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# Tinder: True Love or a Nightmare?

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### Tinder: True Love or a Nightmare?

The computer first played matchmaker in the late 1950s. Data would have been fed into the system, and after some data crunching, it would spit out a match based on common interests. Today's dating sites, such as eHarmony.com, PlentyOfFish, and Match.com are reminiscent of the earliest days of online dating - they rely on algorithms to pair potential matches based on shared interests. With the advent of mobile dating apps such as Tinder, of which I will examine in-depth in my paper, the ability for geo-location, which allows users to "see" other users that are nearby their location, has opened new doors. No longer do users have to rely on pre-determined computer algorithms to find potential suitors. Now, if they find another user within their radius all they have to do is swipe right. If the user they are interested in swipes right as well they are matched and can start messaging each other instantly.

Tinder has become a cultural phenomenon with today's young adults. Although some critics of Tinder slam it as superficial and view it strictly as a hook-up platform, it is much more. In today's increasingly interconnected society, Tinder caters to young millennials by fulfilling their desires of finding people outside of their social circles for dating. According to the Pew Research Center, there are more singles under the age of 25 than ever before. Online dating apps have transformed the way young adults under 25 seek out relationships with one another, as an estimated one-in-five 18 to 24 year olds (22%) reported using online dating apps versus only 5%

in 2013.<sup>1</sup> Tinder is packaged in an easy-to-use platform with a shiny bow on top that satisfies instant gratification with the ability to sift through tens upon tens, even hundreds of potential dating prospects.

On the Apple app store, Tinder bills itself in its own description of the app as “[changing] the way people meet around the world. Making new connections on Tinder is easy and fun – just swipe right to like someone, or swipe left to pass.” In fact, according to Tinder, it has facilitated 10 billion matches worldwide.<sup>2</sup> In social media, the Instagram account “tindernightmares,” unaffiliated with Tinder, has accrued 1.7 million followers by populating the feed of followers with funny and embarrassing nightmarish encounters on Tinder.<sup>3</sup> Clearly, the extent of Tinder’s significance in today’s popularity culture cannot be underestimated.

Tinder’s popularity represents a shift in dating culture that focuses on immediate gratification, instant attraction, and convenience, but in some regards, dating culture stays the same because of its reliance on contrast when making partner selections. Contrast effects are inherent to the nature of online dating platforms that keep Tinder grounded in conventional dating culture. However, Tinder’s emphasis on contrast effects rooted in physical attraction differentiates it from traditional dating sites, evidenced by personal anecdotes and research, revolutionizing the way we approach dating. I will examine secondary sources that are comprised of peer-reviewed studies conducted on online-dating and news articles, and apply the theoretical framework and ideas to primary sources that encompass personal anecdotes and Tinder’s website. I will use the quantitative data from the secondary sources and apply it to the

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<sup>1</sup> Aaron Smith and Monica Anderson, “5 facts about online dating,” *PewResearchCenter*, last modified February 29, 2016, <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2016/02/29/5facts-about-online-dating/>.

<sup>2</sup> “Press,” *Tinder*, accessed August 30, 2016, <https://www.gotinder.com/press>.

<sup>3</sup> “Tindernightmares,” *Instagram*, accessed August 30, 2016, <https://www.instagram.com/tindernightmares/?hl=en>.

qualitative data gleaned from personal accounts. My paper will cover the importance of physical attraction and its relation to Tinder's popularity and shift in dating culture, "contrast effects" that ground Tinder in traditional dating culture, and the unique appeal of Tinder including the principles of sexual attraction and analysis of primary anecdotes. The shift in dating culture is changing the way millennials seek out new relationships, and it is important to understand the intricacies that surround Tinder's popularity in popular culture.

