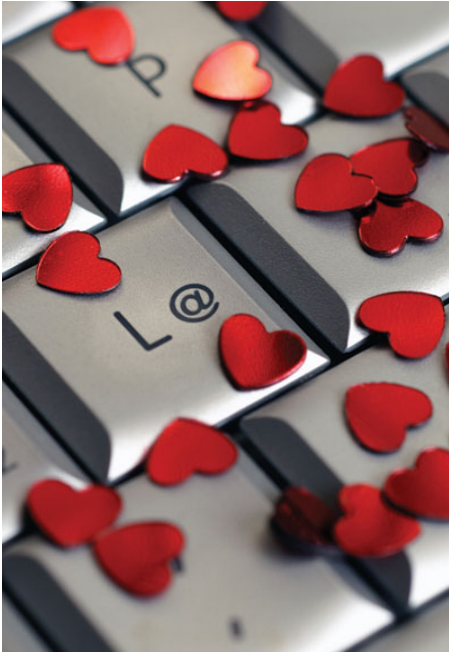


Online Dating: A Critical Analysis From the Perspective of Psychological Science

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Many of us enter the dating pool looking for that special someone, but finding a romantic partner can be difficult. With the rise of the digital age, it is no surprise that people have flocked to the Internet as a way to take control of their dating lives and find their “soul-mate.” But is online dating essentially different than conventional dating, and does it promote better romantic outcomes? In this new report, Eli J. Finkel (Northwestern University), Paul W. Eastwick (Texas A & M University), Benjamin R. Karney (UCLA), Harry T. Reis (University of Rochester), and Susan Sprecher (Illinois State University) take a comprehensive look at the access, communication, and matching services provided by online dating sites.

Although the authors find that online dating sites offer a distinctly different experience than conventional dating, the superiority of these sites is not as evident. Dating sites provide access to more potential partners than do traditional dating methods, but the act of browsing and comparing large numbers of profiles can lead individuals to commoditize potential partners and can reduce their willingness to commit to any one person. Communicating online can foster intimacy and affection between strangers, but it can also lead to unrealistic expectations and disappointment when potential partners meet in real life. Although many dating sites tout the superiority of partner matching through the use of “scientific algorithms,” the authors find that there is little evidence that these algorithms can predict whether people are good matches or will have chemistry with one another.

The authors’ overarching assessment of online dating sites is that scientifically, they just don’t measure

up. As online dating matures, however, it is likely that more and more people will avail themselves of these services, and if development — and use — of these sites is guided by rigorous psychological science, they may become a more promising way for people to meet their perfect partners.

Hear author Eli J. Finkel discuss the science behind online dating at the [24th APS Annual Convention](#).

[About the Authors](#)

Editorial: Online Dating: The Current Status —and Beyond

By Arthur Aron

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