MATCH ME IF YOU CAN: SELF-PRESENTATION AND DATING APPLICATIONS

by

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper, which is a pilot project, is to understand how different dating applications facilitate the process of impression-management, and if different applications lead to different modes of impression-management. Research suggests that dating apps can serve multiple purposes, among which casual sex and participating in hookup culture is only one (Anzani et. al, 2018; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018; Lebfevre, 2018; Castro & Barrada, 2020). Tinder and JSwipe are two popular dating applications, and they will be used as platforms to study alongside impression-management theory to explore how eligible single males incorporate techniques from this theory to emphasize different attributes to potential romantic partners. Findings from this MRP suggest that individuals stress non-physical attributes to potential matches, regardless of the application that is being used. However, this research paper was a pilot project, and therefore cannot confirm or dismiss any assumptions. This study points in various directions that might be fertile ground for further research on this topic, to confirm these findings.

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Introduction

It has been documented, since at least the 11th century, that romance has often been the basis of human relationships (Lamy, 2011). However, for as long as humans have been pursuing romantic relationships, they have also recognized that finding a suitable partner can be challenging, thus turning to third parties for assistance (Finkel et al. 2012). Possibilities to find a romantic connection have evolved from cultural matchmakers such as the *shadchanit* in Jewish religions, arranged marriages in Eastern Asian cultures, and the *nakodo* in traditional Japanese cultures (Jensen, 2011) to missed connection advertisements in publications, and now, mobile dating applications (hereafter referred to as dating apps).

This paper, which is a pilot project, seeks to understand the impact that dating apps have on how individuals choose to present themselves to potential partners. In particular, this paper will explore how different dating apps facilitate impression-management and if, as a result, these different dating apps shape different modes of self-presentation. Impression management theory is

"the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions that others form of them. The impressions that people leave on those they meet have implications for how others perceive, evaluate and treat them; therefore, individuals will sometimes behave in ways that will create a certain impression in others' eyes" (Ward, 2017; Leary and Kowalski, 1990).

According to eHarmony.com (2021), 53% of individuals reportedly lie on their dating profiles with the top three topics that they lie about being: age, height/weight and job/income. These statistics demonstrate the existence of impression management on dating apps, thus illustrating that there is fertile ground for research on this topic. The idea of impression management was first conceptualized by Erving Goffman in 1959, and further expanded on in 1967. Goffman's theory of impression management was built upon a dramaturgical metaphor in

which he compares human interaction to a theatre stage (Gorea, 2017; Ward, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017; Goffman 1959). Within Goffman's theory, he compares individuals to theatrical actors; when actors play parts, they implicitly request their observers to take their impressions seriously (Gorea, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017; Goffman 1959). Additionally, impression management theory will be discussed more within a review of the literature.

For the purpose of this paper, the dating apps that I have selected to focus on are JSwipe and Tinder. These apps were chosen mainly due to the significant difference between the perceived use and outcomes between these apps. Since its inception, Tinder has long been regarded as an app that is used mainly for finding a "*hookup*" (Grigoradis, 2014). The definition of the term will be explored in the literature review, as definitions of *hookups* vary among different researchers in this academic field (Garcia et. al, 2013); for example, to Garcia et. al (2013) the term *hookup* focuses on the "uncommitted nature of a sexual encounter or experience, rather than focusing on what the specifics of the encounter itself entails." For the purpose of this paper, the term *hookup* will be referencing Garcia's definition, which is mentioned above.

JSwipe is similar to Tinder in its appearance and functionality but is targeted towards Jewish singles looking for a romantic connection (David and Cambre, 2016). The ideology behind JSwipe is considered to be focused more on long-term relationships, as opposed to casual encounters. This could be attributed to the cultural idea of finding a "nice Jewish" significant other to marry (Avraham, 2017). There are many different dating apps that focus on one particular faith, however JSwipe was selected as part of this pilot project, because it is familiar territory for me. I acknowledge that a more robust study would use multiple different demographic apps to form a more comprehensive understanding. Something that is imperative to remember when investigating these two apps (and other dating apps), is that at their core, these apps were created to be for-profit, and thus have commodified human connection. Through the

commodification of human connections on these apps, the apps are not only "selling" their perceived outcomes to potential users, but leading users to self-commodify themselves as well (Gerber, 2016). Additionally, I selected these two apps as they are the most simple and consistent with their layouts. While other dating apps exist, such as Bumble and Hinge, they have been excluded from this study due to their more complex functionality and layouts.

This paper seeks to answer the research question: **Do individuals on an app that is focused on short-term hookups weigh attributes differently than individuals on an app that is focused on long-term relationships?**

The first section of this major research paper will examine literature on relevant topics to this study, such as impression management theory and the virtual social identity versus the actual social identity. Next, I explain the methodology, which will attempt to address and answer the research question. This includes explaining why in-vivo coding was chosen as the dominant method for data analysis. I then present my data analysis, demonstrating how the sample size was coded and subsequently analyzed. Through my research method, the pattern that was revealed within the sample size is that individuals on both Tinder and JSwipe emphasize non-physical attributes rather than physical. Finally, this major research paper will conclude with a discussion about the findings and comparing the literature with the study findings. In addition, the paper will identify directions for future research on this topic, and address any shortcomings based on the scope of the research that was conducted.

It should be noted that the terms 'impression management' and 'self-presentation' are used interchangeably throughout this paper.

Literature Review

The literature analyzed below fits into five parts and addresses the research question posed above. Parts one and two lay out the foundation of this study by defining and providing important background information on the concepts that are guiding this research, which are two of Erving Goffman's most notable theories – impression management and the virtual social identity versus the actual social identity. These sections focus on further explanation of these theories, as well as their relevance and relation to this research paper. These sections verify that individuals are motivated for different reasons to make themselves appear more appealing to those they meet, or potential love interests. This leads into the third part of the literature review, which explains contemporary Jewish dating culture. This section focuses on Jewish dating culture, and if there are any specific motivators for Jewish individuals when it comes to dating to find long term relationships, as opposed to more casual affairs. Additionally, this section explores the cultural trope of a "nice Jewish boy". As mentioned briefly in the introduction, there is a cultural idea of finding a "nice Jewish" significant other to marry (Avraham, 2017). Similarly, section four focuses on "hook-up apps", as well as explaining the cultural motivations behind these apps, and how individuals navigate these apps. The final section of the literature review discusses the history and evolution of online dating, in order to better understand the functionality of these apps, as they are the ones under study.

These topics were selected to be included within the literature review, as they each relate to the main aspects of the research question, through contrasting dating trends and how individuals shape impressions of themselves when meeting others. Reviewing literature on these topics is important in understanding not only the creation of the research question, but also to provide a higher level of understanding on the topics that will be further explored and elaborated on in this research paper.

The literature review also addresses the limitations of the scholarship regarding each respective section. The literature's general findings indicate a need for further research regarding a majority of these topics, such as impression-management on dating apps and contemporary Jewish dating. Additionally, a further discussion surrounding these apps from a communication studies standpoint is needed as well. Lastly, there is an explanation of how the research question connects to, and how it was shaped by, the literature reviewed.

Part 1: Impression Management

As mentioned previously, impression management is

"the process by which individuals attempt to control the impressions that others form of them. The impressions that people leave on those they meet have implications for how others perceive, evaluate and treat them; therefore, individuals will sometimes behave in ways that will create a certain impression in others' eyes" (Ward, 2017; Leary and Kowalski, 1990).

