

6-1-2016

## Singles Looking to Mingle: An Analysis of Self-Presentation in Online Dating

Leigha Jacobson

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Abbey Atkinson

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*


Ladan Mohamed

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

Jason Dorr

*Concordia University, Saint Paul*

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

 Part of the [Gender, Race, Sexuality, and Ethnicity in Communication Commons](#), and the [Social Media Commons](#)

---

### Recommended Citation

Jacobson, Leigha; Atkinson, Abbey; Mohamed, Ladan; and Dorr, Jason (2016) "Singles Looking to Mingle: An Analysis of Self-Presentation in Online Dating," *Concordia Journal of Communication Research*: Vol. 3 , Article 1.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.csp.edu/comjournal/vol3/iss1/1>

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

**SINGLES LOOKING TO MINGLE: AN ANALYSIS OF SELF-  
PRESENTATION IN ONLINE DATING**

By

Leigha Jacobson, Abbey Atkinson, Ladan Mohamed, and Jason Dorr

Advising Professor:

Dr. Kim Flottemesch, PhD

Concordia University- St. Paul

## **ABSTRACT**

*Online dating has become a commonplace in today's society as more people are turning to it more than ever before. Because this type of dating has become so widely accepted, the researchers felt it was necessary to take a deeper look into self-presentation in online dating and how people choose to represent themselves. Participants of this study include single men and women, between the ages of 18-35, from a large Midwestern metro area in the United States. The purpose of this study was to gain information as to how men and women choose to represent themselves on online dating platforms. The key areas that were chosen to be further explored in the analysis include: the information participants chose to share about themselves, types of photos they used to represent themselves, expressions of desiring physical relationships and each gender's use of deception. Ultimately, the data suggests that there were clear discrepancies between the information that men and women shared about themselves in their bios, versus what they disclosed to the researchers in questions asked.*

## **INTRODUCTION**

The topic of self-presentation in online dating profiles between men and women required further exploration because the researchers believe that there is a difference in the way men and women portray themselves online. The self-presentation tendencies that the researchers aimed to analyze are the specific ways in which both genders choose to portray themselves, such as the

types of photos they display and how they are choosing to describe themselves in their general profile. A 2010 study by Hall, Park, Song & Cody, explored the following factors: “gender, self-monitoring, personality traits, and demographic characteristics that influence online dating service users’ strategic misrepresentation, or the conscious and intentional misrepresentation of personal characteristics” The study ultimately found that, “men are more likely to misrepresent personal assets, relationship goals, personal interests, and personal attributes, whereas women are more likely to misrepresent weight” (para.1, abstract). It is hypothesized that there is a difference between what people say they are seeking in a romantic partner in their online profile versus what they actually want in a real life relationship.

By conducting this study, the researchers aimed to find the specific differences between men and women’s profiles. By doing so, it was sought out to pursue if there are certain trends or discrepancies between the two genders. It is believed that men and women’s profiles differ from one another in what they express about themselves. In conducting this study, it is intended to find out if there is a trend of people purposefully misrepresenting themselves on their online dating profiles with plans of becoming more successful in finding a romantic partner. If so, what is each gender most commonly being deceptive about and is there a difference between what they choose to fabricate?

## **LITERATURE REVIEW**

### *Online Dating/Mobile Dating*

As the digital age increases, singles find online dating as a more viable option over traditional ways of meeting people. A study conducted by Pew Research Center as cited in Smith & Anderson shows, “[as of 2005] most Americans had little exposure to online dating or to the people who use it, and they tended to view it as a subpar way of meeting people. Today, almost

half of the public knows someone who uses online dating or who has met a spouse or partner via online dating—and their attitudes towards online dating have grown progressively more positive” (2015, para. 2). In today’s day in age, online dating has become a more socially acceptable means of finding a significant other. According to a 2015 study, the total number of single people in the United States is 54,250,000, while the total number of people in the United States who have tried online dating is 49,250,000 (Online Dating Statistics, 2015). Thus, it is shown that a vast majority of singles are now turning to online platforms instead of solely relying on face-to-face interactions.

In the 21st century, society communicates by using hands rather than mouths, touching keyboards and mouse pads to coincide with thoughts going through the mind. “In the last decade, advances in information technologies have substantially altered the way humans interact. Between email, texting, social networking, instant messaging, and Skype, people now have the resources that would make it possible to spend days or even months without coming face-to-face with another person, yet still remain connected with the world” (Brown, 2013, p. 1). With the frequency in which millennials use social media and the heightened access to mobile devices, it is now more possible for people to be connected with someone at all times.

