

THE RIGHT SWIPE?

A QUALITATIVE RESEARCH ABOUT HOMOGAMY AND THE FACTORS OF MATE SELECTION ON
TINDER.

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ABSTRACT

Finding the perfect partner to spend the rest of our lives with has always been part of human society. In traditional dating, it is often seen that people look for a partner with similar characteristics, also called homogamy. A new mechanism that enables people to find this potential partner in the modern world is mobile dating. Mobile dating applications hold certain features, which to some extent enable match selection based on personal preferences. One of the most popular mobile dating applications used worldwide nowadays is called Tinder. This widespread mobile dating application has filtering features such as photos, name, age, education and profession, location, and biography. Since we live in an era where the number of higher educated women has increased and women have become more accepted as intellectual equals, educational homogamy might be different in comparison to other aspects of homogamy, especially in the modern dating environment. Hence the following research question is posed: "How does homogamy play a role in Tinder users' search for finding a potential partner on Tinder?". Through 13 interviews with 13 Tinder users with an MBO or WO educational background, many interesting insights into potential partner selection on Tinder were found. A thematic analysis was performed on the data, which shows the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application and the different steps that Tinder users go through when selecting their potential partner. This Tinder partner selection showed to be based on the features of Tinder, where users first looked at appearances by swiping through profile photos. Secondly, Tinder users looked at profession and educational level, with a difference between the selection process of MBO and WO educated respondents. Most MBO educated interviewees started working at a younger age than WO educated interviewees. Consequently, MBO educated Tinder users valued the profession of the potential partner more than educational level. Though for the WO educated interviewees, this was the other way around. Also, WO educated interviewees seemed to have some prejudice about MBO educated people in general. Subsequently, it will be interesting to see the social effect of educational level and the interference of Tinder in society in the future. Lastly, interviewees looked at two other features of Tinder, the biography of the potential partners' profile as well as shared mutual friends. In the end, one of the reasons why Tinder users would leave Tinder again was because they had found a new romantic partner.

KEYWORDS: *Tinder motivations, online potential partner selection, educational homogamy, mobile dating applications, filtering features*

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1. INTRODUCTION

For as long as romantic relationships exist, searching for a life-time partner is for some an indispensable goal of life, as romantic relationships are a ubiquitous component of human experience (Miller & Tedder, 2011). This would suggest that finding someone to love and someone who loves you back can be compared to the ambition to make a career, the idea of having "it" keeps you safe (Klinenberg, 2001). Therefore, people often take part in the process of mate selection, identifying people we might consider to be a date or a mate when interacting with them (Maliki, 2009). In this research, mate selection is defined as the process of selecting a potential partner (Abdullah, Li, & David, 2011). Research shows that finding the perfect partner is more likely to succeed when the two partners have similar characteristics, also called homogamy (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004; Maliki, 2009; Skopek, Schulz, & Blossfeld, 2010;). Another term that is often used to describe the process of partner selection associated with finding a partner of similar values, attitudes and beliefs is called homophily. However, compared to homogamy the degree of homophily in personality characteristics is modest (Buss, 1985; Klohnen & Mendelsohn, 1998). Therefore, this paper focusses on the personal characteristics of homogamy, defined as the mating with a person of similar socioeconomic status, ethnicity, race, age, education level, and/or religion ("Homogamy, definition & theory", n.d.). The reason why relationships with similar characteristics are more likely to succeed is because partners may feel more understood by one other, causing less conflicts in relationships (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004). In respect to relationships, finding a partner has been known for its challenging aspects (Brooks, 2011). A phenomenon of this century that has transformed the process of meeting a potential and ideal partner is online dating. One form of online dating that has recently become popular is through the use of dating applications, which have been established due to the invention and spread of the internet (Finkel, Eastwick, Karney, Reis, & Sprecher, 2012). These online dating applications can be accessed on the web or through an application on mobile phones through iOS and Android mobile operating systems (Patsakis, Zigomitros, & Solanas, 2015). Moreover, this is where some of the mobile dating applications promise to create matches between suitable partners using

desires from the users and tools such as algorithms to determine a perfect match (Lashgari, 2014). Examples of such dating applications in the Netherlands are: Zoosk, Lexa and Pepper ("Top 10 Nederlandse Datingsites", n.d.). On one hand, online dating provides a wide variety of choice, therefore it is often seen as a viable, efficient way to meet dating or long-term relationship partners (Braziel, 2015). On the other hand, this can make the search for true love even harder due to the overload of possible partners. Besides, online dating websites often contain filtering features where one can select their potential partner based on personal preferences such as education, age and lifestyle (Brooks, 2011). With these filters that are available on online dating platforms, online dating gives the opportunity to be more selective in one's partner choice (Brooks, 2011).

A relatively new mobile dating platform with proximity algorithms and location-based software, is called Tinder (James, 2015). This dating app is one of the most popular dating applications, with around 1.2 million users in the Netherlands alone (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017). Only 4 years ago, Tinder made its entrance in the dating market by appearing in the Apple App Store for the very first time (Braziel, 2015). In the year 2012, Tinder arrived at college campuses, collecting 90 percent of its users ageing between 18 and 24 years old (Braziel, 2015). These users are interacting with the mobile dating application for different reasons, such as finding casual sexual relationships or a romantic partner (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013; Ligtenberg, 2015; Sumter et al., 2017). Prior research suggests that besides casual sexual relationships, adults on mobile dating applications such as Tinder try to fulfill the need of finding a romantic partner through the application (Sumter et al., 2017). Now, downloaded over 100 million times worldwide, Tinder's popularity is still increasing ("45 impressive Tinder statistics", 2016).

As the popularity of Tinder keeps growing, the mate selection practices on Tinder by its users become an interesting aspect. Mate selection on Tinder happens by inspecting the potential partner profiles that show up for the user (Tyson, Perta, Haddadi, & Seto, 2016). The profiles that one can create on Tinder are relatively limited, including a name, age, interests, education, profession and the possibility to provide a short bio, which has a limit of 500 characters (Tyson et al., 2016). A study conducted by

Hitsch, Hortaçsu, and Ariely (2010) examined an online dating service, in relation to whether people search for a partner with similar characteristics and educational homogamy. Their results show that people on the online dating service preferred a partner with a similar education level (Tyson et al., 2016). Additionally, they found that most online dating site members preferred to date a partner with similar beliefs. It can therefore be assumed that in online dating various factors of homogamy, such as education, can be of importance when selecting a potential partner. Based on the information available on a Tinder profile, it would be of great interest to find out whether people actually believe that personal information such as education is important, specifically if they favor a partner with similar characteristics. It must be noted that within this study, selecting a potential partner based on similar characteristics is defined as swiping right after having viewed the potential partner's profile. This does not include actual contact or relationship formation with the selected potential partner.

1.1. Research Question

Drawing upon theories of homogamy and online mate selection, the research of this thesis aims to find out why and how people choose their potential match on the mobile dating application Tinder, with a focus on homogamy and educational homogamy.

RQ: *"How does homogamy play a role in Tinder users' search for finding a potential partner on Tinder?"*

I will answer the research question of this thesis by conducting semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews with Tinder users to understand their perspective when selecting a match on the mobile dating application, focused on homogamy. To enhance the research question, sub research questions have been created. The first sub research question will support our research by determining one's motivations to use the dating application:

RQ_{-sub1}: *What are the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application?*

The second sub research question will determine the specific components of online mate selection practices and will be looking at these features in regards to homogamy:

RQ_{-sub2}: *What is the role of homogamy in mate selection on Tinder?*

The third sub research question will dive into one specific feature of the components of mate selection on Tinder, namely by discovering the different mechanisms of educational homogamy on Tinder. Moreover, it is discovered how Tinder users from an MBO and WO educational background look at educational features of a potential match on Tinder, and why or whether they find this important when looking for a potential partner on the mobile dating application:

RQ_{-sub3}: *What is the role of educational homogamy in mate selection practices of Tinder users?*

In the next section, the scientific and social relevance of this present study on Tinder motivations, the specific components of mate selection on Tinder and educational homogamy will be justified.

1.2. Scientific and Social Relevance

Studying how people select their potential partners on the mobile dating application Tinder is captivating and relevant for science as it will extend previous research on the mate selection processes on Tinder. While prior studies have demonstrated that homogamy is a factor that people look for during mate selection, previous research focused on factors of homogamy such as education in relation to online dating websites instead of mobile dating applications. In the offline world, many studies portray the

findings that people find their potential partner according to homogamy (Hitsch et al., 2010; Harrison & Huntington, 2000; Meier, Hull, & Ortyl, 2009). Studying and finding out whether mate selection is an ever-changing process due to the transformation of mobile dating applications, could predict whether the transformation of mate selection has an impact on the market of mobile dating applications as well as on society. Moreover, if the process of mate selection is different for users of mobile dating applications compared to the offline world, then the process of mate selection in general might be transformed.

This study regarding Tinder is especially relevant for society as the mobile dating application Tinder has become such a popular platform for society to look for a romantic or sexual casual relationship (Finkel et al., 2012). Studying how people select their potential partner on Tinder tells something about how people meet their potential partners in modern society and why they have to motivation to start doing so. Moreover, it then finally shows how Tinder users behave when looking for a potential partner, in regards to these motivations. Besides Tinder, there are many more mobile dating applications out there nowadays that stimulate meeting new people through an online app. Studying how people select their potential partners and relationships on Tinder may therefore provide information about how people select their partners online and whether this is different from the traditional way of how human beings used to select their future partner. In the case of homogamy, there might be different selection criteria based on what type of relationship someone is looking for. For example, when looking for a romantic partner compared to a sexual casual relationship partner. This is of interest to society as well as to science as it provides information about the selection procedure on mobile dating applications.

Specifically, this research can help collect knowledge about the societal process of selecting a potential partner online, which will provide insights for Tinder users concerning their partner preferences. Moreover, it will provide insights for Tinder itself about its customers. It helps Tinder to get to know their users, what their motivation is to use Tinder and how the online mate selection process may differ between MBO and WO educated Tinder users. Educational level is especially interesting as a focus in relation to the Netherlands as women are catching-up with the high percentage of

higher educated males in the country ("Man nog steeds vaker de hoogst opgeleide partner - CBS", 2017). Meaning that if males would prefer a woman with a lower education than them as is still presumed, the number of lower educated males without a partner in the Netherlands would increase ("Downdaten' wordt noodzakelijk", 2017). This exploratory study is therefore of relevance for the development of society. In terms of economic relevance, developers of Tinder can then use this information to enhance Tinder's design or even use different types of designs for MBO and WO educated Tinder users in the Netherlands. Furthermore, they can then create strategies for marketing and a future business model.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

In this chapter, I will be giving a literature review of different studies, first introducing the process of mate selection in relation to traditional homogamy. This is then followed by mate selection and homogamy in online dating services. Then the chapter will be explaining the different motivations for using the mobile dating match-selection application Tinder, as Tinder is such a popular dating service at the moment. The motivations of Tinder users are linked to online mate selection, as one's process of online mate selection may depend on one's motivation to start using Tinder. Lastly, educational homogamy is explored in relation to Tinder and one's motivations to start using Tinder. Prior studies will be discussed in the order of these given topics, in line with the research question of this thesis.

2.1. Homogamy

The following section will provide key arguments about why human beings appeal to homogamy in the process of mate selection.

2.1.1. *Traditional Homogamy*

In general, one that is looking for a romantic relationship in the offline world, is often seeking for a successful outcome (Skopek et al., 2010). To increase stable and positive attitudes towards one another in a relationship or marriage, it is said that homogamy between two partners is of significance (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004; Skopek et al., 2010). Homogamy is defined as the tendency of people to marry a partner that has similar characteristics as themselves (Kalmijn, 1998). The term homogamy traditionally refers only to marriage, but the principle is applicable to dating relationships as well (Kalmijn, 1998). In the past century, homogamy has been examined between married or mating partners in such characteristics as: education, race, ethnicity, age and professionalism (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004; Todosijevic, Ljubinkovic, & Arancic, 2003). An important aspect of homogamy is claimed by Blackwell & Lichter (2004) who state that homogenous relationships have a greater possibility to eventually turn into marriage.

They then also address the importance of the selection process, as increasing selectivity marks progression towards marriage (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004).

But how come human beings appeal to homogamy when looking for a potential partner? According to Brynin, Longhi & Perez (2008) a reason for human kind to be attracted to someone with the same characteristics, might be because there is some kind of social closure in society, and people being less open to distinctions between characteristics. However, there are many more theories about partner choice based on homogamy. According to Kalmijn (1998), marriage patterns of homogamy arise from three social forces: individual preferences for resources in a partner, influences of one's social group and the constraints of the marriage market. The first force, individual preferences, links to the resources that a partner displays as his or her characteristics, such as education and race (Kalmijn, 1998). These are the badges that individuals wear to show others what kind of person they are (Kalmijn, 1998). In the next step, people will start forming social groups with whom they share similar social characteristics, as mostly they would get along better with these people (Kalmijn, 1998). Then lastly, the chance exists that they will marry with someone from the same social group, where homogamy between social characteristics is already insured (Kalmijn, 1998). This relates to the fact that homogamy might also result from social proximity. According to the theory of social proximity, people would be more likely to meet their potential partner within their own social class. Thus, this increases the probability that they will share traits that are specific to this class (Bovet, Barthes, Durand, Raymond, & Alvergne, 2012).

Furthermore, in terms of the marriage market constraints mentioned by Kalmijn (1998), homogamy is related to the funnel system for some of people's characteristics. For example, in terms of education, educational homogamy is more likely to happen due to how the educational system works, for example a university is attended by university students. The opportunities for meeting a potential partner in school has increased and therefore educational homogamy as well. This is because people marry later and spend more time in school with the same kind of educated people, narrowing the interval between leaving school and marriage. As a result, unmarried people are

more likely to meet their spouse at school with the same educational level (Kalmijn, 1998)

Another finding of Skopek et al., (2010), is that for some of their cases, they found asymmetric mechanisms of homogamy related to the traditional Bourgeois family model. The Bourgeois family model emphasizes high moral standards including an enormous interest in the welfare of children (Halliday, 1997). This may include a proper education, norms and values in relation to economic success and personal responsibility, a religious faith and a devotion to the arts (Halliday, 1997). The ideal Bourgeois father is a good provider for the family as he virtues economic success (Halliday, 1997). The ideal Bourgeois mother is a helpmate to the husband, facilitator of her children's development and education, as well as doing all the finer things in life for her family (Halliday, 1997). In relation to this Bourgeois family model, Skopek et al., (2010) found that women have difficulties overcoming the traditional patterns because of the female gender stereotypes in society. On this behalf, because they have difficulties letting go of these patterns, they would prefer a potential partner with a similar or higher education than themselves (Skopek et al., 2010). This is in line with Kreager, Cavanagh, Yen and Yu (2014) who also mentioned that women prefer a potential partner with a similar or a higher education than themselves. This will be thoroughly explained in section four of this theoretical framework, as educational homogamy is a main focus of this paper. The next section will discuss how traditional homogamy is also present in online dating and online partner selection.

2.2. Online Match Selection

In relation to people searching for a potential partner with similar characteristics, in the section below I will be exploring how this mate selection actually happens on online dating websites and mobile dating applications.

