AGE, GENDER, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND THEIR EFFECTS ON ONLINE DATING MOTIVATIONS

By

Jenna Leigh McPherson

Bachelor of Arts – Psychology
Bachelor of Arts – Spanish
University of North Carolina Wilmington
2014

Master of Arts – Psychology
University of North Carolina Wilmington
2017

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the

Doctor of Philosophy – Psychological and Brain Sciences

Department of Psychology
College of Liberal Arts
The Graduate College

University of Nevada, Las Vegas
May 2024

UNLV | GRADUATE COLLEGE

Dissertation Approval

The Graduate College
The University of Nevada, Las Vegas

April 29, 2024

This dissertation prepared by

Jenna Leigh McPherson

entitled

Age, Gender, and Sexual Orientation and their Effects on Online Dating Motivations

is approved in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy – Psychological and Brain Sciences
Department of Psychology

Rachael Robnett, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Chair

Murray Millar, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

David Copeland, Ph.D.
Examination Committee Member

Annaliese Grant, Ph.D.
Graduate College Faculty Representative

Alyssa Crittenden, Ph.D.
Vice Provost for Graduate Education & Dean of the Graduate College

Abstract

Online dating and dating apps are becoming more common as a means to meet a romantic or sexual partner (e.g. Rosenfeld, Thomas, & Hausen, 2019). Previous literature on the motivations for why people use dating apps and how they differ among participants of varying age, gender, and sexual orientation has not allowed for comparisons across these groups, or shows conflicting findings. In order to consolidate existing literature and further explore the topic, I conducted both a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. The meta-analysis demonstrated a gender difference in the motivation of casual sex, such that men scored higher than women. The meta-synthesis showed that there was a variety of motivations for why people used dating apps, and this may be affected by dating app type and cultural values. Taken together, these findings show a need for more rigorous statistical reporting standards and a possible revisitation of popular scales used for dating app motivations.

Acknowledgements

First, I would like to acknowledge my committee for all the help they provided with this project: Dr. Rachael Robnett, Dr. David Copeland, Dr. Murray Millar, and Dr. Annaliese Grant. Specifically, Dr. Robnett helped me stick to a timeline while still encouraging quality work and managing my anxieties. Dr. Copeland always gave very helpful and informative feedback regarding my drafts. Dr. Millar helped me start this project and obtain a base for this research. Dr. Grant very graciously took on the role of representing an outside department.

Second, I would like to thank everyone in the Social Development Lab for their ongoing support. In particular, I would like to show my appreciation to Claudia Luu, Ana Flores, Melanie Garcia, Jessica Nguyen, and Maryiam Raza. They have been the best research team I could have ever hoped for.

Last, I would like to extend my gratitude to Dr. Kristin Vierra for all of her guidance regarding how to conduct a meta-synthesis and, in general, for being a supportive friend as I completed this project.

Dedication

I dedicate this dissertation to my soon-to-be husband, Kenneth Burge. Ever since we met (on a dating app, it should be noted), you have been my strongest support system. You have always believed in me and encouraged me to continue towards my goal. You have kept me sane and always found a way to make me laugh, even when I was convinced that I was a failure. You kept me fed and hydrated when I would forget that I need to take care of my physical health. I can't wait to spend the rest of our lives together.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

Romantic relationships are a common feature of everyday life. In recent decades, online dating has broadened the dating landscape by providing people with more options for partners and types of dating relationship (Statista Research Department, 2022; Wiederhold, 2015). Once examined more closely, however, it quickly becomes apparent that there are different motivations for why one would want to initiate a romantic relationship through online dating. Existing research paints an inconsistent picture of whether people from different sociodemographic backgrounds engage in online dating for different reasons.

Thus, the current research seeks to synthesize literature on motivations for utilizing online dating services (referred to broadly as dating apps throughout this paper). In addition, due to the variety of findings in previous literature, I will present a current study that employs both a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis to aggregate the existing research. Below, I summarize previous studies on the topic of motivation for using dating apps. I further break down the subject by analyzing literature in terms of demographic categories like age, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

Online Dating

Using dating apps and websites such as Tinder, Grindr, and Match.com (collectively referred to as "dating apps" throughout this paper) to find and select a partner has been described as the modern-day equivalent of newspaper personal ads (Toma, 2015). Prior to the year 2000, finding a partner via the Internet was considered unusual or uncommon. However, over the past two decades, it has become increasingly common for romantic couples to meet in a virtual space (e.g. Rosenfeld et al., 2019). In recent years, it has been estimated that 70.8 million Americans use online dating services (Statista Research Department, 2022), and Wiederhold (2015) reported

that one-third of new marriages begin online. Thus, with the prevalence of online dating, I chose to focus on this phenomenon in order to understand people's motivations for using this method of relationship initiation.

Self-selection methods, system-selection methods, and hybrid methods are the three primary types of online dating (Toma, 2015). On the one hand, self-selection methods are the most user-driven, as individuals can search for a potential partner using keywords or categories. With these services, singles can search for a wide variety of potential matches or narrow their searches to specific demographic categories, such as religion, age range, lifestyle, or profession (Fiore & Donath, 2004). System-selected methods, on the other hand, involve a third party (the dating app company or a matchmaker) using data and a proprietary algorithm to select potential matches for the user. Most online dating companies claim that their algorithms are superior to human judgment because they are based on existing psychological and social theories (Schwartz & Velotta, 2018). Finally, hybrid methods, as their name suggests, are a hybrid between self-selection and system-selection methods (Toma, 2015).

Access, matching, and communication are three advantages of dating apps that are not typically found in "traditional" offline dating (Finkel et al., 2012). *Access* refers to the ability to meet people that one would otherwise not interact with in their day-to-day life. A downside to access is that it can increase the dating pool to an unmanageable size, so *matching* is used to pair potential partners with complementary characteristics (using mathematical algorithms). Lastly, *communication* refers to the fact that the majority of dating apps enable users to communicate via online messaging prior to meeting potential partners in person.

Motivations Behind Using Dating Apps

There are numerous reasons for why a person may utilize dating apps, and this may vary depending on different demographic categories. For instance, some individuals may view a dating app as successful if it leads to a long-term romantic relationship (Baker, 2002), whereas others may be satisfied with a hookup or an ego boost by having others tell them they are attractive. Multiple matches and requests to hook up are viewed as the most successful by those in committed relationships who intend to cheat (Alexopoulos et al., 2020). Using a mixed-methods approach with college-aged Hungarian participants, it appears that there are four major motivational factors associated with Tinder usage (Orosz et al., 2018). These four factors are (1) a desire for sex, (2) a desire for love, (3) a desire to boost self-esteem (e.g., feeling validated after receiving compliments), and (4) a desire to alleviate boredom (e.g., using Tinder as a form of entertainment when bored). Based on this study, women are more likely to use Tinder for love and self-esteem enhancement, whereas men are more likely to use the app for sex. In addition, older participants were more likely to use Tinder to find sexual partners. Furthermore, no significant association was found between personality traits, such as the Big 5 factors, and any of the four motivational factors.

It is unclear whether the previous four motivational factors encompass the entirety of why people use dating apps. In a study conducted by Sumter, Vandenbosch, and Ligtenberg (2017), six motivational factors were identified: (1) love, (2) casual sex, (3) ease of communication (e.g., the convenience of using an app to find partners), (4) self-worth validation (e.g., feeling happy about oneself after receiving compliments or dating/sexual requests), (5) thrill of excitement (e.g., an adrenaline boost from getting matches and dates), and (6) trendiness (e.g., feeling they should use the app because everyone else is). Other research conducted in Mexico has identified up to twelve categories for why people use Tinder (Rodríguez & Aragón,

2022). Research with Australian participants highlighted boredom and casual sex/dating as primary motivation factors (Garga et al., 2021). With inconsistencies such as this one, it would be beneficial to combine existing literature to further examine what motivational factors are most prevalent.

Sources of Variation in Online Dating Motivations

Dating apps vary in what information they require of users. For instance, Tinder allows their users to specify their interests and Hinge has sections for drinking/smoking status, religious beliefs, and more. However, across dating platforms, standard demographic questionnaires usually include information on a user's age, gender identity, and sexual orientation. For this reason, I focus on these three main demographic identifiers when I explore variations in motivations for using dating apps.

Age

Throughout the lifespan, social relationships are crucial to one's health. Indeed, those with more and stronger social ties have a lower mortality risk (Antonucci et al., 2010). According to previous research, this is especially true for older adults (Antonucci & Akiyama, 1995). A common way of maintaining social connections is through romantic relationships. This creates a strong motivation to seek a romantic partner through dating. In this section, I will discuss previous research on what motivates people to engage in online dating at different points in the lifespan.

Romantic Experiences During Emerging Adulthood. Emerging adulthood is a distinct developmental period encompassing those in their late teens to early twenties, specifically those aged 18 to 25 (Arnett, 2000; 2007). Internet usage has become extremely widespread, particularly among young adults. Approximately 99 percent of young adults (ages 18 to 29) in

the United States regularly access the internet (Johnson, 2022). This is compared to the approximately 75% of adults over 65 who use the internet. Given the prevalence of internet usage, it is not surprising that young adults utilize online dating resources.

When analyzing emerging adults (ages 18 to 30) on Tinder, one study asked participants to check off a list of reasons for using the app and they could select as many as they believed applied. Subsequently, six motivational factors were identified: (1) love, (2) casual sex, (3) ease of communication, (4) self-worth validation, (5) thrill of excitement, and (6) trendiness (Sumter et al., 2017). In general, men reported higher levels of motivation for casual sex, ease of communication, and the thrill of excitement than women. Higher age (i.e., closer to 30) increased the significance of these three factors regardless of gender. They found no statistically significant differences between the other motivations.

