Five to two

Strangers were asked to pair up with no matching system. Five said OPEN for every two who said TAKEN.

THIS IS	PART OF	STATUS
PAPER 003 · A FINDING	THE GAME · ACT II, ROUND 7	FILED · V1 · 31 AUG 2026

SOURCE

3,694	11 to 14 May 2026
COMMENTS	DATES

IN PLAIN WORDS

In May 2026 we asked an Instagram audience to find a partner in the comments. The mechanism was two words. Comment OPEN to offer yourself as a partner. Comment TAKEN to claim someone who had. One OPEN equals one TAKEN. No matching system, no list, no host. The round would pass at 100 active links.

Of 3,694 comments on the pairing post, 2,543 were OPEN and 956 were TAKEN. Five people offered a slot for every two who took one. The round passed its bar anyway, because two in five was enough to make 100 links.

This paper is about the gap between offering and claiming. It is the same crowd, the same thread, the same cost in keystrokes. The difference is what the word binds you to.

THE QUESTION WE ASKED

The round before this one showed a crowd could converge on a number with no channel. This one asked whether a crowd could do the harder thing: **form pairs with no channel.** Convergence needs everyone to pick the same answer. Pairing needs two strangers to pick each other.

WHAT WE DID

- **Instruction:** “Find a partner. One OPEN equals one TAKEN.”
- **Where:** Instagram. A pre-attempt post on 11 May 2026 explained the mechanism, the pairing post went up on 12 May, and the pass was announced on 14 May.

- **Pass condition:** 100 active links, declared in the thread.
- **How we counted:** every comment on the pairing post. OPEN and TAKEN were counted as written. A comment that tagged another player was counted as a third category, since tagging is a pairing move that uses neither word.

WHAT HAPPENED

TABLE 1. The three moves in the pairing thread.

MOVE	COUNT	SHARE
OPEN (offering a slot)	2,543	69% of the thread
TAKEN (claiming one)	956	38% of the offers
Tagged another player	615	17% of the thread
Comments on the pairing post	**3,694**	

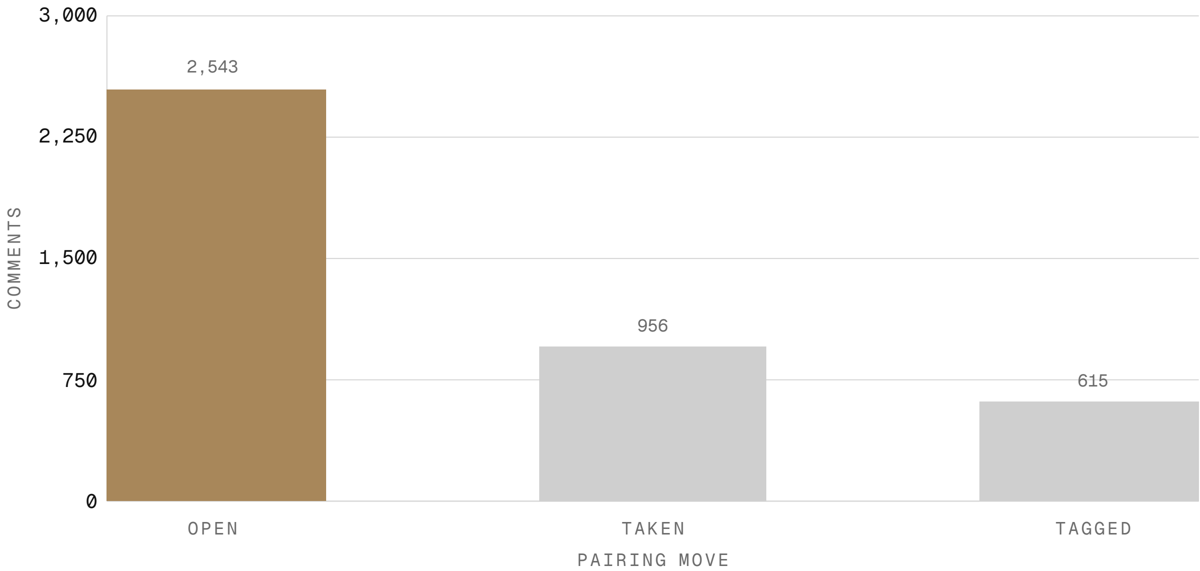


FIGURE 1. Offers, claims, and tags. The offers are the accented bar; the claims are the bar the round actually depended on.

