University of South Dakota

USD RED

Spring 4-3-2024

The Role of Dating Apps in the Formation of Long-Term Relationships in College

Jalani Bodidasa
University of South Dakota

The Role of Dating Apps in the Formation of Long-Term Relationships in College

by

Jalani Bodidasa

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the

University Honors Program

_____

Department of Sociology

The University of South Dakota

May 2024

The members of the Honors Thesis Committee appointed

to examine the thesis of Jalani Bodidasa

find it satisfactory and recommend that it be accepted

Louisa Roberts, Ph.D.
Assistant Professor, Anthropology & Sociology
Director of the Committee

Stephanie Spars, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer

DocuSigned by:

Gemma D. Skillman

5F D1AB8F B04C47F

Gemma Skillman, Ph.D.
Senior Lecturer

ABSTRACT

The Role of Dating Apps in the Formation of Long-Term Relationships in College

Jalani Bodidasa

Director: Louisa Roberts Ph.D.

As the prevalence of dating app usage continues to rise, it is imperative to explore the implications of their use, including the influence on long-term relationship formation. In this thesis, I explored whether the widespread use of dating apps amongst college students promotes long-term relationship formation. I also delved into college students' motivations for using dating apps and whether they would want their dating app use to result in a relationship. One hundred students at the University of South Dakota were surveyed. Results indicated that 31% of respondents are current dating app users. Out of the participants who are single and current dating app users, only 39% reported to using dating apps for the purpose of forming a relationship. Meanwhile, amongst those who are currently in a relationship, most (81%) met their partner outside of a dating app either through school or work, at a bar or party, through friends, through a church event, or Snapchat. It is evident that many college students do engage in dating app use–and in some cases, they report that dating app use does result in relationship formation. However, results indicate that it is not the primary method students use when choosing to form romantic relationships.

Keywords: dating apps, online dating, tinder, swipe culture, college students, relationships, love

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have so many individuals I would like to express my sincere gratitude to, with the completion of my thesis. Dr. Louisa Roberts–I am deeply thankful for your invaluable guidance, unwavering support, and insightful feedback throughout every stage of this process. Your expertise and encouragement have been instrumental in shaping the direction of this thesis. To my committee members: Dr. Stephanie Spars and Dr. Gemma Skillman, thank you for your valuable insights and scholarly guidance which have significantly enriched the quality of this work.

To my parents–thank you for being my twin pillars without whom I could not stand. Every milestone I've reached, every success I've celebrated, is not solely my own; it's a testament to the values, guidance, and sacrifices you've bestowed upon me. I am forever a reflection of who you are.

Finally, I would like to thank the participants who volunteered their time and insights for this study. Your cooperation is the reason this research was possible. I extend a *Thank You* to all those have played a part in the completion of this thesis. Your support and encouragement have been invaluable.

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

Today, the college student experience is being shaped by the wide use of dating apps on college campuses. One 2017 survey found that almost 70% of students use online dating platforms (Lundquist & Curington, 2019). Dating apps are mobile applications or websites that help individuals find a partner for either a sexual or romantic relationship; a service that gained popularity in the early 2000s, with the launch of the site eHarmony. These apps are viewed as intermediaries by users in the search for companionship, sex, love, and intimacy (Hobbs et al., 2016). Since 1980, the use of internet services among heterosexual individuals to meet their partner has skyrocketed to almost 38% in 2017, surpassing traditional methods such as meeting at a bar, through friends, or in primary or secondary school (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). We possess insights about the use of dating apps leading to relationship formation among American adults in general today, with data from the Pew Research Center reporting that: "One-in-ten partnered adults–meaning those who are married, living with a partner or in a committed romantic relationship–met their current significant other through a dating site or app," (Vogels & McClain, 2023). But we know much less about whether the widespread use of dating apps among college students is providing an avenue to love among this young adult population.

Bodies of scholarly research have expressed concern over the potential risks of dating app usage such as lies and deception, harassment, and unsafe sexual behaviors (Phan et al., 2021), while others have emphasized on the possible meaningful connections that can be made digitally (Hobbs et al., 2017). Today, college students use dating apps for a multitude of reasons, ranging from using apps for entertainment out of curiosity and boredom, for relational purposes such as friendship and love, and to satisfy intrapersonal issues such as self-validation (Barrada et al., 2021). While the existing literature on dating apps explores topics such as college students' motivations for using

dating apps, the risks regarding use, and college hookup culture, there is minimal discussion regarding the ability to form long-term relationships through the use of dating apps in college.

A common stereotype about dating app use among college students is that their primary use is to engage in hookups– a culture that encourages casual sex on college campuses. To better understand dating app use among college students and contribute to the gap in knowledge, I conducted a descriptive study by surveying 100 students at the University of South Dakota. The impact of dating app use in the ability of young adults to form stable, long-term relationships is an evolving phenomenon. This study will examine students' motives for using dating apps, whether their dating app use has transformed into relationships, and whether students prefer organic relationship formation over digitized relationships. To better understand this question, the study was open to individuals presently in a romantic relationship, individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are active dating app users, and lastly, those who are neither in a relationship nor are online dating app users. By surveying different groups of participants, my aim was to gauge the college population's perceptions on dating apps. The survey questions were designed to shed light on the role dating apps play in students' lives, with special attention to whether dating app use allows for relationship formation.

The chapters that will follow seek to provide information, firstly, on the literature that currently surrounds dating apps–exploring topics such as the risks of using such apps, the opportunities dating apps bring, and their contribution to college hookup culture. Next, I will discuss the methods used to conduct the survey and will provide an in-depth analysis of the study's results including charts and graphs of the data. The thesis will conclude chapters discussing what we can learn from the results and final a conclusion section.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This literature review aims to investigate the current research on the use of dating apps among college students, focusing on the implications of use within a college context and highlighting any inconsistencies in the existing studies. In this chapter, the topics of college hookup culture, the risks associated with using dating apps, such as deceptive self-presentation and vetting, and the potential opportunities arising from dating app use are explored. As the chapter progresses, I delve into what has been studied about dating app use and relationship formation in the broader adult population and college students.

College Hookup Culture Today

The traditional method of dating in college has long been taken over by the surge of online dating culture, going as far as to completely reshape the college hookup scene in the United States. Previously, the college hookup scene in the United States was almost entirely governed by campus party culture, generally occurring at the peak of the night when hanging out amongst a large group of friends/classmates at a campus party or local bar (Bogle, 2007). The concept of *hooking up* involves a casual sexual encounter between two individuals that occurs outside of a romantic relationship, but that does not necessarily involve penetrative sex, has begun to almost replace romantic relationships and the concept of dating (Kuperberg and Padgett, 2016, p. 1071). The "hookup" motive plays a significant role in students' motives to meeting in-person with their dating app matches (Harrison et al., 2022, p.132). College students engaging in hookups have the potential to cement their association by forming a long-term relationship. However, the probability of hookups transcending into anything more than just a hookup, is quite rare. Research by England et al. (2007) shows that the sexual behavior entailing a hookup does not necessarily have affection, an exclusive romantic relationship, or even interest in such a relationship as a prerequisite.

Through the use of a dating app, finding someone to hook up with becomes an easier task due to the new availability of people. Whether or not college students engage in hooking up with others depends on the cultural or social norms they are surrounded by. For instance, students that partake in Greek culture may participate in hookup culture more than students who do not. We know this because Kuperberg and Padgett (2016) found that membership in a fraternity or sorority correlated with a significantly higher rate of engaging in hookups. With time, despite their morals, students develop dispositions to act in certain ways in specific situations, which may push them to engage in these activities–especially hooking up (Kuperberg and Padgett, 2016).

The use of alcohol amongst students–often being consumed by one or both parties involved in the hookup, is another factor that promotes the culture of hooking up (Bogle, 2007). Alcohol being used as a social lubricant can be seen during college parties, which are an important aspect of the college social life (Bogle, 2007). Through the use of alcohol, signaling interest in a potential partner becomes easier as well as being able to deal with potential rejection. With the use of dating apps, the pressure to signal interest and having to deal with rejection is almost entirely taken off, since interaction is through a phone screen and not in-person.

Dating App Use in College: Risks and Opportunities

Why do students use dating apps today? Research suggests that several factors affect college students' motives for using dating apps and even meeting matches in-person. One of the biggest qualities that dating apps possess is their ability to make thousands of people available for one person. But with this, comes a series of issues such as making women and minorities, such as individuals of color, more susceptible to sexual violence and rape. Women and minority groups have to constantly safeguard themselves, especially when meeting strangers off the internet, but their safety is not always ensured. A study by Filice et al. (2022) found that websites and dating apps can be settings for abuse, such as through the form of non-consensual image distribution, and are also

used to arrange physical encounters where different forms of violence can occur, like sexual assault (p. 15). Measures women could take to protect themselves from possible harm is by sharing their location with their close friends, letting the people around them know the identity of the person they are going out with, and by meeting in public for the first time.

With this digitized form of dating, newer ways to create intimacy arise. One way to create intimacy using technology is through sending nude pictures of oneself to a partner or a potential partner–a form of sexting which bears several risks (Rosenfeld, 2018). Creating intimacy online is a nuanced process that involves building emotional connections after matching with someone on a dating app. According to a study conducted by Dalessandro (2018), digital mediation has become associated with common relationship anxieties, such as disinterestedness, lying, and cheating (p. 638). Allowing oneself to be intimate online involves being mindful of one's interactions and the other person's availability. Therefore, individuals should be respectful of their partner's boundaries and comfort levels when forming a relationship online.

It appears that vetting is one of the aspects of dating apps that could be taken as a benefit and as a danger. The benefits of vetting are such that college students can verify who they are meeting with through other social media platforms such as Instagram and Facebook. This allows for activities such as catfishing, where an individual creates a fake identity to trick others in to thinking they are someone else, to be diminished since they know the person they are meeting with is real. Students turning to activities such as vetting may have more to do with survival, than distrust (Perkins et al., 2021). This indicates that although college students may be motivated by distrust in previous relationships to vet their dating app match, women may feel the need to begin vetting to ensure their safety.