The main theoretical approach I will use to relate the similarity of Tinder to traditional online dating sites is "contrast effects." Contrast effects refer to the phenomenon in which "evaluation of a target stimulus is affected by prior or simultaneous exposure to other stimuli. These other stimuli serve as anchors, or reference points, from which to compare a target stimulus."<sup>4</sup> The study of contrast effects is extensive, indicating the importance of contrast effects during social-decision making and person perception. A practical example would be that people recommended lighter sentences to prisoners after learning of more egregious crimes than they had committed. Another instance is politicians were judged as more trustworthy after being exposed to untrustworthy politicians.<sup>5</sup> In the context of attractiveness, contrast effects have been reliably demonstrated for ratings of physical attractiveness such that the face of a moderately attractive person is rated as less attractive following exposure to highly attractive peers than if the raters had been first exposed to moderately or unattractive peers.<sup>6</sup> I will draw parallels in my

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<sup>4</sup> Stephanie S. Spielmann and Geoff MacDonald, "Nice guys finish first when presented second: Responsive daters are evaluated more positively following exposure to unresponsive daters," *Journal Of Experimental Social Psychology* 64, (May 2016): 99, *PsycINFO*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 30, 2016).

<sup>5</sup> Ibid.

<sup>6</sup> Mary H. Burleson, Deborah L. Hall, and Sara E. Gutierrez, "Age moderates contrast effects in women's judgments of facial attractiveness," *Evolutionary Behavioral Sciences* 10, no. 3 (July 2016): 179, *PsycINFO*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 31, 2016).

paper between Tinder and traditional dating sites to prove that they have more in common than commonly perceived and demonstrate the significance of contrast effects in Tinder's appeal to the Millennial generation over dating sites predicated on algorithms.

Why the focus on Tinder? A quick search on social media platforms reveals its popularity. Searching "tinder" on Instagram yields 427,067 public posts with the "#Tinder," a considerable amount considering that the vast majority are photo posts talking about Tinder. Furthermore, searching "swipedright" a popular phrase commonly used by committed couples returns 5,367 public posts, the vast majority featuring engaged or married couples that met on Tinder. It is important to note that both these results are public posts. There may be even more results that are private depending on the nature of the Instagram account as Instagram users have the option of making their accounts private or leaving them public where anyone can follow them and see their posts. On Tinder's website, Tinder proudly touts 1.4 billion swipes per day, 26 million matches per day, and that it is downloaded in 196 countries.<sup>7</sup> Tinder also has a section featuring success stories of its users resulting in long-term relationships and even marriages. Its branding appears to be responsible for attracting new users as well. The featured success stories section is progressive, featuring interracial couples and same sex couples, appealing to the Millennial generation, a generation in which "nine-in-ten" people accept interracial dating and marriage.<sup>8</sup> Undeniably, Tinder is as popular as ever since it first came out four years ago.

The peer-reviewed article, "Nice guys finish first when presented second: Responsive daters are evaluated more positively following exposure to unresponsive daters," published in the *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology*, examines the relationship between the phenomenon

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<sup>7</sup> "Press," *Tinder*, accessed August 30, 2016, <https://www.gotinder.com/press>.

<sup>8</sup> "Almost All Millennials Accept Interracial Dating and Marriage," *PewResearchCenter*, last modified February 1, 2010, <http://www.pewresearch.org/2010/02/01/almost-all-millennials-accept-interracial-dating-and-marriage/>.

of contrast effects and its relationship to the personal characteristic of partner responsiveness deemed important in romantic relationships by the researchers. The results of the research uncovered the importance of context for dating decisions. The researchers found that following unresponsive prospective partners, responsive targets were found to be more attractive regardless of the target's physical attractiveness.<sup>9</sup>

