Speed-dating as an invaluable tool for studying romantic attraction: A methodological primer

ELI J. FINKEL,[a] PAUL W. EASTWICK,[a] AND JACOB MATTHEWS[b]
[a]Northwestern University and [b]University of Chicago

Abstract

Research on initial romantic attraction flourished in the 1960s and 1970s but has now been partially eclipsed by research on close relationships. The authors argue that speed-dating procedures, in which participants attend an event where they experience brief "dates" with a series of potential romantic partners, permit researchers to "retro-fit" the advances of close relationships research to the study of initial romantic attraction. Speed-dating procedures also allow for strong tests of many fundamental attraction-related hypotheses and, via longitudinal follow-ups, could unify the fields of initial romantic attraction and close relationships. This article will help investigators conduct speed-dating studies by addressing the methodological and logistical issues they will face and by illustrating procedures with a description of the Northwestern Speed-Dating Study.

Since its invention by Rabbi Yaacov Deyo in the late 1990s to help Jewish singles in Los Angeles meet one another, speed-dating has rapidly become an international phenomenon serving diverse populations. In *speed-dating*, individuals looking to meet potential romantic partners attend an event where they go on a series of brief "dates" with other attendees. These dates last a uniform number of minutes within each event, although their durations vary from one event to another (typically from 3 to 8 minutes). After the event, participants have the opportunity to say "yes" or "no" to indicate whether they would like to see each of their dates again. If two speed-daters say "yes" to one another, they are given the ability to contact each other for a future, presumably more traditional, date.

Speed-dating has rapidly become big business, with millions of individuals shelling out tens of millions of dollars to attend the events. It has also been featured in popular television programs (e.g., *Sex and the City*), movies (e.g., *The 40-Year-Old Virgin*), and virtually all mainstream news outlets. Although these media portrayals vary, they converge in suggesting that speed-dating serves as a new option for individuals eager to meet potential romantic

partners. For those who have never witnessed speed-dating first hand, it is perhaps useful to conceptualize a speed-dating event not as analogous to a series of first dates (which typically last, we hope, longer than 4 minutes) but instead as analogous to those social settings, such as parties or bars, where individuals are exposed to a large number of new potential romantic partners. Of course, compared to those more traditional settings, speed-dating has the advantage of removing significant barriers to initiating a conversation with a desirable stranger. For example, one can safely assume that speed-daters are (at least somewhat) romantically available and eager to meet potential romantic partners, and one is virtually guaranteed a few minutes of one-to-one time with all the preferred-sex speed-daters present.

Recently, at least two independent teams of social scientists have recognized the immense power of speed-dating procedures to address diverse scientific inquiries and have run their own speed-dating studies. One study was conducted with a graduate student sample by Sheena Iyengar and her colleagues at Columbia University and another was conducted with an undergraduate student sample by ourselves at Northwestern University.

The two principal goals of this report are (a) to argue that speed-dating provides a particularly promising method for studying the dynamics of initial romantic attraction and early relationship development and (b) to serve as a conceptual and methodological primer for investigators interested in conducting their own speed-dating studies. The latter goal occupies the majority of this report, but we begin by addressing the former.[1]

---

1. Issues related to data storage, management, and analysis are beyond the scope of this report. Investigators interested in learning about data analytic issues relevant to analyzing speed-dating data are encouraged to begin by perusing books by Kenny (1994), Raudenbush and Bryk (2002), and Singer and Willett (2003). Unfortunately, fewer resources targeted toward social scientists are available for learning about issues of data storage and data management. Investigators can learn about such issues as the distinction between flat files and relational databases (and the advantages of storing and managing data in the latter) in books by Stanczyk, Champion, and Leyton (2001) and Kline, Kline & Hunt (2004). Additional information is available from the authors upon request.

The Scientific Potential of Speed-Dating Research

The 1960s and 1970s witnessed the heyday of research on initial romantic attraction. Scholars unearthed diverse factors (e.g., physical attractiveness, similarity) that predict the experience of romantic attraction. A laudable handful of these early studies assumed the ambitious task of setting men and women on actual dates (e.g., Byrne, Ervin, & Lamberth, 1970; Walster, Aronson, Abrahams, & Rottman, 1966; for a rare post-1980 example, see Sprecher & Duck, 1994). Most studies, however, demonstrated principles of attraction in laboratory settings among participants who never met the target of their attraction (e.g., information about the target was presented to them only on paper, in a photograph, or both) or, at the very least, who did not actually have the opportunity to form a romantic relationship with the target following the study.

In the early 1980s, research interests shifted and scholars began directing attention and resources to the study of ongoing romantic relationships. In their comprehensive overview of the field of interpersonal relationships, Berscheid and Regan (2005, p. 88) observe that "Although initially most attraction research was conducted with strangers in the laboratory…, by the early 1980s attraction researchers had grown frustrated with the limitations of such research. As a consequence, they became more willing to confront the many conceptual, methodological, and ethical difficulties associated with research on ongoing relationships." This increased emphasis on close relationships led to a literature characterized by many advantages over the literature on initial romantic attraction, including (a) a focus on relationships that have a future beyond the conclusion of the laboratory visit, (b) the emergence of insights into the dyadic nature of romantic relationship processes, and (c) an enhanced understanding of how romantic dynamics play out over time.

Unfortunately, these methodological and conceptual advances from the close relationships literature have not yet been completely "retrofitted" to the study of initial romantic attraction. Garnering increased insights into

the mechanisms of initial romantic attraction and early relationship development is important both because of the direct impact that attraction processes have on individuals' lives and because elevated insight into them will likely enhance our understanding of ongoing relationship dynamics (e.g., distinguishing flourishing relationships from those that end in divorce). Berscheid and Regan (2005, p. 159) suggest that "to understand why others currently are in the relationships they are—and to understand why we ourselves developed the relationships we did—it is usually necessary to retrace the history of the relationship back to its very beginning and to identify the causal conditions that were in force at that time." We enthusiastically agree that understanding ongoing relationship dynamics requires examining them from their very beginning (and even before partners meet one another), but we suggest that relationship scientists are severely handicapping themselves by settling exclusively for "retracing history." Retrospective reports on this topic can be prone toward methodological problems, including systematic memory and selection biases (for a discussion of the pros and cons of retrospective self-reports in relationships research, see Metts, Sprecher, & Cupach, 1991).

We suggest that great explanatory power will be gained when relationship scientists intensively study initial romantic attraction and early relationship development from before the two partners meet. Speed-dating provides a promising methodological paradigm for studying initial romantic attraction and early relationship development because it enables investigators to assess a large battery of background information about individuals before they meet one another, to introduce them to one another in a controlled laboratory setting (the speed-dating event), and to follow them after the laboratory session to examine relationship dynamics over the ensuing days, weeks, and beyond. The manifold virtues of speed-dating research allow investigators of initial romantic attraction dynamics to focus on relationships that have the potential to become meaningful to participants in the future, to study those aspects of attraction that are inherently dyadic, and, by including longitudinal follow-up assessments, to examine how these attraction dynamics play out over time (see Eastwick & Finkel, in press). The speed-dating paradigm thus harnesses the strengths of close relationships research and applies it to the domain of initial romantic attraction.

