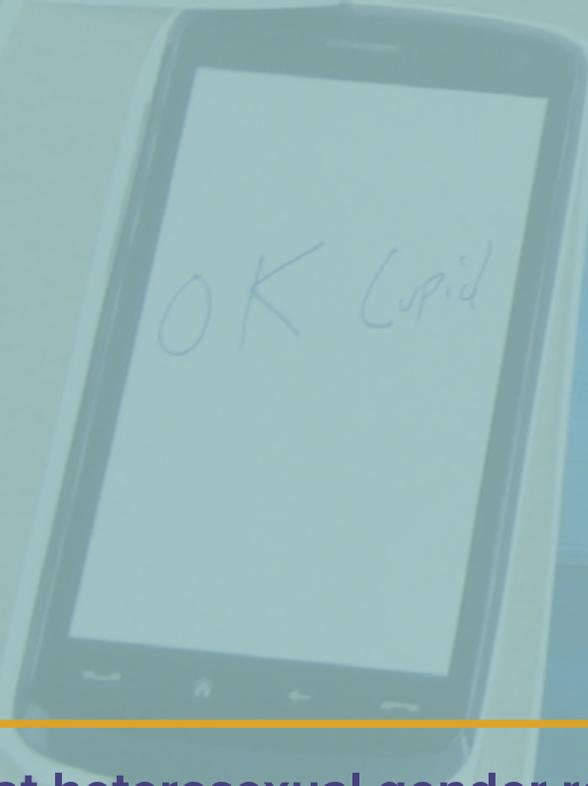


Modern Dating in an Old-Fashioned World



**A look at heterosexual gender roles
in the online dating landscape**

Rickles, Fagergren, Voyk, Gadzala

Summary of Fieldwork

In our quest to discover if the modern nature of online dating sites enforces or diminishes old fashioned, hetero-normative gender roles, we collected data using 5 different research studies. Over the course of three weeks, we deployed a survey, eight “micro-interviews” via OkCupid messenger, four genealogical analyses, two full length in-person interviews, and a new research method we are calling “Comparative Storyboarding”.

Our **online survey** was filled out by 27 participants. The survey had 16 questions and was passed out on facebook and OkCupid. Our sample population was 37% male and 63% female. In our sample population, 81% identified as being heterosexual, 7% identified as being bi-sexual, 7% identified as being homosexual, and 4% (one person) declined to answer. Our results uncovered a mix of quantitative and qualitative data that helped us become familiarized with our user population and chosen age group. These results helped us generate insights and formulate questions for the more in-depth, one-on-one methods.

Three of the researchers (Julia, Jeff, and Steve) signed on to the free dating website OkCupid.com to get to know the space and understand how it functions. They were upfront in their profiles about being on the site for research purposes, and were surprised to find many people volunteering to by participants without any solicitation. To capitalize on this opportunity, we decided to incorporate “**micro interviews**” with this population. Julia performed 6 micro-interviews and Steve performed 2 from his existing account. Aside from the micro interviews, we noticed off the bat that Julia received an incredible amount of views (143 in the first 24 hrs) and Jeff received around 9, this began to give us a look into male and female activity on this site.



