

Annotated Bibliography: How Dating Apps are Shaping Intimacy in a Digital Age

Nicholas P. Hansel

Source #1:

Aalai, Azadeh. "Are Dating Apps Ruining Your Love Life?" *Psychology Today*, 28 Feb. 2017, www.psychologytoday.com/blog/the-first-impression/201702/are-dating-apps-ruining-your-love-life.

This article/blog post was written by Azadeh Aalai (Ph.D.). She is an assistant professor of Psychology at Queensborough College in New York. She is also an adjunct professor at New York University and previously was a professor at George Washington University. Aalai is the author of *Understanding Aggression: Psychological Origins and Approaches to Origins*.

This source is non-scholarly. It was retrieved from *Psychology Today*, a magazine published every two months in the United States. It is a blog post and is certainly not peer-reviewed; therefore, it is non-scholarly. The audience is for a variety of individuals interested in psychological issues of today. Much of this has to do with relationships and ourselves. Some of the blogs and articles are targeted to casual readers while others are more scholarly in nature.

The article essentially summarizes the hopes and pitfalls of navigating the dating application scene in today's world from a psychological perspective. Aalai discusses that she, in fact, met her partner via a dating website. The key ideas of the article are the seemingly infinite number of potential partners and the paradox of choice. This states that we think we will be happier with more choices; however, often times "constrained choice leads to a more satisfactory life." The important thing, she concludes, is to get out in the real world with potential partners and experience life. She urges users to experience the unpredictability of an encounter with another human, embracing their imperfections and considering how well they match with one's own.

This text is very important and relevant to my research particularly because it is derived from a psychological standpoint. There is an emphasis on “shallow in, shallow out” which I will analyze on a deeper level as it pertains to superficiality. This source discusses how if someone is looking for just “hook ups” they will likely be able to find that relatively easily. However, as in the real world, looking for love, intimacy, and long-lasting companionship, takes time. In many cases, it takes failure as well. Are apps just tools/platforms or do they subconsciously alter our behavior? This source will be a valuable piece helping to evaluate this question. Aalai references the paradox of choice and I will use this commentary to inform my conversation as I confront the issue of user’s superficiality, as well as contentment. I plan to discuss the dehumanizing effects of viewing others as just a profile and how the vast choice of potential partners actually can harm us in our search for partners and in our current romantic relationships.

Source #2:

Banks, Jaime, et al. "A Mere Holding Effect: Haptic Influences on Impression Formation through Mobile Dating Apps." *Computers in Human Behavior*, vol. 76, Nov. 2017, pp. 303-311. *EBSCOhost*, doi:10.1016/j.chb.2017.07.035. Accessed 12 Feb. 2018.

Dr. Jaime Banks (Ph.D.) is an assistant professor at West Virginia University. Her research focuses on the melding of technology, communication, and who we are as humans. She also researches smartphones and social media profiles—and how those technological relationships influence a communicator’s sense of self. Dr. Liesel Sharabi (Ph.D.) is also an assistant professor at West Virginia University. Her research on online dating received the Top Dissertation Award from the National Communication Association. Her work has appeared in numerous peer-reviewed journal and scholarly publications. Dr. David Westerman (Ph.D.) is an associate professor at North Dakota State University. He studies communication and technology.

This is a scholarly source. It was published in the *Computers in Human Behavior* journal. The detailed headings indicate that this is an exceptionally well-written and researched work with extensive footnotes and other research cited. *Computers in Human Behavior* is a bi-monthly

peer-reviewed academic journal covering human-computer interaction and cyber psychology. It was established in 1985 and is published by Elsevier. The editor-in-chief is Mathieu Guitton.

