Illuminating the Increase of Intentional Dating in the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Connection to Relationship Satisfaction through the Lens of Photography.

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Illuminating the Increase of Intentional Dating in the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Connection to Relationship Satisfaction through the Lens of Photography.

by

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A culminating thesis submitted to the faculty of Dominican University of California in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters of Marriage and Family Therapy

Dominican University of California
San Rafael, CA
2022
Abstract

In this study, the researcher examined if the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic prompted individuals to reprioritize their emotional needs in intimate relationships. As a result of reprioritizing intimate relationship needs, the researcher also examined whether intentional dating increased within an individual. Furthermore, the researcher explored the use of photography to illuminate an individual's relationship satisfaction and motivation for dating. Asking these questions can help to better understand how the COVID-19 pandemic impacted intimate dating relationships and how dating trends may have shifted. It further explores how photography can also be used as a research tool as well as a therapeutic tool in the field of Art Therapy. To better understand and explore the research questions, this qualitative study consisted of four parts. Participants completed a general demographic survey, the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16), a retrospective survey, and a prompted photography activity. A qualitative analysis of the results of this study revealed COVID-19 positively influenced participants' dating intentions. Furthermore, a positive relationship between dating intentionality and relationship satisfaction was also observed. Lastly, the results of this study demonstrate that individuals can express their relationship satisfaction or intentions through photography when given the necessary reflective tools, such as prompts and follow-up questions.
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Chapter 1 Introduction

Problem Statement

Human connection is in a constant state of adapting to the ever-evolving circumstances of society (Seymour, 2016). This adaptation can significantly impact the trends of casual and intentional dating by creating a shift in development. In the face of the COVID-19 pandemic it is important to examine dating trends and better understand intimate connections, because a pandemic and the changes in human behavior have the potential to alter the nature of our intimate relationships for years to come (Fleming & Franzese, 2021).

For the purpose of this study intentional dating is defined as the act of breaking away from the fast-paced casual nature of the modern dating culture, and becoming more mindful of the process of entering into an intimate relationship. Further defining that individuals think about what attributions they truly want in a relationship, while reflecting on patterns and habits that may be keeping them from finding their ideal partner. In this qualitative study, adults who are not in a committed relationship are defined and referred to as singles, while relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their romantic relationship. More specifically, when an individual feels as if their partner satisfies their needs it is characterized as increased or high relationship satisfaction, implying positive feelings and attitudes towards their partner (Bühler et al., 2021).

The way individuals find and maintain intimate connections has changed over the course of the pandemic, resulting in an outcome where individuals are focused on seeking out and nurturing intimate relationships with mature partners over a longer period of time (Garcia, 2021). Consistently, recent research has exclusively highlighted the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on relationships. Although there is some truth behind these impacts for couples who
had pre-existing relationship vulnerabilities, it is just as crucial to highlight the positive impacts that were brought forth for various relational and dating aspects in the wake of the pandemic.

The pandemic strengthened the relationships of many couples and also inspired singles to find more meaningful ones (Garcia, 2021). In a study carried out by an online dating company, singles reported limited negative impacts brought on by the pandemic to their dating life and displayed a shift in their dating interests over a span of two years (Match.com, 2021). Baumesiter and Leary (1995) yielded results in their research that suggested individuals are driven to feel meaningfully connected in times of stress, suggesting that the outcome of the singles survey can be supported through a process of human drive. Results of this survey can also be supported by the idea that social connectedness plays a significant role in coping and resilience against stress and trauma (Hobfell et al., 2007). These findings suggest that individuals who felt inclined to date during the pandemic may have contributed to higher rates of their own coping and resilience against the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic. Attachment theory supports that COVID-19 ignited a proximity seeking response in adults as a result of perceived danger, in turn leading to an increase in more meaningful intimate relationships (Cohan & Cole, 2002). While the looming reality of a pandemic cultivated an atmosphere for healthy pre-existing relationships as well as new relationships to thrive, these intimate connections in return provided individuals with emotional support and satisfaction of relational needs, while reminding them how healing the power of love can be.

While research on current intentional dating trends is likely still being conducted or in review, recent research indicates that the pandemic fundamentally reshaped many aspects of human connection and among these aspects, relational life was heavily impacted (Merolla et al., 2021). In the context of this study, the concept of relational life is narrowed down to dating
relationships. It is possible the reality of COVID-19 caused individuals to reprioritize their relational needs in order for them to be met while dating. Often as a society individuals get lost in simply moving through life and as a consequence relational needs can become neglected. COVID-19 granted individuals the ability to slow down and allowed them to have deeper intentionality about how they connect relationally (Lang, 2021). Perhaps, they began no longer taking meaningful connections for granted while dating, especially when their relational needs were being met. The current trends being reported in research have the potential to represent a reset in modern dating culture, to which increased stability and satisfaction in relationships could be a positive outcome of this reset for decades to come. This shift highlights the importance for furthering research to better understand the impacts of a pandemic on dating relationships.

When individuals were faced with the reality of staying home and practicing social distancing during the pandemic, dating intentionality shifted as a result. Cohan and Cole (2002) state that life threatening events motivate individuals to take noteworthy action in their close relationships that may influence their life course. The noteworthy action Cohan and Cole expand upon can help to better understand the motivation and increase of intentional dating in the face of the COVID-19 global pandemic. The present study examined this motivation while also exploring whether photography could express the relationship between intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic and relationship satisfaction.

It is hypothesized that those who experienced the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic reprioritized their relationship needs in order to get those needs met, which resulted in individuals engaging in intentional dating. Recently, a positive association between both shared reality and partner support with relationship satisfaction has been identified (Enestrom and Lydon, 2021). This positive association could offer support to the research hypothesis that
intentional daters who have established relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic experience higher rates of relationship satisfaction in comparison to their pre-pandemic relationships. Individuals who experienced the pandemic together may have felt a greater sense of partner support than they have in the past, satisfying their inherent relationship-needs in the process. Fleming and Franzese (2021) highlight that a determining factor for relationship satisfaction is the fulfillment of relational needs, while a predictor for relationship stability and longevity is relationship satisfaction. These findings support the implication that intentional intimate relationships initiated during the pandemic satisfy individuals' relational needs more than their previous relationships pre-pandemic, whether they were casual or long-term relationships.

The purpose of the present qualitative research was to illuminate the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 global pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction through the lens of photography. The researcher examined whether the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic led individuals to reprioritize their relational needs in intimate relationships in order to have them met. In addition, the researcher explored whether intentional dating increased as a result of reprioritizing these relational needs in intimate relationships. To address these questions, participants were asked to complete a demographic survey to better understand how they identify themselves and their current relationship. Following this survey, participants then completed the highly validated and reliable Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI) to evaluate their current relationship satisfaction. In order to better understand dating intentionality and pre-pandemic relationship satisfaction, participants completed a Retrospective Survey created for the purpose of this study.

In this study, the student investigator sought to examine how photography could reveal the connection between a participant’s current and past relationship satisfaction, with their
motivation to date intentionally during the pandemic. This connection was explored through prompted photography and reflective follow up questions. Participants used photography in an attempt to convey the complex relational phenomenon of intentional dating during a pandemic, for which there are limited statistical means of representation. The present research is relevant to the field of art therapy because it will further the research and the use of photography as a creative expression within the field, by allowing participants to reflectively express their emotions and lived dating experiences. Using the results of this study, art therapists can gain a deeper understanding of the connection between intentional dating and relationship satisfaction. In addition, this study can provide insights into how photography may be integrated into future sessions to illuminate individual or couple relationships for art therapists. Results of this research can also lend support to better recognizing future impacts of global disasters on intimate relationships and dating tendencies in the face of perceived danger. While offering an expansion to the use of photography as a form of data collection in research, as well as a therapeutic tool for non-verbal expression of thoughts and feelings for participants.
Chapter 2 Literature Review

Romantic relationships have been regarded as one of the most meaningful and complex forms of human connection, which are often constructed with a multitude of considerations and they are driven by basic human motivation (Campbell & Stanton, 2019). Over time, stable relationships have become understood in the context of attachment styles and criteria of relational needs. These contexts help better understand the foundation of romantic relationships and can also play a role in an individual's relationship satisfaction. Relational life and human connection were fundamentally reshaped in many aspects by the COVID-19 pandemic, so it is reasonable to ask what role the pandemic played in romantic relationships. This thesis seeks to look at romantic relationships through the lens of a camera to begin to understand the increase in intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction.

COVID-19 Climate

In March 2020 the World Health Organization declared the COVID-19 (SARS-CoV-2 coronavirus) outbreak a global pandemic (World Health Organization, 2022). In the wake of the pandemic, everyone was faced with challenges that affected their physical health, psychological well-being, and daily life (American Psychological Association, 2020). As a result of this outbreak, several lockdown phases, social distancing guidelines, and mask mandates were implemented throughout the months of March 2020 and December 2021. During the duration of this study social distancing and masking guidelines were reduced significantly. Despite these reduced guidelines having little impact on this online study, it is important to acknowledge the societal shift they created for the public and participants after two years of a declared pandemic.
COVID-19 and Relationships

The dynamics of romantic relationships are often susceptible to influence by factors outside of the relationship, particularly social pressures or life stressors. When a traumatic and stress inducing event such as the COVID-19 pandemic occurs, it is likely to influence social behaviors and shift the dynamics of relationships (Montanaro et al., 2022). Whether still in review or being conducted, research on dating trends during the COVID-19 pandemic is rather limited, but ample research on relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic has been published and is used to support the present study.

Unprecedented Times Changing Relationships

While researchers have taken different approaches to better understand the far-reaching impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on social relationships, the extent of some research may fail to address the full scope of changes in intimate romantic relationships due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic (Montanaro et al., 2022). Consistently, these studies have limited their research to exploring the negative impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on relationships. While there is some truth behind these impacts for couples who had pre-existing relationship vulnerabilities, it is just as crucial to highlight the positive impacts that were brought forth for many relational and dating aspects in the wake of the pandemic.

Over the course of the pandemic the way individuals find and maintain intimate connections has changed, resulting in an outcome where individuals are focused on seeking out and nurturing close intimate relationships, with mature partners over a longer period of time (Garcia, 2021). Based on self-reports, some relationships thrived during the pandemic as a result of frequent forgiveness and decreased blame. These self-reports also indicate that social isolation caused by the pandemic did not reduce relationship satisfaction. (Montanaro et al., 2022;
Williamson, 2020). Experiencing trying times together, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, can serve as a benefit to intimate relationships because individuals may turn to their closest others for comfort and security (Enestrom and Lydon, 2021; Holmberg et al., 2021; Kausar & Saghir, 2010).

**Impacts on Intimate Relationships**

Although evidence supports perceived positive and negative impacts to relational experiences during the pandemic, Holmberg et al. (2021) suggest that the positive impacts outweigh the negative impacts. For many couples the pandemic strengthened their relationships while also driving singles to find more meaningful ones (Garcia, 2021). It is possible the COVID-19 pandemic emphasized consciousness of being single, which increased the importance of stability and family commitment in adult relationships (Candel and Jitaru, 2021). Consequently, this consciousness may have ignited the drive for singles to find more meaningful connections.

In an annual survey conducted by an online dating company, 74% of singles reported that the pandemic did not negatively impact their dating life. While 62% of singles reported that they were more interested in finding a meaningful committed relationship than they were two years ago prior to the pandemic (Match.com, 2021). Recent online dating trends such as these can subscribe to the notion of an increase in dating during COVID-19. Indicating the reality that even during a time where risks to life were heightened, dating did not come to a halt. In times of stress individuals are especially driven to feel meaningfully connected to others, lending an explanation to the high percentages that the annual survey yielded in the face of a pandemic (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). In the wake of collective emergencies, social connectedness can play a significant role in the coping and resilience against stress and trauma which increases the drive to feel
connected (Hobfell et al., 2007). These positive impacts of the pandemic fostered an environment for healthy pre-existing relationships as well as new relationships to evolve. These relationships in return provided individuals with emotional support and satisfaction of relational needs, while reminding them how healing intimate connections can be.

**Attachment and Relationships**

Evolving out of research on attachment in infancy, attachment theory can offer predictive insight into the quality of a relationship. While attachment theory can be used to better understand the circumstances in which attachment plays a role in the future of a close relationship, it is also one of the many theories that sets the foundation for the relational needs model. Such model emphasizes the need for relationships as a primary human motivation and what primary needs humans seek to be met while in a relationship (Žvelč G et. al, 2020). It should be noted that three types of attachment from infancy (secure, anxious, and avoidant) have important implications for relationships later in life (Ainsworth, 1989). Hazan and Shaver (1987), reconceptualized the work of theorists Bowlby and Ainsworth to address the attachment process of romantic relationships. Later their research found that attachment can predict unsuccessful and successful relationships.

Bowlby (1969) theorized that universal behavioral strategies evolved in response to threat for the purpose of security, safety, and survival. These strategies are learned as an infant in order to satisfy needs for physical closeness or proximity of a caregiver and remain active throughout an individual's lifespan (as cited in Cohan & Cole, 2002). Cohan and Cole (2002) suggest that the proximity seeking factors of Bowlby’s attachment theory can inform predictions about family transitions following a natural disaster. Their research saw a steady increase in rates of marriage
and family planning following a natural disaster. When applied to the present research it can help better inform the understanding behind the motivation for dating in a global pandemic.

By applying the fundamental functions of a safe haven and a secure base as key attachment components for an individual within a relationship, attachment theory was proven to be a promising framework to use when studying romantic relationships (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). The safe haven component in an attachment is activated when an individual experiences the presence of a threat or a time of distress, it is during these experiences when a partner is sought after for comfort, support, and reassurance (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). The fundamental function of a secure base in an attachment, indicates an individual’s ability to use the relationship to foster exploration of new or challenging situations. When an individual knows that the other is available to them, it contributes to an increase in confidence in their partner's ability to provide a safe haven and a secure base. This confidence is more likely to cultivate satisfaction from the relationship, thereby increasing their investment in maintaining the future of the relationship (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001).

While attachment security is likely to increase an individual’s confidence it is the combination of the commitment process and the security that builds upon one another (Duemmler & Kobak, 2001). In order to be available to serve as a safe haven and a secure base, a partner must be perceived as committed to maintaining the relationship. In return, this promotes more satisfaction within the relationship. This theory can lend support to the motivation behind intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic because these new relationships may have offered individuals the components of safe havens and secure bases that they were seeking, yet not receiving in pre-pandemic relationships. Theoretically these new relationships were meeting
the commitment and security factors it takes to serve as a source of safety and support, while fulfilling newly prioritized relational needs and contributing to higher relationship satisfaction.

