The Science and Entertainment Exchange’s homepage has a link to recent events and the subject is the Science of Love. The article talks about a PhD Mathematician from UCLA and his search for love on the dating website OkCupid. At first he wasn’t successful so he discovered a way to ‘hack’ the site and figure out how he could make himself more attractive to potential dates. He revised his online profile and was inundated with women wanting to meet him. After 88 dates, he found the woman who would become his fiancé. An audience member asked our mathematician how he knew that his fiancé was ‘the one’ and he replied it was something he felt. So, the audience member replied, it wasn’t science. Well, said the mathematician, science put the two of us in the same room and things worked out from there.

When I chose this organization to study, I wasn’t thinking how science could tell us about love, I was thinking about space flight and how humans will function on long haul space missions, for example, to Mars. But, where human beings are in close quarters, does it lead to love and what are the ethical issues with scientists relating to this question?

To start with I wanted to find out what it means to be a scientist and the website directed me to a link on YOUTUBE entitled, “On being a Scientist from the National Academies.” Scientists gain satisfaction from understanding nature and scientific research has a direct impact on our planet and its inhabitants, but, scientists are human beings and research is subject to error. They do not work in a void so communication and professionalism are key. When researching a chosen topic, enthusiasm can take over
but a scientist always needs to remember to be impartial such that any new theory is peer reviewed anonymously to check data. If data is fabricated, plagiarized or falsified and the scientist is found out, it could or probably would be the end of their career as trust would be broken. The core ethical values on which science is built - honesty, integrity, fairness and respect - are in some respects not different from the ethical values of other professions and of society as a whole and for that matter how an individual should behave in a relationship.

The exchange is looking at the cross pollination of science and entertainment, both occupations being imaginative and creative, and how ‘real’ science can be better presented on the big screen or TV screen.

Under the heading Projects, I found the TV show ‘The Big Bang Theory’. The link took me to the show’s website on CBS. It’s about two physicists, a mechanical engineer and an astrophysicist who live in Pasadena and work at Caltech. They are socially awkward being extremely insular and only mixing with their ‘own kind’ (fellow scientists) and are schooled in the etiquette of dating and being at ease in the wider world by their street smart neighbor across the hall, a pretty waitress and aspiring actress. Within the dating circle of these scientists, relationships break up when individuals cannot agree on string theory as opposed to loop quantum gravity. The show’s science consultant is David Saltzberg, a professor of physics and astronomy at UCLA who checks scripts and provides dialogue, mathematics equations and diagrams used as props. It was all facilitated by ‘The Science and Entertainment Exchange and the TV show is a hit.
So, what about our mathematician and his manipulation of his profile on OkCupid using what he learned at college. Was it ethical? Well, since we don’t know about the 88 dates and how they were conducted and if he ‘came clean’ about his ‘gaining the system’, it does seem that he used his knowledge to ‘get a leg up’ from his competitors. With that said, he was at a recent talk confessing his sins so to speak. A scientist needs to be impartial in their work but when it comes to matters of love, how can one be impartial, since emotions are a different animal altogether than intellect.