12-15-2010

Predicting someone's true identity: Linguistic norms and cues in online personal advertisements

Lindsay Elliott

The Rochester Institute of Technology

Department of Communication

College of Liberal Arts

Predicting Someone's True Identity:

Linguistic Norms and Cues in Online Personal Advertisements

by

Lindsay Elliott

A Thesis submitted

in partial fulfillment of the Master of Science degree

in Communication & Media Technologies

Degree Awarded:

December 15, 2010

The members of the Committee approve the thesis of
Lindsay Elliott presented on December 15, 2010

_____

Bruce A. Austin, Ph.D.
Chairman and Professor of Communication
Department of Communication

_____

Rudy Pugliese, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication
Coordinator for Communication and Media
Technologies Graduate Degree Program
Department of Communication

_____

David Neumann, Ph.D.
Professor of Communication
Department of Communication
Thesis Advisor

_____

Neil Hair, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Marketing
E. Philip Saunders College of Business
Thesis Advisor

Table of Contents

Predicting Someone's True Identity: Linguistic Norms and

Cues in Online Personal Advertisements

Name: Lindsay Elliott
Department: Communication
College: Liberal Arts
Degree: Master of Science in Communication and Media Technologies
Term Degree Awarded: Winter (20102)

Abstract

Internet dating is now ranked third as the way people meet, behind meeting at work or school, and through a friend or family member. This study researches the use of social and linguistic norms in online dating advertisements. Previous research has posed that social groups create unique identities and group members will selectively present themselves in ways consistent with these identities. Using Craigslist to assess the similarities and differences between genders and sexualities in online personal postings, an online quiz-like survey was created. This research reports on people's abilities to predict the sexual orientation and gender of the writer based on linguistic cues.

Keywords: Linguistic Norm; social identity, sexuality, online dating, mediated matchmaking

Predicting Someone's True Identity: Linguistic Norms and

Cues in Online Personal Advertisements

Common practices of courtship have changed with the passage of time, evolution of culture and the introduction of new technologies. In some traditional societies, courtship is a highly structured activity, with very specific formal rules. In 17th century Wales, ornately carved spoons, known as love spoons, were traditionally made from a single piece of wood by a suitor to show his affection to his loved one. The decorative carvings have various meanings. In some cases the parents or community propose potential partners, and then allow limited dating to determine whether the parties are suited or parents will hire a matchmaker to provide pictures and résumés of potential mates. Gentlemen in England often sent a pair of gloves to their true loves; if the woman wore the gloves to church on Sunday it signaled her acceptance of the proposal. So while once courtship was done through writing letters and paying visits to the parent of one being courted, it is commonplace today for people to post online dating profiles, search other profiles, and contact those people who seem compatible. Internet dating is now ranked third as the way people meet, behind meeting at work or school, and through a friend or family member. One of out five people reported they met their significant other on an online dating site and 17 percent of couples married in the last three years met each other online (Bailey & Match.com, 2009). With so many people posting online profiles, how does one determine if the other person is a good match for you or not with just a few paragraphs or less? There are certainly cues and clues within the profile and these cues and clues differ significantly based on how one wants to be viewed or who one wants to attract to viewing their profile.

Various social groups create and display unique behaviors in order to separate themselves

from other groups. One way these groups separate themselves is by opposing the norms of the

dominant system and creating their own style and identities; this results in social identification.

Some examples of social identification in the resulting ideosyncratic linguistic manifestations are

the use of Ebonics or Spanglish (Harwood, Jake, Roy & Abhik, 2005). Engaging in these

linguistic manifestations not only allows one to associate with a specific social group but to

disassociate with other groups as well. The exchange of shared knowledge through messages

between members of a group constitutes a fundamental part of the intragroup landscape

(Harwood, Giles & Palomares, 2005). These messages are what spread the stories, beliefs, and

linguistic cues unique to the group to the members.

Language is central to social life and can be used deliberately and strategically to produce

an intended effect on an audience (Reid & Giles, 2005). People use language to engage in a

social network by drawing on ideologies and practices that they associate with a common group

identity. Although the participants may differ by gender, occupation, race, and nationality, these

differences are largely downplayed in interactions in favor of an emphasis on the group identity.

Linguistic clues follow the social norms of a specific group. The importance of displaying these

group- specific norms through linguistic cues becomes very important in the uncertain online

dating environment. Not only do the cues demonstrate the writer's membership in that group,

but it should attract potential partners with similar attributes. Each distinctive group places

various amounts of importance on different characteristics. Whether it is describing oneself or

desired characteristics of a future significant other, the type and way items are expressed should

be universal within the group.

This research paper is interested mainly in the similarities and differences of the expressed linguistic norms in the online personal advertisement context of two distinct groups: heterosexuals and homosexuals. This study will explore differences in how each group presents themselves in online personal profiles on a web site specifically focused on courtship, in its widest interpretation. It will also examine the ability of both groups to predict the sexual orientation and gender of the writer based solely on linguistic cues.

Hypothesis

H1: The gender and sexuality of an online dater can be determined correctly by use of social and linguistic norms in an online personal advertisement more often by people in the same social group than those belonging to other social groups.

Research Questions

R1: What are the differences in the narratives between genders and sexualities?

R2: What are the differences between the groups in use of images?

Rationale

Language is a primary vehicle by which cultural ideologies circulate; it is a central site of social practice, and it is a crucial means for producing sociocultural identities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Sociocultural identity is the perception of self through the lens of ethnicity, religion, caste, class, race, language, tribal heritage or combinations of these. It can be formed from the relationship between technologies, social structure, beliefs, values and goals of a culture. Whether spoken or written, languages include different styles, registers, vocabularies, and grammars, necessitate socially situated identities so there is a reciprocal relationship between language and identity.

Communication programs began to thrive with the support of the Speech Communication Association (now the National Communication Association) and International Communication Association in the 1980's. Since then, courses have continually expanded and are now the rule, rather than the exception. The "process of relationship development has been of interest to interpersonal communication scholars for more than three decades… [relationships] are significant contexts for interesting and important communication phenomenon" (Mongeau, Jacobsen & Donnerstein, 2007, p. 531). Research traditionally emphasizes gender differences claiming that men and women tend to use dissimilar language independent of the context, personal proclivities, or interaction partners (e.g., Lakoff, 1975; Mulac & Lundell, 1980; Tannen, 1990) and the empirical evidence is mostly compatible with this claim (Palomares & Lee, 2010). Also permeating the literature is a focus on the diverse, dynamic, and sometimes transient nature of gender or sexual identity; more specifically how it differentially presents itself in computer mediated communication (CMC), and the resultant communicative behavior of men and women (Palomares & Lee, 2010). Currently the internet is changing the way we communicate, and it is important to investigate how the Internet has and continues to impact matchmaking and the transmission of social and linguistic norms within specific groups.

Language and sexuality has gained increased recognition within socioculturally oriented linguistic scholarship (e.g., Besnier, 2003; Braun & Kitzinger, 2001; Eckert, 2002; Kiesling, 2002; Talbot, 1997; Queen, 1997, 1998). Current work in this area emphasizes identity as one key aspect of sexuality and has been researched as a broad sociocultural phenomenon (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Sociolinguistic research has demonstrated that ideologies are not only imposed by the norms and rules of society but are also evolved by people through their natural daily

discourse in sociocultural and interactional practice (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004). Gender is

performative in the sense that it is brought into being through linguistic and other semiotic

practices (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 491). Bucholtz and Hall (2004) analyzed discourse using

the conversations of a group of gay men and women at a private social gathering, and discuss

"how a common queer identity allows speakers to create a social network" (p. 496). Though the

participants were different along numerous lines, including occupation, race, and gender, the

differences were downplayed during interaction to favor the common identity. The term

"adequation" was used by Bucholtz and Hall (2004) to explain the strategies employed when

presenting information as shared knowledge. Such that participants were found to "highlight

similarities based on sexual identity that span the differences that might in other

situations divide the participants. The use of... strategies to determine another's sexual identity

constructs all participants as knowing how to produce and interpret [them]…" (Bucholtz & Hall,

2004, p. 496).

Highlighting similarities does the opposite of stereotyping. Instead of highlighting to

mock characteristics, here it is used to create a cohesive group. Distinctiveness entails structural

uniqueness and in order for a linguistic feature to count as an index of social identity, its use

must be restricted to speakers who share that identity (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004).

Research in the discourse analytic tradition has identified flexible and constructive uses

of language. Reid and Giles (2005) call for "more strategic aspects of intergroup communication

... [to] be incorporated in the research of experimental social psychologists" and state that "how

the social cognitive and the constructive/strategic uses of language are theoretically reconciled

stands as an exciting challenge for the future" (p. 213). This paper takes on that challenge by examining the language use in online personal advertisements.

Literature Review

Online Dating

Mediated matchmaking is certainly not a new phenomenon: newspaper personal advertisements have existed since the mid-19th century and video dating was popular in the 1980s (Ellison, Heino & Gibbs, 2006). Current Internet dating services are substantively different from these incarnations due to their larger user base and more sophisticated self-presentation options and the ability for people to search potential partners by a myriad of characteristics (e.g., race, age, eye color) and using specific key word searching. Technological innovations over the past ten years have produced a steep increase in the use of online dating websites, which have provided an efficient avenue for individuals seeking many different kinds of companionship (Rosen, Cheever, Cummings & Felt, 2008). Entering 'dating' in an Internet search engine will quickly provide thousands of links to dating sites. The Internet has opened a new avenue for romantic interaction as a user can reach a larger pool of potential partners and has increased freedom of choice (Lawson & Leck, 2006). Entrepreneurs have seized this market and today online dating is a major business (Rosen et al., 2008).

Generally, mediated matchmaking sites provide users with opportunities to present personalized profiles of themselves, review the profiles of others, send expressions of interest to other users, and facilitate synchronous (e.g., instant messaging) and asynchronous (e.g., email) communication between users. Given that users of CMC try to get others to like them through a favorable self representation and that social information can be manipulated to form and manage

impressions, strategic impression management in online dating should be particularly

commonplace (Hall, Park, Song & Cody, 2008). Mediated matchmaking participants have the

opportunity to represent themselves using a wide range of multimedia content, such as text-based

descriptions, photographs, and video recordings; they can interact using both asynchronous and

real-time communication tools, such as e-mail, instant messaging, and chat rooms (Gibbs,

Ellison & Heino, 2006). Internet dating appears to be an ideal medium for the presentation of

biographical narratives, providing individuals with an avenue through which they can reflect on

and create a discourse about who they are and what they want from a relationship (Hardey,

2004). Social traits such as gender, race, ethnicity, age, or features such as height, tone of voice,

or hair color are invisible unless a participant makes a point of displaying them (Del-Teso-

Craviotto, 2008). In real life, people role-play by taking on certain characteristics in some

situations and different characteristics in others. Online dating allows people to create personas

that are less constrained than in real life because dating partners know very little about the person

on the other side of the screen (Lawson & Leck, 2006). It has been found that attributions of

personality traits could be gleaned from paralanguage cues even when communicating via e-mail

and that people will use whatever cues are available to infer personality (Rosen et al., 2008).

Easy self-disclosure would seem to be the antithesis of the impersonal world of electronic

communication devoid of nearly all cues used to infer feelings from others (Rosen et al., 2008).