Attachment theory can offer insight to predictive factors regarding the quality and satisfaction of a romantic relationship, allowing researchers to predict both unsuccessful and successful relationships. For the purpose of the present study it is important to understand the role that secure attachment plays in relationship satisfaction because secure attachments are correlated with higher relationship satisfaction as well as relationship longevity. Hazan and Shaver (1987), report findings that support the association between secure attachments and greater trust and commitment within relationships. Furthering Hazan and Shaver’s findings, research conducted with undergraduate students confirmed that secure attachment predicts intimacy and commitment in romantic relationships, which in turn predicts and promotes a higher level of relationship satisfaction (Madey & Rodgers, 2009). The feeling of security secure attachments provide to a relationship is what allows individuals to establish intimacy and commitment without fear of rejection. These findings help contribute to the foundation, to better understand the role that secure attachments play in relationship satisfaction for the purpose of the present research.

**Relationship Satisfaction**

The phrase relationship satisfaction is defined as an individual's overall evaluation of their romantic relationship. More specifically, when an individual feels as if their partner satisfies their needs it is characterized as increased or high relationship satisfaction, implying positive feelings and attitudes towards their partner (Bühler et al., 2021). Having a stable and fulfilling relationship is an important aspect of personal development and is associated with positive health and longevity outcomes (Gable & Poore, 2008). In relation to the present
research, determining an individual's current relationship satisfaction and comparing it to their pre-pandemic relationships can contribute to understanding the increase in intentional dating during the pandemic.

Relationship satisfaction is a prominent topic in the study of romantic relationships and research has yielded various contributions to increased relationship satisfaction over time. In a study focusing on responsiveness to specific events over the course of a relationship, researchers found that individuals who perceive their partners being responsive to said events have a tendency to feel closer with their partner while displaying more satisfaction and commitment to their relationship (Cao et al., 2020). These findings support that perceived partner responsiveness in new or challenging experiences can influence relationship satisfaction because these events emphasize the secure-base component of a securely attached relationship. A pandemic like COVID-19 presents new challenges for many and emphasizes the necessity of a secure base more than ever before, thereby supporting the inherent motivation to find new partners through intentional dating in the midst of a pandemic. This experience would then allow new partners to test their perceived partner responsiveness, potentially influencing a higher satisfaction rate within relationships. Partners in securely attached relationships have a tendency to behave in ways that maintain distress levels because they often engage in more open communicative behaviors. These behaviors then become predictive for higher satisfaction rates within a relationship (Cortes et al., 2017). Securely attached relationships initiated during the pandemic could offer individuals a way to maintain distress levels leading to higher rates of satisfaction.

Another determining factor for relationship satisfaction is the fulfillment of relational needs, while a predictor for relationship stability and longevity is relationship satisfaction
(Fleming & Franzese, 2021). When partners meet each others’ needs there can be positive outcomes for all partners involved as well as the relationships. When individuals' needs are met they can feel enhanced satisfaction with their relationships, along with more positive emotions and a greater increase in love over time (Machia & Proulx, 2019). This sense of need fulfillment can also contribute to more relationship security. It should also be noted that this instinctual drive for need fulfillment is not limited to monogamous relationships, but can be highlighted and even potentially increased in multiple partner or polyamorous relationships as well (Mitchell et al., 2013). As a result of the new relationships' stability and longevity, need fulfillment may support the hypothesis that intentional intimate relationships initiated during the pandemic fulfill individuals' relationship needs better than their pre-pandemic relationships did. Regardless if the pre-pandemic relationships were casual or long-term.

There are eight primary relational needs that are identified in clients and present in psychotherapy (Erskine et al., 1999; Zvelc et al., 2020). Erskine et al. (1999) found that clients most commonly expressed the following eight needs:

1) The need for security;
2) The need to feel validated, affirmed, and significant within a relationship;
3) The need to be accepted by a stable, dependable, and protective other person;
4) The need for confirmation of personal experience;
5) The need for self-definition;
6) The need to have an impact on the other person;
7) The need to have the other person initiate;
8) The need to express love.

In addition to being present in therapy, the eight needs are suggested to also be demonstrated in an individual’s everyday life (Erskine, 2015; Zvelc et al., 2020). Prior the eight primary relational needs being identified within a therapeutic relationship in 1999, Drigotas and Rusbult (1992) identified intimacy, companionship, sex, security, and emotions as being the prominent relational needs within a romantic relationship. The research findings from both Drigotas and
Rusbult (1992) and Erskine et al., (1999) help to identify and contextualize relational needs within a romantic relationship for the purpose of the present study. When there is a lack of satisfaction of these relational needs within a dating relationship, the relationship can become intense and upsetting (Zvelc et al., 2020). Reiterating that fulfilling relational needs can determine relationship satisfaction, which is a key contributor to relationship stability and longevity (Fleming & Franzese, 2021). Perhaps supporting the idea that relationship satisfaction is a catalyst for the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic that has resulted in an increase of long term relationships.

COVID-19 and Relationship Satisfaction

The COVID-19 pandemic caused widespread disruptions to daily life, resulting in heightened stress and uncertainty. As a result of these increased levels of stress and uncertainty, romantic relationships have also been affected. However, due to the unprecedented nature of the pandemic, the full extent of these effects is still unclear. Uncertainty and stress may bring individuals together during a pandemic, but for some it can enhance relational conflict. (Vowels et al., 2021). A number of attributions have been identified that contribute to non-linear results and assessment when attempting to determine how the pandemic has affected relationship satisfaction among couples. These nonlinear results and assessment are due to lack of generalizability and representation across multiple research studies that aim to address relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic. Attributions contributing to the non-linear results and assessment will continue to be expanded upon for the purpose of the present research.

Couples who entered the pandemic with well-established relational strengths, adequate resources, and higher-quality communicative skills were more likely to maintain their increased relationship quality and recognize space for relational growth (Vowels et al., 2021). Whereas
couples who entered the pandemic with pre-existing vulnerabilities and limited external resources were more likely to experience a decline in their relationship stability and quality (Vowels et al., 2021). For some relationships, it is possible that pandemic specific factors contributed to higher rates of relationship satisfaction because some individuals have a tendency to rely on their partners during negative or uncertain times (Enestrom & Lyndon, 2021). There is a positive association between both shared reality and partner support with relationship satisfaction, suggesting that experiencing the unprecedented nature of the COVID-19 pandemic may be a way for individuals under stress to perceive greater support from their romantic partners (Enestrom & Lydon, 2021). This positive association could offer support to the idea that intentional daters who have established relationships during the COVID-19 pandemic experience higher rates of relationship satisfaction in comparison to their pre-pandemic relationships. Through experiencing the pandemic together, the individuals may have felt a greater sense of partner support than they have in the past, satisfying their inherent relationship-needs as a result.

Evidence supports minimal impacts to relationship satisfaction and in some cases increased satisfaction over the course of the pandemic (Enestrom & Lydon, 2021; Holmberg et al., 2021; Pietromonaco & Overall, 2020; Williamson 2020) but it is imperative to note that additional relational stressors can play a role in relationship satisfaction such as children, limited employment, and socioeconomic status. It is possible that these stressors were contributing factors for individuals who experienced a decline in relationship satisfaction during the pandemic, and were identified as having “relational vulnerabilities”. This makes evaluating whether couples' relationship satisfaction has been negatively, or positively impacted during the COVID-19 pandemic difficult, unless specific populations are examined. Upon addressing these additional factors and stressors, even when both positive and negative aspects of relational
experiences were observed, the positive impacts consistently outweighed the negative (Holmberg et al., 2021).

The generalizability of current research on relationship satisfaction during the pandemic has been limited by the demographics and populations studied so far (Li & Samp, 2021). The sparse representation of marginalized populations in the current research contributes to this hindered generalizability. Further research on romantic relationship satisfaction specifically within LGBTQ+ communities and communities of color, is a necessary and important contribution to the field of study because these groups were impacted disproportionately during the COVID-19 pandemic. People of color and LGBTQ+ individuals experience increased rates of encountering unique personal vulnerabilities that can become a contribution to relationship satisfaction (Li & Samp, 2021). Though research is limited, two studies on relationship satisfaction during the pandemic with same-sex partners yield different results. The study of positive and negative impacts of the pandemic on relationship satisfaction in male couples, yielded 30% of participants reporting increased relationship happiness while 25% of the 209 surveyed reported that they had become more invested in the relationships future during the pandemic (Walsh & Stephenson, 2021). In contrast, various factors such as race/ethnicity, rates of internalized homophobia and whether or not partners move in together, can be moderators to the negative relational and personal outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic (Li & Samp, 2021). The inconsistency of results between the two studies, highlights the importance of continuing to contribute research to the field of relationship satisfaction during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the need to include more diverse populations in future studies.
Relationship Satisfaction Scales

Relationship satisfaction is a theoretical concept that has become a cornerstone in relationship research, to better understand the inner workings of marriages and romantic relationships (Funk & Rogge, 2007). In the study of romantic relationships there are many widely used satisfaction scales that result in consistent validity when determining relational satisfaction. These include but are not limited to, the Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS), Marital Adjustment Test (MAT), Quality of Marriage Index (QMI), Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS), and the Kansas Marital Satisfaction Scale (KMS). Although these scales display high internal validity they are skewed towards determining the relationship satisfaction within marriages and for the purpose of the present study they are not applicable. Therefore the present research makes use of the Couples Satisfaction Index or CSI which has consistently yielded high validity across various types of romantic relationships (Funk & Rogge 2007; Graham et al., 2011; Pepping et al., 2019; Okhotnikov et al., 2020;).

Former relationship literature was supported by the MAT and DAS, two of the most widely used satisfaction measures at the time. Evaluation revealed relatively low amounts of information and inflated levels of measurement error or noise (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Though these popular measures could adequately assess relationship satisfaction, they would not necessarily be able to detect relationship change and satisfaction over time (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Whereas, the increased precision the CSI scales offer researchers the ability to detect meaningful differences when using smaller samples as well as between groups and relationships.

The Couples Satisfaction Index is a measure that has increasingly become a more popular tool in the field of romantic relationships. The CSI is a 32-item measure of relationship satisfaction that has been developed into 16-item and 4-item scales for the purpose of various
research topics. The CSI was developed from items used in the previously mentioned satisfaction scales including the DAS, KMS, QMI, and the RAS (Graham et al., 2011). In the development of the CSI it was proved useful across a variety of relationship types, therefore making it a relevant scale to use when assessing the relationship satisfaction of intentional daters during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Experiencing satisfaction within a romantic relationship can be one of the strongest predictions for life satisfaction and well being. Couples who experience distress within their relationships can become susceptible to various mental health outcomes (Forouzesh Yekta et al., 2017). In romantic relationships, relationship satisfaction can be influenced by various factors such as mental health, communication, sexual satisfaction, sexual preferences, and cultural diversity to identify a few (El Frenn et al., 2022). The CSI, therefore, offers a valuable range of satisfaction with most partners, including same-sex relationships, and provides cross-cultural validity; making it the ideal scale to use with participants of various backgrounds in the current study (Forouzesh Yekta et al., 2017; Halford et al., 2018; Pepping et al., 2019; Okhotnikov et al., 2020).

Photography and Relationships

In addition to using relational scales to determine participants' current relationship satisfaction, the present research uses photography to illuminate potential connections between relationship satisfaction and the motivation behind intentional dating in the COVID-19 pandemic. Photography can be utilized rather diversely in today’s society because it has become readily accessible to everyone, meaning that it can play a major role in the documentation of and interactions that take place in romantic relationships. Traditionally photography was a well-
established tool used as a means for documentation of moments or people to which would later translate into memories or personal narratives (Schwartz, 2010).

Photography has now been adapted into many aspects of life to which these adaptations have created a set of unspoken rules when it comes to the role of photography within romantic relationships (Schwartz, 2010). During the early stages of dating, photography has become somewhat stigmatized suggesting that if too many photos of individuals are taken prematurely, then they can be misinterpreted as emotional expressions, commitments, or signs of rushing into a relationship (Schwartz, 2010). These underlying social rules that have been created around photography within romantic relationships, influence couples to then limit their process of capturing photos, and wait until the relationship has become well enough established to a certain degree.

While societal rules and media consumption have led to an adaptation of photography in relationships throughout generations, it has also contributed to various uses of photography in said relationships. In some romantic relationships, photography is used as a means to gain attention from a partner, or divert a partner's attention away from something that has become attention consuming. Meanwhile for some romantic partners, photography is used as a means of erotic expression within their sexual relationship, using photographs as a way to elicit desire for one another (Schwartz, 2010). However, photography within a romantic relationship can also serve as an expression of relational satisfaction.

Photographs can capture the quality of our relationships and reflect our general well being (Saslow et al., 2012). When individuals feel more satisfied with their relationship, social media users are more likely to share relationship relevant information, including photographs of romantic partners (Saslow et al., 2012). Photographs give individuals the opportunities to express
themselves how they choose fit, with this being said photographs can also be used as a self-presentation strategy to appear happier in a relationship compared to others. This behavior primarily takes place on social media platforms such as Facebook, and often happens when partners feel societal pressure to have their relationship fit into the unspoken rules of relationship photography (Saslow et al., 2012). Photography in many ways can offer partners new domains to express their emotions, desires, and needs because it offers a nonverbal way to communicate with others. This is where the field of Art Therapy and combination of photography, can lend support to better understanding relationships, specifically relationship satisfaction through photography.

**Photography and Art therapy**

Art Therapy is a mental health and human services profession that emphasizes the psychotherapeutic relationship between creative processes such as active art-making, and the application of psychological theory to the human experience. When facilitated by a professional art therapist, art therapy can enrich the lives of individuals, families, and communities. Additionally, the well-established therapeutic practice of art therapy, can be beneficial for improving cognitive abilities, fostering emotional resilience, and increasing self-esteem (American Art Therapy Association, 2022).

The therapeutic benefits of photography can be traced back to the nineteenth century, but despite the health promoting effects of photography, as well as its accessibility, photography has remained an underutilized medium for art therapists (Kopytin, 2008; Saita & Tramontano, 2018). While the use of therapeutic photography is beginning to increase within the context of health, social, and community settings, a review of the literature for the present study has revealed this
underutilization to be true because contemporary literature and art therapy research continues to display an underrepresentation of photography.

Photography has a social nature to its existence that can link individuals together and stimulate conversation, typically through the sharing of memories or beliefs making it an ideal medium to use within the context of art therapy (Kopytin, 2008). Photography has the ability to promote an individual's visual thinking and allows someone to play with reality and its representations. When fantasy and reality come together through the act of photo taking, individuals can often reveal their conscious and unconscious thoughts, allowing for reflective therapeutic dialogue. Photography can play many roles within the day to day life of a romantic relationship, but it can also make an impactful presence for couples within a therapeutic setting. The use of photography in couples therapy can allow individuals to deepen their understanding of their partners’ belief systems, personal histories, and relationship quality, while also serving as a catalyst for intimacy between partners (Star & Cox, 2008).