Julia's OkCupid Profile



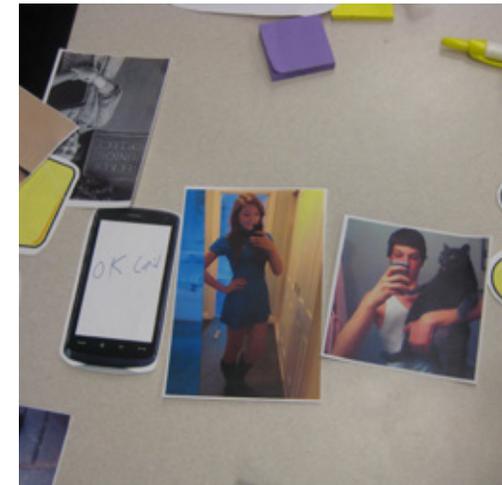
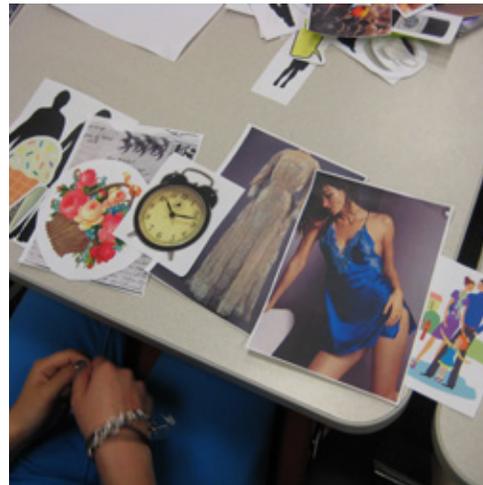
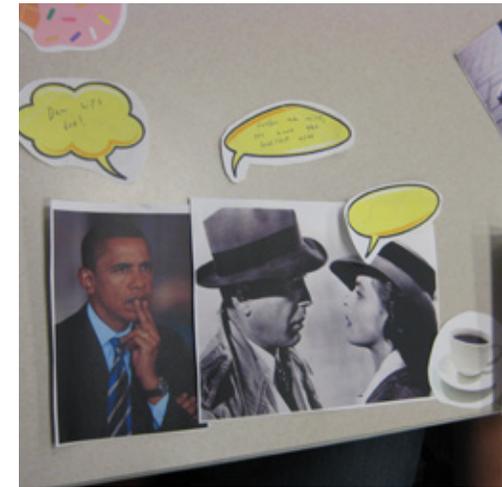
Photo from Genealogical Analysis Session

From Julia's willing OkCupid.com volunteers (52 inquiries) she selected one male as a candidate for an in-person one-on-one genealogical analysis (which was conducted for 1 hour over coffee), and recruited another male for the genealogical analysis, interview, and “Comparative Storyboarding” session. Steve conducted two one-on-one genealogical analyses with females recruited from OkCupid.com (one was conducted over the phone, another was conducted over coffee) and recruited another female for the genealogical analysis, interview, and “Comparative Storyboarding” session.

Two of our recruits, whom we will call “female subject 1” and “male subject 1”, were invited to the School of Informatics and Computing at IU on Friday, April 15th at 12:00pm for **an interview, genealogical analysis and a comparative storyboarding session**. The team split the next two hours as follows:

1. Female Subject 1 was paired with Jeff and Julia for a genealogical analysis and interview session for 45 minutes. This session was recorded and photographs were taken while the researchers took notes.
2. Male Subject 1 was paired with Emma and Steve for a genealogical analysis and interview session (with the same questions) for 45 minutes. This session was recorded and photographs were taken while the researchers took notes.
3. At 12:45pm, we introduced Female Subject 1 and Male Subject 1. All four of the researchers were present for the “Comparative Storyboarding Method”, which the subjects completed as a team. The researchers took notes, video, and photographs of the session.
4. At the completion of the session, the subjects were each compensated for their time with a Starbucks gift card for \$10.

At the conclusion of all of our field studies, we met as a team to discuss insights and engaged in an affinity diagramming session to triangulate results.



Images from the “Comparative Storyboarding” session with “female subject 1” & “male subject 1”

Development of the New Method: *Comparative Storyboarding*

We wanted to develop a method that let us gain insight into the participant's attitudes and mental models regarding dating. We brainstormed different ways of doing this, and got excited about doing something related to storyboarding. We had a hunch that letting participants play around and express themselves with images could present a way of discovering attitudes and mental models that did not emerge during regular interviews. In line with this, we also decided to pair up a man and a woman for the activity, in the hope of sparking discussion around the topic. We wanted to see if the opinions differed between the sexes.

In preparation for the activity we put together a collection of images. Most images could be interpreted as relating to dating and gender roles; however, we intentionally kept most images ambiguous and open to interpretation, as not to dictate the story the participants could tell. For example, if an

image of a car was included, it was presented in a neutral context and without passengers. In line with this thinking, a few images could be seen as completely random, such as pictures of a clownfish or dogs in silly clothes.

The images were printed out and presented to the participants together with some complimentary tools. These included post-it notes, printed speech bubbles, scissors, white paper to write/sketch on, pens and markers, and a men's fashion magazine in case participants wanted to cut out additional images.

