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## ROMANTIC REJECTION IN GAY POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS: A GAY BLOG ANALYSIS

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ROMANTIC REJECTION IN GAY POTENTIAL RELATIONSHIPS: A GAY BLOG  
ANALYSIS

A Thesis Submitted to the  
Graduate School of  
John Carroll University  
In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree of  
Master of Arts

by

Rebecca Ferlotti

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## **Abstract**

Little research has been done on gay potential relationships (when two daters had gone on five or fewer dates or would-be dates), and there was no existing research available on romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. Most existing literature on romantic rejection focused on heterosexual relationships and long-term homosexual relationships. This thesis analyzed 48 blog entries from four publicly-accessible gay dating blogs (*The Guyliner*; *It Gets Worse*; *Gay Dating Stories*; and *100 Guys, 100 Stories*) that described romantic rejections. This thesis concluded romantic rejections for the four gay bloggers overall were most frequently implicit, due to a violation of expectations, and used face-detracting rejection strategies; offering a reason and silence were the most common rejection strategy sub-categories. Results varied between blogs, and each is reported within this thesis. The results of this content analysis offer a framework for understanding romantic rejection in the gay community regarding types of rejections, reasons for rejection, and rejection strategies used in potential relationships.

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## **Chapter One: Introduction**

Romantic rejections, also called breakups or relationship dissolutions, are the conclusions of unsuccessful relationship attempts. Romantic rejections exist for all sexualities and relationship lengths, but researchers have not studied the primary facets of romantic rejection in a single study, including types of rejection, reasons for rejection, and rejection strategies. Nor have they studied the primary facets of romantic rejection for gay potential relationships at all, here defined as two gay men going on five or less dates (or dates that were supposed to happen and one of the daters did not show up). Gay men were not studied much in the past because their relationship patterns were thought to be the same as heterosexual men. While there are similarities between heterosexual and homosexual relationships (Shieh, 2016; van Eeden-Moorfield et al., 2011), researchers have also found differences, such as higher levels of autonomy in gay relationships (Kurdek, 1998). Available research on romantic rejection in homosexual relationships discussed the effects of breakups after long-term relationship dissolution (Kurdek, 1998; van Eeden-Moorefield, Martell, Williams, & Preston, 2011) but did not examine types of rejection or rejection strategies at all. Shieh (2016) discussed reasons for rejection in homosexual relationships, but the reasons were applicable to long-term relationships, such as infidelity or lack of trust. Willerton (2010) framed communication theories in a homosexual relationship context, discussing relationship breakdown and the factors leading to it, including the social level of relationship breakdown, which involved the support systems of the two people within the relationship. Lannutti and Cameron (2002) compared heterosexual and homosexual relationships after romantic rejection occurred. Some studies on relationship aspects that could lead to romantic rejection included a small sample of homosexual online daters. Those studies included personal values systems (Manning, 2013) and uncertainty reduction strategies in

online dating profiles, or strategies used to determine if people were lying on their dating profiles (Gibbs, Ellison, & Lai, 2011). Young, Paxman, Koehring, and Anderson (2008) did not specify sexuality but covered unrequited love in romantic relationships, rejection in friendships, and rejection from acquaintances.

The majority of existing research on romantic rejection or factors leading to romantic rejection used heterosexual subjects. Kurdek (1998), Shieh (2016), and van Eeden-Moorefield et al. (2011) concluded there were many similarities between heterosexual relationships and homosexual relationships in the way those relationships were conducted. Tong and Walther (2010) discussed communicating romantic rejection through the lens of politeness theory (the belief that individuals will be more polite to one another when they have higher levels of acquaintanceship). Doering (2010) conducted a study in which participants described instances of heterosexual long-term relationship dissolution. Additional research on heterosexual relationships focused on relationship aspects that could result in romantic rejection, such as attraction based on traditional gender role representation (Kreager, Cavanagh, Yen, & Yu, 2014; Fullick, 2013; Korobov, 2011) and linguistic deception within online dating profiles (Ellison, Heino, & Gibbs, 2006; Gibbs, Ellison, & Heino, 2006; Ellison, Hancock, & Toma, 2012; Toma & Hancock, 2012). However, a search of the literature revealed no research on romantic rejection as it applied to gay potential relationships.

This thesis applied other theories and concepts to romantic rejection in gay potential relationships as well. Face work included positive and negative faces. “Positive face (the desire to be seen as competent and desire to have our face accepted) and a negative face (a desire for autonomy and to preserve the status quo)” could be threatened in situations involving romantic rejection (Redmond, 2015, p. 2). The explicit-implicit dichotomy covered how speech was

explicit; actions without speech, or speech that had a contradictory meaning, were implicit (Mehrabian, 1972). Expectancy violation theory explained that expectations about an individual's personality or habits might not align with reality (Burgoon, 1993).

Overall, this thesis examines types of rejections, reasons for rejection, and rejection strategies in gay potential relationships using gay bloggers' accounts of their dates. Gay potential relationships, in this context, involved two men who were not in a committed relationship, as they had gone on less than five dates or would-be dates (dates that were supposed to occur but one of the daters did not attend), as described by gay bloggers. Rak (2005) explained gay bloggers often used blogging as a form of autobiography because the publishing industry often did not accept gay writers. Rather than write diaries, these individuals opted to share their stories publicly online as a means of expression. While readers had to make the assumption that blog entries were as accurate as possible, Rak concluded lying within blogs was difficult to sustain; "Bloggers write to a readership and not to themselves, and so 'readers notice' when something is not real" (p. 175). These autobiographical accounts of gay bloggers' lives that were publicly available were more data-rich than a typical diary used for personal consumption (Bloom, 1998). Since blog entries spoke to audiences, bloggers had to describe more about their backgrounds or situational backgrounds than they would if they wrote about themselves and for themselves.

Romantic rejection blog entries included the type of rejection: explicit (with words) or implicit (using non-verbal cues or spoken in a contradictory way) (Mehrabian, 1972). Entries discussed reasons behind the rejection. Rejections occurred because of a violation of expectations (Kelly, 2001; Kelly, Miller-Ott, & Duran, 2017), physical misrepresentation (Toma & Hancock, 2012; Curran & Lippold, 1975), or unrequited love (Baumeister & Dhavale, 2001). Once a reason for rejection was established, the rejection was perpetrated or received via



face-enhancing strategies, or strategies that “support or confirm a person’s positive or negative face” (DeVito, 2017, p. 322), and face-detracting strategies, or strategies that attack a person's positive or negative face. Romantic rejection sub-categories included: reason, apology, appreciation, concern, encouragement, future contact, blaming, direct disagreement, forcing self-disclosure, silence, sarcasm, and other. A content analysis of gay bloggers’ blog entries offered a way to study types of rejection, reasons for rejection, and rejection strategies to increase understanding of gay potential relationships.

For communication management professionals, this thesis is useful in terms of comprehending interpersonal communication strategies used between gay men. Marketing strategies often include personas with both demographic and psychographic information, and having a fuller perspective of all facets of gay men’s lives can assist in creating those marketing personas. Using gay blogs to understand romantic rejection in gay potential relationships aids communication management professionals in developing more effective messaging for gay men as a target audience. From a search engine optimization (SEO) perspective, communication management professionals can see which search terms perform well on online searches. They can tailor their own writing for gay men based on those search terms and the way the gay bloggers speak within their entries.

Communication management professionals who are employed at dating websites can also use this information to more effectively tailor dating websites to gay men. They can use the knowledge gained from the way gay bloggers frame romantic rejections to facilitate romantic rejections on their dating websites, such as the existing “Say no thanks” button on Match.com.

Chapter two discusses literature on types of romantic rejection, reasons for rejection, and reviewed existing studies conducted on the rejection strategies used in romantic rejection.

Chapter three describes the criteria for selecting gay bloggers, the content analysis procedure, and the coding sheet used to determine the content analysis results. Chapter four presents the results of the content analysis. Chapter five analyzes the results of the content analysis on gay blogs, identifies limitations to the thesis, and suggests future research opportunities.

## **Chapter Two: Literature Review**

### **Introduction**

Many people attempt to have successful long-term romantic relationships, but most relationship attempts end in rejection. Romantic rejection occurs across all sexualities and relationship stages, but surprisingly little research has covered rejection in early stages of romantic relationships or attempts at relationships. No research exists for gay men in this capacity.

Most of the existing research on romantic rejection and factors leading to romantic rejection overall was done on heterosexual subjects; however, Kurdek (1998), Shieh (2016), and van Eeden-Moorefield et al. (2011) found some research on heterosexual romantic relationships and rejection could be applied to homosexual research as well. Both people in heterosexual relationships and those in homosexual relationships had similar levels of satisfaction in existing relationships as well as similar reasons for ending relationships. Support systems existed for both heterosexual and homosexual couples, but support often came from friends rather than family for homosexual couples. The stigma homosexual couples endured (van Eeden-Moorefield et al., 2011) may have been why gay men ended relationships more often than their heterosexual counterparts (Kurdek, 1998). When relationships ended, women were often the rejectors in heterosexual pairs. While gender could not be a predictor of romantic rejection in homosexual relationships, gay men and heterosexual men used some similar rejection strategies when ending relationships or potential relationships (Tong & Walther, 2010). Research on heterosexual couples needed to be established first as a basis for understanding romantic rejection to supplement the limited research on homosexual relationships and, more specifically, gay relationships.

## Literature on Heterosexual Couples

Existing research on relationships oftentimes used heterosexual subjects with researchers studying online dating profile development, reasons for rejection, and post-rejection outcomes.

**Politeness Strategies.** Tong and Walther (2010) focused on hypothetical scenarios using heterosexual dyads (N=190) to determine the number of rejection strategies participants used in rejection messages. College-aged participants responded to hypothetical scenarios on Match.com, which described the level of acquaintance between themselves and their potential dates. Politeness theory posited the higher the level of acquaintance between two individuals, the harder it was to see them hurt (Brown & Levinson, 1978). Tong and Walther used this theory to hypothesize participants would be more polite to people they knew better. The participants were asked to create rejection messages either using the Match.com pre-written messages or to construct their own messages. Tong and Walther counted the number of politeness strategies used within rejection messages out of a possible seven strategies, identified after analyzing their data: rejection, reason, apology, appreciation, concern, encouragement, and future contact. Participants used more politeness strategies for hypothetical scenarios in which participants had higher levels of acquaintance with their potential dates than when the scenarios presented strangers. Apologies were used most often for those with lower levels of acquaintance. Future contact was the most common strategy employed in scenarios in which there was an established level of acquaintance, as the rejectors were more likely to see the rejectees again. These findings implied rejectors would be more polite in situations where they had higher levels of acquaintance with rejectees. In situations where participants engaged with strangers, there was the potential for the rejectors to forego responses.

**Unresponsiveness.** The rejection strategies identified by Tong and Walther (2010) were commonly face-enhancing in that they did not threaten the rejectee's positive or negative face, but Tong and Walther also identified a face-detracting strategy called unresponsiveness. They explained, "In online dating sites, ignoring advances is somewhat normative and functional in that it saves time and reduces cognitive load" (p. 494). They predicted date requests from strangers would result in participants using the "Say no thanks" button on Match.com rather than constructing their own rejection messages, which was accurate. However, they also pointed out participants found it easy to ignore messages from unknown individuals. If there was no prior level of acquaintanceship established, ignoring a message sent via computer-mediated communication (CMC) was easy to do for participants.

Unresponsiveness was also known as silence (DeVito, 1989) or ghosting in the modern dating vernacular (Ansari, 2015). Ansari (2015) identified ghosting as a common problem in dating. While there was no formal study conducted, Ansari asked comedy show audiences about their experiences with ghosting, and most had experienced ghosting. In this way, silence was a frequently-used rejection strategy in potential relationships that often threatened rejectees' positive and negative faces. Because of the nature of silence, or ghosting, rejectees did not necessarily receive or comprehend reasons for rejection.

**Reasons for Rejection.** Tong and Walther (2010) originally asked participants to identify the reasons they rejected the person's profile and background information that was presented to them; however, they found no significant effects between reasons for rejection and rejection strategies. Their study was done before a face-to-face meeting occurred, so there might have been a stronger connection between reasons for rejection and rejection strategies if the potential

relationships were tracked. The daters would have been able to compare their experiences online to a face-to-face meeting, using information from online dating profiles and prior conversations.

**Online Dating Profiles.** Online dating profiles not only allowed individuals to explain who they were to potential mates, but there were also opportunities to lie about themselves. Ellison et al. (2006) explained that people present their best selves online. Through a qualitative analysis of 34 heterosexual online daters from Connect.com, they discovered there was a tension between accuracy and desirability in the participants' dating profiles. Their desire to be attractive to a potential mate sometimes overcame the desire to be honest. For example, some participants lied about their ages so as not to be excluded from potential mates' searches. Ellison et al. also found online daters sometimes wrote about characteristics they wanted to emanate rather than qualities they truly possessed. Even if individuals were more likely to lie on their profiles due to their personality traits (Hall, Park, Song, & Cody, 2010), their desire to go on dates might have overridden those personality traits, making daters susceptible to their expectations being violated.

Hall et al. (2010) discussed the tie between high self-monitors and online dating profile misrepresentation. People who monitored themselves closely and were in tune with others' needs often adapted their profiles to match the needs of potential partners. Using both male and female participants (N=5,020) from an online dating site, Hall et al. predicted men would lie more often than women about their personal assets and relationship goals. They predicted women would lie about their age more often than men. Participants were predominantly white (83.2%), female (74%), and averaged 39.8 years of age. They were mostly single and had never been married (52%). Although they did not include information regarding sexuality, their study included both men and women, and their hypotheses compared men and women's responses. Hall et al.

confirmed men were more likely to misrepresent their financial status than women, which aligned with traditional gender roles. Both men and women lied about their ages but men in the 20- to 40-year-old range did so more often than women. Men misrepresented themselves more than women overall. These findings implied men were more likely to experience violations of expectations due to people lying when interacting with other men online.

Hall et al. (2010) found certain personality types were more prone to lying on dating profiles than others. There were high self-monitors and low self-monitors, which could be classified as actors or other-directed. High self-monitors were those who tried to present themselves in a desirable way to everyone whereas low self-monitors acted the same towards everyone. Being other-directed meant they were empathetic toward their dates. Although high self-monitors who were other-directed were the predominant personality types of those who strategically misrepresented themselves online, the data were skewed by the addition of female participants. Male participants were often actors, or those who could adapt themselves to suit their dates. Hall et al. concluded high self-monitors who possessed the actor trait were less likely to misrepresent themselves than high-self monitors with the other-directedness trait. Since men were more likely to be actors rather than other-directed, this finding meant men might not lie as much on dating profiles due to their actor personalities, which goes against the finding that men were more likely to misrepresent themselves online. Looks were another online dating aspect that daters misrepresented.

**Physical Attraction.** Carefully-selected profile photos were the only indication of a person's looks in an online dating context. Toma and Hancock (2012) found the less attractive a person was, according to the ratings given by the participants, the higher the chance they would lie about their looks in their online dating profiles by altering their photos, using misleading

physical descriptions, or both. Participants had three pictures taken of them and judges rated their physical attraction on a scale from 1 to 10. Toma and Hancock found that women were rated as more attractive than men on average ( $M=4.68$  women,  $M=4.2$  men) and that male judges were more likely to rate the participants as less attractive than female judges. Hall et al. (2011) determined their female participants ( $M = 3.24$ ,  $SD = 2.74$ ) were more likely to lie about their weight on dating profiles than men ( $M = 2.37$ ,  $SD = 2.14$ ). However, Toma and Hancock's data, along with Kang (2013), and Curran and Lipold (1975) suggested men were more selective about their dates' bodies than women. This might imply, in relationships between two men, they would both lie about their weight or body types to be seen as attractive to their dates.

Hall et. al (2011) also suggested women's photos were frequently thought to be retouched versus men's photos. Toma and Hancock (2012) did not separate results by gender in their determination that less attractive participants enhanced their photos and used misleading physical descriptors; more attractive participants "displayed their attractiveness by posting more photographs of themselves than their less attractive counterparts" (p. 345). If more attractive people posted more photos on their online dating profiles, daters might have avoided succumbing to physical misrepresentation by not engaging with those who only had a few pictures (or requesting more). Toma and Hancock also acknowledged physical misrepresentation was contingent upon meeting method. Online daters had the option to enhance their photos or use outdated photos whereas "face-to-face daters have only a limited range of options for enhancing their physical attractiveness (i.e., wearing flattering clothes, makeup, and hair)" (Toma & Hancock, 2012, p. 346). When a face-to-face meeting occurred, inaccurate photos may have prompted rejection.



Toma and Hancock (2012) identified physical attraction as a reason individuals wanted to date each other, so a lack of physical attraction could also end relationships. This was a limitation for Toma and Hancock, as they did not study the effect of physical misrepresentation on face-to-face meetings; they were not able to determine whether or not physical misrepresentation affected daters in negative ways, causing rejection. Curran and Lippold (1975) removed the potential for inaccurate photos affecting the results of their study by pairing participants themselves rather than allowing them to use computer-dating services on their own.

Curran and Lippold (1975) recruited heterosexual college students (N = 8,259 men, 6,274 women) for a computer-dating service and paired those students based on their physical attractiveness, as classified by Curran and Lippold. They found couples who were more physically attractive, as defined by Curran and Lippold, liked each other more on a first date than those who were physically unattractive. While they made that assertion, Curran and Lippold also acknowledged gender differences; women “tend to overestimate the physical attractiveness of people they like” (p. 537). Women were more likely to overestimate others’ physical attractiveness, so men were more realistic about their potential dates’ physical attraction. Therefore, men might have more effectively mitigated being deceived by physical misrepresentation and other lies through fact-checking information after developing relationships online.

**Social Information Processing Theory.** Social information processing theory explained “how we develop impressions and social relationships with one another, over time, online, without recourse to non-verbal cues” (Walther, 2015, p. 420). As relationships were built, daters needed to find ways to sort liars from people to whom they were attracted. Both Ellison et al. (2006) and Gibbs et al. (2011) discussed fact-checking information online. In the absence of

non-verbal cues, online daters looked at grammatical errors, when users came online (Ellison et al., 2006), shared social networks, online searches, talking on the phone, and email correspondences as well as photo and profile description comparisons (Gibbs et al., 2011). Paying close attention to messages and photos during the relationship development process might have prevented or lessened the potential for a violation of expectations or physical misrepresentation.

Gibbs et al. (2011) studied predominantly heterosexual (79.9%) online daters (N=562). Their participants applied uncertainty reduction to their online dating practices. Uncertainty reduction strategies were the ways people attempted to discover others were lying during initial interactions: a way to alleviate a violation of expectations or physical misrepresentation. Three online dating concerns that contributed to uncertainty reduction emerged: personal security, concerns about misrepresentation, and people's desire to remain anonymous. Gibbs et al. predicted daters with those concerns would employ more uncertainty reduction strategies than those who did not have those concerns. They also found those with higher levels of self-efficacy, or those who were confident in their online dating abilities, found more ways to reduce uncertainty about their dates than those with lower self-efficacy. This suggested individuals with low self-efficacy would be more likely to believe lies in a dating context rather than those with higher levels of self-efficacy. Once a date occurred, there was the potential for rejection, which could be perpetrated in face-saving or face-detracting ways.

**The Concept of Face.** Doering (2010) discussed the concept of face, analyzing how individuals saved face when describing their date accounts as rejectors as well as their date accounts as rejectees. The analysis included six biographical interviews of heterosexual participants (three men and three women in their 20s). Doering concluded that women often took

part of the blame for relationships not working out, but men did not. Men more frequently tried to save face than women, meaning if two men were involved in a relationship, they might have self-reported in ways to help them save face. If they were the rejector, this would have meant making themselves seem innocent. In recollections of men being rejected, such as in instances of unrequited love, they would have described how the individual broke up with them and how they grew from it.

Regarding unrequited love, Baumeister and Dhavale (2001) found “would-be lovers did report suffering and heartbreak, but they also reported excitement, euphoria, and other positive feelings and looked back with a rich mixture of affection and regret” whereas the “rejectors’ stories were more uniformly and consistently negative in their affective tones” (p. 60). Rejecters often became irritated with their former romantic partners or would-be partners because the rejected individuals did not understand from the beginning that there was not a romantic connection. Baumeister and Dhavale (2001) added, “the rejection is often far more explicit and final in the rejector’s mind than in the pursuer’s,” and more than likely “rejectors are often far less clear than they think in communicating the possibility of a romance” (p. 63). Rejection was difficult for both the rejector and the rejectee, so the rejection “probably does not get said as clearly and as often as it should” (Baumeister & Dhavale, 2001, p. 64). While Baumeister and Dhavale did not identify a difference between men and women, Doering (2010) suggested men would try to save face in situations of unrequited love. Tong and Walther (2010) also found women were more frequently the rejectors, meaning if men were rejectors in cases of unrequited love, it might have added more ambiguity to the rejection given the implication men did not have as much experience being rejectors. While there were many studies on heterosexual participants regarding rejection in instances of unrequited love or otherwise, there were also a few that

compared heterosexual and homosexual relationship aspects or did not specify sexuality. These comparative studies helped identify similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual relationships.

### **Literature on Both Heterosexual and Homosexual Couples**

Kurdek (2005) found same-sex couples and heterosexual couples to be similar in the way they conducted romantic relationships. Relationship satisfaction and support systems were equal for heterosexual and homosexual couples. Homosexual couples had more constructive conflict resolution and more equal household work division. Kurdek suggested, though, that homosexual couples ended relationships more often than heterosexual couples.

**Ending Relationships.** Lannutti and Cameron (2002) discovered that when homosexual couples ended relationships, they were much more satisfied with the relationship after dissolution than their heterosexual counterparts. Homosexual couples were also more likely to stay in contact with their ex-partners versus heterosexual couples, which might be “because of involvement with a mutually close social network” (Lannutti & Cameron, 2002, p. 165). In cases in which ex-partners remained friends, emotional intimacy was low for both heterosexual and homosexual participants. One potential reason for low emotional intimacy was unrequited love.

**Unrequited Love.** Unrequited love happened when one person within a romantic relationship or potential relationship felt stronger than the other person did, which led to rejection. Young et al. (2008) studied unrequited love as it related to level of acquaintanceship for both male and female participants; they did not specify sexuality. While rejection from acquaintances and from friends hurt the participants’ feelings, rejections from romantic partners were evaluated as the harshest. Young et al. (2008) explained,

The difference may lie in the fact that when romantic partners reject, they are saying on some level, 'I no longer feel the same way about you,' whereas, when friends reject, they are conveying simply 'My feelings for you are not of that nature.' (p. 63-64)

In this way, romantic rejections due to unrequited love were often emotional for rejectees.

Young et al. (2008) also evaluated the types of rejection messages that were most common in cases of unrequited love. On-record strategies, or direct verbal rejections, were the most commonly-used strategies. Specifically, Young et al. (2008) identified bald on-record strategies as the most commonly-used strategies in rejection (121 of 230 participants); these were direct verbal rejections rather than off-record strategies, which were ambiguous in nature (17 of 230 participants). This was in opposition to the assertion set forward by Baumeister and Dhavale (2001) that rejections in cases of unrequited love were usually unclear. However, Young et al. (2008) cited their questionnaire as potentially leading, causing "participants to indicate more direct communicative messages than were reflected in their typical interactions" (p. 64). This would mean rejections in cases of unrequited love were explicit rather than implicit rejections (such as in bald off-record strategies).

In addition to literature that compared heterosexual and homosexual relationships, there was also research that focused solely on gay relationships. Research on gay relationships specifically separated them as research subjects from the larger homosexual population. Although there was not as much research on gay couples regarding rejection, literature on gay relationships did provide background information for larger studies.

### **Literature on Gay Couples**

There was not as much existing literature on homosexual relationships and resulting rejections; there was no research on romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. Available

research often discussed desirability leading up to relationships or potential relationships, the impact of technology on relationships, and reasons for rejection in long-term relationships.

**Reasons for Rejection.** Shieh (2016) conducted a study on why same-sex couples break up by observing 33 couples over a period of time. Initial surveys were conducted in 2004 and 2005 with a follow-up survey in 2010 and 2011. Of the 33 original couples who participated, 13 separated. Shieh analyzed the reasons for rejection in cases where the long-term relationships ended. Infidelity was the main reason for relationship dissolution (13 couples). Life-stage incompatibility, often when one of the individuals went to college, affected four out of the six couples in their 20s. Shieh (2016) did not cite a specific number of couples who broke up due to rigid interaction patterns (when past disagreements kept resurfacing) or lack of trust. Couples often had multiple reasons for ending relationships. While this research began to give insight on reasons for rejection, it focused on long-term relationships, which often had more complex reasons for rejection than potential relationships. The couples cited infidelity, life-stage incompatibility, rigid interaction patterns, and lack of trust, which built over time rather than more superficial reasons for rejection such as desirability.

**Desirability.** Milani (2013) conducted a qualitative study on men seeking men within a South African online community called Meetmarket. Milani found men on the website identified as straight-acting, meaning gay men who shared many of the same stereotypical characteristics of heterosexual men (e.g. aggressiveness). Milani discussed this straight-acting trait was often thought of as a sign of normalcy whereas more effeminate men were not as desired within Meetmarket. In this way, gay men performed straightness; given that straightness can be performed, “this would mean that even heterosexual men are 'straight actors'” (Milani, 2013, p.

626). Heterosexual and homosexual men had personality traits in common, making a comparison between the two feasible in a dating context.

Milani (2013) also mentioned the way men looked was instrumental to them being desired. This aligned with a Coffee Meets Bagel study, which surveyed 600 gay single men about their bodies. The study found gay single men put a large emphasis on potential mates' bodies. In fact, 81% of gay men were interested in someone because of physical appearance (Kang, 2013). Both Meetmarket and Coffee Meets Bagel were online dating sites gay men used to interact with one another. Grindr was another common dating application that put a heavy emphasis on looks and performing desirability. Grindr, according to Cover (2016), demonstrated "the proliferation of new ways of doing connectivity and relationality, and therefore new ways of doing identity (as subjects and as sexual subjects)" (p. 187). Thereby gay men were able to showcase their identities in an online context through the usage of dating sites.

**Positive Links to Technology.** According to Cover (2016), dating sites and applications gave the gay community (and LGBTQIA+ community as a whole) a way to seek out and maintain romantic relationships without the ambiguity of searching for partners in clubs, bars, or otherwise. McKie, Lachowsky, and Milhausen (2015) had similar conclusions about the gay community's link to technology. They found it was easier for their participants to obtain and maintain relationships via CMC. Furthermore, their participants were able to tailor their self-presentation, much like the heterosexual participants in Ellison et al. (2006) and Ellison et al. (2012). However, McKie et al. identified this as a positive aspect of technology for gay men. This ability for gay men to adjust their online presences helped with confidence. This finding was similar to the finding by Walther (2007), who discovered heterosexual men spent more time developing messages for romantic pursuits than heterosexual women. The participants from

McKie et al. also met potential partners offline, but it was much less prevalent. Overall, participants thought online communication was more open and accepting, which positively impacted their experiences as gay men. It would then make sense that gay men would meet potential partners online more often than offline. Because of the positive influence of technology on their lives, a tendency to use online dating sites might have also led to internet usage in other ways such as writing blogs to describe those dating encounters. Future research would need to extend beyond compartmentalized relationship aspects like using technology to obtain dates. Future research also would need to include types of rejection, reasons for rejection, and rejection strategies for gay potential relationships, given the similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual men and the gap in romantic rejection research for this group.

### **What We Need to Know**

While research existed for rejection after long-term relationships and potential factors leading to relationships, there was not any research that discussed rejection in gay potential relationships. There were also no studies that used blogs as a vehicle for a qualitative analysis on romantic rejection in gay potential relationships.

**Types of Rejection.** When rejection in gay potential relationships occurred, rejectors used different types of rejections to end potential relationships. Young et al. (2008) discussed bald on-record strategies (explicit verbal rejections) and bald off-record strategies (implicit non-verbal rejections or verbal rejections with alternative meanings) in an unrequited love context. Unrequited love was only one potential reason for rejection. To build an understanding of rejection in gay potential relationships, rejections needed to be classified as explicit or implicit across multiple different reasons for rejection.



**Reasons for Rejection.** There were other possible reasons for rejection that past researchers identified but did not apply to a single study on gay potential relationships. Hall et al. (2010) discovered certain personalities were more likely to lie on dating profiles than others. Specifically, men who valued themselves highly (high self-monitors) were often actors, or those who could adapt their personalities to suit others. This ability allowed them not to lie as much on dating profiles as they were genuinely showcasing multiple facets of their personalities. This study was done with heterosexual participants, so there was a gap in research on gay men regarding lying about personality characteristics on profiles and the results of lying on profiles. Lannutti and Cameron (2002) did review gay men's online dating profile descriptions on their personalities, but they did not study the effects of inaccuracy, or a violation of expectations. Toma and Hancock (2012) discussed a different violation: when heterosexual daters used edited or misleading photos on their dating profiles. Gay men often sought out specific physical features in other men (Kang, 2013), so additional research needed to be conducted to see if physically misrepresenting oneself was a common reason for rejection. Once a dater knew they were going to reject their dates, they employed rejection strategies.

**Rejection Strategies.** Tong and Walther (2010) gave rejection scenarios to their heterosexual participants and asked them to write their rejection messages. These rejections occurred prior to a first date, highlighting a gap in the research. Rejections prior to a face-to-face date or would-be date might have had different results. Because the Tong and Walther participants also only used CMC, this warranted research to see if there were additional rejection strategies used when in-person rejections were an option. The strategies Tong and Walther used were also predominantly face-enhancing strategies in that neither the rejectees' positive nor negative faces were threatened. Further research needed to include both face-enhancing and

face-detracting strategies. Research had to involve gay men who had experienced or perpetrated rejection within potential relationships, not prior to a date, and the method of obtaining that information needed to be from a data-rich source such as blogs.

**Blogs as a Medium.** When people took what were traditionally written as diary entries or told as stories and wrote that information on publicly-accessible blogs, the blog entries created took on additional characteristics that set them apart from diaries. When diaries were no longer private, “these superficially private writings become unmistakably public documents, intended for an external readership” (Bloom, 1998, p. 171). More detail was added, which helped readers understand the events in the writers’ lives. Private diaries “exhibit no foreshadowing and scarcely a retrospective glance” when the writer wanted to reference past events (Bloom, 1998, p. 174). Blogs were written with readers in mind, helping them to understand stories using literary devices such as foreshadowing. Diaries detailed everyday life, so they contained characters from the writer’s life that developed over time. Blog entries about singular dates had to be constructed as stories, so “getting the sounds and the rhythm right, supplying sufficient detail for another’s understanding, can never be excluded” (Bloom, 1998, p.173). For LGBTQIA+ individuals, blogs were a way to express autobiographical accounts, foregoing the publishing industry (Rak, 2015). Publicly-accessible gay blogs offered recollections of dates that could be studied to address the gap in research on romantic rejection in the gay community regarding gay potential relationships. This study used gay blog entries that included types of rejection, reasons for rejection, and rejection types.

This research produced four questions. Rejections were communicated explicitly, with words, or implicitly, through actions or words with alternative meanings. R1 asked: Which type of rejection was most commonly reported by gay bloggers: explicit or implicit? In potentially

face-threatening situations such as romantic rejection, Brown and Levinson (1987) explained four ways to handle the situation. Off-record approaches were implicit approaches. On-record without redress approaches indicated explicit rejections. Certain reasons for rejection lent themselves more to explicit rejections such as unrequited love whereas physical misrepresentation may have produced implicit rejections. This leads to R2: What was the most common reason for rejection the gay bloggers reported? When a rejection was perpetrated, those rejections could have been face-detracting or face-enhancing. Face-enhancing strategies did not threaten daters' positive or negative faces whereas face-detracting strategies did. Therefore, R3 was asked: Were face-enhancing strategies or face-detracting strategies more commonly used in gay bloggers' blog entries? Tong and Walther (2010) identified many potential face-enhancing strategies in their study. However, it was important to identify face-detracting strategies that could have been used in accounts of real dates, as face-to-face encounters allowed for potentially different results than contrived scenarios using computer-mediated communication. To understand the specific rejection strategies used, R4 questioned: Which rejection strategy did the gay bloggers report as employed most often?

### **Chapter Three: Methods**

Romantic rejection affected many people at different stages of relationships. While a large body of research had been developed for romantic rejection in heterosexual relationships and romantic rejection in long-term homosexual relationships, no research existed for romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. The chosen subject matter for building a foundation for understanding romantic rejection in gay potential relationships was gay dating blogs. Bloggers elaborated on instances of romantic rejection within blog entries, providing data-rich sources for content analysis.

#### **Sample**

Gay dating blogs were the medium of study for this thesis. The sample used was a convenience sample. The original project involved interviewing gay men over the phone; however, it was difficult to recruit gay men to participate in the study, as it required a snowball sampling, or contacting people who contacted would-be participants to protect their identities. Blogs were substituted in place of phone interviews because blogs were publicly accessible and contained multiple entries describing romantic rejections. Blog entries were data rich in that they contained lengthier explanations of individual dates than researchers might have received over the phone or via email. Most romantic rejection research as a whole did not analyze individual dates, but that was necessary to build a foundation for understanding romantic rejection in gay potential relationships.

The analysis criteria for selecting gay dating blogs were as follows: the blogs needed to primarily contain accounts of dates between gay men and there had to be at least one usable blog entry that discussed an explicit or implicit rejection. Blogs that discussed gay dating tips or blogs that had gay dating stories in addition to heterosexual dating stories were not used. The blogs had

to be publicly accessible; they were found through the first ten pages of two Google searches using the search terms “gay dating stories” and “gay dating blogs.” The four gay dating blogs in this content analysis met the analysis criteria: *The Guyliner*; *100 Guys, 100 Stories*; *Gay Dating Stories*; and *It Gets Worse*. Myers (*The Guyliner*) was a journalist and author. He had the most information about himself publicly available and was 35 when he began writing his blog entries. Spitale (*It Gets Worse*) was also in a similar field to Myers, having been a journalist and worked in public relations. Spitale was also in his 30s when he wrote the blog entries on his site, and there were a number of other anonymous contributors to his site who did not have further descriptions. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* followed the dates of an anonymous blogger from ages 20 to 21. The entries from *Gay Dating Stories* were also written by an anonymous author. He was based in New York City and was in his early twenties.

In the four blogs that met the criteria, there were 38 entries that had inconclusive results, referred to successful dates, or discussed a subject other than a date (e.g. friendship or unrelated research). Those entries were removed from the sample. Of the 86 total blog entries ( $N=86$ ), 48 entries qualified for content analysis ( $n=48$ ). The 48 usable blog entries addressed romantic rejection from dates or dates that were supposed to occur. The number of usable blog entries from each blog were as follows: *The Guyliner* (27), *It Gets Worse* (17), *Gay Dating Stories* (3); and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* (1). The blog entries were written between January 2013 and September 2017.

## **Procedure**

A coding sheet was developed that applied rejection theories to dates as described by the bloggers (See Appendix A). First, blogs were analyzed to determine if the date or would-be date ended with a rejection. All blogs described potential relationships, or bloggers who had been on

less than five dates with their potential mate. Blogs that met the criteria were further classified into explicit and implicit rejection types. Second, blogs were coded for reason(s) for rejection. Last, blogs were analyzed to determine whether bloggers used face-enhancing or face-detracting rejection strategies as well as the specific rejection strategy or strategies used.

It was first important to identify a rejection type to see if the blogs qualified for analysis. Blogs that did not have a clear rejection type were removed from the study. Explicit rejections were vocalized rejections using phrases such as “I am not interested.” Implicit rejections were either non-verbal rejections such as walking away or vocalized rejections with alternative meanings. For example, a dater might have said, “I have to be up early for work.” after an awkward conversation topic when the dater did not actually have to be up early for work.

After blog entries were determined to have described a rejection, the next step was to discover why the rejection occurred. Three categories were used in coding reasons for rejection. They were: violation of expectations, physical misrepresentation, and unrequited love. A violation of expectations occurred when people’s descriptions of their personalities on their online dating profiles were exaggerated or untrue (Ellison et al., 2006; Gibbs et al., 2011; Hall, Park, Song, and Cody, 2010) or the daters’ perceptions of their dates’ personalities did not match reality (Kelly, 2001). For example, daters experienced a violation of expectations if they had superficial conversations prior to the date but differences in political opinions came up during the date. Another violation of expectations was if daters described themselves as generally happy people but were depressed and dull in person. Physical misrepresentation was the reason for rejection when daters used enhanced or misleading photographs on their dating profiles (Toma & Hancock, 2012). For example, if daters used pictures from ten years ago on their profiles rather than current pictures, they physically misrepresented themselves. When unrequited love was a

reason for rejection, it was because one person felt more strongly about the other person (Baumeister and Dhavale, 2001; Young et al., 2008). Daters might have used phrases such as “I only view us as friends.”

The next codebook topic was rejection strategies, first looking at whether face-enhancing strategies or face-detracting strategies were used. Face-enhancing strategies were rejections that supported people’s positive and/or negative faces, using phrases such as, “It’s not you; it’s me.” These strategies may have included praise (e.g. “You are a great person.”) or allowed an opportunity for future discussion such as saying, “I think it is best we stay friends.” Face-detracting strategies attacked people’s positive and/or negative faces. These rejections may have used criticism (e.g. “It’s your fault.”) or threatened rejectees’ autonomy (e.g. “You need to leave.”) Face-detracting strategies also could have used non-verbal communication to stop conversations altogether, like silence (walking away without saying anything or not responding to attempts at communication after the date).

Face-enhancing and face-detracting rejection strategies were further split into 12 sub-categories: reason, apology, appreciation, concern, encouragement, future contact, blaming, direct disagreement, forcing self-disclosure, silence, sarcasm, and other. This content analysis used rejection strategies from Tong and Walther (2010) with additional rejection strategies from DeVito (2017), Holtgraves (1992), DeVito (1989), and Katz, Blasko, and Kazmerski (2004) to incorporate face-detracting strategies.

The rejection strategies used by Tong and Walther (2010) were predominantly face-enhancing strategies. Reason as a rejection strategy offered an excuse to end a date. Rejectors might have cited work or sleep as reasons they had to leave rather than expressing they did not like the rejectees. Apologies included phrases such as, “I am sorry” and offered

placations to the rejectee. Appreciations expressed admiration for the rejectees but ended the date (e.g. “Thank you for saying all those nice things about me.”). Concern showed empathy for the rejectees with phrases such as, “I hope this is not too harsh.” Encouragement gently nudged the rejectees towards other dating pursuits. For example, “I am sure there are other people interested in you.” Future contact offered friendship but no romantic ties. Future contact might have used phrases such as, “I hope we can still be friends.” In addition to the predominantly face-enhancing strategies discussed by Tong and Walther, face-detracting strategies were added to the content analysis that bloggers could have used in romantic rejections.

The addition of face-detracting strategies accounted for bloggers going on in-person dates (or attempted in-person dates) rather than exclusively using CMC. In cases of blaming, an individual placed the responsibility of a date’s failure onto the other person (DeVito, 2017). For example, “You are an awful person.” Direct disagreements had similar undertones but were combative, in response to a discussion between the daters (Holtgraves, 1992). Direct disagreements may have used phrases such as, “You are wrong.” Forcing self-disclosure was pressuring people to reveal private information about themselves (DeVito, 2017), which resulted in rejection (e.g. “How do you feel about me?”) Silence relied on non-verbal communication to translate meaning (DeVito, 1989). Silence might have entailed daters leaving dates without saying anything. In the vernacular, silence was also called “ghosting,” which occurred when individuals made contact attempts that were unreciprocated (Ansari, 2015). Sarcasm relied on paralanguage. Daters may have emphasized different parts of a conversation that normally would not have been emphasized, occasionally indicated by italics in blog entries (DeVito, 1989). For example, “I don’t think you have to worry about *this* relationship getting too serious.” Sarcastic comments were caustic and blunt (e.g. “I would rather be anywhere else but here.”)



The researcher was the primary and sole coder. Data were coded twice by the researcher to ensure the coding was done correctly. Topics were selected to build a framework of understanding romantic rejection in gay potential relationships, as told by gay bloggers.

### **Data Analysis**

A cross-tabulation determined which type of rejection was most common for gay bloggers, the most common reason for rejection, whether face-enhancing strategies or face-detracting strategies were more frequently used, and which rejection strategy sub-categories were used most often within four gay dating blogs: *The Guyliner*; *100 Guys*, *100 Stories*; *Gay Dating Stories*; and *It Gets Worse*. Results were reported both by total across all four blogs as well as for each blog individually.

## Chapter Four: Results

Of the 46 blog entries that described rejections, two blog entries contained accounts of two dates, so each date was treated individually. Therefore, 48 blog entries underwent a content analysis. *The Guyliner* had the most blog entries analyzed (27), followed by *It Gets Worse* (17), *Gay Dating Stories* (3), and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* (1). The results are presented first by overall total and then by blog. Blog entries could have included more than one reason for rejection and more than one rejection strategy; some did not include a face-enhancing or face-detracting designation or could include more than one. Therefore, data does not always add up to 48 for the research questions.

### Rejection Types

The first RQ asked: Which type of rejection was most commonly reported by gay bloggers: explicit or implicit? Of the 48 blog entries, 36 described implicit rejections and 12 had explicit rejections (See Appendix B).

*The Guyliner* had the most instances of implicit rejections (22 out of 27 entries). *It Gets Worse* had 11 implicit rejections out of 17 blog entries. *Gay Dating Stories* had 2 implicit rejections out of 3 blog entries. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* had one implicit rejection, which was the only blog entry on the site.

For explicit rejections, *The Guyliner* had 5 out of 27 blog entries that described an explicit rejection. *It Gets Worse* had 6 out of 17 explicit rejections. *Gay Dating Stories* had 1 out of 3 explicit rejections. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* did not have any explicit rejection blog entries.

The most common type of rejection for gay bloggers was an implicit rejection.

## Reasons for Rejection

The second research question studied the most common reasons for rejection that the gay bloggers reported. Of the 48 blog entries, the reasons for rejection for the blogs overall were as follows: violation of expectations (37), physical misrepresentation (12), unrequited love (8), other (1), unknown (1). Ten blog entries had two reasons listed (See Appendix B).

*The Guyliner* had 25 of 27 blog entries that were classified as a violation of expectations. There were no instances of unrequited love. There were 10 blog entries that described physical misrepresentation as a reason for rejection. One blog entry was classified as other, and one blog entry had an unknown reason. The 10 blog entries that cited physical misrepresentation as a reason for rejection also cited a violation of expectations as a reason for rejection.

*It Gets Worse* contained 11 of 17 blog entries that described a violation of expectations. Five of 17 blog entries had unrequited love as a reason for rejection and 2 of 17 blog entries described physical misrepresentation as a reason for rejection. Of those, one blog entry cited both a violation of expectations and unrequited love as reasons for rejection. *It Gets Worse* did not have any blog entries that used other or unknown categories.

For the three blog entries on *Gay Dating Stories*, there was one instance of a violation of expectations. Two entries described unrequited love. None of the entries described a physical misrepresentation or were classified as other or unknown.

In the one blog entry on the *100 Guys, 100 Stories* blog, there was one instance of unrequited love. There were not any entries that could be classified as a violation of expectations, physical misrepresentation, other, or unknown.

The most common reason for rejection the bloggers reported was a violation of expectations. Individually, *The Guyliner* and *It Gets Worse* had a violation of expectations as the top reason for rejection. *Gay Dating Stories* and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* had unrequited love as the most common reason for rejection.

### **Face-Enhancing vs. Face-Detracting Strategies**

R3 asked: Were face-enhancing strategies or face-detracting strategies more commonly used in gay bloggers' blog entries? Of the 48 blog entries, there were 25 instances of face-detracting strategies and 22 instances of face-enhancing strategies (See Appendix B).

*The Guyliner* had the most face-detracting strategies (13 of 27). *It Gets Worse* contained 10 of 17 blog entries with face-detracting strategies, and *Gay Dating Stories* contained 2 of 3 blog entries with face-detracting strategies. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* did not include any blog entries with face-detracting strategies.

*The Guyliner* also had the most instances of face-enhancing strategies (12 of 27), followed by *It Gets Worse* (8 of 17), and *Gay Dating Stories* (1 of 3). The one usable entry from *100 Guys, 100 Stories* described a face-enhancing rejection strategy.

Face-detracting strategies were more commonly used in romantic rejection for gay bloggers. Individually, *The Guyliner*, *It Gets Worse*, and *Gay Dating Stories* used more face-detracting strategies than face-enhancing strategies. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* only used face-enhancing strategies.

### **Rejection Strategy Sub-Categories**

The final research question determined which rejection strategy the gay bloggers reported as employed most often. The face-enhancing and face-detracting strategies were further categorized into 12 rejection strategies (See Appendix B).

In order of frequency, the rejection strategies for the 48 blog entries were: reason (11), silence (10), other (7), forcing self-disclosure (5), sarcasm (5), apology (4), future contact (4), blaming (4), appreciation (2), and direct disagreement (1). There were no blog entries that used concern or encouragement as rejection strategies.

*The Guyliner* had the most blog entries that used reason as a rejection strategy (9 of 27). Five blog entries used sarcasm. There were four blog entries that were categorized as other. There were three instances each of silence, forcing self-disclosure, and future contact. There was one instance each of blaming, appreciation, and direct disagreement. There were no blog entries that described an apology, concern, or encouragement.

*It Gets Worse* had the most instances of silence and apology: 4 of 17 each. There were three blog entries classified as other. There were 2 of 17 instances each of reason, forcing self-disclosure, and blaming. There was one instance each of future contact and appreciation out of the 17 blog entries. *It Gets Worse* contained no blog entries that were classified as sarcasm, direct disagreement, concern, or encouragement.

In the three blog entries from *Gay Dating Stories* there were two instances of silence and one instance of blaming. There were no blog entries classified as reason, other, forcing self-disclosure, sarcasm, apology, future contact, appreciation, direct disagreement, concern, or encouragement.

The one usable blog entry from *100 Guys, 100 Stories* had silence as the rejection strategy used. There were no instances of reason, other, forcing self-disclosure, sarcasm, apology, future contact, blaming, appreciation, direct disagreement, concern, or encouragement.

The most common rejection strategy the gay bloggers reported was reason. Individually, *The Guyliner* had reason as the top rejection strategy. *It Gets Worse* had silence and apology as the top rejection strategies. *Gay Dating Stories* and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* both had silence as their most common rejection strategy.

## Chapter Five: Discussion

The purpose of this thesis was to develop a framework of understanding for romantic rejection in gay potential relationships, as there were no existing studies that covered that subject. While there were similarities between heterosexual and homosexual relationships in their conduct and resulting rejections, there were opponents to that assertion such as Willerton (2010). This thesis used heterosexual dating research to understand if gay men conducted themselves similarly in potential relationship development and resulting romantic rejections. This thesis used a content analysis of four gay dating blogs to determine how gay men rejected one another, including the most common type of rejection, reasons behind rejection, and rejection strategies. The content analysis of these blog entries helped to fill the gap in research for romantic rejection in gay potential relationships, as told by gay bloggers.

### Rejection Types

Within rejection, there were explicit rejections, which were vocalized rejections, as well as implicit rejections, which were rejections that could have been communicated nonverbally or said “in a voice that conveys a subtle, or even contradictory, shade of meaning” (Mehrabian, 1972, p. 2). All four blogs had more implicit rejections (36) than explicit rejections (12). Each blog individually also had more implicit than explicit rejections. *The Guyliner* had 22 implicit rejections and five explicit rejections. *It Gets Worse* had 11 implicit rejections and six explicit rejections. *Gay Dating Stories* had two implicit rejections and one explicit rejection. *100 Guys*, *100 Stories* had one implicit rejection and no explicit rejections. Existing research on romantic rejection in cases of unrequited love found explicit rejections were more common (Young et al., 2008), and given the gay community’s connection to stigmatization, there was a chance explicit rejections were more common.

Miller and Kaiser (2001) explained that being in a stigmatized community was “virtually synonymous [to] being rejected” (p. 206). If the gay community expected this stigmatization, or rejection, results would have likely shown more explicit rejections. However, stigmatized communities like the gay community were connected in a way that the heterosexual community was not. Myers described this concept in “The Better Offer” when he said, “The gay world is too small, I sigh.” The use of more implicit rejections than explicit rejections may have been because there was a higher likelihood to see rejectees again. Lannutti and Cameron (2002) confirmed this: homosexual couples were more likely to talk to ex-partners than heterosexual daters. Furthermore, Tong and Walther (2010) discovered, “the more a rejector expected potentially to meet or interact with the target of rejection in the future, the more politeness strategies he or she used in the refusal message” (p.499-500). While their participants were heterosexual, this seemed to be the case for gay bloggers as well. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* had an instance where the anonymous blogger expected to see his date again in “#1 The Barista with a Boyfriend”:

By now we’ve spent the past 6 hours together and I almost regret that I gave up on him at first. But I know that no matter what, he saw this date as nothing but a friendship. It hurts...but I know it’s true.

The blog entry described subtle hints his rejector gave throughout the date such as not being able to leave work and pulling away from the blogger when the blogger touched his thigh. This rejection was implicit to be kind to the rejectee due to their existing friendship. Implicit rejections also assisted in effective storytelling.

Keeping the readers’ interest while telling a story or preferring to end blogs with cliffhangers (to make the reader want to read more) may have contributed to the high volume of implicit rejections as well. Implicit rejections showed an attention to detail and concern for the



bloggers' eventual readers because implicit rejections held readers' interest. Bloom (1998) discussed this idea of storytelling:

The private performance may be less polished than the manuscript destined for publication from the outset, but once a writer, like an actor, is audience-oriented, such considerations as telling a good story, getting the sounds and the rhythm right, supplying sufficient detail for another's understanding, can never be excluded. (p.173)

Both Myers (*The Guyliner*) and Spitale (*It Gets Worse*) were professional writers in some capacity and therefore had experience with storytelling. The contrast between explicit and implicit rejections was most stark in Myers' blog, *The Guyliner*, with 22 implicit rejections and five explicit rejections. *It Gets Worse* contained 11 implicit rejections and six explicit rejections; however, that blog had multiple contributors, which may have been why the results were slightly more balanced than *The Guyliner*. Implicit rejections used storytelling techniques to keep readers' interest; however, accounts of explicit rejections used storytelling techniques as well.

When the bloggers described an explicit rejection, they sometimes ended with a summary of the rejection, such as "Some Surprises and Mr. English Muffin" from *Gay Dating Stories*:

A four hour long argument began via gchat, and long story short. The words that Mr. English Muffin said to me were probably some of the worst things someone could ever say to someone. I was so frustrated, hurt and blown away by what was said...that I didn't even have the energy to argue or defend myself.

Other times, explicit rejection blog entries employed storytelling strategies similar to the implicit rejection blog entries. In "Brodie's Public Relations," Spitale recounted a date with a man he did not know was an escort, but rather than end with "Brodie lamented that we could never work out, which wasn't exactly a news flash."

Spitale continued:

I gathered Brodie was still a porn star, partly because he was working the booth of a famous porn company, but mostly, because he was naked, suspended by a leather harness, while a drag queen probed his prostate with a fluorescent dildo.

Spitale added to the story to keep the reader's interest and also build himself up as the better person in that scenario. Doering (2010) noticed many of his interviewees shirked responsibility for breakups when they were rejectors, building themselves up as the better person in cases of romantic rejection. Those findings aligned with the way bloggers described instances of them rejecting others, despite Doering's participants being heterosexual. While Rak (2015) explained it was difficult to lie in blogs because readers could tell when bloggers lied, this tendency for rejectors to make themselves seem like the better person might have skewed the self reports. In addition to the bias on the rejector side, Doering also found rejectees would make themselves seem innocent: that they had no reason to be rejected but that they grew from the experience(s). This was a limitation to using self reports in any study, but blogs offered data-rich entries to build a foundation for understanding how and why romantic rejections occurred in gay potential relationships. In gay relationships, there were no traditional gender roles for gay men to follow; however, gay men might have taken cues from heterosexual men regarding rejection.

Tong and Walther (2010) found heterosexual men were more likely to respond to date requests than women. They explained that traditionally heterosexual women acted as rejectors because they often received more date requests than heterosexual men, who were often the initiators of relationships. When heterosexual women initiated relationships and heterosexual men were the rejectors, Tong and Walther explained, "men may be more sympathetic to the disappointment and face threat associated with rejection." Because this thesis dealt with gay

men, there were no gender differences and therefore removed that factor in predicting who would be the rejector and who would be the rejectee. However, the sympathy men may have had in situations of romantic rejection might also have contributed to why there were more implicit rejections than explicit rejections. There were also reasons behind those rejections in each romantic rejection account.

### **Reasons for Rejection**

**Violation of Expectations.** The top reason for rejection was a violation of expectations, with 37 blog entries total. Many of the bloggers met their dates online, consistent with Rosenfeld and Thomas' (2012) finding that most same-sex couples meet online. Bloggers' expectations were violated when their dates' profiles and conversational abilities prior to meeting did not align with their experiences on the dates. Ellison, et al. (2012) described the pressure online daters face with their dating profiles: "In short, online daters must manage the tension between comprehensively honest and selectively positive self-presentation in a context in which deception is technically effortless but potentially damaging to relational goals and self-views" (p. 47). Bloggers and their dates they met online might have included personality traits they were trying to emulate but did not necessarily possess. In opposition, Hall et al. (2010) concluded men were more likely to be high-self monitors who possessed the actor trait (people who could adapt themselves to their dates). High self-monitors who possessed the actor trait were less likely to misrepresent themselves than high-self monitors with the other-directedness trait (people who were empathetic). Although this decreased the chances of men lying about non-physical aspects about themselves (e.g. personalities, career, or age) on dating profiles, the compulsion to be seen as a desirable mate might have overridden the compulsion to be accurate (Ellison et al., 2012), causing a violation of expectations.

