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Goffman's On Grindr?: Presentation of Self Among Nonbinary Users

by

Samuel Timothy Hammer

Under the Direction of Deirdre Oakley, PhD

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

Master of Arts

in the College of Arts and Sciences

Georgia State University

2022

## ABSTRACT

In the 2000s, dating applications were created on and for mobile devices, including Grindr in 2008 (Grindr, 2015). Previous research on Grindr has primarily focused on users who are cisgender gay men. Now that Grindr proclaims itself a “queer” networking space, research on other LGBTQ+ populations who use the application has increased. Still, nonbinary people’s identities and experiences remain understudied. I expand Goffman’s conceptualization of self-presentation to the virtual landscape of Grindr. Specifically, I consider the implication of impression management and stigma on the self-presentation of nonbinary people. I perform a content analysis on the individual profiles of nonbinary users, including visual (pictures) and textual (autobiographical) data. This thesis illuminates the lived experiences of nonbinary users navigating a dating application rooted in homonormativity, monosexuality, and the gender binary.

INDEX WORDS: Nonbinary; Hook-Up Apps; Grindr; Presentation of Self; Transnormativity

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2022

Goffman's on Grindr?: Presentation of Self Among Nonbinary Users

by

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May 2022

## **DEDICATION**

To the Hammer 5. To Mimi and Papa who did not get to see me finish. To my Baby Love. To the West Coast girls – miss you; to the Southern girls – thanks for welcoming me. To the Queers, Freaks, Rejects, and Rabblrouers. To those who do not fit into society's boxes. To leaving academia once and for all.

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For my own sanity, I was forced to finish with my circle small. Tyler McCoy Gay, a colleague turned best friend; I was lucky enough to meet you through this graduate program. Deirdre Oakley, I am indebted to your mentorship, advice, support in my time of need, and just getting me to finish this damn thesis. Desmond Goss, physical interaction did not define our professional relationship (thanks COVID) but still I am unable to properly express my gratitude for everything you have done. Of course, thank you Wendy Simonds for your leadership in the department and your straightforward approach. Really, thank you to all the faculty that touched my journey in this program but particularly Erin Ruel and Maura Ryan. Thank you to my students: I have learned so much from y'all. To the Sociology Graduate Student Cohort of Fall 2019 - baddies, all of you. We really tried to make a change despite all the trauma. Thank you for the last 2.5 years, and good luck navigating the Ivory Tower.

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Throughout the thesis I use various key terms related to this research; I list definitions in Appendix A.<sup>i</sup>

## 1 INTRODUCTION

Online dating is a contemporary networking and matchmaking practice that has existed in one form or another throughout history (Miles, 2020). Before the internet, developing relationships with other human beings, regardless of intention, required physically navigating various social spaces. Thanks to the Internet and technological advances beginning in the 1990s, other forms of networking have blossomed. This increase in online interaction has led to the creation of entire networking websites and mobile-device applications designed for specific purposes like dating, romance, and sex. Online dating has flourished since the 1990s. Forums and web pages created for specific demographic groups provide space and permission for people to engage in new forms of human interaction in the virtual world (Gudelunas, 2012; Miles, 2020). For sexual and gender minorities, this avenue opened a world of curated and organized interactions and pleasure that was not afforded them before (Masullo and Coppola, 2021).

Navigating public spaces that support dating, romance, and sex can be incredibly dangerous for gender/sexual minorities and, at points in this country's history, illegal. According to Pew Research Center (2020), gender/sexual minorities report higher levels of harassment online than cisgender, heterosexual people. This harassment includes sexually explicit messages or images people did not request (56% vs 32%), continued contact with someone even after they said they were not interested (48% vs 35%), offensive names and slurs (41% vs 25%), and threats of physical harm (17% vs 7%). Despite this harassment, LGBTQ+ people were quick to flock to online networking for community and social interaction, including dating, romance, and sex (Gudelunas, 2012). Queer people disproportionately used online networking (for dating and more) than straight or cisgender people, and this trend has continued (Pew Research Center, 2020). Notably, 55%–75% of LGBTQ+ people in the United States reported using online dating

applications to find partners, with 28% of LGBTQ+ having found their current partner online (Pew Research Center, 2020); in contrast, of straight or cisgender people, about a third use dating apps to find partners, with about 11% actually finding their current partner online.

