

# Swiping me off my feet: Explicating relationship initiation on Tinder

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## Abstract

Tinder, a mobile dating application (app), facilitates the initiation of new, potentially romantic relationships and promotes itself as a social discovery platform dominating the U.S. with 1.4 billion swipes per day. This exploratory study investigates how people engage in relationship initiation behaviors through Tinder and highlights how interpersonal relationship initiation, selection processes, and strategic pre-interaction behaviors are evolving through contemporary-mediated dating culture. Participants ( $N = 395$ ) were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk to complete an online survey about their Tinder usage. The study employed descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to analyze reasons for selecting and deleting Tinder, pre-interaction processes, swiping strategies, and Tinder hookup culture. The prevalent view that Tinder is a sex, or hookup app, remains salient among users; although, many users utilize Tinder for creating other interpersonal communication connections and relationships, both romantic and platonic. Initially, Tinder users gather information to identify their preferences. Their strategies show clear implications for explicating the relationship development model and associated information pursuing strategies. Overall, this study argues that new emergent technologies are changing how interpersonal relationship initiation functions; the traditional face-to-face relationship development models and initiation conceptualizations should be modified to include the introduction of the pre-interaction processes apparent in mobile dating applications such as Tinder.

## Keywords

Dating, hookups, mobile dating apps, pre-interaction, relationship development model, relationship initiation, swiping, Tinder

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Interpersonal relationship initiation occurs at the touch of a screen through the mobile phone application (app), Tinder. Tallying 50 million users, 10 million daily active users, and over 100 million downloads (C. Smith, 2016), Tinder ignited the romantic spark for 10 billion matches (A. Smith, 2016). Tinder (2016) clocks 1.4 billion swipes per day, aiding 6 billion friendships, professional partnerships, and platonic relationship matches, and 26 million matches daily for those ages 18–50.<sup>1</sup> Tinder, a commonly used dating app, promotes itself as a social discovery platform dominating the U.S. and available in 196 other countries. Apps such as Tinder are changing the dating and mating market landscape.<sup>1</sup>

Recent advancements in communication technology enable billions of people to connect using mobile phones (Mieczakowski, Goldhaber, & Clarkson, 2011). Now, with a finger swipe, mobile apps increase convenience due to readily accessible smartphone capabilities, geolocation features, and user-friendly platforms. Tinder affords opportunities to familiarize, communicate, and meet potential partners; the platform utilizes converging proximity, convenience, and technology to promote interpersonal interaction and facilitate physical and psychological connections (Quiroz, 2013). Traditionally, individuals' relationship initiations were contingent on proximity for available partners (Kerckhoff, 1974). Before online sites and mobile apps, relationship initiation remained reliant on face-to-face contact (Regan, 2015); Tinder's software capabilities and technological affordances permit a real-time dating experience to proximal partners. Popular press articles, utilized throughout this study, indicate that Tinder has captured the public's attention. As such, I utilize popular press articles in addition to sparse empirical studies to define Tinder practices. Until recently, there has been minimal empirical research (e.g., Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015; David & Cambre, 2016; Duguay, 2016; Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Lighenberg, 2017; Ward, 2016) that examined Tinder's interpersonal relationship initiation processes.

The traditional relationship development model (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2010) yields a descriptive dual staircase model for understanding relationship initiation and dissolution behaviors and patterns in face-to-face applications. The dual staircase involves partners navigating steps to escalation (i.e., coming together or initiation) and de-escalation (i.e., coming apart or dissolution). Yet, relationship initiation patterns remain widely unexplored in interpersonal scholarship within the advent of computer-mediated communication and technological mediums (e.g., Brody, LeFebvre, & Blackburn, 2016; Fox, Warber, & Makstaller, 2013) and particularly in regards to pre-interaction processes on platforms beyond Facebook.

This exploratory study investigates how people engage in relationship initiation behaviors through Tinder and highlights how interpersonal relationship initiation, selection processes, and strategic pre-interaction behaviors are evolving through contemporary-mediated dating culture.

More specifically, this study examines how Tinder enables initiation of potentially new romantic relationships and I provide a critical evaluation of prevailing stereotypes and assumptions (e.g., Parks, 2009) of the relational processes surrounding Tinder. By examining mobile dating, scholars can explore how people facilitate mediated interpersonal communication through emerging technological initiations.

### *Modern relationship initiation*

Technological capabilities provide new ways to communicate, meet, date, and mate. In the early 1990s, online chat rooms enabling users to communicate with one another relied on text to portray themselves (Kennedy, 2010). Since then, online relationships have evolved to include digital dating. Online personal advertisement sites were introduced, enabling users to post basic and personal information. These advertisements disclosed desirable partner characteristics and helped pave changes to traditional dating when internet-based sites, such as eHarmony and Match.com, allowed people to add pictures to their profiles. Traditional online dating sites became a societal dating convention, desensitizing stigmas (e.g., Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012; Stephure, Boon, MacKinnon, & Deveau, 2009). Many individuals embraced online access points, with 55% of people in marriages or committed relationships claiming to have met online (Smith & Anderson, 2015). Over time, modifications enabled user anonymity, increased proximity features, and promoted easier accessibility. Unlike earlier dating sites, the new technological and structural affordances and adaptations for smartphones and satellite geolocation features further increased opportunities for relationship initiation and spawned the mobile dating app evolution.

### *Mobile dating apps*

The app industry markets advantageous dating services—time, ease, and proximity (Quiroz, 2013). Dating apps employ a number of convenient variations that include selection processes (personal advertisements or algorithmic patterns), platform systems (online sites, mobile-only, or hybrids), classifications (free, fee-based, or both), and varying global-positioning systems (GPS) parameters.

One of the first smartphone-based dating apps, Grindr, a gay, bisexual, or curious men app used geolocation features allowing users to find others within close geographical proximity (Grindr, 2015). The location-based tool offered real-time dating via satellite, mobile, or GPS (Quiroz, 2013). Grindr provided a new platform that ushered in location-based GPS capabilities. Tinder replicated Grindr's GPS features and now leads the dating scene among dating apps.

### *Tinder*

Tinder launched in September 2012 as a social discovery platform, rather than exclusively for dating. In order to better understand Tinder, we delineate Tinder setup from download to match. Downloading and using Tinder is free and requires no algorithms or questionnaires to populate the profile. Once activated, seemingly endless potential partners' pictures appear immediately in see-and-swipe mode. The creators, Sean Rad and Justin Madteen, modeled their mobile app after a deck of cards, making an accessible game-playing format that avoided online dating preconceptions (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015).

