# GENDER PERFORMANCE DISCOURSE ON TINDER PROFILE PICTURES IN LONDON, UK – A SOCIAL SEMIOTICS STUDY

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## ABSTRACT

Cyclical and bidirectional relationship(s) between technology and today's romantic gratifications have reformed how people seek romance. On another end, gender performances largely underpin humans' romantic gratification. This is where Tinder, as a dating application, affords unique opportunities for those seeking romances through portraying gender performances. A number of studies concluded that, in romance-seeking ventures, male's masculinity and female's femininity generally remained conformist to their respective biological attributes. Therefore, this study aimed to evaluate nuances of gender performances portrayed in dating apps such as Tinder. Since Tinder profile picture, as a form of visual text, is a source rife with gender performance cues, this study focused on the visual component – profile pictures. Profile Picture Protocol (PPP), derived from notable social semiotics frameworks, was established. This study revealed that, albeit a major affinity towards more saturated bright colors in the observed data, color choices in profile pictures were not conclusive to determine gender performatives, mainly due to possible duality in meanings when other elements (body gestures and clothing choices) were taken into consideration. Formal clothing choices were only found in the male group, which was conformist to the previous studies. Foregrounding bodily features was evident in both male and female group's profile pictures, which indicated that the male group also exuded an element of femininity, which leaned towards contestating the previous findings. Actors' angles that were frontal as well as eye-level, indicated a need for social closeness and friendliness emulation, were fashionable in both gender groups, which was initially prevalent in the female group. Limitations were put forth.

**Keywords; profile picture; visual text, social semiotics, gender performance, Tinder**

## ABSTRAK

Hubungan siklus dan dua arah antara teknologi dan gratifikasi romantisme dewasa ini telah mengubah cara orang mencari hubungan romansa. Di sisi lain, ekspresi gender umumnya mendukung gratifikasi romantis manusia. Di sinilah Tinder, sebagai aplikasi kencan, memberikan peluang unik bagi mereka yang mencari romansa melalui ekspresi gender. Sejumlah penelitian menyimpulkan bahwa, dalam usaha pencarian romansa, maskulinitas pria dan femininitas wanita umumnya tetap mengikuti atribut biologis masing-masing. Oleh karena itu, penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengevaluasi ekspresi gender yang digambarkan dalam aplikasi kencan seperti Tinder. Karena gambar profil Tinder, sebagai bentuk teks visual, adalah sumber penuh dengan isyarat ekspresi gender, penelitian ini berfokus pada komponen visual - gambar profil. *Profile Picture Protocol (PPP),* berasal dari kerangka kerja semiotika sosial terkemuka, dikonstruksikan. Studi ini mengungkap bahwa, meskipun memiliki ketertarikan umum terhadap warna-warna cerah yang lebih jenuh pada data yang diamati, pilihan warna dalam gambar profil tidak konklusif untuk menentukan ekspkresi gender, terutama karena kemungkinan dualitas dalam makna ketika elemen lain (gerakan tubuh dan pilihan pakaian) disertakan dalam pertimbangan. Pilihan pakaian formal hanya ditemukan pada kelompok pria, yang sesuai dengan penelitian sebelumnya. Gambaran tubuh terdepan terlihat dalam gambar profil kelompok laki-laki dan perempuan, yang menunjukkan bahwa kelompok laki-laki juga memancarkan unsur feminitas, yang condong ke arah mengontestasi temuan sebelumnya. Sudut para aktor yang frontal maupun setinggi mata, mengindikasikan keinginan atas kedekatan sosial dan emulasi keramahan, yang umum di kedua kelompok gender, yang awalnya lazim di kelompok perempuan. Keterbatasan penelitian disampaikan.

**Kata Kunci; teks visual, Semiotika Sosial, performa gender, aplikasi berkencan.**

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## INTRODUCTION

Generally, a lot of components of belonging to modern people and allowances of Information Communication Technology (ICT), in the form of Internet and social media sites (SNS), have amalgamated in ways that have never been practiced circa pre-millennium era. This situation could be understood since the internet "[…] grants the possibility […] to stay in constant contact with friends" thus the need of more organic and physical interactions somewhat has become secondary (Thurlow, 2003). Also, humans use applications that are very closely related to current technological developments (Rorong, 2016. p 102). Since seeking romance is a part of human interaction spectrum, technology also caters to this particular activity (A. Smith & Duggan, 2013). Tinder as a dating application (app) acts as a tool and vessel that provides both ample and unique opportunity to display one's gender performances as a vessel to find romantic gratifications (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017). MacKee (2016) posits that Tinder mostly permits homosexual clients to depict the users' less sexual selves, apparently differentiating its other partner "hook-up app" which to an degree manage its clients to depict excessively sexual persona(p. 3).

Lawson and Leck (2006) observed different objectives beyond seeking life companion, which are comfort post-crisis, a power over presentation of selves, adventure and fantasy realization. This then implies that user-generatedness value applies to dating app in that the uses and function of the platform are dependent towards the innate motivation of the users (Shao, 2009). From the app point of view, this dialectical relationships between users and app render Tinder as Polymedia: the app producer initial objective of the app does not always become relevant with its final uses on the users' side (Horst & Miller, 2012; J. Smith, 2014).

Polymedia is a construct where there is an understanding that social media are a group of complex environments whose culture is ever-shifting (Madianou, 2015). It can be further contested that although virtually Tinder enables users to multiply expressions of selves, it confines as well to an extent that the features of Tinder "guide, distort, and facilitate social activity— but delete some of it" (David & Cambre, 2016, p. 9). In this juncture, the complexity of Tinder use and its relation to gender performance portrayal are what intrigues this study to proceed.

