



Sociologie Românească

ISSN: 2668-1455 (print), ISSN: 1220-5389 (electronic)

THE MORAL CAREERS OF MALE TINDER USERS: AN EXPLORATORY SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Maria STOICESCU

Sociologie Românească, 2022, vol. 20, Issue 2, pp. 49-75

<https://doi.org/10.33788/sr.20.2.3>

Published by:
Expert Projects Publishing House



On behalf of:
Asociația Română de Sociologie

THE MORAL CAREERS OF MALE TINDER USERS: AN EXPLORATORY SOCIOLOGICAL ANALYSIS

Maria STOICESCU¹

Abstract

Men's experiences and behaviors on dating apps are shaped by the gender distribution asymmetry on these platforms, usage patterns and results, motivations of use, and perceived benefits. This study contributes to the understanding of the outcomes of men's use of dating apps, by identifying the social trajectories of use observed on Tinder. For this purpose, I use the concept of 'career', as discussed by Erving Goffman (1963) Howard Becker (1963), and David Matza (1969), to answer the following research question: What are the 'moral careers' of male users, and what are the factors that influence their engagement on the Tinder dating app? The study relies on 25 semi-structured interviews with 22 self-identified heterosexual and three self-identified homosexual male users, held between 2019 and 2022, and a sample of 22 online accounts of Tinder use, published on *Quora*. The analysis shows the emergence of five 'moral careers': the serial dater, the relationship-oriented dater, the passive dater, the episodic dater, and the discredited dater, with associated narratives. The findings contribute to the understanding of the dating practices and effects stirred by dating apps, with a focus on Tinder. It also illuminates specific masculine behaviors and goals within the app, with an accent on their dynamics.

Keywords: moral career, male users, dating apps, Tinder.

Introduction

On Tinder, the gender distribution of users is highly unbalanced. Although the company does not publicly reveal official information regarding the gender distribution on the app, several statistics point to a significant asymmetry. For instance, according to the Statista Research Department (2022), of the Android active user accounts of the Tinder dating app in the United States, 76% belonged to male users. In fact, the distribution observed in the US is less unbalanced than in

¹ Doctoral School of Sociology, University of Bucharest, Bucharest, ROMANIA. E-mail: maria.stoicescu@sas.unibuc.ro.

some European countries. A report released by Ogury (2019), based on 12 million dating app users across the US, the UK, Italy, France, and Spain, showed that the user base in Italy is comprised of 91% men, in Spain 87%, in the UK 85%, and in France 81%. The popularity of dating apps among men has also been suggested in the literature (Castro *et al.*, 2020; Erevik *et al.*, 2020). The uneven gender distribution of users, and masculine preference of Tinder and other dating apps raise a question: why are these apps used much more by men, and how do male users behave on these platforms? It also demands a more in-depth analysis of the usage patterns, experiences, and social trajectories taken by this gender category.

Traditionally, men are considered to be in charge of initiating romantic and sexual interactions (Laner & Ventrone, 2000). Thus, dating apps can serve as the ground through which men more easily access dating opportunities. Moreover, research has shown that through dating apps, people sensitive to rejection may overcome the challenge of approaching others face-to-face (Blackhart, Fitzpatrick, & Williamson, 2014), which can be another factor that adds to the popularity of such apps among men. This study is concerned with the various social trajectories of men as revealed by their swiping habits on Tinder. Previous studies have looked at the experiences of men who use dating apps. More specifically, they analyzed the effects of dating apps on body image (Strubel and Petrie, 2017), men's presentation of self on dating apps (Miller, 2020; Waling *et al.*, 2022), masculine representations and discourses (Haywood, 2018; García-Gómez, 2020; Montemurro, 2021), and motivations of use (Ranzini, & Lutz, 2017; Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017; Timmermans, & De Caluwé, 2017a; Lopes, & Vogel, 2019). However, no study so far has looked at what incentivizes or inhibits the use of dating apps among men, whether the main goal is achieved or if it has changed over time, or what various new uses arise in the way. Thus, through this study, my aim is to explore the main 'moral careers' taken by men on dating apps, with a case study of Tinder.

Tinder

Tinder is a social dating app that contains over 75 million active users (Iqbal, 2022). According to Timmermans and De Caluwé (2017) Tinder is used for a variety of motives that go beyond love and sex narratives, such as when traveling, to immerse themselves better in the culture and among locals, and to socialize. It is also used to get over a breakup, for acceptance, approval, and validation, for entertainment and to pass the time, to disconnect from work or study, or to feed one's curiosity. These motives of use support the versatile characteristics of Tinder as a technological product that shapes human practices and incentivizes the social trajectories of use.

The Tinder dating app is based on simple matchmaking that requires users to swipe right on the screen to like or left to dislike the possible partners displayed. By design, Tinder users may describe themselves briefly through a description of up

to 500 characters, age, education, occupation, passions, up to nine photos, and pre-established characteristics (i.e., organized under categories such as zodiac, dietary preferences, drink of choice, or communication style). This assembly, organized for fun and ease, allows users to access romantic and sexual partners in their proximity with low effort and increased engagement, facilitated by gamification elements (Garda & Karhulahti, 2019). Tinder's popularity also steams from how it was perceived by users in the beginning (i.e., mid-2010s) – as a hook-up app, which increased interest among users.

The activity and results of Tinder users differ significantly when gender is considered. More specifically, the number of matches raised by a male user differs significantly from the number raised by a female user. While male users appear to match with fewer people, are less selective when swiping right, and even casually like most profiles when lacking matches, female users report matching with over 50% of the profiles they have swiped right on, at the same time being highly selective, and do not appear to change their selection strategy while on the app (Tyson *et al.*, 2016). The matching results of male users may shape the adopted trajectories of use, which, to the author's knowledge, have not been specifically identified in previous research.

Men's use of dating apps

Users, in general, are more aware of their body appearance when using dating apps (Strubel & Petrie, 2017). Matches and dating success mediated digitally are mechanisms through which users receive feedback on their level of desirability and acceptability (Duguay, 2017; Krüger & Spilde, 2020). In the hope of attaining better results, men negotiate their self-presentations in relation to idealized images of masculine bodies and the cultural messages contained in these representations (Waling *et al.*, 2022). Moreover, supported by digital affordances, some heterosexual men engage in sexting practices and send pictures of their genitals to promote a sexualized image of their bodies and to provoke appreciative comments from women (Waling *et al.*, 2022).

Men appear to be more comfortable in addressing sexual motivation as a main reason for using dating apps (Carpenter, & McEwan, 2016; Orosz *et al.*, 2016; Ranzini, & Lutz, 2017; Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017; Timmermans, & De Caluwé, 2017b; Sevi, Aral, & Eskenazi, 2018), and do not perceive integrity-wise repercussions of exposing themselves on dating platforms (Lopes, & Vogel, 2019). In comparison, female users are more likely to report harassment (Thompson, 2018), feel exposed, objectified, and subjected to offensive behavior, and perceive the online dating experience as unsatisfactory (Lopes, & Vogel, 2019; Anderson, Vogels, & Turner, 2020). In fact, research has shown that men are more tolerant of various risks related to the use of dating apps (Blackhart, Fitzpatrick, & Williamson, 2014; Sevi, Aral, & Eskenazi, 2018). These results partially reveal

why men install and use dating apps more than women. In the case of gay men, the long-term use of dating apps has been linked to whether their sexual orientation was disclosed publicly (Miller, 2020). Homosexual men describe Tinder as an app intended for more romantic dating interactions. The description comes in comparison to Grindr, a hyper-sexualized dating app intended for gay intimate relations (MacKee, 2016).

Dating apps offer numerous romantic and sexual opportunities; however, they are not equally accessible to everyone, especially when it comes to heterosexual men. Because women use such apps in low numbers (Ogury, 2019; Statista Research Department, 2022) and are choosier when engaging on the dating apps (Tyson *et al.*, 2016), some heterosexual men might be challenged in attaining their romantic and sexual goals. By analyzing the social trajectories of male users, the gender category exceedingly attracted to dating apps, we can understand how digital dating technologies can influence the behavior of users.

