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There Is More to Love: Meeting and Mating in the 21st Century

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements for the degree Doctor of

Philosophy in Sociology

by

Jessica Carbino

2015

ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

There Is More to Love:

Meeting and Mating in the 21st Century

by

Jessica Carbino

Doctor of Philosophy in Sociology

University of California, Los Angeles, 2015

Professor William G. Roy, Chair

This dissertation explores how individuals meet and mate in the 21st Century. Technology has always influenced the way we date, but meeting a partner online is increasingly common. I employ a mixed methods approach to understand the complex online dating space. Using three unique data sources, I explore how facial attractiveness, gender, and third parties structure online dating interactions.

In chapter one, I examine the influence of facial attractiveness and demographic factors on initiation and response behavior on a match-based online dating site. I also influence whether the context of the online dating site, match-based, influences traditional dating scripts. I use data from an online dating site to examine these questions. The results of this chapter indicate that facial attractiveness and demographic factors influence initiation and response behavior online. In addition, match-based sites help to diminish the effect of traditional dating scripts on initiation and response behavior online.

In chapter two, I investigate how individuals negotiate the tension between romantic and prosaic love. I also examine whether the preferences individuals express during confidential focus groups and interviews matches what they express in publically posted online dating profiles. This chapter uses data that have not been used in prior published work on online dating: online dating profile content and focus group and interview data. The results of this chapter indicate that a third logic, market, should be considered in the typology of love.

In chapter three, I examine the involvement of third parties in the romantic partner selection process, specifically the involvement of mothers in the romantic lives of their children. The major question I would like to address in this chapter is how the dynamics of gender operate in the reproduction of family relationships. The results of the study indicate that mothers' presentation of their children both in their profiles and in their correspondence with other mothers is based upon strategy.

The dissertation of Jessica Carbino is approved

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2015

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Jessica M. Carbino. "Experiences of Single Parents on Online Dating Sites." Presented at Dating Industry and Internet Dating Conference (IDate). Los Angeles, CA (June, 2014)

Introduction

What men and women desire in a romantic partner is the eternal question asked by individuals and sociologists alike. The mates we select influence our health, wellbeing, assets, and the outcomes of our offspring (Hawkins,2005). Romantic partner selection also has consequences at the population level. For example, Americans are now more likely to mate with individuals who are like themselves demographically (Schwartz and Mare, 2005), which may ultimately have consequences for the intergenerational transmission of inequality (Beller, 2009). This shift in assortative mating patterns may be the result of changes in the criteria for mate selection generally, such as the importance of achieved versus ascribed characteristics (Kalmijn,1998).

Changes in mate selection beyond the criteria for a prospective mate have occurred over the course of the 20th century. Individuals are now delaying marriage due to the expansion of higher education and changes in employment. Moreover, the context in which individuals are meeting their romantic partners has changed. Historically, third parties, such as families, and schools were instrumental in the romantic partner selection process (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012). The influence of families on romantic partner selection decreased, however, as individuals, especially the educated, are now more likely to live away from family (Rosenfeld,2005).

Since the advent of newspaper advertisements in the 19th century, technology has been an integral part of the romantic partner selection process (Sprecher et al., 2008). The latest technological innovation to influence romantic partner selection is online dating (Finkel et al., 2012). Although relatively new, online dating is a popular and growing means to meet a romantic partner. For example, Rosenfeld and Thomas in their How Couples Meet and Stay

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Together study find that online dating was the second most popular means by which individuals met their partners between 2007 and 2009.

This dissertation examines the mating process in the context of the exciting and growing online dating industry. The issues discussed in this dissertation include topics that scholars have not been able to investigate fully. In prior studies of assortative mating (Schwartz and Mare,2005; Kalmijn, 1991), scholars are only able to investigate with whom individuals ultimately couple and do not have data regarding with whom individuals chose to not couple. The lack of information on individuals who are chosen versus individuals who are not chosen also does not allow for a full examination of how market forces impact individuals' decision-making processes.

The information individuals possess and the ideals individuals hold also greatly influence the dating process. The issues associated with navigating the online dating realm in the face of thin information have not been fully explored in scholarship to date. Additionally, prior research has not explored how individuals' notions of prosaic and romantic love influence their decision-making and approach to finding a romantic partner. To examine the issues above, this dissertation uses two unique data sources that have not been analyzed in prior research and data collected via focus groups with online daters. Below I outline the three chapters of the dissertation. Finally, I explore some of the major themes that emerged throughout the three chapters of the dissertation.

Information: Thinness and Overload

Self-presentation is critical in the dating process (Derlega et al., 1987). The information individuals provide to potential partners is often signaled through verbal and non-verbal interaction. In the context of online dating, individuals are only able to signal information

through the information they provide in a written profile and their photographs. Due to the few signals available to online daters, individuals are acting on the basis of thin information.

Thin information may have a significant impact on how individuals navigate online dating. In the face of thin information, individuals are more likely to rely on stereotypes (Festinger,1954). Given that online dating is based upon the interactions between the genders, on heterosexual sites, online daters may default to traditional gender stereotypes when presenting themselves and describing their desires to others.

The default to stereotypes becomes most apparent when third parties intervene in the process of brokering a match as in the third chapter of the dissertation. In the process of brokering a match for their child, mothers are presenting their children in their profiles and correspondence. The descriptions mothers provide reproduce traditional gender stereotypes and roles. Mothers, however, deviate from traditional gender stereotypes when describing their child at junctures that were strategic.

Online daters are also facing information overload. For online daters, such as the focus group participants in chapter two, they are presented with hundreds if not thousands of prospective partners on a regular basis. The ability to identify, which matches are good and which matches are bad, is not necessarily very simple. For many online daters, the number of choices is not only overwhelming but also deceptive. Many online daters are under the delusion that they have unlimited choices available to them. The choices presented to them are not unlimited, however. The choices users face are often undesirable and for many individuals it is rare to find an individual with whom they want to couple.

Traditional Dating Scripts

Norms regarding online dating interactions are relatively unestablished. Men and women in theory have the same opportunities to initiate and interact with one another online. Despite the

equal opportunities online dating presents for interaction, men and women default to traditional dating scripts when dating online. Men overwhelmingly message women and women remain passive recipients to their advances.

Traditional dating scripts are crippling interactions among men and women. Women and men have a firm understanding that their roles in a dating context are established and that deviations from the norm have consequences. For online daters, the consequences for deviations from the norm may include reprimands from peers and feelings of rejection. For women who initiate contact with prospective matches and do not receive a response, feelings of rejection may be particularly strong given that they normally are rejected indirectly and they have deviated from traditional gender norms.

Despite firmly established dating scripts, the context of an online dating site may mediate the influence of gender. In contexts in which men and women are provided the same match, match based sites, women are more likely to send an initial message than on search based sites. By removing the search dynamic, men and women are being placed in a position where the opportunities for and mindset to message are more equal.

Prosaic v. Romantic Love:

Online daters are operating in a context in which they have been exposed to social constructions of love since they were children. Romantic love is very clearly present in the media and individuals are able to describe romantic love in a meaningful way. Prosaic love is not grounded in convention and is often learned about through experience and observation. Both types of love influence individual decision-making, however.

Understanding how the tension negotiated between romantic and prosaic love works was a critical part of this dissertation. Individuals operate in a manner that is consistent with both

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romantic and prosaic versions of love.

The influence of prosaic love begins with dating site selection. Men and women diversify their online dating portfolios to increase their likelihood of finding a good match and to attract as many prospective matches as possible. Strategy influences the entire online dating process and largely dictates individuals decide with whom to match and communicate. Individuals also frame their preferences in their online dating profiles based upon an understanding of what potential matches may desire. Moreover, male and female respondents are both far more candid in focus groups than in their online dating profiles.

Romantic love heavily influences the online dating process. Online daters interactions are structured on the basis of traditional gender courtship scripts. Male and female respondents have firm understandings regarding gender appropriate behavior and act accordingly. Online daters are also unwilling to compromise on what characteristics their ideal should possess. Moreover, respondents are confident that an ideal exists and they will be able to find their ideal.

Romantic and prosaic love may be limited in their ability to fully capture how individuals seek relationships. In her investigation of how individuals talk about love, Swidler (2001) presented two logics :romantic and prosaic. For Swidler (2001), her investigation of love was solely related to individuals who had coupled prior. These individuals had already made a decision regarding whom they would partner and described how their relationship developed over time. Swidler's (2001) analysis did not touch on whom the individuals did not select to marry or the realities they faced when dating. In the process of investigating the tension, a third element emerged that significantly influences how individuals conceptualize and think about love: the realities of the market.

Market logic is critical to understanding how individuals select partners given that individuals are not making choices in a vacuum. Individuals enter the dating market with a fixed set of characteristics, have a firm understanding how they stack up to other single individuals, and are acting on the basis of available information. While the information may not always be good information, as seen in the illusion of endless choice, individuals are making decisions on the basis of what they know and can reasonably infer.

Dissertation Summary

The emergence of online dating rather than signaling the failure or inability of preexisting social institutions to generate romantic partnerships may simply signal the emergence of new social institutions and larger demographic shifts in partnering patterns. The three chapters of the dissertation attempt to investigate how various factors, including ideals, third parties, and contexts, shape individual decision making behavior. While there are no clear-cut answers, there are many themes and trends that merit further investigation.

In chapter one, I explore whether context influences communication patterns between men and woman on an online dating site. This study builds upon prior research through exploring whether the context for contact alters behavior. Research conducted on speed dating suggests that context influences patterns of contact behavior by gender (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009). Prior research on contact behavior on online dating sites suggests that males are more likely to contact females (Lewis, forthcoming, Skopek et al., 2011;Cavanagh et. al, 2014). These studies use search based sites, however, and users do not always see the profiles of all users on the site nor do they know whether they are considered to be a good match. Other contexts, such as match based sites, might give rise to different behavior, however.

The findings from this analysis indicate that context indeed mediates the influence of gender on online dating sites. Although the norm of men initially messaging in greater numbers persist, women on match based sites are far more likely to message men than on traditional search based sites. The structure of online dating sites may therefore strongly impact the persistence of traditional dating scripts.

This study also highlights the importance of market level factors in influencing online dating outcomes. Prior studies have not had access to data related to with whom individuals selected to partner, whom they rejected, and how their preferences interact with market realities. In this study, I find that women who are interested in a serious relationship are more likely to initiate contact with a prospective match. This behavior signals that some women who are motivated to find a committed relationship will act and not be passive recipients to the advances of men.

In Chapter Two, I investigate how individuals negotiate the tension between romantic and prosaic love. For many individuals, finding a romantic partner is a complicated process. Individuals enter the market with ideals formed by experience and socialization. The ideals individuals possess, however, do not necessarily match the realities of the market.

Romantic and prosaic versions of love influence the dating process. Individuals act in a strategic manner online, which is consistent with a version of prosaic love. Strategy informs every step of the online dating process ranging from communication patterns to profile descriptions. Moreover, these strategies are strongly linked to ideas surrounding appropriate gender behavior, such as the norm that men must initiate contact with women. The influence of romantic notions of love can be most clearly seen in terms of the adherence to traditional dating scripts and unwillingness to compromise among both men and women. At the same time,

romantic and prosaic love does not fully capture how individuals seek relationships and form partnerships. In this chapter, I introduce a third logic: market.

Another major issue address in the chapter is whether the preferences individuals express during confidential focus groups and interviews matches what they express in publically posted online dating profiles. According to the findings, male and female respondents are both far more candid in focus groups than in their online dating profiles.

In this chapter three, I explore the involvement of third parties in the romantic partner selection process, specifically the involvement of mothers in the romantic lives of their children. The major question I would like to address in this chapter is how the dynamics of gender operate in the reproduction of family relationships.

In the United States, romantic partner selection today is largely controlled by the individuals forming the relationship. However, parents have a large stake in their child's partner and for some groups, such as Jews, this interest may be particularly strong (Hynie et al., 2006; Phillips, 1997; Goldscheider, 1986). For Jews, the imperative to marry another Jew is not only to ensure cultural similarity, but demographic as well (Phillips, 1997). Parents, specifically Jewish mothers, may thus intervene to ensure their child marries a Jewish partner. Studies using other dating sites involve communication between the individuals forming the relationship. The individuals communicating on the site used in this study, however, are the mothers of the children being matched. The data are from a national dating site composed of Jewish mothers. In this chapter I assess how mothers describe and present their children to the mothers of prospective matches.

The results of the study indicate that mothers' presentation of their children both in their profiles and in their correspondence with other mothers is based upon strategy. Due to the thin

information mothers have to act when creating profiles for their children and communicating on behalf of their children, mothers use few, but universally appealing words to describe their child, such as nice, intelligent, and attractive. These terms are the most commonly used terms and are used to describe both sons and daughters.

While using the same terms to describe their sons and daughters, mothers crafted their profiles and correspondence in a manner that reproduced traditional gender stereotypes and roles. There were occasional deviations from traditional gender stereotypes when describing their child, however. Deviations from and adherence to traditional gender stereotypes and roles may largely be related strategy.

Mothers' primary goal was to find a suitable match for their child. Mothers went to great lengths literally and figuratively in their correspondence and profile descriptions to find their child a partner. All of their strategic efforts were geared with this goal in mind.

Theoretical and Practical Conclusions

The findings from this dissertation have important theoretical implications on studies of mate selection. To date, scholars have been unable to establish how and whether individuals modify their preferences over time. While a segment of the population, namely the highly educated, white men and women, claim that they are not willing to modify their preferences, data from an online dating site demonstrates that online daters relax their preferences after being on an online dating site for a period of time. The mismatch between stated and latent preferences is particularly interesting, given that for women their preferences are grounded not necessarily on romantic ideals but on market and prosaic logic.

This dissertation expands on our understanding on the influence of facial attractiveness in mate selection. Individuals have long understood facial attractiveness to be a significant motivating factor in partner selection both women and men. Scholars to date have not had access to the photographs of individuals whom individuals select and do not select to assess the significance of attractiveness in the mate selection process. The findings indicate that physical attractiveness, in the form of facial attractiveness is a significant factor impacting the mate selection process. At the same time, physical attractiveness does not necessarily negate the influence of other demographic factors in the mate selection process.

The findings of the dissertation also have practical implications for the online dating industry. According to data related to the influence of context on sending behavior, context may have a mediating effect on gender. Women on the match based site in this study are more likely to send initial messages to male users, relative to users on search based sites used in prior work. The findings also indicate that the traditional dating scripts influencing sending and response behavior are highly inefficient and hamper the process of matches transitioning to messages and ultimately to dates. Moreover, the traditional dating scripts associated with online dating lead to a high degree of user fatigue, "online dating fatigue," among both men and women that ultimately will negatively impact their bottom line.

Chapter 1: Love Is Only Love: Romantic, Prosaic, and Market

Understanding what characteristics individuals seek in their romantic partners is an important task for family sociologists. Romantic relationships have long term consequences for individuals, including economic stability, health, and their offspring's wellbeing (Hawkins and Booth, 2005). Historically, prospective marriage partners were selected based upon their ability to maintain or elevate an individuals' financial status (Dribe and Lundh, 2005, Borscheid,1986). The criteria for selecting marital partners have changed over time, however (Oppenheimer, 1988; Coontz, 2005). Individuals now prioritize selecting marital partners with whom they can have an emotionally and sexually satisfying relationship (Cherlin, 2004; Coontz, 2005). Selecting a marital partner today may thus be a based upon more individual factors and preferences.

The context in which individuals have the opportunity to meet a potential partner has also changed dramatically. The third parties and institutions that traditionally facilitated romantic introductions no longer may be as dominant as they once were (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012). For example, family and friends historically facilitated the introduction of romantic partners (Rosenfeld, 2007). However, individuals, especially the educated, are now more likely to live away from friends and family (Rosenfeld, 2005). Additionally, educational institutions were a common place to meet romantic partners (Schwartz and Mare, 2005), but many individuals delay marriage for many years after completing their education. The rise of the Internet and development of online dating sites has helped to fill this gap in facilitating romantic partnerships.

Online dating sites are an increasingly common (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2012) and efficient means for individuals to meet romantic partners. According to Orr (2004), one in four single individuals used an online dating site to meet a prospective partner. Moreover, dating sites provide individuals with the ability to target the type of individual they desire. For example, online dating sites allow individuals to set parameters, such as age, religion, education, and race,

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for the partners with whom they are matched (Sprecher et al., 2008). Given that demographic preferences are a critical determinant of romantic partner selection (Kalmijn, 1998), the ability to set these preferences may be particularly beneficial for individuals seeking a serious relationship. For some individuals, meeting a romantic partner may now be as simple as clicking a button.

While meeting romantic partners may be easily facilitated through online dating, the process by which men and women interact online may not necessarily be straightforward. When initiating contact with and dating prospective partners, men and women tend to adhere to cultural scripts regarding socially appropriate behavior (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Rose and Frieze, 1993).The cultural scripts men and women describe involve men initiating contact and women being passive recipients to their advances (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Rose and Frieze, 1993). These scripts are understood by men and women to be effective and there may be negative consequences when not adhered to (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009; Muehlenhard and Scardino, 1985). For example, women who appear to be too aggressive are considered to be less attractive partners (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009).

While the aforementioned studies on cultural scripts do not use samples of online daters, prior research on online dating behavior suggests that men are more likely to initiate contact (Lewis, 2012). For example, on average male online dating users send approximately 4.19 messages to initiate contact with a prospective partner relative to .67 messages among women users. However, online dating theoretically provides both men and women with the equal opportunity to contact prospective romantic partners (McKenna,2008; Scharlott and Christ, 1995). Research on whether traditional gender norms regarding dating interaction persist in online dating interactions is also very limited and requires further exploration.

Online dating facilitates an examination of whether traditional gender norms persist, what

individuals desire before they form a relationship and provides a dating market for analysis. Prior literature on romantic partner selection generally and online dating, however, has multiple limitations. A major limitation of prior work is the focus on marriage formation, a transition that increasingly occurs late in the partnering process. While scholars focus on marriage has largely been the result of data availability (Lewis, 2012), this literature fails to account for the multiple changes in relationship formation that occurred over the course of the 20th century, such as the extension of dating into later ages. Moreover, we are not able to understand why individuals selected the partners they married because these unions have already been formed. These studies also are unable to shed light on the structure of the marriage market when these individuals began their search for a romantic partner. Prior studies on online dating also are not able to assess the relative importance of (facial) attractiveness on initial contact and the development of romantic attachments.

This paper expands upon prior studies on online dating by examining the importance of stated preferences in romantic partner selection (Lewis, 2012; Bruch, forthcoming) and by using a dating site that may enhance women's opportunities for initiating contact. I hypothesize that match based sites, such as the site being analyzed, may make women feel more comfortable initiating contact because women know that prospective male partners will see their dating profiles and be told they are a good match unlike search based online dating sites used in prior studies where individuals must decide whether another user on the site is a potentially a compatible match and initiate contact with no prior "introduction." Understanding whether men and women behave differently on a match rather than search based site is particularly important due to the influence of context on women initiating contact with men. For example, Finkel and Eastwick (2009) find that women are more likely to indicate interest in men if the women rather

than men circulate when speed dating. An investigation of how gender shapes interaction in dating is important because dating is the precursor to marriage and family formation.

Another important contribution offered in this paper is a focus on the relative importance of attractiveness for online dating contact behavior. I hypothesize that facial attractiveness will influence messaging behavior on online dating sites. For example, individuals will be more likely to send a message to a "potential match" who is more physically attractive relative to the other individuals with whom they are matched. Facial attractiveness has not been well explored in the literature due to the limited data that online dating companies typically provide to researchers. Most recent studies related to attractiveness also have not considered the importance of attractiveness relative to other demographic characteristics for messaging behavior (Fiore et al., 2008; Hitsch et al., 2010). Moreover, other recent studies that have attempted to include attractiveness are not directly measuring facial attractiveness, but rather a global attractiveness measure of the user relative to other users in the pool (Kreager et. al, 2014). Moreover, this measure of user attractiveness may not be based exclusively on the physical attractiveness of the user. Given the relative lack of information individuals have about their matches, facial attractiveness may be particularly important in determining whether an individual initiates or responds to a message.

This paper also expands on prior studies by including an analysis of how the dating market and relationship type preferences influence behavior. Individuals are on the dating market for a discrete period of time and encounter many people with whom they could theoretically mate. Individuals select partners or don't select partners depending upon whom they meet, their position in the market, and what type of relationship they desire. Prior studies have not had access related to data on the timing of matches relative to the individual user's time on the site or

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on their relationship preferences. Through understanding market constraints and individual preferences, I am able to better understand whether users change their preferences to achieve their goals.

In this paper, I address five questions about online dating interactions and romantic preferences. First, I ask with whom do individuals choose to communicate once given a "good match" opportunity, given their own demographic characteristics? Second, what is the relative importance of demographic characteristics and physical attractiveness for initiation and response behavior? Third, does the relative importance of attractiveness vary by gender? Fourth, how does gender influence initiation and response behavior in the context of a match based site? Fifth, do relationship preferences and market constraints influence initiation and response behavior?

I begin this paper by exploring prior work related to mate selection. Second, I discuss the emergence of the online dating market and prior research related to online dating and romantic preferences. Third, I discuss the role of gender in structuring dating interaction. I then present my findings and directions for future research.

Matching Strategies

The factors influencing the partner selection process vary across time and space. Individuals live and work in distinct neighborhoods, have certain preferences, and are exposed to third parties which influence with whom they choose to mate (Kalmijn,1991). Despite the complexity of the factors influencing the mate selection process, three theories may explain the mechanisms underlying the mate selection process: homogamy, matching, and market.

Individual preferences are a critical factor in the partner selection process. (Kalmijn, 1998). Across time and space, individuals have generally partnered with others who were demographically similar (Johnson, 1980; Kalmijn, 1998; Schwartz and Mare, 2005). Given this

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behavior many scholars assert that individuals prefer to marry those who are similar to themselves: homogamy. The primary individual preferences individuals most often sort themselves on are age, race, religion, and education (Johnson, 1980; Lewis, 2012; Skopek et al, 2011; Rosenfeld, 2008). For certain subgroups, the tendency to partner with demographically similar individuals may be particularly pronounced (Skopek et al, 2011). For example, highly educated women are more likely to select a demographically comparable partner than less educated women (Raymo and Iwasawa, 1995; Skopek et al, 2011; South, 1991). Additionally, the achieved (i.e. educational attainment) rather than ascribed characteristics of their partner (race, religion, and parent's background) have become more important determinants of partner selection (Schwartz and Mare, 2005).

The strength of homogamy in relationships thereby increases in accordance with the seriousness of the relationship (McClintock, 2010; Blackwell and Lichter, 2004). Although scholars observe a relative degree of heterogamy in dating and cohabiting relationships, most individuals ultimately marry partners who are similar to themselves. For serious relationships, such as marriage, individuals mate in a homogamous manner because they desire a romantic partner who possesses similar traits and values due to the importance of shared understandings, such as how to rear children and to ensure family harmony (van Leeuwen and Maas, 2005). The influence of homogamy in marriage and serious relationships extends beyond the desire to reproduce or please one's parents, however. Changing social values and norms also impact how individuals select partners. Given the rising desire for egalitarianism in relationships (Gerson, 2011), many individuals prefer to a demographically similar mate to ensure equality between the partners.

While sociological research primarily focuses on individuals selecting partners with

whom they match on cultural and demographic characteristics, economists and social psychologists posit that couples may engage in a process of exchange (Becker, 1981; Homans; 1958). In the context of romantic relationships, individuals recognize that the utility from selecting a partner with whom they can exchange resources is greater than the utility they can derive from being single. Individuals therefore will seek partners who possess a characteristic that is highly valued, even if they possess characteristics that are also less valuable (Becker, 1981). Men and women also only form relationships when they believe the exchange will maximize their utility (Becker, 1981). In the context of dating, a white woman who values education may be more likely to partner with an educated, black man than a less educated, white man. A traditional view of exchange theory would also posit that men with a high status via education or income would partner with attractive, but less educated or lower status women.

Individuals are also not making their mating decisions in isolation. Individuals are making decisions their decisions based upon their position in a dating market. Upon entering the dating market, individuals possess a set of demographic characteristics and preferences for a partner's characteristics. Men and women then engage in a search process to find a prospective partner (Oppenheimer, 1988). An important component of the search approach is the assumption that men and women desire finding a partner equally (Albrecht, 2001). Men and women may vary in their desire to form a marital relationship, however (Thornton and Young-Demarco, 2001). This variation may potentially be explained by the different economic rewards of marriage for men and women (Albrecht, 2001). For example, women historically acquired resources and position through marriage unlike men who acquired their status through their employment (Coontz, 2005). Although many women today are active labor force participants and financially independent, the legacy of the past may still be operative in the marriage market.

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Unsuccessful searches may lead to difficult choices for the individuals seeking a romantic partner. If the search is unsuccessful, many individuals may choose to delay or forgo partnering (Raymo and Iwasawa, 2005). Rather than delaying or choosing to forego finding mate, however, individuals may engage in a process of rational adaptation. In the context of dating, individuals would compromise on their preferences or standards if their pursuits to find their ideal or preferred partner were not effective after a period of time. For example, women may compromise on their educational preferences and marry a less educated partner if their pursuit to find a highly or similarly educated partner proves unsuccessful (Raymo and Iwasawa, 2005). Research to date has not yet explored whether men and women engage in a process of rational adaptation based upon their relationship preferences and time on the marriage market. Moreover, the factors that individuals are willing to compromise on in the course of adapting have not been explored either.

