

## Abstract

In this world of advancing technology, more and more people are using online dating websites (e.g. Match.com, E-Harmony) or mobile applications (e.g. Tinder and Bumble) to meet people (Ward, 2016). Studies show that people use online dating applications to meet people for varied reasons: to have a quick hookup, casually date, pass the time or/and find someone to hopefully spend the rest of their lives with (Botnan, Bendixen, Grontvedt, & Kennair, 2018; Hobbs, Owen & Gerber, 2016; Ward, 2016).

The purpose of the study is to understand college students' reasons for meeting people through dating applications. College students are at a life stage when people are busy with classes, have access to social events and meet people while trying to figure out their personal and professional lives for a future. As dating apps have become a fast and easy way of meeting new people and initiating online communication for the younger generation, it is important to understand motivations for college students to seek romantic relationships through online dating apps as opposed to face-to-face settings. The study has important implications to understand prevalence of online dating experiences among emerging adults and their motivations.

## Literature Review

- According to the Pew Research Center, almost one third of the users of online dating sites or apps in America were from the young adult group, including those of 18-24 years old (10%) and of 25-34 years old (22%) (Smith, 2014).
- There has been limited research on college students' dating life and their dating apps usage despite their life span at this stage. Online interactions not only take away in-person interactions, but also change the way we communicate and how often we communicate (Standlee, 2016).
- Prior studies have identified various reasons that people used dating apps to meet people. For example, Lefebvre (2017) reported that users of Tinder for the entertainment value and did not take the app "fully seriously." while most people do use online dating apps to find romantic and intimate partners. Some people wanted to use Tinder to recover from a breakup and find a new partner. People can turn to online dating apps to be distracted from a breakup (Ward, 2017).
- Dating apps made it easier for people to find partners as well as well as to find a casual sex partner (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016).

## Methods

### The research site & sample:

Surveys were distributed at Eastern Connecticut State University and at the IMPACT Conference at the University of Virginia, but most of our respondents came from the online survey distributed on researchers' Facebook and social media profiles.

### Sample & Sampling:

The final sample included 92 college students. We used availability sampling method to recruit respondents on campus and online for three weeks during Spring of 2019.

### Measurement:

-We asked 16 questions, 15 were multiple choice and 1 was open-ended. 10 questions about dating app usage and 6 demographic questions. The open-ended question asked participants to share any experience they had on a dating app.

-Motivations was measured by: Trying to find a relationship, Casual sex partner, Hookup, Boredom, Curiosity, and Other. Other survey questions include, "what dating apps were used", "their overall experience in online dating", and "if the respondent has ever met up with a person in real life through a dating app".

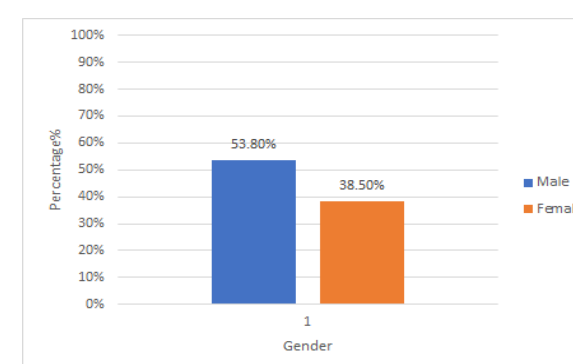
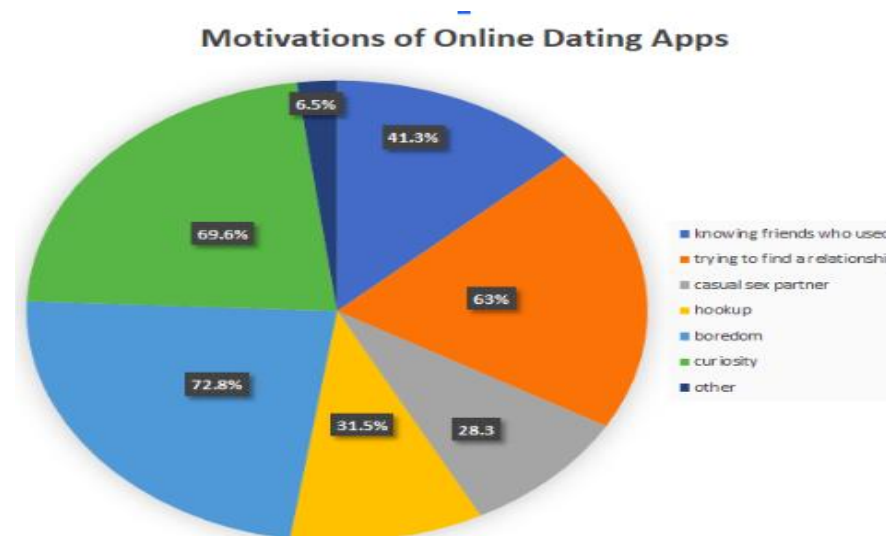
### Analysis Plan:

- We used Pearson's Chi-Square test to analyze our bivariate findings. We also analyzed the relationship between demographic variables and each motivation.
- SPSS 21 version was used to analyze data.