During the activity we instructed the participants to first use the images – however they saw fit – to create a story about how they think that their grandparents generation dated and then how people today date. We asked them to specifically focus on the first stage of dating, such as who asked out whom, what the date was like, what the result was, etc. Since one of our participants stated that “I’m not a visual person”, we had to ensure them that the purpose was not to create a beautiful collage, but to use the images as a means to tell the story.

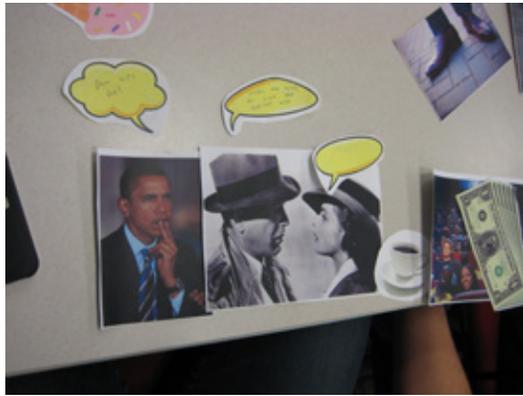
We filmed the entire session and took close-up photos in order to capture interaction and the emerging narratives.

Keywords: Attitudinal, qualitative, innovative, exploratory, observational.

Storyboard One: “Create a story about how you think your grandparents generation dated”



First got rid of condoms (the female subject noted how many children her grandparents have) and things they did not understand.



“Men definitely asked women out!”

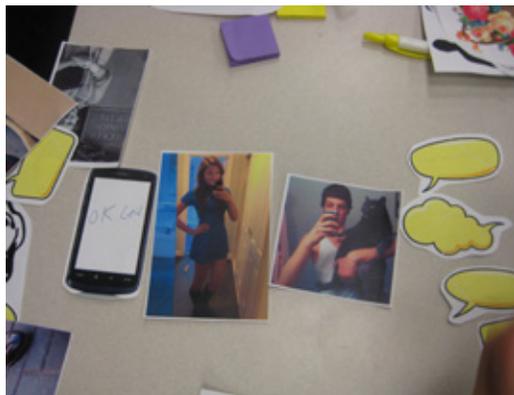


They decided the couple went out to a coffee, then a movie, the male always paid.



The end of their relationship was easy for the team of subjects to complete. Without prompting they decided that the hypothetical couple would get married.

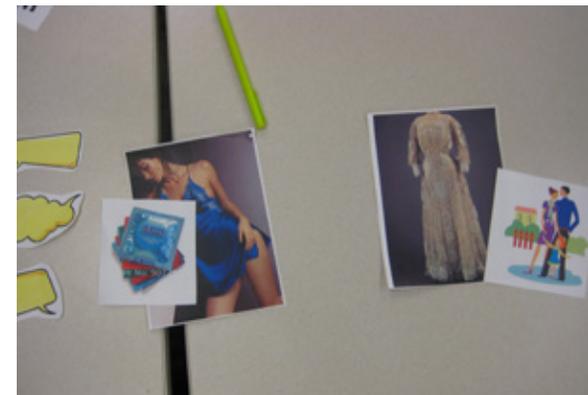
Storyboard Two: “Create a story about how you think people today date”



The easily decided to have the couple meet on OkCupid and decided they were both “hot narcissists”



The couple in this scenario met at a bar for a drink, they asserted this was low key and a typical place for people on OKC to meet. The clock represents “three weeks” passing without contact and the male, drunk on wine, texts the female at 3am (speech bubbles).



The couple reunites in the middle of the night and has lots of sex with condoms. For the conclusion, our female subject asserted “maybe if they’re really lucky they’ll get married... or desperate”.

Summary of the Data Analysis

The survey data and genealogical analyses produced similar results and several of the insights confirmed our previous assumptions:

1. *Men send the bulk of the first messages, “playing the numbers game”*
2. *Women have a full inbox which forces them to respond more than initiate*
3. *Sending messages have little consequence*

We discovered that the bulk of these first messages are often short messages with no content- “hey you” “how r u?” Also, due to the lack of consequence attached to these messages, there were some intro messages that were very sexual / vulgar in nature. This attention given to women varied in our survey data and on the low end a female would receive 10 to 20 views on any given week however there were at least three women that reported to have in excess of 200+. Contrasting that with the responses from the males, the high end was around 10 views per week.