Violations of expectations also happened situationally. For example, Myers' expectations of a date with Toby were violated in "The Plus One." Toby's friend, Polly, invited Toby and Myers to her house and proceeded to criticize Myers to Toby. Another example was "Brodie's Public Relations" from *It Gets Worse*. Spitale's date, Brodie, told Spitale he was in public relations when he was actually a porn star. Another reason for violation of expectations was age.

Hall et al. (2010) cited age as another aspect people lied about on dating profiles. This study compared men and women, but they concluded men in the 20- to 40-year-old range lied about their age more often than women. Bloggers recounted their dates lying about their ages often, such as in "Uber and Out" from *It Gets Worse* in which an anonymous blogger met a man who said he was 26 but was actually 36. Myers also detailed an exchange between him and his date about why Myers did not disclose his age on dating profiles in "The Right Peter":

Out of nowhere, he asks my age. Here we go. I don't reveal this on the phone dating app profile for various reasons, which I begin to explain. He again asks me how old I am. I begin to tell him, but as I do, he goes in for a guess; I've no idea why. He's four years out, erring on the junior side. I suppose I should be buoyed by this. Man, is he going to be disappointed when I slam down the actual age. I tell him I'm 35. He visibly blanches, recovers quickly (but not quickly enough) and says "Well, you don't look it at all. As I, er, said, um, before". He doesn't hide his disappointment now, but he doesn't really need to.

While the participants from Hall et al. (2010) were heterosexual, lying about age applied to the gay bloggers' dating stories as well. Physical misrepresentation, which referred to when daters deceived each other by lying about their looks, was closely related to a violation of expectations.

**Physical Misrepresentation.** Physical misrepresentation was the second most common reason (12 entries) daters rejected each other in this blog entry sample. The gap between a violation of expectations and physical misrepresentation was large. There were rarely any instances in which the blog entries cited physical misrepresentation as the sole reason for rejection. Only two entries from *It Gets Worse* described physical misrepresentation as the only reason for rejection. This was at odds with Kang (2013) and Willerton (2010), which cited physical attraction as the top priority for gay men. Toma and Hancock (2012) concluded less attractive daters were more likely to post old or altered photos on their dating profiles and would also verbally describe themselves in a more flattering light. Daters used uncertainty reduction techniques when assessing whether or not to pursue someone. As Gibbs et al. (2011) explained, photo and profile description comparisons being one of the common techniques. Therefore, bloggers might have figured out daters who were physically misrepresenting themselves before a date was even brought up, thereby eliminating a resulting blog entry about romantic rejection. Men were also more realistic about their dates' looks when compared to women, who built up their dates in their minds to be more attractive than they were in reality (Curran & Lippold, 1975). In situations where the dates ended because of physical misrepresentation, bloggers often brought up that pictures were blurry ("The Wrong Peter" from *The Guyliner*, for example), too small, or were of men's torsos rather than of their faces (Cover, 2016). Blogs were also self-reported, so the bloggers may not have wanted to be seen as shallow, citing personality as the reason for rejection rather than looks or, at the very least, citing both personality and looks as the reasons for rejection. While a violation of expectations and physical misrepresentation dealt with personality and looks respectively, unrequited love was linked to emotions.

**Unrequited Love.** Unrequited love was the final main reason for rejection, with eight occurrences total. *It Gets Worse* had four instances of unrequited love, *Gay Dating Stories* had two, and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* had one. In “First Crush” from *It Gets Worse*, an anonymous author talked about a date he went on when he was 22. Even after his crush rejected him, he still liked him:

I still had a crush on him, although I tried moving on by going on dates with other guys. Berkeley is a small place—and I soon met a lot of other guys who likewise had a crush on Sam —the charming boy who avoids you after the first date, leaving you wanting more.

This description of the blogger’s object of affection aligned with Baumeister and Dhavale’s (2001) assessment of rejectees. They found “would-be lovers did report suffering and heartbreak, but they also reported excitement, euphoria, and other positive feelings and looked back with a rich mixture of affection and regret” (p. 60).

The anonymous blogger from *Gay Dating Stories* has two similar accounts of unrequited love. He was in his twenties, according to the subtitle on his website. *100 Guys, 100 Stories* was also in his twenties, according to his bio. With 4 out of 7 instances of unrequited love coming from men in their twenties versus the three other instances from a man in his thirties (Spitale from *It Gets Worse*), age may have played a factor in unrequited love. It made sense, then, that the sample used by Young et al. (2008) when they studied unrequited love had an average age of 21.18. Young et al. concluded that the level of acquaintanceship mattered in the rejectee’s assessment of the relationship or would-be relationship and how positively they looked back on it. The way the anonymous blogger from *100 Guys, 100 Stories* wrote about his date in “#1 The Barista with a Boyfriend” aligned with this finding. The anonymous blogger did not paint his

date in a bad light and expressed regret for not believing he would have a good time on the date originally. He ended the blog entry with, “Here’s to 2013, this hope was treacherous, this daydream was dangerous, and I kinda liked it.” This implied that despite the pain of unrequited love, he still enjoyed the date because of the friendship established prior to the date. Young et al. also discovered rejections due to unrequited love were most frequently explicit. For gay bloggers, instances of unrequited love were more implicit (six) than explicit (two). This may have been because of the associated strategies used for those rejections. Silence was the most common rejection strategy used for implicit rejections due to unrequited love (four), which was often face-detracting. Rejection strategies could be either face-detracting or face-enhancing.

### **Face-Enhancing vs. Face-Detracting Strategies**

When a rejection occurred, two categories of rejection strategies emerged: face-enhancing strategies and face-detracting strategies. Directness was often face-detracting (specific strategies included direct disagreement, blaming, or forcing self-disclosure). Face-enhancing strategies tended to rely on ambiguity so as not to threaten the rejectee’s positive or negative face. Therefore, it was expected explicit rejections would use face-detracting strategies because explicit rejections often threatened rejectees’ positive and/or negative faces and implicit rejections would use face-enhancing strategies because implicit rejections often supported rejectees’ positive and/or negative faces. For this set of blog entries, both explicit rejections and implicit rejections incorporated face-detracting rejection strategies more often: seven explicit and face-detracting; six explicit and face-enhancing; 17 implicit and face-detracting; and 16 implicit and face-enhancing. The amount of implicit rejections (35) given by bloggers in this study suggested there would have been more face-enhancing strategies used

overall. However, the number of implicit rejections using face-detracting strategies and the number of implicit rejections using face-enhancing strategies were about the same.

An instance of implicit face-enhancing was from “The Muse” from *The Guyliner*. Myers’ date said, “I’m pretty beat. Shall we call it a night?” The date offered an implied rejection because it was 8:30 p.m. when he said that to Myers, accompanied by a “stagey yawn.” Reason was a face-enhancing strategy, as reasons place the blame for the date ending on external factors rather than personality or looks, not threatening the rejectee’s positive or negative face.

One instance of an implicit rejection that used a face-detracting strategy was from “••Interlude•• Angry Hurt Boy On A Mission”:

Things got awkward and conversation stopped all together. I was so confused as to what went wrong, maybe 3 weeks after the date I just choose to give up on it, I cried and my friends had a little outing with me when I told them it was over.

When implicit rejections ended with face-detracting strategies, they often ended with silence (seven blog entries), as in the situation above. After many attempts at contact, the anonymous blogger stopped trying to continue the relationship with his date, accepting that as a breakup. Silence was also known as ghosting in the modern dating vernacular (Ansari, 2015). Ghosting was used in blog entries like “Full House” from *It Gets Worse* in which an anonymous blogger said, “I tell him it was nice meeting him, but instead of a reply, I just get blocked.”

Twenty-five total blog entries used face-detracting strategies such as silence. Tong and Walther (2010) analyzed CMC rejection responses, and 6 of the 7 original strategies from that study were face-enhancing strategies. For this content analysis, more face-detracting rejection strategies needed to be added to accommodate the variety of rejections within the blog entries. This was to be expected because the gay bloggers described real dates rather than contrived



dating request scenarios. The gay bloggers also used both CMC and in-person rejections, which caused more variance in the strategies used. Tong and Walther's participants were all explicit in their rejections because they were directly asked to reject their dates, and all responses had to be written out. Also, CMC allowed them to communicate in ways they may not have been able to face-to-face. In "Husband Material" from *It Gets Worse*, Spitale described a phone call he had with his rejectee, who Spitale found out was married. The use of a digital intermediary, in this case a phone, allowed him to be bold: "I told Trent he should probably update their [marriage] website with one of these excuses."

Rejections using face-detracting strategies such as Spitale telling Trent to update his marriage website seemed to be more difficult to perpetrate in person. For example, an anonymous blogger from *It Gets Worse* recalled when he met a man at a business conference, Scooter, in "Fair Gayme." Rather than tell the blogger in person that he was not interested, Scooter reported the blogger to the blogger's company for sexual harassment. Only after the report did Scooter communicate with the blogger via text. In this way, bloggers who used face-detracting strategies seemed to gravitate more towards CMC for their rejections. Although Tong and Walther (2010) did not categorize rejection strategies as face-enhancing or face-detracting strategies, the majority of their rejection strategies were face-enhancing, so this finding goes against their conclusion. This may have been because Tong and Walther used heterosexual participants rather than homosexual participants potentially due to gay men having higher levels of autonomy in relationships.

As Kurdek (1998) explained, those who identify as homosexual had higher levels of autonomy in relationships when compared to heterosexual individuals. This autonomy may have caused gay men not to be as concerned about hurting their dates' feelings when perpetrating

rejection. Tong and Walther (2010) concluded daters were more polite to those with whom they had higher levels of acquaintance, so gay bloggers might have used more face-detracting strategies because they did not know their dates well, such as in “The Boy on the Beach” when Myers meets his date within minutes of messaging him for the first time. Conversely, dates they spoke to for longer periods of time before meeting up might have resulted in face-enhancing rejection strategies such as “The Associate,” when Myers goes on a date with an ex-colleague. In addition, Tong and Walther used hypothetical rejection scenarios rather than accounts of dates, which also could have caused participants to be more polite when typing out a rejection prior to going on a date. Face-to-face meetings might have caused daters to use face-detracting strategies to ensure the date was conclusory rather than face-enhancing strategies which did not threaten a rejectee’s positive or negative face and could encourage them to continue talking to the rejector. Face-enhancing and face-detracting strategies contained sub-categories to further classify rejections.

### **Rejection Strategy Sub-Categories**

Tong and Walther (2010) had seven different rejection strategies in their study: rejection, reason, apologies, appreciation, concern, encouragement, and future contact. Their strategy called rejection was renamed to direct disagreement in this content analysis for clarity. In addition to the original strategies from Tong and Walther, blog entries’ strategies could have included blaming, forcing self-disclosure, silence, sarcasm, or other. Each blogger could have employed up to 12 specific rejection strategies in each entry.

Overall, the most common strategy used across blog entries was reason (11), offering an excuse so the date would end. All of the blog entries that used reason as a rejection strategy were implicit rejections; the rejectors did not have to be forthcoming but communicated the reasons they needed to leave in a way that did not threaten the rejectee's positive or negative face. It made sense that reason was the most commonly-used strategy because implicit rejections were most common. Reason seemed to be the easiest implicit rejection to fabricate; for example, rejectors said they had work to get done or were tired.

That being said, reason was the most common rejection strategy used because *The Guyliner*, which had the most blog entries overall, skewed the data. *The Guyliner* had 9 of the 11 instances of reason whereas *It Gets Worse* only had 2 of 11. This could have been due to Myers wanting to save face in his accounts of his dates, much like the research subjects from Doering (2010). With his storytelling background, it also could have been a technique Myers used to conclude his blog entries without much ambiguity for the reader that a rejection occurred but more ambiguity (implicit rejections) for the rejectees.

The other 11 rejection strategies required more explanation to the rejectee, potentially inviting lengthier discussions, such as future contact. "Dorian's Grey Pictures" involved additional discussion when Spitale told Dorian he was not attracted to him and preferred to stay friends. That invited a response from Dorian:

Dorian was clearly taken aback and showed the visceral maturity of a toddler with the croup. He lashed out in three separate paragraphs, the first detailing how he could never be attracted to someone as sexless as me; the second, explaining how I had the personality of a corkboard; and the third, – irony alert – accusing me of looking nothing like my pictures.

Other rejection strategy sub-categories did not invite responses such as silence.

Silence minimized the chances for additional conversations and was therefore a face-detracting strategy. Silence was the second most common strategy used in the blog entries overall (10) but was the most popular strategy in *Gay Dating Stories* and *100 Guys, 100 Stories* as well as one of the most popular rejection strategies in *It Gets Worse*. Most instances of silence in the blog entries were instances of ghosting. As Ansari (2015) explained, ghosting was a common occurrence in modern dating, so it was not surprising gay bloggers also experienced ghosting. However, silence also included in-person non-verbal reactions such as in *100 Guys, 100 Stories*’ “Barista with a Boyfriend”:

He makes a strange movement that tells me he obviously wasn’t expecting it and didn’t reciprocate the feelings. So I awkwardly pretend to crack my knuckles and remove my hand from his thigh. I sat for the rest of the movie, the next TWO HOURS, in silence; wishing I had never moved my arm and wondering what was going through his head.

The date did not vocalize their concern about the anonymous blogger touching him, but the date “makes a strange movement” in response to the blogger touching his leg. The exchange was silent, but it foreshadowed the eventual rejection. From then on, the blogger’s perception of the date changed. He was angry at himself that he tried to move the relationship forward when his date did not want anything more than friendship. Silence, when used as in-person non-verbal communication, signified a more firm rejection than ghosting, which left the daters waiting for responses. Some blogs had clear rejection strategies like silence, but some were classified as other when their conclusions did not match an existing rejection strategy sub-category.

While Tong and Walther (2010) did not use other as a category, this content analysis incorporated the additional category because accounts of real dates were less predictable than determining how participants responded to contrived dating scenarios. Within the seven entries that were categorized as other, three entries discussed a departure. For example, in “The Frat Pack,” Spitale simply left when his date invited Spitale back to his house and Spitale discovered the date wanted to have a foursome. Blog entries that fell into the other category also described rejection strategies in which the rejector showcased interest in someone else (three entries). In “The Also-Ran,” Myers described a time he was rejected by his date when the date texted Myers back that the date got a better offer. The final subcategory within other was distance. This was only presented in one blog, “The Christmas Fling,” in which Myers distanced himself from his date because Myers felt he did not deserve to be with the date.

Many of the strategies Tong and Walther (2010) identified (apologies, appreciation, concern, encouragement, and future contact) were used less often than the added strategies (blaming, forcing self-disclosure, silence, sarcasm, and other). This was expected because the bloggers recounted real dating experiences. Tong and Walther’s participants also were required to perpetrate rejections via computer-mediated communication rather than the blogs which could have been done either in person or via CMC. However, the top rejection strategy for Tong and Walther (2010) was reason, which also was the top rejection strategy in *The Guyliner*.

In “The Associate,” Myers used reason when he said, “I am fading fast and definitely too old to waste any more time listening to him. I drain my drink and make up a previous engagement. He shrugs and nods, apparently insouciant at my departure.” In this case, Myers’ reason to leave the date was vague (“a previous engagement”) but many of the other blog entries that used a reason were more closely tied to work deadlines or the date being tired. The second

most often used strategy from *The Guyliner* was not one of Tong and Walther's original strategies. Five of Myers' blog entries used sarcasm as a rejection strategy. None of the other blogs used sarcasm in their entries. Sarcasm seemed to align with Myers' caustic personality. Even when he was not describing the rejections at the end of the dates, he used quippy remarks while describing what happened during the dates such as, "He looks 31 in the same way that Caprice looks 31. Not at all." from "The Drunk." While there were some notable differences between heterosexual participants in the Tong and Walther (2010) study and the gay bloggers in the way they used rejection strategies, there were also similarities in which strategies they did not use often.

Tong and Walther (2010) explained that women were more likely to use encouragement and appreciation as rejection strategies. Appreciation was one of the least used rejection strategies for gay bloggers (two) and encouragement was not used in any of the blog entries, which aligned with Tong and Walther (2010) despite their male participants being heterosexual. Closely related to encouragement and appreciation, concern as a rejection strategy was also never used within the blog entries. The only words of encouragement any of the bloggers included were self-reflections. The anonymous author of *Gay Dating Stories* used self-reflection in his "What I Learned" sections that spoke to himself and to the reader, offering advice after rejections occurred. For example, in "••Interlude•• Angry Hurt Boy On A Mission," anonymous said:

Don't hype a situation up in your mind so much that if it doesn't work out you will be devastated! Not saying that you can't be excited, but just remember to remind yourself that you have only been on 1 date, you can't quite jump to conclusions that quickly, you have to play "the game" and let things unfold and let the interest build up.

Because this was a note rather than an account of the date, and it was not directed toward the rejector, it cannot be classified as encouragement. Level of acquaintanceship also affected which rejection strategies were used.

One of Tong and Walther's (2010) focuses was level of acquaintanceship. They claimed apologies were used most often when participants were given contrived scenarios explaining a low level of acquaintanceship. While blog entries did not necessarily explain the level of acquaintanceship, the amount of entries that contained apologies (4) may have been an indication that daters did not know a great deal of information about each other prior to the dates. With most of the blog entries describing online encounters (25), lower levels of acquaintanceship made sense. As Ansari (2015) explained, profiles on sites like Grindr did not contain much information; therefore, the gay bloggers might not have had high levels of acquaintanship with their potential dates. Blogs were limited in this way because information about the dates and resulting rejections could not be corroborated.

### **Limitations**

The blog entry sources were limited to publicly-accessible blogs via google searches for "gay dating stories" and "gay dating blogs" and were restrained to a time period of almost five years (January 2013 to September 2017). A recent search using the same search terms produced two more usable blogs: *Gay Dating In A Small Town*, which began after the search time period, and *Gaysian Dating*, which did not show up in the original search despite having enough blog entries to qualify for this content analysis. As Rak (2015) explained, blogs showed up on Google because of how many times they incorporated keywords. The more times the blogs included keywords, the more likely they would show up in search results. At the time, *Gaysian Dating* did not include the search terms enough to show up in a Google search even though the blog entries

dated back to 2015. For communication management professionals, this was a lesson in content marketing, specifically in search engine optimization. Understanding the language gay men used within their blogs could help develop content for business websites, aiding websites in showing up on the first page of Google search results by incorporating common search terms.

Communication management professionals who work at dating websites also could use gay bloggers' language to more effectively tailor dating websites to gay men.

A limitation of using gay dating blogs that were available to the public was the inability to confirm the accuracy of information contained within the blog entries. Self reports could have been biased, making rejectors seem less cruel or rejectees seem more innocent. Self reports in any study, whether written or verbal, risked the same bias. Members of the gay community might have had access to private blogs, and the stories could have been confirmed if those individuals knew the blogger. Blog entries describing romantic rejection had multiple sides to the story. If individuals knew everyone mentioned within the entries, they could have obtained a more holistic description of what happened on the date(s).

Private blogs would also help to expand the sample size, as the number of usable blog entries was low. *The Guyliner* had the most blog entries and therefore skewed the data as a whole. Although gay bloggers only offered a small sample size within the larger LBTQIA+ community, analyzing gay dating blogs began to build a framework of understanding for romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. This thesis also confirmed there were similarities between heterosexual and homosexual relationships pertaining to romantic rejection in potential relationships.



## **Future Research**

Further research needs to be done to find additional similarities and differences between heterosexual and homosexual relationships regarding romantic rejection. While this thesis began to build a framework for understanding romantic rejection in gay potential relationships, it used gay bloggers only. One of the main differences between heterosexual daters and gay bloggers was gay bloggers' usage of implicit rejections rather than explicit rejections. Young et al. (2008) found rejectors used bald on-record strategies (explicit rejections) rather than off-record strategies (implicit rejections) in instances of unrequited love, that was opposite for gay men both in situations of unrequited love and other reasons for rejection. A similarity between heterosexual and homosexual men in the context of reasons for rejection was the comparatively low number of instances of physical misrepresentation compared to a violation of expectations. Both heterosexual men (Curran & Lippold, 1975) and gay bloggers seemed to be realistic about the way their dates looked whereas personalities were what caused violations of expectations. Both gay men and heterosexual men seemed to have used uncertainty reduction strategies to alleviate reasons for rejection such as physical misrepresentation; however, much like heterosexual men, homosexual men in the 20- to 40-year-old range lied about their ages often (Hall et al., 2010). The resulting rejection strategies were similar between heterosexual men and homosexual men, but additional rejection strategies were needed to supplement the strategies used by Tong and Walther (2010). Gay bloggers and heterosexual men use silence (Ansari, 2015) and reason as common rejection strategies. Much like Tong and Walther's heterosexual male participants, gay bloggers used encouragement and appreciation as some of the least-utilized strategies despite Tong and Walther's participants responding to contrived dating scenarios versus accounts of dating experiences on the gay blogs. There were also additional research

opportunities based on the gay dating blogs' contents outside of further comparing heterosexual and homosexual men in a romantic rejection context.

Age might play a factor in unrequited love and it might also be an avenue for future research beyond unrequited love. All of the bloggers mentioned large age gaps in some of their blog entries. The anonymous blogger from *Gay Dating Stories*, who is in his early twenties, mentioned a ten-year age gap in one of the unusable blog entries, "My First Gay Bar: Screw Relationships, Let's Makeout" as did the anonymous blogger from *100 Guys, 100 Stories* in an unusable blog entry, "#2 8 Years and 400 Miles." *It Gets Worse* mentioned an age difference between daters three times. However, Myers mentioned an age difference the most often: 11 times. Myers often dated younger men and cited their life inexperience as one of the reasons the dates would not end successfully. Future research could look into whether or not age differences contributed to romantic rejections in gay relationships.

Blog entries were also one side of the story. One of the unusable entries from *The Guyliner*, "The Male Nanny," talked about an outing with Myers' friend, a fellow blogger. The Male Nanny wrote a blog about his and Myers' outing from his perspective. None of the other blog entries described bloggers' dates with other bloggers. Future research could include both men who were on the date to understand how each man perceived the date in terms of romantic rejection.

Tong and Walther (2010) and Ellison et al. (2006) focused solely on online dating sites in their studies. While the goal of the content analysis was to begin to develop a framework for understanding romantic rejection in gay dating, many of the bloggers met their dates online (25 entries) rather than offline (14 entries). Eight entries had unknown meeting methods. As Ansari (2015) discussed, modern romance often had a technological component to it. Online dating

became less taboo in recent years, and gay men especially used online dating sites, significantly more than their heterosexual counterparts (Rosenfeld & Thomas, 2012). Future research could focus on online gay daters specifically, comparing paid dating sites such as Match. com with hook-up-based phone applications such as Grindr and the resulting rejections from those dates.

This thesis also incorporated blog entries describing offline initial meetings. Future research could focus specifically on gay offline daters. Using either online or offline daters instead of both would add to the growing base of research on romantic rejection in the gay community.

Additional blog entries would also help determine if the majority of blog entry analyses from *The Guyliner* skewed the results in this thesis. Blogs are data-rich sources in that bloggers have to communicate information they would already know themselves if they were writing private diary entries, such as background information about bloggers' lives. Future research could use *Gay Dating In A Small Town*, *Gaysian Dating*, and other dating blogs that have since shown up in Google search results to expand the analysis pool.

## **Conclusion**

There was a gap in research regarding romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. Although there were similarities between heterosexual and homosexual relationships, this was only somewhat true in terms of romantic rejection. Gay daters used more face-detracting strategies than heterosexual daters. Gay daters were also more likely to use implicit rejections than explicit rejections. However, both gay daters and heterosexual daters had similar reasons for rejection. This study was able to begin to build a foundation for studying romantic rejection in gay potential relationships. By using gay bloggers as research subjects for content analysis, this thesis discovered which type of rejection was most common, the most common reasons for

rejection, and which rejection strategies gay bloggers used most often. Romantic rejection in gay relationships, as described by gay bloggers, was implicit. The most common reasons for rejection were a violation of expectations (*The Guyliner* and *It Gets Worse*) and unrequited love (*Gay Dating Stories* and *100 Guys, 100 Stories*). Three of four blogs used more face-detracting strategies than face-enhancing strategies, with *100 Guys, 100 Stories* using only face-enhancing strategies. The most common rejection strategies specifically were: reason (*The Guyliner*), apology (*It Gets Worse*), and silence (*It Gets Worse*; *Gay Dating Stories*; and *100 Guys, 100 Stories*). This study can be used for marketing professionals looking to develop a greater understanding of the gay male target demographic. More research needs to be done to comprehend how gay men perpetrate and experience romantic rejection in potential relationships to give a fuller view of gay dating.

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## Appendix A: Codebook and Coding Sheets

### A1: Codebook

This codebook provides working definitions for terms used in a qualitative content analysis of gay dating blog entries.

#### Research Questions

R1: Which type of rejection was most commonly reported by gay bloggers: explicit or implicit?

R2: What was the most common reason for rejection the gay bloggers reported?

R3: Were face-enhancing strategies or face-detracting strategies more commonly used in gay bloggers' blog entries?

R4: Which rejection strategy did the gay bloggers report as employed most often?

#### Coding Terms

##### *Rejection Types*

| Codes              | Definitions  | Examples   |
|--------------------|--|--|
| Explicit Rejection | “Usually, an idea or feeling is made explicit with words,” in this case resulting in a rejection<br>(Mehrabian, 1972, p. 2)  | “I’m not interested.”<br>“I’m interested in someone else.”   |
| Implicit Rejection | “When the speaker refrains from talking, or when [they say] the words in a voice that conveys a subtle, or even contradictory, shade of meaning,” in this case resulting in a rejection<br>(Mehrabian, 1972, p. 2) | “I have to be up early for work” when the rejector does not actually have to be up early for work.<br>“You really shouldn’t have said that.” |

***Reasons for Rejection***

| <b>Codes</b>               | <b>Definitions</b>  | <b>Examples</b>   |
|----------------------------|---|---|
| Violation of Expectations  | One's expectations about the type and amount of attention that one should receive in a social interaction are not fulfilled or expectations about the date's personality or social behaviors do not align | When preferred conversation topics and views do not align, resulting in finding each other to be dull |
| Unrequited Love            | When one person within a romantic relationship feels stronger than the other person does  | "I view us as friends."<br>"I don't feel the same way about you."                                     |
| Physical Misrepresentation | Using enhanced or outdated pictures on online dating profiles or using clothes/makeup to hide perceived flaws for in-person meetings  | When someone uses a picture taken a decade prior to the date  |

***Rejection Strategies***

| <b>Codes</b>    | <b>Definitions</b>   | <b>Examples</b>   |
|-----------------|--|---|
| Face-Enhancing  | “Those that support and confirm a person’s positive or negative face, meaning praise, pat on the back, giving person space, and asking rather than demanding” (DeVito, 2017, p. 322) | “It’s not you; it’s me.”<br>“I appreciate the offer for a date, but I think it’s best we stay friends.”                               |
| Face-Detracting | “Those that attack a person’s positive face, criticizing or minimizing their abilities or their negative face, making demands on a person’s time” (DeVito, 2017, p. 322)             | “It’s your fault.”<br>“You need to leave.”  |
| Reason          | Statements that give reason for why respondent is ending the date  | “I’m so busy with work/school.”<br>“My parents are in town this weekend.”   |
| Apology         | Statements indicating apology  | “Sorry about this...”<br>“I apologize...”   |
| Appreciation    | Statements of appreciation for (a) going on the date or (b) complimenting the respondent   | “Thanks for your message.”<br>“I’m so flattered that you’re interested in me.”<br>“Thanks for saying all those nice things about me.” |
| Concern         | Expressions of concern for requester’s potentially hurt feelings   | “I hope this isn’t too harsh.”  |
| Encouragement   | Statements that bolster rejectee’s confidence in the face of rejection   | “You sound like a great person.”<br>“I’m sure you can find someone else.”   |
| Future Contact  | Suggestions for future contact or relationship between rejector and rejectee   | “I hope we can still be friends.”<br>“We should get to know each other better as friends.”  |

|                         |   |   |
|-------------------------|---|---|
| Direct Disagreement     | Verbal acts that clearly threaten the hearer's negative face  | "You're wrong."<br>"I disagree."  |
| Blaming                 | Attacking and blaming the rejectee  | "You're an awful person."<br>"What's wrong with you?"   |
| Forcing Self-Disclosure | Pressuring someone to reveal restricted information about oneself   | "What do you think about me?"<br>"What do you think about X subject?"   |
| Silence                 | Failure to respond or reply, known as "ghosting" in the vernacular  | Continued unresponsiveness after repeated attempts at contact<br>Not responding when a date says or does something with which the rejector does not agree |
| Sarcasm                 | "Sarcasm, a variant of irony, has a caustic element in its usage and is, unlike irony in general, directed at a specific victim," based on paralinguistic cues. (Katz et al., 2004, p. 186) | "I don't think you have to worry about this relationship getting too serious."<br>"I would rather be anywhere else right now."                            |

## A2: Coding Sheet

Blog Name:

Blog Author:

Blog Entry:

Blog entry should be pasted here.

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?
  - a. Face-Enhancing
  - b. Face-Detracting
  - c. Reason
  - d. Apology
  - e. Appreciation
  - f. Concern
  - g. Encouragement
  - h. Future Contact
  - i. Blaming
  - j. Direct Disagreement
  - k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
  - l. Silence
  - m. Sarcasm
  - n. Other
6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

### A3: Completed Coding Sheets

#### Coding Sheet 1

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Hold-Out

A restaurant. I hate going for food on a first date, but my date suggested it and so here I am.

Leo is a student and 22 – that enchanted age where anything seems possible, but you’re still not old enough to realise none of it will ever happen.

His pictures were, to put it bluntly, deceiving and he is not very good-looking at all, but I’m here now and we can at least have a nice dinner. I can tell he’s not a serial dater, as he’s picked Chinese – nobody wants to spend two hours watching a stranger grapple with chopsticks.

He has been flirting with me outrageously since I got here – he’s all coquettish leans to one side, wry smiles and fluttery eyelashes. I am as responsive as a fridge in a scrapyard.

Halfway through a bowl of noodles that I can’t wait for him and his mouth to finish, he licks his lips and puts down his chopsticks and I know I am in trouble.

“I just want you to know – I never sleep with someone on the first date.”

Here we go. I am nothing if not a sadist, so I ask simply: “Why?”

He goes into a long diatribe about how relationships can only be brief and meaningless when founded on sex and that he prefers to get to know someone “spiritually rather than carnally”. I wonder which rock of self-help this bizarre statement crawled out from under.

“So how long do you wait?” I ask. “What’s the magic number of dates before you do the deed?”

“About four?”

“Four,” I repeat. “And then what?”

“Whaddya mean?”

“After date five, what happens next?”

There is no response. Just a deep breath. I plough on.

“Well, here you are.” I gesture around the room. “Sitting with me, on date number one. It rather suggests that as magic formulas go, your one for having a long-lasting relationship doesn’t seem to be much good.”



He scratches his head. “Eh?”

I should stop, but I can taste blood and, reader, I like it. “Four dates. Risky strategy.”

“How do you mean?”

“Well, you’re giving people an awful lot of opportunities to fall out of love with you.”

He scrunches up his face, puzzled. “What’s wrong with my four-date rule?”

I rest my chin on my hands. “If your formula for starting out on a long relationship is not to have sex with someone until the fourth date, why are you single? Where’s your relationship? Why are you here, now, with me, on a first date, imparting your ‘wisdom’, when in fact it is a load of old pony?”

He laughs nervously. “I don’t know.”

“Well, no. Holding out on sex on a first date is your choice, and totally up to you, but don’t think it makes you any deeper or less superficial to keep your Aussiebums on. It just means you are missing out on a shag. If you’re happy with it, that’s great.”

He puts his hand on my arm and smiles at me in a way I imagine someone once told him was sexy. There is a bit of chive in his teeth. He looks very pleased with himself – like a bank manager cancelling an overdraft. “Are you asking me to make an exception just this once?” he says.

My gaze slides glacially to his hand.

“I do sleep with people on the first date,” I smile. “If I fancy them.” Cue dramatic pause. “You’re safe tonight, Leo.”

He moves his hand back. We spend the rest of the date talking about the weather and ask for the bill as quickly as politeness will allow.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation

- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- His pictures were, to put it bluntly, deceiving and he is not very good-looking at all, but I'm here now and we can at least have a nice dinner.
- He has been flirting with me outrageously since I got here – he's all coquettish leans to one side, wry smiles and fluttery eyelashes. I am as responsive as a fridge in a scrapyard.
- I rest my chin on my hands. "If your formula for starting out on a long relationship is not to have sex with someone until the fourth date, why are you single? Where's your relationship? Why are you here, now, with me, on a first date, imparting your 'wisdom', when in fact it is a load of old pony?" He laughs nervously. "I don't know."

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm**
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

"I do sleep with people on the first date," I smile. "If I fancy them." Cue dramatic pause. "You're safe tonight, Leo."

## Coding Sheet 2

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Muse

Some people really love talking about their job. And I should know – I have spent many a sunny evening sitting under a cloud of boredom at a smeared pub table across from a guy going through his company's sales figures in mind-numbing detail. Curriculum Borae.

I don't really like talking about mine; I never have, really. People always think it should be more impressive than it actually is, that I should be sipping champagne at celebrity events and photobombing Taylor Swift's selfies.

The sad fact is, however that most of the time I am in my living room, slamming my fingers on my laptop's much-maligned keyboard, limbering up for a lifetime of back and shoulder pain thanks to my terrible posture. Either that or I'm doing the same but in a local café, while demonic children on microscooters encircle me.

But when a date asks, you have to tell – and Luke, my handsome, but slightly vanilla, date for the evening, is about to do just that.

"So you're a writer?" he says.

"Yes." I'm hoping my blank face will stop him from enquiring any further. It never works.

"What do you write about?"

I resist the temptation to roll my eyes and instead begin to tell him about my job, leaving out the key detail that sometimes I write about men I go on dates with, too. Describing what you do for a living to a date is one of the least fun parts of the whole process. Like I say, they're almost always disappointed that I don't get to meet any celebrities or break any big political stories.

My date listens intently, or at least pretends to, and then takes a swig of his drink. "I've been on a date with a writer before," he says.

"Oh, really?" I reply. "And how was that?" Although from his tone, I can guess it went badly.

"Fine," he shrugs, "except that he told me he was in the middle of writing a book about going on loads of dates with different men. Can you imagine that?"

Well, I kind of can. I gulp. After a silence lasting infinite millennia, I lean forward in my chair. "And what did you say to that?"

"I was really annoyed," he retorts with a furrowed brow. "He didn't want to be on a date with me because he was interested in me; he just wanted to put me in a book."

While I sympathise, I can't help but think it would be highly unlikely for my date to have been interesting enough to make it into the final draft of any book about dating. We have been sitting here for about an hour and this is the first time he has asked me a question, yet I know everything about his firm's redundancy procedure, which in the main seemed devoted to getting rid of him and him only. What a shame someone so beautiful has turned out to be such a dullard.

"So what happened?" I ask.

"Well, nothing. Once he told me that, the date was over."

I consider revealing all, just so I can get the exit I've been waiting for. Instead:

"Would it really have annoyed you to see yourself in print?"

He looks at me quizzically. "Well, of course it would. What a stupid thing to ask. Jesus."

"..."

I drain my drink and stare at the glass, my throat tight with awkwardness. I resolve not to ask him anything else, stupid or otherwise.

Luckily, my date seems to have tired of me considerably, as he gives a very stagey yawn and stretches his hands above his head. "I'm pretty beat," he whimpers. "Shall we call it a night?"

'Beat', yuk. I check my watch. 8.30 pm. Hardly "a night", but fair enough.

"Sure," I smile. "It was nice to meet you."

"Yeah," replies my date with not even a hint of sincerity. "You too."

"Ooh, by the way," I say as we part. "Do you read Gay Times magazine?"

He scratches his head. "No, I can't say I do. Why?"

"Oh, no reason. Goodnight."

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

Luckily, my date seems to have tired of me considerably, as he gives a very stagey yawn and stretches his hands above his head. "I'm pretty beat," he whimpers. "Shall we call it a night?"

'Beat', yuk. I check my watch. 8.30 pm. Hardly "a night", but fair enough.

“Sure,” I smile. “It was nice to meet you.”

“Yeah,” replies my date with not even a hint of sincerity. “You too.”

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- “Would it really have annoyed you to see yourself in print?” He looks at me quizzically. “Well, of course it would. What a stupid thing to ask. Jesus.”
- While I sympathise, I can’t help but think it would be highly unlikely for my date to have been interesting enough to make it into the final draft of any book about dating. We have been sitting here for about an hour and this is the first time he has asked me a question, yet I know everything about his firm’s redundancy procedure, which in the main seemed devoted to getting rid of him and him only. What a shame someone so beautiful has turned out to be such a dullard.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Luckily, my date seems to have tired of me considerably, as he gives a very stagey yawn and stretches his hands above his head. “I’m pretty beat,” he whimpers. “Shall we call it a night?”

### Coding Sheet 3

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Better Offer

My date has just got back from New York. I know this because he mentions it every five sentences. The shimmering neon is still visible in his starstruck eyes, and has blinded him to the fact that my own glazed over some time ago.

I tune back in to hear him telling me, in a rainy Tuesday monotone, about a go-go bar he went to in the East Village and quickly zone out again, my eye wandering over his shoulder to someone standing in the distance. That someone looks familiar. Hotly familiar. We catch each other's eye and stare a millisecond too long. I remember. Why, we went on a date only the other week. As I recall, he turned up looking hotter than hell, ate a burger, spat most of it over me and then left me the morning after with an oniony taste in my mouth I couldn't shake for days. So far, so normal.

The gay world is too small, I sigh. I decide to refocus, however, on my current date, who is in full flow about a carriage ride through Central Park. It's not that New York is boring – it's one of my most favourite places on Earth. Yet my date is recalling his trip with all the vigour of a bank teller warning me the next direct debit to leave my account will send me overdrawn. I hold in a yawn so hard that my lungs start to sizzle. My phone buzzes. A text message. Guess who?

"You look bored. Fancy a drink?"

I glance over to where my observer is standing. He looks mischievous. He raises his glass and gives me a lopsided grin.

I turn back to my date and start to weigh things up. I've not been great company. I'm unresponsive. He deserves better. Plus, he picked his nose and wiped it under the table when he thought I wasn't looking. The SMS intruder, on the other hand, looks a lot more fun. I'm no pushover, though. Let's make him work for it. Plus, it's my round and I don't want to look stingy.

At the bar I reply:

"Well, look who it is. I'm actually having an outstanding time, thanks."

Quick as a flash, he's back at me:

"You're full of it. Your eyelids are drooping. Again – do you fancy a drink?"

I'm so excited, I almost fancy I can taste onion in my mouth again. But I'm not a ball of knitting, to be picked up whenever he's bored. I haven't heard from him since our date. And so I reply:

"Maybe I do. You never called."

In a heartbeat comes the retort:

"Neither did you. Consider this the call. What's your answer?"

Touché. I return to my date smiling to myself, but knowing I'm beaten. That's a good answer. The cocksure bastard.

But how to extricate myself from the king of Manhattan? We sip our drinks for another 5 minutes until I spot my date stifling a yawn and see my opportunity.

"I'm a bit tired," I say. "Do you mind if we call it a night?"

My date nods a little too eagerly – clearly he's not head over heels in love with me either – and we leave the pub, the texter's eyes burning into us. Out of the corner of my eye I see him reach for his phone. Ideally, I'm aiming to be standing in front of him before he can even type "WTF?"

As I say my goodbyes to the Big Apple enthusiast, I feel my phone buzz angrily in my pocket. And then again. Eventually I see the date into a cab and victoriously turn back to the pub, texting the words that will get me my 'Access All Areas' pass deep into the fires of Hell: "Yes. Pint. See you in 5."

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
  - I hold in a yawn so hard that my lungs start to sizzle.
  - I turn back to my date and start to weigh things up. I've not been great company. I'm unresponsive. He deserves better. Plus, he picked his nose and wiped it under the table when he thought I wasn't looking.
  - We sip our drinks for another 5 minutes until I spot my date stifling a yawn and see my opportunity. "I'm a bit tired," I say. "Do you mind if we call it a night?" My date nods a little too eagerly – clearly he's not head over heels in love with me either – and we leave the pub, the texter's eyes burning into us.
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
  - My date has just got back from New York. I know this because he mentions it every five sentences.
  - I tune back in to hear him telling me, in a rainy Tuesday monotone, about a go-go bar he went to in the East Village and quickly zone out again, my eye wandering over his shoulder to someone standing in the distance.
  - I decide to refocus, however, on my current date, who is in full flow about a carriage ride through Central Park. It's not that New York is boring – it's one of my most favourite

places on Earth. Yet my date is recalling his trip with all the vigour of a bank teller warning me the next direct debit to leave my account will send me overdrawn. I hold in a yawn so hard that my lungs start to sizzle.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

“I’m a bit tired,” I say. “Do you mind if we call it a night?”



## Coding Sheet 4

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Christmas Fling

Winter. Brrrr. Mulled wine and Christmas shopping, festive drinks, tinsel and coupledness.

I'm trying not to think about what the festive period is going to be like without a significant other – it's best not to – but I'm wary of starting something at this time of year. Being alone in winter can be quite scary, but I don't want to over-compensate, or see romance where there is none, just so I won't be flying solo during party season. Draping tinsel over a 'maybe' shouldn't make it a 'yes'.

Nevertheless, here I am on the dating site being very cautiously wooed by our latest contestant. He's neither brash nor particularly confident but he can't seem to say a thing wrong. He's sweet, intelligent, funny and, from his limited number of public pictures, handsome.

He's a journalist and we talk about pretty much anything, settling into a jocular tone very early on. I don't ask him out for a drink because I sometimes worry something so perfect electronically can turn out to be only a disappointment when flesh comes into play. If he asks me, however, I won't say no. The games you play with yourself and others. How beautifully time-consuming and utterly pointless it all is.

He does ask, and my hand is forced. The date is a long time in the making: conflicting diaries and last-minute work commitments mean that the first meeting is delayed twice. By the time we do meet, December is on the horizon. I am to meet him on a Tuesday night in a pub in a beautiful part of London that's brimming over with Christmas cheer and ambience.

I arrive first. He's not here. The one available table is right in front of the door, so I can't possibly miss his arrival. I gaze at the huge Christmas tree in the corner and then out of the window at the wintry night. There are snowflakes. Every time the door opens I look down or away to avoid looking too eager. It's a terrible affectation, but I'm not going to change any time soon.

Finally, the door opens and he walks through it. On first glance, I'm a little disappointed, I must admit. He has less hair than his pictures had me believe and he's not the height he claims to be. I have no interest in starting a relationship with a giant, but it would be nice if my potential dates could be honest about their vital statistics. What else are they fibbing about, I wonder. Everything, I suppose. So why don't I? Anyway.

My grumpiness melts away when it becomes clear that he's very taken with me. Being fancied is quite an aphrodisiac, and confidence booster, and as he eagerly drinks in what I'm saying and looks at me appreciatively, I start to feel sexier, more attractive. No, really.

I can tell he's shy, and geeky and very dedicated to his job. He's much more of a serious soul than me, but I don't mind; I'm going through a phase where I'm finding earnest men very hot. I'm on my best behaviour, but being as mischievous as I dare, so it's going well. The silences are scarce.

After a couple of hours, I've warmed to him massively, but it is a weeknight and I've a considerable tube journey home ahead of me, so I call things to a halt. As we part outside the pub, we shake hands and he says he'd like to do it again. I reply I would too. His eyes are firmly locked on my mouth as I speak. On the way home, I am approached by a beautiful drunk girl brandishing some mistletoe and asking for a snog. I succumb to a kiss on the cheek, feeling optimistic and festive. If I breathed out hard enough now, I'd exhale streamers.

I don't hear anything for a day or two. I don't know why I feel the need to break my personal rule and text him first – I'm not really sure where that next move will take me, after all, and we're so hugely different – but he fancies me and sometimes that's enough. He's pleased to hear from me and wants to meet. Again, schedules get in the way, but we do finally settle on a Saturday night, my first weekend date for a while, in a pub I've taken a lot of suitors to before. It's not a gay venue, but it's near places that are. If things look promising, we can progress. It's good to think ahead; I like a plan.

He gets there before me, so I spot him as I walk in. He stands against the wall, studying me as I come toward him. He smiles, his eyes twinkling with – well, I don't know. Lust? Desire? Expectation? Yes, I think so – all three.

He's not as coy this time. He attempts to ply me with drinks, although there's no need to anaesthetise me, and repeatedly touches my arm, staring into my eyes and making me feel self-conscious, but not uncomfortable. I suggest we move on. We walk down the street close to one another, not quite touching but near enough for anyone passing us to know that while we're mere acquaintances at the moment, the chances are we're likely to be more than that before the night is out.

When we arrive at the next bar, we get drinks but don't seem that interested in supping them. Instead we play a game of dare where we stand as closely to each other as we can get away with without touching. I'm aware this is not usually his style; I'm corrupting a certified square. He may have increased his confidence levels since the first date, but I know the first move is not his to make, so as he reaches out his hand to lift up his drink, I put myself in its way. He doesn't touch the drink again.

When we have finished kissing, he looks at me in wonderment.

"Who are you?" he asks, laughing. "Who just does that? You've got, well, gumption."

"No. It's what anyone would've done," I reply. I don't really know who I am any more, at this moment. I ask him to come home with me. He's not sure.

"I just wanted to get to know you first," he says.

"That's fine. I understand." I don't suggest it again.

But he doesn't let go of my hand until we're out of the taxi and I need him to release it so I can unlock my front door.

We are in touch almost daily after our second date. He's clever, sharp and sexily serious and I feel a rush of, well, something when I get texts from him, although there are misgivings in there too. Will I ever get to be the real version of myself? Do I want to be? I've been laying on the charm and being as sexily mysterious as I dare, but the veil will have to fall eventually. Me will out.

He asks if I'll go out with him for dinner and I accept. I have been keeping my options open, and have been on two extremely chaste (and boring) dates with another man. I don't feel the need to share this information with my current date. I'm not sure which way it's going to go.

We arrive at the restaurant at the same time. It's a restaurant I was at just a few weeks ago, on a date with someone else. A waiter nods and smiles in recognition. My date is, as ever, conservatively dressed. He looks ordinary and geeky and cute as he very gallantly waits for me to sit down before taking his own seat.

Over dinner we talk about his job (I don't really ever want to talk about mine) and his impending work travels and, of course, his plans for Christmas. It's not feeling as natural as before but my default setting is 'overthink', so I resolve not to worry about it. We discuss the dates we're departing London for our festive breaks and he's throwing up possible days to fit in a pre-Christmas drink, flicking through his diary as we wait for the bill. He's organising, but I don't mind so much. That's who he is. He'd never be domineering or controlling in a million years, I realise – he's too sweet.

And then I get a strange feeling I can't explain. A sense of doom. I dismiss it, but "too sweet" stays in my head. This paradise is all mine to ruin. I wonder how long it will take me. We pay the bill and walk out into the cold night.

"What are you doing now?" he asks.

"Well, nothing. Going home, I guess."

"I was wondering if you'd like to come back with me," he says, his eyes hopeful and kind. He's romantic, charming and perfect. Eager. Adorable.

I say yes.

The journey takes a good half-hour. Inside the flat, he pours me the glass of water I ask for and a bigger glass of wine I don't. His flatmate is out. His pad is neat and tidy, tastefully decorated. Everything is in order, no chaos, nothing is random. Even the bills, photos and shopping lists stuck to the fridge are perfectly lined up and evenly spaced. I sip my drink carefully as he regards me from the chair opposite. He tells me how much he likes me. It feels nice. He says I'm cheeky, and not the kind of guy he would normally go for, but he didn't have to. I already know.

Minutes later, as he is nuzzling into my neck and stroking my knee, I get a flash into the future. It involves me introducing disorder and confusion into his life, as he gets to know me and grasps that I have been on my very best behaviour so far, which still isn't saying a lot. As he whispers into my ear about staying the night, I fast forward a month, maybe a year, and see me breaking his heart, letting him down and bringing him a randomness he's not ready for. He's everything I

think I want, but know, in my heart, that I don't. While we move to the bedroom and draw the curtains, I know that this will be the last time I see him. I am almost proved right.

Almost a year later, I am in central London on my way home after my first spate of Christmas shopping. As I descend the stairs into Piccadilly Circus station, two geekily handsome bespectacled men are on their way up. Their arms interlocked. Lovers. They share a joke and laugh. The same laugh. One of them is last year's Christmas fling. He has found his other half after all.

He catches my eye for a second, but does not display any sign of recognition. I silently wish him a merry Christmas and feel glad I stepped out of his life when I did. There really is somebody out there for everyone, I guess.

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
  - And then I get a strange feeling I can't explain. A sense of doom. I dismiss it, but "too sweet" stays in my head. This paradise is all mine to ruin. I wonder how long it will take me.
  - While we move to the bedroom and draw the curtains, I know that this will be the last time I see him. I am almost proved right.
  - Almost a year later, I am in central London on my way home after my first spate of Christmas shopping. As I descend the stairs into Piccadilly Circus station, two geekily handsome bespectacled men are on their way up. Their arms interlocked. Lovers. They share a joke and laugh. The same laugh. One of them is last year's Christmas fling. He has found his other half after all. He catches my eye for a second, but does not display any sign of recognition. I silently wish him a merry Christmas and feel glad I stepped out of his life when I did. There really is somebody out there for everyone, I guess.
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
  - That's who he is. He'd never be domineering or controlling in a million years, I realise – he's too sweet.
  - He says I'm cheeky, and not the kind of guy he would normally go for, but he didn't have to. I already know.
  - Minutes later, as he is nuzzling into my neck and stroking my knee, I get a flash into the future. It involves me introducing disorder and confusion into his life, as he gets to know me and grasps that I have been on my very best behaviour so far, which still isn't saying a

lot. As he whispers into my ear about staying the night, I fast forward a month, maybe a year, and see me breaking his heart, letting him down and bringing him a randomness he's not ready for. He's everything I think I want, but know, in my heart, that I don't.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?
- a. Face-Enhancing
  - b. Face-Detracting
  - c. Reason
  - d. Apology
  - e. Appreciation
  - f. Concern
  - g. Encouragement
  - h. Future Contact
  - i. Blaming
  - j. Direct Disagreement
  - k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
  - l. Silence
  - m. Sarcasm
  - n. Other – Distance

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Minutes later, as he is nuzzling into my neck and stroking my knee, I get a flash into the future. It involves me introducing disorder and confusion into his life, as he gets to know me and grasps that I have been on my very best behaviour so far, which still isn't saying a lot. As he whispers into my ear about staying the night, I fast forward a month, maybe a year, and see me breaking his heart, letting him down and bringing him a randomness he's not ready for. He's everything I think I want, but know, in my heart, that I don't. While we move to the bedroom and draw the curtains, I know that this will be the last time I see him. I am almost proved right.

Almost a year later, I am in central London on my way home after my first spate of Christmas shopping. As I descend the stairs into Piccadilly Circus station, two geekily handsome bespectacled men are on their way up. Their arms interlocked. Lovers. They share a joke and laugh. The same laugh. One of them is last year's Christmas fling. He has found his other half after all.

He catches my eye for a second, but does not display any sign of recognition. I silently wish him a merry Christmas and feel glad I stepped out of his life when I did. There really is somebody out there for everyone, I guess.

## Coding Sheet 5

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Associate

One shouldn't mix business with pleasure, they say, but it is a redundant cliché. Many of us needn't be warned: the only pleasure a lot of people take from their work is skipping right out of it at 6pm. If you are the kind of person who derives gratification from their metier, it's unlikely that you'll need to find it in the groins of your colleagues or other pursuits in the workplace. As tantalising as Ken from the High Wycombe office may be, there are much more exciting temptations awaiting you outside the revolving doors of Day Job plc.

I've never had the misfortune to date anyone from the workplace and I've no intention of dipping my toe in that stagnant pool now, so it is with some bemusement I accept an ex-colleague's invitation to go for a drink. When he contacts me – over LinkedIn, Facebook's serious, data-obsessed, social leper of a sister – his message is fairly straightforward and not particularly chatty. It's hardly blokeish, but it's matter-of-fact. How have I been? Would I like to go for a drink? I have no gaydar to speak of. Usually I don't realise a guy is my way inclined until he has his hand on my rump or his tongue down my throat. Plus, I've seen the back covers of enough chick lit novels to know that workmate-dating is right up there with having sex at a funeral when it comes to inappropriate things to do, but the working relationship is over and, crucially, I misread his invite. I'm uncharacteristically unprepared, and really quite reluctant to go at all, but I have an evening to kill and sitting at home stirring the cherry in a cocktail only looks good on TV. So I say yes, assuming he just wants to talk at me about his workplace woes or his girlfriend. The usual.

He opts to meet in a noisy bar in Soho. I arrive first, annoyingly, and sit doodling in the condensation on my pint glass as I wait. I try to remember how much I had to do with my date when we were co-workers. The answer, I discover after totting up the encounters in my head, is very little. Aside from a cursory "hello" in the kitchen as I plunged yet another tea bag into a cracked mug, plus one fateful time he was on the panel for a presentation I gave, our meetings have been few and far between. He always seemed like a nice guy, though, and I excitedly think that there may be some career opportunities coming my way. Maybe he saw something in me at our previous job that he wants to exploit wherever he is now. It isn't long before I discover exactly what he saw in me, and how he plans to get it there.

