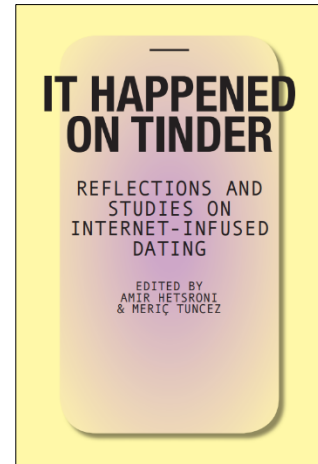


Amir Hetsroni and Meriç Tuncez (Eds.), **It Happened on Tinder: Reflections and Studies on Internet-Infused Dating**, Amsterdam, The Netherlands: The Institute of Network Cultures, 2019, 219 pp., \$0.00 (Open Access).¹

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It Happened on Tinder: Reflections and Studies on Internet-Infused Dating, edited by Amir Hetsroni and Meriç Tuncez, is an inclusive anthology of cutting-edge studies that examine pressing issues and fascinating practices associated with digital intimacy, such as online courtship scripts, profile pictures and information, the affordances of dating apps, dime dating, the stigmatization of online dating, ghosting practices, bitmojis, mobile dating rejection, religious and interracial romance, and digital love stories. These studies engage with a wide range of cultures and places, making the anthology interesting and informative for a wide variety of audiences, including users of Tinder and various online dating apps, app designers, programmers, social media and cultural studies scholars, media workers, policymakers, entrepreneurs, individuals with disabilities, and anyone involved in online relationships. Given that, in the United States alone, 30% of adults report having used a dating site or app (Anderson, Vogels, & Turner, 2020), the book will fascinate a large population of readers.



It Happened on Tinder aims to map the changes in romantic habits and conceptions relating to online dating through websites or apps like Tinder. To fulfill this goal, the book begins with an introduction and proceeds with 13 chapters divided into 4 thematic sections: *Gender*, *Users*, *Design*, and *Culture*. The authors describe these themes as the four major determinants that shape online dating and romance.

The first section, *Gender*, starts with “The Myth of the Siren’s Song: Gendered Courtship and Sexual Scripts in Online Dating,” a quantitative study by Julie M. Albright and Steve Carter, explores the current gender disparity in online courtship scripts compared with traditional gendered courtship scripts and discusses its implications concerning technological empowerment. Next, in “Gender Differences in Online Dating Experiences,” Milena R. Lopes and Carl Vogel examine gender differences further in Tinder users’ perceptions of online dating experiences, using a mixed-method approach. The authors also reflect on the potential existence of bias in the design of the Tinder application. The *Gender* section concludes with “Stereotypical Gender Attributions Across Sexual Orientations on Tinder: Evidence From Turkey,” in which Amir Hetsroni, Meriç Tuncez, and Mina Özdemir investigate “the accuracy of stereotypical visual attributions pertaining to sexual orientation

¹ Available at: https://networkcultures.org/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/It_Happened_on_Tinder_small.pdf.

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and related to the self-presentation of dating candidates across the genders" (p. 57), by content analyzing the profile pictures of over 2500 heterosexual and homosexual Tinder users from Turkey.

The second section, *Users*, begins with a quantitative study entitled "Mirror Mirror on the Wall, Which Dating App Affords Them All? Exploring Dating Applications Affordances and User Motivations," in which Leah E. Lefebvre and Xiaoti Fan investigate the affordances of mobile dating apps popular in the United States to shed light on users' motivations and the development of their relationships. Next, in "The Social Exchange Framework and Dime Dating," Arrington Stoll uses social exchange theory and the investment model to explore how users communicate their cost-benefit appraisals of dime dating. Elisabeth Timmermans and Cédric Courtois then examine the relationship between users' romantic beliefs and the stigmatization of online dating in "The Relationship Between Romantic Ideals and Online Dating Stigmatization." The last chapter of the *Users* section, "Justifications for 'Ghosting Out' of Developing or Ongoing Romantic Relationships: Anxieties Regarding Digitally-Mediated Romantic Interaction," investigates the darker side of ghosting, offering a typology of user motivations for the practice of suddenly terminating communication with a romantic partner at an early stage of the relationship.