Goffman's theory of impression management was built upon a dramaturgical metaphor in which he compares human interaction to a theatre stage (Goffman 1959; Gorea, 2017; Ward, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017). Goffman defines performance as "all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his presence before a particular set of observers and which has some influence on the observers" (Goffman; 1959; Ellison et. al., 2016 Gorea, 2017; Ward, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017). Within Goffman's theory, he compares individuals to theatrical actors. When actors play parts, they implicitly request their observers to take their impressions seriously (Goffman 1959; Gorea, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017). In other words, they are attempting to control or guide the impressions others make of them (Ward 2017). Goffman explains that within his dramaturgical analysis, individuals put forward their "front

stage" self, which is how they act when others are watching in a certain setting, also referred to as a stage (Goffman 1959; Gorea, 2017; Ward, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017).

Leary and Kowalski (1990) discovered there are two main factors which comprise impression management. The first aspect is impression-motivation, which is defined as "people becoming motivated to how others see them" (Leary and Kowalski 1990; Ward 2017). The second component is impression-construction which is, "when people explicitly choose the impression they want to make and decide the method they will use to create" (Leary and Kowalski 1990; Ward 2017).

Dating apps create a heightened setting for impression management, mainly because they provide users with the ability to select the most attractive photos of themselves (Ward, 2017). This act of careful curation allows users to influence others' opinions by hiding their insecurities and other physical attributes that they deem embarrassing and emphasize information that can be considered to be desirable or undesirable to potential matches (Ellison et. al. 2016; Gorea 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017). Users participate in the process of impression management when they decide which photos to include, and what text they should put into their biographies (Leary and Kowalski, 1990; Ward, 2017; Ranzini and Lutz, 2017).

Research shows that individuals create online dating profiles as a way to demonstrate their ideal self to partners (Ellison et al 2006; David and Cambre 2016). Ward (2017) came to the conclusion that to users, impression-management is important to both create and maintain on dating apps as they are imagining who will see them on the app. Additionally, there is also a desire to appear attractive to a potential match, prior to meeting in person or even before talking on the app. Taking this research one step further, Ranzini and Lutz (2017) have pointed out that

the motives behind self-presentation on apps can range from very explicit strategic motives, such as wanting to portray a certain self-image to entice matches that they want to purely "hook up" with, to more implicit emotional motives, such as searching for self-validation (Ranzini and Lutz, 2017). Ranzini and Lutz (2017) also add that individuals who use certain apps for long-term relationship seeking over a casual hook-up are likely to self-present themselves more authentically because of the idea of wanting the match to last long-term.

Although the literature regarding self-presentation on dating apps has grown within the last decade (Ward 2017, p. 1656), there is still room for more research on this topic. While a few studies have emerged (i.e. Ward 2017, Ranzini and Lutz, 2017, LeFebvre, 2018), Tinder is still relatively understudied and JSwipe is incredibly understudied. The goal of this paper is to begin bridging the gap in the research between Tinder and JSwipe, specifically, as platforms for self-presentation and addressing if the different perceptions between these specific apps leads to different forms of self-presentation.

Part 2: Stigma and Social Identity

Another concept that relates to impression management is Erving Goffman's idea of a virtual social identity (hereafter referred to as VSID), compared to an actual social identity (hereafter referred to as ASID).

Originated by the Greeks, the term 'stigma' was used in reference to "bodily signs designed to expose something unusual or bad about the moral status of the signifier" (Goffman, 1963). In today's society, the term now refers to "individuals who violate the norms and expectations of society in some way" (Koken et. al, 2004). Goffman identified three types of

conditions which may lead to individuals being stigmatized or considered as having a "spoiled identity"; physical deformities or handicaps, membership in a minority racial or ethnic group, or "blemishes of character" (Goffman, 1963; Koken et. al, 2004; Ward, 2017). The latter refers to an individual's perceived moral defects, such as being a drug user or a sex user (Goffman, 1963).

Society enables the means of categorization and classification of persons. Most often, social settings provide the backdrop to establish "the categories of persons likely to be encountered there" (Goffman, 1963). However, Goffman's theory of stigma and social identity does not only concern social settings that are associated with stigma or preconceived notions; this theory also focuses on the consequences of co-presence in general, with Lemke & Weber (2017) stating: "the issue is that in certain circumstances, the social identity of those an individual is with can be used as a source of information concerning his own social identity, the assumption being that he is what the others are" (Goffman, 1963).

Using the example of Lemke and Weber's (2017) work on male sexual online dating behaviour, individuals who are not publicly open about their sexual orientation are at risk of being spotted by a third party -- and perhaps subsequently identified as being gay -- if they arrange an in-person sexual encounter at the home of a well-known gay individual (Lemke & Weber, 2017). As a result, these individuals are extra cautious when entering gay spaces, as they do not want someone to automatically assume that they are gay (Lemke and Weber, 2017).

According to Goffman (1963), an individual's identity may be dual in nature, as an individual can possess either a virtual social identity or an actual social identity (Goffman 1963, Koken et. al, 2004, Ward; 2017). When individuals encounter a stranger, first appearances and impressions can lead to assumptions of the strangers "social identity". Goffman (1963) tells us

that there are two types of social identities; VSID versus ASID. A virtual social identity is defined as a false identity that one creates about an individual that they encounter in their head—an identity that is based upon assumptions, stereotypes and stigma attached to a person (Goffman, 1963). One can infer that based on the description, the actual social identity is the real and true identity that one possesses. The ASID can either defy or follow the perceived identity that one has created (Goffman, 1963). The term social identity is used as it is considered to be a term that is better than the oft-used social status, due to the fact that personal attributes are incorporated as well, and not just structural (Goffman, 1963). More often than not, we do not realize we are making assumptions about those we encounter until a situation arises where we realize whether or not these preconceived ideas have been fulfilled.

 Once this happens, we realize that we have been making assumptions about who or what we believe this individual is. In Koken et. al's (2004) study on the experience of stigma in the lives of male internet sex workers, it is discussed that a person who belongs to a stigmatized group must learn to fill the gaps between their virtual identity and their actual identity, which somehow violates societal norms in some way (Koken et. al, 2004; Ward, 2017). Goffman defines this process as *identity management*, which is an ongoing process for the individual whose identity is believed to be stigmatized (Goffman, 1963; Koken et. al, 2004).

Due to their definitions, it can be hypothesized that VSID and ASID could be very prominent on dating apps. This could be attributed to an individual potentially using their profile on these apps to create assumptions – a VSID – for potential partners to have about them, in order to make them seem more appealing and therefore have individuals choose to match with them. These created assumptions could be different on an app that is hookup based, compared to

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one that is more relationship based, as some individuals might want to come across as more suitable for a relationship, for example. However, the ASID can defy these expectations when individuals meet offline and in the real world.

A large portion of the literature surrounding and explaining Goffman's theory of virtual social identity versus actual social identity comes from Goffman himself. Although there have been studies which employ Goffman's theories, such as Lemke and Weber (2016) and Koken et. al (2004), they are centered around topics involving stigmatized individuals and groups, such as male escorts and homosexuality. There is ample ground to explore the application of Goffman's theories of stigma and social identity with regards to dating applications in future research.

Part 3: Contemporary Jewish Dating Culture

According to the Talmud - which is a compendium of Jewish laws and thoughts - the process of courtship is only for mature men and women who have reached the appropriate age for marriage and are looking for a compatible life partner (Chabad, 2017). The Talmud states that

> "it is forbidden for a man to marry a woman until he meets her, and she finds favor in his eyes, and a woman is not to be married until she is mature enough to make an intelligent decision with regards to her proposed husband. The prospective bride and groom must meet beforehand, and both must be fully comfortable with each other and must give their full consent to the match".