An additional virtue is that diverse features of the speed-dating event are amenable to a large array of experimental manipulations. As examples, investigators could (a) compare 1-minute dates to 5-minute dates, (b) offer different instructional sets across the events or to certain individuals within an event (e.g., encouraging some participants to disclose personal information and others *not* to do so; see Aron, Melinat, Aron, Vallone, & Bator, 1997; Sedikides, Campbell, Reeder, & Elliot, 1999), or (c) include confederates of the experimenter at the events to enact one interpersonal style on certain dates and another interpersonal style on others (assuming that the investigators can identify an ethical way to include confederate-based manipulations). In addition to these experimental manipulations, investigators could also employ audio or video procedures (or both) to record each date for subsequent rating by trained coders.

Despite allowing for tight experimental control, speed-dating procedures are also strong in ecological validity. Most importantly, individuals' behavior and decisions in the speed-dating process strongly impact their real romantic prospects. Being impressive on each speed-date (as one would strive to be in real-world settings when meeting potential romantic partners) and taking one's "yes" or "no" decisions seriously can powerfully impact one's romantic life following the event. Also, as in real-world dating situations—but unlike most extant research on initial romantic attraction—each participant is simultaneously evaluating potential partners and being evaluated by them. In addition, individuals really do meet in virtually identical speed-dating events in the real world (i.e., outside of the laboratory)—and individuals, even when they are not attending speed-dating events, frequently face circumstances (e.g., attending a party, going to a bar, attending a retreat for church or another social group, entering a new college dormitory) that allow them to evaluate the romantic

desirability of a series of potential partners simultaneously.

Large-scale speed-dating studies consisting of enough participants to create hundreds of romantic couples and including longitudinal follow-up assessments could in principle produce a sufficient number of romantic relationships to integrate research investigating initial romantic attraction and ongoing close relationships, two fields that barely speak to one another at present. For example, such a study could reveal whether the best predictors of strong initial romantic attraction are correlated positively, negatively, or not at all with the best predictors of healthy long-term relationships. It is possible that one reason for the high divorce rate in Western cultures is that individuals make marriage decisions on the basis of variables that are at best irrelevant to long-term relationship well-being. A large-scale speed-dating study with a longitudinal follow-up portion could provide the data for a compelling test of this speculative but important hypothesis.

Types of hypotheses that can be tested in speed-dating research

Speed-dating studies provide the opportunity to answer countless research questions. For illustrative purposes, we highlight three general types of analysis that emerge in a speed-dating study. The first type of analysis involves predicting speed-dating dynamics on the basis of information collected prior to the event. For example, investigators have examined the role that variables such as physical attractiveness, height, age, body shape, and race play in the number of "yesses" individuals receive (Kurzban & Weeden, 2005). Other investigators might be interested in examining how personality characteristics (or other person-level variables such as having divorced parents) relate to the dynamics of initial romantic attraction. They might hypothesize, for example, that having an agreeable disposition predicts receiving more yesses for women than it does for men or that the similarity-attraction link (cf. Byrne, 1971) is more robust for attitudinal than for personality or demographic similarity.

The second type of analysis involves predicting postevent relationship dynamics from information gathered at the speed-dating event. For example, investigators could examine the relative strength of initial perceptions of physical attractiveness versus initial perceptions of personality in predicting satisfaction with a follow-up date. Other investigators could explore whether individuals who are experimentally urged to disclose deeply personal information on their speed-dates experience elevated mood and well-being in the days following the event.

The third type of analysis involves using variables assessed exclusively during the speed-dating process. For example, investigators have examined (a) whether reciprocal romantic attraction emerges during the speed-date (Eastwick, Finkel, Mochon, & Ariely, 2007) and (b) whether having more speed-dates at a given event differentially impacts the rates at which men and women say "yes" to one another (Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, & Simonson, 2006). Other investigators could explore, for example, whether enjoying one date diminishes the likelihood of saying "yes" to the subsequent date.

This third type of analysis also allows investigators to capitalize on one of the most powerful features of speed-dating research: It is beautifully suited to take advantage of the immense power of Kenny's (1994; Kenny & La Voie, 1984) social relations model (SRM). The SRM provides a data analytic procedure that allows investigators to examine the degree to which features of a given social interaction are due to (a) one partner, (b) the other partner, or (c) the unique dynamics between the two partners. For example, suppose that Jennifer reports strong sexual desire toward David immediately following their 4-minute speed-date. There are three independent reasons why she might experience this desire toward him. First, Jennifer might report strong levels of attraction toward all the men she meets at the event (i.e., she finds everybody sexy, which is an example of an *actor effect*). Second, all the women at the event might find David to be attractive (i.e., he is generally perceived as sexy, which is an example of a *partner effect*). And third, there is something

unique about the dynamics between Jennifer and David that makes her desire him (i.e., she has unique "chemistry" with him, which is an example of a *relationship effect*).[2] If participants report on each of their speed-dates, then investigators can use the SRM to investigate, among other things, the degree to which each of these three independent explanations accurately accounts for attraction phenomena.

In addition to all three types of analysis available from speed-dating research, investigators could also examine the interplay between them. For example, perhaps individuals with high preevent attachment avoidance scores tend not to enjoy follow-up dates with partners who were consensually rated as anxious. We encourage investigators to consider a three-part structural plan, including data collection prior to, during, and following the event. Although this three-part plan is far more labor intensive and costly than the one-part plan involving only the speed-dating event, we believe that its benefits in terms of richness and texture are often worth the costs.

Issues to Consider Prior to Conducting a Speed-Dating Study

We now turn our attention from (a) the potential of speed-dating procedures to advance the science of initial romantic attraction and early relationship development to (b) a nuts-and-bolts "manual" on running speed-dating studies. Researchers planning to conduct a speed-dating study confront an array of decisions unique from those typically encountered by attraction or close relationships researchers. This section of the *Primer* discusses eight issues worth considering prior to conducting a speed-dating study.

Participant sample

After committing to speed-dating as an optimal method for studying a particular research question, investigators must determine the par-

ticipant sample. Several issues factor into this decision, including the researchers' theoretical interests, convenience, and financial considerations. For many research questions, undergraduate samples may be optimal because they are frequently convenient to access, inexpensive to recruit, and, most importantly, interested in meeting new romantic partners. Nonetheless, investigators interested in examining attraction dynamics following divorce, among singles in their 30s, or for individuals looking for immediate marriage partners will frequently find undergraduate samples lacking. Considering that professional speed-dating events are typically attended by people from the nonacademic community, recruiting from this population may be less difficult than is typical in psychological research. Scholars could contact professional speed-dating companies with the hope of initiating a collaborative relationship or they could use more traditional methods of participant recruitment (e.g., newspaper or radio advertisements, flyers), perhaps trying to tantalize potential participants by emphasizing that the research-based speed-dating events will be free of charge.

