When internet and real life meet: women, internet dating and perception of fear

Student name: Caroline Ehrlander
Student number: s1890549
Deadline: 07-01-2019

Abstract

This study aims to answer the question of how women who use dating applications to find a (sexual) partner perceive their own safety on the internet as well as when meeting their potential partner in real life. The importance of the perception of safety and its influence on geography has been outlined by Valentine which stated that women negotiate strategies to cope with fear and adapt their geographies to minimalize risks.

In this study, eight interviews were conducted with women between the ages of 20 and 52, all living in or dating in the city of Groningen. The results of this study supports the literature on the subject of geographies of fear. The perception of fear of women has an influence on their geographies to the extent where choosing where to have a date is dictated by fear of a potential crime rather than what the woman may find a pleasant place to be. Even though all women indicated that fear was an important factor in choosing a geographic location for meeting a potential partner, the amount of precautions taken by the women showed great variation.

Table of contents

Introduction

Background

Recently there has been a surge in attention paid to women's sexuality partially brought to light by the #MeToo movement. This has also resulted in much academic attention to the issue of sexuality and safety (Gill and Orgad, 2018). Most research concerning internet dating and safety has so far been mostly focused on deception, intimacy and sexual health (Tjaša et al., 2015). However, space and safety in relation to gender has been studied in quite an abundance within spatial planning as well (Whitzman, 2007). Until today, most research on safety and sexuality within spatial planning has mainly been focusing on the perception of safety of women in public spaces.

Hubbard outlines how intimacy as well as the geographies of people change through online technologies through the possibility of staying connected at greater distances (2018). The changing of geographies in relation to the internet is a relatively new field of study. The claim by Hubbard is also supported and further developed upon by Tjaša et al.:

> *"Instead, Internet dating is a specific marital and partnership market, which is in many ways distinctively different from the traditional face-to-face ways of meeting potential partners. It creates specific conditions for meeting and communicating with other people (for example: limited visual contacts), it influences the selection process (for example: search options) and, consequently, it influences the course of the online and (potential) offline communication."* (2015, p.10):

Thus as communications change through internet based dating applications, so do the daily geographies of people as well as one may very well argue that communication also has a geographical component within this context.

Research problem

With the increased use of online dating applications there is a new expansion of the field of emotion connected to spatial sciences as online life and real life merges. The focus of the study lays with the perception of women and how they feel about their own safety rather than aiming for a simple answer of whether they are more or less safe. The aim of the research is to study the influence that dating applications has on the feeling of safety online as well as offline. In addition, the following questions might aid in answering the research question of how women perceive their own safety: are there changes to the daily geographies as a consequence of the use of online dating applications? Do women take certain precautions when meeting somebody that they have met via an online dating service? Is this different as compared to meeting somebody that they have met offline?

Research questions

The above mentioned research problem leads to the following research question: How do

women who use dating applications to find a (sexual) partner perceive their own safety on the internet as well as when meeting their potential partner in real life? Sub-questions serving to answer the main research question are: What are women's perceptions of safety in relation to online dating? Are there certain precautions taken when meeting somebody from an online dating application? Are geographies influenced when meeting someone from an internet based dating application? The latter question might at first glance seem unrelated to the topic of sexuality and safety: however, the geographies of women and the influence of fear (thus lack of safety) may play a role in changing geographies of women (Valentine, 1989).

Theoretical framework

This study focuses on the perception of fear of women who use online dating applications to find a (sexual) partner. The phenomenon of internet dating is relatively new and Tjaša et al. (2015) defines internet dating and its consequences as:

> *"[...] Internet dating is a specific marital and partnership market, which is in many ways distinctively different from the traditional face-to-face ways of meeting potential partners. It creates specific conditions for meeting and communicating with other people (for example: limited visual contacts), it influences the selection process (for example: search options) and, consequently, it influences the course of the online and (potential) offline communication."*

In addition to influencing communication, internet based dating also influences the perception of fear of women and therefore also their geography. Valentine was one of the first researchers combining geography and fear, and defined why it is so important to understand:

> *"By adopting [...] defensive tactics women are pressurised into a restricted use and occupation of public space. Therefore an understanding of women's use of space necessitates an awareness of their geography of fear." (1989, p.386)*

Valentine also outlines what the effects are of women's perception of fear and risks:

> *"The association of male violence with certain environmental contexts has a profound effect on many women's use of space. Every day most women in western societies negotiate public space alone. Many of their apparently ' taken for granted ' choices of routes and destinations are in fact the product of ' coping strategies ' women adopt to stay safe"* *(1989, p.385).*

Thus studying and understanding, how women perceive fear will still be highly relevant today, especially as the world changes and internet based communications are being used instead of the "traditional" ways of meeting a partner. By using semi-structured interviews with women and focusing on their own perceptions it may be possible to look into whether or not defensive tactics are being applied as well as how.

In addition, there must also be noted that there is a certain amount of risk taking and risk evaluation when meeting someone from the internet. Couch and Liamputtong state that:

> *"People who use online dating do consider the risks involved and they demonstrate personal autonomy in their risk management". (2007, p.275)*

They further go on to explain that people may perceive, evaluate and deal with risks and safety differently but that most people are relatively well aware of the risks involved with internet dating.

Methodology

To answer the research questions this study used semi-structured interviews as they are deemed to be informal and flexible (Clifford et al., 2012). The goal was to conduct interviews with women that use internet-based dating applications to be able to collect data from the participants' perspective. The interviewees were able to choose the place where the interviews took place thus some interviews were held via Skype, others at the home of the participants and one at the researcher's home. It is important to note that while using an internet based medium such as Skype, it does limit the possibility of the researcher to observe body language to any greater extent. Lack of visible body language makes it rather difficult for the researcher to interpret whether or not the participant is comfortable. The researcher had to rely on the words of the participant as there are no cues from the body language indicating at what level of comfort the participant is.

Participant recruitment and inclusion criteria

The women were recruited through the social network of the researcher and there were no limitation as to which age the participant were. All participants were residents of Groningen, or had recently lived and dated there. This is partially due to convenience but also a way to be able to compare geographies, may they turn out to be a relevant factor during the research. In the end, eight women were aged with ages ranging from 20 to 52.

The participants were women from the province of Groningen and belonged to the social network of the researcher due to accessibility reasons as participants may not feel comfortable talking about such private subjects with a complete stranger. There are, of course, a few arguments for and against this type of sampling. First of all, when using a social network to find participants one may consciously or subconsciously use bias when choosing participants. Secondly, if the participants are familiar with, or has a social connection to, the researcher he or she might have a tendency to give more socially desirable answers. On the other hand, since the researcher is a female that the participant is acquainted with the participant may feel more comfortable and safe to share details about their emotions. The participants were not close friends to the researcher as to lessen bias, but are part of a larger social network

Ethical considerations and positionality of the researcher

Being a female researcher conducting interviews with other females it was hoped that the power balance would be somewhat equal despite the interviewer being in control of the direction of the conversation. Using a semi-structured style of interviewing aimed to create a relaxed environment with questions to warm up the conversation and create a sphere where the interviewee will feel comfortable to talk about her own experiences.

In addition, the interviewee was informed beforehand of the subject of the interview and, at the time of the interview, also informed about the research project, its aim, and the possibility to stop the interview at any point in time. Furthermore, the interviewee was guaranteed complete anonymity and was able to choose her own pseudonym and signed an informed consent form. Combined, these things were designed to make the interviewee much more comfortable with

the situation and the often value-laden conversation regarding sexuality. To further provide a feeling of safety for the participant she herself was able to choose the space in which the interview would take place.

The above mentioned recruitment of participants raises the question of positionality and the position of the researcher. Hopefully, the participants felt comfortable being interviewed by a fellow female. However, one must always be aware of the fact that not all women are comfortable sharing details about their lives with other women. There will always be a slight power imbalance between the interviewer and the interviewee due to the fact that the interviewer will always steer the conversation and thus remain in charge of the conversation. However, regarding the location of the interview the control were in the hands of the participant who choose a space that was the most comfortable to her.