Analyzing social trajectories through the *career* concept

For the analysis of the social trajectories of Tinder male users and factors that shape their engagement, I opted for the theoretical model provided by the *career* concept previously discussed by Goffman (1963), Becker (1963), and Matza (1969). The literature engaging with the *career* concept contains analyses that explain the work of individuals in overcoming various types of addiction (Radcliffe, 2011) and dealing with illnesses (Cruz *et al.*, 2015; Wouters, & De Wet, 2016), the courses taken by cigarette smokers across different life stages (Peretti-Watel *et al.*, 2007; Peretti-Watel, Halfen, & Grémy, 2007), the ways individuals negotiate normative beliefs in the face of novel and challenging social situations (Johnson, & Best, 2012; Sumerau *et al.*, 2016), but also to understand the adoption of various identities, such as the sports-related identities (e.g., sports supporter, sky-diver; Jones, 2000; Crawford, 2003; Hardie-Bick, 2005)

Although the career concept has been used predominantly in the study of deviancy and health-related practices, its application outside these fields can advance the understanding of the processes of becoming, (non-)conforming, and identity performance in many other social situations (Scott, & Hardie-Bick, 2022). Moreover, the use of the *career* concept can also help illuminate important aspects of the interaction between agents and more or less rigid structures (Crawford, 2003). For instance, Crawford's analysis of the career of the sport supporter (2003) provides insights into how the ice hockey supporter career progresses with time (i.e., at first, part of the general public or interested; later, devoted or professional, etc.), what behaviors are considered acceptable and what socio-demographic characteristics and reactions are seen as authentic (e.g., female supporters of sports labeled as masculine are less likely to be viewed as "real" fans). Notable is also the application of the concept to the study of the skydivers' identity transformation,

from a beginner to a legitimate skydiver (Scott, & Hardie-Bick, 2022). Hardie-Bick's study (2005) describes the particularities of the skydiving practice, how individuals become involved in the community, learn the rules and the skills necessary to perform well while engaging in the practice of an extreme sport. The application of the concept to the analysis of male Tinder users' experiences is useful because it can reveal less visible aspects of the digital dating dynamic offered by Tinder, by focusing on the engagement of users across time in relation to their identity, motivations of use, and expectations stimulated in this specific dating context.

In Goffman's perspective, the *career* concept provides insights on the moral aspects contained in the process of identity change. Essentially, the *moral* career concept employed by Goffman envisions the trajectory of an individual who learns (in early childhood or late in life) that they carry a certain attribute that can discredit them socially and attract stigma from others (Goffman, 1963). In acknowledging their discreditable attributes, individuals seek to come to terms with the new "normal", and to overcome this limitation. Institutions may significantly shape the career of stigmatized individuals. In his article, "The Moral Career of the Mental Patient", Goffman (1959) was preoccupied with understanding the social and moral dynamics of the mental patient's status in the context of psychiatric hospitalization. Here, he describes the mental hospital as a constraining establishment, one that strips away individuals' right to act willfully. While located in this constraining terrain, the mental patient reconstructs an identity not in line with their own desires and goals, but compatible with the demands of the institution. The analysis provides an extreme example of how institutions can shape identities.

Another use of the career concept is proposed by Becker (1963), who discusses the *deviant* career in relation to social settings and patterns that shape its beginning and sustain its development. For instance, Becker argues that the pleasures perceived from the deviant act are socially acquired and later justified and maintained through engagement with other deviant persons. In discussing the moral career of marijuana users, Becker observed that engagement with other users secures the transition to a regular user. Novice users are supported by more experienced users to manage and understand their use of the drug, cope with the sensations, and learn to perceive them as pleasurable.

Matza's explanation (1969) of the career concept provides useful insights for this study. He documented the previous approaches to deviancy as dominated by three themes, 'affinity', 'affiliation', and 'signification', which together offer a deeper understanding of what the *deviant* career entails. *Affinity* represents the attraction toward deviant acts, formed in social circumstances. In this sense, the level of an individual's delinquency may be connected to a certain set of social conditions that promote a predisposition towards deviancy. *Affiliation* refers to the adoption of behaviors that are characteristically deviant and result from engagement with other deviant people. Here, Matza discusses Becker's report on marijuana users. *Signification* catalogues not only society's reaction but also the

meaning-making that derives from deviant acts. Essentially, in Matza's opinion, individuals catalogued as deviant seek to justify their actions through a creation of meaning and reasoning that further amplify and sustain the adopted identity.

The theories discussed in this section draw attention to the socially shaped, contextual identity creation of individuals who find themselves in a contested situation. The three perspectives on the concept of *career* provide a complementary theoretical framework for the interpretation of the setting, social implications, and dynamics involved in the experiences of men who use Tinder. Thus, in my analysis, I acknowledge users' motivations, social context, and determinants of using the app. I also highlight the perceived benefits and disadvantages, factors that fuel users' engagement or inhibit their use, attributes through which users are celebrated or discredited in this digital social setting, how they perceive the utility of the app, how they acquire new motivations, what sustains their participation across time, and the reasoning derived from use.

Methods

To facilitate an in-depth understanding of the social trajectories of dating app use, I conducted 25 semi-structured interviews with self-identified male Tinder users. The collected data provided access to a rich range of situations. Therefore, the interviewing stage has ended when the code and meaning saturation objective was achieved (Hennink, Kaiser, & Marconi, 2017). I complemented the data gathered through interviews with 22 online accounts selected from the community platform Quora to expand the applicability of the identified moral careers. Because the experiences presented through the interviews and user comments are complementary and offer a more comprehensive understanding of user experiences and trajectories of use, I opted for a combined presentation of the careers incentivized by Tinder, identified across the full sample. The application of the methods used is described below.

Sociological survey

This study relies on 25 semi-structured interviews with 22 self-identified heterosexual men and three self-identified homosexual men who used the Tinder dating app. The interview participants were selected through purposive and snowball sampling methods. More specifically, the interviewees were either asked to participate in the study based on their status as users, or they were recommended by other study participants. The respondents were informed about the anonymization procedures and agreed to the audio recording of the interviews. Three of the interviews were conducted face-to-face, and the rest were recorded telephonically or through the Zoom platform. Verbal consent for the recording was

obtained from all participants. The duration of the interviews ranged from 30 to 120 minutes. The names of the participants have been replaced with pseudonyms.

During the interviews, the following themes of discussion were followed: motivation and duration of use, type of Tinder account used (i.e., the free or the paid version), usual app activities, self-presentation approach, selection strategies, and temporal patterns of interaction – how they engage with others and when, emotional investment aspects, opinions on online dating versus face-to-face dating opportunities, perceived benefits and deficiencies of use, anticipated and actual usefulness of the app, reasons for deleting the app, and reasons for further use.

Most of the participants were of Romanian nationality. However, Brazilian, Colombian, Italian, and Swedish participants were also included in the sample. The decision to include participants of various nationalities is supported by the fact that a significant proportion of the interviewees have used the app while traveling for work purposes or other reasons. It is necessary to underline here that the app is highly popular worldwide, and that its use in different territories for short or long periods is expected.

The ages of the study participants varied between 20 and 53 years. All interviewees presented higher education and lived in urban and suburban areas, cities with high or low numbers of inhabitants. The number of inhabitants of the city of residence can be relevant for the use of a location-based app such as Tinder. If users choose to use Tinder for long periods, it might also be due to the area in which it is used (i.e., more profiles to swipe on, and consequently, more dating opportunities and experiences), along with other reasons and predispositions. The participants belonged to the middle class and were university students, unemployed or employed, and from various work fields. See Supplementary Material for more details on the interviewed study participants.