However, vetting could eventually lead to stalking. Obsession over a dating app match and constantly viewing their social media profiles could lead to stalking. The difference between stalking

and vetting exists where the stalker would need to know the exact location of the person. Dating apps provide users with distance options, even allowing them to specify their exact location, which could potentially facilitate stalking.

The functionality of dating applications plays a large role in why college students prefer to use them over traditional methods of meeting people. For example, the algorithm of dating apps allows you to see people you specifically have things in common with, which provides great convenience when compared to meeting someone organically and having to start from scratch. Additionally, the "swipe-logic" of dating apps provide ease of use that many students have access to from merely just a college dorm room. The ability to constantly have people available is another motive, while dating websites emphasize on how a better match could be determined from using such a service, the swipe-logic and constant availability of people suggests that a better match can be discovered (Hanson, 2020). This indicates that the ease of use dating apps provide users with gives them a substantial advantage compared to traditional methods. Overall, individuals who use dating apps for the advantages of their functionality, with the mindset that there are better options out there, find themselves delving into the intricacies of modern relationships.

Further, dating apps also allow for deceptive self-presentation. With the creation of an account on a dating app, an individual is able to strategically choose the best pictures of themselves, alter their personality, and present themselves in a way that would achieve their desired impression— fostering a culture of superficiality. Physical attractiveness has been shown to be one of the stronger predictors of interpersonal attraction (Peters and Salzseider, 2018). On the internet, individuals may have a desire to self-present to attract potential mates. According to research conducted by Guadagno et al. (2012) women were more willing to use deception to present their physical appearance as more favorable than it actually was, and men were more willing to use deception to display themselves as more resourceful, dominant, and more kind than they actually were.

However, the risk factor regarding dating apps may be diminished because dating apps provide more control over who you meet–a feature that is especially favored by women due to the ability to weed out bad actors from a distance, rather than having to confront bad behavior in an uncomfortable or dangerous situation in-person (Lundquist & Curington, 2019). Generally, college students move off of Tinder or Bumble into a different app such as Snapchat, allowing them to get to know the person they are talking to before they meet up in-person.

Dating App Use and Relationship Formation in the Broader Adult Population and Amongst College Students

We know that the internet and online dating sites play a large role in how adults meet their partners in the 21st century, with research showing that by 2017, almost 38% of individuals met their partners off the internet (Rosenfeld et al., 2019). In a study conducted by Grehan (2015), where 191 participants were split into two age groups consisting of older (29-39 years old) and younger (18-28 years old) adults, the older adults reported more exposure to online dating through their own experiences, and agreed at a high percentage when asked if online dating is a good way to meet people compared to the younger adults. This indicates that older adults may be more open-minded when using dating apps, which might explain why they have higher rates of success when compared to younger adults.

When studying dating app use and relationship formation in the broader adult population, it is important to consider the longevity and stability of relationships formed on dating apps compared to meeting in-person. A study by Cacioppo et al. (2013) found that the percentage of marriages ending in separation or divorce differed for individuals who met their spouse on-line vs. off-line, with a lower percent of marital break-ups for respondents who met their spouse online. Further, respondents who met their partner on-line also reported higher levels of marital satisfaction, when compared to those who met their partner off-line (Cacioppo et al., 2013). Therefore, this brings us

to the question of why young adult populations such as college students tend to not form relationships with the use of dating apps.

Many college students approach these platforms as an easy and self-proclaimed lazy way to test the dating waters when starting university (Lundquist & Curington, 2019, p. 24). Research conducted by Harrison et al. (2022) showed that the motive of love predicted a greater likelihood of meeting dating app matches in-person. This means that college students who are using dating apps for the primary purpose of love might have a better chance of forming a relationship since they are more motivated to meet their matches. Among college students, common dating apps used such as, Tinder and Bumble have many grounds for use; while some students see love as a top motive for using Tinder, others are seeking short-term relationships. Although the study by Harrison et al. (2022) enhances our understanding of dating app use among college students, further research is necessary to determine whether such usage fosters relationship formation within this young adult demographic.

In summary, the existing literature delves into the ramifications of dating app usage among college students, covering aspects such as hookup culture, associated risks, and potential opportunities. This exploration allows researchers to develop a thorough understanding of how these platforms shape social interactions, personal relationships, and individual well-being in today's society. Focusing specifically on whether dating apps facilitate relationship formation among college students, this study seeks to advance our understanding of dating app use.

Chapter 3: Methodology

The purpose of this survey was to understand whether dating app use amongst college students promotes relationship formation. This will help establish whether college-aged students

(18-24 years old) consider dating apps as a viable method of relationship formation and collect their perception on dating apps. This thesis hopes to answer the following questions:

- What are college students' motivations for using dating apps?

- How often do college students use dating apps?

- What is the most common method used to form relationships by college students?

- Would college students suggest dating apps to their peers that want to form a relationship?

- Would students like their dating app use to result in a relationship?

Methods

Sample

The survey was aimed at college students aged 18-24 years, who are actively enrolled at the University of South Dakota. The minimum age to create an account on most dating apps is 18. The sample consisted of undergraduate students, ranging from freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classifications. The age range was extended from the typical 18-22 college aged years to be more inclusive and generalizable to older undergraduate students.

Participant Demographics

This study consisted of 100 participants, aged between 18-24 years, who voluntarily completed this survey. All responses were recorded between September 4, 2023, and November 15, 2023. The first three questions open to all participants were used to decipher participant demographics. Tables 1 through 3 highlight the demographic data reported by participants.

Table 1

Gender of Participants

Female	Male	Non-Binary	Prefer not to say
78.95% (n=75)	16.84% (n=16)	3.16% (n=3)	1.05% (n=1)

This table demonstrates the gender of the participants of this study. Since most of the participants were women, the results might be tilted to emphasize a female perspective. This could be because this particular topic might be more interesting to female college students rather than males. Additionally, this gender disparity might be a reflection of the higher percentage of women enrolled in universities and colleges, in comparison to men–with women accounting for almost 60% of enrollment (West, 2021).

Table 2

Participant Academic Year

Freshman	Sophomore	Junior	Senior
13.54% (n=13)	20.83% (n=20)	28.13% (n=27)	37.50% (n=36)

Table 3

Age of Participants

18	19	20	21	22	23	24
12.90% (n=8)	22.58% (n=14)	22.58% (n=14)	30.64% (n=19)	8.06% (n=5)	1.61% (n=1)	1.64% (n=1)

A subset of participants refrained from responding to several questions within the survey, including questions about demographics and questions within each participant group. Consequently, the total count of participants within the groups will not equate to 100.

Materials and Procedures

The first part of the survey was open to all participants and included questions about participant demographics (age, gender, academic year) using multiple choice and text entry. The next

two questions open to all participants consisted of Yes/No questions, where participants were asked if they are currently using a dating site/app, and whether they are currently in a romantic relationship. The demographic questions were asked to ascertain whether participants fit the study's age criteria and to gain deeper insights into participants' dating app use. Three groups of participants were used: individuals presently in a romantic relationship, individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are active dating app users, and lastly, those who are neither in a relationship nor are online dating app users.

     The first set of questions were open to individuals in relationships only and consisted of 48 participants. Participants were considered to be a part of Group 1 if *Yes* was selected for the question: "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" and *No* to the question: "Are you currently an online dating site/app user?" In this section, multiple choice and open-ended questions were used as well. Participants were asked how they met their partner, if they met their partner before college, and if they have used an online dating app in the past. These questions were asked to understand how college students form romantic relationships and to evaluate their opinions on dating apps–which have become a norm on college campuses.

     The second group of participants consisted of 26 individuals who answered *No* to the question: "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" and *Yes* to the question "Are you currently an online dating site/app user?" The questions began by asking participants if they would be interested in getting into a relationship in college, being provided with three answer options ranging from interested, somewhat interested, and not at all interested. The participants were then asked if they would like their dating app use to result in a relationship, their frequency of use of dating apps, which dating apps they use, and their primary use of dating apps.

     The third group of participants consisted of 19 individuals who answered *No* to the questions: "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" and "Are you currently an online dating site/app

user?" Participants were asked if they would be interested in getting into a relationship in college–similar to the previous group, and if they have used an online dating app in the past.

The final three questions were consistent throughout each group of participants and included asking them if they would suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so, why, or why not, and if they had further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships. A full list of the survey questions can be found in Appendix C.

Measurement

The survey was created by the author and principal investigator of the study and approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) of the University of South Dakota, following the implemented modifications. The survey was constructed online using the site Qualtrics. By using Qualtrics, the survey was designed to identify college students' perceptions and use of dating apps–and the questions asked from each group of participants focuses on this. The question answer format varied from multiple choice to text-entry. The IRB approval can be found in Appendix A.

Data Collection

The survey was distributed to undergraduate students aged 18-24 years at the University of South Dakota, beginning in September of 2023. Flyers were posted in the areas of campus that students are mostly present with a scannable QR code, emails were sent out with the survey information and purpose to different departments of the university, and the survey was posted on the University Honors Program's newsletter for recruitment purposes. Students were able to complete the survey by clicking the link provided to them, or by scanning the QR code on the flyers. Before beginning the survey, students were asked to provide their consent to participate in the study after reading through the consent from. Students were informed that the survey was anonymous,

and no IP addresses were collected. The identifying information that was collected included gender, age, and academic year. The Participant Consent Form can be found in Appendix B.

Data Analysis

The data collected through the distribution of the survey was analyzed and presented in multiple ways. Participants demographic information was organized into a methodical chart, consisting of each respondent's age, gender, and academic year. The responses to multiple choice questions were analyzed and visualized using pie charts and bar graphs. Thematic analysis was used to analyze participant responses to open-ended questions, where topics and ideas that arose repeatedly were examined (Caulfield, 2023).

Chapter 4: Results

This section provides an overview of the results collected from surveying college students about their perceptions of dating apps and their use of dating apps. Due to the survey being open to three different groups of participants: individuals presently in a romantic relationship, individuals who are active dating app users, and individuals who are neither in a relationship nor are active dating app users, the results will be split into three different sections. By partitioning the results of the survey from different groups of participants into distinct sections, it is more feasible to comprehend dating app use and perceptions amongst different groups of individuals that fall under the umbrella term of being college students.