Therefore, the above conundrum enticed this study to further inquiring the layers of gender performances expressed by Tinder users through their profile pictures. Previous social semiotic studies in gender expressions through visual cues were utilized in order to assist with evaluating the findings. Visual texts such as pictures carry potentials for portraying gender representations (O'Regan, 2006) and Tinder plays a role as a fertile space that allows its users the liberation to assume and subscribe to plethora of visual expressions (MacKee, 2016; Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017).

Against the above background, a research question was then constructed: "How do Tinder users perform gender performances in the visual text?". This study was undergone due limited research studies which attend to the representation of gender in dating application through profile pictures, while similar approach has been done to media in print versions and televised programs (Dhaenens, 2013; Edgar, 2011). Although Timmermans and de Caluwé (2017) studied motivations underlying people's decision to create a Tinder profile, little has been addressed concerning how the users displayed their gender performances, which was where this study gained its novelty.

Gender representation has been investigated in printed media (Saraceno & Tambling, 2013; Small, 2017; Vokey, Tefft, & Tysiaczny, 2013) and gender expression on

TV (Dhaenens, 2013; Edgar, 2011). Both studies virtually discuss how media, as institutional agents of social (re)construction, actively alter their consumers' understanding towards gender. Timmermans & De Caluwé (2017) examined inspirations basic people's choice to form a Tinder profile. McLeod and Wright (2016), broadly talking, conclude how dating apps (Tinder and Bumble) administer, permit, but too restrain its users' bi-directional intelligent. Discoveries by Sumter and Vandenbosch (2019) floated around the endorsed employments of Tinder and inspirations of its users in connection to sexual and romantic graticiation. Comparative to Sumter and Vandenbosch, Ranzini (2017) found, among other things, the polarizing (but nearly twofold) employments of Tinder where female bunch looked for approval and sex intercourses drove the male partner. All the over discoveries, in spite of the fact that instructive, did not unequivocally address how visual content constuctions advance or downgrade sex representation of its clients, which is where this ponder acts to extend the discourse through visual content investigations.

In Indonesia, investigation into gender has been discussed in relation to its dialectical relationship with religion, history, and politics where it is placed in such complex and cyclical position in different Indonesian societies and varying time pockets (Blackwood, 2005; Robinson, 2008). Few studies have also acknowledged empirical findings where subversive acts in the form of 'feminist activism' by Muslim women were present in the country though their scalability remained in question (Rinaldo, 2014). Nevertheless, the observed studies may have implied absence in researching gender through language production, which is where this study positions itself to fill gap of understanding to gender representation in dating application.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Postmodernism is a construct to question and contest the unspoken sanctity of modernist view in evaluating humans' social dynamics. Mooers (1997) rightly suggests that philosophical and relative differences

humans coexist, interact, and understand their world, wherein investigating human experience through structure and hierarchy – generally modernists way – should be questioned. Mooers admits that there is an element of inconsistencies in postmodernist studies which could lead to lack of certainties in the understanding. However, Mooers concludes human experience does not fit into preconditioned categories, which is preemptively inherited. Human experiences, traditions, and cultures are lively and prone to experience shifts. This is further emphasized by Januarti and Wempi (2019) where they found cultural shifts in the manufacture of traditional fabrics of an Indonesian ethnic tribe, driven by external influences. This is perhaps what is meant by human experiences being complex, fluid and artistic in their unique human ways due to interactions with different influential agencies.

Furthermore, the force of postmodernism persists beyond claims regarding the history of philosophy and Derrida's reading of foundational texts. Between 1970s and 1980s was the onset of postmodernists affecting literary studies, in part following the translation of Derrida's work into English. Postmodernism is as well due to the fruit of labour of other thinkers, including Paul de Man, J. Hillis Miller and Barbara Johnson. Instead of thinking postmodernism in ways of modernism regarding the metaphysics and claims about ultimate being, literary postmodernism abandons such constructivist ethos: postmodernism DNA is baselining on the relative socioculturally-dependent construction of epistemology (Jones, 2016, p. 27). Judith Baxter (2016), then, rightly asserts that human knowledge is epistemologically built, discovered by and during social interaction, thus renders knowledge as ever-shifting and dynamic.

In gender studies, Butler posits that gender identities manifests in acts being performed (2016), therefore labeled "gender performativity/ performance". Butler (2006) argues three dimensions interplaying in gender performances: "anatomical sex, gender identity, and gender performance". This may suggest that human's gender identities are conditional thus may not be linear to the biologically assigned genders. In

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turn, positivist's claim where gender is biologically or environmentally conditioned is challenged. Judith Butler (2006), however, admits that humans are limited in performing gender where alignment with the norms of culture is desired by the society. It is accepted that these social standards can be what is implied by sex generalizations. Döring, Reif, & Poeschl (2016) warn that drastic simplifying cultural phenomenon drastically added with repeated practices of it would yield cumbersome social norms potential to exclude people who are unfit to the fixated categories (p. 956). Pierre Bourdieu (1977) labels this phenomenon a "cultural habitus", which is a product of an act of repeating and habitualizing a particular doing. Giving archetypes of masculine and feminine behaviors may provide a single narrative of gender profiling thus exclusion of certain group of people may not be avoided. In this manner, it would be concerning in the event that this categorization of sex performativity would turn into more broadened sexual orientation asymmetry where one gather of sex rules the other.

