

# Filtered Out: Disability Disclosure Practices in Online Dating Communities

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In this work, we sought to understand the experiences and disability disclosure preferences of adults with and without disabilities who have dated online. Our 91 survey respondents expressed varying opinions about the need for potential partners to disclose disability status when online dating depending on the nature or perceived severity, with “visible” disabilities carrying a higher expectation of upfront disclosure than “invisible” disabilities. Many disabled respondents also described proactively disclosing as a technique to filter potential connections. Our findings suggest that individuals with disabilities must perform additional labor and navigate complex group norms in pursuit of personal connection. We advocate that the social computing research community consider how these processes are driven by both societal expectation and the constraints of online dating platforms. We then offer design considerations and open questions as a means to extend social computing study at the intersection of online dating and disability studies.

CCS Concepts: • **Human-centered computing~Social networks** • **Human-centered computing~Empirical studies in collaborative and social computing** • *Human-centered computing~Empirical studies in accessibility*

## KEYWORDS

Online dating; inclusive design; disability studies

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

Online dating, although popular [56], can be an awkward and stressful process. Like other forms of dating, it involves its own set of complex social norms and behaviors. These include making nuanced yet consequential decisions about self-presentation [17] and strategically searching for

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potential romantic partners [29]. People who date online may also encounter harassment, including aggression and unwanted sexual solicitation [9,30,37,57]. Already challenging in many ways, this process can have further complexity for someone who is commonly stigmatized and oppressed in other online and offline spaces, like the one in five American adults who has a disability [63] or who experiences mental illness [10]. Throughout popular media, people have offered accounts of the tactics they use to disclose that they have disabilities when online dating; they have also described subsequent ignorance and harassment they have endured from potential partners while using these sites and applications (e.g., [1,44,59,68]). Some online dating platforms have attempted to address these issues through offering advice in the form of blog posts (e.g., [15,16]) or by restricting dating communities to only those with disabilities (e.g., disabilitydating.com, disabilitymatch.co.uk, myspecialmatch.com) [59]. Alternatively, Glimmer, a dating application “designed with all people in mind,” allows users to “select, deselect, hide or show” one’s disability, a feature explicitly designed to promote transparency [24]. The application’s creator, Geoffrey Anderson, explained the aim was to “take the weight off users to disclose their disability to potential partners” [36].

In the social computing research community, we have focused on understanding social norms for nondisabled online daters. However, there is still a need to understand the perspectives and experiences of disabled online daters alongside their nondisabled counterparts. Here, we sought to begin to understand these perspectives and experiences, specifically regarding issues of disclosure of disability, as disability disclosure is a complex, personal experience with significant implications for inclusivity in policy, practice, and design [4,30,46,64].

In this paper, we describe the results of a survey of 91 adults with and without disabilities in which we inquired about the experiences between disabled and nondisabled online daters. Specifically, we investigated how and why individuals prefer to disclose their own disabilities and be told about their connections’ disabilities. In line with critical Disability Studies [41,53] and phenomenological perspectives [45], we consider both individual experience and social restrictions when referring to ‘disability.’ Therefore, we recruited without restriction on a particular definition, diagnosis, or experience, and our study included people identifying as Deaf or as having disability(s), impairment(s), or mental health condition(s). We aimed to better understand both the unique and similar experiences of disclosure and encounters with stigma and oppression among this diverse, yet often marginalized group.

Through this study, we found that—irrespective of disability status—most participants preferred that people with immediately noticeable disabilities (here called “visible” disabilities) disclose them before an in-person meeting. In contrast, many participants indicated that people with disabilities that are not noticeable in-person, such as mental health conditions and other less visible disabilities, could withhold such information until after a few in-person dates. Additionally, we found that people with disabilities used disclosure as a preemptive filtering method to weed out potentially ableist dating matches. With these findings, we consider how design choices embedded in online dating tools might facilitate or impede disclosure of disability and filtering based on attitudes toward disability.

By beginning to illuminate some of the experiences and perspectives of both disabled and nondisabled users when dating online, and by connecting prior online dating research to theoretical frameworks situated in Disability Studies tradition, we contribute a broadened understanding of online dating for the Computer-Supported Cooperative Work (CSCW) community. Further, we call for consideration of online dating sites as mediated social spaces in which people with disabilities must navigate group norms and perform additional labor in relation to their disability to pursue personal connections. In doing so, we take intersectionality [13,21,35,51] and inclusivity (e.g., [11,37,54,67]) as key design considerations—understanding that people rarely fit neatly within discreet identity categories (instead spanning and intersecting with any number) and that designing for functional access only gets us part of the way to equitable products, services, and systems.

