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of Glasgow

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**'Swipe left, or right?': A phenomenological exploration of the psychological impacts of  
Tinder use - the user's experience.**

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## **Abstract**

Research into the relationship between Tinder use and psychological well-being is critically limited. Thus, this study sought to explore the phenomenological experiences of using Tinder by interviewing eight postgraduate students. The main interest of the study was to explore the potential impact of Tinder use on psychological well-being. Additionally, the study aimed to investigate how self-presentation strategies used by participants on Tinder may impact well-being. The data was analysed using an Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA) approach. Results suggest that using Tinder has both positive and negative psychological implications for participants. Tinder appears to afford increased control over romantic interactions, provides a secure environment for exploration of the self and positive evaluation from other users appears to validate participant's sense of worth. On the other hand, Tinder use seems to lead participants to question their sense of self-worth and appears to lower self-esteem. Results also imply that engaging in inauthentic self-presentation leads to psychological discomfort. The novel use of Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being and Higgin's (1987) social discrepancy theory were applied to explain the findings. Suggestions are made for both theories to better comprehend Tinder use, self-presentation and the impact on well-being. Practical and theoretical implications are discussed. Further research is encouraged into this important new area of investigation.

## **Introduction**

### *A brief overview of online dating*

The need to connect with others has even been argued to play a central role in human motivation (Baumeister & Leary, 1995). Additionally, being engaged in intimate relationships is one of the strongest predictors of happiness and emotional well-being (Cohen, 2004; Diener & Seligman, 2002). In light of this, it is not surprising that the topic is of critical importance to the public, especially considering connected health and well-being outcomes that have been identified. In an extensive review from the perspective of psychology, Finkel et al. (2012) discuss a fundamental shift in the processes and outcomes relevant to romantic relationships since the inception of online dating in the early 2000s (Smith & Duggan, 2013). For instance, the amount of choice daters are now faced with for prospective partners has increased dramatically, consequently, people's willingness to commit to one person may now be undermined. In addition, comparisons have been made to a market place, where people are 'shopping' just as they would for goods, which can lead to objectification of partners (Heino, Ellison & Gibbs, 2010; Finkel et al., 2012). Changes associated with romantic relations may present daters with uncertainty and outcomes that may be more negative than before the infiltration of online dating.

In the modern age the dating landscape is constantly altering and in 2008 Apple launched its App Store which introduced location-based mobile dating apps such as Tinder, Bumble and Hinge (Finkel et al., 2012). The affordances offered by smartphone-based dating applications have increased the ease of which users are able to pursue physical romantic encounters with prospective dates within local proximity, consequently initially becoming known as 'hook-up apps' (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016; Stein, 2013). However, the

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motivations of people using location-based dating is reported to include the pursuit of meaningful romantic relationships. It is argued that some changes have resulted in positive romantic outcomes while some have led to possibly worse outcomes (Finkel et al., 2012). In the 1990's, online dating was deemed as a service for 'loners' or 'psychos', however, their reception dramatically changed when attitudes started to become more positive and it became mainstream in the early 2000's, shedding its stigma (Smith & Anderson, 2015). With increased social acceptance of using online dating there has been a rapid growth in the number of people participating in recent years. The platforms are now generally considered a common or even advantageous means of finding a romantic partner (Doan & Meyers, 2011). Given that approximately fifty million individuals are Tinder users alone (Ward, 2017) and a strong link between relationships and wellbeing tends to exist (Ratelle, Simard & Guay, 2013), it can be argued that their romantic experience has significant psychological implications.

### *Advantages and disadvantages of online intimacy*

Online intimacy and computer-mediated communication is argued to have certain benefits for initiating and forming romantic relationships, having the potential to ameliorate for what many people consider a time-consuming and frustrating activity (Finkel et al., 2012). In the digital age, the benefits of online social engagement can have a direct influence on health and well-being outcomes (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2016). Benefits include an increased speed at which individuals are able to self-disclose and increase online disinhibition which can facilitate meaningful and intimate interactions (Valkenburg & Peter, 2011). The anonymity offered by online contexts can encourage users to speak more freely, disclose feelings and opinions due to a lessened fear of disapproval or sanction which lead to

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accelerated intimacy formation compared to offline settings (Mckenna, Green & Gleason, 2002). Self-disclosure is argued to play a central role in mediating the positive effects of intimacy on health and well-being (Reis & Franks, 1994; Ryff & Singer, 2000). Sumter, Vandenbosch and Ligtenberg's (2017) were the first to empirically investigate why emerging adults use Tinder and found that the medium is used as a multifunctional tool to meet various psychosocial needs. The researchers found participants used Tinder to validate their self-worth by receiving positive feedback regarding their appearance. When Tinder users receive positive feedback, this is likely to have a positive impact, as previous research has demonstrated that physical attractiveness is related to subjective well-being (Diener, Wolsic & Fujita, 1995). Thus, it appears that the medium has the potential to cultivate well-being through receiving positive evaluation, engaging in satisfying social interaction and facilitating the formation and maintenance of psychologically healthy relationships.

In contrast, questions have been raised about online dating's usefulness in developing and maintaining psychologically healthy romantic relations. Online contexts may increase the rate at which intimacy can develop, fostering the formation of relationships. However, at the same time it can lead to unnecessary self-disclosure, sexual disinhibition and encourage unrealistic expectations about potential online partners (Lomanowska & Guitton, 2016). Online daters are at a higher risk of deception, for instance, by other users who deliberately withhold certain information (Ellison, Hancock & Toma, 2012), contracting sexually transmitted infections (Couch & Liamputtong, 2007), exploitation (Whitty & Joinson, 2009) and sexual harassment (Thompson, 2018). Moreover, the affordances of dating apps have been identified as playing an integral role in changing daters' views of romantic ideals. Tinder boasts haptic features such as being able to accept or reject prospective dates with a quick thumb movement. This facilitates the swipe logic, which encourages users to assess the

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desirability of prospective dates in a matter of seconds subsequently basing the decision to accept or discard them on aesthetic qualities (David & Cambre, 2016; Strubel & Petrie, 2017).) Adopting a strong assessment mindset may increase the likelihood that daters will swipe again due to the belief that there is a better alternative partner.

Similarly, Bauman (2003) argues long-term relationships have been ‘liquified’ by technological change and individualisation, fragmenting partnership security and conventional romantic ideals. Arguably, dating has become a frivolous activity where transient connections are formed rather than meaningful relationships, thus facilitating a view that people are disposable (Hobbs, Owen & Gerber, 2016). This attitude is strongly expressed by one of Bauman’s (2003) participants who indicated that the advantage of online dating is that “you can always press delete” (Bauman, 2003, p. 65). Having a wide pool of prospective dates to choose from may be advantageous for date seekers as research has demonstrated that having the perception of options increases psychological health (Deci & Ryan, 1991). However, an overwhelming degree of choice may dilute people’s desire for committal relationships and lead to lower success in relationship formation and maintenance (Finkel et al., 2012). Despite the view presented here, Hobbs et al (2017) found that Tinder users value conventional romantic ideals and are using the app to find long-term committal relationships as opposed to ‘hook-ups’.

In light of the argued negative changes that online dating has introduced and given the importance of relationships for psychological health, there are arguably cognitive and emotional consequences of placing dating apps at the centre of romantic lives. Although the effects of using dating applications on psychological health has not yet been widely explored, in the last decade research on other mediums such as Facebook have revealed a negative relationship between use and mental health (Bessière et al., 2010; Kross et al., 2013). A



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study conducted by Tromholt (2016) investigated the impact of using Facebook on well-being. The participants were divided into two groups. One where they took a break from Facebook and a control group who continued using it to compare the impact on well-being. The researchers found that taking a break had a positive influence on two dimensions of well-being: higher life satisfaction and increasing positive emotions. The findings should be interpreted with caution however, as it may be hard to determine what proportion of the causal effects are due to the experimental setup. Furthermore, in a concise review of research on the relationship between social networking sites (SNS) use and well-being, Pantic (2014) highlights that constant self-evaluation and comparing one's self to others may impact well-being. Perhaps there are similar advantages and disadvantages for online daters. At present, only physical health consequences of mobile dating applications have been identified in the literature, such as an increased risk of sexually transmitted infections (Beymer, 2014; Bhattacharya, 2015). It seems imperative to gain an understanding of both the positive and negative impacts on psychological health (i.e. psychological well-being) to inform the increasing number of Post-Millennials that are likely to be using dating applications.

Exploring Tinder users' experiences pertaining to the fundamental factors of well-being identified by Ryff (1989) is how the present study will explore online dating app use and its potential relationship with psychological well-being. Over recent years there has been an increased interest in positive functioning and how to live a fulfilling life, encouraged by the seminal work of Ryff (1989), who produced the six-factor-model of psychological well-being. Ryff developed a theoretical framework of well-being based on an extensive review of several established perspectives on positive functioning. The most central viewpoints included clinical perspectives of personal growth (Rogers, 1961; Maslow, 1968), life span theories (Erikson, 1959) and the principles of positive mental health constructed by Jahoda

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(1958). Additionally, Ryff integrated her own ideas from her research on development through the life course (Ryff 1995; Ryff & Keyes 1995). Ryff argued that the aforementioned perspectives all contained complementing and similar criteria for positive well-being. In an effort to strengthen conceptual foundations of well-being Ryff identified six core theoretically-motivated dimensions of positive functioning; independence and self-determination (autonomy); mastery and competence in managing one's life (environmental mastery); having satisfying interpersonal relationships and caring about the welfare of others (positive relations with others); growing by being open to new experiences (personal growth); holding beliefs and having goals that create meaning in one's life (purpose in life); and having a positive outlook on oneself and one's past life (self-acceptance), (Ryff, 1989; Ryff & Keyes, 1995). Research has only just begun to address psychological functioning in relation to dating apps (Strubel & Petrie, 2017) and thus remains an important area of inquiry that is largely underexplored. It is not yet possible to understand the effects of using dating apps on well-being and it is critical to do so given that fifty million people use Tinder (Ward, 2017) and considering the aforementioned importance of romantic relationships for positive psychological health (Ratelle et al., 2013). Ryff's (1989) model provides a useful theoretical framework to bridge together and explore Tinder use and well-being.