What was interesting was that through the survey data that we gathered, women in general preferred to be pursued and courted, yet there were two female respondents that said their current relationship started by initiating the message.

The storyboarding activity produced interesting results, our two subjects worked together to form two timelines. Both the modern dating timeline and the grandparent’s dating timeline were assembled with minimal arguments between subjects, though, there was some hesitation. The grandparent’s timeline predictably involved more dates and in the words of the male subject “the dude paid for everything” though the courting process was considerably longer. The point of contention during this drew from both personal accounts as our female subject made the claim that people “back then” did not sleep around that much, whereas the male’s response was “My grandfather got around back in the day.” But they finished the storyboard with a wedding dress to imply marriage and a picture of the family.

The modern day storyboard involved fewer steps as it started with meeting online then a quick exchange of selfies. It progressed to a bar for drinks then sex and the follow dialogue was exchanges:

Male subject: “then they don’t see each other for three weeks, then he drunk texts her in the morning”. (Everyone agrees that this is “so true”)
Female subject: “I think we demoralized our generation”.

The storyboarding activity did show that this modern generation of dating has a perception of being more causal in the beginning of a relationship and less courting is involved as opposed to the grandparent’s generation.

Summary of the Data Analysis, cont.

After affinity diagramming our data, we sketched out how typical male and female experiences of OkCupid differed.

For females, it looked as follows:

1. Create profile
2. Receive tons of messages in inbox
3. Filter messages based on: 1) content, 2) looks, 3) match %

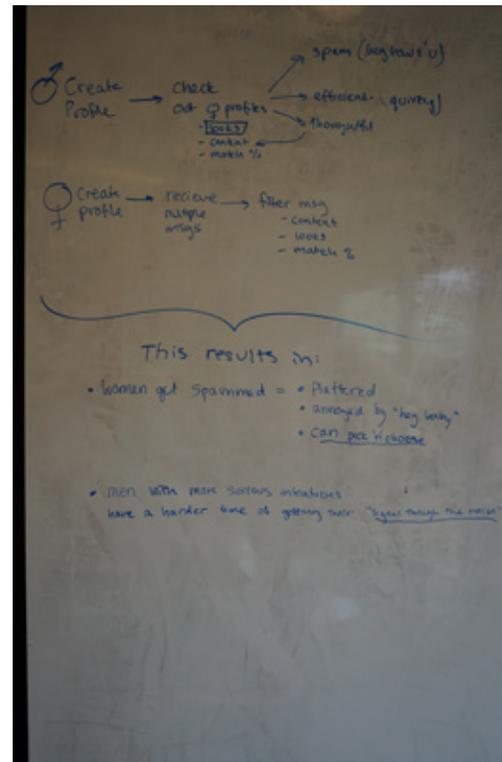
For men, it looked like this:

4. Create profile
5. Check out female's profiles.
6. Choose who to message based on: 1) looks, 2) content, 3) match %
7. Write a message that is either: "spam", "efficient/quirky", or "thoughtful" (if thoughtful, reference back to receivers profile content).

Based in research findings, we conclude that this results in:

- Women getting spammed, resulting in mixed feelings of flattery and irritation over too many "hey baby" messages. It also lets women be picky about who they reply to.

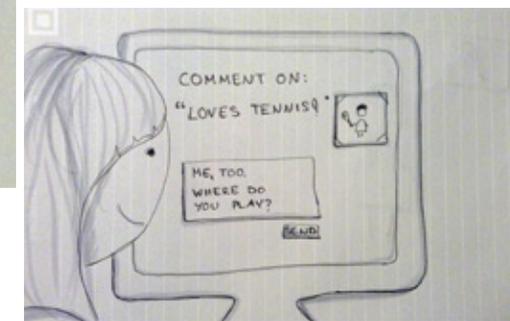
Men with more "serious" or "genuine" intentions have a hard time of getting their signal (well-intended message) though the noise (spam).