The researchers noted that in a separate study, both men and women rated traits reflecting warmth, kindness, trustworthiness, and responsiveness as the main traits they look for in a romantic partner. The researchers conducted two studies. Study one involved a pool of female undergraduates who were single and heterosexual. Deemed an exploratory study by the researchers, the participants viewed four dating profiles in two different orders. Participants either viewed a sequence of dating profiles beginning with responsive targets followed by unresponsive targets, or they viewed a sequence of dating profiles beginning with unresponsive targets followed by responsive targets. Data was collected via individual questionnaires.<sup>10</sup> The second study involved single, heterosexual men and women, recruited via Amazon's mechanical Turk, a workforce interface offered by Amazon. The study involved evaluation of a responsive, physically unattractive target followed by manipulation of the attractiveness and responsiveness of the preceding profile.<sup>11</sup>

One of the primary strengths of the research is that the researchers sought to define attractiveness of the dating profiles by conducting a pilot study in which the attractive photos were more attractive than the unattractive photos. Like the attractiveness of the photos, the responsiveness of each profile was determined through pilot testing in which responsive profiles

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<sup>9</sup> Spielmann and MacDonald, *Nice Guys*, 104.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid.

<sup>11</sup> Spielmann and MacDonald, *Nice Guys*, 100-102.

were rated as significantly more responsive than non-responsive profiles. Therefore, physical attractiveness and responsiveness were systematically determined and varied. These two traits are very important to the entire study, as the study rests its premises on these two variables. Thus, it is important for the researchers to systematically determine the level of responsiveness and physical attractiveness in order to manipulate the variables in the study.

Another strength of the study is that the researchers sought to expand on the limitations of past studies. Instead of only taking into consideration and only manipulating one single feature of the preceding stimulus in the series, such as attractiveness, the researchers in this study explore the role of contrast effects by including two variables, attractiveness and responsiveness.

Across both studies, both male and female participants perceived higher responsiveness, and expressed greater romantic preference for a responsive person, even when that person was physically unattractive. That means with regard to online dating, traditional online dating sites and mobile dating apps such as Tinder may drive the direct comparisons between dating prospects with the goal of selecting the best in the series. This study is significant in that according to the researchers, it is the first to show that evaluations of a dater's personality can be affected by sequential or simultaneous exposure to dating prospects. That means apps such as Tinder have more in common with traditional dating culture than initially meets the eye. The psychology behind swiping right after viewing a series of profiles is not different from scrolling through matches found via algorithms on traditional dating websites.

According to Tomas Chamorro-Premuzic, a professor of business psychology at the University College London, 90% of the participants focused on looks and only decided to go on

a second date if they deemed the other equally attractive or worthy of each other's looks.<sup>12</sup>

Tinder has proven itself to be a formidable alternative to other online dating platforms not only because of its appeal and simplicity of use, but also because it incorporates some of the same sociological and physiological mechanical aspects as traditional dating sites that drive our partner selection. However, it is important to examine the importance of physical attraction and its relationship to online-dating, a prominent constituent of sexual attraction that Tinder is able to capitalize on further due to the nature of its platform in contrast to traditional online-dating sites, contributing to its appeal.

Physical attraction is a significant, if not the most salient, factor that people consider when assessing prospective dates online. According to a study done on dating across different age groups, sexual attraction went hand-in-hand with companionship. The results indicated that older users, in comparison to younger users, valued companionship more highly than sexual attraction, but sexual attraction was still high on the list. Although men valued sexual attraction more highly than women at all ages, only the youngest women viewed interpersonal communication as more important than their counterparts, highlighting the importance of physical attraction at all ages. The results were the outcome of the collaboration between the researchers and the eHarmony.com research lab profiling a sample of 5,829 users based on an age and gender stratified sample drawn from the entire population of eHarmony.com users from October of 2002 and March 2012, with analysis focusing on recent profiles. Analysis was

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<sup>12</sup> Tomas C. Premuzic, "The Tinder effect: psychology of dating in the technosexual era," *The Guardian*, last modified January 17, 2014, <https://www.theguardian.com/media-network/media-network-blog/2014/jan/17/tinder-dating-psychology-technosexual>.

conducted through analysis of questionnaires that new users need to fill out when joining the site.<sup>13</sup>

The findings of the study reveal that sexual attraction was highly rated when assessing prospective dates. Tinder operates on the assumption that attraction is a significant part of mate selection. Tinder users are given the option of including six photos from their Facebook account and are given a short text box to describe their personality. The only other salient characteristic available to other users is age – height is not included. Tinder places greater emphasis on physical attraction than sites like eHarmony.com where new users have to fill out an extensive questionnaire about their interests and personality. The process for Tinder is more organic, where users can choose to match with other users without having to go through a predetermined computer algorithm. Therefore, Tinder is more attractive to many users, especially millennials.