### ***Self-presentation in the context of online dating applications***

Self-presentation is essential for finding prospective partners online; this information will shape decisions on whether or not to begin new relationships (Derlega, Winstead, Wong, & Greenspan, 1987). Dating applications such as Tinder provide a novel vehicle for impression management practices. This is largely ascribed to minimal cues, local proximity, greater control and a decreased filtering process (Ward, 2017). A Tinder profile consists of

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five photographs and a short biography, meaning cultivating fast first impressions is likely to be crucial to attract potential partners. Impression management or self-presentation (often used interchangeably) is a concept coined by Goffman (1959) which has been adapted by various scholars to online interpersonal environments, providing a valuable sociological framework for understanding self-presentation practises of online daters. Impression management generated a lot of attention in social psychological research. Leary and Kowalski's two-component (1990) model posits impression management as essential for interpersonal relationships and for self-esteem. If an individual effectively creates a desired impression, it is likely to evoke a positive response from others which can increase self-esteem. Self-esteem can also be mediated by an individual's perception of the impression they think they have made on others, if the perception is a successful attempt, self-esteem will be bolstered (Leary & Kowalski, 1990). Goffman (1959) identified that impression management is a common practice many years before the arrival of dating applications. In the digital age, technology mediated relationships have become the norm rather than the exception and the opportunity to control impressions is ever increasing as online self-presentation is more malleable, fluid and subject to self-censorship compared to conventional face-to-face self-presentation practises (Walther, 1996).

The novel context of online dating provides a venue for users to exercise maximum control over self-presentation (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). In light of this and perhaps unsurprisingly, users are not entirely authentic in self-presentations when crafting profiles and interacting with prospective dates. Ellison et al. (2006) reason that this tendency is due to the notion that individual's self-perceptions are not entirely accurate. Previous literature suggests that strategic self-presentation is a common practice that online daters make use of to attract a larger number of potential dates. In Guadagno, Okdie and Kruse's (2012) study,

they found that when participants did not expect to meet their online partner face-to-face, the manner of presentation was exaggerated which consequently lowered authenticity. This tendency was attributed to the online context which is argued to exacerbate engagement with deceptive self-presentation. From the literature, it appears that online daters may emphasise positive qualities and withhold undesirable information to deliberately construct a favourable image due to increased control over self-presentation online (Ward, 2017; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Toma, Hancock & Ellison, 2008; Toma & Hancock, 2010).

### *Self-presentation and well-being*

Previous research has extensively investigated self-presentation in the context of online dating, but it has not yet investigated the potential psychological well-being outcomes of engaging in these practices. Attention has been paid to strategic self-presentation SNSs such as Facebook and how it can be both beneficial and detrimental to individuals' subjective well-being (Bareket-Bojmel, Moran & Shahar, 2016; Kim & Lee, 2011,). Engaging in self-presentation on SNSs and dating websites can be proven to be beneficial for some individuals, especially those who may lack social competencies. It can act as a vehicle for expressing the true self (McKenna et al., 2002), presenting possible and ideal selves (Manago, Graham, Greenfield & Salimkan, 2008), exploring different identities and initiating new relationships (Whitty, 2003), arguably leading to positive well-being outcomes such as bolstering self-esteem. For instance, in Gonzales and Hancock's (2011) study, they found that Facebook can be a venue for increasing self-awareness as selective self-presentation can elevate self-esteem and the impressions of one's self. It appears that online settings have the potential to optimise self-presentation to others more effectively than perhaps offline contexts. Thus, dating applications such as Tinder may provide a safe space for users to

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engage in self-expression with a minimised fear of negative evaluation and rejection (Timmermans & De Caluwé, 2017).

Contrary to this view, the increased control afforded to dating app users could lead to 'perfect profiling' which can perpetuate low-self-esteem (Potts, 2018). Due to the ability to cultivate desired impressions (e.g. having the time to edit messages before pressing send), users may form an idealised image which they feel they are obligated to maintain. The first and currently only known study to investigate the relation between Tinder and psychological functioning is Strubel and Petrie's (2017) quantitative research. Strubel and Petrie (2017) investigated the effects of Tinder use in association with body image concerns and self-esteem. The key findings were: Tinder users compared to non-users have lower self-esteem, negative perceptions of their body and face, feel appearance related pressures and are more likely to make comparisons to others, compared to non-users. The findings are concerning given that previous scholars have identified self-esteem as a fundamental contributor to positive well-being (Diener & Diener, 1995). Tinder affords daters with the use of evaluative mechanisms built on predominantly physical attributes, increasing the risk of users engaging in self-monitoring and deliberate construction of an idealised self. The researchers argue that gradually using strategic modes of presentation such as self-promotion, may diminish self-esteem, especially when positive feedback is not received. Strubel and Petrie (2017) recommend qualitative research methods as an appropriate approach to explore how Tinder user's feel when they are being "swiped" left (rejected) or right (accepted). It should, however, be noted that in this study only a small proportion of participants identified themselves as active Tinder users. The findings, therefore, should be interpreted with caution as the amount of time using Tinder may affect well-being. For instance, previous research on Facebook has shown that the length of time an individual has used the platform can affect

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well-being (Tromholt, 2016). To avoid recruiting participants who are not active users, Strubel and Petrie (2017) may have benefited from stipulating that participants need to be active users as part of criteria in the recruitment process.

In addition, the literature has shed light on how and why daters use certain manners of self-presentation, however, little is known about the effects of engaging in said strategic practices. For example, if a dater has constructed an ideal image online and there is a perceived mismatch with their true or accurate self offline it could induce a negative psychological state. This is in keeping with social psychologists' argument that individuals who have contradictory perceptions regarding their self-images will experience psychological discomfort (Aronson, Wilson & Akert, 2005). Higgin's (1967) argues that the self comprises of three domains: the 'actual self', the 'ideal self' and the 'ought self'. The actual self is a representation of the attributes you or others believe you actually possess, the ideal self is the attributes another (or yourself) would ideally like you to possess and the ought self is the attributes someone else (or yourself) believes you ought to possess due to obligation. Higgins (1987) identified specific emotional consequences for each type of discrepancy. When our actual self does not align with our ideal self we experience dejection-related emotions and when our actual self does not match our ought self we experience agitation-related emotions.

Social-discrepancy theory has been successfully applied to many areas of study, receiving empirical support. For instance, body image studies affirm the utility of social-discrepancy theory, specifically the distinction between 'own' and 'other' standpoints (Szymanski & Cash, 1995; Heron & Smyth, 2013). Regarding the current study, if an online dater perceives a discrepancy between their actual and ideal self which they have presented online it may have psychological consequences, bearing strong resemblance to Higgin's

(1987) proposed dejection-related or agitation-related emotions. Social-discrepancy theory may offer insight into the emotional repercussions of mismatched self-beliefs, thus providing a useful theoretical framework, complementing the use of Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being. Using social-discrepancy theory can help gain an understanding of the effects of engaging in strategic self-presentation for online daters' well-being, an aspect of the current research that Ryff's (1989) model may not capture as adequately. The literature discussed earlier identified daters' frequent use of self-enhancement to construct an ideal self online, i.e. through selecting flattering photographs and using highly positive self-descriptions on their profile (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Toma et al., 2008; Ward, 2017;). It may be plausible that psychological discomfort may be aroused if self-presentation does not yield positive feedback or if there is a perceived discrepancy. However, both positive and negative repercussions of self-presentation for online dater's well-being remains unexplored.

### ***Purpose of the current research***

Research is beginning to address the psychological element of dating apps, whereas earlier scholars have often focused on the traditional facets of relationship formation or motivations behind online dating use, for example, how they are commonly used to bolster self-esteem (Sumter et al., 2017). To my knowledge, the only research to examine the psychological impacts of using Tinder is the quantitative study conducted by Strubel and Petrie (2017). This study reveals causes for concern as Tinder users were found to have significantly lower levels of satisfaction with their body and lower self-esteem compared to non-users. There are currently no known phenomenologically oriented investigations of Tinder users' experiences in relation to well-being. Considering the dearth of research in this area, the current study aims to explore the impact using Tinder can have on psychological

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well-being and to also investigate the perceived effects of engaging in self-presentation practices. Where applicable, Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being, complemented by social-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987), will provide two frameworks to discuss the findings.

### **Methodology**

#### ***Participants***

In accordance with using Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis (IPA), a small homogenous sample was selected with the aim of capturing shared experiences and the ideographic nature of the participants' lived experience of the phenomenon; in the present study using Tinder (Howitt & Cramer, 2017; Smith & Osborn, 2008). Postgraduate students from the MSc Psychological Studies programme at the University of Glasgow were recruited, a total of eight individuals participated. The participants were selected for the research as they identified as being active Tinder users and were aged between 18-34 years, which is the age group that most commonly uses dating applications (Smith & Duggan, 2013). Of the participants, two were male and six were female. The sample was considered homogenous as all participants are of the same socioeconomic status and studying on the same postgraduate programme. Demographic information and the amount of time participants had been using Tinder was obtained, this is displayed in Table 1 below.