Furthermore, it could be argued that the mainstreaming of binary gender performance could reach the large body of social groups could promote and perpetuate viewing gender one-sidedly which would later yield undesired consequences in the social sphere. Vokey, Tefft, & Tysiaczny (2013) conclude that 'hyper-masculinization': a single, over-masculinized, way of characterizing "manhood", in magazines might result 'social sanctions' to male populace such as improbable 'perfect man' profiling and physical hostility to the inverse sex (p. 573). Novarisa (2019) further confirms that there is a symbolic reference where male actors imposed violent power asymmetry towards female actors on scripted television program, which could say something about an affinity towards patriarchal ideology and the current capital value towards masculinization nature of TV programs.

However, there is production and reproduction of communicational codes based on a cyclical relationship between agents and the target cultures. Hutapea (2017) provides a useful description where the researcher found out that a repertoire of communicative exchanges between a specific drug-using group in a platform is interactional-based, in that codes are created between interlocutors in unique ways where their uses are localized, limited, and understood by the people involved in the community. Hutapea confirms that those specific codes are to enable them to communicate without being understood by the external people. This then informs an element of user-generatedness on social media platforms where the users' objectives of using a particular social media platform are not necessarily in line with its intended uses (Kwak, Lee, Park, & Moon, 2010; Situmeang, 2017).

In regards to online interactions, Herring (2011) interestingly finds a number of females portraying vigorous language choices in an online forum that is dominated by males, while males linguistically seemed less exuberant in an online forum where the females are the majority. Clothing-wise, Tifferet & Vilnai-yavetz (2014) sees that male clients' Facebook profile pictures show formal dress and outside exercises which is contended that convention and open air action are identified with the guys and the need of "displaying status prompts"(p. 393).

Dating apps like Tinder, being a platform for digitized online interactions added with the need for romantic gratification, Herring (2011) observes young women's self-representing themselves in a rather sexual display by wearing low-cut and provoking clothes along with sexualized gestures (p. 213). Selfie culture on Tinder is also semiotically relevant to how people hint their gender performances. Sedgewick, Flath, & Elias (2017) finds that the males prefer to take a photo of themselves with angle that is lower while the females have an affinity towards taking a selfie with angles that are higher. These findings, the scholars argue, correspond to what the users believe as "the ideal mate qualities": for the males, lower point would make a "tall illusion" and more in control; lower point would reflect a "small/ brief illusion" for the females in this way less in control.

It can be concluded the observed male and female groups are capable to assume more than one gender performances preconditioned not only by biological and cultural, but also social and eventually

personal predispositions. Multiplicity of identity not uncommon in social interaction. MacKee (2016) concludes that non-heteronormative men depict different gender performances in two different dating apps wherein the participants' Tinder profile picture would semiotically signify somewhat of dignified and less sexual men. Contrastingly, the same participants would signify more sexually obvious persona in an app that is generally preconditioned for sexual advances. Participants of Mackee's study would, one of which, feature their "topless" overly sexualized profile pictures in the sex-motored app.

Visual cues in the form of photos are heavily used to portray gender performances on a dating application like Tinder. Therefore, it is compelling to explore the dynamics of gender performance being formed and projected outward in the Tinder app compared to the previous findings.

## RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

### A Social Semiotic Analysis – Profile Picture Protocol (PPP).

Social Semiotics is an endeavor for something rather strange to be further questioned in certain texts or narratives / discourses. Analysis behind the paradigm, including the hidden meaning behind visual texts. People also often say semiophica is an effort to find the meaning of 'news behind the news' with semiotics. (Trifonas, 2015. p.1-25). Djonov and Zhao (2018) notes the ability of Social Semiotics to uncover meanings that are produced, repeated, in different media and platforms, mainly billboards, literary texts, and others. The researchers further argue that acts of repetition and 'habitualization' producing signs and meanings will ultimately lead to institutionalization of the meanings and sings produced. This then means that there is a subtle, unconscious, yet apparent action to producing a form of sign which Pierre Bourdieu previously has mentioned in regards to 'cultural habitus'.

Bouissac (2017) further posits Semiotics as a model of analysis for social science, aimed to understand the world as a system of relationships that has a basic unit of 'sign'. Therefore, semiotics studies center themselves on the existence and interpretation of a sign. A Semiotics expert, Umberto Eco calls the sign as a 'lie' wherein something hidden is oftentimes not the Sign intended (p. 177). John O'Regan (2006) acknowledges visual texts potentials (pictures, colors, shapes, and more) to add ideational meanings of texts. However, in reality, it seems the majority of text analyses remain to rely on the written cues thus the visual ones become secondary. Theo van Leeuwen (2004) confirms that the ideational meanings could be relative as communicative means "[…] allows the articulation of different social and cultural meanings" (p. 4). Since Tinder users deal with visual text, this study develops *Profile Picture Protocol (PPP)* as a tool of analysis. PPP generally comprises of two major elements: Space, allowing interpretation surrounding elements in the picture; and Actor, decoding ideational meanings portrayed by the person.