Upon creating a dating profile, users are given the opportunity to access potential partners within 100 miles. Profiles include users' first name, age, employment, and

education. Tinder values efficiency by importing profile information directly from photo uploads or Facebook allowing access to social networked information (e.g., photos, education, employment, and likes). Such information enables Tinder to locate nearby matches based on gender, sexual orientation (and soon self-identity), and age, if desired (Crook, 2016b). Users can choose specific photos and provide a 500-character biography (bio). The user-friendly platform allows for quick initial setup, positioning the user to swipe instantaneously. The app operates through digital embodied self-presentations that rely on first impressions, snap judgments, or initial attraction (James, 2015).<sup>2</sup>

Specifically, using a self-selection process with a see-and-swipe mode, users begin determining their romantic interest. Typically, women spend 8.5 min and men 7.2 min swiping during a single session (Bolton, 2014); therefore, expeditious decisions occur as users anonymously swipe the through their deck of suitors. Swiping another user's profile to the left indicates no interest. The profile disappears, and the opportunity to create a match is lost. Swiping up to "super like" results in that user learning that another person *really* liked him/her. The up swipe is a new feature (Tinder, 2016) individuals can use once every 12 hr. Swiping right indicates interest. Mutual right swipes result in a match that enables the two interested partners to chat through private messaging. Direct messaging presents users the opportunity to maintain anonymity while determining whether one or both partners desire further communication.

Tinder adapts to relationship initiation demands as an app for on-the-go singles, the committed, and those looking for more. Tinder (2016) asserted the average user logs on 9–11 times per day (C. Smith, 2016). Men make up 62% of users and women 38% (Dredge, 2015); the average user is 27 years old with 85% of users between 18 and 34 (A. Smith, 2016). Users comprise singles (54%), already committed (12–30%), and divorced (3%; C. Smith 2016). Tinder's swipe interface allows users to approve or dismiss users who pop up on the screen of their mobile device and offers the freedom to pursue numerous relationship initiation interests simultaneously.

### *Relationship development model*

This study utilizes the relationship development model to position mobile dating apps for exploration. Originally, the relationship development model (Knapp & Vangelisti, 2010) delineated a dual staircase for understanding behaviors and interaction patterns that occur as partners navigate steps of escalation and de-escalation in face-to-face relationships. Because the present study focuses on relationship escalation, only these processes are highlighted. Escalation commonly involves five (sequential) steps: *initiating*, *experimenting*, *intensifying*, *integrating*, and *bonding*. The first step, initiating involves starting with stereotypical considerations, environmental and situational expectations, judgments of attractiveness, and decisions to initiate communication. Physical attraction and a sense similarity are linked and provide incentive for relationship initiation (Vangelisti, 2011). The second step, experimenting begins once communication is initiated. Experimenting may involve direct or indirect questions of or about the person to eliminate uncertainty and includes passive and active reduction strategies (Fox et al., 2013). The experimental process begins to share a breadth of information with shallow depth and formulates ongoing maintenance behaviors. Most

relationships do not progress past experimenting (Vangelisti, 2011). To summarize these two steps include instigating communication, establishing first impressions, uncovering the partner's unknown, and engaging in self-disclosure.

Initiating and experimenting processes occur via Tinder once a match is established. A gap exists prior to initiating processes. This study examines these two processes prior to interaction: (1) information seeking which is central to people's lives and (2) motivations in relationship development. Online sites and mobile app research have commonly borrowed from traditional dating research, and emerging technologies challenge traditional face-to-face relationship model assumptions (e.g., Fox et al., 2013; LeFebvre, Blackburn, & Brody, 2015). The pre-interaction information gathering and strategies have clear implications for the traditional relationship development model.

### ***Emerging adult (EA) relationship development process***

EAs 18–29 years include Millennials.<sup>3</sup> Emerging adulthood is a life stage between adolescence and adulthood (Arnett, 2015). The current generation of people in the EA's life stage rely on and utilize technology at higher rates than people from other generations; for instance, 97% of them own a computer and 94% own a mobile phone (Strauss & Howe, 2000). EA experiences a period of romantic and sexual exploration, where individuals encounter increased opportunities to consider their relationships and sexuality (Morgan, 2012). Previous research indicated that EA's romantic relationships remain highly influential, normative, and salient; commonly, they are fragile, unstable, and terminate (van Dulman, Claxton, Collins, & Simpson, 2015). During emerging adulthood, individuals aim to establish their first long-term serious relationships and place an increasing value on commitment as a characteristic of social relationships (Sumter, Valkenburg, & Peter, 2013). Prior research suggested that for EA online media are an aid to fulfill the developmental needs of finding a romantic partner and maintaining social connections (Van De Wiele & Tong, 2014).

### **Advancing relationship development**

Tinder's mobile GPS expands beyond physical constraints, widening the field of potential offline partners in nearby locations (Regan, 2017). Online accessibility generates new pre-initiation processes since passive information (pictures and bio) exist on Tinder. The selection process begins with limited information but does not account for the pre-interaction self-impression management users undergo to create their own relationship personas. For instance, face-to-face dating requires an understanding of implicit dating preferences; however, mediated dating requires prescribed explicit dating preferences prior to interaction. Thus, users must manage their predetermined personal textual and visual depictions as well as delineate preference parameters (e.g., age ranges, proximity ranges, etc.). Therefore, this study recognizes the changes occurring in mobile dating apps and the need to further explicate *how* Tinder assists in relationship initiation, and *what* implications that may have for pre-interaction relationship developmental processes. This exploratory study investigates how people engage in relationship initiation behaviors through Tinder and highlights how interpersonal relationship

initiation, selection processes, and strategic pre-interaction behaviors are evolving through contemporary mediated dating culture. The following questions are posited:

**RQ1:** Why are users selecting (or deleting) Tinder?

**RQ2:** What are users' profile pre-interaction preferences?

**RQ3:** What motivates relationship initiation swiping strategies for Tinder users?

## Hookups

When investigating Tinder, it would be remiss to avoid the sexual implications surrounding contemporary technological dating apps. Tinder is and has been commonly viewed as a sex app for a wide variety of casual sexual relationships and experiences that come in many different forms—from one-night stands and friends with benefits to booty calls (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Hatfield, Hutchison, Bensman, Young, & Rapson, 2012). Hookups are ambiguous by nature, with kissing, oral sex, or penetrative sex all constituting hookups (Garcia, Reiber, Massey, & Merriwether, 2012). Interpersonal romantic relationships often include hookups (short-lived and intense sexual exploration) that exist apart from emotional connections and routinely exclude relationship escalation (Paul, Wenzel, & Harvey, 2008).