In the 2000s, after the creation of smartphones, developers created dating applications for mobile devices including Grindr in 2008 (Grindr, 2013; Grindr, 2015). This innovation brought an expedited world of online dating and consensual sex to more people (primarily men who seek sex with men) than ever before (Grindr, 2013; Grindr, 2015). LGBTQ+ people continued to use these options for networking and dating but quickly came to realize that these virtual spaces were not designed to be inclusive of all gender identities (Anderson et al., 2018; Chan, 2018; Conner, 2019). These applications rely on algorithms (David and Cambre, 2016; Grindr, 2013; Grindr, 2015) that replicate the gender binary to function (Conner, 2019; David and Cambre, 2016; Masullo and Coppola, 2021).

### **Purpose**

Many LGBTQ+ people report a myriad of experiences such as discomfort, joy, tension, pleasure, and violence when engaged in online dating (Chan, 2018; Masullo and Coppola, 2021; zamantakis, 2018). In addition, nonbinary people have been excluded generally and systemically in research on gender and sexuality, even queerness (zamantakis, 2018). The purpose of this thesis is to examine how nonbinary people navigate and negotiate online dating.

Surprisingly and fortunately, the Williams Institute provides data about who nonbinary people are in the United States. Of all LGBTQ+ people, 11% or 1.2 million are nonbinary (Wilson and Meyer, 2021). Nonbinary people between the ages of 18-29 make up 76% of the population (Wilson and Meyer, 2021). Apparently, 31% of nonbinary individuals live in the West; 16% live in the Midwest; 25% live in the Northeast; 27% live in the South; and 88% of



respondents in the William's dataset reside in urban areas, regardless of geographic area (Wilson and Meyer, 2021). Furthermore, the data suggests there is a spectrum of sexual orientation for nonbinary people: 31% queer; 17% pansexual; 17% bisexual; 14% asexual; 10% gay; 6% lesbian; 3% same-gender loving; and 2% another identity (Wilson and Meyer, 2021). The racial demographics of nonbinary people were also notable: of the respondents, 58.9% were white, 16.7% were multiracial, 15.6% were Latinx, and 8.9% were Black (Wilson and Meyer, 2021). In sum, the majority, about 75%, of nonbinary individuals in the United States are under the age 29, urban, and white (Wilson and Meyer, 2021).

I analyzed Grindr profiles in a Southern metropolitan area that has a very high proportion of people of color and ensured a racially diverse sample for my study. Studies on queer people generally tend to focus on white cisgender people in the west and northeast regions of the United States (Moore, 2018). People of color who use Grindr (or other dating apps) often report experiences of racism in several forms, including exclusion, isolation, fetishization, hyperfeminization, hypermasculinization, and hypersexualization (Chan, 2018; Conner, 2019).

I ask, how is this population resisting, rejecting, and participating in cishomo- and heteronormativity? This project contributes new and much-needed research on nonbinary people's experiences concerning dating, romance, and sex in an increasingly online dating world. Generally, studies of transness and queerness have often led to unique knowledge production concerning the general understanding of gender, sexuality, and identity, as well as new critiques of the gender binary and essentialized sexuality (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018). For example, Enguix and Gómez-Narváez (2018) argued that transmasculine expressions of masculinity problematize existing notions of intimacy and C. J. Pascoe (2018) argued that considering queer identities helps better inform quantitative research practices.

Currently, many dating apps structure themselves with strict gendered choices that limit sexual and romantic networking for nonbinary people. This study considers how nonbinary people navigate Grindr, which was designed by and for cisgender gay men. Grindr might be one of most notorious and efficient dating apps, as people of all genders and sexualities flock to it to find casual sex. However, nonbinary people searching Grindr profiles meet structural and cultural barriers because they do not identify with the gender binary. The growing presence of nonbinary people in monosexual—that is, heterosexual or homosexual—spaces (virtual or physical) forces people to grapple with their own gender and sexual logics (Grindr, 2013; Grindr, 2015). Although not a focus of this study, the question remains how gays, lesbians, and even bisexuals make sense of nonbinary people in their romantic and sexual networks. However, my goal is to understand how nonbinary people present themselves in their online profiles on Grindr to position themselves in the gender binary logic and culture of monosexuality.

Because studies on gender do not always include sex or sexuality, I provide a theoretical framing in three distinct but related parts: Dating apps Culture, (Binary) Gender and (Mono) Sexuality, and (Virtual) Presentation of Self. I conduct a content analysis of dating profiles on Grindr for nonbinary users. I collected textual and visual data to ensure a more well-rounded content analysis. Analyzing dating profiles in their “natural habitat” to elicit an understanding of the presentation of self on Grindr allowed me to avoid behavioral changes in research participants that occur when they know they are being “watched” or evaluated (Adair, 1984; Oswald, Sherratt, and Smith, 2014). Although interviewing and surveying are important research methods, I consciously and unconsciously curated all responses from participants for the audience. In some ways, mostly due to refusing to acknowledge the effect and consequences of

researcher presence, modified behavior or impression management can taint research, data, and analysis (Adair, 1984; Oswald, Sherratt, and Smith, 2014).