Mediated matchmaking environments lack reference systems to determine optimum disclosure

levels (Ji & Lieber, 2008). With limited cues available, uncertainty is high. People participating

in online personal relationships may be strangers to each other in the sense that they have never

physically met each other. However, they are also close to each other since they share intimate

information and common dreams (Ben-Ze'ev, 2004). In online settings, users will look for signals that are difficult to mimic or govern in order to assess others' identity claims (Ellison et al., 2006).

Subtle cues such as misspellings in the online environment are important clues to the identities for CMC interactants (Ellison et al., 2006). Online dating participants operate in an environment in which "assessing the identity of others is a complex and evolving process of reading signals and deconstructing cues, using both active and passive strategies [and interactants will] adapt to the remaining cues in order to make decisions about others" (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 420). Daters also respond to cues to ascertain another's socioeconomic status, attitude, concept of self, and trustworthiness (Lawson & Leck, 2006).

Emoticons, abbreviations, unconventional spellings, and specialized grammar are used by people to differentiate themselves from the greater society and to help determine whom one wants to interact with (Lawson & Leck, 2006). Research in online dating chat rooms has demonstrated the importance of paralanguage; linguistic practices are used to authenticate and validate individuals as members of a specific gender or sexual group (Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2008). Authentication in this context is necessarily a discursive act because of the absence of visual or aural cues, and it takes place through linguistic strategies such as the age/sex/location schema, descriptions of the self, and screen names. The resulting gender and sexual identities are sketches or stereotypes whose value derives from the acceptance of social and cultural discourses on gender and sexuality that are negotiated in the interactions. Authentication, therefore, is not an external process imposed upon people, but the result of specific social practices (Del-Teso-Craviotto, 2008).

Social norms and practices will change over time and over different media channels but there is one crucial element that will remain constant through all relationships, regardless of the type, and that is self-disclosure. By disclosing, or sharing information, we become more intimate with other people and our interpersonal relationship is strengthened. Whether face-to-face or online, self-disclosure is at the heart of the relationship and self-disclosure is central to the social penetration theory.

Social Penetration Theory

Altman and Taylor's (1973) social penetration theory provides a framework with which to view relationship development. According to social penetration theory interpersonal relationships develop systematically with interpersonal exchange progressing from superficial, non-intimate areas to increasingly intimate areas of interaction as uncertainty is reduced (Hays, 1984). Originally this theory was based on face-to-face interactions and exchange in developing relationships were hypothesized to operate on two dimensions -- breadth (content areas of exchange) and depth (intimacy of exchange) (Hays, 1984). Breadth of self-disclosure refers to discussing a range of topics, such as information about one's family, career, and so forth. Depth refers to the more central core of one's personality: the more unique aspects of one's self. The timing of how much one self-discloses is crucial to determining whether a relationship will continue to proceed. In face-to-face relationships rushing self-disclosure in the early stages of a relationship can seem unnatural and desperate which can lead to an abrupt end (Whitty, 2008).

Altman and Taylor further suggest that relationships tend to pass through four stages of development: orientation, exploratory affective exchange, full affective exchange, and stable exchange; with orientation having the least degree of social penetration and stable exchange

having the broadest and deepest disclosure pattern. At first it is common to offer others more

information about yourself, which may enable "deal breakers" to surface but you are likely to

receive more information about potential dating partners because of the reciprocity norm

surrounding self-disclosure and thus make better decisions about them (Gibbs et al., 2006, p.

170).

A number of studies have been conducted that "support the basic tenets of social

penetration theory in offline settings" (Hammer & Gudykunst, 1987, p. 418). This theory made

a lot of sense until the internet was born. On mediated matchmaking sites there is a large range

of self-disclosure that spans depth and breadth in each profile. Before even meeting someone

you can know information that is a variety of depths from general to extremely intimate. The

present research looks at the theory in a new light, one that encompasses the Internet and almost

anonymous self-disclosure.

One part of social penetration theory that holds true in both on and off-line setting is the

idea that individuals often withhold negative information early on in relationship development

(Gibbs et al., 2006). Altman and Taylor's (1973) theory consisted of a constant cost-reward

analysis as a dominant frame to determine social penetration when dealing with strangers (Ji &

Lieber, 2008). When cost and reward assessments support further penetration, interactants

would approach the core of the personality structure and share feelings, values and needs. Both

potential costs and benefits increase exponentially the deeper the penetration becomes, thus more

boundary regulation mechanisms are employed. Hence privacy is a social-psychological process

involving culture-specific boundary regulation mechanisms. Depending on the purpose and the

particular situation, individuals or groups could employ gate keeping mechanisms to create the

optimum level of social penetration (Ji & Lieber, 2008). This model, developed before the

advent of the online social realm, sees privacy as a set of interpersonal boundary-control

processes, by which a person asserts control over how much he or she is open to various others.

Privacy also incorporates the management of how much input to accept from others and how

much to participate and share of oneself. The recordability and subsequent persistence of

information online shifts the temporal boundaries such that the audience can now exist in the

future. Which point "in time" are we talking about in an environment where persistence and

recording are the norm? Not only are we deprived of audience management because of spatial

boundaries, we also can no longer depend on simultaneity and temporal limits to manage our

audiences (Tufekci, 2008). A profile on a mediated matchmaking site is open for all to see,

especially for sites that do not require a subscription to join. Also true in both settings is Altman

and Taylor's framework of privacy optimization which suggests that the need to be seen is

greater than the fears of privacy intrusions (Tufekci, 2008).

The proposed order of penetration is reversed in online settings. Inner feeling and

opinion sharing can be concurrent or even preceded factual disclosure. Ji & Lieber (2008) found

that users tended to open up faster, yielding relational benefits associated with sharing deeper

emotions. This not only hints at the possibility of "cyberspace fostering a more emotional

reality, it also suggests that a constant, cost-reward analysis powers emotional disclosure

decisions" (Ji & Lieber, 2008, p. 39). There is far less opportunity for relationships formed

initially online to develop similarly to face-to-face encounters. On a mediated matchmaking site

the profiles are typically set-up in such as way to reveal both depth and breadth. For instance,

within the profiles individuals typically have to provide information about surface levels aspects

of themselves such as: eye color, drinking and smoking habits, relationship status, number and types of pets, occupation, and so forth. In addition, participants are given space to write more in-depth information about themselves. They are encouraged to describe things such as their personality, interests, their ideal date, their political persuasion. Mediated matchmaking sites support their users in opening up about all aspects of themselves so that they have a better chance to attract the most appropriate person. Given the amount of information that is presented, it is no surprise the conversations that take place via email, telephone and so forth prior to the first meeting are more to clarify instead of gather information about the person. Therefore, online dating is arguably even more removed from what people are used to when it comes to developing a relationship. Social penetration theory needs to be re-examined with the influence of the Internet on relationships today; this is an environment where anonymity and therefore uncertainty is high. Uncertainty reduction theory can assist in this reexamination.

Uncertainty Reduction

The basic assumption of uncertainty reduction is that when two individuals meet for the first time, their primary goal is to reduce uncertainty and increase predictability through communicating with each other, since uncertainty is an uncomfortable state (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). This assumption suggests that the quantity of information is a major determinant of reducing the uncertainty level (Yoo, 2005). The original explication of the theory by Berger and Calabrese (1975) presented 7 axioms and 21 theorems that specify "the interrelationships among uncertainty, amount of communication, nonverbal affiliative expressiveness, information seeking, intimacy level of communication context, reciprocity, similarity, and liking" (Gudykunst & Hammer, 1987, p. 191). Beginning as an offline theory, Berger's uncertainty

reduction theory is still today qualified as "one of the most influential theories applied to the context of interpersonal communication" (Emmers & Canary, 1996, p. 166).

Berger and Calabrese (1975) argued that heightened levels of uncertainty diminish intimacy and attraction. Other research has assumed that uncertainty sparks information seeking and that open communication about uncertainty promotes closeness (Baxter & Wilmot, 1984). Another possibility is that the uncertainty reduction process itself is experienced as rewarding and fosters intimacy, irrespective of the uncertainty that remains (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005). In people's quest to achieve interpersonal understanding in on or off-line settings, uncertainty is a fundamental byproduct (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). More formally, uncertainty constitutes an inability to anticipate and explain behavior. In other words, uncertainty is a lack of confidence about how interpersonal interaction will proceed (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005).

Still, in the process of reducing uncertainty individuals might discover undesirable facts about their partners, thus uncertainty reduction can bring negative relational outcomes (Yoo, 2005). Consistent with this theoretical perspective, empirical evidence points to ways in which high levels of uncertainty limits the knowledge necessary to establish intimacy (Theiss & Solomon, 2008). Some findings have suggested that high uncertainty leads to negative outcomes in the relationship, such as relational disintegration, negative relational consequences and decreases in attraction (Yoo, 2005). Several researchers have established that uncertainty reduction is an important predictor of liking since uncertainty and social attraction are inversely related (Yoo, 2009). Hence mediated matchmaking sites urge users to post as much about themselves as possible. Uncertainty reduction is a necessary condition for the development of

relational trust and when more uncertainty is reduced, perceived predictability should increase, vulnerability will be minimized, and positive relational outcomes will be likely to develop.

According to Planalp and Honeycutt (1985), events that increase uncertainty in intimate relationships are usually viewed as deviant. Behaviors that violate expectations or social norms were reported by participants as deviant (Berger & Calabrese, 1975). Deviance is often defined as unpredictability, and unpredictability typically increases the uncertainty level. The negativity effect occurs when negative information is disproportionately weighted more heavily when compared to positive information about objects, events, and people (Kellermann, 1989). Numerous studies reveal that even if the relative number of positive and negative attributes is controlled and balanced, negative impressions tend to emerge. So information viewed as deviant and non-normative about the target person presented will increase the uncertainty level (Yoo, 2009). Schumacher and Wheeless (1997) also posed a hypothesis that surroundings play a role in uncertainty as well. Even if a "relatively low level of uncertainty is associated with familiar surroundings and familiar people, uncertainty may rise if the behavior of others deviates from the norm" (p. 428). Thus a relatively low level of uncertainty may be present when an individual is familiar with the surroundings and others involved in the interaction (Schumacher & Wheeless, 1997). Luckily for users posting on mediated matchmaking sites they have the time to craft specific profiles with carefully worded information about themselves to keep the balance positive.

Research generally provides support for the information-seeking strategies of uncertainty reduction theory (Schumacher & Wheeless, 1997). To cope with such uncertainty-raising events, people engage in communication strategies to reduce their uncertainty, which also helps

to restore their important close involvements (Emmers & Canary, 1996). It has been shown, for example, that in CMC settings users develop skills to "decode textual cues, such as language errors and emoticons, to reduce uncertainty and form impressions about a target person" (Antheunis et al., 2010, p. 101).

Relational uncertainty emerges from self, partner, and relationship sources (Knobloch & Solomon, 2005). The development of romantic relationships is marked by a variety of turning points, turbulent episodes (Solomon & Knobloch, 2001), and transgressions (Metts, 1994) that can give rise to feelings of uncertainty. Partners enact a variety of direct and indirect communication strategies in their efforts to reduce uncertainty and restore equilibrium in their relationships in response to the negative feelings that accompanies experiences of uncertainty (Theiss & Solomon 2007). On mediated matchmaking sites people present a great deal of positive information about themselves, which others subsequently use to reduce uncertainty and form impressions (Antheunis, Valkenburg & Peter, 2010). Forming impressions includes the use of symbols and specific language and the symbolic convergence theory explains how this is useful to potential advertisement respondents.