Qualitative content analysis

The analysis of the interviews was complemented with 22 answer posts selected from Quora, a Q&A platform where users ask questions on a broad range of topics to access first-hand information from other users or experts (Wang *et al.*, 2013). I selected the user post using the purposive sampling method. More specifically, I first searched for the relevant question that would allow me to access useful information on male users' experience with the Tinder dating app. The most relevant question turned out to be "What was your Tinder experience like?" (Quora, no date), which attracted 93 answers (i.e., including the related answers¹) in which users summarized their experiences and strategy of use, and detailed their practices with the app. From a total of 93 answers, roughly half belonged to male users. I selected 22 of the most detailed use descriptions, thus excluding very brief answers (i.e., the shortest selected answer had 90 words and the longest 1,069 words), in which the motivation and outcome of use could be concluded. In comparison to the interviews, the Quora answers provided less organized

information, as users mentioned only the details particularly relevant for them. The gender and sexual orientation of the user could be easily identified, as most of the Quora participants labeled themselves (e.g., “I’m a guy”), and indicated their dating interests. The age, education, and nationality were mentioned, but not always. Nevertheless, the selected Quora accounts seemed to belong to Asian men, who represented the majority (e.g., Indian, Indonesian), but also to African, North American, and European users. As a result, Quora accounts delivered incomparable insights into the analysis of users’ moral careers incentivized by Tinder. The names used for Quora users in this paper are fictive. See Supplementary Material for more details on the included Quora accounts.

Analysis

I performed a thematic analysis of the interview data and Quora accounts, as discussed by Braun and Clarke (2012), focusing on how participants describe the purpose of the app, motivation of use, and paying attention to the distinct patterns of use, engagement dynamics, goals, associated narratives, and beliefs and meanings derived from personal experiences. Starting from the meanings and scope derived from the *career* concept and its previous uses, I deductively coded the collected data. Following, I categorized the most visible patterns of use into themes representing the moral careers specific to Tinder male users. The results are discussed in the following section of this paper.

Results

The moral career of the mental patient is marked by “the experience of abandonment, disloyalty, and embitterment” (Goffman, 1959, 126). In comparison, the moral career of the male Tinder user is typically triggered by romantic and sexual yearnings, feelings of loneliness, need to engage socially and to be entertained, or curiosity. However, the imagined outcomes are sometimes contradictory to the actual experience. Depending on the satisfaction derived from use and matchmaking results, the use can be pleasurable or, on the contrary, disheartening. In comparison to moral careers incentivized by leisure activities that imply group participation, cooperation, rehearsal, and competition (Scott, & Hardie-Bick, 2022), the moral careers of Tinder users develop, in the majority of cases, privately, this being an aspect previously discussed in the context of the “privatization of intimacy” (Bergström, 2021).

The trajectories of use for male Tinder users are significantly shaped by their app results. More specifically, if users obtain “matches” (i.e., the term used to indicate when two users have liked each other), have conversations, and finally go on dates, they end up using the app more intensely. It is important here to specify that female users always raise matches on Tinder, and that women’s variation in the number of matches is caused by their selection strategy (i.e., being more or less

selective), rather than by the factors that influence men's outcomes (Tyson *et al.*, 2016; Neyt, Vandenbulcke, & Baert, 2019). In comparison, men are, on average, on the vulnerable side of women's choosiness and the competitiveness that results from the presence of a high number of male users on the app, factors that cause some users to be unable to raise matches. Male users have their own interpretations of why they lack matches. They may consider themselves not desirable enough in terms of physical attraction or wealth, which in Goffmanian terminology would count as "discreditable attributes." They may characterize women as "superficial" for going for the best-looking users, or they may blame the unbalanced gender distribution on the app for their lack of favorable outcomes. The matchmaking results influence how men end up using Tinder, and they incentivize different trajectories of use. Five moral careers were identified through this analysis: "serial," "relationship-oriented," "passive," "episodic," and "discredited" daters (*Table 1*).

Table 1. Moral careers incentivized by the Tinder dating app

Moral career	Reported no. of matches	Main activity	Perceived benefits	Use of app	Potential to pay for the premium features
Serial dater	Moderate	Swiping, chatting, and going out on dates	Dating, socializing, entertainment, casual sex, meeting various people, validation	For long periods; on and off (intense and mild periods of dating)	Moderate
Relationship-oriented dater	Moderate	Swiping, chatting, and going out on dates	Access to dating opportunities	Moderate periods, until they find a partner or find more favorable dating alternatives	Moderate or high
Passive dater	Low or moderate	Swiping, chatting, engagement with peers	Entertainment Distraction Validation	For long periods	Moderate
Episodic dater	Low or moderate	Swiping, chatting, and going out on dates	Meeting people easily when traveling To overcome momentary situations	Using the app for short periods, when needed	Low

Discredited dater	None or very low	Swiping	Easier to interact with others	Short periods (The long periods of use are sustained by the absence of other dating alternatives)	High
-------------------	------------------	---------	--------------------------------	---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------	------

Serial daters

The serial dater's career combines the favorable results obtained through the use of the app with a predisposition for exploration. Eleven study participants and seven Quora participants took the serial dating route. The pre-installation motivations declared by these participants were formulated around affirmations as "to meet new people," "for entertainment," and/or for "casual sex." Thus, the intention to interact with others in person is invoked from the beginning. The serial dating career is characteristic to the users who describe a moderate-to-high engagement with possible partners in-app but also off-app. Together with the characteristic of serially meeting their matches face-to-face, in this specific group, users do not have a strongly formulated "end" goal. For instance, they often do not intend to secure a serious relationship, their activity being fueled by the promises the app incentivizes, the feeling of validation derived from matches and casual sex encounters, and/or the face-to-face experiences they obtain through its use. Most of the time, the partners they meet are carefully selected in terms of attractiveness, to attain a satisfactory and pleasurable interaction. Albert, a Tinder user for two years, described how he used the app when more opportunities arose:

"I matched with four different people in one day, and I was like, 'What do I choose?' Oh, well, I can talk with all of them and see what is going to happen. By the way, those are my intentions in the app, and I am not lying to anyone. I am not like hurting anyone at that point. And I was like having simultaneous dates. So, if I am going with one on Thursday, I am going with the other one on Friday. [...] And, of course, being like straight with the person, like, 'You know that we're just going to hook up and that's it?'" (Albert, Colombian, 27).

Tinder's potential to incentivize and prolong the exploration process in the dating segment is noticeable, especially in the case of serial daters. This is also facilitated by the absence of a clearly formulated relationship goal, which makes users less focused on choosing a partner option and more open to alternatives. For instance, Victor described using Tinder for more than three years for a variety of reasons and in various countries:

“First and foremost, I use it for socializing [...]. I’m also interested in sex – to have someone to go out with one night, for example, to a movie, to the theater, like that. So, I use it for many... for me, it has many uses.” (Victor, Romanian, 33)

However, in other cases, users simply find it difficult to develop a relationship with a person met through Tinder. Users’ narratives point to a lack of compatibility that goes beyond physical attraction (i.e., emotional, intellectual), but also unsynchronized temporal plans – Tinder’s accelerated matchmaking dynamics versus the temporality specific to relationship development. Knowing a person well enough to start a relationship takes time. This aspect conflicts with the temporality of the app, in which partner options and dating opportunities are constantly accessible. Matching with several people in a short timeframe leads to a complex process in which users are challenged to assess the potential of the interactions in a timely manner. Thus, users are faced with high levels of uncertainty (not knowing if their partner choice is truly a good option in terms of reliability and intellectual, and emotional compatibility), and with the chance to explore other dating options. Jeremy, a user who has used Tinder on and off since 2016, and went on over a hundred dates from Tinder, uses the app primarily “to meet people I would not otherwise have known, or I would not have intersected with.” He also described finding a partner on Tinder as feasible but challenging:

“Well, if I find a person who is ok and I want to go out with her, I stop trying to get any more dates. Or, to say the worst, this is going to sound really bad, but if I started a conversation, I finish it and eventually go out on a date to see what the person is like so that no one could say I did not give a chance. But ideally, it would be nice to find a person who is ok and then stop dating other people. The problem is that this “ok” is not very clear after the first date, nor after the second, or you see only after a month that she was not really “ok”. (Jeremy, Romanian, 35)