Therapeutic photography can allow individuals to tap into emotions or experiences that are not readily verbalized through capturing emotional content. These captured photos can be used to better understand past and present expectations, as well how a story has played out within a relationship or an individual's life. When individuals use visual media such as photography within a therapeutic context, they offer insight into their inner world and contextual experiences. Within the context of this study, photography can offer insight into understanding participants' perspectives of their own relationship satisfaction in current and pre-pandemic relationships. Through the use of reflective photo prompts, the captured photos can deepen the connection between participants' relationship satisfaction, and understanding participants’ motivation behind intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Although photography
can be a powerful medium of self-expression within a therapeutic context, it can also be a useful tool for qualitative research. Participants in the present study may use surveys and scales to describe their relational experiences, but the use of prompted photography to also describe said experiences, can offer a depth and creativity that may surpass their written descriptions.

**Photography and Research**

Serving as a contemporary and novel approach to qualitative research, visual methodologies such as photography, can add value to already existing methods for research by providing rich multidimensional data (Glaw et al., 2017). Photography as a research tool can offer valuable insight into the lived experience of participants, and allow researchers to use the photographs to create consumable knowledge within the field of research. In art therapy, visual methodologies such as photography can be used to facilitate communication and encourage reflection, a process that researchers in turn can use for data enhancement, in addition to surveys and other research tools. Photography has been deemed an effective and acceptable method to use when collecting data for qualitative research, and is becoming more widely used in varying disciplines (Glaw et al., 2017). The use of visual methods in qualitative research are commonly seen in the form of Autophotography or Photo elicitation.

Autophotography is a research method that often asks participants to take photographs of their environment, while Photo elicitation uses photographs in an interview to generate verbal discussion with participants. Autophotography allows the researcher to gain access to the lived experience of participants through photography, and can often become an important tool for bridging marginalized groups and research together. Autophotography does not rely on the singular view of survey questionnaires and other research instruments that may be culturally biased, and it does not limit itself to participant perspectives (Glaw et al., 2017). Therefore,
Autophotography can enhance the conventional approaches to qualitative research by allowing participants to express themselves with confidence and clarity. Participants in turn give their photographs a voice within the research, by assigning meaning through telling stories of the photographs and identifying issues or themes that emerge. Whereas, Photo elicitation can produce a different kind of data for research because it evokes feelings, memories, and information. The use of this method in research can reveal varying levels of meaning because it allows participants to choose what they want to discuss in their interviews by photographing their own images (Glaw et al., 2017).

The expressive process of photography is valuable both as data evidence and as a tool for intervention in the present qualitative study. In addition to the Couples Satisfaction Index, it will be used to communicate the complex relational phenomena of intentional dating in pandemic for which statistical means of representation is limiting (Szto et al., 2005). As expressed by Szto et al., when photography is used in qualitative research it is an approach that is “designed to express human experience, not interpret or analyze it” (2005, p.138). The use of prompted photography as an additional activity in the present research will strengthen the data while allowing the participants to have an opportunity to creatively express themselves. Visual methods such as photography, will not only enhance the richness of data through additional layers of meaning, but photography can also contribute to higher rates of validity and depth, as well as support the creation of knowledge (Glaw et al., 2017).

The present study aims to use a hybrid method of the two common forms of photography research. Through using prompted photography, the participants will take photographs of their environment allowing them to insert their own voice into the research data similar to Autophotography, while the informal interview questions on the submission page will allow
participants to reflect on the feelings and memories the prompted photographs may evoke, similar to Photo elicitation. For the purpose of the present research, photography can offer an advantage to the data collection methods, because it can allow for multilayered information about relationship satisfaction and symbolic representations of intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic to be portrayed through the participants' images (Milasan et al., 2020).
Chapter 3 Methodology

Introduction

Through the lens of photography this qualitative study sought to illuminate the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction. This study incorporated four methods of measurement in order to address the different aspects of intentional dating, relationship satisfaction, and photography. These separate parts included a general demographic survey, the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16), a retrospective survey created for this study, and a prompted photography activity. The participants were recruited through online postings and community flyers where they were directed to an online platform that introduced them to the study. Additionally, this online platform provided information such as definitions of intentional dating and relationship satisfaction. With the help of this hosting platform, the entire research was conducted online.

Exploratory questions

In this qualitative study, intentional dating during the COVID-19 global pandemic and its interrelation to relationship satisfaction were explored through the lens of photography. This study was designed to examine how the COVID-19 pandemic affected intimate relationship priorities and whether intentional dating increased as a result. Through prompted photography and reflective follow-up questions, the study explored how photography can illuminate participants' current and past relationship satisfaction, as well as their motivation to date intentionally during the pandemic. The following exploratory questions were considered during the entirety of the research:

1. Did COVID-19 influence intentionality behind romantic dating?

2. Does dating intentionality have a positive connection to relationship satisfaction?
3. Can photography be used to depict participants' relationship satisfaction and motivation behind dating?

**Research Design**

In order to better address the exploratory questions, the researcher conducted a qualitative research study to provide a more in-depth look at the topic. By focusing on nuances between individuals, qualitative research allows the researcher to gain insight into the topic from the perspective of the participants. When examining relationships, qualitative research can offer emotional and intimate insight that is not always possible with quantitative research. The qualitative research design consisted of four separate but related components. These include a general demographic survey, the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16), a retrospective survey created for this study, and a prompted photography activity. All documents for this study were transcribed into separate Google forms for digital accessibility. Each step was created on its own form to preserve data collection in the case of technical computer errors. The researcher examined the data of 11 qualifying individuals among the 15 participants who signed up for the study. Data analysis was done using simple statistics and reflection.

**Participants**

The population for this research consisted of adult intentional daters in the pandemic. More specifically, the participants were individuals who started long-term romantic relationships between March 2020 and December 2021 and were currently in the relationship at time of participation. In order to participate in the study, participants and their partner(s) in the relationship of question had to be at least 18 years old. Participants were recruited through various online platforms including but not limited to Facebook and Instagram as well as community flyers (Appendix G). The researcher completed 4 online pushes for participant
recruitment during the 5 month timeframe of May 2022 - October 2022. Participation for this study took place digitally to make it more accessible to a wider population and to stay consistent with COVID-19 social distancing guidelines.

Due to the flexibility that online data collection offers, participation will not be limited to individuals demographics or geography. Participation was strictly limited to: age, start of relationship, accessibility to online platforms, and accessibility to a digital photography device. All participants were directed to a Google site created specifically for the study that housed links for all required documentation to be deemed an eligible participant. All participants were required to complete a digital consent form prior to participation and were provided with a debriefing after completion of the study (Appendix A,F). The online informed consent form was set up to filter participants’ eligibility and redirected participants to the end of the submission form if participants were not eligible to participate. The researcher maintained minimal to no contact with participants except under the following circumstances: upon receiving study inquiries, documentation errors, and incomplete or delayed data. Participants were informed about contact in the digital consent form.

**Participant Demographics**

At the time of data collection, 15 individuals initiated participation in the study but 4 of the 15 were removed from the overall results. There were 2 participants who did not complete the consent forms and 2 participants were excluded from the overall results for not completing the prompted photography step of the study. The final results of this study consist of 11 participants who for the purpose of this research will be referred to as intentional daters. Each qualifying participant in this study reported starting their long-term romantic relationship between the months of March 2020 and December 2021. Ages of participants range from 22-69
and ages of their romantic partners range from 22-71. It is important to highlight that the majority of participants in this study were under the age of 28 and the majority of participants' partners were under the age of 37.

At the time of participation, relationships ranged in duration from 4 months to 2.4 years. The initial context of meeting their romantic partners varies from participant to participant (Appendix H). For a better understanding of how participants met their romantic partners, two participants met their partners online, two participants met their partners through mutual friends, four met their partner through various life experiences and three participants had known their partner before the pandemic started and began dating during the pandemic. In at least two of the three cases, the couple had been friends for at least four years before becoming romantically involved.

Table 3.1 Context of Participants Meeting their Current Romantic Partner

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Context of Meeting (n=11)</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Online</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Prior to Pandemic</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Life Experiences</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mutual Friends</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The following demographics were collected in hopes to better understand each participant's background. This collected data was not a factor in determining participants' level of satisfaction and did not play a factor in the overall exploration of understanding intentional dating during the pandemic in the current study. In the participant intake form (Appendix H), participants were asked to describe their current dating relationship, identify their own and their partner's gender and sexual orientation, and describe their own and their partner's race/ethnicity.
All qualifying participants reported being in a monogamous relationship. All participants identify as cisgender (non-trans) females and report that their partners identify as cisgender (non-trans) males. Among the 11 participants, 4 identify as bisexual and 7 identify as heterosexual. In the group of 11 reported partners, 1 identifies as bisexual, 1 identifies as Asexual and 9 partners identify as heterosexual (Table 3.2). Of the 11 participants, 3 identify as either Vietnamese, Korean American or Asian American and 8 identify as White/Caucasian. While 5 of the 11 partners identify as White and 6 of the 11 partners identify as White/Jewish, Mexican, Korean American, Asian American, White/Greek, and Indian (Table 3.2)

Table 3.2 Participant and Reported Partner Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant and Reported Partner Demographics</th>
<th>n</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Type of Relationship</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monogamous</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender (non-trans) Female</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reported Partner Gender</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Cisgender (non-trans) Male</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reported Partner Sexual Orientation</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asexual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Bisexual</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heterosexual</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participant Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>8</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vietnamese</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reported Partner Race/Ethnicity</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asian American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caucasian/White</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Greek/White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Indian</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Jewish/White</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Korean American</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mexican</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Confidentiality and Participant Protection

The records from this study were and will continue to be kept confidential. No individuals are identified in any reports or publications resulting from the study. Emails and personal information that were collected for the purpose of data organization remained separate from research data throughout the study. Individual identity was protected at all times. All artwork, tests, questionnaires, and transcribed material were coded by the researcher upon submission that matched the corresponding consent and permission to use artwork forms for organization and anonymity throughout data analysis. The forms were accessible to the researcher only, and stored in a private folder on an internal drive and separate external hard drive. All research information will continue to be kept by the researcher for three years (seven years if published) and used only for research purposes. Unless published, all artwork and testing information will be discarded after the three-year period. Participants were informed about confidentiality in the digital consent form and received a copy upon submission.

Noted Risk and Benefits

While participants were not directly compensated for participating in this research, there were still discernible benefits. The study encouraged and guided participants through a reflective process that allowed individuals to examine their own relationship and motivations during the prompted photography. The act of reflecting through positive art making activities, like photography, can facilitate self-reflection and promote growth, allowing individuals to gain a deeper understanding of themselves and the world around them.

The risks associated with participation in this study were considered minimal, and included possible discomfort if certain feelings or thoughts arose when creating art or responding to the survey questions. Potential risks included and were not limited to: reemergence of negative
emotions related to past relationships and reliving of traumatic events within a previous relationship. These risks were presented in the consent form as well as addressed directly in the study information on the curated Google site. In their debriefing, participants were provided with a list of free national online resources in case this occurred. The debriefing also included cost efficient online resources for individual counseling and relationship counseling (Appendix F). Participants were informed prior to beginning the study that their consent was given voluntarily without being coerced, and they may refuse to participate in any part of the study or withdraw at any time.

**Measures**

This study included four separate tools of measurement in order to address the various aspects of the proposed hypotheses. The study made use of a general demographic survey created for the purpose of this research to better understand how the participant identifies themselves and their relationship (Appendix B). Following the survey, participants were asked to complete the Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16) (Appendix C). The CSI is a 32-item measure of relationship satisfaction that has been developed into 16-item and 4-item scales for the purpose of various research topics. The CSI scales yield consistent convergent validity as well as excellent construct validity in assessing relationship satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI offers a valuable range of satisfaction with most partners, including same-sex relationships, and provides cross-cultural validity; making it the ideal scale to use with participants of various backgrounds in the current study (Kim et al., 2018; Pepping et al., 2019; Okhotnikov et al., 2020; Yekta et al., 2017). It should be noted that the CSI is a previously developed index and is available in the public domain to make use of in any research.
A retrospective survey addressing perceived relationship satisfaction in previous dating experiences prior to the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the motivation/intentionality to date during the pandemic was constructed for the present research (Appendix D). The retrospective survey includes four questions from an adapted version of the CSI-4 in order to address pre-pandemic relationship satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). This index was adapted and written in past tense to enable participants to reflect on past relationships, and it should be known that this measurement was not a validated measure due to the adaptation. The retrospective survey also included preliminary questions addressing dating intentionality and motivation as well as perceived satisfaction (Appendix D).

This research also made use of a prompted photography activity that was created to address themes of perceived relationship satisfaction and the perceived motivation behind intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic (Appendix E). The photography activity asked participants to use photography to reflect on their lived experiences and create metaphorical photo representations of these experiences. The photography activity asked participants follow up reflective questions and gave participants the opportunity to provide a title and description for their artwork.

Data Collection and Analysis

Data was gathered over a span of 4 months and all data was collected in a separate Google form for each respective step, including the participants' photograph submissions. The research study was accessible to participants in an online format on a Google website created for the present study. Data was collected using Google forms and stored in a private internal drive as well as an external hard drive. To ensure privacy, participants' personal data and identity was
stored in separate private files than the collected research data. The researcher maintained the security of these files and information at all times.

Information from the demographic survey was categorized and a simple inventory was gathered. Scoring for the CSI-16 followed the procedures of the index, which is a simple statistical method of adding up the respective numbers that correlate with the participants’ answers (Funk & Rogge, 2007). Higher numbers yield higher satisfaction rates and lower numbers yield lower satisfaction rates. The retrospective survey made for this study, contains reflective questions to address dating intentionality and motivation as well as previous relationship satisfaction. To evaluate previous relationship satisfaction, the CSI-4 was adapted and modified for the purpose of this study to address past tense circumstances. The scoring of these questions was based on the original CSI-4 and was used to make connections between the prompted photography activity responses and participants' current assessed relationship satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007).

The artwork from the prompted photography was viewed by the researcher to examine the photographs for connections and commonalities with the participants' responses to the respective prompts’ open ended questions. The artwork and responses were examined for emergent themes of dating intentionality and motivation, as well as current relationship satisfaction and pre-pandemic relationship satisfaction. The researcher analyzed how the participants responded throughout the study to different measurements alongside participants’ photographs to compare and contrast gathered information. Upon IRB approval, research and data gathering was carried out between the months of May 2022 and October 2022.
Required Documents

A. Informed Consent (Appendix A). Participants are expected to complete this form prior to beginning any other step in the research study.

