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Swipe right? Tinder, commitment and the commercialization of intimate life

This chapter explores the posited commercialization of intimate relationships, and the threat that this is perceived to pose to traditional forms of commitment (Illouz, 2007, 2012). Findings are drawn from a qualitative study of heterosexual male Tinder users, which focused in particular on participants' online representation of self, their motivations for using the app, and their accounts of encounters and relationships mediated in this way. Analysis suggests the majority of participants were seeking both long-term relationships and casual sex, frequently moving between the two. Therefore the distinction between 'hook-ups' and long-term commitment did not reflect the lived experience of the men interviewed, who had not rejected committed relationships, but began all encounters casually before these potentially developed further. Commodification and rationalisation was demonstrated in terms of the presentation of self (Goffman, 1957), as participants sought to compete on the dating app market via highly edited profiles, and evaluated potential matches through a similarly strict criteria. Heteronormative scripts dominated participants' encounters, which continued to operate within the context of wider structural gender inequalities rather than fundamentally challenging them. On the basis of these findings there is limited evidence to support arguments that the use of dating apps such as Tinder reflects either the emancipatory potential of the Internet, or the commercialization of intimate life.

Within a few years of Tinder's inception in 2012, the popular app was held responsible for the 'dating apocalypse' in a viral article by Nancy Jo Sales for *Vanity Fair* (2015). The piece deployed a familiar trope by arguing that the easy access to sexual 'hook-ups' the app facilitates has created a generation of commitment-phobic men. Various sociologists have supported this interpretation, including most notably Eva Illouz (2007, 2012) who maintains that the choice and individual self-fulfilment that consumer society is predicated on undermines commitment and encourages the seeking out of alternative partners, usually via the internet. In this chapter I draw on qualitative in-depth interviews with heterosexual male Tinder users to explore these claims.

Commitment and individualisation:

The emergence of Tinder and subsequent apps onto the dating scene has been accompanied by a record low in marriage rates between opposite-sex couples in England and Wales (Office for National Statistics, 2018), prompting a media panic over the end of commitment. While commitment has become an established public and political concern, Smart (2007) notes that it has also emerged as a key theme in the sociological debate over the impact of individualization on intimate relationships. In the context of Giddens' (1992) notion of the 'pure relationship', commitment is negotiated and contingent and comes without the guarantees of traditional ties such as marriage. Instead, 'it is a feature of the pure relationship that it can be terminated, more or less at will, by either partner at any particular point' (Giddens, 1992: 137). Similarly, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim propose that young people reject traditional notions of family and marriage, instead seeking 'emotional commitment' (1995: 16), while Weeks (2007) notes that commitments within contemporary relationships are negotiated rather than obligatory.

Other theorists lament the impact of late-modern social processes upon personal life. For Christopher Lasch, writing in the late 1970s, individualisation and excessive consumerism were leading 'personal relations [to] crumble under the emotional weight with which they are burdened' (Lasch, 1979: 188). Similarly, Zygmunt Bauman railed against the personal consequences of the individualization process, arguing that the uncertainty which pervades consumer society works to divide individuals and undermines the 'common interest' (Bauman, 2000: 148). For Bauman, the plurality of choice on offer compounds this condition of uncertainty, as 'if you may never err, you can never be sure of being in the right either. If there are no wrong moves, there is nothing to distinguish a move from a better one' (Bauman, 2000: 63). The advent of a free-floating capitalism is replicated in the trend from marriage to cohabitation, which for Bauman includes the assumption that the relationship may be broken at any minute, for any reason, once the desire or need has dried up.