With the prevalence of dating apps, people now have the ability to have constant attention from someone through online dating networks, if one chooses to seek it. This breaks the cycle of traditional “face-to-face” dating because with online platforms, it is possible to skip certain relationship phases and go through a quicker course of action when developing a relationship than traditional dating. This is justified by the Social Exchange Theory (1959), which illustrates the extent to which individuals feel about having a relationship with another person depending on three perceptions; the balance between what is put into a relationship and

what is gotten out of it, what type of relationship is thought to be deserved, and the chances of finding a better relationship with someone else. If a person becomes discontent within a relationship based on these notions, it can lead to one feel unfulfilled by their current situation. However, more singles are dissatisfied with being alone as is shown through a 2010 study conducted by Nayar which states; “Lonely people tend to report being dissatisfied with their relationships and are often cynical, rejecting, bored, and depressed. Both relationship dissatisfaction and difficulty with social behaviors may lead lonely people to seek online relationships” (2010, p. 486). Furthermore, Duck’s Disengagement and Dissolution Theory (1982) explains that in a position when analyzing a relationship, one is likely to find their situation unsatisfactory when the relationship is not intimate enough, is not defined, or there is a psychological withdrawal. In the case of online dating, these tendencies occur more often because the situation tends to be more ambiguous due to the fact that it does not follow the path of traditional relationships. Duck’s theory lays out four specific phases that conventional relationships are assumed to go through. Without any face-to-face interaction, it is possible to skip over certain steps or go through them in a quicker fashion because cyber relationships do not require the physical, emotional or social elements that a traditional relationship does. For example, as shown in his third phase, the Social Phase, Duck expresses that, “Not only are there unattractive implications of relationship loss, in terms of levels of failure and consequent lowered social values, there are also social problems. Much of our society’s life is based on the assumption that people are paired. [...] A single person, one without an appropriate partner, is thus something of a difficulty for *other people* to manage in a vibrant social environment” (p. 436). With an online relationship, a couple is never seen as a physical pairing; therefore it is not necessary to go through this step of the dissolving of a relationship.

### *Self-Presentation*

Having a strong self-presentation is key while a person is involved in online dating. Previous literature states that, “online self-presentation is static and involves describing one’s appearance verbally or using photographs, whereas face-to-face self-presentation is dynamic and embodied” (Toma, 2010, p. 336). Because there is so much importance placed on providing a put together profile, people go out of their way to create the best possible image of themselves on their online dating profiles. Factors such as creative screen names, striking primary photos and an intriguing headline messages can attract potential dates. Khan touches on the effectiveness of profile pictures in his 2015 study by stating that, “In the absence of prior acquaintance, attire and physical appearance in still photos have a powerful influence on likeability. A genuine smile, one that crinkles up your eyes will make a good first impression. A slight tilt of the head can also enhance attractiveness. Choice of red in a woman enhances men’s attraction leading to significantly more contacts.[...] A headline message is a simple language, not over-complicated wording, is likely to result in significantly higher ratings of intelligence because people are naturally drawn to words that are easy to remember and pronounce. It makes information- processing easier, which also increases likeability. Overall attractiveness of the text is positively correlated with photo attractiveness. If you can get the potential date to stop and think about your headline message, increasing the exposure time to the primary photo, this will increase their liking”. (para. 7-8).

In relation to profile pictures, Khan also makes the case that; “Desirable [screen] names are more often associated with attraction than undesirable names. Names with negative connotations are often associated with inferiority. Playful screen names are universally attractive. Men are more attracted to screen names that indicate physical attractiveness, whereas women are

more attracted to screen names that indicate intelligence” (2015, para. 6). First impressions are important in any setting whether it be face-to-face or online. Self-presentation can make or break a person's decision to pursue a relationship based on what one presents to the world via online dating.