## 2 RELATED WORK

There is an expansive body of literature that examines how people use technology to meet others for romantic and/or sexual engagements, referred to here as “online dating.” This scholarship spans the fields of Communication, Sociology, Social Psychology, Human-Computer Interaction, CSCW, and more. Much of this research, as related to our work, focuses on self-presentation or impression management, impression formation, deception, stigma, and disclosure. We build on this work by examining the practices of both disabled and nondisabled participants, and by taking up an analytical lens from Disability Studies.

### 2.1 Self-Presentation, Disclosure, & Impression Formation

Self-presentation or impression management, within online dating literature, refers to the ways in which people share aspects of themselves (true or untrue) to appeal to others [25]. For example, people might include attributes in their profiles they perceive desirable. Research in self-presentation in online dating contexts has revealed technology gives users the opportunity to strategically control the presentation of themselves, which is often an idealized version, ultimately giving them ‘advantages’ in their online dating pursuits [17,20,66]. Thus, deception is sometimes tied to self-presentation when online dating, as evidenced by many research studies in this area (e.g., [17,26,27,37,60,61,62,66]), although deception is limited when real-world encounters are likely [17,22,70].

Self-disclosure, on the other hand, refers to the practice of revealing true parts of the self [65]. This act may contribute negatively to self-presentation (e.g., including certain attributes on a profile may be perceived as unappealing). Some work suggests that self-disclosure occurs less frequently online compared to in-person interaction, while other research indicates the opposite [33]. In either case, researchers have studied how users self-disclose their identities and attributes on online dating systems. This includes revealing information such as race and relationship status on Grindr (a location-based real time dating app for men seeking men) [19], photos in gay online chat rooms [34], and private thoughts and feelings on dating websites [23].

Handel and Shklovski [28:p.175], whose research focuses on online systems “explicitly designed to support particular types of risky sexual activity among men who have sex with men,” discuss how “minute design decisions,” like requiring the filling in of specific information on profiles and allowing users to give indefinite answers (i.e., “Ask me” to prompt discussion and negotiation), can change self-disclosure of personal information, such as HIV status or a potential partner’s preferred HIV status. They found greater self-disclosure was linked with more “success” in finding friends-only and sexual connections, and vice versa, particularly in regard to preferences in others (i.e., preferred HIV status and drug use). These researchers call for more inquiry into profile options, like ambiguity in interface design, “because even the smallest changes can result in substantial differences for user interactions” [28:p.178].

Additional CSCW research has shown other tensions between self-presentation and self-disclosure in online environments, particularly in communities of daters who are managing potentially stigmatized identities (e.g., [2]). Blackwell et al. [3], found that Grindr users experienced conflicts between presenting their identity positively (i.e., through pictures) and being identifiable (i.e., self-disclosure of their identity and intents/behaviors). When users did not provide pictures, in order to maintain privacy, they were sometimes at a ‘disadvantage’ in meeting others. Moreover, ‘accurately’ representing personal attributes and forming impressions of others have been considered frustrating by online daters. For instance, Zytka et al. [69,70] found online daters experience anxiety and fear of rejection when trying to present complex experiential attributes about themselves, due to partners’ potential misinterpretation. This was partly due to the inadequacy of online dating systems’ feedback and communication mechanisms (e.g., profile views,

message-read timestamps) in allowing participants to understand what impressions they were making.

Finally, other studies have investigated impression formation, and specifically the concept of “filtering” potential mates using specific criteria to narrow down with whom one will interact. For instance, Heino et al. [29] describe how online daters used strategic filtering techniques that were “sterile” and “calculating,” reducing their romantic interests to “the perfect parts.” This type of filtering allowed people to target those with specific characteristics and avoid others with qualities they call “deal breakers.” As a counter, Ellison et al. [17] explain how online daters often lied about their age to circumvent such filters. Using impression management theories (e.g., [5,25]) and Predicted Outcome Value Theory (POVT) [58] (i.e., that we predict the value of future social interactions with strangers), Zytka et al. [70] link self-presentation and impression formation to how people navigated new social interactions. The authors note daters wanted to influence partners’ perceptions while also having the ability to evaluate these partners [70].