2.2.1. Mate Selection in Online Dating

The process of mate selection can be defined as the filtering practice where he or she selects a potential match with characteristics that appeal to them (Tyson et al., 2016). A

phenomenon of the 21st century that has extended homogamy in terms of mate selection is online dating. Online dating can be defined as the practice to search for a potential partner on the internet through the use of various online dating services such as websites and mobile applications (Smith & Duggan, 2013). Today, we have the possibility of using online dating websites and mobile dating applications such as Tinder to find a partner with similar characteristics. However, this first all started out with the upcoming of online dating websites (Lee, 2016). One of the first online dating websites launched in 1995 was match.com (Lee, 2016). The existence of online dating websites then gave people the ability to search for a potential partner outside their social networks and communicate through online interaction (Smith & Duggan, 2013). In online dating, previous academic research has demonstrated that people have specific filtering practices to select a potential partner on the online dating services, as they use the search tools and filter options available provided by the online dating services (Heino, Ellison, & Gibbs, 2010; Hitsch, Hortaçsu, Ariely, 2010; Skopek et al., 2010; Tyson, 2016). Online dating websites have matching algorithms with search tools that allow users to filter for potential partners based on the website's criteria (Smith & Duggan, 2013). For example, this may include age range, geographic location, height range, marriage status, education level, income, house ownership and children status (Xia, Jiang, Wang, Chen, & Liu, 2014). The filtering of finding someone of the same and likeable characteristics on online dating services is called the filtering process (Heino et al., 2010).

In addition to the search tools on these dating websites, these tools increase the selective filtering practices of the users of dating websites (Heino et al., 2010). According to Heino et al., (2010) the filtering 'encouraged a shopping mentality', giving people the tendency to shop online for a potential partner with the fitting characteristics. Many online daters saw this online shopping as a successful way to increase their chances of a long-term relationships (Heino et al., 2010). It allowed them to choose matches with certain characteristics and to avoid others with characteristics that would not appeal to them. In relation to homogamy, a non-smoker was able to avoid smokers and was able to choose to match with a person that did not smoke (Heino et al., 2010).

Another woman in the research of Heino et al., (2010) shared that she would only match with someone if the revealed information of the person was positive and if they shared similar characteristics.

A qualitative study conducted by Best and Delmege (2012), identified through the use of in-depth interviews, that the filtering process of online dating is divided into two stages. The scholars found that the filtering process starts off with the process of initial screening. In this stage, the online daters try to filter out inappropriate behavior from some of the potential matches without putting too much energy in to it (Best & Delmege, 2012). During this initial screening phase, the photograph of the potential match's profile is especially important, as well as the written biography (Best & Delmege, 2012). Though within one's strategy of filtering, honesty also may play a role. If the potential match portrays incongruent and untrue behavior, one will filter out this potential match (Best & Delmege, 2012). The second stage found by Best and Delmege (2012) is to examine the 'life course' goals or the 'identity' of the potential partner. For example, a potential mate should have similar life goals as the online dater, such as the desires to have children or one's motivation to have started using the online dating service (Best & Delmege, 2012). Another study by Tamerler (2014) mentions that there are users on online dating sites that filter crudely, for example just by weight or body type indicators used by the site. Nonetheless, Tamerler (2014) also found that the filtering process changes as the number of 'failed dates' increases. For example, some of the online dating services users mentioned that their list of filters became longer and longer when searching for a romantic partner as their 'negative dating experiences' increased.

2.2.2. Match Selection on Mobile Dating Applications

Besides online dating websites, during the past couple of years mobile dating applications have become increasingly popular amongst people to look for a potential romantic partner. The implication of mobile dating applications is that people meet and mate beyond traditional social barriers, increasing the options of finding a partner according to homogamy and therefore increasing the possibility of a successful romantic relationships (Skopek et al., 2010). One reason that explains the recent

popularity of mobile dating applications in relation to homogamy is that they provide a quick and easy online selection and filtering process as mentioned above, creating a variety of successful choices in potential partners and quickly eliminating the ones that do not share similar characteristics (Skopek et al., 2010). Thus, mobile dating applications are often portrayed as the driving force of homogamy between partners in romantic relationships, as they provide easy features to find a partner with similar characteristics (Skopek et al., 2010). Furthermore, mobile dating applications seem to make the barrier to online dating lower than traditional dating sites as they are often free of charge. This is in contrast to most online dating sites as they may not be available to everyone and require a payment (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). Moreover, mobile dating applications constitute a minimalistic design, which compared to online dating sites is often much more simplistic as it typically only consists of photographs and a small description (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016).

All in all, mobile dating applications are less restricted and quite open. First, potential matches are able to provide as much information as they choose to, which could then also symbolize their motivation of using the app (Hitsch et al., 2010). These conditions allow users to make the easy decision to contact the other person only when the potential partner exceeds the 'minimum standard' and qualities that the person is looking for (Hitsch et al., 2010). This might also be a potential partner with shared similar characteristics (Skopek et al., 2010). Besides all these positive aspects of using mobile dating applications for finding a potential partner, users have different motivations to start using these mobile dating applications. Since this specific research focuses on Tinder, the next section introduces the motivations Tinder users have to start using the mobile dating application.

2.3. Tinder User Motivations

Since Tinder is such a popular mobile dating application in today's world, the following section looks at the different motivations of Tinder users in relation to why they downloaded and started using Tinder. Moreover, the relationship between these motivations and homogamy will be discussed.

2.3.1. *Casual Sexual and Romantic Relationships*

The mobile dating app Tinder is most frequently used (41%) by 25-to-34 year olds (Statista, 2015). Research shows that within this particular age group, having casual sexual relations, which in this paper will be referred to as having sexual intercourse outside of a committed romantic relationship, is a growing trend (Claxton & van Dulmen, 2013). One form of a casual sexual relationship is a hook up: any sexual activity from kissing to sexual intercourse (Bogle, 2007). Since this type of relationship has become popular amongst this age group, it may not be a surprise that Tinder has widely come associated with "hook-ups" and "casual dating" (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). Moreover, various studies from the past three years confirm that many Tinder users use the dating app for short-term casual sexual relationships. For example, a study conducted by Sumter et al., (2017) found that 17% of their sample had had a one-night stand with a Tinder match (Sumter et al., 2017). Additionally, Gatter & Hodkinson (2016) compared Dating Agency user motivations to Tinder user motivations in a quantitative study. They however, did not find any significant differences between the two groups based on their motivations (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). Nevertheless, they did find one major difference between the means of motivation between the groups (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). When comparing Online Dating Agencies user motivations to Tinder user motivations, they concluded that Tinder users' showed a highest mean score on "to find casual sex" as their motivation to use Tinder (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). On the other hand, Dating Agency users showed that their highest mean score of motivation for the Dating Agency was "to find a romantic relationship" (Gatter & Hodkinson, 2016). Therefore, Gatter & Hodkinson (2016) suggested that there might be a significant difference if they had used a bigger sample.

Another quantitative study by David & Cambre (2016) mentions the Urban Dictionary definition of Tinder, stating the mobile dating app as "the McDonalds for sex" (David & Cambre, 2016). Additionally, a significant qualitative study by Roeffen (2015) found that when men were interviewed about their motivation of using Tinder, they did not believe it could lead to romantic relationships. An interviewee did not believe that Tinder could lead to actual dating because it is not associated with 'long-

term relationships' (Roeffen, 2015). Moreover, an interviewee from Melbourne in their study mentioned that Tinder is often used by teens who are interested in getting physical without emotional connection (Roeffen, 2015). Taking gender into account, male Tinder users seem to have a higher incentive of casual sex than female Tinder users (Sumter et al., 2017; Petersen & Hyde, 2011). Nevertheless, when age increases, the motivation for finding a romantic relationship as well as sexual casual relationships increases for both genders (Sumter et al., 2017). According to Sumter et al., (2017) this might be due to development changes in love styles and the changes of what people find important in their relationships. However, Roeffen (2015) also explains the danger of casual sex in her paper, as many young people are using Tinder. The connected Facebook accounts on Tinder can easily be manipulated, for example by creating a fake profile (Doutré, 2014; Roeffen, 2015). This allows sexual predators to create Tinder profiles with the motivation to meet vulnerable teenagers (Doutré, 2014; Roeffen, 2015).

However, in contrast to Tinder's reputation in the media, Sumter et al., (2017) found that even though Tinder has the reputation of allowing easy hookups, Tinder users are more motivated to find love on Tinder than sexual casual relationships (Sumter et al., 2017). Yet, most people on Tinder will not put on their profile what their motivation is to use Tinder, as the mobile dating application provides the freedom to write your own short biography (Roeffen, 2015). For example, the Mirror looked at over 200 profiles and according to their research only one mentioned sex on his profile (Quilty-Harper, Conrad, & Anna, 2014). Sumter et al., (2017) state that as adults' needs may develop when they grow older, their motivations for using a dating application as Tinder may also change (Sumter et al., 2017). Therefore, in terms of long-term and short-term relationships, Tinder user motivations are very complex as they can develop during the progress of adulthood (Sumter et al., 2017; Ward, 2016).

2.3.2. Easy Flow of Communication

Tinder has the reputation of having an easy flow of communication, thus making it easy for users to employ the app for casual sexual or romantic relationships (James, 2015; Sumter et al., 2017). This easy communication is also used to meet new people, therefore often being the reason why people start using Tinder (James, 2015). A reason

to study homogamy on Tinder partly stems from the particular motivation of easiness of communication as connections on a romantic or casual level can easily be formed (James, 2015). However, in the study by Sumter et al., (2017) the motivation of easy communication was reflected relatively low to their sample. Additionally, it should be mentioned that research has shown that men use Tinder more often to meet new people and potential partners for the reason of easy communication than women (Haferkamp, Eimler, Papadakis, & Kruck, 2012; Sumter et al., 2017). In contrast to Sumter et al., (2017), James (2015) found that easiness of meeting new people was one of the key motivations. She also found that the motivation of easy communication is amplified by changing personal circumstances such as busy work schedules, friends starting romantic relationships, not being able to go out, break ups and moving to a new city (James, 2015). This is in line with literature on online dating, as Valkenburg and Peter (2007) emphasize that in terms of using dating sites for easy communication, it all depends on one's personality. Someone who is already social and outgoing, would be more active in online dating than those who would have a more reserved personality (Valkenburg & Peter, 2007). Furthermore, Sumter et al., (2017) also found that Tinder users were less likely to meet their Tinder matches in the offline world when they started using the app because they feel more comfortable communicating in the online world than offline world.

2.3.3. Ego Boost, Self-Worth and Entertainment

In a whole different light and set of motivations come the psychological motivations of Sumter et al., (2017), one of them being self-worth validation. Self-worth validation is a term used to describe the need to feel better and happier about oneself by using social media, especially amongst adults (Sumter et al., 2017). In line with Roeffen (2015), Sumter et al., (2017) clarify that the specific function of Tinder is that one can only interact with a match on Tinder if the match is mutual. Matching with a person on Tinder might indicate that you like the appearance and the interests of a person (Sumter et al., 2017). This match may therefore be regarded as a validation of self-worth amongst Tinder users, as they get the acceptance that there is someone that likes them (Sumter et al., 2017). People may use this as a motivation to use Tinder, as they can receive

positive feedback on their physical appearance and interests to increase their self-esteem (Ando & Sakamoto, 2008; Sumter et al., 2017). This observation was also made by Tuncez (2017) who's interviewees mentioned that they liked someone purely based on their visual image and found the disliking of a match contributing to their self-worth, calling this an ego boost. Yet, it is the study by Kim, Kwon and Lee (2009) indicates that when users of online internet dating services have the motivation to look for a romantic partner on the service, the ones that have a high self-esteem tend to be using the service more frequently. On the other hand, when romantic relationships are considered less important to someone, those with a low self-esteem seem to be using the internet dating service more frequently (Kim et al., 2009).

On the contrary, Ranzini and Lutz (2016) found that entertainment was the most noticeable motivation for the respondents and self-validation the weakest. Moreover, Ranzini and Lutz (2016) associate Tinder with the mobility of app, highlighting "traveling" as a component of entertainment. Moreover, people may find sensation on Tinder by looking for someone to have sex with, as sensation seekers are more likely to use the Internet to find sexual partners (Tuncez, 2017; Baumgartner et al., 2012). Similarly, Sumter et al., (2017) found that Tinder users use Tinder for the thrill of excitement related to riskier offline consequences, for example one-night stands with Tinder matches.

2.3.4. Homogamy Motivations

In relation to Tinder motivations, homogamy plays a significant role in romantic and casual sexual partner selection. For example, in terms of long-term relationships, it is suggested that the selection of a romantic partner is one of the most essential decisions that individuals make in their lifespan (Abdullah et al., 2011). However, the negative consequences should also be exposed, such as a breakup, when in the end there is no homogamy and one's characteristics do not match with the partners' characteristics (Naustadter, 2012). In casual sexual relationships, homogamy seems to be of relevance in partner selection as well. According to Kalish and Kimmel (2011), homogamy is often present in college sexual activity as college students are likely to have sexual casual relationships with roughly similar class and race characteristics.

Additionally, since people often look for homogenous characteristics when searching for a casual sexual relationship, there is a chance that the partners of a sexual casual relationships share the same characteristics and that the relationship may turn into a romantic relationship of longer duration (Lyons et al., 2014). The mentioned five key motivations in this section will therefore be the focus when answering the sub research question *What are the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application?* and will also be a focus of the in-depth interviews. Moreover, these motivations will be linked to one's mate selection process on Tinder in regards to homogamy. One's criteria of mate selection may vary in terms of society and culture, due to the variance in norms and values (Harrison & Huntington, 2000). In the next section, it is discussed how education can be one of the selection criteria on Tinder.

2.4. Educational Homogamy on Tinder

Since this thesis is particularly interested in homogamy and the feature of education on Tinder, this last section of the theoretical framework will be focusing on educational homogamy in online dating and on Tinder.

2.4.1 Educational Homogamy

As mentioned as a feature of online dating websites in the previous sections, research has shown that matching along similar characteristics is a dominant mechanism for both men and women in the online dating environment (Skopek et al., 2010). One of these key themes of homogenous characteristics that one might look for in a potential partner highlighted by literature is educational background (Skopek et al., 2010; Masden & Edwards, 2015). Educational background is described in this paper as the highest educational level, diploma or degree that one has attained or that one is still accomplishing (York, Gibson, & Rankin, 2015; Warnick, 2013). More than ever before, education has become crucial for a successful career, influencing individual preferences for specific partners with high education and income (Skopek et al., 2010). Nevertheless, results show that the social structures of homogamy and mate selection from everyday life continue to affect people's choices, even in an open setting of online

dating websites (Skopek et al., 2010). In terms of gender, Skopek et al., (2010) looked at the interaction between potential partners on online dating websites, to when they would introduce themselves when they first contact one another. By obtaining their data from the provider company of a German online dating website allowing access to its database, they found that there is a symmetrical relationship for men and women between homogamy and the level of education (Skopek et al., 2010).

