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Dating in the Age of Tinder: Swiping for Love?

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Introduction

In *Cold Intimacies*, Illouz (2007) explores how capitalism has created a society in which economic behaviour conflicts with intimate relationships. She states in a culture of ‘emotional capitalism’, emotions, relationships and intimate bonds have become commodified whilst economic relationships have become increasingly emotional. In an era of ‘cold intimacies’ (Illouz 2007) and ‘liquid love’ (Bauman 2003), fluidity and uncertainties have led to increased insecurity, vulnerability and anxiety around romantic relationships causing social bonds to become objects of consumption, becoming easily disposable as they lose their real meaning. In line with this argument, Bauman (2003) states that while love can suddenly strike, it becomes a rare achievement, instead individuals replace the art of loving with commodified imitation; taking the waiting out of the wanting. Intimate relationships increasingly become commodities to

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be consumed, efficiently and in great volumes (Bauman 2003; Blum 2005; Illouz 2007; Keskin-Kozat 2004).

Illouz (2007) uses the concept 'emotional capitalism' to express a culture in which emotional and economic discourses define and shape each other, leading to intimacy and emotional life becoming shaped by economic relations. Illouz (2007) points to evidence of this process of emotional capitalism in a number of different areas including internet dating, self-help literature and talk shows. She argues internet dating makes romantic encounters into economic transactions, emptying relationships from emotion and representing a significant departure from the tradition of love (Illouz 2007). Illouz (2007) characterises traditional love through the concept of 'love at first sight' and excitement, arguing this type of love happens spontaneously and unexpectedly. However, due to the mass consumption of prospective partners internet dating creates, it demands a rationalised mode of partner selection which in turn contradicts this idea of traditional love (Illouz 2007). Therefore, internet dating is seen to fulfil a new standard of rational choice, which drives out all relationships, introducing mass consumption, endless choice, selectivity, rationality and standardisation to the realm of intimacy and romantic encounters. Due to the vast volume of interactions internet dating produces, dating becomes highly repetitive, enabling users to create standardised messages to send to all potential partners and use the same talking points both online and offline. Through this the user must maximise options and use techniques to be cost effective, taking the excitement and novelty out of the equation, which characterised traditional love (Bauman 2003; Illouz 2007).

Illouz (2007) explores how internet dating has become separated from traditional forms of love in a number of different ways. For example, internet dating creates a space in which the self can visualise the market for potential partners, unlike traditional love, in which the market remains hidden. Virtual relationships are also seen to defuse the pressure 'real relationships' create; online users can date knowing they can always return to the marketplace to find something better, there is no obligation to 'buy' (Bauman 2003; Illouz 2007). Bauman (2003) is critical of online dating as he suggests it supposedly leads individuals to favour temporary connections over life-long relationships. Dating becomes a recreational

activity, in which people are seen as easily disposable, as easily as pressing delete, without any mess or regret (Bauman 2003; Hobbs et al. 2016). When insecure and anxious about relationships, individuals turn to technology to find relationships and protect themselves, thus expecting more from technology and less from each other. Therefore, the ties formed through the internet are not ties that bind, but ties that preoccupy and online relationships can be put 'on hold' if better ones come along (Turkle 2011). Heino et al. (2010) investigated the use of a 'market metaphor' in online dating, comparing internet dating to the economic market, a place where people can 'shop' for potential partners. The study found that the design of online dating sites encouraged participants to adopt the marketplace metaphor when online dating. This metaphor influenced their communication and behaviour online, for example comparing choosing partners to going through a catalogue to find what you want (Heino et al. 2010).

Horvat (2016) contributes to this discussion by questioning the universality of love in an era of cold intimacies (Illouz 2007) arguing the reinvention of love, may actually just be a reinvention of free sex. The true meaning of falling in love is taking the risk of falling whatever the consequences may be; however, this becomes problematic as we live in a society which is directed against any sort of risk. Free bodies become 'fuck bodies' where anything goes, and this liberal permissiveness is a false reinvention of love. Therefore, Horvat (2016) asks, is internet dating a real reinvention of love in this technological era? The problem with online dating apps was people were trying to create real conversations and real connections, but ended up creating conversations which were much more superficial, based on sex. Everyone becomes a potential 'fuck body' (Horvat 2016).