## 2.2 Disability Studies, Dys-Appearance, & Passing

Despite a focus on online dating within CSCW literature, past research on disabled people’s experiences with other types of social networks (e.g., [6,7,30,47]), and calls from assistive technology researchers to take a Disability Studies perspective [40], few have considered the experiences of people with disabilities using online dating websites. Just beyond CSCW, social scientists Seymour and Lupton [52] found people with disabilities engaged in online communications to maintain and create ties. Sociologist Saltes [49] followed up by specifically focusing on online dating. While prior work [4] anticipated online spaces might allow people with disabilities more anonymity and freedom to disclose their disability later, Saltes [49] instead found users were making complex decisions around when to disclose, as the body and impairment could not be disentangled from their online selves. As people with disabilities often interact with those without disabilities, our work expands this past research to also consider disability disclosure preferences of those with *and* without disabilities.

We situate our work within two bodies of literature from critical disability studies: the phenomenological concept of ‘dys-appearance’ [39] and ‘passing’ [5]. Disability Studies scholars have taken up phenomenologist Drew Leder’s notion of ‘dys-appearance’ [39], or moments when we gain awareness of our bodies. Leder [39] argues our bodies are often backgrounded in daily life—we do not notice them until they do not fit into our world. Paterson and Hughes [45] find dys-appearance encompasses disabled people’s interactions with inaccessibility. Wheelchair users, for instance, may not think about how they move through space until they must ascend floors in a building with no elevators. Such encounters forefront the body and the disability, rendering the person unfit to occupy that particular space.

Building on this work, Disability Studies scholar Davis describes the related concept of invisibility as occurring when indicators of disability are “invisible to certain perceivers under certain conditions” [14:p.156]. In seeing a person use a cane to assist with balance, visibility might be literal. It can also be figurative. For instance, someone’s physical disability may be invisible during a phone conversation. This notion of visibility plays an important role in ‘passing,’ described by historians Brune and Wilson [5] as the practice of acting and appearing nondisabled and others choosing to not recognize markers of disability. They note, “passing expresses, reifies, and helps create concepts of normality” [5:p.2]. Disability Studies scholars Samuels [50] and Siebers [55] further describe passing as an ongoing negotiation reinforced by institutions and social stigma that treat disability as an oppressed identity. Further, Samuels [50] draws on queer theory and her experiences passing and coming out—not only a disabled person, but also as a lesbian—to emphasize passing, disclosure, and coming out as ongoing negotiations.

Here, we draw on ‘dys-appearance’ and ‘passing’ to expand and rework categories of self-presentation, self-disclosure, and impression formation, core to CSCW literature in online dating for nondisabled communities. In doing so, we seek to question the ways in which online dating applications may render disabled users as unfit to participate, and imagine how the design of inclusive platforms may offer people with disabilities more agency in how and when they might dys-appear.

### 3 METHODS

We developed and administered an approximately 20-minute online survey of open-ended questions, targeting adults with and without disabilities, impairments, or mental illnesses who had used an online dating service within the past year. (We refer to these participants as with and without disabilities or disabled/nondisabled.) In the survey, we asked if participants identified as having a disability, impairment or mental illness (which they later open-endedly described). The longer-form portion of the survey utilized a branching survey structure of four to six optional open-ended questions, contingent on responses to the prior question. It asked participants to describe specific prior online dating experiences—most recent, most memorably positive, and most memorably negative—and share their attitudes towards disclosure of disability in online dating contexts. The different participant groups were presented with different questions inquiring about the same topics, depending on the survey’s branching. For example, participants who identified as having a disability were asked to describe their own disclosure practices and discuss any personal rationale behind them (e.g., through describing a past experience). Participants who did not identify as such were asked to describe how they personally would prefer to have such information disclosed to them by others. Participants’ answers to these questions ranged from one sentence to multiple paragraphs in length.

#### 3.1 Participants

We recruited via three avenues to attempt to reach a broad audience of both disabled and nondisabled people. First, we sent recruitment emails to several disability-focused email lists. After getting administrative permission, we also submitted Reddit posts on subreddits dedicated to major online dating platforms and the r/disability subreddit. Lastly, we posted recruitment information on our own social networks. To be eligible for the study, participants had to be at least age 18 and had to have used at least one online dating service within the past year. As compensation, participants entered a drawing for one in five \$5 Amazon gift cards.

A total of 91 participants completed the survey with 58 self-identifying as having a disability. [Table 1](#) provides details on the participants’ demographic information.

