



May 2018

Connection: An Autism-Focused Dating App

Cyrena Johnson

Western Washington University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://cedar.wvu.edu/scholwk>



Part of the [Computer Sciences Commons](#)

Johnson, Cyrena, "Connection: An Autism-Focused Dating App" (2018). *Scholars Week*. 41.
https://cedar.wvu.edu/scholwk/2018/Day_one/41

This Event is brought to you for free and open access by the Conferences and Events at Western CEDAR. It has been accepted for inclusion in Scholars Week by an authorized administrator of Western CEDAR. For more information, please contact westerncedar@wwu.edu.

Connection: An Autism-Oriented Dating App

Cyrena Johnson and Dr. Moushumi Sharmin
NEAT Research Lab, Computer Science Department

Introduction

30% of US young adult internet users actively use dating sites. [1]

41% of autistic adults have never been in a romantic relationship longer than two months. [2]

44% of autistic adults who use dating sites reported having had long-term relationships which lasted an average of 2.65 years. [3]

Relationship sites are effective, but focus on speed dating and favor outgoing individuals.

We propose **Connection**, a relationship building app designed for autistic adults.

Research Methodology

Existing Technology

- Spectrum Singles
- Aspieology
- AusticDating
- Tinder
- Bumble

Research Paper Databases

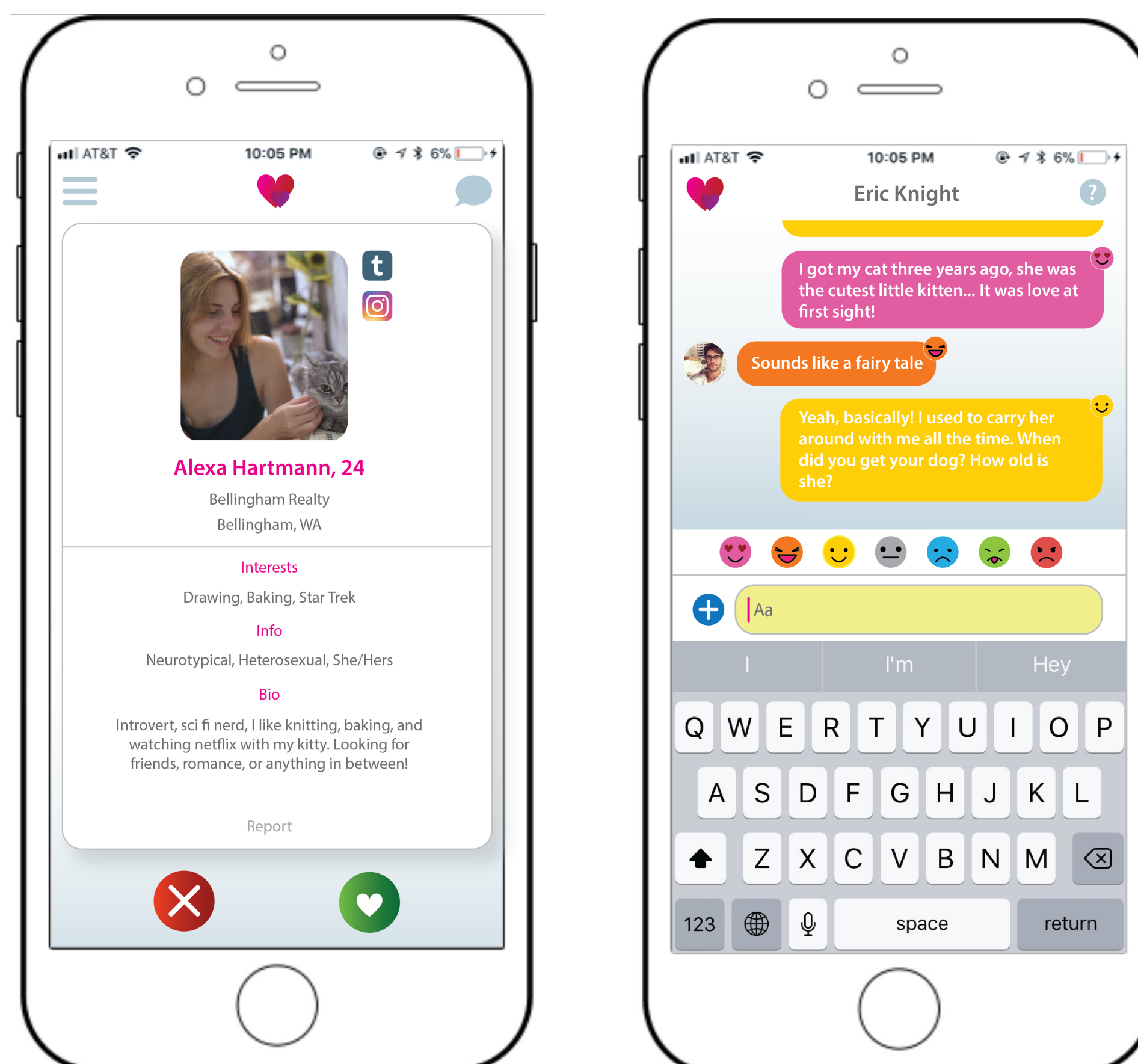
- Pubmed
- ACM Digital Library
- IEEE Xplore
- Google Scholar