B. Demographic Survey (Appendix B). Participants are asked to complete a demographic survey for the purpose of understanding the participants background and how they describe themselves and their relationship.

C. Couples Satisfaction Index CSI-16 (Appendix C). Participants are asked to complete the CSI-16 to evaluate their current relationship satisfaction.

D. Retrospective Survey (Appendix D). Participants are asked to complete a retrospective survey to evaluate pre-pandemic relationship satisfaction as well as their motivation and intentionality behind dating in the COVID-19 pandemic.

E. Prompted Photography Activity (Appendix E). Participants are asked to partake in a prompted photography activity in order to better understand the connection between relationship satisfaction and intentional dating.

F. Debriefing Statement and Resources (Appendix F). Participants are expected to read the provided debriefing statement and resources that are provided upon completing the study and final submission of artwork.
Figure 3.1 Review of Research Procedures

- Online Participant Recruitment
- Step One: Informed Consent
  - Participants read pre-participation information and are directed to Study Steps
  - Step Two: Demographic Survey
  - Step Five: Prompted Photography Activity
  - Step Six: Debriefing
  - Step Three: CSI-16
  - Step Four: Retrospective Survey
Chapter 4 Results

This qualitative study sought to examine three components of intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The first component the researcher explored was the potential increase in intentional dating during the COVID-19 pandemic. The second component the researcher sought to examine was the connection between relationship satisfaction and intentional dating. For the third component, the researcher explored how photography could be used to illuminate this connection between relationship satisfaction and intentional dating. The following chapter will expand upon these three components through reporting the findings and results of this research study. The researcher will identify common themes throughout participants submissions and connect these themes to the collected data.

Summary of Results

Through analysis of the results, COVID-19 was found to positively influence participants' dating intentions based on their written responses in the retrospective survey. The pandemic provided participants time for shifting their dating intentions and as a result, participants' motivation shifted to finding a relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous dating experiences. During the analysis, the researcher also found that participants reported a shift in dating intentions and participants' high CSI-16 scores reflect a positive connection between intentionality and relationship satisfaction. The combination of these results suggest that when participants shifted their dating intentions, they found a relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous dating experiences. Upon examination of participants prompted photography submissions, the researcher often found descriptive words in the participants’ follow-up question answers that could be represented within their images. This finding supports the idea that when given reflective tools such as a prompt to capture a
photograph, individuals can depict their relationship satisfaction or intentions through photography.

**Retrospective Exploration**

A retrospective survey was created for this study to examine whether intention to date increased during the COVID-19 pandemic. Reflective questions were included in this survey to explore each participant's dating intentionality and motivation. Using this data the researcher sought to answer the question: *Did COVID-19 influence intentionality behind romantic dating?* The retrospective survey findings revealed that COVID-19 positively influenced participant dating intentions. The pandemic gave participants the time to re-evaluate their dating intentions. This resulted in their motivation shifting to finding a relationship that satisfied their needs more so than their previous dating experiences.

During this portion of the survey participants were asked if they were previously in a relationship. In the current study, six of the 11 participants had been in a relationship prior to their current relationship. One described their previous relationship as casual while the other five described it as long term with a duration of two or more years. Among the 11 participants, five had not been in a relationship prior to their current one. These participants were prompted to describe their dating experiences before their current relationship. All five participants generally described their dating experiences as casual through online apps or as nonexistent (Appendix H). One of these five participants even described their experience as using dating apps in another country for seeking a companionship over a committed relationship.
Table 4.1 Participant Dating Demographics

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Dating Experiences Demographics</th>
<th># of Participants</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relationship Prior to Current Relationship</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual Relationship</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Long Term 2+ years</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>No Relationship Prior to Current Relationship</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experience Defined</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Casual</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Non-existent</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Modified CSI-4**

For this portion of the retrospective survey, the participants who were in a relationship prior to their current relationship were asked to complete an adapted version of the CSI-4. The CSI-4 consists of 4 questions that may suggest an individual's current satisfaction level. For the purpose of this study, the researcher modified the index to be in past tense in order to address the participants' past relationship satisfaction. The researcher also included follow up questions to support the modified CSI-4. Among the 6 participants that completed the modified CSI-4, scores ranged from 1-9 with the average being 5.5. Among the 6 participants, 2 participants received a satisfaction score of 9 and 1 participant received a satisfaction score of 1. In the validated CSI-4 scores can range from 0 to 21 to which scores of 14 and above indicate higher levels of satisfaction while scores falling below 13 suggest notable relationship dissatisfaction.
Table 4.2 Modified CSI-4 Scores

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants (n=6)</th>
<th>Modified CSI-4 Scores</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As a follow up to the first question of the adapted CSI-4, the 6 participants were asked to explain their overall happiness in their past relationship (Appendix H). Participants could share as little or as much as they wished. Several participants reported feeling unfulfilled, dissatisfied, and unhappy in their previous relationships. In addition, participants reported disagreements between partners regarding expectations for the relationship. At the end of the modified CSI-4 when participants were asked to explain the degree of satisfaction within their previous relationship, participants reported overall dissatisfaction suggesting a lack of relational needs being met. Furthermore, participants also report themes of lost identity and authenticity in their previous relationships (Appendix H).

**Retrospective Questions**

In this portion of the retrospective survey all participants were asked to reflect on their current and past dating experiences and provide written responses. These questions help to explore each participant's motivation and intentionality behind dating during the COVID-19 pandemic (Appendix I). Upon examining each participant's response, almost every individual expresses a shift in their own intentionality and motivation in relation to the COVID-19
pandemic. Common themes of intentionality that participants express address *stability, relational needs,* and *fulfillment.* When asked whether their intentions for dating during the pandemic were different from their intentions from dating pre-pandemic, one participant expressed:

Yes, I think because I became less interested in the initial rush/infatuation of meeting someone new and rather more invested in a sustainable relationship. A combination of my emotional maturity developing over the two years and multiple unfulfilling dating experiences likely made it easier to filter out what I did or did not want in a person (Appendix I).

Among the 11 participants, 8 expressed that the COVID-19 pandemic positively impacted their dating experience. Frequently in response to question 5 (Appendix I), participants expressed that the pandemic was able to offer a space for healing and time to slow down, while also enabling greater proximity to their new partner, whether that was being in the same place or spending more one-on-one time together. Analysis of participants' written responses revealed that COVID-19 positively influenced participants' dating intentions. As a result, participants' intentions shifted to finding a relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous dating experiences.

**Current Relationship Satisfaction**

This study utilized the 16-item Couples Satisfaction Index to assess participants’ current relationship satisfaction at the time of participation. As a measure of presumed relationship satisfaction, the CSI-16 can give a score between 0 and 81. When interpreting the level of satisfaction in a relationship scores above 52 indicate increased levels of satisfaction, while scores below 51.5 indicate significant dissatisfaction within the relationship. The average level of satisfaction for this study was a score of 74 with the highest score being an 80 and the lowest being a 60 (See Figure 4.1). These results indicate that at time of participation all qualifying participants reported high levels of satisfaction within their relationship.
Through analysis of the retrospective survey results and the results of the CSI-16, the researcher sought to examine the question: *Does dating intentionality have a positive connection to relationship satisfaction?* The researcher found that the shift in participants’ intentions and their high CSI-16 scores suggests a positive connection between intentionality and relationship satisfaction. This positive connection can also be demonstrated through the responses to question 4 on the retrospective survey, where participants were asked to reflect on how their current relationship meets their needs compared to their pre-pandemic dating experiences (Appendix I). When asked whether their current relationships satisfy their needs better than their pre-pandemic dating experiences all participants responded similarly with reporting higher satisfaction in comparison to their previous relationship. One participant stated:
Yes, completely. My new partner and I share many of the same ideas, thoughts, and needs. We both respect each other, enjoy making each other feel special and happy. He is willing to compromise on some things to make me happy and I am willing to do the same for him. We both have each other’s backs too. We make each other feel comfortable sharing our feelings and thoughts because we want the best for each other and respect boundaries (Appendix I).

Participants' responses to this question display themes of increased communication, mutual respect, and emotional intimacy. These results suggest that when participants shifted their dating intentions, they found a relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous relationship.

**Illuminating Connections with Photography**

In the final phase of the study, participants were asked to complete a prompted photography activity, where they received photo prompts and were asked follow up questions. This activity explored participants' motivations and intentions for dating during COVID-19. When analyzing participants' responses to the prompts, the researcher asked: *Can photography be used to depict participants' relationship satisfaction and motivation behind dating?* In reviewing participants' follow-up questions answers, descriptive words emerged within the participants responses that could also be identified within their photographs. This finding supports the notion that individuals can depict their relationship satisfaction or intentions through photography when given reflective tools such as prompts and explorative follow-up questions to take a picture.
Photo Prompt 1

For the first prompt participants were asked to capture a photo that represented how satisfied they felt in their current relationship. Participants were asked whether their photo accurately represented their current relationship satisfaction in the first prompt. Although, seven of the 11 participants responded in more detail to this follow-up question, themes of *Warmth*, *Happiness*, and *Comfort* commonly emerged from all participants' responses (Appendix J). Below are examples of how these three themes show up as participants describe how their image metaphorically represent their relationship satisfaction:
Participant shared:

**What did it feel like to create this image?**

It made me feel warm and fuzzy inside.

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**

My relationship feels comfortable and safe. I could describe it as being like a warm blanket, I feel like nothing can hurt me in this relationship and I trust my partner so wholly.
Participant shared:

**What did it feel like to create this image?**
I felt happy and warm

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**
Yes, my relationship is colorful, sweet, and such a breath of fresh air.
**Photo Prompt 2**

Similar to the first prompt, participants were asked to capture a photo that represented how satisfied they felt in their past relationship in the second prompt. The researcher asked participants how satisfied they were in their pre-pandemic relationship and if their image accurately portrayed this relationship satisfaction (Appendix K). Responses to the follow-up questions revealed themes of *Isolation, Loss of Identity,* and *Sadness.* In the following examples, participants responses emphasize these themes:
In a metaphoric sense, *do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?*

Absolutely. I thought I was satisfied in my last relationship but it ultimately made me lose myself. It was only through breaking their heart, as well as my own, that I could find myself again and feel like I could truly be satisfied. I was genuinely in love but it was bad for us both.

*Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?*

Not very. It was toxic and uncomfortable
In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?
Yes-- it was very isolating, but I surrounded myself with things that made me comfortable: my games and really comfy sweaters.

Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?
Not at all. It drained me.
Participant shared along with submission:

In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?

Yes, I felt like I was just another girl in their dating profile that they can just use for their ego then discard when they wanted. But I know my worth and I know that I’m not some jumbled up discounted furniture on clearance.

Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?

Not satisfied.
*Photo Prompt 3*

For the final prompt participants were asked to capture a photo that represented their intentions behind dating during the COVID-19 pandemic. They were asked to reflect on whether the motivation was driven by a past experience or an internal feeling before entering their current committed relationship. As participants expanded upon their intentions behind dating in the pandemic and explained how their image metaphorically represented these intentions, themes of *Support, Stability, Emotional Maturity, Trust* and *Personal Alignment* emerged within their responses (Appendix L). The following examples emphasize some of these themes that appear within the participants responses:
In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?

My intentions were like the ore dock in that I wanted something with another person that would be sturdy yet beautiful and different.

What were those intentions/motivations?

My intentions were to find someone I actually want to spend all my time with. I wanted a partner that would support me and never leave my side, even in a crazy pandemic. I ached for something stable but also fun.
**Title: “Close but so far”**

**Figure 4.8 Photo Submission from a Participant showing an image of a snail outside on the ground moving along a sidewalk.**

Participant shared along with submission:

*In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?*

I do! I'm self-sufficient in my own environment I feel most comfortable in, but it feels like I'm not quite reaching what feels like home to me.

*What were those intentions/motivations?*

I was motivated to start dating again in the pandemic because I didn't feel I was truly supported with the things I wanted to do--play trading card games, MMORPGs with someone in real life, do art--someone to share in my passions instead of in isolation. In my prior relationship, I was supported because someone shared the financial burdens with me but I was not fulfilled emotionally and we did not share common interests. I wanted to be myself with someone else.
Title: “A Life to Share”

Figure 4.9 Photo Submission from a Participant showing a photograph of an illustration hanging on the wall. The illustration is of two individuals sitting at the end of the dock looking out at the sea.

Participant shared along with submission:

**Description:**

The photo is an illustration piece by one of my favorite artists, Kokooma. I chose this photo because it encapsulates my intention for dating--sharing life's joys and burdens, and ending each day together, watching the sunset. What makes dating so special is that there is someone committed to starting and ending each day with you.

*In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?*

Yes

*What were those intentions/motivations?*

To find someone who is compatible and whom I can learn from, grow, and share life with.
Participants commonly used descriptive words within their responses that corresponded with components of their submitted images. The examples shared for the three prompted photography activities illustrate how individuals can use photography to illuminate and express their experiences when given the necessary reflective tools.

**Summary of Analysis**

In this chapter the researcher presented the results and key findings of this study. A retrospective survey of participants' dating intentions revealed that COVID-19 positively influenced their intentions. A positive relationship between intentionality and relationship satisfaction was observed when participants reported a change in dating intentions and scored high on the CSI-16; these results indicate that participants found a relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous relationship when they shifted their dating intentions. The researcher often identified descriptive words that could be represented in the participant's photography submissions, suggesting that individuals can express their relationship satisfaction or intentions through photography when given the necessary reflective tools.
Chapter 5 Discussion

This qualitative study was developed with the intentions of exploring the influence of the COVID-19 pandemic on intimate dating relationships. The study aimed to better understand and possibly illuminate intentional dating motivations and the connection to relationship satisfaction through the lens of photography. In this chapter the researcher will expand upon the results of this study as well as the findings in context with previously highlighted research. Limitations and validity of the study as well as implications for future research will also be highlighted.

Summary of the Findings

During this qualitative study, the researcher observed that COVID-19 positively affected participants' dating intentions. Additionally, through examining participants' reported change in dating intentions and their high scores on the CSI-16, this study emphasizes that dating intentionality is associated with relationship satisfaction. As a result of shifting their dating intentions, participants reported that their new relationships were more fulfilling than their previous ones. In addition, this study found that photography can illuminate dating intentions and relationships when individuals are provided with the necessary reflective tools. As participants visually expressed their feelings, their submitted photographs corresponded closely to their written responses and their results in the measures. The findings of this study are significant in the research field of intimate dating relationships because it furthers the understanding of how pandemic impacted dating trends.