Icebreaker

In real life, people can strike up spontaneous conversations around things that peak their interest. This concept aims at facilitating these kinds of “ice breaker” interactions in an online dating setting. Users can click on any element on someones profile and the system lets them strike up a conversation with that particular topic as a starting point.

Rationale: This concept grew from the research finding that many first messages come off as impersonal “spam”. Having a first message being related to something on your profile lets you know that the sender spent at least a minimal amount of time interpreting what you put there. It provides a talking point, and it is also a support for people who are unsure of what to say in a first message.



“Creepiness” Filter

A design critical of the paid features (“Body Type” and “Attractiveness”) on the popular dating site OkCupid, the “Creepiness” filter pulls feedback from interactions with users. For instance, during chat, when a correspondent is reported, their creepiness factor

goes up. Online daters can visualize the creepiness of the people they are matched with on the “Browse Matches” page.

Rationale: From our first hand experiences on the site and with our interviews, we decided to design something to respond users who are not good matches.

Conversation Currency

Implication: Make it easier for people with genuine intentions to get their “signal through the noise” and increase trustworthiness

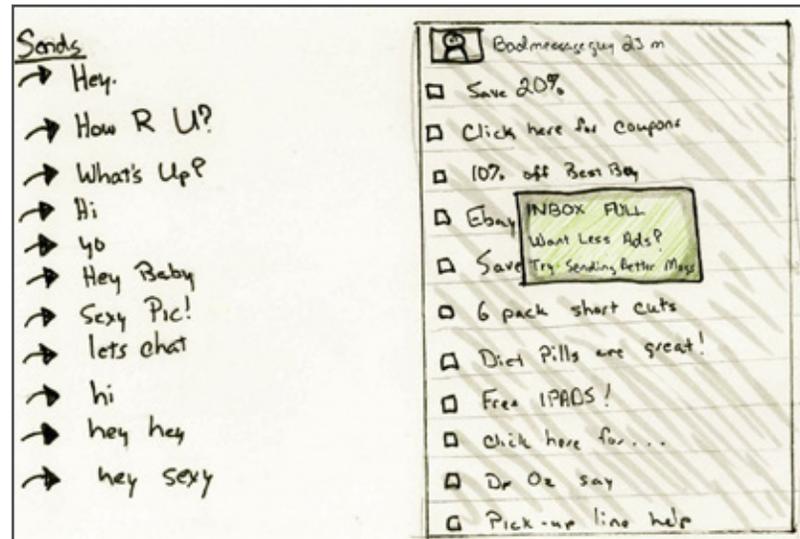
Description: This concept limits the amount of messages that male users can send out, and would replenish after a fixed amount of time. So if a male user could only send out two messages per week,

this would require him to be more selective. Females would have the ability to send unlimited messages and this model would hopefully encourage more females to initiate contact.

Rationale: When Alice from OKC first reaches out she tells you:

“Take the initiative: You’ll get better results if you send messages to people who interest you. We’ve studied this extensively; women who make

the first move end up with better-looking and more desirable matches. We can’t emphasize this enough.”



Spam for Spam

Implication: Make people less jaded from receiving spam messages

Description: Whenever a male user sends a message that very clearly a ‘copy and paste’ message that he will send to every girl on the site, or just a generic “hey, how r u?”. The system would then detect this and respond by sending that user an advertising message designed to fill up his

inbox with messages that are not worth his time. The idea here to reverse the experience of the flood of messages female users receive.

Rationale:

“It’s hard to feel anyone is worth your time online”

-Female Subject 1

“You can move quick, get in lots of messages with little investment”

-Male subject 1

Smart-watch - Match Detection

Implication: Make interactions feel more organic and less planned.