The demographic composition of a community's may lead to rational adaptation in mate selection (Kalmijn, 1998; Harris and Ono, 2005). An individuals' ability to mate with others depends on the size of their social group and the sex ratio of available men and women (Fossett and Kiecolt, 1991; South, Trent, and Shen, 2001). Marriage markets that are imbalanced may affect relationship formation patterns depending upon which sex is favored (Warner et al., 2011). For example, markets that are unfavorable to woman lead to a lower number of committed relationships because there are greater opportunities for men to obtain sexual partners without a marital commitment (Warner et al., 2011). Women seeking more serious relationships may therefore be more willing to compromise on certain characteristics to achieve the relationship they desire if they have been unable to find a partner after a certain period of time.

Technology Mediated Dating

Technology has long been an important element in matchmaking (Sprecher et al., 2008). The placement of personal advertisements in local newspapers accompanied the rise of newspaper circulation in the mid-19th century (Finkel et al., 2012). In these advertisements, individuals would provide a description of themselves and their ideal partner. The newspapers would then act as the intermediary directing correspondence to the individual placing the advertisement from individuals responding to their inquiry (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, and Michaels, 1994). Newspaper advertisements, however, were not a widely effective means of meeting a prospective partner (Finkel et al., 2012). Less than 1% of individuals found their partners using newspaper advertisements (Laumann, Gagnon, Michael, and Michaels, 1994).

With the development of video recording devices, video-dating became an option for meeting romantic partners in the 1980s (Ahuvia and Adelman, 1992). Video-dating users would provide basic information and pictures of themselves as well as a brief video interview. After analyzing the information and pictures of other users, videodaters would select individuals whose videos seemed appealing and would be paired if both parties were interested. The success of video-dating was also limited, however (Finkel et al., 2012).

The emergence of computer technology facilitated the development of computer mediated dating. The earliest form of computer mediated dating emerged at universities and social scientists began to develop algorithms to match people (Finkel et al., 2012). Researchers at Stanford were the first to dabble in computer matching in 1959. The "Happy Families Planning Services" endeavor involved matching 49 men and 49 women in a class based upon demographic characteristics and personal preferences (Gillmor, 2007). While the project was purely an academic exercise, others began to follow suit for commercial purposes. In the1960s, students at

Harvard launched a service using questionnaires distributed nationally to match individuals using an algorithm (Leonhardt, 2006). Other computer mediated matchmaking efforts include "Project Cupid" where psychologists were recruited to develop a computer matching system and online bulletin boards comparable to newspaper advertisements (Finket et al., 2012). The first contemporary online dating sites, such as Match and JDate, were launched in the mid-1990s (Finkel et al, 2012).

Unlike video-dating and personal advertisements, online dating is commonly used. Approximately 25% of singles have used an online dating site to find a romantic partner (Orr, 2004). Moreover, online dating leads to romantic unions. Rosenfeld and Thomas (2012), using data from their How Couples Meet and Stay Together study, find that online dating was the second most popular means by which individuals met their partners between 2007 and 2009. Given that a significant number of Americans use online dating to find romantic partners, scholars are interested in understanding which individuals use online dating sites. Online daters are more likely to be white, single (never married), internet users, educated, and male (Sautter et al, 2010). According to Sautter et al. (2010), the effect of sociodemographic variables on the likelihood of using an online dating site is modest because internet use and being single is associated with most sociodemographic variables.

An important factor related to the success of online dating is the diversity and number of sites (Finkel et al., 2012). Individuals want to be able to meet a partner who meets their desired criteria and expand their pool of potential partners. As a result of the large number of online dating sites, individuals have the opportunity to meet a partner who they may never have encountered in their daily life. Some online dating sites are fairly general in nature such as Match, OkCupid, and Plentyof fish and also may be used for free (Finkel et al., 2012). Although

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online dating sites arguably allow individuals to meet a variety of people from completely

different walks of life, many online dating sites cater to specific demographic groups thereby

allowing individuals to pre-select on important characteristics prior to beginning the search

process (Finkel et al., 2012). Sites that allow for pre-selection on demographic characteristics

may be particularly attractive and more efficient for individuals who have set criteria for a

romantic partner. Several online dating sites target specific religious groups, including JDate

which targets Jews, Christianmingle which targets Christians, and LDSMingle which targets

Mormons. Sites that specialize on the basis of race and sexual orientation, such as Blacksingles

targeting Blacks and Grindr targeting Homosexuals, also occupy an important place in the online

dating market.

While most online dating sites and apps theoretically puts individuals in the position to

make decisions about partners independent of third parties, technology, in this case the online

dating site, acts as the intermediary. Although there are many issues associated with online

dating sites, such as their algorithms, features, design, individuals use the information

prospective matches provide on the sites to make decisions. The process by which individuals

are making decisions is therefore not completely independent but rather very mediated.

Prior Work on Preferences in Online Dating

Given the recent emergence of online dating sites, scholarly work in this area is limited,

but rapidly growing. The most recent work by demographers provides information on what

characteristics individuals desire in romantic partners (Bruch, Forthcoming; Hitsch et al., 2005;

Lewis, 2012). Upon entering the dating market, individuals form an understanding of their

overall attractiveness relative to other single individuals and use this understanding to inform the

criteria they set when searching for a partner (Skopek et al., 2011a). While individuals using online dating sites have the ability to meet individuals from virtually any background of their choosing, prior research suggests that individuals engage in sorting behavior along demographic and cultural lines (Lewis, 2013; Skopek et al., 2011a). Age, race, religion, and education are the primary variables focused on in these studies regarding romantic partner preferences and are found to be important determinants in the partner selection process.

According to Skopek et al. (2011a), age is an important factor influencing contact among and romantic partner preferences among online dating site users in Germany. Young men and women both prefer to date a partner who is close to them in age. However, preferences change as men and women age. For example, men consistently prefer younger women as they age, but changing preferences for women are more complicated (Skopek et al., 2011a). As women age, there is no clear pattern for desired partner's age. According to Skopek et al. (2011a), gender differences in age preferences may be explained by variation in the attractiveness older men and women have on the dating market. As men age, their attractiveness grows or remains stable whereas women's attractiveness declines with age (Skopek et al., 2011a).

Race is one of the primary criteria used in partner selection on online dating sites (Feliciano, 2009; Lewis, 2013; Lin and Lundquist,2013). Despite the enhanced ability to meet people from multiple backgrounds, racial boundaries and endogamy persists in online dating (Feliciano, 2009; Lewis,2013; Lin and Lundquist,2013). In fact, the desirability of an online dating user varies by their race (Feliciano et al., 2009). Feliciano et al. (2009) document that when individuals state preferences for a partner's race in their online dating profile patterns of racial hierarchy and boundaries emerge. For example, whites are most likely to express a preference for white partners than all other racial groups (Feliciano et al.,2009). Black women

are also the group that is least likely to be listed as a preferred dating partner (Feliciano et al., 2009). These racial boundaries translate into contact behavior on online dating sites (Lewis, 2013). For example, white men and women are most likely to receive messages from other online dating users (Lewis, 2013). Additionally, Lewis (2013) finds that black women are one of the groups that is least likely to be contacted and receive a response when they initiate contact.

Religion is an area where scholars also find individuals sort themselves on online dating sites. According to Lewis (2012), there is a high a level of religious endogamy among online dating users. As with other demographic characteristics, there appear to be certain religious affiliations that are deemed more attractive than others (Lewis, 2013). For example, atheists and agnostic online daters are seen as the most desirable partners and are most frequently contacted by other online dating users (Lewis, 2013).

Education seems to be the demographic characteristic that individuals most strongly sort themselves along when dating generally. Prior research consistently suggests that men and women are likely to mate with similarly educated individuals (Bruch, forthcoming; Lewis, 2012; Skopek et al, 2011b). Matching along educational lines is most strong at the poles of the educational spectrum. Individuals with a high school education, the bottom pole, and with a graduate level education are most likely to select partners of similar educational backgrounds (Lewis, 2012). Women are also less likely than men to contact individuals who are less educated (Skopek et al., 2011b).

Attraction is a critical element of the mating process. Analyses of interpersonal interactions indicate that attractiveness may be more important than personality when forming initial judgments (Dion et al.,1972). Prior research on attractiveness in online dating has been limited in terms of both breadth and scope. Economists have wanted to determine whether

individuals are strategic in their online dating behavior and evaluate the potential cost associated with initiating contact with attractive individuals (Hitsch et al., 2010). According to Hitsch et al. (2010), individuals are more likely to message more attractive individuals and thereby willing to bear the cost of initiating contact with attractive individuals. Other studies have evaluated attractiveness based upon the number of messages an individual received and self-reported attractiveness (Fiore & Donath, 2005). To date, no study has analyzed the relative importance of facial attractiveness for sending and response behavior on an online dating site, however.

Marital status and relationship preferences, however, are also critical factors influencing the partner selection process. Individuals who are married may have different outlooks on the types of relationships they want in the future relative to their single counterparts (Bumpass et al., 1995). Moreover, demographic factors influence the likelihood of remarriage following divorce (Montalto and Gerner, 1998; South,1991). For example, men are more likely to remarry than their female counterparts (South, 1991). Moreover, relationship preferences may shape individuals' demographic preferences, if individuals prefer individuals who are homogamous in serious relationships. To date, no study has on analyzed the relative importance of marital status or relationship preferences for sending and response behavior on an online dating site, however.

Prior Work on Gender and Dating

Social interactions are largely guided based upon traditional gender scripts (Ridgeway, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 1987). Although men and women perform actions as individuals, they do not act in isolation, but rather interact with others and their actions are viewed on the basis of their gender (West and Zimmerman, 1987). For example, the appropriateness of a man or woman's actions may be determined based upon whether the activity they engaged in is viewed as masculine or feminine (Ridgeway, 2009; West and Zimmerman, 1987). In certain

areas of social life, cultural understandings of appropriate masculine and feminine behavior may be firm (Ridgeway, 1997). Dating, for example, may be an area where shared understandings of masculine and feminine behavior may be particularly strong (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Rose and Frieze, 1993).

When asked about appropriate dating behavior men and women express clear ideas regarding what roles are appropriate for each gender (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Rose and Frieze, 1993). Men and women both agree that men should actively pursue female partners and that women should be passive recipients to their advances (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Rose and Frieze, 1989, 1993). For example, women and men overwhelmingly state that men are supposed to plan dates, ask out the woman, and pick her up (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Rose and Frieze, 1989, 1993). Moreover, when women do not adhere to these scripts they are viewed negatively (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009). For example, women who initiate dates are viewed by men as more promiscuous and not interested in forming a serious relationship (Muehlenhard and Scardino, 1985).

The notion that men are hunters and women are prey is not only expressed by individuals but also by the popular media (Laner and Ventrone, 2000). Despite a great deal of contestation within the media regarding the appropriate gender roles for men and women generally, in the context of dating advice most popular media still emphasizes traditional dating scripts. According to many dating advice books, such as *The Rules*, women are instructed that men are biologically programmed to pursue women and that they should not interfere in this process (Laner and Ventrone, 2000). For example, in *The Rules*, women are instructed to not contact men but rather to wait and let the men initiate contact (Fein and Schneider, 1995). These prescriptions can also be seen in major network television shows, such as the Millionaire Matchmaker and

Miss Advised.

Despite social prescriptions and understandings that men and women have different roles in the dating game, recent research is mixed as to whether gender roles are quite as rigid (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009; MacGregor and Cavallo, 2011). According to MacGregor and Cavallo (2009), women who feel a greater sense of empowerment and control are more likely to initiate contact with a prospective male partner. The context for initiation may be important for establishing women's sense of control, however. For example, in speed dating experiments where women are assigned the active role of rotating to different men, women are more likely to indicate interest and less likely to be as selective as when they are in the passive role (Finkel and Eastwick, 2009). While others have argued that online dating may be a context where women feel more comfortable initiating contact with men (McKenna,2008; Scharlott and Christ, 1995), recent research on online dating suggests online dating may not result in major changes in initiation patterns (Skopek et al., 2011; Lewis, 2013; Kreager et. al, 2014). For example, Lewis (2012) finds that male online dating users overwhelmingly send the initial message to a prospective female partner.

Research Questions

In this paper, I address five questions about online dating interactions and romantic preferences. First, I ask with whom do individuals choose to communicate once given a "good match" opportunity, given their own demographic characteristics? Second, what is the relative importance of demographic characteristics and physical attractiveness for initiation and response behavior? Third, does the relative importance of attractiveness vary by gender? Fourth, how does gender influence initiation and response behavior in the context of a match based site? Fifth, do

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relationship preferences and market constraints influence initiation and response behavior?

Hypotheses

First, given the strength of homogamy among married individuals, I hypothesize that individuals will be more likely to select individuals who are similar to themselves rather than engage in a process of exchange. Second, given prior studies on the diverging priorities of men and women in partner selection, I believe that the physical attractiveness of a prospective partner will be more influential than demographic characteristics for male respondents and initiators. For women initiators and respondents, however, I expect demographic characteristics to be relatively more important than facial attractiveness. Third, given the influence of physical attractiveness on partner selection, I hypothesize that individuals will be more likely to send and respond to a message from a "potential match" who is more physically attractive. Fourth, I hypothesize that that match based sites, such as the one in this study, will lead to women sending initial messages at a higher rate relative to the findings from studies using search based sites. Fifth, as a result of rational adaptation, I hypothesize that individuals will be more likely to relax their preferences to find a potential partner over time.

Data

This study uses a unique source of data from a now defunct Los Angeles based online dating site. The users were primarily from Los Angeles, but also included users from New York and San Francisco. Although defunct, there are multiple advantages to using the site in this study. First, scholars have never analyzed the site being used in this study. Second, prior studies have used sites where members are able to conduct searches for potential partners and have primarily used data from the same online dating site (Lewis,2013; Feliciano,2009; Kreager, 2014). This study, however, uses a match based site where members receive approximately five

matches on a weekly basis and are notified when other users receive them as a match.

The match based model of attaining a prospective partner is an important advantage because this model may provide further insight into prior findings regarding contact behavior on dating sites. Prior research on contact behavior on online dating uses data from search based sites and suggests that males are more likely to contact females (Lewis, 2013; Kreager et al.,2014; Skopek et al., 2011). On search based sites, users do not always see the profiles of all users on the site nor do they know whether they are considered to be a good match. On the site I use, however, the matches are reciprocal, both the male and female users are given access to each other's profile information when matched, and they are told that they are compatible. Given that female users know that the males with whom they are matched will presumably see their profile and are told they are compatible, women may arguably feel more comfortable initiating contact with their male matches.

This site is unique because site members are accepted to the site on the basis of their educational background and personality attributes, which are assessed when taking the onboarding survey. Unlike other sites where all individuals who enroll are accepted, individuals who are deemed undesirable were rejected or waitlisted. Individuals logged on to the site and took a quiz to determine whether they were desirable as site members. The questions on the quiz assessed personality, demographic background, and other factors deemed important for desirability. Upon acceptance, individuals had the opportunity to create a profile providing information about themselves. While individuals were free to share whatever information they felt was appropriate, many individuals often provided information regarding their family, hobbies, and general background. The site also only included individuals seeking heterosexual relationships. I included all users regardless of what type of relationship they are seeking, such as

a casual relationship, committed relationship, or marriage.

The site is now defunct but at the end of its existence included approximately 12,369 individuals who registered on the site. Many individuals who registered, however, never provided complete data related to their demographic characteristics. This study only draws from the 2,693 individuals who completed the entire onboarding process and had reciprocal matches.

The users included in this analysis signed up for the site over a 14 month period from September 2012 to November 2013. While an extensive period of time, the sample size for the entire site was incredibly small. Individuals also were only matched with users who maintained active accounts and were made aware via email when they received a match from the site. Moreover, among users with available data related to time of match, 93.5% of messages initiated were sent to a match who had signed up for the site within a six-month period.

Missing data is a major issue in the sample (see Table 1-1). The sample is missing a great deal of data on variety of attributes, including very relevant variables for understanding mating patterns, such as race, education, facial attractiveness, and religion. These data, however, are not randomly missing. Given the relevance of these variables, individuals missing on these key attributes are removed at every step of the analysis (see Table 1-1).

Measures

The dependent variables in this analysis are sending an initial message or responding to an initial message received. The independent variables used to assess mating on the basis of demographic and social characteristics are race, education, age, facial attractiveness, religion, smoking, drinking, marital status, and facial attractiveness. To assess whether market forces or preferences shape mating patterns, I include a variable for the timing of the match and relationship type.

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Race is measured as a three category variable: White, Asian, and other. Individuals included in the other category are Hispanic, Black, Middle-Eastern, Indian, or individuals who identified as other. Smoking is captured as smoker versus non-smoker, which was collapsed from smoking as measured by never smoke, occasionally smoke, smoker. Drinking is assessed as often, socially, and never drink, which was collapsed from a variable that included "occasional" drinkers. For the purpose of creating a more robust analysis, individuals who were occasional drinkers were reassigned to the socially category. In the religion category, individuals who stated their religion was Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, or other were assigned to the other category as a result of small sample sizes. Given that the vast majority of the daters on the site are single, individuals who selected married, widowed, divorced or separated are clumped into the other marital status category. I would like to note that approximately one percent of the site users were married, which is less than the percentage of married individuals on other dating sites and apps (Business Insider, 2015).

Facial attractiveness is a very important factor in the mate selection process. To code for facial attractiveness, I created a panel of five individuals who assessed the users' primary profile picture. The primary profile picture was rated because this is the first visual information users receive about their match. Based upon this information, users evaluate whether to investigate their matches further. The individuals on the panel included myself and four interns (two male and two female).

We conducted a pretest using stock photos I found online to assess facial attractiveness. We rated these individuals on a scale from zero (very unattractive) to ten (extremely attractive). Then we rated all of the individuals on the site. The attractiveness scores assigned by the panelists were then averaged. Scholars studying facial attractiveness in online

dating and other contexts have employed a similar approach (Hitsch et al., 2010). The results of reliability testing indicate that there was relative agreement. The correlation for intercoder reliability was .34. Facial attractiveness in this analysis is treated as a continuous variable due to the small sample size for certain facial attractiveness groups, specifically highly attractive individuals. I did run the models, however, with facial attractiveness treated as a categorical variable, however.

Relationship preferences and dating market conditions are critical elements in the dating process. To understand whether the type of relationship an individual desires influences their behavior, I include a relationship type desired category. For the relationship desired category, individuals were assigned to seeking a more serious relationship if they selected that they were looking for a partner whom they would marry in the near future or were open to being in a committed relationship. For individuals who selected wanting to find a friend, casual sex, activity partner, or a date, these individuals were assigned the casual relationship partner. The individuals did not see the relationship type preference of the users with whom they were matched. Moreover, the time an individual spends on the dating market, in this case an online dating site, may influence their preferences and behavior. To understand the influence of time on the dating site, I create a variable that measures the time between an individual signing up for the site and the time between receiving a match. If individuals choose to message matches later who are less desirable, individuals theoretically relax their preferences. Unfortunately, small sample sizes restrict the analysis using timing to sending behavior. For response behavior, relationship type preferences are used to measure market forces.

Measures

I examine patterns of contact among users to understand who contacts whom and to

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whom individuals are more likely to respond, given their own demographic characteristics. To examine these messaging patterns, I used multilevel logistic regression models to analyze initiation and response behavior. Prior work on online dating has used logistic regression models to analyze contact behavior (Lin and Lundquist, 2015). In the first model (See Table 1-2), I analyzed sending behavior. The universe of the first model is all matches. Each match is in the data set twice because it appears once for the female partner and once for the male partner. I conducted separate analyses by gender because specific matches will only appear in the data set once for each gender group.

The dependent variable in the first analysis is does an individual send a message to the other individual in the match. In the second analysis, the sample is restricted to matches in which an initial message was sent and the dependent variable is whether or not the recipient of the initial message sends a response. The independent variables in this analysis are demographic and non-demographic: race, education, age, facial attractiveness, religion, children, smoking, drinking, relationship type.

In the first model all independent variables except for facial attractiveness and market level factors, will be included. The independent variables in this analysis are race, education, age, religion, smoking, drinking, and marital status. These models include the characteristics of the recipient. In the second model, however, I will add the facial attractiveness scores of the recipient to assess the significance of attractiveness in the mating process. In the third model, I add in relationship preference and market factors. After running all three models, with only the recipient characteristics I add in the sender's characteristics to the third model to assess the influence of the recipient's characteristics given the sender's characteristics. Small sample sizes prohibit an interaction on the basis of time of match.

I will also analyze response behavior. The universe to be included in the first model is the matches in which an individual has received an initial email from the other individual in the dyad. As with the models for sending behavior, the first model will not include the facial attractiveness of the sender or recipient, but the second model will include all of the independent variables except the market and relationship preferences variables. The third model includes the relationship type preference variable. Unfortunately, the models would not converge using the time of match variable due to empty cases. After running all three models, with only the recipient characteristics I add in the sender's characteristics to the third model to assess whether the influence of the initial sender's characteristics the sender's (person responding) characteristics.

Results

Consistent with prior research that online daters tend to be more privileged than the vast majority of the population, site users are highly educated, nonsmokers, and white (See Table 1-2). Ninety-five percent of individuals on the site have achieved at least a college degree and approximately thirty-eight percent of users have a graduate degree. The individuals on this site tend to be more far more educated relative to the vast majority of users on other sites.

The users on this site are theoretically demographically and socially motivated to seek relationships. Users overwhelmingly are single (never married) and are also an age when most people are in their dating prime or seeking a romantic partner. A majority of users also are seeking serious relationships. There is a significant difference in the seriousness of the relationships sought on the basis of gender with approximately fifty-five percent of male users and seventy-eight percent of female users seeking a serious relationship.

The messaging behavior of men and women is consistent with prior research regarding

men's likelihood to send more messages than their female counterparts (See Table 1-3). Men are 3.6 times more likely to send a first message than their female counterparts, men message 5.1% of the women with whom they are matched, and 74.6% of initial messages are sent by men. While men overwhelmingly send the vast majority of first messages, women on this site send the initial message to their match 1.7% of the time. This finding suggests that women on reciprocally matched message men more often than their counterparts on search based sites.

The influence of demographic and non-demographic characteristics on the likelihood of an individual sending a message differs among men and women (See Table 1-4). For women, education significantly impacts the odds of sending a first message, but has no effect among their male counterparts. Relative to messaging a person with a Bachelors degree, the odds of women messaging a man with a professional degree increase by 28%. The main effect of education on sending behavior among women may also be consistent with an exchange analysis, given that the only statistically significant educational effect was seen among recipients with professional degrees. While both men and women are more likely to message an individual who claims to be spiritual relative to messaging a Christian person, the effect for messaging an agnostic individual has the opposite effect among men and women. For example, the odds of responding to an agnostic person relative to a Christian person are 31% less for women, but the odds of responding to an agnostic person for men increase by 26%. For men and women the significance of age in the sending process varies. For women, the odds of messaging an individual who is younger decrease but for men the odds of messaging a person who is younger increase. The tendency to message younger women among male senders may be in line with the exchange hypothesis.

At the same time, there are similarities between men and women in general messaging

behavior (Table 1-4). Men and women both have lower odds of messaging individuals who are not white. Moreover, the influence of facial attractiveness is the same among both male and female respondents in terms of sending behavior. For example, with every unit increase of facial attractiveness doubles the odds that both men and women will message an individual. Upon considering the general influence of facial attractiveness, the odds of men being less likely to message women over forty becomes statistically insignificant. Presumably, the attractiveness of women over forty may drive men message them, despite their age.

Overall, demographic factors and non-demographic factors have a strong impact of on response behavior for men and women. From a relative perspective, facial attractiveness is the most important characteristic influencing the sending behavior of both men and women. When examining demographic factors, religion, race, smoking habits, age, and education respectively influence behavior for women. For men, religion, race, age and drinking behavior respectively influence behavior.

Rational adaptation and relationship preferences are also at play in the sending behavior of users. When the time of match is included in the analysis, men and women are significantly less likely to message individuals whom they were matched in one to three months and three to six months of being matched relative to messaging individuals within the first thirty days of being matched. The odds of messaging someone with whom they are matched after six months on the site is not statistically significant for either men or women. The type of relationship preferred affected the odds of sending a first message, but only for female senders. Relative to women interested in a casual relationship, women who are interested in a serious relationship are more likely to send a first message. Given that 93.5% of messages were sent in the first six months, I feel fairly confident that this measure is capturing active users.

Rational adaptation and relationship preferences not only affect the likelihood of messaging or not messaging an individual, but also may influence the preferences individuals have. For women, the odds of messaging a man with a Professional degree relative to a man with a Bachelors degree was statistically significant in previous models, but not in the rational adaptation and relationship preferences model. For men, however, the effect of education in the rational adaptation and relationship preferences model is the opposite. In prior models education did not influence men's behavior, but the odds of messaging a woman with an Associates or Master's degree increase and are statistically significant. For women, the age of the recipient is also affected in the market forces model. In this model, the odds of messaging a man between the ages of 25 and 30 relative to messaging a man between the ages of 30 and 34 become lower than the models excluding market level factors.