Romantic Experiences During Older Adulthood. Between 1990 and 2010, the divorce rate doubled for those aged 50 and older (Brown & Lin, 2013). This, in turn, increased the number of older adults who are single and searching for romantic partners, as opposed to limiting samples to widows and widowers. Seniors may seek a romantic partner for practical reasons, such as financial security, or for more personal motives, such as improved mental and physical health (Conney & Dunne, 2001). Regardless of the cause, older adults are better able to find partners due to the increased accessibility of dating apps and other forms of technology.

In general, individuals aged 65 and over are becoming more at ease with online activity (Czaja, 2017) and are more willing to maintain social connections, including through dating apps (Delello & McWhorter, 2017). This may allow dating apps to play a unique role in the lives of older adults, as increased social interaction can be obtained through technology, but people can still meet and become more ingrained in one another's lives.

Differences Across the Life Span. When compared to younger adults, older adults are more concerned with fostering a sense of community, whereas younger adults are more focused on establishing their own identities (Antonucci et al., 2010). In a study of widowed elderly adults, Carr (2004) found that different factors contributed to whether a person would have interest in dating that may not be present in younger adults. The amount of social support received had a greater impact on male older adults than on females, according to the findings. When men had less social support, they were more likely to pursue romantic relationships. However, after 18 months following the death of a spouse, these differences vanished and at that point there were no differences between males and females. In a study of older adults (ages 53-74) who use online dating sites, men desired a committed relationship whereas women desired committed relationship but with the extra caveat that it would be a companion who did not require constant care (McWilliams & Barrett, 2014). Moreover, as women age, their standards for a romantic partner become more stringent, while men loosen their standards. It is suggested that this is because older women do not want to become a caretaker, as may be expected of them by societal gender norms (McIntosh et al., 2011).

Limitations of Previous Research on Age. A main limitation on age research is that, frequently, an individual study focuses on either younger populations (such as with undergraduate students) or specifically on older adults. This limits comparisons that can be made across the life span, such as one study may examine factors that another did not. A meta-analysis and meta-synthesis will combine all relevant existing research on the topic of motivations for using online dating apps. This way, differences across the life span may become more apparent and help direct future research.

Gender Identity

Along with age, gender is one of the more widely studied topics when it comes to motivations for dating online. Given the plethora of existing research, it is important to collect all relevant information on the subject and re-analyze findings through a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis. This section discusses current research regarding gender and motivations for using dating apps. I will also discuss how research on gender and dating app motivations frequently take a heteronormative approach, and how this may limit findings.

Gender Differences. Men using dating apps are more likely than women to prioritize physical attractiveness and provide status-related information throughout their entire lifespan (Alterovitz & Mendelsohn, 2011). In contrast, women were more selective in their partner selection and desired a high-status partner for the duration of their lives. In accordance with evolutionary theories, a systematic literature review of gender differences in online dating revealed that men and women display stereotypical gender roles (Abramova et al., 2016). These roles dictate that men tend to place a greater emphasis on physical attractiveness while women focus on socioeconomic status. This finding aligns with conclusions that were drawn in a 35-year review of articles on heterosexual dating published in the journal *Sex Roles*. Specifically, the researchers found that beliefs on gender norms and dating have changed little over time (Eaton & Rose, 2011).

Limitations of Previous Research on Gender. Similar to the limitations on age-related research, studies have tended to be separated into either heterosexual or non-heterosexual populations, weakening the ability to make comparisons across groups. Moreover, existing literature on gender and romantic relationships often conflate gender and sex. Statistically, gender is frequently viewed as a dichotomous variable (male/female) rather than a complex and fluid phenomenon. Gender as a category is more complex than it is typically portrayed, as

reducing it to a binary erases the diverse experiences of intersex individuals (Hyde et al., 2018). A priority of a future literature search will be to seek out existing articles that highlight the differences between gender and sex and/or include specific data regarding this nuanced subject as it relates to online dating motivations. By including both quantitative literature via a meta-analysis and qualitative literature via a meta-synthesis, the greatest possible effort will be made to include voices for minority or under-represented groups.

Sexual Orientation

As discussed below, most of the research that examines online dating focuses on heterosexual participants; it is much less common for research to focus on people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or queer (LGBQ). Identifying as LGBQ is often related to sexual orientation, which is arguably an important aspect of romantic relationship research because it affects the biological sex of a chosen partner, whereas transgender individuals are people whose gender identities do not correspond with their biological sex (Hyde et al. , 2018). Although recent research indicates that approximately 7% of American adults identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT; Brown, 2023), this percentage is much higher among contemporary emerging adults (Jones, 2022). Accordingly, an important contribution of this paper lies in its focus on both heterosexual and LGBQ samples.

Prevalence of Heterosexual Romantic Relationship Research. The vast majority of research on romantic relationships has been conducted on heterosexual populations and has been heavily influenced by heterosexual norms and scripts. This tendency exists despite the finding that a typical dating app user is a white, gay man between the ages of 25 and 35 (Anzani et al., 2018).

Based on traditional gender roles in heterosexual relationships, romantic relationship scripts largely ignore the presence of non-heterosexual individuals (Glick & Fisk, 1996). Applying these scripts to LGBQ relationships frequently results in distortions. Using traditional heterosexual scripts could lead us to believe, for instance, that lesbian women would never be able to determine if the other person was attracted to them due to the stereotype that a woman should never be the one to initiate a romantic/sexual relationship. Similarly, gay men would never have trouble finding a willing partner because of the stereotype that all men always want sex. The current study will gather existing research, both qualitative and quantitative, on the topic with an aim of analyzing results with an open lens of what motivates LGBQ individuals to use dating apps.

***Dating Apps in LGBQ Communities*.** Significant research has been conducted on the safety and risks of LGBQ individuals using dating apps. For example, one focus is on sexual risk behaviors, which are typically defined by the prevalence of unprotected sex, the number of sexual partners, and the transmission of sexually transmitted infections (Choi et al., 2017). One meta-analysis, for instance, investigated the prevalence of these behaviors among LGBT individuals (Choi et al., 2017). However, much less attention has been paid to the nuances of how LGB populations use and are influenced by dating apps. In one of the few studies examining the effects of dating apps on the LGBQ population, Chan (2018) found that dating apps create ambivalence, or indecisiveness, in gay men. This ambivalence is caused in part by the emphasis on physical attraction, the flexibility of relationship expectations (i.e., long-term versus short-term), and the sheer abundance of profiles. Simply put, gay men may experience something akin to decision paralysis in economic literature (Adriatico et al., 2022) and become overwhelmed by dating apps. Similar results have been found among gay men in Hong Kong, so

this finding is not limited to Western nations (Yeo & Fung, 2018). Despite these findings, gay and bisexual men still find dating apps beneficial because they can be themselves without fear of stigmatization (Gudelunas, 2012), especially when they live in small towns (Hughto et al., 2017).

***Limitations of Previous Research on Sexual Orientation*.** Prior research on sexual orientation and dating has frequently taken a risk-factors-centered approach. This approach pathologizes sexual orientation and those who identify as non-heterosexual by ignoring the inherent risk associated with all sexual activities, regardless of the partner involved. Rather than seeing risks as the only outcome with dating app usage within the LGBQ community, research would benefit examining the topic in different ways, such as motivations. Much of the research that focuses more on dating experiences rather than dating outcomes within LGBQ populations is qualitative work (e.g., Filice et al., 2023). The current study will utilize a meta-analysis and a meta-synthesis to consolidate research that focuses on motivations for using dating apps. We thus move away from the risk-factors-centered approach by instead focusing on what leads people to engage in online dating as opposed to the outcomes of online dating. By including both a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis, my aim is to include as many voices as possible without pathologizing certain groups.

Current Study

Online dating has become the most prevalent way in which to meet a romantic or sexual partner (Rosenfeld et al., 2019; Statista Research Department, 2022; Wiederhold, 2015). With the current study, I plan to examine romantic and sexual relationship initiation within dating apps. Specifically, the focus will be on motivations for using dating apps and whether/how these motivations differ among people of varying age, gender, and sexual orientation. Previous research has shown that there are several reasons to use dating apps, and those reasons may

differ across people of different identities (Rosenfeld et al., 2019; Wiederhold, 2015). In addition, previous studies have sometimes found conflicting statistical findings regarding, for example, the number and type of motivation categories for why people use dating apps (Garga et al., 2021; Rodríguez & Aragón, 2022; Sumter et al., 2017). This creates a need to systematically aggregate and examine the previous literature. To this end, the current research seeks to synthesize both quantitative and qualitative research in the dating app literature via a meta-analysis (quantitative) and a meta-synthesis (qualitative). Motivations are categorized according to the Tinder Motivations Scale: (1) love, (2) casual sex, (3) ease of communication, (4) self-worth validation, (5) thrill of excitement, and (6) trendiness (See Appendix A; Sumter et al., 2017) to create continuity across the different research articles. Two main research questions are considered:

> Research Question (RQ) 1: What is the relative prevalence of the aforementioned motivations (i.e., *love, casual sex, ease of communication, self-worth validation, thrill of excitement, and trendiness*) for using dating apps?
>
> Research Question (RQ) 2: Does the prevalence of these different motivations differ on the basis of participant age, gender, or sexual orientation?

