

Occupy Social Media
Site: Tinder
Phill Di Censo
12/12/13

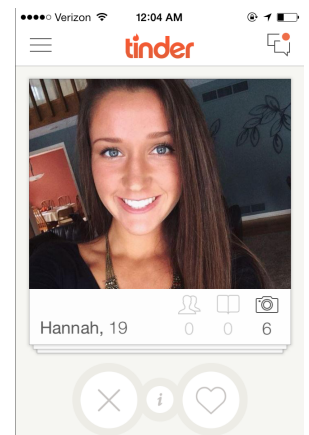
Occupy Social Media: Tinder
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The Android/iOS application Tinder was released in September of 2012 at the University of California. The idea of Tinder is the perfect app for single, college students. It combines the shallowness of Facebook picture-stalking, subtle hints at the opposite sex through picture “likes”, and the chat window, without the shame or the of seeing your parents on it (well, for now). In case this short description hasn’t painted much of a picture in your head about how this iPhone application works, I will attempt to tell you all about it in this paper (if I can put my phone down long enough to write it all).

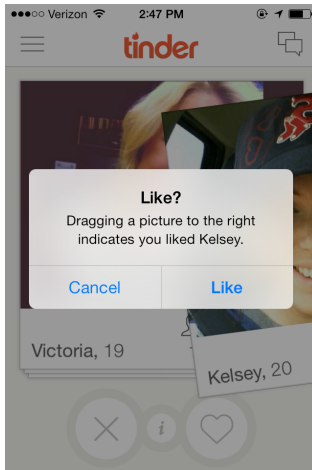


After seeing my friends play around with Tinder on their phones and just hearing brief, alluring descriptions from them, I decided I had to try it out. The day was October 5th that I caved in to the latest social media/App Store trend. I typed in “Tinder” into the App Store search bar and the first result was a logo with a orange flame and a white background. Is this to represent the hot, hot heat of teenage lust? That’s my guess. Whatever the case, I hit download (it’s free) and by the time I returned to my phone’s home screen the application was already loaded.

The only thing I had to do to get started was click the “Log in with Facebook” box that came up once I opened the app. Once the application did its thing the next screen I saw was a picture of a girl. Underneath the photo was her name and her age. Hannah, 19. “She’s beautiful!” I said to myself. I see two circles under her picture, one with an ‘X’ in it and the other with a heart. It was pretty clear to me already the basics of how this game works. I tapped the heart and a green “Liked” showed up over her picture. The next girl, Taylor, 19, wasn’t quite...my type. Now, I’m not here to sound like a pig who is just interested in looks, but thus is the nature of the Tinder game. Anyway, I hit the ‘X’ and, with a red “Nope” stamped upon it, the picture flew off the screen to the left. This is what made me realize a cool part of the app. When the next girl, a pretty one came up on my screen, I simply put my thumb on her and swiped the photo to the right. The “Liked” stamp of approval came up and her picture was off the screen and the rest was out of my hands for the time being.



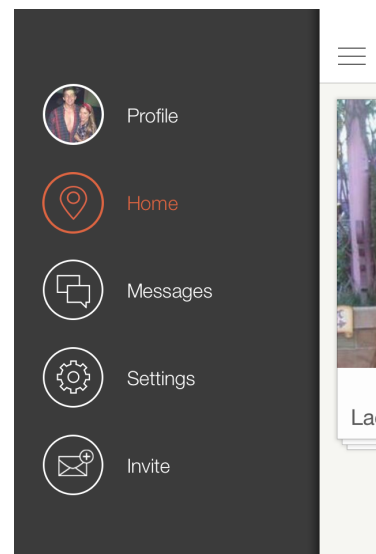
Now for more about the design layout of the



application. A few minutes into my new App Store obsession I tried clicking on a picture. What comes up under the picture is a brief description paragraph that users type to tell people what they are interested in or whatever they would like others to see when they come across their profile. I saw things like Instagram usernames and dirty, dirty invitations for encounters with the opposite sex. Anyway, remember

how I had to log in with Facebook? The people at Tinder used my information for good. Under those optional descriptive paragraphs are lists of mutual Facebook friends I have with the girl. I think that's pretty cool. Under that is a list of mutual interests: things that both I and the girl have liked on Facebook. Awesome! A hint of complexity and personality start to balance out the completely shallow experience I had been having. Well...let's be real. People don't download Tinder to find somebody with whom to start a Harry Potter book club or a pick up basketball game. There's a reason the shared "Likes" are at the very bottom of the page. But that's just my guess.

