MODERN ROMANCE BY AZIZ ANSARI AND ERIC KLINENBERG.  
RECOMMENDED BY STEVE KARCESKI

Submitted by Anonymous on September 23, 2017 - 1:56pm

This past summer I had my SOC 110 students read Aziz Ansari's Modern Romance. While it may seem like a dating advice book, I was pleasantly surprised by how thoughtful and well-researched it is. I received positive feedback from my students as well, who said the book was 'funny', 'not too serious', and 'not boring' - great comments for any assigned reading.

Ansari and NYU sociologist Eric Klinenberg - with whom Ansari organized focus groups online and in person all over the world - illuminate the ways in which dating now is different than it was in the recent past. Ansari also cites and consults with influential scholars including Stephanie Coontz, Andrew Cherlin, and Barry Schwartz.

The book covers how potential romantic partners meet, date, and break up, and how each has changed over time. Americans today are more likely to partner with someone who was born in another part of the country, find that partner later in life, and focus on partnering with someone for passionate, rather than companionate, love. Ansari discusses how technological advances in dating - the shift from newspaper ads, to phone and video services, to online dating - inform the notion of a 'soulmate'. If you think there is a perfect person for you, then you might be more likely to dismiss someone over a minor disagreement or put too much emphasis on 'deal breakers'. Especially when it comes to online dating, there might be too much choice.

Further, do these technological advances make you more likely to cheat or snoop on your partner? Does a lack of face-to-face interactions make people less empathetic, or more likely to breakup up via text or 'ghost' someone (where you simply do not respond to messages and let the relationship fade out)? Or are people more likely to connect with better partners and have more fulfilling relationships?

In one of the focus groups, the individual who had the most dating success also did the most to expand his social network outside of the online word (volunteering, joining sports teams, attending church, etc.), suggesting that the people most successful at dating today are not the those who are the most active on swipe apps, but are still those who are well-connected to a diverse range of in-person social networks.

MODERN ROMANCE. 2015. WRITTEN BY AZIR ANSARI AND ERIC KLINEBERG.  PUBLISHED BY PENGUIN PRESS.

Steve Karceski is a PhD student who is writing a dissertation about the politics of various forms of taxation. He has taught our Community Internship Practicum, and will TA for the Study Abroad program in Rome during Winter 2018.

People Involved:  Steven Karceski  
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Department of Sociology · University of Washington · 211 Savery Hall, Box 353340 · Seattle, WA 98195-3340 · Main Office: (206) 543-5882 · Student Services: (206) 543-5396 · Fax (206) 543-2516 · Email: uwsoc@uw.edu