To address these research questions, I implement both a meta-analysis and a meta-synthesis. The meta-analysis combines and analyzes data from previous quantitative studies, whereas the meta-synthesis combines and analyzes data from previous qualitative studies. These methods have complementary strengths and weaknesses. For example, a strength of the *meta-analysis* approach is that quantitative studies often utilize populations from more mainstream groups, such as young, heterosexual participants. In contrast, a strength of the *meta-synthesis* approach is that qualitative studies often utilize more marginalized populations, such as those

who are older and/or non-heterosexual. By synthesizing both the quantitative and the qualitative literature, the current research is well positioned to give voice to the diversity of people's experiences with dating apps.

Chapter 2: Method

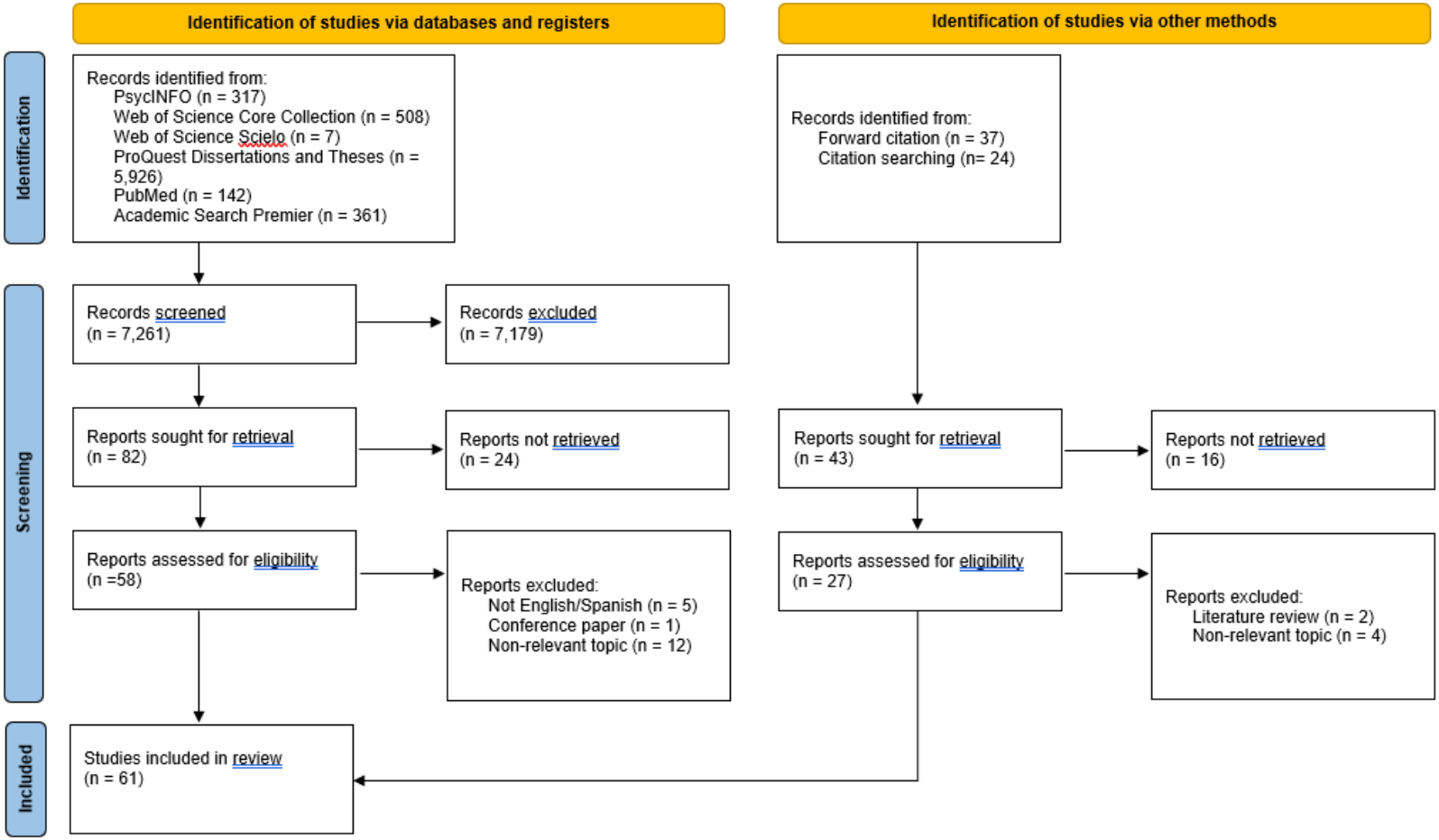
Literature Search

A team of four undergraduate students and one graduate student worked together to complete the literature search. Two of the undergraduates are fluent in Spanish, which allowed for the inclusion of Spanish-language articles in the literature search. After consulting with a social sciences librarian, search terms were created to locate relevant articles. These terms were (“dating app*” OR "online dating") AND (motiv* OR reason* OR predict* OR inten*). No other search limitations were utilized with the exception of using [STRICT] in front of the search terms with Proquest in order to limit the results to more relevant findings. The chosen databases included APA PsycINFO, Web of Science Core Collection, Web of Science Scielo, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses, PubMed, and Academic Search Premier. APA PsycINFO yielded 317 results, Web of Science Core Collection yielded 508 results, Web of Science Scielo yielded 7 results, ProQuest Dissertations and Theses yielded 5,926 results, PubMed yielded 142 results, and Academic Search Premier yielded 361 results. This created a total of 7,261 results. See Figure 1 for a detailed chart of the literature search process.

The research team read each article title for all results in all databases. The only exception to this rule was for Web of Science Scielo, which was only examined by the two Spanish-speaking undergraduates. To be considered for further review, the title needed to focus on online dating/dating apps and motivations (the reason why people use them). The title also needed to be written in English or Spanish.

This initial screening process resulted in 518 individual titles that met the criteria for further consideration. Next, I created a spreadsheet to list all potential articles. Then the entire research team and I went through the title list and came to a consensus about which results

Figure 1: PRISMA Flowchart Describing the Literature Search and Screening Process



From: Page MJ, McKenzie JE, Bossuyt PM, Boutron I, Hoffmann TC, Mulrow CD, et al. The PRISMA 2020 statement: an updated guideline for reporting systematic reviews. BMJ 2021;372:n71. doi: 10.1136/bmj.n71. For more information, visit: http://www.prisma-statement.org/

qualified for an abstract search (see Siddaway et al., 2019). The inclusion criteria were (1) titles related to online dating/dating apps and (2) motivations for use (or similar/synonymous wording). While there were few, any disagreements were settled through discussion. For example, several titles had phrases such as "seeking soulmate" or refer to a "marriage partner search" and it was unclear if these qualified as motivations. If there was ambiguity about whether an article should be excluded on the basis of the title, we erred on the side of keeping the article under the assumption that it could always be eliminated if necessary when more information was acquired. This resulted in a total of 82 articles for the abstract search.

After reading the 82 abstracts, the research team marked which articles met the above criteria for full review. This was done via a checkbox method in the spreadsheet, such that individuals would check a box if they believed the article should go through further review. The few disagreements were settled during regular meetings. For example, a disagreement occurred over whether articles focused on dating app use in specific events, such as a music festival, met the criteria since these were non-everyday scenarios. Once again, many of these articles were included for full review under the assumption they could be filtered out later if necessary. At this point in the literature search, I tested inter-rater reliability to assess agreement within the research team on which articles should be read in their entirety. A total of 58 articles were used in the test of inter-rater reliability. The ratings of five team members were used to compute kappa (k). There was evidence of very good agreement (Cohen's $k = .91$).

All 58 individual articles were read in their entirety by at least two members of the research team as part of a data checking process to ensure accuracy and rigor. When disagreements arose between the two assigned members about an article, the article was re-examined by the entire research team. Articles were excluded if they were not written in English

or Spanish, not a published research article or dissertation/thesis, or for not being relevant to the current study. This resulted in 41 articles deemed acceptable for the current study.

Finally, the other graduate student and I completed a citation search on the 41 articles. We examined the reference lists of these articles and made a list of any possible relevant titles. In addition, we utilized Google Scholar's "cited by" feature on all articles and included them in the list of possible relevant titles when they seemed related to the current study. This resulted in 111 possible titles, with 61 titles that had not been previously analyzed. After completing the same process previously described, 21 articles remained and were added to the original corpus of 39 articles.

A final list of the relevant literature included 61 articles: 38 of these articles were quantitative, 18 were qualitative, and 5 were mixed-methods. Among these 61 articles, 18 were dissertations or theses. Most of the research originated in the social sciences fields. The research team determined which studies in the mixed methods articles were relevant to the current study and if they would be included in the meta-analysis, meta-synthesis, or both.

Chapter 3: Results

Quantitative Analyses

The meta-analysis adhered to the Campbell guidelines for meta-analytic conduct standards (Methods Group of the Campbell Collaboration, 2016). This broadly recognized standard for meta-analyses creates a protocol for both the literature search and analytical process. The protocol includes guidelines for how to determine inclusion/exclusion criteria, appropriate literature search strategies, data extraction procedures, determining risk of bias, and statistical analyses (Methods Group of the Campbell Collaboration, 2016).