Symbolic Convergence Theory

Symbolic convergence theory (SCT) is based on language and symbols. SCT emerged in the 1970s from research on small groups attempting to explain "the appearance of shared group consciousness and its constitutive emotions, motives, and meanings (Bales, 1970; Bormann, 1983b; 1985a; Cragan & Shields, 1999)" (Olufowote, 2006, p. 453). SCT provides a universal explanation of human communication (Bormann, 1982). As people develop portions of their private symbolic worlds which overlap as a result of symbolic convergence, they then have the

basis for communicating with one another to create a community and to discuss their common experiences and to achieve mutual understanding (Bormann, 1982).

The power of the symbolic convergence theory stems from the human tendency to try to understand events in terms of people. Mediated matchmaking sites are full of personal stories or self- disclosures that help reduce uncertainty about a specific individual because the stories explain their behavior or illuminate their thought processes. We can understand a person making plans, seeking goals, and succeeding or failing because we often interpret our own behavior in that way. On a mediated matchmaking site it is understood community or site-wide that you will find certain information on most profiles and there is a common, encompassing theme of finding a compatible mate. When we share a dramatization of an event, we make sense out of what prior to that time may well have been a confusing state of affairs. This carries over into the interpretation of the things people say and do. People tend to make human motion "into symbolic action (that is, they tend to attribute meaning to it) by trying to figure out why the actors did what they did and what the action symbolizes" (Bormann, 1982, p. 51).

Symbolic convergence explains how people come to have an emotional investment and commitment to the symbols they live by—how it is that people can sympathize, empathize, and identify with one another (Bormann, 1982). It is symbolic because it deals with the human tendency to interpret signs and objects and give them meaning. SCT recognizes communication as embodying both fantasy and logic. As a context bound framework, specific norms, cultures, and communicative practice of groups embedded in time and space are taken into consideration. That is—group consciousness is "bound by the interpretations, meanings, and values of participants situated in time and space" (Olufowote, 2006, p. 454). The profiles posted typically

reference carefully selected current events, whether they are personal or public and thus are

fixated in a unique moment of time.

Dramatizing accounts of past occurrences artistically organize what are usually more

complex, ambiguous, and chaotic occurrences. Although dramatizing may occur frequently

between individuals, some messages resonate so strongly with listeners that a symbolic

explosion spreads from the originating context (Olufowote, 2006). Bormann has argued that

resonance with a dramatizing message can evoke a strong psychodramatic response, resulting in

chaining outward of the original setting into publicly shared consciousness (e.g., in social

movements, mass media, etc.) (Olufowote, 2006). SCT is grounded in two basic assumptions.

First, communication is capable of creating reality via the symbols we exchange and these

symbols are connected to knowledge and experience. Secondly, when we share these symbols it

is possible to create a shared reality. Symbolic convergence occurs when individuals come to

have a similar understanding of a shared universe of symbols (Myers & Andrews, 2006). These

symbols are found in the mainstream media and can be so ingrained that observers do not even

realize they share these common symbols. A simple symbol example can be a man bringing

flowers on the first date to impress his date. This scenario has been played out in books, on

television shows, in movies and it symbolizes romantic interest on behalf of the man.

SCT offers a set of technical terms (or tools) for capturing and describing, in varying

levels of abstraction, the recurring dramas that chain between participants. Fantasy themes and

types are simultaneously tools for researchers as well as varying abstractions of dramas used by

those sharing them. As tools, they allow the researcher to track and hierarchically organize

dramatic content. Such content can be found in a rhetorical community's dramatic and narrative

materials (e.g., online dating advertisements) (Olufowote, 2006). A fantasy is defined by

Bormann as "the creative and imaginative interpretation of events" (Myers & Andrews, 2006, p.

6). The term fantasy in the symbolic convergence theory is a technical term and should not be

confused with another common usage of the term which is of something imaginary, not

grounded in reality. Quite to the contrary, fantasy within this theory is the way that communities

of people create their social reality, and employs a meaning much closer to another common

usage of the term: the imaginative and creative interpretation of events that fulfills a

psychological or rhetorical need. A fantasy theme is a way for "people to present or show to the

group mind, to make visible (understandable) a common experience and shape it into social

knowledge" (Bormann, 1982, p. 52). Fantasy themes are noteworthy because of their capacity to

prompt two or more people to have a shared interpretation that accounts for and explains human

experience (Stone, 2002). For example, everyone has heard stories of horrible blind dates or

meeting someone they met online for the first time. These stories are shared and carried through

a social group. A different social group may have their own version of that story but with unique

twists that are characteristic of or opposite from the norms of the group.

Fantasy types, in-and-of themselves, are significant indicators of motive. However, their

true significance as sources of meaning for larger groups is manifest in the tendency to cluster in

such a way that they provide a broader skein of meaning known as a "rhetorical vision" akin to a

"viewpoint, ideology, or worldview" (Stone, 2002, p. 230). Those who participate in a rhetorical

vision constitute a rhetorical community. The "fossilized remains of shared group fantasies can

be found in texts of oral or written messages in the form of fantasy themes or fantasy types"

(Bormann, 1982, pp. 51-2). The basic communicative process by which people experience

symbolic convergence is the dynamic process of sharing group fantasies. The moments when communicators are caught up in the sympathetic participation of a common drama are fantasy chains. The result of such symbolic sharing is a social reality common to the participants which explains their experience in terms of narrative accounts, analogies, metaphors, irony, and word play (Bormann, 1982). Because of their common fate as part of the group, members have common experiences that predispose them to share fantasies that relate symbolically to their concerns (Bormann, 1982). Fantasies contain fantasy themes that, through repetition, become a fantasy type, a stock dramatization on which group members can call upon to arouse shared emotions and motives.

Symbolic convergence theory explains the processes by which members use symbols to converge around a shared representation of their group. This symbolic convergence subsequently motivates and guides group and group members' actions, thus group members portray themselves in a certain way according to the group norms in online dating advertisements. This study is an attempt to identify fantasy types or symbols unique to certain social groups found on mediated matchmaking sites in personal advertisements. The reason these symbols and fantasy types appear in profiles can be explained by self-presentation theory.

Self-Presentation Theory

Self presentation is a complex communicative process that involves understanding one's own strengths and weaknesses, being receptive to the values of the target audience, and using the medium of communication to one's advantage. In a mediated matchmaking environment users have distinct self-presentational goals, and the expression of these goals is shaped by the medium of communication (Toma & Hancock, 2010). As senders, CMC users selectively self-present,

which entails revealing attitudes and aspects of the self in a controlled and socially desirable

fashion. As receivers, CMC users idealize partners based on the circumstances or message

elements that suggest similarity or desirability. Specific technical affordances of CMC such as

editability and off-line composition, with the passage of conversational time in suspension, have

been argued to allow CMC users to augment their self-presentations (Walther, 2007). A

prominent activity of many profile posters is self-presentation which is "the goal directed activity

of controlling information of self in order to influence the impressions formed by audiences"

(Bucholtz & Hall, 2004, p. 492). Typically, impression management is undertaken to create and

maintain a stable and favorable impression of the self in ways that are desirable to the audience,

and takes place through a variety of verbal and nonverbal cues in face-to-face settings, yet the

enactment or modification of impressions in text-based CMC is limited to items such as

linguistics, typography, and visual presentation (Walther, 2007).

Goffman's classic work, <u>The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life</u> (1959), posits that

people are concerned with the way others perceive them, motivating persons to manage their

behavior in order to present favorable and appropriate images to others. Goffman argued for a

dualistic image of the self; he described the self as both a performer and a character. The 'self-

as-performer' has a basic motivational core, and is not merely a social product. In contrast, the

'self-as-character' represents an individual's unique humanity. It is this character part of the self

which is a social product. Goffman explored self-presentation as a conscious, interactive act that

requires both an awareness of and participation from the audience. However the audience has

been obscured in this technologically mediated society. We can no longer see who is looking, or

even make an educated guess. Hardey (2002) found that Internet daters' interactions are also

often guided by "rituals and norms that protect the self" (p. 577), which was originally suggested

by Goffman. The technology of the Internet presents new challenges to building intimacy and

avoiding rejection, but the basic motivations for protecting the self still remain (Lawson & Leck,

2006). Initiating relationships involves important decisions regarding self-disclosure: what

information to disclose and how to disclose it to create a favorable impression. One needs to

disclose enough to reduce uncertainty, but not too much as to violate social norms. This process

of packaging and editing the self is an essential and ubiquitous component of any social

interaction (Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008).

Self-presentation strategies are especially important during relationship initiation, as

others will use this information to decide whether to pursue a relationship or not (Derlega,

Winstead, Mathews & Braitman, 2008). This means on mediated matchmaking sites users need

to construct a profile that does not alienate those very people that they are trying to attract. If a

profile browser does not like even a small portion of the self presentation of the posted profile

they will not even propose to begin a relationship. Research suggests that when individuals

expect to meet a potential dating partner for the first time, they will "alter their self-

presentational behavior in accordance with the values desired by the prospective date" (Ellison,

Heino, & Gibbs, 2006, p. 417). Thus mediated matchmaking users have to employ tactics to

make their profile attractive to others they are interested in meeting.

Perhaps nowhere are self-presentational pressures more explicit than in the dating arena.

The online dating profile is a crucial self-presentation tool because it is the first and primary

means of expressing one's self during the early stages of a correspondence and can therefore

foreclose or create relationship opportunities. To be successful, daters must manage their

presentation to appear desirable and compare favorably with others. By providing access to

millions of profiles and allowing for direct comparisons among them, dating in an online context

can "render self-presentational goals highly salient" (Toma et al., 2008, p. 1024). CMC can

convey affective information and relational communication, despite the reduced availability of

nonverbal cues. Online communicators with sufficient motivation adapt their messages to

generate and detect interpersonal impressions (Wang, Walther & Hancock, 2009). How

motivated are online daters to control how others see them? Given that online dating profiles are

meant to attract and impress potential mates and scrutinized by a large audience of these

potential mates, online daters' motivation to control their self-presentation should be generally

high. However, daters' specific relational motivations may vary: whereas some are interested in

short-term relationships, others are interested in finding long-term partners. These different

kinds of relational motivations should affect how daters go about constructing their self-

presentations. For instance, those with long-term relational goals may be motivated to present

themselves as realistically as possible, as deceptive profiles can severely undermine relationship

development; whereas those seeking short-term engagements may be more likely to embellish

their profiles in order to attract a large number of potential mates. Impression construction in a

dating environment should be shaped by users' desired impressions or how exactly they wish to

come across, which is one of the most important aspects is to ensure being categorized into the

correct social group (Toma & Hancock, 2010). Social identity theory describes many ways of

identifying with a social group; the most common is by displaying characteristics that are unique

to that group.

Social Identity Theory

Social identity is a perception of self as a member of particular groups, along with the associations relevant to those groups. Examples of group memberships include age groups, nationalities, sexual orientations and religion to name a few. Social identity theory (SIT) posits that social group memberships constitute crucial elements of the self and that they combine with societal intergroup dynamics to influence thoughts and actions. Speakers create a social network by drawing on ideologies and practices that they associate with a common identity.