TABLE 2. Offers and claims, with 95 percent intervals.

MEASURE	COUNT	OF	SHARE	95% INTERVAL
OPEN, share of the thread	2,543	3,694	68.8%	67.3% to 70.3%
TAKEN, share of the thread	956	3,694	25.9%	24.5% to 27.3%
TAKEN, share of OPEN plus TAKEN	956	3,499	27.3%	25.9% to 28.8%
Tagged another player, share of the thread	615	3,694	16.6%	15.5% to 17.9%

The third row is the one the finding rests on: of every move that was an offer or a claim, between 25.8 and 28.8 percent were claims.

Offering was the popular move by a wide margin. Claiming was not. The ratio is close to five to two, and it held across the life of the thread rather than closing as the round went on.

The most liked comment on the post is a lament, **No-one claimed me**, and the thread under it is the mechanic working anyway: a stranger replies **taken**, the lamenter answers with an image, and a pair exists. The receipt is on the page. It is also a reminder that the count sees offers and claims, not the pairs that formed in replies.

TABLE 3. The post at platform scale, as of 31 August 2026.

REEL	VIEWS · REACH	COMMENTS TODAY
The pairing post · 12 May 2026	27,967 · 17,508 reach	531
Likes on the reel	**1,672**	

Platform numbers are from the Instagram API on 31 August 2026. Comment counts there include replies and everything written since the round, which is why they run above the counts this paper analyses; views and reach are the tallies the platform reports.

The platform reports 531 comments on the pairing post today against 3,694 in the archive at round time. Most of the thread has since been removed from the count, by deletion or by the platform, and this paper counts what the archive holds.

WHAT IT MEANS

> A crowd will build a coordination structure freely and a trust structure reluctantly. OPEN commits you to nothing. TAKEN commits you to a specific stranger, in public, by name.

Economists have a name for the first kind of word. Cheap talk is a message that costs the sender nothing and binds them to nothing, and the classic result is that people produce a lot of it. OPEN is cheap talk. It signals willingness without choosing anyone. TAKEN is the opposite: it names a person, it can be seen by that person, and it can be refused or ignored in front of everyone. That is a small social risk, and 62 percent of the people who offered never took it.

The 615 tags are the crowd routing around the mechanism. Tagging a friend is pairing with someone you already trust, which removes the risk the round was built to measure. It is also the move the platform rewards, since a tag pulls a new person into the thread.

The round passed. That is worth saying plainly. Two in five was enough, and 100 links formed between strangers with no host. The crowd can do the harder thing. It just does the cheap half of it first.

WHAT THIS DOES NOT SHOW

- **A claim is not a link.** TAKEN comments were counted as written. Whether each claim matched a live offer, and whether the pair did anything after, is not in this count. The 100-link pass was declared in the thread, not derived from these numbers.

- **Order and visibility were not controlled.** People who arrived late saw a wall of OPEN and may have read the round as already full or already failed.
- **One round, one audience.** The ratio is from one thread on one account in May 2026.

WHAT WE WOULD RUN NEXT

The same mechanism with the cost moved. Make OPEN the binding word and TAKEN the free one, and see whether the ratio follows the cost or the word. If it follows the cost, the finding holds. If it follows the word, something about claiming itself is the problem, and that is a different paper.

THE WHOLE ROUND

The round this paper reads is 3 posts, not one. Every post is below with the platform's numbers and what the comment archive holds of each.