A content analysis of nonbinary users' profiles from any dating app will not be a representative sample of the entire population under study. By using a purposive sampling design (Etikan et al., 2016; Sharma, 2016), I was able to systematically choose profiles to ensure I maintained a rich, meaningful, and diverse sample. Although I focus on nonbinary users' self-described understandings of their own presentation, I use a literature review of prior scholarship on dating culture, gender and sexuality, and Erving Goffman's presentation of self. The considerations surrounding gender and sexuality (Connell, 1987; Masullo and Coppola, 2021; Conner, 2019; zamantakis, 2018), as well as dating culture (Bronksi, 2011; David and Cambre, 2016; Richters, 2001) provide much needed context regarding assumed information for the study. Further, the extensions of Goffman (1959; 1963) and Fadzil and Hamid's (2020) visual analysis provided necessary frameworks to consolidate and analyze the collected data in a succinct, meaningful way.

## **Grindr**

Grindr is "a geolocation-based social networking application for the LGBTQ+ and broader community" (Grindr, 2015, p. 1). Colloquially, Grindr is a "hook-up" app (Anderson et al., 2018). A "hook-up" app refers to the structure and general design, as well as the intentions and motivations of users. A "user" refers to the account in which a profile is curated. Users can be individuals or groups of people. For example, existing monogamous couples, those in polyamorous relationships, or groups of friends looking for additional partners can be a single "user." Sometimes derogatorily considered a "meat market" (Bonner-Thompson, 2017) or a "digital bath house" (Conner, 2019), Grindr is designed to expedite people linking with others

for casual sex, and the majority of users accept and participate in a highly sexualized network. Researchers suggested a disconnection exists between Grindr's goals as a place for LGBTQ+ people and the actual lived experience of people who use the app (Conner, 2019). For example, forms of racism and HIV stigmatization often put users in a position where they experience discriminatory behaviors from others that negatively affect their ability to achieve the noted goals. Subsequently, the claim that Grindr might be a superior substitute for traditional gay spaces is called into question, particularly for marginalized users (Conner, 2019). Nuanced and varied experiences, from networking for friends to finding a one-night interaction, are possible, of course (Chan, 2018). Some conceptualize Grindr as a hybrid virtual space, due to the geolocation features that bridge the physical world in a way that was not possible before (Miles, 2020). Cruising is now available at the swipe of a finger and no longer must one be in a gay neighborhood, a public bathroom, park, or library to engage in casual sex (Humphreys, 1970). Any bar, sports game, office area, or place that appears unwelcoming to LGBTQ+ people can be transformed into a queer, sexually charged, virtual underground that connects those with shared intentions (Miles, 2020). What does this mean for nonbinary people who find themselves on an app that has garnered a reputation for curating to the culture and experiences of men seeking sex with men?

Grindr does not officially advertise itself as a space for casual sex, but the structure and logistics facilitate an expedited process for exactly that. Alongside the option to anonymize oneself, the culture of casual sex made the app globally popular (Chan, 2018; Conner, 2019; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020). Grindr accomplished notoriety with several structural features. First, Grindr allows users to chat with others in a user's approximate location by sending texts, images, videos, and voice (Grindr, 2015). Individuals can broadcast their location; Grindr collects this

information and uses it to arrange the cascading grid for to each user's unique location (Grindr, 2015). Second, users can select any profile of another in the available (about 100 profiles for the free version) grid to view a person's information, send a message, or simply "tap" another user (Grindr, 2015). A Grindr profile "includes the headline (or the username of the profiles), previously provided descriptive statistics (e.g., age, ethnicity, or body type), and an open-ended and optional "About me" section for users to write about themselves, their location, preferred activities and interests, and music, movie and, books preferences (Fadzil and Hamid, 2020, p. 7). Also, tapping is a small, indiscrete identifier of interest, allowing for the reciprocal engagement or a soft rejection from the "tapped" person (Grindr, 2015). Again, this is truly an expedited form of communication for casual sex; this interaction can be based solely on profile information (Anderson et al., 2018; Fitzpatrick, Birnholtz, and Brubaker, 2015). One of the most important aspects of Grindr is the personal biographic identifiers that are coupled with the "filter" feature. Because this app was created by and for gay men, the demographic characteristics follow characteristics of gay culture (Anderson et al., 2018; Grindr, 2015). Aspects of gay culture are built into the application: identifying with a sexual position, a "tribe," a focus on the body and physical attributes, a focus on HIV/AIDS status and knowledge, antivagina discourses, femmephobia, ageism, sexualized racism, and a subculture of discrete, closeted, hypermasculine homosexual behavior (Anderson et al., 2018; Conner, 2019; Miles, 2020; Tharrett, 2016; Whalen, 2017).