Another rule that is stipulated within the Talmud is that marriage between a Jew and a gentile is not only prohibited under Jewish law but void as well. Moreover, Jewish law also states that religion is passed down through the mother's bloodline; therefore, if a Jewish man married a non-Jewish woman, according to the Talmud, the offspring would not be considered Jewish (Chabad, 2017). As such, there is a cultural ideal within Judaism that Jews should only

marry other Jews, particularly those of the same denomination. Many individuals who identify as religious want to marry someone of the same faith. However, in Judaism, not only is this idea connected to a matter of religious teaching, but also to the memory of racialized persecution and attempted extermination of the Jewish people serve as constant reminders of the need to continue Jewish bloodlines (Green, 2013). In Gromova's (2014) study of Jewish dating, she questioned if a young Jewish individual's wish for a Jewish partner is connected to the decisions of their parents and grandparents.

Furthermore, there is the existing cultural ideal surrounding the "nice Jewish boy" or the "nice Jewish girl" that one should marry (Avraham, 2017). The so-called "nice Jewish boy" is a stereotype of Jewish masculinity that circulates within not just Judaism, but in mainstream culture as well (Boyarin et al., 2003). Historically, Jewish men have always been viewed as effeminate when compared to the more violent and masculine traits existing within Roman society (Boyarin et al., 2003). Boyarin et al. (2003) tells us that in the early days of rabbinic Judaism, masculinity was emphasized by studying the Torah, and other academic pursuits, as opposed to physical strength. Throughout history, this idea of Jewish men being more effeminate has remained, and thus given way to the stereotype of the 'nice Jewish boy' that has gained recognition within media (Boyarin et al., 2003).

The qualities that are associated with this stereotype come from a Jewish ideal known as *eydlkayt*, which when translated, means "nobility" or "delicateness" (Boyarin, 1997; Granovsky, 2019). Boyarin (1997) tells us that the idea of a nice Jewish boy embraces the "studiousness, gentleness, and sensitivity that is said to make a male an attractive marriage partner". The idea of the modern Jewish man is often portrayed as gentle, timid, and delicate. The "nice Jewish boy" title often implies that all Jewish men are kind, worthy of marriage and fragile (Granovsky, 2019). When in a confrontation, the biggest show of manliness a Jewish man could demonstrate

was to be able to control his anger, and not be provoked, thus perpetuating the idea of the paradigmatic traditional "nice Jewish" male (Bergmann cited in Boyarin, 1997).

In Gromova's (2014) research of Jewish dating among young-Russian speaking Jews in Berlin, she explores the idea of "Jewish meeting places". Although the existence of such places is unconfirmed, one interviewee named Max explains that "the search for a Jewish girlfriend seems left to chance". However, Max explained that all of his friends are Jewish, and thus Jewish friends, Jewish neighbours, Jewish colleagues and even his Jewish ex-girlfriends form sinformal networks, which can be used to aid in his search for a Jewish girlfriend (Gromova, 2014). Max also explains that he underwent the complete process of Jewish socialization, attending Jewish kindergarten, Jewish youth club, and Jewish high school. These bonds formed in adolescence and childhood allowed for the emergence of these informal networks. These connections guarantee that as an adult, Max continues to find himself within an informal circle of mostly Jewish friends and colleagues (Gromova, 2014).

Gromova (2014) refers to other individuals she interviewed who also underwent Jewish socialization from a young age, and when speaking to Gromova, participants indicated that it is self-evident that their partner must be Jewish. These individuals do not make a conscious decision that their partner has to be Jewish, but rather, according to the interviewees in Gromova's study, many future couples end up meeting in mainly Jewish settings, such as Jewish high school, or Jewish summer camp. However, if an individual's relationship ends, they rely on their informal networks, such as the ones mentioned above by Max to meet new people (Goromova, 2014).

In 2019, JSwipe surveyed 4,000 Jewish singles that use their platform in February 2019. This survey was made available to users of all ages, allowing for the observation of trends between different age groups. The study consisted of three sections: The State of Jewish, The

State of Dating, and The State of Jewish Dating. For the purpose of this literature review, the sections from this study regarding the State of Jewish and the State of Jewish dating will be focused on, as they are the most relevant to both the topic under study, and the research question.

Additionally, it should be acknowledged that this research was conducted by a company who is surveying their consumers, and as such, there could be biases that guide the results and conclusions in this survey. It is important to keep these potential biases in mind when reviewing and analyzing this data set. In JSwipe's own words, the organization does acknowledge that surveying 4,000 users is not the same as a randomly selected sample of the Jewish population; due to their use of the app, all individuals would be Jewishly engaged to one degree or another, and are also all assumed to be looking for Jewish spouses (JSwipe, 2019).

54% of responses came from individuals aged 25-34, followed by 26% coming from individuals within the 18-24 demographic (JSwipe, 2019). Further breaking down the responses, 58% of respondents were male, and 42% were female. Lastly, those who responded to this survey identified their Jewish denomination as either cultural (23%), traditional (22%), reform (16%), or conservative (16%) (JSwipe, 2019). Within the category regarding the State of Jewish, 87% of respondents said that they practice Judaism in some form, whether it be through celebrating Jewish holidays, or keeping Kosher.

48% of respondents said that their Jewish identity was very important to them, with 50% of 18-24-year-old respondents agreeing. When asked about identifying as a Jew, respondents elaborated, with one respondent saying that his or her identity as a Jew is "*fundamental to who I am*", and another saying that "*even though I am not religious, it is very important to my identity*" (JSwipe, 2019). Another area of note was that 29% of respondents said that having a Jewish mother makes someone Jewish, which goes back to the rules from the Talmud mentioned above.

Respondents also noted that having a Jewish upbringing and being raised with Jewish traditions and customs makes someone Jewish (JSwipe, 2019).

The section surrounding the State of Jewish Dating explores the motivations behind dating within Judaism. 50% of JSwipe users said that it is very important to date someone Jewish, with 30% of those individuals attributing that importance to the potential for marriage, a family, and kids. 33% of females who answered this question agreed, as did 27% of males (JSwipe, 2019). The second highest response stressed the importance of religion / continuity of a Jewish bloodline, as a reason to date someone Jewish, followed by shared interests and values. When asked to elaborate as to why JSwipe users find it important to date someone Jewish, one user said, *"my mom would kill me, but I'd also like to raise a Jewish family with traditions and culture, it's just easier with someone else who's Jewish"*. Another user said, *"I want my children to be Jewish and want to date someone with the same family values and upbringing"*. Lastly, *"Judaism is a big part of who I am, my community, my family. It would be hard to be with someone who didn't share that. I want to raise a Jewish family. It is important that Judaism is not eliminated"* (JSwipe, 2019).

The literature regarding contemporary Jewish dating is lacking within academia, and thus there is still room for more research on this topic. Although JSwipe (2019) conducted a study of their users, a vast majority of the existing literature surrounding Jewish dating is focused on the Orthodox Jewish community. Elazar and Geffen (2012) used calculations from the 1990s to infer that, as of 2012, there are at least 2,000,000 observant Orthodox Jews worldwide, and an additional 2,000,000 who identified as such. As a result, these figures demonstrate that Orthodoxy is the largest Jewish religious group, which could explain the focus of literature on this particular denomination. This paper aims to help fill the gaps within this topic by adding to

the discussion about dating within the Jewish religion as a whole, while focusing on contemporary Jewish dating culture.

Part 4: Tinder and Hookup Culture

The rapid growth and popularity of dating apps has changed the way that individuals meet and interact with potential romantic and sexual partners (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018; Castro & Barrada, 2020). These apps have transformed the pathways of socialization, and as a result, introduced new ways to meet potential romantic interests (Helm, 2019; Castro & Barrada, 2020).