Whether investigators employ undergraduate or other samples, they must decide on the age ranges of the participants at each session. Even investigators employing an undergraduate sample will want to consider whether, say, senior women (~22 years old) will be interested in dating freshman males (~19 years old). In the Northwestern Speed-Dating Study (NSDS), we resolved this concern by holding separate events for freshmen and sophomores, on the one hand, and for juniors and seniors, on the other. Another important consideration is whether to include only heterosexual events or also gay male and lesbian events.

Speed-dating event details

Another series of decisions to be made early on involves the structure of the speed-dating events themselves. Investigators must decide, for example, how many participants will attend each session, how long each date will last, and whether participants will complete questionnaires after each date. Given that, as with all other experiences, there is a limit on

---

2. One important consideration for SRM analyses is that investigators must include more than a single item to assess each construct of interest to separate the relationship effect from error.

how long individuals can speed-date before their enjoyment and concentration wanes, these decisions are interdependent; the resolution of one influences the others. Although no research has examined what total duration for a speed-dating event is optimal, we decided early on to hold our speed-dating sessions to approximately 2 hours. Our informal perception is that NSDS participants generally were able to stay focused, interested, and attentive for the whole time and that going much longer would have begun to cause strain. This 2-hour block allowed us to include, in addition to other procedural logistics, approximately 12 dates, each lasting 4 minutes and followed by a 2-minute questionnaire. Shortly after participating in the events, 73.0% of participants reported that the number of dates was "just right" (with 6.7% saying it was "too few" and 20.2% saying that it was "too many") and 60.1% reported that having 4 minutes of time for each date was "just right" (with 39.9% saying it was "too little" and 0.0% saying that it was "too much").[3]

Investigators might presume a priori that including a larger number of dates (e.g., 20) would generally result in a better speed-dating experience and in a greater number of matches than would including a smaller number of dates (e.g., 10). After all, the larger number of dates should provide participants with the opportunity to meet more people with whom they could be compatible. Recent evidence suggests, however, that this logic may be incorrect: Participants tend to be happier with their speed-dating experiences and to match with a larger number of people when they attend events with a smaller rather than a larger number of speed-daters (Iyengar, Simonson, Fisman, & Mogilner, 2005).

Investigators must also decide whether to take photos of the speed-dating participants. Although taking photos (and subsequently having them rated for attractiveness by objective observers) can potentially cause some discomfort for participants, it enables researchers to predict the dynamics of initial romantic attraction beyond the effects of physical attractiveness. Such data are likely to be important in persuading skeptics that a given social process promotes initial romantic attraction independent of physical attractiveness.

Keeping event sex ratios near 1.0

Sex ratios refer to the proportion of men to women in a particular environment, and it is important for investigators to keep these ratios in mind as they prepare to conduct speed-dating studies. Imagine that you are a woman attending a speed-dating event consisting of 10 women and 6 men. You would find yourself waiting much of the time for an available man. In addition, the gender imbalance would likely influence your experience in diverse ways (e.g., elevated feelings of intrasexual competition, a perception that you cannot be particularly picky)—and men would likely be influenced in complementary ways. Although fascinating questions emerge in situations with imbalanced sex ratios, scholars generally would not want such imbalances to emerge accidentally.

How can investigators maximize the likelihood that sex ratios will approximate 1.0 in each heterosexual session? One important strategy for avoiding biased sex ratios is limiting the number of available events that are initially opened for registration. The most likely cause of imbalanced sex ratios is that one sex will sign up substantially more quickly or in larger numbers than will the other. In the NSDS, for example, virtually all the female slots filled in less than 48 hours, whereas the male slots took a week to fill. Although we did not predict this imbalance, we were thankful that we had been circumspect in the number of events we initially opened (seven) and that we gave participants ample time to register. In addition to posting a relatively small number of sessions at first, investigators can attend

---

3. Scholars and lay theorists might assume that individuals cannot learn anything substantive about another person in only 4 minutes, but this assumption conflicts strongly with (a) the robust literature on the importance and accuracy of "thin slices" of behaviors (e.g., Ambady & Rosenthal, 1993) and (b) the early findings from the NSDS, which suggest that individuals are able to make extraordinarily sophisticated social judgments on their speed-dates (e.g., Eastwick et al., 2007).

closely to the signup rates and systematically initiate proactive measures to recruit participants of the sex that is signing up more slowly.

Publicity and recruitment

Recruiting similar numbers of men and women for each heterosexual session is just one of several issues to be considered when developing a publicity campaign to recruit participants. The publicity campaign for the NSDS consisted of two waves. The first took place approximately 3 weeks before the initial event and consisted of a series of "teaser flyers" posted around campus. We used six teaser flyers, all of which were eye-catching and designed to inspire students to think of speed-dating as an appealing alternative to the typical dating scene; some included quotes from fictitious Northwestern University undergraduate students. Examples were as follows: (a) "'New people I've met since Fall Quarter? Does my TA count?' — Rachel, Class of '06," and (b) "'4 minutes? That'd be an improvement' — Abby, Class of '08." The second wave took place approximately 10 days before the first event and included a single flyer printed in color and posted around campus. As with the teaser flyers, this flyer was designed to generate excitement while simultaneously emphasizing that the speed-dating events were part of a research study approved by Northwestern University's institutional review board. All flyers are available from the first author upon request.

Although we felt that this advertising campaign would convey the message that participating in the speed-dating study was likely to be a fun and interesting social event, we were concerned that, on its own, it might not be sufficient to generate the "buzz" necessary to recruit large numbers of participants. To complement the advertising campaign, then, we formed a collaborative relationship with the Northwestern Class Alliance, an organization consisting of four subgroups representing, respectively, the freshman, sophomore, junior, and senior classes. Bringing the Northwestern Class Alliance on as a cosponsor of the speed-dating events benefited the study in three important ways: (a) it added a group of motivated undergraduates to assist with activities such as generating publicity ideas, posting flyers, and helping to conduct the speed-dating events; (b) it meant that there were groups of undergraduates on campus (active members of the Northwestern Class Alliance) who were knowledgeable about the speed-dating events and eager to answer questions that other students might have about it; and (c) it gave us access to the listservs to send e-mails about the speed-dating event to all students in a given class.

Participant payment

An additional feature of speed-dating studies is that participation is frequently a substantial reward in its own right, rendering participant payment considerations relatively complicated. In most relationships studies that do not take advantage of "participant pools" (in which undergraduate students participate in exchange for course credit), participants typically must be paid enough to ensure adequate participation. In contrast, speed-dating studies leave open the options of (a) paying individuals to participate, (b) having the events be free to individuals in exchange for completing questionnaires, or (c) charging individuals to participate. Although it may seem strange to consider charging participants to participate in a research study (option c), there are at least two arguments supporting the legitimacy of such an approach. First, individuals who participate in real-world speed-dating events (as opposed to events run by relationship scientists) typically pay a nontrivial sum to participate (a typical price in Chicago, IL, in 2007 was US $35), so it is not unreasonable to charge a smaller amount and also ask that participants complete questionnaires. Second, evidence across diverse domains suggests that individuals place greater value on things for which they have paid than on things they have received for free (e.g., Thaler, 1980); participants may well take the speed-dating study more seriously if they have paid to participate. Furthermore, these funds can be used to make the event more enticing, perhaps by enabling the researchers to rent out a nicer location.