I check my watch, idly wondering what drink to order next, when he arrives in a flurry of activity. He apologises profusely for being late (a whole three minutes) and plonks his bag onto the table, making the entire thing wobble, as if he's diffusing all his nervous energy into it. As I can't get a word in edgeways, I have plenty of time to scope him out and I do so, but not too obviously; after all, at this point he's a straight colleague and this is a business meeting. He's much more attractive than I remember, dressed sharply as if just out of work and, judging by the oppressive cloud of cologne, via the nearest branch of Boots, too. He scurries off to the bar to buy us drinks and there's something about the glint in his eyes – deep dark brown and sitting beneath what look suspiciously like shaped eyebrows – which makes me think we are not just

here to talk about spreadsheets. Let's not elaborate on that and turn it into a pun; we're better than that.

In a whirlwind, he is back at my side, his eyes flashing again. He sits very close to me, his thigh not quite touching mine but you would be hard-pressed to get a grain of salt between them. He's off talking again, but he is at least asking me questions rather than burbling his way through a book report like most of my dates do. His first question is a jugular-seeking missile about when I last had a serious boyfriend. Finally, the penny drops.

"About two years ago," I reply, moving in a little closer now I know what game we're playing.

"So you'll be looking to settle down soon, I guess?"

My, he's fast. I explain that I'm not, and just enjoying being single at the moment.

"Oh right, I just figured, y'know, 'cos of your age and stuff," is his reply. If he means to wound with this barb, he shows no sign of it. Yet with just a casual remark and a swig of his bottle of Beck's he has swaddled me in a mauve bedjacket and hurled me into an adjustable bed with a side table, upon which sits a scratched glass containing Steradent and a set of false teeth. I shift uneasily in my chair and my bones creak in sympathy. He is all of five years younger than me, for crying out loud. I don't let me discomfort show and instead resolve the best way to avoid him mortally offending me is to get him to talk, so I ask him a couple of questions about his work and what he's doing now.

He's moved on from our old place of employ, he tells me. His boyfriend at the time wanted him to make a change and so he left his job to start anew. I'm torn between admiring the sacrifice he made and questioning his decision to submit to his ex's request. I tell him this and his face sets, his eyes becoming lifeless until we change the subject. He decides to talk about how old I am again. He's fascinated by my age, quizzing me on cultural references and asking what it's like to be a gay man of "my generation". I briefly look over to the pub window to check my reflection to make sure my hair hasn't gone bright white and ask him what the deal is with this age obsession.

"Single gay men just seem to end up alone and bitter when they get old," he confides. "I don't wanna be like that."

I'm puzzled. "I think you're hanging around with the wrong gay men."

It seems crass to point out that young gay men can be just as lonely and bitter, if not more, than their silver-haired counterparts, but I do anyway and he turns to me, all handsome and clueless, and tells me that every gay man he's been with has fucked him over one way or the other, and that he doesn't think he can ever be in a relationship. I'm not altogether sure why I'm here, but I feel like an actor at an audition that's just taken a turn for the worse.

He then kicks off a monologue that lasts a good 20 minutes, drilling down in great detail about all his 'boyfriends' – he counts one night stands in this group – and their list of crimes. Most of their misdemeanours seem petty and overblown, aside from the unfortunate suitor who ran over his dog as he was making a quick getaway after a night of passion turned into an argument. Perhaps realising he is losing me with his "woe is me" act, he speedily changes his line, attempting to paint himself as an ultra-desirable god that I simply must be with. His method is to tell me about two ex-boyfriends who were madly in love with him, how they begged and pleaded for him to first of all be with them and finally never leave them. There were tears, flowers,

holidays in five-star resorts, weekends in the country and champagne – endless, abundant glasses of champagne.

“So what happened?” I ask, perfectly reasonably, my neck starting to ache somewhat as I have been trying to tilt my head at an angle which makes me look interested.

“They both cheated on me,” he says, “but little do they know I did the dirty on them first!” He sits back proudly and rubs the rim of his bottle with his finger.

He then carries on, talking me through the break-ups and inevitable division of goods and finances. I realise that in the entire time I have been sitting here, all he has talked about is his ex-boyfriends. And his only line of questioning to me was when did I last have one. I look at him again. He really is beautiful. He seems odd out of the workplace, though, like an iguana sitting on a flowery sofa. I’m not used to seeing him as a real person, with thoughts, feelings, gripes. My eyes wander down from his face to his neck to his body and everything is perfection, save for a speck of dirt on his collar. He will age well, I decide. But I don’t want to be there when he does. His insecurities, at the moment only a speck, will grow and grow the older he becomes. Those hang-ups about age and men will strain and he will look for the nearest person to blame. At the moment, it’s someone else – he is gleefully telling me how he refilled his ex’s vodka bottles with water – but if I stand too close for too long, it’ll be my turn. I am fading fast and definitely too old to waste any more time listening to him. I drain my drink and make up a previous engagement. He shrugs and nods, apparently insouciant at my departure.

I bid him adieu and make my way out onto the street, knowing that his next date is likely to hear the story about the superannuated ex-colleague who wasn’t ready to settle down. Ah well, I never did like taking my work home with me, no matter how much pleasure I could’ve got out of taking care of ‘business’.

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection**
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
  - He will age well, I decide. But I don’t want to be there when he does. His insecurities, at the moment only a speck, will grow and grow the older he becomes.
  - I bid him adieu and make my way out onto the street, knowing that his next date is likely to hear the story about the superannuated ex-colleague who wasn’t ready to settle down. Ah well, I never did like taking my work home with me, no matter how much pleasure I could’ve got out of taking care of ‘business’.
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations**
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:



- His first question is a jugular-seeking missile about when I last had a serious boyfriend. Finally, the penny drops. “About two years ago,” I reply, moving in a little closer now I know what game we’re playing. “So you’ll be looking to settle down soon, I guess?” My, he’s fast. I explain that I’m not, and just enjoying being single at the moment. “Oh right, I just figured, y’know, ‘cos of your age and stuff,” is his reply. If he means to wound with this barb, he shows no sign of it.
- He is all of five years younger than me, for crying out loud. I don’t let me discomfort show and instead resolve the best way to avoid him mortally offending me is to get him to talk, so I ask him a couple of questions about his work and what he’s doing now.
- He’s fascinated by my age, quizzing me on cultural references and asking what it’s like to be a gay man of “my generation”. I briefly look over to the pub window to check my reflection to make sure my hair hasn’t gone bright white and ask him what the deal is with this age obsession. “Single gay men just seem to end up alone and bitter when they get old,” he confides. “I don’t wanna be like that.” I’m puzzled. “I think you’re hanging around with the wrong gay men.”
- It seems crass to point out that young gay men can be just as lonely and bitter, if not more, than their silver-haired counterparts, but I do anyway and he turns to me, all handsome and clueless, and tells me that every gay man he’s been with has fucked him over one way or the other, and that he doesn’t think he can ever be in a relationship. I’m not altogether sure why I’m here, but I feel like an actor at an audition that’s just taken a turn for the worse.
- Perhaps realising he is losing me with his “woe is me” act, he speedily changes his line, attempting to paint himself as an ultra-desirable god that I simply must be with.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I am fading fast and definitely too old to waste any more time listening to him. I drain my drink and make up a previous engagement. He shrugs and nods, apparently insouciant at my departure.

## Coding Sheet 6

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Backpacker

It's always surprising when someone gets in touch who you may, at one point, have considered to be out of your league. In an utterly pointless act of 'playing hard to get', I have resolved not to add any new men as 'favourites' and instead see if they come to me. After all, the first law of internet dating appears to be "The ones you like, don't like you", so I figure it's time to see who likes me. It hasn't yet occurred to me that I could be faced with months and months of silence, the email inbox where I receive the dating site notifications acquiring a fine layer of dust, with a lone spider building a cobweb just above the last message received: a junk email telling me that the O2 is having a line-dancing extravaganza.

Happily, I never get to find out as my first bite on the line is The Guy, an impossibly tall handsome young man who travels a lot. He sends me the usual email and I am baffled as to why on Earth he would be remotely interested in me. Maybe he likes older, shorter men with lines so deep their faces look like a carving of the London Underground map. We each express an interest in meeting up and then the conversation stops dead – he doesn't reply and I don't prod or chase. I'm playing hard to get, remember. I am just about to file him away under "Looks like someone better came along" when he gets in touch. He's been away travelling as he is writing a book. His time has been taken up with that and he hasn't had a chance to answer emails but now he has, and would I like to meet up this time? I would, so I say so. The date is set for a Wednesday evening and, thanks to it being a scorching week, he settles on the south bank, at the bar in the British Film Institute. I groan inwardly. The south bank is always too busy on a sunny evening and has been the scene for some truly terrible dates. He's not to know that of course, so I say how GREAT that will be and that I'll see him then. I read through his profile once again, to refamiliarise myself with his stats and all that. He seems to be very much an outdoorsy type – a fact I must have glossed over when he first got in touch. But this is OK. I go outside quite a lot: to the shop, to the pub, you know – the great outdoors.

So the great day comes and I am decidedly nervous, as I always am before a date with a considerably younger man. I shrug it off and a few moments before I arrive at our destination, he texts to say he'll be slightly late. I make my way into the bar, which is crowded and warm and smells of spilled beer and order a drink, taking the only available seat I can find. I have a pretty good vantage point of both doors and am sitting in front of the bar, so I shan't miss him. I text him to let him know I've arrived. Any worries that I may not see him approach are quickly dispelled as I notice a remarkably tall, slight blond walking toward me. I don't have my glasses on, but I really don't need them; it has to be him. In what seems like only two strides to cross the room he is in front of me with hand outstretched by way of hello. This is the 18th guy I have been out with in a few short months, and I know chemistry when I see it, and I think it's fair to say that The Guy is a tad disappointed. His face may not fall and his smile may remain bright, but the enthusiasm you feel – the warm, excited feeling you get – when you know somebody fancies you is missing. This oven has not been pre-heated.

Once he gets himself a drink, he suggests we move outside and I agree. We don't look too odd walking beside each other, at least not in height terms. We find a seat and once settled, the conversation flows easily. He's handsome, well, cute at least, and not the kind of guy I would normally have gone for, but that doesn't mean anything. He has really clear, beautiful blue eyes, the whites of which are so white I think he must have had some kind of groundbreaking eye-white surgery. I then remember he is young and probably goes easy on the late nights. He is a travel writer, and is waiting to get his book published, which is expected to happen very soon. He has been editing and re-drafting, so is kind of sick of the project. In the meantime, he writes about backpacking holidays for a fairly well-known travel site. He regales me with tales of grubby youth hostels and the kind of thing which happens in them, and even at one point says he can get me some work if I need it, but ultimately there is little below the surface I can really work out about him. We don't chat about our families or where we grew up; everything is kept very much at a superficial level. I can't seem to work out why. Does he not like getting too deep on a first date (with which I tend to agree) or is he only too aware that we shan't be meeting again and is thus unwilling to share too many of his secrets?

We are just talking about a journalist who is a mutual acquaintance when we are interrupted by someone saying a fairly inebriated "hello" at me. I turn to find an ex-colleague sitting with some people I don't know. He comes over for a chat which lasts all of 30 seconds, as he soon realises I'm on a date and thus backs off. The timing couldn't be worse; I wish I'd bumped into him days ago so I could try arrange some freelance work but now is not the time. Also, the brief interruption has changed the energy of the date and it's getting late too, so we agree it's time to go. As we walk to the train station together, he starts to make noises that he'd like to do this again, and I guess I agree. He is, after all, clever, funny, handsome and HELLA tall. There was no instant spark or chemistry, no, but I remember in chemistry lessons at school it could take quite some time and patient potion-mixing before things went "BOOM". Maybe this will be a slow-burner. As we part company at the tube entrance, there is a kiss on the cheek and a shoulder pat and I walk off to get my bus without turning my head back. I'm still in two minds whether to leave it or pursue things, and resolve to put it out of my head for a few days, which I do.

Around a week or so later, I text The Guy to ask how his weekend went and to let me know if he fancies a follow-up drink. He does not reply. Riiiiight. And so on to the next...

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
I'm still in two minds whether to leave it or pursue things, and resolve to put it out of my head for a few days, which I do.

Around a week or so later, I text The Guy to ask how his weekend went and to let me know if he fancies a follow-up drink. He does not reply. Riiiiight. And so on to the next...

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**

- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- This is the 18th guy I have been out with in a few short months, and I know chemistry when I see it, and I think it's fair to say that The Guy is a tad disappointed. His face may not fall and his smile may remain bright, but the enthusiasm you feel – the warm, excited feeling you get – when you know somebody fancies you is missing. This oven has not been pre-heated.
- He regales me with tales of grubby youth hostels and the kind of thing which happens in them, and even at one point says he can get me some work if I need it, but ultimately there is little below the surface I can really work out about him. We don't chat about our families or where we grew up; everything is kept very much at a superficial level. I can't seem to work out why. Does he not like getting too deep on a first date (with which I tend to agree) or is he only too aware that we shan't be meeting again and is thus unwilling to share too many of his secrets?
- There was no instant spark or chemistry, no, but I remember in chemistry lessons at school it could take quite some time and patient potion-mixing before things went "BOOM". Maybe this will be a slow-burner.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Around a week or so later, I text The Guy to ask how his weekend went and to let me know if he fancies a follow-up drink. He does not reply.

## Coding Sheet 7

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Banker

So we're on another summer of "yes", it would seem. My iPhone calendar heaves with dates and I'm looking as ravaged as only one can when one has been necking beers in a variety of pubs with a slew of strangers.

As a result of my packed schedule, which I pore over with all the enthusiasm of a dead cat, it is a few weeks between arranging a date with The Guy and actually going on it. He first contacts me during a busy period at work. He says the usual intro stuff: he likes my profile, I seem interesting, would like to know more – truly the "Do you come here often?" of the internet dating world. I peruse his profile and he seems nice, intelligent, friendly. He doesn't look anything special on his pictures but my recent experience has shown that pictures are so ridiculously unrepresentative of the men who post them that he may well be an adonis in the flesh. Yeah, I know. I live in hope, at least

Anyway, we exchange a few pleasantries over email and then he goes in with the whammy of asking me out on a date. I think about this. If I'm honest with myself, which is always important but devastatingly rare, I don't really want to go. He's a little older than I am looking for, and beyond the niceties we've exchanged, I'm struggling to see what we'll have in common. I do, however, feel that I have led him on slightly by keeping up the dialogue. By now we have taken it to email, as his subscription on the dating site was about to expire. He mails me again and suggests meeting for dinner in Pimlico. Shit. For some reason it is beyond my capability to refuse him outright. So, turning gradually more yellow by the second, I avoid the email for a couple of days. He sends the exact same email again.

I can't ignore him a second time, so I reply, saying that I'd rather go for a more informal drink and that I'm unavailable for the next couple of weeks, in the hope that this will discourage him or he will meet Mr Right in the intervening weeks. We make vague plans for a couple of Thursdays away, he goes in the diary, and then I get on with being alive. Two days before the designated time, he mails and texts me to confirm the date. Resignedly, and generally feeling like a shit for being so reluctant, I agree and we arrange to meet outside a theatre in Victoria, where a well-known musical is playing. I fervently hope that he hasn't bought "surprise!" tickets to see said musical, as I have absolutely no desire to see it ever.

D-Day arrives and I plonk myself on the train and resolve to be positive about the date. It's got me out of the house and let's face it, the telephone hasn't rung in a while. I am a little early so wander round the shops for a bit, and then head off to the theatre, which is over-run with enthusiastic tourists waiting to go into the show. I have forgotten to wear my glasses, so squint unattractively as I try to find my date among the swathes of babbling theatregoers. Only two men look as if they're waiting for someone. One is wearing a football shirt, tracksuit bottoms and is scratching his balls with a vigour I can barely believe let alone describe, so I discount him immediately. The other looks like John Prescott. Shit and double shit. I walk by him, expecting a

flicker of recognition from him, but there is none. I sigh deeply. I wait a little longer and then check my emails to see if I've got the right time. I'm 30 minutes early. Balls. Annoyed at my stupidity and slackness, yet relieved I won't have to endure John Prescott making cow eyes at me for the next couple of hours, I head back to the shops for another whirlwind window shopping extravaganza.

Take two, then. At the right time, I make my way out of the station concourse and toward the theatre. There is a lone man there who doesn't resemble my date, but, as I have just realised, I cannot remember what my date looks like. At all. The man I'm walking toward looks decidedly middle-aged. He is rather squat, and has a considerable gut and the beginnings of man boobs. My mind is working overtime as I calmly approach him, preparing to do the walk-by in case it is yet another stranger. He lets me get quite a way past him before he looks at me quizzically and says my name. I turn, and in my spectacle-free state think I've been approached by TV critic Charlie Brooker. I haven't, though. It's my date. I smile brightly and we shake hands. For me, it's over, but I'm damned if I'm going to let it ruin my evening.

He says he knows a pub round the corner so we walk there, chatting about the kind of stuff you can only really talk about if you have met someone online. It's not awkward, particularly, but at times we talk over each other and then pause, laughing, waiting for the other to continue. We get the job stuff out of the way fairly quickly. He's an investment banker, and has been all his working life, save for a couple of sabbaticals. He lives locally to where we're going for a drink, which raises my eyebrow slightly as I know all the tricks, having played most of them myself. Going for a drink near where you live usually means you're hoping for something extracurricular. Well, this time, kid, you're out of luck.

We arrive at the pub which is packed with drinkers outside and in. It's a lovely pub, but roasting hot, and my attractiveness fades by the second as the perspiration collects on my forehead. He tells me to take a seat while he gets drinks. He returns with my pint and for himself what looks like cola. I worry inwardly. If he's going to sit there sober while I disintegrate into drunkenness, he might not be in for a scintillating night. The chat flows freely but never develops beyond a superficial level. The News International phone-hacking scandal is still a hot topic and so once we've done careers, family, childhoods, driving, cycling, the horrors of Canary Wharf (although he confesses he likes it), we talk about the Murdochs, before moving on to the hair salon staple that is holiday talk. He's clearly well travelled and his wallet is well-oiled too. He goes to New York every year and is going on 3 holidays in the space of 8 weeks in the coming months. I can tell that he has probably used these subtle hints at a bulging wallet on dates before; it's the kind of thing that appeals to some gay men, but all the money in the world can't buy you a personality or innate sexiness, so it's never impressed me. To give The Guy his due, he seems a lovely fella – yeah, I'd say he was a fella – who is looking for someone to share his time and money with. Sadly, I want neither.

It's my round and I am relieved that his 'cola' actually also has a double helping of Jack Daniel's in it. I am momentarily distracted by work-related texts and emails but he very kindly tells me to go ahead, so I type furiously and make a ridiculous amount of errors as I don't want to keep him waiting. It is after the third drink that I realise I am having a nice time. While I wouldn't say he

was particularly interesting, he's clever and well-read and is capable of a decent discussion. I do not, however, fancy him at all, which is pretty much a key thing, right?

Drink 4 comes and goes and it's at this time that I realise my enthusiasm for another drink may suggest to him that this is going anywhere but home separately. But that is not going to happen; I'm not that drunk. I say I have to get going and he looks straight into my eyes and seems to understand. As we walk out of the pub, he remarks that his flat isn't far, but in the opposite direction to the station. I turn to him, smile and say "OK, well, I guess this is where we say goodnight."

"Sure, goodnight. It was really nice to meet you."

"And you," I say. And I mean it. And then I go home.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

I say I have to get going and he looks straight into my eyes and seems to understand. As we walk out of the pub, he remarks that his flat isn't far, but in the opposite direction to the station. I turn to him, smile and say "OK, well, I guess this is where we say goodnight."

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- The chat flows freely but never develops beyond a superficial level.
- He goes to New York every year and is going on 3 holidays in the space of 8 weeks in the coming months. I can tell that he has probably used these subtle hints at a bulging wallet on dates before; it's the kind of thing that appeals to some gay men, but all the money in the world can't buy you a personality or innate sexiness, so it's never impressed me. To give The Guy his due, he seems a lovely fella – yeah, I'd say he was a fella – who is looking for someone to share his time and money with. Sadly, I want neither.
- While I wouldn't say he was particularly interesting, he's clever and well-read and is capable of a decent discussion. I do not, however, fancy him at all, which is pretty much a key thing, right?

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation

- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I say I have to get going and he looks straight into my eyes and seems to understand.



## Coding Sheet 8

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Graduate

The true currency of dating, the one you never really think about, is time. Whether you're buttering up a honey in a noisy bar, doing extra lengths at the swimming pool to impress a buff lifeguard or stumbling through endless online profiles, the amount of time you spend on this initial process can be disheartening if the end result is less than satisfactory. Checking out pictures, flicking through your favourites and, of course, fielding all those interested parties (if you're lucky enough to have more than one contestant take a shine to you) all takes up precious time, not to mention – once you've locked on to the one you want – the synchronisation of diaries, agonising over what to wear and where to go, followed by the biggest time-consumer of all: the actual date.

It's refreshing, then, to encounter somebody who cuts straight to the chase. Dawdling, flirting and textual one-upmanship cast aside by somebody who knows what they want – you. Sure, build-up is important and can set the tone for your date, but we live in modern times. We eat fast food, rely on our phones to remember pretty much anything and can, if we so wish, arrange a late-night sexual assignation at the click of a mouse and without any money changing hands. Now, now, now! More! Now! With this in mind, enter our new Guy, who contacts me, exchanges monosyllabic pleasantries and asks if we can arrange a date within about 30 minutes of me first laying eyes on him.

On first inspection, pretty much everything about This Guy in turns repels and attracts me. His two pictures are nothing special. In one he is wearing his graduation attire (sexy!), and in the other he is among a gaggle of friends who look like a school chess club after a particularly unkind makeover by some ill-meaning school bullies who covered them in superglue, found a box marked 'things in neon' and threw it at them. But he is good-looking and straight to the point. Also, I should remark in the interests of full disclosure that another plus in his favour was his ridiculous flattery, spouting meaningless TV panel show-style plaudits such as "You don't look your age", "You're really cute", and the ultimate line to loosen my belt buckle: "Your spelling and grammar is pretty impressive". Well, that's all I need to know. He's handsome, knows his way around a semicolon and thinks I'm hot too. I collect a few more details from him to place on my virtual clipboard – he's 24, just finished uni and is taking a year out before starting a graduate scheme in marketing. And he's hot, did I mention that? Our date is fixed for a couple of days later, on a Sunday afternoon, in a local pub.

To Sunday, and on the morning of the date I awake pretty fresh, having stayed in the night before to catch up on some work. I have plenty of time to kill, but knowing you have something to look forward to later in the day makes the acres of nothingness before you not quite seem so bad. As a child, I would've been impatient, restless. Now, I potter around my kitchen, awaiting 3 o'clock with controlled anticipation. At 2, I receive a text message.

"Hey [my name]. Can we make it 5 instead? Am behind schedule."

And it is here where childish impatience kicks in. When you know what time you'll be entertained, you can look forward to it, aim for it, the boredom in between less important. But now the goalposts have been moved. The light at the end of the tunnel fades to a pinprick. I vigorously bleach the bathroom before replying that it is fine; I shall see him at 5. His reply is simply "OK".

When someone tells you they need to move the meeting time back, they're usually being optimistic about their arrival time; they're probably going to be even later. With that in mind, I turn up a full 10 minutes late for the date, only to be proven utterly wrong. He is sitting before me, looking at the door fairly vacantly. I walk toward him and extend my hand. Strangely, he doesn't see me coming and jumps as my hand approaches. He apologises, saying he was miles away. I wonder how many miles exactly. I get us some drinks and when I finally sit down he smiles broadly, but seems agitated and distracted. He lifts his pint and his hand trembles. I sense a hangover. He is still very pretty, but looks kind of, well, rough today.

I ask him if he was out last night, by any chance. He giggles.

"Out last night? Yeah. Still am, really."

I ask him what he means.

"Well, thing is..." he leans forward, conspiratorially, as if about to impart some big secret, "I haven't been to bed yet. That's really bad isn't it? To turn up to a date on no sleep."

"Well, I don't know," I reply. "If you had insomnia, I guess it's not that bad at all. If you were out all night and came straight from a party, well perhaps."

He puts his hand to his mouth and giggles again. "I know this isn't funny. I'm sorry."

I sigh. "It's OK. At least you turned up."

"Yes!" he exclaims, proudly. "I did, didn't I? Although to tell you the truth, I'm still fucked." He takes a glug of his pint as if it were water – which it really should be given his current state – and apologises again, before going on to tell me about his night out and how it couldn't be missed. Since graduating, he's been letting his hair down quite a lot, he says, and last night was one of many "big ones" with all his friends. As he talks me through it, I feel like a schoolteacher listening to a pupil read out an essay on "What I did on my holidays". It feels as far removed from my night last night as it's possible to get without being dead.

As he talks, I take a closer look at him. His face has the freshness of youth still, and even his months of debauchery haven't eroded his good looks. But his skin is grey and his eyes bloodshot: the pupils large and leaving little room for the bright green iris to show itself. His frame seems more slender than on his photos. Clearly his nights out have not been starting off in restaurants. He has soon slurped his way through his drink and offers to go to the bar to get more. He begins to stand, but is unsteady on his feet and instead I say I'll go. The last thing I

need to add to my increasing disappointment is for my date to be refused service and thrown out of the place. When I return, he is fiddling with something on his ear. When he moves his hand away, I see there is a hole in it. A hole I can see through.

“What’s that?” I ask, peering closer at his ear.

“Oh this?” he waggles his lobe like Groucho Marx would his cigar, “it’s a tunnel.”

“A what?!”

“A tunnel,” he repeats. “It’s like a piercing, and you make it get bigger and bigger by putting different tunnels – like tubes of metal – in it, to widen it, you know?”

I look at it again, then put my hands to my own ear lobes, as if measuring them to see if such a thing would be possible. He notices me do this.

“I think your lobes would be too small to get a decent sized one going, really.”

I laugh. “Why would you want to do that to your ear?”

As soon as it’s out of my mouth I regret it. I sound antiquated, a crotchety parent misunderstanding the ways of the young. What exactly is he supposed to say in response to that?

He shrugs. “Oh, fuck it, y’know? I just like it. I’m guessing you don’t.”

I have to confess that it’s not something I’d usually find attractive.

He shrugs again. “Don’t worry about it. We can’t all like the same things.” He stops to take another swig before looking me straight in the eye and saying: “God, I really am fucked. This isn’t very romantic, is it?”

I laugh again, inexplicably charmed by his honesty. He’s far too young, I’m not interested in him at all and this date has all the potential of a romantic night in with a relative, but I’m here now, he is being mildly amusing, so I may as well have a good time. I find him strangely endearing, and while I am not getting what I came for, he hasn’t been boring. I raise my glass to clink it with his.

“You have a lot to learn about romance,” I tell him amiably, “and I am so glad I won’t be the one to have to teach you.”

He chuckles and nods. Our glasses clash noisily.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

“You have a lot to learn about romance,” I tell him amiably, “and I am so glad I won’t be the one to have to teach you.”

He chuckles and nods. Our glasses clash noisily.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- I ask him if he was out last night, by any chance. He giggles. “Out last night? Yeah. Still am, really.” I ask him what he means. “Well, thing is...” he leans forward, conspiratorially, as if about to impart some big secret, “I haven’t been to bed yet. That’s really bad isn’t it? To turn up to a date on no sleep.” “Well, I don’t know,” I reply. “If you had insomnia, I guess it’s not that bad at all. If you were out all night and came straight from a party, well perhaps.” He puts his hand to his mouth and giggles again. “I know this isn’t funny. I’m sorry.”
- As he talks me through it, I feel like a schoolteacher listening to a pupil read out an essay on “What I did on my holidays”. It feels as far removed from my night last night as it’s possible to get without being dead.
- His frame seems more slender than on his photos. Clearly his nights out have not been starting off in restaurants.
- When I return, he is fiddling with something on his ear. When he moves his hand away, I see there is a hole in it. A hole I can see through.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

He shrugs again. "Don't worry about it. We can't all like the same things." He stops to take another swig before looking me straight in the eye and saying: "God, I really am fucked. This isn't very romantic, is it?"

I laugh again, inexplicably charmed by his honesty. He's far too young, I'm not interested in him at all and this date has all the potential of a romantic night in with a relative, but I'm here now, he is being mildly amusing, so I may as well have a good time. I find him strangely endearing, and while I am not getting what I came for, he hasn't been boring. I raise my glass to clink it with his.

"You have a lot to learn about romance," I tell him amiably, "and I am so glad I won't be the one to have to teach you."

## Coding Sheet 9

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Wrong Peter

There are good days and there are bad days in the dating world. What constitutes a good day varies greatly. Sometimes it will be a day where you have myriad emails from suitors to reply to: all of them handsome and witty and wise, with porcelain teeth, bright eyes and shiny hair. Sometimes a good day is a day when you don't have anyone to respond to, as you have despatched your oh-so-clever, multi-layered communiqués with ease, as if second nature. And sometimes a good day is when you manage to go on a date with the right person. Today, then, might not be a good day.

As well as using the internet dating site which has served up the majority of my 'guys', I'm also using an iPhone app which hooks me up with other men looking for dates. I'll be brutally honest here: a lot of them are just looking to put their John Thomas in you or on you. Many of them, however, are, like me, just looking to meet new people. It's fairly easy to weed out the ones who just want a bang – they send you a picture of their penis within the first minute and/or have a headless, gym-tortured torso as their profile pic. To counter this, there is a very handy and, in my case, oft-used 'block' button, and the decapitated pec monsters are consigned to the slop bucket of the internet. It is through this medium that we arrive at This Guy.

The Guy first contacts me on a very dull Sunday evening. I have spent the evening working and am bored to the point of suicide, so fire up the iPhone app to see who is online. The Guy 'pings' me an instant message, opening with the devastatingly original 'Hello'. I know I shouldn't criticise, as most conversations have to begin with hello, but fucking hell. We exchange a few messages and he seems perfectly pleasant and polite. He is new to London and doesn't live far from me. His profile picture is a bit blurry, but I'm not backing away from him with my hand over my eyes so he's not too bad-looking. After around 15 minutes of inane instant messaging, I say I have to go and he asks if I'd like to go for a drink sometime. Do I? Hmm. Well, it would be nice to meet a neighbour and I don't actually have to arrange something now, right? I say OK and he provides his mobile number, which I do not bother noting down. He asks for mine in return and STUPIDLY I give it to him. This, dear reader, proves to be my ultimate undoing. As a parting shot, and rather oddly, he gives me his full name and says I should Google him if I want to know more. I do; he's a bigwig at a university and, in the photos I see, not for me. Call me shallow, but hey, I like what I like.

I put this guy to the back of my mind and carry on chatting to other people. One guy I am chatting to is extremely handsome, clever, funny and works in TV. He sounds like he would be a brilliant laugh. His name is Peter (it isn't, but it is for the purposes of this blog) and he suggests meeting up for a coffee sometime. I agree and we leave it there, work seeming to get in the way of arranging something definite. A few days pass by and I am at work when my phone buzzes. I have a text. The text is from Peter. He reminds me that we have chatted before on the iPhone app and that I said we could go for a coffee. Do I remember and would I like to go? I leave it an hour or so, as is my wont, and then reply in the affirmative, and that we should go for an after-work

drink. I suggest a pub which is halfway between where we live, and that will be on his route home from work. He replies that he doesn't know the pub, but will find it. I am puzzled. He can't not know the pub if he lives where he says he lives. It's just not possible. Everyone knows it. I reply, offering to meet somewhere else, and also expressing surprise that he doesn't know the pub if he lives in East Dulwich. And then comes the reply.

"I don't live in East Dulwich; I live in Peckham"

Now I am even more confused. Peter definitely said he lived in East Dulwich. Has he moved? Already?! Another text arrives saying that he will find it anyway and puts forward a time, saying he will see me there. And then my blood runs cold. I realise who I have been talking to. There are two Peters. I only like one of them. This isn't that Peter. This is the other Peter, the wrong one. Fuck. And we are meeting the very next night. Double fuck with a fucking cherry on fucking top. I agonise all day and all the next day what to do. I have never called off a date in my life, unless I have been ill, and it seems really unfair of me to arrange it and then cancel. It is at this point I realise that I have a conscience and am thus a very good boy, and as a penance for taking my eye off the ball and not concentrating on my Peters, I resolve to go, and make the best of it.

I do some shopping on the way home from work and decide to go straight to the date without going home. If I arrive 'fresh' from work, it gives the impression that I am very busy and have lots to do, and so will need to leave the date early to finish this afore-mentioned work. This is actually partially true: I do have some work to do tonight, but the world isn't going to shatter in a million pieces if I don't do it, but he doesn't have to know that. I plod toward the pub with all the enthusiasm of Marie Antoinette going to the gallows. He is there already. I pretend I don't see him which is fairly easy because my attention has been attracted to the fact that the pub appears to be closed for a refurb. The Guy is standing outside it looking as if he is desperately hoping not to have been stood up. He is wearing a rugby-style top and some very clean jeans and a pair of shiny shoes. Having come straight from work, I look like I've been dragged through an H&M backwards by the hair.

I catch his eye and we exchange that good old hello before acting puzzled at the pub's closure and then deciding to decamp to another round the corner. I have never been in this pub before, but I hate it immediately. The kitchen is in the pub itself, and is spewing out all manner of unsavoury smells. I can't see a menu but I imagine it's a scampi and shit burger fest. The Guy asks what I'd like to drink and when I tell him, he orders the same. I am vaguely aware of the smell of aftershave, and it is getting stronger and stronger the more time I spend in close proximity to him. Match this with the cacophony of odours from the kitchen, and I'm in olfactory meltdown. We choose a table and are seated. Conversations are awkward enough to get going, let alone without the added ingredient of 'I don't want to be here', so I ask lots of questions to appear interested. He doesn't ask many back, but to be honest I am so bored by talking about myself after 35 other dates that I am glad of the respite. I have to say that it's a bit hard to be interested as I find what he does a little boring. We talk a lot about politics and while that can be an interesting subject, it's one of the worst topics for a first date ever. It's right up there with confessing to your date that you dress up as one of the Spice Girls to get an erection – simply not done. Also, his aftershave is now choking me to the point where I can feel myself

turning blue. I can't do this much longer. It's so strong I feel like saying something. My nose is going to wither and fall off. He seems genuine and is perfectly pleasant, but he is categorically not for me. Not now, not ever.

Politeness says that I should buy him a drink back, which I do, but I begin to wind things up by mentioning the work I have to do and bemoaning the life of a freelancer. I think he gets it. We drain our drinks and leave the pub. I could go the way he's walking, but I decide to euthanise the evening here and now, and separate from him outside the pub. We exchange the nice to meet you bollocks, shake hands – he wisely does not move in for a kiss on the cheek – and we part company. When I have turned the corner, I look at my watch. I lasted 55 minutes. That's not bad considering I should never have been there in the first place. I arrive home and get out my phone. There is a message on the iPhone app from Peter, this time the right one. I exhale.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

Politeness says that I should buy him a drink back, which I do, but I begin to wind things up by mentioning the work I have to do and bemoaning the life of a freelancer. I think he gets it. We drain our drinks and leave the pub. I could go the way he's walking, but I decide to euthanise the evening here and now, and separate from him outside the pub. We exchange the nice to meet you bollocks, shake hands – he wisely does not move in for a kiss on the cheek – and we part company. When I have turned the corner, I look at my watch. I lasted 55 minutes. That's not bad considering I should never have been there in the first place.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- I realise who I have been talking to. There are two Peters. I only like one of them. This isn't that Peter. This is the other Peter, the wrong one.
- Conversations are awkward enough to get going, let alone without the added ingredient of 'I don't want to be here', so I ask lots of questions to appear interested. He doesn't ask many back, but to be honest I am so bored by talking about myself after 35 other dates that I am glad of the respite. I have to say that it's a bit hard to be interested as I find what he does a little boring. We talk a lot about politics and while that can be an interesting subject, it's one of the worst topics for a first date ever. It's right up there with confessing to your date that you dress up as one of the Spice Girls to get an erection – simply not done. Also, his aftershave is now choking me to the point where I can feel myself turning blue. I can't do this much longer. It's so strong I feel like saying something. My nose is



going to wither and fall off. He seems genuine and is perfectly pleasant, but he is categorically not for me. Not now, not ever.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- If I arrive 'fresh' from work, it gives the impression that I am very busy and have lots to do, and so will need to leave the date early to finish this afore-mentioned work. This is actually partially true: I do have some work to do tonight, but the world isn't going to shatter in a million pieces if I don't do it, but he doesn't have to know that.
- Politeness says that I should buy him a drink back, which I do, but I begin to wind things up by mentioning the work I have to do and bemoaning the life of a freelancer. I think he gets it.

## Coding Sheet 10

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Iceman Skateth

On dates, for a while, you are someone else. You nod at gaps in conversation that would be better served by an eye roll, you agree where disagreement is more apt, you smile – always the smile.

Usually, if you are well matched, these pretences fall away. The veil drops. The mask slips. And because you like each other so much, it doesn't matter. Other times, it takes a little bit longer. Maybe you're having to work harder to find a common ground or having to play along a little longer to snare your man. It's this kind of insecurity that sees you agreeing to go ice skating at Christmas with a man you're really not sure about.

I have been on four dates with Richard and we have got on well. He is erudite and kind of handsome and very nearly on the cusp of being funny. Our courtship has been virtuous to say the least – I have brushed up against his stubble but our bodies have always been separated by layers of cotton and Christmas jumper. And there are plenty of layers – it's a cold winter. We are two priests in search of a baptism. Our dates have been wintry – a mulled cider and bratwurst here, a festive concert there. Little more.

I am not expecting to see Richard again until after Christmas, as he is busy with work and I, well, I am keeping my options open. I am giving dating more than one man at a time a go. I'm not very good at it – I'm terrified I'll get a name wrong or attempt to bond reminiscing events that happened with the other. But at least I am keeping my underwear on with both; this is not a delayed threesome.

My phone rings. It is Richard.

"Hi!" He is always enthusiastic. For now, I am playing along, so I respond as if a winning lottery ticket has just fallen into my hands.

"Hello Richard, how are you?"

"Yes, great, fine," he gasps. "Look, I've got tickets for tomorrow night and wondered if you are free."

I don't ask what the tickets are for. I have a window that must be filled, a curiosity to be satisfied, an itch that I'm hoping to be scratched and a mind I need to make up. I blunder on. "Let me just check." I don't move a muscle. "Free."

"Great! We're going ice skating ice skating at Somerset House. You like ice skating, right?"

I have never been ice skating. It was true then and it is still true now. I don't lie.

“I’ve never been.”

“You’ll love it. See you at 6.30.”

After he rings off, I sit for a while and mull this over. I have never ice-skated. I am old. I have avoided trying it for a variety of reasons: it looks like falling over would hurt; I don’t want to look stupid; I am not confident on anything other than my Converse. And, if I’m honest, I just don’t want to. But I am not at the stage where I can say there are things I don’t want to do. Dating means you have to appear up for everything, a keen bean, an enthusiast. If all else fails, I’ll get drunk and attempt some kind of charm. Wish me luck.

On the phone to my mother that day, I casually mention I’ll be going ice skating for the first time that evening, and that I’m nervous.

“Why?” she asks.

“Because I’ve never done it before.”

“Well you were all right on the roller skates; it’s just like that.”

“I never had roller skates,” I reply.

A pause. “You sure?”

“Yes.”

“Oh no, it was your sister. You had... Oh, what was it?” There is another pause and then a choking sound. She is laughing. “Oh, yes, the skateboard. Absolutely no sense of balance. Never on it for more than a second.”

“Yes, I remember.” I cringe.

“Well, you were OK until you actually started moving.” She begins cackling again. “But then sure enough, you’d be off it before you could even say ‘skateboard’. Terrible.”

“This is why I’m nervous,” I say.

“I should have got you some roller skates.”

“How would that have helped?” I ask, incredulous.

“It wouldn’t,” she replies drily. “I’d just have loved to have seen you give it a go.” And then she laughs again, like a drain. For too long.

I glance at the clock and lose half a stone thanks to sheer anxiety.

I arrive early and pace up and down clutching a Starbucks. (Red cup! Yaaaay! Or whatever.) I've decided what I'm going to do is tell him, when he gets here, that I don't want to do it. He'll laugh about it, call me silly – maybe even ruffle my hair – and we'll go for a drink. I'll feel a bit dumb for a bit, sure, but at least I'll be honest; the transition into myself can finally begin.

And then he turns up. With his very own pair of ice skates slung casually over his shoulder. Shit.

As I change into my regulation dead-dog-coloured skates, he fastens up his own with superior skill, in about 10 seconds flat. I am dreading standing up so much. I try to think of ways to cause a diversion, but his eyes are fixed on my skates.

“Need a hand?”

“Um, no.”

“Oh, it's fine. Let me.”

I breathe deeply. “Richard,” I say, my face reddening with both the extreme cold and embarrassment. “I...I don't want to do this. I really don't.”

“I don't understand.” His forehead crinkles with bewilderment.

“I just don't want to. I've never done it before and have no desire to.”

“You could just try.” Richard's expression is dark.

I look at the ice rink. The buildings surrounding it are beautiful, floodlit and, right now, oppressive. The arena itself is packed with middle-class people in patterned pea coats laughing uproariously and doing perfect figures-of-eight. There are no clumsy elephants; everyone is immaculate, chiselled and graceful. I may as well throw a lump of shit on the ice as clamber on it myself.

I speak again. “I don't want to sound like...like I'm going to sound, but... I really can't.”

He folds his arms. “These tickets are fucking impossible to get.”

“I know.”

“I could've taken anyone with me tonight.” Okaaaay. “But I chose you.”

I nod and smile. “I know. But I... I know it's stupid.”

“It is,” he barks, standing up and outstretching his hand. “Get up, we're doing it.”

“But...” I splutter.

“Come on,” he says. “It’ll be romantic.”

I grab onto his hand, feeling as romantic as Marie Antoinette hitching her brocade skirts up to the guillotine.

“I’ve heard it’s really hard to get off the ice,” I whimper.

“You’re not even on it yet.”

“I think I need a bit longer.”

He attempts to hoist me up, chuckling. My body is unresponsive. I am frozen with fear of looking stupid – even though, of course, I am making myself look even more stupid than the ice would. Soon, his chuckles subside, and my humiliation is so great it is sentient and writing into Points Of View.

Eventually, he acknowledges my anguish and suggests we try again in a short while. He emphasises “short” like it’s a threat.

I itch to unclip my skates, my slippery jailers.

“Oh, hey, Alan!” says my date, in an excited voice I haven’t heard before. A clean-cut guy comes over to Richard, engages in what seems like hours of air-kissing, and looks over to me. We are introduced.

“We’re just taking a break,” says Richard. “I think [my name] is a bit tired,” he beams, glancing over at me with eyes no bigger than a pinprick in a bedsheet.

“Ooh, that’s a shame,” grins ‘Alan’. “I’m just about to hit the ice.”

I spy my parole. “Why don’t you two go ahead?” I smile, my mouth lop-sided with the cold. They don’t need telling twice. Before you can even say “Torvill and Dean”, they are off across the ice, hand in hand. Alan has a fat, boring arse. I clench my own in satisfaction.

I sit dejectedly for around 15 seconds, before pulling off my skates. My eyes idly wander over to the rink, and see Alan and Richard guffawing as they pirouette. They are graceful, synchronised. Two swans.

Yet my feathers aren’t ruffled. I hug my coat around me and wait for my winter wonderland to thaw. They’ll tire of their routine eventually, and then I can go home. I know this is my fault; I know I was difficult and irrational. I’m willing to take the bullet. At least I’ll never have to skate again. Not with Richard, anyway.

Thank fuck.

1. What was the result of the date?

a. Explicit Rejection

b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
 “We’re just taking a break,” says Richard. “I think [my name] is a bit tired,” he beams, glancing over at me with eyes no bigger than a pinprick in a bedsheet.

“Ooh, that’s a shame,” grins ‘Alan’. “I’m just about to hit the ice.”

I spy my parole. “Why don’t you two go ahead?” I smile, my mouth lop-sided with the cold. They don’t need telling twice. Before you can even say “Torvill and Dean”, they are off across the ice, hand in hand. Alan has a fat, boring arse. I clench my own in satisfaction.

I sit dejectedly for around 15 seconds, before pulling off my skates. My eyes idly wander over to the rink, and see Alan and Richard guffawing as they pirouette. They are graceful, synchronised. Two swans.

Yet my feathers aren’t ruffled. I hug my coat around me and wait for my winter wonderland to thaw. They’ll tire of their routine eventually, and then I can go home. I know this is my fault; I know I was difficult and irrational. I’m willing to take the bullet. At least I’ll never have to skate again. Not with Richard, anyway.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

a. Violation of Expectations

b. Unrequited Love

c. Physical Misrepresentation

d. Other

e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

As I change into my regulation dead-dog-coloured skates, he fastens up his own with superior skill, in about 10 seconds flat. I am dreading standing up so much. I try to think of ways to cause a diversion, but his eyes are fixed on my skates.

“Need a hand?”

“Um, no.”

“Oh, it’s fine. Let me.”

I breathe deeply. “Richard,” I say, my face reddening with both the extreme cold and embarrassment. “I...I don’t want to do this. I really don’t.”

“I don’t understand.” His forehead crinkles with bewilderment.

“I just don’t want to. I’ve never done it before and have no desire to.”

“You could just try.” Richard’s expression is dark.

I look at the ice rink. The buildings surrounding it are beautiful, floodlit and, right now, oppressive. The arena itself is packed with middle-class people in patterned pea coats laughing uproariously and doing perfect figures-of-eight. There are no clumsy elephants; everyone is immaculate, chiselled and graceful. I may as well throw a lump of shit on the ice as clamber on it myself.

I speak again. “I don’t want to sound like...like I’m going to sound, but... I really can’t.”

He folds his arms. “These tickets are fucking impossible to get.”

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other – Someone Else

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- I sit dejectedly for around 15 seconds, before pulling off my skates. My eyes idly wander over to the rink, and see Alan and Richard guffawing as they pirouette. They are graceful, synchronised. Two swans.
- At least I’ll never have to skate again. Not with Richard, anyway.

## Coding Sheet 11

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Boy on the Beach

When your lake becomes devoid of fish – or you’re sick of catching the same old ones – you must cast your net farther. To the sea, even. And so I find myself in a seaside town, firing up a dating app (allow me the indulgence of fooling myself that the men on this app are only looking for dates and nothing more intimate) and seeing who’s available. The circumstances which have brought me here are sad ones. My godfather has died and I am in town for his funeral, which is in a couple of days. Grief is an odd emotion. While its primary characteristic is sadness, there’s a strong undercurrent that’s quite life-affirming. You want to do things which confirm to you that you’re alive: drink a pint, jump up and down and laugh, make noise, punch a wall, scratch your eyes out, fuck somebody. I pace around his home, smiling at old photographs and wishing there were more I could do. His family need some time together to talk about the funeral, so I decide to get out of their way and go for a walk on the beach. As I leave the house, I idly scroll through the dating app, the eager mugshots all melding into one great big welcoming face. And then, a ping. And so it begins.

His photo isn’t going to win any beauty contests, but it’s not a bad storefront. He has big blue eyes. That’s the first thing I notice. I look at his age. 23. A child! His lips are quite thin. My mother always told me never to trust a man with thin lips, but I’m not going to give him my bank details, or perhaps even my real name, so I don’t need to have very much faith in him. We get over the initial hellos and how-are-yous fairly quickly. My flirtation is mechanical, direct and, from my perspective, deeply unsexy. What a great proposition I am for this young buck. But he is curious and, crucially, bored out of his mind on the greyest of Sunday afternoons, so he takes the bait. I tell him I’m on the beach and he says he’ll join me. I breathe out slowly, the freezing air turning my breath into an ice sculpture, not of a swan or a pretty crystal, but words. They say, “What on Earth are you doing?” but I turn my back on them.

He tells me it’ll take around 25 minutes for him to get there, so I walk along the beach. Despite the Arctic chill, the promenade is fairly busy, with oodles of runners in their odd, fluorescent leggings and couples with prams, bickering affectionately, some of them even with ice creams. I have forgotten my scarf and gloves, so am ill-prepared for even a half-hour stint of walking in the open air in the middle of February. I briefly lament the lack of lambswool against my neck and wonder what my date is expecting of me. We haven’t talked about what we’re going to do, or where we’ll go. I don’t even have his phone number. Does he think this is a hook-up? Am I soon to be undressing in front of a stranger? In my head, the answer is no – it would be massively inappropriate and I don’t do that any more – but what kind of afternoon does he think awaits him? I begin to go off the idea rapidly and my arrogant confidence, which saw me breezily tapping away at my phone keyboard and arranging to meet a stranger, is now leaving me. My shivering is no longer related to the temperature alone. In an effort to shake it off, I duck into an amusement arcade and resolve to think about something – anything – else.



The smell of chips hangs heavy in the air as I stroll around the arcade. I attract a few initial stares (I don't look like your typical video game fan), but people soon get back to their shoot 'em ups or fruitless attempts at grabbing a soft toy and ignoring me altogether. I start to feel like a ghost, wandering aimlessly, or perhaps a paedophile hunting out prey, so I go to a machine which pretends you can win lots of coins the more you put in, and choke the slot with as many two-pence pieces as I can find in my pocket. I check the app again to see if there are any updates, given I don't have his phone number. None. Five minutes ago, I was an ice cube; now I begin to sweat. I put one last coin into the machine and, when denied a prize, childishly raise my middle finger at it and leave the arcade. As I go, a man with more spots than the canine cast of 101 Dalmatians approaches the machine, inserts a coin and wins what sounds like a million dollars. I roll my eyes and push the door open.

Back outside again, I check the app to find a message. He's here. He gives me some directions to his location, using landmarks recognisable only to a local. I am not a local. I ask again and again for clarification, like a wittering pensioner on the phone to a utility company, and finally he mentions a place I recognise, a drinks kiosk, and I make my way toward it. This feels like the longest walk of my life. Anticipation is being strangled by a sense of dread. I don't want to do this now. I want to be back in the house, drinking tea. Not here. Not now. But I would never stand up a date, and this isn't his fault. I know this will end badly. I plod toward my doom.

As I come to the kiosk he mentioned, I see a lone figure sitting on the beach, quite far away. I squint at him in the distance – I have forgotten to wear my glasses – and sigh, before trudging over to him. He is hunched, as if reading something, but as I get closer I see he is picking at his shoes. Nervous, perhaps. I stand behind him and utter a monotone "hello". He jumps, startled, and turns to me. He has fake tan, over-gelled, badly dyed hair and eyes like dinner plates. He looks young. His camera was kinder than my eye. I look at the blond splodge on his head. It's a comfort that he too seems rather underwhelmed by my physical form.

I plonk myself awkwardly on the pebbles next to him and we shake hands. I ask his age again. He replies that he's 21. His breath smells like a mixture of Haribo and cigarettes.

"I thought you were 23?"

"No, I'm 21."

"Your profile says 23."

"Oh, yes, that's right, I'm 23."

I laugh out loud but he only stares defiantly back.

"Are you saying you forgot you were 23?"

"Does 2 years make that much difference to you?" he asks, sending his eyes skyward.

I have to concede that it doesn't. And as I have not told him my name yet, and am becoming increasingly reluctant to do so, I decide I'm in no position to call anybody out on being economical with the truth. And anyway, I'm cold and can't be bothered to argue with someone I am never going to see again. I'd quite like to call it a day now, but he travelled to get here and I feel like I owe him something. I can give him a bit of my time, surely? But that's all he's getting. "I'm going to grab a coffee from over there," I say, pointing at the bustling kiosk back on the promenade. "And then let's go for a walk."

I can tell by his face that he doesn't like walking, but I can't bear to sit on this arse-numbing beach any longer.

As we walk, he tells me about himself. He's nice, if massively naïve and a tad dull. He says he's a medical student, so I quiz him as much as my knowledge will allow to see whether he's telling fibs. I don't know very much, but his patter is fairly convincing so either he's telling the truth – this time – or he speed-read a pile of textbooks before leaving the house. His 'fake tan and clumps of peroxide' look seems completely at odds with his subject of study, but that probably says more about me than it does him. He tells me he is bored, and sick of his flatmate. Because I know this is going nowhere except home, separately, as soon as I can, I don't wheel out my usual first-date charms. I don't tell him why I'm in town, but I talk frankly, perhaps too frankly, and I become aware of myself sounding like an arsehole. I'm not being unkind to him, but I'm ranting and probably not being great company. The combination of my causticity matched with the cold air and brisk walk are not endearing him to me, I fear – no matter how good-natured my intentions. He doesn't 'get' me, it seems, but I'm not 'giving' particularly well, really.

Finally, as we stop and look out to sea, he turns to me and says: "Do you actually like anything at all?" I sigh. I've done it again. My sourness is often mistaken for misery. Maybe I am miserable and haven't realised. I don't reply, just smile.

"You're very grumpy," he says, looking puzzled and bored, and runs his hand through his hair. A clump of solidified gel falls from it and settles on his shoulder.

I speak at last. "Oh, just ignore me; I'm just a grouchy old man."

He shrugs and picks at his hair again. "You're not that old." He sticks out his bottom lip. All that's missing is a lollipop and his schoolbag tucked under his arm.

I cough. Silence. This is wrong. Now is not the time to be making small talk with strangers, wasting their afternoon with my sourness. I shiver.

"Well, I'd better be off," I say brightly.

"Yeah, I think I had, too."

"I'm sorry if it was a wasted journey for you."

He shrugs. "It was nice to meet you, I suppose. I didn't have anything else to do. But you are really grumpy; you need to fix that."