**Table 1***Participants profile*

Pseudonym	Age	Gender	Nationality	Sexuality	Amount of time on Tinder
Olivia	27	Female	British	Heterosexual	2 years
Diya	23	Female	Indian	Heterosexual	5 months
Aanya	22	Female	Indian	Heterosexual	4 months
Emily	26	Female	British	Heterosexual	5 years
Jack	25	Male	British	Homosexual	1 year
Mae	26	Female	British	Heterosexual	3.5 years
Lukas	24	Male	Slovakian	Homosexual	6 months
Ava	29	Female	British	Heterosexual	5 years

*Ethical Approval*

This study received approval from the School of Education Ethics Committee at the University of Glasgow, please see approval document in Appendix A. The research complied with ethics protocol by using the document as a blueprint. For instance, pseudonyms were used to protect participant's identity and all data was stored on a university OneDrive as opposed to a private laptop.

*Procedure*

A message composed by the researcher was posted in a course open forum, detailing the purpose of the study, what participation would entail and included an instruction for individuals to contact the researcher if they were interested in taking part. Six individuals contacted the researcher. The final two participants were recruited through a snowballing technique, whereby the researcher asked the six participants if they knew anyone on the programme who would be like to take part (Patton, 2002). The participants were then

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contacted via email to give more information about the purpose of the study. The participants were informed that their participation would involve a one-to-one, face-to-face, semi-structured interview and that the researcher would audio-record and transcribe the interview subsequently. Furthermore, participants were made aware that the researcher would use verbatim quotes from the interviews in a dissertation project and that pseudonyms would be used to ensure that participants are not identifiable.

After receiving ethical approval for the initial interview themes, they were adapted to construct an interview schedule that consisted of open-ended questions as recommended by Creswell and Poth (2018). Initial themes were converted into questions by considering how best to elicit detailed responses with as little prompting as possible to ensure participants were not led by the questions (Smith & Osbourne, 2008). A draft of the interview schedule was piloted, which allowed the researcher to make important modifications in response to feedback from the pilot participant. With redrafting, the questions were phrased in a way that was less loaded and used clear wording (Smith & Osborn, 2008; Braun & Clarke, 2013). The decision was made for the interview to be a semi-structured design, using the interview schedule as a guide to ensure the topics of interest were explored (Smith & Osborn, 2008) and to elicit rich, first-person accounts of experiences with the said phenomena (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). The semi-structured interview design also provided ample room for exploring novel issues that may arise during the interview, allowing the researcher the freedom to explore them further (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). Please see Appendix B to view a copy of the interview schedule.

Before each interview began, the participant was given a plain language statement to read through which included vital information, such as the purpose of the research and why the participant had been selected. After the participants had read the document thoroughly,

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the researcher asked if they were happy to continue, subsequently signing two copies of a consent form, one for the participant and one for the researcher to keep. Please see appendix C for a copy of the plain language statement and see appendix D for the consent form. The participants were then asked if they had any questions and their permission was requested by researcher to make notes during the interview. Additionally, participants were made aware that the interview could be stopped at any point, if they wished so, without requiring a reason. Moreover, it was made clear to the participants that their identity would be protected through use of pseudonyms in the data. Before each interview commenced, the researcher began by building a rapport and establishing the trust of the participant by asking background and warm up questions. This is important to ensure participants are at ease and comfortable, encouraging a natural conversation (Braun & Clarke, 2013).

After receiving permission from the participants, the interviews were audio-recorded using two recording devices for the purpose of transcribing later. The duration of the interviews were approximately between 40 and 55 minutes. At the end of the interview, participants were debriefed, thanked for their time and asked if they had any questions about the study. Furthermore, participants were offered the opportunity to provide feedback or to make suggestions to the researcher. Interviews were transcribed using express scribe software immediately after, maximising familiarity with the content as suggested by Pietkiewicz and Smith (2014). Each interview was transcribed verbatim and the completed transcriptions were anonymised instantly by giving each participant a pseudonym.

### *Data Analysis*

IPA was deemed the most suitable approach for the research carried out due to the emphasis on the phenomenological ‘lived experience’ underlying psychological concern, i.e.

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the impact of using Tinder on participant's well-being. IPA is an inductive qualitative approach which places the participant's 'lived experience' (Smith, Flowers, & Larkin, 2009, p. 33) at the heart of the research, while also providing the researcher with the opportunity to, in part, "interpret the interpretations of the individual" (Howitt & Cramer, 2017, p. 454). In keeping with an inductive approach, each transcript was carefully read and reread a number of times. The audio recordings of the interviews were frequently listened to while rereading the transcripts, allowing the researcher to fully immerse themselves in the data. The left-hand margin of the document containing the transcript was used to make a note of anything of initial interest that occurred to the researcher. After, the transcripts were reread, and any major themes were noted in the right-hand margin of the document for each transcript, resulting in a list of several themes for each interview (please see Appendix E for an example). The occurrence of the themes and the extent to which they were spoken of was noted and used to assemble a smaller list for each transcript. Superordinate and subordinate themes were compiled through identifying connections between the original themes, grouping them together according to conceptual similarities and giving each cluster a descriptive label (Pietkiewicz & Smith, 2014). This aided in producing a master list which was then used to code the interview transcripts.

### ***Reflexivity***

Langdrige's (2007) guidelines were followed where possible to attempt to adopt a reflexive approach throughout the research process. A reflective journal was kept to note down any preconceptions and thoughts. The researcher did not have any experience with using the dating application Tinder herself.

### Results

Using an IPA approach, three superordinate themes transpired through analysis of the data; 'Self-presentation and self-disclosure online', 'Using the screen as a barrier' and 'The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use'. The first theme to emerge from the data, 'Self-presentation and self-disclosure online' was salient in all participants' experiences, reflecting the ways in which they presented themselves on their Tinder profile and throughout their interactions with potential dates, the amount of self-disclosure they engaged in and the impact of these processes. The second theme, 'Using the screen as safety barrier' highlights the way that participants appeared to use Tinder as a means of exploring aspects of themselves online and how the perceived barrier, represented by a screen, appears to be indicative a change in the way online daters treat and view each other. The final theme, 'The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use' reflected the participants' perceived impact using the application had on their general well-being. For some participants, this included creating and perpetuating esteem-related concerns and for others it appeared to have fostered an increased sense of self-worth, at least initially, until other mediating factors gradually decrease the elevation in confidence. See table 2 below for superordinate and subordinate themes.

**Table 2**

*Table of themes*

Self-presentation and self-disclosure online*	Using the screen as a barrier*	The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use*
Strategic self-presentation	Revealing an undesirable self	Questioning self-worth
Self-disclosure online	Exploring aspects of the self	Increasing self-confidence
	Changing attitudes towards online partners	

\*Superordinate themes

The rest are subordinate themes

***Self-presentation and self-disclosure online***

All participants engaged in impression management and strategic self-presentation on Tinder. This was an opportunity for participants to present an authentic, yet idealised self, resulting in engaging with compensatory presentations. The online environment, mediated by reduced cues, resulted in greater control being afforded to participants through the opportunity to actively construct and manage the impression they created online.

***Strategic self-presentation***

Results suggest that all participants engaged in strategic self-presentation behaviour, referring to this as a way of ‘marketing’ themselves to attract prospective dates. Around two thirds of participants had significant anxieties regarding a perceived discrepancy between the ideal self which they had crafted and their actual self offline.

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I was trying to present the best version of myself...but I think it probably just came from being insecure and not one hundred percent sure of who I was as well and just the uncertainty of that made me want to pretend that I am better than I am...that's the impression I was giving off at the time, but it wasn't how I was feeling inside (Mae, 26, female)

Mae discusses how she wants to 'present the best version' of herself by engaging in compensatory presentations due to feeling insecure and unsure about her identity. Phrases such as 'want to pretend' and 'the impression I was giving off' suggests that Mae constructed a desirable presentation of herself which was not representative of her true feelings at the time. In Mae's later discussions she uses phrases such as 'parts of my personality I want to work on', suggesting she may have been presenting a potential future idealised version of herself as opposed to an actual self. Mae notes that she does this to avoid excluding herself from potential partners. Mae described how she would then worry over the perceived discrepancy between the image she had constructed and her accurate self. Over half of the participants mirrored this concern.

Similarly, Emily had apprehensions about her image online compared to offline:

...I really worry about how I look in person compared to my photos like now I know that I've put on weight since my photos...I'm not trying to catfish...so yeah nervousness and self-doubt. (Emily, 26, female)

From this extract it appears that this perceived discrepancy is a significant concern for Emily, using phrases like 'not trying to catfish' suggest that she was attempting to present

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herself authentically but has strong concerns that other online daters may be disappointed with her appearance offline. Catfishing is a slang term for the act of luring someone into a relationship by adopting a fictional online persona. This concern was salient in discussions with Emily. She voices her considerable anxieties regarding this issue and refers to the moment she meets an online dater face-to-face as ‘show time’. It appears that Emily may feel she may not have presented herself accurately online and this causes her grave concern regarding the response she will receive. Another example of this concern is articulated by Ava, who comments on her worry about other online daters possibly thinking ‘you don’t really resemble who you portray yourself as online’, which she notes would be ‘really awful’. This suggests Ava is considerably worried about this possibility and she feels it would be a highly unpleasant experience for her. Interestingly, around half of the participants disclosed that their self-esteem was quite low, and they seemed to engage in compensatory presentations as a tool to view themselves as they desire to be in the future. The other half of participants avoided this due to the eventuality of a face-to-face meeting and by remaining authentic they believed this would attract another authentic person.