### *Self-Disclosure*

Interactions in which a person may share details about themselves can vary from general meet and greets with small talk, to conversing with close family, friends or partners in which every moment of life is shared with. The level of self-disclosure is dependent on the situation a person is involved in. When meeting a new person, individuals are generally more reserved during face-to-face interactions. While engaging in online dating, people are able to disclose details about oneself such as a hometown, job and other personal attributes. By revealing these details up front, individuals miss out on the initial small talk that otherwise would be encountered when meeting a new person face-to-face. “Self-disclosure means letting go of anxiety and apprehension of losing someone due to knowing someone more intimately; when relationships reach this stage they become more intimate” (Wysocki, 1996, 1998; Merkle & Richardson, 2000; McKenna et al., 2002(as cited in Rosen, Cheever, Cummings & Felt, 2008, p.2127)). This level of self-disclosure can be reached in a quicker fashion in an online setting as people have the ability to disclose more intimate information up front in a virtual atmosphere. “When people meet online they tend to reveal much more about themselves immediately in the first few e-mails. It’s all about getting to know each other before possibly meeting face-to-face” (Wallace, 1999; Parks & Floyd, 1996 (as cited in Rosen, Cheever, Cummings, & Felt, 2008, p.2127)). This generation of singles is looking to mingle to get to know one another via online



chatting, rather than the old school meeting style where the only way to get to know each other was to meet face-to-face or send a personal letter through the mail.

Espana (2013) looked at the process of online dating, the similarities and differences between online and offline dating and the emotions and self-disclosure on first impressions via e-mail with a potential partner. Their results indicated that, “traditional-style dating, personal information, personality types and education levels are the most important predictors of self-disclosure. By contrast, online daters focus on communication style and physical attractiveness” (p. 27). Individual profile bios on online dating websites include generic “icebreaker questions” which would typically be answered on a first date; thus, leading users to skip over this awkward step in traditional dating. In other words, online dating profiles provide more information up front than what would otherwise be given in a conventional face-to-face encounter. According to Espana 2013, “To understand when self-disclosure takes place and how self-disclosure works in romantic relationships, based on Altman and Taylor’s Social Penetration Theory, the theory posits that the more time we spend with others, the more likely we are to disclose more personal or intimate information about our lives. The social penetration theory is also known as the onion theory because the theory is based on the notion that as you peel each layer of disclosure and have deeper conversations, you are getting closer to the core of an individual. As relationships develop, the individuals will share more aspects of themselves with more breadth and depth. For example, every individual has breadth (the various topics incorporated in your life). As you converse and share information regarding these topics, the depth at which you share information increases with every piece of information exchanged. Thus, the concept peeling the onion layers” (p.19-20).

Self-disclosure, in an online atmosphere, focuses more on intimate information about an individual and what is chosen to be shared with others. The purpose of this is the hope of creating a relationship. People self disclose faster because others can read bios and answers about the person right away to see if there is an instant connection. In offline dating these answers come with time and you learn as you go. The process of communicating online expedites surface level conversation. The person already knows the biography of their match because it is online; there is less mystery because a person is able to have a deeper level of conversation right away.

### *Deception*

Online dating is essentially a personal advertisement of an individual; the online user can easily enhance oneself to appear more alluring hence why online dating can often be more appealing than traditional dating. “To attract customers, online dating sites typically emphasize two aspects of the services they offer. First, they emphasize that their services are unique to dating through the Internet; that is, the sites are offering a service that cannot be duplicated in any other way. [...] Second, online dating sites emphasize that forming relationships using their services is superior to dating offline.” (Finkel et al, 2012, para.14). These services are often enticing to users, due to the fact that online dating sites give individuals the freedom to say whatever they want to represent themselves; however, there is no ethical standard to assess if what they are saying is truthful or not. “Online dating requires users to invest time, money, and high hopes in finding potential mates. Encountering deception in others’ profiles can stall the process and shatter those hopes, which is why many users characterize online dating as taking a leap of faith (as cited in Whitty & Joinson, 2009). An important question, is whether online dating deception is detectable before meeting potential mates face-to-face.” (Toma, 2012, p.78)

With deception being a pertinent issue with online dating, it could easily curb the appeal of these services to some individuals.

Detecting deception is becoming a major concern with online dating. People are increasingly becoming worried about being fooled by false information from people's dating profiles, which complicates the process of forming solid, honest, relationships. "Concerns about online deception are as old as the Internet itself. These concerns stem from the disembodied nature of online communication, which allows people to interact in the absence of the physical self and primarily through textual means. This lack of physicality increases opportunities for deception (e.g., lying about physical appearance) and decreases the number of cues people use in detecting deception (e.g., eye gaze, fidgeting). For these reasons, the detection of deception is assumed to be difficult in online environments" (Hancock, 2007, p.78). Often times, people present themselves as their ideal selves, or how they hope to be in the future, rather than a true representation of how they are at the time of writing their profile.