Of the 43 possible articles, 30 quantitative and 4 mixed-method articles were discarded due to not having appropriate statistical information. Frequently, these articles only listed frequencies related to demographic variables or simply stated that demographic variables were used for control purposes. Additionally, many studies took existing motivations scales (such as the Tinder Motivations Scale; Sumter et al., 2017) or created their own scales and completed exploratory factor analyses on them for different populations. Completing exploratory factory analyses on scales, whether already existing or not, is important work and vital to the field. However, in order to be included in a meta-analysis, they must also provide necessary statistics. Of the 5 remaining articles (Sevi et al., 2018; Sumter et al., 2017; Bryant & Sheldon, 2017; Cöbek & Ergin, 2021; Menon, 2024), 2 used the full Tinder Motivations Scale or selected subscales.

Gender. Gender had the most available statistical information, with relevant data present in 5 articles, representing 5 of the 6 motivations from the Tinder Motivations Scale (Sumter et al., 2017). There was not enough available data to examine the sixth motivation: *Thrill of*

Excitement. The statistical software R was utilized to run analyses (Ariel de Lima et al., 2022; Viechtbauer, 2010). Means and standard deviations were used to calculate effect size.

Results showed a significant difference with the motivation of *casual sex,* reflecting an overall estimated *d* of -0.82 (95% CI [-1.09, -0.55]; $p < 0.0001$). Thus, men were more motivated to use dating apps for casual sex in comparison to women. See Figure 2 and 3 for a forest plot of study characteristics. No significant difference was found with *love* (*d* = 0.18), *ease ofcommunication* (*d* = 0.33), *self-worth validation* (*d* = -0.02), *and trendiness* (*d* = -0.13; all *p*s > .05).

Age and Sexual Orientation. No articles directly compared age groups. This led to an inability to complete a meta-analysis regarding age and motivations for why people utilize dating apps. Only one article directly compared sexual orientations and provided necessary statistical information (Volman-Pampanel, 2023). They found that, in comparison to LGBTQ+ participants, heterosexual participants scored lower on sex and self-worth validation as motivations to use dating apps. No significant differences were found for the motivations of love, ease of communication, thrill of excitement, or trendiness. A lack of additional articles led to an inability to complete a meta-analysis regarding sexual orientation and motivations for why people utilize dating apps.

Qualitative Analyses

The meta-synthesis utilized the Critical Appraisal Skills Programme (CASP) Tool for Qualitative Studies (Critical Appraisal Skills Programme, 2018). The CASP broadly focuses on three categories: study validity, examination of results, and if the results will help the local population. By following the CASP standards, this will ensure that qualitative studies chosen for this study

Figure 2: Effect Sizes for Men on Casual Sex Motivation.

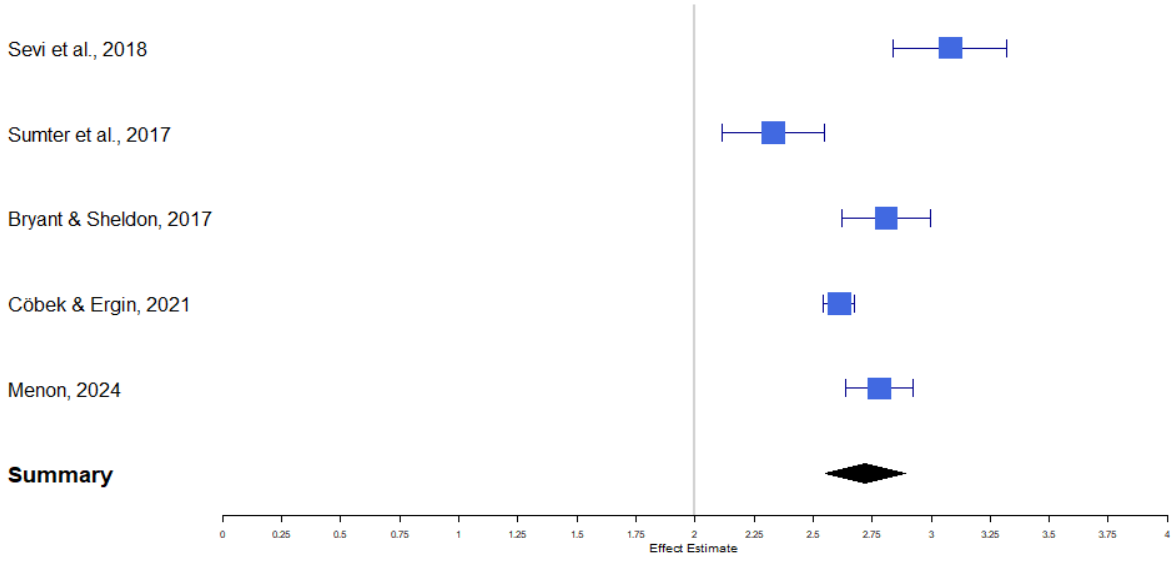
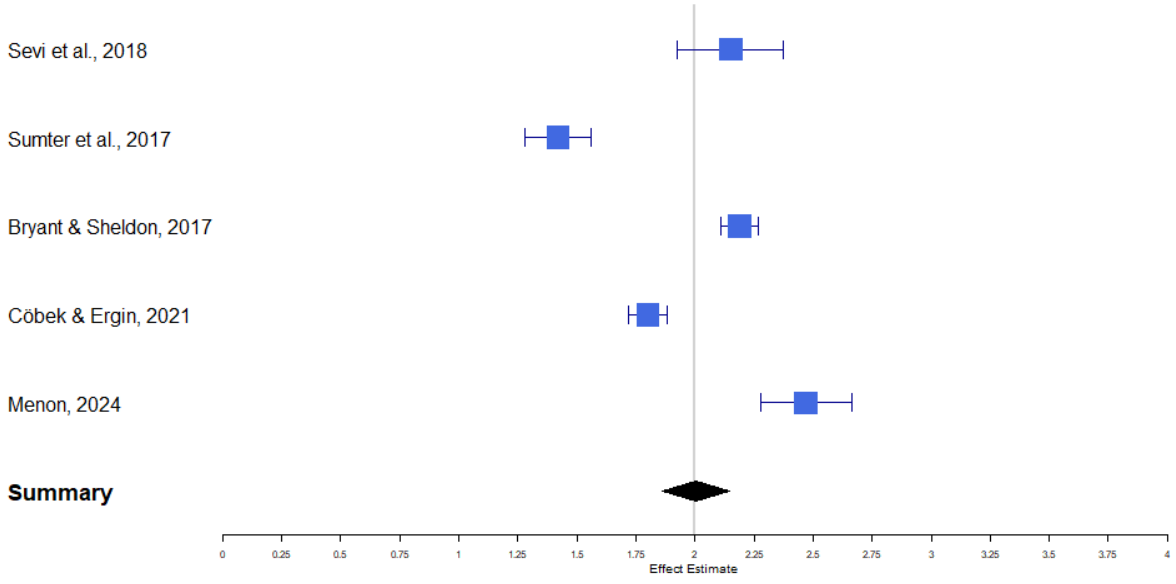


Figure 3: Effect Sizes for Women on Casual Sex Motivation.



were high quality. Complete information on how the articles performed on the CASP checklist can be found on Table 1.

A total of 21 qualitative and mixed-methods studies were included in the meta-synthesis process. A thematic analysis approach was used (Braun & Clark, 2006). As a first step, all members of the research team and myself read the results of all articles and made a list of mentioned themes. We then, as a group during regular meetings, decided which themes were related to motivations and discussed the most commonly mentioned themes. I then created a draft of a qualitative codebook based on the feedback from these meetings before sending it to the other graduate student for review. Finally, I sent the codebook to the entire team for review.

The final codebook had eight main themes: *Romantic Relationships*, *Sexual Relationships*, *Socializing*, *Entertainment*, *Self-*, *Convenience/Benefits/Advantages*, *Curiosity*, and *External Factors* (See Table 2 for a summary of themes and frequencies; see Appendix B for full codebook and explanation of all themes/subthemes). As described later, these themes overlap in part with the Tinder Motivations Scale (Sumter et al., 2017). The current approach utilized a blend of inductive and deductive coding. In this manner, existing scales were used as a general guide but also allowed for emergent, unexpected themes.

After coding one article together as a group, five articles were assigned to the group as a part of a practice coding round. One team member had a family emergency and was not able to complete the qualitative coding, resulting in a total of five raters rather than six. Each individual had their own tab in a spreadsheet with all categories and articles listed. The motivation themes were marked with a "1" if they were mentioned and a "0" if they were not mentioned. I answered clarification questions as needed. The research team then completed coding for the remaining qualitative articles. Once all coding on all articles was finished, I ran separate reliability on

Table 1: CASP Summary of Articles Checklist.

Prompt	1. Was there a clear statement of the aims of the research?	2. Is a qualitative methodology appropriate?	3. Was the research design appropriate to address the aims of the research?	4. Was the recruitment strategy appropriate to the aims of the research?	5. Was the data collected in a way that addressed the research issue?	6. Has the relationship between researcher and participants been adequately considered?	7. Have ethical issues been taken into consideration?	8. Was the data analysis sufficiently rigorous?	9. Is there a clear statement of findings?	10. How valuable is the research?
Cárdenas Rodríguez (2022)	✓	✓	✓	*UC* [a]	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Chan (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Couch & Liamputtong (2008)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Davis (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Dean Marshall et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Hanson (2017)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Kallis (2020)	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓	✓
Kim et al. (2024)	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Klinsky (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Locke (2021)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Morrissey (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Nair & Padmakumar (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓
Ong (2019)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓
Richardson et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓	✓

Roca-Cuberes et al. (2023)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Rodríguez & Aragón (2022)	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓	✓
Sahib (2020)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Smiley et al. (2020)	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Tanner & Huggins (2018)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	✓	✓	✓
Ward (2017)	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	✓	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓	✓
Zorita (2022)	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	*UC*	*UC*	✓	✓	✓

UC = unclear.