The approach we took in the NSDS was to make the event free for participants in exchange for completing a series of interaction records during the event (option b). We advocate this strategy, particularly for events with an undergraduate population, because it does not exclude participants who are particularly short of cash and allows the experimenter to make salient that this typically expensive event is being offered free of charge in exchange for completing the questionnaires diligently. Of course, payment decisions also need to be made for preevent questionnaires, follow-up questionnaires, and any other aspects of the study that investigators might include, especially if these components of the procedure are particularly time consuming for participants. Our perception is that paying participants for the parts of the procedure aside from the speed-dating event itself is frequently a good idea.

Event location

We highlight here three important concerns in identifying the optimal location for the speed-dating events. First, an obvious concern is that the location should be convenient for the participants. With an undergraduate sample, for example, it will typically be best to host the event on campus or immediately off campus. Second, the location should be as elegant or fun as possible. Although we do not believe that hosting the events in an elegant or fun location is necessary to conduct a high-quality speed-dating study, we do believe that such a location promotes the quality of the experience and leads to an aura of professionalism that is likely to increase the probability that participants will take the study seriously. As described below, we held the NSDS events in an elegant art gallery situated in Northwestern's centrally located student union. Third, the location should be off the beaten path of potentially intrusive passersby. Although there is no need to hold the events in a windowless dungeon, they should not be held in a fishbowl. Passersby and, in our experience, local media figures, will likely be curious about the speed-dating events. If speed-daters feel that they are being watched by outsiders during the event,

this will likely influence their behavior and their experience of the event and the dates (not to mention the confidentiality concerns that could emerge). Although some investigators might decide they are explicitly interested in how dating behavior is altered by the presence of spectators, most will want to eliminate this potentially confounding variable.

Institutional review board considerations

Although ethical concerns are presumably more or less constant across locations, there is an alarming amount of variability in what different institutional review boards (IRBs) (i.e., institutionally sanctioned bodies tasked with overseeing research ethics) determine to be ethical versus unethical research. Our opinion is that any reasonable IRB will allow investigators to conduct speed-dating research as long as the investigators strive toward maximum scientific and scholarly benefits while simultaneously minimizing risks to participants.

The single most important step in garnering IRB approval is to initiate dialogue early in the process. As soon as we knew that we wanted to conduct a speed-dating study with Northwestern University undergraduates and what our general procedures would be, we scheduled a face-to-face meeting with the full-time IRB employee who handles proposals from the psychology department. We were forthright in this meeting about what we believed were the three risks associated with participating in the studies. The first risk was a strong likelihood of experiencing social rejection. Most participants would say "yes" to at least one speed-dater who would say "no" to them, and some participants would say "yes" to many who would say "no" to them. On rare occasions, participants could even be rejected by everybody at the session. The second risk was a strong likelihood of embarrassment and social awkwardness. Speed dates could be uncomfortable, particularly for dyads in which neither partner is blessed with talents for striking up interesting conversation with strangers. Worse yet, there was a nonzero possibility that participants would find themselves on a 4-minute speed-date with a person they had met previously and did not like. Finally, the third risk was a very small likelihood

that an individual whom participants met at a speed-dating event would harm them at a later point in time. An example of this low-probability but very serious risk was that a female participant could subsequently go out with a man she met at the speed-dating event and be sexually assaulted by him on the date.

In addition to having open dialogue with the IRB about the risks associated with participating in the speed-dating study, investigators also need to balance between (a) employing an effective advertising campaign designed to generate excitement about the events and (b) IRB concerns about the protection of human subjects. One of the more difficult conversations we had with the IRB had to do with our desire to advertise in a way that was exciting and that eschewed excessive legalese. The IRB was initially concerned, for example, that our primary flyer came close to promising undue benefits when it said, ''Bring a friend. Make several.'' Ultimately, the IRB concluded that individuals signing up for a speed-dating event could not reasonably infer that we were promising them new friends, and it relented in its initial request to take this section off of the flyer. We raise these details because advertising for a speed-dating study will require an awareness of different aspects of participants' rights than those that might emerge in more traditional relationships research. Again, the best policy is for investigators to initiate dialogue on these issues with the IRB as soon as possible, preferably at least 3 months before they plan to conduct their first event.

Another issue to address with the IRB is using an online consent form. If participants sign up for the study online (which is recommended; see the section Using the Internet), it is significantly more convenient to have them also complete the consent process online, especially if they will also be completing a preevent questionnaire online. If participants will complete these other procedures in person, there is no need to have them complete the consent form online.

Using the Internet

Speed-dating research can be conducted without using the Internet, but using it can result in a more efficient and potentially superior product. We invested substantial effort to make our Web site (www.speeddating.northwestern.edu) look professional, inserting our logo and header atop each page and formatting the pages to optimize aesthetic appeal. We used the Internet for, among other things, (a) participant signup, (b) administration of the preevent questionnaire, (c) signing participants in at the speed-dating event, (d) having participants report their ''yesses'' and ''nos,'' (e) administration of the follow-up questionnaires, (f) implementation of the messaging system that allowed individuals to e-mail their matches through our Web site, and (g) sending reminder e-mails for the speed-dating events and for all follow-up questionnaires. In addition to making the study seem more professional, other benefits emerging from using the Internet to conduct speed-dating research include (a) automated procedures that save time and minimize the likelihood of human error, (b) the ability to set up a messaging system (discussed below) for participant communication, (c) access to precise timing information about when participants completed Internet-based components of the study, and (d) reducing the need for manual data entry from the research team.

On the other hand, setting up a Web site sophisticated enough to run a speed-dating study requires computer programming skills that are not available in many psychological laboratories. We believe that investigators could conduct high-quality speed-dating studies without creating a study Web site, but it would require crossing a few hurdles. One important hurdle would be developing a system for the matching process. Investigators could do this by, for example, having participants turn in their ''yes'' or ''no'' decisions at the end of the event to a member of the research team, who would do the matching by hand and e-mail matches to the participants. Preevent and follow-up questionnaires would also require alternative solutions (e.g., mailing the questionnaires to participants or asking them to come to the lab for separate questionnaire sessions), but these certainly would not be prohibitively difficult. In short, there are several advantages to conducting speed-dating

research by relying extensively on the Internet, but investigators can conduct high-quality studies using more traditional research procedures.

The NSDS—Procedures and Materials

As we began NSDS preparation, we were only able to rely on our own idiosyncratic speed-dating experiences[4] and unpublished manuscripts from other speed-dating researchers. In addition, empirical papers presenting results from speed-dating studies are likely to be somewhat meager on procedural detail due to the space constraints placed on authors by editors and publishers. Toward the goal of providing an in-depth, illustrative overview of the methodological issues and procedures relevant to conducting speed-dating studies, the final section of this Primer explains in detail the NSDS procedure and materials.