As mentioned in the introduction, according to Garcia et. al (2013), the term *hookup* focuses on the "uncommitted nature of a sexual encounter or experience", rather than what rather than focusing on what the specifics of the encounter itself entails. Operational definitions of *hookups* vary among different researchers in this academic field. Some consider a hookup to be a "form of casual sex" or "uncommitted sexual encounter" (Garcia et. al, 2013). Others define it as "casual sex as outside of a 'formal' relationship without a 'traditional' reason for doing so". Garcia and Reiber (2008) defined a *hookup* as "a sexual encounter between people who are not dating, or in a relationship, where a more traditional romantic relationship is NOT an explicit condition of the encounter". Researchers Glenn and Marquardt (2001) used an explicitly heteronormative definition for participants: a *hookup* is "when a guy and a girl get together for a physical encounter and don't necessarily expect anything further".

The idea of "*hookup culture*" is not new. According to Garcia et. al (2013), over the last 60 years, the prioritization of traditional forms of dating has shifted to more casual "*hookups*" (Bogle, 2008; Garcia et. al, 2013). According to Garcia et. al, hookups began to become more frequent within the 1920's, in tandem with the rise of automobiles and entertainment venues,

such as movie theaters. As a result of these inventions, young adults left the home and were able to explore their sexuality more freely (Garcia et. al, 2013). Hookups have grown to be more and more culturally normative, leading to a decrease in dating for courting purposes.

Sexual behaviour outside of traditional committed romantic relationships has become not only typical, but increasingly socially acceptable as well (Bogle, 2008; Garcia et. al, 2013). However, *hookup culture* can cause many to "behave in ways they don't like, hurt others unwillingly, and perhaps even consent to sexual activity they don't desire" (Ward, 2017; Helm, 2019). Additionally, it can lead to a double standard in which women disproportionately face sexual objectification, harassment, sexual assault and rape (Armstrong et al., 2006; Armstrong et al., 2014; Hanson, 2021).

Since the development and widespread use of dating apps, *hookup culture* has become more accessible (Helm, 2019). However, with the use of these apps becoming more widespread, users find themselves feeling as though they are 'enmeshed' in a *hookup culture* (Helm, 2019). In a North American context, this idea of ""*hookup culture*" is a set of sexual mores and norms that bring individuals - a majority of which are college students -- together under a rubric of casual sexual activity" (Bogle, 2008; Hanson, 2021).

According to Hanson (2021), there are some pre-existing parallels between the use of dating apps and *hookup culture* as both facilitate sexual activity, and can potentially lead to relationships (Wade, 2017; Hanson, 2021). There is a stereotype that dating apps are used only, or above all, to look for casual sex. These apps have been accused of perpetuating "*hookup culture*" (Castro & Barrada, 2020). However, this is not the case. Within the last 6 years, research has indicated that dating apps can serve multiple purposes, among which casual sex and participating in *hookup culture* is only one (Anzani et. al, 2018; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018; Lebfevre, 2018; Castro & Barrada, 2020).

With the unprecedented growth and usage of dating apps, there has been an increase of scholarly articles surrounding this topic. However, a significant portion of the literature on online dating has focused on individual users or the apps themselves (Hanson, 2021). A large majority of the literature focusing on hookup culture existing on dating apps is geared towards college students. Wade (2017) tells us that almost all of America's college campuses are characterized by a *hookup culture,* where the idea of engaging in sexual activity with an individual is ingrained in the ideology of what a college experience should be. Students believe, or think that their peers believe, that college is a time to have fun and explore sexuality; that separating sex from emotions is liberating, and that these individuals are young and care-free. All of these ideas are widely circulated on campuses, and therefore both validate and perpetuate the cycle of hookup culture and casual sex (Wade, 2017). However, although research has demonstrated that the use and accessibility of dating apps on college campuses has become ubiquitous, it can also be inferred that these apps spur on the idea of casual sex with no emotions, regardless of the age group (Helm, 2019).

Although this paper is a pilot project concerning self-presentation on dating apps, this section of the literature review demonstrates that one potential direction for future research on this topic could be to extend dating app scholarship to include groups outside of the college age demographic, in order to get a broader picture of varying views on this topic.

Part 5: Dating Apps / Tinder

In 1995, Match.com was released, advertising itself as the first online dating service. 22 years later, location-based smartphone dating apps appeared, allowing users to access online

dating, regardless of where they were in the world (Bonilla-Zorita et. al 2020). Though dating

websites still have a large share of the industry (Ward 2017, p.1645), mobile dating apps have

increased in popularity, solidifying their place in modern courtship, as they offer a different

experience from their predecessors.

Finding a romantic partner through a dating app is different from finding one at a social

gathering or meeting by chance in a public setting. The use of dating apps offers unprecedented

levels of access to potential partners, which can be helpful for those who might lack such access

in their daily lives (Finkel et. al, 2012). One of the most significant differences is that dating apps

allow users to set criteria and then filter through pre-selected matches before meeting in person

(Best & Delmege, 2012; Ward, 2017; Hanson, 2021). Instead of being limited to those who they

encounter in person, dating apps can expand an individual's network of potential partners. This

allows users to sort through potential romantic and sexual partners quicker than if they were

meeting face-to-face (Hanson, 2021).

Ward (2017) tells us that filtering works to screen potential contacts. Best and Delmege

(2012) describe the filtering process as starting with an initial screening, which is where users

choose who they want to match with based on search criteria, such as height, location, and age.

Then, users choose potential romantic partners based on the matches that they have (Hanson,

2021).

Sean Rad and Justin Madteen created Tinder in 2012 as a way to "take the stress out of

dating'" (Grigoradis, 2014; David and Cambre 2016; Hobbs et al. 2017; LeFebvre 2018). Since

its creation, Tinder has achieved substantial success, reaching more than 50 million global users

across 196 countries (Ward 2017). Once they have created a profile, users can begin to try to find potential partners within a certain radius (David and Cambre 2016; LeFebvre 2018).

Profiles include users' first names, ages, employment, and education. Users can choose a limited number of images and provide a short biography to present and describe themselves, allowing a potential match to learn more about any given user (Ward, 2017; David and Cambre 2016; Blackwell et. al, 2015; LeFebvre 2018; Gudelunas, 2012). Swiping to the left removes a user's profile from your screen, indicating that you are not interested, and another profile is shown. For two users to match, both users have to swipe right on each other, indicating that you are interested in one another. If a match occurs, a pop-up appears on the screen and invites the two users to start a conversation in the app (David and Cambre 2016; LeFebvre 2018).

Although there has been academic attention surrounding the topic of dating apps in recent years, there are multiple areas in need of further elaboration and discussion. To date, there is very little literature that is focused on dating apps as their own entity. Furthermore, much of the research that does exist on the topic focuses on dating apps from a psychology or health studies standpoint rather than a communication studies standpoint. As such, this paper seeks to fill in the existing literary gaps on the topic by contributing to the discussion on dating apps from a communication studies paradigm.

The research question at hand relates to the literature, as it stems from Goffman's idea of self-presentation. Using Goffman's dramaturgical analysis for the presentation of the self, Tinder and JSwipe are both considered to be stages on which individuals perform. This question has been posited to better understand if the impressions individuals create are different when the "stage" or setting is different. Furthermore, as mentioned above, impression construction is

"when people explicitly choose the impression they want to make and decide the method they will use to create" (Leary and Kowalski 1990; Ward 2017). When it comes to dating apps, individuals might choose to portray themselves as suitable romantic partners for a long-term relationship or just someone looking for a casual encounter, and that could be demonstrated through the way that they present themselves within their profiles and biographies.

The literature regarding contemporary Jewish dating, as well as the literature on Tinder and hookup culture helps to contextualize why these two applications were chosen to examine what attributes were selected, as well as providing an explanation as to how this question came to be.

The aim of answering this question is to uncover the differences between the impressions individuals attempt to make when they are on an app looking for a hookup (Tinder) versus a long-term relationship. For the purpose of this research, the term 'attribute(s)' is defined as a "quality or feature regarded as a characteristic or inherent part of someone or something" (Oxford Languages, n.d.)