There is strong evidence for the homogamy hypothesis in sending behavior (See Tables 1-5-1-10). I find that sender characteristics interact with recipient characteristics to influence their likelihood of sending a first message. In the case of education, relative to individuals with bachelors degrees messaging another individual with a bachelors degree, the odds are 1.61 times higher of senders with a professional degree sending a message to a recipient with a professional degree among men (see Table 1-5). For women, the education of the sender does not have a statistically significant on odds of messaging when interacted with the education of recipients. There is also evidence of homogamy on the basis of religion (see Table 1-6). For women, the odds of Catholic senders messaging other Catholic senders is 5.42 times greater than the odds of Christians messaging Christians (see Table 1-6). Homogamy for women on the basis of religion persists among Jewish and Spiritual individuals as well (see Table 1-6).. Another interesting finding for female daters on the basis of religion is that there is a statistically significant effect

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for the odds of agnostic individuals having increased odds of messaging Jewish, Catholic, and spiritual individuals. For men, homogamy on the basis of religion follows the same pattern as it does for women but the effects may not be as strong. For example, the odds of Jewish male senders messaging Jewish female senders is 4.34 times greater than the odds of Christians messaging Christians whereas the odds of Jewish females sending a message to a Jewish male is 6.3 times higher (see Table 1-6).. Moreover, the interaction for Catholic males sending a message to Catholic females does not persist in the male model (see Table 1-6). There is also evidence for homogamy on the basis of race. Relative to the odds of a white woman messaging a white man, the odds of an Asian woman messaging an Asian man increases 10.53 times (see Table 1-7). There is evidence for homogamy among men as well on the basis of race (see Table 1-6). Men, however, may also engage in an exchange process. For men from other backgrounds, the odds of a person an 'other' racial background messaging an Asian woman are higher than the odds of a white person messaging a white person. There is also an interaction between sender and recipient facial attractiveness among both male and female respondents (see Table 1-8). For men the odds of messaging a female respondent increases 2.36 times for every unit increase in attractiveness relative to messaging someone at their same level of attractiveness whereas the odds of a woman sending a message to male respondent increases 2.60 times for every unit increase in attractiveness relative to messaging someone at their same level of attractiveness (see Table 1-8). Attractiveness is actually stronger for sending behavior among women then among men.

There is also evidence of market forces operating when interactions between sender and recipient characteristics are considered. For female respondents, the odds of a woman between the ages of 35-40 messaging a male over age forty increase 3.87 times relative to the odds of a

woman between the ages of 31 and 35 messaging a male between the ages of 31 and 35. The

marital status, drinking habits, and smoking habits of senders do not interact with the habits of

recipients.

For both, men and women demographic factors have a stronger impact of on response

behavior for men and women than facial attractiveness or market factors (See Table 1-9). For

women, factors that most significantly influence response behavior are the education, religion,

race and facial attractiveness, respectively of the prospective match. For men, the factors that

most significantly influence response behavior are the race, education, and facial attractiveness

of a prospective match.

While similar demographic and non-demographic factors influence the likelihood of an

individual responding to a message, there are differences within these demographic categories

among men and women (see Tables 1-10 and 1-11). For example, the effects of educational level

are the opposite for both men and women. Whereas the odds of men responding to a message

from a woman with a Master's Degree are higher and the odds of a man responding to a woman

with a professional degree are lower relative to a woman with a Bachelors degree, the odds of a

woman responding to a message from a man with a Master's Degree are lower and the odds of a

woman responding to a man with a professional degree are higher. For women, this pattern may

be evidence of an exchange model. There are also differences on the basis of race. For women,

responding to messages is consistent with the homogamy hypothesis. The odds of a woman

responding to an Asian man are 96% less and the odds of responding to a man of an 'other' race

are 70% than the odds of responding to a white man. For men, however, the odds of responding

to an Asian woman or a woman of another race are significantly higher than the odds of

responding to a white woman. For men, there is a significant decrease in likelihood over time of

responding to an older woman. Among male respondents, the odds of responding to a woman between the ages of 35 and 39 decrease by 40% and the odds woman over age 40 decrease by 81% relative to responding to women ages 31 to 35. For women, there is a decline over time, in responding to men over 40 relative to responding men ages 31 to 35 but the decline is less dramatic. This general decrease for men and women may be consistent with all three hypotheses: homogamy, market, and matching. For women religion plays a significant role in response behavior. The odds of women responding to a message sent from every religious group increases, except among Catholics for whom the odds decrease and for agnostic individuals for whom there is no statistically significant effect, increase relative to responding to Christians. For men, however, religion is only significant in determining the response to atheists. Relative to responding to a Christian woman, men are 94% less likely to respond to an Atheist. The odds of women responding to a message from a man who is single decrease relative to responding a man who has another marital status. This behavior may be related to a market perspective. Women may assume that men who married prior are open to marriage and therefore are more likely to be open to marrying them.

Facial attractiveness dramatically influences response behavior. For men and women, facial attractiveness has the opposite effect. Among women there is .77 percent decrease in the odds of responding to a man for every unit increase in attractiveness. For men, however, the odds of response are 2.52 times greater for every unit increase in the woman's attractiveness. Additionally in the male model, the odds of responding to an Asian woman dramatically increase but the odds of responding to a woman of an 'other' racial background dramatically decrease relative to the model without facial attractiveness. In the men's facial attractiveness model, there may be an influence of the exchange model with men exchanging status for attractiveness.

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The market model may be less strong in response behavior than in sending behavior. Although senders' desired relationship preferences influenced the likelihood the sending a message, desired relationship type does not have a statistically significant effect on response behavior. Individuals may therefore not relax their preferences in terms of to sending behavior but not necessarily response behavior.

For response behavior, sender characteristics have less influence on behavior than initial sending behavior. The sender characteristic that significantly influences responding behavior is religion for among male respondents. For men, who are spiritual the odds of responding decrease by 12 percent when messaged initially by a Catholic woman. Moreover, the facial attractiveness of respondents does not interact with the characteristics of the initial sender in determining response behavior for men or women.

Conclusions

Finding a romantic partner is a complex process. Individuals enter the dating market with a variety of preferences and constraints. The dating process has also changed significantly due to the declining influence of traditional social institutions in facilitating introductions. At the same time, there has been the rise of a technological medium to connect individuals seeking romantic partners: online dating.

This study adds to the prior literature on the role of homogamy in the mate selection process. After taking into account senders' characteristics, I find that individuals seek partners who are similar to themselves on the basis of religion, race and education. For example, the interaction between male senders and female recipients demonstrates that the odds that a man with a professional degree of messages women are positive and statistically significant. Given the growth in the number of individuals meeting their partners online and that may online dating

platforms allow individuals to filter partners by demographic characteristics, understanding the strength of homogamy in the mate selection process online is critical due to the population-level consequences of mate selection.

While homogamy is very strong, there is evidence that the exchange hypothesis influences sending and response behavior. For example, in terms of sending bhehavior women are more likely to send initial messages to men with Professional degrees relative to men with Bachelor's degrees. For men, however, exchange may be occurring on the basis of race. For men of other races, they are to send messages to women who are Asian relative to the odds of white men messaging white women. Minority men, both Asian and men of other races, are also more likely to respond to women who are Asian or an other race as well. The effects of the exchange model in terms of race may be limited to minorities, however, given that an additional test conducted showed that in terms of sending behavior white men were less likely to respond to women who are Asian or other races relative to their likelihood of responding to white women.

The introduction of a valid measure of facial attractiveness into the online dating literature is a significant contribution. The role of facial attractiveness significantly impacts sending an initial message for both men and women. Men and women are more likely to send messages to individuals who are more attractive. Moreover, the interaction between sender and recipient is positive and statistically significant. The role of facial attractiveness in influencing responding behavior, however, is far more complex. For responding behavior, women are less likely to respond to attractive men whereas men are more likely to respond to more attractive women. In theory, female respondents may believe attractiveness may be a proxy for characteristics that are undesirable, such as arrogance or selfishness. Despite their increased odds of sending messages to more attractive men, they may not respond to more attractive men

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because they did not find other elements of his profile or background sufficiently compelling to send an initial message themselves. Alternatively, given the importance of attractiveness in dictating the social value of women, some women may not want to date a man who may be considered more attractive than them. In future research, I will use this data to determine the interaction between facial attractiveness and other demographic factors.

A major strength of this chapter is also that I have access to an unique source of data that has never been available to scholars. This data allows for an examination of how context influences men and women's likelihood of initiating contact with a prospective match. In prior research, men overwhelmingly message the women on search based sites. In this study using data from a site in which matches were reciprocal, men continue to be the primary initiators. The percentage of women initiating conversations on this site, however, initiated was significantly higher than the percentage of women found initiating conversations in prior research. The context of an online dating therefore may significantly affect the persistence of traditional gender norms in initiation and response behavior. Sites that provide women with a more equal playing field may provide women with a greater opportunity to deviate from traditional dating scripts. Future research should be conducted to determine whether alternative contexts, such as women and men both agreeing to a match prior to messaging, affects initiation and response behavior. Given my access to data from other dating sites, I will be able to explore the influence of reciprocity in matching further.

This study also demonstrates the importance of examining rational adaptation and relationship preferences, namely the type of relationship desired and time on dating site, in the online dating process. For men and women, market realities and timing dictate their behavior. After including market level factors in my models, demographic factors such as religion and

education, which were significant in prior models, are no longer statistically significant in predicting women's likelihood of sending an initial message. For men, there seems to be a relaxing of preferences with men increasing their willingness to message less educated and more highly educated women than prior models indicated. The time men and women spend on the site and their preferences therefore leads to relaxation of their preferences. Preferences are not completely relaxed, however, given the persistence of race and facial attractiveness in influencing sending behavior.

The time men and women spend on the site also influences how their likelihood of sending a message. For men and women, the odds of messaging an individual are lower after being on the site for one to three months or three to six months. In theory individuals, who experience rejection do not want to be continuously rejected. The odds of messaging first become even lower for women relative to their male counterparts. The relatively lower odds are women may indicate that when women deviate from traditional dating scripts and are rejected, the effects are particularly pronounced.

The type of relationship desired influences women's behavior significantly. Women who prefer serious relationships are more likely to send an initial message. These women are taking control over their dating lives and trying to meet their goal of finding a committed relationship. The effect of relationship type does not hold in terms of responding behavior, however. For women, relationship type desired might signal that women are willing to be proactive, but not desperate and willing to respond to whoever knocks on their door.

There are several limitations to the data used in this study. The site used in this study was limited to heterosexual individuals. The individuals on the site are also more highly educated than the general population and online daters generally (Kreager et al., 2014; Lewis, 2014). The

data are primarily limited due to the relatively small sample size as a result of missing data. The data are not missing due to random error, however. Moreover, I am limited to a very small sample size when measuring market level variables and the full analysis of market level variables is confined to the sending analysis. Future research should further explore the influence of market level factors on online dating behavior.

Table 1-1: Percent of Sample Lost Due to Missing Data per Variable in Messaging File

Variable	% of Respondents Lost	N Remaining
Religion	15	2272
Education	19.6	2150
Race	25.4	1996
Drink	26.2	1975
Age	31.2	1868
Smoke	65.4	1749
Marital Status	62.5	1672
Facial Attractiveness	54.7	1465
Time of Match	85.3	393
Relationship Type Desired	85.3	392

Note:Source website used in this analysis (Total N=2.674)

Table 1-2: Descriptive Statistics on Senders

	Total (2674)	Male (1174)	Female (1500)
Education			
Less than College	1.3	1.5	1.1
College Graduate	54.6	52.9	55.9
Master's	18.4	16.7	19.7
Professional Degree/Doctorate	19.3	21.5	17.5
Missing	6.4	7.3	5.7
Religion			
Christian	10.2	12.5	8.4
Catholic	4.8	7.8	2.5
Jewish	10.8	9.4	11.9
Spiritual	14.2	12.5	15.2
Atheist	2.7	3.3	2.3
Agnostic	19.7	19.5	19.9
Other	23.3	20.1	25.9
Missing	14.3	14.7	13.9
Race/Ethnicity			
White	64.2	64.9	63.7
Other	13.1	14.1	12.3
Asian	11.4	9.1	13.2
Missing	11.2	11.8	10.7
Age			
20-24	3.6	3	4.1
25-29	31.2	34.7	28.5
30-34	33.3	30.6	35.5
35-39	16.7	13.1	19.5
Over 40	9	13.6	5.4
Missing	6.1	5	6.9
Marital Status			
Single	85	86.2	85
Other marital status	7.6	7.9	7.3
Missing	6.8	5.9	7.7
Smoking	5	7.2	3.8
Relationship Type			
Serious Relationship	67.9	55.1	78
Casual Relationship	27.1	40.2	16.8
Missing	5.02	4.87	5.16
Average Sender Facial (Mean)	5.35	5.19	5.48

Table 1-3: Number of Individuals Messaged among Matches by Gender

Matches	Female	Male	Total
Not Messaged	85,489	85,524	171,013
Messaged	1,565	4,606	6,171
Total	87,504	90,130	177,184

Note: Source is data from website analyzed

Table 1-4: Odds Ratios from Multilevel Logistic Regression for Likelihood of Sending an Initial Message

	Female Matches						Male Matches					
	Does Not Include Facial Attractiveness (1)		Includes Facial Attractiveness (2)		Includes Facial Attractiveness, Timing, and Relationship Type Preferences (3)		Does Not Include Facial Attractiveness (1)		Includes Facial Attractiveness (2)		Includes Facial Attractiveness, Timing, and Relationship Type Preferences (3)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)												
Less than College	0.64	0.22	0.68	0.24	0.37	0.38	1.04	0.15	1.13	0.17	2.82*	0.92
Master's	0.88	0.09	1.04	0.11	1.45	0.3	1.04	0.05	1.01	,05	1.57*	0.19
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.19*	0.1	1.28*	0.11	1.19	0.21	0.98	0.06	1.12	0.06	1.11	0.14
Recipient Religion (Christian omitted)												
Catholic	0.82	0.13	0.91	0.15	0.74	0.27	1.01	0.07	1.08	0.08	0.93	0.17
Jewish	1.2	0.14	1.36*	0.17	0.89	0.24	1.03	0.07	1.04	0.07	1.09	0.17
Spiritual	1.57*	0.2	1.47*	0.19	1.09	0.31	1.22*	0.08	1.20*	0.08	1.17	0.18
Atheist	1..22	0.18	1.3	0.20	0.98	0.33	0.97	0.12	1.1	0.14	1.01	0.27
Agnostic	0.69*	0.22	0.89	0.15	0.54	0.22	1.26*	0.1	1.31*	0.11	1.54*	0.31
Other	0.43	0.23	0.28*	0.15	0.32	0.35	1.37	0.27	1.57*	0.32	0.81	0.41
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)												
Other	.47*	0.07	.45*	0.07	.42*	0.14	.74*	0.05	.77*	0.05	0.82	0.12
Asian	.14*	0.04	.15*	0.04	empty	empty	.58*	0.04	0.71*	0.05	0.69	0.14
Recipient Smoking	0.27*	0.08	0.33*	0.10	empty	empty	0.98	0.11	1.22	0.15	1.41	0.6
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)												
Often	1.1	0.32	1.05	0.31	1.03	0.65	0.76	0.12	1.06	0.18	2.48*	0.94
Socialy	1.05	0.3	1.02	0.28	0.81	0.45	1.08	0.13	1.31*	0.2	0.70	0.16
Recipient Age (30-34 omitted)												
20-24	0.61	0.36	0.79	0.47	empty	empty	1.75*	0.16	1.89*	0.17	2.06*	0.46
25-30	0.67*	0.07	.64*	0.07	0.52*	0.13	1.03	0.1	1.00	0.05	0.9	0.11
35-39	0.77*	0.07	0.88	0.09	1.12	0.22	.85*	0.05	.84*	0.06	0.95	0.13

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Over 40	0.45*	0.05	.67*	0.08	0.62	0.15	.73*	0.09	1.11	0.14	0.54	0.18
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	0.95	0.12	0.99	0.13			0.99	0.09	0.96	0.09	1.43	0.31
Recipient Facial Attractiveness			2.03*	0.08	1.52*	0.12			1.99*	0.05	1.98*	0.11
Sender Relationship Type (Not serious omitted)					1.42*	0.18					0.91	0.08
Time of Match (less than a month omitted)												
One to three months					.65*	0.1					.72*	0.08
Three to six months					.45*	0.11					.55*	0.07
Over six months					0.4	0.2					0.89	0.23
Total												
N	54806		49,420		8403		60147		52167			8306
Log Likelihood	-4337.45		-4,067.59		-1022.42		-10157		-9299.73			-1932.8

p <.05*

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Table 1-5: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions by Educational Status of Sender and Recipient for Male Recipients

	Model with Interactions	
	(1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)		
Less than College	1.38	0.27
Master's	1.04	0.05
Professional Degree/Doctorate	0.98	0.06
Sender Education(College graduate omitted)		
Less than College	0.45	0.27
Master's	1.03	0.18
Professional Degree/Doctorate	0.9	0.08
Interactions on Education		
Less than College/Less than College	7.25	7.64
Less than College/Master's	0.65	0.32
Less than College Professional	0.67	0.35
Master's/Less than College	0.71	0.28
Master's/Master's	0.96	0.13
Master's/Professional	1.32	0.21
Professional/Associates	0.58	0.22
ProfessionalMaster's	1.04	0.13
Professional/Professional	1.61*	0.22
Recipient Religion (Christian omitted)		
Catholic	1.04	0.08
Jewish	1.03	0.07
Spiritual	1.22*	0.08
Atheist	1.07	0.14
Agnostic	1.31*	0.11
Other	1.63*	0.34
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)		

Other	.77*	0.05
Asian	.70*	0.05
Recipient Smoking	1.19	0.15
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)		
Often	1.05	0.18
Socialy	1.32*	0.17
Recipient Age (30-34 omitted)		
20-24	1.76*	0.18
25-30	0.99	0.1
35-39	0.87	0.06
Over 40	1.13	0.15
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	0.99	0.09
Recipient Facial Attractiveness	1.99*	0.05

Total
N
Log Likelihood   48345
p <.05*   -8801
Note: Source is from website analyzed

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Table 1-6: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions by Religion of Sender and Recipient for Men and Women

	(1)		(1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)				
Less than College	0.62	0.24	1.13	0.18
Master's	1.06	0.11	1.02	0.06
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.24*	0.11	1.12	0.07
Recipient Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.62	0.24	0.87	0.17
Jewish	0.55*	0.16	.56*	0.1
Spiritual	0.86	0.24	0.82	0.13
Atheist	0.64	0.25	0.76	0.27
Agnostic	0.51	0.21	1.31	0.27
Other	0.36	0.39	0.61	0.47
Sender Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.44	0.2	0.44	0.2
Jewish	0.62	0.23	0.57*	0.14
Spiritual	0.75	0.25	0.88	0.25
Atheist	0.2	0.23	.42*	0.15
Agnostic	0.22*	0.13	0.44*	0.13
Other	1.07	0.87	0.61	0.28
Interactions on Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Agnostic/Agnostic	3.57	2.29	3.5	0.56
Agnostic/Atheist	3.24	1.98	2.61	0.77
Agnostic/Catholic	5.53*	3.45	3.36*	0.64
Agnostic/Other	6.38	9.35	8.1	5.00
Agnostic/Jewish	5,83*	3.17	3.76*	0.52
Agnostic/Spiritual	4.49*	2.3	3.45*	0.57
Atheist/Agnostic	6.41	7.37	2.8	0.69
Atheist/Atheist	9.53	11.02	2.81	0.57
Atheist/Catholic	3.39	3.86	2.46	0.44
Atheist/Other	empty	empty	empty	empty
Atheist/Jewish	3.66	3.44	2.77	0.61
Atheist/Spiritual	4.62	4.27	3.08	0.58

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Catholic/Agnostic	2.11	0.86	2.08*	0.14
Catholic/Atheist	1.55	0.42	1.59	0.32
Catholic/Catholic	5.42*	2.55	2.18	0.29
Catholic/Other	empty	empty	1.71	0.86
Catholic/Jewish	2.83	0.9	1.67	0.22
Catholic/Spiritual	3.01	0.91	2.3	0.28
Other/Agnostic	3.19	1.53	2.9	0.5
Other/Atheist	2.52	0.88	3.38	1.45
Other/Catholic	2.13	0.53	2.57	0.51
Other/Other	empty	empty	14.91	14.65
Other/Jewish	2.07	0.42	3.02	0.78
Other/Spiritual	2.4	0.44	2.92	0.58
Jewish/Agnostic	2.71	0.89	2.24	0.3
JewishAtheist	3.78	1.3	2.6	0.67
Jewish/Catholic	2.47	0.68	2.32	0.3
Jewish/Other	1.84	1.3	2.49	1.28
Jewish/Jewish	6.3*	1.98	4.34*	0.73
Jewish/Spiritual	3.69*	0.9	2.82*	0.36
Spiritual/Agnostic	3.09	0.91	2.71	0.22
Spititual/Atheist	3.83	1.16	3.3	0.83
Spiritual/Catholic	2.69	0.53	2.79	0.33
Spiritual/Other	empty	empty	3	1.41
Spiritual/Jewish	3.03	0.62	3	0.36
Spiritual/Spiritual	3.08	0.53	3.82	0.31
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	.42*	0.06	.76*	0.05
Asian	.14*	0.04	.71*	0.06
Recipient Smoking	.31*	0.1	1.18	0.09
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)				
Often	1.13	0.36	1.13	0.21
Socialy	1.1	0.32	1.39*	0.19
Recipient Age (30-34 omitted)				
20-24	0.82	0.5	1.83*	0.19
25-30	.59*	0.07	1.03	0.06
35-39	0.87	0.09	.82*	0.06
Over 40	.67*	0.08	1.01*	0.14
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	0.97	,13	0.93	0.09

Recipient Facial Attractiveness	2.07*	0.09	2.00*	0.05
Total				
N	44375		46117	
Log Likelihood	-3673		-8194	

p <.05*

Note: Source is from website used

Table 1-7: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions for Race of Sender and Recipient for Men and Women

	Women (1)		Men (1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)				
Less than College	0.66	0.25	1.17	0.18
Master's	1.07	0.12	1	0.06
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.26*	0.11	1.12	0.07
Recipient Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.9	0.16	1.1	0.09
Jewish	1.38*	0.17	1.01	0.06
Spiritual	1.44*	0.2	1.15*	0.08
Atheist	1.26	0.2	1.1	0.15
Agnostic	0.78	0.14	1.24*	0.11
Other	0.32*	0.17	1.72*	0.07
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	.43*	0.08	.71*	0.06
Asian	0.09*	0.04	.50*	0.05
Sender Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	0.78	0.16	.78*	0.17
Asian	.49*	0.04	.73*	0.18
Interaction Race (White Omitted)				
Asian/Asian	10.53*	6.4	4.45*	0.79
Asian/Other	2.79	0.8	2.3	0.31
Other/Asian	empty	empty	4.26*	0.55
Other/Other	3.24	0.4	3.34*	0.31
Recipient Smoking	.34*	0.1	1.14	0.14
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)				
Often	0.99	0.04	1.01	0.18
Socialy	0.96	0.08	1.25	0.16
Recipient Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24	0.82	0.51	1.89*	0.19
25-30	0.64*	0.07	1.03	0.06
35-39	0.82	0.08	0.89	0.07

Over 40	.67*	0.08	1.23	0.17
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	0.96	0.13	0.93	0.09
Recipient Facial Attractiveness	2.04*	0.09	1.99*	0.05
Total	45457		47811	
N	3765.35		8323.57	
Log Likelihood				
Pseudo R2				

p <.05*

Note: Source is from website used

Table 1-8: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions for Race of Sender and Recipient for Men and Women

	Women (1)		Men (1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)				
Less than College	0.60	0.23	1.17	0.18
Master's	1.03	0.12	1.01	0.06
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.30*	0.12	1.12	0.07
Recipient Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.87	0.16	1.05	0.09
Jewish	1.32*	0.18	1.01	0.06
Spiritual	1.53*	0.2	1.16	0.08
Atheist	1.31	0.21	1	0.14
Agnostic	0.81	0.14	1.25*	0.11
Other	.34*	0.18	1.47	0.07
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	.44*	0.07	.76*	0.05
Asian	.14*	0.04	.73*	0.06
Recipient Smoking	.32*	0.1	1.14	0.14
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)				
Often	1.03	0.34	1.01	0.18
Socialy	0.99	0.3	1.25	0.16
Recipient Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24	1.05	0.65	1.66*	0.18
25-30	.66*	0.08	1	0.06
35-39	0.94	0.09	.82*	0.06
Over 40	.54*	0.08	0.97	0.17
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	1.03	0.14	0.97	0.09
Recipient Facial Attractiveness	1.16	0.32	0.88	0.14
Sender Facial Attractiveness	.32*	0.09	.30*	0.06
Sender and Recipient Facial Attractiveness Interaction	2.60*	0.06	2.36*	0.04
Total				
N	41744		46175	
Log Likelihood	-3665.88		-8494.2117	

p <.05*
Note: Source is website used in the study

Table 1-9: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions by Age of Sender and Recipient for Men and Women