Additionally, according to Maliki (2009) and congruent with the homogamy theory, graduates prefer their potential partner to have a good educational background like themselves. In addition, based on Acitelli, Kenny & Weiner (2001), similar educational backgrounds may cause less challenges within a relationship and thus makes it easier to establish a joint lifestyle. This is because people with educational similarity may have similar attitudes, values and beliefs (Acitelli et al., 2001).

Furthermore, due to the chance of more conflict-free communication, it is more likely that positive emotions and social assertion within intimate relationships is created (Skopek et al., 2010). The study conducted by Hitsch et al., (2010) found that in general, users prefer a romantic partner with educational similarity. This is also demonstrable in the Netherlands. According to the numbers from CBS, half of the amount of men and women who started a relationship in the 1970's, had about the same level of education (de Graaf, 2011). Though in regards, homogenous educated couples were mostly poorly educated. Meaning, that couples appealing to educational homogamy were those with either an MBO or high school education. A study done by Hitsch et al., (2010) is one that explored why someone decides to like someone on an online dating platform. They found that users typically have strong preferences for a partner of their own education level, however they looked at a dating site and not a dating app.

2.4.2. It's an Educational Tinder Match!

In relation to dating websites mentioned in the previous paragraphs, one can currently use mobile dating apps to find a potential partner. As previously discussed, one of these mobile dating applications is Tinder. In terms of online dating and different homogamy factors that Tinder users would be looking for in a potential partner, there has been

limited prior research on this topic. Since the dating app Tinder has gained popularity, it is of relevance to identify whether similarity of education levels is of importance when selecting a potential match on Tinder. Additionally, social dating apps like Tinder allow users to casually interact with a large number of people who have similar characteristics like themselves. Since homogamy and online dating on Tinder has not been explored much, a key focus of this paper is educational homogamy in relation to the characteristics of Tinder: match filtering, profile pictures and profile description.

First of all, Tinder is a mobile dating application that allows Tinder users to filter through a number of matches (Tyson et al., 2016). Other dating websites and mobile dating applications mostly also allow filtering options, but it all depends on the specific kind of mobile dating app what these filtering options are. On Tinder, users can specify the potential partners they get to see by selecting an age range, gender and distance in kilometers or miles that they are separated from one another (Tyson et al., 2016). When Tinder users open the app, their location is reported to the Tinder server, returning profiles that match with the user's requested specifications (Tyson et al., 2016; Braziel, 2015)). The users are then able to click on two buttons, labelled with a cross ("like) and a heart ("dislike"), or swipe right ("like") or swipe left ("dislike"), allowing the user to like or dislike the profile (Tyson et al., 2016; Braziel, 2015). When two users like each other, they become a match and from now on the two users are able to interact with each other via text messaging on the app (Tyson et al., 2016). Though before deciding one whether one wants to match with someone on Tinder or not, they might look at one's profile pictures and profile biography.

On Tinder, the physical appearances can be found on one's profile pictures. Before the year 2016, Tinder established authenticity amongst its users such as preventing fake profiles by only allowing users to upload photos from their Facebook-connected account (Raymundo, 2016). In the beginning of 2016 however, Tinder started allowing people to upload pictures directly from their mobile devices (Raymundo, 2016). This gives users more freedom when deciding on what they want their potential matches to see. However, it also increases the danger of scam profiles (Coelho, Stachowiak, & Smith., 2016). In relation to mate selection, profile pictures on Tinder can create a big difference in one's choices (Braziel, 2015). In relation to educational

homogamy, one's interests might be portrayed in one's profile pictures, where education could be reflected (Kreager et al., 2014). For example, a person playing piano on one his profile pictures might indicate that he or she is musically educated and talented.

Another feature of Tinder is the profile description (Braziel, 2015). Within the profile description, one is able to show a job description and education. Included in the profile description is the profile biography, where one can choose to write any additional information about themselves or, if they would like to start flirting, a pick-up line (Braziel, 2015). Though, one is able to choose whether they are willing to portray the profile description and what information specifically they would like to be present. Since the profile description can be filled out according to one's own desires, an educational background may not always be present (Braziel, 2015). Moreover, the dating profiles on Tinder are limited compared to other dating websites, as a user is not able to report what they desire from a match (Tyson et al., 2016). In terms of measuring educational homogamy, an education description or educational features in photographs would have to be present on the Tinder's profile. As Kreager et al., (2014) found, educational aspects could also include one's communication skills or cultural interests which might be present in the bio of the potential Tinder match. Since the chance exists that not everyone portrays educational information on their profile, it would be interesting to find out whether people actually notice the profile description and use this for match selection. Thus, being the reason that the goal of this paper is to study one's mate selection preferences in regards of educational backgrounds when selecting a match on Tinder. Would one swipe left if their potential match does not portray this information about themselves and what is the minimum education level they look for? However, for this thesis, the different types of motivations for Tinder use were first explored in the interviews, as the importance of displayed education level may vary per motivation. The next section will talk more in depth about the methodology used for this thesis.

3. METHOD

The following section will cover a detailed description of the methodology I used to answer the main research question: *How does homogamy play a role in Tinder users' search for finding a potential partner on Tinder?* I explored this main research question by answering the following sub research questions:

1. *What are the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application?*
2. *What is the role of homogamy in mate selection on Tinder?*
3. *What is the role of educational homogamy in mate selection practices of Tinder users?*

In line with Tyson et al., (2016), Tinder users' motivations for downloading and using the application were identified, and secondly mate selection processes when using the application were explored. Exploring Tinder users' motivations was of importance to determine whether this influences their mate selection process on Tinder as well. The following research design will amplify the type of research method, data collection and data analysis. In general, the methodology incorporated data collected by the use of semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews, arguing that this is a highly appropriate research method to use when one is interested in unravelling detailed thoughts and behaviours of individuals concerning a specific social phenomenon (Neuman & Lawrence, 2006).

3.1. Research Method

To answer the research question, I selected the research method of semi-structured in-depth face-to-face interviews, which is a qualitative research technique used to examine the knowledge and experiences of an individual (Neuman & Lawrence, 2006). The method of semi-structured interviews is often used for observation and informal interviewing in order to allow the researchers to gain a keen understanding of a

particular topic (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). A key element of semi-structured in-depth interviews is that the interviewer conducts the interview with one participant at a time, asking questions related to their experiences and expectations (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006). During these interviews, the interviewer follows a paper-based interview guide composed of a list of questions and topics that need to be covered during the conversation (Cohen & Crabtree, 2006).

Moreover, in-depth interviews are useful for researchers that want to explore a new issue in depth, offering a more complete picture of why things may occur (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The primary advantage of using in-depth interviews as a method is that they may provide much more detailed in-depth information than other quantitative methods such as surveys (Boyce & Neale, 2006). Furthermore, by choosing the method of semi-structured interviews, the validity of the recorded data is enhanced (Neuman & Lawrence, 2006). This is due to the fact that background information and theoretical framework in regards to the research question of this thesis is considered during the creation of the interview guide. Therefore, close attention is paid towards the questions that will be asked in the interviews (Neuman & Lawrence, 2006). As the interviewer will be prepared and appears competent during the interview, the quality of the data collected will be reliable (Neuman & Lawrence, 2006). However, there are some limitations to using in-depth interviews, for example that it can be time-intensive and prone to bias. Therefore, maximum efforts were made to allow minimum bias and to start interviewing on time to leave sufficient time for transcription and analysing the results.

In order to ensure the questions formulated in the interview guide elicited the right information, provided clarity and allowed the interviewees to open up, a pilot interview was conducted before moving ahead with the research (Turner, 2010). The outcome of the pilot interview was confident as the questions in the interview guide triggered meaningful and detailed answers from the interviewee, which were useful for answering the research question of this thesis. Moreover, the pilot interview was useful for timing and structuring the questions. The complete interview guide can be found in Appendix A.

3.2. Recruitment and Sample

The first recruitment strategy to recruit participants for this research, was through the non-probability strategy of purposive sampling. Purposive sampling is a sampling strategy in which the researcher starts with a particular purpose in mind for the research, and thus only includes selected people of interest (Etikan, Musa, & Alkassim, 2016). This means that for this study, a selection criterion was used. Just as other researchers have done before, two groups were created based on different educational backgrounds, since this research focuses on mate selection in relation to educational homogamy (Pekkarinen, 2012; Stern, Gurland, Tatemichi, Tang, Wilder, & Mayeux, 1994). These two different education groups, MBO educated and University educated interviewees, were looked at in this study to decide whether educational homogamy takes place between these different groups when they search for a partner on Tinder. The sample aimed to exist of at least 7 interviewees per group, one group having the highest education of or being enrolled at MBO in the Netherlands and the other group having the highest education of or being enrolled at WO in the Netherlands. The sample size is according to Baker, Edwards and Doidge's (2012) guidelines, who mention that a sample of 12 is ideal in the case of a short timespan. In this study, the focus was on participants who were between the age of 18 – 25, due to the fact that most people would still be in school during this age as well as that this age group is highly active on Tinder (Statista, 2015). To decrease a language barrier and avoid negative cognitive responses, all participants had to be able to speak Dutch fluently, as the interviews were recorded in the Dutch language (Kim & Mattila, 2011). These people were reached through purposive sampling. Permission was asked for putting up advertisements on two school bulletin boards and their websites, one being Erasmus University and the other being Zadkine. Since the advertisements were placed on bulletin boards in the school, more people were able to visually see and touch the advertisement, which for some could have been a reason to be more convinced to participate in the study (Scott, 1992). Interviewees needed to have had at least two months of experience on Tinder, and did not have to be using Tinder at the time of the interview (Ward, 2016). This criterion was made to be certain that the participants were familiar with the mobile

dating application and its usage. The condition was explicitly stated in the advertisements that were put up at the school and university. The advertisements were written in Dutch since this research was carried out in the Netherlands and was expected to be conducted with Dutch participants. Moreover, each of the criteria were measured by questions that were asked in the beginning of the interview. See figure 1 and 2 below for an image of the two different advertisements for MBO and University:

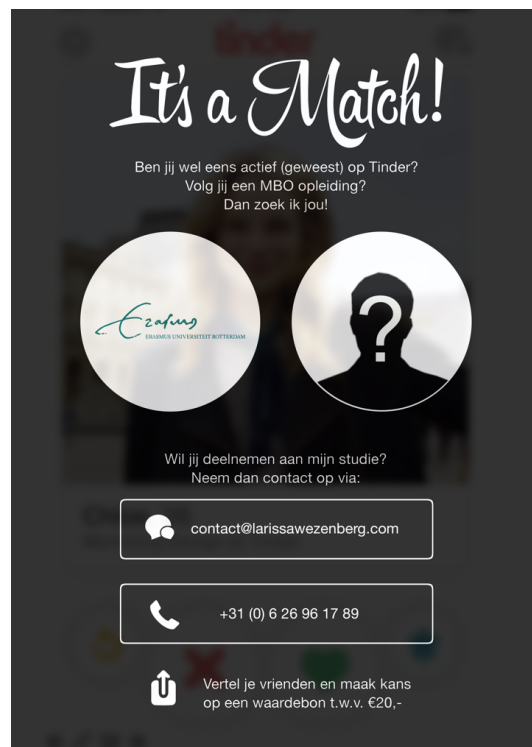


Figure 1. Advertisement MBO Students

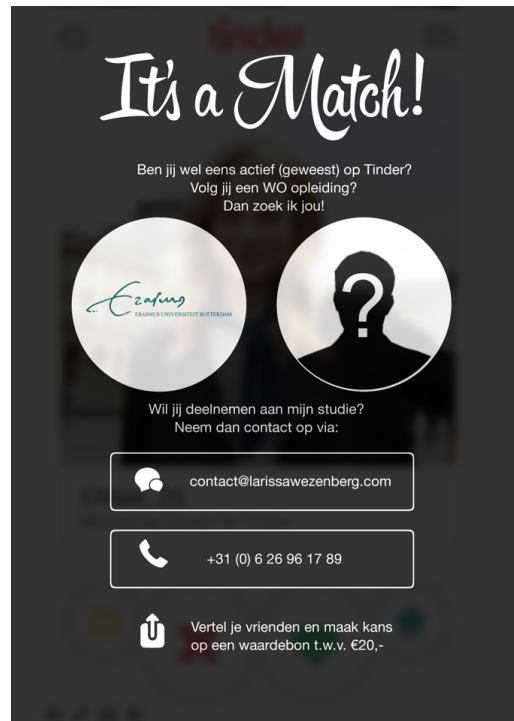


Figure 2. Advertisement University Students

However, since the communication with both schools did not go efficiently, the advertisements were not placed online on their websites, and were just spread around the schools through handing out flyers as well. Through the use of these advertisements as hand-outs, the research also spread through word of mouth, therefore quickly reaching four MBO and three WO educated interviewees.

Secondly, similar to other studies recruiting participants for online dating studies, participants were partly recruited through the internet with the same advertisements posted online (Heino et al., 2010; Blackwell, Birnholz, & Abbott, 2015). A recruitment text was added to the advertisement and was circulated on multiple different Facebook groups such as the "Roep u Maar (RuM)" and the "Roep u Maar (voor studenten)" Facebook group. These are groups where one can find voluntary participants for media and communication studies, one being especially for students. In the recruitment text, it was specifically stated that one needed to be attending or to have completed either a MBO or University education and that they must have used Tinder for at least two months in the past to be able to participate. The participants were then able to send a private message through Facebook or send an email to contact@larissawezenberg.com

if they were willing to participate. During the email exchange with the interviewee's, a short description of the interview was given to make sure that the interviewee understood what would be asked during the interview, and they could ask any questions that they felt needed to be answered before the interview took place. Two Interviewees were found during this method, both University students.

Thirdly, since a sufficient number was not reached through the two methods above, I created a Tinder account connected through my Facebook account. This Tinder account included the two advertisements as profile pictures, where I switched my profile photo between the two pictures each day making sure that only one of the advertisements was shown on the Tinder profile at a time. This reached an additional male interviewee number of two WO educated interviewees and two MBO educated interviewees. In the end, the number of interviewees reached was thirteen. A complete overview of the respondents can be found in Appendix B.

3.3. Interviews

The thirteen interviews were held on a face-to-face basis at a location that the interviewee preferred, most likely at a café or restaurant where the interviewee felt comfortable, all located in the area of Rotterdam. This is one of the advantages of face-to-face interviews as the interviewer has the possibility to create a good interview ambience (Opdenakker, 2006). Another advantage of face-to-face interviews is that the interviewer and interviewee have the possibility to see each other and interpret one's body language, pauses, inflection and tone of voice better than when the interview would not be face-to-face (Opdenakker, 2006). All interviews were conducted in Dutch. Following the criteria for interview guides by Boyce and Neale (2006), the interview consisted of three parts: the introduction including informed consent, questions according to topics from the interview guide and a conclusion with closing comments. Therefore, upon arrival, interviewees were thanked for their participation, followed by the researcher's name and were given a very brief description and purpose of the study. Then the researcher gave the interviewee an indication of the duration of the interview, an explanation of how the interview would be conducted and leave the opportunity for

questions from the interviewee before the interview would start. Then participants were assured that all information that was retrieved stayed anonymous and with their permission, the interview was recorded. After the interviewee had given a spoken consent, the interview consisted of one forty-five to sixty-minute semi-structured interview about one's motivation to use Tinder and their mate selection process.