However, the question is to what extent are we living in an era of cold intimacies? To counter this argument, there has been research which emphasises the continued importance of tradition, monogamous relationships, intimacy, love and commitment in people's lives (Carter 2012; Carter and Duncan 2016; Jamieson 1998; Smart 2007; van Hooff 2013). Duncan (2011b) argues that theorists misinterpret the change in intimacy, seeing it as a wholly reflexive process where people can freely create their biographies, separate from tradition. However, he argues that

individuals consciously or unconsciously draw on tradition to piece together responses to changing situations. Individuals make decisions about their personal lives pragmatically; tradition is idealised, however becomes reinvented and reformed as a response to changing situations (Duncan 2011a). Similarly, Carter (2017) found that whilst there was this possibility for couples to live beyond the conventional family, this was not always the case. Relationships were still bound by tradition; the traditional family was aspired to. Through a process of bricolage, traditions were reaffirmed and reinvented, and the act of marriage became strengthened through this process. Love became the narrative of marriage and relationships, as relationships were less about structuring society and more about love and romance. Marriage is desired because it is assumed, traditional and normal; to not marry was seen as socially unacceptable in a culture of free choice. Whilst the transformation of intimacy may influence the ways in which couples discursively construct their relationships, in terms of lived experiences, relationships continue to be underpinned by tradition (van Hooff 2013, 2017).

This chapter examines whether the dating app Tinder, as a new phenomenon, transforms dating within an era of liquid modernity and cold intimacies, or whether Tinder extends the way we are dating, thus implying a continuity with tradition. This chapter focuses on how young adults use technology to negotiate intimate relationships; whether there is a split with tradition in which dating apps facilitate emotional capitalism, or whether traditional narratives of romantic relationships are incorporated into new modes of dating.

Tinder has become a cultural phenomenon amongst young adults; however, it is criticised for its association with casual sex and meaningless bonds. Kao (2016) argues that Tinder caters to young adults and has transformed the ways in which they seek out relationships. Whilst Tinder represents a shift in dating culture which favours instant gratification, immediate attraction and convenience, in some ways dating culture has remained the same due to the process taken when selecting partners (Kao 2016). Much of the existing literature surrounding online dating suggests a continuity with tradition, with value being placed upon romantic relationships. Hobbs et al. (2016) explored the experiences of users of online dating apps to see if technology had influenced their views of long-term

relationships. In particular, they looked at whether dating apps may be eroding traditional ideals of commitment and romantic love. Through a mixed method approach of online surveys and in-depth interviews with six of the participants from the survey, they found that the majority of individuals valued romantic love and used technology as a means to pursue meaningful relationships. The participants found technology gave them greater chances of meeting new partners (see also van Hooft, this volume). Similarly, Brym and Lenton (2001) found that among Canadian users of online dating sites, the strongest motivation for using online dating services was to find dates and establish long-term relationships. These studies show that technology can give multiple choices when it comes to online dating. Whilst there may not be a single reason why individuals use dating sites, many use technology to facilitate romantic bonds amongst other motivations. Whilst these studies reflect key findings within online dating, the majority of existing literature addresses dating websites rather than dating apps, such as Tinder. Similarly, a number of previous studies on online dating focus on self-presentation rather than experiences and reasons for using online dating or dating apps.

