

Women on Tinder prefer highly educated men

August 1 2019



Credit: CC0 Public Domain

A belief among many is that women have a higher preference for

education level and earnings potential in a potential partner while men have a higher preference for physical attractiveness. But is there any evidence for this belief in 2019? And is this sex difference in preferences present in online dating? Researchers from Ghent University went undercover on the popular dating app Tinder to answer these questions.

In their study, 3,600 real Tinder users in Ghent, Leuven, and Bruges (three of the biggest cities in Flanders, Belgium), received a "right swipe"—with which interest is indicated on Tinder—by 24 fictitious profiles created by the authors of the study. These fictitious profiles differed only in their [education](#) level, which was randomly assigned to the profiles (the education levels varied from a Bachelor's degree with three years of higher education to a Master's degree with five years of higher education). By analyzing the number of times that the real Tinder users also showed interest ("swiped right") in the fictitious profiles (resulting in a "match"), the authors evaluated the extent to which men and women on Tinder take into account the education level of potential partners.

"Women on Tinder indicated interest in fictitious profiles with a Master's degree 91.4% more often compared to fictitious profiles with a Bachelor's degree, almost twice as much," reports doctoral student Brecht Neyt.

Contrarily, men on Tinder indicated interest in fictitious profiles with a Master's degree only 8.2% more often compared to fictitious profiles with a Bachelor's degree, a difference which was not statistically significant. However, the fact that men also did not disfavor women with a Master's degree (compared to women with a Bachelor's degree), is an indication that men are not intimidated by highly educated women.

"These findings are in line with previous research from evolutionary

psychology that link partner choice to reproductive success. On the one hand, men prefer women who are highly fertile, which is signaled by physical attractiveness. On the other hand, women prefer men who can (financially) provide for potential offspring, which may be signaled by a high education level," says Master's student Sarah Vandenbulcke.

Birds of a feather flock together?

The authors also examined an alternative hypothesis, namely that Tinder users have a [preference](#) for a potential partner with a similar education level compared to themselves. However, no evidence was found for this hypothesis.

"Tinder users prefer potential partners with a higher education level compared to themselves over potential partners with an equal (or lower) education level. This again is more apparent for women on Tinder compared to men on Tinder. For men, this is again an indication that they are not intimidated by higher educated women," says Professor Stijn Baert.

These findings diverge from what was found in previous research with respect to partner choice in an offline setting, where evidence has been produced for assortative mating based on education level. The authors argue that this is because in an offline setting (for example at school or in the workplace) people with similar education levels have more contact opportunities, causing them to form relationships more often. This is denoted in the literature as "search frictions." On Tinder, however, users interact with a more diversified group of people. As a result, the study was able to examine partner preferences in a setting without search frictions.

Method

The study was conducted between January 2018 and March 2018 among Tinder users aged 23 to 27. Methodologically it is similar to field experiments using fictitious resumes often used in labour economics. The randomly assigned degrees were: Bachelor in Office Management, Bachelor in Business Management, Master in Public Administration and Management, and Master in Business Engineering.

The field experiment was conducted by doctoral student Brecht Neyt and Master's student Sarah Vandebulcke, under supervision of professor Stijn Baert. Despite the enormous popularity of the [dating](#) app Tinder, to the extent of the authors' knowledge this is the first study worldwide to investigate determinants of success on Tinder. The study was approved by the Ethical Committee of Ghent University.

Provided by Ghent University

Citation: Women on Tinder prefer highly educated men (2019, August 1) retrieved 12 May 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2019-08-women-tinder-highly-men.html>

This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.