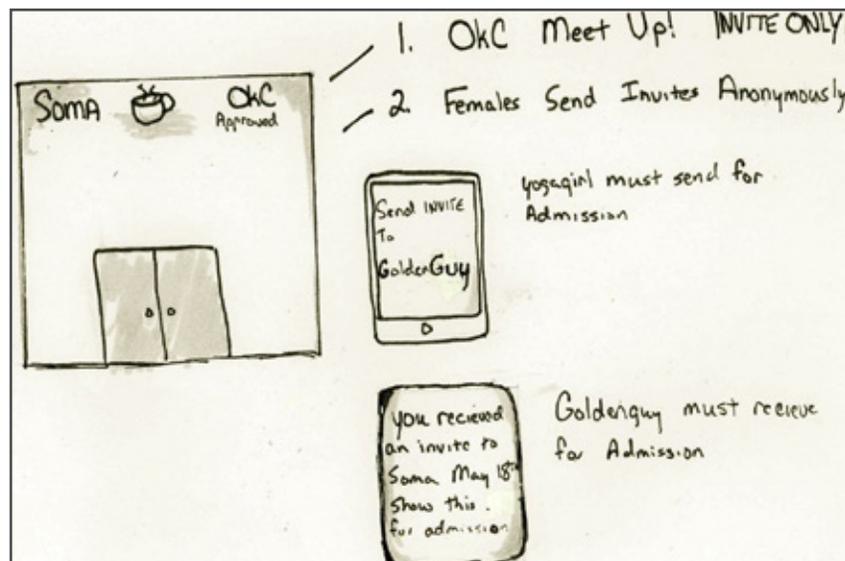
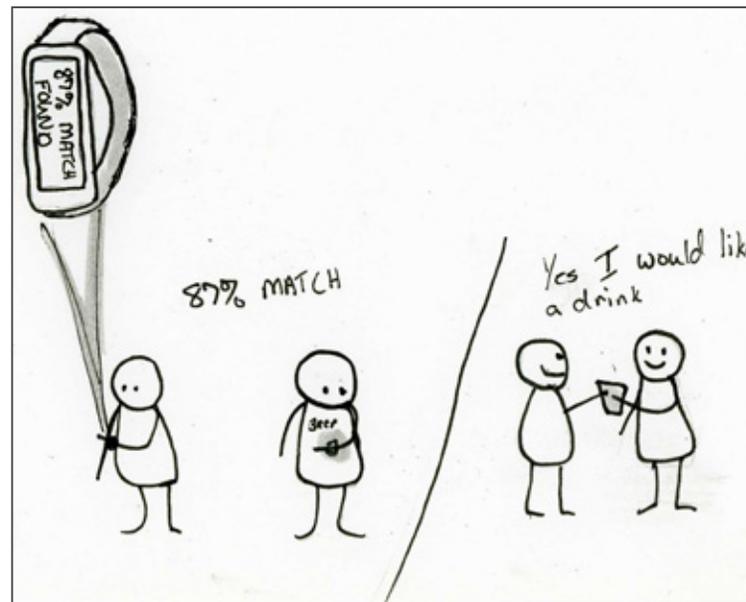
Description: Designed for social settings, this smart-watch would enable users of OkCupid to receive a proximity alerts base off of their profiles. So for instance the two users would receive an alert stating an "87% Match nearby" and because this pulls

from the profile data, they know they are both single, and allows for conversation to begin. This streamlined approach would be OkCupid's response to Tinder.

Rationale:

"Tinder is cooler than okupid. Everyone is on tinder"
 -online survey participant

"Online dating is a great way to get in the same room as people you may not otherwise encounter."
 -online survey participant



Sadie Hawkins Event

Implication: Let men experience being pursued / encourage women to send first

Description: Local businesses can sponsor social meet-up events through OkCupid. For instance-Soma sets up a social event that requires a female to invite a male. Soma then uses that invitation for admission for the female, and like

wise the male must present his invite to gain access to this event.

Rationale:

"I sent the first message to the person I am in a relationship with now. In fact, I think most of the people I've actually gone on dates with I sent the first message"