We shake hands and part. I check my watch. 27 minutes. Wow. I hunch my shoulders up to my neck in defence against the glacial air. I quicken my walk, heading home to whomever can mend me.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- He has fake tan, over-gelled, badly dyed hair and eyes like dinner plates. He looks young. His camera was kinder than my eye. I look at the blond splodge on his head. It's a comfort that he too seems rather underwhelmed by my physical form.
- As we walk, he tells me about himself. He's nice, if massively naïve and a tad dull.
- I don't tell him why I'm in town, but I talk frankly, perhaps too frankly, and I become aware of myself sounding like an arsehole. I'm not being unkind to him, but I'm ranting and probably not being great company. The combination of my causticity matched with the cold air and brisk walk are not endearing him to me, I fear – no matter how good-natured my intentions. He doesn't 'get' me, it seems, but I'm not 'giving' particularly well, really.
- Finally, as we stop and look out to sea, he turns to me and says: "Do you actually like anything at all?" I sigh. I've done it again. My sourness is often mistaken for misery. Maybe I *am* miserable and haven't realised. I don't reply, just smile. "You're very grumpy," he says, looking puzzled and bored, and runs his hand through his hair. A clump of solidified gel falls from it and settles on his shoulder.
- I cough. Silence. This is wrong. Now is not the time to be making small talk with strangers, wasting their afternoon with my sourness. I shiver. "Well, I'd better be off," I say brightly. "Yeah, I think I had, too." "I'm sorry if it was a wasted journey for you." He shrugs. "It was nice to meet you, I suppose. I didn't have anything else to do. But you are really grumpy; you need to fix that."

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming**
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

He shrugs. "It was nice to meet you, I suppose. I didn't have anything else to do. But you are really grumpy; you need to fix that."

## Coding Sheet 12

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Latecomer

After a frantic August and a much quieter September, October comes into view at full throttle. I line up three dates in the space of a week and the third one, on the Friday, is This Guy. Our communication so far has been fairly one-sided; out of the 3 dates I've arranged, he's the one I'm less interested in. I'm also dreading the thought of polluting my liver once again so am not particularly keen to waste another £30 or so getting pissed in a pub on the off-chance that the stranger chatting awkwardly opposite me might one day be Mr Right.

He is another one of my young ones. I don't know how or why they are so interested in me. I'm old. I thought younger people didn't remotely care what their elders had to say. Maybe he wants to re-enact the Werther's Original advert, with me in the role of kindly grandfather, patting him on the head and offering him sugary toffees in order to stop him pointing out my greying hair.

As a result of my lack of interest, I realise I know absolutely nothing about this man as I arrive at our arranged meeting point. For some reason, I have broken my rule about having a dinner-free first date – probably because he suggested it and I am too polite (ha!) to rebuff him – and we are to meet at a fashionable new tapas place. It's the kind of place you can't book so have to hang around the doorway like a depressed security guard until a table is available. As I arrive, he texts and says he's going to be a little late. I roll my eyes and put my name on the list of people waiting for a table. The waiter says I can go to the pub and they'll call me when the table is ready. I don't want to go to the pub – well, not on my own anyway. I can do that any night of the week. However, the risk of looking like I have been stood up and hovering over people eating their calamari is not one I'm prepared to take, and I trudge off in silent fury to the nearest decent pub I know.

A few more texts are exchanged over the next few minutes. He's not just going to be slightly late; we are moving into monstrously late territory and I'm not happy. It is a Friday night. This is not what they're for. I shouldn't be standing alone in a pub nursing my second pint when all around me are young lovers feeling each other up or sharing nachos. He seems jokingly apologetic, but I left my sense of humour in the queue at the tapas restaurant and can't be fucked retrieving it. This isn't going well. Each passing minute sees my mood darken. If he doesn't get here soon I'm liable to be on murderous form.

Finally, a whole 35 minutes later than the time we agreed; he turns up. So this is what I have been waiting for. He seems shorter than he said he was on the website (they all lie) and is neither attractive nor unattractive – what my grandmother would call 'plain'. He is dressed in the east London uniform of slim-fitting denim and brogues and a plain white T. We say hello and he apologises for being late. I make a joke about it but my laugh is hollow and we seem to set the tone for the remainder of the evening right here and right now. Just as he gets a drink, buying me my third pint on an empty stomach, the restaurant rings and says there's a table available. He laughs and says that he "got here just in time after all". I smile politely as my face burns hotter

than the sun and my throat longs to cry out “Yes but I have been here for over half an hour, you fucking bastard”. But I do not. We leave to go and eat.

The restaurant is busy and the food is good. I throw back tequila as he excitedly tells me about his job in fashion and how he likes to go to gigs and out clubbing. I toy with my patatas bravas during his long monologue about how tough it was graduating with a fashion degree and I’m staring milky-eyed into the bottom of a not-large-enough glass of cava when he begins to tell me the reason he was late. Finally I speak: “Were you working overtime?” I am prepared to be sympathetic. It happens.

“No,” he replies. “I was having drinks with colleagues in town and misjudged how long it would take me to get here.”

“What do you mean ‘misjudged’?”

“Well, y’know, I thought I’d just be able to jump on a tube and be here.”

“How long did you give yourself?”

“Ten minutes or so – it’s farther than you’d think, isn’t it?”

Yes. Yes it is. And so the realisation that I was standing like a doughnut alone at the bar while he was having ‘just one more’ with a bunch of ironic haircuts hits home. We’re at least a ten-minute walk from the tube station as it is; he’d have to have worn hover boots to have even had a chance of making it here anywhere within his timeframe. He just thought it was OK to be late, clearly. He was wrong.

“Look, I’ll pay for all the drinks as I was so late,” he says after a minute or two of silence.

“Great,” I reply. Might as well get another tequila for the road.”

He looks at me with a concerned face. “We’re probably not going to get over the being late thing, are we?”

“Don’t be ridiculous,” I snort. “It’s fine.”

We pay the bill and head out into the chilly autumn evening. He suggests one more drink and that he’s buying, so I shrug and follow him to a nearby pub. We sit sipping pints and try to have a conversation, with only partial success. The writing on the wall comes when he catches me updating Facebook when he gets back from the loo.

“I bet you’re writing on there that I was late, weren’t you?”

“No,” I answer. “I’m writing that I can’t wait to get home – so I guess I’d better get on with it.”

I drain my drink, offer my outstretched hand to shake and leave, after wishing him a nice weekend.

On the way to the tube I have a fit of laughter that’s so loud and vicious that a noisy gaggle of women on a hen party actually stop their screeching to turn and look at me.

I tip my head to them and walk toward the warm glow of the tube station, leaving that disastrous Friday night out in the cold air behind me.

1. What was the result of the date?

a. **Explicit Rejection**

b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- As I arrive, he texts and say he's going to be a little late. I roll my eyes and put my name on the list of people waiting for a table.
- He's not just going to be slightly late; we are moving into monstrously late territory and I'm not happy. It is a Friday night. This is not what they're for. I shouldn't be standing alone in a pub nursing my second pint when all around me are young lovers feeling each other up or sharing nachos. He seems jokingly apologetic, but I left my sense of humour in the queue at the tapas restaurant and can't be fucked retrieving it. This isn't going well. Each passing minute sees my mood darken. If he doesn't get here soon I'm liable to be on murderous form.
- So this is what I have been waiting for. He seems shorter than he said he was on the website (they all lie) and is neither attractive nor unattractive – what my grandmother would call 'plain'.
- And so the realisation that I was standing like a doughnut alone at the bar while he was having 'just one more' with a bunch of ironic haircuts hits home. We're at least a ten-minute walk from the tube station as it is; he'd have to have worn hover boots to have even had a chance of making it here anywhere within his timeframe. He just thought it was OK to be late, clearly. He was wrong.
- "Look, I'll pay for all the drinks as I was so late," he says after a minute or two of silence. "Great," I reply. Might as well get another tequila for the road." He looks at me with a concerned face. "We're probably not going to get over the being late thing, are we?" "Don't be ridiculous," I snort. "It's fine."

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement

- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

“No,” I answer. “I’m writing that I can’t wait to get home – so I guess I’d better get on with it.”

### Coding Sheet 13

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Right Peter

I'm a big believer in putting things right if I can. If I'm in a supermarket and knock something over, I'll quickly pick it up and place it back on the shelf. Should I underpay (or overpay) for something, I'll endeavour to fix it so that nobody's out of pocket. I like everything just-so. My date with this guy, then, simply had to happen whether I wanted it to or not, so I could make amends with myself for the fact that I accidentally went on a date with a guy who had the same name as this one, thinking it was him. It was time to go on a date with the right Peter after all.

Regular readers will be aware of my hugely embarrassing faux-pas when I agreed to go on a date with a guy over text, only to discover that it was someone else entirely, who I didn't want to meet. I duly went on it anyway, and had an excruciating couple of hours in the company of the wrong Peter and his offensive cologne. You can read up on this, if you like. So, 6 guys and a pile of texts and instant messages later, here we are ready to do battle with the guy I should've gone out with in the first place.

On first glance, everything's pretty good. We have been chatting for months on a dating app (well, I use the term 'dating app' very loosely; very few dates seem to actually happen) and he seems clever, handsome and funny. He doesn't say much about himself on his profile. I know that he works in TV, and his age and his height and that's about it. The only blurb he has says "Straight-acting, good-humoured guy looking for dates". My eyes narrow a little at the 'straight-acting' tag he's so keen to get out there. What he means here is that he isn't camp, I suppose. He should maybe say that instead, rather than aligning his firm-wristedness with the heterosexuals, but I resolve not to get too bogged down in this. Finally, after months of toing and froing – not to mention the abysmal date with his dreary namesake – we actually arrange a time and place to meet. The date comes during a busy period; there has been a flurry of meet-ups and most of them wildly unsuitable. Peter comes right after my extraordinary evening with the eccentric composer, so I am looking forward to hooking up with someone regular, down-to-earth and, dare I say it, normal?

I arrive on time at the pub and have a look around. Can't see any six-foot blond guys anywhere, so I get myself a drink. He texts to say he's on his way. I don't reply; it seems pointless if he's nearly here. I sip my lager and wait on. The phone rings. It's his number.

"Hello?"

"Oh hiiiiii." Strange. He appears to have asked camp comedian Alan Carr to call me up. Perhaps it's a stunt and I am appearing live on his chat show – Peter does work in TV, after all.

"Er, yes?"

"Sorry, are you in the pub? You didn't answer my text," says Alan, who clearly isn't Alan Carr at all, but Peter himself.

I reply that I am here, yes, and he says he'll be here soon. And, boy, did he mean it. Not 20 seconds later, a blond person comes through the door. I don't look up and acknowledge him –



that would just be too easy for him, and he is a little late, after all – so instead I actually turn my back on him and face the bar, leaning on it over-casually and messing about on my phone. A voice behind me says my name. I turn around, tilting my head up, expecting to be looking up at an angle and into the baby blues of a six-foot blond. All I see is empty space. I adjust my gaze downward and there is his face. He is certainly blond, the eyes, yep, they are blue, but 6' tall he is not. And I mean really not. He's as tall as me. I wonder what else he can so blatantly lie about. I'm not kept in the dark for long.

Momentarily stunned by the fact that he really thought I wouldn't notice his reduced stature, I wheel round to order him a drink. It's not that I'm disappointed, he's quite good-looking, but why say you are six feet tall when you're not? What is his excuse? "Oh I left my other, longer legs at home"?! I get him his beer and we decide to go out on the pub's roof terrace. I step aside to let him walk ahead. He sashays on through the pub and goes outside. It's like watching Naomi Campbell swagger down the catwalk at Paris Fashion Week. I see.

I trudge behind him, feeling ungainly. He selects a table and sits down at it very gracefully, full of purpose, like a ballerina. He considers me as if looking into the face of a child with learning difficulties, the line between compassion and disappointment being crossed a million times and back again by his huge, darting eyes. We talk, as is customary, about our jobs. He goes first. He has worked on some fairly high-profile TV shows, not as a producer as he suggested in our initial chats – he's actually a production assistant. I suppose he thinks I won't know what they do, so he can big it up – he's wrong. I don't care what people do for a living, truly. As long as they like it and earn money from it, then it's cool. But to hear young Peter talk (well, I say 'young'; he may also have lied about his age), you'd think he singlehandedly kept his TV shows going. He is, he says, about to enter a dry spell when it comes to work, but I don't think he needs to worry – with his powers of storytelling he could soon talk his way into another high-flying position, I'm sure.

He talks on. And on. And on. This is partly my fault. I don't really have anything to say to him, as he doesn't seem that interested. Plus, he's camp as Christmas, yet said he wasn't on his profile, and this irritates me. Not that he's camp, I don't give a shit about that, but that he felt he had to put that on his profile in an effort to differentiate himself from camp (and thus, in his eyes, less attractive) gay men, as it is quite clearly bullshit. I toy with the idea of bringing up the whole concept of 'straight-acting' and what it means to him, but realise I don't want to have a highly-charged debate on a roof terrace on a hot evening. In fact, I would really rather not be here at all.

Out of nowhere, he asks my age. Here we go. I don't reveal this on the phone dating app profile for various reasons, which I begin to explain. He again asks me how old I am. I begin to tell him, but as I do, he goes in for a guess; I've no idea why. He's four years out, erring on the junior side. I suppose I should be buoyed by this. Man, is he going to be disappointed when I slam down the actual age. I tell him I'm 35. He visibly blanches, recovers quickly (but not quickly enough) and says "Well, you don't look it at all. As I, er, said, um, before". He doesn't hide his disappointment now, but he doesn't really need to. He has totally unravelled in front of my eyes and his attractiveness has diminished to the point of fiction, like his height and straight-acting demeanour. I don't think he's a bad person – in fact, a couple of things he said about friends and family made me very briefly think he might be a catch for someone – but he is utterly ill-at-ease

in his own skin. So uncomfortable is he with his body and soul's natural state that he covers for them, tries to make them something they're not. He's got a lot of growing up to do, I fear, and I am definitely not the right person to be his support while he does it.

We leave and walk some of the way home together. I regret this, as he starts to act as if I am somehow trying to get him to take me home with him. He very pointedly says that he has to get up early in the morning, and that he is going to go a shortcut way to his house. I roll my eyes inwardly and say "Goodnight then".

He leans toward me as if to shake my hand but I'm already bounding off, pausing only to offer him a jaunty wave before I stride on into the darkness.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

We leave and walk some of the way home together. I regret this, as he starts to act as if I am somehow trying to get him to take me home with him. He very pointedly says that he has to get up early in the morning, and that he is going to go a shortcut way to his house. I roll my eyes inwardly and say "Goodnight then".

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation**
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- My eyes narrow a little at the 'straight-acting' tag he's so keen to get out there. What he means here is that he isn't camp, I suppose. He should maybe say that instead, rather than aligning his firm-wristedness with the heterosexuals, but I resolve not to get too bogged down in this.
- "Oh hiiiiii." Strange. He appears to have asked camp comedian Alan Carr to call me up. Perhaps it's a stunt and I am appearing live on his chat show – Peter does work in TV, after all.
- All I see is empty space. I adjust my gaze downward and there is his face. He is certainly blond, the eyes, yep, they are blue, but 6' tall he is not. And I mean really not. He's as tall as me. I wonder what else he can so blatantly lie about. I'm not kept in the dark for long.
- He sashays on through the pub and goes outside. It's like watching Naomi Campbell swagger down the catwalk at Paris Fashion Week. I see. I trudge behind him, feeling ungainly. He selects a table and sits down at it very gracefully, full of purpose, like a ballerina.

- He has worked on some fairly high-profile TV shows, not as a producer as he suggested in our initial chats – he’s actually a production assistant. I suppose he thinks I won’t know what they do, so he can big it up – he’s wrong.
- Plus, he’s camp as Christmas, yet said he wasn’t on his profile, and this irritates me. Not that he’s camp, I don’t give a shit about that, but that he felt he had to put that on his profile in an effort to differentiate himself from camp (and thus, in his eyes, less attractive) gay men, as it is quite clearly bullshit. I toy with the idea of bringing up the whole concept of ‘straight-acting’ and what it means to him, but realise I don’t want to have a highly-charged debate on a roof terrace on a hot evening. In fact, I would really rather not be here at all.
- Out of nowhere, he asks my age. Here we go. I don’t reveal this on the phone dating app profile for various reasons, which I begin to explain. He again asks me how old I am. I begin to tell him, but as I do, he goes in for a guess; I’ve no idea why. He’s four years out, erring on the junior side. I suppose I should be buoyed by this. Man, is he going to be disappointed when I slam down the actual age. I tell him I’m 35. He visibly blanches, recovers quickly (but not quickly enough) and says “Well, you don’t look it at all. As I, er, said, um, before”. He doesn’t hide his disappointment now, but he doesn’t really need to. He has totally unravelled in front of my eyes and his attractiveness has diminished to the point of fiction, like his height and straight-acting demeanour. I don’t think he’s a bad person – in fact, a couple of things he said about friends and family made me very briefly think he might be a catch for someone – but he is utterly ill-at-ease in his own skin. So uncomfortable is he with his body and soul’s natural state that he covers for them, tries to make them something they’re not. He’s got a lot of growing up to do, I fear, and I am definitely not the right person to be his support while he does it.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- Out of nowhere, he asks my age. Here we go. I don’t reveal this on the phone dating app profile for various reasons, which I begin to explain. He again asks me how old I am. I begin to tell him, but as I do, he goes in for a guess; I’ve no idea why. He’s four years out, erring on the junior side. I suppose I should be buoyed by this. Man, is he going to be

disappointed when I slam down the actual age. I tell him I'm 35. He visibly blanches, recovers quickly (but not quickly enough) and says "Well, you don't look it at all. As I, er, said, um, before". He doesn't hide his disappointment now, but he doesn't really need to.

- We leave and walk some of the way home together. I regret this, as he starts to act as if I am somehow trying to get him to take me home with him. He very pointedly says that he has to get up early in the morning, and that he is going to go a shortcut way to his house.

## Coding Sheet 14

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Straight-Talker

One can spend what seems like a lifetime wading through the deep and meaningful in search of love, or whatever your approximation of that is. As I have learned with the majority of my pre-date wooing, sometimes the build-up isn't worth the final result. You've spent all that time laying foundations, only to run out of budget for your skyscraper before it's topped out. With this in mind, and reluctant to hand over more subscription money to the dating site only to meet clones of the cardigan-enthusiasts I've dated before, I turn to iPhone apps to find my latest beaux. They're free, fast and, I hope, uncomplicated. The apps, that is; I imagine the suitors will be anything but.

Thus our story of this latest contestant begins. I am idling at home browsing through those 1cm-square thumbnail images, searching for something to take my mind off the recession. And there he is: local and, as I don't recognise his face, I'm assuming a relatively new addition. I click through. He is fairly handsome, but looks ordinary, approachable, safe. It's hard to tell from just a photo, but there's an innocent charm there. I'm intrigued. I can see that he too is currently online. I wait five minutes or so to see if he messages me (I am always loath to take the initiative), but he does not. I stare at the screen a while longer, and then shut the app down and vacuum under the sofa.

Two days later, I try again, but he doesn't bite. I'm at a crossroads here. I can either carry on to await him noticing me, retaining my pride but ultimately remaining ignored. Or I can bite the bullet and send him a message. I decide to leave things as they are until one night when I am staying at a friend's and am very much on the business end of a few drinks. After a couple of messages in the over-matey "how's your night been?" vein, I give him my number and ask for his. Wham, just like that, he hands it over and we make tacit arrangements to meet the following week. Easy.

A few days later, I message him to make firm arrangements. We arrange to meet at a pub local to us both, which is fine – a shorter distance to stagger should the evening go well, or, should it not, only a few quick steps to make my escape. The day arrives, and around an hour or so before our date, he texts me to check it's still on, saying he's not bothered if it isn't as he has stuff to do.

This irks me a little. Is he trying to act nonchalant in case I reject him at the last minute or is he genuinely saying he doesn't give a shit? It's a bizarre tactic. The spiteful 14-year-old schoolgirl within me is half-tempted to upend the chess board and call the date off, but I retune my brain back to Radio Normal and shrug off his eleventh hour jitters, texting back that we are still on.

As I make my way to the pub, he texts to say he's there and that it's busy. On entering, I wonder if he grew up in the middle of a field – the pub may be bustling, but it's far from nose-to-nipple. I do a quick scan of the room and spot the only person sitting on their own, nursing a full pint. He is wearing a green hooded top and faded jeans. Right.

I breeze on past, feigning obliviousness and head to the bar to order myself a drink. I surreptitiously glance to the left out of the corner of my eye to regard him further. His shoes look a bit weird. I pick up my pint and glide over, painting on my hopefully genuine “nice to meet you” smile.

As I sit, I can’t read his expression. There isn’t disappointment, but his eyes don’t widen in awe, either. Fair enough, I’m no beauty. He is not bad looking, true, but his complexion is paler than I had thought and he certainly looks older in the flesh. He doesn’t really resemble his photo at all. He has a sleazy air about him. I’m not disappointed, no, but Cupid’s arrow has certainly taken a detour. I don’t fancy him at all, but I’m here now so we may as well get on with it and just have a nice evening.

Luckily, when we start to chat and the conversation flows effortlessly. He’s a trainee doctor, which is an interesting job for someone like me who doesn’t even watch ER, so we talk about that for a while. He uses a lot of medical jargon and seems pleased when I ask for clarification. It’s fine at first, but after a while I feel like I’m on a date with an encyclopaedia. I catch a look at his footwear and, while such things really don’t matter, am taken aback by how ugly they are. He’s 28, but they look like something that would make a 14-year-old tug at him mum’s cuff, begging her to buy them for him. They’re huge, hulking and red – two colossal, plasticky blood clots in trainer-form. Perhaps he has been raking through the bins in the surgical ward and fashioned his shoes out of a removed appendix or five. As I zone back in from glaring at his sneakers, he’s telling me about an argument between his friends that he had to come into the middle of, as self-appointed mediator. I notice his voice has taken on a hissing tone; has it always been thus?

“I just said to them: ‘you’re being a dick and so are you’,” he trills. “I just tell it like it is; I don’t mince my words. I’m like that all the time.”

He fixes me with a determined, dramatic stare.

“And if people don’t like it... well, tough.”

Indeed. I am always wary of people who say things like this. Rudeness and insensitivity masquerading as frankness or straight-talking is a huge turn-off. Oh, a gay man with a no-nonsense attitude. How original. Plus, I have just realised that he has bad breath.

I take a hearty glug of my drink and go to the bathroom. As I stand in the cubicle, readying myself, my text alert goes. It’s a friend wanting to know how the date is going. Where to begin? I’m considering my answer when I feel a fleetingly warm, then utterly cold, sensation all the way down my left leg. I look down. I’ve urinated all down my jeans. Fucking hell. I hurriedly cram my phone back into my pocket and frantically look around for solutions. None are forthcoming. Finally, I regain composure, quit the cubicle and espy the hand dryer. Grimacing, I lift my leg up to it and attempt to dry out my piss-soaked leg under the airstream, which has all the gust and power of an asthmatic wasp with a 20-a-day habit. Realising I have been gone too long, I give up and make my way back to the table – and my date. Thankfully, he is engrossed in his phone – shopping for trainers, I hope – so doesn’t notice the wet patch down my leg.

I sidle into my seat and lift my pint, draping my arm over my leg, in what I hope is a natural fashion, to conceal the dark trickle snaking down the denim. The breezy tone of our earlier conversation somehow gives way to topics I prefer to avoid on a first date, namely the state of society. For someone who works in a caring profession, my date has an unhealthy disregard for the less fortunate. His received opinion gushes from him, like it has been nudging the edge of an internal dam for some time.

“People these days think they can just get what they want for free. They just walk into the job centre and demand welfare. I’d never ask for any handouts unless I really needed it. I think it’s disgusting that I pay all this money for tax just so people can get free boob jobs.” It’s like being talked at by a hysterical tabloid newspaper.

Quite why I’m the outlet for this catharsis I’m not sure. While there is a point to be made, perhaps, about a culture of self-entitlement, along with the media’s demonising of the poor, a first date isn’t the right arena for it. My date won’t be swayed, anyway. He puts up his hand to stop me mid-flow, saying: “I don’t listen to the media; these are all my own thoughts that I have had myself. I don’t read the papers and I have never watched the news.” He’s so far out of his depth he can see the lifeboat containing his original point bobbing uncertainly far off in the distance.

I look back to my lager and suddenly it seems cloudier and flatter. My leg feels cold. I’m abruptly reminded that my jeans are soaked in my own urine. I feel desolate and pathetic. I look up to see my date gazing at me, his lip curled and eyelids drooping. He touches my dry leg and asks if I’m OK, not moving his hand away once he’s spoken. I look down at his hand. It doesn’t move. We haven’t had very much to drink, so I am guessing this is seduction. Maybe I should take my date’s lead, and tell it like it is: that it will never be, that he’s not the cute, normal guy I thought he was when staring at my iPhone screen. I preferred him as a photo, an idea – he was better when he didn’t have a voice.

I smile warmly, look at my watch and say I have to be up early. We leave the pub and he walks me home. At my doorway I say it was nice to meet him and then blurt out that I’ll see him soon. He licks his lips and leans forward slightly. I proffer my hand to shake.

In a beat, he recovers, shakes it quickly and burbles some goodbyes, stalking off as my hand remains in mid-air. I open my door and once inside shake my head slowly as I take off my jeans and throw them in the washing machine, and all the highs and lows of the date with them.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
He licks his lips and leans forward slightly. I proffer my hand to shake.

In a beat, he recovers, shakes it quickly and burbles some goodbyes, stalking off as my hand remains in mid-air.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- The day arrives, and around an hour or so before our date, he texts me to check it's still on, saying he's not bothered if it isn't as he has stuff to do. This irks me a little. Is he trying to act nonchalant in case I reject him at the last minute or is he genuinely saying he doesn't give a shit? It's a bizarre tactic.
- As I sit, I can't read his expression. There isn't disappointment, but his eyes don't widen in awe, either. Fair enough, I'm no beauty. He is not bad looking, true, but his complexion is paler than I had thought and he certainly looks older in the flesh. He doesn't really resemble his photo at all. He has a sleazy air about him. I'm not disappointed, no, but Cupid's arrow has certainly taken a detour. I don't fancy him at all, but I'm here now so we may as well get on with it and just have a nice evening.
- He uses a lot of medical jargon and seems pleased when I ask for clarification. It's fine at first, but after a while I feel like I'm on a date with an encyclopaedia.
- "I just said to them: 'you're being a dick and so are you'," he trills. "I just tell it like it is; I don't mince my words. I'm like that all the time." He fixes me with a determined, dramatic stare. "And if people don't like it... well, tough." Indeed. I am always wary of people who say things like this. Rudeness and insensitivity masquerading as frankness or straight-talking is a huge turn-off. Oh, a gay man with a no-nonsense attitude. How original. Plus, I have just realised that he has bad breath.
- For someone who works in a caring profession, my date has an unhealthy disregard for the less fortunate. His received opinion gushes from him, like it has been nudging the edge of an internal dam for some time. "People these days think they can just get what they want for free. They just walk into the job centre and demand welfare. I'd never ask for any handouts unless I really needed it. I think it's disgusting that I pay all this money for tax just so people can get free boob jobs." It's like being talked at by a hysterical tabloid newspaper.
- He puts up his hand to stop me mid-flow, saying: "I don't listen to the media; these are all my own thoughts that I have had myself. I don't read the papers and I have never watched the news." He's so far out of his depth he can see the lifeboat containing his original point bobbing uncertainly far off in the distance.
- I preferred him as a photo, an idea – he was better when he didn't have a voice.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation



- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I smile warmly, look at my watch and say I have to be up early.

## Coding Sheet 15

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Invisible Man

Sometimes you have those periods where you don't have a date for what seems like decades. Then, before you know it, you're swamped. A mere 24 hours after my bizarre, yet fun, adventure with the drama teacher, I am once more heading to a date. I might as well get my kicks while I'm young enough to get them, right?

This next guy is someone I wouldn't say I'm particularly interested in, looks-wise. His pictures seem OK, if a little blurred, but his profile is funny and the emails and texts we have been exchanging have been good-natured and definitely on my wavelength. He also seems very interested — I'm still at the stage in my dating 'career' where someone being keen is an attractive trait to me — and so, after less than a week of chatting, we agree to meet for a drink and, if we're not horrified at the sight of each other, go on to dinner.

As my date says he works in fashion, I agonise a little over what to wear. I like to look good, but I'm not a high-fashion person at all and truly believe less is more. There's also the fact that I'll be coming straight from work so may have to tone down my usual disco attire (usual disco attire: same as daywear but with more Chanel splashed on). Because we've been getting on so well, I'm fairly confident that any misgivings about him not being my usual type will be washed away by his sparkling personality.

I arrive at our pre-arranged destination a little early, so decide to go into the pub and get a drink. As it's roasting hot outside, most drinkers are out on the pavement so the bar's not too busy. I have a quick scoot around the pub to make sure he's not there already. No sign. I order a drink, sit at a table where I can see the door and absent-mindedly scroll through Facebook and Twitter and all those other sites the world could quite happily live without. After a few moments, I check my watch. 6.35. I send a text:

"Hello. I am here. Are you?"

I wait a further ten minutes but no response is forthcoming. Let's try again:

"Did you die in the night? Or perhaps you bumped into someone hotter en route."

Five minutes later, he sends the response that he is stuck in a conference call to a supplier who he had fired that day and that he was trying to keep a lid on things. I text back straight away and ask if he wants me to wait. He doesn't reply for 15 minutes, but when he does he says "Probably best not". I text back that I'll amuse myself shopping for a while in case he gets out soon. He sends me a garbled message with words missing that makes no sense, but then gist of which is "I'll come to you when I'm done". I ask him to clarify, but there's no response. I shop until 8pm and then admit defeat. I text him that I'm heading home. No reply. Weird.

A few days later, I am on my way to another date – no point hanging around – when I get a text from the guy who stood me up out of the blue telling me there was a family tragedy at the weekend and that he hopes we can pick things up again.

I'm wary, but I have to give him the benefit of the doubt. Don't I? Even though he didn't contact me at all after my last text, I suppose if something bad happened, he couldn't help it. And we'd got on so well over text; it was like I'd known him years.

He offers to buy me dinner and I agree. He then calls me but I am with the other date so don't answer. His message suggests meeting near his work on Bond Street.

When I get home, I notice that he has added me as a 'favourite' – the system the dating site uses for you to show your interest in someone. And, oddly, his username is different. I remember already being a favourite, so am confused. I text him to ask why he's done this and he said there was something wrong with his account so he lost all his previous favourites. Hmmm. OK.

The night before our re-arranged date, I'm at a barbecue and he texts once more. I notice that when he replies, his answers seem to mirror what I've said to him: I'm drinking too much champagne, while he's drinking too much chablis; I've got an early conference call the next day, while he's got a meeting first thing. It's like my very own bot.

I wonder why he's trying so hard. He's trying to force a rapport that would otherwise be there anyway. Then, out of the blue, he phones me. Edit from future self: This is 2010 so, like, people still do the whole phoning thing.

We chat for 5–10 minutes and, I have to say, the signs are good. He jokes how he's worried that I'm going to stand him up this time and I joke that I may not be bothered enough to turn up. The tone is flirtatious, our humour is very much aligned and, again, I feel fairly positive about the date to come. At the very least, he'll probably end up being a friend.

After work the next day, I head to our meeting point outside the Tube station with a strange feeling that things aren't going to be straightforward. I arrive on time – as always – and begin to wait. After five minutes, I decide to text. It's 6.35, and he could be delayed, but if it were me who had stood him up the week before, I'd have made the extra effort to get there early. I send the text:

"Hello. I'll wait until 6.45 unless I hear otherwise."

I start to get really paranoid and begin to feel low. Why would he stand me up again? I know he works in the large building opposite the station; is he peering at me through the window and dismissing me as too ugly? What kind of person would bother re-arranging a date only to stand me up again? 6.45 arrives and I walk away without a backward glance. I go to a nearby pub for a much-needed beer. I check the dating website and see that the snake has just looked at my profile and is online now. Weirdo. I send him a message:

"Hello

I don't know what happened to make you feel it was OK to stand me up again, but I think it's a good idea to leave it."

I finish my pint, smooth down my shirt and start walking home. When I get home, I check the dating site. He hasn't read my message and his profile has been deleted. Strange. I decide not to make any further contact. I get the feeling that he's the kind of person who would enjoy the attention. He's obviously stood me up on purpose at least once and while I'm puzzled why anyone would want to pay a subscription just to arrange fictitious dates, I'm wise enough to know that eventually he'll pick the wrong person to piss off.

I look at the entry for him in my iPhone contacts list. My last thought on the matter will be a small act of defiance. I don't want to delete the number in case he texts and I have to reply to see who it is, so I go to his entry, delete the name 'Joe' (for that is his name; I am naming and shaming for one blog post only) and type in 'STAND UP CUNT'. From now on, he'll be easily identifiable.

A few days later, I notice his profile is live again, but with a different username. I don't know what his game is, and I don't want to know. Fuck you, Joe.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

- After a few moments, I check my watch. 6.35. I send a text: "Hello. I am here. Are you?" I wait a further ten minutes but no response is forthcoming. Let's try again: "Did you die in the night? Or perhaps you bumped into someone hotter en route." Five minutes later, he sends the response that he is stuck in a conference call to a supplier who he had fired that day and that he was trying to keep a lid on things. I text back straight away and ask if he wants me to wait. He doesn't reply for 15 minutes, but when he does he says "Probably best not". I text back that I'll amuse myself shopping for a while in case he gets out soon. He sends me a garbled message with words missing that makes no sense, but then gist of which is "I'll come to you when I'm done". I ask him to clarify, but there's no response. I shop until 8pm and then admit defeat. I text him that I'm heading home. No reply. Weird.
- After work the next day, I head to our meeting point outside the Tube station with a strange feeling that things aren't going to be straightforward. I arrive on time – as always – and begin to wait. After five minutes, I decide to text. It's 6.35, and he could be delayed, but if it were me who had stood him up the week before, I'd have made the extra effort to get there early. I send the text: "Hello. I'll wait until 6.45 unless I hear otherwise." I start to get really paranoid and begin to feel low. Why would he stand me up again? I know he works in the large building opposite the station; is he peering at me through the window and dismissing me as too ugly? What kind of person would bother re-arranging a date only to stand me up again? 6.45 arrives and I walk away without a backward glance. I go to a nearby pub for a much-needed beer. I check the dating website and see that the snake has just looked at my profile and is online now. Weirdo. I send him

a message: “Hello I don’t know what happened to make you feel it was OK to stand me up again, but I think it’s a good idea to leave it.” I finish my pint, smooth down my shirt and start walking home. When I get home, I check the dating site. He hasn’t read my message and his profile has been deleted. Strange. I decide not to make any further contact. I get the feeling that he’s the kind of person who would enjoy the attention. He’s obviously stood me up on purpose at least once and while I’m puzzled why anyone would want to pay a subscription just to arrange fictitious dates, I’m wise enough to know that eventually he’ll pick the wrong person to piss off.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

N/A

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

When I get home, I check the dating site. He hasn’t read my message and his profile has been deleted.

## Coding Sheet 16

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Marrying Kind

The old saying goes that the Devil finds work for idle hands, but he also seems to run an interesting sideline in spicing up long, boring afternoons. A day off with nothing to do can be a dangerous void stretching out in front of you, and sometimes the only way to plug that gap is to half-heartedly stumble around social media applications until something happens – a potential inferno in search of a spark. It is one such afternoon, sunny, bright and cheery outside yet hot and oppressive in my bachelor pad, that finds me indolently scrolling through Grindr, any distinguishing features of the gallery of thumbnail pictures lost as I whirr through them with the enthusiasm of a toddler watching a documentary on the Holocaust. I'm not looking for anything in particular – the idea of having a stranger awkwardly undress in my kitchen having lost its novelty since my encounter with the Colombian last year – but perhaps it would be nice to talk to someone, anyone, out there if only for half an hour before I get up out of my seat to make that scheduled cup of tea, which I won't drink. Not since I was a teenager has the unbearable feeling of boredom and waiting for something to occur been so exhausting.

Ping! The silence is broken by that infamous alert. Someone has something to say to me. I look at the picture of the guy who has sent me a message. He is shirtless, yes, and appears to be posing in the mirror, but I can at least see his face, all too rare in a world where the muscly bumps on your torso are all you need to get attention. As I'm examining his picture, another message comes through. I silently hope he'll have something more to say than "hello" – a totally unreasonable expectation, given that even the most stimulating conversations have to start off with the blandest of introductions. One final check: he's OK-looking, has a nice 'body' and I've nothing better to do. I click through to his messages.

His opener:

"I suppose I should start with hello, or maybe tell you I think you're hot."

Interesting. Its follow-up:

"But I don't think that's going to cut it with you."

Perceptive.

We exchange a few pleasantries. Well, I say pleasantries. He's sharp as a tack and seems keen to cut right across my pretence of a cool, collected exterior. Every statement or question seems like a challenge, and while I enjoy my mind being stretched, a series of exhausting, bellicose exchanges isn't my ideal way to spend a lazy afternoon, even in the absence of anything better to do, and so I invent a pressing engagement and shut things down.

A week later, I am sitting in a pub with a large group of friends. A couple of them have their iPhones out and are idly browsing and given that I am sitting between two very distinct conversations, neither of which I feel compelled to join, it isn't long before that phone yawn reaches me and I too begin to fiddle with my touch screen. On firing up Grindr, guess who's there waiting, like a belligerent puppy with my slipper in his mouth?

He asks what I'm up to. I reply, staying fairly non-committal and monosyllabic. And then the immortal line finally comes.

"Do you want to see a picture?"

There are a thousand sarcastic answers I could come up with here, but instead I play things a little more coquettish.

"I assume you don't just mean a holiday snap."

Another ping. It is a picture, and not one of a beautiful vista in a foreign land. It is a picture of him. Well, a part of him. It looks red and angry. How fitting. I'm not sure what I'm supposed to do with this, so I congratulate him on his appendage. He replies quickly: "Your turn now".

I give a hollow laugh. I have never taken a picture of \*that\* before and I'm not about to begin now. I politely decline. He reduces his request to a body shot, as if negotiating with a terrorist. Again, I tell him no, saying: "If you're so eager to send pictures of your pecker willy-nilly (pardon the pun), then how do I know you won't be equally indiscreet with pictures of my torso?"

"I doubt anyone would be that interested" is the dry retort.

Touché.

He quickly changes tack and asks me out for a drink. Perhaps he thinks he's got more of a chance of seeing me with my top off if he tries to persuade me 'live'. Well, if there's one thing I can't resist after all these dates, it's the chance to fail to live up to expectations in the flesh, so I agree. He moves swiftly, organising a place and a time for that very evening. Keen? Or just a sadist? We'll find out.

"Remind me to tell you about the time I screwed my intern in a toilet in Notting Hill" is his sign-off text. I go red, question my sanity, and think about something else.

I arrive freshly changed and scrubbed at the designated place, in a small satellite 'village' equidistant from our homes, to see him sitting at a secluded table in the corner of the bar. I check my watch. 7:00. I am right on time. He sees me approach and surveys with all the innocent wholesomeness of a jackal. He asks me what I want to drink while I sit down. He is back in two flashes. I barely notice him return; he moves like he's on casters.

The chat is awkward from the start. He is in turns ribbing or hostile then conciliatory and charming. I can't keep up. I try to bring things back to normal date chat, and so ask him if he lives alone. He looks over the brim of his glass, his steely eyes fixed straight on my mouth.

"No, not alone," he says, finally. "I live with my husband."

I do not spit and splutter mid-drink but inwardly I convulse. "You're married?"

"Yes," he says coolly. "Well, kind of. I'm civil partnered."

I try not to stammer in surprise and rage, but fail. "Wh-what the hell are you doing here, then?"

He rolls his eyes. "I wanted to meet you. You interest me. Plus I want you to send me a naughty picture."

"And would your husband be 'interested' to know you were here?"

"Possibly. We have an open relationship."

I sigh deeply and wrinkle my nose. He asks what the problem is.

"I don't think I could ever be involved in one," I say. "People can get hurt too easily."

His voice is icy and calm, utterly tuneless. "I'm not asking you to be in one. I barely know you."

I laugh, more out of nerves than anything, but his face doesn't respond.

“Whose idea was the open relationship?” I blurt.

“Oh, it was mutual.” He speaks evenly. “We’re not too bogged down in petty, old-fashioned things like you are.”

“I’m hardly old-fashioned; I just don’t think I want to play gooseberry.”

He takes a final swig of his drink and sets his glass down on the table. “It looks like my chances of seeing your cock have been greatly diminished by my honesty. I’m sorry I offended you and brought out your *many* insecurities.”

I reel slightly. “Perhaps your honesty should have come earlier in the conversation. Only then might it have had more merit.” I reply, hurriedly composing myself.

He stands suddenly and gathers his jacket over his arm. “Either way, I’m sorry I bothered.

Goodbye.” And with that, he glides from the bar and out onto the pavement before I can open my mouth to speak. I look at my watch. 7:25. A new record.

Some weeks later, the heat is getting to me so I stop into a coffee shop to piggyback on to their air conditioning and to grab an iced coffee. I sit down gratefully in a vacant seat around a busy communal coffee table. I slurp my iced coffee a little too loudly and look up self-consciously to see if anyone has heard me. There are no reactions, but almost directly opposite me, concentrating very hard on a book, is Mr Red & Angry. He is sitting on a couch, with a space next to him, his left hand outstretched over the vacant seat, and an empty coffee cup in front of him. He’s waiting for someone. I quietly take another sip of my drink and bow my head, busying myself with my phone while I work out what to do.

Suddenly, there’s an exclamation. A man approaching has lost control of his tray, sending a water-filled glass crashing onto the table and over the spare seat. The glass doesn’t break, but the commotion is enough to make everybody look up. I raise my head. Mr Red & Angry is making soothing noises at the glass dropper and handing him paper towels. They are both wearing wedding rings. I see. At that moment, my former date catches sight of me, and the colour drains from his face. His eyes, once so confident and mocking, now seem to sink right back into his head, as if hiding, and he pulls his mouth in tighter and tighter until it is little more than a light pink scar between nose and chin. Open relationship? His face tells me otherwise.

He doesn’t take his eyes off me as his husband (or so I have deduced) apologises to me for the accident and checks nothing has spilled on me. He has kind eyes and a warm smile. He then remarks to my former date that now he doesn’t have anywhere to sit. Here’s my chance. I stand up. I sense a sharp intake of breath from my date.

“Here,” I say to the husband. “Have my seat.”

“Oh,” he smiles, “are you absolutely sure?” An angel. He deserves better.

“Positive,” I reply. “I’m finished with this” – I wave my now-watery cup of iced coffee in my date’s general direction– “it’s a bit tasteless now.”

I move out of the way to allow him to sit down and turn back to my date, who mouths a meek “thank you” to me.

I lightly shake my head and leave the coffee shop without looking back, my iced latté days behind me for good.



1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

The chat is awkward from the start. He is in turns ribbing or hostile then conciliatory and charming. I can't keep up. I try to bring things back to normal date chat, and so ask him if he lives alone. He looks over the brim of his glass, his steely eyes fixed straight on my mouth.

"No, not alone," he says, finally. "I live with my husband."

I do not spit and splutter mid-drink but inwardly I convulse. "You're married?"

"Yes," he says coolly. "Well, kind of. I'm civil partnered."

I try not to stammer in surprise and rage, but fail. "Wh-what the hell are you doing here, then?"

He rolls his eyes. "I wanted to meet you. You interest me. Plus I want you to send me a naughty picture."

"And would your husband be 'interested' to know you were here?"

"Possibly. We have an open relationship."

I sigh deeply and wrinkle my nose. He asks what the problem is.

"I don't think I could ever be involved in one," I say. "People can get hurt too easily."

His voice is icy and calm, utterly tuneless. "I'm not asking you to be in one. I barely know you."

I laugh, more out of nerves than anything, but his face doesn't respond.

"Whose idea was the open relationship?" I blurt.

"Oh, it was mutual." He speaks evenly. "We're not too bogged down in petty, old-fashioned things like you are."

"I'm hardly old-fashioned; I just don't think I want to play gooseberry."

He takes a final swig of his drink and sets his glass down on the table. "It looks like my chances of seeing your cock have been greatly diminished by my honesty. I'm sorry I offended you and brought out your *many* insecurities."

I reel slightly. "Perhaps your honesty should have come earlier in the conversation. Only then might it have had more merit." I reply, hurriedly composing myself.

He stands suddenly and gathers his jacket over his arm. "Either way, I'm sorry I bothered. Goodbye."

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing

**b. Face-Detracting**

- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming

**j. Direct Disagreement**

- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence

**m. Sarcasm**

- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- “Whose idea was the open relationship?” I blurt. “Oh, it was mutual.” He speaks evenly. “We’re not too bogged down in petty, old-fashioned things like you are.”
- He takes a final swig of his drink and sets his glass down on the table. “It looks like my chances of seeing your cock have been greatly diminished by my honesty. I’m sorry I offended you and brought out your *many* insecurities.”
- He stands suddenly and gathers his jacket over his arm. “Either way, I’m sorry I bothered. Goodbye.”

## Coding Sheet 17

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Drunk Mexican

The dates are becoming more and more disillusioning as time goes on, to be honest. This one is a little different from the others, though. I meet him on a different site, one where you know less information about your potential date, but you talk through instant messenger, rather than emails. (Edit: Grindr – why am I so afraid to say Grindr?!) We seem to get on well, at first missing each other and not being online at the same time, but showing mutual appreciation. When we finally do talk ‘live’, he’s away on business in Germany. We arrange to meet in a pub, round the corner from my house, as he also lives locally, the following Saturday at 1pm. He says he likes an afternoon pint. Nice.

I walk into the pub precisely three minutes late and there is no sign. I order a pint — even though the last thing I want to do is drink — and sit outside in the sun. From where I’m sitting, I have all entrances to the pub covered. I half look out for him and half mess about with my phone. It gets to 1.10pm, and alarm bells are ringing. I realise I don’t have his mobile number. How stupid of me. I message him via the website and say I’m here. Time ticks on. No response. I sit and finish my pint, reading in the sun and wondering what on Earth is going on. By now, it’s 1.45pm and he’s clearly not coming. Furious but not wanting to show my anger, I send him a message telling him that I’m leaving now and that it was a shame that he couldn’t make it.

Hours later, I am out with friends when I check the website to see if there have been any messages. There are indeed, saying I must have mistaken him for somebody else and that we never arranged to meet (????). I tell him I put the date in my diary as soon as we arranged it, so unless I’m suffering from some kind of hallucinatory disorder, we had a date. He says he is really sorry and there must have been a misunderstanding and he’d like to make it up to me by taking me for a drink that night. I arrange to meet him near where I live so I can have an early exit if he turns out to be a dick. We arrange to meet at half ten. I begrudgingly leave my friends who I was having a really good time with and go the pub. This had better be worth it.

I arrive bang on time and there is no sign of this elusive truth-dodger. Not again. Surely, not again. Time ticks by and when it gets to 10.40, I message him — by now, I do have his phone number — and ask if he’s on his way. No response. I send another message ten minutes later asking if he has stood me up again. He says he’s 2 minutes away. I check my watch and wonder if this was such a good idea.

Ten minutes later, two South American-looking guys walk in and go straight to the bar. One of them then comes over and asks — well, slurs — if I’m waiting for someone. I say yes, and it’s probably him. It is indeed him. At long last. Anticipation and disappointment seldom go without the other, do they? He is cute but, I have just realised, one of the drunkest people I’ve ever met. He slumps down on the chair. I ask him if the other guy he came in with is with him. He says yes, it’s his friend. I am incredulous. Why on Earth has he brought a chaperone? “Is it because I could be a serial killer?” I squeak, barely concealing my annoyance. He doesn’t seem capable of

answering. I motion for him to bring his friend over and thank goodness I do; the friend is absolutely beautiful, tall and toned with a ridiculously handsome face. They have accents, so I ask where they're from. They reply Mexico City. I tell them I briefly dated a Mexican. They want to know who. I demur, realising that like all ex-pats they'll probably know someone who knows someone who knows him, and that guy is best consigned to history.

My date is pretty much incapable of coherent conversation. Luckily his friend is sober and so we chat about this and that. My date occasionally stops staring into the middle distance and interjects with inanities like "Wearing a T-shirt under a shirt is very American". I am wearing a preppy long-sleeved shirt, open over plain T with slim chinos and Gola boots as I do for most of my dates – my "approachable but not quite sexy enough to be threatening, but open to suggestion" look. He then asks if I have a hairy chest, plunging his hand down the front of my T-shirt (I don't). His friend seems mortified. I really wish I was on a date with the friend; his face is like a work of art and he seems a really nice guy. Sigh. The date asks if I want to go out with them to a club in Clapham. I'd rather be fucked in the face by an angry dinosaur than spend 10 more seconds in this dickhead's company but the chance of proximity to his friend for a few more minutes seems very appealing. I go with them. The date is a complete idiot on the bus on the way there; I start being rude to him on purpose but he's too dumb or inebriated to notice, although he does call me a bastard in Spanish. I don't let him in on the fact I can understand him.

We arrive at the bar and it is chock-full of guys who've just moved to London and the hawks that like to feast on them, all dancing badly and mouthing along with the words of Katy Perry or Lady Gaga or whatever. It is packed to the rafters in the smaller, front bar, whereas the back room is cavernous and empty save for three lesbians. At this point, after a clumsy attempt to get off with me that is quickly rebuffed, my date stomps off for some trifling reason and is not seen for the remainder of the evening. I take it my date is unofficially over. His friend and I take a seat and watch a set of drag acts murder songs of which I had previously been rather fond. It's woeful and all the guys around me are devouring the friend with their eyes, their faces contorted like a cartoon bulldog dreaming of sausages. The friend and I talk and we eventually arrive at the deflating revelation that he has a boyfriend, who lives in Germany. He shows me a photo. He looks like Adrian Mole. There is no justice in the world.

I'm wasting my time here, clearly. I suggest we leave, which we do. A bus arrives and even though it's not going where I want to go, I get on it. I want the night to be over. I smile and shake hands with the best sex I'll never have and get on the bus, frantically wiping the ink stamp from the club off my hands in an effort to bleach out the memory.

The next day, I get a message from the date, apologising for being rude and drunk and saying he is just getting over a break-up and that it appears he's not ready for dating. I accept his apology and my finger hovers over the 'block' button. He then messages to say he hopes we can be friends. Friends. The friend. Call me foolish, but I can't resist the idea of somehow grabbing a drink with the foxy friend. And to do that, I'd need to stay in touch with my date.

'Sure,' I find myself typing. 'Let's be friends.'

1. What was the result of the date?

a. **Explicit Rejection**

b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

a. **Violation of Expectations**

b. Unrequited Love

c. Physical Misrepresentation

d. Other

e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

I arrive bang on time and there is no sign of this elusive truth-dodger. Not again. Surely, not again. Time ticks by and when it gets to 10.40, I message him — by now, I do have his phone number — and ask if he's on his way. No response. I send another message ten minutes later asking if he has stood me up again. He says he's 2 minutes away. I check my watch and wonder if this was such a good idea.

Ten minutes later, two South American-looking guys walk in and go straight to the bar. One of them then comes over and asks — well, slurs — if I'm waiting for someone. I say yes, and it's probably him. It is indeed him. At long last. Anticipation and disappointment seldom go without the other, do they? He is cute but, I have just realised, one of the drunkest people I've ever met. He slumps down on the chair. I ask him if the other guy he came in with is with him. He says yes, it's his friend. I am incredulous. Why on Earth has he brought a chaperone? "Is it because I could be a serial killer?" I squeak, barely concealing my annoyance.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

a. **Face-Enhancing**

b. Face-Detracting

c. Reason

d. Apology

e. Appreciation

f. Concern

g. Encouragement

h. **Future Contact**

i. Blaming

j. Direct Disagreement

k. Forcing Self-Disclosure

l. Silence

m. Sarcasm

n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

He then messages to say he hopes we can be friends. Friends. The friend. Call me foolish, but I can't resist the idea of somehow grabbing a drink with the foxy friend. And to do that, I'd need to stay in touch with my date.

'Sure,' I find myself typing. 'Let's be friends.'

## Coding Sheet 18

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Raincheck

“It’s raining” is the first thing out of his mouth.

“I know.”

He hops from one foot to the other as if avoiding drops of lava from the sky. He seems stressed. “Well, what should we do?” he asks. “It’s raining!”

“Let’s go into the gallery,” I reply, wishing I had brought an umbrella – not to keep me dry, but to shove in my date’s mouth. I try to shake the last time I went to a gallery with a date from my mind. This will be different.

Afternoon dates are always a risk. Daylight can be unforgiving, of course, and going for a drink in the afternoon always seems a little seedy when you’re with a stranger.

But here I am, in the absence of anything to do on a grey Saturday afternoon other than count the spatters of tea next to the bin (I’m quite athletic when it comes to chucking tea bags away). I didn’t factor in the rain, but here it is, like a gooseberry. A wet, miserable chaperone to match my date’s mood.

I know exactly why he’s upset: he has a ‘hairstyle’.

It’s a huge quiff, which wasn’t in his photos, so either it’s a new thing he’s trying out (with limited success today), or his dating profile pictures are aeons old. I watch the rain trickle down the lines by his eyes. The quiff, like his profile photo, is not new.

We duck into the National Portrait Gallery, usually one of my favourites. Obviously, lots of other people have had the same idea – the lobby is filled with pissed-off looking people who wouldn’t normally be in here, shaking off sodden cuffs and looking bewildered. The air is heavy and humid. It smells of wet hair and halitosis and museum and doom.

“Do you want to start at the top and work our way down, or look around the bottom floor?” I ask, cursing myself as I do, and praying he won’t come back with a double-entendre.

“Well,” he whispers, narrowing his eyes in a way I imagine he thinks is sexy. Oh dear. “I was hoping to get to know you a bit better first, but I always like to start at the top.”

There is no God.

I laugh a laugh so fake I should either be arrested or given an Oscar, and we make our way up the long escalator to the top floor.

We talk, mainly about the pictures of various Tudors in front of us. I'm not particularly highbrow, but his exclamations about how difficult it must've been to have sex in the outfits they wore and musing whether Henry VIII was well-endowed make me feel like a schoolteacher taking a wang-obsessed pupil on a day out. I have to get him away from these paintings.

Down a floor, then. He finally stops ruminating on the sex lives of all the subjects in the portraits and casts his dirty little mind to me instead.