### **RESEARCH QUESTION/ HYPOTHESIS AND JUSTIFICATIONS**

When looking at online and mobile dating, there are three main factors that are used to make an online dater stand out in the virtual world: self-presentation, self-disclosure and deception, as is shown in the body of the literature above. It is hypothesized that there is a difference in the way men and women portray themselves online. However, research to date has not fully explored how one presents their ideal self online, versus their actual self.

The researchers of this study were curious to find out if individuals misrepresent themselves on their profile bios when it comes to attempting to find a romantic partner. It is thought that there is a difference between what people say they are seeking in a romantic partner in their online profile as opposed to what they actually want in a real life relationship.

*RQ: What are the different ways that men and women use self-presentation in their profiles on online dating websites?*

## **METHODOLOGY**

### *Sample Participants*

The target participants selected for this study were a convenience sample of seven single men and seven single women all between the ages of 18-35 in a large Midwest metro area. The 14 total participants were asked to fill out a questionnaire (See Appendix Figure 1), which was sent out via email with an attached word document. Included in the email was a message stating the purpose of this study and a brief explanation of the study. No incentive was given for the survey. The participants were also asked to attach a screenshot(s) of their main profile and basic bio, including their main picture. The researchers then examined the data using a coding sheet (See Appendix Figure 2).

### *Analysis of Content*

The researchers compared a total of 14 profiles from the following dating websites: Match.com, OKCupid and Tinder. Match.com and OKCupid are online dating websites, while Tinder is a mobile dating app. From these profiles the researchers focused on the different characteristics that each participant discloses in his or her bio. The information gathered from both their profiles and the questionnaire responses were analyzed through a coding sheet (See Figure 2) in which the researchers cross-referenced each participant's information. It was observed that the data collected from Tinder profiles was not as extensive as other dating platforms being analyzed, because Tinder has a maximum limit of a combination 500 letters and/or symbols. Other dating sites, such as Match.com and OKCupid have different sections

with specific questions that allow users to elaborate as much as they want, while Tinder only has a blank slate where a person can type as much as the limit allows.

## **RESULTS/DISCUSSION**

The amount of information people disclose about themselves on online dating profiles varied from person to person. The key areas that were chosen to be further explored in the analysis include the participant's information they chose to share about themselves, types of photos they used to represent themselves, expressions of desiring physical relationships and each gender's use of deception.

### *Information Shared*

The data suggests that profiles on Tinder usually had very brief statements, many of which were seemingly random thoughts that came across as vague and only provided a small glimpse of the individual's personality. For example, Female 4 states in her bio, "Don't you think the drummer from Nirvana looks a lot like the lead singer of the Foo Fighters?" This gives a brief insight into her personality, showing that she is not only a fan of this particular genre of music, but also her potentially eclectic nature. However, the men and women that did go into more depth on their Tinder profiles showed very different trends. In comparison, men's bios tended to discuss work, sports and the military, while women, on the other hand, discussed work, school and social interests.

Altman and Taylor's Social Penetration Theory (1973), most commonly referred to as the onion model, is the process of developing intimacy with another person through mutual self-disclosure and other forms of vulnerability. In other words, you have to peel back the layers to get to know someone on a deeper level. Through evaluation of the participants, the researchers found that people were more comfortable initiating conversation online as opposed to in person.

Thus, the users were more comfortable with vulnerability in an online platform because it seemed less intimidating as well as less risky. Many expressed that there is not as much risk of immediate rejection and embarrassment when approaching someone online. Male 6 states in his answers, “In person, I would never initiate a conversation with someone if I didn’t have a pre-text. In other words: I wouldn’t chat up a stranger at a bar. On a website, everyone is there to find someone to date, so it seems less intrusive to initiate conversation. I also ask more questions than I would in person, otherwise the other person rarely responds”. With online dating, users are able to disclose information much more quickly than they would when meeting face-to-face.

Women shared this same sentiment as expressed by Female 2 where she shares, “I am pretty shy as far as approaching someone like that in person but online I feel like I could be myself right off the bat”. Participants of both sexes showed mutual feelings of comfort with being vulnerable when behind a computer screen that is missing in face-to-face meetings. The participants overwhelmingly expressed a willingness to expose their true selves in less time when communicating online than they normally would when meeting a date in person. Toma (2008) elaborates in saying, “Initiating relationships involves important decisions regarding self-disclosure: what information to disclose and how to disclose it to create a favorable impression” (p. 2). This leads to “peeling back layers”, or self-disclosing, much sooner in a relationship that began online as opposed to one that started face to face.