Serial daters rely significantly on the physical attractiveness displayed in their profile through photos. They are preoccupied with what their profile looks like and what works best to secure more matches and, consequently, obtain more dates. Moreover, most of the users in this category reported increased self-esteem and improved interaction abilities, once they learned to use the app. Many reported that the app has helped them overcome the discomfort they felt when interacting with strangers, and as a result, they have become more confident in talking to possible partners. For instance, Benjamin, a Tinder user for about four years, described personal growth:

“The truth is that it has helped me interact more easily with new people, because, in parallel, since I started using Tinder, I find it easier to manage a problem that I had in general, which is that I could not talk easily with strangers. But since I’ve been using Tinder, it has become a little easier for me. With Tinder, I have picked up [women] from different contexts as well.” (Benjamin, Romanian, 33)

In the dating context, heterosexual men often relate to an imagined masculine ideal of success. This image can be related to having an increased number of partners or, on the contrary, finding the perfect relationship partner and starting a family (see the relationship-oriented dating career in the following section). Dating apps are a never-ending source of potential partners, and some male users who demonstrate desirable qualities are inclined to take advantage of the opportunities they offer. John, a Quora user, described how he started going frequently on dates with women on Tinder. His account reveals how dating practices can be shaped by the technological affordances of Tinder:

“I went into this already expecting the worst, no matches. [...] Nothing prepared me for the sheer number of matches I got by the time I stopped using the app. [...] I’d do nothing but text back and forth for days on end. [...] I got so many compliments; I saw a side of women most men will never see throughout their lives. Their sexual side. [...] I later quit Tinder since it was contributing to destabilizing my fragile mental health. Additionally, I wanted to deal with the matches I already had. It was turning me into a man I never thought I’d be: a hedonist and, soon, a sex addict.” (John, Kenyan, used Tinder in the United Kingdom; Quora user)

Developing games through Tinder to raise matches or dates while casually competing with friends or colleagues has become a common practice (Sobieraj, & Humphreys, 2021). Moreover, descriptions of sexual interactions that often take place in groups of men, perceived as “opportunities to demonstrate heteromascularity” (Montemurro, 2021, 318) and “evidentiary stories” (Montemurro, 2021), are also common in the case of serial daters. The preoccupation with acquiring matches and having successful interactions was visible in several interviews. For instance, Matthew, a man who used various dating platforms starting in 2015, described how he used the Tinder dating app with his male friends in a sort of competition, feeling excited about the possibilities and acclaim these matches would bring. Interestingly, his use of the app developed across different life stages. More specifically, his accounts regarding his past use showed a higher focus on meeting various women without a fixed goal, whereas his present use seemed more oriented toward meeting a serious partner. This demonstrates that users may change their motivations for use over time:

“I remember that, at that time, in 2015, when I discovered Tinder, I was with some comrades with whom I had some kind of competition, to say, «Look, brother, how many babes. Look who answered me, look at how this one looks.» and so on, you know? And because this is a desire to be validated, it stimulates even more of this desire to stay there and get involved in all kinds of dates and discussions. [...] I changed my approach a bit. [...] I reached a level of saturation, as if I felt tired and I want to find out. Okay, «Why are you on Tinder?» That’s one of the questions I ask, you know? [...] I mean, I want to know. Is it a real reason or...?” (Matthew, Romanian, 35)

Other serial daters described how their use progressed over time. Interestingly, like other social media platforms that become part of users' identities, Tinder becomes a routine, as well as a dating experience. For instance, Tobias, a Tinder user for three years, admitted to becoming jaded over time:

"And I remember, for example, my first date on Tinder. I was extremely nervous. I was finished. My whole body was shaking before the first date, and now... «Eh, Tinder.» I think there is a disadvantage in being so... you get so used to dating and it should be special. Because you have access to endless women, the magic somehow disappears." (Tobias, Romanian, 31)

Over the course of their use, serial daters learn to be emotionally distant in the interactions they have with persons met on Tinder. Noah, a divorced man who was married for 20 years, used Tinder in New York. He described originating from "a more conservative country, in Europe." In his Quora answer, Noah described the difference between the dating landscape from before he got married and the dating possibilities accessed through Tinder today. His account is revealing of newly acquired attitudes and beliefs, as well as the attempt to manage disappointments, by taking advantage of the dating opportunities accessed through Tinder:

"Girls may match, and, as soon as you start chatting, will unmatched, with absolutely no feedback as to why [...]. This means you need to be cynical, not take things personally, see it as a numbers game, and not give up any opportunity in hope of another one. Very specifically: line up multiple dates during the week in case girls flake or you don't connect. Do not be afraid of getting involved with one, and not be available for another one. Better that than ending up alone on a night when you hoped to be dating." (Noah; Quora user)

The three men who identified as homosexual appeared to take a serial dating career, going on dates off Tinder often. Of the three users, two were involved in open relationships (Brazilian and Italian nationality, respectively). They used Tinder and Grindr alternatively or in parallel, and their motivations for use ranged from meeting new people and making friends, to having casual sex. Luis, a closeted, self-identified homosexual male, single at the time of the interview, used Tinder for approximatively five years, mainly to find a partner for a serious relationship, but also for making friends and for socializing, going out to dates often, as part of his lifestyle:

"I have included in my lifestyle the habit of meeting new people, meaning that you can never get to anything if you do not know new people, and even if I want or I do not want, I have a portion of time allocated to meeting new people." (Luis, Romanian, 22)

It is important to specify here that homosexual Tinder male users are more active in liking the profiles of other homosexual male users (Tyson *et al.*, 2016).

Consequently, the interviewed gay men indicated that they were not deprived of matches while using the app. Moreover, in their case, the digital space appears to provide more social opportunities to engage with users with similar lifestyles and sexual orientations.

Male users who often go on Tinder dates are stimulated to explore face-to-face social, dating, and sexual opportunities, by favorable app results and by their flexible motivations for use. In the absence of an essential objective, these men may be less focused on investing efforts to develop interactions, and are thus more inclined to go on many dates, and use Tinder longer. The app's role in incentivizing dating interactions is also observed, especially through its physical attraction-based matchmaking system that promotes idealized versions of users, and swift dating temporality, which inhibits the development of interactions, by constantly offering alternative dating opportunities. Serial daters appear to be stimulated to use the app by the validation obtained through likes, face-to-face social and dating interactions, and sexual encounters with different partners. This moral career path indicates social progression (users acquire new abilities), but also emotional distancing (users learn to enjoy the activity, to be less involved emotionally in interactions, in order to preserve their commitment of going out to dates), and the adoption of new attitudes and beliefs in the dating segment (e.g., better to be involved with many persons than being alone). The negative effects of the use of the app can be related to app use addiction, and the development of an insensitive attitude.

Relationship-oriented daters

The "relationship-oriented" career describes users who installed Tinder mainly to find a relationship partner. These users reported a moderate number of matches (i.e., the complete lack of matches leads to different trajectories of use; see the "discredited daters" category). They invoked either the scarcity of partner options in their physical proximity or discomfort in approaching strangers in face-to-face social settings as the main reasons for using the app. Given their desire to meet a person for a long-term commitment, relationship-oriented daters were selective and inclined to meet noteworthy matches face-to-face.