Tinder's creation influences countless EA's relationship initiations. In *Vanity Fair*, Sales (2015) popularized the notion of Tinder as a "hook-up" because she observed 50 males and females aged 19–29 and found casual sex commonplace; these claims are supported with the assumptions that online and mobile app dating increase sexual exploration and initiation for EA. Contrary beliefs exist within popular press, Lapowsky (2015) and Petersen (2015) argued that users are seeking long-term relationships. In empirical research, Gatter and Hodkinson (2016) found no difference between Tinder and other online dating agencies. EA has had fewer sexual partners than any other generation, who at the same age averaged two partners each (Monto & Carey, 2014). Additionally, Pew Research (2016) reported that many emerging technologies have instigated online initiations but failed to translate those interactions to offline meetings (see Smith & Anderson, 2015). Therefore, assumptions surrounding EA's desire for sex have conflicting popular press and empirical support. The script for obtaining and enacting hookups remains elusive (Paul et al., 2008), especially with changing romantic relationship development opportunities connected with emerging technological mediums. EA may utilize alternative venues to access partners, but initiation of sexual experiences and relationships remains unclear.

Mobile dating apps, such as Tinder, afford users the opportunity to fantasize about anonymous individuals, interpersonal relationships, communicative behaviors, and sexual exploits; users can create and recreate ideal mates or partners and seek connections (Quiroz, 2013). The idealization and actualization coupled with the likelihood that partners might never meet again, yet be accessible via prescribed proximity parameters, enables hookup opportunities. Although, user attitudes have shifted from viewing Tinder as a sex-app to the "go-to dating app" (Ansari & Klinenberg, 2015), the present study

acknowledges that Tinder intertwines dating and/or hookup culture. The following question is posited to determine whether sex is utilized in relationship development and to identify any stigmatic tendencies associated with Tinder usage.

**RQ4:** What are users' hookup experiences on Tinder?

## Method

### Participants

Participants' ( $N = 395$ ) age ranged from 18 to 34 ( $M = 26.41$ ,  $SD = 4.17$ )—EAs and Millennials, 18–34 years (see EA: Arnett, 2015; Millennials: Junco & Mastrodicasa, 2007). EAs and Millennials were combined since: (1) dating apps are used most frequently by 25–34-year-olds, comprising EA and Millennials (Smith & Duggan, 2013), (2) they have overlapping interpersonal research, and (3) those 30–34-year-olds also included many participants who initiated Tinder usage as EAs. Participants' ( $n = 314$ ) indicated they first used Tinder approximately 3 weeks to 5 years ago, with average first activation at 512.93 days ( $SD = 321.48$ ,  $Mdn = 365$ ). At the time of first Tinder activation, participants were under 18 (11.2%),<sup>4</sup> EA (70.7%), and over 30 (18.1%). Approximately half (50.4%) of participants deleted their app multiple times ranging from one to seven ( $M = 1.71$ ,  $SD = 1.06$ ). Therefore, determining previous and current usage remained difficult, since participants' usage and relationship status varied. This study required participants to have used Tinder for a month and have at least one match; participants may have previously utilized the app (and their current relationship status may not reflect their relationship status while on Tinder).

Participants' ethnicities included 70.6% Caucasian, 8.9% Black or African American, 7.8% Asian or Pacific Islander, 6.8% Latino/a or Hispanic, 5.6% multiple ethnicities, and 0.3% Native American. Participants were split across community types: 47.8% suburban, 37.7% urban, 14.4% rural, and 0.3% unidentified. Education varied as follows: 45.6% baccalaureate, 22.3% associates, 21.3% high school diploma/GED equivalent, 8.9% masters, 1.3% doctoral, 0.3% some collegiate, and 0.3% technical degree.

Participants' sexual orientations included 83.9% mixed sex, 12.5% bisexual, 2.6% same sex, and 1% other (i.e., queer, asexual, pansexual, demisexual, or unidentified). Participants identified a particular sexual orientation as interested in 47.6% only women, 36.9% only men, and 15.5% men and women. Participants characterized their current relationship status (may/may not reflect their status when using Tinder) as follows: 26.9% committed relationship (one person), 25.1% not in a relationship, 19.8% casually dating (one person), 15.7% casually dating (multiple people), 5.1% married, 2% engaged, 1.5% never been in a romantic relationship, 1.3% separated, 0.3% divorced, 1% domestic partnership, 0.8% committed relationship (multiple people), and 0.5% did not answer.

### Procedures

Participants were recruited from Amazon's Mechanical Turk (Mturk), Amazon's online crowdsourcing platform that allows workers to complete human intelligent tasks (HITs).

Mturk provides similar samples to other recruitment methods offering affordability with access to a large, diverse pool (Mason & Suri, 2012). Inclusion criteria were participants had to be 18 years or older, be literate in English, and hold U.S. residency. All sexual orientations were welcomed. Once they selected the HIT, participants were provided a Qualtrics link to complete an online survey in March 2016. Upon clicking the link, participants were asked to read a consent form, complete a survey ( $M = 29$  min and 12 s), and then were directed to complete validation information for their (US\$1.00) compensation.

## Measurements

The survey included individual/relational demographics (e.g., age, education, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and geological location) and online and mobile dating perceptions. Participants were asked questions about their Tinder usage (account setup, preferences, selection strategies, and post-match communication),<sup>5</sup> and Tinder hookup perceptions were collected.

*Perceptions, selection, and deletion.* Initially, six questions (two open-ended and four closed-ended) measured general online dating impressions. Open-ended questions read: “What is your overall impression of online dating?” and “What is your overall impression of the people you meet online?” Two close-ended questions, on a Likert-type scale (1 = *strongly agree*; 5 = *strongly disagree*), measured online dating perceptions. Participants compared their online and mobile to traditional dating on a 3-point scale (e.g., *better, worse, same*). Also, a 5-point Likert-type scale (1 = *little to none*; 5 = *extremely*) gauged perceptions of online/mobile dating popularity. Participants were then asked: “Explain your motivations for *choosing* the Tinder mobile application” and “Explain your motivations for *using* the Tinder mobile application.” App activity included questions about account initiation, frequency of usage, and so on. Participants were also asked whether they utilized online or mobile dating apps, how many, and if they tried other apps. In addition to asking about their activation, I also assessed whether they deleted their Tinder account, their rationale for doing so, and how many times.