The peer-reviewed article, “Online dating across the life span: Users’ relationship goals,” published in the *Journal of Psychology and Aging*, examines gendered interactions of online dating and its implication for “heterosexual union formation.” From six months of online dating data from a mid-sized Southwestern city (N = 8,259 men, 6,274 women), the researchers found that both men and women tend to send messages to the most desirable alters, regardless of their own desirability. Furthermore, in a separate study by Hitsch et al., physical attractiveness was found to be a vertical preference as opposed to “homophilous,” meaning both male and female online daters seek prospective partners that are more attractive than themselves. Furthermore, this finding has been replicated by the majority of experimental studies, including: Curran & Lippold, 1975; Hitsch, Hortascu, & Ariely, 2010; Lee, Loewenstein, Ariely, Hong, &

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<sup>13</sup> Josephine A. Menkin, Theodore F. Robles, Joshua F. Wiley, and Gian C. Gonzaga, "Online dating across the life span: Users’ relationship goals," *Psychology And Aging* 30, no. 4 (December 2015): 987, PsycINFO, EBSCOhost (accessed August 8, 2016).

Young, 2008; Walster, 1970.<sup>14</sup> The findings of these studies disprove the matching hypothesis upon which traditional dating sites like eHarmony.com and Match.com are based on.

In social psychology, the matching hypothesis states “both men and women are strategic in their mate selection, typically seeking partners whose social desirability closely resembles their own because such selections are most likely to achieve better matches.”<sup>15</sup> According to Kreager et al. in the article “‘Where Have All the Good Men Gone?’ Gendered Interactions in Online Dating,” the matching hypothesis is consistent with observed rates of marital homogamy, however not with experimental studies concerning physical attractiveness with regard to dating. It is important to emphasize that the matching hypothesis appears to be consistent in marriage where both partners possess similar characteristics as indicated by the rate of marital homogamy. However, in dating, physical attractiveness is not a “homophilous” preference, but vertical. Furthermore, Kreager et al. assert that vertical preferences apply to “other commonly valued characteristics,” such as “income, intelligence, humor, and sociability.”<sup>16</sup> The findings of Kreager et al. regarding daters’ strong inclination toward vertical preferences (i.e. physical attractiveness) as opposed to horizontal preferences (i.e. age, race, education) have significant positive implications for the credibility of Tinder’s platform and negative implications for traditional online dating sites such as Match.com.

On eHarmony.com’s website, it states, “eHarmony matches compatible men and women based on 29 Dimensions of Compatibility that are predictors of long-term relationship

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<sup>14</sup> Derek A. Kreager, Shannon E. Cavanagh, John Yen, and Mo Yu, 2014, “‘Where Have All the Good Men Gone?’ Gendered Interactions in Online Dating,” *Journal Of Marriage & Family* 76, no. 2: 389, *OmniFile Full Text Mega (H.W. Wilson)*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 27, 2016).

<sup>15</sup> Ibid.