	Women (1)		Men (1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)				
Less than College	0.63	0.24	1.12	0.17
Master's	1.03	0.12	1.01	0.06
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.29*	0.11	1.11	0.07
Recipient Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.9	0.15	1.1	0.09
Jewish	1.36*	0.17	1.01	0.06
Spiritual	1.52*	0.2	1.18*	0.08
Atheist	1.24	0.2	1.04	0.14
Agnostic	0.87	0.15	1.27*	0.11
Other	0.32*	0.17	1.51*	0.32
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	.45*	0.07	.78*	0.05
Asian	.15*	0.05	.73*	0.06
Recipient Smoking	.25*	0.09	1.23	0.15
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)				
Often	1.07	0.34	1.03	0.18
Socialy	1.01	0.29	1.28	0.16
Recipient Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24	0.99	0.7	2.20*	0.38
25-30	.53*	0.11	1.05	0.08
35-39	0.79	0.11	0.77	0.12
Over 40	.35*	0.07	0.43	0.44
Sender Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24	.17*	0.1	1.85	0.8
25-30	.52*	0.1	1.08	0.21
35-39	1.54	0.37	1.62*	0.32
Over 40	0.9	0.88	2.62*	0.53
Interaction Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24/20-24	3.49	3.2	5.15	0.42

20-24/25-30	3.85	1.73	empty	empty
20-24/35-39	empty	empty	empty	empty
20-24/Over 40	empty	empty	empty	empty
25-30/20-24	empty	empty	4.81	0.18
25-30/25-30	2.54	0.38	3.21	0.16
25-30/35-39	3.38	0.23	2.67	0.95
25-30/Over 40	2.58	0.92	empty	empty
35-39-/20-24	empty	empty	5.21	0.59
35-39/25-30	empty	empty	3.64	0.14
35-39/35-39	3.54	0.29	3.24	0.17
35-30/Over 40	3.87*	0.57	2.95	0.65
Over 40/20-24	empty	empty	empty	empty
Over 40/25-30	empty	empty	4.25*	0.14
Over 40/35-39	2.69	0.97	4.25	0.23
Over 40/Over 40	4.14	3.15	5.97	0.09
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	1.13	0.16	0.93	0.09
Recipient Facial Attractiveness	2.03*	0.09	1.99*	0.05
Total				
N	46596		50010	
Log Likelihood	-3758.28		-8794.8	

p <.05*

Note: Source is website used

Table 1-10: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions for Race of Sender and Recipient for Men and Women

	Women (1)		Men (1)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)				
Less than College	0.60	0.23	1.17	0.18
Master's	1.03	0.12	1-Jan	0.06
Professional Degree/Doctorate	1.30*	0.12	1.12	0.07
Recipient Religion (Christian Omitted)				
Catholic	0.87	0.16	1.05	0.09
Jewish	1.32*	0.18	1.01	0.06
Spiritual	1.53*	0.2	1.16	0.08
Atheist	1.31	0.21	1	0.14
Agnostic	0.81	0.14	1.25*	0.11
Other	.34*	0.18	1.47	0.07
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (White omitted)				
Other	.44*	0.07	.76*	0.05
Asian	.14*	0.04	.73*	0.06
Recipient Smoking	.32*	0.1	1.14	0.14
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)				
Often	1.03	0.34	1.01	0.18
Socialy	0.99	0.3	1.25	0.16
Recipient Age (31-35 omitted)				
20-24	1.05	0.65	1.66*	0.18
25-30	.66*	0.08	1	0.06
35-39	0.94	0.09	.82*	0.06
Over 40	.54*	0.08	0.97	0.17
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	1.03	0.14	0.97	0.09
Recipient Facial Attractiveness	1.16	0.32	0.88	0.14
Sender Facial Attractiveness	.32*	0.09	.30*	0.06
Sender and Recipient Facial Attractiveness Interaction	2.60*	0.06	2.36*	0.04
Total				
N	41744		46175	
Log Likelihood	-3665.88		-8494.2117	

p <.05*

Note: Source is website used in the study

Table 1-11 Odds Ratios from Logistic Regression for Likelihood of Responding to Initial Sent Message Stratified by Gender

	Female matches						Male matches					
	Main Effects Model:Does Not Include Facial Attractiveness (1)		Main Effects Model: Includes Facial Attractiveness (2)		Main Effects Model: Includes Facial Attractiveness and Relationshipmreferences (3)		Main Effects Model:Does Not Include Facial Attractiveness (1)		Main Effects Model: Includes Facial Attractiveness (2)		Model Including Interations: Includes Facial Attractiveness and Timing Preferences (3)	
	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE	Odds Ratio	SE
Recipient Education(College graduate omitted)												
Less than College	1.53	0.94	1,00	0.62	1.02	0.63	1.08	1.6	1.21	1.83	1.47	2.13
Master's	.50*	0.1	.51*	0.10	.52*	0.11	3.1*	1.05	3.18*	1.1	3.01*	1.02
Professional Degree/Doctorate	2.63*	0.48	2.22*	0.42	2.24*	0.42	0.42*	0.11	0.42*	0.12	.40*	0.11
Recipient Religion (Christian omitted)												
Catholic	.46*	0.14	.51*	0.16	.53*	0.17	2.28	1.32	2.17	1.3	2.5	1.44
Jewish	2.97*	0.72	2.99*	0.75	2.84*	0.70	0.81	0.32	0.69	0.28	0.81	0.33
Spiritual	2.25*	0.54	2.59	0.63	2.82*	0.56	1.51	0.6	1.31	0.54	1.5	0.6
Atheist	6.52*	2.49	5.44*	2.13	4.90*	1.91	0.06*	0.04	0.06*	0.04	0.09*	0.06
Agnostic	1.32	0.39	1.13	0.34	1.01	0.30	0.29	0.39	0.83	0.45	0.97	0.51
Other	10.5*	8.67	16.9*	14.04	15.9*	12.75	9.34	19.4	3.07	6.5	3.49	7.08
Recipient Race/Ethnicity (Asian omitted)												
Other	.30*	0.07	.45*	0.11	.42*	0.11	5.28*	2.04	3.9*	1.5	3.96*	1.52
Asian	.04*	0.01	.03*	0.02	.04*	0.01	17.7*	5.28	36.3*	28.9	27.9*	20.8
Recipient Smoking	.18*	0.08	.12*	0.1	.12*	0.06	0.71	0.56	0.88	0.7	0.92	0.71
Recipient Drinking (Never Drink)												
Often	2.27	0.96	2.01	0.87	2.12	0.93	0.3	0.22	0.42	0.33	0.39	0.31
Socially	1.30	0.49	1.08	0.42	1.14	0.44	0.76	0.35	0.96	0.48	0.88	0.43
Recipient Age (Under 24 omitted)												
20-24	2.19	0.91	2.20	0.97	2.30	0.99	1.83	1.29	1.9	1.36	1.67	1.18
25-30	1.09	0.18	1.14	0.19	1.21	0.20	1.24	0.31	1.25	0.32	1.2	0.31

35-39	1.26	0.21	1.28	0.22	1.31	0.22	0.6*	0.13	0.74	0.17	0.75	0.17
Over 40	.68*	0.12	.65*	0.12	.68*	0.12	0.19*	0.11	.19*	0.11	.21*	0.12
Recipient Marital Status (Divorced Omitted)	.48*	0.13	.68*	0.19	0.71	0.20	0.82	0.39	0.7	0.34	0.68	0.32
Recipient Facial Attractiveness			.33*	0.03	.35*	0.03			2.52*	0.35	2.34*	0.33
Sender Relationship Type (Not serious omitted)					0.98	0.09					0.88	0.12
Total												
N	3939		3,925		3820		1733		1731		1656	
Log Likelihood	-1647.4228		-1557.430		-1490.89		-785.18		-760.15		-720.78	

Table 1-12: Odds ratios from Multilevel Mixed Effects Models including interactions by Educational Status of Sender and Recipient for Male Recipients (N=3,448)

Recipient's Religion (Christian Omitted)	Sender's Religion (Christian Omitted)					
Recipient's Religion (Christian Omitted)	Agnostic	Atheist	Catholic	Other	Jewish	Spiritual
Agnostic	2.72	3.28	2.54	4.67	2.43	3.07
Atheist	8.58	9.86	9.08	10.74	8.31	8.29
Catholic	1.87	empty	3.73	empty	2.2	2.73
Other	20.33	empty	21.3	empty	21.1	28.2
Jewish	3.1	3.33	4.98	10.2	4.86	3.81
Spiritual	3.27	2.92*	4.6	empty	3.27	4.44

Note: Source is data from website

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Chapter Two: Love is a Many Splendored Thing

Love is not only a many splendored thing, but a complicated concept for social scientists to investigate. Two views of love, romantic and prosaic, dominate cultural repertoires. While seemingly at odds, romantic and prosaic love coexist relatively well in individual's understanding of how love influences romantic relationships (Swidler, 2001).

Romantic and prosaic love provide individuals with a toolbox for framing and understanding their relationships (Swidler, 2001). Romantic love is understood as a convention. Despite an understanding that romantic love is not necessarily realistic, individuals most commonly draw upon the language associated with romantic love when trying to articulate major turning points in their romantic relationships. Realistic love, however, is less articulated but considered more grounded and rational.

New modes of meeting romantic partners call for a reexamination of how individuals may negotiate the two seemingly inapposite views of love. The increasingly common but relatively new process by which many individuals today find their partners, online dating, differs greatly from the romanticized version of partner selection in the popular media. Individuals on online dating sites engage in a search process to find their romantic partner. The search process involves both individuals determining how to best present themselves to prospective partners and evaluating prospective partners based on the information presented to them. Although the notion of searching for a husband or wife is as prosaic as and comparable to searching for a job, other aspects of the search for a romantic partner may be romantic or at least romanticized by online daters.

The distinction between romantic and prosaic love may also be limited. In Swidler's (2001) seminal investigation, she introduced the romantic and prosaic distinction to help

individuals understand how love is discussed and communicated. Swidler (2001), however, used the distinction to understand how couples functioned rather than how relationships were formed. In this dissertation, I will introduce a third logic, market logic, to expand upon our understanding of how individuals negotiate love in the context of relationship formation.

Online dating is also a situation that is highly ambiguous and based upon thin information. When individuals are facing ambiguous situations, they are more likely to rely on the influence of others (Festinger, 1954). Given the very thin information online daters use to make decisions and the ambiguity associated with online dating, we can expect many online daters to be influenced by media notions of love, romantic love. Like any other individuals, however, online daters, are also influence by more realistic or prosaic notions of love when evaluating romantic partners. At the same time, individuals operate in a market and must use reason and information to make decisions.

This chapter explores how individuals navigate the tension between romantic, prosaic, and market views of love when dating online. In this chapter, I analyze data from focus groups with online daters and the content of online dating profiles from a national online dating site to understand how individuals frame the process by which they find, the impressions they form, and what they desire in romantic partners. The focus group process is intended to reduce the ambiguity of the online dating situation and lead to an understanding of how prosaic love and expectations influence the online dating process. To date, no studies using focus group and interview data on individuals' online dating experiences and romantic partner preferences or content analyses of online dating profiles have appeared in the published literature.

In this study, I use data from 19 focus groups (nine male and ten female) and 11 interviews with women and men in Los Angeles and the content of online dating profiles from a

national online dating site. I ask seven questions regarding online dating and the romantic partner selection process in this paper? First, does the structure of online dating sites influence whether romantic and realistic aspects are emphasized? Second, how do individuals frame their entrée into online dating? Third, what aspects of the online dating process are romanticized? Fourth, I ask what aspects of the online dating process are based on a prosaic version of love? Fifth, I ask what aspects of the online dating process are based on a market version of love? Sixth, do the preferences individuals express in their public online profile match the preferences individuals express when asked about desired partner characteristics in more private settings like focus groups or one-on-one interviews with a promise of confidentiality? Seventh, do men and women differ in their private and public expressions of romantic partner preferences? Finally, how do men and women negotiate the tension between romantic and prosaic love when dating online?

Love: Romantic, Prosaic, and Market

Romantic love is mythological in nature. Two forms of romantic love dominate cultural repertoires and understandings: courtly love and bourgeois love. The first form of romantic love, courtly love, emerged during the feudal period and is based on four tenets. Under the myths of courtly love, love: happens at first sight, lovers are idealized, love ennobles the individuals, and love leads individuals to be at odds with society and to go against conventions (Swidler, 2001). While seemingly illogical, several myths of courtly love exist in classic stories, such as *Romeo and Juliet,* and persist in the popular imagination through films like *Titanic.*

Another version of romantic love, the bourgeois mythology, emerged in the 18th century, and was largely influenced by individualism. According to the bourgeois love myth, love is a certain and based on clear and unwavering choice (Swidler, 2001). Bougeois love also posits the idea that every individual has only one true love. The tenets underlying bourgeois love like the

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one true love concept have also been portrayed in popular media, such as the film *The Notebook*.

While romantic love is most directly communicated to individuals through media, romantic love is also communicated through interactions and norms. Individuals indirectly about love through secondary talk with friends and family. Interactions with friends and family also influence how people understand norms surrounding love.

The reproduction of romantic love is also the results of social norms, such as courtship norms. Traditional courtship norms are firmly established and widely understood. Many traditional courtship norms are based primarily on a rigid understanding that men and women perform different functions (Laner and Ventrone, 1998; Laner and Ventrone, 2000; Rose and Frieze, 1993). The different functions, such as men asking the woman out, place men in an active and women in a passive role.

Prosaic love is less defined than romantic love. According to Swidler (2001), prosaic love is based on an understanding of relationships as voluntary. Individuals choose to remain in relationships and date the partners with whom they are involved. Prosaic love, however, does not involve the passionate elements characterized by romantic love and is not often the basis of love stories portrayed in popular media.

Although prosaic love is not communicated directly via media, prosaic love can be learned via interaction. The less public nature of prosaic love does confine learning about prosaic to more restricted to interactions between close family and friends. Individuals not only learn about romantic love through discussing the issues faced by family and friends, but though observations of couples' interactions. Individuals also will experience the need to discuss the romantic issues they are facing with their confidants and negotiate these issues with their own partners.

Romantic and prosaic love may not fully capture the unique issues associated with finding

a romantic partner, however. In the romantic/prosaic distinction provided by Swidler, prosaic notions of love are essentially everything that does not meet the standards of a romantic ideal. Moreover, Swidler (2001) is dealing with individuals who are married and therefore have a limited choice set. The role of choice is especially critical and why the romantic/prosaic typology works within the context of a marriage. At the same time, choice also largely influences why the romantic/prosaic logic may not necessarily apply in the wider dating market. In marriage, your decision making is isolated to whether I should be married to a specific individual, but in the process of selecting a partner you are comparing individuals to the other choices available to you when forming decisions. In other words, the market becomes more relevant in the process in dating than in decisions within a marriage.

Market logic has similarities to both romantic and prosaic views of love but also is distinct. Market logic, like prosaic love, assumes that dating and/or finding a spouse take work because individuals are looking for a partner in a community or context filled with many people whom they must weed through before finding someone with whom they are compatible. Prosaic love, however, assumes that dating or mate selection takes work, because unlike romantic love the person you marry or date is not magically brought to you "some enchanted evening." Romantic and market versions of love are similar, however, because both logics assume individuals should maximize their ability to attain what they desire in a partner. Romantic love, however, assumes that individuals should maximize because an ideal exists and you ultimately mate with your ideal, whereas market and prosaic love do not assume an ideal exists in terms of a partner. The market version of love assumes that individuals maximize because they have information available to them on their potential choices and they select a mate based upon that information. Under the logic of prosaic love, individuals do not maximize, because finding a partner is

difficult, individuals settle for what they can get, and you settle because you are lucky to find a person willing to partner with you.

The varying logics call into question the role of rationality in mate selection. While rational action according to Swidler's (2001) logic was entirely prosaic, she did not have to deal with both the ends and the means. In terms of ends, with whom you date or mate, prosaic love emphasizes rationality in terms of trying to find the best person available whereas romantic love assumes that individuals are trying to find a soul mate. Compatibility is also a critical element in terms of ends under the prosaic version of love, but under romantic love the version the emphasis is on finding the Mr. or Miss Right others will envy for. In terms of means, finding the best person, all three logics, romantic, prosaic, and market, are rational.

While more defined in cultural repertoires, sociological research suggests that the romantic partner selection process to date is based on prosaic and market versions of love. The central area of study for on the partner selection process is assortative mating. Assortative mating is the process whereby individuals select individuals who are like them more often than would be predicted if mating conditions were random. According to the assortative mating literature, individuals tend to mate with individuals who share similar characteristics, such as race and religion, rather than individuals who vary significantly from themselves as suggested by romantic films or television (Kalmijn, 1998).

Assortative mating patterns do not appear to be a vestige of historical laws or norms. Historically, assortative mating patterns have been largely influence upon market factors such as third party intervention and opportunities to meet partners, which led to high level of partner selection along more realistic lines. Although individuals have a higher degree of latitude and opportunities in partner selection due to increases in higher education, lower levels of parental

influence in children's marriage partner choices, and the outlawing of anti-miscegenation laws, assortative mating along status characteristics, specifically education, has increased over time (Schwartz and Mare, 2005). The persistence of assortative mating in a relatively open context suggests that individuals rely on realistic or market criterion when selecting partners.

Online dating presents a particularly interesting context for individuals to select romantic partners because there is a new market of individuals from a variety of demographic backgrounds whom individuals may have never otherwise met. Despite the relative openness of the online dating market, individuals continue to construct boundaries and communicate exclusively with individuals who share their social and demographic backgrounds (Feliciano et. al, 2009; Lewis, 2013).

Although prior research findings present online dating outcomes as love that is realistic or based on market level factors, several of components the online dating process represent the romantic aspects of love. For example, many sites and dating apps ask individuals to describe their ideal partner. Moreover, individuals on online dating sites have the opportunity to present the ideal version of themselves to prospective partners.

While seemingly distinct, romantic, prosaic, and market love are not self-contained cultural frames. Romantic, prosaic, and market forms of love interact with one another and individuals discussions of love demonstrate the interplay between both forms (Swidler, 2001). Individuals understand that cultural representations of love are romanticized and based upon an ideal, but that they must make decisions and compromise due to market and relationship realities.

Online Identities and Revealing Preferences

Individuals actively engage in creating a persona on a daily basis. We often construct

identities and present an image of ourselves to others that we believe would be most desirable (Goffman, 1959). The online identities individuals construct may differ from the identities individuals construct during face to face interactions because individuals are afforded anonymity (Mckenna and Bargh, 1999). Interactions online may therefore allow individuals to present a side of themselves that they may not be comfortable presenting in their daily life (Rosenmann and Safir, 2006).

Self-presentation is particularly important in dating when individuals must decide if they want to initiate a relationship with a prospective partner (Derlega et al., 1987). Online dating sites may be particularly instrumental in facilitating the construction of an ideal self-image because members are required to construct an online dating profile (Sprecher et al., 2008). In these profiles, dating site users can share whatever information about themselves that they would like, such as their interests, educational background, and hobbies. Online dating site users may also post pictures of themselves to create an image that they believe will appeal to a prospective dating partner. Through their narratives and pictures individuals are able to present themselves in the most attractive light possible.

Online dating site users may actually engage in deceptive behavior to present a more attractive version of themselves (Ellison et al., 2006). For example, many female dating site users lie about their weight to attract prospective dates (Toma et al., 2008). In more extreme cases, online dating profiles allow for complete deception. For example, the recent movie Catfish documents a hoax in which an older woman emails a younger man posing as a much younger woman. MTV has adopted the basic premise of the movie to develop a TV show in which individuals are deceived by individuals with whom they interact on online dating sites. Another popular example of deception online is the recent scandal involving Notre Dame football player

Manti Te'o. According to news reports, a young man, who was in love with Manti Te'o, posed as a woman to gain his affection. This young man's deception developed into an online relationship, which later became public when Manti Te'o discussed this relationship in national interviews. However, Manti Te'o ultimately discussed that the relationship was a hoax. Most online dating site users do not overtly lie about their overall identity, but rather exaggerate or provide inaccurate information about certain characteristics, such as lying about their weight or age (Toma et al., 2008). However, these extreme cases cited above exemplify the opportunity to construct a deceptive online persona.

Given that individuals may often not reveal information about themselves to prospective dates, individuals may also not be likely to indicate what they desire in a prospective partner. Women may be particularly unlikely to reveal that they want a financially stable partner as a result of societal taboos regarding the discussion of money and avoiding perceptions of being a "gold digger." At the same time, men may be unlikely to state they would like to find a woman who has large breasts in their public online dating profiles – and yet be likely to list such characteristics in private discussions with same-sex peers.

The language individuals use in their online dating profiles to describe prospective partners is also important to consider in light of the cultural repertoires individuals have to describe prospective partners. If individuals are more likely to describe the courtship process using language that draws on the romantic version of love, we could expect individuals would idealize their partners when answering questions regarding or describing what they are looking for in a partner. Individuals posting an online dating profile may rely on existing cultural repertoires not only due to their concerns regarding image maintenance but also because when individuals are faced with limited information they rely on preexisting cultural repertoires to guide their

behavior (Vrgut and Schabracq, 1996; Festinger, 1954).

The Online Dating Landscape

Online dating is a complex industry. Online dating sites cater to users with interests ranging from the mainstream (i.e. Match) to the extremely niche (i.e. Farmersonly.com). Online dating is also no longer limited to a desktop computer. A growing number of online dating sites now offer their services via mobile devices. In fact, certain online dating companies are only available in app form for use on mobile devices. Online dating sites and apps are also now targeting a new demographic: younger consumers.

Despite the increasing influence of online dating and the influence of technology in facilitating relationships for centuries, online dating was not always widely accepted. Following the emergence of online dating sites in the mid 1990s, many individuals dating online did not discuss online dating openly. Many Americans perceived online daters to be desperate and not capable of finding partners independently (Smith and Duggan, 2013). The stigma associated with online dating, however, has declined significantly (Smith and Duggan, 2013).

The growing acceptance of online dating may largely be associated with social interactions and contact. Many Americans know individuals, including presumably friends and family, who use and have had success using online dating sites. According to the Pew Research Center, 42% of Americans know someone who uses online dating, and 29% of individuals know someone who found their spouse or a long-term relationship through online dating. Individuals now also enlist the help of social contacts to smooth their transition into online dating. For example, 20% of online daters have enlisted the help of another person to construct their online dating profile (Smith and Duggan, 2013). Given increased levels of contact with online daters

and the growing enlistment of contacts to construct profiles, individuals presumably are learning about online dating from and sharing their online dating experiences with friends and family.

Method:

Focus groups and content analysis are the primary methods for the study. I conducted the focus groups separately by gender and age to create an environment in which individuals would feel comfortable speaking. Focus groups lasted approximately 60 to 90 minutes. I conducted 18 focus groups. The focus groups included 6 to 8 people per focus group and were conducted for individuals. I divided the focus groups into the following age groups: 18-24, 25-30, 31-35, and 36-40. I conducted nine focus groups with men and nine focus groups with women.

My sample consists of individuals who are single and dating in the Los Angeles area. Sample members tend to be highly educated, white, and only one individual was divorced. Ninety-five percent of the individuals in the focus groups had at minimum completed or were currently enrolled in college and ninety percent of the individuals included in the sample were white. I relied on snowball sampling from a source, my employer who was a matchmaker, to recruit focus group and interview participants.

I also performed a content analysis of 200 online dating profiles from a national online dating site (the data site used for chapter 1) to assess whether the information provided in interviews differs from data in online dating profiles. The dating site used in this analysis is based in Los Angeles and includes users from other U.S. major metropolitan areas, including New York. The site being analyzed is unique because site members are accepted to the site on the basis of their educational background and personality attributes, which are assessed when taking the onboarding survey. Unlike other sites where all individuals who enroll are accepted, individuals who are deemed undesirable are rejected or waitlisted.

Upon acceptance, individuals had the opportunity to create a profile providing information about themselves. There were multiple open-ended questions, such as "describe yourself and where do you see yourself in the next ten years." While individuals are free to share whatever information they feel is appropriate, many individuals often provide information regarding their family, hobbies, and general background. The site also only included individuals seeking heterosexual relationships. The site did not require users pay at the time of data collection.

In these interviews and focus groups, I explored individuals' dating patterns to date, including how they meet people, how much time they dedicate to dating online, how much time people focus on dating generally, and what characteristics they desire in their romantic partners (See Exhibit 2-1). For example, I asked respondents whether financial status, attractiveness, education, or physical attractiveness is the most important characteristic in a potential partner.

I analyzed the content of these interviews and focus groups to explore how individuals meet and what they desire in their romantic partners. I looked for patterns that appear to be related to gender. Gender differences that appear to be interrelated with basic demographic variables such as age, religion, education, and income were analyzed as well. I was also very interested in examining individuals' entree into and experiences with online dating generally.

To understand whether preferences stated in focus groups and interviews when confidentiality is promised match those presented in publicly posted online dating profiles, I analyzed the information individuals post about themselves in their online dating profiles. The individuals who participate in the interviews and focus groups do not necessarily post profiles of themselves on the dating site, however. As a result of my inability to conduct exact matches, I conducted the online dating site profile analysis separately. However, I used a sample of

demographically comparable dating site users. Given that the individuals who participated in my focus groups and interviews to date are demographically comparable to site users, creating a demographically comparable sample of site users was not an issue.