'*Space*' is further broken down into frame, color codes, and spatial codes. Van Leeuwen (2004) suggests that frame is essentially the "territory" of the picture where contributive lexical elements may exists. Further, 'Color codes' according to Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) is essentially the colors and how they may signify ideational meanings. Color codes are further broken down into the followings:

- *High & Low Color Saturation* entails to the overall impressions of color where emotive effects may be resulted from: high saturation that is heavy with the mix of bright colors is associated to positivity, exuberance, adventurousness, energy, etc. On the other hand, low saturation usually signifies subtlety, mood dynamics, tenderness, cold and repression, and also brood. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006);
- *Color Immaculateness* extends from exceedingly unadulterated in color to exceedingly crossover in color: tall immaculateness is to some degree 'Mondrian' where there's color blocking in essential colors (yellow, ruddy, blue, dark, and white).This means an component of innovation and lesson. Tall hybridity where color angles are utilized is related with "fluidity, relativeness, and complexity of ideas", and submits to postmodernism (Demjen, 2016, p. 129);
- *Modulation* is essentially the application

of shades of colors. Low modulation where one-tone color is applied throughout may signal 'simplicity, boldness, and abstract truth' (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006);

- *Differentiation* is related to the color uses where monochromes suggest timidity and acknowledges 'classic fashion' choices. Multicolor uses signify an element of diversity and a sense of adventurousness (Demjen, 2016, p. 129);

- *Red or blue tones* point at the common temperament of the picture. The utilize of ruddy tint is related to warmth, vitality, striking nature, foregrounding. Occurrences of blue tone are connected to 'coldness, calmness, separate, backgrounding' (Demjen, 2016, p. 129). -

- *Spatial Codes* bargains with the actor's position within the outline and the degree of remove crossing between the gathering of people and the on-screen character. Notes to see at are whether the on-screen character is formally/ casually depicted and whether the on-screen character is positioned central or within the outskirts of the outline. Spatial codes offer assistance reply the ideological request of control asymmetry (Hodge & Kress, 1988, pp. 61–3). The degrees of distance are linked to emotional proximity between the actor and audience. To put into perspective, close shot picture signifies closer and intimate emotional proximity, medium shot is linked to a collective or social proximity, and long shot suggests less than personal proximity.

Ideational meaning can be found in *'Actors'* and their saliency, clothing, and gestures along with the way they gaze in the frame. Saliency is related to the ways of actors and their methods of emphasis amidst compositional elements, especially regarding the degrees in which they appeal to the audience attention (Van Leeuwen, 2004, p. 284). Photographic alterations such as brightness, focus, methods of cropping, and pictorial size of the actors are also taken into account.

*'Clothing'* is essentially the methods of actor's attire's mixing-and-matching.

Clothing is comprised of the followings: 'Carrier' which essentially signifies the general look; possessive attributes whose accessories are considered in the overall look, i.e. the use of pearl necklaces, formal clothes, and dresses signify different ideational meanings; and high or low modality are discussed. Hodge & Kress (1988) rightly claim that each clothing item suggests meanings, especially in relation to the actor's aspiration to a particular gender stereotype (pp. 62–3), deemed highly relevant to this study.

A number analyses need to be undergone when it comes to 'Gesture'. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) emphasize that there is a need for 'vector' analysis, which is essentially the lines stretched in the frame signifying a few meanings: directions to another object in the frame, the degree of proximity of actors to the audience, and actor's visible pictorial movements. 'Angle positioning', scholars claim, is generally comprised of a few elements: frontal angle which indicate involvements with the audience; oblique angle which suggests detachment from the audience; high angle is closely associated with power asymmetry where the less power position is on the actor's side thus putting the audience in the higher power relational position; lower angle is the polar opposite of high angle where the actor is position in much higher power position to the audience; and eye-level suggests equality in power among audience and actor.

Gestural cues, furthermore, Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) further elaborate as focal elements in determining semiotic understanding to the gesture analysis. Gestural cues are divided into two sub-elements, 'demand' and 'offer'. 'Demand' means that the actor expects audience to join in an imaginary relationships with them. It is as if the actors express "Look at me as the central actor". Cues to be scrutinized in the 'demand' is the visible smile (audience is to enter actor's social sphere), cold/ straight-face (audience is feel the emotional vulnerability of the actor), seductive/ sexually provoking "pouts" (audience is to desire the actor), limbs position (folded arms in front of the body indicates emotional distance and neutral limbs indicate actor expecting sufficient

social proximity) (Gopikrishnan, n.d.). Kress & van Leeuwen suggest 'Offer' gestural cues where the actors represent somewhat of an information vessel for greater narratives. is as if the actor confers "Look at this ideation where I belong to!". This can mean that the actor expects a membership to a larger setting instead of centering the signified meaning on themselves, e.g. sports activities portrayed with the actor may suggest the actor's healthy lifestyle. Lastly, according to the scholars, 'Gaze' evokes ideational meaning where a direct look to the audience may suggest 'Demand' while absence of gaze to the audience may signify 'Offer'.
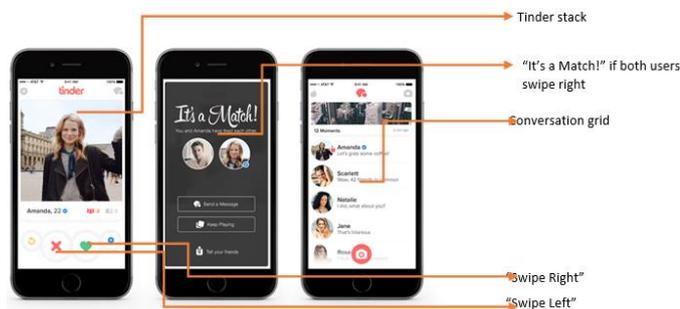
## DATA AND ETHICAL CONSIDERATION



**Figure A: Tinder Topography retrieved from http://bit.ly/2uNELbU, last accessed: 23/07/2017, 05.03 pm, London time**

Tinder is a dating app that is geo-locating and proximity-based allowing users to locate potential romantic partners who fall into their preferred criteria of gender and geo-location proximity (i.e. 0 – 21 km) (Sumter et al., 2017). "Swiping" is the common vernacular in this context which means physically dragging a profile to the right means an interest for interaction with the profile owner, and a drag to the left signifies otherwise.The figure above provides description of Tinder topography and sequential process of "finding a match". Tinder users are given a "stack" of potential romantic-interests from which they can either swipe right or left depending of the users' interests. The "It's a Match" screen indicates that both show interests in each other. Only upon matching, conversation can begin.