Queries

- (autism OR asperger OR ASD OR autism) AND (dating OR romance OR marriage OR divorce OR girlfriend OR boyfriend) AND (app OR website OR "online dating")
- (adult OR "young adult" OR adolescent OR college) AND (autis* OR asperger OR "pervasive developmental disorder" OR ASDs OR PDD-NOS OR ASD) AND (lgb* OR queer OR gay OR trans* OR lesbian OR bisexual OR dysphoria OR "GD")

Features

- Color-coded text messages with corresponding emojis to indicate emotion of the text.
- Inclusive design focused on creating long-term relationships and friendships for ASDs and neurotypical individuals.
- Access to information on safety, relationship advice, and sexual education.
- Focus on privacy sensitive design.
- Inclusive approach for gender and sexual identities.
- Help section for writing positive, informative biographies.



Figures 1&2: Connection screen displays. Featured are the 'swiping' screen and the chat screen.

Nice to meet you! 😊

I'm sorry, I'm going to have to go out for a bit, but I can talk more tonight, if you'd like? 😞

Figure 3: Example chat bubbles, showcasing the color coded chat bubbles used to indicate the emotion of the text.

Future Plans

- Interviews focused on friendships, romantic relationships, and experience with dating apps.
- Design Connection+.
- Usability and controlled evaluation.
- Longitudinal field deployment.

Quotes from ASD Subreddit

"Online dating, that seemed like a perfect tool for introverts at first, is tailored to meet the needs of extroverts looking for casual relationships and their protocols are often based on the concept of attraction built on first impressions." [4]

"If you're having difficulty meeting people, then... spend some time getting to know people who have hobbies and values in common with you. This is the most solid basis for a relationship." [4]

"...I never assume someone is interested in me unless they give explicit cues. I prefer girls that are very direct and know what they want because of this, it just makes it easier for me." [4]

References

- [1] Kyle Gordon. Topic: Online dating. Retrieved March 4, 2018 from <https://www.statista.com/topics/2158/online-dating/>
- [2] E. Sandra Byers, Shana Nichols, and Susan D. Voyer. 2013. Challenging Stereotypes: Sexual Functioning of Single Adults with High Functioning Autism Spectrum Disorder. (March 2013). Retrieved March 4, 2018 from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007%2Fs10803-013-1813-z>
- [3] Matthew E. Roth and Jennifer M. Gillis. 2014. "Convenience with the Click of a Mouse": A Survey of Adults with Autism Spectrum Disorder on Online Dating. (December 2014). Retrieved March 3, 2018 from <https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s11195-014-9392-2>
- [4] KurNeko. Why does no one fall in love (and such) with aspies? @ NTs & aspies. Retrieved February 25, 2018 from https://www.reddit.com/r/autism/comments/zu1tt3/why_does_no_one_fall_in_love_and_such_with_aspies/