-online survey participant

Online Dating with Google Glass

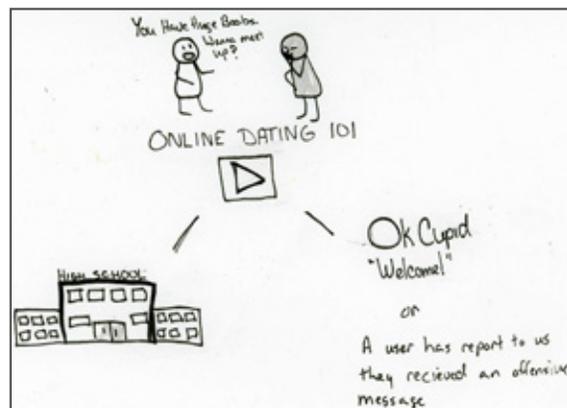
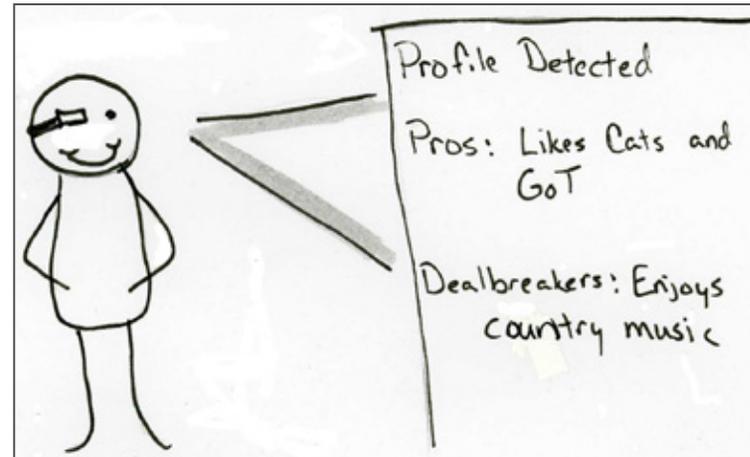
Implication: Increase transparency

Description: Users of Google Glass can integrate their OkCupid account and it would then be able to use facial recognition to detect active members of the site. Once it detects the account, it will quickly

show the user a list of Pros and a list of deal-breakers. This would be beneficial for singles who are looking for a particular set of qualities in a mate.

Rationale:

“Online dating is for efficiency, you can be more critical”
 - Female Subject 1



Online Dating 101: PSAs

Implication: Create a more accepting and comfortable community

Description: This would be a two part strategy that would draw attention to these types of “introductions” by way of youtube videos showing how this would sound in real life. These videos would be used in a campaign to raise awareness and reduce this

kind of behavior. It would initially target high school seniors in the form of a course on online etiquette. The second phase would be an intro video for new website users and “punishment” to those users who have been flagged for inappropriate content.

Rationale: Our survey asked “what is the strangest message you have received?” We received the following responses:

“You have huge boobs, wanna meet up tonight?”

“Do you have daddy issues?”

Will you kick me in the crotch?

“no message but just a picture of his dick without even a “hi” first”

“I’m looking for a submissive gal”

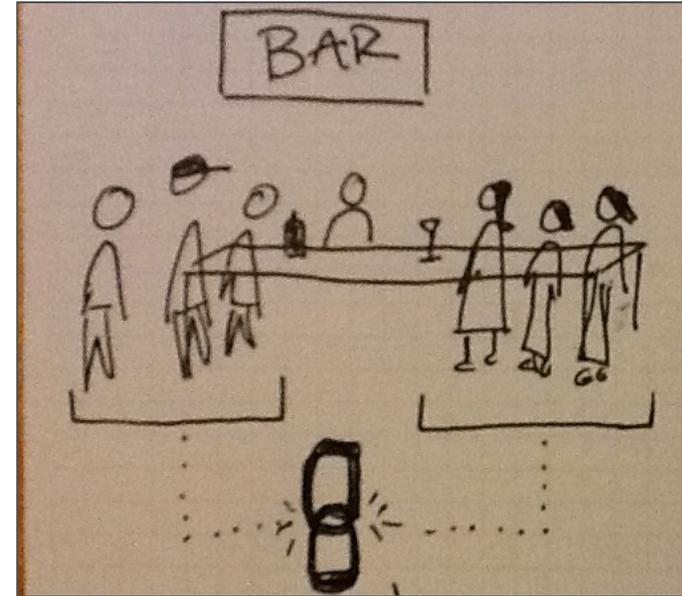
Group Date

Implication: Groups of singles can meet by physical proximity and interests

Description: We've all gone out with friends hoping to meet people, but it doesn't always pan out so easily. This design is a system that would link groups of friends together by proximity. Other factors would be number in group, sexual preference, interests, age, etc- anything in common would prompt the users and they could see their commonalities to spark initiating conversation.