Two distinct questions were asked from the participants which allowed all of the participants to be separated into three groups. The first question was: "Are you currently an online dating site/app user?" to which 31.25% of respondents reported *Yes* (n=30), while 68.75% of respondents reported *No* to being a current online dating sit/app user (n=66).

The final question posed to all participants was: "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" 47.92% (n=46) of participants answered *Yes*, while 52.08% (n=50) responded with the option *No*. Figure 1 displays these data.

Figure 1:

Q: Are you currently an online dating site/app user?   Q: Are you currently in a romantic relationship?"

No 68.75% (n=66)
Yes 31.25% (n=30)

No 52.08% (n=46)
Yes 47.92% (n=50)
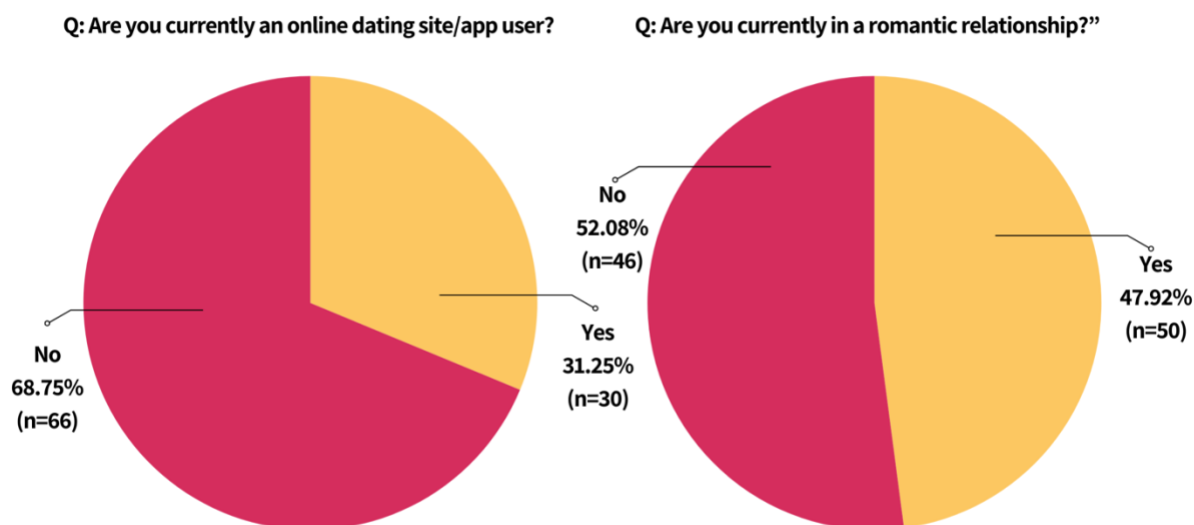
Group 1: Individuals Presently in a Romantic Relationship

Participants were guided to this group after the selection of *Yes* to the question "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" and *No* to the question "Are you currently an online dating app/site user?" Individuals who are presently in a romantic relationship did not report to using a dating app as zero participants answered *Yes* to the question "Are you currently an online dating app/site user?"

The questions that followed asked them about their relationship formation and previous dating app use. When respondents were asked: "How did you meet your partner?" they were given multiple choice options to choose from. These options ranged from *dating app* (n=7), *through friends*

(n=15), *through school or work* (n=21), *at a bar or party* (n=3), and participants were given the option of choosing "*Other*" given that they specified how they met their partner (n=2). The participants who chose the option "Other" reported that they met their partner at a church event and through Snapchat, a social media app.

**Figure 2: "How did you meet your partner?"**
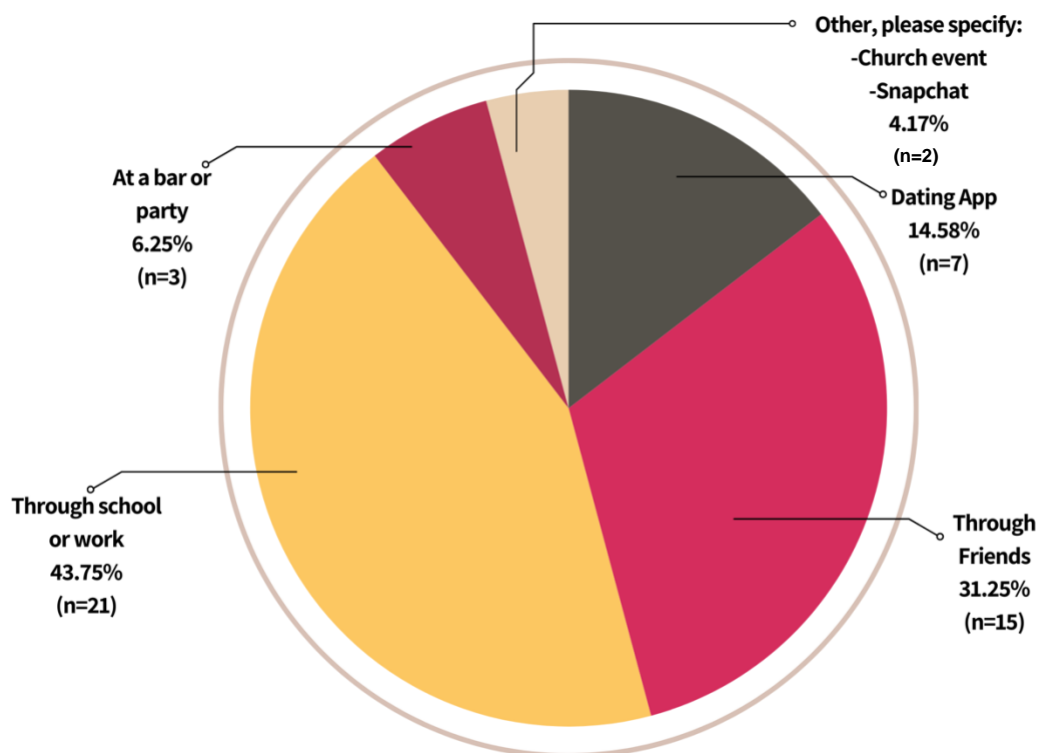
Next, the participants in this group were asked: "Did you meet your partner before college?" to which 63.64% of participants responded *Yes* (n=28), while 36.36% of participants responded *No* (n=16).

Figure 3: "Did you meet your partner before college?"
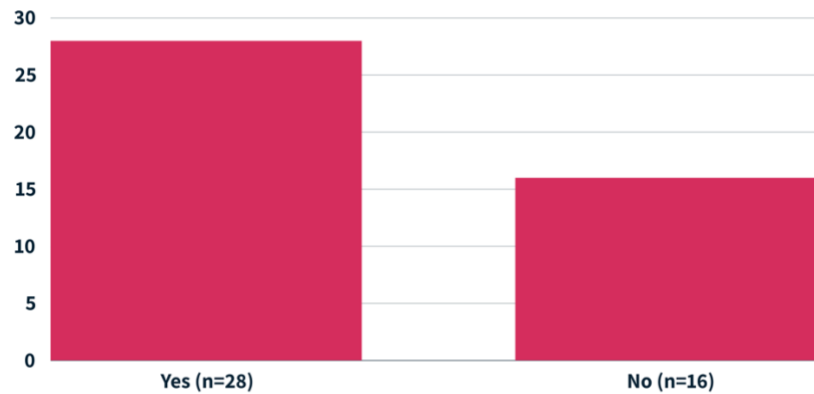
When participants were asked: "Have you used an online dating app in the past?" 45.45% of participants responded *Yes* (n=20), while 54.55% of participants responded *No* (n=24). The majority of participants who responded *Yes* to this question reported Tinder to be the most common option amongst undergraduate students aged 18-24 years. Other answers included: Bumble, Hinge, and Plenty of Fish (POF).

Figure 4: "Have you used an online dating app in the past?"
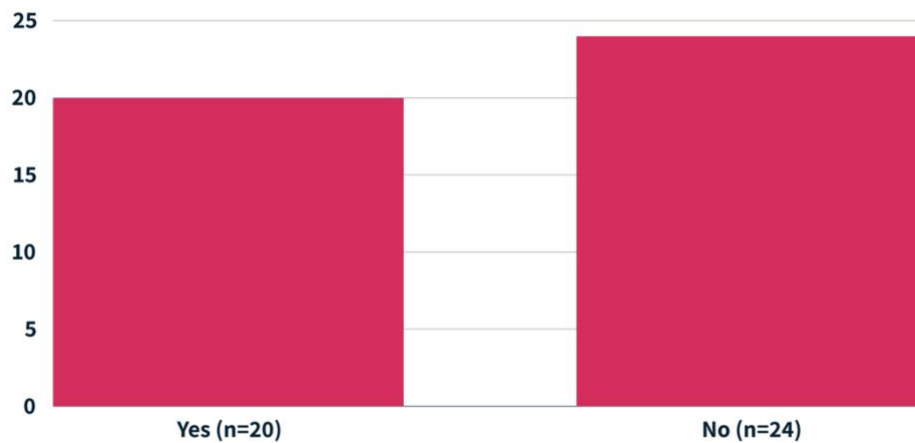
The final multiple choice question asked from this group of participants was: "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?" Of the respondents, 11.36% chose the option *Yes* (n=5), while 54.55% of respondents chose the option *Maybe* (n=24), and 34.09% of respondents chose the option *No* (n=15). Figure 5 illustrates this data. Participant responses to this question illustrates a level of ambiguity as to whether dating apps are a viable source for relationship formation.