### *Self-disclosure online*

The results suggest that most participants actively adopted a highly deliberative approach to their self-presentation. They were selective in the amount and type of self-disclosure they engaged with, which appeared to be indicative of a way of protecting one’s self when faced with navigating the ambiguity of other users’ intent. Placing limits on self-disclosure also appeared to aid participants in crafting a certain impression by deliberately withholding certain information that they deemed would be undesirable. It appeared that for



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almost all of the participants, the perceived stigma attached to Tinder shaped how they wanted to be viewed by others. Olivia provides an example:

I always feel like even though I am open to something more serious... you would never want to advertise that on your profile...because I feel like it scares people away (Olivia, 26, female)

Here, it seems that Olivia feels that she cannot be explicit about her true intentions due to the worry that this would be unattractive to potential dates. In later discussions, Olivia notes that she believed other people are not using Tinder to find something meaningful which then shaped her expectations and attitude towards using it. Other participants reflected a similar view, often wanting to appear a certain way and achieved this by concealing their true intentions. Similarly, Mae placed limits on her self-disclosure:

...I was never really describing myself, but it was almost like I was just trying to give off that I wasn't taking this seriously, like I am on here for fun, I didn't say that I was just kind of giving that impression (Mae, 26, female)

From this quotation it appears that Mae actively attempts to create a certain impression; wishing to appear as though she is not seeking anything meaningful. In subsequent discussions, Mae notes that the dominant view of Tinder is that it is an application primarily for hook-ups, or non-committal relationships, which she believes has influenced her approach to using it and the impression she wanted to make. Using phrases such as 'trying to give off' suggest that this impression differed greatly from public to private. Perhaps here we see a

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strategy employed by Mae to reduce uncertainty and to protect herself from perceived risks. Around half of the other participants expressed this view and appeared to use this strategy.

### *Using the screen as a barrier*

Almost all participants appeared to use the screen as a barrier to reveal aspects of themselves they would not normally express (often negative), to have the freedom to explore aspects of the self and to treat and view other users differently than in real life (offline). Participants perceived the online environment of Tinder to be lower risk compared to real life settings.

### *Revealing an undesirable self*

Most of the participants felt that using Tinder made it easier for them to reveal aspects of themselves that they would usually choose not to express in an offline environment. For some participants, an undesirable self was often ascribed to Tinder use due to believing that using it encouraged them to engage in superficial behaviour as it 'allowed it' and 'normalised it', which was often described as 'brutal'. The undesirable self is associated with qualities and behaviours deemed to be negative by participants. Mae provides an example of this concern:

I've been so superficial and had to stop myself...I'd be like scrolling and looking at him like "too fat, don't like his hair, what is he wearing?", it felt like it made me really judgemental, like I don't know if it made me...it was probably just bringing that out  
(Mae, 26, female)

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From this extract, it appears that Mae felt ashamed of how she had acted and ascribed this to her Tinder use which she believed encouraged her to base her judgements of other online daters on merely their physical appearance. Often Mae discarded those who did not meet her criteria for who she found physically attractive. Using phrases such as ‘bringing that out’ suggests that it may have reinforced an existing undesirable aspect of herself which she would then question. In later discussions, interestingly, Mae remarked on how she was unhappy about being judged on superficial characteristics despite being aware that she was engaging in that behaviour.

Likewise, Aanya highlighted that her Tinder use has resulted in her questioning herself:

Tinder really makes me question myself a lot... do I look for their face or do I look for their personality? In real life I find it easier to choose personality, on Tinder I find it harder, so it definitely makes me question my ideals as a person...it does affect my mental world (Aanya, 22, female)

Aanya discusses how she found herself questioning who she is as a person, her ideals and how she would normally behave. Aanya notes that Tinder does not include features that enable an understanding of others based on deeper characteristics. In an offline environment or ‘real life’ she would ‘find it easier’ to decide if she is romantically interested in a person based on their personality. As a result, she seems to experience an inner conflict, one where she is questioning her ‘own ideals as a person’. It appears that Aanya is afflicted by this change in her behaviour; ‘it does affect my mental world’. Using phrases such as ‘made me’ indicates that Aanya assigns this change to her Tinder use and that perhaps she feels forced into making decisions based on primarily aesthetic qualities. Similarly, Lukas remarked ‘you just don’t feel the consequence of swiping’, meaning it felt easier to judge others on

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superficial characteristics. Perhaps here we see a way in which undesirable behaviours are easier to engage with when the perceived repercussions are minimised.

### *Exploring aspects of the self*

In contrast to attributing undesirable aspects of the self to Tinder use, several participants felt that using the application gave them the agency to explore aspects of themselves that they had not had the opportunity to do beforehand. Diya provides an example of this as a positive experience:

...it's a really good way to see what kind of men you're interested in... I honestly never really explored what I like...it's a great way to find out (Diya, 23, female)

From this extract, it seems that for Diya, using Tinder afforded her with the opportunity to express her true self, explore aspects of herself and her identity, especially concerning her choice in a romantic partner. In later discussions, Diya noted that she felt that Tinder gave her control of who she wanted to date; 'I'm doing it for myself'. Other participants remarked on how using Tinder gave them more agency in their romantic lives, accompanied by a minimised fear of rejection which often increased a sense of security:

I think it improved my self-esteem and resilience a little bit because if you have a negative experience, because it's through online dating I don't feel it would have the same effect on you as it would in person (Jack, 25, male)

From this quotation, it appears Jack felt he was able to develop his resilience by using Tinder as a way of gaining experience with embarrassment and rejection, in an online environment that had fewer perceived personal risks. Jack notes that the impact of rejection would be

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much greater for him in an offline setting. Likewise, other participants felt more at ease when expressing themselves, for example Olivia remarked on how she felt 'detached' from the consequences of her online interactions, meaning she was able to speak more freely, be 'a bit more confident' and 'more flirtatious' than she would be in offline setting.

Similarly, a couple of the participants appeared to have used Tinder as a means of exploring their sexuality in a 'safer' environment:

...you don't know if someone's straight or gay... especially in conservative settings where I come from you know people really try to hide it (Lukas, 24, male)

Lukas discusses how it can be difficult to know who he can approach as his sexuality may be ambiguous in an offline setting. Lukas appeared to use Tinder as a way to avoid this uncertainty and to explore his sexuality in a safe place, which is something he was prevented from doing so previously in his conservative country. Similarly, Jack also remarked on how Tinder provided him with the opportunity to easily meet other homosexual men, avoiding the potential discomfort of approaching a heterosexual man.

### *Changing attitudes towards online partners*

A salient issue that presented in almost all of the participant's accounts was regarding a perceived change in the way they view and treat other users on Tinder and consequently the way they themselves are viewed and treated. Diya provides an example of an undesirable change in her view of others:

...instead of putting in the effort to actually get to know them and see if that's a problem...I'm gonna look for the new, non-exclusive casual date and I think that's

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really destructive, Tinder gives you the tool to do that... it's so much easier to find a replacement (Diya, 23, female)

Diya discusses how she feels that using Tinder has encouraged her to view others as perhaps more disposable and that it is likely she would be tempted to 'find a replacement'. Consequently, this appears to reduce the probability that Diya would attempt to resolve any problems, in an effort to avoid relationship dissolution. Diya noted this as a significant concern, describing it as 'destructive', suggesting this type of hook-up culture is damaging. Other participants echoed this concern, believing that the app plays a role in reducing people to commodities in a market place of romantic possibilities, encouraging the view that people are disposable. Likewise, Emily provides an example of this concern:

...they can ghost you which is where they just stop replying out of nowhere...it's so much easier for them...to treat you like shit...I'm sure there have been times where I have gone to the loo and they've been swiping ...you feel disposable (Emily, 26, female)

In this extract, it appears that Emily believes that using Tinder makes it easier to treat other people as disposable due to perhaps the perceived minimised consequences of this behaviour. In Emily's experience, Tinder seems to enable some users to treat others as disposable due to having an abundance of romantic options. This seems to result in treatment that is potentially different from that in an offline setting and treatment that is often negative:

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...the creepy messages...sometimes quite violent sounding messages, it's disgusting...you can't name and shame...some of the disgusting opening messages, it makes my blood boil (Emily, 26, female)

This quotation reflects that, for Emily, she has experienced poor treatment in the form of aggressive messages which have a physical and psychological impact on her; 'makes my blood boil'. It seems that Emily felt a great amount of anger and in later discussions she notes how this reinforced her distrust in other users. The anonymity offered by Tinder may then influence the treatment of others, as Emily notes 'you can't name and shame' daters who engage in this behaviour. Likewise, other participants reflected this concern, for example Ava remarked 'it feels like you're not really talking to a real person'. This indicates that Ava feels somewhat detached, and later she disclosed that she been treated poorly by other users, often in the form of unexpectedly ceasing all communication with her or 'ghosting her'. Ghosting is a slang term for having someone you believe cares about you cease all contact with you without any explanation. Treatment such as this appeared to have a substantial negative impact on half of the participants by causing esteem-related problems.

### *The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use*

#### *Questioning self-worth*

Almost all of the participants expressed how using Tinder resulted in them questioning their sense of self-worth, lowered their self-esteem, exacerbated existing insecurities and increased their feelings of self-doubt. All participants remarked on the superficial nature of Tinder and felt that physical appearance is of central importance on the platform,

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consequently facilitating appearance related worries. Some participants noted that their general well-being had decreased subsequent to use of the application:

... I don't think I've had any experiences that have made me feel particularly good about myself afterwards [pause] actually it made me feel worse about myself and then I'd, I'd react by deleting Tinder and then after a few months I'd need some more like confidence boost, so I'd just download it again...the cycle continues (Ava, 29, female)

This quotation indicates that for Ava, her experience of using Tinder has affected her negatively and her reaction to this is often to delete the application for a time period, perhaps to have a break, at least until she feels that she needs a confidence boost again. Ava used the phrase 'so the cycle continues', indicating that using Tinder in her own maladaptive manner may facilitate being caught in a damaging cycle of need for validation, but the end result being significant levels of self-doubt. Perhaps this indicates that Ava may not feel in control of how she uses Tinder, or that she may be aware, but continues due to the dependency she has developed on the initial validation to be gained. This dependency is mirrored by Diya's comment; 'psychologically it kind of convinces you that you need somebody to give you constant attention'. This indicates that Diya believes Tinder enables a dependency on validation. This may be a feature of various types of social media but more so for Tinder due to its focus on physical appearance. Diya notes that this validation is primarily based on physical appearance, describing this as 'dangerous'. In later discussions, Ava mentioned that she found herself questioning why she didn't receive matches, often feeling unattractive, believing that the fault is with her. Likewise, most other participants doubted their physical attractiveness and general sense of self-worth.