*Pre-interaction preferences.* These questions paralleled items that Tinder profile users must determine upon activating their profile. First, participants discussed their profile preferences—age range (lowest and highest), gender preference (men, women, or both), proximity range (1–100 miles), and whether they selected to identify their status in regards to their employment, interests, and common connections and whether they were premium users. Second, participants were asked to provide descriptions of their bios—whether they had a bio, why/why not, and bio word count. Lastly, participants were asked about their photos (e.g., number of pictures, source of photos, and who besides the user was in the photos).

*Relationship initiation swiping strategies.* Participants were asked five open- and five-closed-ended questions about their general Tinder strategies and behaviors. Participants answered questions on 5-point Likert-type scales (1 = *never* to 5 = *always*). Scales

measured participants' swiping behaviors, such as "How often do you swipe (right, left, up, and common contacts)?" Three open-ended questions asked participants to explain why for each swiping behavior. Next, two additional open-ended questions measured participants' strategies: "What are automatic swipe (lefts or deal breakers)? Explain." and "When swiping through TEN people, on average, how many of these people would you swipe right on?" Lastly, participants were asked about their post-match style, communication, and behaviors (for a larger study).

*Hookup (in or as relationship initiation).* Participants answered questions pertaining to Tinder as a casual sex conduit. Three closed-ended questions asked on 7-point Likert-type scale questions (1 = *never* to 7 = *always*) measured the perceived Tinder hookup culture. These questions were as follows: "How often do you hook up with someone from Tinder?" and "How often does the typical male/female on hook up with someone from Tinder?" Additionally, they were asked an open-ended question "How many times have you hooked up with someone from Tinder?" Lastly, participants were asked to select one response as to whether they thought Tinder was a dating, hook up, or meeting app with the question "Do you perceive Tinder as a \_\_\_\_\_ app?"

## Analysis

This study employs descriptive statistics and thematic analysis to analyze the results from the research questions. To derive categories, the data were analyzed after several iterative reading sessions. The author and one trained graduate student qualitatively analyzed the data for thematic qualities utilizing analytic induction (e.g., Bulmer, 1979; Lindlof & Taylor, 2001). Initially, the coders utilized open coding, where concrete analytic interpretation could begin and move beyond the concrete statements (Charmaz, 2006), where codes could be attached to data. In the process of data reduction, coders compared similarities and differences, grouped data into themes, and provided conceptual labels (Corbin & Strauss, 1990). Coders used axial coding to identify codes creating linkages between data and themes, which consolidated homogeneous codes. Finally, coders reviewed responses to determine emerging themes and collapsed, integrated, and finalized a coding scheme for each mutually exclusive open-ended question. In order to establish reliability among the generated coding scheme, coders independently coded 10% randomly selected data. Krippendorff's  $\alpha$  indicated reliability for all the coding schemes: selecting Tinder  $\alpha = .74$ ; deleting Tinder  $\alpha = .81$ ; bio creation  $\alpha = .87$ ; swiping left  $\alpha = .87$ ; swiping right  $\alpha = .76$ . Remaining discrepancies were resolved through discussion and data was divided for coding.

## Results and discussion

### *Selecting and deleting Tinder (RQ1)*

Initially, in order to determine more specific inquiries about Tinder, participants answered questions about their current pool of potential partners. Participants felt their potential pool on mobile dating was 46.6% better, 29.1% same, and 24.3% worse than

the physical world. Approximately, 46% found mobile dating increased their current accessibility to partners; however, when adding together those that found it the same or worse (53.4%), this majority did not observe a benefit. Often participants expressed that their pool of potential partners was greater online than in offline contexts and had multiple venues of online sites and mobile apps.

Participants ( $n = 393$ ) were asked why they elected to download Tinder. Eight themes emerged: *popularity*, *design*, *curiosity*, *interpersonal relationships*, *hookup*, *geolocality*, *entertainment*, and *miscellaneous*. Specifically, Tinder users sought this app because of mass marketing popularity (48.3%) and more significantly their friends, peers, and desired social circles utilized it. One participant noted, "The more users for a dating app the better." Another wrote, "It [Tinder] is where the [dating] 'market' was. These apps are very cyclical, I've noticed, and when it cycles to Tinder I use it a lot." Mobile apps are readily available and provide an entrance to a larger field of available interpersonal relationships and sexual intimacies. In regards to popularity, the strong mass advertising and social network appeal is further supported by the app's simplistic card-playing user-friendly interface design (14.8%). Many people were seeking interpersonal relationships (8.9%), whether romantic or platonic—users sought access to others' companionship. Individuals that did not have Tinder accounts often joined for curiosity (7.9%) and did not want to be left out of contemporary conversations, friend circles, and popular dating culture. Hookups (5.1%) instigated Tinder usage or the desire to meet others for sexual experience (see Table 1 for further information about the themes, frequencies, definitions, and exemplars).

Many Tinder users (44.3%) had or (62.3%) tried other active online sites and mobile dating apps. Users averaged 2.02 ( $SD = 1.79$ ) online sites and mobile dating apps. Therefore, participants were not restricted to or solely dependent on Tinder. Participants were asked whether they deleted their Tinder. Half (50.4%) had deleted their accounts between 1 and 7 times ( $M = 1.71$ ;  $SD = 1.06$ ). When participants ( $n = 193$ ) answered why they deleted Tinder, 10 themes emerged: *in a relationship*, *unsuccessful*, *hookups vs. relationships orientations*, *miscellaneous*, *time off*, *harassment*, *privacy*, *sexually explicit content*, *data usage*, and *spamming*. The primary reason (38.7%) participants chose to delete Tinder was that they were in a relationship and felt dishonest looking at it while committed to another and they or their partners sought exclusiveness. Contrary to the first reason, other participants were unsuccessful (34.7%) or unable to find potential partners, obtain matches, or receive (positive) responses. Users had differing relationship orientations where some desired relationships and others wanted hookups (4.1%); the inability to match their personal desires with a potential partner led to deletion. Unwelcoming actions, such as harassment (1.3%), privacy (1%), and sexually explicit content (0.8%) produced additional reasons for deletion. Also, technological device considerations, fake computerized partners, and exceeding data usage (0.8%) or spamming (0.5%) caused deletion (for more information see Table 2).

### *Pre-interaction preferences (RQ2)*

To answer the second research question about Tinder pre-initiation preferences, participants discussed their profile appearances and strategic impression management.