Figure 5: Responses to "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?" from Group 1.
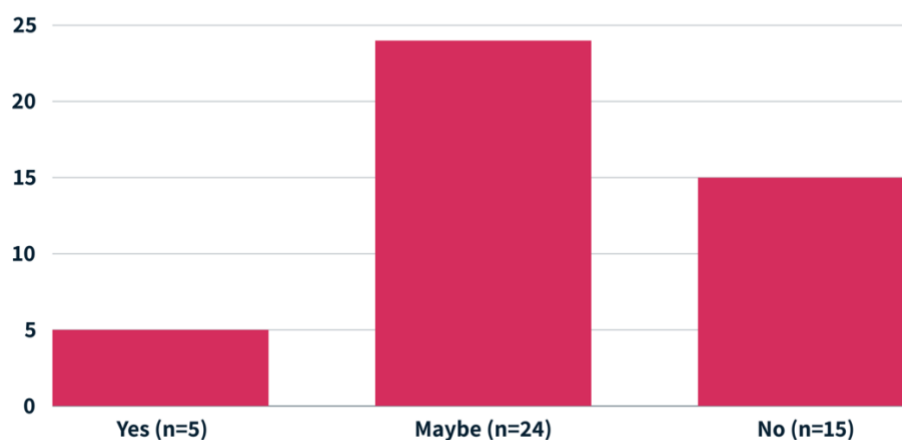
Due to the nature of this study, it was beneficial to have open-ended questions for participants to answer to better understand their perception of dating applications. After participants answered the question: "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?" the following questions were, "Why or why not?" and "Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?"

Participants in this group were able to share their experiences and thoughts on dating apps by answering these questions. Most of the participants who are in a relationship expressed how they prefer to meet their partner through traditional methods because they feel as if most people on dating apps are not looking for a relationship and that it is healtheir to form genuine, authentic friendships and relationships in person. Other participants also voiced how dating apps could be more useful resource for introverts, how dating apps help break the ice, and that they give you more opportunities to find good people. More detailed participant responses to these questions can be found in appendix D.

Group 2: Individuals Who Aren't in a Romantic Relationship and are Active Dating App Users

Participants were guided to this group if they answered *No* to the question: "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" and *Yes* to the question: "Are you currently an online dating site/app user?" The first question posed to this group of participants was: "Would you be interested in getting into a relationship in college?" Of the participants surveyed, 53.85% chose the option *Interested* (n=14), while 46.15% chose the option *Somewhat interested* (n=12), and 0.00% of participants chose the option *Not at all interested* (n=0). The proceeding question asked participants: "Would you like your dating app use to result in a relationship?" to which 38.46% of participants responded *Yes* (n=10), 61.54% responded *Maybe* (n=16), and 0.00% of participants chose the option *No* (n=0).

When the participants in this group were asked: "Which apps do you use?" 59.46% of respondents reported to using *Tinder* (n=11), 21.62% of respondents reported to using *Bumble* (n=8), and 18.92% of respondents reported to using *Hinge* (n=7). When given the option to choose *Other, please specify*, none of the participants in this group selected this option. Figure 6 shows the popularity of dating apps amongst college students.

Figure 6: "Which apps do you use?"
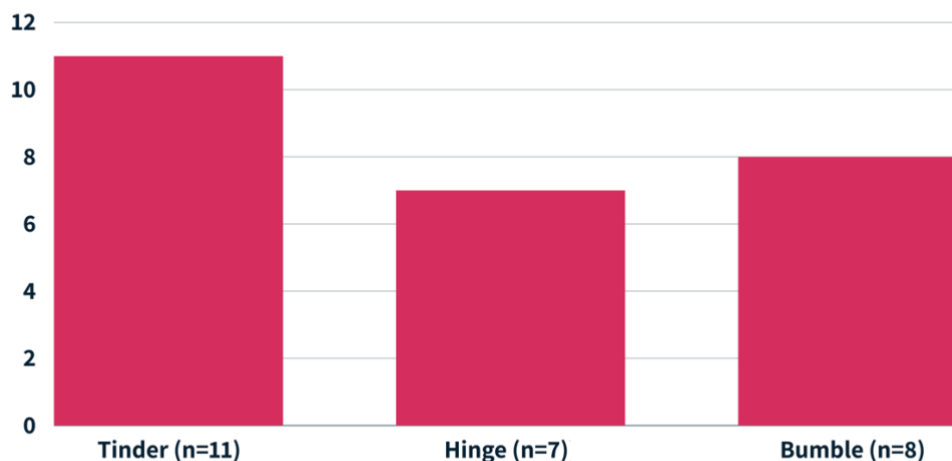
To further understand dating app use amongst college students, participants were asked: "How frequently do you use dating apps?" The options were as follows, *often: multiple times a day* and 7.69% chose this option (n=2), 15.38% chose the option *once a day* (n=4), 46.15% chose the option *once per week* (n=12), and 30.77% chose the option *multiple times a week* (n=8).

Participants were then asked: "What is your primary use of dating apps?" and were given the options: to meet new people platonically, for sex/hookups, to form a relationship, for fun, and Other, given that they specify their use of dating apps. 7.69% of respondents reported to using dating apps to *Meet new people platonically* (n=2), and 7.69% of respondents reported their use to be *For sex/hookups* (n=2). 42.317% of respondents reported to using dating apps *For fun* (n=11), and 42.31% of respondents reported their use of dating apps *To form a relationship* (n=11). Figure 5 illustrated dating app use amonst college students.

Figure 7: "What is your primary use of dating apps?"
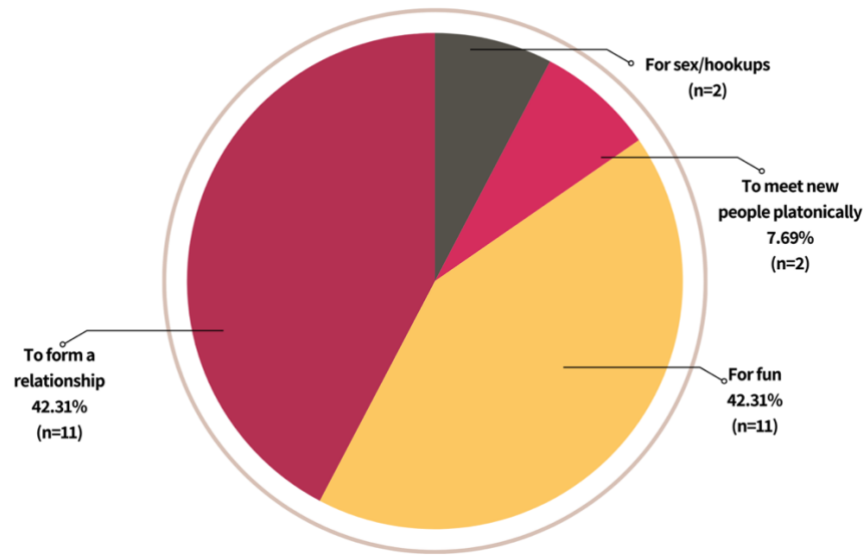
The proceeding questions to this group of participants included: "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?" 7.69% of participants choose the option *Yes* (n=2), 30.77% of participants chose the option *No* (n=8), and 61.54% of participants chose the option *Maybe* (n=16). Figure 8 illustrates the options chosen by the participants.

Figure 8: "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?"
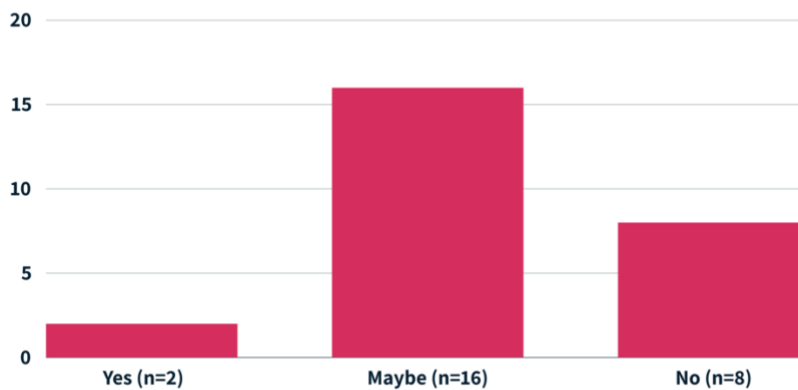
Following this question, the participants were given open-ended questions to answer: "Why or why not?" and "Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?" Similar to Group 1, participants were invited to share their experiences using dating apps and their perception of dating apps. A wide majority of participants voiced how using dating apps create a "hit or miss" situation on whether they can connect with someone and how most people on dating apps are looking for hookups. Other participants expressed how dating app use is fun and creates a safe atmosphere. All free responses to these questions can be found in Appendix D.

Group 3: Individuals Not in a Romantic Relationship and Not Using Online Dating Apps

Participants were guided to a separate set of questions if they answered *No* to both the questions: "Are you currently an online dating site/app user?" and "Are you currently in a romantic relationship?" Participants in this group were asked: "Would you be interested in getting into a relationship in college?" to which 42.11% of respondents chose the option *Interested* (n=8), 52.63% chose the option *Somewhat Interested* (n=10), and 5.26% of respondents chose the option *Not at all interested* (n=1).

Figure 9: "Would you be interested in getting into a relationship in college?"
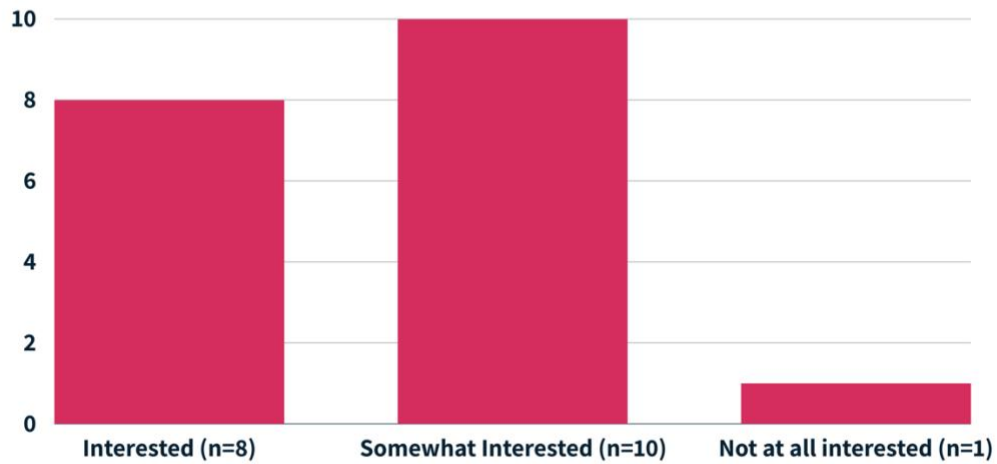
When asked the question: "Have you used an online dating app in the past?" 47.37% of respondents reported *Yes* (n=9), and 52.63% of respondents reported *No* (n=10). Figure 10 reports dating app use amongst individuals who are not in a relationship, and are not current dating app users.