In addition to the proliferation of these cultural characteristics and identifiers, Grindr allows users to "filter" (Tharrett, 2016) their grid to aid in identifying people with whom they may wish to interact. An individual user can curate an ideal "type" from what they see based on a set age limit (18–35, no older than 50, looking for similar ages, etc.), based on a tribe identifier

like Jock (only jocks, no jocks, etc.), or based on including or excluding certain sexual positions (top, bottom, versatile, etc.; Grindr 2015). The filter feature provides precedent for exclusion based on a variety of characteristics, however, people of color and HIV+ people organized enough pressure on Grindr to disallow the ability to filter race and serostatus to mitigate the ongoing discrimination. Previously mentioned filters remain as well as whether the profile has a face picture or the individual user is currently online. Here, we can see the interplay of the general cultural ideals of various gay communities; the structural reinforcement can create a type of “application culture” (Conner, 2019; Miles, 2020; Shield, 2018).

Gay men have historically used subcultural codes, from handkerchiefs to identify their “tribe,” to earrings, language, and slang to “match” with others in public (Miles, 2020). They have also historically used high frequency, public areas from bathrooms and parks to airports and libraries as settings for sexual encounters. Now, the ways in which actors become identified in the subculture are translated, reshaped, and rejected by users in a virtual world that prioritizes sex as a primary motivator for interaction (Kane, 2015). Additionally, the setting of Grindr acts as a framing device that primes users to consider sex as a casual encounter (Kane, 2015). These aspects, considered together alongside gay cultural characteristics, signify a type of “application culture.”

Recently, Grindr began providing users with the option to identify themselves with either an original gender label created by the individual or with an expansive list of gender identity terms from which the individual can choose (Grindr, 2015). Some users claim this is proof of some progress and, regardless of impact, many appreciate the baseline effort. A new feature for gender identity now explicitly invites various queer people to engage with the application. Now, instead of covertly navigating or having to awkwardly reveal their sexuality in every social

interaction with the full assumption of gender-binary ideology (Grindr, 2015), nonbinary people can expect smoother social interactions. Although an expansive list of identity options exists<sup>1</sup>, the rest of the structure of Grindr remains largely the same in cultural characteristics (for example, “tribes” or “tags”) embedded in the application.

When Grindr premiered in 2008, cisgender men who have sex with men looked for romance, dating, sex, and more, as advertised. Soon thereafter, more and more trans women became active users of the application in search of cisgender men who might be interested in them sexually or romantically, as well as other transgender women (Shield, 2018). Transgender men were slower to integrate into the application’s users and culture because of the vaginophobic ideologies and general feelings of transphobia prevalent in cisgender gay culture (Enquix and Gomez-Narvaez, 2018). Today, we see many iterations of gender identity on the app, including nonbinary and people. Ultimately, the diversifying user population, as well as Grindr (2015), argue that currently the culture and structural design of the application is steadily moving toward a unique queer space where LGBTQ+ people can come in search of romance, dating, sex, and more with cisgender men and other queer people.

---

<sup>1</sup> “Man; Cis Man; Trans Man; “Custom” Man; Woman; Cis Woman; Trans Woman; “Custom” Woman; Nonbinary; Nonconforming; Queer; Crossdresser; and “Custom” Nonbinary.

## 2 LITERATURE REVIEW

This thesis contributes to growing bodies of literature in several areas: gender and sexuality, dating and a hook-up culture, and the virtual presentation of self. Sociological scholarship in general routinely excludes LGBTQ+ individuals and specifically in the aforementioned areas of research (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018). Despite a fair increase over the last few decades, especially following legalization on same-gender marriage, nonbinary people and their lived experiences are still underresearched and undertheorized. This is particularly true with consideration of how nonbinary people navigate a world of binarized gender. The focus of this project is on the virtual presentation of self of nonbinary people on Grindr and potentially other dating/networking applications. As more people identify with nonbinary gender and as positive societal understandings of nonbinary people become more widespread, this kind of research will begin to offer some insight into their lived experiences.