### *Types of Photos Used*

Relating to the information shared, the researchers believe that women’s descriptions as well as their photos left more room for people to get to know them, whereas men’s descriptions were more up front. In another example, Female 6 expresses her social interests through the photos she has chosen to display. She revealed, “Most of the pictures on there are of me when I

travel. I chose the pictures that remind me of fun times and also highlight my love for travel/fun. I have pictures on my profile from Paris, London, Morocco, and Spain, all places that I've gone to and had experiences that have shaped who I am as a person today." Men's photos, on the other hand, were commonly taken in front of generic greenery or inconspicuous places and their descriptions were more direct and to the point with less room for interpretation. Male 4 exemplifies this as his picture is taken in an unrecognizable outdoor setting and his personal description reads simply: "Hockey, tacos, and head banging".

In their profiles, men also had the tendency to display photos that showed them engaging in different activities. A majority of the male participants had pictures that showed different aspects of their lives to display that they are physically active in general, without verbalizing it in their description about themselves. Male 3 states, "Yes I have multiple pictures. Each one feeds into a different aspect of what I want my image to say to women". The most common trends that the researchers observed of the male participant's pictures were of photos with a group of friends, usually in a party atmosphere where they are engaging in something physically active.

The photos also often showcased the participants in the outdoors, typically displaying their full bodies. As far as editing their pictures, one out of seven men admitted to using filters, and another one out of the seven men had used a professional image. As de Backer et al. (2008) noted, "it is much easier to present oneself in desirable ways if one actually possesses desirable attributes" (p. 123). Men generally expressed the hope that by using these specific pictures, it would encourage women to gain interest in them. For example, Male 4 states this about his profile picture, "Yes I do [have multiple pictures of himself]. And I just chose a few photos that I thought give anyone viewing my profile the best image of what I look like". This can be linked to Baumeister's Self-Presentation Theory. The theory explains that, "[There are] Two types of

self presentational motivations can be distinguished. (as cited in Baumeister, 1982 p. 91, 3-26). One (pleasing the audience) is to match one's self-presentation to the audience's expectations and preferences. The other (self construction) is to match one's self-presentation to one's own ideal self" (Baumeister, 1987, p. 71-87). For example, one would dress differently going into a professional interview than to hang out with friends at a sports bar to watch the big game. Men and women want to give off a good image of themselves online while they are looking for a potential partner in order to be more successful.

Four out of seven women who participated in the survey used some sort of photo editing, such as filters. Female 7, whose profile photo has the most obvious editing due to the fact that she altered her photo to a different color, stated in her answer that she "...enjoys turning all of her photos into black and white." According to a 2009 study conducted by Hancock & Toma, "The profile photograph is now a central component of online self-presentation, and one that is critical for relational success" (para. 7). Because of this, the researchers find that people put much more thought and effort into finding the perfect photo to represent themselves rather than simply describing themselves through words.

When the researchers analyzed the photos of both genders, they found similar characteristics were appearing throughout their profile bios. As also detailed by Hancock & Toma, "self-presentation is defined as the process of packaging and editing the self in order to create a certain impression upon the audience" (2009, para. 6.) If both genders were to be broken down into two different categories, we find all seven of the men's profile pictures were either of them in a party scene or showing them acting more stoic through their pictures taken. Male 5 stated in his answers, "I used a black and white filter to go for a more vintage look. I thought it fitting with my black tie look and the scotch in my hand." This can lead the researches to believe



one of two things; first, men want to be seen as individuals who like to have fun and second, they want to come off as someone who isn't soft and can be defined as a “real man”. The women on the other hand showed the opposite. All seven participants had bright white smiles, and from the beginning, there was a sense of open, inviting and welcoming vibes about their personalities through their dating sites. All seven of the female participants had posed pictures as opposed to candid photos; four out of these seven women posed with the stereotypical female pose with their hand on their hip with their chin up and chest out.