Figure 10: "Have you used an online dating app in the past?"
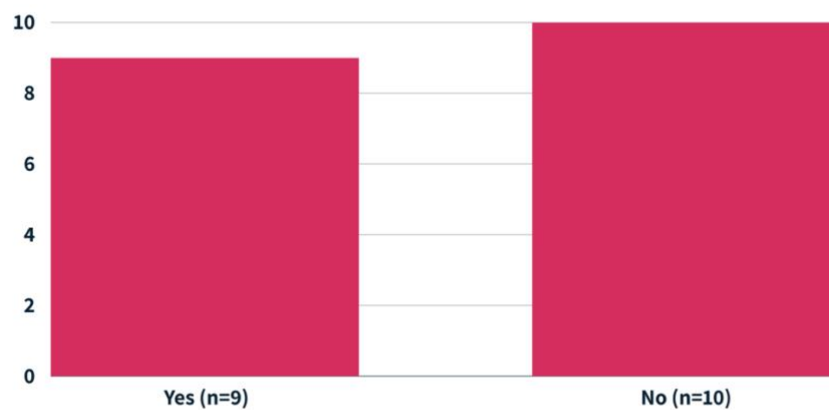
The questions that followed were the same last three questions asked from the previous groups. Participants were asked: "Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?" to which 0.00% of respondents chose the option *Yes* (n=0), 63.16% of respondents chose *Maybe* (n=12), and 36.84% of respondents chose *No* (n=7).

Based on their chosen option, participants were provided with two open-ended questions: "Why or why not?" and "Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?" to gauge participants understanding of dating apps and their reasons for not using dating apps. Most participants in this group mentioned how dating app use in their age group is heavily catered towards hookup culture and how most guys on dating apps just want to have sex. Participants also expressed how dating apps are helpful for casual dating, but are not viable for long-term relationships unless users get lucky with who they match with. More detailed participant responses can be found in Appendix D.

Chapter 5: Discussion

In this section, we delve into a comprehensive analysis and interpretation of the findings presented in the preceding chapter. This thesis set out to investigate whether dating app use among college students promotes relationship formation. Specifically, we aimed at examining college students' motivations for using dating apps, the most common method used to form relationships by college students, and whether college students would like their dating app use to result in a relationship. This discussion aims to elucidate the implications of this study in relation to existing literature.

The three groups of participants in this study are different in terms of their use of dating apps, yet their perceptions of dating apps and the implications of their use are similar. Based on the

results of this study, participants are aware of how dating app use in their age group is heavily targeted towards hookup culture and that their prospects of forming a stable long-term relationship are narrow. Among participants who are currently in a romantic relationship, those individuals report having had better prospects of meeting people in-person and forming relationships through those connections. Indeed, although the 21ˢᵗ century is heavily digitized with new emergences in technology in most aspects of life, it appears that most individuals maintain the human need for organic social connection.

Of the individuals who are presently in a romantic relationship, a significant majority–almost 85%, reported to meeting their significant other through more traditional means, such as through or work, at a bar or party, or through friends. Almost 15% of participants reported to meeting their significant other through a dating app. This might be an indication of how despite the rise of online dating apps, face-to-face interactions and traditional social networks are prevalent and remain important avenues for forming romantic connections. Additionally, the fact that 15% of participants met their significant other through a dating app highlights the increasing role of technology in modern romance. This result might be an indication of how dating apps have become a mainstream way for people to meet potential partners, offering convenience, accessibility, and a broader pool of potential matches, as explored in the study by Hanson (2020). Participants in this group also reported to prior dating app use, while the majority of participants–almost 55% reported to not having used a dating app before. These individuals mentioned how: "*I think that an app might be a good way to like first coordinate the first interaction, but meeting someone organically just lets you know the unfiltered version of that person before you date them, and I think that really helped me with finding my relationship,*" and "*I am more old fashioned and I feel that a genuine connection is to be made in person.*" These results acknowledge the practical utility of technology in facilitating initial connections. While recognizing the utility of dating apps for initiating contact, they emphasize the primacy of in-person interaction in fostering

deeper connections. A wide majority of participants, almost 64%, reported to meeting their significant other in their adolescent years, before they began college. This indicates that these participants were already in a romantic relationship prior to meeting the minimum age (18) required to be a user on a dating app. Participants being able to form a romantic relationship before they met the minimum age for dating apps implies that they did not feel the need to rely on online dating platforms to find romantic partners.

From the individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are active dating app users, almost 60% reported to using Tinder, which is commonly labelled as a "hookup" app (Lundquist and Curington, 2019). Participants of this study expressed how: "*Tinder is an app for hookups, usually the guys on there are not looking for anything serious unless you are older than college age*," and "*You have to find the right app, that is very important but most of the hot people use tinder. Also people don't really talk on apps.*" Therefore, the results of this study indicate that understanding the type of app being used is crucial; some cater to hookups while others might focus on relationship formation, attracting different user demographics. When participants were asked about their primary use of dating apps, the categories that dominated were: to form a relationship and for fun, with almost 42% of participants choosing these options each. While some participants seek relationships on these platforms, success remains subjective, and experiences vary widely. This is shown by participants making statements such as: "*Good relationships can come from dating apps,*" or *"Most people just want to hookup on dating apps,"* and "*I know individuals who have met their significant other on dating apps, but it's not for everyone.*" These results are an indication of how participant experiences with dating apps vary widely. Some participants responses suggest a belief in the possibility of finding lasting romantic relationships through dating apps, indicating optimism about their efficacy in fostering genuine connections. However, other participant responses suggest skepticism about the prevalence of hookup culture on these platforms. This skepticism and concern might be an indication of why young adults seem to have less success

when using such platforms to form romantic relationships, in comparison to studies that found that older adults have higher rates of success (Grehan, 2015).

Further, this group of participants were asked about their frequency of use of dating apps, where the majority of participants, almost 46%, reported to using their dating apps *once per week*. This result suggests that they are using the apps casually rather than relying on them as their primary method of meeting potential partners. Participants' frequency of use could be an indication of how they are actively involved in the online dating process, but perhaps with less intensity or frequency compared to those who reported to using their dating app multiple times during the day or week. Additionally, this result may suggest that these participants are less dependent on dating apps for their social interactions or dating prospects. Participants made statements such as: "*As someone who has tried using dating apps for primarily seeking long-term relationships, they just haven't seemed to work. Nine out of ten times I'm better off just talking to people in my classes and talking to them over Instagram or Snapchat and getting dates that way,*" and "*It's a good way to at least meet people, but a lot of times people just want it for a hookup.*" Given that they use the dating app once per week, they might also complement their online dating endeavors with alternative avenues for meeting potential partners, such as attending social gatherings, leveraging mutual connections, or engaging in offline pursuits.

Survey respondents discussed how dating apps allow individuals to choose the best photos of themselves and tweak information about themselves (Guadagno et al., 2012). Several participants made statements such as: "*[…] On dating apps, you are going off of a brief description and appearances of a person. Starting a relationships off of appearances makes the foundation of the relationship superficial,*" and "*Because it is deceiving. #catfished.*" These participants argue that forming a relationship based on attributes such as physical appearance can result in a superficial foundation, lacking a genuine connection, and that dating apps facilitate deceptive behavior, which could potentially lead to harmful situations. This creates an overemphasis on self-presentation and the facilitation of a surface-level connection. By

making the choice to swipe on a person using a dating app, you are essentially making a judgement based on an individual's appearance and filtered version of themselves. If participants prefer to invest time and effort in carefully selecting potential matches–as seen by their frequency of use of dating apps–rather than swiping through multiple profiles frequently, then the intermittent use of dating apps might be related to this preference.

Among this group of individuals, the survey also inquired about their interest in pursuing a relationship during college, with over half of the respondents, 54%, choosing the option *Interested*. However, when individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are not using online dating apps were asked the same question, the most popular option chosen was *Somewhat Interested*, with almost 53% of this group choosing this option. This outcome demonstrates how current dating app users are more expressive of their interest in forming a relationship in college, compared to those who are not dating app users. This could be evidence of how college students seem to be having a mix of hopefulness and skepticism about dating app use and suggests that the use of dating apps may be associated with a higher level of interest or readiness to pursue romantic relationships during this period. Those who are not current dating app users might not be as actively committed to the idea of forming a relationship, which is portrayed by individuals in this group making statements such as: "*Dating apps for college populations tend to focus on hook-up culture. I'd say the usage of them depends on the person*," and "*It's difficult to find people with the same values looking for the same level of commitment in a relationship on a dating app.*"

Among the different groups of participants, there seems to be a level of ambiguity in their perceptions of dating apps. For instance, participants were asked if they would suggest dating apps to individuals who want to form a relationship, more than half (54.55%) of individuals who are currently in a romantic relationship and are not active dating app users chose the option *Maybe*. More than half (61.54%) of the individuals who are active dating app users and are not in a romantic

relationship demonstrated a similar response and chose the option *Maybe*. If participants have experienced both positive and negative encounters with dating apps, they may be inclined to provide a neutral response rather than a clear yes or no when asked if they would recommend dating apps to individuals seeking relationships. Group 3, consisting of individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are not current dating app users, also mirrored this response, where more than half (63.16%) of participants chose the option *Maybe*. This creates the implication that college students, while not entirely dismissive of dating apps as tools for forming relationships, acknowledge the complexity and variability of their effectiveness. Participants could be cautious with their recommendations of dating apps as they recognize that using dating apps could work for some individuals but not others.