Regarding the ethical considerations of the study all participants were first informed about the aim of the study before considering to participate. In addition, the participants were provided with an informed consent form to read and sign before the beginning of the interview (see Appendix 1). This form contains information about the study, the participant's right to pause or stop the interview, information about the anonymity of the participant as well as contact information in case the participant has questions at a later date. Ethical considerations have been outlined in the guidelines of approval (see Appendix 2). Furthermore, after the interview had been conducted, the interviewee was provided with contact information to a center for sexual violence and abuse victims as well as contact information of the researcher (see Appendix 4).

Primary data collection and analysis

The aim of the interviews was to get an insight in the feeling of safety of individual women who seek a (sexual) partner through internet-based dating applications. The data of this research project was collected through semi-structured interviews. The semi-structured interviews provided structure to the conversation but also space for in-depth exploration of topics that seem relevant at the moment (Clifford et al., 2012). In addition, an interview can give many insights into the experiences and observations, as well as the interpretations thereof, of participants which we may otherwise have not been able to collect (Weiss, 1994).

The questions were divided into eight themes with questions (see Appendix 3). The initial questions regarded the participant and how it was doing on the day of the interview as to ease into the interview. As the interview progressed the questions ranged from with which aim the participant was using online based dating applications to the advice that the participant may give a friend who was going to meet someone from an online based dating application.
.
To be able to analyze the transcripts of the interviews, Atlas.ti was used to code and create an overview of the most important themes (see Appendix 5).

Results

The interviews with eight women between 20 and 52 years of age all living and, or, dating in Groningen gave quite some interesting insights into how these women perceive fear and safety, as well as how they deal with it and how their geographies are influenced.

When coding the transcripts of the interviews three themes were subject to the most emphasis by the participants: *location*, *precautions* and *gender and fear based advise*. All participants spent a considerable amount of time developing upon these themes and therefore one may argue that they are the more important ones from a participant's perspective. However, no hierarchy could be established as to which of the three themes was the most important.

Location

All of the women that were interviewed indicated that a suitable place for meeting with someone that they had met online must be public. This is partially due to the fact that if something unpleasant would happen then there are people witnessing it but also, as one interviewee indicated, the social control will make it less likely that something even will happen. Choosing a public location is thus part of preventing a possible assault as well as making sure it is witnessed, may it occur. One interviewee told the story of how upset she was when a colleague was about to get into a car with someone she had met via an internet based dating application:

> *"He could have taken her anywhere… That is not safe."*

When choosing a location, having an activity to do was regarded as important, however, being in a public space was rated as much more important as one interviewee stated:

> *"I would like to do an activity but if it wouldn't be in a public place, I wouldn't do it."*

Another interviewee reacted with a raised voice and was very adamant about the location of the date and that it had to be in a public place:

> *"Being alone with someone… it makes it very easy for him if he would have had bad intentions!".*

The figure below is a visual representation of the places that the interviewees regarded as safe and unsafe. Marked in green are public spaces with many people moving about. The locations marked with red are alleys which few people come, as well as a park (Prinsentuin) where not many people come and which cannot be seen from the street. One interviewee noted that even though the park is in fact public, the location is still not very open and visible and therefore not suitable for a date.
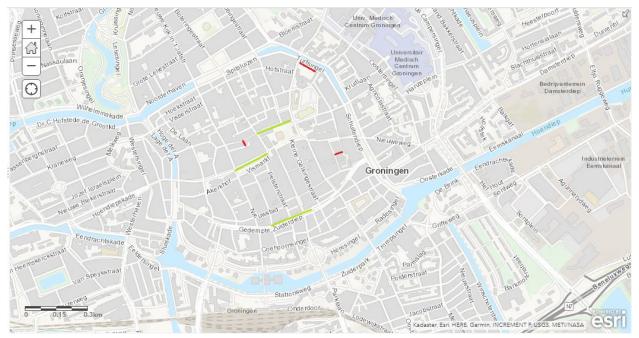
Figure 1: A few locations deemed as safe and unsafe for dating in the city of Groningen.