**Table 1.** Why participants select Tinder.

Themes	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Popularity	190 (48.3) <sup>a</sup>	Majority of users' friends, social network, or their perception of the greater public utilizing this application	I chose to download the Tinder app because it feels like a culture I should be part of since so many of my peers use it. It also seems fun! Tinder had a large amount of media coverage, which made it a household name. Since Tinder is the most commonly known app it's logical to assume it will have the most users. The more users for a dating app the better.
Design	58 (14.7) <sup>b</sup>	Ease Simple Usability Visually appealing	It's user-friendly, quick, visually appealing, and anonymous enough. I wanted an easy way to meet potential dates without having to always be around a computer in order to log in and check up on it.
Interpersonal relationships	35 (8.9) <sup>a</sup>	Lonely Companionship	I was lonely. It seems like a lot of people are getting on board with Tinder and I wanted to see what kind of results I could get.
Curiosity	31 (7.9)	Dating/friendship Desire relationship Access to people Unknown	It's where the "market" was. These apps are very cyclical, I've noticed, and when it cycles to Tinder I use it a lot. My motivations for choosing the Tinder application are curiosity.
Hookup	20 (5.1) <sup>b</sup>	Interested Intrigued Sex Flings Physical companionship	I was doing research for an article I was writing about dating in LA. I like to connect with people and I like to have sex. Those are the two primary motivations that I have for using any dating application. I chose to try Tinder because I knew a couple of people who had some success with it. It also seemed like a simple enough process, and I knew it was popular and wanted to find out why for myself.
Geolocality	16 (4.1) <sup>a</sup>	Location Proximity Convenience	It's really just about looks and nothing else—you swipe if you wanna fuck them I chose the Tinder mobile application because it allows a person to see other people in a certain area. You can type in your zip code and it gives you potential matches based on people near you, so eventually you could meet in person. The application is easy to use and I can use it from my phone. It was just an opportunity to meet people nearby that are interested in dating.

(continued)

**Table 1.** (continued)

Themes	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Entertainment	15 (3.8) <sup>a</sup>	Social activity	It seemed like the most fun way to meet people online.
		Game	My friends use it as a “game.” It’s common
		Fun	and user friendly.
Miscellaneous	9 (2.3) <sup>b</sup>	Nonsensical	

Note. *n* = 393; 99% response rate.

<sup>a</sup>Participants interested in men were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>b</sup>Participants interested in women were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

Participants set their geolocation range at an average of 38 miles ( $M = 37.38$ ,  $SD = 26.73$ ) with variations depending on rural ( $Med = 50$ ), suburban ( $Med = 30$ ), and urban ( $Med = 25$ ) areas. All areas had minimum range of 1 mile to a maximum of 100 miles. Participants’ desired age range for potential partners was 22.08 ( $SD = 3.92$ ) low age to 34.81 ( $SD = 9.1$ ) high age. Participants selected potential partners approximately 4.32 ( $SD = 3.97$ ,  $Mdn = 4$ ) years younger, 8.42 years older ( $SD = 7.92$ ,  $Mdn = 6$ ), and overall age range 12.76 years ( $SD = 8.58$ ,  $Mdn = 10$ ). Participants utilized Tinder—11% several times a day, 14.3% once daily, 26.5% several times weekly, 14.8% once weekly, 12% several times a month, and 21.4% monthly.

Since Tinder utilizes pictures and written text (bio with maximum 500 words) in the interface, the majority used the maximum six pictures allotted. Participants on average included 5.62 pictures ( $SD = 12.11$ ) since pictures can be linked to Instagram; therefore, they expanded beyond the Tinder initial platform interface. The majority of users (74.4%) had bios averaging 31.75 characters ( $SD = 56.55$ ,  $Mdn = 15$ ) and ranging from 1 to 500 characters, whereas a minority (25.6%) did not have bios. Seven themes for not including bios were *inactivity*, *desired conversation*, *privacy*, *visual appeal*, *comparison*, *safety*, and *miscellaneous*. Inactivity (34.1%) indicated that users were lazy, felt it unnecessary, or were indecisive, whereas other users desired communication where they could disclose information in an exchange rather than via a profile advertisement. Other users did not mind sharing photos, although they wanted to maintain their privacy from potential, current, or past partners. Additionally, several users preferred the visual appeal to speak for their assets (for additional information see Table 3).

In traditional face-to-face models, the interaction commonly begins face-to-face with nonverbal communication. However, Tinder generates novel pre-interaction mechanisms that position potential offline meeting initiation through photographs and bios. Premeditated actions individuals undertake leading up to potential matches are strategic. Pre-interaction processes are driven by the app’s interface and constrict the organic communication occurring face-to-face. These strategic processes deliberately force individuals to select their preferences (age range, sex, and sexual orientation). Tinder offers the space (setting, scene, and stage) for individuals to generate representations that promote who they are (in their mind’s eye) and who they want their potential partners to

**Table 2.** Why participants deleted Tinder.

Themes	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
In a relationship	76 (39.4) <sup>b</sup>	Met someone  Dating	When I was banging one girl she made me delete it. I did so because even though I was unhappy, I was in a relationship and felt that I was being dishonest because.
Unsuccessful	67 (34.7)	Exclusive No responses No matches No potential partners Bored/tired/pointless Negative experience	I was not actually single. I found the selection abysmal. It was pointless; people on there are not stable.
Hookup versus relationship orientations	16 (4.1) <sup>a</sup>	Stereotypical stigma difference between relationship desires	It's overwhelming and I wasn't getting anywhere with finding what I wanted. I want a relationship, not a one-night stand. People I meet online tend to be looking for hookups I'm looking for a relationship.
Miscellaneous	7 (1.8)	Nonsensical	
Time off	7 (1.8)	Break from relationships  Escape from online sites Removal from Tinder	[I] got frustrated with the app and online dating, and wanted to take a break for a while. Was angry about someone I dated and wanted to stay away from dating for a while.
Harassment	5 (1.3)	Stalking Creeping  Safety	There were way too many creeps on there that I could not take it anymore. [I] just created one to see if spouse had one.
Privacy	4 (1.0)	Personal  Social anonymity	I had a very nosy and jealous ex-girlfriend. I have done it when traveling to my hometown, as I don't want people there to find me.
Sexually Explicit Content	3 (0.8) <sup>a</sup>	Inappropriate content Racy pictures Genials Sexual advancements	Too many dick pics I got very frustrated by the number of obvious sexual solicitations, and by the complete lack of authentic communication.
Data usage	3 (0.8)	Mobile app complications Restricted data space	I wasn't using it and needed the space on my phone. Just cleaning space on my phone and wasn't using it much anymore.