The analysis focused on what characteristics dating site users state are desirable in a romantic partner in the "about me" section of their online dating profile. I compared whether men or women reveal the same preferences in focus groups and interviews as in their dating profiles. To do this, I analyzed what men and women describe they are looking for in the "about me" section of their profile and compared this to characteristics that are emphasized in the interviews and focus groups. To conduct this analysis, I randomly sampled every other male and female online dating site user in my sample to obtain 100 female and 100 male online dating profiles. If users do not discuss the characteristics they desire in a potential partner in their profiles, I selected the next man or woman. If individuals did not state what they are seeking in a romantic partner in their dating profile, they were not included in the analysis.

Results

Stages of Online Dating

Online dating can be segmented by stages. In the first stage of online dating, 1995-2011, online dating was exclusively based on a dating site model in which individuals used computers to find prospective partners. The primary structure of online dating sites was a search based model in which individuals were able to enter criteria regarding the characteristics they desired in a prospective partner and would be presented with matches who met their criterion. Individuals would then have to sift through the prospective partners presented and message a prospective partner if interested. Individuals, however, had no indication of whether prospective partners were interested in connecting.

The second stage of online dating, from 2011- present, emerged with the introduction of mobile app based dating sites. The most popular dating platforms of the second stage operate primarily using a mobile app-based model. Mobile online dating apps have revolutionized the online dating scene through a variety of features and structural elements. A major feature of mobile-based apps is the geo-locational feature. The geo-locational feature of mobile dating apps allows individuals to communicate with other individuals in their area based on close proximity. While individuals historically had used online dating sites that allowed them to search for people within their area based upon their city or zip code. Individuals therefore were able to know how close people were to them geographically. While this high degree of information raised concerns and the intentions of potential users in the popular media regarding security (Friedman, 2013), a large segment of the population adopted the mobile dating app model.

Mobile dating apps also structurally changed how dating apps matched individuals through the widespread introduction of double opt-in matching. Double opt-in matching requires individuals to establish a mutual match prior to communicating. The structural change of online dating apps via double opt-in matching creates a higher degree of equality between partners theoretically by requiring individuals to establish a mutual match prior to communicating. Through requiring both individuals to establish interest in the other individual prior to matching, double opt-in matching, pioneered by the dating app Tinder, has revolutionized the online dating market and become the norm among recently introduced dating sites.

The structure of online dating sites and apps largely influences how individuals perceive and interact with the online dating app. Online daters on first stage sites only knew that prospective matches lived within a certain mile radius, usually more than five miles. Second stage apps allow individuals to pinpoint with a relative degree of certainty how far a prospective

match is located from their location (i.e. 0.2 miles) due to the introduction of a geolocation measure. The high degree of accuracy regarding geographic location in second stage app changed perceptions regarding the purpose and use cases of of online dating sites. Due to the enhanced ability of individuals to understand how close a prospective match is located to them, many individuals worried that the purpose of online dating apps could shift towards an app designed to facilitate hookup relationships.

The marketing of second stage dating platforms also varies significantly from first stage platforms. Most first stage dating sites, such as Match, E-Harmony, and OkCupid, are marketed towards individuals 25 and above who in theory are seeking longer term relationships. Whereas second stage apps launched their brands through targeting the college students who are most likely less interested in forming long-term, serious relationships (Washington Post, April 6th).

The branding of first and second stage apps is very different as well. First-stage sites heavily emphasized their brands as relationship-focused. For example, E-Harmony's tagline is "more relationships more marriages" and Match's tagline is "the leading online dating site for singles." In contrast second stage online dating platforms' branding is less explicit regarding the dating function of their products. For example, Hinge's tagline is "meet new people through friends. Second stage apps do not provide individuals with the same perception of first stage apps.

The difference in branding and marketing between first and second stage online dating apps signals the contrast between the prosaic and romantic aspects of online dating. First stage apps market and brand themselves to appeal to the sentiments associated with a romantic version of love. First stage sites like E-Harmony claim to form the most marriages of any dating site and enable individuals to, "find the perfect guy for you," as per their commercial. The idea presented

to present and prospective users of first stage sites or apps is that online dating provides individuals with the capacity to find the romantic ideal popularized in the media.

Second stage online dating apps may present a more prosaic branding of love or romance to online daters. The branding of second stage apps, specifically the lack of language emphasizing romance, provides a context for potential use cases that are not consistent with aspects of the romantic views of love. Second stage online dating apps brand themselves as a mechanism for individuals to meet new people not to meet a romantic partner. Online daters may presumably understand that second stage apps are not presenting other users as the potential love of their lives but simply as an individual with whom they can have contact.

Entree into and Approach to Online Dating

Respondents' entrée into online dating is often framed on the basis of resources. Romantic introductions historically have been facilitated through social contacts, namely friends and family. Although friends and family are still the most common means by which individuals meet romantic partners (Rosenfeld and Thomas, 2013), friends and family may not always be a reliable source for introductions.

According to Eric, a male focus group respondent in his mid 30s, "*If you're single and you want to meet someone you cannot just email all of your friends and say hey set me up with somebody.*" Eric's observation is representative of the experiences of several respondents for whom the limitations of social connections to facilitate a romantic introduction were very real.

Eric's concerns regarding asking friends for help finding a romantic partner may also point to issues regarding masculinity that emerged frequently among male respondents. Masculinity for many men may be tied to their ability to attract and seduce women. For Eric and other male respondents, asking for help finding a date may therefore be emasculating. Online dating

presents men with an opportunity to independently search for a partner and not lose face in front of social contacts.

Entree into online dating was also framed in terms of being one of many potential paths to meeting romantic partners. Respondents discussed the variety of ways they have found partners and very casually presented online dating as a manner in which to find a romantic partner. For example, Hal, 34, claims, *"I think it's just another avenue to expanding your pool. I don't think it's better or worse necessarily. It allows you to meet other people who you otherwise would not have been able to meet."* While Hal's claims, at face value, seem very matter of fact and unremarkable. Hal's statements regarding meeting individuals with whom they would have otherwise never had contact may point to a larger issue facing single individuals. Single individuals in theory could hold they could use online dating to meet partners who are a better fit or who are more likely to fulfill their ideal. For example, individuals possessing certain demographic characteristics who use sites that cater to their demographic group, such as JDate or Blackpeoplemeet, could theoretically be using online dating sites to find a more realistic partner. Alternatively, individuals who use a mainstream site and conduct a search for only thin, blonde physicians living within a five-mile radius may be using online dating to search for an ideal.

Respondents also framed their entrée in market terms. For many respondents, there was an underlying understanding that they were presenting themselves as a single individual to a market of other eligible individuals and that if they did not do so they would not be taking advantage of every opportunity available to find a partner. As one female respondent stated, *"From a marketing perspective, if you don't do it, you're missing out. As a marketer, you'd be remiss not to put yourself on it."* The respondents' statement leads to the reduction of single individuals into commodities to be traded and sold on the dating market. Commodification in dating varies

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significantly from the romantic ideal presented in the media of individuals meeting by chance and falling in love. If individuals enter the online dating with the mindset that online dating is a marketing exercise or opportunity, the notion of romantic love is not as prevalent in guiding individuals' approach to online dating.

The market perspective also represents an underlying anxiety that was held among many female respondents. For many female respondents, particularly respondents ages 30-35, there is a palpable concern about finding a partner quickly due to biological and social pressures. Among these women, they feel that if they do not make themselves available on every possible platform, both online and offline, they have not done everything within their means to find a partner. For these women, this notion is very disquieting.

Approach to Online Dating

Women do not frame their approach to online dating based upon romantic notions of love. When discussing meeting a partner, women frame the mechanism by which they may meet their romantic partner is immaterial. As Anna, a 29 year old woman states, "*It's not the channel. I don't have a preference. It's just about meeting a quality person or someone I connect with.*" For female respondents, the process is far less important than the end result: meeting a partner. Anna's statement is also indicative of the anxiety these women face when trying to find a romantic partner.

Women frame their online dating experience as a serious process based upon calculation, rational choice, and anxiety. For women, online dating is a serious endeavor and female respondents are determined to find their romantic partners online. Women's anxiety, and arguably distress, influences their framing of the mate selection process. As Hallie, age 32,

states, *"I am on a husband hunt. I will try anything and my guys friends said to try it."* The statement above indicates degree of desperation that the female focus group respondents, particularly women age 30 and above, expressed with the dating process. Hallie also highlights that for these women online dating as a course of action an individual must take if they want to have exhausted all of their potential options to find a mate.

For some female respondents, namely respondents ages 30 to 35, the desire to find a partner is also framed on the basis of a logical choice, given their life stage. The female respondents tended to be highly educated, accomplished in their careers, but to date have delayed marriage and family. As Harriet ,32 states,

> *"I was working on myself. On me. With growing and my career. And at the same*
> *time my career grew and now it has probably been two years since I had*
> *something serious. Now I am in the spot where I could really meet*
> *someone and be in a fulfilling , wonderful relationship. It's like I am 32*
> *and looking for something long term."*

Harriet's statements largely capture the sentiments of many female respondents who feel as though they have accomplished a great deal professionally, 'done everything right,' and now must complete the next logical goal: finding a husband. Moreover, the statement also indicates that female respondents are very aware of their biology and the imperative to find a partner soon. The statement is indicative, however, of an imperative that is not exclusively biological. For many of the women in this study, there is a strong social pressure from family to couple.

Men are aware of and also influenced by the biological and social pressures women face when trying to find a romantic partner. As Howard, 34 states, "*They just want to move a lot faster. Thirty-five is the magical number where fertility starts to plummet and girls all know this*

stuff so I think the clock just starts to tick faster at 30 and so every year after that it gets faster.

Howard's comment suggests that men use age as a proxy for the seriousness with which a prospective female match approaches a relationship. Moreover, men's perceptions may lead to a modification of their age preferences. Certain male respondents in fact claim that they prefer to date women who are a certain age because they don't want to be placed in "fast-forward" relationships.

The pressure for men to partner in a timely manner is different from their female counterparts. For men, their biology viability is a non-issue. A male respondent, Harry, 35, stated,

> *"Well, I guess women feel the pressure more than men do. I know I*
>
> *certainly don't feel it. I think my boys will swim till I am 55 or 60 give or*
>
> *take. I don't feel that type of pressure. I make a joke to my family that by*
>
> *the time I am ready to have children, my parents and my children will be*
>
> *in diapers at the same time."*

Harry's statements indicate that motivation to couple for men is influenced by their own fertility. At the same time, Harry's statement indicates that men may face social pressure even if it is not as strong as the social pressure faced by and discussed among female respondents to partner.

The framing of men's approach to online dating is casual. Despite the outstanding social pressures to couple, male respondents of all ages do not outwardly discuss a high level of investment in online dating. Many male respondents go so far as to frame online dating as a backup plan. According to Steve, a 31 year old male respondent,

> *"It was this backup plan when I was out meeting people. Not being from*

LA originally and moving here I always found it as a back up plan. You're going out with friends and family and meeting people but it's good to have something on the back burner get yourself out there and expand your network. Just like LinkedIn for instance. Not everyone uses Linkedin as a source to find a job at the same time it's nice to have your resume up there because someone could find you and say hey we have this opportunity for you. The same way that someone a dating site could say hey we have similar interests, let's talk."

At first blush, Steve's comments suggest that most men are unconcerned whether or not they meet someone online. The casual, 'whatever happens' or 'backup approach,' indicates the degree to which male online daters attempt to insulate themselves from feelings of rejection by outwardly downplaying their investment. For many men, rejection is common online. Moreover, while not universal, rejection for some men may be emasculating. Through the adoption of a "whatever happens" approach may provide men with not only with the ability to not be disappointed if they do not find a suitable match, but also to feel less emasculated,

The approach men and women take to online dating in not guided by a romanticized version of love. For men their approach to online dating seems fairly unarticulated relative to their female counterparts, but largely guided by their fears of rejection. Women's approach to online dating is to a large degree entirely unromantic because they engage in a rational and calculated search process. At the same time, women's approach to online dating is motivated by the romantic assumption that their one true love is out there and they will be able to find him. The sense female respondents have that an ideal exists and that they can find their ideal takes

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romantic love to an extreme.

Desired Characteristics

Individuals can provide a description of what they want and what is their ideal online, but online daters ultimately are forced to balance their own desires and expectations with market realities. The market realities for many respondents tended to be relatively grim with many respondents not finding individuals with whom they want to form a relationship. The process of understanding what respondents desire therefore is guided not only based upon what individuals desire but by what individuals do not desire as well.

For female respondents, who are primarily accomplished and successful women, homophily is the ideal. The ideal for these female respondents, however, is not in accordance with a romanticized view of love. According to these women, 'finding someone at their level' is a rational and calculated preference. Female respondents' approach to their ideal is based not only on a realistic understanding of their needs, but on a more realistic version of love. Homophily for these women represents compatibility on values that will foster a successful long-term partnership not an impassioned daliance.

While seemingly rational, female respondents' desires might not necessarily meet with market realities. Female respondents often find that they are not finding anyone in the ballpark of their ideal online. At the same time, female respondents claim they are not willing to negotiate or modify their standards. As Henrietta, a female respondent stated, "*I have raised the bar on what I am looking for. I am not just going to change who I am so if that means the guy has to be all the way up here to feel comfortable with who I am, that is totally fine*." Henrietta's statement touches on an underlying issue discussed among many female respondents, their concerns

regarding finding a partner who will accept them as a successful woman. Moreover, female respondents believe that men who are not 'at their level' socioeconomically will not accept, or even be interested, in them.

Respondents' desire for and unwillingness to compromise on partners' characteristics is consistent with partnering patterns among women. Oppenheimer's theory regarding marriage timing, namely that women forego marriage if they do not find a suitable partner, is very consistent with the behavior of the women in this study. The female focus group respondents are willing to forego relationships, and dates, and to search online until they find their ideal. Moreover, the behavior of these women, namely their evaluation of photos, represents their strategies to quickly determine homophily and reject undesirable partners.

The unwillingness to compromise or settle persists throughout adulthood for female respondents. While the desire to settle may theoretically be more compelling among older respondents, for whom social and biological pressure may exist to partner, the desire to settle for these respondents seems even more unpalatable. Among older respondents, the criteria that they have established for their partners may be even of greater importance. Female respondents presumably may feel as though homophily is even more critical given that they are more likely to move quickly into marriage and family after forming a relationship than their younger counterparts.

The characteristics men prioritize in an ideal partner also differ from those of their female counterparts. Unlike women who are not primarily focused on attractiveness, men overwhelmingly prioritize the attractiveness of a prospective female partner. Psychologists explain men's overwhelming prioritization of female partners' attractiveness as evolutionary (Buss and Barnes, 1989. Men's emphasis on attractiveness, however, is very aligned with social

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phenomena as well. Individuals who are more attractive are more likely to be rewarded financially and socially (Hamermesh, 2010). By dating or marrying an attractive individual, men, even less attractive men, may experience rewards socially.

Men do not prioritize homophily. The discussions surrounding an ideal wife or girlfriend among male respondents did not include language referring to homophily, such as the words equal or partner. The relative lack of concern among men regarding homophily and equality between partners is very interesting due to findings regarding the vast majority of educated individuals seeking egalitarian relationships (Gerson, 2011; Pedulla & Thebaud, 2015). At the same time, it is possible that when men are considering an ideal wife or girlfriend, they may hold a more romanticized view of a partner and less likely to account for more realistic factors, such as homophily or egalitarianism, than their female counterparts. Alternatively, men seeking partners may have different concerns than their female counterparts regarding balancing family and careers.

Egalitarianism or equality for men and women may also not necessarily mean the same thing. Male respondents did not consider the potential economic contribution of a female partner as a priority. For example, Tony, 32, states, *"I don't really place any weight on their income. To me, it's not important.* Men, namely financially successful men like the respondents, may not believe finding an equally financially secure partner is realistic, given persistent occupational steering and earnings disparities. On the other hand, male respondents may not hold strictly to a Becker-like (1981) model of exchange, but may theoretically view equality or egalitarianism in a marriage based upon the exchange of certain characteristics or attributes that are not economic in nature.

For female respondents, equality between partners is largely tied to income and

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socioeconomic status. While all of the respondents were by and large highly educated and successful, a major source of their identity for the women in this study is tied to their work and careers. The work and careers of these women are critical to their identities, possibly more so than their male counterparts, because, as single women, they have not achieved the status, married woman, that has historically conferred women the highest amount of status and benefits. Consequently, finding a man who matched their level of success in their careers is significant due to the strong basis of work and career in their identity.

The clear development of characteristics desired in a partner varies by gender. For female respondents, the process by which they list desired characteristics borders on automation. While some of the characteristics mentioned, such as charismatic or humorous, are not as easily ascertained as socioeconomic status or attractiveness when examining an individuals' online dating profile, many female respondents claimed that they attempted to evaluate characteristics of prospective partners when examining online dating profiles when evaluating individuals online. The ability of women respondents to enumerate what they desire in a partner is consistent with a clearly calculated approach is in line with their potentially more prosaic approach to love and family formation.

The desires of male respondents are not necessarily as developed as their female counterparts. Male respondents did not articulate that they required or were guided by a list of essential characteristics in a prospective partner. As Steve, 34, states, *"Ideally I don't want to be 45 and still be in the pool swimming. However I am not looking to a or compromise what I believe in or want in life or what I think someone else can bring to that."* Steve's sentiments not only highlight that the unwillingness to compromise on characteristics desired in a prospective partner is independent of gender, but also that men's description of the ideal partner was

relatively inchoate. The inchoate nature of Steve's descriptions is in line with a more romanticized view of love. Through not defining an ideal, the ideal partner for many men can remain amorphous and thereby not subject to the inclusion of characteristics that represent realistic love. In theory, the failure to develop a clear ideal allows men to not commit to what they want. Alternatively, men who remain single for a long time may in theory protect their masculinity, if rejected or unable to partner.

While female respondents discussed homophily as critical to them on the basis of socioeconomic markers, very few respondents discussed the importance of matching along demographic, namely religious, racial, or political, lines. Low rates of discussion of assortative mating along demographic lines may be related to respondents understanding of mating along demographic lines as given, taken for granted, and unnecessary to mention. Alternatively, individuals are now more likely to sort themselves along achieved rather than ascriptive characteristics (Mare, 1991). Respondents may also engage in filtering online, both conscious and subconscious, that makes a discussion of mating along demographic lines less compelling.

It is important to note that the influence of homophily is highly contingent upon the sample in this study. While homophily was critical for the women and relatively unimportant for the men, the importance of homophily may vary significantly depending upon the individuals being studied. Homophily for the women in this study was critical because their status as highly educated, successful individuals is their ideal. The ideal, however, for many individuals is tied to issues of identity, specifically race, class, and gender, and for whom homophily would not be an ideal given that they are deemed less desirable and that others would perceive them as being less desirable.

The framing of desired characteristics in a partner may represents a romantic view of love.

No female respondent claimed that they wanted Romeo to visit their bedroom window or Prince Charming to ride in to their office on his horse, but certain elements of what individuals desire represent a romanticized version of love. Although women's desires for homophily are based on a more realistic version of love, the unwillingness of both women and men to compromise on an ideal also represents the romanticized version of love popularized in film and television.

Gender Play

Online dating sites in theory should reduce the rigidity associated with traditionally gendered dating scripts. Men and women on online dating sites have an equal opportunity to reach out to a prospective partner and initiate a conversation. Moreover, behavioral norms are far less established in online dating contexts. Recent research, however, suggests that traditional norms surrounding dating persist online (Kreager et al., 2014). For example, relative to their female counterparts, men overwhelmingly initiate contact with prospective matches (Skopek et al.,2011, Lewis, 2012).

The persistence of gender norms online is especially curious given that the vast majority of online dating users tend to be more highly educated than the general public (Smith and Duggan, 2013). Presumably more educated individuals, especially women, should have a more egalitarian approach to relationships. The respondents in this study, however, affirm prior findings that traditional gender norms persist in online dating. The female respondents in this study, while very concerned about the outcomes of their online interactions and eager to form relationships, do not assert themselves, but rather wait to be contacted by prospective matches.

Traditional scripts surrounding courtship, a manifestation of romantic love, reproduce gender roles regarding messaging behavior on online dating sites. Female respondents frame

their reluctance to message first in terms of traditional dating scripts. Female respondents of all age groups use phrases such as traditional and courtship to describe the dynamic between the sexes in an online dating context. As one female respondent, age 20, states, " *I expect to be courted a little bit. At least send a hey."* This statement indicates the persistence of traditional dating scripts in guiding online interactions. There also is an underlying frustration with traditional dating norms not fully translating from in-person to online interactions. For these women, their expectations that men with whom they are matched or presented with online will pursue them are not being met.

Female respondents also frame their behavior on the basis of men's understanding and operating on the basis of traditional dating scripts when online. For these women, roles are clearly defined and men's action or inaction indicate his intentions. As Sarah, 32, states, *"If they [men] are interested, they reach out. It's annoying to chase some guy. Guys like to chase."* Using evolutionary terms to frame her understanding of men operate, Sarah presents a scenario in which dating is an activity in which women are passive and men are active. For these high-powered respondents, dating is a context in which they must act in a way that is inconsistent with their usual mode of operating. To a certain degree, these women arguably cannot act in a manner that is authentic when they first begin to connect with men online.

According to female respondents, deviating from traditional gender roles negatively affects men's perceptions. In the eyes of respondents, their status as successful and accomplished women, actually increases the importance of adhering to traditional gender traditional gender scripts when dating. On the issue of sticking to gendered scripts online, Paula, 34, states,

> "*Honestly it goes back to they are hunters. I even do my own case studies.*
>
> *The fastest way for a guy to stop dating me is for me to tell him I own my*

own apartment in New York City. I give it two weeks and I have dated

guys who are making one million dollars. They need to feel like they are

strong one. If I say what I really do they get weird. I just say I do

marketing here and there they are much better. They need to feel... I am

not going to judge it or try to reinvent the wheel."

Paula's statement indicates the degree to which women fear that their deviation from traditional

gender roles in certain aspects of their life, specifically career, may adversely affect their online

dating prospects. According to female respondents, these deviations are a liability. Female

respondents must therefore compensate by adhering to traditional dating scripts when online,

specifically not initiating conversations with matches.

Traditional dating scripts not only facilitate the reproduction of gender roles in online

dating, but also have facilitated the establishment of norms. The female respondents cannot be

described as traditional generally, but are concerned that deviation from traditional dating scripts

will negatively affect their dating prospects.

For example, although many women only message first if they find the prospective match to be

exceptional, women's desire to message first is often curbed due to social pressures. As one

female respondent, Sam, age 25, stated, *"I used to do it[message men first] a lot, but then I*

stopped messaging guys because my guy friends told me to stop because I would look too

aggressive." These comments not only reinforce the firmly established cultural script: men

initiate contact with prospective female matches and women waiting for the advances of men,

but also that social pressure exists to adhere to norms. For these women, deviation from the norm

may also be punished. Moreover, this statement indicates that for some women the desire to

adhere to traditional dating scripts is primarily based upon social pressure.

Although very uncommon, women do occasionally deviate from traditional dating scripts. Deviations from traditional dating scripts are often driven by romanticized notions of love. When women initiate conversations, they only do so upon feeling a connection with a prospective match. As Amy, 29, states regarding messaging men, "*Sometimes but the majority no. If I was messaging someone it was because I was genuinely attracted to them and I liked something I saw in their photos that I could message them about.*" As per Amy's statement, female online daters only initiate contact with men whom they find exceptional. Female respondents arguably have no meaningful data regarding a single match to distinguish one match as exceptional, however. Women are rather operating based upon a sentiment or gut reaction. This sentiment or gut reaction is comparable to the concept of courtly love in which love happens at first sight. *While not discussed by respondents, deviations from traditional dating scripts may also be prosaic in nature*. Women, especially the women in the study, are motivated to find a partner and recognize that realistically finding a partner may involve initiating contact. Moreover, if women are not experiencing success outside of online dating in terms of meeting men, market realities may set in and compel women to message men.

Men also have a firm understanding of traditional dating scripts. As Kyle, 31, claims, "*We are supposed to [message first]."* Kyle's statement indicates men not only understand dating scripts but they also realize that men initiating contact with a prospective female match is a norm. Moreover all of the male respondents shared Kyle's understanding that men initiate contact. At the same time, none of the male respondents indicated that they needed to be the individual to send the first message. In fact, the vast majority of the men like when women signal interest by messaging first.

Traditional gender scripts requiring men to message may be highly problematic for facilitating a positive online dating experience. Men are required to message women first, but men frequently never receive responses from female matches. Given that messaging is such a critical element of the online dating process, high levels of nonresponse may lead many men after experiencing a great deal of rejection to leave online dating altogether. In the context of a conversation regarding messaging and gender scripts, Henry, a male respondent, stated, *" I stopped online dating because it was too much work messaging."* Henry's statement indicates the level of frustration men face with the scripts surrounding online dating. Henry's statement also indicates on a common feeling underlying the discussion among many male online daters: avoiding and dealing with rejection. For men, the feelings of rejection and continuous effort to secure a response are very taxing emotionally. To avoid rejection, men like Henry disengage. The concept of disengagement after lack of response or poor responses with matches among online daters that Henry refers to can be labeled as "online dating fatigue."