<sup>16</sup> Kreager, Cavanagh, Yen, and Yu, *Good Men*, 389.

success.”<sup>17</sup> Algorithm matchmaking sites do not disclose their formula, and, in particular, eHarmony.com does not divulge its self-proclaimed “29 Dimensions of Compatibility” as asserted by the site’s founder Dr. Warren, a clinical psychologist. According to the article “The Scientific Flaws of Online Dating Sites” by *Scientific American*, the principles underlying current “mathematical matching algorithms – similarity and complementarity – cannot achieve any notable level of success in fostering long-term romantic compatibility.” The term “complementarity” refers to opposite qualities. A major meta-analytic review of the literature by Matthew Montoya et al. in 2008 as well as a 23,000-person study by Portia Dyrenforth et al. in 2010, found that mathematical algorithms have virtually no impact on long-term relationship quality, accounting for a meager 0.5 percent of differences in “person-to-person differences in relationship well-being.”<sup>18</sup>

Furthermore, according to the peer-reviewed article, “Do Online Matchmaking Tests Work? An Assessment of Preliminary Evidence for a Publicized 'Predictive Model of Marital Success,’” examined the detailed analysis of an “instructive case study” that attempted to validate eHarmony.com’s claim that its mathematical matching algorithm is derived from scientific methods, the case study’s conclusions contained “serious logical flaws.” Issues with the case study’s design and methods cast doubt on the legitimacy of matchmaking algorithms used by online dating sites.<sup>19</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> “eHarmony,” *eHarmony.com*, accessed August 31, 2016, <http://www.eharmony.com/>.

<sup>18</sup> Eli J. Finkel and Susan Sprecher, “The Scientific Flaws of Online Dating Sites,” *Scientific American*, last modified May 8, 2010. <http://www.scientificamerican.com/article/scientific-flaws-online-dating-sites/>.

<sup>19</sup> James Houran, Rense Lange, P. Jason Rentfrow, and Karin H. Bruckner, “Do Online Matchmaking Tests Work? An Assessment of Preliminary Evidence for a Publicized 'Predictive Model of Marital Success,’” *North American Journal Of Psychology* 6, no. 3: 507, *PsycINFO*, EBSCOhost (accessed August 27, 2016).

What are the significances of physical attractiveness as a vertical preference, and the non-credible elements of matchmaking algorithms in relation to Tinder? Traditional online dating sites base their algorithms on the principles of similarity and complementarity, both of which have been proven to be statistically insignificant. Furthermore, Tinder's platform is based on physical attractiveness, which has been found to be a vertical preference. Mathematical algorithms have no way of predicting vertical preferences or physical attractiveness for that matter. Tinder disregards algorithms and instead matches users based on proximity via geo-location and age preference as selected by the user. Tinder does not use a predetermined set of characteristics to match users. Thus, Tinder users are in control of matching with nearby users based on their own preferences.

How does Tinder work? It is very intuitive to use. The app creates an account using the user's Facebook profile. A Tinder profile comprises of the user's first name, age, photos that the user chooses, and any pages that the user 'liked' on Facebook. A recent feature, users can now include their occupation and education in their bio. The app locates the user's position via GPS and finds potential matches based on the selected age and distance chosen by the user. If two users swipe right to 'like,' then both users are matched and can start messaging each other in the app. User's swipe left to 'pass.' Tinder only uses the user's first name for privacy and safety reasons, and as of June 2016, only users ages 18 and over can use the app.

Forming an initial attraction based on physical attraction is often dismissed as 'shallow' and vain. However, as stated earlier, physical attraction is an integral part of the initial dating process more than we would like to admit. As such, contrast effects play an important role in the dimension of online dating where users can scroll or swipe through numerous matches at a time. It is inevitable that multiple matches are compared to each other in a series by the user's

subconscious. Therefore, the sequence in which prospective matches are viewed matters. Contrast effects therefore play a significant role in Tinder's popularity and success and is an important part in social-decision making and person perception stated earlier.

The successful Tinder marriage anecdotes corroborate the contrast effects theory in an important way. It is a powerful subconscious facet of mate selection, a phenomenon found in the dimension of online-dating not viable in real-life interaction. Every successful match on Tinder is the result of the principles and processes of the contrast effects theory due to the exposure to multiple matches in a sequence of which users make a selection. Contrast effects for physical attractiveness have been consistently demonstrated across numerous studies underlining its significance in social contexts.