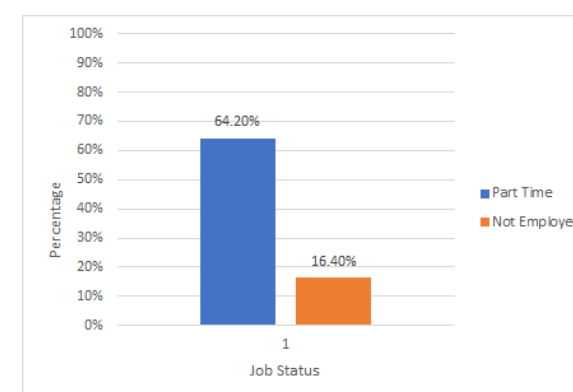
## Results

1. The mean age of the sample was 20.36 (SD=1.3). 76.1% were Caucasian/White respondents, 69.6% were female respondents. Junior accounted for 55.4%, followed by seniors (20.7%). 63% reported having a part-time job as opposed to 22.8% without employment. The majority (89%) participated in campus clubs, music bands or sport teams. 70.7% reported to be heterosexual and 17.4% reported homosexual.

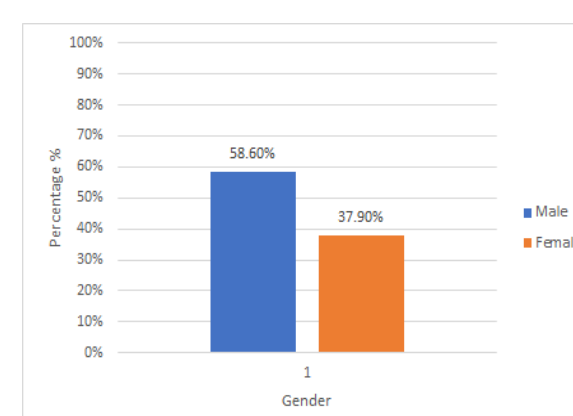
2. The top popular dating app was Tinder (98.9%), followed by Bumble (44.6%). **The top three reasons college students used dating apps** were: (1) boredom (72.8%); (2) curiosity (69.6%); (3) Trying to find a relationship (63%). Seeking "a casual sex partner" (28.3%) and seeking "a hookup" (31.1%) were not the main reasons.



**Male more likely to look for a "casual sex partner" than female in online dating.**  
( $\chi^2 (3, N=92)=17.53, p<.01$ )



**Motivation: those with a part-time job more likely to report "boredom" than those without a job in online dating.**  
( $\chi^2 (2, N=92)=9.337, p<.01$ )



**Motivation: Male more likely to seek "Hookup" than female in online dating.**  
( $\chi^2 (3, N=92)=24.60, p<.001$ )

## Discussion & Implications

- Our study shows that the most commonly mentioned motivation college students have for using online dating apps is because of **boredom**.
- The significant results show** that: (1) Males are more likely than females to find a casual sex partner. (2) Males are significantly more likely than females to seek a hookup on a dating app. (3) People who work part-time jobs are more likely to do online dating because of "boredom" among all the other motivations.
- Future research could use qualitative approach to probe into college students' detailed experiences (e.g. satisfaction) on dating apps.
- The findings from the our study narratives suggest that dating apps are convenient for LGBTQ+ people to find other LGBTQ+ people. Findings also suggest that some college students were being sexually taken advantage of by people they met through dating apps.
- It is important for clinicians to raise more awareness of online dating risks and further address healthy conversations and interactions in online dating relationships through campus sexual assault prevention and residential programs.

## Limitations

- The reliance of self-report on motivations for using online dating apps might have social desirability bias.
- Non-random sampling bias: Only students were surveyed on a non-random sampling, therefore our results are not generalizable to all college students.
- Most of our respondents were Caucasian students, future studies should recruit more underrepresented students to have a better representativeness of a college campus.

## References

- Botnen, E, Bendixen, M, Grøntvedt, T, Edward, L, Kennair, O (2018). Individual differences in sociosexuality predict picture-based mobile dating app use. *Elsevier*, 131, 67-73.
- Gatter, K., & Hodkinson, K. (2016). On the differences between Tinder versus online dating agencies: Questioning a myth. An exploratory study. *Cogent Psychology*,3(1), 1-13
- Lefebvre, L. E. (2017). Swiping me off my feet. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 35(9), 1205-1229.
- Mentel, B(2015). Online Dating. *CQ Researcher*, 25(12), 265-288.
- Newett, L., Churchill, B., & Robards, B. (2017). Forming connections in the digital era: Tinder, a new tool in young Australian intimate life. *Journal of Sociology*, 54(3), 346-361.
- Standlee, A. (2016). Technology and Making-Meaning in College Relationships: Understanding Hyper-Connection. *Qualitative Sociology Review*, 12(2), 6-21.
- Timmermans, E., & Courtois, C. (2018). From swiping to casual sex and/or committed relationships: Exploring the experiences of Tinder users. *The Information Society*, 34(2), 59-70.
- Ward, J. (2016). What are you doing on Tinder? Impression management on a matchmaking mobile app. *Information, Communication & Society*, 20(11), 1644-1659.