Methods

This study aimed to look at how people use online dating apps and their experiences of using apps such as Tinder. Through in-depth interviews I was able to gain an insight into how individuals order and interpret the social world, taking into account the different viewpoints and practices in the field (Flick 1998; Ivey 2012; Rodica and Milena 2008). Whilst there are limitations in using qualitative research, such as difficulty replicating data, as I aimed to gain a full understanding of why individuals use dating apps, qualitative approaches gave me the possibility to find subtle changes, ambiguities and complexities within personal life (Smart 2007). I used a cross-sectional design, as research was collected at a single point in time, allowing the research to be carried out quickly. Thematic analysis of the interviews helped me to understand the phenomena of Tinder in terms of the meanings people brought to them (Babbie 2010; Boyatzis 1998).

Due to the time constraints of this project (which was originally an undergraduate dissertation), purposive sampling was used, the sample only included participants who were currently on Tinder or had used Tinder previously. Within this purposive sample, convenience and snowballing sampling was used; those who were available and accessible to the researcher at the time (Mason 2002). The sample included ten participants, five male and five female, all of whom identified as heterosexual and aged between 21 and 23 years old. I focused on this age group as young adults not only have access to, but use communicative technologies at a much higher rate and a higher frequency than any other age group. As online dating apps are a relatively new phenomenon these young adults are seen to be at their peak dating age when these online dating apps were produced. To understand the uses of Tinder, therefore, this age group was a good starting point (Rappleyea et al. 2014). Participants ranged in occupation and were largely working class to lower middle class (National Statistic Socio-economic classification 2010). All participants identified as White British, and one Mixed-race British, reflecting my own social network. Institutional ethics guidelines were followed throughout this study and participants have been assigned pseudonyms to ensure anonymity.

Emotional Capitalism

Illouz (2007) views online dating sites as an example of emotional capitalism; internet dating transforms encounters into economic transactions as it restructures the search for a partner into a market. Romantic relations are 'not only organized within the market, but have themselves become commodities, produced on an assembly line, to be consumed fast, efficiently, cheaply and in great abundance' (Illouz 2007: 91). According to Illouz (2007) the sheer volume of potential partners Tinder offers its users creates a highly repetitive narrative both online and offline, forcing its users to create a standardised procedure to manage large quantities of potential partners. This is seen within the interviews; Richard (23), for example, described Tinder as 'numbing'; for him the girls he swiped right and spoke to had no identities, they were just people to reply

to without having a real connection. Each conversation was the same, he sent the same message to each girl, with no meaning. Richard explained how he had entered into a constant cycle of ‘meeting and sleeping’ with people from Tinder, which drove out any possible meaningful relationships. As Horvat (2016) suggests, the people Richard was meeting through Tinder were ‘fuck bodies’, conversations became less meaningful and more superficial. In line with emotional capitalism, due to the volume and frequency, the conversations and meetings through Tinder become scripted, much like telemarketing (Illouz 2007).

The idea that Tinder created too much choice was also prevalent in the interviews. According to Illouz (2007) internet sites make the market for potential partners more visible, which leads to people looking for the best value they can get, refusing to settle when something better could come along. This abundance of choice inhibits rather than enables the capacity to commit to a single relationship (Illouz 2012). Tinder created a space to go to where this was possible, you could talk to numerous people at the same time and easily terminate the conversation or tie with the click of a button, this being one prominent aspect of virtual relationships described by Bauman (2003). There was no necessity to keep talking to somebody if someone better came along, or if you got bored:

There is always someone to swipe, someone to talk to, someone to keep you entertained for a while (Harry)

It’s too easy for someone to just swipe right ... if they would stop talking to you, you knew full well that they had swiped right for somebody else and are talking to somebody else (Isabelle)

If it doesn’t go well you can just delete and move on (Alice)

You can just walk away from it whenever you want it’s not awkward to walk away from them (George)

According to Illouz (2007) unlike internet dating, in ‘the real world’ of dating the market of partners remains unseen, therefore the concept of too much choice does not affect relationships. This is exemplified by

Alice who compared Tinder to a 'real relationship', where this would not be as easy to do, showing the difference between 'virtual' and 'real' relationships:

It is so easy to just get bored of talking to someone if someone new pops up, whereas if you were in a bar ... that wouldn't happen, you would just be talking to one person, whereas the vast options Tinder gives you, makes it a lot less personal, you can just stop talking to someone, un-match them and never speak to them again.