This publication and the included study analyze the role of the physical handheld device and swiping on intimacy and connection in how we view potential matches. Study participants were 75 undergraduate students in the mid-Atlantic region of the United States. The study was fascinating for its simplicity. The authors sought to discover more about the role of the device as it pertains to our psychology and perception of the profile or person on the other end. Holding the device, giving the user a feeling of power or dominance, resulted in less attraction. The conclusion of the study was that handheld devices result in a more objectified and commodified view of the potential match when compared to a desktop-based dating profile.

This text is important because it shows how our actual perception of someone changes based simply on the fact that their profile is on our handheld smartphone device. The authors are in dialogue with many other studies and research sources analyzing and commentating on the psychological effects of mobile and app-based dating. Perhaps the most intriguing point to me was about the increased perceived psychological ownership of the profiled person. I plan to utilize this in conversation with my other research pertaining to superficiality and dehumanization effects. These apps can be a “cognitive anchor for future face-to-face interactions” leading to disappointment and heightened expectations upon meeting in person. The study found that those interacting with potential matches on the device were reduced “personhood, belonging, and self-efficacy”, pointing to the smartphone subconsciously, yet concretely, changing how we view others. I will put this text in conversation with social media viral videos (not listed in this bibliography) that illustrate the game-like enjoyment people derive from judging others on the apps. Additionally, the authors make valuable points about the convenience and accessibility of dating apps leading to reduced attraction and promoting the continual search for the “perfect match,” which I will utilize analyzing the psychological effects of dating app proliferation.

Source #3

"Dating Apps Can Help Older Adults Meet? No Time Machine Necessary." *NPR.org*, 30 Jan. 2018, <http://www.npr.org/2018/01/30/581043485/dating-apps-can-help-older-adults-meet-no-time-machine-necessary>. Accessed 16 Feb. 2018.

The "authors" in this case were radio commentators. Ashley Brown is an editor for NPR *The Morning Edition*. Before joining NPR in 2017, she spent nearly a decade on the television side of news writing and investigative journalism at WRC-TV in Washington, D.C. Her work included various investigative pieces and several of her productions have won regional Emmy, AP, and Edward R. Murrow awards. She is a graduate of American University's School of Communication. Jeffrey Pierre and Alyssa Edes are producers for NPR in Washington D.C. Laura Roman is a social media strategist for NPR.

NPR.org is a non-scholarly source. It is an arm of National Public Radio. NPR is privately and publicly funded and is a non-profit organization. It serves as a national syndicator to over 1,000 public radio stations in the United States. This was broadcast on January 30th, 2018 to a wide-ranging and diverse national audience.

This discussion focuses on the power of dating apps and the internet to unite those who likely would otherwise never meet. The conversation focuses on seniors and people who may not have the opportunities to interact in the real world as much as younger people do. The conversation discusses the tremendous growth in users above 50 and the accompanying creation of apps with a minimum age requirement. There are certainly creeps focused on sexual encounters (particularly men), but the conversation ends happily. We hear the story of Anna Fiehler, a 56-year-old widow, who found love after sticking with online dating. She was patient, spent a lot of time creating her profile, and sifted through bad apples to find Heinz Raidel, "the one."

This text is important because it illustrates some of the forgotten unification abilities of online dating sites and applications. The article cited an interesting Pew study which showed that from 2013 to 2015, the percentage of people single, divorced, or widowed and aged 55-64 dating online grew from 6% to 12%. The desire for someone to share your golden

years with is a very real and powerful thing. As my research and thesis develop, it is eye-opening to consider the anecdotal evidence of love being found on these platforms. I embarked on this journey with a bias that these applications were increasing superficiality while complicating our relationships; however, Anna and Heinz are a concrete example of hope. It is interesting to listen as love found in the golden years can improve the quality of life for many in this demographic. These people are not superficial, but are simply searching for intimacy and love. It is important to consider this part of the conversation as I explore the complicated nature of our dating app adventures as a society. Perspective can be everything; as Anna said, “they're actually providing incredibly rich connections for people ... and it can be really worthwhile.”