Examining Key Findings & Existing Literature

In this study, participants reported that the pandemic provided them an opportunity to shift their own intentions behind dating and encouraged them to find what they truly wanted out of a partner. These results were in alignment with the findings of Garcia (2021) and Montanaro
et al. (2022), whose research suggests that COVID-19 is likely to influence and shift the
dynamics of relationships. For most participants, motivations shifted towards finding a
relationship that fulfilled their needs more than their previous relationships. It is also important
to recognize the findings of Candel and Jitaru (2021), and acknowledge that it is possible the
pandemic emphasized consciousness of being single for participants, which may have increased
the importance of stability and family commitment within their relationships. Consequently, this
consciousness may have ignited the drive for participants to find more meaningful connections
rather than fulfilling their inherent relational needs.

Although, reports within this study suggest that when individuals are provided an
opportunity to reflect on their need fulfillment they are more motivated to prioritize their own
needs in order for them to be met. Results from this study notably suggest that when individuals
shift their dating intentionality through prioritizing their own relational needs, they find
relationships that fulfill their needs more than their previous dating experiences. These results
support the research of Fleming and Franzese (2021) and Machia and Proulx (2019) who
highlight need fulfillment as a determining factor for relationship satisfaction, longevity, and
stability. Relationship longevity as discussed in both Fleming and Franzese (2021) and Machia
and Proulx (2019) research can also be a result of these intentionality shifts explored within this
study. The intentionality shifts, such as the ones examined, have the potential to lead to greater
longevity in the participants' new relationships due to the higher levels of satisfaction they have
reported.

The results of this study also provide insight into the use of photography as a research
tool in Art Therapy, as well as as a therapeutic tool for therapy. When participants were provided
with the tools for reflective processing, the researcher found that participants could describe and
thoughtfully analyze their images through prompted photography. This research supports the findings of Star and Cox (2008), who describe photography as a powerful tool for enhancing an individual's understanding of their beliefs, histories, and relationships. The findings of this research study are significant to the field of Art Therapy because it emphasizes the benefits of using prompted photography as a tool in the therapeutic space. Through its social nature, photography is able to connect individuals together and spark conversation, typically through the sharing of memories or beliefs, making it an ideal medium for use in art therapy (Kopytin, 2008). By providing individuals with prompts and follow-up questions, prompted photography can facilitate reflective processing, while at the same time providing creative freedom for individuals to express themselves through photography. Further enhancing an individual’s experience of using photography to understand their own beliefs and histories as Kopytin (2008) and Star and Cox (2008) discuss within their research.

**Limitations**

*Online platforms*

Initially, this study was conducted fully online to be more accessible to a wider audience and meet the social distancing guidelines of COVID-19. The desire to be more accessible resulted in the recruitment process becoming more challenging since most of it took place online, creating a limitation from the start. When resources within an online social platform are limited, it can be difficult to reach a wider population. As a result, a limited number of participants were recruited due to the study's reliance on peer networking.

*Sample Size*

The sample size available for this study presents limitations within the context of collected data as well as generalizability. While smaller sample sizes can offer a closer look at
participants' experiences in a qualitative study, they also result in fewer data points, making it more difficult to support the findings with statistics. Due to the limited sample size, data becomes less generalizable and cannot be representative of a wider population.

**Length of Study**

Due to the amount of steps involved, the length of this study could be a potential drawback. Initially, 15 participants signed up for this study, but only 11 of their submissions qualified, mainly due to incomplete participation. The recruitment process resulted in more than 15 individuals expressing interest but not signing up. It is possible that individuals decided not to take part in the study due to the time commitment it required. Among those who did not complete the study, incomplete prompted photography submissions were common. Due to the fact that many participants had to be reminded to complete this final step in order to be counted in the results, it is possible that they felt burnt out once they reached the end.

**Age Range**

The ages of participants range from 22-69 and the ages of their romantic partners range from 22-71. A majority of the participants were under the age of 28 and the majority of participating partners were under the age of 37. The data set does consist of an outlier with one participant being 69 and their partner being 71. This is important to highlight because it offers a small window of insight into how the pandemic impacted intentional dating within different generations of adults. This age gap also highlights a potential limitation because there is mainly one generation who participated in this study making the results less generalizable.

**Participant Demographics**

In terms of relationship, as well as gender and sexual orientation demographics this study has a limited diversity among the participating population. All qualifying participants in this
study reported that they identify as cisgender (non-trans) females and reported their partners as cis-gender (non-trans) males. All participants also reported being in a monogamous relationship. These demographics reflect less inclusive and generalizable results when considering populations within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. It is also important to highlight that the majority of qualifying participants reported themselves along with their partners being white. While there is some racial diversity within the participants and their partners, it is still limited diversity which is important to recognize within the discussion of limitations. With the racial diversity being limited it makes the results of this study less generalizable for populations of color. These reported demographics are helpful in identifying potential areas of further research that will be discussed further into the chapter.

**Photo requirements**

Before completing the final step, participants were not given any guidelines regarding what their photos should include. There were no clear guidelines about what could and could not be included in the photo or whether participants had to take the photos themselves. This may have caused a limitation within the dataset of photo submissions due to a lack of guidelines. Thus, it is more difficult to analyze the images for themes and commonalities. The context of many photos was lost due to the blurring of faces and details that could be personally identifiable. It should be noted that participants also submitted photos that were not originally their images or old photos that they had taken previously. Submission of past photos or photos that one resonates with could have altered the reflective process intended for each participant.

**Qualitative study**

To provide a more detailed analysis of the topic, the researcher conducted a qualitative study. Qualitative research enables the researcher to gain insight into the topic from the
participants' perspectives by focusing on individual differences. Research using qualitative methods can provide emotional and intimate insights that quantitative methods may not be able to provide. Qualitative studies, on the other hand, do not provide statistical results like quantitative research, making interpretations of qualitative data limited. Therefore, making the validity of results limited.

**Validity**

In research design, internal validity refers to the strength or limitations of the design itself. In this case, a sound and strong research method is needed (Leavy, 2017). To maintain consistency throughout the study, every participant received the same information. Although the research process was consistent, it was conducted online, so further observation by any means was limited. A number of threats to the validity of the research emerged, including selection bias, and history. Selection bias may be present within this research due to the recruitment process taking place through peer networking online. Implying that it is more than likely that the sample is not reflective of the general population as a whole. Perhaps a more representative sample could have been obtained if broader recruitment processes had been used. Since this study occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, history plays an important role in the validity of the results. Suggesting that if similar research took place in the future, the results of the study may be different.

Throughout the analysis of the study, the researcher used descriptive validity to maintain validity. In the case of an online study, descriptive validity implies that all facts, information, and experiences reported are true and not embellished or distorted by the researcher. This research also made use of the CSI-16 which yields consistent convergent validity as well as excellent construct validity in assessing relationship satisfaction (Funk & Rogge, 2007). The CSI offers a
valuable range of satisfaction with most partners, including same-sex relationships, and provides cross-cultural validity. (Kim et al., 2018; Pepping et al., 2019; Okhotnikov et al., 2020; Yekta et al., 2017)

**Implications for Future Research**

The purpose of this study was to establish a baseline for future research. The results of this study explore how COVID-19 impacted intimate dating relationships as well as the connection between relationship satisfaction and intentional dating. The research on intimate dating relationships and trends is limited in the field of romantic relationships. Furthering the research on dating trends in different cultures and populations would contribute to a broader set of research available to the field of romantic relationships. In the future this research would benefit from a larger sample size. Having a larger sample size would contribute to a more inclusive and generalizable data set. Which in turn would contribute to cross-cultural validity. Having a larger sample size may have also contributed to having participants from different generations. Currently, the sample size appeals to one maybe two generations. The results of this study also shed light on the use of prompted photography as a reflective tool. This research could be further explored in the future by evaluating different prompted photography measures and the various reflective processes available. The researcher also recommends exploring both the therapeutic process and the benefits of prompted photography in depth.
References


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https://time.com/6106565/pandemic-dating/


https://www.singlesinamerica.com/


https://doi.org/10.1177/0956797620972688


https://www.who.int/health-topics/coronavirus#tab=tab_1


https://doi.org/10.3389/fpsyg.2020.00901
Appendix A: Digital Informed Consent
Step (1/6): Informed Consent to Participate in a Research Study
This Document was adapted into a document from an online consent form

Project Title: Illuminating the Increase of Intentional Dating in the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Connection to Relationship Satisfaction through the Lens of Photography.

Student Researcher: Caitlin Carnegie

Contact Information for the Student Researcher:
caitlin.carnegie@students.dominican.edu

Principal Investigator and Supervisor of Student’s Research Project: Dominican University Art Therapy Professor, Dr. Erin Partridge, Ph.D., ATR-BC

Contact Information for the Supervisor: erin.partridge@dominican.edu

**Your email is only being collected for the purpose of data organization and your email will remain separate from your data throughout the research. Your identity will be protected at all times.**

Email*

Valid email

Qualification

To qualify as a participant for the current research study, you must have entered a romantic relationship between the months of March 2020 and December 2021, and are currently in the relationship.

To qualify as a participant for the current research study, you and your partner in said relationship must both be 18 years or older.

Are you and your partner 18 years or older?

- Yes
- No
Term of Relationship

To participate in this study you and your partner(s) must have started dating during March 2020-December 2021

Did your current romantic relationship start during the months of March 2020-December 2021?

● Yes
● No

Purpose and Background

This research project aims to illuminate the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 global pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction through the lens of photography. Specifically, the researcher intends to address the question of whether or not the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic caused individuals to reprioritize their relational needs in intimate relationships in order for them to be met and if intentional dating increased as an outcome. The research seeks to identify how photography can contribute to identifying the connection between a participant’s current and past relationship satisfaction with their motivation to date intentionally during the pandemic through prompted photography and reflective follow-up questions.

This research will be conducted by Caitlin Carnegie, a graduate student of Dominican University, under the supervision of Dr. Erin Partridge, Ph.D., ATR-BC, Associate Professor of Art Therapy Psychology at Dominican University.

Procedures

1. I have been asked to partake in a 5-part online research study that aims to illuminate the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 global pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction through the lens of photography. This study may take 45 minutes to 2 hours depending on how long I take between steps.
2. In voluntarily consenting to participate in this research study, I understand the following:
3. I understand that I will be asked to complete a brief demographic questionnaire of which will include contact information, general questions regarding me and my partner(s) orientation/identity/gender/age/ethnicity as well as relationship start date. I understand this information will be used for research purposes only and that my answers, personal data and name will remain anonymous.
4. I understand that following the brief demographic questionnaire, I will be asked to complete the Couples Satisfaction Index as a way for the researcher to evaluate my current relationship satisfaction. I understand that this information will be used for research purposes only and that my identity will remain anonymous.
5. I understand that following the Couples Satisfaction Index, I will be asked to complete a Retrospective Survey as a way for the researcher to evaluate any pre-pandemic relationships, relationship satisfaction. I understand that this information will be used for research purposes only and my identity will remain anonymous.
6. I understand that following the Retrospective Survey, I will be asked to partake in a Prompted Photography Activity as a way for the researcher to evaluate how photography
can be used to identify the connection between my current relationship satisfaction and my motivation to date during the COVID-19 pandemic. I understand that I will be asked to take photos with my mobile phone or any other digital photographing device. I understand that if any photos contain personal identifiable information (such as name, face, family members, personal information) the photo will be blurred/distorted in efforts to become unrecognizable to anyone beside the researcher.

7. The uploaded image may be reproduced for use in a research thesis and for possible presentation and/or publication. No identifying information will be on the artwork, and my identity will remain completely anonymous if the artwork is included in the Thesis and/or thereafter the study. Should this study be published or presented, only pooled analyses will be documented.

8. The uploaded photographs from the prompted photography activity will remain in the property of the researcher.

9. The photographs uploaded will be analyzed for connections by the researcher, and other art therapist graduate-level students at Dominican University.

10. I understand that all documents and documentation mentioned above will be stored by the researcher in external drives and locked computer drives for the purpose of this research. I understand that my identity will be kept separate from my personal data and for the purpose of the research I will be assigned a pseudonym upon submission. All research information will be kept by the researcher for three years (seven years if published) and used only for research purposes. Unless published, all artwork and testing information will be destroyed after the three-year period.

11. I understand that if I don’t submit all of the required steps for this study within 5 days of starting my participation or there is a data collection error identified then the researcher may contact me using the provided email above to remind me to submit the required steps. Unless at any time during the study I contact the researcher deciding to opt out of the study.

12. My consent is given voluntarily without being coerced. I may refuse to participate in this study or in any part of this study, and I may withdraw at any time, without prejudice or without biasing any future contact with Dominican University.

Risks

There are few risks involved in participating in this study. Since participants will be interacting with this study online, the study has a potential to undergo technology malfunctions. If this should happen during the study the participant is advised to troubleshoot the device to help reboot technology. The possible psychological risks of participating in this study are considered minimal and may include potential discomfort if certain thoughts or emotions come up during art creation or when responding to the survey questions. Should this occur, I will be provided with a list of free online mental health support resources at the end of the study.

The researcher will be available to contact via email for any issues that may arise and answer any questions from participants. Her contact can be found at the bottom of this form.

Confidentiality

The records from this study will be kept confidential. No individuals will be identified in any reports or publications resulting from the study. All artwork, tests, questionnaires, and
transcribed material will be coded with a pseudonym upon submission that matches the corresponding consent and permission to use artwork forms. All forms and pseudonym keys will be stored separately from all artworks, test, questionnaires, and transcribed material and will be accessible to the primary researcher and student researcher only, and stored in a private folder on an internal drive and separate external hard drive. All research information will be kept by the researcher for three years (seven years if published) and used only for research purposes. Unless published, all artwork and testing information will be destroyed after the three-year period.

Questions

Any questions about my participation in this study will be answered by Caitlin Carnegie, through emailing her  (caitlin.carnegie@students.dominican.edu)

Any specific questions or concerns about this study can be addressed by Dr. Erin Partridge, Ph.D., ATR-BC. reached by email (erin.partridge@dominican.edu)

Any complaints or concerns about this study should be addressed by the Dominican University Institutional Review Board for Protection of Human Participants (IRBPHP)

IRBPHP
Academic Affairs Department
50 Acacia Avenue, CA 94901
(415) 257-0167

Acknowledgment of Consent

Thank you for taking the time to understand the terms of participating in this study.