Method

This study is an exploration of the usage of dating apps to represent oneself. Examining what is included in individuals' biographies on these platforms are central to this study, as such methods may help to reveal the underlying attributes that individuals place weight on when on different dating apps. It is for this purpose that a conceptual content analysis was the chosen method of research. Most commonly used for analyzing qualitative data, content analysis examines forms of communication to see what they reveal about a society, a culture, or even the relationships between individuals (Bryman & Bell, 2020). According to Mayring (2000), qualitative content analysis is "an approach of empirical, methodological and controlled analysis of texts within the content of communication" (Mayring, 2000; Drisko & Maschi, 2015).

In order to execute a content analysis, the chosen text must be coded, or broken down, into manageable categories – otherwise known as codes – for analysis (Columbia University, 2019). Coding is a crucial part of content analysis, as it makes it easier for the researcher to interpret the data (Bryman & Bell, 2020). By assigning codes to specific words and phrases, it allows researchers to analyze better, thereby making it easier to understand the results of the study (Drisko & Maschi, 2015). In conceptual analysis, a concept is chosen for study and the subsequent analysis involves quantifying its presence in the selected sample. When analyzing, researchers can decide if they want to code based on either the existence or frequency of a concept (Drisko & Maschi, 2015; Bryman & Bell, 2015).

In an effort to determine how individuals portray themselves on dating apps, in vivo coding provides a proper method to do so. In vivo coding is "a form of qualitative data analysis that places emphasis on the actual spoken words of the participants" (King, 2008; Manning, 2017). The aim of creating and using an in vivo code is to ensure that the concepts stay as close

as possible to research participants' own words and terminology, therefore allowing participants

to have a voice in the data collection and research process (King, 2008).

In vivo coding was selected as the analysis method, as it is well-regarded by many

researchers for its ability to not only highlight the voices of research participants, but its reliance

on the participants in order to give meaning to the data as well (Manning, 2017). Although I am

not interviewing participants directly, I am using their words from these biographies. As such, in

vivo coding is an appropriate method for this study in order to maintain the participants' voice

and viewpoint that is used within their biography.

Sampling Strategy

More than 30% of Canadians have indicated that they are using online dating or dating

apps (eHarmony, 2021). JSwipe and Tinder were selected as the two dating apps to study, as

they are very similar in their functionality, yet differ greatly in their ideologies. As mentioned

previously, there are a plethora of dating apps available, such as Bumble and Hinge. These

additional dating applications have been excluded from this study due to their more complex

functionality, such as including more variables that are not pertinent to this particular research

study. JSwipe provides users with the ability to select their denomination, as well as if they keep

Kosher or not, as these are two factors that are considered to be important when dating within

Judaism. However, these variables are beyond the scope of this study, and will not be included

within data analysis.

As mentioned previously, a majority of users on dating apps lie on their profiles, which

could be considered a form of impression management. When these statistics are broken down

further, more than 40% of men admitted that they lie about either their jobs or income to make

themselves appear more successful (eHarmony, 2021). Additionally, men use online dating or

dating apps more than women, with 52.4% of men using these applications compared to 47.6% of women (eHarmony, 2021). These statistics demonstrate the need to explore the way males portray themselves on these apps when looking for a romantic or sexual partner.

I chose to limit the demographic scope to single, heterosexual, males, aged 22-30, living in Toronto. More specifically, I chose a range of 50 miles or 80 kilometers. This distance parameter was chosen, as it is the default selection on both JSwipe and Tinder, and so I maintained this geographic parameter as it provided a reasonably sized geographical area to choose from, while not being too large. While I acknowledge that this is a small population to sample, it is crucial to keep in mind that this paper is only a pilot project on the topic, and as such, the population should be kept to a manageable size to study.

The 22-30 age group was selected to be studied, as research has shown that 15% of individuals aged 18-30 are currently using Tinder, while 62% of individuals in that age range indicated that they have previously used the app (Statista, 2020). Although the user engagement statistics are not readily available for JSwipe, the same age group was used on JSwipe as well in order to keep consistency among the samples.

In qualitative research, the sample size is determined by the informational needs so that the research question can be answered with sufficient confidence (Patton, 2002; Krippendorff, 2004; Bengtsson, 2015). Fridlund and Hildingh (2000) tell us that it is common for qualitative studies to base their data on a range of 1-30 participants. However, for the purpose of this paper, 100 dating app profiles will comprise the sample for data analysis. Half of the dating app profiles (n = 50, 50% of the entire sample), will come from existing Tinder profiles. Thus, the other half (n = 50, 50% of the entire sample) of this study's sample will come from existing JSwipe profiles.

In this study, I aimed to mirror the way a single female would come across these profiles as if she were using the apps normally. In order to do so, I selected the first 50 profiles with biographies that appeared on my screen for each app. Profiles that appeared on my screen without an accompanying biography were deemed to be outside the scope of this project and were subsequently excluded from data collection.

Once the data was collected, selected terms from the biographies were coded for content analysis. Both Tinder and JSwipe had their own coding tables, in order to keep the results organized and to avoid overcomplications in understanding the data. In qualitative research, coding is the process in which data is broken down into component parts, which are then assigned names (Bryman and Bell, 2016). This is done to make it easier to analyze and understand the data that has been collected. Biographies with terms that focus on physical characteristics, such as height or body composition, will be coded into the physical category (P). For terms that focus on non-physical attributes, such as self-describing as a "nice Jewish boy", or discussing their hobbies, these will be coded into the non-physical category (NP).

Lastly, if an individual mentions both physical and non-physical attributes in their biography, for example mentioning both their height, and what they are studying in school, this will be coded into a third category which is referred to as physical/non-physical (P/NP). It is important to note that in this study, I am not interacting with the individuals to whom these accounts belong to, rather only viewing their biographies and therefore am not breaching any ethical violations. The increased use of social media and the internet has provided new dimensions surrounding ethics and ethical decision making within social research (Bryman, 2016). Within the social sciences, a term that is frequently used in connection with ethnographic research is *covert research*, in which the researcher does not reveal their true identity and/or intentions. Some consider this form of research to violate the principle of informed consent,

which is a key principle in social research ethics "that prospective participants in social research should be given as much information as they need to make a sound decision about whether to participate in a study" (Bryman and Bell, 2016)

According to Bryman (2016), it is frowned upon to "lurk" – a type of covert observation in which the researcher is just observing individuals interact, but not interacting themselves when conducting social research. Whether electronic communications are public or private is a matter of some debate, as some believe that it is unethical when participants have not given researchers their explicit consent for their postings and content used in this way, and it violates the principle of informed consent (Bryman, 2016). However, it also could be claimed that these postings exist within the public domain, so seeking consent is unnecessary (Bryman, 2016). Pace and Livingstone (2005) proposed the following guidelines that such electronic communications should be used for research only if: "the information is publicly archived and readily available, no password is required to access the info, the material is not sensitive in nature, and no stated site policy prohibits the use of the material" (Bryman, 2016).

The information collected within this study follows Pace and Livingstone's guidelines, and therefore is suitable to be used for research purposes. The profiles on these dating apps are readily available to be viewed by others who sign up for these apps, which is similar to those who use other social media sites such as Instagram or Twitter. Further, the profiles are not password protected and can be seen by anyone who also has a profile on the app. The materials involved in these profiles are not sensitive, and do not breach any individual's privacy. Lastly, JSwipe and Tinder do not explicitly have a policy against such research.