Precautions

Other precautions than choosing a public location that were taken varied a lot between interviewees. On the one hand there was one interviewee who did not tell anyone where she was going when meeting someone from an internet based dating application, stating:

> *"maybe I am naïve, or maybe I am stupid".*

On the other hand, one interviewee had quite an elaborate system where a friend would send a message at a certain time and the one on the date had a half hour to reply before begin called. If this system would fail, the interviewee would call the café or restaurant where the date was taking place:

"I don't think that the people in the bar would find it so strange if I would call. I mean, it's a nice thing to do for a friend"

The same interviewee also noted that if something would happen it is better to know it soon so one could alert the authorities while reflecting upon the risks and precautions. Another interviewee was emphasizing the fact that one needed to be able to trace the one that you meet just in case something happens:

> *"You should at least share their phone number so you have something to trace,"*

The method of keeping track of one another during the dates as well as sharing details of the person that they were meeting was shared by all interviewees except for one. This is a method for minimalizing the perceived risks and coping with fear of something bad happening.

Gender and fear based advice

In addition to the precautions taken there was also quite a big variation between the advice regarding meeting someone from an internet based dating application that the interviewees would give to their friends. One interviewee said:

> *"I believe in the goodness of people. I think I trust women more than men… So if he [a friend] would meet a woman… I think… I wouldn't expect anything bad from her because it is a woman."*

Most respondents stated that they would give different advice to men than women. One interviewee stated that

"I don't know [why I would give different advise]… I think that a man could protect himself better [than a woman].".

Another interviewee stated that

> *"you never hear about women doing bad things in the media…"*

when reflecting upon the concerns she had when meeting someone in real life that she had first met on an internet based dating application, which may also have a big influence on the perception of fear.

In addition, one interviewee also said that the only male friend she had that used online based dating applications:

"the only guy I know that uses tinder is very sensible… I don't expect that anything would happen to him. I am not worried about him"

When asking the same interviewee about why she would give different advice to a male friend as opposed to a female friend she also stated that :

"maybe I am sexist but I think it is more likely that a man has bad intentions…"

The perception of risks that men and women face when meeting someone from an internet based dating application differed for all participants. Why the perceptions differ remains unclear but may be subject for future studies.

It may be noted that sexual orientation was not a part of this study but may be an interesting field of research to explore in the future as one interviewee said *"[…]and I think I would give my gay son different advice as well"*.

Discussion

How do women who use dating applications to find a (sexual) partner perceive their own safety on the internet as well as when meeting their potential partner in real life?

This question proved to be rather difficult to give one straight answer to as the interviewees had quite different views of risk taking, safety and fear. In general, the interviewed women did not perceive themselves as particularly safe but indeed used precautions to manage and minimalize risks. This leads to the first sub-question: What are women's perceptions of safety in relation to online dating? The interviewed women did not necessarily perceive online dating as neither more safe nor more unsafe than dating someone from within their social network.

Are there certain precautions taken when meeting somebody from an online dating application?

The precautions taken to ensure that the date was safe was the same when dating someone from an internet based dating application as when dating someone from their social network. Crouch and Liamputtong states that

> "…an individual's perception of risk are influenced of social norms of what 'risk' is." (2007, p.278).

This means that as it is increasingly more socially acceptable to date someone from an online dating application the perception of risk is also becoming socially acceptable and placed within the social context of "traditional" dating.

Are geographies influenced when meeting someone from an internet based dating application?

The answer to this question is quite straight forward: yes. However, there is no indication that they are influenced differently than when meeting someone from their own social network. The keyword in this question is dating and how women perceive the risks of dating in general. There was no indication that meeting someone online would increase the perceived risks of dating in general. In addition, all places perceived as safe and unsafe were the same for meeting someone from an internet based dating application which indicates that geographies of fear as Valentine outlines it still holds true:

> "Women's fear of male violence does not therefore just take place in space but is tied up with the way public space is used, occupied and controlled by different groups at different times." (1989, p. 389):

Hence, the theory of geographies of fear as first explored by Valentine in 1989 is still valid as a focal point of research into women's daily geographies.