(continued)

**Table 2.** (continued)

Themes	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Spamming	2 (0.5) <sup>c</sup>	Spambots	Because there are no real matches except for spambots.
		No real matches	Too many scammers and fake profiles.

Note. One hundred and ninety-nine participants had previously indicated they deleted their accounts ( $n = 193$ , or 97% response rate).

<sup>a</sup>Participants interested in men were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>b</sup>Participants interested in women were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>c</sup>Additionally, participants interested in women were the only ones to note Spamming as a criterion for deleting Tinder.

**Table 3.** Reasons participants do not include bios in their Tinder profiles.

Categories	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Inactivity	31 (34.1) <sup>a</sup>	Lazy Unnecessary Indecisive	Cause it's all bull**** anyways.
Desired conversation	23 (25.3) <sup>b</sup>	Dynamic exchange mystery	I feel like a biography or a story about my life is something that I would share face to face when I feel I am ready to do so with the person of my choosing.
Privacy	15 (16.5) <sup>a</sup>	Withhold guarding	Plausible deniability if my account was ever seen by my wife for some reason.
Visual appeal	7 (7.7) <sup>b</sup>	Pictures vanity	I think that Tinder is more focused on pictures. If I am interested in someone I will contact them to learn more. I would expect the same from others.
Miscellaneous	9 (7.4) <sup>b</sup>	Nonsensical	
Indecisive	5 (5.5) <sup>b</sup>	Uncertain how to interact	I find it hard to decide what to put.
Comparison	2 (2.2)	Against other bios Against other apps Strategies	I have bios on the other sites I use so I thought I would try and go without one on Tinder.
Safety	1 (1.1)	Security protection	I like to be a little anonymous [un]til I talk to someone and make sure he's not crazy.

Note. One hundred participants had no bio ( $n = 91$ ; 91% response rate).

<sup>a</sup>Participants interested in men were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>b</sup>Participants interested in women were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

be based on appearance and interests. These representations are commonly enacted through face-to-face interaction, but the preplanned process eliminates communicative spontaneity.

The pre-initiation processes afforded through Tinder indicate that individuals employing mobile dating apps process must (1) know, select, and narrow potential partner qualifications (i.e., selecting dating parameters); (2) create an individualized online impression through photos and bio—by knowing how to present him/herself as a viable partner; and (3) filter through another's interpretations of themselves portrayed through photographs and written descriptions when determining potential partners' worth. The premeditated pre-interaction processes demonstrate static, scripted intrapersonal activities designed to hopefully generate interpersonal communication, and potential relationships. As mobile apps become a supplementary and prominent dating venue, individuals must assess how to evaluate planned representations and their influence on potential interpersonal relationships.

Upon reviewing user demographics and preferences, this app is limited to specific populations and has nominal representation of other populations (e.g., minority, rural, and same-sex individuals). Individuals may be self-selecting into particular apps to obtain their desired mate. Until their latest update, Tinder (2016) did not ask for education or employment information, which provides an opportunity for traversing and enriching status boundaries; however, as Tinder continually updates its interfaces, future adjustments may limit or expand to transgender, economic status, class, race, and ethnic diversification. Future research should examine how self-selecting prior apps constrains or expands potential partner parameters.

### *Relationship initiation swiping strategies (RQ3)*

When utilizing see-and-swipe features, participants indicated they split on swiping left ( $M = 3.06$ ,  $SD = 1.04$ ) and right ( $M = 2.63$ ,  $SD = 0.92$ ). When swiping through ten people, participants indicated they likely swipe right on 3.75 ( $SD = 2.78$ ) potential partners. Common connections, or contacts through their social networks, were only sometimes utilized ( $M = 2.42$ ,  $SD = 1.1$ ). Participants uncommonly used super likes ( $M = 1.41$ ,  $SD = 0.80$ ). Participants indicated they matched a little less than half the time ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 0.86$ ) and initiated communication about half the time (self-initiated (46.8%) and other-initiated (53.2%)).

When swiping right (first percentage) or left (second percentage), users ( $n = 365/364$ ) identified three top themes, *attraction* (33.4%, 29.9%), *selective swiper* (21.4%, 28%), and *interesting* (15%, 16.8%). These themes were identical for both swipes, and many other themes overlapped, although they differed in frequency and order. Attraction relied on pictures and bios. As participants indicated, "Their face either took my breath away or they were somewhat attractive with great things in their bio;" otherwise, potential partners were disregarded if perceived as "real fatties or uggs." Traditional face-to-face and online dating have distinct differences, such as gate features that help users decide to approach or avoid potential partners; however, physical attractiveness is commonly the first and most important factor in the selection process (McKenna, 2008). These gating features limit access beyond an initial profile; however, there exists a multitude of processes that occur prior to relationship initiation.

Although online dating sites and mobile dating apps afford relationship opportunities, many users and scholars are critical of selection and relational success. Finkel and

colleagues (2012) rendered online dating as a mechanism that objectifies potential partners, fails to holistically assess potential partners, and undermines the ability to commit. Nevertheless, even with skeptics, many people continue to utilize virtual proximities to expand their potential meeting and dating venues via emergent technologies. Online dating and mobile apps facilitate relationship initiation by increasing potential dating and mating access, expanding information available (e.g., appearance, occupation, interests, other preferences, etc.), and delaying initial face-to-face interaction (Bredow, Cate, & Huston, 2008). Virtual proximity provides access to potential partners beyond physical constraints, widening the field and increasing accessibility (Regan, 2017), even if attraction is king.

After participants create their premeditated self-idealizations, they pursue other idealizations similar to face-to-face relationship initiation. Participants articulate that minimal visible information (attraction) determined whether they swiped left or right. After attraction, users become selective; cardholders play the game pursuing the interactive card-playing deck of faces, discarding and retaining cards (i.e., potential partners) based on their needs and wants—in hopes of mutual matches and getting lucky. The second most frequent theme, *selective swipers*, meant they had particular criteria or standards, and if they were not present, they quickly dismissed them. Interesting meant the bio and/or profile sparked inquisitiveness (in swiping right) or an unappealing reaction caused a negative response (e.g., drugs, fitness, or no bio). Those not discarded based on attraction often received further scrutiny. When swiping right, numerous users applied a *shotgun approach* (12.1%) where they swiped right on all potential partners and filtered out options after receiving matches. As one participant noted, “I get more matches and then sift through them”; the ability to see who is interested was appealing. Those cardholders who go for broke usually apply a shotgun approach, casts a wide net. Overall, participants with an interest in men versus women had more similarities than differences emerged in swiping techniques (for additional information see Tables 4 and 5 as well as notable differences between those interested in men and women).