### Datasets

Tinder by and large has two primary components which are profile pictures and description. In any case, in this ponder, an examination was coordinated towards the profile pictures. Since social semiotics is primarily utilized for visual content, this thinks about at that point normally accumulated sixty fundamental profile pictures from thirty female and thirty male Tinder clients. Profiles inside – 21 km from

central London were collected. London was chosen as the locus of this consideration for a reason none other than the truth that this consideration was a portion of a bigger scale of think about which took put in London. Changing the area for information collection other than London may require another set of information that would wreck the full investigation gathering. Indeed so, this brings approximately an address, and conceivable future course of investigating, in which geographic area may have impacts in sexual orientation exhibitions.

Even though there ought to be no undesired suggestion from selecting this zone, potential designs and discoveries as byproducts of this consider may not rehash, ought to comparable consider being connected in other geological zones. All things considered, restricting topographical sweep and the sum of collected information were due to the permitted time, were moreover due to the time-intensiveness of undertaking Social Semiotics Investigation.

### Data Collection Method and Maximizing Randomness

Tinder profile was set up in arrange to extricate arbitrary Tinder profiles. Submerging, to begin with, analyst into the watched investigate setting isn't an

unprecedented hone particularly considering the possibilities for encountering the inquire about setting first-hand (Dörnyei, 2007). Only profiles within the – 21 km extend were extricated and analyzed. Five days were decided for the information collection term. Three "time zones" were organized where the most punctual time hour for information collection was at 9 AM and 10 PM being the most recent. Five hours were the interims between time zones. To begin with, half-hour was for extricating Tinder profiles that were from the male gather, Female bunch profile extraction was the half-hour after. To advance guarantee greatest arbitrariness, the male-then-female approach to profile extraction was not continuously connected all through the course of information collection period: information collection variety from male-female to female-male setup was executed.

In any case, in reality, the perfect situation over was not the foremost time-efficient in this way an adjustment was called for. To put it into viewpoint, in a day, three profiles were extricated at the same time, and in this way, the time-frame and time-intervals were neglected. Tinder profiles in a perfect world are comprised of at slightest one profile picture and some composed substance within the profile depictions. Avoidance to a few Tinder profiles, be that as it may, had to be sanctioned since the baselining preconditions laid out in both the information criteria and inquire about morals were not met. Categories for profile exclusion were, among others, babies/ underage children within the outline, numerous profiles but comparable profile proprietor, and pictureless profile.

## Data Analysis Procedure

PPP was completely utilized in arrange to reply to the inquire about the address: "How do Tinder users portray sex exhibitions within the visual text?". Analysts set up a PPP network where each push is spoken to sub-analysis with foreordained conditions for simple reference. Information was analyzed successively: beginning from the Space to the On-screen character segment. There was no watched method of reasoning as to why a consecutive information investigation preparation was undergone. Three weeks was the time utilized to achieve the PPP investigation for all information. The

degree of points of interest and complexities to begin with analyst connected to the system were the causes of or maybe long examination handle. Furthermore, there were negligible program employments to help with PPP investigation. Be that as it may, the investigation was generally helped by the clear picture designs i.e. most profile pictures were taken in a 'selfie' a representation mode (Sorokowska et al., 2016) in this way requiring less time for interpreting not as it were the actors' look but to point.

## Ethical Consideration

There were several inquire about morals to be examined and defended. Framework disappointments, particularly regarding data security, support, and misfortune, are several common challenges in this ponder. Subsequently, to begin with, analysts concocted password-encrypted cloud capacity for any reports. Equipment such as tablet computer, smartphone, an outside hard-drive, and computer program Mendeley reference supervisor was password-encrypted as well for maximum assurance. Concerning the nature of information, zero coordinate contact with any human members was connected due to the text-driven nature of the inquire about to extend. A foundational reason for exclusively including visual components (profile pictures) is there were possibilities for visual content to show as "[…] social spaces in which two essential social forms at the same time happen: cognition and representation of the world, and social interaction" (Fairclough, 1995, p. 6).

Further, the non-attendance of assent shape in a ponder where human-produced online substance is included may be a common practice, however cautious treatment to information still should take put. Trilling (2015) explored two bunches of human-produced content, discourse transcript and Twitter posts with a hashtag #tvduell where the creator did not get assent shapes from the Twitter clients whose tweets were utilized as the dataset. Looking at the test estimate (N= 120.557 tweets), it was very unreasonable to get assent from the information makers. Advance, to Trilling's (2015) defense, tweets are composed substance freely accessible. All things considered, Trilling utilized several strategies to anonymize content makers such

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as not uncovering Twitter handles. This inquire about to consider, moreover, depended on Tinder Inc. explanation that upon marking up, Tinder users "[…] concur that any Substance put on the Benefit may be seen by any individual going to or partaking within the Benefit (such as people who may get shared Content from other Tinder users)." (Tinder Legal, 2016, p. 4). This proposes that Tinder clients ought to completely mindful that any components of the profile they show may be unveiled worldwide (Tinder Lawful, 2016). Subsequently, from the information point of view, it infers the versatility of the substance in that it can both be seen and moved around. In any case, leaving from Trilling strategies of inquiring about morals application, to begin with, the analyst has secured the information by obscuring out any identifiable highlights such as facial highlights, all sorts of online and offline addresses. This approach to anonymization is additionally exemplified by Mackee (2016). Assist, as an included degree to the information security, novel treatment to the information could be a strategy called "backtrack image" strategy. This implies that,

to begin with analyst has screened all obscured out visual writings/ profile pictures through the Google Picture Discoverer (https://images.google.com/) to affirm that the first sources where the pictures have a place to were untraceable within the web.