### *Expression of Physical Relationships*

In their answers, men were more overt when expressing a desire to have physical relationships than what was expressed by women. In response to a question regarding face-to-face meetings from online platforms, Male 3 answered, “Yes, oh lord yes. I meet with the majority of the women I meet online. It's awkward but I turn it into a purely physical relationship with no strings attached. Usually only meet face-to-face the one time.” This expresses a direct intention to meet people solely for a short-term physical relationship. Male participants also alluded to desiring this type of relationship within their bios, but were much more ambiguous when doing so. For example, Male 2 states in his bio: “Experience is one of the few things someone cannot take away from you so let's get weird”. Although this does not directly say that he is only looking for sex, this statement could easily be interpreted as such. Especially, due to the fact that this is the only information he provides for himself other than his age. Male 2 mentioned regarding meeting face-to-face with people he has met online, “Yes, with this app, most of the interactions are just sexual so you can imagine the rest”. On the other hand, no women directly expressed interest in a purely sexual relationship in their questionnaire. Only one out of seven women reported in their online bio that they would be interested in casual sex, but

only after expressing primary interest in finding new friends and finding a long-term relationship. This can relate back the concept of Interpersonal Processes in Romantic Relationships, which states, “The ways people think about potential partners and relationships clearly influence whether and how they initiate relationships with others. Those who see relationships as risky and dangerous are likely to approach potential partners differently than those who view relationships as stable and rewarding. Similarly, once individuals are involved with a romantic partner, their thoughts about their partner and about their relationship are likely to affect their relational outcomes” (Vangelisti, 2012, p. 603). Overall, apprehension in and about romantic relationships correlates with the way people feel about their relationship, the way people behave toward their partner, and even the way their partner behaves towards them.

#### *Use of Deception*

The data suggests that men were more prone to being deceptive about age, job title, and income. For instance, Male 2 stated in his questionnaire that he is 19 years old, but when you look at his profile bio, it says that he is 25 years old. Clearly the two are not consistent. Another example of deception comes from Male 6, where he intentionally is deceptive about his income, saying that he makes more than he really does. When asked if he had ever intentionally provided misleading information about himself on his bio, he answered, “Yes, and it was intentional. I claim to have a slightly higher income than I really do. I’m aware that my income is not very desirable”. In his profile, he chooses to disclose his false income, yet excludes his job title, leaving this part of his personal life seeming a bit vague.

Women were found to be more prone to being deceptive about the school they are attending and filters being used in photos. For example, Female 3 uses the University of Minnesota’s slogan, “Ski-U-Mah”, which could lead one to believe that she is a current student

or alum of the institution. However, during the interview she admits that she has never attended the University of Minnesota, but she attends a different college. Lastly, another example of a female being deceptive is Female 4. She states that she never uses filters on profile photos but looking closely at her picture, one can tell that it has been retouched, mainly due to the fact that her complexion is considerably lighter and clearer than in pictures used in her profile from the same setting. All of this can be tied back to the Interpersonal Deception Theory, which argues, “At root, deception is accomplished by manipulating information. Whether through falsification, concealment, or equivocation, liars use words to accomplish their ends. [the authors] agree, but not necessarily on moral ground. They judge a deceptive act on the basis of the deceiver's motives, not on the acts itself” (Buller & Burgoon, 1992, p.99). In examples shown from the participants, the information from their profiles demonstrates manipulated or misconstrued content that could make potential mates more attracted to their profiles. Although the intent may not have been ill intentioned, the participants were not fully transparent when using self-disclosure.

In summary, the data suggests that there were recognizable discrepancies between the information that men and women shared as well as differences between what participants stated in the descriptions of themselves in their bios, versus what they stated in their questionnaires. This was ultimately found through an analysis of online dating profiles gathered from a convenience sample 14 participants; 7 men and 7 women in which the researchers focused on looking at the types of photos used by the participants, their expression of physical relationships, and the use of deception. Through studying these categories, the researchers were able to conclude that there were indeed clear ways in which men and women use self presentation in their online dating profiles.

## **LIMITATIONS**

While conducting the research, there were some limitations that may have inhibited the success of the study. Firstly, it was noted that by using information from the mobile dating app, Tinder, a limited amount of data about the user was gained due to the fact that the app only allows for a narrow amount of characters to be used in an individual's description of his or herself. This minimized the information that could have been gained. Therefore, in comparison to the profiles from larger websites such as Match.com and OKCupid, which provide an extensive amount of information, data taken from Tinder was extremely limited because it was more of a small snapshot.

Another limitation was that the participants were from a convenience sample. All participants were known by at least one of the researchers. It is perceived that if the participants were complete strangers, the information that was disclosed may have been more accurate as participants could have felt cautious disclosing such personal information to somebody that they already knew. The researchers feel as if this could have repressed the quality of the answers gained from participants because of the fact that there was the possibility of feeling embarrassed by being completely transparent or vulnerable.