"I hope you don't mind my wee joke about tops earlier," he says.

Ah, so he's kind of read me already. That's good, I suppose. I'm not a prude or anything, but it was a bit awkward. But, really, I should lighten up. It was just a joke. Anyone else would've answered similarly, I'm sure.

"No, of course not." I smile. Too widely.

"Good," he says, and our eyes exchange a look that means something and it feels nice. "But out of interest," he carries on. "Which are you? Give or take? I'll do you either way; I'm not that fussy."

I am back out in the rain ten minutes later and it has never felt so good to be wet and alone.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

Down a floor, then. He finally stops ruminating on the sex lives of all the subjects in the portraits and casts his dirty little mind to me instead.

"I hope you don't mind my wee joke about tops earlier," he says.

Ah, so he's kind of read me already. That's good, I suppose. I'm not a prude or anything, but it was a bit awkward. But, really, I should lighten up. It was just a joke. Anyone else would've answered similarly, I'm sure.

"No, of course not." I smile. Too widely.

"Good," he says, and our eyes exchange a look that means something and it feels nice. "But out of interest," he carries on. "Which are you? Give or take? I'll do you either way; I'm not that fussy."

I am back out in the rain ten minutes later and it has never felt so good to be wet and alone.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?



- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- I didn't factor in the rain, but here it is, like a gooseberry. A wet, miserable chaperone to match my date's mood. I know exactly why he's upset: he has a 'hairstyle'. It's a huge quiff, which wasn't in his photos, so either it's a new thing he's trying out (with limited success today), or his dating profile pictures are aeons old. I watch the rain trickle down the lines by his eyes. The quiff, like his profile photo, is not new.
- "Do you want to start at the top and work our way down, or look around the bottom floor?" I ask, cursing myself as I do, and praying he won't come back with a double-entendre. "Well," he whispers, narrowing his eyes in a way I imagine he thinks is sexy. Oh dear. "I was hoping to get to know you a bit better first, but I always like to start at the top." There is no God. I laugh a laugh so fake I should either be arrested or given an Oscar, and we make our way up the long escalator to the top floor.
- I'm not particularly highbrow, but his exclamations about how difficult it must've been to have sex in the outfits they wore and musing whether Henry VIII was well-endowed make me feel like a schoolteacher taking a wang-obsessed pupil on a day out.
- "I hope you don't mind my wee joke about tops earlier," he says. Ah, so he's kind of read me already. That's good, I suppose. I'm not a prude or anything, but it was a bit awkward.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

"I hope you don't mind my wee joke about tops earlier," he says.

Ah, so he's kind of read me already. That's good, I suppose. I'm not a prude or anything, but it was a bit awkward. But, really, I should lighten up. It was just a joke. Anyone else would've answered similarly, I'm sure.

“No, of course not.” I smile. Too widely.

“Good,” he says, and our eyes exchange a look that means something and it feels nice. “But out of interest,” he carries on. “Which are you? Give or take? I’ll do you either way; I’m not that fussy.”

I am back out in the rain ten minutes later and it has never felt so good to be wet and alone.

### Coding Sheet 19

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Drunk

Here we are again then.

It goes without saying that I haven't heard back from the previous guy, and I'm not particularly devastated about this.

Gotta tell you, I'm not feeling too confident about this one, either. I can't discern from his photos whether he's attractive or not. There's a lot of sympathetic (i.e. non-existent) lighting and "Oh, look, here I am in the distance!" posing in his pictures.

Within his profile blurb, he seems at pains to point out that he's quite wealthy so maybe he's trying to compensate. I don't even know why I'm going on the date. I am secretly hoping that his photos will just be poor quality, and that in actual real life he will be devastatingly handsome.

He chooses the venue. When I walk in, bang on time, it is empty save for two males sitting at the bar. They are not together.

I think one of them may be the guy but I can't tell, given that his photos were about as revealing as a child's drawing on an Etch-A-Sketch.

I stand at the bar and order a drink, taking out my phone to text the date and tell him I am here. The men at the end of the bar don't look up as I text so I assume he's not one of them.

Incoming reply: 'Me too!'

Yes, great. But where? I text again to say I'm standing at the bar. Out of the corner of my eye, I see the man at the very end of the bar move. I do not look in his direction.

He's coming over.

He pulls up a stool next to me – the screech of it against the floor cutting right through me – and says my name.

I turn. Oh. Oh. I see.

Oh.

He looks 31 in the same way that Caprice looks 31. Not at all.

His face is ruddy and puffed and his eyes seem lost within it, like little raisins poking out from a large, sugary bun. His hair, a dull, dirty blond colour, seems straggly and unwashed and he's

wearing one of those pink and white striped shirts that I've seen posh people wear, and which remind me of gout.

He has the beginnings of a paunch, but many men do. The *pièce de resistance* is the teeth. Yep, two dates in a row and we have another dental failure. They're yellow — which happens, I know — and one of them seems to protrude from the gum, lying horizontally rather than, well, doing that thing teeth normally do.

It's a shallow world we live in, and my waters run less deep than most, but online dating has to have the foundation of mutual attraction if it is to work.

From here on in, I'm out physically, but I'm willing to give his personality a shot. Sadly, we seem to be lacking here too. He has slightly delayed reactions and it takes him a while to get his words out. Is he about to collapse from an aneurysm? Should I put him in the recovery position? Is he shy or unused to meeting new people? What's the deal here?

We drain our drinks over the most mediocre chat topics we can muster (my own efforts being equally dreary; he is not totally to blame) before deciding to move on to another pub. The place is ridiculously empty and I need to have people to look at so I don't have to focus my attention on my date.

We leave and choose a place near Brick Lane and stand outside. What an odd 'couple' we make: me in my jeans and T-shirt and Converse and him in his posho shirt, crumpled chinos, work shoes and clutching a hardback A4 diary in his hand.

He tells me he's just come from a meeting with a client, but I'd say meeting was something of a white lie, as I soon become to realise that he's not shy: he's pissed.

Clearly he has been enjoying an extended liquid lunch with this 'client' as after a couple more pints he's rocking backward and forward on his feet and seems to be struggling to focus on me.

The conversation, when he can actually speak, is dull to such a level that even a Jane Austen character would put aside her embroidery and say 'Oh for fuck's sake, move it up a notch, sweetheart!' – I have to go.

I down what's left of my drink and tell him it has been lovely to meet him (lie no. 1) and that I must rush as I have a deadline (lie no. 2). I say I'll be in touch (a hat-trick of untruths!) and walk off toward the bus stop seething with the knowledge that I have just wasted three hours of my life on someone who can't even turn up to a date sober. I resolve to phone a friend and get outrageously drunk.

Amazingly, I discover a missed call from him the next day. He's left a voicemail, too. I never bother listening to it. He'll have to find himself another drinking partner.

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection

### b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? Amazingly, I discover a missed call from him the next day. He's left a voicemail, too. I never bother listening to it. He'll have to find himself another drinking partner.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- He looks 31 in the same way that Caprice looks 31. Not at all. His face is ruddy and puffed and his eyes seem lost within it, like little raisins poking out from a large, sugary bun. His hair, a dull, dirty blond colour, seems straggly and unwashed and he's wearing one of those pink and white striped shirts that I've seen posh people wear, and which remind me of gout. He has the beginnings of a paunch, but many men do. The pièce de résistance is the teeth. Yep, two dates in a row and we have another dental failure. They're yellow — which happens, I know — and one of them seems to protrude from the gum, lying horizontally rather than, well, doing that thing teeth normally do.
- From here on in, I'm out physically, but I'm willing to give his personality a shot. Sadly, we seem to be lacking here too. He has slightly delayed reactions and it takes him a while to get his words out.
- The conversation, when he can actually speak, is dull to such a level that even a Jane Austen character would put aside her embroidery and say 'Oh for fuck's sake, move it up a notch, sweetheart!' – I have to go.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Amazingly, I discover a missed call from him the next day. He's left a voicemail, too. I never bother listening to it. He'll have to find himself another drinking partner.

## Coding Sheet 20

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Also-Ran

Is there anything less sexy than a date who dumps all his problems on you? Is it really only nice guys who finish last?

Internet dating attracts the loneliest of souls. Behind every profile advertising a “vivacious go-getter”, there’s a self-doubting emotional wreck searching for a friendly face upon which they can offload their problems – and little else. Sadly. Thankfully. Everybody’s got their problems; some of them like to share them on a supposedly romantic evening. It’s a risky seduction technique, but depressingly popular.

Tonight, I’m playing shrink to Christopher, an aspiring novelist with faux-messy hair and a bowtie. Aspiring. Bonjour alarm bells – aspirations are doppelgangers of unrealised, far-fetched fantasies.

His profile promised the romantic equivalent of high-speed broadband. Instead he is, at best, alternately fizzing and flatlining dial-up on the Isle of Skye. He’s telling me about his career thus far. It’s light on comedy.

“I’ve wasted chances, fucked up opportunities, chased stupid dreams that turned into nightmares and missed out on a podium place every single time. I try not to be bitter about it, but it’s hard. I wish things were different. I wish I wasn’t such a, such a...” he begins to stammer.

I eye my beer wearily. “Such a what?” I prompt.

He sighs heavily. Any joy remaining in the room is quickly sucked out of it.

He continues: “Such an also-ran. A bystander. I’ve never been at the centre of anything. Always in orbit. Uranus.”

I do the obligatory schoolboy laugh, but he ploughs on, deadly serious. “I wish I’d been less of a loser.”

I begin to wish he hadn’t ordered that gin and tonic.

“You don’t really feel that way about yourself, do you?” I say.

He looks up from the table, his eyes sad and grey, like the unluckiest pensioner in the bingo hall.

“I’m afraid so. I try and try but nothing seems to work. All my relationships have been a disaster. Men screw me over all the time.”

He's doing a dreadful PR job on himself. What am I supposed to say? I have never met him before; I only have his side of the story. If he was this scintillating on dates to other men, no wonder all they wanted to do was roll in the hay and run.

Do nice guys all really finish last? Or is there a reason you're destined to be runner-up? I'm not sure I want to find out, and he doesn't look like he needs psychoanalysing. Just a hug and that gin taking away from him would do, I reckon.

We haven't known each other long enough for physical contact, so a verbal ruffling of the hair will have to do.

"I'm sure you've just been unlucky," I offer.

He looks down again, utterly convinced. "Yeah, maybe."

A huge sigh. His eyes return to mine. "Not much chance of a second date, I suppose?" he says.

My mouth dribbles into a weak smile. I feel celibacy's icy fingers grip my balls.

"I think you've just had a bad day. Let's try another, some other time." It feels about as sincere as a Christmas card with a live grenade attached.

"Thanks," he says quietly, and we finish our drinks before heading out into the night and away from each other.

Over the next few days, I think about whether to contact him again. Sure, he was a bit of a downer, but maybe he'd had a bad day. And while he'd been screwed over by men before, perhaps I can prove we're not all the same. Considering those vulnerable eyes, I finally do contact him – a text proposing a drink.

I wait. Nothing comes in return that evening. Busy, maybe. Out of the country. And, then two days later, my phone buzzes.

"Nice of you to get in touch," comes the reply. "But I kind of got a better offer. LOL. Was nice to meet you. Take care."

Maybe I should be irked, but I'm not. His curse looks to be finally broken. Second prize now belongs to me.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A



3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other – Someone Else
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

“Nice of you to get in touch,” comes the reply. “But I kind of got a better offer. LOL. Was nice to meet you. Take care.”

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other – Someone Else

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Over the next few days, I think about whether to contact him again. Sure, he was a bit of a downer, but maybe he’d had a bad day. And while he’d been screwed over by men before, perhaps I can prove we’re not all the same. Considering those vulnerable eyes, I finally do contact him – a text proposing a drink.

I wait. Nothing comes in return that evening. Busy, maybe. Out of the country. And, then two days later, my phone buzzes.

“Nice of you to get in touch,” comes the reply. “But I kind of got a better offer. LOL. Was nice to meet you. Take care.”

## Coding Sheet 21

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Pedal Pusher

There are some dates you feel you should go on, even if you really ought not to.

Maybe it's because somebody incredibly handsome has deigned to ask you out, or perhaps you are lonely, and your diary tells you this coming Friday is a blank space, its page a polar landscape.

Whatever the reason, sometimes we say yes when we should be raising the drawbridge in an emphatic no. Johnny, 28, is such a no. But his square jaw and icy blue eyes draw me in, and he pets my vanity like I'm a cat drunk on all the milk in the world – he contacts me first and tells me he likes my smile.

I'm flattered enough that I set aside my misgivings about his profile – one of his 'absolute musts' is that his date be a "keen cyclist". I'm keen as mustard about plenty, but freewheeling around on a metal, bulimic horse with pedals isn't one of them. I enjoy it when I'm doing it, but I'm not a confident cyclist, especially in London.

But his missives are so charming and touchingly direct, like an awkward Head Boy asking me to dance at a school disco, that I am sucked in to whatever it is he is doing. It feels wrong, fake somehow.

Finally, he asks me out for a drink. I hesitate.

At last: "It says on your profile you want to go out with a cyclist. I am not one."

The reply: "Oh that? No, it's fine. I don't know why I said that; it's silly."

I can almost hear him laughing as he types that. Almost. It's a hollow laugh.

On the actual night of our date, I fall victim to traffic and am a few minutes late. As I bound up to the pub, I spy a few cycles tied to the lone lamppost outside. They seem to be twisted around each other in an inextricable tangle, a frenzied orgy of metal, chain and oil. I wonder if one belongs to the guy awaiting me inside.

He is sitting directly opposite the door to the pub, staring ahead intently. He seems annoyed at my tardiness, which I would understand, except I texted to let him know and, let's not forget, it wasn't intentional. I apologise in mock breathlessness – I didn't run that fast to get there – and despatch myself to the bar to get us drinks, in the hope it will our oil on his Atlantic mood.

When I return, he has thawed somewhat, but his jaw still seems set. Perhaps if he were to relax it, the entire bottom half of his face would come crashing down, like a pelican's bill.

On some men, a brusque nature can be quite attractive. Everybody wants to be the one to force the clam and find the pearl, after all. On others, however, it is wearing, and my brightness feels forced, like a battered spouse trying to keep the peace.

Any jokes I make are met with a kind of half-smile, half-sneer, and his own conversational attempts don't seem to run to much more than sullen critiques of the world in general. I put it down to the same awkwardness I spotted in his emails, and resolve to try a bit harder – he's really good looking and his chest – straining beneath his shirt – looks like it might be fun to wander over.

I decide to take things back to his comfort zone, then; I will take the whining child to Disneyland. I broach the subject of cycling.

Suddenly, he comes alive. His biggest relationship, it seems, isn't with the guy who worked in PR with wandering eyes and hands and dumped him last year, but his two-wheeled lover.

He has had most of the best experiences of his life behind those handlebars, he says, and loves that he never knows where his next adventure will take him. There is something touching about that. I almost envy him his fanaticism, and it's clear his passion for pedalling has served him well physically, if nothing else.

With the fire well and truly in his belly and a previously unforeseen sparkle in his eyes, he turns to me and says: "So do you cycle?"

I cough, embarrassed. I made it clear I didn't cycle in the email and he said it was fine. Should I point this out? He obviously forgot. I'll play along. "No, not really."

He looks disappointed, like, immediately. As if I trod on his puppy's head or broke the crushing news about Santa Claus.

"What does 'not really' mean?" he asks, incredulous.

"Well," I begin cautiously. "I mean, I haven't really ridden a bike regularly since I was at uni."

He is wide-eyed. "And that's what? Twenty years ago?"

My eyes shrink to slits as the diss registers. "Thirteen, actually. I haven't needed to ride a bike since then. And I'd be uncomfortable riding a bike around London."

"Don't you mean you'd be scared?"

I sigh. "Yeah, if you like. Scared. That's not too weird, is it? There are loads of accidents."

"Not if you're careful. You just have to own the road."

I roll my eyes. “A juggernaut hurtling around the Elephant and Castle roundabout begs to differ,” I reply.

“Wouldn’t you at least try?”

“I did,” I say. “I hired a Boris bike for the first time recently. It was horrible.”

“Why?” he says, with a definite sulk.

“I felt nervous and out of control; I’m not a confident road user. Why put myself and others at risk?”

He leans back in his chair. “So basically you’re a chicken?”

I search his face for glints of humour, or signs this is a wind-up. It isn’t. I feel suddenly very tired. I don’t have an answer for him.

He continues: “Look, like I said on my profile, I am really into cycling. It’s important that anyone I, er, anyone I share my, um.” He falters. “Anyone who goes out with me needs to cycle, really.”

They’ll also need nerves of steel. I sip my drink and consider my answer. What witticism can I throw back? Whither my bag of jokes and pithy putdowns? It’s empty; I can’t be bothered.

Finally, I speak: “Yeah. Well, I don’t. Pretty much ever.” Another sip. “I run, though.”

He laughs with a final sneer. “Pah. I don’t think you running alongside my bike – like a dog – is really going to work, do you?”

No, Johnny. No, I don’t.

On leaving the pub, I wait dutifully while he untangles his bike from the spaghetti junction at the lamppost. I don’t know why I wait. What do I want, I wonder. Once he has freed his iron-framed boyfriend, he gives me a lascivious look.

“I could just push it along if you wanted to go on somewhere,” he says, as if we have just spent the most thrilling hour of our lives together. He goes on: “Or, actually, I’ve got some gin back at mine.”

I see. He wants to check out my saddle, after all.

I look from him to his bike. I wonder which would give the most satisfying ride. I sigh and begin walking. In the opposite direction.

On arriving home, I turn out the lights and go to the window, as I sometimes do when I first get in after a date. Such drama.

I look out at the buses hurtling by, filled with people, and the taxis and the passers-by and the drunks and the hubbub, and I cast my eye back over my empty kitchen, my shadow long and lonely against the tiled wall. I am envious of them all in a way, but at least I didn't go home with Johnny. I will always have that.

I look out of the window again, and see a lone cyclist zooming down the road. The lights change, and he quickly mounts the pavement to avoid them. A woman at the crossing shouts after him: "You stupid twat!"

Exactly.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

- He continues: "Look, like I said on my profile, I am really into cycling. It's important that anyone I, er, anyone I share my, um." He falters. "Anyone who goes out with me needs to cycle, really." They'll also need nerves of steel. I sip my drink and consider my answer. What witticism can I throw back? Whither my bag of jokes and pithy putdowns? It's empty; I can't be bothered. Finally, I speak: "Yeah. Well, I don't. Pretty much ever." Another sip. "I run, though." He laughs with a final sneer. "Pah. I don't think you running alongside my bike – like a dog – is really going to work, do you?" No, Johnny. No, I don't.
- I look from him to his bike. I wonder which would give the most satisfying ride. I sigh and begin walking. In the opposite direction.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

With the fire well and truly in his belly and a previously unforeseen sparkle in his eyes, he turns to me and says: "So do you cycle?"

I cough, embarrassed. I made it clear I didn't cycle in the email and he said it was fine. Should I point this out? He obviously forgot. I'll play along. "No, not really."

He looks disappointed, like, immediately. As if I trod on his puppy's head or broke the crushing news about Santa Claus.

"What does 'not really' mean?" he asks, incredulous.

“Well,” I begin cautiously. “I mean, I haven’t really ridden a bike regularly since I was at uni.”

He is wide-eyed. “And that’s what? Twenty years ago?”

My eyes shrink to slits as the diss registers. “Thirteen, actually. I haven’t needed to ride a bike since then. And I’d be uncomfortable riding a bike around London.”

“Don’t you mean you’d be scared?”

I sigh. “Yeah, if you like. Scared. That’s not too weird, is it? There are loads of accidents.”

“Not if you’re careful. You just have to own the road.”

I roll my eyes. “A juggernaut hurtling around the Elephant and Castle roundabout begs to differ,” I reply.

“Wouldn’t you at least try?”

“I did,” I say. “I hired a Boris bike for the first time recently. It was horrible.”

“Why?” he says, with a definite sulk.

“I felt nervous and out of control; I’m not a confident road user. Why put myself and others at risk?”

He leans back in his chair. “So basically you’re a chicken?”

I search his face for glints of humour, or signs this is a wind-up. It isn’t. I feel suddenly very tired. I don’t have an answer for him.

He continues: “Look, like I said on my profile, I am really into cycling. It’s important that anyone I, er, anyone I share my, um.” He falters. “Anyone who goes out with me needs to cycle, really.”

They’ll also need nerves of steel. I sip my drink and consider my answer. What witticism can I throw back? Whither my bag of jokes and pithy putdowns? It’s empty; I can’t be bothered.

Finally, I speak: “Yeah. Well, I don’t. Pretty much ever.” Another sip. “I run, though.”

He laughs with a final sneer. “Pah. I don’t think you running alongside my bike – like a dog – is really going to work, do you?”

No, Johnny. No, I don’t.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other – Departure

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I look from him to his bike. I wonder which would give the most satisfying ride. I sigh and begin walking. In the opposite direction.

## Coding Sheet 22

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Selfie

Imagine being the most selfish person in the world. Never letting people pass on a narrow pavement, never caring about anyone else's feelings, never censoring what you say, just barging your way through life satisfying only yourself.

I've often wondered what it would be like, but I'm not really a selfish person – it has been my downfall over the years. I've spent many lost hours wanting to claw my own eyes out in frustration at other people's self-centeredness, or waiting – endlessly waiting – for people who can't be bothered to turn up on time.

While the temptation to do exactly as you please seems so inviting, I have always stopped myself. I don't ever want to be the person leaving disappointed people in my wake. And you have to hope that one day someone will do the same for you. Be considerate. Someone once told me this was my sexiest feature – but I wasn't convinced at all. Everybody loves a bad boy. Holding doors open never got anybody laid.

My selflessness is being tested to the hilt tonight by Joshua, a tall, handsome young journalist – of course – who is possibly the most self-absorbed person I have ever met. We are three drinks in, and he hasn't bought a single one of them. He is talking about his life, his loves, his successes, pausing for breath only to say yes to a drink.

He tells me has trodden on those lower than him and bitten the knees of those above to get where he has got today – which isn't really that far. He randomly says he feels no sympathy for single mums or poverty-stricken pensioners as “you make your own luck in this world”, before going on to tell me his dad is a CEO and knows Jamie Oliver.

And on and on and on about himself. I feel redundant. I may as well be a video camera filming a monologue. I am on a date with a selfie. I am not to know I'm not far away from meeting the man who will ensure I never have to go on a date like this again, so I feel desolate and hopeless. I want a helicopter to winch me out of here – or at least drop a crate to land on this guy's head.

He seemed good on paper, well, my screen; he laughed at my jokes and said he couldn't wait to meet me. Sometimes that is enough. He was so handsome that yet again I let myself get carried away and flattered that he would be interested. Looking back now at photos of this period, I realise I looked probably the best I have ever looked, and ever will again.

But when you're in the thick of it and feeling it and wondering where the next seductive voice is coming from, you allow yourself to think otherwise. The sky is always at its darkest when you're there in the moment – you think you'll never see sunrise again.



I can tell by the way my date is looking at me that he's not really interested in me beyond offloading a few anecdotes and brags, but I know he's mulling over taking me home, or perhaps trailing after me to mine, to make the journey to the pub worthwhile. For my part, I don't do much to encourage him. I guess I could say more; I should be interrupting, making myself heard. But if you have to try this hard to butt in on a first date, it doesn't bode well.

When he utters the immortal line "I consider kindness to be a form of weakness – it's dog eat dog" I decide it is better to drain my bank account and get drunker than I have ever been before than to sit in sober silence.

As I head to the bar, I realise Joshua is one of those guys who has read one of those books on 'rules' for life. How to get ahead in business, or take what you want, or how to screw people over without guilt. Perhaps he has even read a dating blog just like mine and wrinkled his nose at the dating advice within, certain he doesn't need it. He has almost definitely read a book that says the older man should buy all your drinks – I bet he needs sat nav to find his wallet.

"It's so kind of you to treat me like this," he says as he takes his double vodka and cranberry from my hand. "You're such a gentleman."

"No trouble," I reply, wiping his figurative footprint off my forehead. I feel a flash of envy. He's still young and pretty enough that there will always be an old mug like me willing to put his hand in his pocket – or in Joshua's for that matter – to ensure total loyalty. For one night only, at least.

Joshua checks his watch and switches on what I imagine he thinks are his come-to-bed eyes. But I don't want to go.

I can't spend more time on this, on dates like this, with men like this. I'm wasting my time; this isn't fun. I don't even want a boyfriend – I'm only doing it to get out of the house. I really need to have a word with myself. I resolve to get home as soon as possible and begin that process. Meanwhile, Joshua's balloon needs deflating.

"So how come you brought me here?" he asks with hooded eyelids. "Was it so we could go next door to [redacted] and you could make a move?" Wow, maybe he really does read the blog.

"No, no," I yawn, exaggeratedly. "It's because it's handy to get back to my house."

He raises an eyebrow and shoots me the grin of a teenager who just found a porn mag in the park. "Really?" Oh, so now he can see me. Too late, Joshua. I yawn again.

"I'm tired," I say, smiling like a grandma curled up under a tartan rug.

"No kidding," deadpans my lanky friend.

"Think I'd better make a move," I say, standing up, pretending I haven't noticed his expressions of protest.

“Not the move I was expecting.” Joshua leans in for a kiss and I hold out my hand for him to shake. He stares down at it. “I guess I don’t need to ask if you’d like to do this again sometime,” he sighs, disappointed at his own failure, that he didn’t pay more attention to any one of those sassy dating blog tips.

“You can ask,” I say, brightly. “Text me.” I know he won’t.

I walk out into the night and feel springtime in the air, despite my icy breath making like a dragon ahead of me. I get round the corner and check my pockets, panicking that I’ve left my wallet on the chair. Phew, it’s there. I also realise I didn’t pay for that last round of drinks – it seems Joshua’s luck has run out.

“Never again,” I chuckle to myself. “Never.” And as I hail the taxi that will take me back to my bachelor pad, I have little clue how right – and wrong – I am.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

“Think I’d better make a move,” I say, standing up, pretending I haven’t noticed his expressions of protest.

“Not the move I was expecting.” Joshua leans in for a kiss and I hold out my hand for him to shake. He stares down at it. “I guess I don’t need to ask if you’d like to do this again sometime,” he sighs, disappointed at his own failure, that he didn’t pay more attention to any one of those sassy dating blog tips.

“You can ask,” I say, brightly. “Text me.” I know he won’t.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- He tells me has trodden on those lower than him and bitten the knees of those above to get where he has got today – which isn’t really that far. He randomly says he feels no sympathy for single mums or poverty-stricken pensioners as “you make your own luck in this world”, before going on to tell me his dad is a CEO and knows Jamie Oliver.
- I may as well be a video camera filming a monologue. I am on a date with a selfie.
- He seemed good on paper, well, my screen; he laughed at my jokes and said he couldn’t wait to meet me.

- I can tell by the way my date is looking at me that he's not really interested in me beyond offloading a few anecdotes and brags, but I know he's mulling over taking me home, or perhaps trailing after me to mine, to make the journey to the pub worthwhile. For my part, I don't do much to encourage him. I guess I could say more; I should be interrupting, making myself heard. But if you have to try this hard to butt in on a first date, it doesn't bode well. When he utters the immortal line "I consider kindness to be a form of weakness – it's dog eat dog" I decide it is better to drain my bank account and get drunker than I have ever been before than to sit in sober silence.
- Joshua checks his watch and switches on what I imagine he thinks are his come-to-bed eyes. But I don't want to go.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

"I'm tired," I say, smiling like a grandma curled up under a tartan rug.

"No kidding," deadpans my lanky friend.

"Think I'd better make a move," I say, standing up, pretending I haven't noticed his expressions of protest.

### Coding Sheet 23

Blog Name: The Guyliner

Blog Author: Justin Myers

Blog Entry: The Plus One

“I’m going to a friend’s for dinner on Friday. Come.”

I should say “No thank you, Toby; it’s only our second date”. I don’t.

“Is there anything you don’t eat?”

I should tell him about my phobia of celeriac and meringues. I don’t.

When I ask “What shall I bring?” and he replies “Nothing, just yourself!” I should listen, but I don’t.

When Toby spies the prosecco I’m clutching to my chest as we arrive and tells me “You can’t bring that; they’re teetotal and Polly won’t have it in the house” I should hang on to it, but I don’t. I leave it by the doorstep.

Polly answers the door and eyes me with the same suspicion a white carpet would afford a dog with diarrhoea. I should scowl back. I don’t.

When Polly’s boyfriend Max sloshes elderflower cordial into my wine glass, I shouldn’t quip that it’s a waste of a perfectly good glass, but I do. Max shouldn’t laugh and wink conspiratorially. But he does.

As Polly serves up every food I’ve ever hated in my life, with the icy glare of a serial killer, I should politely decline the offer of pudding, despite eating nothing of the main course. But I don’t.

When Polly goes on and on about Toby’s previous boyfriends, all of them beautiful demigods who adored Polly and would probably have turned straight for had she asked, I should defend myself, or step up my patter in an attempt to impress her. But I don’t care what she thinks, so I nod politely and play with my napkin.

As I laugh uproariously at one of Max’s jokes and see, out of the corner of my eye, Toby’s face fall, I should tone it down and pay more attention to the date who’s barely said a word to me all night. But I can’t. Why get out of Max’s sleek limousine of a conversation only to clamber into Toby and Polly’s knackered old Nissan Micra chit-chat?

When Max and I are stacking the dishwasher and he confesses to me he’s bored rigid living with Polly, I should act surprised and encourage them to stay together. But I’m not, so I don’t.

Usually when a man tells you his problems, he's hoping you'll solve them, so perhaps I should pretend we're in a film and put my hand on his leg and stroke my mouth suggestively. But I don't want to turn a horrendous evening into an apocalyptic one, so my hands stay where they are.

When I walk back into the lounge, it is obvious I have been getting an absolute skewering from Polly, as her and Toby redden immediately. I can see Toby running back to one of those holy exes within a month – Polly wouldn't have it any other way.

When it's time to leave and Max says he's looking forward to seeing Toby and me again really soon, I should tell him that's extremely unlikely, but I don't.

When Toby makes it clear he's going straight home and says he'll call me, I should feel sorry and protest a little, but I don't. Instead I proffer my cheek and he pecks it politely, begrudgingly, finally.

Perhaps I should feel sad that I'll never see Toby again, but I do not – I feel a rush of relief or elation. The regret may come later, but it will be brief and I'll have probably have somebody else close to hand to take my mind off it.

I shouldn't pick up that abandoned bottle of prosecco from the doorstep and drink it on the bus on the way home. But I do. And that turns out to be the best part of the evening.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

When Toby makes it clear he's going straight home and says he'll call me, I should feel sorry and protest a little, but I don't. Instead I proffer my cheek and he pecks it politely, begrudgingly, finally.

Perhaps I should feel sad that I'll never see Toby again, but I do not – I feel a rush of relief or elation.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- When Polly goes on and on about Toby's previous boyfriends, all of them beautiful demigods who adored Polly and would probably have turned straight for had she asked, I should defend myself, or step up my patter in an attempt to impress her. But I don't care

what she thinks, so I nod politely and play with my napkin. As I laugh uproariously at one of Max's jokes and see, out of the corner of my eye, Toby's face fall, I should tone it down and pay more attention to the date who's barely said a word to me all night. But I can't. Why get out of Max's sleek limousine of a conversation only to clamber into Toby and Polly's knackered old Nissan Micra chit-chat?

- When I walk back into the lounge, it is obvious I have been getting an absolute skewering from Polly, as her and Toby redden immediately. I can see Toby running back to one of those holy exes within a month – Polly wouldn't have it any other way.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

When Toby makes it clear he's going straight home and says he'll call me, I should feel sorry and protest a little, but I don't. Instead I proffer my cheek and he pecks it politely, begrudgingly, finally.

## Coding Sheet 24

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
 Blog Author: Justin Myers  
 Blog Entry: The Social Mountaineer

We have agreed to meet at a bar I haven't been to before. I don't usually do this – I like to be on familiar territory. But it is my date's choice and he has been pretty adamant about it in his series of texts, which he sends one after the other – one sentence per text – like he's on IM.

"It's really great."

"I mean I've never been but I hear it's great."

"We have to go."

"It's like a private members' bar but you can just sign up and go in."

"You should get membership."

"xx"

And so it continues. Excited orders barked at me through my phone. Sometimes it is endearing, like a puppy using an iPhone for the first time. Mainly it's like an alarm clock going off every time I blink.

My date is young: 25, almost 26. I am here on a mission to feed my vanity and to find out exactly why this impossibly thin and fresh-faced embryo has pursued me so eagerly, first on the dating site, then email, and finally over continual newflash texts.

We decide to meet outside in case there are problems getting into this mythical melting pot of cool.

"I'm sure there won't be," he coos over text as I take the bus there. He documents pretty much all of his taxi ride to the date ( A taxi! How glamorous!) and by the time he arrives (a whole seven minutes after me), I feel like we have done dates one, two and three already.

He approaches me in the drizzle – 5'11" of the skin and bone only youth and a total avoidance of any exercise can offer you. If he were ten years older, he'd be almost plain, but his small, raisin-shaped eyes are surprisingly bright and his thin mouth hasn't yet turned cruel with age. He trills my name, sticks out his hand – five twigs encased in the smoothest skin this side of a kindergarten – and we graze cheekbones. He smells of nothing, just air. "Shall we?" he says, elaborately waving his hand in the general direction of the door.

Awaiting us is a man with a clipboard and a world-weary grimace, standing behind a glittery lectern. In another life, he could've been an artist or a captain of industry. Maybe even an MP. Instead he is standing in the cramped lobby of a bar, looking like he's just had semolina poured down his trousers.

We can't go in, he explains, as we're not members.

My date starts to make pathetic pleas. Somebody told him such-and-such and Thingy assured him it would be OK. Sir Clip of Board will not budge. I have a flash of inspiration and remember I know someone stupid enough to have joined this bar. I say his name. The clipboard consults something on his lectern. We are waved through. My date is impressed. I am outrageously

embarrassed to have done that – especially after the time a while ago where one of my dates tried in vain to get us into a private members’ bar by phoning a celebrity from the pavement. Anyway, we are inside.

The bar is one of those places in the middle of an identity crisis, trying to be all things to all men – and all of them unlikable. One corner is ‘tastefully’ opulent, another gaudy and uncomfortable. My date says he doesn’t want to sit in comfy seats; he’d rather pull a stool up to the bar. We do, and order drinks. For around two or three minutes, my date says nothing – he simply cranes his neck this way and that to get a better view of what is going on around him. I have just paid £11 for a cocktail to sit opposite a meerkat. I shift in my stool and sip my drink. Finally, he turns back to me and smiles like we’re just coming back after an ad break on QVC.

“Tell me more about yourself,” he says, the very vision of daytime television host. “What kind of stuff are you working on at the moment?”

I cringe at questions like this. First, I am having a relatively quiet spell at the moment – the freelancer’s curse – and secondly, when people ask this, they usually only want to hear about famous people you have met or insider gossip you know. I have very little to relate of either. He begins to reel off names, guys he knows or has heard of who work at various publications in the UK. Do I know them? What did I think of them? How much did I think they earned?

“Oh, of course,” I say. “I forgot. You’re a journalist, aren’t you?”

“Yes,” he grins. “I love it. Don’t you just love it?”

“Yes. Sometimes I love it.”

“I have been to some terrific parties,” he gushes. “And I met X, Y and Z.” He mentions some relatively famous people.

“What made you want to be a journalist?” I ask, trying to catch the barman’s eye. My £11 cocktail is working out at about £3.50 a sip.

“I don’t know really,” he shrugs. “It seemed like a good way to meet the right people, y’know?”

I’m not sure I do, but I press on. “And once you’ve met the right kind of people, then what?”

He thinks for a moment and looks down at his empty glass. “Well, meet some more, I suppose!”

And then he laughs, the sound of 10,000 steak knives raining down on a colony of rats.

“Oh look over there...” he says. “That’s John Doe from Magazine A. Do you know him?”

I don’t.

“Oh. He’s even younger than me! Can you believe it?!”

I pretend I can’t.

What about her?” he continues, pointing at a woman in a boiler suit who has hair like a Bichon Frisé. “She works at Magazine B. She’s deputy ed I think.”

“Nope.”

I fear my media superpowers draining from me, the conversation drying up. He doesn’t want to talk about his hometown (“I just pretend it never happened. I was born the minute I arrived in London.”), he won’t say what he likes beyond “going out, but I never get trashed” and he hasn’t read a newspaper in 10 years. “I get all my info from Twitter,” he says, picking up drink number two. I hand the barman my debit card. Again.

Twitter. That could be a thing. Let’s talk about that. What does he like about it?



“You get to meet loads of people!” he exclaims. Again with the meeting people; he should have been a flight attendant. “I’ve had loads of work out of it. I just follow them and reply to loads of their tweets until we’re ‘friends’” – he does inverted comma fingers here – “and ask if they want me to write something for them. It’s a great way to pitch.”

“Do you follow anyone interesting on Twitter?” I ask. “Anyone really good I should know about?”

But all I get in return are the familiar names of editors and writers on well-known or ‘edgy’ websites and publications.

“Why do you follow them?” I ask.

“Because they’re the right people to know. And I might get to work for them if I chat to them enough. Don’t you do that?”

“Not particularly.”

“No, well...” he says looking me up and down as if for the first time. “Perhaps you don’t need to. How many followers have you got?”

“198,” I say, without flinching.

He wrinkles his nose. “Is that all? Shouldn’t you have more?”

“I suppose I should. I just tweet for pleasure, really.”

He looks at me like that sounds like a total waste of time. I motion to the barman for drink number three. My date tries to look at his watch without me noticing.

“Are you bored?” I smile.

“No,” he says, suddenly, and awkwardly, putting his hand on my knee. “I was wondering where we should go next.”

This is an unexpected turn. I find myself ridiculously flattered by this contact. Despite the fact I have obviously not turned out to be who I thought I was, he is still interested. Shallow? Yes. But it is a weeknight. Unexpected things happen on weeknights.

Drink three is drained even quicker than its predecessors and we move on out of the members’ bar and into the fresh air. The drizzle has stopped. It is a relief to see crumbling brick and chewing gum-spattered pavement instead of ironic wall-hangings and lurex T-shirts. My knees creak in agreement.

I suggest the next place, a bar I have been to a thousand times before. If anything is going to happen – and I’m playing it just bored and remote enough that it might – it will happen there.

There is nowhere to sit so we slip into a corner amid piles of discarded flyers, our pints sloshing onto the floor every time another punter squeezes by to go the loo. He’s chattering on about Twitter again, admitting he only follows Person X because they know Person Y at Media Outlet Z and he’d love to write for them.

“Oh, I know someone who works there,” I say.

“Do you?!” he grins widely. “Who?”

I say the name.

“Ooh, really? Have you ever done anything for them?”

When I say I haven’t, he looks disappointed. “Why not?”

“Because I have never asked,” I say. “And neither have they.”

“But why would you waste a good contact like that?” he blurts out.

“He isn’t a contact; he’s a friend. And it isn’t what I want to do. I wouldn’t be right for it.”

“Well, if I were you, I’d milk it for all its worth.”

I bet. It occurs to me that I too could milk this situation for all its worth. I could lie and say I know A and B at X and Y and could give him an intro. I imagine I could pretend to be someone else – anything else – for the evening and take full advantage of this young guy’s unwavering ambition. He doesn’t even seem like he’d be that bothered – what’s another hour or two on the casting couch? But what would be the point? It would be like having sex with LinkedIn. He isn’t interested in me. He’s interested in what (and who) he thinks I know. We are stepping into an elevator. Only one of us is going to make it all the way up to the penthouse. It won’t be me.

Sensing my cold feet, he pulls me in for a kiss. It is slippery, mock-passionate and, overall, unpleasant. I am embarrassed for us both. The conversation hasn’t been remotely flirtatious; there has been no chemistry, nothing naturally leading us to this point where we would be kissing in a bar, except for a perfunctory hand on my knee 30 minutes ago. Our date has been a list of names and email addresses – virtual CVs and online portfolios piling up in front of us. He has all the knowledge he needs for this evening; we won’t be progressing to the carnal kind.

I pull away from him. “It’s been a lovely evening. But I’m going to have to go.”

He acts crestfallen. “Oh. Why?”

“It’s a school night,” I explain. “And I’m on deadline.”

“Ooh.” He suddenly brightens. “Working on anything exciting? Who for?”

I sigh. “I can’t really say,” I lie, gathering up my coat. “But you might get to read it very soon.”

Or now.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

I pull away from him. “It’s been a lovely evening. But I’m going to have to go.”

He acts crestfallen. “Oh. Why?”

“It’s a school night,” I explain. “And I’m on deadline.”

“Ooh.” He suddenly brightens. “Working on anything exciting? Who for?”

I sigh. “I can’t really say,” I lie, gathering up my coat. “But you might get to read it very soon.”

Or now.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- “What made you want to be a journalist?” I ask, trying to catch the barman’s eye. My £11 cocktail is working out at about £3.50 a sip. “I don’t know really,” he shrugs. “It seemed like a good way to meet the right people, y’know?” I’m not sure I do, but I press on. “And once you’ve met the right kind of people, then what?” He thinks for a moment and looks down at his empty glass. “Well, meet some more, I suppose!” And then he laughs, the sound of 10,000 steak knives raining down on a colony of rats.
- He doesn’t want to talk about his hometown (“I just pretend it never happened. I was born the minute I arrived in London.”), he won’t say what he likes beyond “going out, but I never get trashed” and he hasn’t read a newspaper in 10 years. “I get all my info from Twitter,” he says, picking up drink number two. Twitter. That could be a thing. Let’s talk about that. What does he like about it? “You get to meet loads of people!” he exclaims. Again with the meeting people; he should have been a flight attendant. “I’ve had loads of work out of it. I just follow them and reply to loads of their tweets until we’re ‘friends’” – he does inverted comma fingers here – “and ask if they want me to write something for them. It’s a great way to pitch.”
- I bet. It occurs to me that I too could milk *this* situation for all its worth. I could lie and say I know A and B at X and Y and could give him an intro. I imagine I could pretend to be someone else – anything else – for the evening and take full advantage of this young guy’s unwavering ambition. He doesn’t even seem like he’d be that bothered – what’s another hour or two on the casting couch? But what would be the point? It would be like having sex with LinkedIn. He isn’t interested in me. He’s interested in what (and who) he thinks I know. We are stepping into an elevator. Only one of us is going to make it all the way up to the penthouse. It won’t be me.
- Sensing my cold feet, he pulls me in for a kiss. It is slippery, mock-passionate and, overall, unpleasant. I am embarrassed for us both. The conversation hasn’t been remotely flirtatious; there has been no chemistry, nothing naturally leading us to this point where we would be kissing in a bar, except for a perfunctory hand on my knee 30 minutes ago. Our date has been a list of names and email addresses – virtual CVs and online portfolios piling up in front of us. He has all the knowledge he needs for this evening; we won’t be progressing to the carnal kind.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:  
“It’s a school night,” I explain. “And I’m on deadline.”

## Coding Sheet 25

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Parent Trap

Five minutes ago, my date called me a DILF. I heard it quite clearly.

It was supposed to be a compliment.

I know this because my date purred the acronym at me and ran his finger across his mouth, like a negligee brushing against a closing bedroom door.

A DILF. I am 35 years old. I'm not really sure what kind of D I would have to be to have accrued enough years to F somebody young enough to be my son without being arrested, but it is clear my date's strength lies in buzzwords he has read in listicles, not mathematics.

"Maybe I've got daddy issues," he laughs, each of his 27 years peeling away like the skin of an onion – before my very eyes he is regressing to A-level student.

He thinks this is sexy. He thinks I have a fetish for younger men. He doesn't realise that he's not really young enough to be a kink.

He laughs, gurgling like a waste disposal trying to make sense of a baked potato. I should speak before he does it again.

"I've heard about the daddy thing," I say, smiling like a cat who has just spotted the cage to the family hamster's cage is open. "But I thought it was more about older men and other guys much younger than them. People in their 50s and 60s carousing with twinkles."

"Carooooooooousing," he mimics. He thinks he's Kaa from the Jungle Book, charming me into submission. He is one half of King Louie's coconut-shell bra at best. "Twinkles!" he mocks again.

"Well, you know what I mean," I reply, leaning forward in the most uncomfortable seat in the world. I feel a spasm in my back, but conceal this dreary side effect of old age – I don't want to feed his supposed fetish any more than I have to.

I continue. "I don't think I'm quite in the DILF territory yet. And neither are you." He looks up from his cloudy guest ale in surprise.

"Well," I exclaim. "It's not beyond the realms of possibility that I'd have seen you in the dinner queue at school."

"I'm eight years younger than you!"

I knot my knuckles. “Well, if I’d repeated a year. Why does age matter to you so much? You’re young. You have plenty of time to obsess over it when you’re an old wreck like me.”

He stares into middle distance sadly and tells me how old he feels. How everyone at work seems younger and more ambitious, while he plugs away, getting nowhere. It’s a familiar tale, but not exactly ideal date chat. Welcome to adulthood, junior.

“So why would you go on dates with an older man?” I ask. This is our second meeting.

He looks at me like a concerned relative hovering by a life support machine, desperately trying to extract my bank details.

“I suppose it makes me feel better to know that there are people out there older than me in the same boat, who still haven’t figured things out. Still drifting, not achieving. Know what I mean?”

Indeed I do, the little shit. I raise my glass and we clink them and smile.

I know then it’s the last time I see him. But I won’t let him go until he appreciates the added bonus of being older – experience. And when I accept that inevitable invitation back to his flatshare in a postcode you need a police escort to enter, I’ll take great pleasure in showing him.

I lean over again, ignoring the twinge in my back once more. “How about you get the bill,” I say, brightly. “Treat your old dad for a change, eh?”

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

I know then it’s the last time I see him. But I won’t let him go until he appreciates the added bonus of being older – experience.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- “Maybe I’ve got daddy issues,” he laughs, each of his 27 years peeling away like the skin of an onion – before my very eyes he is regressing to A-level student. He thinks this is sexy. He thinks I have a fetish for younger men. He doesn’t realise that he’s not really young enough to be a kink.
- I continue. “I don’t think I’m quite in the DILF territory yet. And neither are you.” He looks up from his cloudy guest ale in surprise. “Well,” I exclaim. “It’s not beyond the

realms of possibility that I'd have seen you in the dinner queue at school." "I'm eight years younger than you!" I knot my knuckles. "Well, if I'd repeated a year. Why does age matter to you so much? You're young. You have plenty of time to obsess over it when you're an old wreck like me." He stares into middle distance sadly and tells me how old he feels. How everyone at work seems younger and more ambitious, while he plugs away, getting nowhere. It's a familiar tale, but not exactly ideal date chat. Welcome to adulthood, junior.

- "I suppose it makes me feel better to know that there are people out there older than me in the same boat, who still haven't figured things out. Still drifting, not achieving. Know what I mean?" Indeed I do, the little shit. I raise my glass and we clink them and smile.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm**
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I lean over again, ignoring the twinge in my back once more. "How about you get the bill," I say, brightly. "Treat your old dad for a change, eh?"

## Coding Sheet 26

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Show-Off

I'm mixing things up a bit and logging the dates out of date order. This is because I might skip the boring ones and also, I wanted the horror of this one to be fresh in my mind.

On paper, This Guy sounds great. He works in the City, so while he may not have the most interesting job in the world, at least he'll be solvent. Money's not important, but it's good to have some, right? He is new to the dating site and has just two photos. But they are good photos. He is very handsome and looks exceptionally well-preserved for a 37-year-old. Despite his job, he says he has a big interest in all things cultural.

He emails me on Sunday and I respond. He then responds with his phone number. I never make the initial call — just yet another of those stupid rules I set myself — but I dutifully return the email with my number. About ten minutes later, he calls. Keen, then.

We chat about this and that for about 5–10 minutes. He asks when I can meet for a date. I say he should think of when and where and let me know. He says he will.

The next day I get an email from him saying he's free that evening. I am, but don't feel like going on a date; I'm hungover and will be fresh from a lengthy meeting outside London. I reply that any other day is fine. He replies quite quickly saying that the next night is good. Boy, he really is keen. I accept, and we arrange to meet at a railway station.

He phones 20 minutes before the meeting time to check we're still on. Bloody hell. I say yes. He arrives on time, wearing a suit that looks quite expensive. He is very tanned, a bit too tanned for me. I can't decide whether he is recently back from a holiday or sleeps under a sunbed. He is very handsome, but not in the same way as his photos, which I'm guessing are a few years old. He is much thinner and looks rather tired. I am disappointed, frankly, despite his big blue eyes and flawless skin. I know he's not for me.

We walk to Bar A, somewhere he has chosen. It is a relatively exclusive bar in east London. On the way, he keeps trying to reassure me we should be OK to get onto the rooftop bar. I've never been before so have no idea what he's talking about. It is a very sunny evening. He then, really weirdly, says that he can always use his connections. I'm like, what? The conversation isn't so much stilted but very one-sided. I ask a lot of questions; they are not returned. I don't like talking about myself that much, but it would be nice to have the option.

We get to Bar A. He says he hopes he doesn't have to pull strings to get in. Losing patience I say: 'What do you mean? Are you a Royal or something?' He says he knows the owner. He doesn't say who it is, but I know he knows that I'll know who it is. Still with me? It's a very famous family who are big in the dining, design and entertainment game.



We are told at door of Bar A that the rooftop is full and we are welcome to wait. He takes the REALLY snooty Maitre D' woman aside and starts talking in hushed tones. I assume this is him using his 'connections'. She keeps shaking her head. Clearly those connections aren't too promising. I want the ground to swallow me up. This goes on for about 5 minutes before he gives up and decides we should leave.

The Guy then stands right outside the doorway of Bar A and phones someone from his mobile. Whoever it is goes straight to voicemail and The Guy begins saying that he wants to get in somewhere for a drink and can this person say they're meeting him or something. I'm only half-listening as I am very easily embarrassed and people are starting to stare. By this point, I've had enough of him and I know we're done here, but am intrigued at what he's going to do next in a vain attempt to impress me. Parachute into Buckingham Palace? Hire out the entire London Eye?

He then says he can get us into Bar B, a well-known private members' club. He obviously thinks I'm some kind of durrr who will be really excited about going to such a place. I've in fact already been. He says he has a friend who's a member who has told him that he can use his name to get in any time he wants. This is who he phoned, clearly.

We get to Bar B and walk in. He gives the name of the friend and says he's meeting him here. I don't hear the name of the friend. It's probably Elton John or Alan Sugar or WHATEVER. The lady says we're not on the list but we're welcome to wait in the lobby until he arrives. We sit down and I start to flick through a magazine as The Guy texts his friend asking to be put on his list. Friend then phones back and agrees to do this. Friend phones reception at Bar B. Receptionist comes over and says that the friend has phoned and will be a few minutes late so we're welcome to wait. The Guy asks 'Can't we just go up and wait?' and the lady says they can't let non-members up unaccompanied. I could have told him that. We wait for 5 minutes and then date suggests we go somewhere else. I want to punch him; I am so embarrassed.

We go to Bar C round the corner. We have a couple of drinks, start chatting. He seems OK, so it's actually a shame that he completely wasted the first half-hour of the date by being a showy, gold-plated dickhead. Things start to hit a bumpy patch when he starts going on about his exes and how he has loads of people interested in him on the website. He says he can't even read all the emails, there are so many. I'd hazard a guess that if he videoed himself acting the way he just has been doing for five minutes or so and put it online, those emails would tail off quite sharply. I ask lots of questions about holidays, where he lives etc; anything to get him off the subject of internet dating. He doesn't ask me about either of those things, or indeed anything much. Why am I still here?

He decides he wants to eat. The barman had asked if he'd wanted to eat about 30 minutes ago and he said no. Because we haven't reserved, the only place left to sit is a long counter which overlooks the kitchen. The Guy starts pulling rank again and is really embarrassing, continually trying to get a better table but is told no.

The table we're seated at is awful: the chef is a wannabe Gordon Ramsey and swears at the top of the voice at his crew, despite the fact that they're cooking nothing more complicated than

pizza. We're sitting about two feet from all the action. I say that this isn't for me and that I don't want to eat here. The Guy agrees. We leave. I actually don't want to eat anywhere with The Guy; for some reason I am unable to communicate this verbally. I think he put a silence or tolerance serum in my drink. Inside, I am screaming.

We go back to Bar A, where it all began, and he decides to eat in the restaurant in the ground floor. It looks a little expensive. Yet AGAIN he makes a show of himself whingeing to get a nicer table. I can't believe I am going through with this. We sit down and order. He asks for chilled red wine and tuts loudly when told they don't have any. He remarks how hot the waiting staff are (they're not). The more he drinks, the more dramatic he becomes. Lots of face-pulling and gesticulating. That's fine on stage, but not for me in quite a small restaurant. He rolls his eyes loads and tells me how good his sense of humour is. He's hiding it very well; he's not remotely funny. He tells me my first name doesn't suit me. Why is this fucking A-1 charmer still single, eh? Baffling.

We eat. I have the kedgerree, which is lovely. He starts banging on about knowing the patriarch of this famous family. Whether this is true or not, I neither know nor care. He's dull, and trying to blind me into not seeing it by being showy. It's creepy. And finally, I have reached my limit.

The meal over, we're both increasingly impatient to leave. He has finally spotted my discomfort. The conversation starts to dry up. He asks me if that's a cold sore on my face. I say no. He starts babbling about drugs, saying he's very recently got into coke. I can imagine. He whispers the word 'drugs' as if it's the biggest secret in the world. I now realise where his hugely inflated ego comes from: a wrap of plastic in his suit pocket. Sick of trying to attract the waiter's attention, he gets up and walks over to one and demands the bill, rolling his eyes for the hundredth time. The bill comes and I throw over my notes. I'm not paying half; he had 2 main courses and an extortionate glass of wine. We then leave and walk down the street.