In respect to information transmission, to begin with, the analyst has guaranteed that the information would not circulate anyplace off London, embedded into emails, passed online, or be made in print without applying a tall level of secrecy. Each cautious information assurance degree has submitted to the morals rules by "British Mental Society (2009) Code of Morals and Conduct, and (2014) Code of Human Inquire about Morals, British Instructive Inquire about Affiliation (2011) Moral Rules, and British Sociological Affiliation (2002) Explanation of Moral Practice". Report of inquiring about morals was submitted to the UCL Established of Instruction and this consider had gotten an endorsement from the UCL Board of Investigate Morals.

## ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION



**Figure B: (left to right) Andy, Ariana, Jeff and Isaacs, retrieved from Authors' data analysis**.

Space Generally, the watched profile pictures did not have any composed content within the outline. Appeared within the chart, most information appeared direct degrees of color immersion, as prove in Jeff and Isaacs picture. Since most of the pictures were color-saturated, it appeared just like the balance and hybridity elements were influenced as well. Analysts found that most Tinder profile pictures have shown many degrees of color combination i.e. pastel colors to blends of shinning colors. Encourage, the little number of profile pictures (3 occasions) concocted dull colors: from distinctive shades of dark, to completely BW (dark and white)/ total desatured. In terms of "hue", 17 male profile pictures were categorized as "red" whereas the rest appeared to communicate

"blue", and 20 female profiles appeared to flag "red hue" whereas the rest appeared to depict "blue".

Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) conversation almost the potential messages being transmitted in that blue tint, for the most part, communicates backgrounding, whereas the ruddy one signals foregrounding of the on-screen character (p. 235). Encourage, Demjen (2016) proposes that the utilize of distinctive colors in several shades (cf. hybridity) might inspire "fluidity, relativeness, and complexity of ideas" ( p. 129). Goffman (1956) talks around many conceivable implications of dark colors, one of which is that they are more often than not concocted to cover up things within the shadow: "[…] dull colors don't appear the

dirt" (p.143). To a degree, subsequently, the utilize of dark or other dim colors reflects a sense of removing the actors.

However, today's moment photography approaches through smartphones utilize channel arrangement and indeed "sticker". Andy's picture, for the occasion, appears less standard. Within the outline, Dark & White channel was formulated by Andy but at that point included a dog's nose sticker. It appeared like there's a component of comical esteem to his picture. The comical and amusing individual is continuously congenial and related to invitingness. Subsequently, it looks like Andy is attempting to imitate the invitingness component to his picture in spite of the Dark and White color choice to his picture. Following Andy, Ariana utilized comparative Dark and White channel to her picture. In any case, what is curiously is that Ariana has shown openness by opening up her middle. Moreover, Ariana communicated delight in her grin. On the off chance that Goffman's Dark & White contention was taken erratically, we might have rashly concluded the two actors over to set up separately with a group of onlookers. Subsequently, it can be contended that Dark and White pictures don't continuously communicate removing and backgrounding, particularly when body signals were considered. But inconsistencies over, the actors' approaches included layers of abundance in elucidation.

Interpretations are too determined from the actors' and their position within the outline. Fifty-one profile pictures (N=60) positioned the on-screen character within the center. More particularly, thirty-three on-screen characters situated themselves in the near shot and eighteen on-screen characters were in a medium shot. Ariana's picture communicates semiotic meanings similar to most pictures. Ariana situated herself within the center of the frame. Moreover, Ariana appeared to deliberately anticipate other on-screen characters to be within the outline, apparent from her strategy of picture-

cropping. "Selfie" has ended up a striking marvel on a part of social media stages. As "attention-seeking" was the foremost visit inspiration for posting selfies, Sung et al, (2016) assist found that – among other things – drawing in the inverse sex might too be determined from this category. Hodge & Kress (1988) affirm that near and medium shots mean individual, hint and social vicinity between the on-screen characters and gathering of people. Hence, it conclusive that Tinder pictures. Therefore, it seem conclusive that Tinder pictures where actors are in close and medium shots expect and/ or allows intimacy to their potential romantic partners. On another conclusion, other actor-highlighting methods were concocted in arrange to check the backgrounding possibilities when selfies were not utilized. It was watched that, in this ponder, on-screen characters as often as possible made themselves the biggest pictorial measure compared to other performing artists through zooming and/ or trimming strategies, as prove in Isaacs's picture. Advance, photographic adjustments and setting controls i.e. on-screen characters purposely obscured out the foundation, the biggest sum of light connected onto themselves, precise procedures (will be talked about advance), and so on. The researchers respect these foregrounding strategies as ways to create the on-screen characters ended up notable within the outline, and Johansen (1993) calls it an "artistic vision and technique" (p. 74).

