



Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity-- What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves

By Christian Rudder

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about Our Offline Selves** By Christian Rudder

A New York Times Bestseller

An audacious, irreverent investigation of human behavior—and a first look at a revolution in the making

Our personal data has been used to spy on us, hire and fire us, and sell us stuff we don't need. In *Dataclysm*, Christian Rudder uses it to show us who we truly are.

For centuries, we've relied on polling or small-scale lab experiments to study human behavior. Today, a new approach is possible. As we live more of our lives online, researchers can finally observe us directly, in vast numbers, and without filters. Data scientists have become the new demographers.

In this daring and original book, Rudder explains how Facebook "likes" can predict, with surprising accuracy, a person's sexual orientation and even intelligence; how attractive women receive exponentially more interview requests; and why you must have haters to be hot. He charts the rise and fall of America's most reviled word through Google Search and examines the new dynamics of collaborative rage on Twitter. He shows how people express themselves, both privately and publicly. What is the least Asian thing you can say? Do people bathe more in Vermont or New Jersey? What do black women think about Simon & Garfunkel? (Hint: they don't think about Simon & Garfunkel.) Rudder also traces human migration over time, showing how groups of people move from certain small towns to the same big cities across the globe. And he grapples with the challenge of maintaining privacy in a world where these explorations are possible.

Visually arresting and full of wit and insight, *Dataclysm* is a new way of seeing ourselves—a brilliant alchemy, in which math is made human and numbers become the narrative of our time.

From the Hardcover edition.

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Q&A with Christian Rudder, cofounder of OkCupid and author of *Dataclysm*



As more of our social interaction happens on social media, how much can researchers learn about us from our online interactions?

Well, they can only learn what we tell them, but in the age of Facebook and Google, that's become pretty much everything. To the extent that friendship, anger, sex, love, and whatever else happen online, we can investigate them.

Your search history tells us what kind of jokes you like. Your Facebook network reveals not just your friendships, but in some cases the state of your marriage. Your preferences on OkCupid tell us what you find sexy, and your reaction to the strangers the site offers up tells us how you judge people. The articles you "like" tell us not just about your politics, but even predict your intelligence.

You fold in data points like these for millions and millions of people, and you start to get a whole new picture of humankind.

In *Dataclysm* you're taking this flood of information and putting it to an entirely new use: understanding human nature. So what have you found?

I tried really hard to avoid the numerical dog and pony show. There are of course lots of interesting one-off factoids, but I mostly found what I (and probably you) have always known: that people are gentle, mean, stupid, lusty, lonely, kind, foolish, shrewd, shallow, and endlessly complex. *Dataclysm's* central idea isn't necessarily what we can see using big data; it's the fact of the vision itself. That we can get real data on even the most private moments in people's lives is an astounding thing. It's like the second advent of reality television, but this time without the television part. Just the reality.

Are you worried about any of this?

I have mixed feelings about the implications. I myself almost never tweet, post, or share anything about my personal life. At the same time, I've just spent three years writing about how interesting all this data is, and I cofounded OkCupid. My hope is that this ambivalence makes me a trustworthy guide through the thicket of technology and data. I admire the knowledge that social data can bring us; I also fear the consequences.

You have a lot to say about race in the book, and you use data to shed light on the many ways it affects the way we interact with one another. What surprised you about your research in this area? Did you find anything unsurprising?

The data on race was surprising only in its stubborn predictability—for all the glitzy technology, the results could've been from the 1950s. I grew up in Little Rock and graduated from Central High, the first school in the South to be integrated: Eisenhower, the National Guard, mobs of white people screaming at nine black children, that's Central. The school embraces its history and is now over half black. I'm no brave crusader, but race (and racism) were part of my education. So when, in researching the book, I unpacked three separate databases and found that in every one white people gave black people short-shrift, I wasn't shocked, you know? Asians and Latinos apply the same penalty to African Americans that white folks do, which says something about how even (relatively) recent additions to the "American experience" have acquired its biases.

What makes this moment in time—and this set of data—different from the massive data surveys of the past, such as Pew, Gallup, or the Kinsey Institute?

The data in my book is almost all passively observed—there's no questionnaire, no contrived experiment to simulate "real life." This data is real life. Online you have friends, lovers, enemies, and intense moments of truth without a thought for who's watching, because ostensibly no one is—except of course the computers recording it all. This is how digital data circumvents that old research obstacle: people's inability to be honest when the truth makes them look bad. Digital data's ability to get at the private mind like this is unprecedented and very powerful.

Review

"Most data-hyping books are vapor and slogans. This one has the real stuff: actual data and actual analysis taking place on the page. That's something to be praised, loudly and at length. Praiseworthy, too, is Rudder's writing, which is consistently zingy and mercifully free of Silicon Valley business gabble."

—**Jordan Ellenberg**, *Washington Post*

"There's another side of Big Data you haven't seen—not the one that promised to use our digital world to our advantage to optimize, monetize, or systematize every last part our lives. It's the big data that rears its ugly head and tells us what we *don't* want to know. And that, as Christian Rudder demonstrates in his new book, *Dataclysm*, is perhaps an equally worthwhile pursuit. Before we heighten the human experience, we should understand it first."

—**TIME**

"*Dataclysm* is a well-written and funny look at what the numbers reveal about human behavior in the age of social media. It's both profound and a bit disturbing, because, sad to say, we're generally not the kind of people we like to think — or say — we are."

—**Salon**

"For all its data and its seemingly dating-specific focus, *Dataclysm* tells the story set forth by the book's subtitle, in an entertaining and accessible way. Informative, eye-opening, and (gasp) fun to read. Even if you're not a giant stat head."