By virtue of online dating norms, men's masculinity may be at greater stake than women's femininity. Men theoretically expose themselves more to rejection than their female counterparts by being the initiators. Although women may experience rejection and feelings of disempowerment by not being contacted, they are only indirectly rejected. Men, however, are directly rejected when women do not respond to their messages. If masculinity is tied to being positively received by women, preservation of masculinity may therefore a top priority of men.

Men strategies and approach to online dating may be guided by their effort to preserve their masculinity. While men outwardly approach online dating with a degree of indifference, namely the "whatever happens" or "backup" approach, their indifference is really a façade. Men adopt the "whatever happens" approach to avoid dealing with rejection and emasculation. In

theory, when men reach a point of too much rejection, online dating fatigue sets in and they leave dating sites.

Reliance on the cultural scripts in offline behavior to serve as the scripts in online behavior is not efficient. Dating scripts placing the primary onus of messaging on men does not create a dynamic in which individuals communicate, meet each other, and potentially form relationships. Online dating apps in theory need to encourage a balance of communication between parties.

Diversifying the portfolio

The process of dating is far from the romantic version of love presented in the media. Dating is a process guided by a set of rules. Sociologists have gone so far as to refer to dating and mating as a game (Mullan, 1980). While respondents do not go so far as to discuss their dating strategies in such explicit terms, men and women do frame their behaviors as guided by certain rationale and principles. The primary rationale guiding the discussion among respondents relates to dating being a numbers game.

Respondents are navigating a relatively unestablished institution using thin information and must act in a strategic manner to be successful. According to respondents, A major strategy of online daters is portfolio diversification. While early adopters of online dating traditionally only used one online dating site, contemporary online daters use multiple sites when trying to find a mate. Site diversification may not have been as practical for the first cohort of online daters because many sites initially were based on subscription models, fewer sites existed, and online dating was less socially acceptable. Today, however, many online dating sites offer free or freemium models, over 3,500 online dating sites or apps exist, and online dating is no longer socially stigmatized.

Respondents frame their strategy, namely site diversification, as a process. While many respondents use multiple online dating sites simultaneously to meet a prospective partner, most respondents did not begin online dating by using several sites simultaneously. The site diversification process is largely characterized by trial and error. As one respondent, Scott, 33, states, *" I use OkCupid mainly because it's the antithesis of the JDate thing. I thought it felt less forced."* Scott's frames his experience on multiple online dating sites as a process to determine what site fit his needs best. Online daters often engage in an extensive selection process prior to determining which site or sites best fit their needs and personality. Although Scott's and may other online daters are aware of how online dating works prior to entering the online marketplace, online daters cannot be fully aware which site will work best until they begin to diversify their portfolio.

Individuals also at times include niche sites as part of their portfolio to find a partner with similar intentions. According to respondents there is a great deal of ambiguity regarding the intentions of a prospective partner. To better target individuals seeking the type of relationship they want they seek sites that have a reputation as providing a certain type of relationship. Shifting to different sites may therefore not simply be a response to disliking a site's features, but rather an effort to ensure they find a partner seeking a certain type of relationship.

Online dating site diversification represents the strength of the market and prosaic versions of love in guiding the process by which individuals meet romantic partners. Both men and women are using several sites simultaneously in a concerted effort to meet a romantic partner. The process involves elements of strategy and analysis rather than being presented with an individual and knowing that your love is certain.

A Picture is worth 1000 words

In online dating, individuals are presented with the online dating profiles of prospective partners, which normally include relatively limited information regarding the prospective partner. As in other social interactions, online daters must quickly evaluate prospective matches to make determinations regarding future interactions. The term coined by psychologists to explain the process by which individuals quickly evaluate others is thin slicing (Ambady and Rosenthal, 1992). According to psychologists, individuals are able to evaluate thin slices of information about others with a high degree of accuracy.

The information that individuals claim is most valuable is not provided in the descriptions written by prospective partners, however. Respondents claim that the most important factor in determining whether or not they are interested in an individual is their photograph. Individuals are evaluating photographs for far more information than whether or not the other individual is attractive, however. According to respondents, photographs provide many important signals regarding their prospective partner's character and background.

Respondents' framing of their analysis of online dating profile pictures may be consistent with prosaic and romantic views of love. Online daters evaluate photos for cues that will allow them to establish whether they are compatible with a prospective partner. As one female respondent, 33, states, "

> *I think I can tell a lot about a person's lifestyles from their photos. I am*
>
> *not sure how much of it is on the good side of it, I am sure a lot of people*
>
> *have good qualities that I can't tell from their, but photos but I can*
>
> *certainly tell the qualities that I don't prefer such as them in a huge pool*
>
> *and it's a spring break party that's not a lifestyle that I want to live*

anymore so they are probably not for me. Or tights jeans. For lack of a

better word you can tell if someone is a douchebag by some of the photos

that they put up."

The respondent suggests the photographs individuals provide in online dating profiles paint a

portrait of their lifestyle and personality characteristics. According to respond the cues provided

by the photographs are very rich. The photographs individuals post provide cues that go far

beyond signaling their socioeconomic status or personality traits. For example, respondents state

a respective match's modesty or lack thereof signals what type of relationship they desire. Men

claim that women who show a great deal of their bodies in photographs are most likely interested

in or, at least, willing to participate more casual relationships.

The respondent's statement also suggests the information gleaned from photographs can

be used to affirm or reject prospective matches. For this respondent, and many other respondents

the vast majority of information in the photographs is negative rather than affirmative in nature.

The ability to quickly affirm or reject individuals based upon the thin information in photographs

is quite remarkable and important in terms of making the online dating process more efficient.

Respondents also attempt to glean qualities that are critical to a relationship or a partner,

but are less easy to assess in photographs than social status or lifestyle. Although the respondent

suggests that she can tell whether the match is a "douchebag' from the photograph, the qualities

respondents seek, such as kindness and humor, are not quite as easily ascertained from

photographs. The quick assessment of individuals on the basis of their photos may provide

insight into whether a person's lifestyle is incompatible, but not as to whether they possess

features that are valued in a romantic partner.

The determination of compatibility on the basis of photographs points to Swidler's (2001)

notions of all three forms of love. Although respondents are trying to evaluate photographs to find factors that suggest compatibility and rejecting those who seem incompatible, a guiding tenet of courtly romantic love is that individuals know upon first sight that they are meant to be with the other person and are in love. Individuals dating online are to a degree applying the same logic and determining that prospective matches are not for them at first sight. Individuals are therefore using information, consistent with market logic, to make decisions. The degree to which individuals are affirmatively determining prospective matches are for them on the basis of their picture is less known. To a degree, the notion of "at first sight" is seen among women who never message male matches but occasionally message a match whom they find particularly appealing.

Seemingly Endless Choice

Partnership patterns have shifted over the past 30 years. Individuals, particularly highly educated individuals, delay marriage until their 30s. Scholars also posit that individuals are seeking all-fulfilling relationships (Cherlin, 2010). All-fulfilling relationships, however, do not necessarily reflect reality and may lead to impractical expectations regarding responsibilities within relationships. Popular literature suggests that online dating adds to the complex issues individuals face when trying to settle down due to the seemingly endless choices individuals are presented with on online dating sites (Gottlieb, 2011).

Respondents frame choice as a critical element in the online dating process. Individuals are presented with hundreds of prospective matches on a daily, if not hourly basis, depending on the site or app they use. Respondents also seem to perceive that their choices are virtually unlimited. As one female respondent 33 stated, " *It's general to online dating. This illusion of endless*

choice and everyone looks superficially as interesting as everyone else, unless you've written

something really interesting or you have an immediate connection." According to the

respondent, online daters may feel they have a great deal of choice, but the quality of that choice

is not necessarily good due to the thin information provided by prospective matches. The

respondent's statement also suggests that the illusion of endless choice is problematic because

the choices indeed have an ending. Respondents who are looking more deeply at assessing the

potential of a prospective match not only have thin information but also do not necessarily feel

the immediate connection to a prospective match that prompts action. For many online daters,

there may be a great deal of choice among matches but the very few matches that they would

realistically choose. Moreover, the romanticized notion that love is certain and that only one true

love exists does not appear consistent with individuals' illusion regarding endless choice.

The element of choice also is critical in online dating because individuals can specify the

characteristics they desire in prospective partners. In offline interactions, individuals are unable

to know the age, level of education, number of children desired, or income level of another

individual upon approaching and talking with them for a brief period. Online dating, however,

allows individuals to sort and select individuals on the basis of desired characteristics and,

depending on the site or app, only presented with individuals who fit their criteria.

Respondents express concern that choice, specifically selecting the criterion they desire in

a partner and filtering their matches accordingly, may adversely affect their online dating

experience. According to respondents, their "check and go through" behavior of clicking on

boxes for what they desire in a partner adversely affects how they perceive prospective mates.

For example, a female respondent, 32, stated, " *I wonder if we are allowing ourselves to be more*

picky." The respondent's statement is in line with a concern underlying the general focus group

discussions, namely that online dating allows individuals to be more selective. The degree to which individuals are allowing themselves to be selective raises important questions regarding whether online dating or individuals have heightened their selectivity. Selectivity in partner selection, however, is not a new phenomenon. High levels of assortative mating along both achieved and ascribed characteristics prior (Schwartz and Mare, 2005) occurred long before the advent of online dating. Moreover, online dating emerged after individuals were theoretically becoming more selective and shifting towards relationships that were characterized as all-fulfilling (Cherlin, 2010).

While the structural mechanisms of online dating sites allow individuals to filter on almost every imaginable criterion, online dating sites cannot provide a meaningful filter for compatibility. Respondents often find the mismatch between demographic compatibility and chemistry to be troubling. As one female respondent, 32, states, *"I go out with tons of people. They look good on paper, but there is no chemistry."* This statement indicates the degree of frustration experienced by many study respondents, namely female respondents, who are looking to find their life partners. These women cling to the romantic notion that online dating will be the tool to help them find their ideal partner. The inability of online dating sites to assess chemistry and compatibility, however, demonstrates the limits of technology as well as the irrationality of this notion.

Online dating sites, however, are not to blame for a lack of chemistry between two individuals. Online daters are also responsible for evaluating whether they are compatible with prospective matches.

Respondents also express concern that their ability to choose or create an ideal commodifies prospective online matches. As one female respondent, 32, stated, " Yo*u're going*

quickly through it (online dating sites) so you see more people generally so the idea is that if this one is not exactly what you want or does not respond as quickly as you want, you move on to the next guy. That has it's benefits so there's a bit of an ego boost attached to that but the problem is, if you do want to talking someone seriously, and they have a hard time taking me seriously, and so many things to distract them from making a meaningful connection or seeing something through because you are on to the next!" The respondent's statement points to the degree to which online matches are seemingly disposable. Online matches seem more disposable due to the limited interactions with and information about prospective matches. Higher levels of disposability in the process of partner selection may also translate into higher levels of disposability throughout the dating process if individuals are viewed as one of many potential choices.

The anxieties respondents have about online dating enhancing selectivity and disposability do not necessarily match reality for many online daters. Many online daters meet other singles and are able to find long-term relationships, including marriages. The vast majority of online daters may not be shirking relationships or commitment but rather, like the respondents, have not yet selected or encountered an individual with whom they are compatible.

The choice phenomenon provides a wonderful lens to examine the tension between all three types of love. As individuals enter the dating market they have a relatively good idea of how they are positioned. Individuals who are highly desirable in terms of attractiveness and socioeconomic characteristics may be favored and find relationships more easily relative to less desirable individuals. Alternatively, these individuals may hold out and onto myths regarding romanticized versions of love. If individuals are more desirable and recognize that there are thousands of singles signing onto a site or app daily, they can maintain the myth of Prince

Charming riding in on his white horse. While not tested in the context of this research, individuals who are less desirable may theoretically not be able to hold onto romantic myths of love as long or as easily as their more desirable counterparts. Given that the respondents have been using online dating sites from periods ranging from several months to several years and have yet to find lasting, long-term partnerships, they must be very undesirable, which did not seem to be the case, or choice must not be endless.

Deconstructing the Online Dating Profile: Stated Versus Revealed Preferences

Individuals dating online are very concerned with how they present themselves and their preferences. Many individuals not only employ the help of friends or family, but also consult popular media, such as articles related to what to and not to post in an online dating profile, to determine the best way to craft their profiles. The recommendations provided in popular articles, however, do not begin to touch on how individuals should describe what they are looking for or seeking in prospective partners.

The descriptions individuals provide for what they are seeking in an ideal partner are based on strategy and calculation. Two strategies appear to dominate how individuals present what they desire in an ideal partner: providing a list of characteristics desired that are relatively generic or framing their ideal partner in relation to the relationship desired. These strategies are both consistent with a prosaic view of love.

The strategy of listing desired characteristics when asked to describe an ideal partner is consistent with views of romantic love because individuals who listed everything they desired in a partner would not be seen as a rational actor. If individuals thought that prospective matches, even their ideal match, would not be slightly discouraged they would post their exact ideal even

if their ideal was completely ludicrous, such wanting to meet a 6 foot, wealthy, kind, handsome, compassionate Rhodes Scholar who was willing to get married within three months of meeting. Individuals therefore must modify their descriptions to ensure they attract as large a prospective pool as possible.

The strategy of listing desired characteristics when asked to describe an ideal partner is an effort to create with universal appeal. The characteristics mentioned most frequently are intelligence and humor and do not vary by gender. Intelligence and humor are reasonable qualities to desire in a prospective partner. Moreover, many individuals would hope a prospective partner would find they possessed qualities like intelligence and compassion.

Descriptions of ideal partners do vary at times along gender lines. Women are far more likely to mention traditionally feminine characteristics, such as caring or kind, as desirable in their ideal partner relative to their male counterparts. The terms caring or kind, however, may not simply represent a traditionally feminine trait to female respondents. Female respondents who mention kindness and caring may instead be signaling their desire to find a man who wants children or a family. Given the focus group conversations regarding their preoccupation with family formation, many women may be signaling in subtle ways their desire to form families. Men also tend to be more self-deprecating than their female counterparts. Self-deprecation may be a common strategy for many men because they may feel the need to maintain a strong persona relative to their female counterparts.

Descriptions regarding an ideal partner in online dating profiles are much less candid than descriptions provided during focus group. For example, one female online dater in her 30s wrote, "*Intelligence, humor, style and a special something that can't really be defined in words.*" The dater's statement is very evasive. The phrase *"special something that can't really be defined in*

words" not only suggests that online daters invoke language that is consistent romantic notions

of love, but also that the individual is attempting to provide a noncontroversial response.

Alternatively, the phrase may point to the desires most commonly articulated by female

respondents regarding finding a partner who wa*s "at their level."*

While less direct or candid, individuals do state the priorities they articulated in focus

groups in their online dating profiles. The manner in which they articulate their desires online

does not necessarily signal that the characteristic stated is a priority, however. For example, all

male focus group respondents prioritize attractiveness in a romantic partner. In online dating

profiles for men, their desire for an attractive partner is not signaled clearly, but rather carefully

planted within their profile. Men who are interested in finding attractive partners list attractive as

one of several characteristics they desire in a prospective partner. The list function facilitates the

articulation of men's desires in an ambiguous, but socially acceptable manner. Men's lists do not

furnish women with a context to evaluate whether the man prefers one characteristic to the other

with any degree of certainty. The approach taken by women, many of whom were very clear

regarding desire for a financially successful partner during focus groups, is far more cautious.

Although stating the prioritization of finances would most likely be inappropriate in a public

forum, women are able to articulate their desires to find a financially stable partner by

obfuscating their true interests. For example one woman stated in her profile, *"I'm looking for a*

good man who has his act together."

The framing of responses in terms of individuals' own characteristics and experiences was

also a common strategy for individuals. As one man states, " *I have focused on my career for*

most of my life and feel great about my professional/creative accomplishments - I love what I do,

but the next phase of my life is to one day find my soul mate and share and create our future

together." The dater focused on his own characteristics and experiences to avoid describing what they sincerely desire in another individual. The obfuscation of desires provides individuals with the ability to not provide answers that are undesirable or that may alienate prospective partners. Like the list strategy, men and women approach written descriptions of their ideal from a more prosaic view of love by attempting to maintain as large a pool of prospective partners as possible.

Individuals' stated versus latent interests may not match because individuals understand the consequences of potentially articulating their desires fully in a public forum. Online daters not only consider their own desires but also the desires of prospective partners. For some individuals, their own desires may not necessarily translate well to prospective partners evaluating their profile. For example, a man who claims to prioritize attractiveness may understand that women, even attractive women, would not necessarily find his statements to be appropriate. Online daters thus engage in a process of profile management and modify their stated desires to avoid reducing the pool of prospective partners.

The public online dating profiles of men did not match the preferences they stated privately on a significant matter: their desire for a partner or an equal. Unlike their female counterparts who privately and publicly articulated their desire to find a "partner or equal," men privately did not but publicly articulate a desire to find an equal or partner. The articulation of their desire for a partner may be strategic for men. Men may understand or believe that women desire egalitarian partnerships and want to presents themselves in a manner that is consistent with what they believe women want.

While the vast majority of individuals describing their ideal partner did delineate what they were looking for in a partner, the idea of an individual meeting a lengthy list of requirements,

while consistent with the all-fulfilling relationships desired by many individuals (Cherlin, 2010), can be very intimidating to a prospective date. Individuals who provide lists of characteristics desired may appear difficult. Given the vast number of individuals available online, individuals could use minor flaws, such as providing too many criterion for partners, as a convenient method to dismiss a prospective match.

Upon examining the online dating profile content, many individuals not only describe the exact characteristics they desire in their prospective partner but also the type of relationship they desire. For example, *"A deep and meaningful, committed relationship with a great partner."* Candor regarding the type of relationship desired is critical to ensuring individuals attract like-minded matches. At the same time time, only providing information regarding what type of relationship they desire when asked about how they would describe their ideal partner is moderately evasive.

Some respondents also signal how they would like their prospective matches to approach their interactions. Individuals actually state how they would like their prospective partners to approach their conversations. As one respondent stated in their profile,*"I'm more old-fashioned and traditional when it comes to dating. I appreciate when a man makes the first move and leads the relationship."* This description provides prospective matches with information not only regarding their personality and the personality they desire in a prospective match, but also how they would like their relationship to be conducted.

The structure of some online dating sites affords individuals with the capacity to not state what they seek or make stating what they seek irrelevant. Certain dating sites, particularly first stage dating sites, allow users to enter information into a search feature and seek out what they sought in prospective partners. Individuals could theoretically search for a partner with a certain

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height, body type, religion, ethnicity, education level, and income. The need to state desired characteristics in theory became redundant for individuals because they could simply conduct the search themselves. For second stage apps or sites that may not afford such complex filtering, individuals could simply engage in a self-filtering process, such as only corresponding with individuals of a certain educational background or only individuals whose photos they found attractive. Moreover, the thin and relatively generic descriptions provided by online daters theoretically not only negate the need for but the validity the validity of stated preferences.

Decision-making among online daters is difficult due to the thin and relatively meritless information individuals are using to operate. Online dating profiles are theoretically designed to provide individuals with a fairly good idea of what an individual is like and provide prospective partners the ability to quickly evaluate them. This study suggests that online daters provide data that is not meaningful and potentially inconsistent with their purpose. Many respondents in fact stated that the online dating profiles they evaluated did not contain information that does not allowed them to accurately evaluate prospective partners.

The generic nature of online dating profiles may arguably adversely affect the selection process. While generic profiles minimize an individual's likelihood of being dismissed as a prospective partner immediately, generic profiles could be inefficient long-term. Generic profiles may be inefficient long-term if individuals do not provide adequate information about themselves to allow a prospective match to know whether they are interested in going on date with them. Moreover, individuals do not appear very distinct and therefore may have a difficult time standing out from the large pool of matches online. The inability to stand out via profile content may be more problematic on apps and sites that are heavily text based. While some would argue that profile content may matter less on apps that are heavily focused on pictures and

provide little background information regarding the individual, profile content information becomes important at the secondary level, when individuals are initially communicating.

Individuals who provide signals to and interpret the signals that prospective partners provide in their online dating profiles may reduce their risk of rejection and heighten the likelihood of a successful future interaction, if their stated and latent preferences match. Individuals who appear unique will also fare better theoretically because they are distinct from generic online dating profile content. Profiles that appear to deviate too much from the norm, however, may not receive positive attention, given existing norms. Men and women must therefore walk a fine line between being distinct and not appearing too unorthodox to attract attention. The fine line is very critical, given that potential matches know so little about one another and the slightest flaws may drive individuals to seek out the other hundreds of individuals online.

Swidler's (2001) discussion of romantic love is certainly applicable in terms of defining what characteristics individuals desire in a prospective partner. The question wording "describes what you desire in an ideal partner" itself suggests that there is an ideal person who exists and may be waiting for you to message them online. Individuals' strategies to obfuscate their true desires to attract a large pool of prospective partners is not consistent with notions of romantic love, however.

Conclusion

Love is a many splendored thing. The vast majority of media only presents the idealized version of love to audiences. While people do have relationships that include romantic elements, media representations of love do not fully capture what or how individuals consider what is

desirable or realistic in a partner. The audience, however, realizes the limitation of the ideal and people recognize that they face limitations, namely finding the ideal person.

In this paper, I address how different versions of love exist together in individuals' partner selection process. I introduce a new form of logic, market, into the literature to help build upon Swidler's romantic/prosaic typology. Online dating presents an unique opportunity to understand the tension between all three logics of love. Although online dating is a situation of high ambiguity, the methods in this study, focus groups and interviews, allow for a reduction in the ambiguity by understanding the experiences and expectations of actual online daters.

Users' expectation and experiences are heavily influence by gender. While the online dating space is relatively new and provided an opportunity for the establishment of new norms surrounding dating, traditional gender roles and norms persist online. The strength of these roles and norms is amplified by the adherence to these norms and roles by individuals, namely the female respondents, who frequently defy roles and norms in their daily lives.

The manner in which online daters operate is strategic and therefore consistent with a prosaic version of love. Individuals are strategic throughout the online dating process, particularly in terms of how individuals decide with whom to match and communicate. Individuals also describe their preferences in their online dating profiles based upon an understanding of what potential matches may desire. Male and female respondents are both far more candid in focus groups than in their online dating profiles. Men, in particular, may present their desires online in a manner that is not consistent with their privately stated preferences to appeal to prospective female matches.

While online daters may act in a manner that is strategic, they are very influenced by romantic notions of love. Online daters interactions are structured on the basis of traditional

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gender courtship scripts. For example, male and female respondents firmly believe that men initiate contact with female matches and that women should be passive recipients to their advances. Online daters are also unwilling to compromise on what characteristics their ideal should possess. Moreover, respondents are confident that an ideal exists and they will be able to find their ideal.

Online daters act in a manner that is consistent with a market version of love. For many individuals, their decision to enter only dating was based upon a market logic. Individuals realize that is necessary to maximize their ability to find partners and recognize that for many online dating is an efficient and effective means for many to do so. Moreover, market logic also applies in terms of how individuals determine with whom they will correspond. Individuals use information from photographs to make decisions rather than solely relying on a feeling. Although feelings certainly guide some decisions, such as women's decision to deviate from traditional gender norms by initiating a conversation with a man, many decisions to reject individuals are on the basis of content in photographs.

The tension between romantic, prosaic, and market love is very present in their online dating, however. The tension between romantic and prosaic love is best exemplified in the inefficiencies of online dating. Men and women are operating on the basis of romanticized gender scripts that are highly problematic. For men and women, adherence to gender scripts leads to feelings of rejection among men and disempowerment for women. These feelings of disempowerment and rejection ultimately lead to online dating fatigue. Moreover, traditional gender scripts do no facilitate the highest number of potential connections or relationships by preventing one side of the equation, women, from making the initial move.

The tension between romantic, prosaic, and market love is also very operative in the

choices online daters face. The choice presented to online daters is crippling and inefficient. Many online dating sites and apps allow individuals to search through thousands of individuals to build the partner of their dreams. Users are under the illusion that their choices are endless. Respondents' illusions are highly problematic because the choices indeed have an ending. Respondents who are evaluating the potential of a match are operating on thin information and often do not feel a visceral connection that prompts action. For many online daters, there may be a great deal of choice among matches but there are very few matches that they would realistically choose.

Online daters' strategies are not efficient for individuals who are truly interested in finding love and want to match with someone who genuinely fits their interests. The need for a change in who messages whom is critical to increase efficiency in the online dating market. Women need to initiate contact with men more frequently. Individuals ultimately must also provide more in depth details to prospective partners to find out whether or not true compatibility exists. Arguably, existing dating platforms do a very good job of bringing prospective partners together, but individuals must do the heavy lifting in person to make a connection more than just an online exchange.

The study has many limitations. The focus group participants and online daters in the site analyzed are primarily white and highly educated. Most online daters, however, tend to be white and more highly educated relative to the general population. While the topics addressed in the interviews and focus groups I conducted are frequently discussed among friends and unlikely to reveal very sensitive information, the focus group and interview participants did not know me upon agreeing to participate in the study. I found that the participants had a certain level of trust upon talking to me at the outset, however.