Mae notes that using Tinder had a detrimental impact on her self-esteem:



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...I do think it affected me, I don't think it made me feel that good about myself to be honest [pause] my self-esteem because I feel I was just looking to have fun but almost because I thought that was all that people wanted from me, so I was kind of wanting to be in control of that...it just made me feel a bit like guys just wanted me for sex (Mae, 26, female)

Mae notes that she believes using the application lowered her self-esteem, attributing this to a personal battle between attempting to gain control of the nature of her dating interactions and simultaneously feeling objectified by other male online daters. Mae also disclosed that she felt like she was not respecting herself and had 'taken on a different role', perhaps indicating a gradual loss of her sense of self. Three of the other female participants shared the same concern of being viewed as an object of predominantly sexual pursuits, often resulting in a feeling of reduced sense of self-worth.

### *Increasing self-confidence*

In contrast to the 'questioning self-worth' theme that emerged in the data, the results suggest that some of the participants believed that Tinder had given them an ego-boost and as a result increased their self-confidence. This was often achieved by positive reinforcement through receiving mutual matches, experiencing successful dates and receiving complementary messages online. In addition, around half of the participants described using Tinder as a therapeutic tool or as a 'welcome distraction' to overcome past relationships and gain a sense of control over their romantic lives. It appears that using Tinder bolstered self-worth for a third of the participants:

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I think it was a process for me it like maybe helped to use those apps for those things, to have like a higher sense of self-worth, in your dating life I guess you can be like I look fine and I am interesting...a bit more confident about yourself (Lukas, 24, male)

Emotionally, it definitely feels nice because someone's paying attention to you [laughs], someone's clearly on that date because they think your attractive or you and I would have a good time, so they trust in the fact that you would not let them down, which is a lovely thing to feel (Aanya, 21, female)

From these extracts it seems that both participants felt that their sense of self-worth was bolstered through positive experiences using Tinder. Lukas felt more secure in his romantic life and assured about himself as a person. Similarly, Aanya feels valued and desired by other online daters which appears to have a positive impact on her emotionally. For both participants, using Tinder appears to have instilled confidence in their ability to have successful romantic interactions. In earlier discussions, Lukas disclosed that he was struggling to overcome a previous relationship that caused him to doubt himself. In an attempt to move on, he joined Tinder which helped him heal. This is illustrative of the way in which the application can be used as a therapeutic tool which could have a positive impact on one's self-esteem. Similarly, over half of the participants express how using Tinder increased their confidence through positive reinforcements. Although participants recognised the positive impact on their confidence, they did remark on how this can facilitate a 'dependency' on validation from others, describing this as 'dangerous'. Interestingly, around two thirds of participants note that the confidence boost was only temporary and often an initial increase built on superficial factors which later had a negative impact:

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...It did, and it didn't, it was boosting my confidence of my appearance but then I had low confidence about who I actually was as a person (Mae, 26, female)

Here, it appears that Mae had experienced an increase in confidence relating to her physical appearance, but at the cost of questioning her sense of self and ideals as a person. Likewise, in Ava's experience she expressed how she received a temporary boost of self-esteem, noting 'until of course they stop talking to you'. It seems that for Ava, she frequently experienced being uplifted momentarily, only to be disappointed with the lack of further communication from her match. Over half of the participants' accounts seem to indicate that this temporary confidence boost is 'a little trap' and part of a cycle of self-doubt. For further extracts in support of each theme discussed please see Appendix F.

### **Discussion**

It has been suggested that intimate relationships are one of the strongest determinants of happiness and emotional well-being (Diener & Seligman, 2002; Cohen, 2004; Ratelle et al., 2013). The process and outcomes which underpin romantic relationships have changed since the inception of online dating (Finkel et al., 2012). The present study aimed to explore the personal psychological effects of using the dating application Tinder and how this could impact well-being. In addition, the present study intended to understand the effects of self-presentation practices used by online daters on well-being. An Interpretative Phenomenological Analysis of the transcripts illuminated three superordinate themes; 'Self-presentation and self-disclosure online', 'Using the screen as a barrier' and 'The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use'.

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Participants appeared to have a positive experience using Tinder when they had a sense of control and competence in their romantic lives. According to Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being, the environmental mastery dimension posits that having a sense of mastery and competence in managing one's environment and being able to manipulate one's surroundings to suit personal needs is a fundamental factor of positive psychological functioning (Ryff, 1989). Participants viewed Tinder as a vehicle for increasing their control over selecting prospective partners, choosing to engage in sexual encounters and exploring aspects of the self. Tinder was also used as a therapeutic tool to facilitate a healing process for participants after the dissolution of prior romantic relationships by affording them a sense of control during an emotionally vulnerable time. Similarly, previous research found that using Tinder allowed users to exercise control over their sexual encounters and work through feelings of rejection after a break up, restoring self-confidence and as a result increasing self-esteem (Hobbs et al., 2017). The current findings indicate that participants were able to benefit from the agency afforded to them through Tinder by gaining more control of their romantic relations which led to an increase in confidence and a generally positive experience. Unsurprisingly, when participants perceived their control to be less, they described a more negative experience. For instance, female participants explained that they felt objectified by other male users and did not feel in control of their romantic interactions which consequently had a damaging impact on their sense of self-worth. This is supported by Strubel and Petrie's (2017) study. They found that users felt depersonalised in their interactions, objectified and body conscious. In the present study, when control is perceived to be reduced, participants view Tinder as an ambiguous environment that is more difficult to manage and manipulate in accordance with personal goals and needs, which are often to seek the formation of a meaningful relationship.

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Moreover, participants perceived the online environment of Tinder to be lower risk compared to face-to-face settings. Participants indicated that they were able to make effective use of surrounding opportunities, again in accordance with Ryff's (1989) environmental mastery dimension of wellness. Participants explained how they felt able to explore aspects of the self that are not as easily expressed offline. This is supported by previous studies, for instance, McKenna et al. (2002) found participants were able to effectively communicate important aspects of their true selves online compared to face-to-face settings which facilitated the formation of meaningful relationships. In the present study, participants appeared to use Tinder as a venue to express identity-important aspects of the self which had a positive influence on their experience. Similarly, Whitty (2003) suggests that a virtual environment can be a space for experimentation, spontaneity and exploration of identity. This can facilitate development of the self and foster personal growth (Whitty, 2003). In addition, participants appeared to be able to create a context that was suitable for meeting their needs and personal goals. Tinder was used as a way of gaining valuable experience with romantic relations with the added comfort of the online environment, thus, consequences of any potential failings were deemed to be minimised. Participants expressed that the security offered by the online setting allowed them to build resilience and explore what they liked with a lessened fear of rejection which led to an increase in self-esteem.

The present findings suggest that when using Tinder, participants often described how their self-esteem and confidence was impacted negatively when they did not receive positive feedback from other users online. The participants indicated that receiving negative evaluation from other users had a detrimental impact on their sense of self-worth. Similarly, Strubel and Petrie (2017) found that the scrutiny and assessment mindset encouraged by Tinder leaves users feeling critical of their appearance, uncertain of their own worth, and

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psychologically distressed. Exposure to other users' assessments appeared to shape participants' own views of themselves. According to the autonomy dimension of Ryff's (1989) model, possessing the capacity for self-determination and independence, resisting social pressures, regulating behaviour from within and evaluating one's self by personal standards, is integral for positive well-being. Ryff (1989) suggests that fully functioning individuals tend to avoid looking to others for approval and evaluation. Instead, they assess themselves according to personal values, exhibiting an internal locus of evaluation. The current findings imply that for participants, using Tinder encouraged them to seek other users' approval as opposed to internally evaluating themselves in terms of their own personal standards. Participants expressed that positive feedback gave them an ego boost, validation and increased their self-confidence. Likewise, Sumter et al., (2017) found that daters use the apps to bolster self-esteem. In the current study, the increase in confidence, however, is mostly short-lived. Thus, participants explained that a dependency on validation from other users to boost self-worth was facilitated through Tinder use. The participants deemed this dependency to be harmful as often they found themselves relying on other users for positive feedback in order to boost their self-esteem, and in the absence of desired feedback, negative emotions are aroused. The factors discussed here imply that using Tinder may undermine participants' sense of autonomy by increasing the value placed on the evaluation received by others, diminishing the importance of evaluation by one's own personal standards and potentially impinging on the ability to regulate behaviour from within (Ryff, 1989).