Three out of 25 study participants and three out of the 22 Quora users offered accounts that showed that they used Tinder specifically to find a partner for a serious relationship or that they have found a partner without necessarily searching for one. David, a Quora user who used Tinder to find a partner, described being good-looking, a physical quality associated with a higher number of matches by Tinder users, and selective. The outcome of his use turned out to be unsatisfactory, as he felt disadvantaged by the low number of matches and lack of seriousness on behalf of the female users with whom he interacted:

"I am a good-looking guy, and it is a lot easier for me in real life than on Tinder. [...] I was also too picky, so on 85% of the people, I swiped no. If I really like someone, then I really like that person. I will not swipe just to see how many likes I will get. Most of the time, I only got a few matches and got matched with fake profiles and scammers. With the few matches, I tried to have a decent conversation, but they never responded or they unliked me. [...] Some profiles look like a complete joke, and you can tell they are not serious about meeting someone. In conclusion, not good for guys or girls who want a relationship." (David; Quora user)

Contrary to serial daters, relationship-oriented daters appeared more involved in getting to know their matches, aiming for meaningful conversations and interactions. For instance, Filip, 38 years old, divorced, and Tinder user for one year, described how he sought to deepen the interactions established with women with whom he connected on Tinder:

"With all the people with whom I had a match, there were conversations, because I used, I repeat, I used the app to find a girlfriend and a long-term relationship, and with all the people I matched, I had a discussion, a conversation." (Filip, Romanian, 38)

However, Filip mentioned that he later deleted the app after one year of use. He described not liking meeting persons through an app, especially because this type of dating dynamic seemed to limit important aspects found in face-to-face social interactions. He also described Tinder interactions as superficial.

The male users who sought a partner on Tinder were significantly more disappointed with their Tinder interactions than were serial daters. This strengthens the argument that Tinder is a digital structure in which casual and short-lived interactions are easier to attain. Oliver, a 29-year-old Tinder user who considered himself shy, used the app to meet women more easily. He described being quite selective in choosing possible partners; however, he did not find a partner in his approximately three years of using the app:

"I really want a family. [...] I don't feel any pressure or anything. I want this thing. But it's not like there are plenty of fish in the sea, because, again, from my small Tinder experience, I saw that it is not as it seems, meaning that there are a lot of people who are there to acquire Instagram followers, and many people you meet are not suitable for you. I think it would be better to find someone outside the app, outside any app, like to go out, only that it's hard for me. I don't know why I have these preconceptions, but well, I'm trying to get rid of them. I'm working on this thing." (Oliver, Romanian, 29)

Not all relationship seekers feel unlucky with Tinder. From the totality of the study participants and Quora accounts, three users found long-term partners on Tinder. Max, a Tinder user for approximately one year, recounted that most of his Tinder interactions were positive and turned into relationships: "The first date was a 10-month relationship, the second date on Tinder was a two-month relationship, and the third on Tinder was another two-month relationship" (Max,

40). However, Max also described a later period in which he used Tinder to find casual interactions. This period was triggered by his previous relationship failures and his inability to be involved intimately in a serious commitment. Interestingly, Max said he did not feel fully comfortable with this interaction form and did not find it moral to interact with more than one woman at once, which seems to indicate that relationship-oriented daters might rely on a moral compass for dating decisions. When asked about how going out with four people at once made him feel, Max answered:

*“Q: How did all this experience of going out with four people at once make you feel?
A: Uh, not necessarily good about myself. Although it is said that for a man it is the holy grail, I felt bad when I received messages and I did not answer, because it did not seem fair to talk to someone while I was with someone else.” (Max, Romanian, 40)*

Mohammed, another Quora user categorized as relationship-oriented, described that the use of Tinder ended when he found his current partner on the app:

“After that, I uninstalled Tinder forever. She was my first and last match on that dating app. We are still very much in love with each other. [...] What’s even better? We’re all set married in a year! Tinder really sucks because of the so many sleazy people on that app and the risk it poses to privacy. However, I met the love of my life on Tinder, and I guess that’s the best thing that happened to us.” (Mohammed, Indian; Quora user)

Like serial daters, the relationship-oriented male daters in the present study raised a moderate number of matches, which allowed them to explore Tinder’s affordances and form their own opinions about the dating dynamics promoted by the app and its utility. The male users who sought a relationship partner on Tinder described a shorter and a less enjoyable experience than the users categorized as serial daters. However, in some cases, their engagement on the platform produced positive results. In all three fortunate cases, users found partners almost immediately after creating a profile.

Passive daters

The category of passive users includes men who installed Tinder for a variety of reasons (from finding a partner for a serious relationship or casual sex, to socializing and meeting new people) but who later developed new uses (i.e., validation, distraction, entertainment, etc.). Passiveness in Tinder users is defined here as use separated from the pursuit of a specific dating goal. Seven of the interviewed users, and one of the Quora accounts described passive use patterns. Initially, passive daters pursued specific personal motivations, but were also drawn to using the app out of curiosity, and due to the popularity of the app. Paul, a

Tinder user for eight years, has used the app since its launch. During this time, Paul went on several dates out of curiosity, not pursuing a defined goal. He observed that meeting women from other face-to-face social contexts was more appealing for him than meeting them online on Tinder. Paul's style of use was catalogued as passive, especially because his motivation for further use was centered on the validation outcome:

"For me, I would not say that it's a lot about dating, because I can't say that I went out, but considering how long it's been since 2013, I don't know, many years, eight years. I haven't gone to so many dates with Tinder itself, but it's interesting to swipe and see who likes you, if you have matches, collecting matches rather than having conversations. [...] Maybe others don't have so many matches; it depends. Well, I don't know. I've deleted some of them, but I think that in total there are still about 500 matches in the application, meaning, who has time to talk to so many women?" (Paul, Romanian, 33)

Users who have taken the passive usage trajectory also installed Tinder for individual or collective entertainment. A game-like activity (see also Sobieraj, & Humphreys 2021) is visible in the case of passive users who use the app as an entertainment source. For instance, Stefan has installed the Tinder dating app for entertainment purposes, along with his peers. His use was connected to the use of the app by other male colleagues in his work group. After three years, when the group drew apart, he deleted the app. During the time of use, along with entertainment, he described being stimulated by curiosity and thought-provoking conversations:

"For me, it had become a hobby. [...] Every day, there was something happening on Tinder, and that was interesting. There's always something to do, you know. It was kind of a game, and tomorrow you had the next level." (Stefan, Romanian, 40)

Similarly, a Quora user concluded: "I look at it anymore as 'entertainment,' simply to kill time." (Otis; Quora user)

Jake, a Tinder user of seven years, who at the beginning installed Tinder to find sex partners, later identified multiple purposes of use, such as experimentation in-app (e.g., changing photos and descriptions to see the matchmaking dynamic), to meet new people. and occasionally talk online and very rarely meet face-to-face:

"I did a sort of experiment. I wanted to measure how the description influences my number of weekly matches and, at one point, I found a description that quantitatively impacted my number of matches. [...] I've done more [experiments] over time. In the end, it's a playground. At one point, I used Tinder to promote a startup, and then I measured how many leads Tinder brought me." (Jake, Romanian, 28)

Carl, a Tinder user for seven years, after initially using the app to find a committed relationship partner and failing to do so, continued using it for the virtual experience it delivers. He usually uses Tinder during work breaks, browsing through women's profiles to pass the time, and consuming the product as a substitute for an erotic magazine to disconnect from daily life. During the interview, he described his initial and later motivations for using the app:

“Q: What was the initial reason you decided to install Tinder?”