Source #4

Hobbs, Mitchell, et al. "Liquid Love? Dating Apps, Sex, Relationships and the Digital Transformation of Intimacy." *Journal of Sociology*, vol. 53, no. 2, June 2017, pp. 271-284. EBSCOhost, doi:10.1177/1440783316662718. Accessed 15 Feb. 2018.

This article was written by Mitchell Hobbs (PhD), of the Media and Communications at the University of Sydney. He writes about media power, social media, and political communication. His current research is focused on the social consequences of dating applications. Mr. Hobbs is a co-author of several books and publications regularly used at universities in the United States and Australia. Stephen Owen (PhD) is a Lecturer at the University of New South Wales. His doctoral thesis analyzed “technology of the self.” Livia Gerber is a PhD candidate at Macquarie University and a research assistant at the University of Sydney (Australia).

This is a scholarly source. It was published in the peer-reviewed *Journal of Sociology*. The detailed headings indicate that this is a scholarly work coupled with the research information and findings discussed by the authors. The nearly two pages of references and the listing of funding information from a University of Sydney (Australia) research grant also indicate a scholarly text. This research is intended for a more specialized audience of sociologists, specifically studying the modern relationship. The title is a reference to *Liquid Love* by Zygmunt Bauman, a 2003 book on humanity and relationships.

This article highlights the transformation of modern courtship. It particularly focuses on dating apps and the current conversation of how we view relationships as a society. The study ultimately argues that many accounts of dating applications are too pessimistic and do not take into account the positives of networking intimacy and the power of connection afforded by online platforms. Interestingly, the authors conclude that these applications are welcome “intermediaries” in the search for love, sex, intimacy and companionship. People are not slipping down a dark slope towards superficiality, but still value and seek romantic love, monogamy and long-term relationships according to the survey. Humans are inherently resourceful, and they may utilize all available tools to meet potential partners.

This text is vital to my research because it is a fascinating scholarly source examining the impact of dating apps on how we view monogamy, marriage, sex, intimacy, and companionship. It incorporates past conversations (such as *Liquid Love*), other research, the authors’ own comprehensive study, and some very interesting anecdotes. For instance, the single mother, Amy, who often messages Tinder matches “Sex?” because she does not get a significant amount of time to herself and wants a release. The article is in conversation with *Liquid Love*, the book by Zygmunt Bauman, on the frailty of human bonds. This source promotes the argument that dating applications do not represent the end of monogamy as we know it. Overall, people still desire someone to share their life with. New technologies offer an endless menu of new freedoms and possibilities, but also the same “anxieties about risk, self-image and love” remain. This is an important point. Our innate fears about the search for partners lingers within us like an unwanted ghost. Despite the fact that more of us may view potential partners on dating apps as commodities rather than humans, anxieties about relationships remain as potent as ever.

Source #5:

Mantel, Barbara. "Online Dating: Can Apps and Algorithms Lead to True Love?" *CQ Researcher*, vol. 25, no. 12, 20 Mar. 2015, pp. 265-288. library.cqpress.com/cqresearcher/cqresrre2015032000. Accessed 14 Feb. 2018.

Barbara Mantel is a freelance writer in New York City. She was a 2012 Kiplinger Fellow and has won several journalism awards, including the National Press Club's Best Consumer Journalism Award and the Front Page Award from the Newswomen's Club of New York for her 2009 *CQ Researcher* report "The Internet and Terrorism." She holds a B.A. in history and economics from the University of Virginia and an M.A. in economics from Northwestern University.

This is a non-scholarly source. It was published in the *CQ Researcher*. The detailed headings indicate that this is an exceptionally well-written and researched work with extensive footnotes. There are many references and ample fact-checking; however, it is not peer-reviewed. CQ Press is part of SAGE Publications, publishing books, periodicals, and other sources on a variety of topics. The company is headquartered in Washington D.C.