In addition, according to Ryff's (1989) model, having positive relations with others, capacity for satisfying interpersonal relationships and caring for the welfare of others is an essential feature of mental health and is repeatedly stressed in conceptions of psychological well-being. The results of the present study imply that using Tinder may hinder the formation

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and maintenance of positive relations with others, which appeared to have a negative effect on well-being. Participants remarked on how their behaviour was at times shaped by Tinder and the app's affordances rather than guided by their personal morals which would be representative of their usual behaviour in face-to-face settings. For instance, participants reflected on their superficial evaluations of prospective dates and this led them to question their ideals as a person and feel guilty or ashamed of their own behaviour. Similarly, David and Cambre, 2016 argue that Tinder's technological affordances encourage users to adopt a strong assessment mindset, deciding whether to accept (swipe right) or reject (swipe left) in a matter of seconds using a quick thumb movement. A swipe logic is created, enabling the evaluation of others based on aesthetic qualities. As a result, users may view others as disposable and discard potential partners with the belief that the next swipe may provide a better option (Finkel et al., 2012). The current participants noted how they felt Tinder use could perpetuate a tendency to seek non-committal relationships and abandon relationships at the first sign of minor problems due to having immediate access to a large choice set. Finkel et al. 2012 suggest that dating applications may undermine people's willingness to commit to one person and reduce the likelihood of positive romantic outcomes with prospective partners. Moreover, the participants in the current study noted this concern and believed that using Tinder had changed the way they view and treat prospective dates and the way they themselves were treated. The change in treatment tended to be negative. For instance, participants explained that there were occasions where other users suddenly ceased all communication with them without offering any explanation. The slang term used for this action is 'ghosting' and participants alluded to the detrimental impact this had on their sense of own worth, leading to self-doubt and lowered self-esteem. Female participants would also receive aggressive and crude sexual solicitations via messages from male users. Prior

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research has identified sexual harassment as a common occurrence on mobile dating applications (Thompson, 2018). It may be useful for future research to explore this area, investigating the psychological impact of unwanted sexually aggressive messages. The current findings imply that using Tinder may not always foster positive relations with others and encourage consideration of others welfare, which according to Ryff (1989) is a defining feature of positive functioning.

For participants, the control afforded to them through Tinder led to engaging in strategic impression management. This was achieved through compensatory self-presentation or limiting the amount of information they disclosed to prospective dates in order to cultivate and maintain a certain impression. These findings are supported by previous studies that report online daters often emphasise positive qualities and withhold undesirable information due to having increased control over self-presentation (Guadagno et al., 2012; Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Ward, 2017). Some participants explained how they deliberately withheld certain information such as disagreeable characteristics (i.e. neuroticism, weight) to present a favourable image or an ideal self. This appears to support Ryff's (1989) self-acceptance dimension of her model which posits that holding a positive attitude about oneself and accepting ones' positive and negative qualities is essential for full psychological functioning. This implies that failing to accept, and therefore not present, certain personal qualities on Tinder that participants consider negative, could have an adverse effect on self-acceptance. The participants who engaged in deliberate self-presentation alluded to the perceived consequences of this practise. When the ideal image they had cultivated online did not align with their actual self offline it resulted in psychological discomfort such as feeling anxious. Participants were very concerned about disappointing prospective dates in anticipated face-to-face meetings. The mismatch between an actual self and ideal self bears strong



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resemblance to social-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). Higgins(1987) proposes that a discrepancy between an individual's actual self and ideal self results in dejection-related emotions and other negative psychological states. Participants expressed that the perceived discrepancy had a detrimental impact on their self-worth and aroused feelings of self-doubt. This is in line with the argument that an incongruity between the actual and ideal self can have a significant impact on self-esteem (Moretti & Higgins ,1990). The participants who use authentic self-presentation tend to have a more positive experience due to the absence of an anxiety provoking discrepancy between their image online and their actual self. It could be argued that authentic presentation may encourage self-acceptance for participants as they are not withholding any undesirable characteristics. This may foster an accepting attitude towards themselves and encourage participants to accept who they are as opposed to wanting to be different (Ryff, 1989).

The present study is the first to explore how online daters are affected by using strategic self-presentation practises. Given that self-presentation is argued to be fundamental for interpersonal relationships and self-esteem (Leary & Kowalski, 1990), there is a need to be aware of the consequences for online daters who present themselves in a favourable rather than authentic manner. Interestingly, the results indicate that participants who tend to exaggerate their presentations, disclosed that they have generally low self-esteem, thus the image they had chosen to portray was a representation of who they would like to be or who they would like others to view them as, in keeping with social-discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987). This mirrors previous research that found individuals with high self-esteem tend to be authentic in self-presentation online as they are more likely to have a positive self-impression or evaluation by others is not as critical for their sense of self-worth (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017). Again, the importance of evaluation by others is in keeping with Ryff's (1989) model of

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wellness, in relation to the autonomy dimension. If the opinions and appraisals of others take precedence over an individual's own beliefs about his or her self, the individual's sense of autonomy may be lowered and consequently impinge on positive functioning. Furthermore, false-self theories such as Rogers (1959) also suggest that a high degree of inauthentic presentation and a wide gap between the actual and the ideal self can ultimately have a negative impact on well-being, increasing vulnerability to mental health problems (Gil-Or, Levi-Belz & Turel, 2015). The present results indicate that participants experienced psychological discomfort (anxiety, apprehension) associated with perceived discrepancies between their online ideal self and offline actual self. In addition, participants noted their apprehension regarding the views of prospective dates during a face-to-face meeting after online communication.

### *Strengths and Limitations*

The present study has strengths but is not without its limitations. Firstly, I recruited students that I am known to and perhaps this influenced the answers they gave in the interview. However, this could act as a strength of the research as an immediate rapport was established, perhaps encouraging the participants to feel comfortable and speak openly. Ideally, it may be better to have no familiarity with the participants at all, though I did the best I could considering the circumstances. Additionally, it is possible that my own preconceptions could have a bearing on the research, though, a strength is that I do not have experience using Tinder myself which may minimise potential bias. Clarke and Hogget (2009) argue that the researcher's interpretation and generation of the data is influenced by their own emotional reaction to it, thus, if I had used Tinder I may have sought parallels between my own experience of being a user and those of the participants. Moreover,

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qualitative researchers suggest that it is inevitable that the researcher's position and preconceptions will influence the research process in some way (Yardley, 2007). Instead of attempting to completely diminish the influence of the researcher, the advantages of directly engaging the participants in the research are maximised (Yardley, 2007). I adhered to Yardley's (2007) guidelines on how to increase validity in qualitative research, for instance my interview schedule contained open-ended questions to ensure the participants could influence the topic and the data. A further strength of the current study is that I took into serious consideration the importance of adopting a reflexive approach throughout the research process. I referred to the questions that Langdrige (2007) suggests every researcher should ask themselves to encourage reflexivity. Lastly, a main strength of the present study is that, to my knowledge, it is the first phenomenological exploration of Tinder users' experiences in relation to their psychological well-being.

### *Implications*

Despite its limitations, the present study holds important implications for both theory and the public. The present study is the first to apply the novel use of social discrepancy theory (Higgins, 1987) to the naturalistic context of online dating applications. The application of social discrepancy theory offers important insights into the presentational behaviour of participants and the effects on their well-being. The present results suggest that there are negative psychological consequences in engaging in inauthentic self-presentation to cultivate an ideal image online. As it stands, social discrepancy theory does not include self-presentation online as a contributing factor to incongruities between the actual and ideal self. Perhaps there is a need to extend social discrepancy theory to incorporate the psychological impact of perceived discrepancies between the actual and ideal self that is presented online. It

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could be argued that this is especially important given the extent to which the internet infiltrates our lives in today's contemporary world. Additionally, the present findings are contributing to the literature on well-being . This is the first time Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being has been applied to the context of online dating. An understanding of how Tinder use impacts participants' well-being was enriched using predominantly four of the six distinct dimensions of positive functioning. It is important to note that Ryff's (1989) seminal work was put forward before the advent of the internet and mobile communication technologies. Thus, factors that potentially impact well-being associated with online dating use or any type of mobile media could not be considered. Perhaps the defining dimensions of positive functioning could be developed to consider self-presentation online and other features of the online dating experience that may influence well-being. For instance, an extension of the self-acceptance dimension of Ryff's (1989) model could include self-presentation and how it can contribute to or diminish positive well-being.

The present findings hold important practical implications for the public. The need to understand the lived experience and personal psychological effects of dating app use is crucial for informing the current participants and the other approximately fifty million users (Ward, 2017), given the importance of romantic relationships for positive well-being (Ratelle et al., 2013). The current results indicate that engaging in inauthentic presentation led to psychological discomfort and a somewhat negative experience using Tinder. Authentic self-presentation seemed to be associated with a more positive experience. Perhaps other users would benefit from avoiding deceptive presentation in favour of an accurate portrayal. Users may be less likely to experience a congruence between the actual and ideal self and therefore help protect their own self-esteem and well-being while using Tinder. A further use of the

## EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF TINDER USE

current findings could be for updating psychological practise in the digital age. It may provide important insights for future research and wellness promotion programmes. Further research, however, is needed to examine how to incorporate dating app use into assessment and treatment approaches. Additionally, the current findings could be used to encourage and guide improvements that could be made to dating applications. This could be achieved through closer collaboration between scholars and service providers with the aim of facilitating positive romantic outcomes and increasing well-being for users.

### *Future Directions*

The present study also illuminated some potential avenues for future research. Firstly, existing research suggests that female Tinder users experience online sexual harassment from other male users (Thompson, 2018). This is an illustration of one of the ways that using the app may be different for females and males, thus, potentially influencing the impact on users' psychological well-being. Future research may wish to investigate the potential differences between male and female Tinder users' experiences. Moreover, the present study's findings were not concrete enough to infer if participants who have low self-esteem before they start using Tinder have a different experience to those who have higher self-esteem. Given that prior research has suggested that individuals with social anxiety and low self-esteem tend to be attracted to online dating (Finkel et al., 2012), it could be argued to be important to identify if individuals have low self-esteem before using Tinder, as using the app may perpetuate low self-esteem as reported by Strubel and Petrie (2017). A further important direction for future research could be to explore how an individual's culture and sexuality may shape the experience of using Tinder, as the scope of the present could not explore these factors. Finally, the present study provided insight into the lived experiences of Tinder users.