Reflection on methodology

Using semi-structured interviews as a method for data collection was useful for this research as it gave the interviewees the possibility to elaborate on subjects that they deemed important. The cyclical nature of qualitative research also allowed for the interview guide to evolve as an additional question was added during the first interview. The question was added under point number six in the interview guide and regarded the advice that the interviewee would give to a male friend and a female friend and whether or not the advice would be the same (see Appendix 3). This gave the interviewee the opportunity to reflect more deeply upon how the risks and fears regarding dating were perceived.

In addition, many interviewees also expressed content with the fact that they could choose the location for the interviews as that gave them the chance to be in a place that where they found comfortable as well as not having to disrupt their daily routine too much. However, when conducting interviews via an online media, such as Skype in this case, one does forgo the opportunity to be fully aware of the body language of the interviewee.

Furthermore, it may be noted that being interviewed about a subject regarding sexuality may be seen as a very intimate subject and conducting the interview at someone's home may create a very delicate situation that demands great respect and carefulness from the researcher. There is a very fine line between acknowledging the feelings of the participant and encouraging them which may unintendedly increase bias in the answers of the participants.

Conclusion

This research supports the claims that fear is a factor that influences the geographies of women and where they choose to conduct certain behaviors such as dating someone they met via an internet based dating application. It was found that women do take certain precautions such as telling a friend where they are going and with whom and choosing a public space for meeting. In addition, it was also found that women perceive risks differently when asked about the advice that they would give to a male friend as opposed to a female friend. Men were perceived as not being in a high risk group for possible assault by someone that they had met via internet while females were seen as being in a very high risk group.

Recommendations for future research

In the future it might be interesting to further explore the subject of fear based advice and the differences between men and women, as well as the differences between heterosexuals and

non-heterosexuals as was brought to the attention of the researcher by one of the participants. In addition, it might be of interest to further study media's influence on the perceived fear of women and the precautions taken when using internet based dating applications. Furthermore, additional research into the perception of safety regarding geographies and places where women feel safe and less safe may also be recommended as location was a very important factor in the decision making processes of the participants.

References

Clifford, N., Cope, M., Gillespie, T., & French, S. (Eds.). (2012). *Key methods in geography* (Second ed.). London: SAGE.

Couch, D., & Liamputtong, P. (2007). Online dating and mating: Perceptions of risk and health among online users. *Health, Risk & Society, 9*(3), 275-294.

Gill, R. and Orgad, S. (2018) "The Shifting Terrain of Sex and Power: From the 'sexualization of Culture' to #metoo," *Sexualities*, (2018). doi: 10.1177/1363460718794647.

Hubbard, P. (2018). Geography and sexuality: Why space (still) matters. *Sexualities, (2018)*. doi:10.1177/1363460718779209

Tjaša, Z., Doris, K., Alenka, S., & Roman, K. (2015). Internet dating as a project: The commodification and rationalisation of online dating. Družboslovne Razprave, 31(78), 7-24. (2015).

Valentine, G. (1989). The geography of women's fear. *Area, 21*(4), 385-390.

Weiss, R. (1994). *Learning from strangers : The art and method of qualitative interview studies*. New York: Free Press.

Whitzman, C. (2007). Stuck at the front door: Gender, fear of crime and the challenge of creating safer space. *Environment and Planning A, 39*(11), 2715-2732. doi:10.1068/a38449

Dit onderzoek tracht het veiligheidsgevoel van vrouwen te onderzoeken die gebruik maken van dating apps om (seksuele) partners te vinden.

- Ik heb de informatie betreffende dit onderzoek gelezen en begrepen.
- Ik heb de mogelijkheid gekregen om mijn antwoorden in te zien en zo nodig aan te passen.
- Ik begrijp dat deelname aan dit onderzoek vrijwillig is en dat het mogelijk is om op ieder moment te stoppen. Mocht ik achteraf terug willen komen op een antwoord, dan is dit mogelijk
- Ik begrijp dat mijn deelname aan dit onderzoek als vertrouwelijk zal worden behandeld. Er zal geen materiaal openbaar worden gemaakt waaruit mijn identiteit achterhaald kan worden zonder mijn uitdrukkelijke toestemming.
- Ik begrijp dat (anonieme)data voortkomend uit dit onderzoek wordt gebruikt voor een wetenschappelijk artikel, scriptie en presentatie.
- Ik begrijp dat alle informatie die ik verstrek veilig wordt opgeslagen: beschermd met een wachtwoord op een wachtwoord beschermde computer.

