

Men on Tinder think they have a ‘licence to use unattractive women as they see fit’

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Men on Tinder think they have a “licence to use women as they see fit” if their date’s appearance is less attractive than her profile photograph, research says.

The British Sociological Association’s annual conference in Birmingham was told today [Thursday 7 April 2016] that the men believed they were entitled to have casual sex to compensate for the ‘breach of trust’.

Dr Jenny van Hooff, senior lecturer in sociology at Manchester Metropolitan University, carried out a study of the use of Tinder among men in Manchester and Cheshire.

She told the conference: “Many of our respondents felt let down on meeting a woman and on feeling a visual representation hadn’t been accurate.

“Some of our respondents felt that this breaking of trust was a licence to use their date as they saw fit, thereby speeding up intimacy and undermining it at the same time.”

A 29-year-old man told her: “I’ve been very misled by very selective pictures, angles when the person isn’t as attractive or as slim or sporty as they make out on pictures. I try to swerve if possible, or get something out of it.”

One 37-year-old man said: “I am looking for a long term relationship, but you know within seconds of meeting someone whether that’s going to happen. So now, I think if there’s a chance of a shag I’ll take it. Lots of girls put ‘no one-night stands’ on their profiles, but they still end up having them. Tinder has really toughened me up.”

A 34-year-old told her: “What I will say is that it is natural for human beings to take advantage of each other, and Tinder hasn’t changed this, but it has made it easier.”

One 36-year-old man said: “It’s Tinder – I would say your chances of getting sex go up if a girl’s lied on her profile.”

A 38-year-old man said: “I went to meet her in a bar in the Northern Quarter and I could see that she was really fat. If it had been the kind of bar where I could have left without her seeing me, I would have done, but I was stuck there.” They ended the evening by having a one-night stand.

Dr van Hooff, who worked with fellow Manchester Metropolitan sociologist Professor Steve Miles on the research, told the conference that: “We wanted to find out how Tinder affected the nature of our participants’ relationships and intimacies.

“The self-promotion encouraged by digital culture appears to undermine authenticity in romantic encounters, often leading to disappointment in our participants’ experiences.

“Everyone sees themselves as behaving honestly, while presenting a best possible branded version of themselves. Yet many of our respondents felt let down on meeting a woman and on feeling a visual representation hadn’t been accurate. One respondent reported meeting a date who appeared to be 20 years older than her online self.

“Computer communication enhances the ability to selectively self-present through an increased ability to control the signs given off, allowing the presentation of a carefully crafted, edited impression. Men interviewed feel betrayed, although of course they engage in this as well.

“We explored whether the choice of dating apps implies changes the dating experience. Some research has suggested that online dating has led to new kinds of freedoms and equalities, and although we found evidence of a casualization of relationships, traditionally gendered scripts can still be said to predominate interactions, both on and offline.”

The researchers found that Tinder and other dating apps had “commodified” relationships at the same time as making them more available. This could be liberating for men, but also make them feel vulnerable about how attractive and successful they were with women.

“The ready access of potential matches intensified feelings, so that on meeting a connection is already established, however this also makes it more disposable, with relationships being ended quickly with little or no explanation – with Tinder, intimacy is speeded up, as one participant claimed.

“The research found that in many respects dating apps appear to accentuate traditionally gendered norms, rather than providing a space that’s removed from wider gender inequalities.”

Notes

1. The quotations are from 14 men interviewed as part of an ongoing larger study of the use of Tinder.

2. The British Sociological Association’s annual conference takes place Aston University from 6 to 8 April 2016. Around 600 research presentations are given. The British Sociological Association’s charitable aim is to promote sociology. The BSA is a Company Limited by Guarantee. Registered in England and Wales. Company Number: 3890729. Registered Charity Number 1080235 www.britsoc.co.uk

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