Primarily a motivational theory, social identity theory serves as an integrative force across disciplines (e.g. sociolinguistics, communication, and social psychology) (Reid, Giles & Harwood, 2005). SIT has become deeply rooted as a vital lens through which to understand issues of identity and identification as they relate to organizations. In several important ways these issues of identity and identification are fundamentally communicative ones. It is through communication with others that we: express our belongingness (or lack thereof) to various collectives, how we assess the reputation of those collectives, in which various identities are revealed to us, and the social costs and rewards of maintaining various identities are exposed (Scott, 2007). Examples of organizational or social group memberships include, but are not limited to: cultures, religions, academic, sporting, and political groups (Harwood, Giles & Palomares, 2005). SIT claims that when social identity is more salient than personal identity, people see themselves more as part of a group than as an individual, as though partners are equivalent and interchangeable with other group members (Wang, Walther & Hancock, 2009).

Based on the results of early minimal group studies, Tajfel and his associates concluded that "group formation and intergroup discrimination had occurred as a result of social

categorization" (Dobbs & Crano, 2001, p. 356). Social identity theory began as an attempt to

explain macro-social patterns of prejudice and discrimination, and social changes resulting from

intergroup competition for status, power, and prestige (Reid, Giles & Harwood, 2005). Social

identity theory suggests that maintaining psychological distinctiveness between the ingroup and

outgroup is functional for individuals and constitutes crucial elements of the self and they

combine with societal intergroup dynamics to influence thoughts and actions (Harwood & Roy,

2005). People seek to view their ingroup as better than, and distinct from, outgroups (Harwood,

Giles & Palomares, 2005). They categorize themselves into ingroups and others into outgroups,

and engage in social comparisons between those groups. To the extent that the ingroup

membership is valued and salient, the individual can be said to have social identification with

that group (Harwood, Giles & Palomares, 2005). In some manifestations, the motivation for

maintaining positive distinctiveness has been described in terms of self-esteem (individual or

collective), uncertainty reduction, or positive identity. Group members are not necessarily

passive recipients of social identity but they "try to enhance the image of the in-group by a

process of social comparison with relevant out-groups" by adopting the prototypical behavior,

norms, and values of the group (Hennessy & West, 1999, p. 362). Thus the social standing and

prestige associated with that group will affect members' self-esteem.

     A prototype is ''an integrated abstract representation of specific stereotypical/ normative

characteristics which define the ingroup in the salient ingroup-outgroup comparative context''

(Hogg, 1992, p. 94). Perceived prototypicality of other in-group members positively influences

the attractiveness of specific individual persons (Turner, 1987). Moreover, the perceived in-

group prototypicality of members is more strongly associated with liking and popularity when

group identity is salient than when personal identity is salient (Wang, Walther & Hancock, 2009). If a group member is acting according to the social norms and you are familiar with these behaviors, uncertainty is reduced. Group members cognitively maximize intragroup differences, assimilate themselves to an in-group prototype, and develop favorable attitudes toward the in-group. Out-group members are liked less and therefore are less influential in decision making. Social identification increases attraction to the in-group, and in the abstract, to its members (Wang, Walther & Hancock, 2009). It has been tested experimentally and extensively that an individual's identification with a group is sufficient to lead to in-group favoritism for the sake of his or her self-esteem (Hennessy & West, 1999). It is not difficult to argue that language and communication processes are a core element of the social psychology of intergroup relations; indeed, they are integral constituents of our group identities and what differentiates us from other relevant outgroups.

Using self-presentation tactics a user on a mediated matchmaking site should use phrases, words, descriptions and stories to highlight their ingroup as well as their own prototypicality in order to attract potential partners that are similar. Their ability to appeal to symbols or fantasy types should directly affect their success rate of compatible respondents. By appealing to similarities a user quickly decreases uncertainty which should increase breadth and depth of self-disclosures on the respondent's behalf. The basic tenets of these theories were used to create the method for this study.

Method

There are three main parts to this study. The first part is a content analysis of posted mediated matchmaking personal advertisements to determine emergent categories, the second

part is a content analysis of the images posted in the advertisements, and the third part is a survey

testing the ability of people to determine the sexuality and gender of the writer from an

advertisement only.

For the content analysis grounded theory was used to identify characteristics unique to

each group: women seeking women, women seeking men, men seeking women, men seeking

men; sociologists Glaser and Strauss were the first to use this type of theory extensively. The

general subject being studied was differences in posted online personal advertisements between

gender and sexuality. Craigslist was chosen for the content analysis for several reasons: it is

public access, does not require registration, and provides the availability for users to list personal

and preferred partner characteristics in narrative format. As posting a dating advertisement on a

publicly accessible website indicates consent for review, documented consent was not sought.

Unlike many dating websites Craiglist does not require a poster to fill in certain fields, typically

demographics, about themselves. This was important because in a earlier study that had a

structured environment with limited prescribed answers by Ellison, Heino and Gibbs (2006) it

was found that users struggled to "present themselves as unique individuals within the

constraints of a technical system that encouraged homogeneity, negotiating a desire to stand out

with the need to blend in" (p. 433). Also choosing a pre-filled answer became "very important

because they were the variables that others used to construct searches in order to narrow the vast

pool of profiles" (Ellison et al., 2006, p. 427). Using Craigslist avoided all of these issues.

The content analysis consisted of a random sample pulled from two cities. Since social

identity theory posits that members of a specific social group will use the same social and

linguistic norms and endeavoring to encompass all types of members of each group the most

conservative and liberal city in the United States were used. The cities were ranked in a study

done in March of 2010 by an online news organization, Provo, Utah (conservative) and San

Francisco, California (liberal) (Palko, 2010). Some of the criteria used by the news organization

to rate cities were: how voters voted in the past two presidential elections, median household

income (factoring in cost of living), state unionization laws, state concealed weapon laws, state

weekly religious attendance, and state abortion laws.

The sample was pulled by copying the title and advertisement of every nth advertisement;

the number determined by an online random number generator. The advertisement was then

pasted into a Microsoft Word document. Once 25 advertisements were pulled from San

Francisco, 25 more were pulled from Provo. For each category all 50 advertisements were

reviewed by the researcher. If there were not enough advertisements gathered before the end of

the postings, the researcher would start back at the beginning, on the advertisement below the

first previously used advertisement and, using the same random number, continue to gather

postings until the correct number was obtained.

Following grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967) the samples were read in

succession. The researcher highlighted certain words or phrases or subjects that seemed unique

to each group. The researcher then wrote down the words and phrases that had been highlighted

following the review of all of the advertisements. Once this was done for all four groups,

categories were determined from the list of words or phrases from each group. Morgan,

Richards and VanNess (2010) studied dating profiles in their exploratory study on personal and

preferred partner narratives in 2010 using emergent categories as well. They began with nine

categories and then reduced them down to three overarching categories. So in this study if there

was overlapping usages between the heterosexual and homosexual groups with no difference

between genders, they were discarded. A total of fourteen categories were used and they

include: length of advertisement, reason for advertisement, employment status given, drug use

stated for self or partner, usage of the word "drama", "emotionally available", or "disease free",

usage of intimate descriptions, usage of detailed descriptions, whether descriptions were stated or

under tone, mention of religion, children, tattoos or piercings. Once the categories were

determined a new sample of 50, 25 from each city for each group, advertisements was gathered

using the same protocol. The new sample was then coded for each of the categories using an

excel spreadsheet. All data was coded twice to ensure thoroughness and accuracy of codes; 93%

reliability was obtained.

Next the researcher did a visual content analysis of the pictures that were posted in the

advertisements. The pictures of a local Craigslist city were used as a sample to determine the

categories using grounded theory. Then every advertisement that had a picture was viewed for

both Provo and San Francisco in all four groups. Each picture was coded based on the categories

the researcher determined. The amount of postings without pictures was counted to find the ratio

of those who posted to those who did not. The 'less than 50% of the body' category is

dominated by "head shots" or those of just the head and shoulders. Any picture that includes

more than 50% of the body was deemed 'full body'. The icon group includes any type of small

pixilated image. The group shot category was used only if the additional people in the shot were

meant to be there; thus those mistakenly in the background were not counted. The 'other'

category included things such as real pictures of nature, flowers, or boxes of chocolate. If a

picture included any bare sexual part of the body, it was termed intimate. This category was broken into two groups to determine how much of the body was exposed.

If there was more than one picture posted, the researcher only coded the first picture. This is due to the fact that the poster would probably have considered this picture to be the most important. The researcher repeated this procedure twice exactly two weeks apart to ensure accuracy of the coding; adequate reliability was established for each of the groups and categories.

After the content analysis of both the narratives and pictures was complete and checked for accuracy, a survey was created via Clipboard. Instead of creating fictitious literature for participants to review as Rosen, Cheever, Cummings and Felt (2008) did, eight advertisements were chosen from Craigslist— one from each category in each of the cities. The researcher reviewed advertisements and based on the categories chose advertisements that were indicative of the characteristics found for each group. These advertisements were then adjusted by the researcher to contain almost all if not all of the relevant emergent categories. Just as Rosen, Cheever, Cummings and Felt (2008) made slight self-disclosure adjustments to their fictitious e-mail messages, all gender specific words or phrases and culturally specific descriptions were removed. Following this, all obvious gender or sexual orientation descriptions of the person being sought was removed.

Each advertisement was assigned a number one through eight. Pulling numbers from a hat, the order of the advertisements was determined. Directly after each advertisement four options were given that the participant could chose one from: woman seeking woman, woman seeking man, man seeking woman, man seeking man. After that was an optional text box for

participants to explain why they chose the option they had. Following the last advertisement's

text box were some demographic questions about the participant including gender, sexual

orientation and year of birth. The fields were not required and the survey could be submitted

without an answer to any question though a 'prefer not to specify' field was also offered.

A brief introduction was crafted to explain that the survey consisted of eight personal

advertisements that had been slightly altered, and all that the participant needed to do was to

select one of the categories for each of the advertisements. The instructions also indicted that

there would be a box following each advertisement so the participant could briefly explain why

they made the choice they did; it was explicitly stated that it was not required, but would be

helpful to the researcher. Lastly, the participants were told that after they submitted their

answers they would be redirected to a page with the correct answers, which they were. The

answer page looked identical to the initial survey, but only the correct answer was listed under

each advertisement and no space was provided for feedback.

All materials were submitted and approved by the Rochester Institute of Technology's

Human Subjects Research Office and the Institutional Review Board. Following approval, the

link to the survey was posted on a social media networking site, Facebook, and sent as an e-mail

to the researcher's personal contacts. The Facebook posting and e-mail gave a brief description

to solicit participants to take the survey and a non-obligatory request to re-post or forward the

description and link on.

Once the data was collected all of the comments were reviewed for mention of specific

social or linguistic norms that assisted the participant in making their determination. A social

norm was loosely operationalized as a reference to a behavior or activity, and a linguistic norm

as jargon or idiom usage, adjectives or descriptions, or the use of specific words and phrases.

Then the comments that belonged to those that had a correct answer were pulled out for each

question separately and coded again to determine if either social or linguistic norms were cited

more frequently.

Results

Narrative Content Analysis

The first research question this study asked was about the differences in the narratives of

posted advertisements. Using a grounded theory approach the sample online personal

advertisements resulted in fourteen categories. Using content analysis, each group of the new

sample advertisements was coded separately. In each of the tables below the groups are coded as

follows: W 4 W means woman seeking woman; W 4 M means woman seeking man; M 4 W

means man seeking woman; M 4 M means man seeking man.