When both partners swiped right, or matched, participants usually varied in response time: 5.3% immediately, 23.9% in minutes, 39.3% hours, 22.8% days, 4.8% week, and 3.9% never respond. Many participants ventured to meet their matches: 76.9% met matches, while 23.1% never did. On average, participants reported having 4.58 meetings offline ( $SD = 6.78$ ). Many participants (37%) indicated that upon meeting their Tinder-initiated date it led to exclusive dating. Traditional models do not account for modality switching, and there is a limited discussion of online pre-interaction mechanisms that position potential offline meetings. Future research should examine individualistic platform behaviors; both as pre-interaction and strategic information-seeking strategies that set the stage for interpersonal communication, face-to-face expectations, and relationship norms.

### *Hookups (in or as relationship initiation) (RQ4)*

Tinder provides an innovative platform for relationship initiation, offering a supplemental way for individuals to begin romantic relationships, including hookups. Participants were asked to exclusively choose what Tinder was designed for; users indicated

**Table 4.** Reasons for swiping right.

Themes	Frequency <i>n</i> (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Attraction	122 (33.4) <sup>b</sup>	Physical appearance like what they see Desirable profile pic potential spambot	I have very strong, occasionally superficial standards that are easy enough to determine without viewing a bio. Their face either took my breath away or they were somewhat attractive with great things in their bio.
Selective swiper	78 (21.4) <sup>b</sup>	Picky meet approvals	I'm selective! Less fish in the pond, but higher quality fish. I've been a woman on the internet for most of my life at this point. If a guy looks sketchy, well, I dislike getting called a bitch or a whore, so better to just avoid it. Girls are tricky too, because I have particular tastes and a host of my own issues and I'm a little shy.
Interesting	55 (15)	Similar interests appealing attributes Bio appeal	If I like the bio and information the person provides and I think they're attractive, I want to let them know. I look for someone who is creative, intelligent, has friends, doesn't take car selfies, and that I find physically attractive. Unfortunately, a lot of girls take car selfies.
Shotgun approach	44 (12.1) <sup>b</sup>	Increase matches open all possibilities Widest variety of matches	I never message first so I swipe right to everyone. If someone gross messages me I just unmatch with them. I get more matches and then sift through them.
Miscellaneous	32 (8.8) <sup>a</sup>	Nonsensical	
Mood dependent	13 (3.6)	Boredom curiosity emotion driven	Depends on my mood. Because I'm bored.
50/50	11 (3.0) <sup>b</sup>	Chance playing the odds half	I usually swipe right about half of the time because honestly, I'm a very judgmental person. Because half of the time people look attractive to me . . .
Game	6 (1.6)	Fun entertainment	It's a game to me. It is entertaining.
Hookup	4 (1.1) <sup>c</sup>	Sex fooling around flings	I actually would fuck most girls. Sometimes you just need a good fuck!

Note. *n* = 365; 92.4% response rate.

<sup>a</sup>Participants interested in men were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>b</sup>Participants interested in women were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.

<sup>c</sup>Additionally, participants interested in women were the only ones to note Hookup as a criterion for swiping right.

hookup (51.5%), dating (33.5%), or meeting (15%). Participants indicated Tinder was designed for hookups more than dating—the stigma associated with utilizing Tinder did not echo negativity toward mobile app dating nor a stereotypical hookup app. Many

**Table 5.** Reasons for swiping left.

Themes	Frequency n (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Attraction	109 (29.9) <sup>b</sup>	Physical appearance do not like what they see Undesirable profile pic Potential spambot	A lot of the people have raunchy profiles/seem like bots so I just ignore them and I only swipe right if I'm interested. Only real fatties or uggs.
Selective swiper	101 (28) <sup>b</sup>	Picky does not meet approval	Because sometimes it's 100% obvious, right off the bat, that the user is a waste of my time. Plenty to choose from and I have a limited amount of right swipes.
Interesting	61 (16.8)	No similar interests Unappealing attributes No bio appeal	I swipe left when I'm not interested in a guy, it's as simple as that. Tinder is basically judging a person on whether you are physically attracted to them or not. If I don't see a person that I find to be good to look at then I don't swipe right. Judging by their personality (or photos if that's all they provide), I assume some people won't really like me or be interested in my interests.
Miscellaneous	29 (8.0) <sup>a</sup>	Nonsensical	
Mood dependent	19 (5.2) <sup>a</sup>	Boredom curiosity emotion driven	I just went with what felt right to me. [I] follow my gut.
Safety	18 (4.9)	Racists unhealthy behavior crude actions creepers	Again, I'm a woman on the internet. If a guy looks sketchy, and I swipe left, he can't contact me, show me his dick, or ask me to give him pictures of my nude body. With girls, I have to weigh their safety and my own, and again, I'm pretty shy. If someone has a no shirt pic or there's something else that is a red flag for me right off the bat, I'll avoid that person.
50/50	12 (3.3) <sup>b</sup>	Chance playing the odds half	I usually swipe left about half of the time because I have trouble finding someone I think is compatible with me. Only about half are interesting.

(continued)

Table 5. (continued)

Themes	Frequency n (%)	Definition	Exemplars
Game	6 (1.6) <sup>b</sup>	Fun Entertainment	Sometimes I close my eyes and just swipe and see what I land on. I want to go through as many people as possible when using the app
Hookup	5 (1.4) <sup>b</sup>	Only wants sex	Depends on what he's looking for (one night thing) and especially if he sounds like a douchebag. There's quite a few douchebag guys on Tinder. But I was surprised that there are a lot of real sweet guys. It got hard messaging and keeping conversations at one point so it can be hard to zero in on one and talk, unfortunately. Some can be impatient if you don't respond in 2.04 ms.
False hope	3 (0.8) <sup>c</sup>	Soft rejection	I do not like to put anyone down or reject them I never message first so I swipe right to everyone. If someone gross messages me I just unmatched with them.