### **(Binary) Gender and (Mono-) Sexuality**

Researchers from various disciplines have studied the gender binary, its consequences, and how people navigate it. Few have considered the particular ways in which individuals who identify as nonbinary navigate the binary (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018; MacLeod and McArthur, 2019; zamantakis, 2018). The social system and all its facets in the United States are based on the gender binary (Connell, 1987), so understanding how nonbinary people navigate institutions and social interactions is incredibly important.

The scholarship on nonbinary experiences and identity should include hook-up culture and the dating applications they use. Gay or straight, the culture around romance, dating, and sex is rooted in gender binary ideology (Connell, 1987; Fullick, 2013). Essentialized notions of man and woman are built into the discourse and culture of romance, dating, and sex (Connell, 1987;



Fullick, 2013; zamantakis, 2018). People who experience/identify with a sexuality that is not monosexual still are forced into gender-binary logic by the structure of dating applications (David and Cambre, 2016; Fullick, 2013; MacLeod and McArthur, 2019; Masullo and Coppola, 2021). Individuals are bound by institutionalized gendered expectations and how the nature of the gender binary informs the cultural understanding of romance, dating, and sex (Connell, 1987; Fullick, 2013; zamantakis, 2018). Nonbinary people inherently problematize the logic of the gender binary while facing the tension in social interactions created by institutions (Richards and Bouman, 2016; zamantakis, 2018). Some queer scholars think this tension is an integral moment in the research process that will offer unique insights, data, and theoretical implications regarding gender and sexuality (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018). The question remains: How do nonbinary people navigate social contexts where they are inundated with gender-binary ideology?

Although some researchers (Enquix and Gómez-Narváez, 2018; Jones, 2022; Masullo and Coppola, 2021; zamantakis, 2018) have investigated transgender women and men in various social contexts, nonbinary people have been left out of most research, especially in sex/sexuality studies (Bronski, 2011; Richards and Bouman, 2016). Sex research tends to focus on cisgender gay and straight populations, but research on trans people is so often completed in only heterosexual or homonormative contexts (Jones, 2022); such research contributes to upholding gender binary logic. Many studies about Grindr focus on homonormative culture, femmephobia, the body, closeted and DL culture, and how trans women navigate these in the app (Conner, 2019; Miller, 2015; Whalen, 2017). Increasingly, research on trans men and Grindr is taking place, as well (Enquix and Gomez-Narvaez, 2018).

I use the term monosexuality because it emphasizes the either–or binary logic that exists in sexuality and gender (Connell, 1987; Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018; zamantakis, 2018). Although more possible expressions of sexuality exist, sexuality is expressed through gender. Although sexuality is important in people networking for sex and romance, gender is the primary categorizing factor for social interactions in this case. Dating applications force users to navigate the apps' cultural and algorithmic binary by choosing a gender to identify oneself. This choice informs how others see and treat a person through the applications (David and Cambre, 2016). Even though bisexual or queer folks may want to see more than one gender, they are forced to use binary logic, which means they are also seen through the eyes of the algorithm and other users as a man or woman. The onus is on an individual's gender, leaving nonbinary people in an uneasy predicament.

What are the implications for nonbinary people using a dating application that assumes either heterosexuality or homosexuality? If most users' understanding of themselves as gay or bi men rests on a definition given to them by the gender binary, this ensures a sort of tension in social interactions. Some researchers suggested that cisgender people must grapple with the integration of gender-minority users, and that nonbinary people tend to explain their presence or describe their identity (Lomardi, 2018; Conner, 2019; Masullo and Coppola, 2021; zamantakis, 2018). Grindr embeds monosexuality through the presumption that users identify with cisgender gay culture. If users are bisexual, they do not acknowledge sexual activity that includes women. Transgender women, transgender men, and nonbinary people on Grindr inherently reject the assumption of monosexuality and all users must reevaluate the shared culture and how they interact with others. Grindr's recent addition of the "trans" category/filter is indicative of the changes to the user base (Grindr, 2013; 2015). Grindr developers acknowledged that people

other than cisgender gay men were using the application in increasing numbers and added the necessary identifiers. Still, even if nonbinary users can check the appropriate identifier, they frequently need to also explain why they are there and who they are in relation to others (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018; Conner, 2019; Enquix and Gomez-Narvaez, 2018; Masullo and Coppola, 2021; zamantakis, 2018).