Table 1 shows the results of the reason for posting the advertisements. The highest

incidence of those searching for long-term relationships (LTR) was found with females

regardless of sexual orientation. The lowest incidence of long-term relationship seeking and also

the highest incidence of seeking only intimate encounters were found with the homosexual male

group. The heterosexual male population was mostly concentrated around just dating.

Table 1

Reason for posting online advertisement by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
LTR	26	37	10	1
Dating	13	13	33	1
Intimate Only	12	1	8	49

Table 2 shows the differences in the length of the advertisements. The largest frequency of short advertisements was found with homosexual males, those between four and ten sentences were found mainly within heterosexual males and females, and the longest advertisements were found in the women seeking women group.

Table 2

Length of posted advertisement by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Short (1-3 lines)	6	5	4	26
Medium (4-10 lines)	14	24	28	24
Long (11+ lines)	31	21	20	1

Drug usage of the poster was next analyzed in table 3. If the poster stated that they do or do not use drugs or if there was no mention of drugs, the appropriate column was marked. The homosexual male group had the highest rate of mentions, followed by the homosexual females.

Table 3

Listing drug use by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Do drugs	17	0	1	25
Do not do drugs	11	18	4	20
N/A	23	33	46	6

Table 4 shows the number of posters that stated that they were comfortable if others used drugs. Again, N/A was marked if there was no mentioned of drug use, and again the homosexual male population had the most mentions by a large margin.

Table 4

Comfort level with other's drug usage by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	4	2	5	32
No	9	27	4	11
N/A	38	22	42	8

Table 5 shows the amount of advertisements that mentioned being employed or a student, or did not mentioned work of any type. Interestingly the homosexual women had the highest occurrences; this is an interesting finding as the typical finding is that males tend to state their employment to attract potential dates most often. The heterosexual males were the second highest group.

Table 5

Mention of employment status by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Stated	17	7	9	2
Student	1	12	12	1
N/A	33	32	30	48

Table 6 shows if religion, in any capacity, was mentioned or not. The majority of advertisements containing these references were found in the heterosexual groups.

Table 6

Mention of religion in the advertisement by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Mentioned	2	15	12	0
Not Mentioned	49	36	39	51

The heterosexual groups had the highest number of advertisements that mentioned children in any capacity as well as shown in Table 7.

Table 7

Mention of children in the advertisement by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	5	33	21	0
No	46	18	30	51

Table 8 shows if the term "emotionally available" was used in reference to a characteristic that they would like in the person they are seeking. The heterosexual groups show the greatest usage.

Table 8

Usage of the term "emotionally available" by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	4	18	10	0
No	47	33	41	51

Table 9 shows if the term "drama" was used in reference to themselves or a trait they wished in their partner. The highest occurrence was found in homosexual women.

Table 9

Usage of the term "drama" by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Used	16	8	4	4
Not Used	35	43	47	47

Table 10 encapsulates the number of advertisements that used "disease free" in any part of the narrative. The highest frequency was found within the homosexual males.

Table 10

Usage of the term "disease-free" by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	5	0	0	46
No	46	51	51	5

Table 11 shows that homosexual women had the highest frequency of mentioning tattoos or piercings.

Table 11

Mention of tattoo or piercings by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	12	0	0	1
No	39	51	51	50

Table 12 shows the number of advertisements that had descriptions of intimate body parts. There were none within the heterosexual groups; the largest occurrence being found with homosexual males.

Table 12

Usage of descriptions about intimate parts of the body by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Yes	7	0	0	44
No	44	51	51	7

Table 13 shows if there was a detailed physical description given. This would include any type of details that encompasses more than things such as height, and hair or eye color. The group with the least amount of detail is the heterosexual women.

Table 13

Usage of a detailed physical description by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Given	38	16	42	46
Not Given	13	35	9	5

And lastly, table 14 shows if the descriptions were explicitly stated or undertone. This would include statements such as, "I've been told my eyes are amazing". Women had the highest occurrences of the undertone descriptions. This is compared to the descriptions that had a higher occurrence in males that were stated such as, "I have a 6 pack".

Table 14

Descriptions plainly stated or undertone by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Stated	12	3	39	46
Undertone	39	48	3	5

These tables were used to help highlight the social and linguistic norms of each group. Some of the differences were seen between genders, and others between sexual orientations, and sometimes between genders within similar sexual orientations.

Picture Content Analysis Results

All of the posted profiles were then reviewed for the pictures posted. Table 15 shows the total number of profiles reviewed and the percentage of profiles with a picture. The males had the highest occurrence rate of pictures regardless of sexuality.

Table 15

Total number of profiles reviewed and percentage of profiles with a picture

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Total number of profiles	339	649	621	875
Total number of pictures	67	47	184	242
Percentage	19.76%	7.24%	29.62%	27.65%

The type of picture did differ in between the males based on sexual orientation, with the homosexual males being mostly intimate in nature. The women that posted a picture mainly chose to show their face or their face and body. Interestingly there were no intimate photos posted by heterosexual women as seen in table 16.

Table 16

Type of picture posted by group

	W 4 W	W 4 M	M 4 W	M 4 M
Less than 50% of body	21	30	74	4
Full body	11	14	38	49
Icon	12	1	20	15
Group	3	1	5	0
Other	11	1	44	12
Intimate (>50%)	9	0	3	113
Intimate (<50%)	0	0	0	49

A total of 310 surveys were collected: 260 of the respondents were heterosexual, 25 were homosexual, 19 were bisexual and 4 did not answer. Eighty-two respondents were male, and 226 were female. A total of 303 survey results were used as those that did not answer with the gender or the sexual orientation question were removed from the data.

The following tables demonstrate how each group answered each question. The correct answer row is shaded grey. The key is as follows: 1 means female bisexual; 2 means female heterosexual; 3 means female homosexual; 4 means male bisexual; 5 means male heterosexual; and 6 means male homosexual.

There were 8 questions on the survey. The questions in its original format can be found in the appendix. Each participant had to choose one of the options for each advertisement. Tables

17- 24 show the answers selected by each group for each advertisement. The correct answer is

shaded.

Table 17

Answers for question 1 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	6	18	1	1	9	4
W 4 M	1	34	5	0	20	3
M 4 W	4	55	6	0	17	1
M 4 M	6	83	3	1	24	2

Table 18

Answers for question 2 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	0	16	3	0	5	0
W 4 M	3	51	4	0	40	2
M 4 W	9	97	8	2	23	4
M 4 M	5	23	0	0	2	3

Table 19

Answers for question 3 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	0	6	0	0	1	0
W 4 M	2	15	0	0	6	0
M 4 W	2	38	2	0	13	0
M 4 M	13	130	13	2	50	9

Table 20

Answers for question 4 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	3	31	6	0	8	1
W 4 M	14	158	8	2	60	7
M 4 W	0	0	1	0	2	0
M 4 M	0	0	0	0	0	1

Table 21

Answers for question 5 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	1	23	2	0	6	2
W 4 M	5	34	1	0	23	2
M 4 W	8	109	11	2	38	4
M 4 M	2	23	1	0	3	1

Table 22

Answers for question 6 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	8	73	11	1	30	2
W 4 M	1	55	1	0	23	2
M 4 W	5	16	0	1	5	0
M 4 M	3	45	2	0	12	5

Table 23

Answers for question 7 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	1	12	0	0	10	1
W 4 M	0	4	1	0	3	0
M 4 W	3	28	2	0	10	0
M 4 M	13	146	12	2	46	8

Table 24

Answers for question 8 by group

Gender/Orientation	1	2	3	4	5	6
W 4 W	10	41	4	1	10	3
W 4 M	2	48	4	1	33	4
M 4 W	2	48	5	0	18	0
M 4 M	2	26	2	0	8	2

These survey results were coded and then calculated using Minitab. A Chi- square was run for each of the questions to summarize the discrepancies between the expected number of times each outcome occurs and the observed number of times each outcome occurs. First the answers were run with gender as the second variable. For gender, the only question that had significance was the second question with a $X^2 = 17.50$, P- value of .001, and DF = 3. The data show a clustering around woman seeking man for the males and for the females around the answer man seeking woman which was the correct answer. The survey answers were run with sexual orientation. For sexual orientation there were three questions with significance: question one had a $X^2 = 18.02$, P- value of .006, and DF = 6; question six had a $X^2 = 20.48$, P- value of .003 and a DF= 6; question eight with a $X^2 = 16.50$, P- value of .011 and a DF = 6.

Next all of the answers submitted were scored for accuracy. As all of the advertisements were actually posted and had been tweaked to reflect a certain gender and sexuality, the participant's answer needed to be concurrent with the intended gender and sexuality of the poster to be correct. If the answer was correct one point was awarded and if it was incorrect no points were given. After all the questions were scored, the totals were added up for each respondent and termed the overall test score. Thus the highest score possible was an eight, and the lowest was zero. Then the answers were separated by type of advertisement: heterosexual or homosexual. For these two categories the highest total possible score was four, and the lowest was zero. A two –sample T-test were run beginning with gender and total test score. For the next T-test just the answers for the heterosexual advertisements were used, and finally the T-test was run with only the homosexual advertisement test score. No significance between the groups was reported for any of the T-tests hence the mean score of groups are not statistically different from each other. As there was no difference in score between the groups there is no evidence to support this study's hypothesis.

A one-way analysis of variance was run for sexual orientation and overall test score first, then between sexual orientation and score for the heterosexual questions only and lastly for the homosexual question only score. The homosexual only question test score had the only significant result of $p = <.001$, $DF = 2$, $F= 9.16$. Tukey's was run as a post hoc test with a confidence level $= 98.0\%$. The difference was between bisexual and heterosexuals with the mean for the heterosexual group at 1.73, and the bisexual group at 2.52.

In the survey, for every question, there was a text box below the section where the participant would answer which offered a place for the participant to explain why they answered

the way they did. It was not mandatory, but the instructions did specify that it would be helpful

to the researcher. After the tests were run in Minitab the comments were then analyzed for

citations of social or linguistic cues. Table 25 shows the breakdown of each type of cue per

question.

Table 25

Cues used per advertisement

Advertisement number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Social Norms	143	152	146	133	132	53	105	84
Linguistic Norms	220	123	54	159	65	65	111	93

Then the comments belonging to only those that correctly answered the question were

separated and coded again. The breakdown of each type per question is shown in Table 26.

Table 26

Cues used by those who correctly answered by advertisement

Advertisement number	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
Social Norms	18	72	83	91	33	7	53	42
Linguistic Norms	15	65	52	118	65	37	73	78

The hypothesis was not confirmed by this study. The similarities and differences in self-

descriptors and picture usage between genders and sexualities can be seen in the tables above

and will be discussed further in the next section. There were several questions that had

significant results but they were not the majority and with the sample size skewed it is even harder to discern if the significant results are true or not.

Using the emergent categories created by grounded theory approaches, the content analysis of the narrative portion of the mediated matchmaking online personal advertisements highlighted the differences between genders, sexual orientations, or both. The advertisements posted by females were found to be seeking mainly long-term relationships and had a longer length. The males differed in both categories along sexual orientation lines, but neither was aimed at long-term. The ability of the researcher to find emergent categories gives strength to the idea that social groups will converge and share common norms and behaviors. Selective self- presentation in the narratives allowed for clustering along either gender or sexual orientation lines in both the advertisements themselves as well as the answers of the participants.