Omcirkel a.u.b. JA of NEE:
Ik geef toestemming om de audio van dit interview op te nemen JA / NEE

Ik wil graag anoniem blijven JA / NEE

Een pseudoniem naar mijn keuze mag gebruik worden in dit onderzoek JA / NEE

Wilt u een kopie van de transcriptie (uitgeschreven versie) van dit interview JA / NEE

Zo JA:
Uw E-mailadres:_____

"Ik ga akkoord met deelname aan dit interview. Ik heb dit deelnameformulier ontvangen en ben op de hoogte van het onderwerp van dit onderzoek"

Handtekening deelnemer: Datum:

_____

"Ik ga akkoord met de bovengenoemde voorwaarden en beloof dat geen schade wordt toegebracht aan deelnemers van dit onderzoek"

Handtekening onderzoeker: Datum:

_____

Appendix 2: GUIDELINES FOR APPROVAL – Research ethics committee (REC)

At the Faculty of Spatial Sciences an application for ethics approval is needed if your research involves gathering data/information from individuals. Please be informed that in the Netherlands every researcher is subjected to The Netherlands Code of Conduct for Scientific Practice[1].

This form guides you through the procedure for ethics approval of your research project. It is divided into 5 major sections:

I)   Start with the **Ethics check-list** for research projects.

At the end of this checklist you decide if your research projects faces serious ethical issues. If no: go ahead with your research. If yes: complete the full questionnaire to explain how you address these ethical issues.

II)   The full ethics questionnaire first contains **Part A: General information** about the project; please provide this.

III)   Then, in the full ethics questionnaire **Part B: Detailed questions** have to be answered.

IV)   Finally you have to finish the full ethics questionnaire. At this point you decide to either:

à IVa: Self-certify your project. If you self-certify you fill in **Part C: self-certification** of the full questionnaire. Staff members fill in **Part C1,** while PhD researchers and graduate students fill in **Part C2**. Make sure you add appendices.

For your information: the Research Ethics Committee regularly checks ethics questionnaires from self-certified projects to fine-tune the general policy.

àIVb: Involve the Research Ethics Committee for advice. Add appendices to the full questionnaire.

V)   Add the following **Appendices** to the full ethical questionnaire of either your self-certification file or to your REC review request:

- The **Information sheet** for respondents or participants.
- The **Informed consent form** for respondents or participants.

I)   Ethical check-list for research projects
Please complete the following check list.

1) *Consent*

	Yes	No	Not certain

Will the research project involve participants who are in any way vulnerable or who may be incapacitated to give informed consent as to their participation or participants age 18 or below, or belonging to sensitive groups who are unable to give informed consent (i.e. people with learning disabilities)? (a*s general guidance, research participants under the age of 18 may be* *considered vulnerable)*		X	
Will participants be enlisted in the project without their knowledge and/or consent? (e.g. via covert observation of people in public places)		X	
Will the study require the co-operation of a gatekeeper for initial access to groups or more individuals to be recruited? (e.g. students, members of different self-help groups, residents of retirement homes)		X	

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain' in response to any of the questions in this section, please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

2) *Research Design/Methodology*

	Yes	No	Not certain
Are there any significant concerns regarding the design of the research project? For example: (a) Where research intrudes into the private sphere or delves into some deeply personal experience; (b) Where the study is concerned with deviance or social control; (c) Where the study impinges on the vested interests of powerful persons or the exercise of coercion or domination; (d) Where the research deals with things that are sacred to those being studied that they do not wish profaned. (e) Where the research deals with personal data and links personal behavior and spatial data. (Lee, R & Renzetti, C, *Researching Sensitive Topics*, 1993:6) If the proposed project relates to the provision of social or human services is it feasible and/or appropriate that service users or service user representatives should be in some way involved or consulted upon the development of the project?	X	X X X X X	e) X Yes, it might be possible that there may be a link between personal behavior and spatial data.
Could the study induce negative consequences beyond minimal risks?[2]		X	