Isabelle had similar views; Isabelle, who had used Tinder for a long period of time and described how her use of Tinder was 'to find somebody to love me', stated that Tinder had changed her perception of love. For Isabelle, love was something you worked for, something that you stay in for a long time when you find the right person. However, she described how Tinder was not like this, Tinder did not promote love because it was so easy not to try when there were other possibilities out there. Due to having all potential partners visible, she knew the men she spoke to on Tinder were likely to be talking to a number of people at the same time, and stated this was the hardest thing about Tinder, and was 'the worst feeling'. In line with Bauman's (2003) views that easily disposable ties are taking over from romantic love, Isabelle stated:

The older generations are like, if it's broken then they fix it, but our generation now because they have got Tinder and what not, if it's broken then they will just swipe right and find something better, and I think that's what's hard, I think that's what's ruined my perception of it.

Examples of emotional capitalism can be seen throughout the interviews, in particular how Tinder creates a vast market of visible potential partners which causes the search for romance to become inherently unstable. Illouz (2007) states this shows a significant departure from traditional love; however, there was still, to some extent, a connection to tradition within dating explored in the next section. Interviewees still wanted love, despite the negative views they held about Tinder.

Ambivalence

The concept of ambivalence is explored by Illouz (2012) as a condition created by choice. Illouz (2012) refers to romantic ambivalence as dampened feelings, conflicting emotions and as a property of the institutions that organise our lives. There were a number of ambiguities and conflicting emotions within the interviews which were centred on using Tinder to facilitate free sex and the vast choice it created for its users. Many interviewees stated that Tinder was used as an app on which you could get free sex and create meaningless bonds which you could easily terminate if necessary. In every interview the use of Tinder as a tool for casual sex was mentioned. When asked if Tinder was a good way to meet a partner Hannah (21) was quick to say no stating that the reason for this was because everyone was only on there for one reason: 'to get laid'. For some, like Richard (23) and George (22) who explained they used Tinder to have sex, the app made this a lot easier for them. George felt that Tinder had made sex meaningless:

You're far more willing for it to be meaningless because you're allowing yourself to go into something meaningless, you're already setting it out to be meaningless, so it doesn't bother you that it is.

This is also seen in Richard's account, the meaninglessness of sex, the becoming of 'fuck bodies' (Horvat 2016) meant that for Richard sex was just a physical thing, which has no passion or love, it was no longer a big deal to him. Previously Richard explained how he was shy when having sex, and sex used to be a major part of a relationship, something he would often play up in his mind, making him nervous, however Tinder changed that. The sacredness of sex was being removed by Tinder. Richard's account is in line with Illouz's (2012) argument that simultaneous accumulation of sexual partners, and the exposure to a large number of potential partners Tinder creates, decreases and dampens the potential feelings and commitments that individuals have towards one relationship (Illouz 2012). This detachment 'is a form of ostentatious display of sexual capital to other men' (Illouz 2012: 103), thus serial sexuality creates an emotional detachment, leading to meaningless bonds.

Whilst for some, the experiences of Tinder made them view sex in different ways, Tom (22) highlighted that perhaps it is not Tinder but the individual who creates this negative viewpoint. Tom states that whilst Tinder does make one-night-stands a lot easier, the type of person who is having one-night-stands is likely to do this, regardless of whether it is through Tinder or not. Correspondingly, Alice (21) states how although you can never know other people's motives for using Tinder, and whether it is just for sex, the same can be said for meeting someone in a club. This casual sex is not just facilitated on Tinder but also in bars and clubs; it is not the app creating a casual sex culture, but society. This idea of casual sex is not a new phenomenon created by Tinder, sexual lifestyles within the twentieth century included the idea of 'sexual freedom', and sex not being bound by feelings of love, but by casual bonds (Haavio-Mannila et al. 2001). The behaviours of young people may not have changed, however the means by which to obtain casual sex and the technology that facilitates these bonds has.