During the interview, I asked the interviewees the same questions from the interview guide prepared for the research. In order to investigate the experiences of the interviewees on their online mate selection process on Tinder in relation to educational homogamy, the topics and questions were structured around four key themes: homogamy, Tinder motivations, online mate selection and educational homogamy on Tinder. For this particular thesis, I looked at Best and Delmege (2012) two-stage filtering process when creating the questions for "online mate selection". The topics were placed in this particular order in the interview guide, though the guide still gave the freedom to diverge from the order according to the interview's process as well as the questions involved open-ended questions to leave room for the interviewee's input (Boyce & Neale, 2006). The questions within all topics involved probes in order to support the interview and obtain meaningful data (Boyce & Neale, 2006). A probe is a question technique where the interviewer asks follow-up questions designed to effectively follow up the answer of the interviewee (Edwards & Holland, 2013). If at any time during the interview the interviewee feels uncomfortable, they will be able to terminate the interview. At the end and third part of the interview guide, participants were asked whether they had any additional comments and feedback regarding the interview. Then an indication of the procedure of the research was given and the participant was thanked again for his or her time (Boyce & Neale, 2006).

3.4. Transcription and Analysis

While the interviews were being conducted and recorded, I transcribed the already conducted interviews, excluding any identifying details of the participants. The interviews were transcribed using the OS X software called "Transcriptions" where the recordings could be played and transcribed at the same time. Then the data collected

during the face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews was analysed using a qualitative content analysis. Qualitative content analysis is defined as “any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings” (Patton, 2002, p.453). Thus, this method is suitable to analyse the collected data to answer the research question of the thesis, since this research explores the meanings of experiences of Tinder users. Data analysis was started during data gathering and transcription, by creating small summaries of what has been discussed during the interviews right after the interviews were taken. Then for the data analysis I followed three steps: open coding, axial coding and selective coding through the qualitative computer software NVivo (Boeije, 2010). The coding steps by Boeije (2010) were easy to follow in the NVivo programme, as all the cases could be classified and the fragments could easily be coded. These steps were followed in order to identify and interpret meaning in the interviews and was deductive, meaning that the identification of topics was based on the predetermined theoretical framework (Braun & Clarke, 2006). To increase the reliability and validity of this study, each transcribed interview was printed out on paper to perform the different steps of qualitative content analysis and tables were used for coding and collecting the data (Leung, 2015). This was done by highlighting different fragments of the transcriptions that I found relevant in relation to the research questions, and then used NVivo, a qualitative analysis software, to do this again and start coding.

First of all, for the open coding, a hierarchal coding tree was created for the identified fragments in relation to the research question of the thesis. I read the transcribed interviews line-by-line and fragments that were relevant to answer the research question were highlighted and marked with any additional comments in regards to the context of the fragment through the software of NVivo (Boeije, 2010). After finishing the highlighting of fragments, the entire document was read again and all the fragments were assigned an in-vivo code with created code name that fit with the meaning of the fragment (Boeije, 2010). Secondly, after the open codes were determined for the different fragments in the interviews, I merged the codes where appropriate and set common themes for the open codes of the same topic. Here it was important to determine whether fragments would fall under the same theme or under

different themes according to their meaning (Boeije, 2010). This is easily done through the software of NVivo as it automatically creates a visual hierarchal coding tree. Then finally during the selective coding, core categories were formed from the open and axial coding (Boeije, 2010). These core categories were formed by the main messages and meanings, and were compared to the main categories found in the literature. The results of the thematic analysis can be found in the next section.

4. RESULTS

The following section will present the results of the study of how people selected their potential partner on Tinder, in relation to homogamy and education. This section is structured according to key four themes that emerged from the data regarding the Tinder journey, specifically (1) Tinder motivations (2) superficiality (3) career aspirations (4) mutual interests and social groups. The first key theme of Tinder motivations will describe the first stage of one's Tinder journey and the mindset of the interviewees when downloading the mobile dating application Tinder on their phone and their reason for starting to actively swipe through the Tinder profiles. Then, we come to the second stage in one's Tinder journey, where the selection process of finding a potential partner on Tinder starts. Here, the second key theme of superficiality defines how the interviewees view the selection process including the feature that people look at the most: photos and appearances. The third key theme of career aspirations examines the third step of the Tinder journey, including the importance of job titles and education level in the potential match's profile description on Tinder. Additionally, it discusses how these jobs are a determinant for the interviewees in terms of whether they would swipe someone to the right or to the left. Furthermore, this key theme captures how interviewees select their potential match on Tinder based on one's level of education. The overall key theme of career aspirations will make the important comparison between the two educational levels MBO and WO. Last but not least, the fourth key theme of mutual interests and social groups dives into the fourth stage of the Tinder journey and describes how interviewees filter for potential partners on Tinder using the search tools offered based on biography texts, interests, and mutual friends. Within this key theme of mutual interests and social groups, user experiences and their opinions about the concept of Tinder are further explored. The key theme of mutual interests and social groups will end with why the interviewees would sometimes delete the application of Tinder after their usage, therefore ending the Tinder journey.

Overall, all Tinder users went through the same stages when finding a romantic partner throughout the four stages of the Tinder journey. However, there were some

distinctive differences between MBO and WO which will be highlighted in the sections below. A major difference between the two was only found in the third stage of the Tinder journey: career aspirations. Below one can find a diagram of the steps of one's Tinder journey and mate selection process:

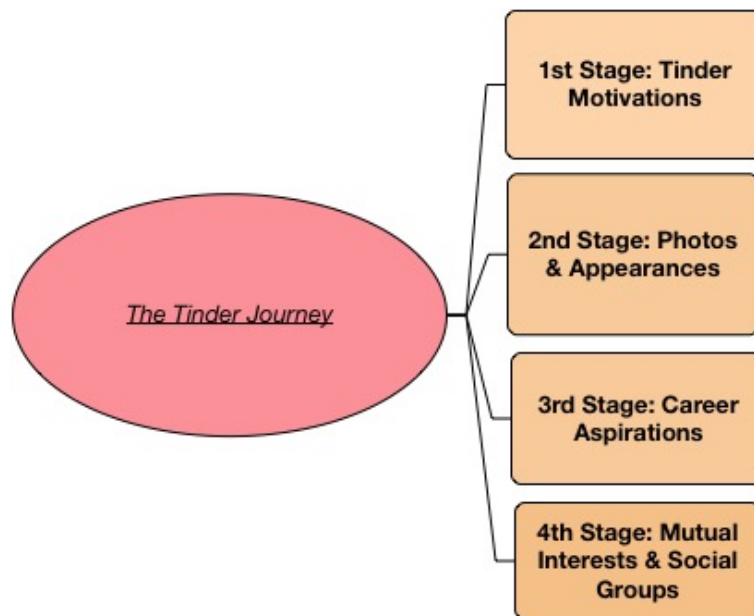


Figure 1. The structure of one's Tinder journey and the stages in mate selection on Tinder.

4.1. Key Theme: Tinder Motivations

The key theme of Tinder motivations is the first step of the Tinder journey. It relates to the mindset of the interviewees about why they downloaded and started using t Tinder in the first place. Specifically, it highlights the very common reason of downloading Tinder because of the curiosity to the newness of the mobile dating application. Then, the key theme of Tinder motivations illustrates what kind of relationship the interviewees tried to search for on Tinder and what they expected of a potential match. The interviewees indicate that when downloading the application, initially searching for a romantic relationship was not their main goal. Nevertheless when they actually started using the mobile application, most participants were looking for a romantic relationship on Tinder in the end. This supports the interpretation that the interviewees might not

have downloaded the mobile dating application Tinder for the specific reason of searching for the perfect romantic partner, but did often end up looking for the ideal match in regards to a romantic relationship.

The key theme of the Tinder experience refers to the main finding that the interviewees either started downloading Tinder because they were curious about this new free and popular mobile dating application or because their previous relationship had come to an end. Namely, a number of interviewees mentioned that they actually downloaded the application Tinder because they "desired relational contact again after being single for a while" (Bas, 23). The phenomenon of using Tinder whenever one is single again, is highly visible amongst the interviewees. Most of all, this seems to be a repeating process for Tinder users as is clearly described in another MBO respondent's answer when asked why she started using Tinder:

A couple of years ago, I had just broken up with my boyfriend. We then just became friends so he mentioned: "Let's download Tinder!". So then I started using Tinder but then at one point, I got a new romantic relationship. So then I removed Tinder, but when the new relationship ended again, I downloaded Tinder again and yeah, ever since, I have always downloaded and used Tinder on and off. (Iris, 24)

Additionally, there were also a number of interviewees who mentioned that they first started downloading the mobile dating application Tinder due to its newness and because they had heard about it from their friends. Moreover, since some interviewees downloaded the application because of its newness, they had low or no expectations of Tinder as they did not know what kind of people they would be able to find on the application. As clarified by one of the WO respondents:

I first heard about Tinder from many of my friends. They would say: "Do you know it yet?" and at a certain point many people started using Tinder. Since I did not have Tinder yet, I thought: let's download it. Because I did not know Tinder, I

did not know what to expect. This made me curious. (Melvin, 22)

Most of the respondents portrayed that they started out by using Tinder for fun or curiosity, especially to examine what Tinder had to offer. A number of interviewees would be swiping through the profiles for fun or whenever they were bored. For example, one respondent explained, "In the beginning I thought it was very amusing to use the app, I often heard people saying that it was funny because you would also come across your friends" (Johnny, 24). While a difference can thus be recognized in the interviewees' reasons for first downloading Tinder, they all did not have a clear motivation in mind of what kind of relationship or purpose they were going to look for on Tinder before their first swipe. As one of the interviewees mentions:

I was not looking for anything in particular because I first wanted to see what type of people were using Tinder, also because I was curious. Then as I started swiping for a longer amount of time and got more serious, I started using it as a serious dating app. (Evert, 20)

These comments symbolize the mindset of the interviewees that one's exact motivation or goal to use Tinder is only created after they have actually started using Tinder and have already downloaded the application on their phones. However after having used Tinder for a while and having swiped through the profiles, all respondents were eventually looking for a romantic relationship when they swiped through the Tinder profiles of potential matches and would even be looking for their "prince charming" (Iris, 24). Searching through profiles and looking for a potential partner on Tinder was often associated with the easiness of meeting new people on the mobile dating application, often going hand in hand with being hindered by work. One of the MBO respondents mentioned that:

Because I am working 40 hours per week and I do not go to social events, Tinder is a good solution to meet new people. (Steve, 25)

As these respondents were looking for a romantic relationship on Tinder, they would often also adjust their profile to their motivation of looking for a romantic relationship. For instance, one WO respondent mentioned that he put his interests on his profile because he was looking for a serious relationship:

Because I was using Tinder to look for "serious romantic relationship material" instead of just a single date, I put some serious interests on my profile, for example which I showed in my pictures and biography. I just put a bit more information for potential matches to see. (Laurens, 20)

Even though the interviewees mentioned that they would often be looking for a romantic relationship on Tinder, they often had the expectation that there were many potential matches using Tinder for sexual motivations. For example, one WO respondent that was looking for a romantic relationship on Tinder mentioned, "For me it was actually not clear in the beginning that I was dealing with a sex-dating application, which I think is the main idea of Tinder" (Laurens, 20). An extent of interviewees showed their prejudices towards Tinder, how in the beginning of their usage they thought it was a sex-dating application because of stories they had heard from their friends, without actually having witnessed it themselves. However, in another case, there was also one MBO respondent who had friends who were able to use Tinder successfully for hooking-up and casual sexual relationships:

At first I started using Tinder for sex, because my friends had mentioned many successful stories of how they easily found sex partners on Tinder. So I saw the success happening for them and I thought I could also use it for that. But since I also consider the feelings of girls, the mindset of sex through Tinder did not work for me. And then when I heard from many others that they also got a relationship through Tinder, the whole image that I had of Tinder changed and I started looking for a perfect romantic partner. (Bas, 23).

Though a fascinating finding is that when the interviewees were asked whether their ideal match would be different according to their motivation to use Tinder, they would say that no matter for what type of motivation they used Tinder, they would always be looking for the exact same 'ideal partner'. In other words, if one would just be using Tinder for fun or to meet new people, they would still incidentally keep the features of their ideal partner in mind when swiping through potential matches. For example, as one of the respondents explains:

I think that one always searches for the potential partner on Tinder that equals the perfect potential relationship candidate. That is what one will still be looking for, even though I was just using Tinder to talk to people and I could have talked to anyone. I still searched for someone of whom I thought that I could have a relationship with that person. I think that Tinder is made that way so you start to think that way as well. (Eline, 23).

Clearly, the interviewees have explored Tinder with a really open mindset when they first downloaded the mobile dating application on their mobile phones. Then after using the application for fun at first and for exploration of the available profiles, the interviewees started to consider Tinder as a useful technological tool in looking for a romantic partner. Also for the ones that thought of Tinder as a sex-application or first used Tinder as a sex tool, their motivation would always change into finding a romantic partner on Tinder.

Not only is Tinder an easy online mobile dating application for respondents to be able to meet new people, but above all most interviewees turned out to be actively looking for potential romantic partners on the application. Therefore, the key theme of Tinder motivations is of great meaning as it shows what the different motivations of Tinder users are and why they started downloading Tinder in the first place. However, it also shows that after Tinder is downloaded, the main image of Tinder is still related to casual sex. Namely, an amount of the respondents mentioned that they thought that many people use the application for sexual reasons, and some even started with this motivation as well when they first downloaded Tinder because of their prejudgment.

Captivatingly, as soon as one started using Tinder, regardless of their motivation, automatically all interviewees started looking for their ideal perfect romantic partner. So even though, the interviewees had different motivations when they started with Tinder, each interviewee ended up using Tinder for the specific reason of finding a romantic relationship. According to one of the respondents, Tinder, “wants this way of thinking due to Tinder’s design” (Doutze, 23). One major aspect of Tinder’s design is the large profile photo on one’s Tinder profile, which most Tinder users will see first when a new match pops up. The next section will be giving an explanation of why these photos are crucial for one’s selection process on Tinder. In figure 2 below, one can find a diagram of the first stage of the Tinder journey in more detail:

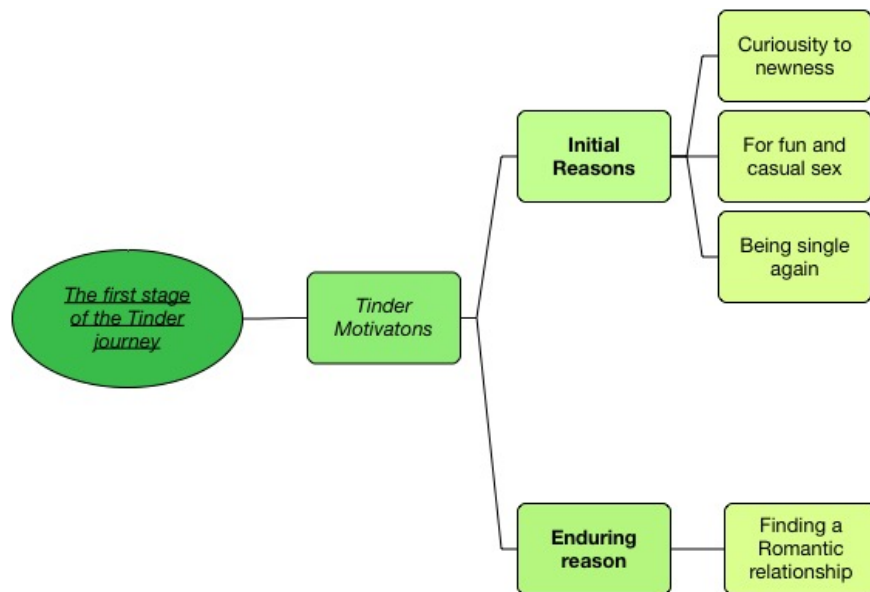


Figure 2. The structure of the first stage of the Tinder journey – Tinder motivations.