A: I thought it was easier for me to meet someone online, because face-to-face I am a little shy and I lack a bit of self-confidence, and I said that online it will be a little easier. [...] Right now, I am just looking at the pictures and swiping. [...] And I just use it to see physically beautiful people. Physically beautiful women.” (Carl, Romanian, 33)

The users identified as passive became less emotionally involved when using Tinder, and their effort to go on dates was described as low, mostly because of the absence of a strong motivation that would sustain the use of the app and their emotional investment, but also because of the anticipation of unfavorable outcomes. Two of the passive users interviewed showed signs of frustration when talking about their experience with the app, mostly when referring to its beginnings. However, after becoming more habituated with the general interaction pattern, they seem to have reached a state of resilience. Henry, a Tinder user for approximately five years, who originally installed Tinder out of curiosity and attempted to find a relationship partner although he was not constant, noted:

“Less than a week ago, I had a match with one girl, and I thought she very pretty and I was thinking, well, maybe I'll write to her, but then I had a match with another one, and she seemed just as pretty, and I thought – I could write to both of them, or I could write to neither one of them – and I chose to write to neither one of them. But this is also because of a big boulder in my mind, in the sense that, many times, when I write, regardless of the approach, so to speak, I don't receive an answer back, and at one point I said: why bother...” (Henry, Romanian, 28)

The male Tinder users who used the app for the virtual experience it delivers were catalogued as passive daters. Passive daters might have a few or moderate number of matches. Those who raise matches appear to do so in a game-like dynamic: they develop experiments in which they test what descriptions and profile photos bring more matches, develop conversations with other Tinder users to explore ideas and as a means of entertainment, or search to receive a validation boost by raising likes. Passive daters who raise insufficient matches and continue using the app for many years appear to be stimulated by photo browsing activity. Contrary to serial and relationship-oriented daters, these men are less focused on

developing conversations or meeting face-to-face, which can be linked to past disappointments or lack of interest in engaging offline. They use the app mainly as observers and as a social media platform.

Episodic daters

Of the 25 interview participants, two expressed episodic use of the app; that is, they mostly used Tinder when traveling abroad. For them, Tinder proved to be a valuable tool for engaging with locals. For instance, Ian used the app only while traveling. He described using the app in Spain, Morocco, Estonia, and France. Although he mentioned the existence of other apps specifically designed for meeting new people while traveling (e.g., TripGiraffe), in his opinion, Tinder proved to be more effective:

“I used to travel a lot for work, and so like a day or two before traveling, I would download the app and then use it. And then, when I came back, for a maximum of one week, I would continue to use it, and then remove it until the next travel.” (Ian, Italian, 30)

Similarly, Emanuel used the app mostly when traveling because it helped him connect faster with other people in new surroundings. He also claimed that through the app, he could more easily understand the social landscape and the culture of the place:

“I often travel to places I’ve never been to before. Even just swiping on Tinder can help you understand society from so many points of view.” (Emanuel, Italian, 30)

One of the 22 Quora answers revealed a pattern of use that may also be categorized as episodic. More specifically, a male user who mentioned that he was married and faced relationship problems used Tinder in three different periods. He described experiencing frustration, guilt, excitement, appreciation (“I was enjoying the feeling of being understood and appreciated for who I am.”), and app addiction in relation to his use of the app. Even though he established contact with some women he met through the app, in the end, he deleted Tinder and vowed to focus on repairing his marriage:

“I am a 30-year-old married man (ok, don’t judge me yet; please check the full answer first). I have been married since February 2017. But our honeymoon period ended rather abruptly. [...] I deleted my Tinder account for the final time and vowed to work harder than ever to make our marriage work.” (Amiri, Indian, 30; Quora user)

The episodic use of Tinder may be linked to the deliberate use of the app in circumstances in which individuals, displaced from their usual social settings, need a faster and easier way to engage with strangers. It can also be linked to

individuals who are part of a monogamous commitment and are unsatisfied with their relationship. These users may install Tinder in moments in which they are struggling with their relationships, to rediscover craved sensations.

Discredited daters

The “discredited daters” category describes men who received very few matches or none on Tinder. Among the 25 respondents, two were categorized as discredited. Of the 22 selected Quora answers, ten users demonstrated similar patterns. They installed the app for a variety of reasons, from curiosity to meeting people, dating, or friendships; however, their moral career on Tinder was, in most cases, short-lived. Sadly, this experience pushes them into a negative spiral, affecting their self-esteem and hope for social connections. A Quora user provided his interpretation of why Tinder did not work for him, concluding with the fact that Tinder only deepened his disappointment in finding a romantic partner:

“I’d still say Tinder is a good app, but the people using it should grow up. And I was totally wrong in trying Tinder to find someone who liked me truly. It is only for rich or handsome/beautiful ones, and not for those like me. Yes, I’m not handsome enough for a woman to choose me as a partner (based on looks), and everybody around me likes me as a good friend or a brother, and nobody likes me as a partner. Maybe that is the reason I was on Tinder.” (Bruno; Quora user)

By not having matches, these users rarely talk to other users or go out on dates. Swiping is the only activity they can perform on Tinder if they settle for the free options offered by the app (i.e., male users are allowed to 100 right swipes in 24 hours; premium accounts include unlimited swipes). These users are also more likely to purchase premium Tinder subscriptions and/or test the app’s capabilities beyond the limits of ethical use. For example, two of the discredited users mentioned that they created fake profiles to see if the matchmaking results would change. One of them described feeling surprised when the fake account he created turned out to deliver at least ten matches a day:

“I am an average-looking guy with literally no friends (girl). So, I thought of installing Tinder, hoping to get some friends. [...] I right-swiped 90% of the profiles and hoped I would get any match to start chatting with them. But still, after one month, I did not get any match. [...] Now, I lost all the hope with this app, so I started to experiment with it. I took some random hot guy pic from the Internet and uploaded it as my profile pic. After uploading this hot guy pic, I started to right-swipe the profiles. Now, to my surprise, I got a lot of matches. Each day, I used to get at least 10 matches. Even they offered their phone numbers before I asked. I wondered how this profile pic brings lots of matches and phone numbers. I understood that Tinder is not for normal guys like me. It’s only for super-hot guys.” (Sebastian; Quora user)

In comparison to the accounts offered by Quora users, where the experience with Tinder was described as short-lived, the two interviewed users catalogued as “discredited” provided more detailed accounts of their experiences, and described longer periods of use. Although they stressed the fact that they did not have sufficient partner choices, they did meet face-to-face with some of the persons they connected with on the app during their prolonged use. They even had longer interactions that turned into relationships; however, they did not find these relationships satisfactory, which in the end, led to their dissolution. The same two users ended up paying for the premium features as a way of increasing their chances. Eric, a foreign 53-year-old divorced man living in Romania, described using Gold, one of Tinder’s premium subscriptions, when actively searching for a partner. The features contained in the subscription allowed him to focus on the women who liked him already (i.e., the “See who likes you” feature), instead of going through all the available profiles. Unlike passive users, who enjoy disconnecting or connecting with peers, Eric disliked swiping. By using the Gold subscription, he could use the app without swiping:

“In the beginning, [...] I was swiping on everyone, but then I realized I could get almost no match; it will take forever. And then I got the Gold, and I could see who was swiping right on me. So ok, these are the 20 ones that I can choose from. I mean, why even bother with the other ten thousand? [...] Before I got the Gold, it was like 99% swiping, because it took a long time to go through everyone, to even get the first match.” (Eric, Swedish, 53)

Eric used Tinder for more than three years, with the objective of finding a romantic companion. Because of his introverted character, he considered other dating alternatives to be unattainable for him. During the time of his use, he was a victim of scamming. Eric mentioned that among the matches he acquired, he frequently stumbled upon scammers, and matched with women who, in the end, asked him for money. The presence of scammers on the app added another layer of difficulty in the way of finding a partner:

“I’m sorry to say, but you can’t trust a single word from any woman in Romania unless you have proof that she’s not lying to you. This is how bad it is for a foreigner in Romania, especially when she starts to bring up money.” (Eric, Swedish, 53)

Thomas, another discredited Tinder dater, first began using Tinder in 2015 while in university. His aim was to find casual partners. He stated that the use of the app diminished his self-esteem and made him frequently compare himself with others. At the time of the interview, Thomas deleted the app and mentioned that he had begun engaging in social and sports activities as a way of enlarging his social circle. However, he admitted that finding available partners in face-to-face social settings is more challenging than on Tinder, where the possible partners are more easily accessible:

"It seems to me that online, it is much easier to get to a date if you already have a connection. This is something I like about Tinder; that it facilitates this kind of connection. In the real world, somehow, there is this fear that I might ruin something. For example, if I know a person from my social circle and I invite her to coffee, she might say "no" [...] and there's a bit of pressure. On Tinder, I have no idea who that girl is, and whether she refuses me or not, it's the same." (Thomas, Romanian, 28)

Among the explanations found by discredited daters for their lack of matches on the app are the following: not being wealthy, interesting, or good-looking enough (muscular and physically attractive); unequal gender distribution, and increased male competition; their profile being less processed, in comparison to that of others (i.e., made in way that can deliver matches); Tinder users being immature; women being superficial, because they seem to make selections based on the physical aspect; women not understanding the purpose of the app (i.e., Tinder is widely associated with hooking-up). Having had a rather negative experience with Tinder, these users advised others to choose better dating app alternatives. Most of the discredited users said they deleted the app sooner or later after trying it out.