Similar to the literature reviewed by Filice et al. (2018), two groups of participants in this study expressed how dating app use can get users into situations where they are more susceptible to risk and violence. Individuals who are currently in a relationship mentioned how: "*I just think dating apps have the very real potential to get people, especially women, into dangerous situations meeting people they don't know on the internet.*" Several individuals who are not in a romantic relationship and are not active dating app users expressed: "*Dating apps have their pros and cons. […]. The cons are [t]hat dating apps can be very dangerous. You never really know who you are meeting with, considering it is usually a complete stranger. However, if you take proper safety precautions, send your location to friends, send them a screenshot of the person you are seeing, and text your friends when you get home, I think that dating apps can be a great way to meet someone,*" and "*I believe that the safest way to date is to be introduced, or know the person as a close friend before moving onto a romantic relationship.*" This trend illustrates how dating apps might be inconsistent and unpredictable which creates skepticism, and thus, college students might feel inclined to avoid using dating apps and resort to more traditional methods. Further, the perception that non-users have of dating apps making individuals more susceptible to risk and violence compared to users, may stem from factors

such as social stigma, limited understanding, and personal experiences. This highlights the importance of education, awareness, and informed discussions about the role of dating apps in modern dating culture and the measures taken to promote user safety.

All three groups of participants expressed concerns about hookup culture on dating apps, where prior literature found that the "hookup" motive was significantly correlated with meeting matches in person (Harrison et al., 2022, p.132). Those in romantic relationships expressed how it is "*Hard to find real, genuine love on dating apps because of hook-up culture,*" and "*I met people this way and created friendships, but all of the experiences I had on Tinder did not lead to a relationship that lasted more than 1 month. I feel like this app is more for those interested in hook-ups, and not necessarily long-term relationships.*" Individuals who aren't active dating app users and aren't in a romantic relationship expressed: "*It seems like college age men (I am a heterosexual female so I only have experience with men) are more interested in the "hookup" culture than building long lasting romantic relationships,*" and "*They can be a good way but also are more catered toward hookup culture than a long term relationship. I have only met a few people who have had a long term relationship from a dating app.*" Current users of dating apps also made statements such as: "*I feel like modern dating apps are really just a place for hookups, if you want something genuine, look at the people you surround yourself with,*" and "*It's just hard to recommend it when a lot of people use the apps for hookups or specifically hookups.*" These statements suggest that both users and non-users of dating apps express skepticism about the ability to form romantic relationships through the use of a dating app. This creates the perception of dating apps as a means catering to hookup culture rather than to foster meaningful relationships. Further, the users and non-users of dating apps cite their personal experience as evidence, reinforcing their belief that these platforms are more geared towards casual encounters. Participants also contrast the use of dating apps with in-person interactions, creating the suggestion that genuine connections are more likely to be formed through traditional means.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This thesis has explored college students' use of dating apps and whether the use of dating apps leads to the formation of long-term relationships. The thesis has been particularly targeted at addressing a gap in the literature surrounding whether dating app use in college leads to love and romance. In this section, the key findings of this study will be summarized, and the significance of these findings will be reflected upon. The potential limitations of this study will be addressed and avenues for future research will be proposed.

This study contributes to our understanding of the implications of dating app use in college. The central conclusion from this study is that college students do use dating apps for the purpose of forming romantic relationships, and that relationships can be formed through the use of dating apps. The results of this study also indicate that dating apps are used for a multitude of reasons, ranging from the purpose of forming a relationship, for fun, to meet new people platonically, and for sex/hookups (Barrada et al., 2021). The overwhelming majority of participants who are currently in a romantic relationship, almost 85%, opted for more traditional methods of forming relationships. This finding indicates that while dating apps serve as an avenue for connection, conventional methods remain predominant in relationship formation among the studied population. As one survey respondent commented, *"I've seen people find a long term relationship through dating apps and I've seen people ghost each other after the first date. Dating apps are another way to meet people and it's useful for some, and for others it isn't their thing."* Further, in comparison to current dating app users who mentioned how their interactions with other dating app users do not last long, the results of this study could also suggest that relationships formed in-person at a younger age have a certain durability or stability compared to those formed through a dating app in the college age group. It can be inferred from the data that experiences on dating apps vary heavily; while dating apps serve as an alternative avenue for meeting individuals, the result of their use varies among different people.

The results of this study also indicate that if dating apps are used, especially within the studied age group, they tend to cater to a culture more focused on physical and surface-level connections–as demonstrated by participant responses. While some individuals may prioritize romantic relationships, participants of this study expressed how it is harder to form real connections off a dating app. For example, a respondent commented: *"In my personal opinion, I believe that a better relationship is formed when someone is first your close friend. Therefore, I don't think that dating apps can't work but flings and hookups occur more often than a meaningful relationship."* Although most survey respondents who are using a dating app reported that they would like, or might like, their dating app use to result in a relationship, dating app use did not usually result in love. Survey respondents commented, for example, that *"I have not found a relationship on the app,"* and *"It's hard to find someone looking for the same thing as you."* Based on the survey results, it is clear that college students within the age group of 18-24 are educated on possible negative implications of dating app use and thus, are aware of the possibility of being unable to find a romantic partner.

Hopefully, the results not only from this study, but from future research studies on dating app use in college can help current and newer college students ease into college life, which is a new, and for some, a daunting environment. By assessing the views of college students on this relatively new form of internet dating, other students can learn and form their own opinions on whether they want to use dating apps for the purpose of forming a long-term relationship.

Limitations and Directions for Future Research

The issue of generalizability arises from the regional context of the study, conducted in South Dakota, a state that is more traditional in terms of early relationship formation and values. Data from the Population Reference Bureau (2019) indicates that the median age at first marriage for women is 26.4 years and 27.8 years for men. This is lower than the median age at first marriage in United States as a whole, which is 28 years for women and 29.9 years for men. These data are

closely intertwined with the results of this study, as a significant percentage (almost 64%) of participants in a romantic relationship met their partner before they began college, and thus, before they met the minimum age (18) to be a user on a dating app. The study was also a descriptive study, focusing primarily on observing and summarizing data rather than conducting more in-depth analyses or establishing causal relationships. Moreover, this study consisted of a relatively small percentage of individuals who are active dating app users which could be a reflection of the state of South Dakota as a whole. Possibly, in less traditionalist states, college students might be more reliant on dating apps and may have better prospects of finding a long-term relationship due to a bigger college population.

For subsequent research endeavors, replication from a more diverse and larger group of participants would be more beneficial. Examining the factors contributing to the success of long-term relationships formed through dating apps, such as profile authenticity, would be useful. It would be interesting to explore the disparities in dating app usage and success rates across demographic groups, such as sexual orientation and race.

Appendix A: IRB Approval

Subject:	IRB-22-1 - Initial: Exempt Approval
Date:	Wednesday, May 17, 2023 at 2:19:58 PM Pacific Daylight Time
From:	do-not-reply@cayuse.com
To:	Bodidasa, Jalani, Roberts, Louisa L
Attachments:	ATT00001.png, ATT00002.png, ATT00003.png, ATT00004.png, ATT00005.jpg

UNIVERSITY OF SOUTH DAKOTA

Date: May 17, 2023

University of South Dakota
414 E. Clark Street
Vermillion, SD 57069

PI: Louisa Roberts
Student PI: Jalani Bodidasa
Re: Initial - IRB-22-1 *The Role of Dating Apps in the Formation of Long-Term Relationships in College*

The University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board has rendered the decision below for this study. Because this study is exempt, its approval does not expire. Please submit a closure form to the IRB when this study is complete.

Decision: Exempt
Category: Category 2.(i). Research that only includes interactions involving educational tests (cognitive, diagnostic, aptitude, achievement), survey procedures, interview procedures, or observation of public behavior (including visual or auditory recording).
The information obtained is recorded by the investigator in such a manner that the identity of the human subjects cannot readily be ascertained, directly or through identifiers linked to the subjects.

Research Notes: Online survey study; waiver of signature on consent forms; date-stamped recruiting flyer

Dear Louisa Roberts,

The proposal referenced above has received an exempt review and is approved according to the procedures of the University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board.

Annual continuing review is not required for this exempt study. However, two years after this approval is issued, on about May 16, 2025, we will contact you to request an update on the status of this study.

When the study is complete, you must submit a closure form to the IRB. You may close your study when you are finished collecting data, no longer have contact with the subjects, and the data have been de-identified. You may continue to analyze the existing data on the closed project.

Please promptly report to the IRB any proposed changes or additions (e.g., protocol amendments/revised informed consents. site changes, etc.) in previously approved human subjects research activities BEFORE you put those changes into place.

Any modifications to the approved study must be submitted for review through Cayuse IRB. All approval letters and study documents are located within the study details in Cayuse IRB.

If you have any questions, please contact: irb@usd.edu or (605) 658-3743.

Sincerely,

University of South Dakota Institutional Review Board

Marc Guilford, J.D.
Director, Office of Human Subjects
University of South Dakota
(605) 658-3767

<center>APPENDIX B: Participant Consent Form</center>

CONSENT FORM TO PARTICIPATE IN A RESEARCH STUDY
The University of South Dakota

Title of Project: The Role of Dating Apps in the Formation of Long-Term Relationships in College

Principal Investigator: Louisa Roberts, 308 East Hall, Vermillion, SD 57069
(605) 677-5402   louisa.roberts@usd.edu

Other Investigators: Jalani Bodidasa, Vermillion, SD 57069,
jalani.bodidasa@coyotes.usd.edu

Invitation to be Part of a Research Study

You are invited to participate in a research study. In order to participate, you must be actively enrolled at the University of South Dakota, and between the ages of 18-24 years old. Taking part in this research project is voluntary. Please take time to read this entire form and ask questions before deciding whether to take part in this research project.

What is the study about and why are we doing it?

The purpose of the study is to learn about college students' ability to form healthy and stable long-term relationships through the use of dating apps. About 100 people will take part in this research.

What will happen if you take part in this study?

If you agree to take part in this study, you will be asked to fill out a survey on Qualtrics consisting of 24 questions. The survey should take around 10 minutes and is online. You will be asked to answer questions regarding your relationship status and dating app usage. I will not be asking for any identifying information of you.

What risks might result from being in this study?