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Future research may wish to investigate other similar contexts such as alternative dating applications which may be functionally different, thus, the impact on well-being may vary.

### **Conclusion**

The findings of the current study present the various ways that using Tinder can impact the psychological well-being of participants, for better and for worse. Tinder use appeared to positively impact well-being by affording users with increased control in their romantic lives by providing a secure environment to explore aspects of the self and by increasing self-confidence through positive evaluation by prospective dates. This being said, Tinder seemed to have many negative impacts on participants' well-being too. It appeared capable of creating a dependency on validation from other users where negative evaluations and 'ghosting' led participants to question their self-worth and lower self-esteem. Additionally, self-presentation on Tinder was explored, and findings imply that participants who engage in inauthentic self-presentation experienced psychological discomfort and other negative consequences due to a perceived discrepancy between the actual self offline and the ideal self presented online. Suggestions were made for extending Higgin's (1987) social discrepancy theory and Ryff's (1989) six-factor model of psychological well-being to include a consideration of factors associated with dating app use and online self-presentation. The findings of the present study hold important implications for how the impact of Tinder use on well-being can be understood and utilised in wellness promotion programmes and treatments. The current study paves the way for further research to continue to explore this critically understudied area.

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## Appendices

### Appendix A: Ethical Approval Form



College of Social  
Sciences

#### Ethics Committee for Non-Clinical Research Involving Human Subjects Notification of Ethics Application Outcome – UG and PGT Applications

##### **Application Details**

Application Type: PGT

Application Number:

Applicant's Name: Kerry-ann Tomlinson

Project Title: 'Swipe left, or right?': A qualitative exploration of the psychological impacts of dating app use - the user's experience.

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##### **Application Status**

Approved – Pending Permissions (please see below)

Approved – No Permissions Required

Not approved – Minor Recommendations only (please see overleaf)

Not approved – Full Resubmission Required (please see overleaf)

**Note: Start and End Dates of Approval will only be given when ethical approval has been granted and when all the relevant permissions have been received.**

Start Date: 14/06/18

End Date: 30/11/18

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##### **Permissions**

Please find below the list of permissions that you MUST obtain and submit to the Ethics Administrator before commencing with data collection. You can either provide a scanned copy of the permission

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letters to: [education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk), or send a hard copy to: C. Paterson PGT Office St Andrew's Building 11 Eldon Street Glasgow G3 6NH

## Permission required from:

MSc Psychology programme leader

## Received in Admin Office:

May 2018

## **Recommendations** (where Changes are Required)

- **Where changes are required all applicants must respond** in the relevant boxes to the recommendations of the Committee and return to the Ethics Office to explain the changes you have made to the application.
- **(If application is Rejected a full new application must be submitted by returning to the Ethics Office. Where recommendations are provided, they should be responded to and this document provided as part of the new application.**

(Shaded areas will expand as text is added)

### **MAJOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MAJOR**

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### **MINOR RECOMMENDATION OF THE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **APPLICANT RESPONSE TO MINOR**

<p>Section 7.2. Please clarify if/when the vignettes will be used and what is the purpose of them. If the vignettes will be used you need to provide a copy for ethical review.</p> <p>Please explain the process of transcript verification such as, what id participants does not want some/all transcription will be used in data analysis.</p>	<p>The vignettes will not be used. It was an idea I had previously, and I have decided not to go ahead with it. I have removed this from the ethics application form.</p> <p>This transcript verification process will not take place and has been removed from my ethics application, consent form and my plain language statement.</p> <p>I will not store the data on a private computer and I removed this from my ethics application form. I will store the data</p>
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<p>Section 8.2. The reviewers would prefer if the data was stored on a University OneDrive rather than the Desktop of a private computer.</p> <p>Section 11. If you are intend it to present the results in journal article you need to indicate the retention of research data.</p> <p>Section 23. Please explain how you intend to provide privacy/confidentiality for participants when conducting the interview in a private space like the Mitchel Library.</p>	<p>on a University OneDrive and I have added this to my ethics application form.</p> <p>I no longer plan on presenting the results in a journal article. I made this change by unchecking the box on my ethics application form.</p> <p>I no longer wish to use the Mitchel library and removed this from my ethics application form. I have kept Glasgow University library as the location on my ethics application form as it will be more than suitable.</p>
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### REVIEWER COMMENTS COMMENTS

### APPLICANT RESPONSE TO REVIEWER

*(OTHER THAN SPECIFIC RECOMMENDATIONS)*

<p><b>Given the timeframe has the student considered the implications to waiting for transcripts to be verified by participants. Considering whether this is a necessary step in the research cycle, we would recommend discussing it with the supervisor.</b></p>	<p>I hadn't considered this previously, but I now understand and agree that the time scale would not permit me to do this. Therefore, I and my supervisor Dr Dely Elliot no longer wish to have the transcripts verified by the participants. I have removed this from my ethics application form, consent form and my plain language statement.</p>
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Please retain this notification for future reference. If you have any queries please do not hesitate to contact the School of Education ethics administrative contact for UG and PGT Applications: [education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:education-ethics@glasgow.ac.uk)

End of Notification.

**Appendix B: Interview Schedule**



University of Glasgow | School of Education

**Warm-up Questions**

1. How did you first discover Tinder?
2. What made you decide to join?
3. What was your perception of the app before you started using it?
  - a) Has this perception changed? If yes- how has it changed?

**Self-presentation**

1. How do you choose your Tinder photographs?
2. How do you describe yourself in your Tinder biography? What are your reasons for describing yourself in this way?
3. What are your reasons for presenting yourself the way you do? Do you think about how you will present yourself?
4. Do you want people on Tinder to see you in a certain way? If yes- Can you tell me your reasons why?
5. So after you have matched with someone, what happens next? Could you walk me through what your interactions are like?

**Face-to-face interaction following online match**

1. How do you feel if someone you connect with online wants to meet you face-to-face?
2. Have you had any experience meeting someone on Tinder face-to-face following a match? If yes- can you describe what that was like for you? If no- What are your reasons for not meeting anyone face-to-face?
3. How did this face-to-face experience make you feel? *That is very interesting, but what kind of emotions. Can you elaborate on that?*
4. With these examples, were there similarities between your online and face-to-face interactions?
  - a) What about differences between your online and face-to-face interactions?
5. Which type of dating do you prefer, Tinder or traditional approaches? What are the reasons for your preference? If you prefer traditional approaches, what are your reasons for using Tinder?
6. How do you approach face-to-face dating since you started using Tinder? Has it changed? If yes- Can you describe how it has changed?

**Positive and negative experiences**

1. What do you like the most about using Tinder? *You mentioned\_\_\_tell me what that was like for you?*

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2. What do you like the least about using Tinder? *That's interesting, could you tell me a bit more about that?*
3. Can you tell me about any notable positive experiences using Tinder?
  - a) What about negative experiences?

### ***Well-being before and after Tinder use***

1. Did you notice any changes in your general well-being after you joined Tinder?

### ***Closing Questions***

1. What advice would you give to someone who is thinking about using Tinder? Could you tell me why?
2. Would you recommend using Tinder to your friends?
3. Will you continue using the app?
4. Is there anything else you would like to comment on or add?
5. Do you have any questions about this study?

## Appendix C: Plain Language Statement



### Plain Language Statement

**Project title:** 'Swipe left, or right?': A phenomenological exploration of the psychological impacts of Tinder use - the user's experience.

**Researcher:** Kerry-ann Tomlinson

**Project supervisor:** Dr Dely Elliot

#### Invitation paragraph

You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you decide to take part, it is important for you to understand why the research is being done and what it will involve. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like more information. Take time to decide whether you wish to take part.

Thank you for reading this.

#### What is the purpose of the study?

The modern dating world has become dominated by online dating apps such as Tinder. The experiences people have of romantic relationships have undergone monumental changes due to the accelerating popularity of these apps. As the use of them becomes more prevalent, so does the need to gain a deeper understanding of how these changes can impact individuals mentally; for better or for worse. The aim of the present study is to gain a deeper understanding of the personal effects of dating app use and how this can impact on psychological wellbeing. By exploring these effects, this research can help raise awareness for following populations who use dating apps to embark on romantic journeys.

#### Why have I been chosen?

You have been chosen to take part in the present study because you are a postgraduate student from the MSc Psychological Studies programme within the age range of 18-34. You need to have had experience with using the Tinder dating app in the last three months and/or are using an app currently, regardless of duration or constancy or had either a positive or negative experience. To take part, you must be over the age of 18 years.

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### **Do I have to take part?**

You are not obliged to take part in the present study, participation is entirely voluntary. If you wish to take part, you have the right to withdraw from the study at any point without giving any reason.

### **What will happen to me if I take part?**

Participation in the present study will involve a one-to-one, semi-structured interview with the researcher. The interview will be audio-recorded, and the anticipated duration of the process will be a maximum of 60 minutes.

### **Will my taking part in this study be kept confidential?**

Your participation in the present study will be kept confidential. The audio recording of the interview will be stored in a password protected file on a University OneDrive, which only the researcher will have access to. The audio recordings will be transcribed using pseudonyms to ensure that your name will remain anonymous in any published work. Once the study is completed all the data files will be permanently destroyed.

**Please note that assurances on confidentiality will be strictly adhered to unless evidence of wrongdoing or potential harm is uncovered. In such cases the University may be obliged to contact relevant statutory bodies/agencies.**

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

The results from the study will be submitted as part of a dissertation project on the MSc Psychological Studies course at The University of Glasgow. If you would like to get a written summary of the results, please contact me after November 2018.

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

The present study has been reviewed and approved by The University of Glasgow's School of Education Ethics Committee.