This disentanglement of sex from emotion is seen in the male interviewees' responses more than the females' responses. Illouz (2012) uses the concept of 'emotional inequalities' to describe this change in causal bonds, stating men are more likely to engage more frequently in casual sex and are much more motivated by sex than women, who tend to value intimacy and love more significantly. Sexuality is channelled differently according to different sexual strategies for gaining status, suggesting a gender difference in responses to creating these casual bonds (Illouz 2012). Illouz (2012) states that women adopt serial sexuality as an imitation of men's power. However, for women this serial sexuality coexists with exclusivity causing a mix of sexual strategies that become full of contradictions. As seen in Isabelle's response when talking about her experiences of casual sex through Tinder:

People do it unlovingly ... I think being naive, I just thought that sex was so lovely and perfect and I honestly remember thinking I will never ever have sex with a random guy and Tinder ruined that. (Isabelle, 22)

This gendered difference in responses takes place in what Illouz calls 'sexual fields'; social spaces in which sexual desire becomes autonomised and competition generalised. Within these social spaces men and women

experience their sexual freedom in competitive fields in different ways. Intimate relationships become much more difficult to achieve, especially for women. Men are more likely to view the marriage market, as a sexual market. Whilst sexuality has become a status signal for both men and women, their sexualisation, and the way they negotiate sexual fields differs. Women are more likely to be in the sexual market for a short amount of time and value intimacy and commitment, whereas men will view the marriage market as a sexual market for a longer period of time (Illouz 2012). This is seen in female responses, in particular both Alice and Isabelle's accounts; they viewed the men they spoke to on Tinder as only wanting a casual bond, which was easily broken due to the vast choice Tinder creates, which is not what they viewed as desirable. Whereas for Richard and George, the market was viewed as a sexual market, based around meaningless ties.

Tinder has highlighted that actually boys are fickle and boys just want sex (Isabelle).

It was clear from the interviews there was a certain ambivalence around Tinder and the uses of Tinder. Interviewees would often contradict previous statements made about the app, suggesting that how they felt about Tinder was not clear cut. On the one hand, Tinder was seen as not creating 'real' relationships (i.e. long-term relationships) and was more about quick, repetitive fixes and casual sex. However, on the other hand, for some Tinder was seen as a legitimate way to meet people, with a number of interviewees entering relationships with someone they had met on Tinder. This ambivalence is something Illouz (2007) explores through feminism and the therapeutic turn; the therapeutic discourse, much like feminism, encouraged women to put together two contradictory sets of values: Independence and nurture, which constituted emotional health. However, this intertwining of feminism and therapeutic language also produced a process of rationalisation in which relationships are transformed into cognitive objects which can be compared. This rationalisation of emotional bonds means intimate relationships can be susceptible to depersonalisation and emotions detached from the individual. Intimate relationships can become both meaningful and meaningless; something which can be measurable and categorised (Illouz 2007). Interviewees saw

their own relationships being meaningful when attached to traditional discourses; however, causal bonds created through Tinder were often seen as meaningless.

Whilst this may be perceived as a progressive move towards liquid modernity, in a number of interviews the idea of creating meaningless bonds was still viewed as undesirable within dating. For example, when Richard and George described how they used Tinder for sex, they conveyed how they did not like using it for this reason, and they did not like how this changed sex for them. This suggests that whilst it is widely assumed that late modern societies are becoming more liberal and open about casual sex, there are still a number of associated anxieties around free sex. These centred on the specialness of sex; its status as extra-ordinary (Jackson and Scott 2004). Thus, whilst sex may seem more meaningless through Tinder, there is still a view that sex should be special, and there is this aspect of shamefulness in regards to free sex. Casual sex is not viewed as romantic or traditional within a relationship, therefore it may not be seen as fully socially acceptable. Casual sex was something interviewees did not want and were ashamed of, even when they chose to use Tinder in this way. Many interviewees expressed their negative views towards casual sex on Tinder:

The type of girl you can bang instantly without having met at least once before isn't worth it. (Harry, 21)

Tinder makes it easy, sadly everything easy is worth very little. (Tom, 22)

When asked if Tinder had changed interviewees' views on sex many acknowledged that it had because sex was so easy to obtain through Tinder. Many then stated this was not how *they* used the app and that their use of the app did not relate to the stereotypical use of Tinder, and thus, creating an 'us' and 'them' narrative. This was exemplified by Alice (21):

I think if you want sex and just sex and you go on Tinder, you can find it pretty easy and quickly, a lot of people use it for that, just a quick fix I guess, but I don't.

Rosie's (22) response to this question was similar:

It becomes more accessible and there are people that use it just for sex I guess ... it's just easier isn't it ... but I personally wouldn't use it for that, but I know a lot of people that do.

Both Alice and Rosie had distanced themselves from the sex narrative, suggesting that sex is still valued within the society as being a special aspect of a relationship. Whilst this contrasts arguments around cold intimacies and liquid love as interviewees did not want Tinder to ruin the value placed on sex and traditional ways of dating, it reinforces the gender differences within the sexual fields; female interviewees were much more likely to view casual sex negatively, compared to the male interviewees.

Lucy and Alice expressed how the view that Tinder was just used for quick ties had affected their views on their own Tinder relationships. For Alice this did not affect her use of the app, as she openly admitted that in the past she had used Tinder for the purpose of finding a partner, however stated that this is not something that many people would admit to because Tinder was seen to be used only to find sex. Alice has been in a relationship from Tinder for six months, however she disclosed that she never told her family that was how they met:

I never say we met on Tinder, it's bad isn't it, but just because the stigma, some people, especially older generations, don't think it's like a legitimate way to meet someone, but I don't think that.

Whilst the negative perception of Tinder did not affect Alice's reasons for using Tinder, nor her relationship, there was still the underlying thought that, in some people's eyes, it was something to be ashamed of: That Tinder was not a legitimate means to find a boyfriend, and thus she kept it a secret. This is similar to Lucy (22), who met her husband, who is now the father of her four-month-old child, on Tinder. Lucy, however, never admitted to her family members that this is how they met. She stated she wanted as few people as possible to know they met through Tinder as 'it has connotations'. Throughout the interview, Lucy had a

very negative view of Tinder, describing it as 'tacky', despite the fact that she is now married to the man she matched on Tinder:

I wouldn't say it was the best way to meet a partner, I wasn't using it to look for a partner and wouldn't have ever said I'd have met someone from there, it just kind of happened ... I'm sure I'm not the only one ... I would never say to someone, if you're looking for someone go on Tinder.

For Lucy there was a clear distinction between the people on Tinder, herself and her own relationship. Lucy explained her use of Tinder was never serious; it was mainly something to joke about with friends. However, for Lucy to have entered a relationship which progressed into marriage, the use of Tinder must have been serious at one point in time, suggesting her motivation for using Tinder changed over time, as her relationship grew in seriousness. This was a similar theme amongst a number of interviewees. When describing Tinder, much of the negative aspects of the app were described through how 'other people' used it. When Tinder was discussed in terms of their own dating and relationships, it was seen as more acceptable. Aside from Harry, Richard and James (21), all other interviewees had dated or been in long-term relationships, which they defined as committed relationships lasting a long period of time, with someone they met from Tinder. Whilst often views of Tinder were negative, Tinder was still, to some extent, a way for interviewees to find a long-term partner. Both Tom and George described their long-term relationships through Tinder in contrast to the competing narrative of liquid love:

I did meet an ex-girlfriend on there, and we were together for a year and a half and that was through Tinder, and we didn't use it in the context of hooking up, I think we just randomly met each other through that. (George)

We decided to give it a go when we were both at university, so it was not like, there were no one-night-stand type things, they were actual dates. (Tom)

To some extent interviewees accept the idea that Tinder facilitates casual sex and therefore according to Bauman (2003), Horvat (2016) and

Illouz (2007) casual love. However, through the ambivalence described above and their use of the 'us' and 'them' narrative, most interviewees distance themselves from Tinder's hooking-up reputation while simultaneously using it as a legitimate dating tool, in order to find long-term relationships. This suggests Tinder does not represent a significant departure from traditional dating practices.