### *Suggestions For Future Research*

In conclusion, the results gained from this study have provided stepping-stones for future research. If subsequent analysis were to be conducted, the researchers feel that having a different pool of participants that were complete strangers, and more specific data requirements, such as using only one dating platform could create a more successful study. By gaining data from strangers, one could eliminate the potential for participants to give inaccurate self-reporting.

Also, by narrowing down the data to only one dating platform, preferably a more expansive website such as Match.com, future researchers could gain access to even more specific data.

## REFERENCES

- Backer, C., Braeckman, J., & Farinpour, L. (2008). Mating intelligence in personal ads. In G. Geher & G. Miller (Eds.), *Mating intelligence: Sex, relationships, and the mind's reproductive system* (pp. 77–101). New York: LEA.
- Baumeister, R. F. (1982). A self-presentational view of social phenomena. *Psychological Bulletin*, *91*, 3–26.
- Baumeister, R., & Hutton, D. (1987). Self-Presentation Theory: Self-Construction and Audience Pleasing. In *Theories of Group Behavior* (p. 71-87). Springer New York.
- Brown, Cecilia, (2013) "Are We Becoming More Socially Awkward? An Analysis of the Relationship Between Technological Communication Use and Social Skills in College Students." Psychology Honors Papers. Paper 40.
- Buller, D. & Burgoon J., (1996). Interpersonal Deception Theory. *The International Encyclopedia of Interpersonal Communication*, 203-246.
- Chelune, G. J., Sultan, F. E., & Williams, C. L. (1980). Loneliness, self-disclosure, and interpersonal effectiveness. *Journal of Counseling Psychology*, *27*, 462-468.
- Duck, Steve (1982). A Topography of Relationship Disengagement and Dissolution. *Interpersonal Communication: Readings in Theory and Research. (Mark V. Redmond)*. 427, figure 25.1.
- Duck, Steve (1982). A Topography of Relationship Disengagement and Dissolution. *Interpersonal Communication: Readings in Theory and Research. (Mark V. Redmond)*. 436.
- España, A. (2013). Self-Disclosure and Self-Efficacy in Online Dating. *Dissertations and Theses*, 1-91.
- Finkel, E., Eastwick, P., Karney, B., Reis, H., & Sprecher, S. (2012). Online Dating: A Critical Analysis From the Perspective of Psychological Science. *Psychological Science in the Public Interest*, 3-66.
- Hall, J., Park, N., Song, H., & Cody, M. (2010). Strategic misrepresentation in online dating: The effects of gender, self-monitoring, and personality traits. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 117-135.
- Hancock, J. T. (2007). Digital deception: When, where and how people lie online. In K. McKenna, T. Postmes, U. Reips, & A. N. Joinson (Eds.), *Oxford handbook of Internet psychology* (pp. 287–301). Oxford, England: Oxford University Press.
- Hancock, J.; Toma, C. (2009) Putting Your Best Face Forward: The Accuracy of Online Dating Photographs *Journal of Communication* Vol 59 (Issue N/A), pages 376-386.

Khan, K., & Chaudhry, S. (2015). An evidence-based approach to an ancient pursuit: Systematic review on converting online contact into a first date. *Evid Based Med Evidence Based Medicine*, 48-56.

Long, B. (2010, May 1). SCRIPTS FOR ONLINE DATING: A MODEL AND THEORY OF ONLINE ROMANTIC RELATIONSHIP INITIATION. Retrieved September 9, 2015

McAdams, D. (1989). *Intimacy: The need to be close*. New York, New York: Doubleday.

McKenna, K. Y. A., Green, A. S., & Gleason, E. J. (2002). Relationship formation on the Internet: What's the big attraction? *Journal of Social Issues*, 58, 9–31.

Merkle, E. R., & Richardson, R. A. (2000). Digital dating and virtual relating: Conceptualizing computer mediated romantic relationships. *Family Relations: Interdisciplinary Journal of Applied Family Studies*, 49, 187–192.

Nayar, P. K. (2010). *The new media and cybercultures anthology*. Chichester, West Sussex, UK: Wiley-Blackwell.

Online Dating Statistics. (2015, September 18). Retrieved from Statistic Brain Research Institute. <http://www.statisticbrain.com/online-dating-statistics/>. Retrieved October 21, 2015.

Parks, M. R., & Floyd, K. (1996). Making friends in cyberspace. *Journal of Communication*, 46, 80–97.