As Tinder's popularity grows, more couples are incorporating Tinder into their engagement and wedding ceremonies and shedding the shame associated with meeting on Tinder. A Tinder spokesperson said that the company received wedding invitation in the mail and that Sean Rad, the chief executive and members of the team often receive invitations. Take for example, Rachael Honowitz, 35, worked as an event planner in Manhattan for 12 years before moving to Los Angeles in 2014 with the hope of finding men on the West Coast who were not as noncommittal as the ones she met in New York. She met her husband Jason Cosgrove, a digital media executive who was growing tired of the online dating scene six weeks later. Mr. Cosgrove proposed to Ms. Honowitz using Tinder messages.

"I was embarrassed by how we met at first and didn't tell people, but now I see it as my civic duty to let people know," said Ms. Honowitz, who agreed to let Tinder post their love story on the "success stories" part of their website. "There's no shame in meeting on

Tinder. I'm a smart, educated girl from a great family. Jason is, too." "And we're having a tinderbaby," Mr. Cosgrove announced proudly.

For Mr. Cosgrove, Tinder served as an icebreaker. He believes that "if I saw my wife in a bar, I would have been too intimidated to approach her," he said. Knowing that she had already swiped right reassured him that she found him attractive, which he said gave him more confidence on their first date."<sup>20</sup> As mentioned earlier, research has substantiated physical attraction as one of the most salient determinants of initiating a romantic relationship. Mr. Cosgrove's desire for his wife to find him attractive in their initial interaction corroborates the research.

In another Tinder success story, Eric Schleicher who met his wife Caitlin on Tinder posted a picture on Instagram with the graphic "Straight Outta Tinder," a play on the N.W.A.'s successful debut album titled 'Straight Outta Compton' in 1988 made famous by the movie of the same name released in 2015. The graphic is followed by the caption "We #SwipedRight!"<sup>21</sup> Mr. Schleicher's conspicuous display of his marriage on social media denotes the continuing trend of Tinder as a legitimate dating platform that transcends conventional dating culture.

Aimee Denaro, a real estate broker who lives in East Village met her husband on Tinder and said, "I had tried Match.com and eHarmony, but I never found any normal guys there." "On Tinder, I felt like I'd found a larger pool of guys, guys I would have been friends with," she said. When she first met her husband Rob Becker, "[She] had written him off, thinking 'Come on, I'm not really going to meet my husband on Tinder,'" she said. They were engaged a year later, and her best friend got engaged to her husband she met on Tinder a month later.<sup>22</sup>The

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<sup>20</sup> Brooke L. Foster, "The Tinder Dating Pool Isn't Completely Shallow," *The New York Times*, last modified March 26, 2016, [http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/style/tinder-dating-relationships.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2016/03/27/style/tinder-dating-relationships.html?_r=1).

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

larger “pool of guys” that Ms. Denaro articulates highlights Tinder’s advantage over conventional dating sites because unlike Match.com or eHarmony.com, Tinder does not constrict potential matches based on an algorithm. Furthermore, Ms. Denaro’s comment that she would have likely been “friends” with the guys she saw on Tinder is predicated on physical attraction further affirming the power of contrast effects in online-dating because of Tinder’s emphasis on physical attraction mentioned earlier.

Tinder CEO Sean Rad touts the “realistic appeal to physical attraction” over the algorithms of other dating sites saying, “when was the last time you walked into a bar and someone said, ‘Excuse me, can you fill out this form and we’ll match you up with people here?’” Rad said. “That’s not how we think about meeting new people in real life.”<sup>23</sup> There is merit to Tinder’s appeal to physical attractiveness. As previously stated in my paper, physical attraction is a vertical preference whereby both men and women seek out partners that are perceived to be more attractive than them. Physical attraction is argued to be most salient to individuals seeking romantic partners and attractiveness is highly influential in the initiation of romantic relationships. Thus, the importance of physical attractiveness, especially in the beginning stage of romantic relationships, can be extrapolated to Tinder’s popularity as a result of its emphasis on physical attractiveness due to the nature of its platform.