Bricolage

This continuation of dating traditions and practices was evident in many interviewees' responses: James, Rosie, Isabelle, Hannah, Tom and Alice all described how the idea of meeting new people was one of their main motivations for using Tinder. The idea that Tinder was a legitimate way to meet new people and date was also prominent as Rosie pointed out:

I don't really think it's any different to meeting someone out, and I think it's just become one of the normal ways of dating people.

Whilst for some the vast choices Tinder gave its users was overwhelming, leading to easily disposable ties, this choice was also seen as a positive, opening up new possibilities for dating; contradicting previous statements, as James explained:

I'm only ever going to meet someone like through mutual friends or via the workplace, or whatever, if it wasn't for Tinder and I think that's always been the case, but now with Tinder, you've got like a whole entire parameter of 10, 20 kilometres around of ... someone that's going to be interested in you.

This account is similar to Isabelle who described how without Tinder, and the internet, she would only meet people through friends, church, school or work. Tinder now allows her to be connected with people from 'different ways of life', speaking to people she wouldn't necessarily talk to. Internet dating allowed for a much larger volume of interactions than 'real-life' dating, thus increasing the pool of potential partners in one single snapshot (Illouz 2012). Illouz (2012) compares this possibility of

choice as if ‘on a buffet table’ (Illouz 2012: 181); for interviewees this ‘buffet’ of choice leads to increased opportunities for dating. For Alice, a relationship was a relationship, whether you met on Tinder, or met somewhere else, Tinder does not devalue that relationship. If you get on enough, whether you were looking for something or not, it will just happen. Interviewees seemed open to the idea of finding love through Tinder, with Lucy and Alice explaining they had found love through the app. All interviewees, apart from Tom, felt it was possible to find love through Tinder, as Alice stated:

I think you have to find the right person, and be lucky, but yeah, I did and I know people who have, so I think it’s possible.

Similarly when asked if it was possible to find love on Tinder George stated:

yeah, for sure, it’s just rare, I wouldn’t expect it, but I think you could.

Whilst love may not have been a primary motive for downloading Tinder, a number of interviewees still valued love as a rare and lucky experience, which coincides with Illouz’s (2007) description of traditional love, as a unique and an ‘unexpected epiphany’ (Illouz 2007: 90). In this sense Tinder is seen by interviewees to create the possibility to find traditional love, countering the argument that internet dating creates a significant departure from this aspiration. Furthermore, love may not have been as prevalent in interviews due to the age range of the participants and their stage in life; statistics show that young adults are marrying at a later age than previous generations. The age men and women are getting married has continued to rise since 1970 (Office of National Statistics 2015). This may be due to young adults putting off marriage and the commitments of adulthood to invest in their careers. Therefore, whilst traditional love is still idealised, it is delayed as a response to changing situations (Armstrong et al. 2010; Bogle 2008).