Procedure

Part I: Preevent procedures.   After seeing our publicity flyers or e-mails, or after hearing about the study via word of mouth, interested individuals visited our Web site and viewed a page that provided a basic outline of all study procedures. If they remained interested in participating after reading this additional information, they read and (electronically) signed the online consent form; the computer system did not allow them to continue unless they signed this form. Next, they provided their name and e-mail address, indicated the type of event they wished to attend (e.g., men seeking women, men seeking men), and created a password so they could log into the speed-dating Web site in the future. Moments after this registration procedure was complete, participants received an e-mail at their registra-

---

4. The first and second authors of this report participated in a Chicago-based speed-dating event in February 2004 to learn how speed-dating events "are supposed to go." Although we do not believe it is necessary for scholars (especially those who are not single) to participate in a speed-dating event to develop a high-quality speed-dating study, we recommend that investigators invest some time familiarizing themselves with professional speed-dating practices before conducting their own events.

tion e-mail address; this e-mail included a clickable link that sent them to a page where they logged in with their e-mail address and password. (We incorporated this part of the procedure to minimize the likelihood that, e.g., somebody might register a friend as a practical joke.) After logging in, participants selected among the available speed-dating events and were sent to the 30-minute preevent questionnaire.

We held participants' selected time slot for 3 hours to provide some flexibility for them to complete this questionnaire (for which they were paid US $5 at the event). They were allowed to stop in the middle of the questionnaire and return later in the 3-hour block to complete it. If they failed to complete the preevent questionnaire within those 3 hours, they were required to select an event again (if there were still open time slots) and could then continue completing the questionnaire from where they had previously left off. This 3-hour time limit disallowed participants from occupying a slot in an event without being serious about the research component of the study. The time limit proved useful, as 10% of the participants who began the preevent questionnaire never completed it (i.e., they in essence dropped out of the study). If those time slots had remained reserved, we could have faced a problematic number of no shows at the events.

In total, we conducted seven speed-dating events involving 163 (81 women) Northwestern University undergraduate students between Wednesday, April 27, and Wednesday, May 4, 2005. Participants were 19.6 years old on average ($SD = 1.0$ years); 36.2% were freshmen, 38.7% sophomores, 21.5% juniors, and 3.7% seniors. (We recruited seniors less aggressively because they were scheduled to graduate approximately 6 weeks after the events.)

Part II: Event procedures.   We hosted the NSDS speed-dating events in the Dittmar Art Gallery in Northwestern University's Norris University Center, which is the university's student union. We standardized the lighting setup and music selection across events. In advance of each session, members of the

research team configured the room so there was a series of approximately 12 dyadic seating areas, each consisting of two chairs and a small tablecloth-covered table adorned with a candle. The large entryway to the art gallery served as a location for refreshments, which consisted of bottled root beer and sparkling grape juice.

When participants arrived for the event, they checked in immediately outside the art gallery, where a researcher (PWE) assigned participant IDs (a number for women or a letter for men). Participants were given name tags and were instructed to write their first names and participant IDs on them. They were also given a clipboard containing a packet of interaction records (one-page questionnaires that participants completed following each date) and a "scorecard" on which they could write notes to themselves about their dates.

Immediately after checking in for the event, participants entered the art gallery and posed for their photograph. The research assistant taking the photograph explained that it would be posted on our speed-dating Web site to help speed-daters remember one another when recording their "yesses" and "nos" and when completing the follow-up questionnaires. The research assistant used a digital camera for the photos, which allowed her to show the picture to the speed-dater. We took as many photos as the participants desired until they were happy with one.

The experimenter for the speed-dating sessions (EJF) filled a dual role as both experimenter and emcee. As in most relationships studies, the experimenter guided participants through the session and answered any questions they raised. At the appropriate time in each event, he explained the speed-dating procedures, how to use the interaction records and the scorecard, and the matching procedures. (The experimenter script is available upon request from the first author.) In addition to these typical responsibilities, the experimenter was also responsible for helping to make the session an entertaining social event; he strived to remain lively and energetic throughout.

After each 4-minute date, the experimenter blew his whistle, which served as the cue for participants to rotate to the next position and complete the interaction record regarding the just-completed date. The reason why participants rotated to the new location before rather than after completing the interaction record is that it would have been awkward for them to complete an interaction record about the person sitting across from them. It was less awkward to complete it while sitting across from somebody they had not yet dated.

The dyadic seating stations for the NSDS were set in a loosely circular configuration. In four of the seven speed-dating events, women remained seated throughout the session, while the men rotated from station to station. In the other three events, men remained seated while women rotated.

Part III: Postevent procedures. When participants returned home from the event, an e-mail containing a link to our Web site awaited them. After logging in, they arrived at the page where they clicked "yes" or "no" next to the photo of each speed-dater[5] they had met that evening and completed the brief prematch questionnaire (discussed below). After completing the prematch questionnaire, participants answered one more question before logging off: They indicated whether or not they would allow "missed matches" (speed-daters who had said "no" to the participant but to whom the participant had said "yes") to learn that the participant had said "yes" to them. If the participant said "yes" to the missed matches option, the missed match would be given the option of changing his or her previous "no" response to a "yes" (after learning about his or her matches 24 hours later). If the missed match indeed chose to change from "no" to "yes," the dyad would become a match. In the NSDS, 100% of participants completed the matching process and 54% selected the missed matches option. The 163 participants generated a total of 206 pairs of

---

5. Other speed-dating researchers (e.g., Fisman et al., 2006) instead had participants indicate their "yes" or "no" decisions on the questionnaire administered immediately after each date. A fascinating program of research might examine how "yes" or "no" decisions change as a function of whether participants are (a) physically with the potential match, (b) at home but presented with a picture of the potential match, or (c) at home with only their memory of the potential match.

matches (mean per participant = 2.53; range = 0–9), and 20.9% of these pairs resulted from the missed matches option. In fact, six participants with at least one match would have had zero matches if not for this option.

Then, 24 hours after the speed-dating event, participants received another e-mail from us directing them back to our Web site. After logging in, they learned who their matches were and completed the brief postmatch questionnaire (discussed below). As soon as participants learned who their matches were (and decided whether to change from "no" to "yes" for any missed matches), they could use our Web site's messaging system to write to one or more of their matches without having to divulge personal contact information. They arrived at the messaging page by clicking a button next to the photograph of the match they wanted to contact; the recipient viewed any received messages by returning to the Web site and was offered the option to send a reply. Participants were permitted to use the messaging system for 1 month following the speed-dating event, during which time 111 participants sent a total of 383 messages. These messages were later coded by the research team (after all identifying information had been removed).[6]

Twenty-four hours after participants received their match information (and 48 hours after attending the speed-dating event), participants received an e-mail directing them to the first wave of the 10-wave follow-up portion of the study. They received similar e-mails every 72 hours until all 10 waves of the follow-up portion of the study had been completed (30 days after the speed-dating event). They were instructed to complete each questionnaire before going to bed that night, although we accepted late questionnaires. They were paid US$3 for each follow-up questionnaire they completed and a US$10 bonus if they completed at least nine of them. Participant retention was good, with 90% completing at least three of the follow-up questionnaires and 64% completing at least nine of them.