Tinder’s appeal to the Millennial generation can be explained by the age preferences of younger female users of potential mates of the opposite and same sex. In the peer-reviewed article “Age moderates contrast effects in women’s judgments of facial attractiveness,” researchers found that contrast effects had the strongest effect among young adults at or near

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<sup>23</sup> Dan Hirschorn, “Men Swipe Right on Tinder 3 Times as Much as Women,” *Time Magazine*, last modified October 30, 2014, <http://time.com/3547890/tinder-men-women-swipe-right/>.

their peak productive age. The researchers focused on women to examine the impact of reproductive motivation on contrast effects. Younger women (18-27 years) and older women (50+ years) rated the attractiveness of an average-looking younger or older woman or younger or older male target person, after having rated a series of five photos that were either highly attractive or average-looking. Strong contrast effects were found for younger women rating images of younger women and men, and for older women, older men were found to be more attractive, such that the same target face was rated as more attractive in the context of average-looking peers than highly attractive peers.<sup>24</sup> This means that the context of the ‘selection pool’ does matter and is stratified by age. Younger women at or near their peak sexuality preferred men and women close to their age which extrapolated to Tinder, highlights its appeal to the younger generation because of the importance of physical attractiveness cues to younger women in a romantic context. Tinder’s platform emphasizes the importance of physical attraction by focusing on presenting photos of the user as opposed to matching users based on shared interests and complementarity favored by traditional dating sites.

The late ‘90s and early 2000s witnessed the birth of two major online dating sites, Match.com and eHarmony.com. The principles behind the matchmaking algorithms, matching partners based on similarity and complementarity, appeared plausible and convinced millions to sign up. Many hurdles are required to access the algorithm, including filling out personality and survey questionnaires not least a paid subscription. Contrary to popular belief, research has found matching people based on similarity and complementarity to have no scientific backing. The shift in dating culture did not truly occur until Tinder’s debut in 2012. The philosophy behind Tinder is simple, yet effective and scientifically credible. Users are matched based only

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<sup>24</sup> Burleson, Hall, and Gutierrez, *Age Moderates*, 179.

on proximity and age preferences. Users have the final say in who they match with, a more organic process than that of a rigid algorithm. There are many subtleties in forming attraction and initiating a relationship that cannot be determined by an artificial algorithm. Physical attraction has been consistently demonstrated to be one of the most salient determinants of initiating attraction and dating. The Millennial generation holds convenience in high regard, and immediate gratification and instant attraction have all but propelled Tinder's popularity to new heights. Tinder has repackaged the dating scene into a simple but instantly gratifying platform that is wrapped up in a shiny box with a bow on top. More often than we would like to admit, physical attraction is one of the primary drivers of attraction, especially in the world of online-dating where physical interaction is not possible initially. Contrast effects are inherent to the process of online dating, whether you are scrolling through profiles on Match.com or swiping left or right on Tinder. However, it is the emphasis on contrast effects inherent to the style of Tinder's platform that sets it apart from traditional online dating sites. It is the primary driver behind every right swipe and successful match. Nowhere are contrast effects more apparent than in young users under the age of 30 who are at or near their peak fertility driven by a desire to seek out relationships and reproduce. As the marriage anecdotes have shown, Tinder allows for an organic process that mirrors conventional dating in the real world not possible in traditional online-dating. The power is in the hands of users, not in an algorithm that matches people based on predetermined characteristics. It is time to embrace the popularity of Tinder, and consider it for what it should have been seen as all along, an extension of conventional dating that broadens the horizons of dating with convenience. Tinder has revolutionized the way millennials seek out relationships, and judging by its massive social medial presence, who knows, you may be able to find Mr. or Mrs. Right in a matter of swipes.

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