From this perspective human bonds and partnerships are treated as things to be consumed rather than worked on and produced, and as such are subjected to the same criteria of evaluation as consumer goods (Bauman, 2000: 163). The commercialization of intimacy is detailed by Illouz in Why Love Hurts (2012). She explains that the hallmarks of consumer culture, freedom of choice and individualisation, have been extended to personal life, with partner choice subject to consumer logic. Early romantic attachment is often intense within

this context, however, long-term commitment is undermined by the availability of an alternative, potentially more suitable partner once the initial desire has worn off. In the past few decades, traditional patterns of commitment have been disrupted with a marked decline in marriage and remarriage and a rise in divorce, singlehood and casual relationships. Conversely, men, who benefit the most from marriage, have developed a commitment-phobia driven by what Illouz terms a new 'architecture of choice' (ibid: 91), which inhibits decision-making and commitment. This comes as a result of the real and imagined increase in sexual partners, facilitated by the internet, and online dating specifically, as traditional marriage markets are replaced by contemporary 'sexual fields' (Illouz, 2012: 53), where sexual attractiveness has emerged as the most important criteria in mate selection. Multiple options dampen men's ability to develop strong feelings for a specific woman, with the possibility of choice fundamentally altering their ability to commit. Illouz maintains that choice is the defining hallmark of modernity, in that it embodies freedom, rationality and autonomy (ibid: 19), and is located in the present, where commitment is necessarily oriented towards the future.

Empirical evidence has not straightforwardly supported claims of a shift from committed to casual relationships. Jamison (1998) cautions against interpreting declining rates of marriage and the trend towards cohabitation as evidence of a rejection of traditional forms of commitment. Cohabiting relationships are not homogenous, and can be understood on a continuum (Smart and Stevens, 2000), with a level of permanence expected at one end of the scale, akin to marriage. Jane Lewis (2001) also takes a nuanced view of commitment, defining it as 'behaving in ways that support the maintenance and continuation of a relationship' (2001: 124). Age and generation may influence what commitment means to couples, with research into generational differences (Sutton *et al*, 2003) suggesting that commitment for older couples was based on traditionally gendered roles, involving elements of care and responsibility to one's spouse, while younger couples report commitment as a personal expression exempt from societal pressures.

If we are to understand commitment as a scale or continuum then we should also examine how relationships progress along it. Much of the discussion on commitment presumes that couples are matched in their desire for commitment as relationships have come to be based on 'emotional give and take' (Giddens, 1991: 62) and an end to traditionally gendered roles

which are renegotiated to give each partner an equal say. From the perspective that contemporary relationships are based on the principles of democracy and personal freedom commitment would be something that is mutually agreed upon, with both partners satisfied with the progression of their relationship. However, research indicates that young women lack power in heterosexual dating relationships (Chung, 2005; van Hooff, 2013) which continue to be characterized by gender inequality.

Research has found that couples may move between greater and lesser ties in their relationships (Smart and Stevens, 2000; Barlow *et al*, 2005), or may have a linear vision of how their relationships will develop, with each 'step' seen as further progression to a more secure and committed relationship (van Hooff, 2013). Carter (2010: 175) distinguishes between 'pull factors' and 'push factors' in the process of developing commitment. Pull factors draw a couple together and are characterized by love, fidelity and monogamy. These usually precede push factors, which include internal and external investments and expectations and are motivated by not wanting the relationship to end. Within this model certain stages of a relationship will be reached before it can progress. Previous research on couples (van Hooff, 2013) suggests that relationships begin casually, with early sexual contact and few expectations of future commitment. However once individuals had been 'seeing' each other for a certain amount of time it was generally expected that they would move to consolidate their partnerships, characteristic of the drift into committed relationships noted in Carter's (2013) research. Thus the argument that there has been a rejection of commitment and long term relationships has generally not been borne out in sociological research, with couple relationships standing firm at the centre of intimate life (Gabb and Fink, 2015; van Hooff, 2017). This is supported by US-based research (Rosenfeld, 2018), which also suggests that the majority of single people are not actively dating or engaging in casual sex, further challenging the representativeness of the popular 'hook-up' culture trope.