### **Contact for Further Information**

**Researcher:** Kerry-ann Tomlinson    **Email:** [@student.gla.ac.uk](mailto:@student.gla.ac.uk)

**Project Supervisor:** Dr Dely Elliot    **Email:** [dely.elliott@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:dely.elliott@glasgow.ac.uk)

### **Samaritans**

**Contact number:** 116 123

**Website:** <https://www.samaritans.org/>

### **Mind**

**Contact Number:** 0300 123 3393

**Website:** <https://www.mind.org.uk/>

## EXPLORING PSYCHOLOGICAL IMPACTS OF TINDER USE

**If you have any concerns regarding the conduct of this research project, you can contact the School of Education Ethics Officer Dr. Kara Makara, email: [kara.makarafuller@glasgow.ac.uk](mailto:kara.makarafuller@glasgow.ac.uk)**

**Appendix D: Consent Form**



University of Glasgow | School of Education

Consent Form

Title of Project: 'Swipe left, or right?': A phenomenological exploration of the psychological impacts of Tinder use - the user's experience.

Name of Researcher: Kerry-ann Tomlinson

I confirm that I have read and understood the Plain Language Statement/Participant Information Sheet for the above study and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time, without giving any reason.

I consent / do not consent (delete as applicable) to interviews being audio-recorded.

(I acknowledge that copies of transcripts will be returned to participants for verification.)

I acknowledge that participants will be referred to by pseudonym.

I agree to take part in this research study

I do not agree to take part in this research study

Name of Participant ..... Signature .....

Date .....

Name of Researcher ..... Signature

.....

Date .....

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## Appendix E: Example of Data Analysis

If both have same idca.	43	people do like find like love and stuff from it if you're both	
	44	looking for it.	
	45	<i>Yeh, okay erm...how do you choose your tinder photographs?</i>	
Avoiding selfies.	46	Erm, I think like...so it comes up connected to your Facebook	
Facebook pictures connected to Tinder	47	so you can only really choose ones that are on your Facebook. I	
	48	don't think I had like any selfies on it, I think I was like steering	
	49	clear of that for whatever reason.	
	50	<i>What were your reasons for steering clear of that?</i>	
Avoid appearing vain.	51	I don't know because I feel like if I just put loads of selfies on I	Impression form an - avoiding appear'n vain.
Try to convey personality	52	just like love myself [laughs], like I am taking pictures all the	
Try to show me 'best version of myself' - ideal self? (catfishing)	53	time but it was like pictures of me, I think I was trying to pick	
Concern for gap.	54	stuff like...oh I am doing something nice here or like a really	
* authenticity	55	nice scene or like I look really nice in this one...or like I look	
	56	like I am funny and I am trying to like show my personality and	
	57	stuff as well you know like and I think yeah I was picking	
	58	pictures where I did look maybe better than I did in real life	Ideal self - actual + ought self - concerned about gap.
	59	[laughs]...erm I don't know if that's considered catfishing but	
	60	yeh...I think like just try to like show the best version of myself.	
	61	<i>The best version of yourself? Can you tell me a little bit more about that?</i>	
	62		
Want to look your best.	63	So like just trying to show like...obviously you don't want to be	
Concerned with way that people perceive her.	64	like, you're not going to put a picture up where you have just	
needs to be the way she wants it to come across.	65	woken up and you like shit [laughs] even though that's	
	66	probably what they are gonna see every morning but you can	
	67	like ease them into that a little bit...I don't know like just where	Impression management - way others view self important
	68	you look like you're having fun and like you look nice and you	
	69	look like...I don't know you look like the way you want people	
	70	to perceive you.	
	71	<i>Yeh, I understand what you mean...earlier you said you like your pictures to try and show your personality...</i>	
	72		
Wants to move away from looks focus on personality - due to change in desire - for a relationship - wants to attract others who looking for something meaningful.	73	Yeh I think cos it's like easy just to look at someone and like as	
'I used to be superficial - not who she is now - identity.	74	I said I used to, I just like go for looks and that would be the	Attributes wanting deep meaningful connection to change in identity.
	75	most important thing, like the first thing and then that didn't	
	76	really matter if they had a shit a personality because at least	
	77	they are like really good looking that's good, I can deal with	
	78	that, but I think that is because I wasn't looking for a	
	79	relationship at that time so when I started thinking I wanted a	
	80	relationship I like changed my ideas. Erm...I don't know...I	- unwanted practical superficial self
	81	think it's easy just to be like someone's pretty or good looking	
	82	but obviously if your like looking for something more then you	
	83	want to find people who are also looking for something more.	



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Appendix F: Evidence for Themes

Superordinate Themes	Subordinate Themes	Selected Illustrative Quotations
1. Self-presentation and self-disclosure online	1.1 Strategic self-presentation	<p>Olivia 3.85 I want to present myself as someone who a) looks like a decent human being, who has like other interests, but you know probably I want people to think I am intelligent...yeh, I feel like I kinda try and be true to myself, you know it is kinda like going for a job interview...you know you advertise the best version of yourself, so you know, it's me but it's the polished, shinier version of me.</p> <p>Aanya 4.126 I would say I hate that part of Tinder, it makes dating like a game supplemented by marketing and you have to market yourself, right? So, there is obviously like a brand image you are sort of working with and I would say hopefully that my brand image is someone who is carefree but logical, someone who indulges in say good food and like adventure but also someone who is passionate about their education, which is not untrue of me as a person.</p>
	1.2 Self-disclosure on online	<p>Diya 7.277 I would try to be like, try to tone it down and seem a bit more like...detached because I want to give off the impression of hey I'm too into you or whatever or like because also they don't know me so it's, your kind of, I'm a bit more calm and quieter.</p> <p>Aanya 7.275 I get more apprehensive when it's just banter conversations, but I am a lot more comfortable when there's an equal amount of self-disclosure going on and then we meet, yeh.</p>
2. Using the screen as a safety barrier	2.1 Revealing an undesirable self	<p>Ava 2.60 I guess I still this feeling that it's erm, you know the people behind the screen aren't real [pause] well they are but you know your flicking through them and your literally just throwing away someone's like child, you know what I mean someone's beloved child and you're like nah because I don't like your face [laughs], it's pretty harsh but do you do that in real life anyway? Do you like see people and then sort of like discard them? You don't really do you, you like get to know them and then sometimes their personality changes how you see them.</p> <p>Diya 9.381 No, if it's an ok face but a good bio, I will definitely swipe and see where the conversation goes [pause] so I mostly, I do focus on the bios predominantly but just unfortunately, the first thing you see is the face so I'm not gonna lie the face isn't even really something I think about, I will swipe left just because it's so fast you just kind of are, yeh its sad but yeh the face makes a difference on Tinder.</p>
	2.2 Exploring aspects of the self	<p>Lukas 8.319 back home Slovakia is like a really conservative country [pause] and yeh things can happen, I think you want to be cautious, I think I was around twenty-one when I started exploring those things, so I was aware of what can happen, and I don't wanna get beaten up or anything and there's not many like safe places you can go out or if they're are they are probably like really creepy.</p> <p>Jack 17.721 Tinder is quite a good starting point for people because it is very minimalist effort and not a lot of emotions can go into it initially...for me personally it wasn't as harsh getting your feelings hurt via Tinder as opposed to in person...</p>

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		<p>Olivia 11.435 I would say to begin with I probably felt a lot more confident because I was getting lots of matches and I felt like I didn't realise how easy it would be to get so much like male attention so quickly because I had never sought it out before and I reckon in person I would be a lot more shy and less likely to try and flirt with someone, quite an ego boost.</p>
	<p>2.3 Changing attitudes towards online partners</p>	<p>Olivia 6.233 I think because you feel detached, you feel like you're kind of separated a little bit from the reality of it and the consequences, until you have actually met someone it's almost as if they are not a real human being, it could be a robot on the other side [pause] yeah it doesn't feel real until you have met the person I think so you feel like you could say whatever you like and it's not really going to come back and bite you in the ass.</p> <p>Lukas 5.177 Maybe you just don't feel the consequence of the swiping, it's maybe like you know [pause] maybe even not I think like on a societal level it's kind of like maybe frowned upon like you know you shouldn't judge the book by its cover or be like superficial, but I think these online dating platforms kind of like encourage it, allow it and normalise it.</p>
<p>3. The subjective emotional impact of Tinder use</p>	<p>3.1 Questioning self-worth</p>	<p>Ava 11.449 to be honest, I don't think I've had any experiences that have made me feel particularly good about myself afterwards [pause] actually it probably made me feel worse about myself and then I'd, I'd react by deleting Tinder and then after a few months I'd need some more like confidence boost, so I'd just download it again [laughs] and so the cycle continues.</p> <p>Olivia 9.355 I would say like you have periods where you know your swiping and you're getting matches and there not really going anywhere and you start to feel like "is it me?", "is there something wrong with me?" and when you have not had a date in a while it makes me start to doubt my worth and attractiveness.</p>
	<p>3.2 Increasing self-confidence</p>	<p>Diya 8.348 if you have a lot of people texting you all the time you like feel like oh my god, I'm so gorgeous, great and funny...and so people, if they don't or if people stop texting you, they get busy, and I felt this and I suddenly wanna swipe more people because I'm like oh my god I'm not receiving attention and validation [pause] which is really also dangerous, so I know it comes with this like positives of having like easy contact with people, I think it's also kind of really dangerous because it can really like, like psychologically it kind of convinces you that you need somebody to give you constant attention, especially based on your physical beauty, which is really not how it should work.</p> <p>Jack 7.304 it does make you feel good, obviously, somebody else is taking an interest in you and although it is maybe not one hundred percent based on your actual personality, it's what you have tried to construe and it's a little bit of an ego-boost.</p>