

Trusting an algorithm to find your soulmate

Written by Melissa Coleman

AMENDED RELEASE This Valentine's Day if you find yourself slightly drunk while loading your profile onto a dating website and mouthing 'All by myself', you may be thankful Maths has been put to good use. There's nothing more puzzling than the ways of love to a human but to an algorithm it's all in the Maths. For the believers, in figures that is, mathematical principals can help in almost any situation, and that includes finding your forever love. Senior Lecturer in Sociology at Monash University, Brady Robalds said online dating really took off in 1992 with Match.com, but before that there were dating services. "These were services where a person wanting to be matched filled in a questionnaire, created a video and paid another human to find their perfect match," Professor Robalds said. "These days though, it's all automated. The algorithm plays cupid and follows a set of calculations in a defined decision-making process." "How you answer the questions helps the algorithm calculate personality traits, geolocation data, genre of choice, age and interests, then your matched... or not," he said. Online dating has gone even further with mobile dating apps. A 'dater' can search their smart phone from their car and find available 'datees' who live in their area. Where traditional dating was limited to one's circle of friends, blind dates, parties and bars, and work environments, dating apps give the 'dater' access to more potential partners than they would normally meet just by swiping left. And, it seems more hope in finding that special forever love by narrowing down the contenders. "Online dating is the main way couples in the last decade have met. With the next most popular way in bars and restaurants. People are still connecting in physical spaces," Prof Robalds said. The latest data shows that just under 40% of 'daters' annually, in the last decade have found success as a couple. The Internet has revolutionized our lives. It has changed the way we work, the way we bank, and even the way we meet our forever love. But alas, for the starstruck lovers, no magical algorithm exists that can create a perfect match...yet. ABOUT PROFESSOR BRADY ROBALDS Brady's research explores how young people use and thus produce digital social media, such as Facebook, Instagram, Tumblr, Snapchat. He also studies social media use among particular groups (LGBTIQ+ people, high school students, and tourists) and is interested in research methods involving social media ('scrolling back' with research participants, friending participants, and incorporating visual media into qualitative analysis). If you would like more information, please contact Melissa Coleman - 0409 002 088. For more on Melissa Coleman, email: wordsmith@melissahcoleman.com / www.melissahcoleman.com

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