The article covers the proliferation of online dating and dating applications and the benefits and risks of this trend. Mantel utilizes personal experience as well as numerous anecdotes to illustrate both the pros and cons of app dating. She discusses the "they say" view of some critics that the unlimited amount of choice is hurting relationships, along with safety risks and financial targeting. As one female user said, "going online beats going to a bar and having a weirdo hit on me, at least online, I know a little bit about each person before meeting." The safety net of the online profile at the very least encourages us to believe we know more about who someone is prior to that first in-person encounter. Mantel also highlights the exponential financial growth in the industry. This has led to services that intensively interview clients and create optimum dating profiles for them. The article also alludes to the conspicuous generational divide between those who date on traditional (questionnaire profile based) online platforms versus the dating app generation.

This source is valuable to me for the variety of perspectives it puts forth. It will help me discuss the vast amount of choice and how this may increase the propensity to get out of a bad relationship. However, it leads to a deeper question of this unlimited choice leading to the ending of relationships because someone may not fit a perfect model. I will use some anecdotes to delve into the question of whether individuals are less likely to let a relationship develop now versus twenty years ago in a pre-dating app world. The dialogue from many different sources including the

companies themselves, researchers, professors, users, and more confront many fundamental issues of my paper. Writer R.D. Rosen declares: "There's an enormously addictive quality to online dating that has never existed before in the culture," (he is working on a book about the evolution of courtship.) "You want to keep going back, because you think you're going to hit the jackpot eventually." These perspectives will be very useful as I explore the consequences of this trend.

Source #6

Markowitz, Dale. "The Future of Online Dating Is Unsexy and Brutally Effective." *Gizmodo*, 25 Oct. 2017, gizmodo.com/the-future-of-online-dating-is-unsexy-and-brutally-effe-1819781116. Accessed 11 Feb. 2018.

This article was written by Dale Markowitz. Markowitz is a psychotherapist based in New York City. She is a former data science engineer at OkCupid, a dating site. She utilizes her own experience, interviews, data, and anecdotes in her articles. Her work has been published in publications such as *The New York Times Magazine*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Atlantic*.

This is a popular, non-scholarly source. This article was retrieved from Gizmodo.com. Gizmodo.com is a science, design, and technology website that also occasionally writes about politics. It was originally a blog founded by Gawker and Nick Denton and has now been purchased by Univision. The audience is likely consumers interested in science and technology. The user base is known as a more liberal leaning audience.

Markowitz discusses the prospect of data algorithms getting to know us and our preferences better than we actually know ourselves. For instance, she compares this to Netflix recommended movies and shows based on what we've previously viewed and enjoyed. Instead of asking users questions (in which they may be dishonest), the new wave of app dating will simply monitor user behavior and build the algorithms accordingly. She references LoveFlutter, a UK dating app that uses twitter profiles and social media to create a "28 axis personality breakdown." This source is interesting because it looks towards the future in terms of bespoke algorithms analyzing our behavior and preferences.

This is a compelling piece examining biases we do not claim or even know we have. For instance, the story of the 55-year-old man who says he likes women aged 40-50, but in actuality likes 25-year-old blonde women. It will be illuminating in helping to identify whether we are more superficial in actuality than we would like to be. This source represents the most technological and future-oriented of my written text research. It will be a crucial source as I examine superficiality, biases and ask the question of whether or not as a society, we will be willing to relinquish control of our dating destiny to an algorithm. The alarming claim of the article is that we may soon enter an age when algorithms know more about us than we know or admit about ourselves. Markowitz also talks about a dystopian future where algorithms can analyze a potential partner's social media and flag any depression or other issues and reject them. I will put this text in conversation with the Netflix show *Black Mirror* and the episode "Hang the DJ." The futuristic episode explores the power of simulations and the role they could play in the future. As I develop my thesis, I will evaluate our contentment with relationships and our role in this "game" in the context of whether we will embrace this more efficient, but less spontaneous method of dating.