Taken together, although there were trends aligning with the literature, specifically in relation to actors' positioning, there were other interesting findings that suggested different interpretations. It seems like other actors' included in the frame associated with establishing a certain image of actor. The use of filter also seemed to compromise the literature. The use of Black and White filter also could suggest an element of higher level of class and distancing, and yet there is also friendliness and joy exuded from the pictures, which in turn suggests friendliness.
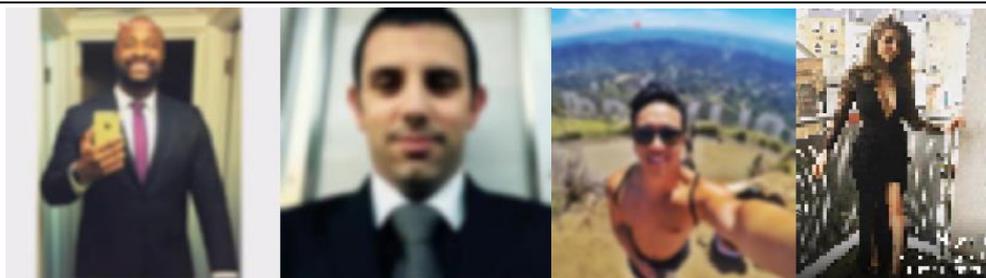
**Figure C: (left to right) Glenn, Eric, Ed, and Tammy retrieved from Authors' data analysis**

## Actor

Although it was troublesome to pinpoint "clothing" components due to common "selfie" design, writing focuses out that clothing choices ought to be considered in connection to sexual orientation execution. By and large, the watched on-screen characters remained traditionalist to more conventional sexual orientation generalization. Analysts have assembled these clothing choices into four categories: "formal; casual; skin; and nondescript". Clothing categories from this time forward considered as "carrier", concurring to Hodge & Kress (1988), would have components of "possessive attributes" to encourage total the semiotic understanding of an on-screen character. Underneath is the analysis:

Five guys were appeared to wear formal outfits whereas the same did not apply for the female bunch. This implies that formal clothing category less prevalent despite several occurrences. Analysts would legitimize those attires as formal since of much bigger setting where such clothing were ordinary to be worn in formal event. Suit and tie gathering was obvious in Glenn's picture where it would appear like he meant an component of custom. Comparative notes were too found in Eric's picture. His close-up situating appeared sufficient suit and tie, which at that point moreover proposed a level of custom. Hodge & Kress (1988) recommends that traditionalist and formal events call for individuals to wear magnificent embellishment, dresses, and suit-and-tie outfits, to which a level of convention is what Glenn and Eric wished to depict.

On the other hand, casual outfits were watched in twenty-five Tinder clients where male bunch was quicker towards casual wear (fifteen occasions) than that of female gather (eleven occasions). Analysts considered

clothing to be casual by a subjective legitimization and comparison the bigger setting in which the casual wear is regularly worn. Considering semiformal/ casual events where casual clothing is as a rule worn, analysts may conclude that the casualness of Tinder users' outfits strengthens an thought of hint and social nearness being for the most part wanted.

Another curiously finding was what this ponder coined "strategic skin showing". As numerous as 25 (twenty-five) Tinder clients appeared their body parts in changing degrees. The designs were that a few male clients favored to go "topless". Female clients appeared to appear liking to appear shoulders, arms, breasts zone, and legs. As of now already depicted in that there remains an component of mindfulness towards conventional sex standards that resort in organic gifts which dole out a specific individual to a specific sex category.

However, it is interesting that this particular action was more fashionable in the female group (F= 16) than that of the male (M= 9). This somehow suggests an element of subscription towards the traditional narrative of sexism in that a lot of women remain to conform to bodily attributes that accentuate womanhood in order to identify themselves as a woman (Bennett, 2015). Seen in Ed's profile picture, he went "topless" where he did not appear to wear any shirt, which then allowed further highlight of his masculine features. Also, as already mentioned previously, Tammy's outfit resembles the females under this category where they would wear dresses with cuts and openings for their feminine parts: the breast: legs; midriff; and legs.

## Gestures

Forty Tinder profile pictures were watched to have coordinate look to the group of onlookers and the other twenty had looks absent from the group of onlookers. Straight look into the gathering of people means an welcome for the group of onlookers to enter the actor's social space (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In other words, the watched Tinder clients endeavored to set up an insinuate vicinity with their gathering of people. This finding was advance strengthened by as numerous as fifty-three profile pictures which utilized eye-level point which proposes rise to control position between on-screen characters and gathering of people. Too, the well known frontal point meant near social nearness and openness.

## Further Discussion

Photographs are conceivable to specific changing implied meaning and this think about endeavored to find a few of them. The watched Tinder profile pictures appeared inclination in implying occupation-related through clothing choices for status/ course/ custom signals, assist complementing that of Tifferet & Vilnai-yavetz (2014) in that not as it were guys that highlight those categories for "status cues", but females as well in spite of the fact that it did not appear overpowering occasions. Encourage, well known occasions of center situating and close-shot share a resemblance with Herring (2011) in that selfies are utilized as a vessel to show users' self-presentation.

Specific to the vital skin-showing, the discoveries complement Duguay (2016) where at first, appearing skin was restricted to females endeavoring for "aesthetic appearance". Discoveries of this ponder complements that of Duguay (2016) in that there remains patterns for the watched female gather to go through the conventional sex generalization where ladies are craved due to their physical highlights. In any case, it was or maybe shocking where it was found that male gather moreover appeared inclinations in appearing substantial highlights, making this common for both bunches. Although appearing skin isn't strikingly well known, this finding remained vital. The discoveries of "skin-showing" guys share an degree of resemblance with Döring et al., (2016) in that

conventional sex generalizations stay intaglio. The analyst recommends that "muscle-showing" guys lean toward to appear off their physical highlights since they assume real quality is related with the manly persona.