Research into commitment has generally explored the stability and longevity of long-term relationships, hence the focus on cohabitation and marriage. Media panic around Tinder has presumed a shift to disposable and temporal relationship forms, with commitment increasingly short-term. However, the early stages of relationships and more casual encounters are underrepresented in sociological research. Most notably, recent work by Wade (2017) on the 'hook-up' culture of US college students suggests that while young

people are not necessarily engaging in increasing amounts of casual sex, they are reluctant to demonstrate emotional attachment, with emotional vulnerability deemed shameful. This research seeks to contribute to sociological understanding of early relationship formation and casual encounters, particularly those mediated through the internet.

Tinder:

Face-to-face interaction and co-presence are often privileged in sociological discussions of personal life, particularly from the perspectives of symbolic interactionism and phenomenology; yet the internet has facilitated the development of new ways for people to form intimate relationships (Jamieson, 2013). The shift from online dating to mobile apps has further accelerated this development, with location-enabled hand-held devices allowing immediate connections based on geographical proximity. While the market has become saturated with a variety of dating apps, Tinder remains the most popular with an estimated 1.6 billion daily swipes (Tinder, 2018).

Early sociological research into online dating focused on the new possibilities afforded by the internet to find a 'date', whether casual or long-term (Jagger, 2001), with traditional geographical constraints no longer applying (Poster, 1996; Valentine, 2006). The emancipatory potential of the internet was also cautiously welcomed, with arguments that online communication offers increased safety, control and freedom (Doring 2000, Miller 2011; boyd 2007). The autonomy fostered by the internet was understood as a challenge to traditional hierarchies, including patriarchal relationships (Castells, 2007). Recent research (Hobbs *et al*, 2016) found little evidence to support claims that Tinder users were rejecting romantic love, monogamy and commitment. While some were using the platform to engage in casual sexual encounters, the majority used the technology to pursue meaningful partnerships and welcomed the agency that it provided. Moreover, in a study of over 2,000 young adults, Timmerman and Courtois (2018) found the majority of dating app users they surveyed did not meet other users face-to-face. For those who did, a third of these offline encounters led to casual sex, while over a quarter led to the formation of a committed relationship. A detailed analysis of US survey data considered the impact of dating apps such as Tinder on relationship stability (Rosenfeld, 2018). Findings confirm that most heterosexual

adults are traditionally married, and interestingly that rather than engaging in a series of 'hook-ups', single heterosexuals do very little dating, with less than 20 per cent of those surveyed having a date or sexual encounter within the previous twelve months. These results challenge the argument that the emergence of dating apps has undermined commitment, and suggest instead that singlehood is becoming a more widespread and stable identity.

Consumer culture has provided individuals with important cultural resources for creating personal identities and marketing themselves online. Daters can construct an idealised image, which may bear little or no resemblance to offline reality, thereby fuelling the romantic fantasies and projections of their online lovers (Allbright, 2007), leading to issues of trust and deception. Online dating profiles are created to represent an ideal-self, yet in the face of imminent offline interaction 'individuals had to balance their desire for self-promotion with their need for accurate self-presentation' (Ellison *et* al, 2006: 430). Dating apps such as Tinder present a new technological environment for impression management, (Ward, 2017), with users highly motivated to control the impression they create or 'give off' (Goffman, 1957). Hogan (2010) argues that Tinder users are crucially different to Goffman's subjects as the context of face-to-face interaction is always reciprocal. Instead the Tinder user is a curator who filters their self-image before it is presented.

The commodification of intimacy fostered by online dating has been a focus of sociological research, with claims that dating profiles create a reflexively organised story about the user, which reflects not only how they see themselves in the present, but their life choices and who they have the potential to become (Burke 2000). Daters have to consider how to represent themselves when assembling online identities, marketing themselves to potential partners. Research indicates that men enjoy a plurality of masculinities to select from, based on varying combinations of occupational and economic resources, lifestyle interests and bodily attributes when assembling personal identities, while women remain limited to physical ideals (Jagger, 2001). For Illouz (2012), the individualisation of the criteria of choice of a mate has accompanied an increasing value placed on physical attractiveness, for both women and men. Under consumer culture the body becomes intensely eroticised, and emphasised femininity and the sexual model of masculinity are rewarded on the dating market. Adherence to conventional standards of physical attractiveness then become an important currency for male and female dating app users.