I have made a decision about my participation in this study:

- YES, I agree to participate in this research study and I agree to have my art as part of the study data
- NO, I do NOT agree to participate in this research study and have my art as part of the study data

Electronic Signature
First Name Last Name, Date (MM/DD/YYYY)

By typing my name and date below I hereby consent to be a participant in this study. By typing my name below, I understand and agree that this form of electronic signature has the same legal force and effect as a manual signature.
Appendix B: Demographics Survey
Thank you for participating in this research study, your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

**Your email is only being collected for the purpose of data organization and your email will remain separate from your data throughout the research. Your identity will be protected at all times.**

*Required*

Email*

Valid email

______________________________________

Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you and your partner/partners.

Prior to participating in this research, are all individuals in your current relationship 18 years or older?

- Yes
- No

**Age Verification**

*Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you and your relationship*
If you answered 'Yes' to the previous question, please list yours and your partner/partners date of birth (MM/DD/YYYY).

**Participant Intake Form**

*Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you and your relationship*

To be a participant in the present research your current relationship must have been initiated during March 2020 - December 2021. If your relationship started during this time frame please list the start date below. *

Please briefly explain how you met your current partner(s) *
Choose the option that best describes your current dating relationship

* Mark only one oval

- Monogamous
- Polyamorous
- Open

Choose the option that best describes you
*Mark only one oval.

- Cisgender (non-trans) Woman
- Transgender Woman
- Cisgender (non-trans) Man
- Transgender Man
- Non-binary

Choose the option that best describes your partner

*Mark only one oval.

- Cisgender (non-trans) Woman
- Transgender Woman
- Cisgender (non-trans) Man
- Transgender Man
- Non-binary

Choose the option that best describes your partner (please answer if you have more than one romantic partner)

*Mark only one oval.

- Cisgender (non-trans) Woman
- Transgender Woman
- Cisgender (non-trans) Man
- Transgender Man
- Non-binary

Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you and your relationship
Choose the option that best describes you *

*Mark only one oval.*

- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Other:

Choose the option that best describes your partner *

*Mark only one oval.*

- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Other:

Choose the option that best describes your partner (please answer if you have more than one romantic partner)

*Mark only one oval.*

- Bisexual
- Gay
- Heterosexual
- Lesbian
- Pansexual
- Other

*Please answer the following questions as they pertain to you and your relationship*

What race/ethnicity do you closely identify with? *
What race/ethnicity does your partner closely identify with? *

What race/ethnicity does your partner closely identify with? (please answer if you have more than one romantic partner)
Appendix C: Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16)
### Couples Satisfaction Index (CSI-16)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Extremely Unhappy</th>
<th>Fairly Unhappy</th>
<th>A Little Unhappy</th>
<th>Happy</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Extremely Happy</th>
<th>Perfection</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Please indicate the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship.</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not at all TRUE</td>
<td>A little TRUE TRUE</td>
<td>Some -what TRUE TRUE</td>
<td>Most ly TRUE TRUE</td>
<td>Almost Completely TRUE</td>
<td>Completely TRUE TRUE</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>--------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Our relationship is strong</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>My relationship with my partner makes me happy</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I have a warm and comfortable relationship with my partner</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>I really feel like part of a team with my partner</strong></td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
<td>Not at all</td>
<td>A little</td>
<td>Some-what</td>
<td>Most-ly</td>
<td>Almost</td>
<td>Completely</td>
<td></td>
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<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How rewarding is your relationship with your partner?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How well does your partner meet your needs?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

For each of the following items, select the answer that best describes *how you feel about your relationship*. Base your responses on your first impressions and immediate feelings about the item.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>5</th>
<th>4</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>1</th>
<th>0</th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>INTERESTING</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>BORING</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>BAD</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>GOOD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>FULL</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>EMPTY</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STURDY</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>FRAGILE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DISCOURAGING</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>HOPEFUL</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ENJOYABLE</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>MISERABLE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Retrospective Survey

Thank you for participating in this research study, your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

**Your email is only being collected for the purpose of data organization and your email will remain separate from your data throughout the research. Your identity will be protected at all times.**

*Required

Email *

The following questions are in reference to the most recent relationship you were in prior to your current relationship, whether it was a long-term relationship or it was a casual dating relationship/experience.

2. Were you in a relationship prior to your current relationship? * Mark only one oval

- Yes (Form will automatically Skip to question 3)
- No (Form will automatically Skip to question 5)

(Section 2) Retrospective Survey

3. Please describe this relationship below. Was it a casual dating experience or long term? *

4. What was the duration of this relationship? *
(Google Form will skip to section 4 for participants who were in relationships)

(Section 3) Retrospective Survey

The following questions are in reference to the most recent relationship you were in prior to your current relationship, whether it was a long-term relationship or it was a casual dating relationship/experience.

5. If you weren't in a relationship prior to your current one, please describe your dating experience before the COVID-19 Pandemic. *

(Google Form will skip to section 5 for participants who were not in a relationship pre-pandemic)

(Section 4) Retrospective Relationship Satisfaction Survey

The following questions are in reference to the most recent relationship you were in prior to your current relationship, whether it was a long-term relationship or it was a casual dating relationship/experience

6. All things considered, I want you to think about the degree of happiness for your past relationship. *

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Extremely Unhappy</th>
<th>Fairly Unhappy</th>
<th>A Little Unhappy</th>
<th>Happily</th>
<th>Very Happy</th>
<th>Extremely Happy</th>
<th>Perfect</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Ex</td>
<td>Face</td>
<td>A</td>
<td>Happ</td>
<td>Very</td>
<td>Ext</td>
<td>Perfect</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
7. Please explain your overall happiness in your past relationship. Share as little or as much as you would like.

8. Your past relationship was warm and comfortable

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all TRUE</th>
<th>A little TRUE</th>
<th>Some what TRUE</th>
<th>Mostly TRUE</th>
<th>Almost Completely TRUE</th>
<th>Completely TRUE</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9. How rewarding was your past relationship with your partner?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little what</th>
<th>Some what</th>
<th>Mostly what</th>
<th>Almost Completely</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

10. In general, how satisfied were you in your past relationship?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Not at all</th>
<th>A little what</th>
<th>Some what</th>
<th>Mostly what</th>
<th>Almost Completely</th>
<th>Completely</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
11. All things considered, please explain how satisfied you were in your past relationship. You can share as little or as much as you would like.

(Section 5) Intentionality for Dating During the COVID-19 Pandemic

12. Given your pre-pandemic dating experience, what motivated you to date during the pandemic? *

13. What were your intentions for dating during the COVID-19 Pandemic? *

14. Were your intentions for dating during the pandemic different than they were when dating pre-pandemic? If yes, how and why did they change? *

15. Do you feel like your current relationship satisfies your needs more than your pre-pandemic dating experiences? If yes, how so? *

16. Do you feel like the COVID-19 pandemic positively impacted your dating experience? If yes, how so? *

17. Do you feel like the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted your dating experience? If yes, how so? *
Appendix E: Prompted Photography Activity
Step (5/6): Prompted Photography

Thank you for participating in this research study, your time and effort is greatly appreciated.

**Your email is only being collected for the purpose of data organization and your email will remain separate from your data throughout the research. Your identity will be protected at all times.**

* Required

Email*

Valid email

The following prompts are intended to help you reflect on your current and pre-pandemic relationships or dating experience as well as your intentionality behind dating during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please submit a photo for each prompt and answer the questions that follow. *There is no right or wrong way to do these prompts, you are encouraged to get creative*

You will be given 3 photo prompts and asked to upload a digital image for each prompt. For each prompt you will be asked 6 brief questions. Please read the question carefully and take your time.

Current Relationship Prompt (1/3)

- Think about your current relationship.
- Think about your overall happiness in the relationship.
- Think about how comfortable your partner(s) makes you feel
- Think about how rewarding the relationship is.
• Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents how satisfied you feel with your relationship and what your relationship feels like to you. *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*
1. Please give your photo a title
2. Please provide a brief description or anything that you would like the researcher to know about your photo.
3. What did it feel like to create this image?
4. How many images did you create before you submitted this one?
5. In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?
6. Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?

**Pre-pandemic Relationship Prompt (2/3)**

- Think about the most recent relationship/dating experience you were in prior to your current relationship whether it was casual or long-term
- Think about your overall happiness in that relationship/experience
- Think about how comfortable your partner(s) made you feel
- Think about how rewarding the relationship/experience was.
- Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents how satisfied you felt in that relationship and what that relationship felt like to you.
  *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*

1. Please give your photo a title
2. Please provide a brief description or anything that you would like the researcher to know about your photo.
3. What did it feel like to create this image?
4. How many images did you create before you submitted this one?
5. In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?
6. Overall, how satisfied were you in your pre-pandemic relationship?

**Intentionality for Dating During the COVID-19 Pandemic Prompt (3/3)**

- Think about your current relationship and your pre-pandemic relationships.
- Think about your overall satisfaction in these relationships.
- Think about your needs and whether these relationships have met those needs.
• Think about your intentions behind dating during the pandemic.
• Think about your motivation behind maintaining a long-term relationship during the pandemic.
• Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic. Was it a past experience? Was it an internal feeling? What motivated you to start a committed relationship. *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*

1. Please give your photo a title
2. Please provide a brief description or anything that you would like the researcher to know about your photo.
3. What did it feel like to create this image?
4. How many images did you create before you submitted this one?
5. In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?
6. What were those intentions/motivations?

You have completed the prompted photography.

The following questions are optional. You can take time to answer these questions or submit the form and return to the participation website.

1. What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?
2. Do you have previous experience with photography? If so, how often do you partake in the activity?
3. Anything else you would like to share or make known to the researcher?
Appendix F: Debriefing Statement
You have completed all of the steps for this current research study! The following sections include the study debriefing and available mental health resources.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION

Debriefing Statement

Thank you for your participation in this research study on Illuminating the Increase of Intentional Dating in the COVID-19 Pandemic and its Connection to Relationship Satisfaction through the Lens of Photography.

The present research study aims to illuminate the increase of intentional dating during the COVID-19 global pandemic and its connection to relationship satisfaction through the lens of photography. The proposed research intends to address the question of whether or not the reality of the COVID-19 pandemic caused individuals to reprioritize their relational needs in intimate relationships in order for them to be met and if intentional dating increased as an outcome. The researcher seeks to identify how photography can contribute to identifying the connection between a participants current and past relationship satisfaction with their motivation to date intentionally during the pandemic through prompted photography and reflective follow up questions.

As presented in new research, over the course of the pandemic how we find and maintain intimate connections has changed. Your participation was important in better understanding how
the pandemic has impacted how we find and maintain intimate connections and how dating
trends have shifted during these unprecedented times.

Final results will be available from the student researcher, Caitlin Carnegie, by January, 1
,2023.

You may submit your email information below to receive an email copy of the final
report. All results will be grouped together; therefore, individual results are not available.

Your participation, including your name and answers, will remain confidential, even if the
report is published.

If you have any additional questions regarding this research, please contact

Student Researcher: Caitlin Carnegie (caitlin.carnegie@students.dominican.edu)

Supervisor of Student’s Research Project: Dominican University Art Therapy Professor,
Dr. Erin Partridge, Ph.D., ATR-BC (erin.partridge@dominican.edu)

YES. I would like to receive an email copy of the final study results that will be available
after January 1, 2023.

Please enter a valid email address that you would like the researcher to use when sharing
the results.

National Resources

FREE National Resources:
National Suicide Prevention Lifeline:

- Website: https://suicidepreventionlifeline.org/
- Phone Number: 1-800-273-TALK (8255) for English, 1-888-628-9454 for Spanish

Crisis Text Line

- Text SIGNS to 741741 for 24/7, anonymous, free crisis counseling

National Domestic Violence Hotline

- Website: https://www.thehotline.org/
- Phone Number: 1-800-799-7233 or text LOVEIS to 22522

National Sexual Assault Hotline

- Website: https://rainn.org/
- Phone Number: 1-800-656-HOPE (4673)

Trans Lifeline

- Website: https://translifeline.org/
- Phone Number: 1-877-565-8860 (para español presiona el 2)

Relationship Support, 5 places to find support that you may not have known about:

- https://www.joinonelove.org/learn/5-places-for-help-may-not-known/

Cost Efficient Online Counseling Services

Individual or Relationship Counseling:

- Better Help Online Therapy
  - https://www.betterhelp.com/get-started/
Thank you again for your support and participation in this research study. If you know of other eligible individuals who are interested in being a participant please direct them to the Study's website.
Appendix H: Participant Intake Raw Data
Appendix H includes the raw data collected from participants during the participant intake form. Some written responses reflect answers of participants who were not in a relationship prior to pandemic and some responses reflect answers of participants who were in a previous relationship.

Question #1 and Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Please briefly explain how you met your current partner(s)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Tinder”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“online”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Met in college through a mutual friend”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I moved to a new location for a new job. I moved into a shared home and he was one of my housemates!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Met through a religious organization, playing sports”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“through a family friend”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We met at an overnight camp but didn’t start talking until the end of March 2020 through Facebook, Instagram, and later Snapchat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We met through church 4 years ago and have been friends for a while.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“At school before the pandemic”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We met in an undergraduate class at University and were friends for 5 years before we started dating.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“At a 6 am Jiu Jitsu class”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question #2 and Participant Responses

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>If you weren't in a relationship prior to your current one, please describe your dating experience before the COVID-19 Pandemic.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I was using dating apps in a different country (Korea) so it would be more for companionship than for a committed relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nonexistent, I was focused on school and didn't want to be in a relationship at the time”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I have been on dates but was not particularly interested in having a romantic relationship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Non existent”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was casually dating before my current relationship. I was not interested in or seeking serious relationships. When I met my current partner I wasn't thinking about a long-term relationship.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Question #3 and Participant Responses

*Please explain your overall happiness in your past relationship. Share as little or as much as you would like.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I was not fulfilled emotionally and my partner did not want to commit”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Psychologically abusive, not confident, low sex-drive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t think I was mentally ready to be in a long-term relationship, my expectations for a relationship were unrealistic and my mental health issues really prevented me from being a good partner and from fully enjoying a relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Looking back, I was so unhappy. I couldn’t be myself around my partner or my family. They followed a career path I fundamentally disagree with and it showed me all along that it was bad. We were mean to each other, I was sexually assaulted, and they were possessive.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Very happy when doing activities and generally fun things together. Very strong attraction but very unsatisfied with important/serious elements, or expectations of the relationship (loyalty, trust, effort, responsibility)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was not a good fit, but was fine while it lasted.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Question #4 and Participant Responses

*All things considered, please explain how satisfied you were in your past relationship. You can share as little or as much as you would like.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Only partially”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I lost myself in the relationship, hid my interests, was not true to my personal values of learning and growth.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don’t think I could have ever been satisfied with my past relationship because what I needed could not have been given in a relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wasn’t satisfied at all, maybe only sexually which doesn’t even matter to me really. They held me back from pursuing things I would’ve liked to have done in college and were overall detrimental to my mental health”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was not satisfied. I was constantly feeling like my feelings were not considered, I did not feel special, and I felt overbearing for wanting to do special things together. I did not feel like my feelings or thoughts were respected or important, and we were not on the same page.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We had fun. Him more so than me.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix I: Retrospective Survey Raw Data
Appendix I includes the raw data collected from participants in response to question 1-6 in the retrospective survey.