—*Grantland*

"[Rudder] doesn't wring or clap his hands over the big-data phenomenon (see N.S.A., Google ads, that sneaky Fitbit) so much as plunge them into big data and attempt to pull strange creatures from the murky depths."

—*The New Yorker*

"Compulsively readable — including for those with no particular affinity for numbers in and of themselves — and surprisingly personal. Starting with aggregates, Rudder posits, we can zoom in on the details of how we live, love, fight, work, play, and age; from numbers, we can derive narrative. There are few characters in the book, and few anecdotes — but the human story resounds throughout."

—*Refinery29*

"*Dataclysm* is all about what we can learn about human minds and hearts by analyzing the massive ongoing experiment that is the internet."

—*Forbes*

"The book reads as if it's written (well) by a curious child whose parents beg him or her to stop asking "what-if" questions. Rudder examines the data of the website he helped create with unwavering curiosity. Every turn presents new questions to be answered, and he happily heads down the rabbit hole to resolve them."

—*U.S. News*

"This is the best book that I've read on data in years, perhaps ever. If you want to understand how data is affecting the present and what it portends for the future, buy it now."

—*Huffington Post*

"Studying human behavior is a little like exploring a jungle: it's messy, hard, and easy to lose your way. But Christian Rudder is a consummate guide, revealing essential truths about who we are. Big Data has never been so fun."

—Dan Ariely, author of *Predictably Irrational*

"*Dataclysm* is a book full of juicy secrets—secrets about who we love, what we crave, why we like, and how we change each other's minds and lives, often without even knowing it. Christian Rudder makes this mathematical narrative of our culture fun to read and even more fun to discuss: You will find yourself sharing these intriguing data-driven revelations with everyone you know."

—Jane McGonigal, author of *Reality Is Broken*

"In the first few pages of *Dataclysm*, Christian Rudder uses massive amounts of actual behavioral data to prove what I always believed in my heart: Belle and Sebastian is the whitest band ever. It only gets better from there."

—Aziz Ansari

"It's unheard of for a book about Big Data to read like a guilty pleasure, but *Dataclysm* does. It's a fascinating, almost voyeuristic look at who we really are and what we really want."

—Steven Strogatz, Schurman Professor of Applied Mathematics, Cornell University, author of *The Joy of x*

"Smart, revealing, and sometimes sobering, *Dataclysm* affirms what we probably suspected in our darker moments: When it comes to romance, what we say we want isn't what will actually make us happy. Christian Rudder has tapped the tremendous wealth of data that the Internet offers to tease out thoughts on topics like beauty and race that most of us wouldn't cop to publicly. It's a riveting read, and Rudder is an affable and humane guide."

—Adelle Waldman, author of *The Love Affairs of Nathaniel P.*

"Christian Rudder has written a funny and profound book about important issues. Race, love, sex—you name it. Are we the sum of the data we produce? Read this book immediately and see if you can answer the question."

—Errol Morris

"Big Data can be like a 3D movie without 3D glasses—you know there's a lot going on but you're mainly just disoriented. We should feel fortunate to have an interpreter as skilled (and funny) as Christian Rudder. *Dataclysm* is filled with insights that boil down Big Data into byte-sized revelations."

—Michael Norton, Harvard Business School, coauthor of *Happy Money*

"With a zest for both the profound and the wacky, Rudder demonstrates how the information we provide individually tells a vast deal about who we are collectively. A visually engaging read and a fascinating topic make this a great choice not just for followers of Nate Silver and fans of infographics, but for just about anyone who, by participating in online activity, has contributed to the data set."

—*Library Journal*

"Demographers, entrepreneurs, students of history and sociology, and ordinary citizens alike will find plenty of provocations and, yes, much data in Rudder's well-argued, revealing pages."

—*Kirkus Reviews*

About the Author

Christian Rudder is a co-founder and former president of the dating site OkCupid, where he authored the popular OkTrends blog. He graduated from Harvard in 1998 with a degree in math and later served as creative director for SparkNotes. He has appeared on Dateline NBC and NPR's "All Things Considered" and his work has been written about in the New York Times and the New Yorker, among other places. He lives in Brooklyn with his wife and daughter.

From the Hardcover edition.

Users Review

From reader reviews:

Sandra Snyder:

Do you have favorite book? If you have, what is your favorite's book? Reserve is very important thing for us to be aware of everything in the world. Each e-book has different aim as well as goal; it means that book has different type. Some people really feel enjoy to spend their time to read a book. These are reading whatever

they get because their hobby is usually reading a book. Think about the person who don't like examining a book? Sometime, individual feel need book after they found difficult problem or exercise. Well, probably you will require this Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity--What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves.

Joseph Haner:

The book Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity--What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves make one feel enjoy for your spare time. You can utilize to make your capable considerably more increase. Book can to get your best friend when you getting stress or having big problem with the subject. If you can make studying a book Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity--What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves to get your habit, you can get more advantages, like add your own personal capable, increase your knowledge about some or all subjects. You are able to know everything if you like available and read a guide Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity--What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves. Kinds of book are a lot of. It means that, science book or encyclopedia or other individuals. So , how do you think about this e-book?

Denise Barnhart:

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Robert Burmeister:

Often the book Dataclysm: Love, Sex, Race, and Identity--What Our Online Lives Tell Us about Our Offline Selves has a lot of information on it. So when you read this book you can get a lot of advantage. The book was authored by the very famous author. This articles author makes some research previous to write this book. This particular book very easy to read you may get the point easily after scanning this book.

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