#### 3.2 Data Analysis

We took a grounded theory approach to the analysis of all our participants’ qualitative responses [11]. Four researchers first independently read through the data and then met to collaboratively code the data across multiple meetings. During these meetings, we developed 22 unique codes. We then grouped, iterated on, and refined code categories according to consistent themes, producing a final set of seven thematic codes. Two researchers wrote analytic memos, from which higher-level themes were extracted. Through memoing, two overarching themes emerged from our seven thematic codes, deemed most salient and relevant to our Disability Studies theoretical framework. Here, we report on these two themes in detail.

Table 1. Participant demographic information.

Age		Nation of residence	
18-63 (M = 31, SD = 10)		USA	79
Disability Status		Canada	4
Disabled		Austria	2
Non-disabled		Australia	1
Type of disability <sup>a</sup>		Israel	1
Vision impairment		US Minor Outlying Islands	1
Motor impairment		No response	3
Mental illness		Race	
Cognitive impairment		White, Caucasian, or European	68
Hearing impairment		Asian	9
Gender		Black or African American	4
Female		Hispanic or Latino	3
Male		Filipino	1
Cis female		Indian American	1
"agender/trans," "DFAB [designated female at birth]/genderqueer," "feminine," "girl," "non-binary," or "woman; non-binary"		"Asian, Pacific Islander," "Caucasian/Filipino," "mixed," "White and native South American," or "White/Asian"	5
Sexual orientation			
Heterosexual		"95% straight," "asexual, biromantic," "bi-curious," "bi/demisexual," "lesbian; queer," "male," or "Pansexual"	7
Bisexual			
Queer			
Gay		No response	1
Lesbian			

<sup>a</sup>Many participants self-identified multiple concurrent conditions.

## 4 FINDINGS & DISCUSSION

Through our analysis, two strong thematic threads became evident in participants' responses: (1) the perspective that the nature of an individual's disability influences when and where they feel disclosure should occur, and (2) the perspective that one can leverage their own disclosure as a means of filtering potential partners on the basis of attitude toward disability. We discuss these themes in the following subsections, taking into account related literature and our theoretical foundation from Disability Studies.

### 4.1 "It Depends On the Severity"

Many participants used certain qualifiers to mark an unspecified threshold of the types of disabilities they would want disclosed to them up front, including terms like "obvious," "severe," and "the nature of the disability." This trend was far more pronounced among nondisabled participants, with such qualifiers being used by 11 of the 28 respondents in this group, while only three of the 58 disabled respondents used such language. Relatedly, there was a preference for up-front disclosure of visible disabilities, such as motor or sensory impairments that would become apparent when looking at someone or communicating with them in-person. Both disabled and nondisabled participants expressed this preference. For example, a 29-year-old nondisabled woman expressed a desire for upfront disclosure "if it's something one would immediately notice upon meeting someone in person." A 29-year-old man with multiple skin conditions similarly touched on this note of visibility, saying disability should be disclosed "[i]f it's something they can't hide." In considering these disability disclosure preferences, we see a reflection of broader social discourse

that often frames those with visible, physical disabilities as “different” and “less.” In a similar vein to the findings of Handel and Shklovski [28] that online daters’ non-negotiable attributes were more likely to be revealed on a profile than negotiable attributes, we found both disabled and nondisabled participants felt that people with outwardly visible disabilities have a responsibility to explicitly mark themselves by proactively describing the ways in which they differ from normative standards. However, in contrast to Handel’s and Shklovski’s findings [28] yet similar to disabled individuals experiences in the workplace (e.g., [64]), individuals with invisible disabilities did not face this expectation, despite identifying as having a disability. Our results suggest that the social negotiation implicit in passing indicate it is acceptable for an individual with a disability to not outwardly identify as such, so long as the disability is not clearly recognizable to an outside observer.

However, one notable difference between participant groups was evident in their rationale behind their disclosure preferences of potential dates with disabilities. Out of 58 participants with disabilities, seven justified their preference for early disclosure by stating a desire to plan ahead for any potential accommodations the date might require. A 25-year-old woman with anxiety and depression outlined specific disabilities she thought would be helpful to learn about beforehand for these purposes: *“So someone who is deaf, I think it would be important for me to know that so we can plan accordingly for a date (I don’t know sign language). Something like being really really visually impaired I’d probably notice pretty early, so it maybe makes sense to just tell me. But if it’s not obvious and I don’t need to account for it in my behavior somehow, then I’m not really picky about when I find out.”* In contrast, only one of the 33 people without disabilities hoped to learn about people who communicate differently in order to arrange accommodations.