Despite my efforts, I do acknowledge that my time with the participants was brief and that I was asking them to confide in me and with others, if they were focus group participants. I was particularly concerned that male participants would be less likely to divulge information to me. However, I found that the men were as candid with me as the female participants. Based upon this and other statements made by male and female participants, I am fairly confident that these individuals were fairly candid.

In future research, several issues raised in this study should be explored more in depth. One issue that I would like to explore further relates to how individuals select the items they wish to include in their online dating profiles and whether they have purposely altered elements of their profile and received different types of responses. I also would like to further explore with individuals why they select the traits they desired in a romantic partner.

Exhibit 2-A: Focus Group and Interview Protocol

Describe the type of relationship you are seeking?

How do you primarily meet people that you date?

What would be your preferred way to meet someone to date?

Why did you choose to use an online dating site?

How much time do you spend a month using online dating sites?

Based upon response ask about week or day.

What feature of online dating sites do you find to be most important?

Approximately how many dates have you been on through online dating sites?

How many of these dates lead to second dates?

Have you formed long term relationships with individuals you have met online?

Are you satisfied with the online sites you have used?

Would you describe yourself as having a type?

What age demographic do you target?

Has this been consistent?

Do you think you have become more open or closed to modifying your type?

Do you tell your friends you are dating online?

Do you tell your family you are dating online?

Do you think the websites you have used allowed you to evaluate the individuals who are on the site?

Do you find the information people provided in their profiles to be accurate based on the dates you have had?

Are you generally the individual who initiates contact?

Do you believe that men should initiate contact?

What are the top five characteristics you seek in a partner?

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Chapter Three: Matchmaker, Matchmaker, Look through Your Screen and Make Me a Perfect Match

To date, sociologists studying romantic union formation have typically framed the mating process as primarily dyadic. Finding a romantic partner is a broader social process, however. Other actors, including family, friends, and community members, possess a great deal of influence on individuals' mating prospects and decisions. Parents may be particularly significant by not only possessing, but potentially wielding influence over their child's mating prospects and decisions. While normative discourse suggests a parental retreat from children's mating process, parents' actions suggest that children are not autonomous actors.

Parents may choose to wield influence over their children's mating decisions because they have a great deal at stake in the marital decisions of their children. Parents hold a large stake in the marital decisions of their children because their child's romantic partner ultimately becomes a member of the larger family unit. The stakes may be particularly high for ethnic and religious minorities, such as Jews, for whom preferences for endogamy are particularly strong. To ensure endogamous marriages for their children, parents may become active participants in their child's mating process.

Despite the potential impacts of parental involvement on children's romantic outcomes, sociological literature regarding the mating process in the contemporary United States does not address parental involvement in adult children's romantic affairs or how involvement may vary depending on the child's gender. The predominant American literature on how coupling occurs addresses the processes of assortative mating which focuses on demographic and economic characteristics of individuals and the aggregate consequences of individual choices (Schwartz,2013; Beller,2009). The social influence of friends and family has not been denied

but has rarely been studied, as much for methodological as theoretical reasons. Comprehensive research on parental involvement in adult children's mating processes may not have been possible prior due to the more private nature of parents' efforts in their children's romantic affairs. The Internet, however, has made once parents' private efforts to arrange romantic unions for their children public. Parents now have the opportunity to broker and secure suitable marriage partners for their children online.

In this study, I use data from a multi-city, Jewish online dating site that caters to Jewish mothers seeking a romantic partner for their adult child explores the strategies pursued by Jewish mothers who create online dating profiles for their adult children. The motivating question is how the dynamics of gender operate in the reproduction of family relationships. Gender roles are reproduced in many ways, but we focus here on the ways that parents influence the selection process in mating, specifically the role of description vis a vis normative advocacy. Conventional accounts of gender socialization emphasized how people learn how boys and girls *should* act; they learned *norms* (Maccoby, 1998*)*. But cognition, of course, is just as important; boys and girls learn how boys and girls *do* act. When parents describe their adult children in gendered ways, it restricts the information available to the audiences of those descriptions. What those audiences are parents of prospective mates, the use of gendered information is likely to magnify the role of gendering in the mating process, even if the content of the parents' description is counter-normative. Given that the family is the foundation of gender, how parents manage gender in influencing who their children mate with is important to how gender is reproduced. This larger issue can be crystalized in the three questions addressed are: first, do mothers emphasize different features or describe their child differently based upon the gender of their child? Second, do mothers emphasize different features or describe their

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child's ideal prospective partner differently based upon the gender of their child? Third, as mothers arrange a match for their child, what are they most likely to discuss in their correspondence with other mothers?

This paper focuses on and is limited to the role of Jewish mothers in their efforts to broker romantic relationships for their children. Given the relatively limited literature related specifically to the involvement of Jewish families in their child's partner selection process, I begin this paper by exploring prior work related to parental involvement in mate selection process generally. Second, I discuss the issue of endogamy in mate selection with a particular focus on endogamy among the subjects of interests, Jews. Third, I discuss the role of gender in structuring dating interaction and self-presentation in online dating. Finally, I present my data and findings.

Parents' Involvement and Interest in Child's Partner Selection

The practices parents employ to select romantic partners for their children varies based upon temporal and spatial contexts. In most pre-industrial societies, overtly arranging children's romantic unions was a socially, and at times legally, sanctioned practice for parents historically. European fathers legally and socially owned their children. Prospective husbands were expected to ask the father for the daughters, who were ritualistically given to the husband in the wedding ceremony. Though rarely called a sale, dowries were often paid to wives' families. Sons were given more autonomy but remained under patriarchal authority until they reached majority and often longer. A disapproved marriage could be grounds for disinheritance. Parents employed a variety of strategies to ensure their child coupled with a socially acceptable partner, such as sending children to live in urban areas so they could accumulate sufficient fund to marry (Arrizabalaga, 2005). Even in societies that afforded children some latitude to select partners like

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18th century France, parents persisted to strategize. For example, parents would steer children toward events such as bundling parties where they could meet suitable partners. Parents had a public and open role in the romantic lives of their adult children.

Mid-twentieth century sociological and historical accounts described the shift from the traditional extended family to the modern nuclear, individualistic family, including the notion that mating became a matter of individual choice. The contrast was always overstated and applied more to public discourse than private practice. While parents' "interference" in the romantic partner selection process is no longer publically sanctioned, parents continue to exercise significant influence (Coontz, 2000). Parental involvement in the romantic selection process begins very early in their child's life (Gray and Steinberg,1999). Due to their child's status as an adolescent, parents, to a large degree, can determine the timing of their adolescent child's dating debut. Moreover, parents wield a great deal of control over their child's social relationships (friendships) and are arguably able to influence who their child dates as well (Mounts, 2008). Parents' control may extend beyond direct intervention but also to indirect control (Connolly and Mcisaac, 2011). Children may deeply value their parents' input on potential partners and their dating habits generally. For example, adolescents often view parents as the most accurate source of information regarding dating (Wood et al., 2002). Given their position as the authority on dating, parents have the opportunity to steer their children to individuals who are deemed suitable. Parents who are concerned about endogamy may not only discuss the importance of dating similar individuals, but also encourage their children to participate in youth organizations where they will meet culturally similar youths and be more likely to establish patterns of dating endogamously (Phillips, 1997). Parental influence in and children's concerns regarding their parents' opinions about their romantic affairs persist as

children age. Moreover, parental influence may be particularly significant once children become adults because parents can manipulate their resources to control when their child marries (Axinn and Thornton, 1992). Parents may also continue to steer their children to suitable marriage partners through setting up their child with children of family friends or acquaintances.

While seemingly self-interested, parents' intervention in their child's romantic choices may be related to maintaining family harmony and transmission of traditions. Maintaining low levels of conflict with children regarding their partner is attractive because parents desire contact and exchange between generations. Support from children may be particularly critical as parents age (Tang and Lee, 2011). Children often assist their elderly parents through providing time and, to certain degree, money (Couch et al, 1999). Parents may therefore be concerned that the child selects a partner who will allow their children to provide time or monetary support. Moreover, may require support not only from their child, but from their child's partner as well (Davis, 1999). Parents are also concerned about maintaining contact with future generations, specifically their grandchildren, which depends on the relationship with the child and the child's partner (Szinovacz, 1998).

Endogamy and Partner selection

In pre-Industrial Europe, romantic partner selection was mainly related to ensuring endogamy across class lines (Mullan, 1984). In the process of selecting mates for their children, families in pre-Industrial societies primarily were focused on maintaining or advancing their landholding and social statuses. Families would employ a variety of strategies, such as only allowing younger siblings to marry after they accumulated sufficient funds to support a family, to ensure that their status and often landholdings were maintained (Arrizabalaga, 2005).Parents also employed third parties, such as shadkhans in Jewish communities or nakodos in Japanese

society, to arrange marriages among young people (Mullan, 1984). Marriages were considered not only the joining of individuals but of families when matchmakers were involved, they determined compatibility on the basis of social relationships within the village rather than the individuals' attributes. Through direct parental involvement and third party intervention, parents were able to maintain the class structure of their communities for multiple generations.

In the United States for most of the nineteenth and much of the twentieth centuries, several mechanisms fostered high and stable levels of endogamy for racial, ethnic, and religious minorities (Goldscheider, 1986; Phillips, 1997). Rather than maintaining social class boundaries as in pre-industrial Europe, marital endogamy, to a large degree, was a result of social closure religious and ethnic minorities faced in educational institutions, housing, and social organizations (Brodkin, 1998; Goldstein, 2006). For example, ethnic groups historically lived in isolation from other communities due to social norms regarding ethnic groups living separately and restrictive covenants (Brodkin, 1998; Goldscheider, 1986; Goldstein, 2006). Moreover, ethnic and religious minorities have been excluded from settings where integration is most likely to occur, such as professional associations and universities (Brodkin, 1998). Ethnic and religious minorities also have engaged in certain industries that are predominately composed of other co-ethnics (Goldstein, 2006). Ethnic and religious minorities not only had lower levels of contact historically with other groups (Goldstein, 2006), but also were not deemed acceptable marriage partners by other groups (Phillips, 1997).

Religious endogamy may have declined in strength over the past century, however (Murphy, 2015;Kalmijn, 1993). Although the data regarding shifting values and decreases in religiosity is mixed, individuals across religious groups have become less differentiated in terms of their cultural and social values. For example, family size preferences between Catholics and

Protestants have converged over time (Westoff and Jones, 1979). Given the smaller social distance between religious groups, intermarriage has become more acceptable.

Shifting opportunities also facilitated lower rates of religious and ethnic endogamy. As ethnic and religious minorities have become more integrated in social, occupational, and educational setting their opportunities to interact with and acceptability as marriage partners to other groups has increased (Phillips, 1997; Brodkin, 1998). During the 20th century, a significant percentage of individuals married an individual from a different religious background (Kalmijn, 1991). For example, 52% of Jews who married between 1985 and 1990 married non-Jews (Phillips, 1997).

For Jews, the issue of endogamy is particularly relevant because their demographic survival as a distinct ethnic-religious group depends upon marriage within the group (Phillips, 1997). Intermarriage from a strictly demographic standpoint may be threatening because "being Jewish" involves both ethnic and religious group identification (Brodkin, 1998). For Jews, survival is not only particularly critical due to their small size in terms of population composition, Jews also constitute less than two percent of the U.S. population, (Jaffe and McClain, 1995), but also due to the fact that they have been threatened with extinction for centuries. While many Jewish sects accept children whose father is Jewish as Jews, a person is considered to be a Jew under Jewish law only if his or her mother is Jewish (Barack Fishman, 2004). Consequently, the romantic partner of a male Jewish child may be particularly relevant. Given these demographic and cultural imperatives, Jewish parents may be particularly interested in ensuring their children marry Jewish spouses and this desire may be stronger for sons than daughters.

Reproduction of gender

Socialization is a critical process in the shaping of a child's identity. Socialization of children has long been considered a critical function of a primary responsibility of families (Coontz, 2005). Gender serves as the primary basis of socialization and norms surrounding gender are reinforced routinely.

The process of constructing gender involves several key actors. Given that parents construct gender through categorization and stereotyping immediately following their child's birth, parents may be the first actors to construct their child's gender. For example, when describing their infant children mothers and fathers describe infant females as finer featured and less strong than male infants (Karraker et. al, 1995). Gender stereotyping persists as children age with parents perceiving their male children to be more competent in sports and math than their female children (Jacobs and Eccles, 1992; Tiedemann, 2000).

The reproduction of gender by parents for adult children is not well explored. Parents may recognize that their offspring are adults and no longer are children, but may continue to perceive their offspring as children and be more likely to apply traditional stereotypes. Major life cycle events, such as caregiving, may represent the persistence of gender stereotyping. For example, parents' expectations regarding children's involvement in later life care indicate that parents' may persist in gender stereotyping as children age (Silverstein and Angelelli, 1998). At the same time, adults are more likely to apply traditional gender stereotypes when describing children rather than adults (Powlishta, 2000).

In the context of dating, parents' constructed their adult child's gender in the process of coordinating their marriage. To market their child, parents placed advertisements in newspapers or hired a matchmaker to present their child as a good marriage partner using conventional

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gender stereotypes. In contemporary contexts where parents are active participants in the matchmaking process, parents emphasize gender stereotypes to describe their adult child (Banerjee et al., 2012). No research to date, however, explores how parents may conceptualize gender relations between their child and a prospective romantic partner.

The reproduction of gender within families must also be considered in terms of a dyad: the child and the parent (Maccoby,1998). The interactions within the parent and child dyad influence whether and how gender stereotyping is performed. Gender stereotyping may occur not only due parents' beliefs regarding gender norms and roles, but also due to the actions and preferences of their children. In other words, parents may describe or treat their child in a certain way that is consistent with, or potentially inconsistent, with traditional gender norms, based upon the preferences and behavior of their child. Children who act in ways that are contrary to traditional gender norms arguably may be described in ways that are also inconsistent with traditional gender norms (Maccoby,2003)

Self-presentation and Online Dating

Self-presentation is critical in the dating process (Derlega et al., 1987). The information individuals provide to prospective partners is often signaled through verbal and non-verbal interaction. In the context of online dating, individuals are only able to signal information through the information they provide in a written profile (Ellison et al., 2006). Given that online dating site members are required to construct an online dating profile the information provided may be particularly instrumental in facilitating the construction of an ideal self-image (Sprecher et al., 2008).

The construction of an ideal self-image is based upon an individual's perceptions of the ideal man or woman. An individual's perceptions of the ideal man or woman are shaped by cultural norms and the individuals to whom they are presenting the image (West and Zimmerman,1987). Constructing an ideal self-image is not necessarily straightforward, given that cultural ideals of masculinity and femininity vary across contexts (Peiss, 2011). The construction of an ideal self-image online may also be particularly difficult due to the information-thin nature of online dating profiles.

Online dating profiles are information thin because the type and amount of information provided may be limited or inaccurate (Ellison et al., 2011). When constructing an online dating profile, individuals have the opportunity to provide their demographic and other personal information that they wish to share with prospective partners. Individuals, however, often moderate their responses when presented with ambiguous and uncertain situations (Malt and Johnson, 1992; Levens et al., 1994). On an online dating site, individuals may be particularly likely to limit the amount of information provided in their profile because they are unfamiliar with the preferences of the individuals evaluating their profile. By regulating the amount of information exchanged, individuals can remain appealing to and not limit their pool of prospective partners.

Information thinness may also affect the evaluations individuals make based upon the information presented. When presented with limited information, stereotypes may become particularly powerful devices (Vrgut and Schabracq, 1996). For example, employers are more likely to make decisions regarding prospective male and female employees using sex-based stereotypes when they have less information about the applicants (Tosi and Einbender, 1985). While many employers presumably do not believe that all men or women possess certain

characteristics, stereotypes are particularly powerful devices because they rely on known markers of characteristics that are also correlated with gender and ethnicity (Waldinger, 1996).

Individuals may not only rely on stereotypes when making their own evaluations, but also operate strategically based upon what they perceive the stereotypes of others to be (Butler, 2011). While individuals may not adhere to traditional gender stereotypes themselves, individuals may present information in a gender stereotyped manner because they perceive the individuals with whom they are interacting adheres to traditional stereotypes (West and Zimmerman, 1987). To find a partner for their male or female children, mothers creating online dating profiles are engaging in a process of presentation and identity shaping. Rather than engaging in a process of self presentation when communicating with other mothers, however,, mothers are presenting another individual, their child. Mothers must make assumptions about how the mothers with whom they are communicating conceptualize gender and gender relations between men and women. Given the information thin nature of the online dating profiles, mothers must depend on traditional gender stereotypes when constructing their child's profile, even if they do not personally prescribe to traditional gender stereotypes.

Although presenting an other may not be as common as presenting oneself ,mothers have been presenting their children to others since their child's birth. In the process of presenting their child, mothers are also attributing features to and categorizing their child along traditional gender lines. These gender lines may, however, potentially be more in line with convention than reality.

In the process of presenting their child to other mothers, mothers may act strategically to secure an appropriate partner for their child. Because mothers are operating in a context in which parents have presented their child along traditional gender lines since birth (Karraker et al., 1995), mothers may assume that mothers with whom they correspond support traditional gender

roles. To ensure a match for their child, mothers may act strategically by describing their child in a way that is consistent with gender stereotypes. At the same time, mothers may also be attune to shifting cultural norms regarding the characteristics young men and women desire in a marriage, such as more egalitarian partnerships (Gerson, 2011). Moreover, economic realities require dual income families in most American households. Given shifting values and circumstances that lead younger men and women to desire spouses who are able to perform domestic tasks and contribute financially to the household, mothers may try to describe their children using language that counters traditional stereotypes.

Research Questions

In this analysis, I will answer the following questions: first, do mothers emphasize different features or describe their child differently based upon the gender of their child? Second, do mothers emphasize different features or describe their child's ideal prospective partner differently based upon the gender of their child? Third, as mothers arrange a match for their child, what are they most likely to discuss in their correspondence with other mothers?

Hypotheses

First, I expect mothers may also emphasize certain characteristics that are not consistent with traditional stereotypes for their sons and daughters due to the research regarding how child's actions and attitudes may mediate the use of stereotypes by parents. Second, because individuals provide limited responses when presented with little information, we can expect that mothers will write relatively little about their child and what their child desires in a prospective partner. Third, given that prior research suggests that individuals rely on stereotypes when presented with little information, I expect that mothers will employ traditional gender stereotypes

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when describing their child and the ideal partner for their child. Fourth, given that the mother confers a child's status as a Jew, I expect mothers to mention religion more frequently when discussing their sons than their daughters. Finally, as a result of the strong influence of stereotypes in situations with thin information, n the correspondence among mothers I expect mothers to use language that reinforces traditional gender stereotypes and roles.

Data, Variables, and Method

The dating site being analyzed is a multi-city, Jewish dating site including approximately 1,347 members. Unlike most dating sites where individuals post profiles of themselves to seek a partner, Jewish mothers post profiles of their children and correspond with other Jewish mothers to find their child a match. The site prompts mothers to answer questions related to their child's educational background, religious observance level, age, gender, occupation, and geographic location. In addition to the demographic information, the site provides mothers with two open-ended prompts to respond to regarding their children. Mothers are asked to describe why their child is a good catch and what their child wants in a partner. Answers to these questions often include a description of their child's interests, attributes, and what basic characteristics they desire in a romantic partner.

Data for these analyses are collected from profiles created by mothers over a year period from December 2011 to December 2012. Given the large number of users on the site, the analysis of this study focuses on a subset of 200 children. The subset was selected at random using systematic sampling. Children who have missing information related to demographic characteristics or profile information were not included in the study.

The analysis focuses on the characteristics mothers use to describe their children and their child's prospective partners in their about child and about child's ideal partner section.

Mothers' usage of characteristics to describe and match their children is consistent with other dating sites that match individuals on the basis of their characteristics. Content analysis is the method used to examine the profiles for the 200 child subsample described above. The coding units in the analysis are the child's profiles and the parents' correspondence. The analysis was limited to manifest content (Krippendorf, 1980). Profiles were coded solely on the basis of overt features mentioned by parents and parents' emails were coded on the basis of themes that emerged throughout the process. To analyze the child's information, the child's demographic information and the attributes, such as nurturing, caring, good provider, loving, kind, and generous mentioned by the mother's regarding their child and desired attributes for a prospective partner are coded. Characteristics are coded based upon whether a mother mentions the characteristic in her child's profile. For example, if a mother mentions that her child is kind, the child is coded as possessing the characteristic that was mentioned. However, if the mother does not mention a characteristic, the characteristic is coded zero. The same procedures were applied to the themes that emerged in the correspondence. (see Table 3-4)

Given that mothers mentioned 25 characteristics when describing their child and their prospective partner, the most popular nine characteristics mentioned are included in the analyses presented: intelligent, nice, hardworking, driven, educated, attractive, successful, family oriented, and religious. Two of the characteristics to describe the child and their prospective mate, nice and are attractive, are composite variables and include synonymous words. The latitude for classifying a characteristic as synonymous was fairly straightforward. If an individual mentioned a word that was synonymous with one of the nine most common characteristic of interest that word was labeled as the most common characteristic with which it was associated. For example, nice is a term meant to represent a person. For example, the word attractive signals

to a prospective parent evaluating an individual's profile that the child physically desirable or appealing. While different words may be used to express the sentiment and while there may be differences across genders, the sentiment stands. Therefore, the attractive characteristic is a composite of pretty, attractive, and handsome. Alternatively, the nice characteristic is a composite of kind, generous, and loving.

To ensure the reliability of the coding schema a subsample of 20 children were coded, before the entire 200 child subsample was coded. The results of the 20 child subsample are consistent with the results of 200 child subsample. Given resource constraints, I was the only individual performing the coding of the sample. All of the names, locations, occupations, and identifiable information have been modified in the correspondence below to ensure the anonymity of the respondents.

Mothers' Description of Children

Many features of the children being matched may not be directly mentioned in their mothers' profile descriptions, but may be significant in the matching process. The features that may be critical in matching that are not in the mother's description are demographic and religious observance characteristics listed in the individual's profile. Children featured on the online dating site are relatively similar across many demographic and religious observance characteristics (see Table 1). The descriptive statistics indicate that the population is highly educated, relatively secular, and primarily composed of female children. For example, all of the female respondents in the sample are college graduates or enrolled at a university. There is a large amount of missing data for certain areas of the child's life such as synagogue attendance. Presumably, mothers may not know how frequently their child attends synagogue. However, other questions that mothers would theoretically answer, such as whether the child has children,

may have been omitted because it was added to the questionnaire after mothers filled out their demographic information. No data are available on whether a child has obtained a graduate degree and I am only able to assess whether a child has graduated from, attends, or has not attended a four-year university.

Contrary to the hypothesis, that mothers employ traditional stereotypes when describing their children, mothers emphasize the same characteristics when describing their sons and daughters. The top three characteristics mentioned by mothers to describe their children are nice, attractive, and intelligent according to the rank ordering of characteristics (see Table 3-4,). Hardworking, educated, and successful are the least common terms used by mothers describing both their sons and daughters. Given the relatively universal appeal of the characteristics mothers most commonly use, their descriptions therefore may not be an effort to distinguish their child on the basis of their gender, but rather to distinguish them as an ideal individual.

Although mothers emphasize similar characteristics, mothers still may rely on traditional gender stereotypes when describing male and female children. Mothers of daughters are more likely use feminine terms or use terms that emphasize traditionally valued feminine traits, such as physical appearance, to describe their daughters and masculine terms to describe their sons (see Table 3-2). For example, 43.9% percent of mothers of daughters describe their daughters as attractive, whereas 32.3% of mothers describe their sons as attractive. Masculine terms, such as successful, are used more frequently when mothers of sons describe their child relative to mothers of women. The use of stereotypes is most likely due to the relatively thin information mothers are using when navigating this site.

The characteristics mothers use to describe their children, however, are not necessarily always consistent with the reproduction of traditional gender norms. Mothers deviate from

traditional gender stereotypes through their descriptions. For example, mothers 30.8% of sons are described as family oriented whereas only 21.8% of daughters are described as family oriented. Additionally, mothers describe their daughters and sons as hardworking at a relatively equal rate. The relatively equal rate mothers with which describe sons and daughters as hardworking demonstrates that mothers understand that dual income households have become the norm and that men are no longer expected to be the primary breadwinner. Moreover, none of the terms used to describe the child are significantly different statistically by sex.

Deviations from the norm do not necessarily indicate traditional gender scripts are dead, however. Mothers' descriptions support the hypothesis that traditional gender stereotypes are employed when mothers describe their children. The relative frequency with which certain characteristics are mentioned by sex supports the hypothesis that traditional gender stereotypes are employed when mothers are describing their children. Furthermore, the data also do not support the hypothesis that mothers' emphasis on child's religious background varies by gender. According to the profile content, mothers describe only 11.9% of men and 12.9% of women as religious. The relatively small difference may be due to the fact that mothers are already using a site specifically targeted towards. Moreover, the vast majority of the children on the site when asked to select their religious affiliation select Ashkenazi, which refers to geographic origins rather than religious affiliation. For certain mothers, shared ethnicity rather than level of observance may therefore be more critical in brokering a match.