Data Collection and Analysis

Following data collection, the gathered profile information was sorted and labeled with the age each user, as well as raw data, which in this case would be the verbatim biographical data from each users' profile. I then analyzed the raw data with preliminary codes, which would allocate these users profiles to one of three categories: physical (P), non-physical (NP) and both physical and non-physical (P/NP). Originally, only two categories were created to be used in order to code the data collected – physical (P) and non-physical (NP). However, after reviewing all of the data collected between both Tinder and JSwipe, it became evident that a third category was needed to classify profiles that mentioned both physical attributes and non-physical attributes rather than picking and choosing. As a result of this realization, a third category – both physical and non-physical (P/NP) was included within the coding.

The following tables are a summary of the data coding process (Table 1), and a quantitative breakdown of the findings from both JSwipe and Tinder. Through the coding process, I was able to determine the attributes that were emphasized the most on each application, and which percentage of the sample size each code accounted for.

Table 1 displays the three coding categories, definitions of what would fall under these categories, as well as examples of some of the biographical data that was collected between both of the applications.

Table 1

Examples of Data Analysis Coding

Category

	Description	Example
NP	Traits that are not of or relating to the body, such as an education/career or interests	"I enjoy reading. I'm studying nursing I like working out I like action, adventure, and historical movies"
P/NP	A combination of both traits about an individual's body and traits that are not relating to the body	"Entrepreneur. Bioscience technology. Eating healthy and going to the gym is always a priority!! Loyalty and trust is most important to me."
P	Defining traits or characteristics about an individual's body, such as eye colour, hair and height.	"26, 6'0"

Table 2 below presents the number of times each code was used on JSwipe and Tinder, as well as the total number of times each code appeared between both of the applications. The number of times the code appeared was divided by both the total number of the sample size (100), as well as the number of the respective apps sample size (50 and 50), to calculate what percentage of each code was applied to individuals' profiles.

Table 2

Data Results from JSwipe and Tinder

      Application

	NP Total (n = 56)	P/NP Total (n = 22)	P Total (n = 11)
JSwipe (n = 50)	34 (68%)	12 (24%)	3 (0.06%)
Tinder (n = 50)	22 (44%)	20 (40%)	8 (16%)

Discussions and Findings

This section will discuss the findings from the data analysis, and the implications that stem from these findings. During the process of analyzing the textual captions of JSwipe and Tinder users, as stated in the introduction, the following research question guided the analysis: **Do individuals on an app that is focused on short-term hookups weigh attributes differently than individuals on an app that is focused on long-term relationships?** Previous studies of impression management have been successful in proposing that individuals create online dating profiles as a way to demonstrate their ideal self to partners (Ellison et al 2006; David and Cambre 2016). Research also shows that impression-management is important for individuals on these apps in order to both create and maintain on dating apps, as users are envisioning who will see them on the app (Ward, 2017), and that "people tend to be more concerned with how others view them when they anticipate future interactions with them" (Leary, 1995; Ward, 2017).

After conducting an analysis of the sampled data, the research suggested that individuals on both JSwipe and Tinder stress non-physical attributes over physical attributes, regardless of the differences in perceived use and outcomes between these apps. Non-physical attributes were emphasized within the biographies of 34 individuals on JSwipe (68%) and 22 individuals on Tinder (44%), equating to 56% of the sample. Although both apps had a fairly large quantity of non-physical codes, the content found within the textual captions varied wildly. On JSwipe, one of the biographies said "*WLU BBA Alum; Trying to introduce you to my bubbie*"; another "*Just a nice Jewish boy, trying to make his Jewish family happy*". Relating back to the literature regarding Jewish dating culture, Jewish law believes that religion is passed down through the mother; thus becoming a motivator for Jewish males to marry a Jewish female to ensure having

Jewish offspring (Chabad, 2017). Although this idea is deeply rooted in Jewish law, it can also be consistently reaffirmed by an individuals' parents, grandparents and other family members.

On Tinder, some of the biographical information that denoted non-physical attributes included *"Hedge fund analyst/trader. Love sports, playing tennis and golf and finding new places to eat*!" or; *"I'm looking for a lady to treat like a queen. I like the finest things in life, walking on the beach holding hands, looking at the sunrise and sunset"*. The first example denotes the individual's career, hobbies and interests, and the second indicates what the individual is looking for in a romantic partner. As Hanson (2021) stated in his research, although Tinder is closely associated with hookup culture, there is a parallel between dating apps and the norms of hookup culture. Both dating apps and hookup culture can facilitate potential relationships, and although there is a stereotype that Tinder is used, above all, to look for casual sex. These examples, as well as the data collected, demonstrate that there are individuals using this application to find a relationship (Hanson, 2021).

Furthermore, as mentioned in the introduction of this paper, at the core of these dating apps, they are for-profit and are commodifying human connection. This can impact how individuals present themselves on dating apps, as it gives way to self-commodification; with individuals listing their best qualities and putting their most attractive photos on their profiles, as if they were advertising themselves the same way they would advertise a product in the supermarket (Zizek, 2010; Gerber, 2016). Self-commodification could provide a possible explanation as to why the non-physical (P) attributes were coded most often, as individuals want to "sell" the idea of themselves to any potential matches, as if they were potential "buyers".

The second category that was coded most often was both physical and nonphysical (P/NP). 12 individuals (24%) on JSwipe had biographies that consisted of both physical and non-physical attributes, and 20 individuals (40%) on Tinder did as well. One biography that stood out on Tinder was the following: *"I'm caring, genuine. I'm 6'0. Want to lose my V-card. Looking for someone to show me the ropes"*. This biography includes a description regarding the individual's personality, but also that they are tall, and looking for someone to have sexual intercourse with for the first time. This users' biography explicitly indicates that they are using Tinder to find someone to have casual sex with, similarly to what Castro and Barrada (2020) proposed; that dating apps have changed the way that individuals meet and interact with potential romantic and sexual partners. As stated by Helm (2019), the use of these apps has become normalized within society, and as mentioned within the literature review, users can find themselves feeling enmeshed within a *hookup culture* (Helm, 2019). This individual could have felt as if they were trapped in *hookup culture,* and thus used Tinder as a way to navigate those norms. Furthermore, this individual could have felt more comfortable with posting that textual caption on their profile, as they might have believed that it would be more widely accepted on an app like Tinder due to pre-conceived notions about the app, compared to other dating apps on the market.

Regarding both physical and non-physical biographies on JSwipe, these were focused on physical activity, height, or hobbies with one biography being *"Queen's U Grad, Working in tech, Love all things film, Very tall",* and another saying "*Personal trainer, Lover of the raptors, jays, drives and adventures, Please take me to your parents' house for the high holidays, My friends have referred to me as Jewsain Bolt! The fastest Jew on the planet."* Although these biographies include physical attributes, a majority of the focus is still on the non-physical traits.

A potential factor for the inclusion of physical factors in their biographies could be attempting to fight against the trope of a "nice Jewish boy". As mentioned by Boyari et al (2003), historically, Jewish men have always been viewed as effeminate when compared to the more violent and masculine traits within Roman society. Granovsky (2019) tells us that by titling Jewish males as just "nice" and associating them with frailty and femininity, Jewish males feel like they must fight against the cultural stereotype and choose to identify with a more masculine persona.

The final coded category is physical attributes (P). Three individuals on JSwipe (0.06%) used physical attributes in their biographies, and eight individuals (16%) on Tinder used physical attributes in their biographies. This discrepancy is not surprising, as hookups have grown to become more culturally normative and dating for purely courting purposes has decreased (Garcia et. al, 2013). Although there is a discrepancy between the two apps, the number of individuals on Tinder who used this code was smaller than anticipated, given the app's reputation. Since the development and widespread use of dating apps, hookup culture has become more accessible, and so these individuals might be stressing physical attributes to feel like they are taking part of these social norms (Helm, 2019).