The homosexual advertisements were more likely to mention drug use, whether it is self-use or others' use, and the heterosexual advertisements were more likely to mention children or religion. Here we can see the groups converging around themes or symbols that they find important enough to mention. Religion was used as a loose term in the content analysis- it could mean any type of metaphysical reference, organized or not. The lack of usage by homosexuals could reflect the fact that most western religions are not friendly to this lifestyle or that religion is not as important to this culture as a whole. Stating something as important as religious beliefs prior to meeting someone can be seen as a fairly revealing statement; this supports the idea that the internet reverses the original social penetration theory's idea that the breadth and depth increases over time. This can also be seen in the homosexual male population which was almost exclusively advertisements for intimate encounters. The self-disclosures were incredibly

intimate and detailed. This would seem to be jumping to a very deep level of social penetration

because of the intimacy but the descriptions are only physical traits. What they lack in breadth

they make up for in depth. Still if the social norms for homosexual men are to be very sexually

charged, then these postings are ways of displaying their prototypicality.

Interestingly, all of the groups, excluding homosexual males mentioned employment or

student status. This differs from most of the literature that states that males often cite this to

show they are good providers. One reason may be that the collective social fabric has changed

and even women may want to highlight their ability to support themselves.

Analyzing the pictures of all four groups also highlighted some similarities and

differences. The males had the highest percentage of the photographs, followed by homosexual

woman and heterosexual women trailing 12% behind them. Part of the reason for the low

amount of posting overall might be the credibility of the site. Recent scandals, scams and news

articles about the use of Craigslist for prostitution may deter some posters from being as

forthcoming as they otherwise would have been. It may also go back to the obscured audience in

this technologically mediated society; posters are unsure who is looking and the uncertainty is

too high to risk further self-disclosure in the form of pictures. Plus women, on the whole, tend to

be more careful. Both heterosexual and homosexual women had the most headshots, but only

the homosexual women had some intimate pictures.

The heterosexual males had mostly pictures of themselves or had pictures of flowers or

chocolates or gifts. This would seem to simulate the tradition of bringing a small token to your

date on the first time you go out. Pictures of nature or picturesque landscapes were also

commonplace, perhaps to give the advertisement a romantic atmosphere. There were almost no

intimate pictures; a few were of the person in swimming paraphernalia so some of the body was exposed but this was the greatest extent of skin exposure. The homosexual males on the other hand had very few photographs of anything that did not fall into the intimate category. Just as the written personal advertisements were extremely sexually charges, so were the pictures. The second common type was a fully clothed full body shot. This could mean the homosexual males are more focused on intimate encounters and therefore care more about certain areas of the body which fits with the data on the type of relationship sought from the first content analysis. It could also mean that the Internet gives them a place to be open and the postings are anonymous so it would be hard to trace it back to an individual. It certainly cannot be discerned from this research whether the social norms drive the advertisements or the advertisements propagate the norms.

The Chi- square for gender and score had statistical significance for the second advertisement which shows that at least half of the participants correctly identified the advertisement of a man seeking a woman. The second online personal was a six line advertisement seeking someone for dating, religion was mentioned and it included a plainly stated detailed physical description. The overall answers were strongly heterosexual with 102 choosing woman seeking man and 144 choosing man seeking woman. Both genders had a similar rate of correct answering. This could show that at least heterosexual females, which were the majority of the respondents, are just as comfortable decoding male characteristics as males are, perhaps because that is their chosen partner. Over half (58%) of the bisexuals were correct though the heterosexuals and homosexuals were not far behind at 46 and 48 percent respectively. The most common comment for choosing heterosexual was "LDS means they're definitely

straight" or "emphasis on religion." The reason for choosing male was often the use of "athletic build" or "described physical characteristics." The usage of religion was strongly heterosexual characteristic which could be why there are also a high number of women seeking man answers as well. More often those that chose the wrong gender cited the "no sex but cuddling would be cool!" comment as "no man with a brain would advertise that fact."

When sexual orientation was used in the comparison three of the eight advertisements showed significance. Two of these advertisements, number one and number eight, were woman seeking woman and they were the only female homosexual advertisements. Question six was the other significant question and was a woman seeking man. The first advertisement had only 39 correct responses. Forty-one percent of the heterosexual population guessed it was a man seeking a man, and 36% of the homosexual population guessed it was a woman seeking a man. Each group guessed a portion of the question correctly: the author was a female homosexual. It was over 11 lines in length, looking for a long-term relationship, mentioned self use of drugs, and specified being employed and having tattoos. Most of the heterosexual respondents though the advertisement was homosexual but figured the author to be male; thus they recognized the linguistic cues were different but could not discern the gender. This somewhat supports the social identity theory in that the outgroup could discern that this advertisement was not part of their group. Having only one other option to choose made getting the sexual orientation correct easier. The homosexual participants recognized the gender as female but thought she was straight. Only four homosexuals (16%) and 27 heterosexuals (10%) were correct; interestingly seven bisexuals (36%) were also correct. Perhaps the bisexuals had an easier time because they float between genders and thus have a better understanding of linguistic cues. The phrases

"dress sharp" and "soft heart but not weak" were commonly mentioned across all groups as reasons for their choice.

Advertisement number six used several female heterosexual characteristics: seven lines in length, mentions non-use of drugs and preferring their date not to, and one female characteristic which was an undertone physical description. Per the comments, the majority of respondents got the gender correct due to the words "sass" and "cute" being used as descriptive terms. Most of those that chose both gender and sexual orientation correctly cited the same descriptive terms, but also the "warning of wanting more than casual sex" as the reason for their decision. However, the majority answered woman seeking woman. These respondents used the descriptive terms to determine a female author and then used "plays on a sports team" and wanted an "open-minded, conversationalist" to mean homosexual. This would seem that most respondents felt a homosexual would list athletics as a positive trait. It is interesting that the specification of being open-minded was used as a touchstone for choosing homosexuality. One would think if posting in a woman seeking woman forum that the people browsing would already be open to same-sex relationships.

The eighth advertisement uses the female characteristic of looking for long-term and the female homosexual characteristics of: over 11 lines, mentions wanting a non-smoker and uses the word 'drama.' The majority thought this was a heterosexual ad, most leaning toward woman seeking a man. Most participants commented that it was female due to liking 'long walks on the beach' and saying 'it's always fun to go out and dance." Those that answered sexuality correctly cited the use of 'drama' and "lets talk awhile and then schedule to meet." Interestingly those that chose man seeking woman cited the walks on the beach as well, only they thought that was a

man trying to attract a woman by mentioning an activity that women would be interested in.

Thus they were correct that the advertisement was trying to attract a woman. The comments also

suggested that the usage of the word 'drama' meant that the male poster did not like drama or he

had been burned in the past.

Though not having any statistical significance between the groups, advertisement four

had the highest number of correct answers. Two hundred fifty-one respondents correctly

answered and only 54 were incorrect. This woman seeking man advertisement included a

request for long-term, was five lines long, mentioned religion and children and did not have a

detailed physical or intimate description. There were three respondents who chose man seeking

woman, and only one comment was left which was "a 20 year old looking for a built-in

babysitter." It would seem that they believed that a woman was being sought to take care of the

two year old. One person chose man seeking man but left no comment. For the majority who

chose woman seeking woman, "curvy" was cited for the decision of female and "open to try new

things" and "is ready and mature enough for an adult relationship" were referenced for the

homosexual decision. The correct respondents agreed the writer was female because "no man

called himself 'curvy'" and because she has a child. Many wrote that they believed the mother

often obtains custody of the child or "usually 20 year-old guys don't have kids who they are

responsible for." The reason they chose heterosexual seemed to be divided among two reasons:

one, she had the child at 18 so it was probably an accident, plus most adoption agencies do not

let 18 year olds adopt; and secondly the age preference was older. This poster was 20 and asking

for someone around 35; the comments argued that males typically go for younger women and

"women tend to seek older men."

The group with the highest correct answer rate for both advertisements was man seeking man with 217 and 227 correct answers. As the categories projected the commonly cited responses were "men are more promiscuous", "poppers- gay drug", and "the word 'clean' because STDs are transmitted from men to their partner more often than women to theirs." Most relevant to this study were the correct answers from self-reported heterosexuals. For the first man seeking man questions some remarked "no idea… just a guess. What the heck is a popper?" or "this is a bizarre one to me- and the group I'm least familiar with is man seeking man hence my choice." The second occurrence of this type of personal advertisement has some similar language and phrases. The remarks were along the lines of "I don't even understand all the terminology", "slang as if a secret language?" and "Negative? HIV negative? And host? Appears to be a gay term." These findings suggest that even when a person does not know what a linguistic or social norm is, they still recognize that it is not something they are familiar with. So if they are part of the heterosexual ingroup, they would consider the words and cues foreign so they would be more likely to pick to be a homosexual answer.

The two lowest scores were advertisements of women seeking women; only 39 and 69 of the 303 participants correctly guessed the gender and sexuality. The next lowest score of correct answers was a woman seeking man at 82. All other heterosexual advertisements did well with correct answer rates of 143, 249, and 172. This would seem to bolster the social identify theory's claim that those in the ingroup would be able to correctly identify the norms as most of the participants were heterosexual themselves. Lastly the man seeking man did the best with 217 and 227. This could mean that the advertisements for the men seeking men had identifiers that more participants were familiar with. Most comments correctly identified it was a male

advertisement because of the sexually charged natures, and the second highest comment

response was the use of poppers or the word "negative" as it refers to HIV status. The media has

often publicized that homosexual males have a higher rate of HIV/AIDS than any other

population so it is not surprising many correctly identified these cues.

Each of the categories found show that each of the groups has different areas of self-

disclosure they are comfortable with which suggests a variety of breadth. While some are

willing to give very intimate descriptions of themselves, others are not, which points to a varying

level of depth. While having different characteristics, each group tended to cluster around

certain categories or levels of self-disclosure about a specific category. The male population was

more comfortable giving specifics about their physical descriptions, perhaps because one doesn't

have the benefit from seeing the person as you would in person or because, on a whole, males

were not looking for long-term which is largely based on appearance. This suggests a large

amount of depth. But the females, who were more long-term relationship oriented, did not have

this inclination, instead giving more information about a range of topics which shows more

breadth. According to social penetration theory both breadth and depth increase as time passes,

but as seen by these two populations this is not necessarily true in an online setting for the

majority. These categories show how groups form around an idea or symbol. Perhaps the

clustering occurs as a result of the shared image of the 'perfect match' whether it is a male or

female. The majority of the comments that were left showed how participants would search for

clues that identified gender first, and then sexual orientation second. The first three questions

had more social norms cited than linguistic norms, but the last five had more linguistic clues

cited.

Not being required to fill in certain demographic boxes accentuates the fact that the user

chose to use the specific details in their posting. Inner feeling and emotion sharing is suggested

to be easier online and in a narrative can be concurrently shared with factual information.

Following this idea heterosexual females were not shy about asking for an 'emotionally

available' man or homosexual women for avoiding 'drama.' Using these emotionally charged

words can mean many things depending on who is reading the advertisement. These specific

words are small dramatizations of personal stories. Those that share a similar story would

understand this cue and be more likely to self-disclose as their uncertainty is reduced by

perceived commonality.