The frequency with which mothers mention certain characteristics for their child's ideal partner, however, indicates that parents may prioritize characteristics differently for sons and daughters and prioritize these characteristics along gender lines (See Table 3-2). Mothers of sons and daughters are most likely to say to say their child would like a nice partner, but 57.3%

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of sons' mothers and 46.3% of daughters' mothers claim their child would desire a nice partner. Moreover, mothers of sons and daughters rank attractiveness as holding equal importance in the mating process, but 20.5% of mothers of sons say that attractiveness is important relative to 9% of mothers of daughters. As when describing their own child, partners' religiosity is not frequently mentioned.

At the same time, the rank ordering of characteristics mothers use to describe their child's ideal partner does not support the hypothesis of sex stereotyping when describing children. Mothers of sons and daughter differ very little in their relative rankings of characteristics (See Table 3-2). The top three characteristics mentioned for the ideal partners of both sons and daughters are nice, attractive, and intelligent. The lowest ranked characteristics are hardworking, successful, and educated for men's partners and attractive, hardworking and educated for women's partners. Given that mothers are trying to attract prospective matches for their child, it is unsurprising that mothers use favorable terms.

The words mothers use to describe their children are both favorable and associated with more commonly used terms (See Exhibit A). In other words, the correlations between popular and logically associated terms are positive. For example, a positive correlation exists between two of the most popular words – attractive and intelligent – for daughters. For sons, a similar pattern follows with a positive correlation existing between the logically associated terms educated and driven. No significant sex differences seem to exist regarding the correlations contrary to expectation of differences between the sexes.

Consistent with the hypothesis that information thinness leads individuals to provide less descriptive responses, most mothers do not describe their child using many of the most popularly ranked characteristics (See Table 3-4). Approximately 65% of mothers mention that their child

has two or fewer of the most popularly ranked characteristics. Among those mothers who mention few characteristics, the characteristics most often mentioned are the most popular characteristics: nice, attractive, and intelligent.

Mothers' Correspondence

The process of presenting one's child to other mothers extends beyond the child's profile. Mothers must engage in a process of corresponding with other mothers to ensure their child secures a match. The correspondence of mothers followed a rather common compositional strategy. For many mothers the following factors were present in their correspondence: (i.) to compliment the recipient mother's child, (ii) state how much their children have in common, (iii) discuss their child's attributes, (iv) discuss the attributes of their family, (v) and coordinate a meeting between children (see Table 3-5). All of these factors are strategically aimed to ensure the "sale" of their child.

Flattery, in the form of compliments for the mother of a prospective match, is critical to mothers' strategies for initiating conversations. The compliments mothers use are a major part of the initial exchange process. For example, as a mother states in her correspondence, *"Hi Jessica, Your Avi is darling!! Do I have a girl for him!!! Elaine is so adorable!! She's fun!! Athletic, into music, spunky with a great sense of humor. Elaine is blond, blue eyed, and petite. Sounds like they'd have a lot in common. Let's chat!! Shirley."*
While seemingly innocuous, the mother's compliment is a critical segue to introducing their own child. The segue diminishes the seemingly awkward step of engaging touting the attributes of their child. Mothers are actively engaging in the process of selling their child, but the compliments frame the exchange as more favorable the prospective match than the daughter of the mother engaging in the sale. The perception that the individual benefitting is the other party

is a critical element of any sale. Moreover, the description provided by the mother demonstrates the degree to which gender is reproduced and traditional gender stereotypes are reinforced in mothers' descriptions. The primary characteristics that the mother focused on in her description of Elaine were primarily related to her physical appearance rather than focusing on her achievements or education. The limited focus suggests that mothers believe that other mothers value attractiveness highly in prospective daughters-in-law and that attractiveness may be one of the most critical attributes in a prospective match.

The matchmaking process for mothers largely resembles the process conducted by traditional matchmakers. Mothers are actively selling not just a match between their children but the potential match between their families. Mothers attempt to create a rapport between themselves and their families through discussing common interests and background. As in the exchange between mothers Ann and Sally,

"Hello Ann: I am also a social worker and work in the pediatric oncology unit. We have common ground with the food and our family's love of Israel and of family. What a blessing to have such a large family. I did send your daughter's information to my son, but maybe you could look at my son's profile and see what you think...it never hurts. Sally

Hi Sally. Thanks for reaching out. How wonderful that you have a close-knit family, good values and a focus on good health! It is especially impressive that you specialize in pediatric oncology. I believe that this is a perfect combination. Harry seems like a nice young man and I have forwarded his profile to Sarah. I will press the "yes' button, but I have found that many times this does not enable the young people to communicate. Let me know if Harry is not able to contact Sarah, and I will forward her contact information to you. Regards, Ann."

Sally and Ann's establishment of their shared educational background is critical rapport between themselves. The rapport is not solely important to ensure that their families will like each other should the relationship move forward, but also to propel their children's initial connection and meeting forward. Given that mothers have the option of connecting with many mothers on this site, mothers may appeal to their common interests and establish a rapport so that the other mother will not only respond but also compel them, if necessary, to convince their child that the match is good. Convincing their child a match is good may be quite important given the rather unorthodox nature of matchmaking today.

Mothers' correspondence is an effort to combat the issues associated with thin information. Despite the rather extensive descriptions mothers provide for their children in the profiles, approximately 50% of mothers continued to describe their child in their correspondence with other mothers. The descriptions mothers provide, both in profiles and in their correspondence, generally extends beyond the scope provided in most traditional dating profiles. For example, as one mother writes,

> *"I was intrigued by your son's profile. I was raised in Connecticut*
>
> *in a rather Conservadox environment, we raised our family, in*
>
> *Brentwood in a more Conserv-Reform environment. For several*
>
> *years Hannah has been on a spiritual journey. At this time she is*
>
> *involved with a synagogue, which she enjoys for the joyous*
>
> *spirituality and genuine caring for the world she finds there. While*
>
> *she enjoys this aspect of Judaism she doesn't feel that she can*
>
> *spend her life totally in that community. This I can say, she is a*
>
> *very good athlete and has done cycling for eight years and bicycle*

is her preferred mode of transportation. She is thin but toned, a

natural dark blond with brown eyes and a smile no one forgets!

We have a house in Santa Barbara and she spends as much time as

possible on the beach there. Hannah has traveled all over the

world --Europe, Brazil & hiking in Vancouver-- are just a few of

her trips. She is the in the nonprofit sector. Because she is looking

for a Jewish man with a spirit of adventure, but still has Jewish

roots, as well as someone who shows dedication to a cause greater

than himself, your son's profile came to mind. If you would like to

take this further please let me know! Nina."

Nina's description provides a thorough picture of Nina's personality interests, background, and

desires in a prospective partner. Her effort to create a thorough picture of Hannah is not based on

a desire to find a penpal or based on her pride in Hannah's accomplishments, however. Nina is

attempting to reduce the ambiguity associated with the highly ambiguous situation that is online

dating. As a result of this highly ambiguous situation, Nina's mother uses a "kitchen sink"

approach, using every possible fact possible in a description, to ensure another mother to find a

will at least one fact or sufficiently compelling to engage in further conversation. The effort to

combat thin information, however, leads to a strategy commonly used by individuals who are

faced with thin information, namely the reliance on stereotypes. The portrait Nina paints, such as

the framing of the reasons Nina enjoys her synagogue, is consistent with gender stereotyping as

seen generally in the descriptions provided by mothers in their profiles (see Table 3-2). For

example, Nina likes her synagogue because she finds it reflects "genuine caring." Nina also goes

to great lengths to describe her daughter's physical appearance. Moreover, when Nina does

describe her daughter in a manner that deviates from traditional gender norms, specifically her athleticism, this less traditional characteristic is used to provide support for a traditional gender characteristic, her attractive physique.

The correspondence mothers engage in is driven by their desire to conform to convention. For many mothers, online dating is fairly foreign to them and they are navigating the ambiguous situation as they engage in the process corresponding with other mothers. Despite the relative ambiguity at least initially, many mothers develop an awareness of the genre conventions of online dating. These conventions are relatively well established and have been popularized in the media, such as the film Must Love Dogs, in which individuals are educated that they must appear pet-friendly in online dating profiles to attract potential mates. Many other conventions exist, however. For example, as one mother, Vivian states, "

> *Hi Judy, Just recently joined the site thinking I might have better judgment than my daughter has had in the past. The one definite thing they have in common is that they both attended and graduated Rutgers University. Sam is now working and living in the city of Manhattan as a copy/editor. She is looking for someone who is a committed individual --- who has a sense of humor and just a nice guy. She also likes music, dancing and going to the movies. She exercises and is on the slim side. She is a sweet caring person; a good listener. Likes sports to watch such as basketball and football. She is a down to earth girl. No drama. If you think this might be a match send the info to your son. Thank you. Vivian*

Vivian's statement not only establishes commonalities between her daughter and the prospective match, education, but also demonstrates an awareness of what genre conventions are most relevant in the online dating space. The genre convention Vivian touches on is sports. Given that women are stereotyped as disliking sports, many women try to distinguish themselves and profess their passion for sports to attract a partner. While Vivian's daughter may or may not like sports, Vivian mentions sports to ensure she fulfills the convention employed by many women online when describing their interests. Moreover, the statement also suggests that mothers believe that they are better equipped to find an appropriate match for their child than their child themselves. The mother's enhanced ability to find a match is not only related to judgment, but also may be in terms of presenting her daughter's needs and desires. Mothers' belief that they are better able to find an appropriate match therefore calls into question whether mothers truly understand their child's desires or if they are rather projecting what desires they believe their child should have.

Coordinating the meeting of their children was a critical element in the matchmaking process (see Table 3-5). For many mothers, the coordination was complicated by the idea of not only needing to have their children agree to the process, but also the varied modes of technology the children potentially could use to connect. As per the conversation below between these two mothers, "

Mother H: Hi Sheryl- well we should be good to go. I told Nora and she wasn't opposed to the idea! Progress already! Your son sounds very sweet and so is Nora so let's see if they have any chemistry! There is just so much we can do! The rest is up to them. Nora said to give you her

number so that they can text! So here it is XXX-XXX-XXXX Funny addendum- my husband is Paul and my real- not nick name is Sherry was named after my moms brother.

Mother H: Hi Sheryl-give Paul this e-mail address instead of the last email address

Mother I: Hi Rebecca, I will give Paul this e-mail address. Thank you, Rebecca, I agree that is funny, and more than a coincidence. Considering all the choice of names that there are, what would the odds be that a potential match would have your husbands name the same as our son, and your name the same as my husbands Paul is named after my mom (Pnina).

Mother I: Good Morning Rebecca. Thank you for Nora's phone number. I will give it to Paul tonight.

Mother I: Thank you for the nice compliment about Paul. If it is meant to be they will meet and have chemistry. I agree this is progress. Nora is a beautiful name, and your daughter looks very sweet. My mom used to tell me that the eyes tell you a lot about a person. I am so excited to give Paul Nora's phone number. Have a great day.

Mother H: Hi Rebecca- Nora hasn't heard from Paul. Just wondering if he got married while we were trying to set them up!

Mother I: LOL Sheryl, I like your sense of humor. I apologize for him. He has been very busy at work. As I told Paul the other night a pretty girl like Nora isn't going to wait forever. Hope that he makes his move soon. Talk soon."

The mothers' exchange demonstrates the degree to which mothers try to find their child's

preferred medium to communicate. For these mothers, the medium may be viewed as important

as the strength of the match due to the potential comfort level their child may feel pursuing the

match. The exchange also demonstrates the degree to which mothers are invested in the process.

Mothers at times also find the process to be protracted and frustrating because they may not

know the degree to which the other party is interested or their intentions.

Transparency may be encouraged among mothers who are asked to share a great deal of

information with other mothers about their child (see Table 3-5). Mothers may not necessarily be

very transparent regarding their activities with their children, however, due to their strong

motivation to set up their children. Given their high levels of motivation, a select group of

mothers on the site did not share with their child that they have created a profile for them online

and are actively brokering a match. For example, as the mothers below discuss, "

Mother F:I just enrolled on this site. Not sure what Jenn will think but... I'll deal with that later.

So nice to see that Joel is tall. Jessica lives in Charleston? How far is that from you? If you think

they might "work," let me know! Anna

Mother G:Hi Anna, It sounds like we're two of a kind here. Jason doesn't know that I'm on this

site as I found it last Friday through an ad on Facebook when I went looking for new baby

pictures of my 5 month old grandson in California (my other son's kid). In fact, he left before the

weekend for a wedding in Arizona and then he's spending a week in the Norman, Oklahoma area

on business. I think I'll see him for a few hours on the 20th, and then we'll be off to our other

home in North Carolina for ten days. Let me see..... I'll do a simple mapquest search

here..........it's approximately 26 miles SE of us. Driving time, depending on the route,

approximately 40 minutes (but the way Joel drives, ha ha, much less!). I know that Joel has gone to there quite a few times with his friends clubbing. Our children don't want us to meddle, or make matches, but we do it anyway! I think if we can get them to agree to meet, that would be a victory of sorts. My hopes are not high. If I can get up my courage, I'll confront Joel with my underhanded deeds (LOL!!) when I see him, which probably won't be until March 23rd or so. You can check out the pictures on Joel Evan Cohen's Facebook page for a bit more of him. At least he hasn't disabled the photos for those who are not his friends. Neither he nor my daughter has "friended" me on Facebook. Only my middle child, the one in California, has. This happens a lot with mothers.... their kids refuse to "friend" them because they fear they'll be stalked by us. Sam, being an old married man with a wife & kid doesn't seem to have that concern. My nieces and nephews have friended me but they won't friend my sisters who are their mothers. Go figure. Sally

Mother F: I'm replying to you without checking Joel's photos. I'm not concerned with looks. I am on Facebook - my daughters actually set me up on it a few years ago. They thought it was hysterical that their mother was on Facebook - until I DID begin stalking them! Hey, I'm a Jewish mother! Now I've been WARNED - if I make any "stupid" comments, they're blocking me!

Mother G:Howdy, I think we should talk. Kindred souls, & all, no? My phone: XXX-XXX-XXXX. Call me now if you can. Sally

The exchange demonstrates that the mothers were not forthcoming with their children regarding their activities. Mothers' lack of transparency is not only a problem from a moral or ethical

perspective, but also hinders their ability to coordinate a meeting between their children. However, the mutual lack of transparency provides these mothers with an opportunity to develop a deeper rapport by taking their own relationship to the next level via a phone conversation. Moreover, Mother F wrote she is not concerned with looks. The statement disregarding the importance of physical appearance underscores the potential misalignment between mothers and child's desires. In theory, most young people would prefer to meet someone to whom they are attracted. If mothers are acting in manner that is contrary to the desires of their children, the matches they create will most likely not be very successful. Given that these mothers were not above board with their kids about their actions, it is possible that their own interests in forming a match generally may supersede the interests of their children. Mothers who are honest about their activities with their kids presumably do and must take into account their child's wishes in a more meaningful way.

As in setups or marriages brokered in real life, rejection occurred among the corresponding mothers. Approximately 16.5% of mothers notify mother initiating that they do not believe their children are a good match. While rejection is not an easy act to perform for any individual, rejections among mothers were commonly based on circumstance that were largely unrelated to the character of the child or mother initiating. For example, many mothers, such as Mothers B and C above, discussed that distance was an issue for their children. Alternatively, other mothers claimed that their children had recently entered into relationships and were no longer available. For example:

Mother D: "Linda I think that Sarah and Andy could be a good match. Please let me know if you agree or not. Thanks Arlene.

Mother E: Hi Arlene, my daughter just started seeing someone and is a little hesitant to meet someone else at the moment. Thanks for contacting me. I'll keep you updated if the situation changes. Linda."

Mother D will never know whether mother E's response was truthful, but mother E framed her rejection in a manner that did not negatively reflect on the initiating mother or her child. Moreover, the act of corresponding with and tell initiating mothers that the match was not possible indicates a degree of courtesy and understanding not seen in the common online dating space. In fact, it was exceptional that mothers mentioned characteristics or factors that reflected poorly upon the prospective match's child, such as height or age (see Table 3-5).

The degree of courtesy to provide a rejection is amplified by the low levels of being informed of one's rejection on most popular sites. Unlike the site studied here, on most online dating sites in which where a non-response is a proxy for a rejection, approximately 16.5% of mothers notify the initiator mother that their child may not be a good match. Third parties arguably provide a degree of civility to the process of brokering the match.

Nonresponse, among mothers may neither be ignoring nor rejecting a prospective match, however. The response rate for the mothers on this site, 60%, arguably would be higher if older generations were as technologically astute as younger generations. While many older individuals are technologically savvy, the mothers in their emails do describe difficulties with setting up their profiles. In theory, if mothers were as technologically savvy as their children, response rates would be higher.

Discussion

Understanding how individuals meet prospective partners is a crucial task for social scientists. This study expands our current understanding of how third parties, in this case Jewish mothers, may intervene to broker the marriage of children. Prior studies of third party intervention in the matchmaking process have not examined how contemporary parents present their children to other third parties, specifically the parents of prospective partners. Despite the norm against parental involvement in the romantic partner selection process in the United States today, some mothers, who may be particularly concerned with securing an appropriate partner for their child, combine traditional matchmaking with online dating technology to advertise their children to other mothers seeking partners for their children.

A major finding of this study is the influence of thin information on largely mothers' strategies in presenting their children. As a result of the information thin nature of the online dating sites in which mothers are operating, mothers use few, but universally appealing words to describe their child. For example, the terms nice, intelligent, and attractive are the most commonly used terms to describe both sons and daughters. The terms nice, intelligent, and attractive tend to be generally pleasing and not easily misconstrued relative to other terms, such as driven and successful. Given the higher likelihood of being misconstrued online, mothers tend to use terms that are universally appealing and not subject to being misconstrued. This behavior is consistent with prior survey research suggesting that individuals moderate responses and withhold judgment when faced with ambiguity and uncertainty. While the motivations for mothers' omission of certain key words is unclear, mothers theoretically want to attract as many prospective partners as possible and therefore do not like to use terms that may limit their prospective pool.

Identifying contexts in which traditional gender stereotypes are and are not employed helps to advance the literature. In this study, mothers' describe their child, their child's desired partner, and correspond with other mothers in a manner that reproduces traditional gender stereotypes and roles. Adherence to stereotypes appears largely related to strategy, such as mothers' increase use of the word when describing daughters.

Contrary to expectation, mothers also employ strategies that do not consistently rely on traditional gender norms when describing their child. Deviations from gender stereotypes may occur in contexts where gender roles or norms are shifting. For example, mothers of sons may be more likely than daughters to mention their sons are family oriented, a traditionally feminine characteristic. Mothers' emphasis on son's family oriented nature may a response to changing trends in family patterns and gender roles, such as delays in childbearing, increased involvement among fathers in caregiving, increased labor force participation among women, and the rise of dual income households. Mothers therefore understand that their descriptions at times must deviate from traditional gender stereotypes to attract prospective partners for their son.

A major contribution of this study is that mothers continue to construct their child's gender as they age. Prior work has failed to address parents' construction of their adult child's gender and focuses exclusively on parents' constructing the gender of their young or adolescent children. Parents' concern for their child does not diminish as they age and parents continue to have a major stake in their child's choices, such as family formation. Moreover, some parents may reasonably take steps, including constructing their child's gender when creating an online dating profile for or corresponding with other mothers, to ensure an appropriate match. In the process of finding a romantic partner for their child, mothers in the current study engage in a process of constructing their child's gender through appealing to or countering traditional

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ideologies. Future studies should investigate other areas of life where parents may be involved in constructing gender for their adult children.

The information third parties operate on when brokering matches may be imperfect given the information mothers provide themselves and the information to them by others online. The descriptions mothers provide do not necessarily reflect what mothers actually think about or what criteria are most important to their child, but rather how mothers want or believe they should present their child to others. In other words, mothers' responses are as indicative of what mothers think other mothers are looking for as what is important to them personally. A significant number of mothers in fact are posting profiles online unbeknownst to their children. The lack of transparency is not the norm, but may indicate that some of these mothers have less of an understanding of or interest in their child's preferences. While mothers who are acting with the permission of their children, may not fully understand or endorse their children's preferences, these mothers presumably have a better idea of what their child is interested in finding in a romantic partner. The issue of transparency may extend beyond third parties to individuals who are acting on their own behalf as well.

This study enhances our understanding of the role of third parties, specifically parents, in the mate selection process. The study is limited in both size and scope, however. The subjects of interest and to whom the findings are most generalizable are Jewish mothers. Given the demographic imperatives Jews face to ensure endogamy, Jews are a unique population. Future studies should try to examine other populations for whom endogamy may also be important, such as Indian or Asian parents, who may have a strong interest in and history of brokering their children's marriages. Future research should also include interviews with mothers on the site

studied or with parents to understand the rationale informing their motivations to seek partners for their kids.

The idea of courtesy extended in interactions online and under the conditions that courtesy occurs is also very compelling, given the high rejection response rate on most conventional sites. Dating sites for other ethnic groups, such as Indian individuals, may provide a lens into whether the degree of courtesy extended by mothers is an indicator of civility that is imposed by a third party mediating the process. Moreover, I am curious to understand in what contexts individuals who are using online dating sites to find a match for themselves provide a rejection and the motivations for not providing a rejection to a prospective partner.

Table 3-1. Children of Mothers who Use the Dating Site

	Women (N=826)	Men (N=521)	Total (N=1,347)
Age (%)			
Less than 20	3.0	3.7	3.3
20-24	18.6	20.1	19.2
25-29	35.7	29.6	33.2
30-34	25.5	25.3	25.5
35-39	11.5	10.8	11.2
40-44	2.9	4.6	3.6
45-49	1.7	4.2	2.7
Over 50	1.2	1.7	1.4
Education			
College graduate	92.6	86.9	89.9
College student	7.3	11.6	8.9
High School graduate	0.1	1.5	1.2
Religious Affiliation			
Ashkenazi	36.0	38.8	37
Modern Orthodox	5.2	4.8	5
Reform	24.8	21.5	23.5
Conservative	23.1	21.7	22.6
Orthodox	2.1	1.2	1.8
Non-practicing	6.3	8.6	7.2
Hasidic	0.2	0.2	0.2
Messianic	0.0	0.2	0.1
Sephardic	2.3	2.8	2.5
Kosher			
Keeps kosher	9.2	8.4	8.9
Does not keep kosher	42.4	39.9	41.5
At home	3.9	4.0	3.9
To some degree	10.3	10.3	10.3
Missing	34.1	37.2	35.3
Children			
Has no children	66.5	61	64.3
Has children	0.9	2	1.3
Missing	32.6	37	34.4
Synagogue Attendance			
Never	3.6	6.7	4.8
High holidays	28.3	22.3	26
Every shabbat	5.1	4.6	4.9
Daily	0.1	1	0.5
Sometimes	26.9	26.3	26.7
Missing	35.9	39.5	37.2

Note: Source is from the website users log profile content.

Table 3-2. Characteristics Mothers Use to describe Children

	Women (N=132)	Men (N=68)
Attractive	43.9	32.3
Educated	4.4	5.3
Religion	12.9	11.9
Intelligence	45.4	32.3
Nice	62.0	51.4
Hardworking	14.7	16.7
Driven	3.8	5.8
Successful	4.5	10.2
Family Oriented	21.9	30.8

Note: Source is from the website users log profile content.

Table 3-3. Characteristics Mothers Use to describe Child's Prospective Partner

	Women (N=132)	Men (N=68)
Attractive	9	20.5
Educated	7.5	2.9
Religion	13.6	10.4
Intelligence	33.3	26.4
Nice	46.1	57.3
Hardworking	8.3	4.4
Driven	11.3	5.8
Successful	17.4	2.9
Family Oriented	28.7	22.0

Note: Source is from the website's user log profile content.

Table 3-4: Ranking Ordering of Characteristics Mothers Use to Describe Their Children & Prospective Mates

Men	Women	Women's Mates	Men's Mates
Nice	Nice	Nice	Nice
Intelligent	Intelligent	Intelligent	Intelligent
Attractive	Attractive	Familyoriented	Familyoriented
Family oriented	Family oriented	Successful	attractive
Hardworking	Hardworking	Religion	Religion
Religion	Religion	Driven	Driven
Successful	Successful	Attractive	Hardworking
Driven	Educated	Hardworking	Successful
Educated	Driven	Educated	Educated

Note: Source is from website user's log profile content.

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Table 3-5. Topics Discussed in Emails between Mothers

	% of Emails (N=200)
Describe Child	50
Geographic Distance between Children	13
Children Share Things in Common	52.0
Attractiveness of Children	6.5
Importance of Jewish Values	12.5
Kids Do Not Know Mother Created Profile	6.5
Non-Jewish Girlfriends or Boyfriends	1.5
Provide Child's Facebook Information	5.5
Moms Become Friends	8.0
Provide Child's Email	20.0
Height Difference	2.0
Age Difference	2.5
Want Child to Have a Family	1.5
Coordinate Children's Meeting	22.5
Reject Child	16.5
Jdate	3.0

Note: Source is from website users log. *40.5% of mothers do not respond.

Exhibit 3-A Correlations between Words Used to Describe Children			
	Men		Women
Attractive-Intelligent	.2034	Intelligent-Hardworking	.2454
Successful-Intelligent	.239	Nice-Educated	.2086
Successful-Educated	.4352	Religion-Familyoriented	.2499
Successful-Nice	-.2045	Educated-Driven	.2138
Familyoriented-Educated	.2827		

Note: Source is from Dating Site Used

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