### **Dating Apps and Hook-Up Culture**

Different iterations of what can be termed as “casual sex” have existed throughout history (Richters, 2001). Currently, a renaissance of sorts emerges through the massive technological revolution of the 21st century. The Internet has radically changed the way humans interact with each other on- and offline, especially regarding romance, dating, and sex (Gottschalk and Whitmer, 2016). In the preceding decades, some forms of casual sex were conducted in common public spaces like bathrooms, libraries, and parks, or underground subcultures (Bronski, 2011; Humphreys, 1970). “The Personals” section of newspapers or magazines was typically at the end where people placed coded ads to arrange hook ups. Today, the same sort of structure exists primarily in online formats like web postings, forums, apps, and social media (Bronski, 2011). An increasing number of people are meeting their partners, romantic or purely for casual sexual—in an online format. Additionally, much of the correspondence between potential partners occurs online (virtually) nowadays, even if folks meet initially in person. This is especially true for queer people, with upwards of 70% of LGBTQ+ people finding partners virtually (Pew Research Center, 2020; Miles, 2020).

The “profile” that allows users to present themselves to others is standard throughout many virtual media, but some differences exist across apps, especially when considering demographic-specific spaces. Some apps use a “swipe-and-match” feature, where users receive a

list of profiles, one-by-one, based on criteria like geographic proximity or gender identity.

Engagement refers to swiping left or right on a screen; a swipe left means not interested whereas a swipe right expresses interest. A mutual swipe right between two profiles results in a match.

Those who match can engage in text communication through a chat feature on the app.

Grindr uses a different structure, listing profiles all at once in a cascading-grid format, based on geographic proximity, allowing individuals to scroll through. Grindr uses and needs no match feature. Anyone can click on any profile and engage in the virtual chat feature with that user (or users). Additionally, search features can expedite finding (a) mutually interested partner(s). Grindr includes many different demographic characteristics or cultural identifiers for users to include in their search. These design and structure choices reflect the intentions of the initial creators. For example, Grindr offers the option to identify one's motivations for social interaction through the "expectations" part of the profile. Some people invest in romantic, long-term connections for potential matches, whereas Grindr and others invest in expediting various types of casual encounters.

However, the apps are structured with gender-binary logic in the information given on the app and how the algorithm identifies a user. For example, apps with a swipe-and-match feature code gender as binary, only allowing "man" and "woman" (David and Cambre, 2016). Even if an app's creators allow users to self-identify with any gender or sexuality, the app continues to use the binary-coded algorithm used for matching users (David and Cambre, 2016; Grindr, 2013; Grindr, 2015). The developers have programmed the structure of these apps and their algorithms to privilege the cisgender and heteronormative culture (Chan, 2018; Conner, 2019; David and Cambre, 2016; Masullo and Coppola, 2021).

**(Virtual) Presentation of Self**

In *The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life*, Erving Goffman (1959) articulated a dramaturgical theory of self-presentation in which people construct and maintain their image through social interaction. Dramaturgy refers to a metaphorical mode of analysis that frames social interaction as a type of “theater” in which “actors” use “equipment” to perform on a “stage” to present themselves to the “audience.” Actors are simply individuals performing; equipment is the various social tools people use to convey meaning through their appearance; the stage refers to the setting; and the audience is the people watching and readying themselves to become actors. Individuals maintain their identity through mediated social interaction and effortful action spent to shape others’ impressions. Self-presentation is thus an everchanging product contingent on the setting and audience reception of the performance (Goffman 1959).

Following Goffman (1959; 1963), sociologists completed a great deal of research on the presentation of self. Since the founding of the Internet, a new iteration of self-presentation research has bloomed. To date, various altered conceptualizations of the backstage and frontstage show how people navigate a virtual world (Birnholtz et al., 2014; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Miller, 2015). According to Goffman (1959; 1963), people perform the reiterative process of social interaction as an actor or audience member in the frontstage. The backstage is the “hidden” setting in which people learn new information about their identity, roles, expectations, and stigma and practice their performances for the frontstage (Goffman 1959; 1963). However, Goffman could not foresee the implications of a virtual presentation of self. A focus on the ability of individuals to curate a sense of self and presentation of self through the structures of the Internet is clear in the literature (Birnholtz et al., 2014; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Miller,

2015). The way individuals navigate through online spaces creates methodological and theoretical implications for how potential researchers can conduct dramaturgical analysis.