When it is time to part, an event I am looking forward to more than my own birthday, Christmas and New Year all rolled into one, he tells me it was nice to meet me. His last words are 'Well, I'm here!', given with a hopeful look. Yes, you're here, and that's where you're staying. I mumble that I'll keep in touch and walk off without a backward glance.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

When it is time to part, an event I am looking forward to more than my own birthday, Christmas and New Year all rolled into one, he tells me it was nice to meet me. His last words are 'Well, I'm here!', given with a hopeful look. Yes, you're here, and that's where you're staying. I mumble that I'll keep in touch and walk off without a backward glance.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love

c. Physical Misrepresentation

d. Other

e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- He is very tanned, a bit too tanned for me. I can't decide whether he is recently back from a holiday or sleeps under a sunbed. He is very handsome, but not in the same way as his photos, which I'm guessing are a few years old. He is much thinner and looks rather tired. I am disappointed, frankly, despite his big blue eyes and flawless skin. I know he's not for me.
- The conversation isn't so much stilted but very one-sided. I ask a lot of questions; they are not returned. I don't like talking about myself that much, but it would be nice to have the option.
- We get to Bar A. He says he hopes he doesn't have to pull strings to get in. Losing patience I say: 'What do you mean? Are you a Royal or something?' He says he knows the owner. He doesn't say who it is, but I know he knows that I'll know who it is. Still with me? It's a very famous family who are big in the dining, design and entertainment game.
- By this point, I've had enough of him and I know we're done here, but am intrigued at what he's going to do next in a vain attempt to impress me. Parachute into Buckingham Palace? Hire out the entire London Eye?
- The Guy asks 'Can't we just go up and wait?' and the lady says they can't let non-members up unaccompanied. I could have told him that. We wait for 5 minutes and then date suggests we go somewhere else. I want to punch him; I am so embarrassed.
- We go to Bar C round the corner. We have a couple of drinks, start chatting. He seems OK, so it's actually a shame that he completely wasted the first half-hour of the date by being a showy, gold-plated dickhead. Things start to hit a bumpy patch when he starts going on about his exes and how he has loads of people interested in him on the website. He says he can't even read all the emails, there are so many. I'd hazard a guess that if he videoed himself acting the way he just has been doing for five minutes or so and put it online, those emails would tail off quite sharply. I ask lots of questions about holidays, where he lives etc; anything to get him off the subject of internet dating. He doesn't ask me about either of those things, or indeed anything much. Why am I still here?
- The Guy starts pulling rank again and is really embarrassing, continually trying to get a better table but is told no.
- We go back to Bar A, where it all began, and he decides to eat in the restaurant in the ground floor. It looks a little expensive. Yet AGAIN he makes a show of himself whingeing to get a nicer table. I can't believe I am going through with this. We sit down and order. He asks for chilled red wine and tuts loudly when told they don't have any. He remarks how hot the waiting staff are (they're not). The more he drinks, the more dramatic he becomes. Lots of face-pulling and gesticulating. That's fine on stage, but not for me in quite a small restaurant. He rolls his eyes loads and tells me how good his sense of humour is. He's hiding it very well; he's not remotely funny. He tells me my first name doesn't suit me. Why is this fucking A-1 charmer still single, eh? Baffling.
- The meal over, we're both increasingly impatient to leave. He has finally spotted my discomfort. The conversation starts to dry up. He asks me if that's a cold sore on my face.

I say no. He starts babbling about drugs, saying he's very recently got into coke. I can imagine. He whispers the word 'drugs' as if it's the biggest secret in the world. I now realise where his hugely inflated ego comes from: a wrap of plastic in his suit pocket. Sick of trying to attract the waiter's attention, he gets up and walks over to one and demands the bill, rolling his eyes for the hundredth time. The bill comes and I throw over my notes. I'm not paying half; he had 2 main courses and an extortionate glass of wine. We then leave and walk down the street.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I mumble that I'll keep in touch and walk off without a backward glance.

## Coding Sheet 27

Blog Name: The Guyliner  
Blog Author: Justin Myers  
Blog Entry: The Reluctant Mean Girl

Midweek. Another bar. Another pint with a stranger. I sit and wonder where I'll be in five hours. Will I be back in my flat ignoring the ironing or will I be tangled in Egyptian cotton and kisses with tonight's contestant? You just never know.

My date tonight bristles with efficiency. He was on time, buying drinks and sitting opposite me with a rictus grin on his face, in his pristine baby pink polo, before I knew what was happening.

"It seems weird going on a date on a Wednesday, no?" he says.

"Wednesdays are perfect, I think," I reply. "And you wore pink!" I nod at his polo shirt, knowingly. "Perfect shirt for tonight!"

He narrows his eyes. "I don't follow."

"Oh, errr," I stumble awkwardly. "It's from Mean Girls. They say 'On Wednesdays we wear pink'. Yes?"

His face is blanker than a blank thing on a blank day in a town called Blankton.

I probe further: "Do you know Mean Girls?"

He leans back in his chair and his face changes to a look of bemusement tinged with disgust and a dash of weariness.

"I don't know what you're talking about," he sighs.

I gulp, feeling dumb and shallow.

"It's a film. Written by Tina Fey. Lindsay Lohan was in it? It's quite old."

"Yeah, I've heard of it. I mean..." he shakes his head dismissively. "I just wouldn't even want to watch it. I'm not into trashy movies."

I shrug. "It's not trashy, really. It's quite a clever, knowing kind of comedy. Not as good as *Heathers*, but in the same ballpark."

"I don't really like the kind of films that gay men usually like," he replies.

Oh, I see! BINGO! We have the new gay stereotype – the gay man who refuses to conform to a stereotype! How lucky for me to have snared this rarest of beasts. And barely halfway through our first drink.

I have two options. I could just let this go, or I could take a tin-opener to that can of worms he's waving in front of me. Egyptian cotton, or home alone? I imagine the pristine sheets. Lovely. Then I think of him in them, beckoning me to a world where sex means never watching a popular movie again. Decision made.

"I don't like it because I'm gay, you total snob. I like it because it's funny."

"Yeah, right," he replies, folding his arms. A drawbridge goes up with great speed. "But you think it's a funny film because of the bitchy dialogue and the pretty, evil girls being all 'fabulous', right? It's just a bit... obvious." He unfolds his arms for a brief second and waves them dramatically in the air.

"So you have seen it, then?" I smirk.

"Uh." A pause so long you could actually use it to nip off to watch Mean Girls. And then: "I might have done actually."

I'm back in my own kitchen – alone – within the hour.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

"So you have seen it, then?" I smirk.

"Uh." A pause so long you could actually use it to nip off to watch Mean Girls. And then: "I might have done actually."

I'm back in my own kitchen – alone – within the hour.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

"Yeah, I've heard of it. I mean..." he shakes his head dismissively. "I just wouldn't even want to watch it. I'm not into trashy movies."

I shrug. "It's not trashy, really. It's quite a clever, knowing kind of comedy. Not as good as Heathers, but in the same ballpark."

“I don’t really like the kind of films that gay men usually like,” he replies.

Oh, I see! BINGO! We have the new gay stereotype – the gay man who refuses to conform to a stereotype! How lucky for me to have snared this rarest of beasts. And barely halfway through our first drink.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure**
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I have two options. I could just let this go, or I could take a tin-opener to that can of worms he’s waving in front of me. Egyptian cotton, or home alone? I imagine the pristine sheets. Lovely. Then I think of him in them, beckoning me to a world where sex means never watching a popular movie again. Decision made.

“I don’t like it because I’m gay, you total snob. I like it because it’s funny.”

“Yeah, right,” he replies, folding his arms. A drawbridge goes up with great speed. “But you think it’s a funny film because of the bitchy dialogue and the pretty, evil girls being all ‘fabulous’, right? It’s just a bit... obvious.” He unfolds his arms for a brief second and waves them dramatically in the air.

“So you have seen it, then?” I smirk.

“Uh.” A pause so long you could actually use it to nip off to watch Mean Girls. And then: “I might have done actually.”

## Coding Sheet 28

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
Blog Entry: Dorian's Grey Pictures

Before there was Grindr, there was Craig's List, sort of like the Wal-Mart of the Internet for anything used, be it appliances, pets, or Pope hats.

It was not uncommon to once find your apartment, your Rottweiler, and your future ex all on Craig's List, and usually for a pretty good price.

I had answered Dorian's ad because I recognized his pictures from Facebook. He had curly dark hair and hunky features, highlighted in gorgeous black and white photography of him on the beach.

Much to my delight, Dorian eventually replied, and we made a dinner date.

I have since learned when meeting someone you've only chatted with online, never make a dinner date.

A coffee or frozen yogurt is better recognizance. It's in broad daylight, with a low level of commitment, and most importantly, brief. If you hit it off, you can always graduate to happy hour drinks or dinner, but only once the date's been vetted. (Lately, my dates have been more of an excuse to enjoy froyo than the other way around. And I never turn down froyo! If it's espresso flavored, then it's really the best of both worlds.)

When Dorian showed up for dinner, I barely recognized him.

Actually, that's an understatement. I didn't recognize him at all.

This 35-year old looked nothing like the pictures on his profile. Gone were the muscular build, swimsuit body, and angular features.

Standing before me was a beer belly, swollen cheeks, and hair that could use a trim if it weren't a toupee.

I couldn't help but ask when the pictures were taken. Dorian had no problem telling me they were from his modeling days, nine or ten years ago. This was when he was in his early-to-mid-20s, when I was in the closet, and the general public still believed in global warming.

Dinner was awkward, and not just because I didn't recognize the stranger sitting across from me.

Apparently, he didn't recognize himself either.



For the next hour, he complained about how hard it was meeting attractive guys in San Francisco. You know, guys that were as attractive as his ten-year-old pictures.

Dorian had even joined a supper club that met once a month, where single gay professionals rotated in and out to meet other single gay professionals. Dorian only attended once, and he was so put out by the experience, he sent his photos to the organizer and asked where the guys were that looked like him – you know, like the ten-year-old pictures.

That's what I wanted to know.

As the dinner went on, every dating story he told went back to the same thing – how the guys simply didn't measure up to his model-good looks from ten years ago.

Sadly, this wasn't even his strangest behavior.

When he emailed the next day asking about a follow-up date, I diplomatically declined, stating I wasn't looking for anything romantic, but I'd be open to hanging out or grabbing a drink sometime.

Dorian was clearly taken aback and showed the visceral maturity of a toddler with the croup. He lashed out in three separate paragraphs, the first detailing how he could never be attracted to someone as sexless as me; the second, explaining how I had the personality of a corkboard; and the third, – irony alert – accusing me of looking nothing like my pictures.

Thankfully, I never heard from Dorian again.

But reliving this story has totally earned me a froyo.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

When Dorian showed up for dinner, I barely recognized him. Actually, that's an understatement. I didn't recognize him at all. This 35-year old looked nothing like the pictures on his profile. Gone were the muscular build, swimsuit body, and angular features. Standing before me was a

beer belly, swollen cheeks, and hair that could use a trim if it weren't a toupee. I couldn't help but ask when the pictures were taken. Dorian had no problem telling me they were from his modeling days, nine or ten years ago. This was when he was in his early-to-mid-20s, when I was in the closet, and the general public still believed in global warming.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

When he emailed the next day asking about a follow-up date, I diplomatically declined, stating I wasn't looking for anything romantic, but I'd be open to hanging out or grabbing a drink sometime.

## Coding Sheet 29

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
Blog Entry: Brodie's Public Relations

When I first came out, smart phones hadn't yet revolutionized online dating. I didn't know where to go to meet people, so I tried finding dates through the only website I was on – Friendster.

Friendster was basically the Facebook of the early 2000s – a social networking site with a clean interface, as opposed to the customizable-to-a-fault MySpace, where any teenager with a creative flair could send you into a seizure by their selection of background graphics.

Facebook has since conquered cyberspace, forcing Friendster to reinvent itself as a social gaming site. MySpace still hasn't gotten the hint.

It was on Friendster that I met Brodie.

Brodie was connected to friends of friends of friends. Communication with Brodie was intermittent. He explained he was in Public Relations and frequently traveled out of the country for work.

We eventually exchanged numbers. When I called a few days later, the recording sounded more like a work line, or even a reception desk, asking the caller to press one if it were a business call. I left a message and didn't give it much thought.

Brodie called back a few days later. He usually had to work weekends, he explained, but was free that coming Friday. So we met for drinks.

Brodie was over six feet tall, in shape but thin, with wispy Scandinavian hair and light blue eyes. He looked just like his pictures. He was sweet, easy-going, and incredibly attentive. Between opening doors and ordering drinks, he couldn't have been more of a gentleman. Even when we ended up back at his place that night, hooking up was all about me. He was so interested in pleasing me, I don't even remember if either of us pleased him.

When we awoke the next morning, we grabbed brunch nearby and walked around the Mission, eventually stopping at the district's centerpiece – Mission Dolores. The Mission dates back to 1776, and is not only the oldest mission in California, but also the oldest building in San Francisco. It's perhaps best known for a scene in Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo*, where Jimmy Stewart follows Kim Novak into the mission's cemetery.

There was no mass or service when Brodie and I entered, so we leisurely toured the grounds. Like all legitimate tourist destinations, it ended in a gift shop. Brodie waited patiently while I picked out saint medallions and holy pictures for friends and family back home.

On our walk back to his place, we happened to pass an adult video and novelty store, the type that specialized in dildos, bondage equipment, and other types of gag gifts given at bachelorette parties and later passed along to gay best friends. Brodie stopped to look at the window display, displaying videos ranging from hard core to harder core. He proudly pointed to one of the raunchier DVDs. The person on the cover sort of looked like Brodie.

He confirmed that it was indeed he. Just like on the seven other DVDs.

Brodie explained that porn was only something he did on the side. His real job was an escort. If this qualified as Public Relations, then I had done my P.R. internship all wrong.

This nugget of knowledge did explain his attentiveness. And his phone number's 888 prefix. And why I had to select 3 to leave a personal message.

Brodie lamented that we could never work out, which wasn't exactly a news flash. He claimed I was the type of guy he wished he could settle down with. I wasn't sure what exactly was keeping him from doing that, but I didn't ask.

Brodie then admitted he'd been nervous to hang out with me. This surprised me, but maybe he wasn't accustomed to conversation before copulation?

I was the one who should have been nervous touring a Catholic church with a porn star, but I did OK. And no thanks to the *Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners*, failing once again to be the definitive guide for every LGBT occasion.

Apparently, my night with Brodie retailed for \$2500. Brodie was fun, but not that much fun. If this seems high, I remind the reader that it was a Friday night, and rates are higher on the weekend.

On my drive home, I opted to drop Brodie off at his three o'clock appointment. It was on the way, and I figured it was the least I could do to repay him for his service, as a thank you card seemed awfully formal.

It was many years before I caught a glimpse of Brodie again, and by this time, porn stars and escorts were no longer a novelty, especially at San Francisco's Folsom Street Fair.

I gathered Brodie was still a porn star, partly because he was working the booth of a famous porn company, but mostly, because he was naked, suspended by a leather harness, while a drag queen probed his prostate with a fluorescent dildo.

Brodie recognized me and motioned with cuffed hands to stop by. Since I was never really good with this type of Public Relations, I opted to just wave and kept walking. He looked like he was enjoying himself, and I hated to interrupt.

Besides, I had an appointment at home with an industrial strength eye rinse.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

On our walk back to his place, we happened to pass an adult video and novelty store, the type that specialized in dildos, bondage equipment, and other types of gag gifts given at bachelorette parties and later passed along to gay best friends. Brodie stopped to look at the window display, displaying videos ranging from hard core to harder core. He proudly pointed to one of the raunchier DVDs. The person on the cover sort of looked like Brodie.

He confirmed that it was indeed he. Just like on the seven other DVDs.

Brodie explained that porn was only something he did on the side. His real job was an escort. If this qualified as Public Relations, then I had done my P.R. internship all wrong.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement

- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Brodie lamented that we could never work out, which wasn't exactly a news flash.

### Coding Sheet 30

Blog Name: It Gets Worse

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entry: Uber and Out

Last year, when I was in New York, I was playing on Grindr and hit up a profile that read "ex-frat jock." The guy's age was 26, and his profile sounded lowkey, straight-forward and somewhat normal.

After exchanging half a dozen pics, I still had no idea what the guy looked like. My pics were hi-res enough for a dermatologist to biopsy the mole on my neck. His were so grainy I couldn't determine his ethnicity, age, or gender.

He offered to send me better ones on his phone. So I gave him my number. But before he sends anything, he discovers we've met, roughly eight years prior when I lived in Chicago. I couldn't place him, and not just because I still had no idea what he looked like, but because he now goes by a different name, and he lied about his age, which would have made him 18 back then. He was currently 36.

We continue texting, and it finally dawns on me who he is. I remembered him being young and a bit on the wild side. We had met at some fashion show back in Chicago, not exactly the type of event that signals "frat" or "jock." We hooked up one night a few weeks after the show, after which he informed me he was in a relationship with a guy 23 years his senior.

He's ecstatic to have reconnected like this now, and wants me to come hang out at his place. He insists on sending an Uber to get me. It was already 1:00 AM on a weeknight, but I decided to go anyway. It's always fun to reconnect with people, right?

When I arrived at his apartment complex, I didn't even recognize him. This was partly because I'd been drunk every time we'd hung out in Chicago, but also because he looked nothing like the millennial in his grainy Grindr pics. He was out of shape, unkempt, and dressed like my Greek uncle, with knee-high white socks and a low-cut ribbed tank that had never seen the inside of a gym.

I go into his place and we catch up for a bit even though he immediately wants to get naked. He puts on some porn to watch, hoping that would get me in the mood. I kept saying I was tired, and I just wanted to catch up. The truth was I couldn't have been less turned on. I even took a Viagra on the way over just in case. Still nothing.

I finally - as gracefully as possible - made my exit. I called my own Uber this time and went back to my hotel and went to bed.

In the morning, I woke up to find a \$10 invoice in my PayPal account, demanding that I reimburse him for not putting out. I debated ignoring the message or responding to it. I decided to block him instead.

Later in the day, I decided blocking him wasn't the most emotionally intelligent thing to do. So I unblocked him, and apologized that there was a misunderstanding about our expectations the previous night. I was wanting to catch up and didn't realize it was contingent on prostituting myself. I attempted to laugh it off.

He was not amused. He was so unamused that he sent 11 irate texts criticizing all of my life choices of the last eight years, how lame I was, how I have no taste, how I'm directionless, and how I was a loser for attending university without pledging a fraternity.

I apologized again for the miscommunication. And I decided to be honest - that I wasn't physically attracted to him, which I'd have been able to discern if he'd bothered to send me a clear and recent image.

He retorted that he was hotter than me, and that was scientific fact.

At this point, I blocked him.

And immediately get another eight messages from a different cell number, proclaiming that if I keep blocking him, he can keep changing his number. Then he called *me* delusional. And pathetic. And unappealing.

I blocked him again.

And I'll be damned if I'm going to reimburse him for the Uber ride.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love



c. Physical Misrepresentation

- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

And I decided to be honest - that I wasn't physically attracted to him, which I'd have been able to discern if he'd bothered to send me a clear and recent image.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

a. Face-Enhancing

b. Face-Detracting

c. Reason

d. Apology

e. Appreciation

f. Concern

g. Encouragement

h. Future Contact

i. Blaming

j. Direct Disagreement

k. Forcing Self-Disclosure

l. Silence

m. Sarcasm

n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- Later in the day, I decided blocking him wasn't the most emotionally intelligent thing to do. So I unblocked him, and apologized that there was a misunderstanding about our expectations the previous night.
- I apologized again for the miscommunication. And I decided to be honest - that I wasn't physically attracted to him, which I'd have been able to discern if he'd bothered to send me a clear and recent image.

### Coding Sheet 31

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Anonymous  
Blog Entry: First Crush

I burst out of the closet when I was 22, having graduated from UC Berkeley earlier that year. Finally, I was openly gay, and could start living my life.

And that meant finally getting a boyfriend. I was eager to start dating.

Not having a lot of gay friends, I first turned to the Internet. I went to the campus Queer Resource Center's website, and was surprised to find something on there called the "Out List."

If you were a Cal student, alum, staff or faculty—and wanted people to know you were openly LGBT—you could just add your name. It was like a yellow pages for gay people on campus.

I proudly put my name down, and started scrolling through the list to find names I recognized. One name in particular really piqued my interest: Sam Thompson (not his real name).

This name registered, as a couple months earlier, I attended an a cappella concert on campus. Having been a choir boy, I had a lot of friends in the various singing groups—including my roommate. When my roommate's group got up to sing, one really cute boy caught my eye. A month later, I went to another concert on campus. All the singers wore nametags—so I learned the cute boy's name was Sam. And a quick look on the group's website told me his last name.

I wondered in excitement. "Was my new crush gay?"

I had stayed in the closet for literally decades—because while I always knew I was gay, I thought I was only attracted to straight men. Maybe there was hope for me, now that I'd taken the plunge.

I tried not to get ahead of myself. "Sam Thompson is a common name, and there are over 30,000 students at Berkeley. It's entirely possible that they are not the same person."

A quick online check of the Cal student directory told me that there were two students named Sam Thompson that semester, so I said: "Okay, there's a 50-50 chance. I like those odds."

In the meantime, I found a gay dating website—PlanetOut—and created a profile, using a photo taken for the Berkeley voter guidebook.

Two days later, someone responded to my profile — it was none other than Sam Thompson.

His e-mail subject line said “a true story,” and he explained how back in October, he was thumbing through the Berkeley voter guidebook and noticed my profile, but thought I was straight.

I tried being coy and responded by thanking him, adding “You mention on your profile that you sing in a choir on campus. We have probably met then, because I used to as well.” And then I mentioned the group that my roommate was in.

We scheduled a date for later that evening.

It was almost too good to be true. The boy I had a crush on for months was attracted to me, and I was going out on my first date with him!

We met for dinner. Sam was really smart, and politically engaging. We had a lovely conversation.

Sure, he expressed some mild disappointment when I told him I had “just come out” (Sam had been out of the closet all through high school)—but he was happy to hang out after dinner.

We walked through Berkeley for a few hours, checked to see what movies were playing at the theater, and eventually went to my house. I made him tea, and we sat on my couch talking more.

When Sam yawned, I gave him an out by asking him if he wanted to leave—but he said not yet. After he finally said he was ready to go home, I offered to walk him back to his car, where I thanked him for the lovely evening. We hugged, then he gave me a nice kiss on the cheek.

I skipped home in excitement. I’d had my first date with a boy *and* had been kissed.

I called Sam the next day and left a message on his answering machine. I thanked him for such a lovely time and asked if he wanted to go on a hike that day. I sent him an e-mail the following day. I waited the entire weekend for a response but none came.

On Monday afternoon, Sam finally responded by e-mail. He never got the message about hiking, he said, because there had been a power failure in his apartment and all his voice-mails had been erased.

I called him up, and offered to make plans. When he said he was busy that week, I asked about the following weekend. “Sure, I can make tentative plans,” he said. But we never made them.

The next two weeks consisted me of sending e-mail after e-mail, making phone call after phone call, with absolutely no response. Sometimes, he would make up excuses like there was another power failure in his apartment. Or the phone got disconnected. Or he forgot his e-mail password.

It would have stung for Sam to tell me upfront he did not want to date me, but to put me through weeks of agony when I was so vulnerable and he was my first crush—it was very infuriating. I second-guessed everything I may have done wrong on that night, driving myself absolutely crazy.

About three weeks later, Sam sent a long response to my e-mail. "I'm sorry if you got the wrong idea from me about what I wanted from you. I'm really bad at communicating with people, and sometimes I handle it by not communicating at all. Not that I've been avoiding you, I was just nervous e-mailing you."

Translation: I've been avoiding you.

He went on to say we should not date because I had just come out of the closet.

The next time he saw me, Sam gave me this awkward hug, but in general, he avoided socializing with me at future parties or events.

I still had a crush on him, although I tried moving on by going on dates with other guys. Berkeley is a small place—and I soon met a lot of other guys who likewise had a crush on Sam - the charming boy who avoids you after the first date, leaving you wanting more. One of them became my first boyfriend.

Sam was only 19, so you can chalk it up to immaturity. But in the past 15 years, I have gone on dates with hundreds of guys—many of whom were well in their 30s—who behaved the same way, leaving me hanging and making me wonder what the hell I did wrong. There's no closure. And when it's a 22-year-old who just burst out of the closet and is eager to meet his Prince Charming, the silence can be particularly painful.

The lesson: just rip off the band-aid, boys, and tell him the plain truth. It's better than just avoidance, which is downright cruel.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- I wondered in excitement. “Was my new crush gay?”
- It was almost too good to be true. The boy I had a crush on for months was attracted to me, and I was going out on my first date with him!
- When Sam yawned, I gave him an out by asking him if he wanted to leave—but he said not yet. After he finally said he was ready to go home, I offered to walk him back to his car, where I thanked him for the lovely evening. We hugged, then he gave me a nice kiss on the cheek. I skipped home in excitement. I’d had my first date with a boy *and* had been kissed.
- The next time he saw me, Sam gave me this awkward hug, but in general, he avoided socializing with me at future parties or events. I still had a crush on him, although I tried moving on by going on dates with other guys.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I called Sam the next day and left a message on his answering machine. I thanked him for such a lovely time and asked if he wanted to go on a hike that day. I sent him an e-mail the following day. I waited the entire weekend for a response but none came.

On Monday afternoon, Sam finally responded by e-mail. He never got the message about hiking, he said, because there had been a power failure in his apartment and all his voice-mails had been erased.

I called him up, and offered to make plans. When he said he was busy that week, I asked about the following weekend. "Sure, I can make tentative plans," he said. But we never made them.

The next two weeks consisted me of sending e-mail after e-mail, making phone call after phone call, with absolutely no response. Sometimes, he would make up excuses like there was another power failure in his apartment. Or the phone got disconnected. Or he forgot his e-mail password.

It would have stung for Sam to tell me upfront he did not want to date me, but to put me through weeks of agony when I was so vulnerable and he was my first crush—it was very infuriating. I second-guessed everything I may have done wrong on that night, driving myself absolutely crazy.

About three weeks later, Sam sent a long response to my e-mail. "I'm sorry if you got the wrong idea from me about what I wanted from you. I'm really bad at communicating with people, and sometimes I handle it by not communicating at all. Not that I've been avoiding you, I was just nervous e-mailing you."

Translation: I've been avoiding you.

He went on to say we should not date because I had just come out of the closet.

## Coding Sheet 32

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
Blog Entry: Frat Pack

One night out in San Francisco, I was approached by a cocksure Tucker Max-type. He was more masculine than handsome, and looked to be 30 but was only 21.

He was a senior at Cal Berkeley, where he lived in his fraternity house. None of his frat brothers knew he was gay, nor that he was out at a gay bar. (Yes, I realized this couldn't have been a hotter scenario if I'd have scripted it myself.)

The guy gave me his phone number, stressing that he hated the gay scene and gay culture. He wished he could just skip it all, find a boyfriend, and move to the suburbs.

For the record, I've not yet met a gay guy who wholeheartedly endorses "the scene." But there's little choice. It's generally the only place to go where you won't bark up the wrong tree.

Not that it's ever stopped me. If there's one straight guy in a gay bar, the odds are pretty good that's the one I'll approach. My record is three in one night. On three separate nights.

Now I just pass out a card that reads, "Please check the appropriate box. I'm: Straight ☐, Taken ☐, Not Interested ☐.

" It limits the stress on my vocal cords from trying to talk over Katy Perry.

But back to Gay Tucker Max.

We hung out the following night, and he kept trying to get me drunk. I refrained. He put away shots like it was Drinkin' with Lincoln at a college sports bar.

We capped the night back at his place; rather, his friend's place where he was crashing that night. We started making out, and it was clear that Gay Tucker Max wanted to get physical, mostly because he had managed to take off his shirt and lose his belt while our lips were still locked.

I told him if he were serious about dating, then I wasn't going to hook up our first night out. I'd finally learned that the longer we abstain from sex, the more we get an accurate impression of the person we're interested in. I'd have been fine hooking up if that were all he wanted, but he'd sold me a different story.

The friend he was staying with saw us from the doorway and pleaded not to hook up on his straight roommate's duvet. He cautioned if we were going to get physical, then we should do it under the covers, or on the sofa.

So Gay Tucker Max takes my hand and drags me into his friend's bedroom for a ménage a trois.

These were not the covers I was imagining. Nor was it a ménage a trois, as his friend already had a trick in his bed.

This was a ménage a quatre.

There I stood before a queen-size bed of three naked people when one of them voiced what I was thinking, "Well this is awkward."

You bet it was. And not because Steven Petrow failed to mention such an occasion in *The Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners*.

It wasn't even awkward for the reason I thought.

"You still have your clothes on," said the trick.

On that note, I tried to relieve the awkwardness.

I bid adieu.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

The friend he was staying with saw us from the doorway and pleaded not to hook up on his straight roommate's duvet. He cautioned if we were going to get physical, then we should do it under the covers, or on the sofa.



So Gay Tucker Max takes my hand and drags me into his friend's bedroom for a ménage a trois.

These were not the covers I was imagining. Nor was it a ménage a trois, as his friend already had a trick in his bed.

This was a ménage a quatre.

There I stood before a queen-size bed of three naked people when one of them voiced what I was thinking, "Well this is awkward."

You bet it was. And not because Steven Petrow failed to mention such an occasion in *The Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners*.

It wasn't even awkward for the reason I thought.

"You still have your clothes on," said the trick.

On that note, I tried to relieve the awkwardness.

I bid adieu.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other - Departure

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

On that note, I tried to relieve the awkwardness.

I bid adieu.



### Coding Sheet 33

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
Blog Entry: Growing Pains

Several years ago, when my grandmother had a stroke and was in a coma, I flew home to the Deep South to be with family.

My mom and her sisters were not taking it well. One aunt was in denial; the other was in hysterics. My mom remained level-headed and distracted herself by researching potential nursing homes in case my grandmother pulled through, and checking into cemetery plots in case she didn't.

Being pretty anal retentive myself, I tend to take after my mom: when the emotional pain is great, I funnel my restless energy into problems I *can* solve - especially things I'm less motivated to do on an ordinary day. Like when I suffered a very painful heartbreak, and I came out of the closet to my closest friends, reconnected with long-lost college friends, and even reconciled with my estranged father all in one week.

I guess we do whatever it takes to feel an illusion of control.

As the week wore on, things were not looking good, and the futility of sitting in the waiting room drove the parents to squabble, which drove all the grandkids to seek sanctuary elsewhere - including myself

Fortunately, I had found just the distraction I needed.

I couldn't do anything about my grandma, I thought, but goddamnit, I could lose my virginity.

Now, this wasn't quite as random as it sounds.

I had only been out of the closet for a few years, and I had this lofty ideal I'd only go all the way with a guy for a *real* relationship. I realize now I was the only gay guy ever to think this. But It was the compromise the recovering Catholic in me made so the gay me could come out.

Unfortunately, same-sex dating wasn't quite as straightforward as straight dating, and we all know how "easy" that is. On TV, they made gay dating seem easy. You come out of the closet and immediately jump into a long-term relationship with the only other gay in the same zip code. That's what *Buffy* and *Grey's Anatomy* taught us, right?

Real life, however, is not nearly as tidy as Shonda Rhimes and Joss Whedon make it seem, and I feared I'd never lose my virginity if I waited for a soul mate.

Fortunately, there was a guy back home I kinda had a crush on. We'd met a year earlier and kept in touch. He was in law school at my alma mater. And the more I thought about that possibility, the more there seemed to be a certain poetic quality about losing my virginity to a college guy who was the approximate age of my arrested development. After all, this is something I probably should have done back in college, and I probably would have if I'd have been born a decade later.

So I reached out to my friend, and he immediately replied. We made plans to sync up that Thursday night.

As the rendezvous time grew near, I grew nervous – for multiple reasons. Not just because my family thought I was visiting college friends, or that those college friends thought I was visiting family. But more that he was coming to this encounter with way more experience than I was. Worse, what if he wasn't into me anymore? I mean, I was kinda pale. I lived in the Bay Area, and we hadn't seen the sun for nine months.

To be safe, I did a party pump, which is when you do pushups and sit-ups at home so that your muscles look a little bigger. Then, I showered, dressed up, decided I was overdressed, then quickly dressed down so that I looked more casual.

He showed up, right on time. However, I learned he was just on a study break. In fact, he had two exams the following day, as he was graduating the following week. This meant a briefer encounter than I'd have preferred. I admired his dedication, but this was not exactly the intimacy I had hoped for.

So we chatted for a bit, and then he suggested we get busy. So we did.

Rather, we tried. But this little maneuver was quite literally like threading a needle that refused to go in. Between the pressure to perform, his time restrictions, his needing a shower, the thought of my grandma on her deathbed, and the three or four anti-anxiety pills I had popped earlier, it didn't look like it was gonna happen - no matter which way we tried.

Finally, he said he needed to get back to studying. We talked about trying again after finals, but it was pretty clear that wouldn't likely happen. So, he returned to the law library, and I returned to my thoughts of inadequacy. Guess I wasn't as anal retentive as I thought.

The only comfort was knowing that my grandmother wasn't dead yet, which meant she wasn't up above in heaven watching this catastrophe play out. It's bad enough to imagine a dead relative watching you have sex (which my Catholic cousins often worried about), but it's even worse to imagine them watching you *fail* to have sex.

I mean, I was supposed to be the successful grandkid. Not the one who couldn't do anything right – that was my brother.

So I did not lose my virginity that week – or even that year. My grandmother did not come out of her coma, nor did I get to say goodbye, because she passed away a week later while I was on the return flight.

It took me a long time to come out of that grief, because losing my grandmother was now forever tied with *not* losing my virginity.

The only thing I could do was to try to live a little more fully, and a little more freely, going forward, so that I never have to play catch up on a life that's already passed me by.

So I've tried to do just that.

And thankfully, by the next time I tried to have sex, if Grandma was watching over me, I'm happy to report, that, at least from her view, I am *still* the successful grandkid.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? Finally, he said he needed to get back to studying. We talked about trying again after finals, but it was pretty clear that wouldn't likely happen. So, he returned to the law library, and I returned to my thoughts of inadequacy.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

He showed up, right on time. However, I learned he was just on a study break. In fact, he had two exams the following day, as he was graduating the following week. This meant a briefer

encounter than I'd have preferred. I admired his dedication, but this was not exactly the intimacy I had hoped for.

So we chatted for a bit, and then he suggested we get busy. So we did.

Rather, we tried. But this little maneuver was quite literally like threading a needle that refused to go in. Between the pressure to perform, his time restrictions, his needing a shower, the thought of my grandma on her deathbed, and the three or four anti-anxiety pills I had popped earlier, it didn't look like it was gonna happen - no matter which way we tried.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Finally, he said he needed to get back to studying. We talked about trying again after finals, but it was pretty clear that wouldn't likely happen.

### Coding Sheet 34

Blog Name: It Gets Worse

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entry: Full House

While traveling through Wisconsin for work, I chatted with a guy on Grindr. He was bi, closeted, and discreet.

I had an hour to kill, so I thought I'd meet up with him.

When I got to his home, I was pleasantly surprised at how hot he was. He was clearly a bodybuilder, with his thick muscles covered in tattoos, veins popping.

He led me downstairs, warning that I had to be quiet because his parents were upstairs, which surprised me because this guy was in his late 20s.

When we get to his room, I hear the sounds of sex coming from a computer. Straight porn is playing.

We proceed to get naked. I expect to begin by kissing him, but instead, he thrusts his ass in my face, gyrating like a pole dancer. So I assumed he wanted me to rim him instead, but when I still his ass, he declares he doesn't get into that. He's not *that* gay.

But he does want my dick in his ass, which, you know, isn't very gay at all, right?

As hot as he was, the entire experience kept me from getting hard – hearing the parents milling about upstairs, the moans of a chick on the computer screen, the contradictory sexual turn-ons, not sure what was acceptable or not, etc. I guess it was too much stress for my penis.

He said he was cool with it, but I say I need to go. He wants me to exit through the window in the washroom, as to circumvent the parents. I ask him if that's really necessary, and he reluctantly agrees to let me leave through the front door, but we have to tiptoe.

Once outside, I see a guy who could only be his brother getting out of a car. When I text him about blowing his cover, he replies that it's cool, as the brother knows what's up.

I tell him it was nice meeting him, but instead of a reply, I just get blocked.

1. What was the result of the date?

a. Explicit Rejection

b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? Once outside, I see a guy who could only be his brother getting out of a car. When I text him about blowing his cover, he replies that it's cool, as the brother knows what's up.

I tell him it was nice meeting him, but instead of a reply, I just get blocked.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

He led me downstairs, warning that I had to be quiet because his parents were upstairs, which surprised me because this guy was in his late 20s.

When we get to his room, I hear the sounds of sex coming from a computer. Straight porn is playing.

We proceed to get naked. I expect to begin by kissing him, but instead, he thrusts his ass in my face, gyrating like a pole dancer. So I assumed he wanted me to rim him instead, but when I still his ass, he declares he doesn't get into that. He's not *that* gay.

But he does want my dick in his ass, which, you know, isn't very gay at all, right?

As hot as he was, the entire experience kept me from getting hard – hearing the parents milling about upstairs, the moans of a chick on the computer screen, the contradictory sexual turn-ons, not sure what was acceptable or not, etc. I guess it was too much stress for my penis.

He said he was cool with it, but I say I need to go. He wants me to exit through the window in the washroom, as to circumvent the parents. I ask him if that's really necessary, and he reluctantly agrees to let me leave through the front door, but we have to tiptoe.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement



- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence**
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I tell him it was nice meeting him, but instead of a reply, I just get blocked.

### Coding Sheet 35

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
 Blog Author: Anonymous  
 Blog Entry: Swim at Your Own Risk

Recently I was home for a 20-year college reunion. While in town I chatted with a few "discreet bi" guys on Grindr.

One of them invited me over late one night, just as I was leaving a party.

He looked young in his pics, but cute. He had dirty blond hair and a warm skin tone, as if he were a lifeguard and it were still summer. Never having hooked up with another guy while in college, I decided to meet up with him

So I swung by his neighborhood, where I discovered several surprises:

1. He lived at home with his parents and 3 siblings, who were all asleep.
2. I would have to sneak inside through his bedroom window, around the backside of his house.
3. He was only 18, which I made him prove by showing me his driver's license.
4. He was still in high school, the middle of his senior year.

Needless to say, we did not have sex.

1. What was the result of the date?
    - a. Explicit Rejection
    - b. Implicit Rejection
  2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
- So I swung by his neighborhood, where I discovered several surprises:

1. He lived at home with his parents and 3 siblings, who were all asleep.

2. I would have to sneak inside through his bedroom window, around the backside of his house.
3. He was only 18, which I made him prove by showing me his driver's license.
4. He was still in high school, the middle of his senior year.

Needless to say, we did not have sex.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:  
So I swung by his neighborhood, where I discovered several surprises:

1. He lived at home with his parents and 3 siblings, who were all asleep.
2. I would have to sneak inside through his bedroom window, around the backside of his house.
3. He was only 18, which I made him prove by showing me his driver's license.
4. He was still in high school, the middle of his senior year.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure

- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

He was only 18, which I made him prove by showing me his driver's license. He was still in high school, the middle of his senior year.

### Coding Sheet 36

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Anonymous  
Blog Entry: Hot 'n Cold Kevin

Last year, I started chatting with this guy Kevin on Scruff.

He lived 2.5 hours from me in a college town in Missouri, where he was going back to school.

Kevin was somewhat new to same-sex dating. He'd been married twice before to women, but had also once dated a drag queen in St. Louis.

After several months of texting and talking, he finally asked to meet.

I drove down to his apartment one Friday night. Immediately, there was a connection. He had a real charisma, and we had great chemistry, accelerated by the months of getting to know each other. I ended up staying the night.

The next morning, Kevin received a phone call that wakes us both up. His pregnant sister's car broke down an hour away, and he had to go pick her up. He apologized for the change of plans, but thought it best if I drove back home. However, he promised to come up and see me later that night.

Except, I didn't hear from him. I sent several texts, but he didn't reply. I left a phone message, but it went unreturned. Admittedly, I was crushed. I really liked this guy, and I thought there was a real connection - more than I'd experienced in quite some time.

So I hand wrote him a letter, voicing how disappointed I was that he didn't respond to any of my messages, which seemed inconsistent to things he said while I was down.

A few days later, I got a text from him saying he received the letter, and how touched he was by it, and how sorry he was that he just dropped off like that. He asked if he could call me.

Naturally, I wanted to hear from him, and see what was going on, so I said yes.

When we spoke, he claimed that his life had been nuts the last few weeks. Between his own work and school, his brother had apparently been arrested in a drug deal gone wrong, and was currently in jail. (I later fact checked the story online, and it seemed to hold up.)

Essentially, we picked up where we left off.

Over the following weeks, we talked on the phone every night, sometimes for hours. We discussed his rough childhood, how he had a father who had abandoned him and his mother, how he still considered himself bi and had not come out to his family, even though he admitted to me he was likely more gay than bi.

I decided to drive down and surprise him over Labor Day weekend. He hadn't been feeling great, and had to work for most of it, so I thought I'd cheer him up. When I showed up at the restaurant where he worked, he seemed genuinely surprised and excited to see me.

However, he felt so ill by Sunday, I brought him to the emergency room, which turned into a 6-hour visit. He had a urinary tract infection that had traveled to his kidneys.

The next morning, he got a call from the hospital with his test results – he had an STD: chlamydia. He claimed he got it from his last girlfriend, which was 6 months ago.

When I returned home, I went to my local clinic to get tested. It took a week to hear back; but I also tested positive for chlamydia.

I tried calling to tell him, but he wouldn't respond to my texts or calls. He claimed he was too busy and would touch base later. But later never came.

So I drove back down to his apartment one afternoon and waited for him to get back from school.

Naturally, he was surprised to see me. I wanted to know what was up with the mixed signals.

Why do we talk for hours a day one week, sharing our vulnerabilities and histories, yet the next week he can't make any time to reply to a text message?

He claimed he didn't have time to talk now, as he was just called into work, and he was sorry I drove all this way for nothing. Maybe we could speak over the weekend.

I drove back home. But we didn't speak that weekend. Or the next week. Or the next month.

I was tired of this inconsistent behavior, so I gave up on him.

In December, when I realized it was finals week, I decided to send a text message to see how his semester went. He replied immediately, saying how good it was to hear from me. He claimed to have been in the hospital 4 more times since I last saw him, and that life was still nuts on his end.

The next day Kevin called me. We picked right back up where we left off, like nothing had changed. He said I gave him a sense of love and belonging that he'd never experienced before. He drove up the next day to surprise me, and he stayed for the entire weekend.

He came back the following weekend. And the next. He met my friends. He cooked dinner for a group of us. He began to integrate into my life, and it was awesome.

He seemed to have made a real turnaround, like everything was fine.

One night, after drinking too much, I began to feel vulnerable and low for some reason - I'd enjoyed our relationship so much that I was afraid he would disappear again.

Kevin promised he wouldn't do that. He said that I made him feel a way he'd never felt. His words seemed authentic. He seemed sincere. More importantly, I wanted to believe him.

Over the next week, he called just to say he wanted to hear my voice, and how much he missed me.

And then I drove down to visit him a week before my sister's wedding. He had planned to come, but had now changed his mind. He said he didn't want to meet my family. He didn't want to be in family pictures. He claimed he had never really wanted to go.

I was annoyed, and hurt. And frustrated. And mad at myself for allowing this to happen again.

So I drove back home.

He promised to see me on Christmas.

But the next day he hardly responded to texts, claiming he was having cell phone problems. Then he stopped responding altogether.

The last message I got from him was a naked snapchat a week later, then I never heard from him again.

Kevin didn't wish me a Merry Christmas, but he did manage to wish all of my friends happy birthday over the coming months on FaceBook.

This type of hot and cold behavior baffles me. I don't understand how people could be so inconsistent. And to ghost someone on top of it is perhaps the most disrespectful thing you could do, especially from someone you have feelings for and are intimately involved with.

I shouldn't have given him a chance after the first time he ghosted me. Or the second.

Now, I hear Kevin's dating a Hooter's waitress.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
He promised to see me on Christmas.

But the next day he hardly responded to texts, claiming he was having cell phone problems. Then he stopped responding altogether.

The last message I got from him was a naked snapchat a week later, then I never heard from him again.

Kevin didn't wish me a Merry Christmas, but he did manage to wish all of my friends happy birthday over the coming months on FaceBook.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- The next morning, Kevin received a phone call that wakes us both up. His pregnant sister's car broke down an hour away, and he had to go pick her up. He apologized for the change of plans, but thought it best if I drove back home. However, he promised to come up and see me later that night. Except, I didn't hear from him. I sent several texts, but he didn't reply. I left a phone message, but it went unreturned. Admittedly, I was crushed. I really liked this guy, and I thought there was a real connection - more than I'd experienced in quite some time.
- However, he felt so ill by Sunday, I brought him to the emergency room, which turned into a 6-hour visit. He had a urinary tract infection that had traveled to his kidneys. The



next morning, he got a call from the hospital with his test results – he had an STD: chlamydia. He claimed he got it from his last girlfriend, which was 6 months ago.

- I tried calling to tell him, but he wouldn't respond to my texts or calls. He claimed he was too busy and would touch base later. But later never came. So I drove back down to his apartment one afternoon and waited for him to get back from school. Naturally, he was surprised to see me. I wanted to know what was up with the mixed signals. Why do we talk for hours a day one week, sharing our vulnerabilities and histories, yet the next week he can't make any time to reply to a text message? He claimed he didn't have time to talk now, as he was just called into work, and he was sorry I drove all this way for nothing. Maybe we could speak over the weekend. I drove back home. But we didn't speak that weekend. Or the next week. Or the next month. I was tired of this inconsistent behavior, so I gave up on him.
- And then I drove down to visit him a week before my sister's wedding. He had planned to come, but had now changed his mind. He said he didn't want to meet my family. He didn't want to be in family pictures. He claimed he had never really wanted to go.
- He promised to see me on Christmas. But the next day he hardly responded to texts, claiming he was having cell phone problems. Then he stopped responding altogether. The last message I got from him was a naked snapchat a week later, then I never heard from him again. Kevin didn't wish me a Merry Christmas, but he did manage to wish all of my friends happy birthday over the coming months on FaceBook. This type of hot and cold behavior baffles me. I don't understand how people could be so inconsistent. And to ghost someone on top of it is perhaps the most disrespectful thing you could do, especially from someone you have feelings for and are intimately involved with.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

- The next morning, Kevin received a phone call that wakes us both up. His pregnant sister's car broke down an hour away, and he had to go pick her up. He apologized for the change of plans, but thought it best if I drove back home. However, he promised to come

up and see me later that night. Except, I didn't hear from him. I sent several texts, but he didn't reply. I left a phone message, but it went unreturned. Admittedly, I was crushed. I really liked this guy, and I thought there was a real connection - more than I'd experienced in quite some time.

- So I drove back down to his apartment one afternoon and waited for him to get back from school. Naturally, he was surprised to see me. I wanted to know what was up with the mixed signals. Why do we talk for hours a day one week, sharing our vulnerabilities and histories, yet the next week he can't make any time to reply to a text message? He claimed he didn't have time to talk now, as he was just called into work, and he was sorry I drove all this way for nothing. Maybe we could speak over the weekend. I drove back home. But we didn't speak that weekend. Or the next week. Or the next month. I was tired of this inconsistent behavior, so I gave up on him.
- But the next day he hardly responded to texts, claiming he was having cell phone problems. Then he stopped responding altogether. The last message I got from him was a naked snapchat a week later, then I never heard from him again. Kevin didn't wish me a Merry Christmas, but he did manage to wish all of my friends happy birthday over the coming months on FaceBook.

### Coding Sheet 37

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Anonymous  
Blog Entry: Disappearing Dates

While at a bar in San Francisco, I met a 32-year old former college football player from the Midwest. He was in town with friends, and we chatted for a while before they moved on to another bar, but not before getting my business card.

I was excited the next day to find two voicemails on my work phone, as he didn't have my cell. We scheduled a date for the weekend. We met out in the Castro for drinks, and spent a couple of hours talking. While he went to order another drink, I went to the bathroom.

When I returned, he had disappeared, never to be seen again. Surely, there must have been a mistake. We were getting along great. Was there an emergency? Had something happened to him?

I tried phoning to make sure everything was OK, but no one answered.

It would be almost 24 hours before I received a voicemail from him - on my work phone, where he apologized for the night getting away from him, whatever that meant.

Unfortunately, that wasn't the only feat of teleportation achieved while I was in a restroom.

Just last year, I chatted up a scruffy-looking 38-year old transplant who'd recently moved to San Francisco from New York, but was originally from Georgia. We hit it off, and he bought a round of drinks.

Another Southerner eyed us and finally introduced himself. He was only 22 and had just moved to the West Coast from Kentucky.

Soon, it was my turn to buy Georgia a drink, so I walked to the bar, where Kentucky followed and propositioned me. I explained to him that I had just met Georgia, and I couldn't ditch him; as that would be rude.

So I got Kentucky's phone number and promised to hang out another time. Then I returned to Georgia with a round of drinks, and excused myself to hit the restroom. When I returned, Georgia had left the bar, leaving only the untouched drink behind.

I would have preferred some sort of explanation, which I still didn't get when I found him shortly after on Grindr. He was already two miles away.

The following day, when I texted Kentucky, he apologized for leading me on and asked me to stop texting him.

WTF

Naturally, my oversensitive self replayed every conversation I'd had with these people trying to understand if I said something that had scared them off, but I came up with nothing. This was not what a reluctant gay man with suffering self esteem needed.

Were they bipolar? On drugs? Suffering from short-term memory loss?

I can't imagine ditching another human being like that, be it a friend, a classmate, or a date. Is it that awkward to feign fatigue and just excuse yourself to go home? It's hard not to take this personally, especially when it happens across multiple ages and demographics.

I don't hear straight female friends enduring this type of utter disregard in their dating life. So why is it so rampant with the gays?

### **First Date – 32-year-old Former College Football Player**

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? When I returned, he had disappeared, never to be seen again. Surely, there must have been a mistake. We were getting along great. Was there an emergency? Had something happened to him?

I tried phoning to make sure everything was OK, but no one answered.

It would be almost 24 hours before I received a voicemail from him - on my work phone, where he apologized for the night getting away from him, whatever that meant.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love**
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

Naturally, my oversensitive self replayed every conversation I'd had with these people trying to understand if I said something that had scared them off, but I came up with nothing. This was not what a reluctant gay man with suffering self esteem needed.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

It would be almost 24 hours before I received a voicemail from him - on my work phone, where he apologized for the night getting away from him, whatever that meant.

### **Second Date – 38-year-old Transplant from Georgia**

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

Then I returned to Georgia with a round of drinks, and excused myself to hit the restroom. When I returned, Georgia had left the bar, leaving only the untouched drink behind.

I would have preferred some sort of explanation, which I still didn't get when I found him shortly after on Grindr. He was already two miles away.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

Naturally, my oversensitive self replayed every conversation I'd had with these people trying to understand if I said something that had scared them off, but I came up with nothing. This was not what a reluctant gay man with suffering self esteem needed.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other – Departure**

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Then I returned to Georgia with a round of drinks, and excused myself to hit the restroom. When I returned, Georgia had left the bar, leaving only the untouched drink behind.

I would have preferred some sort of explanation, which I still didn't get when I found him shortly after on Grindr. He was already two miles away.

### Coding Sheet 38

Blog Name: It Gets Worse

Blog Author: Samuel Spitale

Blog Entry: Cupid is Sociopath, Parts 1 and 2

I met the man of my dreams on Halloween, which should have been the first clue things weren't what they seemed.

Halloween is like the gay man's Christmas. It's a chance to dress up and become someone you're not, like a sexy fireman, or a sexy doctor, or a sexy single guy not afraid of commitment. I usually go for someone hunky and straight, like a 300 Spartan. (OK, mostly straight.)

Of course not every gay guy dresses as a hot straight guy. Plenty dress as hot straight women.

The year I came out of the closet, I attended my first gay Halloween party. It was just a few blocks off Market Street in San Francisco, home to the annual street festival before it was discontinued.

I was dressed in what would come to be my fallback costume for all future Halloweens: Indiana Jones, specifically, the Temple of Doom version: minus a sleeve, half unbuttoned, slashes across the back, and a makeshift grip wrapped around my right hand. The costume was multi-functional. The over-the-shoulder satchel was convenient for carrying my wallet, car keys, cell phone charger, protein bar, Roloids, condoms, pocket pack of Kleenex, and emergency Claritin.

I had barely entered the backyard of the house party when I locked eyes with a friendly face near the liquor table. I didn't know who the guy was, but there was a guy-next-door familiarity about him, almost under the radar at first glance. Dressed in a grayish-blue tank and sporting a worn Breckenridge ball cap, he was the only person at the party not in costume.

As I sipped my drink, Clay introduced himself, and his friend Phil, whom he was up visiting from Los Angeles. With that bit of news, I quickly lost interest and moved on to the local attendees. After all, I was focused on making friends and possible dates who lived in the Bay Area.

However, throughout the night, everywhere I turned, I seemed to find Clay's smile. Only an hour into the party, he had given me his cell phone number on a crumpled sheet of paper, explaining he makes it up to S.F regularly for work, but if I happen to find myself in L.A., I should give him a call. It was clear I was the only person at the party he was interested in getting to know.

And by the end of the night, I felt the same. Clay would later claim I was playing hard to get. But that required a level of strategy I had not yet mastered.

I eventually relinquished to Clay's charm and allowed him to sequester me in the corner of the host's living room. It was decorated like a dungeon, with red brick paper taped to the walls, and rubber skeletons hanging limply from the ceiling.