The symbols or icons were used more heavily in the homosexual advertisements. They

were often representations of their community, such as rainbows or using two intertwined female

gender symbols. These symbols are highly charged with meaning and this group has an

emotional investment in them. As Bormann suggested these symbols are embedded in time and

space and allow users to sympathize, empathize and identify with each other. This is an

excellent example of a poster using these symbols as a part of self-presentation to show

membership to a specific community. In the homosexual female group pictures were mainly of

the face and shoulders; this group also had the highest mention of tattoos or piercings which

were often visible in the photographs. Displaying this characteristic is an excellent example of

presenting prototypicality which will reduce the uncertainty of the reader.

With the one- way ANOVA when looking at only the homosexual test score, there was a

significant difference between the means of the bisexual and heterosexual groups. This could

mean that those with a bisexual orientation are better at picking up homosexual queues than

heterosexuals. Being the only significant difference in detection could infer that the qualities one

is seeking in a potential partner do not significantly differ across gender or sexual orientation.

All of the personal advertisement posters are slightly different because they are written by unique

individuals, but they are all very similar because they are looking for mostly the same reasonable

attributes, and posting similar reasonable qualities about themselves.

Here and in all the comparisons it is important to note the differences in sample sizes.

With 260 respondents reporting they were heterosexual, and only 19 being bisexual, as well as

226 being female with only 82 males, there is a possibility that the significance of the results is

due to the disparity in sample demographics.

Discussion

The primary goal of this investigation was to explore the similarities and differences

between genders and sexual orientations on mediated matchmaking sites. It also looked at how

well participants could accurately determine these factors about the poster using only the

linguistic cues.

The findings provide support for the theoretical framework of social identity theory that

posits groups will form unique characteristics to define themselves and members will display

them in order to show their prototypicality and reduce uncertainty to those that identify the

norms. We can see this manifest itself as the same categories created using grounded theory

were applicable in both Provo, Utah and San Francisco, California. When posting an online

dating advertisement the groups concentrated around certain topics or key words and phrases. It

was shown that these key phrases or symbols are used throughout the social group as they, again,

appeared in both the most conservative and liberal communities.

Having these repetitive phrases or categories also promotes the self presentation theory. These qualities were selectively included in the profile because they were considered important to the posters; this could be due to wanting others to know certain facts about themselves or because they were trying to attract a specific type of individual that they would be compatible with. The intimacy of these categories varied but did not necessarily follow the proposed schedule posed by social penetration theory. This study called for a reexamination and provides support for the idea that the face-to-face timing of self-disclosures is radically different than are found in online settings.

The mixed results of being able to identify the gender and sexuality of the poster can be attributed to several reasons, the least of which is that the respondents had not necessarily ever seen an online personal advertisement before. The advertisements were manipulated to exclude blatant descriptions or identifiers. Having excluded these would make it harder to correctly identify the poster, but it was shown to be possible. Being possible provides support to the social identity and symbolic convergence theory. Often if a participant did not recognize the linguistic clues they would choose the other gender or sexuality because they recognized it was not part of their social group. A specific word could also be cited for the decision but considered to have opposite meanings which resulted in a different answer.

Limitations

This study may not have used advertisements representative of other online dating websites as a publicly accessible website was used in order to access narrative profiles without participants' consent. A non-random sample was used, and the participants of the survey may

not have ever used an online dating site before thus limiting the generalizability of these findings.

Using grounded theory approaches can run the risk of being influenced by the researcher, though no other categories found in the literature were applicable.

Furthermore, societal expectations for appearance and behavior can result in individuals who do not fit the norm and perceive themselves as deviants who will not be accepted. They may fear negative reprisals from more mainstream members of society and thus may retreat into an online setting where they feel safer and have control, so the categories that were created are only specific to the advertisements used.

Future Research

Originally the researcher sent out the survey as responses to the posters on Craigslist. An identical survey was sent, but different response sets were kept in order to keep the various groups separate. This way, the researcher did not have to ask sexual orientation, but could reasonably assume the sexual orientation based on which category the personal advertisement was posted. Over 800 surveys were sent out; 100 to each of the groups in each of the identified cities. Only three responses were received, which is why this study had to go with a non random, convenience sample. In the future it would be helpful to have responses from those individuals who have actually posted.

In the original survey a question about the political inclination of their city was asked as a validity check. With the convenience sampling this field could not be used, but it would have been interesting to have included a personal political stance question.

This study did not look specifically at advertisements that mention sex, whether it was letting the reader know that casual sex was not an option to inviting someone over for an intimate encounter. Some comments left by participants suggest that these items were a factor in their decision process and it would be interesting to do a more focused study on this topic.

Focusing on linguistic clues in a different light by examining the similarities and differences in the profiles and responses of native language speakers versus non-native language speakers would be a good avenue for further studies as well. The age spread was wide ranging from eighteen to sixty-eight years which could account for some of the data spread. It would be interesting to do a comparison of ages as homosexuality is now more socially acceptable than it has been in the past. This may mean the younger generations have had more exposure to this group and their unique identity.

It was found that there were differences in the usage of images in this study. So new studies could branch off and for example find what participants can determine from an image.

Lastly, instead of giving the advertisements, a new study could give the participants the categories and have them fill in what they would expect to be included in each group's postings.

References

Antheunis, M., Valkenburg, P. & Peter, J. (2010). Getting Acquainted Through Social

Networking Sites: Testing a Model of Online Uncertainty Reduction and Social

attraction. *Computers in Human Behavior 26*. 100-109.

doi:10.1016/j.chb.2009.07.005

Bailey, C.M. & Match.com. (2010). *Match.com and Chadwick martin Bailey*

2009-2010 Studies: Recent Trends: Online Dating. Retrieved from

http://cp.match.com/cppp/media/CMB_Study.pdf

Baxter, L. A., & Wilmot, W. W. (1984). "Secret tests": Social strategies for acquiring

information about the state of the relationship. *Human Communication Research,*

11, 171-207. Retrieved from http://springerlink.metapress.com

Ben-Ze'ev, A. (2004). Flirting On and Offline. *Convergence: The International Journal*

of Research into New Media Technologies 10. 24- 42. doi:

10.1177/135485650401000103

Berger, C.R., & Calabrese (1975). Some explorations in initial interaction and beyond:

toward a development theory of interpersonal communication. *Human*

Communication Research, 1, 99-11. Retrieved via InterLibrary Loan.

Bormann, E.G. (1982). The Symbolic Convergence Theory of Communication:

Applications and Implications for Teachers and Consultants. *Journal of Applied*

Communication Research 10(1). 50-61. Accessed by www.ebscohost.com

9/3/2010

Bucholtz, M. & Hall, K. (2004). Theorizing Identity in Language and Sexuality Research.

Language in Society 33(4). 469-515. doi: 10.1017/S004740450044021

Del-Teso-Craviotto, M. (2008). Gender and Sexual Identity Authentication in Language

Use: the Case of Chat Rooms. *Discourse Studies 10*(2).251-270. doi:

10.1177/1461445607087011

Derlega, V.J.,Winstead, B.A., Mathews, A. & Braitman, A. L. (March 2008). Why Does

Someone Reveal Highly Personal Information? Attributions for and against Self-

Disclosure in Close Relationships. *Communication Research Reports, 25*(2), 115-

130. Retrieved via www.ebscohost.com

Dindia, K. (1988) A Comparison of Several Statistical Tests of Reciprocity of Self-

Disclosure. *Communication Research,15,* 726-752. doi:

10.1177/009365088015006004

Dobbs, M. & Crano, W. (2001). Outgroup Accountability in the Minimal Group

Paradigm: Implications for Aversive Discrimination and Social Identity Theory.

Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 27(3). 355-364. doi:

10.1177/0146167201273009

Ellison, N., Heino, R. & Gibbs, J. (2006). Managing Impressions Online: Self-

Presentation Processes in the Online Dating Environment. *Journal of Computer-

Mediated Communication 11*. 415-441. doi: 10.1111/j.1083-6101.2006.00020.x

Emmers, T.M. & Canary, D.J. (1996). The Effect of Uncertainty Reducing Strategies on Young

Couples' Relational Repair and Intimacy. *Communication Quarterly 44*(2). 166-182.

Accessed by www.ebscohost.com on 9/3/2010

Gibbs, J., Ellison, N.B. & Heino, R.D. (2006). Self Presentation in Online Personals: The

Role of Anticipated Future Interaction, Self-Disclosure, and Perceived Success in Internet Dating. *Communication Research 33*(2). 152-177. doi: 10.1177/0093650205285268

Gudykunst,W. & Hammer, M.R (1987). The Influence of Ethnicity and Sex on Social Penetration in Close Friendships. *Journal of Black Studies 17*(4). 418-437. doi: 10.1177/002193478701700403

Hall, J., Park, N., Song, H.Y. & Cody, M. (2008, January). *Strategic Misrepresentation in Online Dating: The Effects of Gender, Self-Monitoring, Personality, and Demographics.* Presented at the Annual Meeting of the National Communication Association, San Diego.

Hannah, A., & Murachver, T. (1999, June). Gender and Conversational Style as Predictors of Conversational Behavior. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology, 18*, 153-174. doi: 10.1177/0261927X99018002002

Hardey, M. (2004). Mediated Relationships: Authenticity and the Possibility of Romance. *Information, Communication & Society 7*(2). 207-222. doi: 001:10.1080/1369118042000232657

Harwood, Jake, Roy & Abhik (Eds.) (2005). Social Identity Theory and Mass Communication Research. USA: Peter Lang Publishing.

Harwood, J., Giles, H. & Palomares (Eds.) (2005). Intergroup Theory and Communication Processes. USA: Peter Lang Publishing.

Harwood, J. & Roy, A. (Eds.) (2005). Social Identity Theory and Mass Communication Research. USA: Peter Lang Publishing.

Hays, R.B. (1984). The Development and Maintenance of Friendship. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships 1*. 75-98. doi: 10.1177/0265407584011005

Hennessy, J. & West, M.A. (1999). Intergroup Behavior in Organizations: A Field Test of Social Identity Theory. *Small Group Research 30*(3). 361-382. doi: 10.1177/104649649903000305

Ji, P. & Lieber, S. (2008). Emotional Disclosure and Construction of the Poetic "Other" in a Chinese Online Dating Site. *China Media Research 4*(2). 32- 42. Accessed by www.ebscohost.com on 9/3/2010

Kellerman, K. (1989). The Negativity Effect in Interaction" It's All in Your Point of View. *Human Communication Research, 16*, 147-183. Retrieved via InterLibrary Loan

Knobloch, L. & Solomon, D. (2005). Relational Uncertainty and Relational Information Processing: Questions without Answers?. *Communication Research, 32,* 349-388. Retrieved via www.ebscohost.com

Lawson, H. & Leck, K. (2006). Dynamics of Internet Dating. *Social Science Computer Review 24*(2). 189-208. doi: 10.1177/0894439305283402

Mongeau,P., Jacobsen, J., & Donnerstein, C. (2007). Defining Dates and First Date Goals: Generalizing From Undergraduates to Single Adults. *Communication Research, 34*, 526-546. doi: 10.1177/0093650207305235

Morgan, E., Richards, T. & VanNess, E. (2010). Comparing Narratives of personal and Preferred Partner Characteristics in Online Dating Advertisements. *Computers in Human Behavior 26*. 883-888. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2010.02.002

Myers, M. & Andrews, M. (2006, January). *Technodyke: Genderqueer Stories in Cyberspace.* Paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association, Germany.