There are no risks in participating in this research beyond those experienced in everyday life.

What are the potential benefits from this study?

Although you will not directly benefit from being in this study, others might benefit because it will create a better understanding of how dating app usage affects relationship formation in college students. This information could assist students in getting used to college life.

How will we protect your information?

The records of this study will be kept confidential to the extent permitted by law. Any report published with the results of this study will not include any information that could identify you. We will protect the confidentiality of the research data by not collecting any information that could identify you.

It is possible that other people may need to see the information we collect. These people work for the University of South Dakota, and other agencies as required by law or allowed by federal regulations.

After this study is complete, your deidentified data may be stored indefinitely in secure cloud storage and shared with other researchers through an open access repository without asking for additional consent from you. Your deidentified data will NOT include your name or other personal information that could directly identify you.

Your Participation in this Study is Voluntary

It is up to you to decide whether to be in this research study. Even if you decide to be part of the study now, you may change your mind and stop at any time. You do not have to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

Contact Information for the Study Team and Questions about the Research

The researchers conducting this study are Jalani Bodidasa, Louisa Roberts, Stephanie Spars, Gemma Skillman. You may ask any questions you have now. If you later have questions, concerns, or complaints about the research please contact Jalani Bodidasa or Louisa Roberts at (605) 677-5402.

If you have problems, complaints, or concerns about the research, questions regarding your rights as a research subject, or if you want to talk with someone independent of the research team, you may contact The University of South Dakota Office of Human Subjects Protection at irb@usd.edu or (605) 658-3743.

Your Consent

Before agreeing to be part of the research, please be sure that you understand what the study is about. Keep this copy of this document for your records. If you have any questions about the study later, you can contact the study team using the information provided above.

V 4.29.14

APPENDIX C: Survey Questions and Response Rates

Questions Open to All Participants

1. Your age:
- 18
- 19
- 20
- 21
- 22
- 23
- 24

Response rate: 62%

2. Your gender:
- Male
- Female
- Non-binary/third gender
- Prefer not to say

Response rate: 95%

3. Your academic year:
- Freshman
- Sophomore
- Junior
- Senior

Response rate: 96%

4. Are you currently an online dating site/app user?
- Yes
- No

Response rate: 96%

5. Are you currently in a romantic relationship?
- Yes
- No

Response rate: 96%

Questions for Individuals Presently in a Romantic Relationship

6. How did you meet your partner?
- Dating app
- Through friends
- Through school or work

- At a bar or party
- Other, please specify

Response rate: 100%

7. Did you meet your partner before college?
- Yes
- No

Response rate: 92%

8. Have you used an online dating app in the past?
- Yes, which app?
- No

Response rate: 92%

9. Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Response rate: 92%

10. Why or why not?
   [Text Entry]
   Response rate: 83%

11. Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships? If so, please share them here…
   [Text Entry]
   Response rate: 48%

Questions for Individuals Who Aren't in a Romantic Relationship and are Active Dating App Users

12. Would you be interested in getting into a relationship in college?
- Interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not at all interested

Response rate: 100%

13. Would you like your dating app use to result in a relationship?
- Yes
- Maybe
- No

Response rate: 100%

14. How frequently do you use your dating apps?
- Often: multiple times a day
- Once a day
- Once per week
- Multiple times per week

Response rate: 100%

15. Which apps do you use?
- Tinder
- Bumble
- Hinge
- Other, please specify

Response rate: 100%

16. What is your primary use of dating apps?
- Meet new people platonically
- For sex/hookups
- To form a relationship
- For fun
- Other, please specify

Response rate: 100%

17. Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?
- Yes
- No
- Maybe

Response rate: 100%

18. Why or why not?
    [Text Entry]
    Response rate: 85%

19. Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships? If so, please share them here…
    [Text Entry]
    Response rate: 35%

**<u>Questions for Individuals Not in a Romantic Relationship and Not Using
Online Dating Apps</u>**

20. Would you be interested in getting into a relationship in college?
- Interested
- Somewhat interested
- Not at all interested
Response rate: 100%

21. Have you used an online dating app in the past?
- Yes
- No
Response rate: 100%

22. Would you suggest to other people that want to get into a relationship that they use dating apps to do so?
- Yes
- Maybe
- No
Response rate: 100%

23. Why or why not?
[Text Entry]
Response rate: 89%

24. Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships? If so, please share them here…
[Text Entry]
Response rate: 37%

APPENDIX D: All Free Responses

Group 1: Individuals in Relationships
Q10: Why or Why not?
Certain apps are better than others. Some have a more hook-up culture environment, some are more relationship-tailored.
It might work for some people, I personally just don't feel comfortable with it.
I think that an app might be a good way to like first coordinate the first interaction, but meeting someone organically just lets you know the unfiltered version of that person before you date them, and I think that really helped me with finding my relationship.
The people on those apps aren't really looking for genuine good relationships but there are times you can find a good person in the bunch.
It's good for people who know what they want and intend to get it.
Hard to find real, genuine love on dating apps because of hook-up culture.
I think it all depends! As long as you are careful I do not think it matters. I know it can work for some people and not others.
Some apps are better than others and it just depends on the person.
Depends on the type of relationship you are looking for.
I just think dating apps have the very real potential to get people, especially women, into dangerous situations meeting people they don't know on the internet.
Depends on the type of person they are and the type of relationship they're looking for.
I am more old fashioned and I feel that a genuine connection is to be made in person.
I met people this way and created friendships, but all of the experiences I had on Tinder did not lead to a relationship that lasted more than 1 month. I feel like this app is more for those interested in hook-ups, and not necessarily long-term relationships.

Dating apps are usually not for romantic relationships, sometimes they are however it is just not as common in our age group (18-24).
It's easy
I think it can be a good way to meet someone.
They are a waste of time.
Real life connections are usually stronger and more complete than digital connections.
Dating Apps are an unusual way to meet people. I think it is best for people to meet naturally, instead of deciding in 3 seconds if the person in the picture is attractive or not. Dating apps are primarily used for hookup culture.
I had success with them and they are popular among young people.
You should get to know people as friends before delving into a romantic relationship. On dating apps, you are going off of a brief description and appearances of a person. Starting a relationship off of appearances makes the foundation of the relationship superficial.
If it is someone you've never met, and someone your friends don't know who it is, it seems scary to meet that person and be safe.
Many people's intentions on those apps aren't pure or meant for long term successful relationships. Typically if someone has a plethora of possible matches then there is no incentive to stay with one person or try to work things out with them- because they have a lot of other women/men to fall back on.
Choosing your lifelong partner in a gamified way is doomed from the start. People create facades of who they want to be with their dating profiles. I am a strong believer in you need to be friends with your partner before they are your partner to see who they truly are.
It's a way to find people who are looking for something, and you can filter through to see people who want long term.
They streamline the dating process, yet that streamlining can lead to emotional detachment from one's fellow person.
I think dating apps can be a wonderful tool to find a partner however hookup culture within dating sites makes it hard to find a long term relationship.

I think that it is possible to find a quality partner on a dating app, but that you have to be upfront about your expectations and boundaries. The majority of people on dating apps seem to want to engage in hookup culture.

it helps break the ice.

I would just go out and try to meet people doing things you enjoy like in a club or at church.

Because they aren't a good breeding ground for long-term, value-based relationships.

I feel as though dating apps can be 50/50. Sometimes a really good thing can form out of meeting someone on a dating app and other times people are just looking for a hook up.

It's a way to meet people! There's no harm in going on a date or two with someone you meet off of it, and if it doesn't work it doesn't work.

At my age, the people on dating apps are usually not looking for serious relationships. I think because of this, they can be harmful to people who are looking for a serious relationship.

Not how I met my boyfriend but I know people it has worked for in the past.

It gives you more opportunities to find good people.

I don't feel that dating apps are the place people are looking for relationships.

A lot of people who use dating apps aren't looking for something real and they just want sex out of it.

The intentions of people on dating apps can vary.

I would say that I personally like the meet people through people I know or places I go, but I think that there are many people that have the personality of liking the use of dating apps.

Q11: Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?

I don't believe that many people take them seriously.

Dating apps can be great if you're an introvert- however the added challenge of getting to know someone, guess if they're into you etc. just helps your social awareness I feel and helps you make more bonds built on trust and knowledge of the person.

I don't think it's great because dating apps are mostly hookup apps and, in my experience, meeting someone in person first is usually better.
I feel that the results are ultimately up to you. College students tend to settle instead of only accepting what they want, which I feel contributes to the negative stigma associated with online dating.
They can be good to start conversations and get to know people, but it's hard to know a person's intent with them.
Not the first way I would recommend someone to find a long-term relationship but can be helpful for basic companionship.
I think that it's healthier to form genuine, authentic friendships and relationships in person than it is to do so online.
I think they can be a place to start but they also need to recognize not everyone shares the same relationship goals.
I think dating apps are a great way to meet new people; although, I do not think that the majority of people on dating apps are looking for a long-term relationship
I think dating apps are not the best option simple because they are usually a way to meet people to hook up rather than form a connection.
Most people just use them for hookups.
It's more of a personal preference than anything. I believe it's possible to form relationships through dating apps, it might be more challenging finding someone else who is there for the right reasons
They can be. Personally, I haven't heard good things about using Tinder as a way to find a long-term relationship, but I also know people who have done that.
n/a
No
Dating apps are not good. Go hang out with people, talk to people, go to parties, sit next to someone new in class.
It's always a way to find friends.
No

In my personal opinion, I believe that a better relationship is formed when someone is first your close friend. Therefore, I don't think that dating apps can't work but flings and hookups occur more often than a meaningful relationship.
I've seen people find a long-term relationship through dating apps and I've seen people ghost each other after the first date. Dating apps are another way to meet people and it's useful for some, and for others it isn't their thing.
Occasionally, there are those that have good experiences with dating apps, but these are rare in my experience.
It really depends on the attitude you go in with and if you can find someone who is thinking the same. There are a lot of people on there who aren't looking for long term.
I think they can be if that's what both people looking for when using the apps.