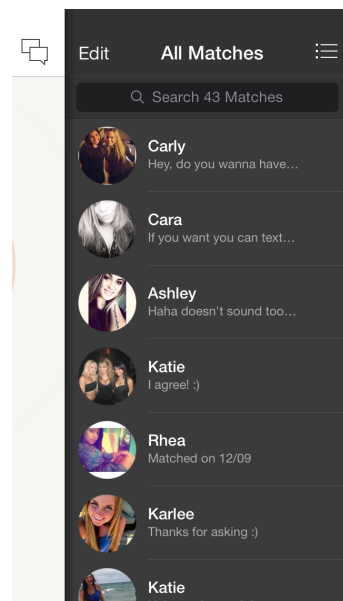
The Facebook connection is also how my profile was put together. In the upper left corner of the screen is an icon with three lines, indicating more options or a menu. I clicked it and tapped "Profile". It showed my picture, the one that girls see on their Tinder apps. It was my Facebook profile picture. The second picture



was my profile picture before the current one. Then there were boxes where I could upload more pictures for girls to swipe through when looking at my Tinder profile. Back to my discussion about clicking on somebody's profile, once you do you can slide through all of the person's pictures for a little extra superficiality.

Back to cycling through pictures of randomized hotties and my thumb started to get exhausted when...BOOM! A grey screen popped up with the words "It's a match!", the lucky girl's picture, and the option to either send her a message or to keep playing. Finally, my tireless swiping and all but excruciating hand cramps had paid off. I have made a connection with a beautiful young woman. Had I found a girl with whom I could spend the rest of my life? Probably not. But hey, flirting is fun and exciting so I sent her a message. "Play it smooth, Phill. Smooth!" I said to myself. "Hey Hey girl" probably wasn't the best I could have done but it didn't really matter to me. That's the beauty of Tinder. It's all carefree, careless flirting and swooning.

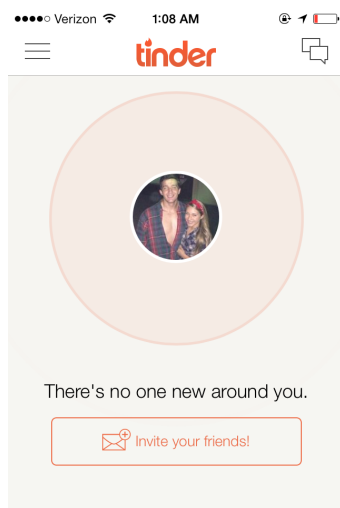
You get to tell members of your sex-of-choice whether you think they are "hot" or "not", straight up. In theory, no feelings are hurt if you swipe somebody to the "Nope" side because they will never know. You only get alerted of people's opinions of you if you both hit "Liked" on each other's photos. Anyway I wasn't too surprised or upset when I never got a message back from the girl, at least not yet. More matches came slowly and I could look at the messages between myself and the ladies by clicking the message icon on the top right of the screen.



Well, swipe after swipe and a day or two passed. Still new to the Tinder game, compared to the number of “Like” swipes I handed out, I felt that my matches were quite scarce. This brings me to a downside of this game. Like I said, I would spend hours each day just mindlessly deciding whether or not I found girls attractive and found myself more and more bummed when I wouldn’t get hardly any matches in return. I use the word “bummed” because I am wise enough to know the pettiness of Tinder and the unimportance of this sort of shallow interaction. Most of the girls I liked were around fifty miles away anyway. BUT, my own self-assurance behind, I could see how people could take this implied rejection to heart. Such a shallow game is sure to lead to shallow feelings. “Is something wrong with my profile picture?” “It must be the lighting.” are thoughts that crossed my mind as more and more matches didn’t happen to my Tinder.