4.2. Key Theme: Superficiality

The second key theme of superficiality dives into the second step of one’s Tinder journey, namely the selection process of one’s potential partner on the mobile dating application on Tinder. Within this study, selecting a potential partner on Tinder was defined through two different selection phases. In previous literature it is mentioned that the first stage of mate selection on dating websites consist of swiping right on a potential match after having viewed his or her dating profile photos and biography.

However the second stage of the Tinder journey enlightens the major finding that the first stage of the selection process only consists of looking at one's Tinder profile photos. So in contrary to the theory of this study about the stages of selection on dating websites, the interviewees did not look at the potential partner's biography in the first stage. This might be due to the fact that dating websites have more extensive bios than Tinder profiles. The first stage of one's selection process, coded into a separate key theme of superficiality, describes one of the most valued criterion of selection by the interviewees, namely photos and appearances. Within this theme, it will be discussed that Tinder users first select their potential match based on personal preferences, ranging from simple physical features or picture features such as nudity to socioeconomic and racial preferences. The key theme also enhances the importance of the clarity of Tinder photos. One of the MBO interviewees describes this as a process of meat inspection, meaning that the design of Tinder is created to make a judgment on looks and appearances first:

Tinder is just a meat inspection where one mostly only considers appearances first before looking at any other information. (Doutze, 23).

Similarly, all interviewees mentioned that they would first look at the the potential match's appearance and photos, before reading any other relevant information on the potential match's profile. Specifically, the interviewees were looking for their ideal partner regarding precise features of the appearance of the potential partner. Meaning, that the interviewees would also have specific features in mind that would definitely be swiped right and definitely be swiped left. On Tinder, a number of respondents' first thoughts were, "If one has a bad appearance or is not my type, I will swipe them to the left" (Bas, 23). These bad looks were then explained by personal preferences. For example, the respondents considered body size as a criterion as well as whether their potential match showed nudity of their body on their Tinder photos. In relation to body size, a number of respondents would not fall for "small people" (Melanie, 20) or people that were considered as oversized, "Someone who is fat, that is a real turn-off" (Evert, 20). These bodies would also often be shown in mirror pictures, where some would

show more uncovered body parts than others. Concerning these mirror pictures, many respondents said that seeing pictures taken in mirrors would be very unattractive. The respondents clarified that this would either look really stupid or like you are a real fan of yourself:

If you have 3 different photos of yourself in three different bathrooms, then you must be really full of yourself. (Evert, 20).

Moreover, when one's potential match would be showing nudity or too many uncovered body parts on their photos, interviewees would often make a connection to sex. Namely, that, "the potential partner would have the motivation on Tinder to find a casual sexual relationship whenever they would show too much nudity on their photos", (Eline, 23). So it could be interpreted that the interviewees would be able to see a reflection of someone's personality in these photos. They would then base their selection on whether they thought their potential partner was having the same motivations to use Tinder. One of the WO participants explains her point of view:

What is really a turn off, because I find it kind of crude, guys that only have nude photos of their abs, of their stomach and upper body. Because then they might have a nice six-pack body but if you only have pictures of your six-pack, then it is a no-go for me. At least, it does not appeal to me, because it leaves the impression that they are searching for a sexual partner and I don't like that.
(Melanie, 20)

Other specific physical features such as red hair and tattoos and piercings would be features that were often swiped to the left by the interviewees. Red hair was clarified as a personal preference, "I am not a fan of people with red hair" (Iris, 24). Though features such as tattoos and piercings would often be associated with the "chav kind of people" (Johnny, 24) and would be swiped to the left because these potential matches would not be similar to the interviewees themselves. Thus, one can interpret that often in relation to physical appearance, one would prefer homogamy in physical

appearances and socioeconomic status. As one of the interviewees also mentioned, "I prefer guys that are equally handsome on their pictures compared to my beauty on my pictures" (Doutze, 23). In literature, this would often be defined as classism. In an example of a WO respondent, he explains that some people with certain looks also come from different socioeconomic groups:

Tattoos and piercings will be swiped to the left. I think that this is my prejudging as I think they would be presented as a "chav" person. Then I think that they belong to a different social group of people which I do not feel attracted to.
(Laurens, 20)

Moreover, another feature on photos that was linked to socioeconomic status, is people holding a Red Bull in their hand on their photo. The Red Bull was then linked further to MBO educated people, which caused the intertwined relationship of MBO educated people coming from a different socioeconomic status. Yet, this is only explained by one WO educated man and therefore this might be one point of view of how WO educated look at the MBO educated:

You just have the stereotype people with a Red Bull in their hand and that does not suit me. This is also often the people that follow an MBO education. (Evert, 21)

Besides socioeconomic preferences, some of the respondents especially considered ethnical background and race when looking at appearances. Defined in literature as racism, an amount of interviewees mentioned that they would prefer Caucasians and would find people from dark skinned races unattractive. As one of the WO respondents clarifies:

I am someone who knows: someone with a very dark skin, that is not what I would fall for. So a little tanned skin is just as far as I would go, because I don't

think I could ever fall for dark men, but yeah I have never really dated someone with a dark skin tone so I also don't really know what that is like. (Melanie, 20)

One of the reasons of the interviewees to prefer Caucasians was because it would be a safer choice instead of getting out of their comfort zone. Some of the interviewees would have a match with a person of a dark-skinned race once or twice, but would still go back to matching with Caucasians more often because it is, "a safe option" (Evert, 20). One of the MBO interviewees would explain matching with a dark skinned person as something that she would normally never dare to do, because then she would be leaving her safe haven:

It is something that I would never dare to do. Because to me it really feels like a safe haven. I was brought up with certain norms and values at home and if I would have a date with a dark man, then in my eyes it would be of some sort of danger. (Iris, 24)

Though when one non-white interviewee from the interviewees was interviewed, he did not mention race at all. He mentioned one physical feature, being clothing style, which he thought was important:

Looks give some information but not a lot. Though clothing style says a lot about a girl, when she is wearing a nice outfit on her photo. (Steve, 25)

Additionally, as many of the respondents prejudge potential matches according to their physical appearance, the significance of the photo feature on Tinder is stressed.

Therefore, when respondents were asked about the photo feature and whether it is important for them to have a profile with more than one picture, many interviewees emphasized that this was very important for the assurance of the potential match's looks. This was namely the case for the profile pictures that looked unclear, or where they would not be able to create an opinion about the person. In relation to unclear photos, a number of respondents said that some of the profile pictures had multiple

people on them, which caused the difficulty of not knowing who the potential match was. Often this would also cause doubts in whether the other person on the picture was his or her spouse or a sibling. One of the MBO respondents clarifies her doubts:

I especially find the information on the picture important. For example, when I saw someone with another girl on his profile photo. Then I would think, oh is that his sister or not, or is it his girlfriend or not? Do I even want to make the effort to find out or not? (Eline, 23)

Since the profile photos were considered as the most important first stage of one's selection process on Tinder, the respondents would also start forming an expectation of this person. Still these expectations were often not met when they would meet their potential match in real life. One of the MBO interviewees explains what kind of expectations are reached through these photos:

Often if you get expectations based on someone's photos, for example that if they have a very sporty photo so you think that they exercise a lot, this does not appear to be true. So you get expectations and everyone can just pretend to be a person that they are actually not. (Doutze, 23)

So often respondents would keep in mind that the profile photos of their potential match could be including untrue information or other information which does not truly reflect the personality of the potential match. Nonetheless, it has become clear that the interviewees really search for a potential partner that fulfills the physical appearance of their ideal partner, often in relation to one's similar norms and values, concerning race and social groups. Amongst the MBO and WO, photos seemed to be the first and primary feature of Tinder that all interviewees would use to select their potential partner. Though a difference between WO and MBO mentioned by the interviewees was that sometimes even educational level is prejudged from the potential match's photos by the WO respondents. Educational level was considered unattractive if this educational level was MBO in relation to someone holding a Redbull in their hand as this may define that

they are from different socioeconomic groups. These discussed criteria do not only tell that Tinder creates a selective environment based on physical appearances and photos, but also form the first key filtering stage for the interviewees when they search for a potential partner on Tinder. Below in figure 3 one can find a diagram of the second stage of the Tinder journey:

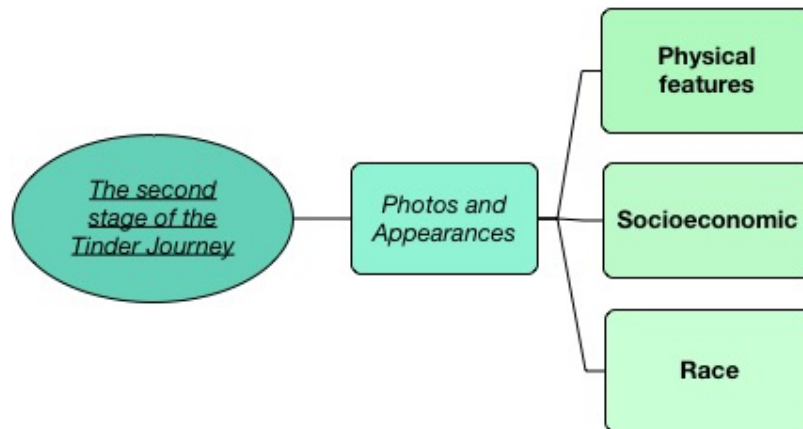


Figure 3 The structure of the second stage of the Tinder journey – Photos and Appearances

The third stage in the Tinder journey defines the filtering stage of how Tinder users select their potential partner based on career aspirations and will be explained in the next section.

4.3. Key Theme: Career Aspirations

This is perhaps the most important key theme in relation to the results and the research question of this thesis. The key theme of career aspirations captures the second stage of the selection process and describes how the feature of profile description on Tinder, including educational level and job title, helps respondents to swipe someone to the left or right on Tinder. In this feature of the second phase, the selection is thus based on the assessed job title and educational level observed through the Tinder profile description. The findings discussed within this key theme therefore confirm previous theory about dating websites that the second stage of the filtering process of selecting a potential

partner in the online dating environment consists of looking at life course goals. The key theme of career aspirations is the first and only point where MBO educated and WO educated interviewees diverge in their selection process on Tinder. The key theme shows how the educational levels of MBO and WO look at different kinds of jobs and educational level by linking them to ambition and financial stability.

During this particular aspect of the second stage of the selection process, there seems to be a major difference between MBO and WO educated respondents in their opinions about job title. First of all, the MBO educated respondents would explain that they often saw profiles passing that included one's job title but no education. As one of the MBO respondents clarifies, "There are many people with a Tinder description including work but not their educational level". Secondly, most MBO educated respondents found job title and professional life extremely important. Most of all, they thought job title was more important than educational level. For example, one of the MBO interviewees highlights:

Job title is more important for me than education. Because an education is one thing, but what you are going to do with it is going to determine your future. So yeah, it could be that someone has a pilot education but then has troubles finding a job so in the end he or she ends up working at a supermarket, at Albert Heijn for example. So I do not think education can define a person but a job can.
(Steve, 25)

In addition to a professional life, for the MBO interviewees it was mostly important that the job title feature in the profile description was filled out. For example, one of the MBO interviewees finds it important to see that a man would be building on his future this way:

It is important that someone is working. That he is working on something in his free time. And building on a future for himself, I find that important in a man.
(Eline, 23).

In contrast to the opinions about job title of the MBO educated respondents, WO respondents did not find job title that important. This is because WO educated people tend to study longer in the Netherlands, which causes some of the WO educated people to often have a part-time job next to their studies instead of a serious full-time job. According to the WO respondents, these part-time jobs often exist of working in a supermarket or giving exam training to other students. Mostly, if these jobs were considered to be easy jobs to be able to do part-time, then they would often be considered as part-time jobs. Since the WO students often keep in mind that this is only a part-time job for the meantime, they would not assess a WO educated person on his or her job. Moreover, they would assess on education instead of on job, which will be elaborated later on. For example, one of the WO respondents describes how she looks at job titles on a Tinder profile:

Well if someone is following some type of education and has a part-time job, then I will not really look at it. Unless that person does not study anymore and has started working but I barely meet those men. This is because these men are often older and I do not see those men on Tinder. Because I put an age range up to age of 24. (Melanie, 20)

On the other hand, some WO educated respondents explain that if a potential match has a profession that interests them or it is a profession in the field that they look up to, the potential match would earn bonus points and it would be more likely that this match is swiped to the right. One of the WO respondents explains this process:

At this age, a job can be an advantage and not per se a disadvantage. Most people have a part-time job at Albert Heijn and that is not very interesting. But if someone already has a really cool job then this person deserves it more to be swiped to the right. (Evert, 20)

Furthermore, there were some undesired professions according to the MBO and WO interviewees that would be swiped to the left as they would have a negative attitude

towards these job titles. Within these preferences, there was a clear difference between male and female preferences. When interviewees were asked the question if they had any job title in mind that they would definitely swipe to the left, a number of interviewees gave various examples of jobs that they would never be interested in. Most of these job titles were disapproved because the MBO and WO interviewees would not think there would be a future in these kinds of jobs. For instance, one of these job titles concerning female preferences was a garbage man, "If he picks up garbage and that is on his Tinder profile, then I think that there is not much of a future in it" (Iris, 24). Moreover, this was also the case for males in terms of the job title, for example a cleaning lady. Furthermore, female respondents would also not find jobs such as construction workers and plumbers attractive. One of the MBO female respondents clarifies her opinion:

I would not like a plumber or a construction worker. This is because my ex also had a job title like that, and I have noticed that these type of men choose this job because they do not really know what else to do. This is not the type of guy that I am looking for, I would rather have a man that has a job title that is more challenging and has more responsibility. (Eline, 23)

Additionally, in the case of fancy job titles for males and females, one would not have a preference at all. Nevertheless, male respondents had a clear judgment about females with a job title such as a hairdresser. This is for the same reason that females would rather not swipe someone with a job title of plumber or construction worker to the right. A number of male interviewees shared the opinion that hairdressers would normally not be very intelligent people and often somewhat naïve. Moreover, they were often swiped to the left by WO respondents because they believed hairdressers were too lazy to try out another type of education. One of the WO male respondents explains:

I have the feeling that those people are also lazier in their educational choices. I have the feeling that anyone can study for plenty amount of years until they are at an HBO level at least. But I think that many people are just too lazy to do it, and I am not a lazy person. (Evert, 20)

Lastly, there was one MBO interviewee who had a strong opinion towards McDonalds employees. This was especially because she does not want to take care of someone financially and she believes that someone with a job at McDonalds would not be at a same financial level as her. She explains thoroughly:

For example, if someone is 30 years old and if someone still flips hamburgers at the McDonalds, then I start asking myself if someone has a very good future. Maybe he works there because he likes it, but then it is not the right partner for me. Maybe I am too arrogant or spoilt, but I went to school and I have a job with a normal income, and if I have to start taking care of someone financially because he likes flipping burgers at the McDonalds, then he is not the right man for me. (Iris, 24)

Consequently, there are a various amount of jobs that do not fit into the ideal partner image of the interviewees, especially with a clear distinction between males and females. While comparing MBO with WO respondents, there was a difference in relation to their opinion and perspective on different professions, as WO respondents would often relate a WO education to a part-time job whereas MBO respondents would relate an MBO education to permanent fulltime jobs. Although in terms of fulltime jobs, the interviewees with different educational backgrounds had the same opinions about certain jobs. However, when considering job title in general, MBO respondents believed job title was more of significance than WO respondents and WO respondents looked more at educational level. The majority of the WO respondents would prefer a potential partner on Tinder with a similar educational level whereas MBO respondents do not value education as much. The reason for MBO interviewees to not hold on to education as much, is because they often did not believe that intelligence is linked to educational level. One of the MBO interviewees exemplifies his opinion:

I think that education is not linked to intelligence, instead a job would be linked to intelligence. Because my trainer only finished high school but then he started

working in healthcare where he takes care of disabled people and now he has a job at NS while he never even studied for it. But he is very smart and has a lot of world wisdom. I think your educational level does not decide what job you are going to have. But your personality, world wisdom and intelligence, how you are raised and someone's interests play a major role. (Bas, 23).