I leaned against a table, while Clay stood in front of me, taking in my costume and showering me with compliments. It was during this moment of affection that I really took him in. Upon a closer look, this guy next door seemed to embody an Abercrombie and Fitch ad, aged in the warm sepia sun by fifteen or twenty years; humbled with a life of hard work, but never without that disarming, aw-shucks smile.

It was a moment that seems more profound in memory than it seemed at the time. After all, I didn't think much of this guy when I entered the party. And here he was complimenting me, telling me my eyes were the most beautiful he had ever seen, that my eyebrows were like brushstrokes. (Even if to me, they looked like two brushes had made contact mid-sneeze while God was aiming an inch higher.)

I'm the first to admit I have a weak spot for the all-American looking jock with a floppy head of hair and broad shoulders; that small town guy with big city dreams, with a masculine predisposition, but a tender-hearted soul; who's much more likely to wear a ball cap than bother with mousse or a brush.

But then again, who doesn't?

I took Clay's cap off to see the dirty blond hair underneath. He removed my fedora, ran his hands through my hair, and said that the moment I entered the party, he leaned to Phil and said, "I've got to meet Indiana Jones." He thought I had captured the look perfectly, especially the smirk – the only part of the costume I wore all year long.

I teased that since he saw my half-exposed chest, it's only fair I see his. Clay pulled up his tank to reveal a perfect muscular physique, lightly covered in almost-imperceptible corn-silk hair.

Clay wanted to kiss me, but I protested since I was just getting over a nasty cold that week. He said he'd take his chances. I still resisted, mainly because I didn't want to risk catching anything myself. So he kissed my neck.



I was playfully shy, unaccustomed to anyone giving me such attention. I wondered why I had fought the urge all night to surrender to this handsome stranger. With each gentle kiss and thoughtful gesture, I melted.

When the clock struck midnight, I realized I needed to make a dash like Cinderella. Except instead of a carriage turning into a pumpkin, I had a sedan in a Union Square parking space that would soon be towed. I made a quick pit stop in the bathroom, whose lock had broken earlier that night. Clay, like a gentleman, guarded the door while I took care of business. When I re-emerged, he had gathered all my belongings.

I began to worry that catching a cab at the same time the street fest was ending might prove to be a challenge. Clay walked me to the curb, hand in hand. He not only hailed me a cab, but put me safely in, and hugged goodbye.

It was the first time in my life another human being had held my hand like that. It was the first time in my life someone, male or female, had ever pursued me.

And it felt good.

\*\*\*

The next day I went back to work, and Clay flew back to L.A. I phoned him that afternoon to apologize for running off so quickly. He thought nothing of it.

Over the next month, we chatted over the phone a couple times and emailed sporadically. Wanting to explore this connection more, I invited him up for Thanksgiving. I had never experienced such a rapport with another person, and I owed it to myself to see if there was something there.

Clay claimed the store he ran would demand all of his time that weekend. He seemed evasive about committing to another weekend, so I reluctantly wrote him off. I was getting pretty accustomed to this process. It was the natural next step after meeting a potential date: you hang out once, then erase the person from your cell phone and short-term memory.

But then, late on Thanksgiving Day, he called. He was just thinking of me and wanted to say Happy Thanksgiving.

I was touched. And a week later I headed to L.A. for work. Naturally, I made plans to meet up with Clay the only night he was free.

I was staying at The Standard on Sunset Boulevard, and when he picked me up for dinner, he wore a casual denim shirt over a crumpled white tee and another well-worn ball cap. I asked him if he always wore a cap. Clay joked that a ball cap was part of his uniform. He had several thrown haphazardly across his backseat, and his closet at home contained dozens more, he explained. It was as close as he got to collecting anything.

Honestly, I was surprised he hadn't flaked on the date, or changed his mind once he saw me out of costume, but he didn't disappoint. Clay was as attentive and charming as I remembered.

On the way to the restaurant, when Clay shifted gears, I noticed sunspots on his hand for the first time, and I thought, "What if I'm no longer attracted to him?" As if reading my mind, he mentioned he hadn't worked out since Halloween because of a rotator cuff injury. Uh oh, I thought, what if without beer goggles the chemistry's gone? I dismissed the passing thought, only relevant in retrospect.

Over the course of dinner, all such thoughts quickly evaporated. The more we talked, the more beautiful he became.

Clay explained that he had only been meeting guys since he turned 30, the same age I was at the time. He was now 38. Clay was married in his late 20s when he lived in Chicago, and he had a ten-year old daughter. He didn't let his gayness define who he is, he said, and it never interfered with his straight family life. None of his straight friends knew about his sexuality, and between caring for his daughter and running a business, he rarely emerged to meet many gay people, of which he knew very few. The only reason he moved west was to be close to his daughter when his wife relocated to Orange County. Because the daughter lived with him full-time, he had put all personal relationships on hold until she's out of school and out of the house. This was why he was so evasive about Thanksgiving and open weekends.

The entire story caught me off guard. I realized I could not have a real relationship with this guy. Yet, nevertheless, here I was, twirling pasta around my fork, sitting across from him on a cozy outdoor patio, cognizant of a sinking feeling in my stomach. The nervous, almost queasy sensation quickly killed my appetite. I returned the fork to the plate while Clay continued.

He said he was surprised how open he was with me in San Francisco, and how quickly he told me about his family just now, as he usually doesn't do that. He never introduces any of his gay friends to his family, not even if they want to meet the daughter.

Clay admitted to struggling with being gay for a long time. In fact, his homophobia and paranoia is what drove him to pressure his ex-wife to get married. I regretted that I hadn't been bisexual enough to stage my own fake marriage.

I empathized with Clay's struggle of coming to terms with his sexuality. He shook his head and said, "Yeah, I wouldn't wish this on anyone." The pain in his face reflected the pain in mine. It was a thought that crossed my mind many times. And a shame that many gay men never fully escape.

At that moment, my tortured soul fell deeply and hopelessly for his. This handsome, well-adjusted father shared the same insecurities that I did.

After months and months of misses, I had finally met someone like me. Hell had officially frozen over, and somewhere Satan was buying a winter coat.

Clay explained the real reason the marriage fell apart was that he and his wife were having problems. One day he checked his savings account to discover she had spent all of it. That was the moment he ended the relationship, as he had never felt so betrayed.

My heart leapt.

As we got to know each other better, conversation moved to lighter topics. He went to a large university in Illinois, where he was in a fraternity, and even crowned Homecoming King. This was also where he had his first gay experience. His roommate was a football player, and one night the guy came home drunk, and Clay awoke to find the footballer giving him a blowjob. Clay pretended to be asleep as the guy sucked him off. Clay never mentioned it to him, nor did the roommate.

Wow, I thought, wasn't that every closeted guy's fantasy? Here was Clay living it.

Soon Clay moved on to post college life, regaling me with a modeling career I had no knowledge of. He dismissed his looks by saying he was an old fart now and claimed I was much better looking. By this point you could have peeled me off of the table like candle wax, while somewhere, Satan must have been buying an ice scraper.

Apparently an image Clay had emailed me was from a photo spread in Men's Health from last April. He modeled a lot more in Chicago, he explained, and was once in a national Head and Shoulders ad and a Bud Light commercial that ran during the Super Bowl. He was also the Kenneth Cole belt model in the late 90s, most notable for an ad campaign seen on billboards worldwide where his naked body was wrapped in various leather belts. Clay laughed at how he accidentally got the gig. He was waiting for his girlfriend at the time, who was in P.R., and they mistook him for the model because the one they hired never showed. He ended up on runways in Milan, naked, wearing only a dozen belts. He said he used to get mistaken a lot for Val Kilmer

back then. His favorite model memory was driving his mom to a billboard outside of Chicago, making her close her eyes, then revealing the belt ad to her for the first time.

I recalled my equivalent college experiences – getting nominated for Homecoming Court, but not making it past the first round of interviews. And doing some local modeling that amounted to little more than volunteer work.

Clay reassured me it was all in the past. The most excitement he got these days was being drug to the White Party in Palm Springs, where he was propositioned by a Nautica underwear model and the Doublemint Twins, all of whom he politely turned down. It wasn't really his scene, he explained. Palm Springs wasn't really my scene either. It reminded me of a Florida beach town but without the beach.

The entire evening, I couldn't help but think, why is a guy like this – who can have any model he wants – talking to me? I'd never felt desirable in my life, until Clay. And out of everyone at his disposal, he was sitting here with me?

Somewhere, Satan was renting a snowplow.

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After dinner we went back to my hotel. Clay pulled me onto the bed to make out more than once, but I wanted to continue talking and learning more about him, partly because I found him fascinating and unlike anyone I'd ever known; and partly because I knew that when things turned physical, it would signal the night was drawing to a close, and I desperately didn't want it to end.

I opened up to him about my own challenges in coming out, and how hard it was to find someone to connect with, how everyone I seemed to meet was so polar opposite from my straitlaced sensibilities. Clay empathized, citing a recent example of when he was in San Francisco. He returned to the hotel room to find his friends snorting coke and having sex with an escort they found online. That's how he met Phil – he went out for a drink just to get away from them.

For every story of my exclusion and rejection, Clay seemed to have a matching one, despite his good looks and popularity. I'd never experienced such synchronicity in all my life.

I wondered if this was what it felt like to meet your soul mate.

Clay was my quintessential type, long before I even realized what my type was. He was more than the guy next door. He was the kind of person who grew more beautiful the more you got to know him, with eyes as deep and blue as a great lake.

His may have been the first eyes I ever truly noticed. He may have been the first person to ever hold my gaze before I looked away out of shame or insecurity. His eyes were like crystals, shimmering shards that caught the light in brilliant reflection, reflecting everything I didn't even know I wanted. It was hard to look away. Their magnetism was both real and hyperbolic.

In other words: trouble.

By the time we got physical, I no longer even needed to. I found him more attractive than ever, but the intimacy was more fulfilling than sex could possibly be. We still hooked up, of course. We were two gay men, after all. But the experience of not needing to was a first for me with another gay guy.

After sex, he rested his head on my chest and fell asleep in my arms. Another first. As I myself drifted off, I became aware of a sinking feeling that had started at dinner and grown stronger throughout the night, crystalizing there in the quiet dark.

I asked him if I'd ever see him again. "Once or twice a year," he joked. "And Christmas Cards." I couldn't bring myself to chuckle. I was afraid it might be true. I tried several times to utter the words, "I'm really gonna miss you tomorrow," but by the time they finally came out, they were barely a whisper, and he was fast asleep.

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When I awoke the next morning, the reality of parting ways was gut wrenching. I knew the impending heartache would bring me to my knees the moment he walked out the door. But first, like any other pair of hot-blooded gays in a double bed, we had sex. Except this time, my feelings of attachment, longing, and separation anxiety swirled inside me like a maelstrom.

When I climaxed, it was the biggest wave of release I'd ever experienced. It wasn't the intensity of the orgasm. It was as if the torrent of torment, and fear and passion, crested and receded out of me in one finite gesture of love. This, I thought, is what it must be like to make love, not just have sex. I would not experience it again.

After that we showered together, another first with another person. Quickly after, he left.

And I crumbled. I slowly, methodically got dressed, wondering how I'd make it through the day.

Then the phone rang. It was Clay. My heart jumped. Did he miss me already?

No, he was in the lobby, needing to get his car out of the garage, and didn't know my last name.

My heart sank. I knew his last name. I remembered it from the first time we met.

Shortly after, I met my boss for breakfast, but I couldn't bring myself to eat. My stomach was in knots. I was quiet, sullen, pale. He asked if everything was all right. I nodded. I had not told a single person in my life that I was gay, so all of the suffering I kept to myself.

When I returned to San Francisco, the city was ablur with rain. Over the next week, as winter set in, the pit in my stomach began to corrode my appetite, my sleep, and my senses. I walked around in a haze.

Unable to fully concentrate on work, I struggled to think straight. I was lucky if I got two or three hours of uninterrupted sleep a night. The bundle of nerves in my stomach made it hard to keep food down. I started living off Ensure and high-calorie yogurt drinks. I was losing weight, and I didn't have much to lose.

I kept thinking that with each passing day, I would get a little better and a little better, but I didn't. I'd break down in tears in my car, my office, in the bathroom at work, in the shower at home, at Target. My emotional state didn't keep me from going through the motions of work and life, but it made everything absolutely miserable.

I fought attempts to phone or email Clay. I knew where we stood. I just had to get over it. But I didn't know how. He was the last thing I remembered thinking when I went to sleep, and the first thought on my mind upon waking.

I started taking Ambien, but I'd wake up after only three or four hours and toss and turn the rest of the night.

When I didn't think I could take it anymore, I finally came out to my first friend. She couldn't have been more supportive and understanding. Even though it took me 5-10 minutes just to say the words "I'm gay," she still complimented my courage. She cried with me. She hugged me. She let me get everything off my chest – coming out, dating, and Clay.

My spirits momentarily lifted, but by the next day I was back to square one. I shopped for a ball cap to send Clay for Christmas, and I found a blue one that would look great with his eyes. I mailed it to arrive just days before the holiday.

I wanted desperately to hear his voice, to talk to him, but I knew that wasn't a good idea. So, I did the next best thing. I searched the web and libraries for his modeling pictures. After working in the library system for almost a decade, I prided myself on my resourcefulness, yet I was unable to track down a single Calvin Klein ad, even looking through every men's fashion magazine from the late 90s. I did find the Men's Health from April, but alas, I couldn't find his picture or spread.

I put the research on hold when I went home for Christmas. Immediately, my mom knew something was wrong, but I dared not utter a word. I spent the holiday comatose, on autopilot, physically present, but miles away.

I had hoped Clay would call on Christmas, as it wasn't just a major holiday but my birthday as well. And surely he'd received the cap by now?

The phone never rang. Not even a text.

By the end of the week, I could take it no more. I had to phone Clay and tell him how I felt. I knew a relationship wasn't an option, and yet... The chemistry was just so strong. Maybe despite everything he said about not allowing himself to date guys or fall for them, maybe he liked me just a little? I had to be sure. The intensity of his interest just seemed to fly in the face of everything he said over dinner. I needed to know there was no hope. I needed to hear him say there was no way to make this happen. I needed to know that he didn't feel anything.

We spoke the day after Christmas. I admitted I was reluctant to burden him with what I had to say, but how important it was for me to get it off my chest. I explained that when we met in L.A., I had no expectations, but despite everything he said at dinner that night, I still came away with feelings. I didn't dare admit the degree to which those feelings were consuming me, but I did reveal how they caught me off guard.

Clay said he was glad I felt comfortable enough to share this with him, as communication is important. I said I knew he wasn't looking for a relationship, but I needed to hear him say it couldn't go anywhere. I needed him to say he wasn't interested in me. I told him not to be afraid of hurting my feelings.

Clay chuckled a bit and said that now I was making him feel bad. I promised I didn't mean it that way. He said that maybe if I lived closer, maybe things would be different. It would be nice to get to know me more, but he couldn't promise me anything. His family came first, and they took up all his time. In fact, he said, he hadn't done anything gay-related since he saw me several weeks ago, as it's just not part of his life.

Clay said he tried a relationship once in Chicago, but it didn't work out, and everyone got hurt. So he didn't allow himself to have those feelings for anyone, and if he did, he nipped it in the bud.

He made it sound so easy.

Clay confirmed he didn't have feelings for me, and that if he did, he probably wouldn't tell me anyway. I said I wanted him to trust me enough that if he ever did, he could tell me, and we could have a rational conversation about it.

I was very rational. It was my emotions that were irrational.

Clay said he had no intention of dating until his daughter finally asked him why he was single, but not until then. And even then, whomever he dated would have to be good with kids, and he's still not sure he'd want to share his family with anyone.

Clay admitted he had a connection with me, and that he was very attracted to me, but knowing how flakey guys were on the West Coast, he never really expected to hang out with me again. Plus, my down-to-earth innocence contradicted the gay culture he'd experienced, so I kinda fascinated him.

I admitted that maybe I read too much into things. I asked if this sort of thing happened to him often – having guys fall for him. He knowingly laughed it off without really addressing it. I guess he just had that effect on people.

After an hour of conversation, we netted out in a good place. He said he didn't want to burn any bridges, or end any friendships, and he'd really like to keep in touch. He was expecting to be back in the Bay Area sometime in the spring, and maybe we could sync up then.

Before I hung up, I asked if he'd received my gift, and he said he hadn't, but he'd let me know when he did. I also asked him about the Men's Fitness spread. He said it was in a pullout section of the issue and he'd mail me a copy.

This was the last time we ever spoke. I never received any package, nor did he ever ask for my address.

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Immediately after the phone call, I found myself throwing up, a total of three times. This was the first time I had thrown up sans alcohol in nearly 25 years. I can only assume it was from expunging the obsessive thoughts that had overrun my neural circuitry for the last three weeks. I did feel lighter. I had gotten everything off my chest, including dinner. And more importantly, I got clarification.

By the time I returned to San Francisco, however, the emotional distress returned to pre-Christmas levels. Once again, I could barely eat or sleep, and I had lost ten pounds. The anxiety got so bad I finally called my general practitioner for an appointment.

It was scheduled for 11AM on a Friday. The office closed at noon on Fridays, and I got stuck in traffic for an hour en route. Fearing I wouldn't get there before they left for the weekend, my anxiety levels shot even higher. While stuck in the swamp of stalled cars, engines running but barely moving, I wondered if this was what it was like to go mad. To have your emotions steamroll off the tracks while you kid yourself you still have control of the wheel.

Fortunately, I made it to the doctor – barely. He prescribed antidepressants, and recommended I see my first therapist.

It's official, I thought. I'm crazy.

The emotional part of me – this growing thing – seemed to exist independently of my senses, immune to my practical self.

I knew there was no relationship to pursue. I knew he had no feelings for me. I knew I needed to suck it up and get over the damn thing.

I was being rational, but my depression was biochemical.

It refused to dissipate. It was cancerous to my mood and my mind. It infected everything in my perimeter with an overwhelming sense of despair, like some sort of growing virus. No matter how much I told myself, "You are not getting sick," there it was, growing, making me sick. I can only imagine that's what it's like to find out you're pregnant. "What are you doing in there? Get out! Finals are in two weeks!"

But no logic, no reason, no rational part of me could prevent this malignant emotional mass from intruding into every single thought and eventually manifesting physically.

I fought it like crazy, with exercise, work, therapy, meditation, medication, distraction after distraction. But it was unreachable. Untethered even. Whether in a crowded bar, a dark theater,

or alone in bed, desperately praying for sleep or a brain aneurism, it was always there... an emotional havoc, if you will.

Writer and psychologist Jesse Bering asserts the original Cupid of mythology was a sociopath who impulsively wrought emotional havoc with the pierce of an arrow.

Cupid was no mischievous cherub with a whimsy for matchmaking, but a malevolent being that scorned law and order. According to Roman author Apuleius in *Metamorphoses*, Cupid roamed the night corrupting lawful marriages and doing “nothing but evil.”

That was exactly how I felt – like a victim of love so callous and cruel, plucked straight through the heart like some hapless fool.

Over the next six months, Cupid's poison-tipped arrow continued to sting, and I still thought of Clay each day.

I tried multiple antidepressants (to little effect) while I tried to make sense of my heartache. There was so much I didn't understand.

How could I fall so hard so fast? Is this what they called love at first sight? If there were a God, why would he introduce me to my soul mate, for just long enough to wave goodbye?

More importantly, like a fungus or a venereal disease, I wanted to know how in the hell to ensure this would never happen again. I needed to understand what was wrong with me.

I knew I was vulnerable, and needy, and had such low self-esteem that I'd been craving unconditional love my entire life. I was obviously suffering from anxiety and depression, and trying desperately to treat it.

I wondered if I would ever get over Clay... *Why could I not let this go?* For Christ's sake, we had spent less than 24 hours together!

Yet still, I was an emotional train wreck.

I came to accept that Clay wasn't just everything I ever wanted in another person. He was the person I had always wanted to be.

I wasn't even mourning a relationship, only the idea of one.

Yet despite all of the introspection, analysis, dissection, and recollection, none of it seemed to offer much consolation. Nothing seemed extraordinary enough to explain this irrational sense of

loss. I had accounted for just about everything I unwittingly brought to the table, but was that really enough to understand what happened?

Was all of this simply the poisonous sting of Cupid's arrow?

And then, exactly six months to the day I fell for Clay, I ran into Phil.

Phil was Clay's friend from the Halloween party. I didn't recognize him at first, but soon the memory came flooding back. He asked if I wanted to call Clay and say hello. I declined, and explained I kinda had feelings for Clay, and I was having a tough time getting over him.

Phil admitted that he kinda did too, and was experiencing the same thing.

This was the last thing I expected to hear. I asked if we could go somewhere to talk.

We walked to Phil's nearby apartment, and he recounted his own experience.

Phil remembered the first time he met Clay, that weekend Clay was up with the two drug-snorting roommates. Phil didn't even remember what he looked like. But when Clay called about coming into town for Halloween, Phil thought, why not? It was that weekend that Phil fell for him.

Within a matter of days Clay went from not even being on Phil's radar to becoming the sole object of his affection.

Except Phil didn't quite meet Clay the way I'd heard.

Clay had been in town with two friends who were partying it up in the hotel room with ecstasy and G, but instead of walking out, all three of them were online searching for a fourth. That fourth became Phil, who joined them for an afternoon orgy of sex and drugs. That night, they went to a sex club. The night before, in a seedy bar South of Market, Clay received an anonymous blowjob on the back deck by an anonymous leather daddy.

Clay and Phil continued to be fuck buddies for the next nine months, with Clay even flying Phil down to L.A. on multiple occasions. On one sex-filled weekend after we met, Clay paraded Phil around his business and openly made out with him in public.

Phil confirmed that Clay had a daughter, but he wasn't celibate for her, nor did she live with him. She was just his excuse to keep guys at bay, so they wouldn't expect anything more than casual sex. He used the same ploy with Phil, so Phil knew not to come off too clingy, as it would just

push Clay away. Phil didn't want to lose what he had with him, so he never confessed his feelings.

Phil knew Clay lived online and hooked up with multiple guys a week, his latest being a ranch hand where his daughter rode horses. It was the best of both worlds, as Clay pretended to spend time with his daughter, but was really rolling around in the hay with some hayseed.

Apparently, Clay never came to the Bay Area for work either, just for weekends of sex parties with his other fuck buddies. His friend Gordon was the one always traveling for work, Phil explained; Clay just tagged along.

I had never heard of a Gordon. Phil explained he was their friend who resembled a young Val Kilmer.

Somewhere, at four in the morning, a needle scratched a record.

Apparently, Gordon was a fashion model and actor most known for his Kenneth Cole campaigns, Budweiser ads, and national shampoo commercials.

Phil pulled out a book to show me a photo of Gordon on the cover. He did look faintly like Val Kilmer. But he looked nothing like Clay, not even through the filter of beer goggles.

What about Men's Health? I asked. Phil said that Clay had told him he was in a June or July issue of Men's Fitness, although Phil had found no proof.

Then I remembered something else.

In February, I was at a San Francisco birthday party and met a group of guys in from Chicago. We talked about guys who broke our hearts, and I said the last guy who stole mine was named Clay, and he recently moved from Chicago. Two of the three guys had both fallen for a Clay in Chicago, and their Clay had moved to Orange County recently too, where he had turned into a total nymphomaniac. However, it couldn't be the same guy, as their guy had two or three kids and had never modeled before.

I guess our Clay was the same person after all. I'm sure he lied to each of them about the number of kids he had, since facts and stories seemed to be pilfered at random to suit his needs.

But what was the point of so much fabrication? It's as if everything was orchestrated to push my buttons that night. He knew exactly what I needed to hear, at a time I wasn't aware myself – the

modeling stories, his tortured soul, the burden of being gay, the discomfort of being drug free, passing up casual sex, etc.

I had never known another human being capable of such deceit. Still, what was the point? It was a given we'd hook up that night. He packed a bag and arranged to stay in my hotel room. What could have been gained by all the lying? Was he some gay Ross Jeffries or Tony Clink – a professional pick up artist living his own twisted version of *The Layguide*?

All of these months of torment and anguish funneled into anger and disgust. Most disturbing of all was that he told Phil that unlike all the fake guys in L.A., Clay liked guys from the Midwest and the South because they were more genuine, and it was my innocence that attracted him most.

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It was weeks before I had one more brush with serendipity. It came as I thumbed through an issue of *Psychology Today* I had borrowed from my therapist's office. After reading the cover story on growing happier with age, I tossed the magazine aside.

On the cover was a callout I never noticed: How to Handle Charming Predators. I joked to myself that Clay, the metaphorical pain in my ass, might just qualify as a charming predator.

I had no idea just how right I was.

I flipped to the article by Martha Stout, who had just written a book called *The Sociopath Next Door*. This was where I found the solution that had escaped me for months.

Dr. Stout defines those living amongst us with no conscience and no emotions as sociopaths. They are incapable of love, yet are the most charming people you will ever meet. They lie, cheat, manipulate and deceive effortlessly to achieve their ends, generally aimed at sex, money, or power. Hallmarks of sociopathy include predatory charm, superficial glibness, unwarranted flattery, and a pity play. They lie compulsively, usually unnecessarily, with stories full of gaps. They have an utter lack of remorse, are incapable of feeling shame or guilt, and they show no concern for victims of their misfortune.

It was as if Martha Stout were speaking directly to me, writing specifically about Clay: charming, handsome, full of flattery and falsehoods – the type of person that makes you feel like you are the only one in the world.

With a killer smile, the sociopath charms with an intense sexual attraction and focused attention that immediately disappears upon gratification. As a result, they leave a trail of broken hearts wherever they go.

Sociopaths are professional in the art of seduction and bombard their objects of affection with language and nonverbal signs that a normal person reserves for extremely intimate encounters. It may read as an unparalleled chemistry, an instant rapport, with feelings of intense magnetism. But make no mistake; it's coldly calculated.

Sociopaths have little sense of commitment and accountability and frequently engage in promiscuous sexual behavior, with many brief, superficial relationships, including affairs.

For the sociopath, sex with a stranger allows incredibly quick access to another person at their most intimate and vulnerable, making it easier to take advantage of them. Those that are lonely, depressed, or emotionally lost are most susceptible to the sexual advances of this charming predator, even when their basic instincts try to caution them.

The sociopath's charisma is almost hypnotic, and they use it to their advantage, as such excessive charm is only used to manipulate. The sociopath creates an immediate, deep connection with his target, even a fated sense of destiny. His personal questions target emotional weaknesses, searching for cues that indicate vulnerability. Victims in the grip of alcohol or other drugs are even more likely to fall prey to the sociopath's tactics.

If it suits their needs, sociopaths may play the part of a wounded puppy seeking pity. They want you to feel sorry for them, as a perverse appeal to our sympathy. This power play preys on our better nature, a quality they lack.

Dr. Stout postures that as many as one in 25 people could be a sociopath. She advises that if you catch a person in three lies, it's a sign you are dealing with someone who cannot be trusted.

It's only when the sociopath abandons the relationship so flippantly that the victims finally seek mental health treatment. Healing from such a relationship usually requires the victim to clearly understand the sociopath's unique psychological profile.

If ever I experienced an epiphany, it was at this moment.

My boy next door was the sociopath next door.

With this enlightenment I could properly contextualize the entire Clay story, and at long last begin to heal.

Sure, my vulnerability was at least 50% at fault, but the real culprit – the enigmatic magnetism, the implausible heartache – these were all predatory machinations of a sociopath.

I'd been ensnared in a web of deception woven specifically to my unique vulnerabilities.

Not only was I finally at peace, I was less hurt and less angry, with no more feelings of resentment or betrayal.

I wasn't manipulated because of any ill will. I wasn't rejected because of any perceived flaw. I was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time, at a low point that created the perfect storm for an emotional wreck.

The reason for my suffering had nothing to do with being unloved. Love or compassion in Clay's eyes was just sexual attraction. He saw something he wanted, and he plucked the words, sentences, and stories necessary to get it. This was his currency. But I paid the price.

Cupid's poison-tipped arrow was indeed shot by a sociopath. But it was anything but random.

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What it must be like to be born without conscience. To have no concept of love, to be free of those pesky emotions that define the highs and lows of the human experience.

Fortunately, Clay never behaved outside of the social norms enough to land in prison, at least, not as far as I know. Clay had a proper upbringing, and he knew to obey the laws of society. Otherwise, the experience could have been a hell of a lot worse.

Thankfully, his pain was only emotional, not physical, like a full-blown psychopath of the Dexter or Hannibal variety. Clay was just a sexual predator, more of a snake in a suit: highly functional in society, but lacking the scruples that rule better men. Think Wall Street CEOs, not street robbers.

The term "snakes in suits" was popularized by Dr. Robert Hare, the leading expert on psychopathy and the FBI's top consultant on psychopaths. Dr. Hare is the author of more than 100 scientific articles on the subject, as well as the widely-referenced *Without Conscience: The Disturbing World of the Psychopaths Among Us* and *Snakes in Suits: When Psychopaths Go To Work*.

Dr. Hare has studied those without conscience for over four decades, even extending his research into the business and corporate world, where a higher concentration of "successful psychopaths,"

or “white collar psychopaths,” lurk. These non-violent criminals use their deceit and charm to pull off embezzlement and fraud. (Bernie Madoff, anyone?)

If you’re wondering what the difference is between a sociopath and a psychopath, it depends on whom you ask. The terms are often used in the media interchangeably, even by psychologists and criminologists. Others use “sociopath” to describe less dangerous people without conscience, like those who steal money and hearts. “Psychopaths” usually refer to more dangerous offenders, like Jeffrey Dahmer or Ted Bundy. Some even theorize that sociopathy may result from environment, or nurture, while psychopathy may result from genetics, or nature.

Dr. Hare devised a checklist to rate a person’s psychopathic tendencies, particularly useful in the courtroom, prisons, and institutions in assessing violent criminals’ potential danger. The Hare Psychopathy Checklist includes many of the traits covered by Dr. Stout, such as superficial charm, pathological lying, manipulateness, lack of remorse, lack of empathy, and sexual promiscuity. Dr. Hare also includes impulsivity, need for stimulation, grandiosity, parasitic lifestyle, poor behavioral controls, juvenile delinquency, and criminal versatility. One can see why Dr. Hare’s checklist is often used in prisons to determine an offender’s level of psychopathy.

There is no disagreement that psychopathy is the most dangerous of all the antisocial personality disorders. Antisocial Personality Disorder (ASPD) is the broad classification found in the D.S.M. that covers sociopathy, psychopathy, and dyssocial personality disorder. Its essential feature is a pervasive pattern of disregard for, or violation of, the rights of others.

According to the DSM-5, this includes many of the behaviors covered in Dr. Hare’s checklist, as well as a failure to obey laws that would warrant criminal arrest, aggression that manifests in assaults or fighting, and a blatant disregard for the safety of others.

Psychopaths are not insane, nor do they suffer from mental illness. They are often incorrectly referred to as psychotic, which refers to a mental break with reality (as in a schizophrenic’s hallucinations). You can’t have a mental break from a conscience if there is no conscience there to begin with. Because this disorder is so uniquely inhuman, it is no wonder that it is such a popular subject in books, television, and film.

Unfortunately, neuroscientists have yet to unlock the key to psychopathy, although Dr. Kent A. Kiehl is getting close. Dr. Kiehl, a disciple of Robert Hare, has created the first mobile functional MRI scanner used to study psychopaths in the criminal justice system. Kiehl scanned over 500 psychopaths to discover their brains all shared a diminished limbic system, which controls emotional engagement and reaction. This physical abnormality may be present since birth, or could even be the result of a brain injury from sports or automobile accidents. Kiehl documents



his 20-years of research in *The Psychopath Whisperer: The Science of Those Without Conscience*.

Sociopaths and psychopaths are indeed the predators next door. And even when their actions do not qualify as illegal, it doesn't mean their damage is any less severe.

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I've been over Clay for well over a decade now, but on occasion, he still crosses my mind. The experience was sobering, and may possibly be the single-most defining moment of my adult life. Like Neo in *The Matrix*, Clay was my red pill. He opened my eyes to painful truths I never had the courage to see. He put a face on labels I had only read about as a psychology minor, never before fully comprehending. Even when they became all too real, the telltale sign was not the encounter itself, but the emotional residue disproportionate to the actual experience. It was like a bad hangover after only a sip of wine.

Fortunately, the hangover is long gone. But sometimes, I still feel the headache.

It's ridiculous to mourn something you never had. Yet, when the dating world beats me down, and I succumb to self-pity, my mind still retreats back to this ideal version of Clay.

I have to remind myself that he isn't the one who got away. The only thing I lost was the feeling that someone like that could be that interested in someone like me.

And even that was something I never really had.

I wonder if it's poetic, or just ironic, that a tortured writer, defined by his emotional sensitivity, may never love another person as much as the insensitive sociopath who broke his heart.

If there were a spectrum for emotion, wouldn't the over-feeling writer reside at the opposite pole from the unfeeling psychopath?

The fact that the word psychopath literally means "suffering soul" is itself ironic, considering they are incapable of emotional suffering.

I often think the world could almost be divided into two groups of people – those who have been touched by mental illness, and those who have no idea what I'm talking about.

Without experiencing the frustration, futility, and emotional turmoil first hand, it's truly hard to comprehend. But make no mistake, sensitive or not, if you are left with what can only be

described as an emotional residue, unwarranted and unexpected, you understand all too well how difficult it can be to restore balance.

It's a reality check that can leave you second-guessing angelic faces who may be hiding inner demons. It adds a level of complexity that a younger, more inexperienced soul couldn't possibly comprehend. It indeed renders you older, but fortunately, a hell of a lot wiser.

Sometimes I wonder what I would say if I ran into Clay today. It's a small gay world, so the chances are strong. (Just last week I logged onto the dating app Tinder to find the last guy I hooked up with staring back. He was pictured on the beach with the guy I hooked up with before him.)

Some days I think I'd just want to have sex with Clay, no strings attached. If I could be a piece of meat to him, surely he could return the favor. But knowing my susceptibility, it would only spell doom. I know Clay would not remember me. I'm sure to have blurred with the hundreds of others, some likely still struggling to understand what happened.

I harbor no ill will. There's no desire for revenge or punishment. In fact, I envy him.

Clay's unable to experience any of the pain he's capable of causing, no less understand it. He will never know what it's like to have his heart broken, or feel remorse, or even shame. Nor will he ever experience love.

I'd like to think I'm in a much stronger place in my life and that I wouldn't fall for the same empty niceties today. But we are all fragile, we are all vulnerable, we are all human.

Some of us are just more human than others.

It's only natural to crave companionship, and to desire that elusive soul mate. And that's the only question left to ponder.

Would I recognize my soul mate if I met him today? Or can no one live up to the false persona I fell so completely for?

To put it simply: would I recognize my soul mate right now, if he weren't made of Clay?

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

Before I hung up, I asked if he'd received my gift, and he said he hadn't, but he'd let me know when he did. I also asked him about the Men's Fitness spread. He said it was in a pullout section of the issue and he'd mail me a copy.

This was the last time we ever spoke. I never received any package, nor did he ever ask for my address.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- I asked him if I'd ever see him again. "Once or twice a year," he joked. "And Christmas Cards." I couldn't bring myself to chuckle. I was afraid it might be true. I tried several times to utter the words, "I'm really gonna miss you tomorrow," but by the time they finally came out, they were barely a whisper, and he was fast asleep.
- No, he was in the lobby, needing to get his car out of the garage, and didn't know my last name. My heart sank. I knew his last name. I remembered it from the first time we met.
- I fought attempts to phone or email Clay. I knew where we stood. I just had to get over it. But I didn't know how. He was the last thing I remembered thinking when I went to sleep, and the first thought on my mind upon waking.
- I wanted desperately to hear his voice, to talk to him, but I knew that wasn't a good idea. So, I did the next best thing. I searched the web and libraries for his modeling pictures. After working in the library system for almost a decade, I prided myself on my resourcefulness, yet I was unable to track down a single Calvin Klein ad, even looking through every men's fashion magazine from the late 90s. I did find the Men's Health from April, but alas, I couldn't find his picture or spread.
- By the end of the week, I could take it no more. I had to phone Clay and tell him how I felt. I knew a relationship wasn't an option, and yet... The chemistry was just so strong. Maybe despite everything he said about not allowing himself to date guys or fall for them, maybe he liked me just a little? I had to be sure. The intensity of his interest just seemed to fly in the face of everything he said over dinner. I needed to know there was no hope. I needed to hear him say there was no way to make this happen. I needed to know that he didn't feel anything. We spoke the day after Christmas. I admitted I was reluctant to burden him with what I had to say, but how important it was for me to get it off my chest. I explained that when we met in L.A., I had no expectations, but despite everything he said at dinner that night, I still came away with feelings. I didn't dare admit the degree to which those feelings were consuming me, but I did reveal how they caught me off guard. Clay said he was glad I felt comfortable enough to share this with him, as communication is important. I said I knew he wasn't looking for a relationship, but I

needed to hear him say it couldn't go anywhere. I needed him to say he wasn't interested in me. I told him not to be afraid of hurting my feelings. Clay chuckled a bit and said that now I was making him feel bad. I promised I didn't mean it that way. He said that maybe if I lived closer, maybe things would be different. It would be nice to get to know me more, but he couldn't promise me anything. His family came first, and they took up all his time. In fact, he said, he hadn't done anything gay-related since he saw me several weeks ago, as it's just not part of his life. Clay said he tried a relationship once in Chicago, but it didn't work out, and everyone got hurt. So he didn't allow himself to have those feelings for anyone, and if he did, he nipped it in the bud. He made it sound so easy. Clay confirmed he didn't have feelings for me, and that if he did, he probably wouldn't tell me anyway. I said I wanted him to trust me enough that if he ever did, he could tell me, and we could have a rational conversation about it. I was very rational. It was my emotions that were irrational.

- After an hour of conversation, we netted out in a good place. He said he didn't want to burn any bridges, or end any friendships, and he'd really like to keep in touch. He was expecting to be back in the Bay Area sometime in the spring, and maybe we could sync up then. Before I hung up, I asked if he'd received my gift, and he said he hadn't, but he'd let me know when he did. I also asked him about the Men's Fitness spread. He said it was in a pullout section of the issue and he'd mail me a copy. This was the last time we ever spoke. I never received any package, nor did he ever ask for my address. Clay said he had no intention of dating until his daughter finally asked him why he was single, but not until then. And even then, whomever he dated would have to be good with kids, and he's still not sure he'd want to share his family with anyone.
- Clay had been in town with two friends who were partying it up in the hotel room with ecstasy and G, but instead of walking out, all three of them were online searching for a fourth. That fourth became Phil, who joined them for an afternoon orgy of sex and drugs. That night, they went to a sex club. The night before, in a seedy bar South of Market, Clay received an anonymous blowjob on the back deck by an anonymous leather daddy. Clay and Phil continued to be fuck buddies for the next nine months, with Clay even flying Phil down to L.A. on multiple occasions. On one sex-filled weekend after we met, Clay paraded Phil around his business and openly made out with him in public. Phil confirmed that Clay had a daughter, but he wasn't celibate for her, nor did she live with him. She was just his excuse to keep guys at bay, so they wouldn't expect anything more than casual sex. He used the same ploy with Phil, so Phil knew not to come off too clingy, as it would just push Clay away. Phil didn't want to lose what he had with him, so he never confessed his feelings. Phil knew Clay lived online and hooked up with multiple guys a week, his latest being a ranch hand where his daughter rode horses. It was the best of both worlds, as Clay pretended to spend time with his daughter, but was really rolling around in the hay with some hayseed. Apparently, Clay never came to the Bay Area for work either, just for weekends of sex parties with his other fuck buddies. His friend

Gordon was the one always traveling for work, Phil explained; Clay just tagged along. I had never heard of a Gordon. Phil explained he was their friend who resembled a young Val Kilmer. Somewhere, at four in the morning, a needle scratched a record. Apparently, Gordon was a fashion model and actor most known for his Kenneth Cole campaigns, Budweiser ads, and national shampoo commercials.

- But what was the point of so much fabrication? It's as if everything was orchestrated to push my buttons that night. He knew exactly what I needed to hear, at a time I wasn't aware myself – the modeling stories, his tortured soul, the burden of being gay, the discomfort of being drug free, passing up casual sex, etc.
- I wasn't manipulated because of any ill will. I wasn't rejected because of any perceived flaw. I was simply at the wrong place at the wrong time, at a low point that created the perfect storm for an emotional wreck. The reason for my suffering had nothing to do with being unloved. Love or compassion in Clay's eyes was just sexual attraction. He saw something he wanted, and he plucked the words, sentences, and stories necessary to get it. This was his currency. But I paid the price. Cupid's poison-tipped arrow was indeed shot by a sociopath. But it was anything but random.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence**
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Before I hung up, I asked if he'd received my gift, and he said he hadn't, but he'd let me know when he did. I also asked him about the Men's Fitness spread. He said it was in a pullout section of the issue and he'd mail me a copy.

This was the last time we ever spoke. I never received any package, nor did he ever ask for my address.

### Coding Sheet 39

Blog Name: It Gets Worse

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entry: Fair Gayme

*The absolute worst way to come out at work...*

I met Scooter at a convention for work in San Diego. He worked for my company's biggest business partner, even though I didn't work on that side of the business, nor did he work on ours.

Scooter looked like a Jewish Steve Urkel in the body of a gym rat, with glasses and kinky hair cropped short in a military cut. His demeanor was stuffy, almost formal.

I chatted with him in his booth, as I had several other friends working in that division, and for me one of the highlights of the convention was bonding with other young professionals who shared my passion, interest, and profession.

But Scooter seemed to lack any interest in networking whatsoever. Even when I introduced him to a mutual business partner, he seemed more put out than appreciative. However, when a casual conversation made it clear we were both familiar with Hillcrest, San Diego's gay part of town, did I finally garner any attention. Suddenly, I was on his radar, but not for any reason that had to do with industry work or business niceties.

When the convention began to close for the day, he suggested I join him for dinner at an expensive steakhouse. His coworker and mutual friend Duane joined us.

It was just the three of us, but that didn't deter Scooter from ordering more than any of us could eat. He was bringing out the royal treatment, on the company's dime, for what I could only assume was an attempt to impress me. As usual, I was slow to comprehend. At this point, I'd just been out of the closet for a year, and I still wasn't accustomed to people hitting on me.

Besides, I was engaged in conversation with Duane for most of dinner as we caught up, geeked out, and talked shop. Scooter offered little to the dinner conversation. He didn't seem interested to discuss the convention, product trends, or anything else that qualified as both work and hobby.

I am the first one to admit I have no game. I blame this mostly on my inability to lie. My friends know not to try on jeans in front of me unless they want the honest truth, which I'm likely to give even if unsolicited.

Scooter had even less game. His attempts felt like political pandering peppered with highlights from Neil Strauss' *The Game: Penetrating the Secret Society of Pickup Artists*.

After dinner, the three of us went our separate ways, but Scooter and I ran into each other later that night at a work-related party. We were both drinking, and I was catching up with friends I only saw once a year.

Scooter seemed reluctant to integrate into a mixed crowd and was preoccupied with getting to the gay part of town. He wanted me to go with him, but I said it was too early. I eventually conceded, only because I had no intention of paying for a cab on my own. (Plus, I had never been out in Hillcrest before and was curious to check it out.)

When we got to the bar, we ran into another buddy, who we hung out with for most of the night. And we got progressively more drunk, to the point that Scooter was no longer subtle with his advances.

By the end of the night, I was alcohol impaired enough to go back to his hotel room where I spent the night. We fooled around, but we didn't even make out.

I had just had my tonsils out two months earlier, after suffering through three cases of strep throat the year prior. Since I was technically still healing, I had no intention of putting my mouth near anything that may contain a contagion.

Nevertheless, Scooter commented that he wished he could have had me for a full week. He didn't elaborate, but I can only assume after seven days, we'd have worked our way up to locking lips.

Over the next year, I included Scooter in emails to my other friends at his company. We often discussed announcements or industry trends, but he was the only one who would never reply. I finally dropped him from the group emails.

Occasionally, we would email through my personal account. Each time he would ask if I was out at work yet, or out to my family. I'd only opened up to three or four friends by this point, so coming out in a massive effort to family or colleagues was the furthest thing from my mind.

I remember calling him once or twice just to catch up, and the only time he returned a call was when he was in a car service on his way to a family member's funeral.

Before long, it was convention season again. A couple weeks before, I dropped an email to see when he'd arrive in San Diego. We exchanged several emails about our arrival dates, our hotels,

our schedules, what parties we were hitting, etc. I commented that his hotel had the better pool, so I may hang there the day before the convention. He said feel free, but he'd likely be busy setting up.

I explained that I'd be catching up with an old friend that day, and I planned to come out to him. I thought Scooter would be impressed, but all he wanted to know was if I was out at work yet. I said no, that I was not quite there yet, especially when I had a rocky relationship with some of my colleagues, and I preferred to keep my personal life to myself.

On the Thursday night of the convention, I attended an event that Scooter's company sponsored. He had helped plan it. When I finally ran into him, I introduced him to a handsome buddy I'd brought with me. He blew us off, and seemed to give me a cold shoulder for the rest of the night. The longest sentence out of his mouth was, "One of us better be going home with him tonight." I replied that my friend wasn't like that, but I'm sure he'd appreciate the compliment.

After the event, my friend had to get home, but I met a few dozen work-related friends at a rooftop hotel bar for drinks. The atmosphere was festive and fun, and I had a great time catching up with folks I didn't see often.

Drink after drink, Scooter seemed to avoid me more and more. I tried to engage him in conversation and get him to join in the group photos, but he was acting standoffish.

We both left the rooftop at the same time. When he went to his room, I asked if I could use the bathroom. He said sure, but quickly followed it with how he had to get to bed. When I came out of the bathroom, he was standing by the open door, waiting for me to leave.

I assumed I must have said or done something to prompt his strange behavior, so I apologized if I had, just in case. Then, in a awkward teen moment of drunken impulse, I said that I didn't have the courage to do this last year, and I know it's a little late, but...

I gave him a kiss.

And since I no longer had an open wound from a tonsillectomy, I didn't even worry about catching anything. Then I gave him a hug, and left.

When I got into work the following Monday, one of my two bosses wanted to speak with me. When I took a seat in his office, he warned me that the conversation wasn't going to be pleasant. My heart dropped unexpectedly.



He asked if I knew Scooter. I confirmed I did. He said that Scooter mentioned to his boss that this closeted guy made unwelcome advances towards him during the convention. Scooter caveated this disclosure with an uncertainty to say anything, but felt it was the right thing to do. Scooter's boss told my boss's boss, who told his boss (the president of my company) and both of my bosses.

I was dumbstruck. If there was ever a way to come out in the workplace, this was not it. Boss #1 was as parental and professional as he could be. I explained to him that I had met Scooter the year before at the convention, how he treated me to a pricey meal at his company's expense, how he repeatedly hit on me all night, and drunk, I spent the night in his hotel room. We hooked up, but did not have intercourse.

We didn't even have oral sex, or even make out. All we did was jerk off. We didn't even cuddle because there was a wet spot between us. We kept in touch over the next year, although I did most of the communicating. We emailed several times leading up to the con, discussing where we were staying, when we got in, etc. We texted the first few days of the con trying to sync up. In all methods of communication, Scooter repeatedly asked if I had come out at work yet, and I repeatedly said I had no intention of doing it anytime soon. I just wasn't ready for that.

I showed my boss the text messages. I printed the emails of our conversation. I told him how I used the bathroom in his hotel room, and how I gave him a hug and a kiss, since I didn't when we hooked up the previous year. If that's what he was responding to, why was that worth mentioning to his boss? Scooter didn't work on our business; I didn't work with his company at all. It was a hotel on a weekend night of a convention that I wasn't even attending for work, just for fun.

I walked my boss through how hard it had been coming out, how I repeatedly met crazy people. I couldn't get through the story without breaking down in tears. I felt humiliated and tormented, and I had to relive this unnecessary anguish four more times that day.

I started with the president of our company, and went through every dirty detail with him, showing him the emails and recounting the sexual conduct in Scooter's hotel room the year before.

Then I met with my bosses' boss, and I walked through every dirty detail again, showing him the emails and recounting the sexual conduct from the year before.

Then I met with Boss #2, and walked through every dirty detail with her, showing her the emails and recounting the sexual conduct from the year before.

Then I did it all again. And each time, I broke down in tears. Thankfully, each time, the superior or colleague could not have been more understanding and supportive.

Not a single person actually believed Scooter's story. I had worked with these people for close to ten years; they knew from personal experience that I was the unlikeliest person in the office to be a sexual predator. (Hell, at this point I was still a virgin for God's sake.)

They all acknowledged the incident had nothing to do with work. They had heard of Scooter's political – *even confrontational* – activism, so they had no doubt the entire maneuver was orchestrated to out me at work. Most suspected Scooter was just jealous of the friend I had brought to the party.

They advised me not to contact him again, but I felt so wrongly victimized, I emailed an apology, stating that I was sorry if I overstepped my bounds or made him uncomfortable in any way. However, I was disappointed that he couldn't have addressed these issues with me directly, instead of going through business channels.

Scooter replied almost immediately, denying the action, and trying to blame unnamed colleagues of his who observed me engaging in "compromising positions." Considering he was the only gay attendee I knew at the convention, and the only two gay friends I had in the city had never been on those sort of terms with me, it was obvious his entire defense was a fabrication.

Scooter would have made Machiavelli proud.

While the matter was forgotten at the office within days, the emotional damage lasted several months. I stopped coming out to both friends and strangers, fearing that others would find a way to use this information against me.

To be outed by friends is the most feared action for a closeted gay man, and it has sent more than a few people to suicide. You never know what the level of shame is for the closeted person or how courageously they may be struggling internally.

As of 2013, 41% of LGBT individuals remain closeted at work.

It's often because of people like Scooter that so many gays are afraid to come out, or worse, embrace who they are.

And honestly, it's hard to blame them. Faux sexual harassment is NOT the way you want to come out at work.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
 When I got into work the following Monday, one of my two bosses wanted to speak with me. When I took a seat in his office, he warned me that the conversation wasn't going to be pleasant. My heart dropped unexpectedly.

He asked if I knew Scooter. I confirmed I did. He said that Scooter mentioned to his boss that this closeted guy made unwelcome advances towards him during the convention. Scooter caveated this disclosure with an uncertainty to say anything, but felt it was the right thing to do. Scooter's boss told my boss's boss, who told his boss (the president of my company) and both of my bosses.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

- He asked if I knew Scooter. I confirmed I did. He said that Scooter mentioned to his boss that this closeted guy made unwelcome advances towards him during the convention. Scooter caveated this disclosure with an uncertainty to say anything, but felt it was the right thing to do. Scooter's boss told my boss's boss, who told his boss (the president of my company) and both of my bosses.
- They all acknowledged the incident had nothing to do with work. They had heard of Scooter's political – *even confrontational* – activism, so they had no doubt the entire maneuver was orchestrated to out me at work. Most suspected Scooter was just jealous of the friend I had brought to the party.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming**
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure**
- l. Silence

- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- He asked if I knew Scooter. I confirmed I did. He said that Scooter mentioned to his boss that this closeted guy made unwelcome advances towards him during the convention. Scooter caveated this disclosure with an uncertainty to say anything, but felt it was the right thing to do. Scooter's boss told my boss's boss, who told his boss (the president of my company) and both of my bosses.
- I showed my boss the text messages. I printed the emails of our conversation. I told him how I used the bathroom in his hotel room, and how I gave him a hug and a kiss, since I didn't when we hooked up the previous year. If that's what he was responding to, why was that worth mentioning to his boss? Scooter didn't work on our business; I didn't work with his company at all. It was a hotel on a weekend night of a convention that I wasn't even attending for work, just for fun.
- They advised me not to contact him again, but I felt so wrongly victimized, I emailed an apology, stating that I was sorry if I overstepped my bounds or made him uncomfortable in any way. However, I was disappointed that he couldn't have addressed these issues with me directly, instead of going through business channels. Scooter replied almost immediately, denying the action, and trying to blame unnamed colleagues of his who observed me engaging in "compromising positions." Considering he was the only gay attendee I knew at the convention, and the only two gay friends I had in the city had never been on those sort of terms with me, it was obvious his entire defense was a fabrication.

### Coding Sheet 40

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Anonymous  
Blog Entry: Down Low and Dirty

A few years ago, when I lived in Long Beach, I was recovering from a breakup with my boyfriend of three years. To help get over him, I began chatting online, trying to meet new guys.

On one night, I was particularly horny when a "discreet jock" hit me up. He claimed to be bisexual, and was taking a break from chicks.

The usual correspondence and exchange of pictures ensued. Eventually, we decided to meet up, even though he lived in the valley.

I decided to drive up to meet him.

On the drive to his home, he texted a more "discreet" details.

1. He lived in his parents' house.
2. The house was dark, but he would meet me outside.
3. He'd have to sneak me in past their room.

I was practically there, and it almost sounded a bit exciting.

I parked my car and walked down the dark street lit only by one flickering streetlight.

A dark figure stood across the street. "Hey man," he said.

I approached the guy. He was definitely the same guy I'd chatted with, but not what I expected. He was taller and skinnier than his photos. He had presented himself as a buff gym goer, not a tall twink in basketball shorts. It was hard to believe he was "bi" or "discreet" judging from his voice. But what the hell, I'd already invested an hour of driving.

He led me to his room above the garage, which made me more comfortable. Once inside, we began to make out and he felt me up.

He turned off the light and began to blow me. He stopped to tear open a condom and put it on me. Then he sat on top of me, riding me.

There in the dark, it felt amazing... I pounded him hard, and then suddenly he stopped. "Wait, something's not right, he said."

And that's when I noticed the smell. It was putrid. I didn't say anything, but my chest and body felt warm. The guy got up and switched on the lights.

There was shit everywhere - on the bed, all over my legs, even a hand print on my chest. And my dick looked like a fudgsicle.

