

Accepted Manuscript

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PII: S0014-2921(18)30060-6
DOI: [10.1016/j.euroecorev.2018.04.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2018.04.001)
Reference: EER 3138

To appear in: *European Economic Review*

Received date: 20 May 2017
Accepted date: 13 April 2018

Please cite this article as: Lucas Herrenbrueck, Xiaoyu Xia, Paul Eastwick, Chin Ming Hui, Smart-Dating in Speed-Dating: How a Simple Search Model Can Explain Matching Decisions, *European Economic Review* (2018), doi: [10.1016/j.euroecorev.2018.04.001](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.euroecorev.2018.04.001)

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Smart-Dating in Speed-Dating: How a Simple Search Model Can Explain Matching Decisions

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First version: March 2016

This version: April 2018. Accepted for publication at the *European Economic Review*

Abstract: How do people in a romantic matching situation choose a potential partner? We study this question in a new model of matching under search frictions, which we estimate using data from an existing speed dating experiment. We find that attraction is mostly in the eye of the beholder and that the attraction between two potential partners has a tendency to be mutual. These results are supported by a direct measure of subjective attraction. We also simulate the estimated model, and it predicts rejection patterns, matching rates, and sorting outcomes that fit the data very well. Our results are consistent with the hypothesis that people in a dating environment act strategically and have at least an implicit understanding of the nature of the frictions and of the strategic equilibrium.

JEL Classification: D83, J12

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Keywords: Search and matching theory; heterogeneous preferences; decisions under uncertainty; attraction and attractiveness

Acknowledgments: We are grateful to Kenneth Burdett, Briana Chang, Eli Finkel, David Freeman, Nicolas Jacquet, John Knowles, Giuseppe Moscarini, Serene Tan, and Randall Wright for their useful comments and suggestions, as well as participants at the WEAI 90th Annual Conference, the 2015 Southwest Search and Matching Workshop, and the 2016 North American Summer Meeting of the Econometric Society, and at seminars at Singapore Management University and Peking University HSBC Business School. Our work has received financial support from the Direct Research Grant from the Chinese University of Hong Kong (Project No. 4057057).

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