Discredited Tinder users perceive their lack of matches as invalidating feedback. These men begin to see themselves as inadequate in comparison to other men, with attributes believed to be more desirable, which disturbs their self-identity. The use of the app affects their understanding about themselves and promotes what Athens (1995) called "a dramatic self-change." This leads to "a sequence of personal adjustments" (Goffman, 1963, 32) that users might incorporate to overcome what they have learned about themselves. These adjustments might concern the digital identity (improving the Tinder profile to become more appreciated), or their offline identity (e.g., like in the case of Thomas, who deleted Tinder and started engaging in a series of leisure activities).

Conclusion

In this study, I aimed to identify the social trajectories of use for male daters on the Tinder app, through the *career* concept (Becker, 1963; Goffman, 1963; Matza, 1969). The population of Tinder users is overwhelmingly male (Ogury, 2019; Statista Research Department, 2022). Thus, I investigated in depth the dynamics of use in relation to motivations, matchmaking results, and engagement in-app and off-Tinder. The analysis revealed five moral careers specific to the interviewed Tinder dating app users and Quora participants: (1) serial, (2) relationship-oriented, (3) passive, (4) episodic, and (5) discredited daters. Although the study does not aim to generalize the applicability of these careers to all Tinder users, or to the general population, it identifies distinctive trajectories of male use for dating

apps, defined through the motivations of use, daters' matchmaking results, and the affordances embedded into dating apps. Further research is needed to understand the careers of women who use Tinder and the emergence of distinctions between male and female dating app users.

The analysis of interviews and Quora accounts has shown that male users who obtain favorable matching results on Tinder are encouraged to explore the social and dating opportunities it offers. These men appear to use Tinder for longer periods and for multiple purposes, that seem to have developed with the use of the app. The initial motivation for use also significantly shapes the social trajectory taken by participants. Access to opportunities is restricted for users with discreditable attributes. The lack of matches creates frustration and often turns users into paying customers, but it also leads to the emergence of new types of use, such as using the app to disconnect from the routine of daily life by looking at attractive persons, having unusual conversations, or experimenting with and learning about social patterns. The analysis results have shown that male Tinder users may also use the app to raise a high number of matches. The favorable results can be more appreciated by heterosexual men, because it is less common for them to acquire these results, in comparison to female or homosexual male users.

The socio-demographic characteristics exposed by interviewees and deduced from Quora answers appear to have little influence on users' trajectory of use. Still, because of the small sample on which this research is based, the effect of the users' sociodemographic characteristics cannot be fully and accurately understood. A more elaborated analysis of users' performances and dynamic of use on dating apps in relation to their age, sexual orientation, education, occupation, and nationality is needed for more reliable correlations. This analysis can only conclude with the fact that the feedback resulted from the number of matches raised and the motivation of use (initial or acquired) remain important predictors for how the use of the dating apps develops in time for male users.

The Tinder dating app is a sociotechnical structure that allows men to address personal goals, and achieve improved social abilities but, at the same time, its use can have negative consequences in the long-term, such as app addiction, or becoming emotionally distant when engaging in dating-related interactions. The use of the app can also affect users' perception of self, especially of those who are limited by matchmaking results. This involves the perception of failure, feeling socially inadequate, and undesirable. By design, the app offers fast and easy access to dating opportunities. These temporal dating affordances appear to be useful and stimulating for many male users. However, those who do not manage to enjoy these benefits are significantly affected. In conclusion, the sociotechnical dynamic contained in the app appears to promote unequal dating opportunities in the case of male users, encouraging the perception of self-value and worthiness by accounting for Tinder-specific "successful" presentations of self.

Note

- ¹ Quora corroborates similar questions and answers to organize information.

References

- Anderson, M., Vogels, E. A., & Turner, E. (2020). *The Virtues and Downsides of Online Dating*, Pew Research Center. Available at <https://www.pewresearch.org/internet/2020/02/06/the-virtues-and-downsides-of-online-dating/>. Accessed on June 23, 2022.
- Athens, L. H. (1995). Dramatic Self Change, *The Sociological Quarterly*, 36(3), 571-586.
- Becker, H. S. (1963). *Outsiders. Studies in the Sociology of Deviance*. New York: The Free Press.
- Bergström, M. (2021). *The New Laws of Love: Online Dating and the Privatization of Intimacy*. Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Blackhart, G. C., Fitzpatrick, J., & Williamson, J. (2014). Dispositional factors predicting use of online dating sites and behaviors related to online dating, *Computers in Human Behavior*, 33, 113-118. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2014.01.022.
- Braun, V., & Clarke, V. (2012). Thematic analysis, in H. Cooper, P. M. Camic, D. L. Long, A. T. Panter, D. Rindskopf, & K. J. Sher (Eds.), *APA handbook of research methods in psychology, Vol. 2. Research designs: Quantitative, qualitative, neuropsychological, and biological*. American Psychological Association, 57-71. doi: 10.1037/13620-004.
- Carpenter, C. J., & McEwan, B. (2016). The players of micro-dating: Individual and gender differences in goal orientations toward micro-dating apps, *First monday*. Available at <https://journals.uic.edu/ojs/index.php/fm/article/download/6187/5469>.
- Castro, Á., Barrada, J.R., Ramos-Villagrasa, P.J. & Fernández-del-Río, E. (2020). Profiling dating apps users: Sociodemographic and personality characteristics, *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*, 17(10), 3653. doi: 10.3390/ijerph17103653.
- Crawford, G. (2003). The career of the sport supporter: The case of the Manchester Storm, *Sociology*, 37(2), 219-237. doi: 10.1177/0038038503037002001.
- Cruz, M.L.S., Bastos, F.I., Darmont, M., Dickstein, P. & Monteiro, S. (2015). The “moral career” of perinatally HIV-infected children: Revisiting Goffman’s concept, *AIDS Care - Psychological and Socio-Medical Aspects of AIDS/HIV*, 27(1), 6-9. doi: 10.1080/09540121.2014.940270.
- Duguay, S. (2017). Dressing up Cinderella: interrogating authenticity claims on the mobile dating app Tinder, *Information Communication and Society*, 20(3), 351-367. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2016.1168471.
- Erevik, E.K., Kristensen, J.H., Torsheim, T., Vedaa, Ø. & Pallesen, S. (2020). Tinder Use and Romantic Relationship Formations: A Large-Scale Longitudinal Study, *Frontiers in Psychology*, 11(August), 1-10. doi: 10.3389/fpsyg.2020.01757.
- García-Gómez, A. (2020). Discursive representation of masculinity and femininity in Tinder and Grindr: Hegemonic masculinity, feminine devaluation and femmophobia, *Discourse and Society*, 31(4), 390-410. doi: 10.1177/0957926520903523.