Method:

The overarching aim of this research was to explore the ways in which heterosexual men use and experience dating apps. In-depth face to face or telephone/skype interviews were conducted with fifteen men actively using Tinder and other dating apps, between 2015 and 2017. The focus on men was motivated by the general paucity of research on men and intimacy, as Gabb and Fink (2015) notes in their work on long-term relationships, with the topic area a suitable 'gap' (Alvesson and Sandberg, 2013: 5) in existing research. Discussions of online dating have also focussed on heterosexual men, and their use of dating apps to access casual sex rather than committed relationships, with little empirical evidence to support these assumptions. A flier, including a brief description of research, the required demographic characteristics of participants, and my contact details, was circulated via social media and email. However, male participants proved particularly difficult to attract for interview, and the majority of the sample was recruited via snowball sampling, which meant that some participants were not unfamiliar to me, or each other. Ethical approval was granted for the study from Manchester Metropolitan University in 2015, and in order to disguise characteristics, transcripts were modified where specific individuals, places or events were made reference to.

Each in-depth interview lasted between forty-five to ninety minutes, and was recorded, transcribed, coded and analysed using thematic analysis in order to identify common themes. Interviews took place in a location selected by the participant, which was usually either my office, a café or bar, or in one case the participant's workplace, with four of the interviews taking place over skype, and two by phone. Follow up email or phone correspondence took place in the instance of five of the interviews in order to clarify points. All participants had been using dating apps for a minimum of two months, and all were employed, with the men aged between 26 and 47 years old, and predominantly white British, with one British-Pakistani and two Black British participants.

Despite the initial issues in recruiting participants, the interviews yielded a huge amount of data. Concerns that men would temper their answers to a female interviewer appeared unfounded, as most participants spoke openly about their encounters, although some were generally more taciturn in their responses.

Consuming and being consumed:

Much of the attention and criticism directed towards Tinder centres on the user interface of the app, which encourages daters to scan through pictures of potential matches, with minimal space given to accompanying text profiles. Online dating is the leading example of the 'technologies of choice' discussed by Illouz (2007, 2012), which have fused consumer logic onto intimate relationships, as selecting a mate becomes akin to online shopping. For the men interviewed, the matches were initially selected on appearance, which indicated attractiveness and the 'type' of person a match might be:

> She has to be 'my type' or it's not going to work, and I can tell that within the first thirty seconds. (George, 45)

As reported in other research (Ellison et al, 2006), participants evaluated matches in terms of suitability for a relationship, or casual sex, based on small cues, or signals 'given off' (Goffman, 1957) unintentionally. Participants evaluated matches based on these cues as quickly as possible, motivated by fear of 'wasting time' on an unsuitable date:

> First of all your looking at how fit she is, whether it's on Tinder, real life, wherever. That's the most important thing. Then location. You work out compatibility from chatting online so you don't waste time meeting up. (Pete, 37)

As Pete explains, dates are quickly assessed, initially on a combination of physical attraction and geographical proximity, followed by messaging. While there is some resonance with Illouz's (2012) 'sexual fields', in which sexual attraction has become the primary criteria for mate selection, participants evaluated attractiveness alongside other factors, including personality. What participants regarded as excessive displays of female sexuality were usually rejected, as women were expected to perform a normatively gendered role (Evans, 2003) or risk being dismissed. Irfan describes how he navigates this through visual cues given off by women, which enables him to swipe through a greater number of profiles:

> Potential partners are anyone that doesn't have ridiculous selfie pictures or anyone not pouting in all of their pictures. No one that has ridiculous cleavage on show either. Also no hideous girls. I don't personally read the profiles because there's just not enough time in the day. (Irfan, 28)