Materials

The NSDS materials consisted of five sections. The preevent questionnaire, interaction records, and follow-up questionnaires were major sections, whereas the prematch and the postmatch questionnaires were smaller sections. We discuss the five questionnaires in the order in which participants completed them.

Preevent questionnaire. The preevent questionnaire consisted of a broad array of demographic and background measures and required approximately 30 minutes to complete. Demographic variables included sex, race, height, weight, hometown, and religion. We included brief measures of a broad array of mainstream personality variables (e.g., self-esteem; the "big five" personality characteristics) and of interpersonal dispositions (e.g., attachment anxiety and avoidance, sociosexuality, loneliness). We also included measures to allow participants to rate the degree to which a series of 28 characteristics (e.g., physically attractive, ambitious/driven, friendly/nice, spontaneous, outgoing) described their actual self, their ideal self, and their ideal partner.

Interaction records. Upon their arrival at the speed-dating event, participants received a packet of identical interaction records, one for each date. These interaction records consisted of three parts. The first part asked participants about their experience of the date itself and of the relationship between themselves and the partner (e.g., "I was sexually attracted to my interaction partner," "I think that my interaction partner was sexually attracted to me," "I thought this interaction went smoothly"). The second part asked participants about their perceptions of 12 of the partner's characteristics (e.g., physically attractive, ambitious/driven, charismatic). These characteristics represented a subset of the 28 characteristics participants had reported

---

6. Participants were aware that we (the researchers) were able to see the messages. Being able to see the messages has enormous scientific benefits in terms of providing a rich source of process-oriented information about how individuals initiate romantic relationships with desired partners, but it could have negative methodological consequences as well (e.g., increasing demand characteristics), which could possibly alter the content of the e-mails or the likelihood of sending one in the first place.

on the preevent questionnaire vis-à-vis the actual self, the ideal self, and the ideal partner. Finally, the third part asked participants about the degree to which the partner made them feel like they possessed each of these same 12 characteristics.

The experimenter emphasized to the participants that some of the items (e.g., the degree to which the other person is "dependable/ trustworthy") might be somewhat difficult to answer after knowing the person for only 4 minutes. He reassured them that they were expected just to provide their best guess.

Prematch questionnaire. When participants returned home after the speed-dating event, they logged into our Web site and checked either "yes" or "no" next to the photograph of each date to indicate whether they would be interested in seeing that person again. After completing these "yes" or "no" decisions, they filled out the brief prematch questionnaire, which consisted of an array of items (e.g., "How many matches do you estimate you will get?" "Overall, how satisfied were you with the people you met?" and "I enjoyed my speed-dating experience"). Participants also indicated the degree to which each of the 12 characteristics assessed on the interaction records influenced their "yes" or "no" decisions, and they were provided an open-ended opportunity to give us feedback about their speed-dating experience.

Postmatch questionnaire. The evening after the speed-dating event, participants returned to our Web site to find out with whom they had matched. Immediately after learning about their matches, they filled out the brief postmatch questionnaire asking four general questions about their satisfaction with their matches and their self-views (e.g., "I am happy about my matches") and several questions regarding their reactions to each of their matches (e.g., "I am extremely excited that I matched with [first name]," "I am very likely to initiate contact with [first name]," "I hope that [first name] initiates contact with me").

Follow-up questionnaires. The follow-up questionnaires were designed to assess how

participants' romantic lives were shaping up in the wake of the speed-dating event. Broadly speaking, the 10 follow-up questionnaires (completed every third day for a month) consisted of two sections. The first section did not mention any of the participants' speed-dating matches, instead focusing on the participants themselves and their life circumstances. This section included items such as "In general, I am pretty happy these days," "I have high self-esteem," and "Compared to the average Northwestern University student, my physical health is excellent." It also asked participants to indicate the degree to which the same series of 28 characteristics initially encountered in the preevent questionnaire described their actual self at each follow-up wave.

The second section consisted of a series of match-specific items. The fact that participants had between zero and nine matches presented a significant complication: If participants responded to the identical set of items about each of their matches, the follow-up questionnaires would become disproportionately onerous for participants who had a large number of matches, potentially resulting in systematic bias in participant retention. Two additional complications also would have arisen if participants always answered the identical set of items about each of their matches: (a) It would have resulted in repetitive responding for participants who had neither corresponded with nor intended to correspond with a particular match as their opinions or attitudes about the match would have been unlikely to change in the intervening 72 hours and (b) many questions (e.g., "I feel uncertain about [first name]'s true feelings for me") would be irrelevant or potentially bizarre if the participant had no romantic interest in the match.

We dealt with these concerns by (a) creating three different sets of questions that could apply to each match and (b) incorporating procedures designed to have participants answer only those questions that were relevant to a particular match. Specifically, the measures regarding each match were customized on each follow-up wave depending on the participants' answers to the following *pivot question*: "What is the current status of your relationship with [first name]?" Participants

were given the following response options to the question: (a) dating seriously, (b) dating casually, (c) friend with romantic potential, (d) acquaintance with romantic potential, (e) friend without romantic potential, (f) acquaintance without romantic potential, and (g) no relationship at all. Table 1 provides an overview of how participants' responses to this pivot

Table 1. *The structure of the match-specific section of the follow-up questionnaires*

Questions	Pivot answer	Sample questionnaire items
Set 1	1. Dating seriously 2. Dating casually 3. Friend with romantic potential 4. Acquaintance with romantic potential 5. Friend without romantic potential 6. Acquaintance without romantic potential 7. No relationship at all[a]	• "[First name] could have a romantic relationship with just about anyone he/she wanted" • "I think that [first name] is romantically interested in me" • "Have you hung out with [first name] in person *or* corresponded with [first name] not in person (e-mail, IM, phone, etc.)?" • Participants indicated the degree to which this match possessed each of the 12 characteristics included on the interaction records.
Set 2	1. Dating seriously 2. Dating casually 3. Friend with romantic potential 4. Acquaintance with romantic potential 5. Friend without romantic potential 6. Acquaintance without romantic potential	• "If [first name] were going through a difficult time, I would put away my own concerns to help him/her out" • "[First name] cares about my needs" • "I feel comfortable opening up to [first name]" • "[First name] helps me become who I ideally want to be—s/he elicits the best in me"
Set 3	1. Dating seriously 2. Dating casually 3. Friend with romantic potential 4. Acquaintance with romantic potential	• "I would like to have a serious romantic relationship with [first name]" • "I would like to have a one-night stand with [first name]" • "I feel uncertain about [first name]'s true feelings for me" • "Have you engaged in any romantic physical contact (kissing or other sexual activities) with [first name]?"