The key concept of impression management (which Goffman suggests is the basis for all human interaction) becomes incredibly palpable in online interaction generally, but particularly when in spaces like social-networking applications that use the profile feature (Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbot, 2015; Chan, 2016; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019). In face-to-face interaction, a person may experience difficulty to “present one’s identity in such a way as to be appropriate for all individuals who might become the audience of the user’s performance” (Goffman, 1959), but in online interaction this effect can multiply. If the general user expects to find other men who are seeking sex with men, self-presentation in profiles could be a huge point of contention for nonbinary people navigating the application. Individuals attempt to present their “idealized” selves by exaggerating what might be considered positive aspects and suppressing what might be considered negative (Goffman, 1959). Nonbinary people who navigate Grindr are required to “correctly interpret situations, to create an acceptable online identity, and to be able to control the impression that their behavior makes” (Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbot, 2015; Chan, 2016; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019, p. 248). How might nonbinary actors try to fulfill the expectations of the audience? To reiterate, “[Grindr] is an over exaggeration in the presentation of self because the general interaction process of acting, reacting, self-monitoring, and interpretation of feedback given by others is sped up” (Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbot, 2015; Chan, 2016; Conner, 2019, p. 402; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019). How do nonbinary people present themselves to others when the structure and culture of Grindr presupposes maleness, the male body, people with penises, the desires of men, and those who seek sex with men?

Conceptualizations of the frontstage or backstage, impression management, and identity are in question. In one study, researchers suggested that an online format clarifies how people engage in Goffman's understanding of the presentation of self (1959; 1963) and create unique forms of social interaction (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). Understanding these reconceptualizations is important in uncovering how nonbinary people navigate sexual and romantic networks curated by and for cisgender men who seek sex with men, as well as how it affects their identities. Potentially, the existence of profiles that allow users to display themselves virtually where others can choose whether to engage with them might enable nonbinary people to be part of this queer space in ways that were not possible before (Bronski, 2011; Miles, 2020).

Although Goffman (1959; 1963) articulated a type of "theater" performed by all people engaging in face-to-face social interaction, what does this mean for virtual spaces? Other research conducted on impression management in an online format extended the scope of the dramaturgical analysis that Goffman (1959; 1963) described (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Gottschalk and Whitmer, 2016; Hogan, 2010; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019; Miller, 2015). These researchers focused on dating application profiles, where a person offers a highly selective, curated presentation of themselves. Here, virtual impression management leads to a selective and performative presentation of self that could be unique to online communication and interaction due to the suspended-in-time and nonphysical nature of profiles (Hogan, 2010). Users can curate and refine the information in their profiles as much as they want, without the consequences that would inevitably occur in face-to-face interaction. The ability to manage their impression for others constantly in real time provides users with more control than they would have in person, thus making virtual interaction between profiles attractive to many people (Hogan, 2010). Many studies on Grindr focus on how cisgender gay

men present themselves through their profile curation (Chan, 2016; Conner, 2019; Enguix and Gómez-Narváez, 2018; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Lai, 2016; Miller, 2015 and 2018; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019; Whalen, 2017). This study is the first to analyze the presentation of self of nonbinary people on Grindr, in general.



### 3 THEORETICAL FRAMING

#### **Goffman's Self-Presentation and Impression Management**

Although Erving Goffman did not live through the 21st-century technological boom, he still provided a succinct framework for how to study social interaction. Others have extended the *Presentation of Self in Everyday Life* (1959) and *Stigma* (1963) to the virtual world (Anderson et al., 2018; Birnholtz et al., 2014; Chan, 2016; Duguay, 2017; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Gudelunas, 2012; Miller, 2015; Whalen, 2017). Researchers have modified and criticized Goffman's dramaturgical analysis in theoretically defining online interaction (Bullingham and Vasconcelos, 2013). Here, I use Goffman's understanding of self-presentation and impression management to analyze dating profiles. What types of information are nonbinary individuals offering, choosing to withhold, or using to posture in their online profiles? I analyze the frontstage of virtual social interaction, that is, the content within profiles. Profiles are the frontstage and chatting or interacting can be considered the backstage. When interacting on the frontstage, "actors" use expressive "tools" to: convey meaning, manage how others view them, and portray an idealized "self." The following questions inform my research agenda: How does the structure of Grindr, as well as cultural (mis)understandings about LGBTQ+ people, affect the self-presentation of nonbinary users? What does impression management look like for nonbinary people on Grindr?

Dramaturgy in sociological studies has led to a contemporary shift in several subtopics in the discipline, gender and sexuality being two of them. Before and after Goffman, life-as-theater frameworks have proved incredibly useful and meaningful in the study of gender and sexuality. Thus, it is fruitful to analyze the performance of nonbinary people's gender and sexuality generally, especially considering the setting of Grindr.