- Garda, M. B., & Karhulahti, V. M. (2019). Let's Play Tinder! Aesthetics of a Dating App, *Games and Culture*, 1-14. doi: 10.1177/1555412019891328.
- Goffman, E. (1959). The Moral Career of the Mental Patient, *Psychiatry*, 22(2), 123-142. doi: 10.1080/00332747.1959.11023166.
- Goffman, E. (1963). *Stigma: Notes on the Management of Spoiled Identity*. New York: Prentice-Hall.
- Hardie-Bick, J. (2005). *Dropping Out and Diving In. An Ethnography of Skydiving*. (Doctoral dissertation, Durham University). Available at <http://etheses.dur.ac.uk/2734/>.
- Haywood, C. (2018). *Mobile Romance: Tinder and the Navigation of Masculinity*. doi: 10.1057/978-1-137-50683-2.
- Hennink, M. M., Kaiser, B. N., & Marconi, V. C. (2017). Code Saturation Versus Meaning Saturation: How Many Interviews Are Enough?, *Qualitative Health Research*, 27(4), 591-608. doi: 10.1177/1049732316665344.
- Iqbal, M. (2022). *Tinder Revenue and Usage Statistics, Business of Apps*. Available at <https://www.businessofapps.com/data/tinder-statistics/>. Accessed on May 16, 2021.
- Johnson, J. L., & Best, A. L. (2012). Radical normals: The moral career of straight parents as public advocates for their gay children, *Symbolic Interaction*, 35(3), 321-339. doi: 10.1002/SYMB.23.
- Jones, I. (2000). A model of serious leisure identification: The case of football fandom, *Leisure Studies*, 19(4), 283-298. doi: 10.1080/02614360050118841.
- Krüger, S., & Spilde, C. A. (2020). Judging books by their covers – Tinder interface, usage and sociocultural implications, *Information Communication and Society*, 23(10), 1395-1410. doi: 10.1080/1369118X.2019.1572771.
- Laner, M. R., & Ventrone, N. A. (2000). Dating Scripts Revisited, *Journal of Family Issues*, 21(4), 488-500.
- Lopes, M. R., & Vogel, C. (2019). Gender Differences in Online Dating Experiences, *It Happened on Tinder: Reflections and Studies on Internet-Infused Dating*, 31-47. doi: 10.1037/a0017504.Bogle.
- MacKee, F. (2016). Social Media in Gay London: Tinder as an Alternative to Hook-Up Apps, *Social Media and Society*, 2(3). doi: 10.1177/2056305116662186.
- Matza, D. (1969). *Becoming Deviant*. New Brunswick (U.S.A.) and London (U.K.). Transaction Publishers.
- Miller, B. (2020). A Picture is Worth 1000 Messages: Investigating Face and Body Photos on Mobile Dating Apps for Men Who Have Sex with Men, *Journal of Homosexuality*, 67(13), 1798-1822. doi: 10.1080/00918369.2019.1610630.
- Montemurro, B. (2021). "If you could just see me": The construction of heterosexual men's sexual selves and the hierarchy of desirability, *Sexualities*, 24(3), 303-321. doi: 10.1177/1363460720939045.
- Neyt, B., Vandenbulcke, S., & Baert, S. (2019). Are men intimidated by highly educated women? Undercover on Tinder, *Economics of Education Review*, 73(July), 101914. doi: 10.1016/j.econedurev.2019.101914.
- Ogury (2019). *Dating App Study '19 – How lovers 'match' in a mobile-first world*. Available at <https://ogury.com/research/dating-app-study-how-lovers-match-in-a-mobile-first-world/>.

- Orosz, G., Tóth-Király, I., Bóthe, B. & Melher, D. (2016). Too many swipes for today: The development of the Problematic Tinder Use Scale (PTUS), *Journal of Behavioral Addictions*, 5(3), 518-523. doi: 10.1556/2006.5.2016.016.
- Peretti-Watel, P., Beck, F., Legleye, S. & Moatti, J.P. (2007). Becoming a smoker: Adapting Becker's model of deviance for adolescent smoking, *Health Sociology Review*, 16(1), 53-67. doi: 10.5172/hesr.2007.16.1.53.
- Peretti-Watel, P., Halfen, S., & Grémy, I. (2007). The "moral career" of cigarette smokers: A French survey, *Health, Risk and Society*, 9(3), 259-273. doi: 10.1080/13698570701486070.
- Quora (no date) *What was your Tinder experience like?* Available at <https://www.quora.com/What-was-your-Tinder-experience-like>. Accessed on June 25, 2022.
- Radcliffe, P. (2011). Motherhood, pregnancy, and the negotiation of identity: The moral career of drug treatment, *Social Science and Medicine*, 72(6), 984-991. doi: 10.1016/j.socscimed.2011.01.017.
- Ranzini, G., & Lutz, C. (2017). Love at first swipe? Explaining Tinder self-presentation and motives, *Mobile Media and Communication*, 5(1), 80-101. doi: 10.1177/2050157916664559.
- Scott, S., & Hardie-Bick, J. (2022). Moral career. The Routledge International Handbook of Goffman Studies, *Routledge*, 74-84.
- Sevi, B., Aral, T., & Eskenazi, T. (2018). Exploring the hook-up app: Low sexual disgust and high sociosexuality predict motivation to use Tinder for casual sex, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 133, 17-20. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2017.04.053.
- Sobieraj, S., & Humphreys, L. (2021). The Tinder Games: Collective mobile dating app use and gender conforming behavior, *Mobile Media and Communication*. doi: 10.1177/20501579211005001.
- Statista Research Department (2022). *Distribution of Tinder monthly active users in the United States as of March 2021, by gender*, Statista. Available at <https://www.statista.com/statistics/975925/us-tinder-user-ratio-gender/>. Accessed on May 20, 2022.
- Strubel, J., & Petrie, T. A. (2017). Love me Tinder: Body image and psychosocial functioning among men and women, *Body Image*, 21, 34-38. doi: 10.1016/j.bodyim.2017.02.006.
- Sumerau, J. E., Cragun, R. T., & Mathers, L. A. B. (2016). "I Found God in The Glory Hole": The Moral Career of a Gay Christian, *Sociological Inquiry*, 86(4), 618-640. doi: 10.1111/soin.12134.
- Sumter, S. R., Vandenbosch, L., & Ligtenberg, L. (2017). Love me Tinder: Untangling emerging adults' motivations for using the dating application Tinder, *Telematics and Informatics*, 34(1), 67-78. doi: 10.1016/j.tele.2016.04.009.
- Thompson, L. (2018). "I can be your tinder nightmare": Harassment and misogyny in the online sexual marketplace, *Feminism and Psychology*, 28(1), 69-89. doi: 10.1177/0959353517720226.
- Timmermans, E., & De Caluwé, E. (2017a). Development and validation of the Tinder Motives Scale (TMS), *Computers in Human Behavior*, 70, 341-350. doi: 10.1016/j.chb.2017.01.028.

- Timmermans, E., & De Caluwé, E. (2017b). To Tinder or not to Tinder, that's the question: An individual differences perspective to Tinder use and motives, *Personality and Individual Differences*, 110, 74-79. doi: 10.1016/j.paid.2017.01.026.
- Tyson, G., Perta, V.C., Haddadi, H. & Seto, M.C. (2016). A First Look at User Activity on Tinder, 2016 IEEE/ACM International Conference on Advances in Social Networks Analysis and Mining (ASONAM), 461-466. doi: 10.1109/ASONAM.2016.7752275.
- Waling, A., Kehler, M., Power, J., Kerr, L. & Bourne, A. (2022). "I don't think my torso is anything to write home about": men's reflexive production of "authentic" photos for online dating platforms, *Journal of Gender Studies*, 00(00), 1-15. doi: 10.1080/09589236.2022.2027236.
- Waling, A., Kerr, L., Bourne, A., Power, J. & Kehler, M. (2022). "It's nice to be appreciated": Understanding heterosexual men's engagements with sexting and sharing Dick Pics, *Sexualities*, 25(3), 198-221. doi: 10.1177/1363460720947297.
- Wang, G., Gill, K., Mohanlal, M., Zheng, H. & Zhao, B.Y. (2013). Wisdom in the social crowd: An analysis of Quora, *WWW 2013 - Proceedings of the 22nd International Conference on World Wide Web*, 1341-1351.
- Wouters, E., & De Wet, K. (2016). Women's experience of HIV as a chronic illness in South Africa: hard-earned, biographical disruption and moral career, *Sociology of Health & Illness*, 38(4), 521-542. doi: 10.1111/1467-9566.12377.