However, the lack of people who used this code on JSwipe was not surprising. Referring to the data from the JSwipe Love Study (2019), 50% of JSwipe users said that it is very important to date someone Jewish, with 30% of those individuals attributing that importance to the potential for marriage, a family, and children. Although not definitively, this data could tell us that individuals who use the application are seeking more long-term and serious relationships that could lead to marriage, children and a family. Male users on JSwipe may believe that a casual encounter is not the proper way to begin a serious relationship, and as such may place

emphasis on attributes which would indicate to potential love interests that they are interested in serious relationships.

The physical attribute that was emphasized the most between both applications was height, with men on both Tinder and JSwipe including their height in their biographies mainly if they were 6'0" or taller. Research shows that there is a particular preference for taller men, and that "taller men are seen as more dominant and assertive" (Melamed, 1992). By including their height, these men may be trying to involve themselves in hookup culture and use their height to attract potential partners, as they know women are attracted to taller men.

Although the majority of users on both applications stressed non-physical attributes as compared to the other codes, the spread of the three codes between the two applications is worth discussing as well. There were large "gaps" between the three codes on JSwipe, with 68% of users sampled emphasizing non-physical attributes, 24% emphasizing both physical and non-physical attributes, and 0.06% emphasizing physical attributes. The wide gaps between the number of users who use these codes demonstrate that JSwipe users could be emphasizing non-physical attributes in order to focus on finding a relationship. On Tinder, the codes used did not have as large of a gap between the number of users who used them, and the codes were more evenly distributed. 44% of users stressed non-physical attributes, 40% stressed both non-physical and physical, and 16% stressed more physical attributes. The differing amounts of users that fall under these codes on Tinder demonstrates that users on this application might have varying motivations for being on Tinder.

The findings from data collection cannot conclusively dismiss the assumption that an application like Tinder, which is known for casual relationships and hookups, is no longer

completely associated with those non-committal encounters, and that individuals do not focus on physical attributes on this specific app. Moreover, this paper cannot conclusively reaffirm that individuals focus on non-physical attributes on JSwipe to try and attain a long-term relationship. However, based on the results of the data analysis, as well as the research collected, one could conclude that individuals emphasize non-physical attributes in order to impress potential romantic partners for long term relationships.

As someone who is fascinated by the world of dating apps, I found the outcome from this study to be interesting, as I – like many others - held preconceived notions that individuals only utilized Tinder as an application for casual encounters. This study provided only a small glimpse of the research on this topic, however, the results from the data collected and analyzed provide information that could lead to changes of what one would intuitively think about these specific applications. As discussed in the literature review above, research has indicated that dating apps can serve multiple purposes, among which casual sex and participating in hookup culture is only one (Anzani et. al, 2018; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018; Lebfevre, 2018; Castro & Barrada, 2020).

As mentioned in both the introduction and the discussion, Tinder and JSwipe have commodified human connections, something that was previously intangible. As a result of commodifying connection, users on these apps may be curating their profiles as if they were representing themselves like goods, rather than individuals looking for a human connection. Moreover, this commodification can lead to decrease in the quality of interpersonal relationships. The quality of social relationships is considered to be lower when created through an online platform as opposed to face-to-face interactions or telephone calls (Mesch and Talmud, 2006).

This can be attributed to the lack of intimacy that individuals experience and share when they are having an in-person interaction (Nyatsanga, 2019). Although this study was unable to further explore the impact of commodifying connections on interpersonal relationships, this concept may provide an explanation as to why non-physical attributes were coded the most during data collection. Based on the results of data analysis in this study, and being cognizant of previous research findings, it could be posited that individuals are shifting away from Tinder as a source to seek casual "hookups", and could be more interested in pursuing long-term relationships from this app. As stated throughout this paper, this major research paper was a pilot project, and therefore, more research would need to be conducted in order to verify and validate these results.

Limitations and Future Directions

Based on the scope of this paper and size of the research sample, there were some choices made that may have contributed to shortcomings in this study, which are discussed below. Additionally, these limitations have demonstrated potential areas and directions for future research on this field of study.

Limitations in Research

This major research paper served as a pilot study in this field, and therefore, further research is needed on this topic before any conclusive and definitive remarks can be made regarding the results. The scope for this research was extremely limited, as I only looked at two dating apps, when there are 1,500 dating applications and websites that are looking to set up potential romantic and sexual matches (Lin, 2019). Investigating only two applications is restrictive and does not provide an accurate picture of how individuals present themselves on dating apps, when there are thousands of other platforms being used, and therefore a multitude of different ways and avenues for individuals to present themselves. As discussed in the introduction, a more robust and larger study would have used multiple applications in order to try and provide more definitive results.

Limitations on Methodology

Beyond research considerations, several issues related to the chosen methodology are worth mentioning. The first is that there is a lack of follow-up. As mentioned previously, Goffman (1959) imagined his theory of self-presentation in terms of face-to-face communication and discussed the influence on actions when in each other's immediate physical presence

(Goffman, 1959; Ward, 2017). Impression management in the digital sphere is different from impression management in a physical environment, and as such there are distinctions that have to be made. As this paper did not explore the subsequent events following a match between two individuals, it is difficult to know how and if impression management carries over. It is difficult to see if this research aligns with the data collected in this project, due to a lack of follow-up with the individuals whose profiles were studied.

Secondly, it's difficult to understand the motivations behind the individuals on these applications. Some individuals who included physical or non-physical attributes might not be putting a sophisticated level of thought into what they're including in their biographies. For example, an individual might have put their height in their biography because they didn't know what else to mention to prospective matches. As such, that could influence the interpretation of the results, because they might not have had any underlying motivation of attracting either a casual encounter or a serious relationship when setting up their biography.

A third limitation regarding the methodology is the fact that the profiles selected for the samples were not the same users on both Tinder and JSwipe. To perhaps more accurately respond to the research question, the methodology could have looked at the Tinder and JSwipe profiles of the same individuals to see if they have different text in their biographies emphasizing different attributes. This would allow for a more comprehensive data analysis to be conducted, and potentially provide a different result.

Lastly, the chosen methodology only looked at the biographies on these individual's profiles but did not include the photos that are part of these profiles. During data collection, many of the profiles seen on Tinder featured photos of individuals who were shirtless, or "selfies" where they looked attractive. In comparison, many of the photos seen on JSwipe featured individuals with family members and friends. By including these photos within data

collection and examining either just the medium of images or both mediums of image and text, it could prove beneficial in aiding to determine the type of attributes that are stressed by users of dating apps. Individuals could choose photos to stress their physical attributes or their non-physical attributes rather than using specific terms in their biographies that stress these attributes. However, it should be noted that looking at and including photos that individuals use on their dating profiles could be a breach of privacy and therefore a subsequent breach of ethics, and as such, future researchers who use this methodology should proceed with caution.

Swiping on the Applications as a Sampling Strategy

Collecting samples from swiping through individuals' profiles on dating apps is not standard. I acknowledge that using JSwipe and Tinder's swiping features may be misguided, due to several factors. Firstly, as the researcher, I do not possess a high-level of understanding behind the technical operations and materiality used on these apps, and as such, these results might result in a lack of data validity and can therefore produce an algorithmically skewed data set.