The third section, *Design*, starts with a qualitative study, "'I♥U': A Semiotic Analysis of Romantic Relationship Bitmojis on Social Media" by Abdulgaffar O. Arikewuyo, Bahire Efe-Özad, and Aminat S. Owolabi, who use semiotic analysis to map out the use of colors, codes, and signs in romantic-related bitmojis on social media, revealing that the red color is, unsurprisingly, the dominant motif in conveying romantic feelings in online dating while various shapes serve to add humor to the otherwise awkward dialogue typical of flirting. In the next chapter, "Verifying Identities: The Role of Third-party Reputation Information in Online Dating," the authors assess the impact of adding positive reputation information to online dating profiles on the perceived trustworthiness of the online dating target. Wrapping up this section is "From Swiping to Ghosting: Conceptualizing Rejection in Mobile Dating," in which Chad V. De Wiele and Jamie F. Campbell identify behaviors, effects, and outcomes linked to the experience of rejection in online dating.

The studies in the final section, *Culture*, consider the cultural impact of online dating from the perspectives of religion, ethnicity, and narrative. The contribution by Yoel Cohen and Ruth Tsuria, "A Match Made in the Cloud: Jews, Rabbis, and Online Dating Sites," explores the Jewish virtual dating scene to investigate rabbis' responses and attitudes on participating in virtual dating, with, as might be expected, those of the more liberal among them being more favorable. In "Crossing Boundaries? Dating Platforms and Interracial Romance," Giulia Ranzini considers whether online dating opens new possibilities for interracial encounters, relationships, and marriages, and finds that it sometimes promotes diversity and sometimes reinforces racial prejudices. The last study in the *Culture* section and the whole book, "Missed Connections or Misinterpreted Intentions? The Genre and Violence of Digital Love Stories" by Brittany Knutson, surveys the potential power dynamics and violence of romance in an online forum popular with those seeking romance.

The chapters are, overall, informative and interdisciplinary. Many of the issues raised here have received scant attention in online dating literature, such as the siren's song metaphor in chapter 2, "dime dating" in chapter 6, online dating stigmatization in chapter 7, "ghosting out" in chapter 8, romantic bitmojis in chapter 9, and romantic rejection in chapter 11. The section titles—again, *Gender*, *Users*, *Design*, and *Culture*—show the breadth of the book's treatment of online dating and digital romance; comparable

publications have tended to concentrate on one or two of these themes (e.g., Chan, 2016; LeFebvre, 2018; Pruchniewska, 2020; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). Another strength of this book is the authors' preference for mixed methodologies combining quantitative and qualitative approaches.

While this anthology of essays touches on comprehensive and interesting lines of inquiry within online dating research, it does not always illuminate existing reflections or critics in new ways, such as the cons, risks, and abuse of online dating (Deans & Bhogal, 2019). Thus, one question still lingers: "Why do we expect more from technology and less from each other?" (Turkle, 2011). It would be informative to hear the authors clarify why the users of these apps have high expectations for the promise of technological advances while remaining unsuccessful in finding romance. From the perspective of such affordances, the algorithmic exploitation of the users of dating apps seems a more fruitful area of research than app designs or interfaces (Narr, 2022). Another weakness of some of the studies relates to the research designs, as the authors acknowledge; in one case, for instance, the significance of the findings is "limited to a small sample of participants and cannot be extended to the whole population of Tinder users" (p. 45), while another study, "From Swiping To Ghosting: Conceptualizing Rejection in Mobile Dating," uses an approach that "does not produce a truly representative sample and therefore decreases the generalizability of the study's findings" (p. 173). Despite these shortcomings, though, this anthology delivers on its promise by documenting key romantic practices and conceptions relating to online dating and digital intimacy.

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