Note. *n* = 364; 92.2% response rate.  
<sup>a</sup>Participants interested in men were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.  
<sup>b</sup>Participants interested in women were more likely to employ these reasons as qualifying criterion.  
<sup>c</sup>Additionally, participants interested in women were the only ones to note *False Hope* as a criterion for swiping left.

users indicated they had a hookup via Tinder; however, as popularity increases on Tinder, relationship initiation and development scripts may need to be more exclusive of noncommittal and emotionally inconsequential sexual interactions, or hookups (Paul et al., 2008). Participants varied on their hookup experience: no hookup experience (21.8%), hookup experience without sexual intercourse (12.6%), and hookup experience with sexual experience (65.6%). Most participants found the following acceptable activities for hooking up: 58.8% kissing, 57.6% touching each other bodies, 51.6% oral sex, and 50.6% vaginal sex. On average participants hooked up 3 times ( $M = 3.41$ ,  $SD = 12.63$ ,  $Med = 1$ ) and ranged from zero times (43.2%) to 200 times (0.3%). Participants indicated they perceived hookups occurred more for men ( $M = 4.13$ ,  $SD = 1.57$ ) than women ( $M = 3.97$ ,  $SD = 1.52$ ) on Tinder and less for themselves ( $M = 22.6$ ,  $SD = 1.7$ ) than either sex. Because Tinder offers scripted pre-interaction, it may be important to consider the subsequent face-to-face interaction and its organic orientation, since the

anticipated interaction is primarily based on attraction, and may involve sex in the initial relationship script.

Tinder is an access point for hooking up, commonly utilized by EA, but does not automatically translate into hooking up (with vaginal or anal intercourse), rather Tinder is multifaceted and should not exclusively be viewed with a sex-app stigma. Although, since Tinder provides a platform for limited disclosure of personal characteristics, individuals balance disclosure and anonymity—the delicate balance creates opportunities and consequences. Tinder creates the anonymity to meet and hookup with perceived minimal consequences; however, meeting strangers can accompany menacing sexual encounters, dangerous situations, and sexually transmitted diseases and illnesses. Therefore, precautions should be determined when meeting or interacting when switching from online safety to offline environments.

### *Relational development 2.0*

Conceptually, interpersonal scholars must negotiate whether new phenomena, such as Tinder merit distinctions in relational processes, especially since online sites and mobile app research, have commonly borrowed from traditional dating research. The relationship development model developed from face-to-face interactions, commonly involves five steps, starting with initiating, as the step where relational partners begin communication and make first impressions. This study adds *pre-interaction processes* that involve information seeking as central to people's lives and motivations in relationship development, currently absent from current traditional models. Therefore, the pre-interaction step identified in this study, should be applied as the new first step within the escalation model where emerging technologies, online sites, and mobile apps are utilized to initiate relationships. This first pre-interaction process involves explicit and conscious selection criteria upon entering the application or site. The criterion automatically eliminates potential partners without any interaction rather through the generation of self-generated static constructions (i.e., age, gender, sexual orientation, proximity, etc.). After categorical selections are self-determined, users participate in the second step, where they craft individual identification in visual presentations and textual descriptions. While these descriptions intend to draw a particular audience, they blur lines between interpersonal and mass communication since composing static, yet optimal-mediated representations of oneself requires self-reflection, awareness, and expertise. The pre-interaction encompasses (1) determining partner categorical selections and (2) designing a mediated rendering of an offline reality, prior to any communication and first impression interaction. Tinder's swipe logic means that instrumental patterns discursively created through this gesture bind users' decision-making to a binary yes or no (David & Cambre, 2016), whereby the information presented and assessed was all generated prior to any interaction.

On Tinder, users must navigate others' self-generated data to match, where then they attempt an initiation to produce a mediated intimacy to be expedited offline (David & Cambre, 2016). Each party must show mutual interest and then either party can initiate discourse, equality exists through mutual interest. Tinder has established ground in the app-dating sphere since it offers a user-friendly interface that boasts physical attraction,

offers an enormous following, and yields a less structured forum for communication. Tinder's popularity increases the desirability for relationship and hook up initiation, and simultaneously, the potential influx of expectation violations, miscommunication, and negative experiences. Other apps are trying to navigate the limited relationship limitation structures on Tinder. For instance, Bumble mandates women initiate conversation and implement photo verification to prevent catfishing; Coffee Meets Bagels prizes women as the commodity requiring men pay for access. The co-presence and design often cause users to perpetuate their desire to search and find more potential partners rather than further relationship initiation and development. Opening Tinder causes users to seek other potential partners; however, Tinder does not attempt to facilitate matchmaking in its design rather continues to exploit its commodity, the users. Apps offer users unique affordances and features, individuals must first determine which app best serves their interests, and then second determine how the technological affordances alter the relationship initiation script. Tinder generates relationship initiation, or what occurs before contact begins, and future scholars should continue to investigate what relational implications occur through and after pre-interaction in mediated relationship developmental processes.

## Conclusion

This study investigated a prominent method for engaging in interpersonal interaction. Wide acceptance surrounding mobile dating apps illustrates supplementation, rather than substitution, to relationship initiation within overwhelming popular usage. As relationship initiation originates through a medium, such as Tinder, relational scholars must consider that the medium modifies and mediates the interpersonal relationship, similar to that of the message. Therefore, the overarching contribution of this study asks: How does choosing Tinder change the relationship? How are psychological, relational, and communicative effects (Ledbetter, 2014) changed given the initial interaction is prescribed. This exploratory research offers insight to theorize what pre-interaction steps individuals undertake to generate relational interactions.

The association that Tinder, and other mobile dating apps, mimic online dating sites reduces their unique features and affordances. Until now, Tinder's influence on interpersonal relationships, including pre-interaction activities, relationship initiation behaviors, and hookup culture, has not been explored. This study recognized the changes occurring in mobile dating apps and the need to further explicate how Tinder assists in relationship initiation, and what implications that may have for pre-interaction relationship developmental processes. Initiating and experimenting processes occur on Tinder once a match is established; however, the pre-interaction processes constitute strategic behaviors, such as choosing mobile dating, determining personal profile appearances, and branding an asynchronous impression, all of which have not been previously been accounted for in the relationship development model.

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## Notes

1. Tinder statistics parallel July 2016 trends.
2. Tinder's new features include Instagram integration, common connections, GIFs (Graphic Interchange Format), bigger emoji usage, and non-gender conforming demographics (Tinder, 2016).
3. Dating apps are used most frequently by 25–34-year-olds, comprising emerging adult (EA) and Millennials (Smith & Duggan, 2013). Millennials were born between 1982 and 2003 and presently encompass all EA. In sum, Millennials research was utilized to argue EA relevance in the search, initiate, and navigate interpersonal relationships; however, I did not want to conflate conflicting perspectives on those two distinct bodies of scholarship.
4. Tinder discounted service for 13–18-year-olds (Crook, 2016b).
5. Tinder discontinues service for users under 18 (Crook, 2016a).

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