The 'hyperpersonal' intimacy argued by Walther (1996) as characteristic of online relationships is apparent here, as the speed and depth of ties is accelerated and encourages users to present themselves in a certain way to potential dates. Time was key to all of the participants discussions of their use of Tinder, with all anxious to be as efficient as possible in their dating. Enough time is spent messaging or texting to ensure that the physical date will not be a 'waste' of time, while participants are also keen not to let this phase drag without arranging to meet. As well as being very aware of what they were looking for in a partner, which was usually based on a combination of conventional attractiveness and personality 'type', participants also invested effort in presenting particular versions of themselves. In this sense, the early stage of online dating is performance insofar as it involves presenting a gendered version of oneself that the user assumes his or her potential partner wants to see:

> Well obviously you create a brand, and my brand is not being like other men. In my first few dates I'm totally presenting a brand, I am what they want me to be, so I present myself as an intelligent, sensitive man who offers them something better. My tagline actually says that I'm not like other men. (George, 45)

The availability of various 'types' of masculinity for men to draw on when presenting themselves online was highlighted by Jagger (2001), and it appears that this has parallels here. For George, success on the app involves presenting a particular version of masculinity at odds with that identified with Tinder, and this becomes what distinguishes him from the competition. Yet, as Illouz notes, while daters may distinguish themselves in terms of their personality, or humour, in order to ensure success they must conform to physical norms, as online dating encourages standardisation. In the process of self-presentation, physical appearance takes on a new, almost poignant importance in the process of the profile picture, as daters use the accepted conventions of the desirable person and apply them to themselves (Illouz, 2007: 82). Participants generally drew on hegemonic versions of masculinity, as Chris notes, 'successful, sporty, sociable':

> I've worked out that you've got to present yourself in certain ways, through your photos, so that's what I've done really. I want to say that I'm successful, sporty, sociable and want someone similar. *Shows me his profile. There are photos of him alone, with groups of friends, skiing, playing football, travelling.* (Chris, 35)

All participants were aware that they presenting a particular version of themselves, to be consumed by others, with most conscious that they had to distinguish themselves from the 'competition'. This was filtered through preconceived notions of what a dateable man might be, with profiles conforming to normative versions of masculinity, usually based on resource capacity and physical attractiveness. These findings align with early research on online dating which noted that body ideals have become important for men to be successful (Jagger, 2001), as the body becomes the visible carrier of the self in consumer culture (Featherstone, 1991). The men interviewed were also aware that economic success was crucial to attract women, with one participant noting that during a period of redundancy he temporarily left Tinder:

> It was actually the one time I had time to use it [Tinder], but there was no point, the first thing girls ask is what you do, it would just have been awkward. (Rob, 34)

The self-presentation of the men interviewed, and presentation of potential matches became a theme of the research findings, with participants openly discussing their personal 'brand' or online attractiveness. This was usually presented and performed in normatively gendered ways, as participants quickly learn that success on tinder involves transformation of the self into a packaged product, to compete on the dating app market. However, claims that dating apps such as Tinder have directed a shift to commodified intimacy neglect the relationship between gender, romance and performance, as explored by Evans, who explains that, 'part of our contemporary performance of gender is the performance of the lover or the loved, in appropriately gendered ways' (Evans, 2003: 13). In this research, Tinder is seen to reinforce these heteronormative performances of gender, rather than represent a radical shift in heterosexual dating practices.

Hooking up or looking for more?

Popular understandings of Tinder suggest that it enables casual sex, and disincentivizes users from committing to longer term, monogamous relationships. Yet, when asked why they used Tinder, participants all described their engagement as a means to meeting a partner, for both casual, or more serious relationships. The attraction of the app was its efficiency and the large pool of potential dates it afforded access to, as Irfan explained:

> Where else would I meet someone? In a bar? I'm not going to meet anyone at work. I'm on Match as well, but it just takes forever and leads to nothing. Tinder works 'cause it's fast. (Irfan, 28)

Meeting a long-term partner is presented as an ideal, although users often engaged with the app on a superficial level:

> To be honest, I use it when I'm on the toilet [laughs], I let my mates pick matches, I rarely swipe left. But when you start chatting to someone nice, you get invested. (Daniel, 30)