Besides, since MBO is the lowest level of education in the Netherlands, MBO respondents did not feel like they could have education as a requirement when selecting a potential partner on Tinder. Nevertheless, MBO respondents do believe that a job compensates for the low education. For instance, one of the MBO respondents does not prefer someone who does HBO or university:

I did finish my MBO education but I did not do HBO or university so I do also not have this as a requirement for my potential partner. But I do want him to have a well-paid job. (Iris, 24)

In contrast, WO respondents thought that educational level was quite important because it defines what one can talk about with the potential match, especially it can define on what level a conversation takes place. The WO respondents very much highlighted the importance of a similar education, specifically that this was really a requirement for a potential partner. According to the WO respondents, if someone has a similar educational level, one has more common ground with this potential match. Also, WO respondents would often avoid people with a different education to avoid any problems. One of the interviewees illuminates this by saying the following:

I find it really important what level of education the person has on her profile description. I would rather date someone with whom I can talk about my educational program as well as hers. At least, I want a person with an equivalent level of intelligence because WO compared to MBO, especially with communicating, one can share more with a person of similar education. (Evert, 20)

However, in the case of WO respondents, there seems to be some strong aversion to the level of MBO education. The interviewees mentioned that if they had already doubts about the potential match's appearances on their Tinder photos, then they would most likely swipe MBO to the left. One respondent explains this educational level selection:

If I am already doubting his appearances, and if I have doubts about his physical attraction and I see that he has an MBO education, then he will be swiped to the left. (Melanie, 20)

Also, many WO interviewees would rather date someone with at least a higher educational level than MBO, so HBO or university level, "I am attending university myself so I want someone that does at least HBO or university" (Saskia, 19). Most of all, a similar educational level is needed to be able to, "understand one another" (Saskia, 19) and to have "interesting conversations" (Anne, 22). Moreover, higher educated people would use less "bad pickup lines" (Anne, 22). Nonetheless in general, the communicational skills were questioned when one attained an MBO education. One of the WO respondents that has had prior experience with dating a lower educated person explains her point of view:

I myself have dated lower educated people a couple of times. I do not dislike these people but it is just not what I am looking for in a man. This is because I have noticed that the communication with them is completely different. The interests are also mostly different when someone is lower educated. For me, education shows that someone is really putting in effort into something and wants to work for it. I believe that that is very important. (Sophie, 23)

Also WO interviewees believed that the sense of sarcasm would be interpreted differently by someone of an MBO educated potential match or that MBO educated would not understand their way of speaking. For example, a WO educated interviewee clarifies his thoughts:

But you would quickly find out that during your conversation, one would talk on a whole different kind of level and they would not understand your sarcasm or my way of speaking. And then you start to realize that there is a major difference between MBO and WO educated. (Laurens, 20)

Nevertheless, this social level difference was often associated with spelling mistakes, but these thoughts were shared by both MBO and WO interviewees. Mostly, the interviewees thought that spelling mistakes were very unattractive. For example, one of the MBO respondents explains:

Definitely whenever the Tinder user would show spelling mistakes, or if they do not speak Dutch very well. I must say that I also check this in real life. If I notice any spelling mistakes in the biography or conversation, I would swipe them to the left. That just does not match with my personality. (Johnny, 24)

So briefly, the difference between MBO and WO mostly has to do with the stage of life that someone is in. MBO participants were often already in the working stage since MBO educated people in the Netherlands often finish their education at the age of 20. However, WO participants on the other hand often finish their education at the age of 25. The interviewees for this study were between the age of 18 and 25. Therefore, when having a MBO educational level, the participants considered the job title of a potential match to be much more important than education. Whereas when having a WO educational level, the participants considered job title to be less important because most WO educated people would still be studying and may only have a part-time job. Consistent with their interview answers, they would not prefer someone with an MBO educational background due to an MBO educated' communicational skills. It would be more difficult to talk to an MBO educated than to a WO educated because of the difference in interests and intelligence level during the conversation. This then causes the favor to select a partner with a higher education than MBO, to enhance a smooth conversation and to avoid communication problems. In line with theory about

homogamy and educational homogamy, this then insinuates that the interviewees would be selecting a potential partner on Tinder that was either in the same stage in life as them or attained the same level of education as themselves, which the interviewees often observed in the profile description section of someone's Tinder profile. The diagram below illustrates this third stage of the Tinder journey:

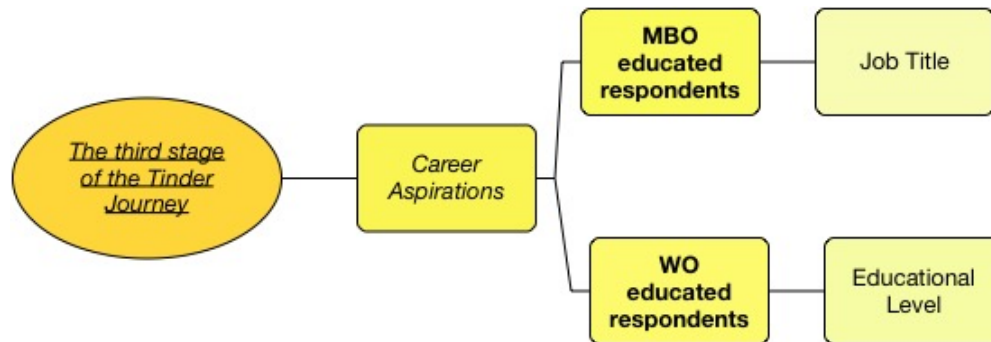


Figure 3. The structure of the third stage of the Tinder journey – Career Aspirations

If either of this information of profession or educational level was not available, then “the other information needed to be able to compensate” (Saskia, 19) and had to be highly attractive to someone to be able to swipe the person to the right. Part of this other information are the aspects of mutual interests and social groups, which will be described in the following section.

4.4. Key Theme: Mutual Interests and Social Groups

The key theme of mutual interests and social groups discusses two other Tinder features, consisting of the selection process when selecting a potential partner on the mobile dating app Tinder, namely biography and mutual friends. The two features biography and mutual friends were often stressed by the interviewees as important features and were often mentioned with a link to one another, therefore being the reason that they are considered as one key theme. Especially in regards of mutual interests, biography was considered as a relevant feature on Tinder. Moreover, the interviewees would mention particular inner personality traits that they would most likely

be attracted to, which they would look for in photos as well as in a biography text. Furthermore, the key theme refers to how people view Tinder as a whole and whether they believe they can make a clear judgment out of all the information they receive from a Tinder profile.

When filtering potential matches, a number of the interviewees looked at the biography text of their potential match. The biography's importance is stressed by one of the MBO interviewees who mentions, "If their bio was empty, then I would already think that this was not going to work" (Bas, 23). The reason that biographies are so important to some Tinder users is because the Tinder users often use the biography information to look at what type of person the potential match is, as well as identifying any sort of common interest. Depending on whether this would be important for them, depended on whether they considered this information when looking for a potential romantic partner. Moreover, the interviewees clearly identify what type of biography they would find attractive in comparison to what they would not find attractive. For example, as the biography is used to identify common interests, a number of interviewees would be attracted to a biography that contained information about one's interests. Moreover, this is often used as a starting point of a conversation. As one of the WO respondents explains:

You can have a way to start a conversation when looking at one's biography. It helps to get to know some information about that person so that you know that you may have shared interests and then you can start talking about that straight away. Then you have an easy pick up line also. (Laurens, 20)

All interviewees further mentioned the importance of mutual interests in someone's biography. Most of them were even more likely to match with a potential match whenever they would see a reference made in their biography to something they knew or something that they were interested in as well. Some of these interests that were highlighted the most were having the personal interest of doing sports, "I find it important that they partake in any type of sport because I am a sport fanatic myself" (Bas, 23). According to a number of interviewees, often it would not even matter what

type of sports someone would participate in, as long as they would participate in a sport, he or she would already be more attractive. Another case that appeared often was the mutual interest in literature and television series. If their potential match had a quote of the interviewee's favorite television series or a reference to a certain literature piece, he or she would have more chance to get swiped to the right. As an MBO interviewee describes:

Or a text from a series that I follow or a book that I have read, for example Harry Potter. Then one recognizes it and then you share the same interests or you can laugh about the same things. And I like that, so I would more easily swipe someone to the right then. (Bas, 23)

Another feature of one's biography is the connection to humor. Having the same type of humor is relevant in terms of whether one is able to make a true connection to someone or not, "I just want someone with whom I connect on the first date and then having the same humor is really important" (Iris, 23). In the case of a biography, this humor can be found in funny or sarcastic biography texts of the potential match, which are particularly interesting when they make the other Tinder user laugh, "If it is a funny tagline or pickup line, and I really have to laugh, that helps" (Laurens, 20). Though on the contrary, there are also aspects of a biography mentioned by the interviewees that are often swiped to the left instead of the right. The first aspect, which has already been discussed before, is that one's motivation should match with the potential match's motivation to use Tinder. For example, biography texts making a reference to sex is often very unattractive. Drastically, these people are quite often swiped to the left straight away because one does not take them seriously. For example, a WO respondent explains why she would swipe someone to the left straight away:

Hmm, yeah if for example someone makes a reference to sex, I will immediately swipe them to the left. Because then we do not have the same goals, so it will never work. (Saskia, 19)

Moreover, a number of interviewees mentioned that if the potential match has a biography containing interests that do not match at all with their own interests, they would also often swipe someone to the left unless the rest of the profile can compensate in some cases. For example, if someone has an interest that does not match with theirs but his or her photos look really nice, then the appearance can compensate for the interests and then they might still be swiped to the right, "If his photos are nice but his biography text was stupid, then I can still match with him because his photos were nice" (Anne, 22). Nevertheless, if the looks cannot convince the interviewee to swipe the person to the right, the person will still be swiped to the left due to the difference in interests. However, some of the interviewees gave examples of interests that would never get this benefit of the doubt. One of these examples often mentioned by the female respondents is gaming. One of the MBO respondents highlights the following:

I would always swipe someone to the left that has written in his biography that he does gaming. Because I know that I would have nothing to talk about if someone is only gaming. Even if it is someone who looks good and has a well-paid job. (Eline, 23)

Another example of a type of interest that would not be appreciated by the interviewees was music type and event interests. For example, three interviewees mentioned firmly that they would not swipe someone to the right if they saw that they were hardcore music fans as this would not match with their own music taste. One of the MBO interviewees explains this point of view:

Even if he looks okay and he has a nice job, if I see that he likes hardcore or hardstyle music very much, then I just cannot relate to it. So I would know that we would have nothing in common in relation to music taste. Because I hate hardcore and hardstyle music. So I could like him but then I would know that it is not going to work out because I do not like his music taste. Therefore, I would swipe him to the left. (Iris, 24)

Besides biography being the fourth stage of the Tinder journey, the respondents would often look at the mutual friends that he or she would have with their potential match. Mutual friends are often used as a starting point of a conversation, to find out how one both knows these mutual friends, "Just like with mutual interests, you can start a conversation about it" (Laurens, 20). One might think that often having a match with someone on Tinder with many mutual friends would also signify an unwillingness to date outside one's social circle. Yet, it seems that the interviewees mostly saw mutual friends as an advantage for the respondents because the mutual friends can give the interviewees extra information about the potential match. This information can be retrieved through talking to this mutual friends and asking this person about the potential match. Then information about the potential match is retrieved from a reliable source, "I think it would be more likely for me to use those mutual friends to ask the mutual friend about this potential match" (Melvin, 22). Secondly, information can be retrieved through stalking someone on Facebook through this mutual friend. This is often done by the interviewees to double check the photos of the potential match and see if there is any other information available. While the interviewees explained that they would quickly check out someone's Facebook, they often sounded embarrassed as if they just revealed a secret. One of the WO interviewees explains the process of Facebook stalking:

Yes, Facebook stalking. For more information about what he does because then you can check it. And also to look at more photos because he could have just used his nicest photos on Tinder. So actually its more to double check. And I only do this when we are already talking on Tinder. Unless I want to start the conversation, because before I do that I sometimes first check out his Facebook. (Saskia, 19).

