things about a person before actually meeting them, can give the dater an upperhand in the dating process. It allows the person to feel more confident in their knowledge of the other person and effectively feel like they some what know a person prior to meeting them. Think about it, the dater will most likely already know what they look like, possibly some of their favorite hobbies and job, so a sort of comfortability may be felt about knowing the individual a little more before going into a first date. Communicating via the internet or through non face-to-face avenues can also make it so the two individuals getting to know each other

connect on a deeper level that is based primarily on communication and connection. While at first, this can be great if someone is lonely or looking to build a relationship, it is still essential for there to be a face to face meeting and connection. I must again argue that we only know what we have obtained from profiles or what the applicant has exposed to us. This process actually takes some of the vulnerability out of dating and especially the first date, which is how deep connections are typically made.

VI: How Online Dating Is Reinforcing The Hook Up Culture.

The convenience of online dating also reinforces a new dehumanizing form of dating, that functions as a way to reinforce oneself's self esteem arguably. Online dating, especially in the college generation tends to function like a point system. The more matches a person has on tinder the greater they tend to feel about themselves. The more matches for a man especially is like reinforcing his manhood. The concept of having the most matches is like having the most hookups under your belt. It is something that and be bragged about and boasted about. It also makes the dater look like he or she is a professional at playing the field.

When I was living in the dorms during my sophomore year of college there was a discussion about online dating and Tinder use on our campus. Someone during the discussion brought up the fact that Tinder is solely used as a means to find hook ups and that men are usually the ones looking for hookups. A male from the crowd decided to speak up and say that for him, that was not at all the case, but that for many of his brothers in her fraternity it was true. He bravely explained that his fraternity had had a "Tinder Competition" in which guys competed to match with the most girls on Tinder, and then tried to meet with and hook up with as many of them as they could. He went on to explain that the guy who won the competition hooked up with

an astounding 23 girls in one month's time. The guy bragged about how he met up with two girls in the same day. He also went on to say that it is not just guys. Girls use Tinder to hook up as well and he noted a few times in which he chatted with a girl on Tinder and then was blatantly asked for a hook up.

Hooking up has been a part of our society, but with the growth of technology and the internet hooking up has become a characteristic of the college and high school generations. Hooking up is almost a necessity to fitting in and many people feel compelled to conform to hooking up (Frietas, 2013). Donna Frietas, Author of *The End of Sex*, argues that many college students feel the need to blend into hook up culture however they do not actually want to. She also argues that an essential part of hooking up is that there are no strings attached. That being said online dating makes for a perfect platform to maintain the hookup culture. It allows for individuals to connect with out knowing each other or having to get to know each other. Effectively, online dating allows for the maintenance of the hook up culture. Online dating is also useful in that it removes the feelings of dating from hooking up, it allows people to participate in hooking up without forcing them out of their comfort zones and without having to visualize the person they meet online as anything but an object or someone that they can meet up with for the sole purpose of hooking up.

Another interesting point that came out of the Tinder discussion on campus was that if a person had more friends in common with someone that they matched with on Tinder, the less likely they would be to try and hook up and the more likely they would be to either avoid the person or try to forge a real relationship outside of Tinder. This is an important note because it speaks towards how online dating commodifies people. When a person has no connections or ties to you they seem like just a profile. The more connections and friends in common that they

share the more real this person becomes. If two people have friends in common it is likely that they will discuss their online dating with said person that two have in common. This effectively brings the online dating profile into reality and therefore humanizes the dating experience again. People become less "disposable" and more real when they are connected to people that are actually known in real non virtual life.

VII: How Online Dating Has Effected Me and the Ways that I Date.

The truth of it all, is that I really do think that online dating can have a positive impact on our society. It is the ways in which we use it, or tend to overuse it that create many problems and dangers for online daters. My friends and I may have had many weird and negative experiences with online dating, but at the end of the day I think that online dating has helped each of us in various ways. Throughout my rollercoaster of experiences with online dating I have had headaches, and shed tears, and felt like I have been deceived, but in the end of the day I met someone genuine. I've been with this person for a little over a year now, and truthfully I have never been happier.

Online dating made me a more cautious person. It made me question a lot of things about a lot of people and it even made me question a lot about the person who I am currently with. It is hard to take what people say about themselves and their pasts as facts when it feels like 70% of the people that you meet online are lying about something about themselves. From my experiences the greatest setback to starting a real relationship with someone who you have met online is that you do not know anything about them except for what they have told you. Prior to meeting the person, they never existed to you and you know nothing about their past or who they were. You are completely disconnected from them, which is hard for beginning a new

relationship. Your worlds are like two separate planets and it is your job to try and build a bridge that connects the two, with solid foundations. You know no one from their world, and they know no one from yours. No mutual friends, no common settings. This is problematic when trying to move forward in a relationship with someone. It is hard to judge their character and even harder to find validity in what they say. But taking the time to build that bridge and make those connections is what made my relationship with my boyfriend much stronger.

Thinking back about my own online dating experiences, I am very thankful. However, I know that I might have overused and maybe even abused online dating at times. I know that I have been deceived by certain people, and that a lot of the people I talked to just wanted to rack up points in their hookup quest. My friends and I used it for entertainment purposes, which in itself is problematic. It became interesting to see who got the most matches on Tinder and to compare cheesy pickup lines used on us. In some ways we were no better than those fraternity brothers. But at the end of the day I continued to use Tinder because I was lonely. I genuinely wanted to find and make a real connection with someone real and that is what online dating should actually be used for.

I wrote this article to further the discussion on online dating and to add to the body of literature that critiques online dating. I also wrote this article as a reflection on my own experiences and encounters with online dating, both first and second hand. Ultimately I got everything that I had been looking for through online dating, but it was only after using it appropriately and not abusing online dating. After everything has been said about online dating, I do believe that online dating is a positive avenue for dating, but that it should not be used as a tool for entertainment or hooking up and that it definitely should be used for building connections. One take away I have is that I have learned a lot from my many interactions with

people through online dating, I've learned a lot about people and as cheesy as it sounds, I have also learned a lot about myself as well.

VIII: And Finally, The Conclusion.

This understanding of how online dating is changing the way we date and form relationships is essential in looking at the ways in which our society is changing and where our society will be at in the future. We are inexplicably linked to technology, as it keeps evolving so to does society, and this can be problematic. Romantic relationships are now coded and individuals are linked through a process of binary filtering processions. While I am not completely knocking online dating, because it does have it's perks, I can't help but wonder, has technology use finally come too far?

Online dating takes the human interaction and overall humanity out of dating. Swiping left or right to choose a person, is like how we choose the next song on a playlist that we want to listen to. Choosing a person to communicate with based on their brief introductory profile bio is like reading the back of a book to see if you like it, and selecting someone based solely off of their profile picture, is definitely like judging a book for it's cover. Dating has turned into a mean of commodifying people and making it so that people can be conveniently selected out of a larger pool of dating applicants. It turns people into objects and in doing so it dehumanizes the dating experience. In reality, swiping left on Tinder, which is how you say you are not interested, instead would be actually rejecting someone in real life. Online dating has become so commonplace today that rejecting someone online feels so much easier than rejecting someone in real life because online daters just do not seem like real people anymore. It makes you think, are we objectifying ourselves when we subject ourselves to online dating and all of its pitfalls? We are people after all, and not computers. We must remember that.

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