Adding to this notion of the importance of visibility for disclosure, some participants also indicated that failure to disclose a visible disability would lead to distrust of the non-discloser. A 24-year-old nondisabled woman expressed this explicitly, saying *“[i]f it was not something you would mention upfront if I had met this person randomly in real life, then I wouldn’t do anything or be really worried about it. But if it’s something that you can hide via an online platform and didn’t disclose and also serious, I would be upset and reconsider whether I would keep connecting.”* Here, we see not only an opinion of this participant that visible conditions carry an obligation for disclosure that invisible ones do not, but also a notion that some people consider one is “hiding” behind the platform when choosing not to disclose. Therefore, acts of passing for individuals with visible disabilities were not only discouraged by our participants, but attempts to do so in the context of these digital communities were seen as evidence of untrustworthiness. Parallel to the findings of Blackwell et al. [3], passing in this context (like not providing a profile picture) could put visibly disabled online daters at a disadvantage in meeting others. This in and of itself suggests a tacit norm of expectation among many users, wherein one does not have the privilege to present without acknowledgment of physical, noticeable disability. While disability and impairment themselves are not directly addressed in the design of these platforms or communities, we posit that aspects of their design may implicitly promote these attitudes. For example, many online dating platforms encourage disclosure of invisible facets of identity such as religion and diet through dedicated profile fields. When a system’s design makes explicit an expectation that the minimum disclosure includes the invisible, what then is the expectation to disclose the visible, beyond or within what can be seen in a picture?

Further, underlying users’ attitudes toward disclosure of disability is not in line with online dating platform affordances. Participants seem to expect to learn information that they might receive in an in-person meeting, despite the digital context of these encounters. Another way of interpreting the varying expectations of disclosure based on a condition’s visibility or severity is that people are accepting of users with disabilities being slow or selective in their self-disclosure, but only as long as they are not *leveraging technology* to do so. Electing to delay revealing visible difference is a clear affordance of such tools, and yet at least in the case of disability, many of our respondents exhibited intolerance for users taking advantage of this affordance.

These findings show that online dating can cause dys-appearance when peoples' disabilities are expected to be at the forefront of self-description and identification. Individuals with disabilities, especially those with visible ones, are discouraged from allowing their body and any limitations thereof to fade into the background. In this way, these spaces can create critical awareness of the body and its mismatch with normative expectations, much as a space without a ramp might do for a wheelchair user.

#### 4.2 “Weed Them Out”

When participants with disabilities described their disclosure methods and rationales, we saw a high prevalence of proactive disclosure across many kinds of impairments. This differs from the delineation between “severe” and “nonsevere” suggested by the participants above when describing their disclosure preferences for others. A strongly expressed sentiment among participants with disabilities was that proactive disclosure can function as a method of filtering prospective partners for whom disability would be unacceptable. A 24-year-old woman with a chronic illness that affects her mobility and energy noted that upfront disclosure is “*a good way to weed out those who aren't mentally or emotionally equipped [sic] to date someone with a disability.*” We consider this type of self-disclosure a form of *strategic dys-appearance*, a tactic used to directly influence potential contact with other online daters or to use impression management to mediate impression formation. Rather than expectations of others establishing a context in which disabled users *must* dys-appear in order to avoid appearing dishonest, users with disabilities are instead *choosing* to dys-appear to filter potential partners. Even those who have the option of passing can make this conscious decision as a means of “weeding” matches.

In line with this approach, our disabled participants conveyed various preferences for when and why they self-disclose for filtering purposes. Many expressed a general sense that disclosing during early conversation was preferable to drive away those who might react negatively before much is invested in the interaction. One 22-year-old genderqueer participant with fibromyalgia and severe depressive disorder said that after beginning to talk with someone online, they disclose “*almost immediately as a way to weed people out.*” The 24-year-old woman with a chronic illness mentioned previously elaborated on this attitude, noting, “*I'd much rather be open about my health and have them freak out online than have used up some of the little energy I do have going to meet someone who I'm not even sure would consider [sic] a relationship with me because of my circumstances.*” Another participant, a 45-year-old man with bipolar and schizoaffective disorders, stated a preference for disclosing during the first face-to-face encounter in order to “*gauge a person's immediate reaction.*”