Table 2: Summary of Qualitative Themes and Frequencies.

Theme/Subtheme	Example	Frequency
Romantic Relationships	"I would definitely say my ultimate goal was for a relationship. I always only date for being in a relationship and to find a husband" (Klinsky, 2023, p.59).	95.23%
Sexual Relationships	"Honestly, it is just for meeting more girls. Hooking up or becoming a girlfriend – this is another story. You can't be sure about any of these" (Chan, 2020, p. 1521)	76.19%
Socializing	"I really did not have strong motivation. But the idea of chatting with random people looked just fun" (Kim et al., 2024, p. 6)	90.48%
Platonic Relationships	"Looking for friends to hang out, instead of a monogamous relationship. I choose to enjoy my life without any kind of obligation" (Sahib, 2020, p. 37).	71.43%
Traveling	"I went to Chicago and met somebody who gave me Lollapalooza tickets because of Tinder once" (Davis, 2018, p. 26)	14.29%
Entertainment	"When my relationship ended I moved in with some roommates and one of my roommates, who was a guy, just made a joke like oh you're hanging out at home on a Friday night, you should just get Tinder. And I think we spent the entire Friday night drinking cheap wine and just looking at all the guys on Tinder. Oh my god it was so much fun – just making fun of people – it was great" (Kallis, 2020, p. 69).	80.95%

Fun	“The act of swiping was really fun—it felt like a game and I enjoyed that” (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 84).	52.38%
Distraction	“I was on holiday and I needed to do something to pass the time, boredom” (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 85)	66.67%
Stress Relief	“During stressful periods at work [...] I think I used [dating apps] a lot more. So, using it on breaks, lunches, after work, pretty much every spare time that I had ahhh... On the way to work, on the way home from work, and I think for me it was more of a... I felt quite stressed out and it is just a stress relief and [...] speaking to new people ahhh...It's sometimes quite nice because when you have the same routine [...] you want to break away from [the] routine to try something new” (Zorita, 2022, p. 131).	14.29%
Self-	“I wanted to reclaim my sexuality and not beat myself up for having sex” (Locke, 2021, p. 55).	47.62%
Discovery	“I feel like it opened up my eyes to the fact that I don’t need technology to forge relationship” (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 84).	14.29%
Improvement	“My social skills are okay. My flirting skills are non-existent. I use Tinder to perfect my flirting skills” (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 85).	19.05%

Esteem	“I would just get on to see who complimented me. It’s a boost of self-esteem” (Davis, 2018, p. 26).	42.86%
Convenience/Benefits/Advantages	“I like it because it’s a way I can meet people I wouldn’t have met just in an everyday life setting.” (Morissey, 2020, p. 60).	52.38%
Access to Specific Populations	“Through Jack’d ... it gives them this comfort zone because you’re able to talk to other people who you can possibly relate to, or who is gay or bisexual or whatever the case may be without feeling like, okay, well, I might get punched in the face because I don’t know if they’re straight or gay, and if I see them in the street I don’t want to speak or things like that” (Smiley et al., 2020, p. 182)	14.29%
More Choices	“It’s improved my dating life...just because you have so many options. You can go on a date every single day, if you so choose” (Morissey, 2020, p. 58).	28.57%
Curiosity	“People just download it (Tinder) for curiosity. Irrespective of their relationship status. Even just for an hour” (Nair & Padmakumar, 2020, p. 39).	33.33%
Fear of Missing Out (FOMO)	“They start talking to you and you, sometimes, you could miss an opportunity just because the other person didn’t have information on” (Zorita, 2022, p. 132).	4.76%
Everyone Has It	“I feel it’s about what your friends have. It’s like a game. You can scroll and laugh together” (Davis, 2018, p. 27)	14.29%

External Factors	“I downloaded it because my friends told me to” (Davis, 2018, p. 27).	52.38%
Getting Over an Ex	“It was after a break-up that spark me to use this app, like the break up and hearing about the app from my friends. So, that's when I started using it, and here I am today” (Ong, 2019, p. 62)	33.33%
Peer Pressure	“It seemed like a fun thing to do. Like, just experimenting but then eventually like, I guess it was more towards like, peer pressure, everybody was having a boyfriend, and I wondered how it would be like, so, I got onto the app” (Ong, 2019, p. 62)	19.05%
Business	“You can only get to know girls in this profession through dating apps. You won’t be able to find them among your friends. ... If I need them, they are willing to show up” (Chan, 2020, p. 1521).	4.76%

English and Spanish articles, since the number of raters differed based on language comprehension. Five raters coded 19 English-language articles and there was evidence of adequate agreement (Cohen's k = .77). Three raters coded 2 Spanish-language articles and there was evidence of adequate agreement (Cohen's k = .67).

Out of the 21 publications examined, 11 involved participants who were not heterosexual. Notably, 5 articles omitted details about sexual orientation. Five studies exclusively enrolled heterosexual individuals. In general, non-heterosexual participants were more likely to cite *Access to Specific Populations* as a motivation compared to heterosexual participants, most likely due to the ability of dating apps to filter for sexual preferences.

Eleven out of the 21 articles involved individuals aged 30 and above. Five out of 11 research included participants aged 40 or older. Older adults were more likely to state they were motivated to use dating apps for *Romantic Relationships* and less likely to endorse the motivations of *Sexual Relationships* and *Self-Esteem*, when compared to younger adults. This supports existing literature that indicates that older adults are more interested in companionship (Carr, 2004; McWilliams & Barrett, 2014).

Romantic Relationships. Almost all articles (95.23%; n = 20) had some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of finding a romantic relationship. This theme was the most frequently mentioned motivation for using dating apps. A man in his twenties described how his primary goal was to find a relationship, "The ultimate goal is to meet this one perfect match who will be my best friend for the rest of my life" (Ward, 2017, p. 1650).

Sexual Relationships. A majority of articles (76.19%; n = 16) has some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of finding a sexual relationship. A sexual relationship could be either short- or long-term. A heterosexual man in his twenties clearly

iterated his motivations as, “I would say that it is basically for picking up girls quick and easy, and for getting laid” (Roca-Cuberes et al., 2023, p. 7).

Socializing. A majority of articles (90.48%; *n* = 19) has some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of socializing. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *platonic relationships* and (2) *traveling*. In Hanson (2017) one woman stated:

> Honestly at the time I wasn’t really looking for anything, I was just kind of with it. Like, whoever was there, fine. You wanted to talk, fine. If you wanted to meet up, fine. If you were looking to date, fine, maybe, we’ll see. Yeah, I didn’t really have a plan in mind, I was just kind of meeting new people and seeing what would happen. (p. 26)

Thus, she described using dating apps just as a way to talk to people, but was open to other possibilities.

The first subtheme of socializing, *platonic relationships*, was present in 71.43% of articles (*n* = 15). One adult man in his late teens said he specifically uses the phrase “finding friends near me” in his profile (Kim et al., 2024, p. 8).

The second subtheme of socializing, *traveling*, was present in 14.29% of articles (*n* = 3). This subtheme represented those who mainly use dating apps while traveling or exploring new areas. For example, on participant stated that “I was in Ireland for a month recently and I met three people. They showed me around the place” (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 85).

Entertainment. A majority of articles (80.95%; *n* = 17) had some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of entertainment. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *fun*, and (2) *distraction*, and (3) *stress relief*. One woman from a study by Nair

and Padmakumar (2020) noted that she downloads the app and uses it when they are bored, but may not use it at other times,

> Sometimes.... when you are bored or something.... you want to hookup..... you use it for a period of time.. 2, 3 months..... Then you get sick of it.. You get off it.. Then you come back again.... 2, 3 months later. (p. 42)

The first subtheme of entertainment, *fun*, was present in 52.38% of articles (*n* = 11). Many participants expressed similar thoughts as this user stating, "I often advise friends to use it – it is so much fun" (Tanner & Huggins, 2018, p. 84).

The second subtheme of entertainment, *distraction*, was present in 66.67% of articles (*n* = 14). One user describes using Mutual, a dating app that targets members of The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints, to relieve boredom, "I like to use Mutual to pass the time. It's entertainment when I'm bored" (Richardson et al., 2020, p. 5).

The third subtheme of entertainment, *stress relief*, was present in 14.29% of articles (*n* = 3). A woman in her twenties described utilizing dating apps for a sort of therapeutic purpose, "I started using the app so I could talk about my feelings anonymously" (Kim et al, 2024, p. 6).

Self-. Around half of the articles (47.62%; *n* = 10) has some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of self-. This theme relates to using dating apps for some personal use, not related to finding a relationship. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *discovery*, (2) *improvement*, and (3) *esteem*. Many participants, such as this woman, expressed going on dating apps to receive attention, "I like it when somebody talks to me. It means somebody likes me" (Davis, 2018, p. 26).

The first subtheme of self-, *discovery*, was present in 14.29% of articles (*n* = 3). One woman in her twenties used dating apps to learn more about her body, "I wanted to reclaim my sexuality and not beat myself up for having sex" (Locke, 2021, p. 55).