Rosen, L., Cheever, N., Cummings, C., & Felt, J. (2008). The impact of emotionality and self-disclosure on online dating versus traditional dating. *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24.

Smith, A., Anderson, M., (2015, April 20). 5 facts about online dating. Retrieved November 30, 2015

Thibaut, J. W., & Kelley, H. H. (1959). *The social psychology of groups*. New York: Wiley.

Toma, C., & Hancock, J. (2010). Looks and Lies: The Role of Physical Attractiveness in Online Dating Self-Presentation and Deception. *Communication Research*, 335-351.

Toma, C.; Hancock, J.; Ellison, N. (2008). Separating Fact From Fiction: An Examination of Deceptive Self-Presentation in Online Dating Profiles. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*. Vol. 20 (No. 10) pages N/A. Retrieved February 15, 2015

Toma, C., & Hancock, J. (2012). What Lies Beneath: The Linguistic Traces of Deception in Online Dating Profiles. *Journal of Communication*, (62), 78-97.

Utz, S.; Beukeboom, C. (2011) The Role of Social Network Sites in Romantic Relationships: Effects on Jealousy and Relationship Happiness *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* Vol 16 (Issue 4), pages 511-527. Retrieved February 15, 2015

Vangelisti, A. L. (2012). Interpersonal Processes in Romantic Relationships. *The SAGE Handbook of Interpersonal Communication*, 18(1), 597-631. Retrieved February 16, 2016, from [http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/48309\\_CH\\_18.pdf](http://www.sagepub.com/sites/default/files/upm-binaries/48309_CH_18.pdf)

Wallace, P. (1999). *The psychology of the Internet*. Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Wysocki, D. K. (1996). Somewhere over the modem: Relationships over computer bulletin boards. Unpublished doctoral dissertation. University of California, Santa Barbara.

Wysocki, D. K. (1998). Let your fingers do the talking: Sex on an adult chat line. *Sexualities*, 1, 425–452.



## APPENDIX

### Figure 1

*By consenting to participate in this study and filling out the questionnaire below, you are agreeing to share personal information from your online dating profile and allowing the researchers to have **access to a screenshot of your basic profile information**. The researchers will be using your information to complete a study which will be supervised by Concordia University, Saint Paul. All information provided will remain completely anonymous. Your name and profile picture or any other confidential information you may have disclosed to the researchers will not be used, and will be immediately discarded after completion of our research. If you agree to the terms above, please continue with the questionnaire. Your participation and honesty are valued and extremely appreciated. These questions will take approximately 20 minutes to answer. Thank you!*

#### Interview Questions:

##### Basic Information:

1. How old are you?
2. When was your profile picture taken? Why did you choose that photo?
3. Did you use filters or photo-shop for your profile picture? Why did you use this? (i.e. was there a feature you wanted to hide or enhance? If so what were they?)
4. Do you have multiple pictures of yourself on your online bio? If so, why did you choose the various photos?
5. What is your intention for being on an online dating website? (Are you looking for a long term relationship, marriage, friendship, etc.)
6. What type of relationship are you looking for? (heterosexual, homosexual, other)

### Dating Platforms:

7. Do you have links on your online dating site to other social media platforms? Please list your social media platforms that you linked. If you have linked to other platforms, why did you choose to do so? If not, why have you chosen not to link to these?
8. How long have you been on this website or dating app?
9. What made you choose this website or dating app?
10. How many other online dating sites are you using?
11. If you have more than one online dating profile, are you being consistent with how you are describing yourself on each profile?
12. How did you decide what to put on your profile?

### Social Interactions:

13. Have you ever met face-to-face with a person you originally matched with online? If yes, how did the interaction go? Please describe.
14. Have you ever put misleading information about yourself on your profile? Was it intentional? If so, please describe.
15. Would you initiate a conversation differently online verses when you are talking to someone in person? How so?
16. Have you ever attempted to find your match from an online dating site on other social media platforms? If so, did that change your initial impression of that individual? Explain.

*Once again, thank you for your participation in this research study. It is greatly appreciated*

**Figure 2**

	Financial Security	Job/ Field	College	Physical Relationship (Hook up)	Religion	Commitment Relationship	Other kinds of Relationships	Talk about Family/ Friends	Type of Photos	Age Deceptive
Male 1										
Male 2										
Male 3										
Male 4										
Male 5										
Male 6										
Male 7										
Female 1										
Female 2										
Female 3										
Female 4										
Female 5										
Female 6										
Female 7										