Group 2: Individuals Who Aren't in a Romantic Relationship and are Active Dating App Users
Q18: Why or Why Not?
Some dating apps are better for getting to know people who actually want a relationship.
Because good relationships can come from dating apps
I have not found a relationship on the app.
Most people are just looking for hookups.
It's kind of hit or miss, it's worth a shot but a lot of times it doesn't work out.
It's very hit or miss on whether you will connect with someone or not.
Most people just want to hookup on dating apps.
Dating apps can be predatory in the sense of using emotionally vulnerable people for monetary gain with the promise of long-term love or short-term gratification. Either the algorithm will not be in your favor, or the people you'd want to have relationships with are not on the app to begin with.
Just because some people are not the apps looking for what you are looking for.

Very unrealistic you'll find someone.
I know individuals who have met their significant other on dating apps but it's not for everyone.
I cannot attest to how well dating apps work for some people. I am not very active on my dating app, so I have not been able to form a relationship with anyone so far.
I would prefer them dating apps because they may find his or her partner through this and there are endless possibilities.
It's just hard to recommend it when a lot of people use the apps for hookups or specifically hookups.
Because it's fun
It creates a fun and safe atmosphere.
I feel like modern dating apps are really just a place for hookups if you want something genuine look at the people you surround yourself with
Diabolical
Tinder is an app for hookups, usually the guys on there are not looking for anything serious unless you are older than college age.
Sometimes they work but usually they don't work for long term relationships.
It's hard to find someone looking for the same thing as you.
Most people are just looking for a hookup on these.
Q19: Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?
It's a good way to at least meet people, but a lot of times people just want it for a hookup.
No
As someone who has tried using dating apps for primarily seeking long-term relationships, they just haven't seemed to work. nine out of ten times I'm better off just talking to people in my classes and talking to them over Instagram or snapchat and getting dates that way.

It is a good thing have a long-term relationship as it helps us to understand how important can be in your life and have to be compassion for that here.
You have to find the right app, that is very important but most of the hot people use tinder. Also, people don't really talk on apps.
They are for people serious about relationships.
Good to start things and meet people maybe not the best for committed long term stuff.
no. this generation is cooked.
I am not sure; I have only had tinder so maybe other dating dates would be more beneficial for the long run.

Group 3: Individuals Who Aren't in a Romantic Relationship and Aren't Active Dating App Users
Q23: Why or Why Not?
Because I think that meeting people in person is better
Dating apps for college populations tend to focus on hook-up culture. I'd say the usage of them depends on the person.
It seems like college age men (I am a heterosexual female, so I only have experience with men) are more interested in the "hookup" culture than building long lasting romantic relationships.
it depends on the dating app. a lot of them are mainly just used for a way to hook up with people.
Good way to meet/interact with new people even if you don't end up dating.
I think it is important to have some common interests that would allow people to meet naturally, but a dating app is a good resource for people to explore what is out there.
Because it is deceiving. #catfished
I think they are more meant for hookups.
Depends on your preference. The most common apps I see with people my ages are more based on hookup culture.

especially tinder and bumble, they're more for hook-ups and not long term.
It seems that all the guys on dating apps just want to have sex.
It's difficult to find people with the same values looking for the same level of commitment in a relationship on a dating app.
I believe that the safest way to date is to be introduced or know the person as a close friend before moving onto a romantic relationship.
better ways of meeting
Dating apps have their pros and cons. The pros are that you can connect with people that you may never run into in your daily routine, also it is easier to know whether they are interested in you or not. The cons are that dating apps can be very dangerous. You never really know who you are meeting with, considering it is usually a complete stranger. However, if you take proper safety precautions, send your location to friends, send them a screenshot of the person you are seeing, and text your friends when you get home, I think that dating apps can be a great way to meet someone.
I think they can be a great place to meet people because it's a place full of people looking for a relationship. At the same time, I've heard it is horrible to use dating apps. People are mean and you never know who you are meeting.
There's no romance!
Q24: Do you have any further thoughts on whether dating apps are a good way for college students to form long-term relationships?
I think college culture on dating apps is more for short-term relationships and hookups rather than anything long-term, with the mindset of something long-term could be harmful and upsetting to the person if it doesn't work out.
They can be a good way but also are more catered toward hookup culture than a long-term relationship. I have only met a few people who have had a long-term relationship from a dating app.
No

I believe dating apps can help you meet people for hook ups or casual dating, but they don't work well for long-term relationships unless you get lucky with who you match with. You can get a lot of good memories from using dating apps, but in the long run, I do not believe it helps much.
Dating apps make relationships seem superficial, though it can work, I believe that lacking a foundation of friendship or mutual connections in a relationship is a recipe for disaster, you lack the safety of having friends and family who understand your partner's character and the close understanding of their personality and attitudes from a friendship to understand what you're getting into.
Since most college students are super busy, I think that dating apps make it quick and easy to access the dating pool in your area and potentially find a partner that suits you.
Nope

Bibliography

Barrada, J. R., Castro, Á., Fernández del Río, E., & Ramos-Villagrasa, P. J. (2021). Do young dating

app users and non-users differ in mating orientations? *PLOS ONE*, *16*(2).

https://doi.org/10.1371/journal.pone.0246350

Bogle, K. A. (2007). The shift from dating to hooking up in college: What scholars have missed.

Sociology Compass, *1*(2), 775–788. https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1751-9020.2007.00031.x

Cacioppo, J. T., Cacioppo, S., Gonzaga, G. C., Ogburn, E. L., & VanderWeele, T. J. (2013). Marital

satisfaction and break-ups differ across on-line and off-line meeting venues. *Proceedings of the*

National Academy of Sciences, 110(25), 10135–10140. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1222447110

Caulfield, J. (2023, June 22). How to do thematic analysis: Step-by-step guide & examples. Scribbr.

https://www.scribbr.com/methodology/thematic-

analysis/#:~:text=Thematic%20analysis%20is%20a%20method,meaning%20that%20come%

20up%20repeatedly.

Dalessandro, C. (2018). Internet intimacy. *Sociological Perspectives*, *61*(4), 626–641.

https://doi.org/https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26580591

England, P., Fitzgibbons Schafer, E., & Fogarty, A. C. (2008). Hooking up and forming romantic

relationships on today's college campuses. *The Gendered Society Reader*, 3, 531–593.

Filice, E., Abeywickrama, K. D., Parry, D. C., & Johnson, C. W. (2022). Sexual violence and abuse in

online dating: A scoping review. *Aggression and Violent Behavior,* 67, 101781.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.avb.2022.101781

Grehan, P. (2015). Attitudes towards online dating and the perceived threat it poses to the future of

long-term relationships. [*Undergraduate Thesis*]

Guadagno, R. E., Okdie, B. M., & Kruse, S. A. (2012). Dating deception: Gender, online dating, and

exaggerated self-presentation. *Computers in Human Behavior*, *28*(2), 642–647.

https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chb.2011.11.010

Hanson, K. R. (2020). Becoming A (gendered) dating app user: An analysis of how heterosexual

college students navigate deception and interactional ambiguity on dating apps. *Sexuality &*

Culture, *25*(1), 75–92. https://doi.org/10.1007/s12119-020-09758-w

Harrison, M. G., McAnulty, R. D., & Canevello, A. (2022). College students' motives for in-person

meetings with dating application matches. *Cyberpsychology, Behavior, and Social Networking*, *25*(2),

130–134. https://doi.org/10.1089/cyber.2021.0031

Hobbs, M., Owen, S., & Gerber, L. (2016). Liquid love? dating apps, sex, relationships and the digital transformation of intimacy. *Journal of Sociology*, 53(2), 271–284. https://doi.org/10.1177/1440783316662718

Kuperberg, A., & Padgett, J. E. (2016). The role of culture in explaining college students' selection into hookups, dates, and long-term romantic relationships. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, *33*(8), 1070–1096. https://doi.org/10.1177/0265407515616876

Lundquist, J. H., & Curington, C. V. (2019). Love me tinder, love me sweet. *Contexts*, *18*(4), 22–27. https://doi.org/10.1177/1536504219883848

Perkins, E. B., Dyer, C., Hilliard, T., & Knox, D. (2021). "Let's Fall in Love...After I Vet You": Romance and Vetting. *College Student Journal*, *55*(1), 25–28.

Peters, S., & Salzieder, H. (2018). What makes you swipe right?: Gender similarity in interpersonal attraction in a simulated online dating context. *Psi Chi Journal of Psychological Research*, *23*(4), 320–329. https://doi.org/10.24839/2325-7342.jn23.4.320

Phan, A., Seigfried-Spellar, K., & Choo, K.-K. R. (2021). Threaten me softly: A review of potential dating App Risks. *Computers in Human Behavior Reports*, 3, 100055. https://doi.org/10.1016/j.chbr.2021.100055

Population Reference Bureau (PRB). (n.d.) *United States Indicators: Median Age at First Marriage (Women)*. https://www.prb.org/usdata/indicator/marriage-age-women/chart/?geos=US,SD

Population Reference Bureau (PRB). (n.d.) *United States Indicators: Median Age at First Marriage (Men)*. https://www.prb.org/usdata/indicator/marriage-age-men/chart/?geos=US,SD

Rosenfeld, M. (2018). Are Tinder and dating apps changing dating and mating in the USA? *National Symposium on Family Issues*, (9), 103–117. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-95540-7_6

Rosenfeld, M. J., Thomas, R. J., & Hausen, S. (2019). Disintermediating your friends: How online dating in the United States displaces other ways of meeting. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*, 116(36), 17753–17758. https://doi.org/10.1073/pnas.1908630116

Vogels, E. A., & McClain, C. (2023, February 2). Key findings about online dating in the U.S. Pew Research Center. https://www.pewresearch.org/short-reads/2023/02/02/key-findings-about-online-dating-in-the-u-s/

West, C. (2021, October 27). *Seeking gender balance, selective colleges are giving men an advantage in admission*. The Hechinger Report. https://hechingerreport.org/an-unnoticed-result-of-the-decline-of-men-in-college-its-harder-for-women-to-get-in/#:~:text=Women%20now%20comprise%20nearly%2060,Student%20Clearinghouse%20Research%20Center%20reports.