The second subtheme of self-, *improvement*, was present in 19.05% of articles (*n* = 4). One woman in Morissey (2020) compared using dating apps to practicing:

> I'm less scared of it. I used to get so nervous before going on a date...But now I'm like, whatever. My roommate and I, whenever either of us go on a date, always say to the other, it's just flexing a muscle...It's practicing. (p. 62)

The third subtheme of self-, *esteem*, was present in 42.86% of articles (*n* = 9). One woman explicitly stated this was their sole reason for logging on to dating apps, "I would just get on to see who complimented me. It's a boost of self-esteem" (Davis, 2018, p. 26).

Convenience/Benefits/Advantages. Around half of the articles (52.38%; *n* = 11) has some mention of participants using dating apps for the purpose of convenience/benefits/advantages. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *access to specific populations* and (2) *more choices*. A gay man in his twenties highlighted the benefits of using technology to find a potential partner, "The ease of it. The simpleness of it. Get online, you can see who's in the area, a picture of the person, talk to the person. Just easy" (Smiley et al., 2020, p. 183).

The first subtheme of convenience/benefits/advantages, *access to specific populations*, was present in 14.29% of articles (*n* = 3). A gay man in his twenties specifically mentioned the benefits of using dating apps to find non-heterosexual partners, "it's very difficult to know if someone is homosexual or not so online dating made it so much easier" (Dean Marshall et al., 2023, p. 9).

The second subtheme of convenience/benefits/advantages, *more choices*, was present in 28.57% of articles (*n* = 6). Participants in this section tended to view the potential of success on a dating app as a numbers game. One man stated bluntly, “The more popular it is, the greater chance of hot chicks” (Davis, 2018, p. 27).

Curiosity. One third of the articles (33.33%; *n* = 7) has some mention of participants using dating apps because of curiosity. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *fear of missing out (FOMO)* and (2) *everyone has it*. One man in his twenties said this was common for users, and they may just download the applications temporarily, “People just download it (Tinder) for curiosity. Irrespective of their relationship status. Even just for an hour” (Nair & Padmakumar, 2020, p. 39).

The first subtheme of curiosity, *fear of missing out (FOMO)*, was present in 4.76% of articles (*n* = 1). A homosexual man in his twenties described using Grindr, an app that does not require users to input much personal information, so that he doesn’t miss any potential opportunities, “they start talking to you and you, sometimes, you could miss an opportunity just because the other person didn’t have information on” (Zorita, 2022, p. 132).

The second subtheme of curiosity, *everyone has it*, was present in 14.29% of articles (*n* = 3). For example, one participant stated, “Everyone I know uses Mutual [a religious dating app], so I feel like I have to have it too” (Richardson et al., 2020, p. 5).

External Factors. Around half of the articles (52.38%; *n* = 11) has some mention of participants using dating apps due to external factors. As detailed below, this theme included three subthemes: (1) *getting over an ex*, (2) *peer pressure*, and (3) *business*. One participant stated that the decision to join an app was a combination of getting over an ex and friends encouraging her to get it, “It was after a break-up that spark me to use this app, like the break up

and hearing about the app from my friends. So, that's when I started using it, and here I am today" (Ong, 2019, p. 62).

The first subtheme of external factors, *getting over an ex*, was present in 33.33% of articles (*n* = 7). This subtheme related to using a dating app to move on from a previous relationship or getting revenge on a past partner. One woman stated in Hanson (2017):

> He broke up with me and I was like really mad. I was like, 'You know what? I'm just gonna go on a bunch of dates and I'm gonna have a good time and you're gonna see it because I'm gonna post pictures all the time. (p. 22)

In this particular instance, the user wanted to create a sense of jealousy with their ex-partner.

The second subtheme of external factors, *peer pressure*, was present in 19.05% of articles (*n* = 4). One woman explicitly stated that she only did it for others, "I downloaded it because my friends told me to" (Davis, 2018, p. 27).

The third subtheme of external factors, *business*, was present in 4.76% of articles (*n* = 1). While only present in one article, this subtheme was very explicitly stated in an article about motivations for using Momo, a popular dating app in China (Chan, 2020). One man in his twenties would use the app for locating sex workers to bring to corporate events, stating "You can only get to know girls in this profession through dating apps. You won't be able to find them among your friends. ... If I need them, they are willing to show up" (p. 1521). While this theme was uncommon, it demonstrates that there are non-conventional reasons for using dating apps and that this may vary by culture and app.

Chapter 4: Discussion

The current study focused on two main research questions: (1) What is the relative prevalence of the motivations (i.e., *love, casual sex, ease of communication, self-worth validation, thrill of excitement, and trendiness*) for using dating apps? And (2) Does the prevalence of these different motivations differ on the basis of participant age, gender, or sexual orientation? Both a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis were conducted to allow for a more thorough examination of existing literature on these topics.

In regard to Research Question 1, many of the studies analyzed found similar motivations similar to those in the Tinder Motivations Scale (Sumter et al., 2017). These were present in a wide variety of locations outside of the United States such as India (Nair & Padmakumar, 2020; Menon, 2024), Mexico (Rodríguez & Aragón, 2022), South Africa (Tanner & Huggins, 2018), Turkey (Cöbek & Ergin, 2021), and many others, demonstrating that, for the most part, motivations to use online dating apps are universal. However, some motivations were unique to certain areas, such as the *Business* subtheme found in the meta-synthesis being unique to China (Chan, 2020).

Unfortunately, not many comparisons were able to be made within the context of Research Question 2 regarding motivations based on age, gender, and sexual orientation due to a lack of available statistical information. However, quantitative results demonstrated that there is a significant difference is men and women who utilize dating apps for casual sex, such that men tend to endorse this motivation more. This is in line with previous research regarding gender differences (Hyde, 2005; Peterson & Hyde, 2010). Notably, this finding reinforces research within the field of evolutionary psychology. For example, the sexual strategies theory suggests that men are more interested in sex because they wish to have the greatest chance of passing their

genes onto potential offspring. Conversely, women will be less interested because they are focusing on the survival of the child (Buss, 1998; Buss & Schmitt, 1993).

Results further demonstrated that there was not a significant difference between the genders in the motivations related to love, ease of communication, self-worth validation, thrill of excitement, and trendiness. This finding supports previous research that shows that, in most regards, women and men have more similarities than differences (Hyde, 2005). This may indicate that gender is not a main predictor in determining dating app motivations (other than sex), although further analysis of existing literature would be needed.

By analyzing qualitative literature, several main themes and subthemes were uncovered for why participants use dating apps. The motivation of finding a romantic relationship was the most frequently mentioned motivation for using dating apps, suggesting that love and genuine connection drives many users to sign up and download them. Other popular themes included sexual relationships, socializing, entertainment, convenience/benefits/advantages, and external factors. Less popular themes were also present such as self- and curiosity.

Taken together, these results contribute to the knowledge that there are a wide number of motivations for why someone may use dating apps (Alexopoulos et al., 2020; Garga et al., 2021; Orosz et al., 2018; Sumter et al., 2017; Rodríguez & Aragón, 2022). By utilizing both quantitative and qualitative literature, more motivations were able to be examined and contributed the most possible information. Furthermore, the current study sheds light on research conducted on those within marginalized populations.

Impact of Research on Marginalized Populations

An additional intention of the current study was to move away from a risk/deficit lens in regards to dating and sexual behaviors among non-heterosexual individuals. Much of the

previous research in the field has focused on health risks in these populations (e.g., Filice et al., 2023). While very important work, it creates stigma towards minority populations and relies on assumptions that these risks are only present in LGBQ relationships. Moreover, this research does not allow for meaningful comparisons with majority populations. The current study, in contrast, reviewed motivations for why various individuals choose to use dating apps without pathologizing one group.

Within the quantitative analysis, only one study gave meaningful statistical information that compared heterosexual to non-heterosexual populations (Volman-Pampanel, 2023). However, this study included being transgender together with LGBQ individuals, despite it not being a sexual preference but rather a gender identity (Hyde et al., 2018). Of the 21 articles reviewed in the meta-synthesis, 11 included non-heterosexual participants. Interestingly, 5 articles did not include information regarding sexual orientation. Five studies only included heterosexual participants. Thus, non-heterosexual individuals were more represented in qualitative research compared to quantitative literature that had meaningful statistics.

Another group that was underrepresented were older adults. The upper limit for emerging adulthood is considered 29 (Arnett, 2023). Of the 5 articles included in the meta-analysis, zero had statistical information that compared older versus younger participants. Thus, age analyses were not able to be conducted within the quantitative literature. Eleven out of the 21 qualitative articles included in the meta-synthesis included participants over the age of 30. Five out of these 11 studies had at least one participant over the age of 40. This demonstrates that qualitative research focusing on dating app motivations is skewed towards those who are younger, leading to a lack of literature focusing on those in their later years.

Reporting Standards Implications and Future Directions

A large implication of this study is the need to revisit reporting standards regarding participant demographic information and outcome variables. Several motivations found in the current meta-synthesis were not present in popular motivations scales, such as the Tinder Motivations Scale (Sumter et al., 2017). The theme of *love* is comparable to the current theme of romantic relationships. *Casual sex* is comparable to the current theme of sex. *Ease of communication* is related to the current theme of convenience/benefits/advantages, *self-worth validation* is related to the current theme of self-, *thrill of excitement* is related to the current theme of entertainment, and *trendiness* is almost a hybrid between curiosity and external factors. However, the existing themes in quantitative literature do not encapsulate all that was found within the qualitative literature, nor does it fully capture found subthemes. Importantly, the main theme of socializing found in the qualitative literature is not present in most existing quantitative measures even though it was a common topic of discussion in interviews.