Rationale: A major difference from pursuing someone online versus in person is the setting, which includes the lack or bounty of people around you. In Julia's Micro Interview with golden_god92, they discussed the fact that:

In person you have your friends around your to get you into or get you out of a situation [of pursuing the opposite sex]. Online, you're a lone wolf.



Reject or Reply

Implication: Reject or reply with ease

Description: This concept expands upon the traditional message filters. Typically you have the option to block / report or reply to a message. This new filter would combine this into a "rejection" tab. With the rejection tab, you can politely reply "thanks but I'm not interested" or if you received an insincere message you can have a preset

sarcastic denial, or in the case of the obscene, you report them to Okcupid.

Rationale: People hide behind their screen names, and because of that are less afraid to send awful messages.

New Filters

Implications: Make people less jaded from receiving spam messages.

Description: Added to the basic profile creation process of OkCupid, these filters will allow the user to set levels of quality control for the messages they receive. Features added would be a minimum word count for a message, filter longer messages so they go toward the top, and

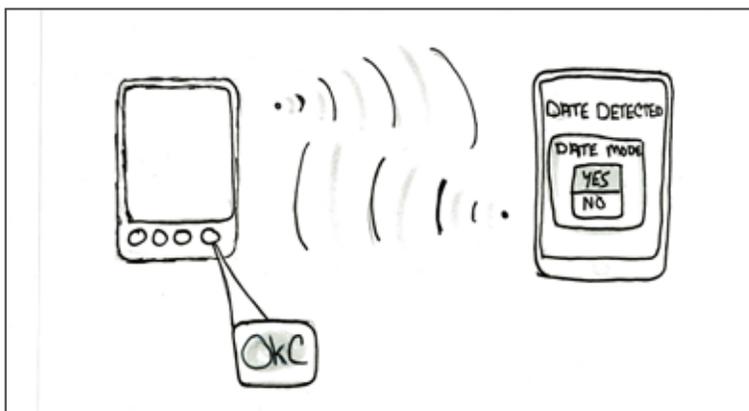
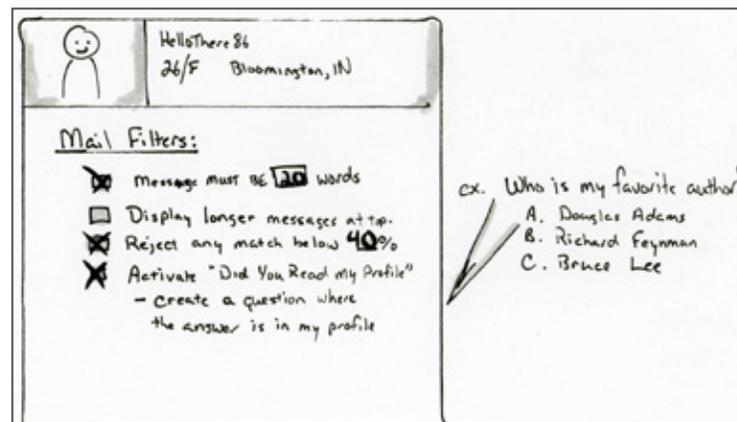
reject any message below a certain match percentage. Finally this gives the user the ability to create a “profile quiz” which is simply a question that must be answered before the message is sent.

Rationale: In order to make people more likely to stay on the site, this give them more control over what messages they received.

“I’ve gotten some pretty rude ones (especially when I didn’t respond to their first message) one guy told me to kill myself and that my attitude of thinking

people were lower than me wouldn’t get you far. Not necessarily strange, but pretty terrible.”

-online survey participant



Date Model

Implication: Make it easier for people with genuine intentions to get their “signal through the noise” and increase trustworthiness.

Description: Involving your cell phone if you are on a first date with someone you met from the site, the phone app would be able to detect another user (in this case your date), and both phones would give the prompt to go into “Date Mode” which would then silence your

phone settings so that you would not be disturbed

Rationale: In order to increase your offline trustworthiness, this feature would automatically respect the other person’s time.