"I'm so sorry man," he uttered. "Hold on." He ran to the bathroom and started the shower, leaving me there covered in shit.

So I got up and walked to the bathroom, and pulled the shower curtain open. "Umm, dude, I need to shower and get this shit off me."

After cleaning up, I quickly put my clothes on. He apologized again, and offered to get me off.

I politely declined.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. **Explicit Rejection**
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. **Violation of Expectations**
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

And that's when I noticed the smell. It was putrid. I didn't say anything, but my chest and body felt warm. The guy got up and switched on the lights.

There was shit everywhere - on the bed, all over my legs, even a hand print on my chest. And my dick looked like a fudgsicle.

"I'm so sorry man," he uttered. "Hold on." He ran to the bathroom and started the shower, leaving me there covered in shit.

So I got up and walked to the bathroom, and pulled the shower curtain open. “Umm, dude, I need to shower and get this shit off me.”

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

After cleaning up, I quickly put my clothes on. He apologized again, and offered to get me off.

I politely declined.

### Coding Sheet 41

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
Blog Entry: Husband Material

On a visit to L.A. many years ago, I met Trent.

His freckly Irish skin and broad build suggested he was older than he actually was, but he was only mid-30s, just a few years my senior. He looked to be from the East Coast, likely Connecticut or Massachusetts or somewhere with Ivy League schools and a crew team.

Trent and I stood near each other on the floor of a popular bar at the time. He wore a blazer and dress slacks, as if he'd just come from a business dinner. When an opportunity arose, I introduced myself. He was pleasant, but a bit stoic. He didn't seem particularly interested in speaking to anyone new, so I let him be.

The following night, I ran into him at a restaurant, where he was with colleagues of his from Loyola Marymount. This time, he was dressed down and couldn't have been friendlier. He said to a female companion that I was the guy he had mentioned earlier.

I was surprised he remembered me, no less interested in remembering me.

We exchanged numbers, and texted back and forth the rest of the weekend, meeting up for coffee before I left.

The next time I was in L.A., we met up for frozen yogurt and a little fun.

The next time I was in L.A., I hung out at his house for a couple hours. We had some more fun.

There was something about Trent that really seemed like husband material. And when I was back in San Francisco, I learned why.

In an email to my L.A. friend Lester, I casually mentioned Trent's name. Lester not only knew Trent, but also knew his significant other of 15 years.

This was a surprise to me. Especially since Trent had told me he wasn't in a relationship. I asked Lester if he were sure. Lester confirmed by sending me a link to Trent and his husband's website, where their last ten years of anniversaries, birthdays, and vacations were showcased in not hundreds, but thousands of digital images.



What Lester did next was more of a surprise: he phoned Trent to ask if he and his partner were still together. And directly mentioned my name.

Trent told Lester he was in an open marriage, and that I must have misunderstood the situation. Lester was still suspicious, and not just because Trent was known to be sexually aggressive when the partner traveled for work.

I remembered a nice home office in Trent's three-bedroom house. When I picked up a stack of business cards that weren't Trent's, he dismissed them as "the roommate's."

I also recalled there was a total lack of photographs in the house, save for just one of their two dogs. Trent had said he didn't like having pictures taken.

Lester told me the house was filled with pictures of them together, which means Trent must have taken all of them down before I came over. This would explain all of the dead space on the walls and the bookshelves, I thought.

I eventually called Trent to apologize for Lester's behavior, and to hold him accountable myself. This time, he claimed he was in an on-again, off-again relationship, but they'd been off again for a while now.

When I asked Trent if they still lived together, he said no. Lester said yes.

Trent's stories had more holes than a grommet belt.

And since the husband's home office looked pretty lived in just a few days ago, I went with Lester's version. I told Trent he should probably update their website with one of these excuses.

I haven't bothered to reach out to Trent since. It's not even worth looking in the *Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners* to know that's the right move.

Besides, there probably isn't protocol for this occasion either. But considering how often it happens, there likely should be.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? And since the husband's home office looked pretty lived in just a few days ago, I went with Lester's version. I told Trent he should probably update their website with one of these excuses.

I haven't bothered to reach out to Trent since. It's not even worth looking in the *Complete Gay & Lesbian Manners* to know that's the right move.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

In an email to my L.A. friend Lester, I casually mentioned Trent's name. Lester not only knew Trent, but also knew his significant other of 15 years.

This was a surprise to me. Especially since Trent had told me he wasn't in a relationship. I asked Lester if he were sure. Lester confirmed by sending me a link to Trent and his husband's website, where their last ten years of anniversaries, birthdays, and vacations were showcased in not hundreds, but thousands of digital images.

What Lester did next was more of a surprise: he phoned Trent to ask if he and his partner were still together. And directly mentioned my name.

Trent told Lester he was in an open marriage, and that I must have misunderstood the situation. Lester was still suspicious, and not just because Trent was known to be sexually aggressive when the partner traveled for work.

I remembered a nice home office in Trent's three-bedroom house. When I picked up a stack of business cards that weren't Trent's, he dismissed them as "the roommate's."

I also recalled there was a total lack of photographs in the house, save for just one of their two dogs. Trent had said he didn't like having pictures taken.

Lester told me the house was filled with pictures of them together, which means Trent must have taken all of them down before I came over. This would explain all of the dead space on the walls and the bookshelves, I thought.

I eventually called Trent to apologize for Lester's behavior, and to hold him accountable myself. This time, he claimed he was in an on-again, off-again relationship, but they'd been off again for a while now.

When I asked Trent if they still lived together, he said no. Lester said yes.

Trent's stories had more holes than a grommet belt.

And since the husband's home office looked pretty lived in just a few days ago, I went with Lester's version. I told Trent he should probably update their website with one of these excuses.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming**
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

In an email to my L.A. friend Lester, I casually mentioned Trent's name. Lester not only knew Trent, but also knew his significant other of 15 years.

This was a surprise to me. Especially since Trent had told me he wasn't in a relationship. I asked Lester if he were sure. Lester confirmed by sending me a link to Trent and his husband's website, where their last ten years of anniversaries, birthdays, and vacations were showcased in not hundreds, but thousands of digital images.

What Lester did next was more of a surprise: he phoned Trent to ask if he and his partner were still together. And directly mentioned my name.

Trent told Lester he was in an open marriage, and that I must have misunderstood the situation. Lester was still suspicious, and not just because Trent was known to be sexually aggressive when the partner traveled for work.

I remembered a nice home office in Trent's three-bedroom house. When I picked up a stack of business cards that weren't Trent's, he dismissed them as "the roommate's."

I also recalled there was a total lack of photographs in the house, save for just one of their two dogs. Trent had said he didn't like having pictures taken.

Lester told me the house was filled with pictures of them together, which means Trent must have taken all of them down before I came over. This would explain all of the dead space on the walls and the bookshelves, I thought.

I eventually called Trent to apologize for Lester's behavior, and to hold him accountable myself. This time, he claimed he was in an on-again, off-again relationship, but they'd been off again for a while now.

When I asked Trent if they still lived together, he said no. Lester said yes.

Trent's stories had more holes than a grommet belt.

And since the husband's home office looked pretty lived in just a few days ago, I went with Lester's version. I told Trent he should probably update their website with one of these excuses.

## Coding Sheet 42

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
 Blog Author: Samuel Spitale  
 Blog Entry: Three's a Crowd

Several years ago at a volleyball game in Golden Gate Park, I met a handsome Southern transplant who'd just relocated from Georgia. He had a killer body, a big smile, and a down-home friendliness - the rare type of guy I could picture dating.

I had crushed after him for months before I managed to secure a dinner date at a soul food restaurant. After a course of fried catfish, candied yams, and sweet tea, we went out for drinks in his neck of the woods.

That same night, my fresh-out-of-the-closet friend Craig finally mustered the courage to venture into a gay bar. Much to my surprise, he met us for drinks and proceeded to get quite drunk.

I was even more surprised when Craig brought my date home with him.

The experience cost me more than my composure, as I hightailed it home over the Golden Gate Bridge to the tune of a \$500 speeding ticket.

Sadly, this turn of events has come to be as unsurprising as it is unamusing.

Just last year, I took to the streets in full costume on Halloween night, where I met up with the only two guys I had any remote interest in, both physically or romantically. Over the next several hours, I watched them discover they had more chemistry together, as their tongues interconnected like Avatars on the dance floor.

I bailed before I had to witness full consummation.

But the whole episode left me even more cynical - I'd been on the dating crazy train for so long, I was beginning to repeat experiences. I had officially reached syndication.

### **Date Coded – Southern Transplant from Georgia**

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?

That same night, my fresh-out-of-the-closet friend Craig finally mustered the courage to venture into a gay bar. Much to my surprise, he met us for drinks and proceeded to get quite drunk.

I was even more surprised when Craig brought my date home with him.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love**
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

I had crushed after him for months before I managed to secure a dinner date at a soul food restaurant. After a course of fried catfish, candied yams, and sweet tea, we went out for drinks in his neck of the woods.

That same night, my fresh-out-of-the-closet friend Craig finally mustered the courage to venture into a gay bar. Much to my surprise, he met us for drinks and proceeded to get quite drunk.

I was even more surprised when Craig brought my date home with him.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting**
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other – Someone Else**

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I was even more surprised when Craig brought my date home with him.

### Coding Sheet 43

Blog Name: It Gets Worse  
 Blog Author: Anonymous  
 Blog Entry: Go-Go Gone Boy

One night at a bar in West Hollywood, I spotted a handsome go-go boy I remembered from previous visits. He kept flashing me a flirtatious smile, and eventually, I wrangled up the nerve to ask him out.

Much to my delight, he accepted the invitation.

A week later, we had a nice dinner, followed by drinks. As the liquid courage kicked in later in the night, I attempted to pull out some sharp wit to spice up the conversation. I was hoping some humor would soon lead to a naked slumber party back at my place.

After a joke or two about handcuffs in the bedroom, I playfully asked if he'd ever done jail time.

I nearly coughed up my beer when, without missing a beat, he began a monologue describing his multiple arrests on not two occasions, or three occasions, but four separate instances of domestic abuse. One such confrontation resulted in injuries so serious that hospitalization was necessary for his ex.

The go-go dancer failed to notice the horror on my face as I politely paid our bill and remembered an early-morning meeting.

There would be no slumber party in my near future. And thankfully, no domestic dispute, jail time, or hospital bills either!

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
 The go-go dancer failed to notice the horror on my face as I politely paid our bill and remembered an early-morning meeting.

There would be no slumber party in my near future. And thankfully, no domestic dispute, jail time, or hospital bills either!

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations

- b. Unrequited Love
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

After a joke or two about handcuffs in the bedroom, I playfully asked if he'd ever done jail time.

I nearly coughed up my beer when, without missing a beat, he began a monologue describing his multiple arrests on not two occasions, or three occasions, but four separate instances of domestic abuse. One such confrontation resulted in injuries so serious that hospitalization was necessary for his ex.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

The go-go dancer failed to notice the horror on my face as I politely paid our bill and remembered an early-morning meeting.



## Coding Sheet 44

Blog Name: Gay Dating Stories

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entries: Summer 2011 & Mr. Hipster Eggroll; Some Surprises & Mr. English Muffin

### Summer 2011 & Mr. Hipster Eggroll

So long story short summer of 2011 was not looking any different than summer of 2010, actually it was looking a bit worse. I had not went to any gay bars or clubs because I felt I would not find anything substantial there, only a hookup and not a relationship. I was hoping that something would just come through and stars would align and I would meet a guy randomly. That didn't happen and I started to get more and more upset as the weeks went by and picked up a nasty habit of drinking to excess.

- **Note:** Drowning your sorrows with alcohol may seem like a great idea however the reality is that if you overdo it you could land yourself into a dangerous situation. I'd much rather suggest eating or another substance that doesn't have the potential to make you blackout. Truth is though, you need to be able to sort out your problems with your sober self because distractions are, well, distractions! *[Disclaimer: Don't call me a prude or the fun police, this is all coming from a former very hardcore partier so I have been there done that okay. Okay good.]*

The summer went by and one of the projects I was working on at my job involved staffing for an event. I was in charge of the staffing. So as the weeks went by contacting people, making schedules, interviewing and training I found two very cute lads. I had a hint that they were gay, one had a boyfriend so he was out of the picture, the other was single. Eventually we met the day every worker was supposed to come on site. I made it a point to talk to him, joke around and make conversation. This the only thing I was going to have all summer because it was the end of August, and at this point I didn't care about anything else because I was horny. I also had his number so... I might as well give this a shot. We met up on the job site and grabbed lunch and chatted and said that we should hang out sometime after work. Fast forward to drunken meetups, makeout sessions and all of that. I was a very happy camper. But I realized he wasn't quite into me soon after. I was a little confused because I thought since we established a small mental connection and also had a clear physical attraction to each other that this was in the bag. Also, I was better looking than him. From now on he will be referenced as Mr. Hipster Eggroll.

**What I learned [1]:** *You need to make a good impression. I think my approach to this was very headstrong, rather, penisstrong, I had a mission to makeout and grope and I wasn't going to stop until I got what I wanted. Well, in the real world, if you have a pure sexual mission at the get-go, DON'T get upset if after it happens they aren't interested. Even if you had a deep conversation about something you both have in common that doesn't mean you've gotten them game, set and match. No, no, if early on your sexual agenda is fulfilled it tends to overshadow the emotional and mental connection you worked to make. The ball is in their court now and have to work EXTRA HARD to get it back. You have to understand that in the beginning of a relationship everything is in such a fragile state and sometimes the slightest thing could turn a person off. Taking it slow has its benefits and allows the two to build some invisible bridge (that leads to the other) together. But... also we all have our moments of weakness and we shouldn't beat ourselves*

*about it remember, there are about 7 billion people in the world and although it may not seem like you have a lot of opportunities you actually do.*

Funny though, looking back at this I had finally got what I wanted, I met a guy randomly without looking, the opportunity fell into my lap. Now I either messed this up or this guy wasn't the right one. It was my turn to figure that out.

Fast forward into September, Mr. Hipster Eggroll was down to go out for dinner. We ordered food, and I tried to make conversation, a lot of it. I would get one sentence out of him each time. Then I said to myself, well you tried but there is always a time and a place for that awkward silence to stop trying to break it. I did exactly just that and the silence went on and on and on. I continued to eat sushi and he continued to eat his tonkatsudon. From then on I had this HUGE "AHHHH!" moment. I said to myself, "Oh my god, I can't do this anymore and I really have no interest in this person because we can't even hold a conversation." Mr. Hipster Eggroll and I left the place, hugged and parted ways. He would later reappear a few months later but we'll get to that another time.

Now I realized that I didn't have to get the ball back in my court because I didn't want that damn basketball anymore. Now when I told two of my friends this they were shocked. Perhaps because I never quite turned down anyone at the time, so for me to say that Mr. Hipster Eggroll was boring was quite a shock to them. If there is one thing you will get to learn about me is that I hate that feeling of boredom.

***What I learned [2]:*** *If you can't have a nice flowing conversation sober, and you know you weren't nervous or anxious then this isn't going to work out. Think about it, communication is such a vital part of a relationship and if you can't even have any small talk about the trivial things in life the probability of this going anywhere is very slim.*

### **Some Surprises & Mr. English Muffin**

So nothing really went down during my first few months of graduate school except for when I saw Mr. Hipster Eggroll. Let's fast forward to mid-December to finals study week.

So I decided to text Mr. Hipster Eggroll, just saying I was going to hang out at a birthday party and he should come if he wants to see me + friends. Funny enough, he responds and says he's coming. He comes, we start dancing and I make a move, he is more than receptive and we proceed to make out in front of my friends (what's new? and yes, in a straight place (what's new?)). I asked him why we never went out on like an actual date and he said "Oh I don't know." And drunk me decided to go on and say let's go out sometime when I actually didn't care because I just wanted to make out anyway. We go along to a different bar and continue the festivities and eventually part ways to home, this time forever HAHA!

I seemed to be on a roll since after my last final I went to a party and somehow sniffed out the only other gay in the room and went for it. This hookup was kind of like your typical college trashy hookup. The first one of the type for me. We hooked up in a bathroom, a shower and then parted. We went back to my friends dorm, and he happened to living in the same building and just so happened to be taking the same elevator as us. I paid it no mind but then my friend saw

what floor he got off on and was like "Go back and get him!!!" So, who was I to say no to that command. So u found his room, knocked on the door and SURPRISE! (Apparently that was his first time with a guy, I think he had a good time so I'm glad he was comfortable because the last thing you want to do is scare someone.)

The next day I was headed home and a former very close friend of mine was in town and wanted to visit. Let's call him Mr. English Muffin.

Mr. English Muffin had came out to to me around thanksgiving and I will say how that I SOOO CALLED THAT 6 years ago in high school when we were best friends. I had really liked him perhaps even loved him. I say perhaps because the feeling wasn't reciprocated, actually the more we got close the more he started to retreat and be annoyed with me but I digress. He was single and recently broken up with his boyfriend so I was thinking maybe something could be there with us. After all, part of his coming out conversation was me telling him how much I liked him years ago and that he always remained in my mind and all that mushy stuff.

So it's almost Christmas time and mr. English Muffin is coming over and my house is conveniently empty. He comes over and we have a drink and watch some TV. We are on my bed and I whip out some Chapstick and put it on, he notices and says why do I always put it on, and I said because I like having soft lips and I hear that many people like how they feel too. Mr. English Muffin says I'm sure mine are pretty soft too but no one has told him. We awkwardly stare at each other and he says "Want to try and see?" AND WELL IF THAT WASN'T AN INVITATION I DON'T KNOW WHAT IS!!

So I commence to do what I wanted to do 6 years ago. It was a great hookup, passionate, aggressive, crazy and with more emotion (on my end) than ever. He was so hot, had a a great athletic jock body and.. Yeah. For some reason he didn't want to take off his pants and I also couldn't finish off. I really didn't want the moment to end because I knew this was my only chance and I was going to prolong it as I could.

He eventually had to go and I was feeling all fuzzy inside. I was so happy that I was finally able to do what I wanted to do for years, and in a in a way close a large void and attached to Mr. English Muffin. However, I realized that my selfish act of passion did more bad than good. I ripped open a wound that was still healing with stitches, I was super emotional and for some reason thought the there could be something between us. We both hung out with my friends and lets just say by the end of the night...well it wasn't good. I made some touchy feely moves and alluded to the fact that he was gay but he wasn't even comfortable yet being openly gay yet (although it was obvious and to a group of people he has previously publicly had a boyfriend...). He yelled at me and left, I was pretty embarrassed in front of my friends and they had no idea what was going on.

A four hour long argument began via gchat, and long story short.. the words that Mr. English Muffin said to me were probably some of the worst things someone could ever say to someone. I was so frustrated, hurt and blown away by what was said...that I didn't even have the energy to argue or defend myself. He was pretty angry and said he had to "break me down" and make it clear that nothing will ever happen with us. I'll put up a synopsis soon. I made it a point to never

speak with him ever again, not because I was frustrated but because it was not healthy to interact with him. I needed closure and to move past this, and that's exactly what I got.

It took a week or so for me to get back on my feet, luckily it was during winter break so I had ample time to relax, and the new year was quickly approaching. I was definitely ready to make some new beginnings and grab this dating thing by the horns.

***What I learned:*** *Think before doing something. Even though hooking up with Mr. English Muffin was something that I always wanted I did it at the cost of opening the same wound that almost took 6 years to heal in the first place! The temporary excitement and joy I got from that moment resulted in something so ugly just a few days later. Had I not done something with him, I would have not had to go through any of that and perhaps we could have been able to talk off and on. Do I regret what I did, absolutely not! I needed to learn this. At that point, I had not thought about how I would end up feeling after doing this. Remember, when you involve any type of sexual acts into a relationship you have with someone, the connection becomes a bit stronger and sensitivity is heightened. What he thought was a casual hookup was what I thought was an invitation to explore new options with each other. That said, people please take a second and think before you do one of those spur of the moment actions... you might help yourself out a lot!*

### **Date 1 – Mr. Hipster Eggroll**

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection**
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
  - Perhaps because I never quite turned down anyone at the time, so for me to say that Mr. Hipster Eggroll was boring was quite a shock to them. If there is one thing you will get to learn about me is that I hate that feeling of boredom.
  - I asked him why we never went out on like an actual date and he said "Oh I don't know." And drunk me decided to go on and say let's go out sometime when I actually didn't care because I just wanted to make out anyway. We go along to a different bar and continue the festivities and eventually part ways to home, this time forever HAHA!
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations**
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
  - Fast forward into September, Mr. Hipster Eggroll was down to go out for dinner. We ordered food, and I tried to make conversation, a lot of it. I would get one sentence out of him each time. Then I said to myself, well you tried but there is always a time and a place for that awkward silence to stop trying to break it. I did exactly just that and the silence went on and on and on. I continued to eat sushi and he continued to eat his tonkatsudon.

From then on I had this HUGE "AHHHH!" moment. I said to myself, "Oh my god, I can't do this anymore and I really have no interest in this person because we can't even hold a conversation."

- Now I realized that I didn't have to get the ball back in my court because I didn't want that damn basketball anymore. Now when I told two of my friends this they were shocked. Perhaps because I never quite turned down anyone at the time, so for me to say that Mr. Hipster Eggroll was boring was quite a shock to them. If there is one thing you will get to learn about me is that I hate that feeling of boredom.
- ***What I learned [2]:*** *If you can't have a nice flowing conversation sober, and you know you weren't nervous or anxious then this isn't going to work out. Think about it, communication is such a vital part of a relationship and if you can't even have any small talk about the trivial things in life the probability of this going anywhere is very slim.*

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

I asked him why we never went out on like an actual date and he said "Oh I don't know." And drunk me decided to go on and say let's go out sometime when I actually didn't care because I just wanted to make out anyway. We go along to a different bar and continue the festivities and eventually part ways to home, this time forever HAHA!

## Date 2 – Mr. English Muffin

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?  
N/A
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations
  - b. Unrequited Love
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
  - Mr. English Muffin had came out to to me around thanksgiving and I will say how that I SOOO CALLED THAT 6 years ago in high school when we were best friends. I had really liked him perhaps even loved him. I say perhaps because the feeling wasn't reciprocated, actually the more we got close the more he started to retreat and be annoyed with me but I digress.
  - However, I realized that my selfish act of passion did more bad than good. I ripped open a wound that was still healing with stitches, I was super emotional and for some reason thought the there could be something between us.
  - I made some touchy feely moves and alluded to the fact that he was gay but he wasn't even comfortable yet being openly gay yet (although it was obvious and to a group of people he has previously publicly had a boyfriend...). He yelled at me and left, I was pretty embarrassed in front of my friends and they had no idea what was going on.
  - A four hour long argument began via gchat, and long story short.. the words that Mr. English Muffin said to me were probably some of the worst things someone could ever say to someone. I was so frustrated, hurt and blown away by what was said...that I didn't even have the energy to argue or defend myself. He was pretty angry and said he had to "break me down" and make it clear that nothing will ever happen with us.
5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?
  - a. Face-Enhancing
  - b. Face-Detracting
  - c. Reason
  - d. Apology
  - e. Appreciation
  - f. Concern
  - g. Encouragement
  - h. Future Contact
  - i. Blaming
  - j. Direct Disagreement
  - k. Forcing Self-Disclosure

- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- I made some touchy feely moves and alluded to the fact that he was gay but he wasn't even comfortable yet being openly gay yet (although it was obvious and to a group of people he has previously publicly had a boyfriend...). He yelled at me and left, I was pretty embarrassed in front of my friends and they had no idea what was going on.
- He was pretty angry and said he had to "break me down" and make it clear that nothing will ever happen with us.

## Coding Sheet 45

Blog Name: Gay Dating Stories

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entry: ••Interlude•• Angry Hurt Boy On A Mission

So after the date had happened all of the texting this guy here and there and being short into the point in order to maintain relevance in this guy's mind was something that I had not quite mastered. An Ivy League education didn't quite prepare me for any of this store. The help of every single friend in my arsenal who had ever talked to a boy.

I would send a text with something funny about what I did during the day and he would either reply immediately or 4 hours later. Since it was around the time of the world cup I would tune into games to be able to have a neutral topic that he would definitely respond to. Also it was Fourth of July weekend so we had even more content to discuss. Well weeks had passed by and the same pattern occurred: responding to texts hours or even days later, using work as the main reason he was busy for weeks upon weeks. Things got awkward and conversation stopped all together. I was so confused as to what went wrong, maybe 3 weeks after the date I just choose to give up on it, I cried and my friends had a little outing with me when I told them it was over.

- **Note:** The excuses of Work or Family are tactics that many people use because the other party CAN'T argue with them over that, and if they do you seem rude. It's a smart move but after a while if used too often, the other party understands the message you are sending. "I'm just not that into you."

***What I learned [1]:** Don't hype a situation up in your mind so much that if it doesn't work out you will be devastated! Not saying that you can't be excited, but just remember to remind yourself that you have only been on 1 date, you can't quite jump to conclusions that quickly, you have to play "the game" and let things unfold and let the interest build up. That's where I went wrong, I layed every card in my hand on the table, I was an open book, transparent and uninteresting. To many this approach can seem overwhelming and just too easy. It's stupid but it's true, think about your best friend and how long it took for them to share some dark secret, family troubles, or real raw emotions to you... If that had come a bit too quickly you might be uninterested and/or overwhelmed but since you learned about these things over time you began to appreciate what a complicated and dynamic individual your friend was. Not saying I was saying crazy things or secrets but different people have different tolerance levels and this guy was on the shy side.*

The next two weeks I spent being a sad mess just hating myself because I believed this was all my fault and that I'll never be able to have a relationship. I was convinced that there was something wrong with me, and i needed to change myself and prove myself to him. I desperately wanted to see this guy again, but I wasn't going to contact him, but I wanted to "run into him". Even if the probability of that was 0% I didn't care, I was going to find this guy. At this point I didn't want to even talk to him to make things work, I just wanted to see him since he was blatantly avoiding me, the overwhelming boy...



So I would walk around the city, from SoHo where I worked up 3rd avenue or Lexington to almost 60th Street since I knew he worked near Grand Central Station. Hoping to run into him but I didn't see him any of the times I walked those 60+ blocks. I also picked up a nasty habit of drinking when I got home while eating dinner, which didn't help my emotions be any more contained..

One day I was invited to a apartment party after work, I jumped on the 6 train and transferred at Fulton Street to take the 2/3 train to the Wall Street stop since the apartment was right outside that particular station. The walk underground was such a long trek though since the 2/3 was about 3-4 blocks away underground. I was walking and saw the back of a man's head, and then observed his build and said to myself, THAT HAS TO BE HIM! I walked faster, and I was hoping to God that I was right, this was my moment to give him a piece of my mind. I knew he had to take the A/C train which was on the way of my walk. My heart was pounding and pounding and I was breathing heavy and was just so nervous. He came to a stop and was waiting for the train, I circled around where he was to make sure who it was. AND IT WAS HIM! I stopped for a second and then walked in the opposite direction and turned around and started walking as if I wasn't following him and had just ran into him. I walked up to him and say "hey there!" he turned a little more and had a look on his face as if he had seen a ghost, and then it turned into an "Oh shit I never thought I would ever see him again" type of look. He slowly took off his headphones and said "hey" in response. I wanted to punch him in the face bust out that one crooked tooth of his. I said "How's it going? Been pretty busy lately?" he then said that he was and that work was hectic, and I replied with the same. We then kind of looked at each other, I just wanted to yell at him tell him what a douchebag he was and tell him how hurt I felt about this entire thing. I wanted to scream, cry and also in a way wanted to hug him also. But I just looked at him and said, "okay I'll leave you to your music, have fun. I'll see you around." He said, "Yep, see you around." I walked away at a steady normal pace, and with every step I got angrier with him and more frustrated with myself because I couldn't just let it out, no matter how rude and bitchy I would have been.

This was a fucking crazy ass occurrence, I ran into him at a train station, I don't know ANYONE who was rate into a previous date on the NYC subway system! I guess the world knew how bad I wanted to see him, I craved it so the world just let me have it... And I didn't know how to feel. I wasn't triumphant, I didn't get any feelings off my chest, if anything this just made me even more upset than I already was. I went to the party, and got (beyond)extremely drunk as a result.

***What I learned [2]:*** I was so fixated on this long term idea of a relationship that I craved so badly, so badly that he could sniff it from a mile away. I idealized him and made him "the one" in my mind after one date, one date! I feel very hard more with the idea of this being my first relationship and it was going to work out and be fucking lollipops and rainbows along the way. Again, the reality of the situation was that I went on 1 date and to maintain a certain sense realism. I took it do personally and got so angry that he didn't want to be with me after we had an awesome date (in my opinion). But I would have to learn this again and again as the years and the dates went by.

1. What was the result of the date?

- a. Explicit Rejection
- b. Implicit Rejection**

2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination? Well weeks had passed by and the same pattern occurred: responding to texts hours or even days later, using work as the main reason he was busy for weeks upon weeks. Things got awkward and conversation stopped all together. I was so confused as to what went wrong, maybe 3 weeks after the date I just choose to give up on it, I cried and my friends had a little outing with me when I told them it was over.

3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?

- a. Violation of Expectations
- b. Unrequited Love**
- c. Physical Misrepresentation
- d. Other
- e. Unknown

4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:

The next two weeks I spent being a sad mess just hating myself because I believed this was all my fault and that I'll never be able to have a relationship. I was convinced that there was something wrong with me, and i needed to change myself and prove myself to him. I desperately wanted to see this guy again, but I wasn't going to contact him, but I wanted to "run into him". Even if the probability of that was 0% I didn't care, I was going to find this guy. At this point I didn't want to even talk to him to make things work, I just wanted to see him since he was blatantly avoiding me, the overwhelming boy...

So I would walk around the city, from SoHo where I worked up 3rd avenue or Lexington to almost 60th Street since I knew he worked near Grand Central Station. Hoping to run into him but I didn't see him any of the times I walked those 60+ blocks. I also picked up a nasty habit of drinking when I got home while eating dinner, which didn't help my emotions be any more contained..

One day I was invited to a apartment party after work, I jumped on the 6 train and transferred at Fulton Street to take the 2/3 train to the Wall Street stop since the apartment was right outside that particular station. The walk underground was such a long trek though since the 2/3 was about 3-4 blocks away underground. I was walking and saw the back of a man's head, and then observed his build and said to myself, THAT HAS TO BE HIM! I walked faster, and I was hoping to God that I was right, this was my moment to give him a piece of my mind. I knew he had to take the A/C train which was on the way of my walk. My heart was pounding and pounding and pounding and I was breathing heavy and was just so nervous. He came to a stop and was waiting for the train, I circled around where he was to make sure who it was. AND IT WAS HIM! I stopped for a second and then walked in the opposite direction and turned around and started walking as if I wasn't following him and had just ran into him. I walked up to him and say "hey there!" he turned a little more and had a look on his face as if he had seen a ghost, and then it turned into an "Oh shit I never thought I would ever see him again" type of look. He slowly took off his headphones and said "hey" in response. I wanted to punch him in the face

bust out that one crooked tooth of his. I said "How's it going? Been pretty busy lately?" he then said that he was and that work was hectic, and I replied with the same. We then kind of looked at each other, I just wanted to yell at him tell him what a douchebag he was and tell him how hurt I felt about this entire thing. I wanted to scream, cry and also in a way wanted to hug him also. But I just looked at him and said, "okay I'll leave you to your music, have fun. I'll see you around." He said, "Yep, see you around." I walked away at a steady normal pace, and with every step I got angrier with him and more frustrated with myself because I couldn't just let it out, no matter how rude and bitchy I would have been.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

Well weeks had passed by and the same pattern occurred: responding to texts hours or even days later, using work as the main reason he was busy for weeks upon weeks. Things got awkward and conversation stopped all together. I was so confused as to what went wrong, maybe 3 weeks after the date I just choose to give up on it, I cried and my friends had a little outing with me when I told them it was over.

### Coding Sheet 46

Blog Name: 100 Guys, 100 Stories

Blog Author: Anonymous

Blog Entry: #1 The Barista with a Boyfriend

The past few months a certain barista at the Starbucks closest to my home has been poking me on facebook. A lot. Not just that, but the liking and commenting and miscellaneous flirting. We recently exchanged phone numbers and one night I may or may not have told him I thought he was extremely cute.

First mistake.

A few days later we finally start texting again and we make plans to see Les Miserables (even though I've already seen it). I show up at Starbucks to meet him and I have to wait one complete hour for him to finally come out. I honestly thought that he had stood me up or was trying to play some cruel joke on me since I knew he had a boyfriend etc. By the way, I wasn't planning on any funny business...I just wanted to see what happened. So after waiting an hour, drinking and entire venti tea, and peeing twice, I decide it's time to leave...I've had enough. (During this hour he kept saying that he was about to come out from the back and that I would laugh at the story of why he was taking so long) Fed up, I drive across the street and pretend to get gas at the store. I know this sounds stupid but to me, it was me giving him one last chance to redeem himself, which he did. I was over there for maybe 2 minutes when I feel a buzzing in my cup holder and it's him asking where I was. Relieved, I quickly drove back over and he meets me at my car. I was too embarrassed to go back inside. His story wasn't that funny, and I was completely unamused. But the fact that he wasn't playing some sick practical joke on me made me feel less anxious and bothered.

We show up to the movie theatre about 45 minutes early because we decided we weren't hungry enough for food (mistake...our stomachs growled the entire 158 minutes of Hugh Jackman's vibrato). We sit and talk about our lives and our little quirks and he's making me fall for him every second. I can't help it. When we finally go into the correct theatre, I say this because it took us three tries to find the right one, we sit down and endure the 20 minutes of previews. You know, it's hard to concentrate on the opening scene of the movie when all I can think about is the fact that the arm rest is still up, nothing is separating us but a few inches and the bare skin of my fingers. I want so much as to hold his hand, or to just rest my hand on his thigh. Finally 30 minutes in to the film, I build up the courage to do it. I clumsily throw my hand on his leg and pet it...almost like a cat.

What was I thinking? Am I out of my mind? He has a boyfriend!

He makes a strange movement that tells me he obviously wasn't expecting it and didn't reciprocate the feelings. So I awkwardly pretend to crack my knuckles and remove my hand from his thigh. I sat for the rest of the movie, the next TWO HOURS, in silence; wishing I had never moved my arm and wondering what was going through his head.

The movie finally comes to an end and we both have to use the bathroom. So what do I do? As soon as you goes up to the urinal I walk up to the one right next to him...how in the hell can I be so fucking awkward? It things weren't weird enough. So I have to stare blankly at the wall and pretend I was not curious at all as to what he was packing down stairs (every gay man knows they wonder!). We walk out of the theatre and our hungry stomachs decide we both need McDonald's. They are pretty much like Starbucks in New York City, there is one on every corner. Fat fucking Americans. We sit down and the talking continues. Not a single silent moment. The kind of conversation I dream of having with a guy - when the conversation just flows and the subjects change faster than one of Taylor Swift's boyfriends - that fast.

By now we've spent the past 6 hours together and I almost regret that I gave up on him at first. But I know that no matter what, he saw this date as nothing but a friendship. It hurts...but I know it's true. So I drive home, alone, with the windows up, listening to demo version Treacherous on repeat, deciding if I should just get really high and forget about the events of the day, or just accept them and hope for a better chance next time. I chose the latter. Looking back, I haven't decided if I chose the right one.

Here's to 2013, this hope was treacherous, this daydream was dangerous, and I kinda liked it.

1. What was the result of the date?
  - a. Explicit Rejection
  - b. Implicit Rejection**
2. If there was an implicit rejection, what context clues were used to make that determination?
  - I honestly thought that he had stood me up or was trying to play some cruel joke on me since I knew he had a boyfriend etc. By the way, I wasn't planning on any funny business...I just wanted to see what happened.
  - By now we've spent the past 6 hours together and I almost regret that I gave up on him at first. But I know that no matter what, he saw this date as nothing but a friendship. It hurts...but I know it's true.
3. What was the reason—or what were the reasons—for rejection?
  - a. Violation of Expectations
  - b. Unrequited Love**
  - c. Physical Misrepresentation
  - d. Other
  - e. Unknown
4. List the quotes that correspond with the reason(s) for rejection:
  - We sit and talk about our lives and our little quirks and he's making me fall for him every second. I can't help it.
  - He makes a strange movement that tells me he obviously wasn't expecting it and didn't reciprocate the feelings.
  - By now we've spent the past 6 hours together and I almost regret that I gave up on him at first. But I know that no matter what, he saw this date as nothing but a friendship.

5. Which rejection strategies did the daters use within the blogs (can be more than one)?

- a. Face-Enhancing
- b. Face-Detracting
- c. Reason
- d. Apology
- e. Appreciation
- f. Concern
- g. Encouragement
- h. Future Contact
- i. Blaming
- j. Direct Disagreement
- k. Forcing Self-Disclosure
- l. Silence
- m. Sarcasm
- n. Other

6. List the quote(s) that correspond with the politeness strategies used:

- He makes a strange movement that tells me he obviously wasn't expecting it and didn't reciprocate the feelings. So I awkwardly pretend to crack my knuckles and remove my hand from his thigh. I sat for the rest of the movie, the next TWO HOURS, in silence; wishing I had never moved my arm and wondering what was going through his head.
- We sit down and the talking continues. Not a single silent moment. The kind of conversation I dream of having with a guy - when the conversation just flows and the subjects change faster than one of Taylor Swift's boyfriends - that fast.

Appendix B: Results

Table B1: Rejection Types by Blog

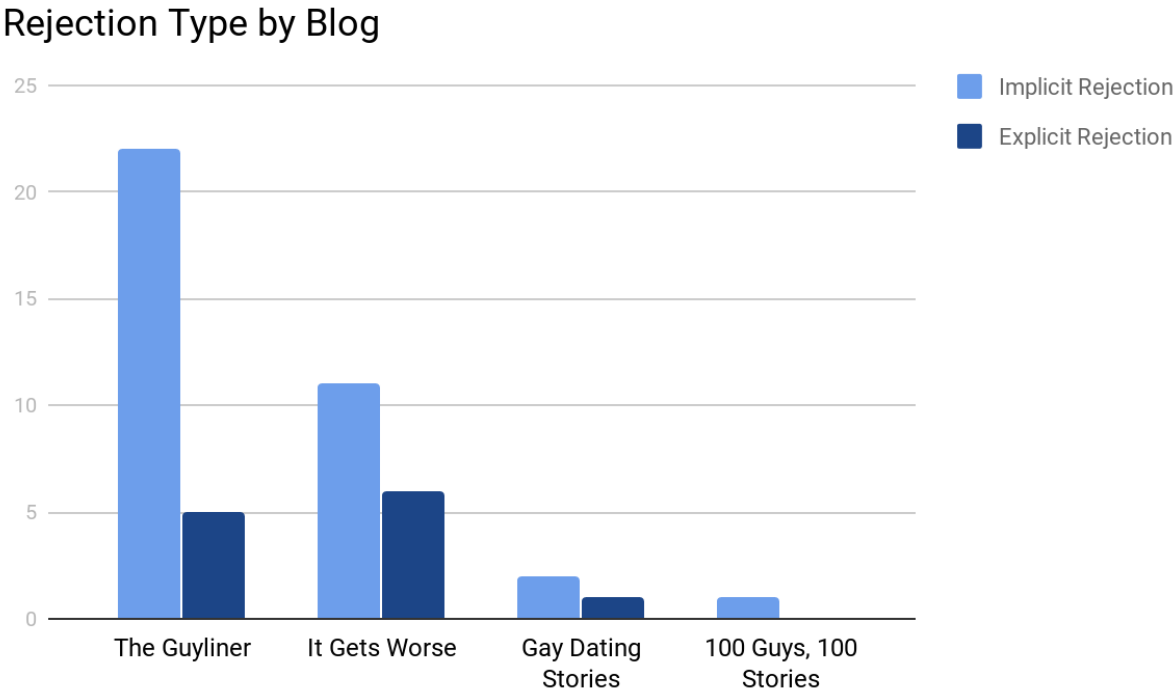


Table B2: Reasons for Rejection by Blog

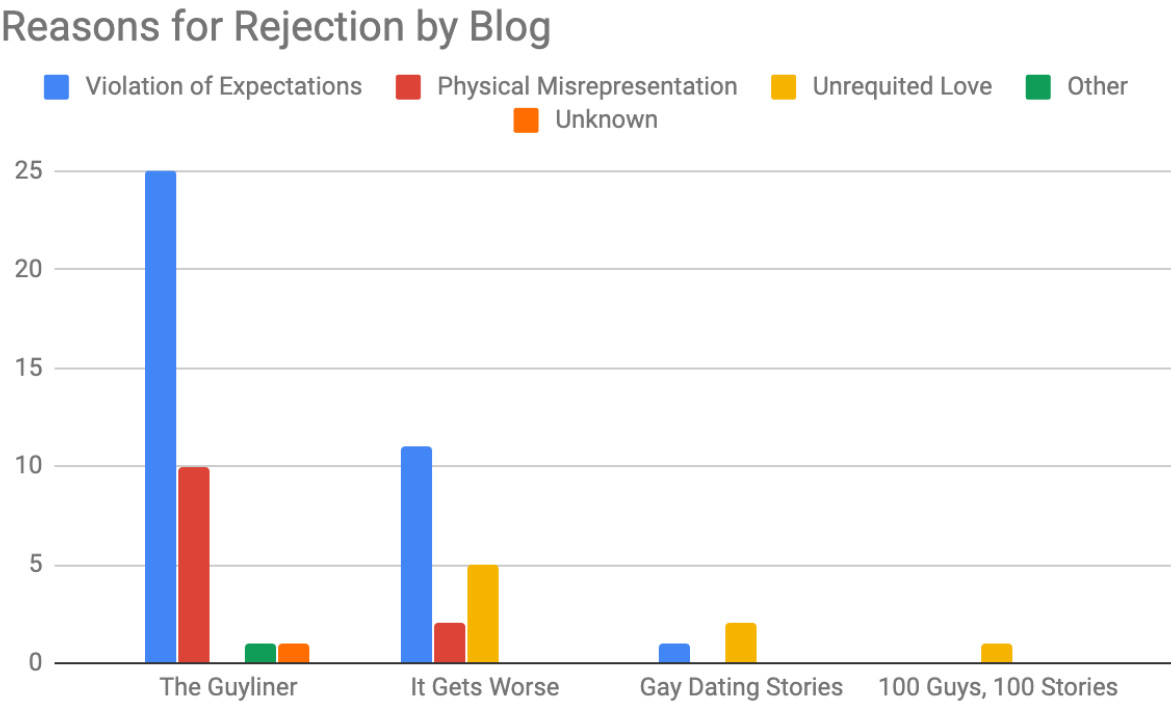




Table B3: Face-Enhancing vs. Face-Detracting Strategies by Blog

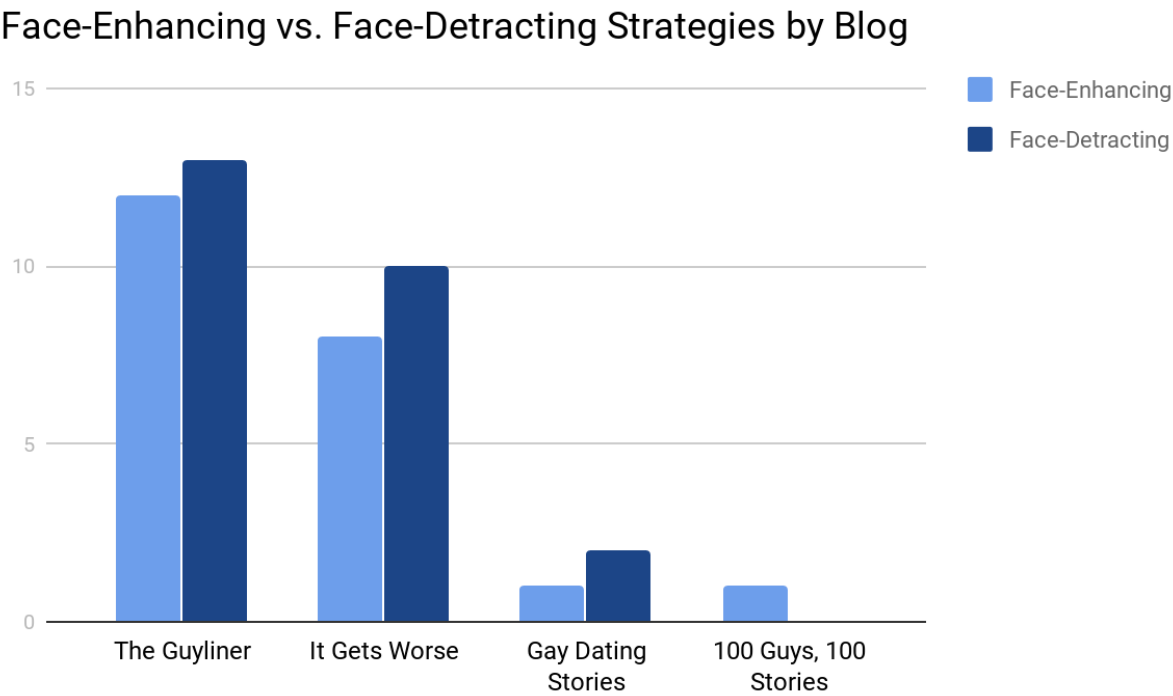
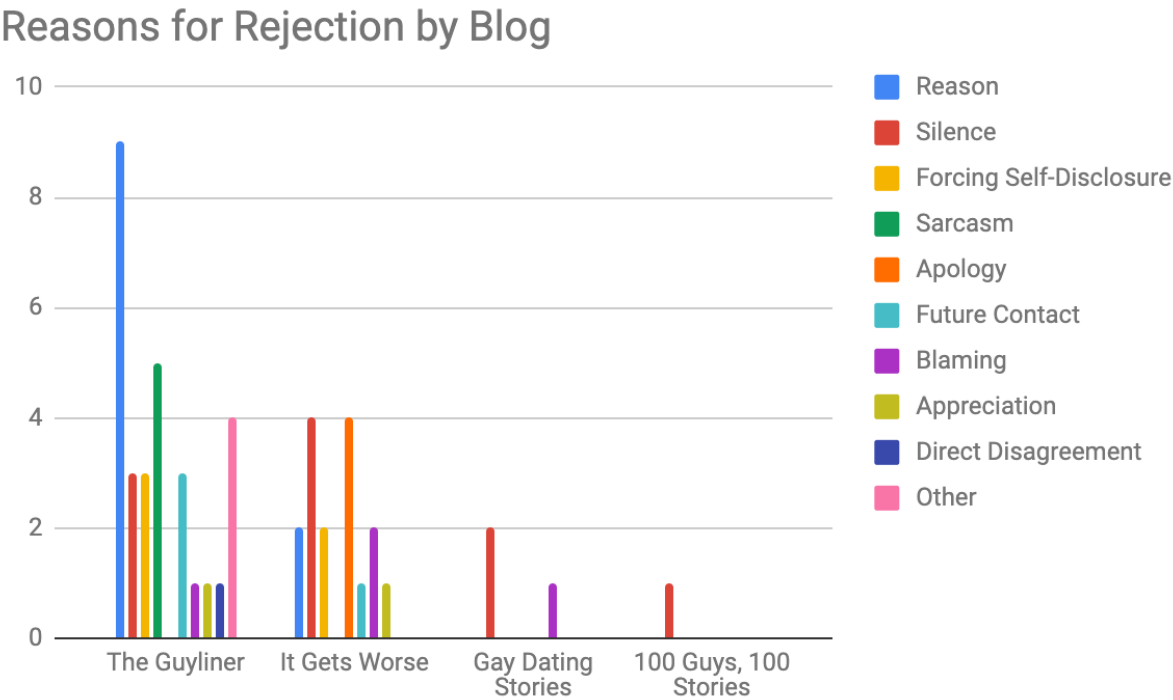


Table B4: Reasons for Rejection by Blog



Concern and encouragement were not included in this chart because there were no blog entries that used those strategies.

**Table B5: The Guyliner Blog Entry Information**

| <b>The Guyliner</b>  |                                       |  |  |                             |
|----------------------|---------------------------------------|--|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Blog Title</b>    | <b>Explicit or Implicit Rejection</b> | <b>Reason for Rejection</b>                              | <b>Face-Enhancing or Face-Detracting</b> | <b>Rejection Techniques</b> |
| The Hold-Out         | Explicit                              | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting                          | Sarcasm                     |
| The Muse             | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                      |
| The Better Offer     | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                      |
| The Christmas Fling  | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | N/A                                      | Other – Distance            |
| The Associate        | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                      |
| The Backpacker       | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting                          | Silence                     |
| The Banker           | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                      |
| The Graduate         | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting                          | Sarcasm                     |
| The Wrong Peter      | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                      |
| The Iceman Skateth   | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                                | N/A                                      | Other – Someone Else        |
| The Boy on the Beach | Explicit                              | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting                          | Blaming                     |

|                     |          |  |                 |                                       |
|---------------------|----------|--|-----------------|---------------------------------------|
| The Latecomer       | Explicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting | Sarcasm                               |
| The Right Peter     | Implicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Enhancing  | Forcing Self-Disclosure and Reason    |
| The Straight-Talker | Implicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Enhancing  | Reason                                |
| The Invisible Man   | Implicit | Unknown  | Face-Detracting | Silence                               |
| The Marrying Kind   | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Detracting | Direct Disagreement and Sarcasm       |
| The Drunk Mexican   | Explicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing  | Future Contact                        |
| The Raincheck       | Implicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting | Forcing Self-Disclosure               |
| The Drunk           | Implicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Detracting | Silence                               |
| The Also-Ran        | Explicit | Other – Someone Else                                     | Face-Detracting | Appreciation and Other – Someone Else |
| The Pedal Pusher    | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Detracting | Other – Departure                     |
| The Selfie          | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing  | Reason                                |
| The Plus One        | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing  | Future Contact                        |

|                         |          |  |                 |                         |
|-------------------------|----------|--|-----------------|-------------------------|
| The Social Mountaineer  | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Enhancing  | Reason                  |
| The Parent Trap         | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Detracting | Sarcasm                 |
| The Show-Off            | Implicit | Violation of Expectations and Physical Misrepresentation | Face-Enhancing  | Future Contact          |
| The Reluctant Mean Girl | Implicit | Violation of Expectations                                | Face-Detracting | Forcing Self-Disclosure |

**Table B6: It Gets Worse Blog Entry Information**

| <b>It Gets Worse</b>                |                                       |   |  |                                     |
|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|---|--|-------------------------------------|
| <b>Blog Title</b>                   | <b>Explicit or Implicit Rejection</b> | <b>Reason for Rejection</b>                   | <b>Face-Enhancing or Face-Detracting</b> | <b>Rejection Techniques</b>         |
| Brodie's Public Relations           | Explicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Enhancing                           | Apology                             |
| Dorian's Grey Pictures              | Explicit                              | Physical Misrepresentation                    | Face-Enhancing                           | Future Contact                      |
| Uber and Out                        | Explicit                              | Physical Misrepresentation                    | Face-Enhancing                           | Apology                             |
| First Crush                         | Explicit                              | Unrequited Love                               | Face-Enhancing and Face-Detracting       | Apology and Silence                 |
| Frat Pack                           | Explicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Detracting                          | Other – Departure                   |
| Growing Pains                       | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Enhancing                           | Reason                              |
| Full House                          | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Detracting                          | Silence                             |
| Swim at Your Own Risk               | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Detracting                          | Forcing Self-Disclosure             |
| Hot 'n Cold Kevin                   | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Detracting                          | Silence                             |
| Disappearing Dates (1)              | Implicit                              | Unrequited Love                               | Face-Enhancing                           | Apology                             |
| Disappearing Dates (2)              | Implicit                              | Unrequited Love                               | Face-Detracting                          | Other – Departure                   |
| Cupid is a Sociopath, Parts 1 and 2 | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations and Unrequited Love | Face-Detracting                          | Silence                             |
| Fair Gayme                          | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations                     | Face-Detracting                          | Blaming and Forcing Self-Disclosure |

|                    |          |                           |                 |                      |
|--------------------|----------|---------------------------|-----------------|----------------------|
| Down Low and Dirty | Explicit | Violation of Expectations | Face-Enhancing  | Appreciation         |
| Husband Material   | Implicit | Violation of Expectations | Face-Detracting | Blaming              |
| Three's a Crowd    | Implicit | Unrequited Love           | Face-Detracting | Other – Someone Else |
| Go-Go Gone Boy     | Implicit | Violation of Expectations | Face-Enhancing  | Reason               |

**Table B7: Gay Dating Stories Blog Entry Information**

| <b>Gay Dating Stories</b>  |                                       |                             |  |                             |
|--|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Blog Title</b>  | <b>Explicit or Implicit Rejection</b> | <b>Reason for Rejection</b> | <b>Face-Enhancing or Face-Detracting</b> | <b>Rejection Techniques</b> |
| Summer 2011 & Mr. Hipster Egg Roll / Some Surprises & Mr. English Muffin (1) | Implicit                              | Violation of Expectations   | Face-Enhancing                           | Silence                     |
| Some Surprises & Mr. English Muffin (2)                                      | Explicit                              | Unrequited Love             | Face-Detracting                          | Blaming                     |
| ••Interlude••<br>Angry Hurt Boy On A Mission                                 | Implicit                              | Unrequited Love             | Face-Detracting                          | Silence                     |

**Table B8: 100 Guys, 100 Stories Blog Entry Information**

| <b>100 Guys, 100 Stories</b> |                                       |                             |  |                             |
|------------------------------|---------------------------------------|-----------------------------|--|-----------------------------|
| <b>Blog Title</b>            | <b>Explicit or Implicit Rejection</b> | <b>Reason for Rejection</b> | <b>Face-Enhancing or Face-Detracting</b> | <b>Rejection Techniques</b> |
| The Barista with a Boyfriend | Implicit                              | Unrequited Love             | Face-Enhancing                           | Silence                     |