Tinder's gamified user interface promotes a casual initial engagement with potential matches, with participants reserving emotional commitment until a match has progressed. Some participants were keen to reject the image of Tinder as a 'hook-up' app, as George explained:

> I think there's an urban myth about people wanting casual sex on Tinder, that hasn't been my experience at all, everyone I've met has been on it looking for a long term relationship (George, 45)

The efficiency and availability afforded by Tinder was also cited by users as a motivation for using the app. Most participants had experienced committed relationships with women they had matched on the app, although the majority of offline encounters either resulted in casual sex or not led to anything beyond the initial meeting. Success is usually defined as a long-term relationship, with all participants professing this as their eventual goal, although all committed relationships initiated through the app started casually and typically became sexual within one to three dates. This experience is similar to research findings on the ways that heterosexual couples began their relationships in the pre-dating app 2000s (van Hooff, 2013). Relationships began as casual encounters, with few expectations of commitment, only continuing if the participants wanted to see each other again. There is very little difference in the approach to sex and commitment for the men interviewed here, with the exception that Tinder affords a greater degree of choice and efficiency.

It has been noted elsewhere that relationships that begin online rarely stay there (Valentine, 2006), and this was accurate for the men here, who were keen to meet up as quickly as

possible, with matches based on propinquity. Early theorising on the impact of computer-mediated communication on relationships argued that as geographical distance has no bearing on the cost it plays a less important role for relationships fostered online (Poster, 1996), however for users of dating apps, distance is a deciding factor in selecting a match, as spatial proximity enables physical engagement with other users. The shift towards a 'cooler' intimacy (Illouz, 2007; Hochschild, 1994) is apparent here as participants make rational decisions about potential dates based on the criteria detailed in the previous section and practical considerations, such as proximity, rather than being motivated by passion.

While most of the women the participants matched with did not meet their ideal of a long-term partner, they were happy to engage in casual sex or relationships, the 'hook-ups' Tinder has become notorious for. Participants also made a distinction between women they wanted to match with for sex or for potential relationships, based on their profile. Usually the casual relationships were carried out with the consent or knowledge of both parties, however the men interviewed described negotiating these interactions carefully. The dominant heteronormative script remains in place in participants' interactions and expectations, although they are loosened for more casual sexual encounters. For Alex, who reported using Tinder for the past three years for at least an hour a day, encounters were generally positive, and although they had not led to long term relationships, Tinder had broadened his social network:

> A long period on Tinder would be six plus dates, usually it doesn't go anywhere. Usually relationships are sexual. I'd always chat to multiple people at once and occasionally see multiple partners at once. Most encounters have been enjoyable and interesting, some I'm still friends with, one is now our company solicitor, but most I don't speak to. (Alex, 29)

Normative gendered discourses of commitment also emerge in participants' discussions of dating, with assumptions that the women they see are always hoping for more committed relationships than they are. Farvid and Braun (2006), in their analysis of popular women's magazines, found that women were constructed as being in constant pursuit of long-term committed relationships with men. Pete describes women who 'read more into it', assuming that sexual encounters will translate into emotional commitment:

If a guy isn't texting or calling you all the time if he hasn't made an explicit commitment, if he's not displaying a keen interest and the girl is choosing to sleep with him and read more into it then it's up to her. But it'll be over in less than a month. (Pete, 37)

Many of the participants discussed managing the expectations of the women they match, navigating between casual and committed partnerships, as Rob explained:

But women who are too keen are off putting, like clinginess. Most are, like they tell you they love you right away, text you twenty times a day, and you have to handle that. (Rob, 34)

This is despite some participants alluding to emotional hurt after the ending of a relationship. While he displays gendered understandings of emotionality, Rob also briefly describes the pain of being 'ghosted' (the termination of all communication without warning) by a woman he was seeing;

I had a five month relationship with someone I met on Tinder, I really liked her but I don't know what happened, I think she didn't fancy me or met someone else, so you just get back on it. (Rob, 34)

Patriarchal scripts define women as emotional and vulnerable, often leaving them humiliated, dismissed and ignored (Illouz, 2012:70), with little space for emotional attachment in contemporary displays of masculinity. Ghosting is usually seen as an example of callous male behaviour, meaning that participants are ill equipped to cope with it when it happens to them. Discussions of Tinder have focussed on the power heterosexual men have to choose and casually date women, yet in the process the agency of those women involved has been overlooked, as has the emotional attachment of men. Thus, the use of dating apps can be seen as reinforcing and recreating conventional hierarchies of masculinity and femininity, rather than providing new freedoms.