**Question #1 and Participant Responses**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Given your pre-pandemic dating experience, what motivated you to date during the pandemic?</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I moved to Marin towards the end of the pandemic and thought I might meet more like minded men here.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Getting back into hobbies and someone to have fun with.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It was honestly a very spur of the moment decision as my partner lives across the country. We had been talking for about a month before the pandemic and then as things started shutting down we just realized that we would rather go through it together, so I flew out to stay with him.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Nothing actually, it was kind of on accident. I left my previous partner in the pandemic and found my current one about 2 months later. I guess the pandemic inspired me to go for what I want and not take anything less than what I deserve”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was not open to dating during the pandemic, but in casually hanging out with my now-boyfriend who was first my housemate, I felt what it was like to have fun and be around someone who wanted to be around me as much as I wanted to be around them. Things were and are easy together and fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We started casually seeing each other before the pandemic, and it escalated very quickly as we both felt incredibly sure that we would be very happy in a long term relationship together. The pandemic sped up the trajectory of our relationship, but that was just fine with us.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Settling back at home in California provided more stability and permanence for potential relationships. It seemed like better timing and circumstances for an intentional relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“During the quarantine, I had a lot more time to catch up with people over text and phone calls. This was when I started talking to my now boyfriend more, and we slowly built a connection. We were also studying together on Zoom or Facetime because we were in the same class that semester.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I wasn't looking to particularly enter a romantic relationship. I just happened to foster a deeper connection with someone and it led to a relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had more time and knew what I wanted in a relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I was not interested in dating. During the pandemic, I was living with my family and not supposed to see anyone else due to the quarantine orders. My now husband would drive out (I lived an hour away from his house) to see me and we would hang out sometimes, right at the beginning of the pandemic. I would sneak out of the house to see him. At first, for several months, there was nothing romantic. We were just friends. We would talk about the world, wrestle (we both like to grapple), and go for walks or drives. We were maybe a bit flirty, but for about two-three months nothing romantic occurred.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Question #2 and Participant Responses

**What were your intentions for dating during the COVID-19 Pandemic?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“I didn't want to date during the pandemic until August 2021. My intentions were to meet</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a committed, compatible, love who was more fun than trouble”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Started off as wanting a snuggle buddy, but wanted to feel less alone.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Initially we just wanted to make it through what we thought was going to be a two-week</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>quarantine (lmao). But then when we realized the pandemic was going to be much longer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>than 2 weeks, so we decided to get more serious and just get through it.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Finding something stable and comfy. something that felt good. I just wanted to be with</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone I liked being around all the time (especially because of quarantining)”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I did not intend to date anyone”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We fell in love.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Desire for a committed relationship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I had no intention of dating during the pandemic, but it just happened that way!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I didn't have any other intentions other than the fact that I liked this person and wanted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to get to know them more.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Exploring what I like and don’t.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I realized, near the beginning of the pandemic, that I no longer wanted to waste my time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>with people who weren't worth it. I was hanging out with a lot of people who were negatively</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>impacting my mental health. I started to cut ties with these people and only focus on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>people who made me feel good about myself.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Question #3 and Participant Responses

**Were your intentions for dating during the pandemic different than they were when dating pre-pandemic? If yes, how and why did they change?**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participant Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, I felt more aware that I could have a truly worthwhile romantic relationship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, I wanted to find someone that was more aligned with my interests while I was holed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>up.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“There was over a year gap between my prior relationship and my current relationship and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>I didn’t date at all or have intentions for dating during that time. But my prior</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>relationship happened kind of by accident? I wasn't looking to date but basically fell</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>into a relationship with very little intention. So, my current relationship was just</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>more intentional in general. I think the fear/panic surrounding the pandemic had a lot</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to do with it, it just made everything much more serious very quickly and almost forced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>us to confront feelings for each other head on.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I didn't want to fool around, I wanted something real and long lasting. dating pre-pandemic,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>that wasn't as much of a deal breaker”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, before the pandemic, I was in a long term relationship. When that ended right</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>before the pandemic, I was open to dating and having fun and experimenting new events</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>or activities with new people. When the pandemic hit, there were no opportunities to go</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>out anywhere, I did not want to bring anyone to my families home, and I did not want</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>to be in a relationship with anyone for two reasons: I enjoyed being single at this time</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>and I was planning on moving away for new job opportunities.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes. If it weren’t for the pandemic, I would’ve been more cautious about entering another</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>long term relationship so quickly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, I think because I became less interested in the initial rush/infatuation of meeting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>someone new and rather more invested in a sustainable relationship. A combination of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>my emotional maturity developing over the two years and multiple unfulfilling dating</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>experiences likely made it easier to filter out what I did or did not want in a person.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
"My intentions weren't different at first, but slowly I started feeling more lonely and kind of dependent on the interactions I had online with my friends and bf. It definitely had to do with the fact that we were all stuck indoors with nothing to do/no physical social interactions."

"Not particularly. I've never been interested in dating just for the sake of it and have been content being single. I think I still feel that way."

"Yes, my expectations for what I want in a partner changed. The less I spent actively looking and just living my life and meeting people I found the right people for me. These people completely changed my expectations and standards for in a partner in a good way."

"Before the pandemic, I would hang with just about anyone. During/after the pandemic, I became more selective of who I chose to spend my time with. I didn't want my time wasted, and I didn't want to feel bad about myself based on other people's opinions of me."

---

**Question #4 and Participant Responses**

**“Do you feel like your current relationship satisfies your needs more than your pre-pandemic dating experiences? If yes, how so?”**

"Yes! My current relationship is incredible. We are wonderful lovers, have a great deal of emotional intimacy, and have a lot of fun together."

"Yes, we have the same love languages."

"Yes! I worked on myself a ton between relationships and worked through a lot of stuff from my past and a lot of my mental health issues which really made me ready to have a healthy relationship."

"Absolutely. my partner and i got married and i have never felt so loved or supported"

"Yes, completely. My new partner and I share many of the same ideas, thoughts, and needs. We both respect each other, enjoy making each other feel special and happy. He is willing to compromise on some things to make me happy and I am willing to do the same for him. We both have each other’s backs too. We make each other feel comfortable sharing our feelings and thoughts because we want the best for each other and respect boundaries."

"Absolutely yes. In literally every way."

"Yes. My current relationship is emotionally healthy, communicative, and is worth the patience, time, and commitment to making it work. I learned how to be a team, share life experiences with someone else, and enjoy their company--whereas in my pre-pandemic dating experiences, I was less invested, interested, and wanted more independence and distance from the people I was meeting."

"Yes, a few years before 2020, I was on dating apps and I feel like that wasn't great for my mental health as it made me feel insecure and doubt myself. I never really went on dates because I wasn't sure if I could trust people on the apps. My current relationship feels secure and I feel safe with my partner."

"I would say so? The people I have briefly met in the past don't understand me as well as my current partner does."

"I didn’t have a prior relationship to compare it to."

"Yes yes and yes. My current relationship is my life. I was married in February, and we just had our first baby, a girl, two weeks ago. My husband supports me, encourages me, and lets me be the best version of myself that I can be. The people I was with before, they would put me down, make me feel unsure of myself, and keep me guessing about how they were feeling about me. I know where I stand with my husband. I know that he loves me. I know that I love him. He has never played games with me or messed with my mind. He makes me happy."
## Question #5 and Participant Responses

Do you feel like the COVID-19 pandemic positively impacted your dating experience? If yes, how so?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Response</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>“Probably. I spent most of COVID not in a relationship. I did school, art and learned to play pickleball. I actually had a lot of fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I feel like COVID-19 was irrelevant to my dating experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Because we are otherwise long-distance, being stuck in the same place because of covid for 10 months was a silver lining in some ways. Having so much in-person time gave us a chance to build a really solid relationship foundation which we would not have had the opportunity to do long-distance.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“yes!! we had to get more creative with dates and spend a lot more time outside/with no one but each other since restaurants, bars, etc were closed. i feel that it brought us together in a more special way”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Individually, the pandemic did positively impact my experiences in some ways. I was able to set aside much more time for myself to heal from my past relationship and I was able to have space to forgive. The pandemic also led me to cut ties with a person I casually dated in February 2020, which would not have been a good relationship to continue on in. Therefore, the pandemic really came at a good time for me in terms of relationships.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I’m not sure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, I don't think I would have met my partner if it weren't for COVID because of the timing (he came back home from college due to online classes), and the smaller group of people playing basketball allowed for more one-on-one interactions. It also made us be more intentional about our hangouts, for example, scheduling appointments to go on dates.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, the pandemic slowed everything down. I was able to take things slow with my bf and really get to know him, like what he liked and disliked. We chatted about the most random things, and it was actually nice not seeing each other every day because it gave time for us to miss each other.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would say so. If it hadn't been for the pandemic, both my partner and I would have definitely made different decisions that would have made it difficult for this relationship to happen. It is nice to have someone by your side during hard times.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, with introspection, I discovered what I truly desire in a partner radically different from my unrealistic rigid standards”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, the pandemic made me re-evaluate how I was spending my time and who I was spending it with.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Question</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Do you feel like the COVID-19 pandemic negatively impacted your dating experience? If yes, how so?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“no.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I think it made me more co-dependent.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“The constant stress of the pandemic definitely puts a strain on our relationship because it is just an ever-present stressor that we have to deal with but can't really do anything about. It also makes it very stressful to travel to see each other which can be very difficult.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“not at all”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“It did have some negative impacts. Since there were no places to go, the couple dates I went on were often in the persons home, which created a more comfortable and private atmosphere which was not ideal for first dates. That caused me to make decisions I would have not made if the option was not present. The pandemic also lead me to reconnect with my ex for several casual lunches, which was positive overall as it gave me closure, but difficult emotionally. it was something I would not have done if I was not home due to the pandemic forcing me to move back home.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Maybe. It didn’t necessarily negatively impact our dating experience, except for perhaps not allowing us to do things together out in the world that we would’ve done otherwise.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“We weren't really able to go on dates or hangout as much as we wanted the first year together.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I don't think the pandemic negatively impacted my dating experience.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“No”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix J: Raw Data from Photo Prompt 1
Appendix J Includes raw data collected from participants in photo prompt 1.

Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents how satisfied you feel with your relationship and what your relationship feels like to you. *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Image](image) | **Description**<br>“I'm observing my partner throwing baseballs at clowns at a bowling alley arcade while reflecting on the fun we had together earlier that night.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**<br>“I felt utter joy. I love having fun with him, but I also adore watching him in his own world and enjoy himself.”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?**<br>“Absolutely. It is blatantly apparent that my partner adores me and it never waivers in my mind because he constantly shows me with his words and his actions. We have an absolute blast smiling and laughing together and are able to be our most true, authentic selves around each other. The fact that I'm not present in this image facing the camera directly demonstrates how I'm living in the moment and admiring his child-at-heart nature-- letting him have his fun separate of myself.”

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?**<br>“I am very fulfilled. We have a strong bond, we grow together, and flourish in our common interests.”

Title: “Inside and Out”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Title: “Sunset on the Beach”**

**Description**
“This photo was taken on a beach near my childhood home, a month before I gave birth to my daughter.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**
“I felt happy. A mother of a friend, who is a professional photographer, offered to take pregnancy photos of myself and my husband. I had never done anything like this before, and I am usually very self conscious of how I look in photos (especially then because I felt so huge and super pregnant). The experience turned out to be amazing. I spent an excellent hour with the love of my life, laughing and smiling, enjoying being at one of my favorite places in the world.”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?**
“Yes, the sun shining behind us, the way he is looking at me, walking barefoot in the sand, just thinking about it makes me smile.”

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?**
“I couldn't be happier.”

| **Description**
| “Photo was taken recently at a lake house that is very special to us.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**
“Joyful”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?**
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Title: “Warmth”</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</strong></td>
<td>“Very”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“This is a photo of our &quot;firstborn&quot; swaddled in a cozy little blanket burrito.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td>“It made me feel warm and fuzzy inside.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphorical sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
<td>“My relationship feels comfortable and safe. I could describe it as being like a warm blanket, I feel like nothing can hurt me in this relationship and I trust my partner so wholly.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</strong></td>
<td>“I am very satisfied. We both have things we need to work on, but part of the fun is growing together and communicating.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: “Comfort”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“A beautiful sunset at the beach for Valentine’s Day this park year.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td>“Happiness”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphorical sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image and Title</td>
<td>Questions and Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: “I Heart It”</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</td>
<td>“Very”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“Early morning is when I engage in my comfort routines and rituals to ease my anxiety for the rest of the day. Watching the sun rise is a representation of hope, new beginnings, and safety, since we can always expect it to rise again the following day. This is what it feels like to be in my relationship—to know that he will be there each morning to greet me, support me, and listen to me throughout the rest of the day.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did it feel like to create this image?</td>
<td>“It felt comforting.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</td>
<td>“Very”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image and Title</td>
<td>Questions and Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
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</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>“My bf and I like to study at coffee and tea shops. We spend most of our time studying and drinking coffee and tea so I think this image is very fitting to symbolize how I feel about my relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td>“I felt happy and warm.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
<td>“Yes, my relationship is colorful, sweet, and such a breath of fresh air.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</strong></td>
<td>“Very Satisfied”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Title: “Flower Power”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>“Orchids often symbolize both beauty and strength. This orchid that sits in my home, in particular, has stayed healthy and vibrant longer than any Orchid I’ve seen before and with very little maintenance or special care. This felt like an artistic expression of my relationship.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td>“I thought deeply about the characteristics of my relationship before creating the image. I think it is strong and beautiful, like this orchid. The two flowers are connected by their root, but flower at a healthy distance with room to grow. There could be more active care, which would decrease the number of smaller dwindling leaves and make the plant stronger, but it has a”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
<td>“Yes, my relationship is colorful, sweet, and such a breath of fresh air.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</strong></td>
<td>“Very Satisfied”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Title: “Duality of an Orchid”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>strong base and continues to grow no matter what. “</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Yes, completely.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“Satisfied more than average, but could be even more.”</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Description</td>
<td>“We love playing pickleball, cuddling, and being together”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What did it feel like to create this image?</td>
<td>“Fun”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</td>
<td>“Yes”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</td>
<td>“Extremely”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Title: “A Little Wonky, A Lot In Love”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Image of a pink hippopotamus plushie](image) | **Description**
“This is a pink hippo plushie that my partner bought me last time we were at IKEA buying a dresser for his apartment. The next day I surprised him by building the dresser while he was at work”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**
“Nice! It made me smile to remember the story behind the hippo. It sits on my desk every day, but I rarely take time to think about it. I was glad to take a moment to appreciate our relationship.”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?**
“Yes! Obviously, I see the story behind the photo when I look at it and I think the story represents my relationship satisfaction. Without the story, I think the photo represents having something light-hearted and fun as the hand is holding a cute stuffed animal, so even devoid of the story I think the image itself is a good representation.”