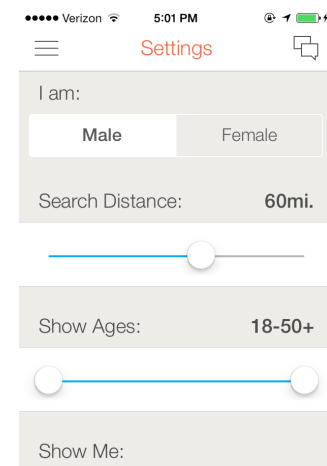
Now I know I use the word “shallow” a good amount in this write-up but, while I see this game as having fake, hollow aspects in terms of the human to human relationships it forms, I am having a great time playing it and I find it quite fun. This may have helped sway my opinion to the positive side, but after a few days, I started to get more and more matches to girls. Maybe it took some of the girls a couple days to check their Tinder and find me. I guess I just had to give it time. Anyway, I ended up getting matched with this beautiful girl named Mackenzie, age 19. I have been messaging her back and forth for a couple of weeks now. She lives in Canada so I know I probably won’t be meeting her any time soon but the giddy middle school crush is always a fun feeling.

Now for a few design flaws I have come across in my experience with the Tinder application. The most annoying problem happened every few minutes or so when the app would tell me there were no new people around me, meaning I had



swiped through every girl with the Tinder app around me. Considering the frequency of this alert, I was a little suspicious of a bug. I clicked on that menu icon and this time clicked “Settings”. There I could select the ages of people I would like to see, within how large of a radius the results had to be from me, and whether I wanted to see males or females. With the default preferences set to show women between the ages of 18 and 50 within a 50

mile radius of me, I was fairly confident that the alert on the main screen was wrong at this point. After some Google searching (which led to my simply clicking on my Tinder profile and hitting “Edit” a couple times) the app was sure enough back to finding many more eligible young ladies for me to judge. This would continue to happen and the same remedy would usually work. Occasionally I would delete and re-download the app from the App Store. That seems like a huge bug the team should work on fixing. On top of that, another minor glitch I encountered was finding the occasional male on my screen. This wasn’t anything a quick swipe couldn’t fix but it’s still something that shouldn’t happen.



This semester using Tinder has been, overall, a very fun experience both for myself and for my friends who downloaded it recently also. A couple of my buddies even met up with a few of their matches to go on a date. That shows that the app could be used to make real dating situations happen. Anyway, as bad as it sounds, it is pretty exciting to get to let loose and rate women based on their looks; something we usually aren't supposed to do. The feeling of getting matched with a girl I find really attractive is a wonderful feeling. It's like the whole socializing and falling in love thing but condensed into a fun application.

While I like the app very much, I am not sure that I will continue using it much anymore. I get a certain thrill from meeting a girl and chasing after her in real life. It's an excitement that has been inside of men forever. I would hate to see a generation of kids who don't know how to pursue the opposite sex in person because social networking apps have made it so easy to never have to talk to anybody. I guess this is me looking at Tinder from a dystopian view of technology in society. It reminds me of what I learned in class about Sherry Turkle and her book, "Alone Together". "Dependence on a robot presents itself as risk free," Turkle writes. "But when one becomes accustomed to 'companionship' without demands, life with people may seem overwhelming." (Turkle) What I took from this quote is that if you say something stupid and embarrass yourself to girl on Tinder's messaging system (like I have done) you can just wipe it off and keep swiping through other girls to try again. It's incredibly easy but it's hardly personal. There's no need to bathe or dress nicely (or at all) or be much of a gentleman when all of the human interaction you make is from your keyboard. The key to Tinder and to any social networking

method is to use it in moderation and to know that it's only technology. We can't let things like Tinder be our main source of socializing and finding dates. There is so much living to be done off of the computer/phone screen. I might come back to the application and play with it occasionally, when I am bored, but I am not going to let a social media platform like Tinder keep me from going out with my friends and meeting real life girls around me. I hope you enjoyed my experiment with Tinder like I have. I learned a lot about the app but also about myself and what I value in life and technology.

Cited

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