19

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain' in response to any of the questions in this section, please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

3) Financial Incentives

	Yes	No	Not certain
Will there be any payments planned/carried out to researchers and/or participants that may have an impact on data collection and/or data analysis?		X	
Will financial inducements (other than reasonable expenses and compensation for time) be offered to participants?		X	

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain' in response to any of the questions in this section, please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

4) Confidentiality

	Yes	No	Not certain
Will research involve the sharing of data or confidential information beyond the initial consent given? *If you have answered yes or not certain about this please complete the relevant section of the full Questionnaire.*		X	
Does the Dutch Data Protection Act 1998 (Wet bescherming persoonsgegevens) and the European Data Protection Directive apply to any of the data-processing activities that will be involved with this research?		X	
Will the research involve recruiting and/or interviewing respondents over the internet or other visual/vocal methods whereby respondents may be identified?		X	
Will the research involve administrative or secure data that requires permission from the appropriate authorities before use?		X	

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain' in response to any of the questions in this section, please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

5) Multi-performer and multi-sited projects

	Yes	No	Not certain
Will the research take place in other countries than the Netherlands?		X	

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain' please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

6) Risk to researchers

	Yes	No	Not certain
Are there any doubts or concerns regarding your own safety and /or wellbeing of any of your fellow colleagues during the research period?		X, I am fully aware of the risks of psychological effects the study might have and have contact information regarding councelling.	

If you have answered 'yes' or 'not certain', please make sure that you give the relevant information in the questionnaire.

➨ **Decide if you have to complete the full questionnaire**

After careful consideration and completing the questionnaire you have answered all questions with No (whether you are a student, PhD researcher or junior/senior researcher at the faculty), then you do not need to complete the form below.

If you have answered **Yes or Not certain** to any one question in the checklist (i.e. if your project may be subject to specific ethics review other than the Ethics Committee), you will need to describe how you plan to deal with ethical issues raised by your research by answering the following questionnaire. After completing the questionnaire you have to decide if self-certification is suitable or a full review by the REC is necessary.

---

[1]http://www.vsnu.nl/files/documenten/Domeinen/Onderzoek/The_Netherlands_Code_of_Conduct_for_Scientific_Practice_2012.pdf

[2] The concept of minimal risk is taken from the research ethics framework of the ESRC (pages 21 to 26): "Risk is often defined by reference to the potential physical or psychological harm, discomfort or stress to human participants that a research project might generate. This is especially pertinent in the context of health-related research. But, in addition, social science raises a wider range of risks that needs to be considered by RECs. These include risk to a subject's personal social standing, privacy, personal values and beliefs, their links to family and the wider community, and their position within occupational settings, as well as the adverse effects of revealing information that relates to illegal, sexual or deviant behaviour. Research which carries no physical risk can be disruptive

and damaging to research subjects either as individuals or as whole communities or categories of people, such as those with HIV infection."