Formerly, Tinder used a variation of the ELO rating system. Originally created by professor Arpad Elo to rank player skill levels within the chess world, this scoring format assigns ranks by judging players' presumed skill levels against one another (Erhardt, 2016). Tinder uses this rating system to facilitate better matches, and therefore facilitate which profiles are suggested to you and who sees your profile (Carr, 2016; Erhardt, 2016). Tinder would then show individuals with similar scores to each other, with the assumption that these individuals would be in the same tier of what was referred to as "desirability" (Carr, 2016; Tiffany, 2019). In 2019, it was reported that Tinder deemed the ELO scoring system as "outdated" in comparison to their "new cutting-edge technology". In 2019, Tinder explained that this new technology matches users based on their recent activity, preferences and location (Tinder, 2019; Tiffany, 2019). This

new technology is defined in extremely broad terms, but Tiffany (2019) interprets the evolution of the app's use of the ELO score happening once "the app had enough users with enough user history to predict who would swipe on whom, based on the ways users select many of the same profiles as other users who are similar to them, and the way one user's behaviour can predict another's, without ranking people in an explicitly competitive way". There is no research that is easily accessible regarding JSwipe's use of a ranking system, but it is widely assumed that JSwipe similarly uses a form of the ELO ranking system. As I do not possess a complex level of knowledge on the ranking system, I do not know if this has a potential impact on which users came up on my screen while swiping. As I was collecting my data, those who saw me on their screens were swiping either right or left to me, which could have potentially impacted my "ranking" and, therefore, my sample as well.

When signing up for both JSwipe and Tinder, both applications prompted me to input variables which, in the methodology section, had previously been deemed as outside of the scope of the study, such as interests, hobbies and educational background. In the interest of maintaining a neutral approach to the research and not skewing any algorithmic data on the dating apps, I avoided entering these extra variables where possible. Tinder had the option to skip inputting these variables, such as interests and school; however, to set up a JSwipe profile, I had to select my denomination of Judaism as well as my level of Kosherness.

Although these variables are not included within the research and therefore are subsequently outside the scope of this project, inputting these variables within JSwipe could have skewed the profiles that came up on my screen, as they could have shown individuals who matched my denomination as well as my level of Kosherness, rather than a completely random selection.

Areas of Future Research

     As this paper was only a pilot project on this topic, there are multiple directions that can be approached to further study this research field. As mentioned above, the sample size of this study was quite small, and as such, it is hard to make a definitive statement on the result. One potential area for future research would be to explore the same research focus (impression management) on other mobile dating apps that exist on the market to get a better understanding of this topic, as well as for the purpose of providing more comprehensive results.

     Heterosexual individuals are often the central focus on studies in romantic relationships and dating trends (Hanson, 2021). For the directions of future research, this topic could be explored in the context of homosexual relationships and see if there are any differences in the findings between just homosexual and heterosexual dating trends and their respective dating applications. Moreover, there are multiple different variables that could be studied in relation to this topic, such as ethnicity on dating apps. In this specific study, those different variables were outside the scope of this study yet could provide yet another direction for further research. Lastly, another direction for further research would be to compare the results between males and females or compare results between different age groups.

     An additional direction for future research would be to further study the impact that the commodification of human interactions as a result of dating apps has on interpersonal relationships, especially when these interactions are taken out of the virtual world and into the real world. By conducting this study, it would provide researchers with a broader scope to see the impact that dating apps are having on communication in both the long-term and short-term.

     A final direction for future research could be to conduct the same study in a year in order to keep track of the dating trends on each app studied. By conducting the same study over time,

this allows researchers to see if the breakdown of which attributes are emphasized has changed or not.

Conclusion

The goal of this research was to explore the differences in how individuals portray themselves on two separate dating apps when the perceived outcomes of each app varies tremendously; one focusing on short-term hookups, and one focusing one long-term relationships. The research question was shaped after reviewing literature surrounding a number of different, yet relevant, topics, including Goffman's theories of both impression management and social identities, as well as exploring the topics of contemporary Jewish dating in comparison to hookup culture.

After conducting a detailed analysis, the research suggests that individuals stress non-physical attributes over other both physical and non-physical attributes, and physical attributes on both applications. As mentioned in the data analysis section, 56% of the overall sample size focused on non-physical attributes in their dating application biographies. These results are especially interesting, given the preconceived notions held by many regarding the purposes behind different dating apps, as mentioned within the literature review of this research paper.

Based on the analysis of dating application biographies, this data could suggest that individuals on the dating apps studied are shifting away from focusing on physical attributes and the pursuit of casual encounters, and concentrating more on non-physical attributes, such as family, education background, and hobbies. As with any research study, there are a number of shortcomings and limitations that could impact the research. As such, these limitations provided direction for future research with this topic. One main shortcoming in the methodology which was discussed within the limitation section was that using only two dating apps, when there are thousands more available, limited the scope of research immensely. This does not provide an accurate glimpse of how individuals present themselves on dating apps. A larger study would have used multiple applications for more definitive results. Secondly, the profiles selected for

sampling were not the same users on both Tinder and JSwipe, therefore making it difficult to compare profiles and see if these individuals were portraying themselves differently between the two applications. Thirdly, as the researcher for this paper, I do not possess a high level of knowledge on the technical operations used on these applications. As such, these results might result in a lack of data validity and could therefore produce an algorithmically skewed data set.

It is important to remember that as this is a pilot project on this topic, I am unable to confirm or dismiss any assumptions or preconceived notions surrounding the dating apps that were included in this study. Further, the analysis of the data was not done using a rigorous quantitative approach, as that would have been beyond the scope of this paper. The aim of this study was to point in the direction or various directions that might be fertile ground for further research which is needed to confirm these findings.

This major research paper has provided a look into the phenomenon that is mobile dating applications and has helped to discover both similarities and differences with past scholarship on both dating applications and impression management. It offers insights into explanations on how individuals present themselves on the apps, particularly when the perceived outcomes of the two apps differs greatly. Remaining cognizant of the limitations that could occur, and how to remedy them, this paper presents reasons to continue researching self-presentation on dating apps in a number of different contexts. In the end, does the type of dating application impact how individuals present themselves, or what attributes individuals place a greater emphasis on? The research suggesting that individuals on both apps are emphasizing mainly non-physical attributes is interesting and should be explored further.

Appendix A- Dating Application Biography Samples

JSwipe Biographies:

Hello🤪 I am an electrical apprentice⚡

I am looking for a nice Jewish girl who likes to go out on adventure, and try new things!

I enjoy reading
I'm studying nursing
I like working out
I like action, adventure, and historical movies

Looking for fellow Larry David enthusiasts

WLU BBA Alum. Trying to introduce you to my bubbie.

Looking for something real, dog lover, lawyer to be. Women in pics=mom/sister

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Your Mom will love me... I promise

Analyst in media and broadcast research. You could probably find me at the gym most days prior to COVID.

Ask me about the obscure tv shows I have gotten into 😬.

I like camping, comedy podcasts, country & bluegrass, cats and board games – but not necessarily in that order.

Entrepreneur: Bioscience technology, Eating healthy and going to the Gym is always a priority! Loyalty and trust is most important to me.

Lover of sweatpants, sarcasm, & takeout. 5 star Uber passenger. Raptors fan. Dog dad 🐶

Tinder Biographies:

Oswego State Hockey
Markham 🇨🇦
Florida 🌴

Pros:
- 6'1ft
- Likes to cook & bake
- Spontaneous

Cons:
- Can take awhile to text back

I'm looking for a lady to treat like a queen 👑 .
I like the finest things in life, walking on the
beach holding hands, looking at the sunrise
and sunset.

Just looking for someone to send funny
TikToks to, and possibly a sushi/dimsum
partner

🇬🇧🇨🇦
Life is soup and I'm a fork
-Freelance Illustrator-
The alpaca's name is Henry btw

A passive aggressive statement that
outlines my insecurities ✨

Catfish duhhhh 🤷‍♂️

Let's go on a road trip?!?
Love camping and hiking

IG: tjthagardfit
Snap: tjthagard

I'm also not short lmao I'm 6'0 😂

Inst: @khaihue
5'7, I'm 26 but someone says I'm
forever young
Lets be a friend

Hedge fund analyst/trader.
Love sports, playing tennis and golf and
finding new places to eat!

*29
IG @gregogallagher
LA/Toronto

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