Though, as the potential match and the interviewee had mutual friends which is his or her ex romantic partner, then this would often be considered as a bad mutual friend so he or she would most likely be swiped to the left. Sometimes even if the potential match

knows their ex romantic partner, the potential match gets swiped to the left. As one of the MBO respondents clarifies:

I find it very important that they do not know my ex. Because otherwise I find it really awkward to start a relationship of any kind with that person. (Bas, 23)

The interviewees also would swipe a person to the left if they would see that they had bad mutual friends. Bad mutual friends often included people that they were friends with on Facebook but that they would not actually like as a person. Also in relation to criminal activity, one would be more likely to swipe a potential match to the left with mutual friends that often participate in criminal activity. This is enhanced by an MBO interviewee:

If there are mutual friends that I know personally well from which I know that they are surrounded by people who have been in contact with the police, then it stops there and the person is swiped to the left. (Doutze, 23)

In regards to the whole selection process in general, the interviewees thought that Tinder itself makes one more selective than in real life, because one has the tools to filter anyone out on Tinder. Moreover, Tinder provides a very wide range of all sorts of people, which was often seen as something positive by the interviewees so that one could be more open to dating someone outside of their comfort zone. Nonetheless, a number of interviewees mentioned that the information provided on Tinder was often not enough to decide whether one would be a good match in real life as well, which was therefore often a reason that people were too scared to have an actual date with their Tinder match. When swiping through their profiles on Tinder, the interviewees noticed that they would be more selective about certain aspects of a potential match, which would normally not matter in real life. In real life, one would maybe take less factors into account than when one can swipe everyone to the right that has a slight unattractive feature. However, this also causes the fact that many people are excluded from one's

match list, while in real life one might have been able to give this person a chance. One of the WO interviewees explains that this is a downside of Tinder:

I think that you will exclude many people while in real life you would not have to exclude these people at all. Because in real life it would be completely different. So I think Tinder also somehow makes it more difficult to find a perfect potential partner. (Laurens, 20)

Nonetheless, Tinder does provide a wide range of people of which the Tinder users can choose from, such as matches from different ethical backgrounds, different educational levels and with different interests. The fact that Tinder has so many different kinds of users all over the world is highly appreciated by a number of interviewees. For example, one of the MBO interviewees explained that she likes Tinder because it feels like a discovery trip:

I think the fun part of Tinder is that you can select someone according to a few features and then you can find out during a date what this person is really like. It also may cause some people to step out of their comfort zone and may like someone that is completely different than they would normally match with. I think one can see it as a discovery trip and that especially getting many different people to swipe through is a very strong aspect of Tinder. (Eline, 23)

Despite the fact that one can swipe through many different profiles on Tinder, the interviewees thought that Tinder in general would not provide enough information about the person to find out what the potential match is really like. For example, one of the MBO interviewees said:

You can get potential out of it but truly finding out if someone is a match for you, you can only find that out after having a conversation with them on Tinder, or preferably even during a date. If you see someone in real life, then you get the most out of it eventually. (Steve, 25)

Regarding the opinion that Tinder is not able to provide a complete picture of someone to determine whether they are potential partner material or not, some of the interviewees gave examples of how Tinder could improve. For example, one of the MBO interviewees mentioned that she finds a man's voice very important so she advised the following:

Well what I find very important is someone's voice. And how someone talks. So if Tinder would add voice memo's that can be send to one another, that would make it more interesting for me. Because anyone can type a story, you have all the time to think about it. Even if you type something wrong then you can type something else or you can add emoticons to express what you are trying to say. But at the moment that you are talking with someone with voice, the experience is completely different and that might be a step to be able to find out whether it is a real match for you or not. (Iris, 24)

Finally, when asked why one would delete Tinder again and end their Tinder journey, respondents mentioned an on and off usage meaning that they would delete it whenever they found a new spouse and download it again after this relationship ended. As one MBO interviewee with such attitude explained, "but the reason why I deleted it was because at the time I met a new potential partner. So then it is kind of strange if you still use Tinder" (Doutze, 23). In other words, the interviewee thought it would be inappropriate to still have Tinder on her phone whenever she would have her eye on a potential new romantic partner. However, there was also one WO interviewee who mentioned that she would delete Tinder because:

It was interesting for a while but I got bored after a while because I did not need the distraction from my ex anymore so I stopped. (Sophie, 23)

In short, biography texts and mutual friends are two very important filtering features of Tinder. When filtering potential matches using these search tools, they would often have personal preferences, however mutual interests that were often looked for in a

biography were sport activities, literature and television series. If these interests would not match at all, the potential matches would often be more likely to be swiped to the left. Furthermore, mutual friends were also considered to be important for the interviewees as they could retrieve more information about the potential match through these mutual friends. In the diagram below, one can find a sketch of the fourth stage of the Tinder journey:

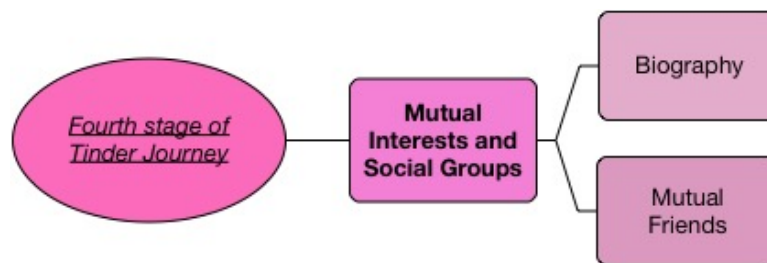


Figure 4. The structure of the fourth stage of the Tinder journey – Mutual Interests and Social Groups

Even though there is quite some information available for the interviewees regarding interests and photos, some interviewees did not have the idea that this information would be enough to determine whether a Tinder match could also be a potential partner. Thus, the majority of the MBO and WO respondents did not consider Tinder to be a medium that could already tell them whether a person would be a good potential partner or not. There was no difference identified between the MBO and WO respondents when selecting their partner based on mutual interests and mutual friends. Drawing upon the comments of the interviewees, it can be concluded that Tinder makes people more selective in regards to photos, profile description, biography and mutual friends compared to one's selection process in real life. The following section will provide a thorough discussion to these findings in relation to the research questions of this thesis.

5. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

Online dating services have come a long way in evolving as technological tools for finding a potential partner online. Before online dating applications, people used to search for a romantic partner with similar characteristics as well as potential partners from similar social groups. Today many people use an online dating service that has gained notable popularity over the past eleven years called Tinder. The rise of this particular mobile dating application raises the question whether people still look for a potential partner with the same selection criteria or whether the journey of looking for a partner online is different. The present study has attempted to answer the research question *How does homogamy play a role in Tinder users' search for finding a partner on Tinder?* through conducting face-to-face semi-structured in-depth interviews while making a comparison with MBO Tinder users and WO Tinder users to explore their perspectives on the selection process of potential partners in the online environment of the mobile dating application Tinder. The data collected was analyzed using a qualitative thematic content analysis of the in-depth interviews. To answer the main research question, the following sub research questions were developed: (1) *What are the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application?* (2) *What is the role of homogamy in mate selection on Tinder?* (3) *What is the role of educational homogamy in mate selection practices of Tinder users?* The answers to the formulated sub research questions will be clarified below and will contribute to the answer of the main research question.

5.1. Summary of Results

The results of the study of how people select potential partners on the mobile dating application Tinder were discussed according to the Tinder journey with four key themes that emerged from the data collection through interviews, specifically (1) Tinder motivations (2) superficiality (3) career aspirations (4) mutual interests and social groups. The first key theme of Tinder motivations described the first step of one's Tinder

journey, specifically the mindset of the interviewees concerning their motivation to download the mobile Tinder application on their mobile phones. Within the key theme of Tinder motivations, to start off with, the interviewees started using the Tinder application for different kinds of reasons. Though, as they were using Tinder for some time, all interviewees ended up looking for a romantic relationship on the application in the end.

The second key theme of superficiality then discussed the start of the selection process of finding a potential partner on the mobile application Tinder. In particular, it argues that the interviewees first determined their selection of a potential partner on appearances and Tinder photos. Following, the third key theme of career aspirations defined how the MBO and WO interviewees view the feature of job title and educational level in the selection process. The key theme career aspirations makes the important point that WO educated interviewees would prefer someone with a similar educational level of HBO or above, while MBO educated interviewees consider profession more often at all as they do not believe education is related to intelligence. Last but not least, the fourth step of the Tinder journey of selecting a potential partner based on mutual interests and social groups enabled two other filtering features of Tinder such as mutual friends and biography. Both features were considered important to the interviewees, as information in these features could eventually determine whether someone would be swiped to the left or right.

5.2. Tinder Motivations

With regards to the first sub question *What are the motivations of Tinder users to start using the mobile dating application?* the findings suggest that people start downloading and using Tinder for different reasons in the beginning. These reasons include to use Tinder for fun, to meet new people in an online environment, to download it out of curiosity because of its newness or for casual sexual relationships. This is in line with the literature by Sumter et al., (2017), James (2015) and Roeffen (2015) who found these key motivations in their research as well. Though downloading the mobile dating application Tinder for the motivation of casual sexual relationships was formed because of Tinder's reputation and external stories about Tinder. With regards to the literature in

the theory section, self-worth validation was not mentioned as one of the motivations to download Tinder. This goes against the findings of Sumter et al., (2017), who found that amongst the Tinder users, this was also one of the motivations to start using Tinder. However, the finding that self-worth validation is not a motivation to use Tinder, is in line with Ranzini and Lutz (2016), who found that self-validation is the weakest motivation to start using Tinder.

Additionally, in line with Sumter et al., (2017), the interviewee's motivations changed after having used Tinder after a while. According to Sumter et al., (2017) this is the case because Tinder user motivations are very complex as they can develop during the progress of adulthood. Not only in regards to first downloading it for casual sexual relationships, but in the case of each motivation to download Tinder, all interviewees changed their motivation in the end to using the mobile dating application for finding a romantic partner on Tinder. In other words, in the beginning Tinder users need to orient and explore Tinder and have a playful motivation to download the application. Nevertheless, after having explored the application, all Tinder users will start looking for a romantic partner eventually on the mobile dating application. This is also in line with the literature by Sumter et al., (2017) but in opposition to the literature of Gatter & Hodgkinson (2016) as they mention that Tinder user motivations showed a highest mean score on 'to find casual sex' on Tinder. Moreover, besides looking for a potential romantic partner, from the moment Tinder is downloaded, all Tinder users unintendedly look for their perfect ideal romantic partner considering physical features and personality traits.

5.3. Specific components of mate selection on tinder

Respecting the second sub research question: *What is the role of homogamy in mate selection on Tinder?* the first requirement of the selection process for all the MBO and WO educated interviewees is appearances on one's Tinder profile photos. Within the thematic analysis, this step of the Tinder journey was called superficiality as the interviewees would always swipe someone to the left immediately, without looking at his or her profile, when they did not like the potential match's appearance. This is in

contrast to the literature of Best and Delmege (2012), who conducted a qualitative study with the finding that the first phase of the selection process in online dating includes looking at the photograph of the potential match's profile as well as the written biography. Nevertheless, in this present study I found that the interviewees only look at photographs in the first phase and look at biography much later on. This was not different for MBO or WO educated participants and since all interviewees were seeking a romantic relationship, the first stage of the selection process was not different according to motivations to use Tinder. Within these pictures, one would look for similar interests in line with the literature by Skopek et al., (2010) who define this as a selection criteria part of homogamy.

It was further highlighted by the interviewees that they would look for people from a similar socioeconomic background, often prejudging these people with certain behavior shown on their photographs. According to literature, this type of selection would be called classicism, meaning that people have prejudicial beliefs against groups of people sharing a similar social position in particular economic, political, and cultural characteristics (Liu, Soleck, Hopps, Dunston, & Pickett, 2004). Moreover, in relation to homogamy, one would select their partner based on classism due to social proximity, meaning that people are more likely to meet someone within their own social class (Bovet et al., 2012). Even though one does not have a higher chance to meet their partner on Tinder from the same social class, they might still be looking for these people as it is what they are used to in the offline world. Furthermore, the respondents preferred a potential partner of a similar racial background, though they associated prejudice with this group. For example, one interviewee would consider it more dangerous to date with someone with a darker skin color, and therefore she would swipe this person to the left. In literature, this is classified as racism as one attributes bad characteristics to a person according to their physical aspect (INTER group, 2007). According to Brynin et al., (2008), a reason for human kind to show a fondness towards a certain race, is because there is some kind of social closure in society and people might be less open to different races. This is also confirmed by one of the interviewees, who mentioned that she would be leaving her safe haven whenever she would date with someone from a different skin color. Though, the only non-white male interviewee

mentioned nothing about race or skin color in his selection process, which might suggest that Caucasians look more at race in their selection of a potential partner on Tinder than non-Caucasians. This goes against the American assumption of 2011, that whites believe anti-White bias is more predominant than anti-Black bias (Norton & Sommers, 2011).

Secondly, the interviewees looked at educational background and job title in their selection process, which is in line with the literature by Best and Delmege (2012) as they found that the second selection phase within online dating is to examine the 'identity' or 'life course' goals of their potential match. A clear distinction was made between MBO and WO educated respondents in relation to what type of a potential match they worshipped concerning job title and educational level, which will be demonstrated in the next sub research question.

Lastly, all MBO and WO educated respondents selected their potential partner based on mutual friends and interests on Tinder in the third stage. In line with literature about homogamy from Skopek et al., (2010), similar interests are a dominant mechanism for those seeking a romantic relationship on Tinder. Especially mutual interests in sports came out as a very strong characteristic that both MBO and WO educated valued very much, which therefore shows a strong connection towards homogamy. Furthermore, mutual social groups is also of importance to Tinder users as one can identify above in regards to race. Moreover, if the mutual friends are related to one's ex or are in the same social group as their ex partner, they would swipe the potential match to the left. Also, Tinder users often like to have mutual friends with their potential match due to the fact that then they are able to gain more information about this person and would find out sooner if he or she would be a dishonest person.

An interesting aspect that derived from the interviews is that the interviewees mentioned that they believe that Tinder does not provide enough information to make a clear judgment about a potential match. This could be related to the research by Cobb & Kohno (2017) who found that people on dating platforms often withhold information about themselves and control the way they present themselves on their profile due to safety reasons. Meaning that there are only a few specific features on Tinder that can be used by Tinder users to discover information about a person, which might often not

even be filled out by the potential partner. This creates issues related to the use of Tinder as a mobile dating technology as users need to make a judgment based on just a few personal and physical aspects such as pictures, job title, education and biography. In line with the literature by Tyson et al., (2016), the specific Tinder features cause Tinder users to be more selective than in real life as they only have a few features to choose from. This led to the conclusion that when selecting a potential romantic partner on Tinder by means of being interested in the profile due to the appearance of the potential match, people still need to make a selection based on mutual interests and friends as well as career aspirations and often look at features of homogamy. All interviewees went through the same process in regards to their similar motivations to use Tinder, though the second stage of career aspirations differs for MBO educated and WO educated. In particular, MBO educated are more likely to make a selection based on profession whereas WO educated are more likely to make a selection based on education. A thorough explanation in relation to homogamy will be given in the next attempt to answer one of the sub research question.

5.4. Educational Homogamy on Tinder

Concerning the third sub research question *What is the role of educational homogamy in mate selection practices of Tinder users?* the present study revealed that for MBO educated Tinder users, selecting a romantic partner on the mobile dating application does not involve looking at educational level whereas for WO educated Tinder users, selecting a romantic partner does involve selecting their potential partner based on one's educational level on Tinder. This is because for MBO educated Tinder users, job title is much more relevant compared to educational level, especially that job title was filled out on one's Tinder profile. In opposition to the opinions about profession of the MBO educated Tinder users, the WO educated Tinder users did not find profession important but found educational level an important criterion. This corresponds to the development of educational homogamy in Switzerland in the offline world, as educational homogamy has increased for highly educated women and men, while a noticeable decline in educational homogamy can be observed for men with a low

education (Becker & Jann, 2016). Switzerland predicted this already due to the educational catch-up of women (Becker & Jann, 2016). This could be the case for the Netherlands as well, as numbers show that young adult women are often the highest educated partner in a relationship in the Netherlands ("Man nog steeds vaker de hoogst opgeleide partner - CBS", 2017). Another clarification for this might be that in the Netherlands, WO educated people tend to study longer than MBO educated people, therefore causing a difference in timelines between MBO and WO respondents when one would start working. Consequently, it may often be assumed by WO educated Tinder users that if they see a profile stating an MBO education as well as a profession next to it, that this job title is often a long-lasting full-time job. Whereas when WO educated Tinder users see a profile stating a WO education as well as a profession next to it, they often assume that this job next to a WO education is just a simple part-time job so often they do not take it as seriously.