Appendix 3: Interview guide

Vragen
1. Hoe gaat het met u vandaag? ● Vragen over het weer, hoe de deelnemer bij de interview is gekomen… ● Wat vindt u van het onderwerp van het interview? Heeft u wat ideeën hierover? ● Moeilijk/spannend/leuk? ● Toestemmingsformulier invullen en tekenen
2. Hoe komt het dat u op een dating app zit? ● Wat zoekt u? ● Is het makkelijker of moeilijker om een partner te vinden via een app? Waarom?
3. Bent u open over het feit dat u op een dating app zit? ● Gebruikt u foto's? ● Is het mogelijk om u te identificeren via uw foto's? ● Of misschien via uw profiel tekst? ● Wat vindt u van het idee dat iemand u misschien zou kunnen identificeren en vinden op basis van uw profiel? Hoe voelt dat? ● Voelt u zich veilig genoeg om erover te praten met uw familie?
4. Heeft u ooit iemand in het echt ontmoet wie u tegen bent gekomen op een dating app? ● Als ja, wat vond u ervan? ● Waar hebben jullie toen afgesproken? Waarom? ● Als niet, denkt u dat u dat gaat doen in de toekomst? ● Als u dat in de toekomst wilt doen, waar zou u dan willen afspreken? Waarom?
5. Voelt het anders om iemand te ontmoeten dat u via internet hebt ontmoet ten opzichte van bijvoorbeeld in de kroeg of op werk? ● Wat is belangrijk als u de beslissing maakt om iemand in het echt te ontmoeten? Welk factoren spelen een rol? ● Is het moeilijk om iemand te ontmoeten via uw sociale netwerk, makkelijker om een gesprek aan te gaan…..? ● Zou u de eerste date op dezelfde plek doen met iemand wie u van uw sociale netwerk kent als met iemand wie u van een dating app kent? ● Waarom ja of nee?
6. Kent u andere mensen die gebruik maken van dating apps? ● Wat zijn uw gedachten over hun veiligheid? ● Doen ze het anders dan u? Waar ze afspreken? Controle vragen etc.? ● Hoe? ● Zou u ander advies geven aan een man dan aan een vrouw?
7. Zou u twee of drie plekken kunnen noemen waar u wél een date zou willen hebben met iemand wie u heeft ontmoet op internet, en twee of drie plekken kunnen noemen waar u echt niet met iemand zou afspreken?
8. Heeft u verder nog iets wat u wilt toevoegen? ● Is er iets wat u graag kwijt wilt?

- Iets wat er gevraagd had moeten worden?
- Verdere opmerkingen?

9. Bedankt voor het meedoen aan het onderzoek. Even voor de zekerheid wil ik herhalen dat het interview volledig anoniem is. Wilt u uw eigen pseudoniem kiezen?
Contactinformatie en steun in geval van gedachten of behoefte aan met iemand te praten.

Appendix 4: Contact information and counselling

Contact information

Dear participant,

Again, thank you for your time and effort. In case of need, here are some contact information for emotional support and in case of thoughts of questions:

Students:
An appointment can be made with a counselor via the Student Service Centre (SSC).
Visiting address : Uurwerkersgang 10, Groningen.
Phone: 0031 (0)50 363 8066
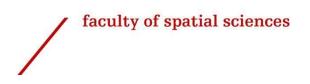E-mail: ssc-info@rug.nl

Non-students:
Centrum Seksueel Geweld Groningen & Drenthe/ Sexual Assault Center Groningen & Drenthe
This phone number is available 24/7: 0800 0188.

Also, for further concerns regarding your participation in the study, feel free to contact me:

Caroline Ehrlander
a.c.ehrlander@student.rug.nl
06-44428761

Contact information

Geachte geïnterviewde,

Nogmaals bedankt voor uw tijd en moeite om mij te helpen met mijn scriptie. Mocht u na de interview behoefte hebben om iemand te spreken over de onderwerpen dat wij hebben behandeld kunt u contact opnemen met:

Studenten:
U kunt een afspraak maken met een psycholoog via het Studenten Service Centrum.
Bezoekadres : Uurwerkersgang 10, Groningen.
Telefoon: 050 - 363 8066
E-mail: ssc-info@rug.nl

Niet-student:
Centrum Seksueel Geweld Groningen & Drenthe/ Sexual Assault Center Groningen & Drenthe
Telefoon, 24/7 bereikbaar: 0800 - 0188.

Mocht u nog vragen hebben over uw deelname aan deze studie kunt u contact opnemen met mij:

Caroline Ehrlander
a.c.ehrlander@student.rug.nl
06-44428761

Appendix 5: Codes

Theme	Sub code	Example	
Perceived fear	Perceiving little fear	Not afraid at all	
	Perceiving much fear	Trying to prevent possibly dangerous situations	
Location and safety	Positive locations	Where one felt safe, such as at a crowded bar	
	Negative locations	At a stranger's home	
Gender and fear	Perception of risk for women	Positive	As long as you are in public, you will be fine
		Negative	Women have to look out at where they are going and be careful
	Perception of risk for men	Positive	Men will be fine
		Negative	It might be more dangerous for homosexuals