Note: Participants answered a different array of questionnaire items about each match at a given follow-up wave depending upon their responses to the *pivot question*: "What is the current status of your relationship with [first name]?" The "pivot answer" column indicates which answers caused the program to present participants with a given question set. The three question sets are ordered hierarchically, such that all participants who answered Set 2 items about a given match also answered Set 1 items, and all participants who answered Set 3 items also answered Set 1 and Set 2 items. Questionnaire items phrased as declarative statements were assessed on scales ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

[a]To avoid redundancy, if participants indicated that they had "no relationship at all" with a particular match on two or more consecutive follow-up questionnaires, they were asked no additional questions about him or her (not even those in Set 1). This procedure allowed us to get basic information regarding all matches at least once while avoiding burdening participants unnecessarily by having them repeatedly report on a match with whom they had no relationship.

question influenced the questions they answered regarding that match at that wave.

Before concluding this discussion of the follow-up questionnaires, we mention a final aspect of the procedure that investigators conducting speed-dating research might also want to consider incorporating into their own studies: Participants in the NSDS reported on romantic dynamics regarding individuals whom they met via avenues other than speed-dating. We referred to these non–speed-dating romantic interests as "write-ins" and asked participants a series of questions about them. Information gleaned from the write-ins is valuable because it provides a more comprehensive picture of relationship dynamics than would have emerged had we maintained an exclusive focus on participants' relationships with other speed-daters. Furthermore, this procedure ensured that all participants, even those who had unsuccessful speed-dating experiences, were able to provide important data about their romantic lives when they completed a follow-up questionnaire. In addition to being interesting in its own right, this information about other romantic interests can also provide insight into the source of sudden shifts in romantic interest in a particular speed-dating match.

Potential Limitations of Speed-Dating Research

Thus far, we have served as unabashed supporters of the scientific potential of speed-dating procedures. As with all other methodologies, however, there are potential limitations of speed-dating research. These potential limitations can be divided into three categories: external validity, efficacy, and stigma.

External validity

When researchers attempt to study any real-world phenomenon (including speed-dating) in a controlled setting, external validity can potentially be compromised. There are two separate reasons why generalizability might be threatened specifically in a speed-dating study: (a) attraction and relationship development *processes* that emerge during and after

speed-dating events might be dissimilar to those that emerge in relationships initiated through other means and (b) participants who volunteer for a speed-dating study might constitute a highly unusual *sample*.

Although both of these concerns are valid, we suggest that neither should dissuade interested researchers from conducting their own speed-dating studies at this time. In response to the first (processes) concern, it is worth noting that, unlike most laboratory-based procedures, speed-dating is a mainstream activity that millions of people actually engage in outside the lab. In many cities, a typical speed-dating company will host events weekly—even more frequently in major metropolitan centers such as New York or Los Angeles. More importantly (and as noted earlier), speed-dating shares several core features in common with other forms of real-world dating: Speed-daters are both evaluating others and being evaluated themselves, and, as in many social situations in which individuals meet potential romantic partners (e.g., bars, parties, singles cruises, church social events), they meet a variety of potential romantic partners simultaneously. Finally, although it is unknown whether speed-dating findings would generalize to people meeting at a bar, for example, it is equally unknown whether meeting someone at a bar is similar to meeting someone on a softball team or at a dinner party. To be sure, these are all social gatherings, and whether or not they differ systematically from one another in ways that alter romantic processes is an interesting research question, not an inherent limitation with research designs that focus on one particular setting.

The second concern is that speed-dating participants could constitute a highly unrepresentative sample. Even if the results of a speed-dating study accurately describe how these particular individuals initiate relationships across social settings, speed-daters might be unusual, and perhaps we would not want to assume that their behavior describes what "normal people" do. Although we acknowledge that speed-dating participants might be unusual in important and systematic ways, we observe that plausible a priori hypotheses

are often contradictory regarding the *ways* in which speed-daters are likely to be unusual. For example, it is easy to imagine that speed-dating samples are comprised of highly extraverted individuals who greatly enjoy meeting and talking with new people. Yet, it is equally easy to imagine that speed-daters are people who have difficulty initiating conversations in more traditional social situations and look to speed-dating as a way around this difficulty.

The sanguine truth is that both of these generalizability concerns can ultimately be addressed empirically. One way we are striving to address the first (processes) concern is by examining whether the NSDS revealed systematic differences between follow-up reports of fellow speed-daters and follow-up reports of write-ins, as such differences could suggest that there is something unique or unusual about meeting a potential romantic partner at a speed-dating event. In a preliminary examination of this issue, we found no evidence for systematic differences between the two groups (Eastwick & Finkel, 2007). Researchers could address the second concern (sample) by studying whether people who are willing or eager to try speed-dating differ in systematic ways from participants who are not willing or not eager to do so.

Ultimately, concerns about generalizability are appropriate, especially insofar as they generate additional research questions that can help highlight how and why people might differ in their approach to dating. There is no evidence at this time, however, suggesting that these concerns seriously threaten the use of speed-dating as a research tool for understanding romantic relationship initiation.

Efficacy

The second possible limitation of speed-dating research is whether the events actually create romantic experiences of scholarly value to relationship scientists. We have expressed our hopes that speed-dating, through the creation of actual romantic relationships, might ultimately help to connect the fields of initial romantic attraction and close relationships research, but we acknowledge that there exist heretofore almost no efficacy data to back up this optimism. In fact, it is not clear which

criteria should be used to validate speed-dating's efficacy. It is clear that individuals who married, had children, and lived happily ever after with a partner they met through speed-dating would count as a success, but what about individuals who spent 8 months or even 2 weeks in a romantic relationship with a partner they met through speed-dating—would such outcomes count as successes?

Although the extant literature cannot provide definitive answers for any of these questions, data from the NSDS shed some preliminary light on the issue of speed-dating efficacy. On the follow-up questionnaires, participants indicated whether they had corresponded or hung out with each match during each 3-day interval (see Table 1). Across the 10 waves, speed-daters reported 579 instances of corresponding or hanging out with a match, and the substantial majority of these reports (78%) were with people they had not known prior to the speed-dating event. At first glance, 579 seems like a large number of potential romantic interactions, suggesting that speed-dating does indeed promote contact between speed-daters in the wake of the event (although there is no guarantee that this was romantic contact). Upon reflection, however, it becomes apparent that efficacy questions are unanswerable at this stage because it is not obvious what the appropriate base rate comparison should be. How often are romantic relationships spawned when two singles meet at church or in a college chemistry class? If 1 out of every 100 speed-daters eventually forms a serious relationship with another speed-dater, would that be impressive? The question of speed-dating efficacy is fascinating, but it will likely be some time before researchers have a handle on the base rate of romantic relationship initiation in *any* context, speed-dating included.

Stigma

Although many other types of relationships research (e.g., clinical interventions for sexual dysfunction) could be stigmatizing, speed-dating differs from most of these in that it is unusually public. If individuals participate in a speed-dating session with 10 men, 10 women, and 5 members of the research staff, then at least 24 other people will know that they

participated. Granted, all of the other participants will be in the same situation, but this could be little comfort to individuals who might be embarrassed about their participation.