POST	DATE	VIEWS	REACH	COMMENTS	ARCHIVED
Pre-attempt, the mechanism explained	2026-05-11	48,489	28,942	4,269	3,695
Attempt 1, the pairing post	2026-05-12	27,967	17,508	531	480
Pass declared	2026-05-14	18,388	11,982	99	98
THE ROUND		94,844	58,432	4,899	4,273

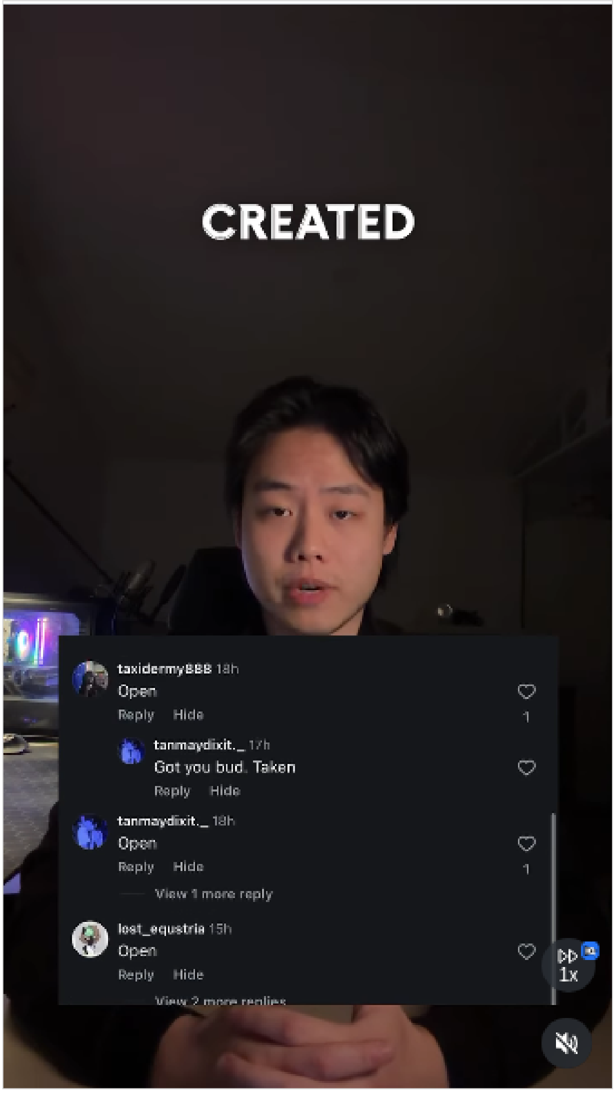
Views, reach and comments are the platform's figures from the Instagram API, snapshot 2026-08-31, and keep growing. The reach total adds each post's reach and overlaps between posts, so it is not a count of distinct people. Archived is the number of comments the archive holds for the post; ingestion is selective, so a gap between the two columns is expected and is stated wherever it changes a count in the paper.

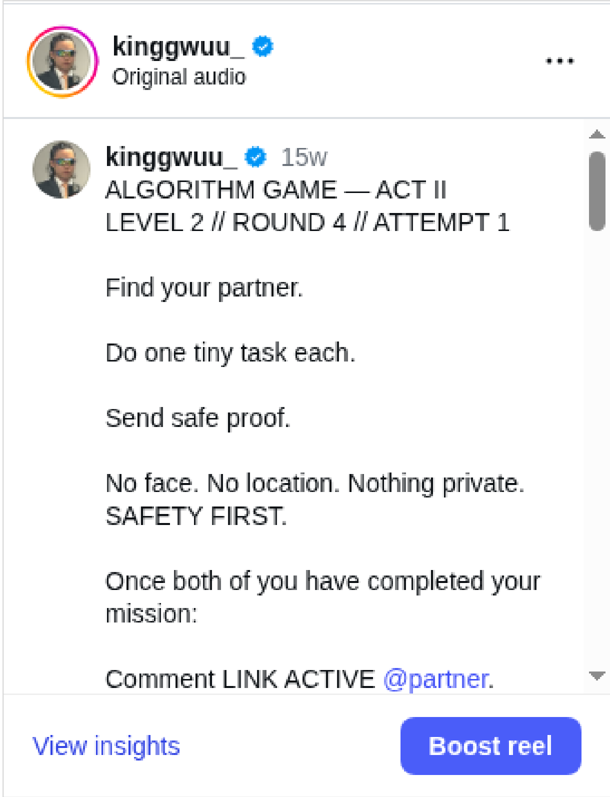
IN THE RECORD

The pairing round has no Chronicle entry of its own yet; the round record on The Game holds it. The convergence it built on is filed as THE NUMBER, ◇035.