The concept of bricolage (the piecing together of old and new (Carter and Duncan 2018)) can be utilised to explain the incorporation of new dating technologies into traditional dating practices and aspirations. The

tradition of meeting new people and going on dates is still prevalent within interviewees' experiences; interviewees still valued romantic relationships. Whilst the values of traditional romantic relationships are present, the means by which interviewees facilitate this has changed. Instead of finding dates at dances or nightclubs, young people are finding dates through Tinder. Tinder therefore becomes patched together with traditions of romantic love to form a new and reinvented way of dating (Bogle 2008; Duncan 2011a; Carter and Duncan 2018). In this way, young daters are bricoleurs:

It is just another way to date, technology allows us to do so much and everyone is always on their phones, so it's just a new way of dating ... dates are pretty standard no matter where you meet. (Alice)

It's like a reflection of the twenty first century. (James)

It's the modern world of dating, instead of meeting people in bars and speed dating, you now meet people on Tinder. (Richard)

The notion of standardisation of dates is explored by Illouz (2007), who argues that internet dating creates interchangeability and has introduced mass consumption to the realm of romantic encounters, which is based upon endless choice and standardisation. These standardised techniques used to deal with the volume of interactions makes dates highly repetitive. As Illouz (2007) argues, romantic relationships now face the problem of greater volume and speed of romantic consumption. It may be that the frequency of encounters through Tinder creates this scripted dating character which as Alice puts it, makes dates 'pretty standard' (Illouz 2007). Whilst this points towards aspects of emotional capitalism, it could be argued that dating in general has become standardised, whether facilitated through Tinder or not. Alongside the narrative of standardisation is the value placed on romantic relationships, thus showing the contractions and ambivalence throughout the interviews.

However, whilst there are some aspects of emotional capitalism and liquid love within the interviews, there is still a continuity with tradition, which could suggest that whilst technology is changing the way romantic

relationships are formed, tradition still plays a part in this process. It is clear there is a change within romantic relationships; however, this change may not be the behaviours of young people but the options available to facilitate romantic relationships.

Conclusion

Whilst there has been a change in technology which supports Illouz's (2007) and Bauman's (2003) ideas of transient intimacy, this has not completely changed young people's romantic relationships or their aspirations. Young people are faced with the idea that sex can be simultaneously casual yet special, bonds can be easily broken or meaningful. It may be that the conflicting and ambiguous ideas the interviewees had about Tinder reflect the conflicting views around romantic relationships for young people in society generally. In attempting to resolve these conflicting ideas, interviewees created an 'us' and 'them' narrative. On the one hand Tinder creates a space which facilitates instant and quick fixes, a visual market of potential partners and too much choice (for 'them'). On the other hand, there is still this continuity with tradition and dating within Tinder (for 'us'). In this way interviewees distanced themselves from the more 'distasteful' aspects of Tinder while upholding it as a legitimate dating tool.

There was an evident gender difference in responses, which aligned with Illouz's (2012) ideas around gendered inequalities within marriage markets and sexual fields. Female interviewees were much more likely to view Tinder as a new way of dating with ultimate expectations of long-term relationships and to view the causal bonds and free sex facilitated on the app as negative. Whereas, whilst the male interviewees also viewed Tinder as a legitimate way to meet people, they were much more likely to view Tinder as a sexual market and stay in this market for a longer period of time. This demonstrates men's continued power within the dating field (Illouz 2012). It is also important to note that for interviewees who go on to form long-term relationships, Tinder no longer operates as a site of choice—love inhibits romantic choice once commitment is

established and Tinder is only discussed by these participants as a tool for dating, in the very early stages of relationship formation.

This is not to say Illouz's (2007, 2012) ideas should be dismissed when discussing romantic relationships in society. It is clear that aspects of cold intimacies and in particular emotional capitalism within internet dating are prevalent within interviewees' accounts—at the early stages of the dating process. Young people in today's society are given the opportunity, through technology, to easily create meaningless, superficial bonds over romantic relationships. The degree to which this is reproduced in participants' accounts is perhaps a reflection of their age and stage in the life course (van Hooff's chapter in this volume shows a slightly different attitude to dating on Tinder among her older cohort of men). Alongside this narrative of cold intimacies and liquid love is the narrative of tradition and romantic relationships. Whilst Tinder creates the *opportunity* for casual bonds, young people still, to some degree, hold long-term romantic relationships as an ideal, suggesting instead a continuity with traditional dating practices alongside changes in dating forms; in short a bricolage of old practices with new tools.

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