Given that a speed-dating study had never (to our knowledge) been conducted with an undergraduate student sample prior to the NSDS, we experienced considerable concern that few individuals would sign up to participate, leaving us with a small and quirky sample. One of our primary goals as we began planning for the NSDS was making it a cool event on campus rather than having it seem like a nerdy alternative to a real social life. We strived to generate "buzz" by means of an intensive publicity campaign and a collaborative relationship with a student organization. We have reason to believe that our efforts were effective at eliminating much of the stigma potential. Not only were we forced to turn away hundreds of interested participants after our events had filled, but several favorable write-ups appeared in the Northwestern daily newspaper, with one explicitly thanking the first author of this report for doing something to help the local dating scene. Our intuition is that students at many (if not most) institutions also believe that their school has "no dating scene"; therefore, there is a good chance that a similarly conducted ad campaign would be effective at reducing speed-dating's stigma potential among many undergraduate populations.

Preliminary NSDS Findings and Concluding Remarks

The present report provides a conceptual and methodological primer for investigators interested in conducting their own speed-dating studies. We hope that speed-dating research catches on among scholars interested in studying initial romantic attraction or early relationship development (or both), as we have found it to be an extremely generative method for such pursuits. Thus far, the NSDS has led us to many interesting findings that have since spawned full-fledged programs of research. As one example, an SRM analysis (Kenny, 1994) of the NSDS data revealed that participants can distinguish between another's romantic desire that is directed uniquely toward the self versus indiscriminately toward all the speed-daters at the session (Eastwick et al., 2007). We are currently conducting follow-up experiments to discern exactly how participants are able to make these fine-grained distinctions after only 4 minutes. As a second example, the NSDS data revealed that participants' self-reported romantic partner preferences at pretest did a poor job of predicting whom they actually liked at and after the speed-dating event (Eastwick & Finkel, 2007; also see Iyengar et al., 2005). We are currently conducting follow-up experiments investigating what it is about meeting and getting to know a potential romantic partner that causes individuals not to compare this person with their preexisting ideal partner template. These two examples represent just the tip of the iceberg and are included to provide illustrations of the sorts of research programs that can be enhanced by the high quality and plentiful quantity of data provided by speed-dating studies.

In sum, speed-dating has rapidly become an international phenomenon, helping individuals meet compatible romantic partners in diverse nations, from Japan (e.g., tokyospeeddating.com) to South Africa (e.g., xfactordates.com), and among diverse populations, such as devout Muslims (MacFarquhar, 2006). We have argued that speed-dating could well serve as a significant methodological innovation for the science of initial romantic attraction (see Eastwick & Finkel, in press). Speed-dating could help investigators unravel relationship initiation processes (without depending upon retrospective reports) among a sample of individuals who are motivated and eager to meet potential romantic partners. It could also help them apply to initial attraction research some of the best elements of close relationships research: the emphasis on (potentially) meaningful relationships and the use of dyadic and longitudinal data collection procedures. Finally, speed-dating has the potential to enhance the landscape of research on initial romantic attraction and link the fields of attraction and close relationships research into a single, comprehensive field of inquiry. This merger could bring important age-old questions into focus (i.e., whether the predictors of attraction are compatible with those that predict a successful

marriage) and highlight critical theoretical and practical directions for future research.

References

Ambady, N., & Rosenthal, R. (1993). Half a minute: Predicting teacher evaluations from thin slices of nonverbal behavior and physical attractiveness. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *64*, 431–441.

Aron, A., Melinat, E., Aron, E. N., Vallone, R., & Bator, R. (1997). The experimental generation of interpersonal closeness: A procedure and some preliminary findings. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *23*, 363–377.

Berscheid, E., & Regan, P. (2005). *The psychology of interpersonal relationships*. New York: Prentice-Hall.

Byrne, D. (1971). *The attraction paradigm*. New York: Academic Press.

Byrne, D., Ervin, C. E., & Lamberth, J. (1970). Continuity between the experimental study of attraction and real-life computer dating. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *16*, 157–165.

Eastwick, P. W., & Finkel, E. J. (2007). *Sex differences in mate preferences revisited: Do people really know what they desire in a romantic partner?* Manuscript submitted for publication.

Eastwick, P. W., & Finkel, E. J. (in press). Speed-dating: A powerful and flexible paradigm for studying relationship initiation. In S. Sprecher, A. Wenzel, & J. Harvey (Eds.), *Handbook of relationship beginnings*. New York: Guilford Press.

Eastwick, P. W., Finkel, E. J., Mochon, D., & Ariely, D. (2007). Selective versus unselective romantic desire: Not all reciprocity is created equal. *Psychological Science*, *18*, 317–319.

Fisman, R., Iyengar, S. S., Kamenica, E., & Simonson, I. (2006). Searching for a mate: Evidence from a speed-dating experiment. *Quarterly Journal of Economics*, *121*, 673–697.

Iyengar, S. S., Simonson, I., Fisman, R., & Mogilner, C. (2005, January). *I know what I want but can I find it?: Examining the dynamic relationship between stated and revealed preferences*. Paper presented at the annual meeting of the Society of Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), New Orleans, LA.

Kenny, D. A. (1994). *Interpersonal perception: A social relations analysis*. New York: Guilford.

Kenny, D. A., & La Voie, L. (1984). The social relations model. In L. Berkowitz (Ed.), *Advances in experimental social psychology* (Vol. 18, pp. 142–182). Orlando, FL: Academic.

Kline, K., Kline, D., & Hunt, B. (2004). *SQL in a nutshell* (2nd ed.), Sebastopol, CA, O'Reilly Media.

Kurzban, R., & Weeden, J. (2005). HurryDate: Mate preferences in action. *Evolution and Human Behavior*, *26*, 227–244.

MacFarquhar, N. (2006, September 19). It's Muslim boy meets girl, but don't call it dating. *New York Times*, p. A1.

Metts, S., Sprecher, S., & Cupach, W. R. (1991). Retrospective self-reports. In B. M. Montgomery & S. Duck (Eds.) *Studying interpersonal interaction* (pp. 162–178). New York: Guilford Press.

Raudenbush, S. W., & Bryk, A. S. (2002). *Hierarchical linear models: Applications and data analysis methods* (2nd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Sedikides, C., Campbell, W. K., Reeder, G. D., & Elliot, A. J. (1999). The relationship closeness induction task. *Representative Research in Social Psychology*, *23*, 1–4.

Singer, J. D., & Willett, J. B. (2003). *Applied longitudinal data analysis*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Sprecher, S., & Duck, S. (1994). Sweet talk: The importance of perceived communication for romantic and friendship attraction experienced during a get-acquainted date. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin*, *20*, 391–400.

Stanczyk, S., Champion, B., & Leyton, R. (2001). *Theory and practice of relational databases* (2nd ed.). New York: Taylor & Francis.

Thaler, R. (1980). Toward a positive theory of consumer choice. *Journal of Economic Behavior and Organization*, *1*, 39–60.

Walster, E., Aronson, V., Abrahams, D., & Rottman, L. (1966). Importance of physical attractiveness in dating behavior. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, *4*, 508–516.