Many participants described the user experience of Tinder as 'addictive', which made it difficult to abandon in favour of a more committed, sexually exclusive relationship. Thus the reality of dating for the majority of the men interviewed was a series of medium-term relationships interspersed with more casual encounters. As Illouz (2007) notes, technology

13

encourages an increased refinement of tastes, as users aim for a match who is 'out of their league', and the participants here displayed particularly high standards about the attributes of a potential long-term partner. While several of the men interviewed had been using the app for a number of years without meeting any women that conformed to their ideal, they refused to compromise, as the internet unleashes a fantasy yet inhibits actual romantic feelings (Illouz, 2007: 104). Tinder also introduces an element of efficiency into dating, with participants unwilling to 'waste time' on the wrong match, when a sea of other potential women are apparently available, a swipe away. For this reason, the most participants often dated multiple women casually, with sexual exclusivity negotiated at a later stage. However, the casual start to relationships, characterised by 'hooking-up' did not preclude them from becoming more serious at a later stage, rather it appears that commitment is not assumed and has to be more formally established in relationships formed on Tinder, unlike the 'drift' into committed offline relationships (Carter, 2013). Moreover, characterising Tinder as the end of commitment fails to take into account the fragile nature of the early romantic attachment of relationships formed on the app, which are likely to have a high failure rate. Those who 'successfully' navigate the app to form long-term relationships are no longer visible.

Conclusion:

Enthusiasm by sociologists and cultural commentators to announce social change does not always reflect the messier, more nuanced reality. The research presented here provides limited support for the shift to a technology-enabled commercialization of intimate life. For the participants interviewed, Tinder and other dating apps enabled access to a larger pool of potential women, in a shorter space of time than offline dating. These initial motivations align with Hochschild's posited emotional cooling (1994), or Illouz's cold intimacy (2007), with efficiency and choice ruling over passion. The intensely competitive, technology enabled 'sexual fields' (Illouz, 2012) are partially represented by participants' experiences. Although the men interviewed were strategic in the way they presented themselves and selected potential matches according to consumer logic, beyond the initial meeting relationships were allowed to develop or fade out. While this may lead to some acceleration in relationships which sometimes begin and end more quickly than equivalent offline encounters, underlying normative gender roles and ideals about long term relationships remain in place. The

evidence that men are emotionally detached (Illouz, 2012: 243) in such encounters was also limited as participants performed normatively gendered displays of emotion, but also expressed attachment and desire for commitment.

The focus on Tinder illuminates the unpredictability and high failure rate of early romantic attachment, which may not previously have been as visible, rather than a significant shift away from committed relationships as argued by Illouz (2007, 2012). It should also be noted that men are not a clear and cohesive group (Holmes, 2015), and heterosexual men's use of dating apps are complex and multidimensional, with participants often ambivalent about their own use and motivations. Participants who claimed to be looking for a long-term relationship would also engage in casual sexual encounters, frequently moving between both types of relationships. Therefore the distinction between 'hook-ups' and long-term commitment did not reflect the everyday lived reality of the men who have not rejected committed relationships, but expect all encounters to begin casually. This is not evidence of the casualization of relationships, and instead aligns with earlier research into offline relationship formation, where commitment followed on from casual sexual encounters for most couples (van Hooff, 2013). While evidence to support the commercialization of intimate life was limited, findings suggest that the use of dating apps may reinforce conventionally gendered hierarchies, as participants' interactions and experiences continue to be framed by heteronormative scripts.

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