THE POSTS, AS ISSUED

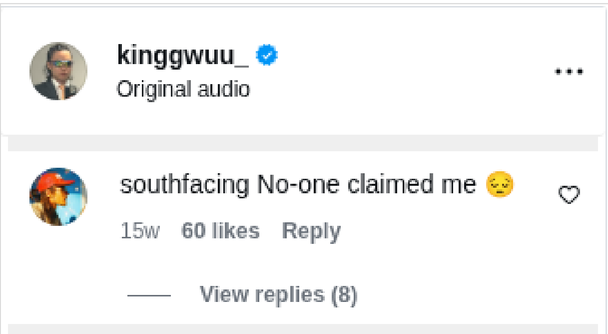
The instruction as it went out: the reel frame beside the caption, captured from the operation's own signed-in account. What the paper counts is the answer to exactly this.

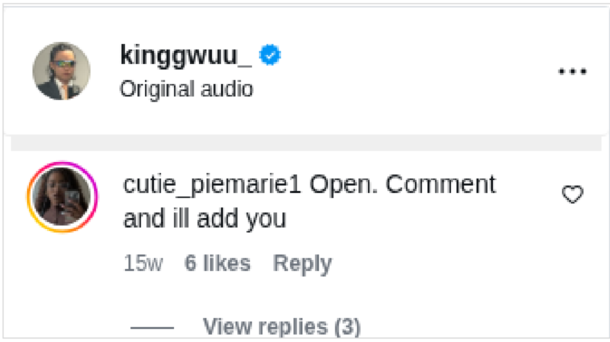




THE RECEIPTS

Native captures of the comments this paper leans on, taken from the operation's own signed-in account on 31 Aug 2026. Handles and like counts are as they stood that day; the numbers in the paper are the round-time count.





METHOD NOTE

- **Source of truth:** the round ledger (Act II, Round 7) as filed on the round record, with the counts witnessed at the time of the round.
- **Cheap talk:** Farrell, J., and Rabin, M. (1996). Cheap Talk. *Journal of Economic Perspectives*, 10(3), 103 to 118.

SOURCES, BY LINK

01 Pre-attempt, the mechanism explained · 2026-05-11 · https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYM-vuFplxO/

02 Attempt 1, the pairing post · 2026-05-12 · https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYPVMG-JegF/

03 Pass declared · 2026-05-14 · https://www.instagram.com/reel/DYThxuBpw7w/

WHERE THE NUMBERS COME FROM

POST-LEVEL COUNTS

Views, reach, comments, likes, shares and saves per post come from the Instagram Graph API (Meta), read with the operation's own access token for its own business account. Each paper states the date of the snapshot it uses. These are the platform's counts of events, not of people: one person can view a reel twice and comment ten times, and the counts keep growing after a round closes.

COMMENT TEXT

The comment archive is the operation's own database of public comments on its own posts, pulled through the Instagram Graph API comments endpoint and stored with the comment id, username, text, like count, timestamp and whether it is a reply. Ingestion is selective: the most engaged posts were backfilled and recent posts are pulled daily, so some posts are held whole and others only in part. Every paper states how much of each post the archive holds. Every count that reads text (exact matches, categories, keyword themes) is run as a read-only script against this archive, and the scripts are in the repository beside the paper data.

THE ROUND LEDGER

For Act II rounds, the counts filed on The Game's round record at the time each round closed. Where a paper uses a ledger figure it says so, and where the archive re-count differs from the ledger both numbers are shown.

RECEIPTS

Every comment and post shown as evidence is a native capture from the operation's own signed-in Instagram session, taken by opening the exact permalink, with the source URL, a description, the rights basis and a file hash recorded in a manifest that is checked on every build of the site. Nothing shown is recreated, retyped or edited beyond cropping to the post header and the comment.

STATISTICS

Shares carry Wilson 95 percent intervals: the range the share would land in 19 times out of 20 if the same count were taken on a fresh crowd of the same size. Differences between two shares carry a Wald interval. Where a study is cited as a baseline, its own reported figure and sample size are used.

WHAT NONE OF THIS CAN SEE

No demographics beyond what people typed. No view durations. No private messages. No comments that were deleted before the archive pulled them. No way to verify that a self-report is true. Every paper's limits section names the specific things its count cannot show.