Only one portion of the meta-analysis in the current study could be completed due to a lack of available statistical information. This creates unnecessary barriers to reviewing existing literature and creating a streamlined direction for future research in complex topics. Recently, the American Psychological Association released suggested standards for reporting participant race and ethnicity (American Psychological Association, 2023). An original goal for this project was to also examine race/ethnicity in the context of online dating motivations; unfortunately, there was not enough data, partly due to these standards not being met.

Based on these recommendations, it would be sensible to extend these suggestions to all demographic variables, such as age, gender, and sexual orientation. A possible solution is the inclusion of a demographics table, broken down by group categorization, with the number of responses, means, and standard deviations for all outcome variables mentioned in the study (See

Table 3 for an example). If there is a limitation on space due to page number requirements for published articles, an online appendix may be made available. With this, future meta-analyses will be easier to conduct. Not only will the data be readily available, but it helps to prevent issues related to not being able to contact authors or relevant data being erased after a certain period of time in accordance to IRB regulations. Moreover, having information related to outcome variables would allow an easier comparison of different, yet similar, scales. By extension, this would make it easier to compare motivations found in quantitative and qualitative studies.

Regarding other possible future research, the topic would benefit from research designed to make age comparisons, taking specific steps to include more elderly adults. Additionally, a study focusing on intersex individuals would be a welcome addition as most of the current research divided participants by male and female. Furthermore, it would be of interest to examine if similar studies could be conducted in regard to motivations to use different kinds of social media, such as LinkedIn.

Conclusion

Dating online is popular, as evident by the estimate that 70.8 million Americans use online dating services (Statista Research Department, 2022), and one-third of new marriages begin online (Wiederhold, 2015). With the prevalence of this phenomenon, it is imperative to understand people's motivations for using this method of relationship initiation so that services may better fulfill their wants and needs.

Quantitative literature showed that there was a significant difference between men and women in regard to casual sex motivations, but no other motivations. Qualitative literature had a wider variety of motivations represented. In addition, qualitative literature suggested that non-heterosexual individuals were motivated by having access to specific populations and older

Table 3: Example Demographics and Outcomes Table.

Demographic Variable	**Love *M*(*SD*)**	**Casual Sex *M*(*SD*)**	**Ease of Communication *M*(*SD*)**	**Self-Worth Validation *M*(*SD*)**	**Thrill of Excitement *M*(*SD*)**	**Trendiness *M*(*SD*)**
Younger (*n* =)						
Middle (*n* =)						
Older (*n* =)						
Men (*n* =)						
Women (*n* =)						
Non-binary (*n* =)						
Heterosexual (*n* =)						
Non-heterosexual (*n* =)						

adults were motivated by long-term relationship development. By conducting both a meta-analysis and meta-synthesis, all populations of interest were able to be examined.

Fully understanding why individuals use dating apps may not just benefit the field of psychology, but other fields where the topic is relevant, such as in communications or business. To achieve this goal, it is recommended that reporting standards need to be improved regarding participant demographic information and outcome variables. Furthermore, research in this subject would benefit from a revisitation of various dating app motivation measures to include a wider variety of motivations that may be present across different apps and cultures.

Appendix A

Tinder Motivations Scale (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017). All items are on a 5-point Likert scale (between 1 = completely disagree to 5 = completely agree).

I use/d Tinder (because)…

- *Love*
  - To contact potential romantic partner
  - To find a romantic relationship
  - To find a steady relationship
  - To find someone to be with
  - It is an easy way to meet someone

- *Casual Sex*
  - To talk about sex
  - To have a one-night stand
  - To find someone to have sex with
  - To exchange sexy pictures

- *Ease of Communication*
  - Online less shy than offline
  - Online easier to open up
  - Easier to communication online
  - It helps me to find friendships
  - Online connections understand me better

- *Self-Worth Validation*
  - To improve my self-esteem
  - To feel better about myself
  - To feel attractive
  - To feel less alone
  - To get compliments about my appearance

- *Thrill of Excitement*
  - Because it is exciting
  - For the kick of it

- *Trendiness*
  - It is new
  - Everyone uses Tinder
  - It is cool

Appendix B

- Theme 1: Romantic relationships
    - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about romantic relationship motivations
    - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about romantic relationship motivations

- Theme 2: Sexual relationships
    - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about sexual relationship motivations
    - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about sexual relationship motivations

- Theme 3: Socializing
    - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about socializing. This may include formation of friendships or wanting to just talk to people
    - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about socializing
        - Theme 3a: Platonic relationships
            - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about forming platonic relationships. This may include making friends. Does <u>not</u> include romantic or sexual relationships
            - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about forming platonic relationships
        - Theme 3b: Traveling
            - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about traveling as a motivator for using dating apps/websites. This may include being in a new or unfamiliar location and wanting to meet people.
            - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about traveling as a motivator for using dating apps/websites.

- Theme 4: Entertainment
    - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about using dating apps/websites as a form of entertainment. This may include reducing boredom, having nothing better to do, and enjoyment of the way the app is designed.
    - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites as a form of entertainment.
        - Theme 4a: Fun
            - Give an article a "1" if they mention something about the app being fun or enjoyable
            - Give an article a "0" if they do not mention anything about the app being fun or enjoyable
        - Theme 4b: Distraction

            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about the app being a method of distraction from boredom or everyday life activities.
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about the app being a method of distraction from boredom or everyday life activities.
        - Theme 4c: Stress relief
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about the dating apps/websites being a method to de-stress or to not think about more difficult things going on in their lives.
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about the dating apps/websites being a method to de-stress or to not think about more difficult things going on in their lives.

- Theme 5: Self-
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about internal motivational factors for using dating websites/apps. This may include learning things about oneself, gaining new skills, or feeling better about themselves
    - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about internal motivational factors for using dating websites/apps.
        - Theme 5a: Discovery
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about using dating apps/websites to learn things about themselves
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites to learn things about themselves
        - Theme 5b: Improvement
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about using dating apps/websites to improve themselves or gain new skills. This may include having more romantic and sexual experiences and romantic/social skills
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites to improve themselves or gain new skills.
        - Theme 5c: Esteem
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about using dating apps/websites to gain a better image of themselves. This may include using the apps for an ego boost or for validation of their own attractiveness
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites to gain a better image of themselves.

- Theme 6: Convenience/Benefits/Advantages
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about how there are advantages to using dating apps/websites that are not present in traditional dating. This may include easily finding someone interested in a same-sex relationship, filtering by location, or how many people use the apps.

- Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about how there are advantages to using dating apps/websites that are not present in traditional dating.
    - Theme 6a: Access to specific populations
        - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about using dating apps/websites to find a target population. This may include sexual orientation, race/ethnicity, religion, etc.
        - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites to find a target population.
    - Theme 6b: More choices
        - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about using dating apps/websites to have access to a wider number of people/options to choose from
        - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about using dating apps/websites to have access to a wider number of people/options to choose from

- Theme 7: Curiosity
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about joining a dating app/website just to see what it’s about or because everyone is doing it. This does <u>not</u> include feeling pressured by others to join one.
    - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about joining a dating app/website just to see what it’s about or because everyone is doing it.
        - Theme 7a: Fear of missing out (FOMO)
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about not wanting to be left out or missing an experience
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about not wanting to be left out or missing an experience
        - Theme 7b: Everyone has it
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about how dating apps/websites are the norm and they felt they should join the trend
            - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about how dating apps/websites are the norm and they felt they should join the trend

- Theme 8: External factors
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about external motivational factors for joining a dating app/website. This may include getting back at someone or someone convincing them they have to join. This theme differs from Theme 7 in that the they are on the app because of another person
    - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about external motivational factors for joining a dating app/website
        - Theme 8a: Getting over an ex
            - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about joining a dating app/website because of a previous relationship. This may include getting revenge or wanting to be seen as moving on.

        - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about joining a dating app/website because of a previous relationship.
- Theme 8b: Peer pressure
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about feeling forced by others to go on dating apps/websites. This may include family or peer pressure to find a partner (romantic/sexual).
    - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention anything about feeling forced by others to go on dating apps/websites.
- Theme 8c: Business
    - Give an article a “1” if they mention something about joining dating apps for business-related meetings. This may include hiring sex workers for colleagues and business partners.
    - Give an article a “0” if they do not mention something about joining dating apps for business-related meetings.