Though on the other hand, the MBO educated Tinder users take every job title seriously, no matter what type of education is stated next to the profession. However, they do not at all look at the education level stated in the Tinder description, as they do not consider this information important. MBO educated Tinder users probably have more working experience than WO educated Tinder users as they start working at a younger age than WO educated Tinder users ("Education system in the Netherlands" n.d.). Since the MBO educated interviewees have been in the working world for a longer time than the WO educated interviewees, they probably consider work more important than education level itself, as job title shows one's ambition and way of life for them. In contrast to the MBO educated Tinder users, the WO educated Tinder users have not been in the working world for a very long time or have only been in the working world with part-time jobs. Though having a high education shows WO educated Tinder users that one has the ambition to grow in their knowledge and expertise, with often having a simple part-time job next to it. Thus probably being the reason why WO educated Tinder users do not consider job title as important as educational level.

Furthermore, in relation to the offline world, educational homogamy is more likely to happen due to having the opportunity to meet a potential partner in school (Kalmijn, 1998). However, this is not the case in online dating, since people are used to mingling

amongst people from their own educational level, they might prefer a potential partner from the same educational level as well (Kalmijn, 1998). This might also be the reason why both MBO educated Tinder users and WO educated Tinder users would have personal preferences with regards to the type of job their potential match had written down on their profiles. Especially in relation to homogamy, they would mention that they prefer someone with a similar financial stability as themselves. Several professions were to be called unattractive. The jobs chosen by women which they thought were unattractive, were often also related to a low education. This is in line with the literature by Kreager, Cavanagh, Yen and Yu (2014), as women often seem to hang on to the tradition to like men that are higher educated than themselves as they may believe a higher education is crucial for a successful career (Skopek et al., 2010). This is also in proportion to the Bourgeois family theory, where the ideal Bougeois father is a good provider for the family as he virtues economic success (Halliday, 1997). In addition, the literature mentions that men prefer dating someone with a lower education (Skopek et al., 2010). However, as mentioned by the interviewees, men would not at all prefer jobs in the traditional kind of way, as they did not prefer jobs coming from a lower education such as hairdressers (Kreager, Cavanagh, Yen, & Yu, 2014). This is interesting as men would often consider hairdressers as lazy people who would just start working as a hairdresser as they did not know what else to do. This contradicts with the literature of Millward, Houston, Brown and Barrett (2006), where hairdressers are often depicted as sociable and feminine people.

Additionally, the WO educated interviewees had a prejudice against MBO educated Tinder users because of the difference of intelligence level. WO educated interviewees would often predict that someone with an MBO educated background would have a harder time understanding sarcasm and would be talking on a different social level. On the contrary, MBO educated interviewees would not link intelligence to educational level at all, as they would have met people with a higher education that were not intelligent from their personal perspective. This is in line with a societal issue in the Netherlands, where MBO educated speak of discrimination because some insurance companies advertise to be a service for only 'the higher educated' (Huygen,

2016). As mentioned in the Dutch NRC newspaper, "The status differences between MBO and WO is an advantage to the higher educated" (Huygen, 2016).

Overall, concerning career aspirations of the Tinder journey, MBO educated respondents did not have a lot to say regarding their potential partner selection on the mobile application Tinder based on educational level. This is not in line with the theory of educational homogamy, as people would be more attracted to a similar education according to the theory of educational homogamy (Skopek et al., 2010; Kreager et al., 2014; Maliki, 2009;). In contrast, WO educated respondents would select their potential partner according to the theory of homogamy and educational homogamy, as they would prefer a potential partner on Tinder with a similar educational level. This is in line with the theory of Acitelli et al., (2001), as the WO educated interviewees believed the chance would be higher to be on a similar intelligence level with WO educated Tinder users, causing less challenges in the interaction on Tinder.

5.5. Conclusion

Concisely, the answers to three sub research questions contribute to the answer of the main research question *How does homogamy play a role in Tinder users' search for finding a partner on Tinder?* as the sub questions demonstrate that Tinder users select potential romantic partners on Tinder by using the features provided by Tinder, but above all through evaluating whether the potential match would match based on similar interests, similar life ambitions, educational level and similar financial stability. Also through the filtering features on Tinder, people often use Tinder to start looking for a romantic relationship and their ideal partner on Tinder does not change according to their motivation to use Tinder. However, the interviewees showed that before one would even consider personality traits, the potential partner would first have to pass appearance requirements set by the interviewee. People namely make a second selection of potential romantic partners based on the similar personality traits and characteristics mentioned above, and in some cases potential matches would be swiped to the left if one's interests would not match at all. This is in line with the theory

about homogamy, as people would be more attracted to potential matches with similar characteristics.

Moreover, there is a noticeable difference between MBO educated interviewees and WO educated interviewees in terms of looking at profession and educational level, since they each assess different features for ambition and life course goals. In relation to the literature, Tinder users use the same values for finding a partner based on homogamy in real life as they do on Tinder. This leads to the conclusion that Tinder users are just as selective in real life as they are on Tinder when looking for a romantic partner, even though they mention themselves that they believe that Tinder makes them more selective. However, in the case of educational homogamy, this is only true for WO educated respondents, whereas professional homogamy is only true for MBO educated respondents. This is because WO educated Tinder users are more selective than MBO educated Tinder users in their selection process in terms of educational level when finding a romantic partner whereas MBO educated Tinder users are more selective than WO educated Tinder users when considering job title.

Lastly, the interviewees would end their Tinder journey eventually if they would have started a new relationship with someone. Moreover, whenever participants would not need the distraction anymore, the mobile dating application Tinder would be no longer welcome. This is in line with literature about Grindr, as the research by Brubaker, Ananny and Crawford (2016) mentions that Grindr users leave Grindr for the same reasons.

5.6. Limitations and future research

While prior studies have demonstrated that homogamy is a factor that people look for during mate selection, emerging research has not focused on educational homogamy in relation to online dating platforms. This research is of societal relevance due to the fact that the mobile dating app Tinder has become such a popular platform for society to look for a romantic or sexual casual relationship (Finkel et al., 2012). Besides Tinder, there are many more apps out there nowadays that stimulate meeting new people through an online app. Specifically, this research helped to collect knowledge about how

the interviewees select their potential partners online, which will provide insights for Tinder users concerning their partner preferences as well as for Tinder itself. It helps Tinder to get to know their users and the online mate selection process in regards to the features that Tinder has.

In this study, maximum efforts were made to minimize the interviewer bias by using a recruitment strategy that has been performed by other researchers before, in the case of posting advertisements online (Blackwell et al., 2015; Heino et al., 2010). Also, the criteria from Boyce and Neale (2006) for the interview guide was followed by conducting the interview in three parts, including the introduction, questions from the interview guide and a conclusion. Though, there are several limitations to the present study resulting from the selected research methods. First, the sample of interviewees consisted of 13 interviewees, 6 MBO educated respondents and 7 WO educated respondents. Since there was an uneven amount of respondents, the study included more female interviewees than males. Additionally, one of the factors that should be held into account is that the age of the respondents fluctuated a bit by two years for the MBO educated respondents, meaning that the MBO educated respondents coined people that were two years older than the oldest WO educated respondents. Especially in the comparison of MBO and WO education in the case of educational homogamy, perhaps the findings would have been clearer with older Tinder users when everyone would have finished their education, or with everyone being in the same stage of their studies. Secondly, since it was difficult to get in touch with the MBO and WO schools, the methodology had to be adjusted by creating a Tinder account with the advertisement as the profile picture to a sufficient amount of respondents. Though, since this adjustment in the methodology was created during the collection of data itself, to save time for feature research, a stand-in methodology should be written down in advance in the case that one cannot collect enough respondents.

Furthermore, this current research presents evidence that people base their selection of potential romantic partners on homogamy regarding certain features on Tinder. Though, with regards to educational background, there is a clear distinction between MBO and WO educated Tinder users, where MBO educated Tinder users do not look for educational homogamy in a potential partner on Tinder. This online

selection process for a potential romantic partner is therefore the same as the selection process in real life, except for educational background and profession, as MBO educated Tinder users considered profession much more important than WO educated Tinder users. However, the factor of personal preference also plays an important role within the selection of potential partners. Therefore, suggestions for future research include investigating a comparative study of how people determine a potential partner in the offline world and a potential partner online based on educational homogeneity. Moreover, regarding educational homogeneity, the theory could be improved by finding out more about the attitudes from WO educated citizens towards MBO educated citizens in the Netherlands. Future research could look further into how Dutch WO educated citizens look at the MBO educated citizens, as this research shows a prejudice towards MBO educated Tinder users by the WO educated Tinder users. Also, according to this study, the higher educated citizens in the Netherlands prefer a partner from a similar educational level. However, the number of WO educated females in the Netherlands is rapidly increasing ("Man nog steeds vaker de hoogst opgeleide partner – CBS", 2017). This could eventually result into having an increase in the number of lower educated males without a partner as well as an increase in the number of higher educated females without a partner in the Netherlands ("Man nog steeds vaker de hoogst opgeleide partner – CBS", 2017). Thus, examining how Tinder could be used as a solving mechanism to tackle this problem would be an interesting topic for future research.

Other promising research avenues lie within investigating the other selection features on Tinder in comparison to how people would look at these aspects in real life when they meet a potential partner. Then a clear conclusion can be made on whether Tinder makes one more selective or not and how people select their partners nowadays compared to before the invention of online dating applications. Future research as a follow up of this study might then lead to the ever changing results in regards to how people search for a romantic partner in this era. Is making the right swipe a changing indispensable goal of life?

7. REFERENCES

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APPENDIX A – INTERVIEW GUIDE

Part 1: Introduction (00:00:00 – 00:05:00)

Hi! My name is Larissa and it's a pleasure to meet you. Thank you for willing to participate in this study and finding the time to let me interview you. As I have informed you during email/Facebook conversation, this interview is part of the research I am conducting for my Master thesis for the Erasmus University Rotterdam about how people select potential partners on Tinder in relation to homogamy. During the interview I will therefore ask you questions about your motivations to start using Tinder, what information you consider important in the profiles of potential partners on Tinder, and your thoughts when swiping through the profiles of other Tinder users and selecting your potential matches. The interview will last for approximately 45 to 60 minutes and your answers will remain anonymous and used for academic purposes only. Please feel free to ask questions if anything is unclear to you.

Part 2: Open-ended questions

Topic 1: Warm-up Questions & Tinder Motivations (00:00:00 – 00:15:00)

1. When did you start using Tinder?
2. For what reason did you start using Tinder?
3. What does/did your Tinder profile look like? (pictures, biography, profile description)
4. Using these features of Tinder, what is/was the impression you want/wanted to give to your potential match in relation to your motivation of using Tinder?
5. What do/did you expect to find on Tinder?

Topic 2: Online Match Selection - Photographs (00:15:00 – 00:25:00)

6. Do you consider yourself selective? What aspect do you think you are most selective on in searching for a potential match?
7. When swiping through the Tinder profiles, do you view the main profile picture or do you click to see more photographs? How important is it to you that a Tinder profile has more than one photograph? Why?

8. What information are you able to obtain from these photographs? What would make you swipe left and what would make you swipe right?
9. How important do you consider the photographs in the Tinder profile in comparison to the other information in a potential match's Tinder profile?

Topic 3: Online Match Selection - Profile Description (00:25:00 – 00:35:00)

10. How important are friends in common on a Tinder profile to you?
11. How important is one's profile description of education and employment to you?
12. Could you tell me more about other aspects of one's profile description that you would consider, such as their name and age?
13. What exactly would make you swipe left or swipe right concerning one's profile description?

Topic 4: Online Match Selection - Profile Biography (00:35:00 – 00:40:00)

14. What would make you swipe left or swipe right regarding one's profile biography?
15. Do you think that Tinder profile give you enough information to decide whether the other user could be a match or not? Why?
16. Do you think there should be another filtering feature on Tinder? Why?

Topic 5: Potential Partner Differences (00:40:00 – 00:55:00)

17. Does your ideal match on Tinder differ in terms of what type of relationship you are looking for? How?
18. Did you ever match with someone on Tinder that you would normally not match with?
19. Can you tell me more about this? Why did you match with this person? Why do you think this never happened?
20. How was this match different?
21. How did the interaction go?
22. How did you feel about this experience afterwards?
23. Do you know a couple that met through Tinder who are completely different? Could you tell me more about this?

24. Did your motivation for using Tinder change during your usage? why?

Topic 6: Demographics (00:55:00 – 01:00:00)

25. Since I respect your privacy, I will not use your real name. What name would you like me to use for this interview?

26. What is your age?

27. How long have you been/were you on Tinder?

Part 3: Conclusion (01:00:00 – 01:05:00)

Thank you for your time. I really appreciate that you were willing to share your thoughts about your usage of Tinder with me. Is there anything I did not ask you about your Tinder usage, Tinder or yourself that you would like to share? If not, then I believe we are finished. I will contact you if you have won the voucher of your choice; this will be known in the next two weeks. Again, thank you for your participation and if you are interested in the results of this research, I can keep you updated.

APPENDIX B – OVERVIEW OF RESPONDENTS

Respondent 1

Name	Evert
Age	20
Gender	Male
Educational Level	WO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	12 months
Date interview	15 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	45:52

Respondent 2

Name	Iris
Age	24
Gender	Female
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	12 months
Date interview	18 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	51:43

Respondent 3

Name	Eline
Age	23
Gender	Female
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	4 months
Date interview	19 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	43:28

Respondent 4

Name	Bas
Age	23
Gender	Male
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	4 months
Date interview	19 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	59:18

Respondent 5

Name	Doutze
Age	23
Gender	Female
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	6 months
Date interview	20 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	45:48

Respondent 6

Name	Anne
Age	22
Gender	Female
Educational Level	WO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	18 months
Date interview	20 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	49:46

Respondent 7

Name	Steve
Age	25
Gender	Male
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	6 months
Date interview	26 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	49:51

Respondent 8

Name	Melvin
Age	22
Gender	Male
Educational Level	WO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	4 months
Date interview	21 st of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	48:11

Respondent 9

Name Sophie
Age 23
Gender Female
Educational Level WO
Nationality Dutch
Time on Tinder 2 months
Date interview 24th of April, 2017
Location interview Rotterdam
Length interview 44:33

Respondent 10

Name Laurens
Age 20
Gender Male
Educational Level WO
Nationality Dutch
Time on Tinder 2 months
Date interview 24th of April, 2017
Location interview Rotterdam
Length interview 56:24

Respondent 11

Name	Saskia
Age	19
Gender	Female
Educational Level	WO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	6 months
Date interview	26 th of April, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	47:05

Respondent 12

Name	Melanie
Age	20
Gender	Female
Educational Level	WO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	36 months
Date interview	3 rd of May, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	48:27

Respondent 13

Name	Johnny
Age	24
Gender	Male
Educational Level	MBO
Nationality	Dutch
Time on Tinder	24 months
Date interview	4 th of May, 2017
Location interview	Rotterdam
Length interview	48:25