For other participants, disclosure occurred prior to any direct communication with potential partners by including information about disability in their dating profiles. Here, the express goal was to preemptively discourage any incoming communication from those who would react negatively to the disclosed information. An 18-year-old woman who is legally blind said she disclosed in this fashion because “*if someone is biased or feels negatively towards people with disabilities for some reason I would like to weed them out before they even message me if possible.*” Here, we find a sentiment that time spent interacting pre-disclosure with a potential partner who reacts negatively post-disclosure is time wasted. Participants who discussed the function of disclosure often implicitly expressed that doing so early serves to minimize time they might waste on dead-end interactions. Other participants spoke directly about wasting time, suggesting self-awareness that not wasting time is a motivating factor for them. A 25-year-old woman who uses crutches and has a condition impacting her ability to walk and stand stated that early disclosure “*helps avoid unnecessary disappointments,*” and that if the other individual “*has a negative reaction toward my disability than [sic] we would waste each other's time by meeting up anyway.*” This consideration of avoiding wasted time was echoed by a 29-year-old woman with a vision

impairment who said, “*I disclose right away because if they are going to reject me they might as well do it right off the bat without wasting my time and energy on them.*”

Some participants stretched beyond the utilitarian motivation of minimizing perceived time wasted, describing how the emotional impact of rejection based on disability is also an important consideration. A 36-year-old woman with dwarfism described the importance of avoiding situations where late disclosure would lead to rejection after emotional investment began. She said, “*I would rather be upfront and if that is a barrier they can tell me [...]. I would never put myself in a position of being rejected because I did not disclose; that would be harmful to myself.*”

Using self-disclosure of disability at a particular time in a particular way for the purpose of not only filtering partners, but also avoiding time wasted and negative emotional impact can be perceived as empowering, especially due to its contrast with others’ *expected* dys-appearance. Yet, this ‘weeding out’ behavior is complicated by the fact that it necessitates foregoing the privilege of disclosing completely on one’s own terms. We suggest participants’ disclosure practices may be a response to particular design limitations in current platforms. Online dating platforms are often built around the mechanism of *active filtering*, wherein a user browsing possible dates is able to use a set of filtering tools to narrow the result set based on inclusion or exclusion criteria. Users are generally not able to engage in such filtering based on the criteria of others’ attitudes toward disability and must rely on other techniques to achieve the same effect, such as the *passive filtering* via disclosure that we see exhibited by many of our participants with disabilities. This *passive filtering* expands our understanding of impression formation beyond only utilizing “searchable attributes for immediate decision-making, and experiential attributes for gradual qualification towards a face-to-face meeting” [70:p.58].

## 5 CONCLUSION

Through this empirical exploration, we contribute a greater understanding of disabled and nondisabled individuals’ disclosure practices and preferences when they encounter one another dating online. Future work should seek to learn about the perspectives of those who do not identify as white, female, heterosexual, western, and who are members of greater disability communities. Additionally, these online daters’ experiences should be investigated more deeply through other methods such as interviews.

Moving forward, we hope to spark more research that attends to the intersection of online dating and Disability Studies in the CSCW community, pushing investigators to consider new framings of self-presentation, disclosure, and impression formation that draw on the rich histories and theories that Disability Studies scholars have introduced. Building on past research, we also call for further reflection on the implications of design decisions made in these platforms for not only individuals with disabilities, but also those negotiating disclosure of other stigmatized identities. This garners additional importance because broad calls for “design for all” often fall short when, with this framing, designers tend to create systems that preference their own interests and competencies [43]. Instead, considering diverse users during the design process benefits more than marginalized users and can lead to more inclusive, equitable designs [42,43].

As conversations concerning the experiences of online dating and disability move forward, it is worth considering ways that designers might start supporting the active filtering to which online daters with disabilities do not currently have access. For example, the dating site OkCupid asks users to answer multiple-choice questions in order to generate “match” percentages between pairs. Users are also able to identify important questions and filter their matches based on others’ responses to them. A user with mental illness could therefore look to responses to the question, “*Could you date someone who uses antidepressants?*” (a question formerly posed on the website) as a proxy indicator of someone’s attitudes towards mental illness. We believe interaction paradigms such as these are compelling in that they return the privilege of active filtering to those ordinarily

marginalized, rather than requiring them to disclose for the sake of informing filtering from the other direction. While not a perfect solution, we view it as an indicator of one possible design direction worth further exploration and consideration. Moreover, drawing on Handel and Shklovski [28:p.178], we see potential in designing ambiguous options around disability and disability preferences in online dating platforms (like “Ask Me”) to invite open discussion and handle impression management and formation around these issues “with care.”

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