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?**
“Very! I feel like we meet each other's needs well, we communicate well and thoroughly, and it is so full of joy and laughter.”

Title: “Pink Hippopotamus”
Title: “Feels Like Springtime”

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I took this photo of a painting I did back when I was in high school”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I just took a picture of the closest thing to me in my space right now that represents my relationship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I guess so. I was really proud of this painting when I first created it, and I am really proud of our relationship”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your current relationship?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>“I would say I am pretty satisfied”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix K: Raw Data from Photo Prompt 2
Appendix K includes raw data collected from participants in photo prompt 2.

Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents how satisfied you felt in that relationship/experience and what that relationship/experience felt like to you. *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Image with Description](image.png) | **Description**<br>“This is a selfie. I'm a big gamer, so I tend to stay up all night playing games to take my mind off the hard days and thoughts that fuel my overthinking/ anxiety.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**<br>“I tried to recreate how indifferent and numb I felt. My self- esteem was very low in my last relationship, so I barely took photos of myself. I couldn't stand to see myself in an image. It brought up some terrible memories of how I was emotionally abused, and I began to feel anxious that my current partner would be the same way though I know they would never make me feel like my last partner.”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**<br>“Yes-- it was very isolating, but I surrounded myself with things that made me comfortable: my games and really comfy sweaters.”

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**<br>“Not at all. It drained me.”

Title: “Late Night”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Title:** “Purple/Blue Split” | **Description**
“The original photo was taken close to the date I met the previous person I was in a relationship with. The purple edit was made today, along with the collage of the two photos.”

What did it feel like to create this image? 
“Okay; a little sad”

In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction? 
“For the most part, yes”

Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship? 
“Somewhat satisfied”

| **Description**
“Overall, my previous relationship was very hot and cold. Although there were many happy times, the emotions were so extreme - Extreme love and happiness and extreme sadness and anger.”

What did it feel like to create this image? 
“It felt a bit funny, comedic. But true.”

In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction? 
“yes.”

Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship? 
“Unsatisfied” |
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th><strong>Image and Title</strong></th>
<th><strong>Questions and Responses</strong></th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **Title: “Hot & Cold”** | **Description**  
N/A  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
N/A  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
N/A  
**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**  
N/A |
| | **Description**  
“I’ll take solitude and peace over toxicity and forced connections. Any day.”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
N/A  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
N/A  
**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**  
N/A |
| **Title: N/A** | **Description**  
“This feels like a bit of a cheat because it's an art print in my house, but I wanted to make sure you could see my reflection.”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“Introspective”  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
“Absolutely. I thought I was satisfied in my last relationship but it ultimately made me lose myself. It was only through breaking their heart, as well as my own, that I could find myself again and feel like I could truly be

Title: “Finding Myself”

Self.” |

Title: “Losing Game”

Title: “Love”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Image and Title</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions and Responses</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title: “Alone”</strong></td>
<td><strong>satisfied. I was genuinely in love but it was bad for us both.”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?</strong></td>
<td><strong>“not very. it was toxic and uncomfortable”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>“felt alone in the relationship”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td><strong>“sad”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
<td><strong>“yes”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?</strong></td>
<td><strong>“not at all”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Title: “Lifeless”</strong></td>
<td><strong>“The photo represents how I felt about dating before my current relationship. I chose the title &quot;Lifeless&quot; because I felt uninterested, drained, and treated dating like a task more than out of willingness and curiosity. I thought that these experiences were a problem within myself rather than incompatibility.”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td><strong>“The photo represents how I felt about dating before my current relationship. I chose the title &quot;Lifeless&quot; because I felt uninterested, drained, and treated dating like a task more than out of willingness and curiosity. I thought that these experiences were a problem within myself rather than incompatibility.”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td><strong>“It felt fitting. I feel like the image does encapsulate the suffocation I felt from my previous dating experiences.”</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Image and Title</td>
<td>Questions and Responses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>-------------------------</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ![Image](image.png) | **In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
“Yes”  

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**  
“Not very satisfied, pretty much given up on dating in general” |

**Description**  
“I've been working all day, I'm dirty, I need a shower.”  

**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“Bleh, unhappy, negative, ugly, dirty, no-good, very bad”  

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
“Yes. Before my current relationship, I was very unhappy. I was unhappy with my life choices, with my family circumstances, with the people I spent time with. When I realized I could wash them out of my life (just like I will wash my feet later), I was so so so much happier.”  

**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**  
“very unhappy”  

Title: “Dirt”
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| ![Image](somethingsarenotmeanttobe.png) | **Description**  
“N/a”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“It was funny”  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
“Yes. I tried but it didn't work out. Oh well”  
**Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?**  
“Not very satisfied” |
| “Some Things Are Not Meant To Be” | |
| ![Image](cheapfurniture.png) | **Description**  
“I thought it was funny how everything was so cluttered in that area and how it was such an organized mess. It reminded me of how although my past dating experiences seemingly were pretty on the surface (handsome dudes, etc), it was just a big mess.”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“Ironically at peace with myself. I just felt the whole thing was funny”  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?**  
“Yes, I felt like I was just another girl in their dating profile that they can just use for their ego then discard when they wanted. But I know my worth and I know that I'm not some” |
<p>| “Cheap Furniture” | |</p>
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<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>jumbled up discounted furniture on clearance.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not satisfied”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><img src="Image" alt="Wrong Journal" /></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“My journal that a friend gave me when I started therapy shortly after my last relationship ended with a page torn from a different notebook placed inside.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Sad. It made me reflect on a difficult time in my life and it was challenging to try and represent that in an image”</td>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your previous relationship satisfaction?</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Yes, the photo is of some blank pages from various sources but the journal clearly has writing on other pages that is not being shown.”</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall, how satisfied are you in your pre-pandemic relationship?</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>“Not particularly. What I needed could not have been satisfied through a romantic relationship.”</td>
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Appendix L: Raw Data from Photo Prompt 3
Appendix K includes raw data collected from participants in photo prompt 3.

Now using your phone or any means of digital photography, take a photo that represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic. Was it a past experience? Was it an internal feeling? What motivated you to start a committed relationship. *There is no right or wrong way to do this, you are encouraged to get creative*.

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<tr>
<th>Image and Title</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Description</strong></td>
<td>“This is a photo of the ore dock in marquette, michigan that I took not too long ago while on a boat.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong></td>
<td>“It felt good. I don't know why but I'm very drawn to this structure.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?</strong></td>
<td>“My intentions were like the ore dock in that I wanted something with another person that would be sturdy yet beautiful and different.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What were those intentions/motivations?</strong></td>
<td>“My intentions were to find someone I actually want to spend all my time with. I wanted a partner that would support me and never leave my side, even in a crazy pandemic. I ached for something stable but also fun.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?</strong></td>
<td>“It was hard, I don't feel a particular attachment to photography but it was a reflective experience.”</td>
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Title: “Ore Dock”
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<th>Image and Title</th>
<th>Questions and Responses</th>
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<tr>
<td><img src="image.jpg" alt="Image" /> Title: “Not So Temporary”</td>
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**Description**

“Photo of a satin pothos in a glass jar with water with many roots growing.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**

“This one was a little more challenging than the others as the prompt felt more abstract. In the end I was satisfied with the photo I took.”

**In a metaphorical sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**

“Yes. My initial intentions for dating were to provide a temporary solution, just like putting a cutting in water is supposed to be only temporary. But as time went on it turned out to be much more permanent than expected and while the intention did not correctly predict future outcomes did still turn into a lot of growth and was at the end of the day a good decision.”

**What were those intentions/motivations?**

“To not be alone during what we thought was going to be a short time of quarantine.”

**What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?**

“Interesting! I don't consider photography to be an art that I'm particularly interested in and I don't often take photos with artistic intentions, so this was definitely out of my comfort zone. But overall it was fun to reflect on things and try to find meaning in everyday objects.”
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<td><strong>Image and Title</strong></td>
<td><strong>Questions and Responses</strong></td>
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| ![Image](image1.png)  
**Title: “Ready To Fly”** | **Description**  
“This is an image from an altered book page I created right before I knew I was ready”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“Happy”  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**  
“Yes”  
**What were those intentions/motivations?**  
“I knew I was ready to share my heart and my life”  
**What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?**  
“Interesting” |
| ![Image](image2.png)  
**Title: “Close But So Far”** | **Description**  
“I was outside walking my dog early in the morning after it rained all night, and I saw this adorable and super chunky snail trying to make it into the plants. He had the resources he needed to survive and flourish in the moist environment, but he wasn't quite where he wanted to be.”  
**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“I was really happy actually. I like the cold and rain. Seeing animals is the best part of my day usually.”  
**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**  
“I do! I'm self-sufficient in my own environment I feel most comfortable” |
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<td>in, but it feels like I'm not quite reaching what feels like home to me.”</td>
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<td><strong>What were those intentions/motivations?</strong></td>
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<td>“I was motivated to start dating again in the pandemic because I didn't feel I was truly supported with the things I wanted to do-- play trading card games, MMORPGs with someone in real life, do art-- someone to share in my passions instead of in isolation. In my prior relationship, I was supported because someone shared the financial burdens with me but I was not fulfilled emotionally and we did not share common interests. I wanted to be myself with someone else.”</td>
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<td><strong>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?</strong></td>
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<td>“I really enjoyed this form of art. I completed a minor in Art History during my undergraduate program, so I love to discuss themes and implications from creating. It was nice to tell a story with my personal images.”</td>
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<td>Image and Title</td>
<td>Questions and Responses</td>
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| ![Image](Image) | **Description**  
“This is a photo of a koi pond in my new home I share with my partner.” |
|                | **What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“It felt peaceful, but energetic.” |
|                | **In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**  
“Yes” |
|                | **What were those intentions/motivations?**  
“My motivations were actually to just live my life rather than search for a partner. But my intention was to eventually find a partner that is more aligned with my future goals and emotional maturity and stability. I have found a partner older than myself that values these same things, wants to explore the world and do things together in a calm, harmonious way.” |
|                | **What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?**  
“N/A” |

**Title:** “Tranquility and Flow”
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**Description**
“The photo is an illustration piece by one of my favorite artists, Kokooma. I chose this photo because it encapsulates my intention for dating—sharing life's joys and burdens, and ending each day together, watching the sunset. What makes dating so special is that there is someone committed to starting and ending each day with you.”

**What did it feel like to create this image?**
“It felt fitting. I knew which photo I wanted to capture.”

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**
“Yes”

**What were those intentions/motivations?**
“To find someone who is compatible and whom I can learn from, grow, and share life with.”

**What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?**
“It was a new way of exploring relationships. Usually I process my thoughts through writing but having an image involved opened up new insights.”
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<tr>
<td><img src="image-url" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong>&lt;br&gt;“my current boyfriend made this for me because I love pokemon”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“it was fun”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“For me, love isn't just an emotion. It's a choice. I have never really consciously made the choice to fully love someone because the odds weren't worth it for me. It was always easier to focus on my self-improvement and career and personal aspirations. I chose to be in my current relationship even though it was risky, and I have enjoyed it thus far”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What were those intentions/motivations?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“I don't casually date because I am afraid of attachment and so I have always prioritized my family, friends, and career. If I had to choose a partner, I would only choose to be with people who I respect and respect me back, is on my side, and is willing to explore the unknown with me.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?</strong>&lt;br&gt;N/A</td>
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<td><strong>Image and Title</strong></td>
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<td><img src="image.png" alt="Image" /></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong>&lt;br&gt;“Puppies trust their loved ones so, so much. They're loyal and are there for you whether you're happy, sad, stressed, or anxious. Petting pups are scientifically proven to improve your mood!!”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Title: “Happy Pup”</td>
<td><strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“Happy :-) Such a cute puppy”</td>
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<td><strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“Yes, I think it represents what I wanted.”</td>
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<td><strong>What were those intentions/motivations?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“I wanted a relationship that was carefree, where trust and communication was #1 priority, and where I can be my genuine self without feeling judged by my significant other. I felt these things with my bf before we got together and I thought I'd try this relationship thing out.”</td>
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<td><strong>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“It was fun! I've done something similar before for another study so it was fun taking pics again.”</td>
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| ![Image](image.jpg) | **Description**  
“This photo was taken at the beginning of 2020 and edited today. It’s of a path toward the sunlit sky.”  

**What did it feel like to create this image?**  
“Nostalgic, happy, warm”  

**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**  
“Yes”  

**What were those intentions/motivations?**  
“To be fully myself in a relationship with someone I saw as a person I could potentially spend the rest of my life with”  

**What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?**  
“I felt that photos I had taken during the time frames of the prompts (i.e. during my previous relationship, current relationship, and at the start of the pandemic) better represented my ideas/feelings than if I had taken all new photos. As a whole, I had positive feelings during this process.” |

Title: “Path”
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<tr>
<td><strong>Title: “Slow Burn”</strong></td>
<td><strong>Description</strong>&lt;br&gt;“He got me a dozen roses for our six month anniversary last year.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What did it feel like to create this image?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“Proud”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“Yes”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What were those intentions/motivations?</strong>&lt;br&gt;“To get to know someone easily and slowly like a flower blossoming and have the relationship grow into something beautiful.”&lt;br&gt;&lt;br&gt;<strong>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography?</strong>&lt;br&gt;N/A</td>
</tr>
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</table>
| **Title: “Support”** | **Description**<br>“This was my husband and baby this morning at 6 am. My husband got up so I could sleep a little more. Baby is two weeks old.”<br><br>**What did it feel like to create this image?**<br>Loved, supported, happy.<br><br>**In a metaphoric sense, do you feel like this image accurately represents your intentions behind dating during the pandemic?**<br>“Yes”<br><br>**What were those intentions/motivations?**<br>“During the pandemic, I wanted to be around people who would help me to be a better version of myself, who would support me when I needed help and who would encourage me when I needed encouragement the most. My
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<tr>
<td>Husband does all of these things for me.”</td>
<td>What did it feel like to explore your relationships through photography? “Interesting”</td>
</tr>
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</table>