Olufowote, J.O. (2006). Rousing and Redirecting a Sleeping Giant: Symbolic Convergence Theory and Complexities in the Communicative Constitution of Collective Action. *Management Communication Quarterly 19*(3). 451-492. doi: 10.1177/0893318905280326

Palko, C. (2010). *America's Top 20 Conservative-Friendly Counties.* Retrieved from http://dailycaller.com/2010/03/19/americas-top-20-conservative-friendly-counties/

Palko, C. (2010). *America's Top 20 Liberal-Friendly Counties*. Retrieved from http://dailycaller.com/2010/04/09/americas-top-20-most-liberal-friendly-counties/

Palomares, N. & Lee, E. (2010). Virtual Gender Identity: The Linguistic Assimilation to Gendered Avatars in Computer- Mediated Communication. *Journal of Language and Social Psychology 29*(1). 5-23. doi: 10.1177/0261927X09351675.

Planalp, S. & Honeycutt, J. M. (1985). Events that increase uncertainty in personal relationships. *Human Communication Research, 11*, 593-604. Retrieved via www.ebscohost.com

Reid, S.A. & Giles, H. (2005). Intergroup Relations: Its Linguistic and Communicative Parameters. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations 8*(3). 211-214. doi: 10.1177/1368430205053938

Reid, S.A., Giles, H. & Harwood, J. (2005). A Self-Categorization Perspective on

Communication and Intergroup Relations. *Intergroup Communication*. 241-263.

Accessed by www.ebscohost.com 9/3/2010

Rosen, L., Cheever, N., Cummings, C. & Felt, J. (2008). The Impact of Emotionality and

Self-Disclosure on Online Dating Versus Traditional dating. *Computers in Human

Behavior 24.* 2124-2157. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2007.10.003

Schumacher, B. & Wheeless, L. (1997). Relationships of Continuing Uncertainty and

State-Receiver Apprehension to Information-Seeking and Predictions in Dyadic

`Interactions. *Communication Quarterly,45*(4), 427-445. Retrieved via

www.ebscohost.com

Scott, C. (June 2007). Communication and Social Identity Theory: Existing and Potential

Connections in Organizational Identification Research. *Communication Studies

58*(2). 123–138. doi: 10.1080/10510970701341063

Solomon, D. & Knobloch, L. (2001). Relationship Uncertainty, Partner Interference, and

Intimacy within Dating Relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal

Relationships, 18*(6). 804- 820. Retrieved via www.ebscohost.com

Stone, J.F. (2002). Using Symbolic Convergence Theory to Discern and Segment

Motives for Enrolling in Professional Master's Degree Programs. *Communication

Quarterly 50*(2). 227-243. Accessed by www.ebscohost.com 9/3/2010

Theiss, J.A., & Solomon, D. H. (2007). The Effect of Direct Communication About

Uncertainty on Subsequent Perceptions of Relational Uncertainty and Relational

Intimacy. International Communication Association Annual Meeting. San

Francisco, CA

Theiss, J.A., & Solomon, D. H. (2008). Parsing the Mechanisms that Increase Relational
Intimacy: The Effects of Uncertainty Amount, Open Communication About
Uncertainty, and the Reduction of Uncertainty. *Human Communication Research,
34.* 625-654. doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.00335.x

Toma, C.L. & Hancock, J.T. (2010). Looks and Lies: The Role of Physical Attractiveness
in Online Dating Self- Presentation and Deception. *Communication Research
37*(3). 335-351. doi: 0.1177/0093650209356437

Toma, C.L., Hancock, J.T. & Ellison, N.B. (August 2008). Separating Fact From Fiction:
An Examination of Deceptive Self-Presentation in Online Dating Profiles.
Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin 34(8). 1023-1036. doi:
10.1177/0146167208318067

Tufekci, Z. (2008). Can You See Me Now? Audience and Disclosure Regulation in
Online Social Network Sites. *Bulletin of Science Technology & Society 28*(1). 20-
36. doi: 10.1177/0270467607311484

Walther, J. (2007). Selective self-presentation in computer-mediated communication:
Hyperpersonal dimensions of technology, language, and cognition. *Computers in
Human Behavior 23.* 2538-2557. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2006.05.002

Wang, Z., Walther, J., & Hancock, J.T. (2009). Social Identification and Interpersonal
Communication in Computer- Mediated communication: What You Do Versus
Who You Are in Virtual Groups. *Human Communication Research 35*(1). 59-85.
doi: 10.1111/j.1468-2958.2008.01338.x

Whitty, M. (2008). Revealing the 'real' me, searching for the 'actual' you: Presentations

of self on an internet dating site. *Computers in Human Behavior 24.* 1707-1723.

doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2007.07.002

Yoo, J. (2005). "Why Should I Trust You?" The Path From Information Valence to

Uncertainty Reduction, Cognitive Trust, and Behavioral Trust. Paper presented at the

annual meeting of International Communication Association, New York.

Yoo, J. (2009). Uncertainty Reduction and Information Valence: Tests of Uncertainty

Reduction Theory, Predicted Outcome Value, and an Alternative Explanation?

Human Communication, 12(2), 187-198. Retrieved via www.ebscohost.com

Appendix

Following are eight postings from people seeking relationships. These are actual postings with some minor edits to hide the gender and sexual orientation of the author. After you have read each posting, please select which group you believe the author is: a woman seeking woman, woman seeking man, man seeking woman, and man seeking man.

After each posting there is a text box in case you would like to explain your choices. It is not required but would be extremely helpful.

Upon completing of the survey you will be directed to a link that will give you the correct answers.

1. Hi all. I'm 24 I was born and raised in San Francisco, and I am of Latin descent. I am employed, stable, have a car, moving into a new place, independent, honest, light when things are heavy, smart, have a soft heart but not weak, laugh easily, extremely social, friendly, always open to meeting new people, dress sharp, notice the little things, supportive, deep, etc. I get along with most people, but am looking for something long term. I love to party and live each day to the fullest if I can. I am into clubs, parties, dancing, drinking. I love going out with friends & family and hitting up the city. 420 should be obvious at this point! I am deep into music all types. I'm also always up for going to bbq's, beaches, concerts, movies, art galleries, museums, theaters, sporting events, and outdoor things. I am into boating, weekend get aways, traveling, road trips, all festivals, Music wise I love old school hip-hop, oldies and salsa; some of the new stuff is ok. You name it and I am usually in. I also have 3 tattoos- just ask me where :)

○ Woman Seeking Woman

○ Woman Seeking Man

○ Man Seeking Woman

○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

```


```

2. I'm here at home getting ready to whip up some spaghetti with garlic bread maybe a movie afterwards tonight. If you'd like to join me and eat/ help cook a delicious meal and maybe watch to a movie send me a message? 5'8" athletic build, short brown hair, brown eyes. Good looking? you decide. You just need to be nice and easy going. Yes, I am religious (LDS) so no sex but cuddling would be cool!

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

```


```
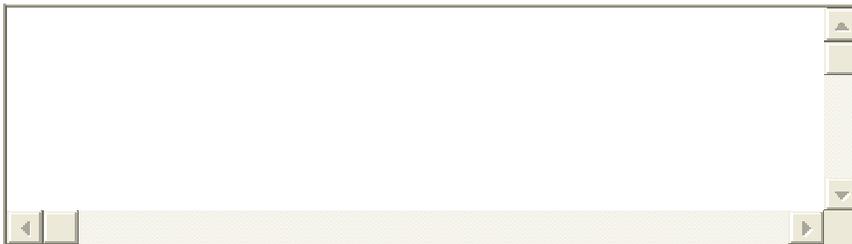
3. So I could really use some quick action right now. I need you to be clean, and close though bc I cant host. Poppers ok by me- hit me up if you are interested. I could use this soon please thanks :)

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

```



```

4. I'm looking for the love of my life... a real person, someone who has an appreciation for the out of doors (camping, hiking, skiing, and swimming) but can appreciate the finer things in life, is well educated, is spiritual in nature, has a great personality, willing and open to try new things and is ready and mature enough for an adult relationship. If the situation is right, I'm also interested in meeting someone who wants to settle down and raise my two-year old with me. About me: Caucasian, 20 years old, attractive, athletic but curvy, family oriented, shoulder length brown curly hair, and I've been told my eyes are amazing. Age preference: 35-50 years old

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking man
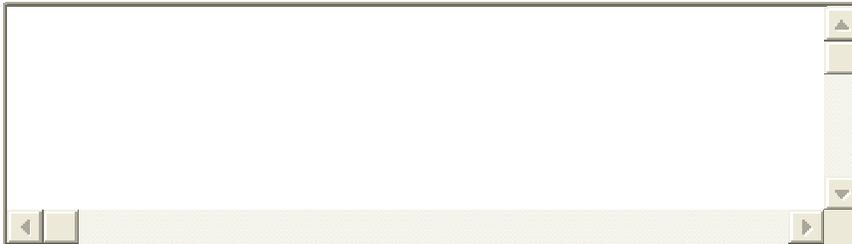
What led you to choose this group over the others?

```



```

5. If you've considered taking the drastic step of an affair, then you & I are in the same boat. I'm looking for a mutually fulfilling relationship, which could be discreet and possibly ongoing. I am not looking for a divorce, and you shouldn't be either. I'm decent looking and in good shape for my age. You should be healthy as well. This is not a financial arrangement- I'm looking for a genuine relationship with an intelligent, independent person who can be a lover and a friend. Let's spoil each other. If this intrigues you, please tell me something about yourself!

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

6. It's Friday and I thought I'd try something new. Me: 31 y.o., cute, plays on a sports team, creative, witty, with some sass. You: Creative, open-minded, conversationalist, caring, cultured, passionate, and witty. 25-35 I do drink but don't smoke or do drugs- you shouldn't either. Let's chat it up and see where it goes. I'm looking for more than casual sex though so be advised. Pics please and I will send one in return.

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

```

```

7. Me: 47, 5-9, attractive, good hygiene, smoker, 420 friendly, no diseases, negative. I like to kiss, have body contact, etc. You: Any age or race, disease free, negative, attractive. CLEAN!!!!!! I can host. Looking for now. Let's have a beer! No pic = no reply.

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman
- ○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

```

```

8. What I like: African American, non smokers, very light drinkers. I like movies, walks at the beach, love dogs, good food. It's always fun to go out and dance. I am a very easy going person, who would love to fall in love with you if it works out. 2010 has taught me some hard lessons, and motivated/motivating me to go after some life plans and goals. If you're drama, you need not apply. I'm hoping to meet someone who loves good conversation, and can comfortably talk about anything (I know I can), has some goals/direction in life, open-minded as well. E-mail me with a picture of you if you like my ad, with that you'll get more info and a picture of me. Let's talk for awhile and then schedule to meet. Thanks and take care.

- ○ Woman Seeking Woman
- ○ Woman Seeking Man
- ○ Man Seeking Woman

○ Man Seeking Man

What led you to choose this group over the others?

What is your gender?

○ Male

○ Female

In what year were you born?

Do you consider your current city of residence to be...

○ Left leaning liberal

○ Right leaning conservative

What is your sexual orientation?

○ Heterosexual

○ Homosexual

○ Bisexual

○ Prefer Not to Say

Thank you for your participation. Once you have hit the submit button you will receive a link to the correct answers.