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Curriculum Vitae

Jenna McPherson

jlm8952@gmail.com

EDUCATION

Doctor of Philosophy, Psychological and Brain Sciences
University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV) **May 2024**

- Dissertation: Age, Gender, and Sexual Orientation and their Effects on Online Dating Motivations (Dr. Rachael Robnett)

Master of Arts, Psychology
University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW) **May 2017**

- **Thesis**: The Friend Zone: Definitions, Predictors, and Outcomes (Dr. Graciela Espinosa-Hernández)

Bachelor of Arts, Psychology (Departmental honors)
Bachelor of Arts, Spanish
University of North Carolina Wilmington (UNCW)
December 2014

Escuelas Profesionales de la Sagrada Familia **Úbeda, Spain**
Faculty Led Study Abroad **Summer 2013**

RESEARCH EXPERIENCE

Graduate Researcher **Spring 2023- present**
Social Development Lab

- Organize a meta-analysis for a dissertation project
- Lead undergraduate student teams on various projects
- Assist in various projects and research as needed

Graduate Researcher
Social Interaction Lab **Fall 2019-Fall 2022**

- Create and run experiments relating to social psychology
- Develop a dissertation and execute the study
- Write a Qualifying Activity based on scientific literature

Emerging Scholar Blogger
Society for Research on Adolescence **May 2018-May 2020**

- Develop relevant topics associated with adolescent research
- Write in a format meant for general audiences
- Edit and critique blog posts by other authors

Graduate Research Assistant
Latino Adolescent Sexuality Lab (UNCW) **Fall 2015-Spring 2019**

- Generate a thesis on a novel research area
- Assist undergraduates in tasks

- Run and interpret data for manuscripts

Volunteer Graduate Research Assistant **Fall 2015-Spring 2017**
Love Lab (UNCW)

- Code open-ended data
- Choose appropriate articles to discuss in meetings
- Write provoking response papers

Volunteer Graduate Research Assistant **Fall 2016-Spring 2017**
Pond Lab (UNCW)

- Create and run a collaboration project to expand on an existing psychological measure
- Aid in running data analyses
- Attend lab meetings

Graduate Assistant (SONA, Undergraduate Research Pool Administrator) **Fall 2015-Fall 2016**

- Created research accounts for psychology students and faculty
- Aided in the creation of online research advertisements
- Troubleshooted any difficulties that arose with participation credit

Honors Research Assistant
Pond Lab (UNCW) **Spring 2014-Fall 2014**

- Create psychological tests using Inquisit
- Run subjects and interpret data
- Generate a thesis applicable to self-concept clarity and aggression

Spanish Independent Research Project
UNCW **Summer 2014**

- Analyzed Mexican cinema as a reflection of cultural values
- Created a connection on these cultural values and romantic relationships
- Wrote a twenty-one page research paper in Spanish
    - "El cine mexicano como una refleja de los valores culturales" (English translation: "Mexican cinema as a reflection of cultural values")

PUBLICATIONS

- Espinosa-Hernández, G., Vasilenko, S. A., Lombardi, K., McCrimmon, J., & **McPherson, J. L.** (2022). Patterns of Sexual Well-Being in Mexican Adolescents and Associations with Psychological Adjustment: A Latent Profile Analysis Approach. *The Journal of Sex Research*, 1-13.
- Espinosa-Hernández, G., Velazquez, E., **McPherson, J. L.**, Fountain, C., Carpenter-Garcia, R., & Lombardi, K. (2020). The role of Latino Masculine Values in Mexican Adolescent Sexuality. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology.*
- Espinosa-Hernández, G., Vasilenko, S. A., **McPherson, J. L.**, Gutierrez, E., & Rodriguez, A. (2017). Brief Report: Sexual well-being and psychological adjustment among adolescents in Mexico. *Journal of Adolescence, 55*, 61-65. doi: 10.1016/j.adolescence.2016.12.009

CONFERENCES AND PRESENTATIONS
International Association for Relationship Research **July 12-16, 2018**

- **McPherson, J. L.**, White, T. D., & Espinosa-Hernández, G. (2018, July). *Attachment Style Mediates the Association Between the Friend Zone and Depression*. Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the International Association for Relationship Research, Fort Collins, CO.
- White, T. D., Luo, S., Klettner, A. M., & **McPherson, J. L.** (2018, July). *Predicting reproductive desire from resources, childhood experiences, and personal characteristic.* Poster presented at the Biennial Meeting of the International Association for Relationship Research, Fort Collins, CO.

Society for Research on Adolescence **April 12-14, 2018**

- Espinosa-Hernández, G., Vasilenko, S., **McPherson, J. L.**, Matney, R., Fountain, C., & García-Carpenter, R. (2018, April). *Patterns of Parenting Behavior in Mexican Adolescents and Associations with Sexual Behaviors: A Latent Class Approach*. Talk presented at the 17th Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Minneapolis, MN.

Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality **November 9-12, 2017**

- Espinosa-Hernandez, G., Vasilenko, S. A., & **McPherson, J. L.** (2017, November). *Patterns of Sexual Well-Being in Mexican Adolescents and Associations with Mental Health: A Latent Class Approach.* Talk submitted to be presented at the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality. San Juan, P. R.

Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists **November 4-5, 2016**

- **McPherson, J. L.**, Pond, R. S., Espinosa-Hernández, G. (2016, November). *Attachment Avoidance Moderates Aggressive Responses to Being Friend Zoned*. Poster presented at the 39th Annual Meeting of the Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists, Asheville, NC.

Society for Research in Child Development
Special Topics Meeting: Babies, Boys, and Men of Color **October 6-8, 2016**

- Velazquez, E., **McPherson, J. L.**, Espinosa-Hernández, G. (2016, October). *Latino Masculine Values and Sexuality in Mexican Adolescents*. Poster presented at the Society for Research in Child Development Special Topics Meeting: Babies, Boys and Men of Color, Tampa, FL.

Society for Research on Adolescence **March 31-April 2, 2016**

- Halgunseth, L. C., Espinosa-Hernández, G., Bissel-Havran, J. Gutierrez, E., Rodriguez, A., Harris, C., **McPherson, J. L.** (2016, April). *Maternal Monitoring and Sexual Behavior in Mexican Adolescents*. Poster presented at the 16th Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Baltimore, MD.
- Espinosa-Hernández, G., Vasilenko, S., **McPherson, J. L.**, Harris, C., Hurtado-Hoyos, C. (2016, March). *Psychological Well-being and Psychological Adjustment among Adolescents in Mexico*. Talk presented at the 16th Biennial Meeting of the Society for Research on Adolescence, Baltimore, MD.

Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists **October 23-24, 2015**

- **McPherson, J. L.**, Leschak, C. J., Pond, R. S. (2015, October). *Inducing Empathy Moderates the Association Between Rape Myth Acceptance and Attributions of Blame in Sexual Assault*. Poster presented at the 38th Annual Meeting of the Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists, Winston-Salem, NC.

UNCW Fall Student Research and Creativity Showcase **October 27-31, 2014**

- West, S. J., Leschak, C., **McPherson, J. L.**, Tindal, P. (2014, October). *Knock it Off: Effects of Gender on Perceptions of Sexual Harassment*. Poster presented at the 2nd UNCW Fall Student Research and Creativity Showcase, Wilmington, NC.

Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists **October 17-18, 2014**

- West, S. J., Leschak, C., **McPherson, J. L.**, Tindal, P. (2014, October). *Knock it Off: Effects of Gender on Perceptions of Sexual Harassment*. Poster presented at the 37th Annual Meeting of the Society of Southeastern Social Psychologists, Athens, GA.

TEACHING EXPERIENCE

First Year Seminar Instructor, Temporary Faculty, UNCW **Fall 2017**

- Developed syllabus that met course requirements
- Interacted with students and graded papers
- Designed final project relevant to freshman collegiate experience

Teaching Assistant (PSY 464- Social Psychology Capstone) **Summer 2016 and Spring 2017**

- Assisted in class discussion
- Edited final papers
- Graded daily homework and provided feedback

LECTURES

- McPherson, J. L. (April, 2018). *Aggression in Adolescence*. Presentation, University of North Carolina Wilmington, TL 1008.
- McPherson, J. L. (October, 2016). *Graduate School*. Presentation, University of North Carolina Wilmington, TR 143.
- McPherson, J. L., Reed, M., & Shannon, K. (August, 2016). *TA/GA Student Panel*. Presentation, University of North Carolina Wilmington, MC 1051.
- McPherson, J. L. (February, 2016). *Lab Tour*. Presentation, University of North Carolina Wilmington, TL 3105.
- McPherson, J. L. (November, 2015). *Lab Tour*. Presentation, University of North Carolina Wilmington, TL 3105.

LEADERSHIP EXPERIENCE

Representative for Quantitative/Experimental Program
UNLV

Psychology Experimental Student Committee **Fall 2020-Spring 2021**

- Represent members of my program
- Attend meetings
- Communicate with fellow graduate students about the program
- Answer questions about the program

Shelter Advocate
Wilmington, NC

Domestic Violence Shelter and Services, Inc. **June 2014-April 2017**

- Answer after-hours crisis calls
- Monitor shelter and supervise clients
- Assist clients in goal-planning and transition

Psychology Graduate Student Association President **UNCW**

Psychology Graduate Student Association **Fall 2016-Spring 2017**

- Delegate tasks to other officers
- Decide focus of the organization
- Oversee meetings
- Organize projects

Graduate Student Association Liaison **UNCW**

Psychology Graduate Student Association **Fall 2015-Spring 2016**

- Attend monthly meetings with fellow graduate students
- Relay information in an organized manner
- Share opinions on important Graduate School topics
- Vote for new Graduate School officers

Vice President **UNCW**
Psych Circle **Fall 2013-Spring 2014**

- Assist the president in completing their duties
- Make all room reservations for weekly meetings
- Oversee the meeting leaders
- Recruit new club members

PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

Psychology Graduate Student Association **Fall 2015-Spring 2017**
Psi Chi, Psychology Honor Society **Fall 2012-Fall 2014**
Psych Circle, Psychology Interest Group **Fall 2012-Fall 2014**
Omicron Delta Kappa, National Leadership Honor Society **Fall 2013-Fall 2014**
Sigma Alpha Lambda, National Leadership and Honors Organization **Fall 2012-Fall 2014**
Sigma Delta Pi, National Collegiate Hispanic Honorary Society **Fall 2013-Fall 2014**

AWARDS AND GRANTS

- GSA Travel Grant ($250)
- Graduate School Travel Award ($600)
- CSURF Undergraduate Travel Award ($1000)