Besides, point choices-wise, The ponder discoveries to some degree differentiate Sedgewick et al. (2017) where they found guys appearing inclinations towards low-angle photo to depict themselves as strong-looking, taller, and higher control position than that of gathering of people, and the female partner where they favored tall point for an figment of being brief, less huge, and within the lesser control position than their group of onlookers. The researchers proceeded that point choice is generally due to natural faculties at play as well as the attitude of "the perfect mate qualities". Sedgewick et al. (2017) consider point approaches as "gender differences". In any case in this ponder, really not one or the other male nor female bunches appeared inclinations in concocting either tall or low angles. In truth, the foremost prevalent point choice among bunches is the eye-level point. Kress & van Leeuwen (2006) foresee the thought processes within the notoriety of eye-level point: (a) a apparatus to appear social closeness with the group of onlookers, and; (b) a vessel to show sidelong control position between on-screen characters and group of onlookers. Solid ubiquity for utilizing frontal points as well as coordinate look to the group of onlookers encourage cement closeness and invitingness components shown by the watched Tinder clients. However, color selection-wise, Kress & van Leeuwen (2004) affirm that strong system to translate semiotic implications behind color codes is however to be built up, primarily due to different uses of color different pockets of history. Researchers advance declare that "[…] what individuals do with color shifts massively, and social bunches which share common purposes around employments of color are regularly moderately little and specialized" (p. 228). Although this study found a few color combinations to be more favored by a specific sex gather, it would be a rushed conclusion ought to a sexual orientation execution translation be decoded from colors.

## CONCLUSION

Instead of a feminine/ masculine clear-cut categorization largely suggested by notable constructivist thinkers, this study points at a direction where gender expression and identity is an ensemble of complex display of outward performance. This is in full alignment with some principles of interpretivist/ postmodernist epistemological construct (Baxter, 2016). To certain degrees, complexity of gender performance was emulated in the findings of this study. This social semiotic study found elements of Tinder profile pictures which communicated cues of gender performances. Complementing its literary findings, this study discovered that the use of formal wear is most notably in male groups although some females were seen to wear similar clothing type. Color choices, though preferences towards high saturation and multicolored choice, were rather inconclusive to pinpoint a particular gender performance. Most notably, however, actors showcasing bodily-feature were common in both male and female groups.

Taken further, showing off bodily features, or previously jargoned: *strategic skin showing*, was evident in both male and female groups although prevalence is leaning towards the female ones. Although evident, this study discovered the utilization of the low angle to be rather subtle in the male group as well as female group, which is complementing the literature which initially suggests that low angle is related to creating an illusion of height, thus "the ideals of masculinity". Alternatively, frontal and eye-level angle, which exude friendly approach and social closeness, seemed to be fashionable in both groups. The idea of gender has far shifted from the binary mold. The study is insofar confident that, although influences of gender binary hegemony, gender is performed in a multilayered manner in the dating world nowadays.

## Research Limitation(S)

It is unsurprising that a lot of studies, or in all studies generally, there are research limitations. The followings highlight some of the flaws that this research study has encountered. Some of the limitations encountered were due to the nature of the data, as Bowen (2009) has posited that there is bound to be barriers in the data analysis due to the kinds of data being garnered. There is also an issue of human-driven analysis. It has been hotly debated that analysis by human raters most-likely entails to, one of which, biases. Burghardt et al (2012) have noted several alternatives to alleviate biases by human raters by employing, one of which, blind analysis by different raters. Due to manpower and other limitations, these recommendations could not be performed.

This study employed heavy adherence to human-driven analysis over the computer software. It has been hinted previously that most, if not all, aspects of analysis were done by the researchers with means that computer intervention is minimal. This is of a shortcoming: the data nature that is a screenshot, instead of an actual file, resulted in some distortions in picture quality and file extension thus computer-based software was unable to perform. Unlike exemplified in Thurlow (2003) and Rovino (2019), researchers were not successful in discovering a computer software to assist with all conditions governed by the PPP. Although supplementary software i.e. Photoscape had been devised to assist with the analysis related to color composition, human-rater based analysis is the majority in the data analysis process.

The above treatment, then, may be prone to human innate preferences. Therefore, it can be arguably suggested that most pictorial analyses might lead to, among others, personal bias. With that being said, researchers would like to invite the readers of this study to acknowledge that analysis biases are unavoidable in a lot of social research, as noted by Shank and Corbitt (1999). Since biases are heavily related to social research studies, Shank & Corbitt invite social researchers to improve the quality of data and method of analyses which include, but not limited to, the number of garnered data and the level of intricacy/ complexity of the analysis methods. Since this study situated in London, there is a possibility that the garnered Tinder profile pictures came from diverse ethnic backgrounds. Due to the nature of this study which disregards ethnic differences, conclusion byproducts where

overrepresentation or underrepresentation of a particular ethnic group could surface. Though seemingly harmless due to the scope of this study which does not encourage ethnicity, this limitation is worth pointing out. Nonetheless, this should not discourage other social semiotics studies from performing research studies in this nature.

In the spirit of postmodernism, we should question, challenge, and revisit totalizing conclusions of things. Therefore, researchers invite other scholars from similar, or different, disciplines to academically evaluate this study in order to expand the academic horizon of social semiotics studies.

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