**From Goffman to Grindr: Reconceptualizing Goffman in the Virtual World**

For this investigation, I reconceptualized and operationalized Goffman's ideas in a virtual online setting, taking viewpoints from several researchers. Table 1.1 illustrates this reconceptualization and operationalization. Goffman used the term "façade" (1959; 1963) to express an individual's unique ways of self-presentation and impression management that people employ to curate their social self. This façade had three parts: (a) a "social front" (the setting: i.e., a home, or in this case, a location-based dating application [Merunková and Šlerka, 2019]) in which the actor has manipulated in ways that serve their idealized self; (b) a "personal front" that can be considered the individual's appearance (Goffman, 1959; 1963); and (c) a "personal façade," considered the ways an individual interacts with other people. The first two parts are my focus in this study, as understanding the personal façades is contingent on researching the interaction between users. Merunková and Šlerka (2019) considered the "façade" a central concept in their analysis of online social networks, and as such will be the focus of this project. I consider and investigate the profiles of individual users as a medium of façade. The curation of the textual and visual elements of Grindr profiles by nonbinary actors is the object of study.

In addition, the results of the analysis of nonbinary people's Grindr profiles elucidates the ways individuals "give off" expressions to others. By extending Fadzil and Hamid's (2020) theoretical framework of visual analysis to Grindr profiles pictures, I determined the appropriate themes associated with how nonbinary people involuntarily convey meaning and manage their impressions to other users. For Goffman, expressions given off are inherently voluntary, and Fadzil and Hamid articulated how visual analysis of profile pictures can provide insight on what these involuntary expressions look like on Grindr.

[F]raming is the core for the visual framing theory that in accordance with [Goffman] and refers to how the organization of a message influences perceptions on what is happening which also draws some certainty of reality whilst concealing others, that is very applicable to the culture and intentions behind the act of taking a selfie or pictures. (Fadzil and Hamid, 2020, p. 5).

*Table 1.1 Reconceptualizing Goffman in the Virtual World*

<i>Components of Goffman</i>	<i>Original Goffman Description</i>	<i>Virtually Applied Goffman</i>
<b>Façade</b>	Unique individualized self-presentation and impression management	Grindr profiles
Social Front	Dramaturgical stage	Grindr
Personal Front	Individual appearance mediated by the setting	Themes from visual data (Fadzil and Hamid 2020)
Personal Façade	Individual interaction mediated by the setting	Individual interaction mediated by Grindr features, application culture, etc.; not the scope of this study
<b>Expressive Equipment/Expressions</b>	Modes and tools of social interaction in relation to self-presentation and impression management	The tools and styles of interaction available to users on Grindr
Given	Explicit verbal communication	Demographic info; structured by Grindr filters, features, etc.
Given Off	Implicit nonverbal/textual communication	Information involuntarily provided throughout the profile; coded themes from textual and visual data
<b>Dramaturgical Stage</b>	Setting	The social-structural setting and context of Grindr
Front	The public setting in which people navigate the reiterative process of social interaction as an actor or audience member	Public grid that displays all profiles for people to view and interact
Back	The “hidden” setting from which people learn new information about their identity, roles, expectations, and stigma. and practice their performances for the frontstage	Chat feature; Offline socialization and reflection; not a scope of this study

As noted by Fadzil and Hamid (2020), pictures are recognized as visual forms of communication, framed to highlight very selective content by the individuals taking them, they can convince viewers that they are witnessing truth in the form of the photographers' mediated realities and point of view. (p. 5)

Fadzil and Hamid's (2020) framework highlighted Clothing and Nudity, Social Distance, Posing, Visual Modality (cropping, lighting, and filters), and Gender Presentation or Expression. These themes provide a basis for which given expressions can be identified in an online format like Grindr (see Table 1.2). Although researchers have used this framework to analyze men who seek sex with men, my application of this theory toward nonbinary people's experiences on Grindr is groundbreaking.

"Expressive equipment"—tools of social interaction—manifests differently between face-to-face and online interaction. Equipment refers to the setting in which the interaction occurs and to the items intimately related to the performer such as bodily gestures, size, posture, and appearance, facial expressions, speech patterns, race and ethnicity, age, gender, clothing, and occupation (Goffman, 1959). Although many of the same characteristics of social interaction replicate themselves in virtual spaces, some are amplified, quieted, or transformed. For example, Goffman stated that actors engage in two types of activity that dictate the capacity to curate impressions and, potentially, an "idealized" self (Goffman, 1959; 1963). This activity can be called expressions *given* and *given off*. Expressions given are "verbal symbols that were used to transmit information and when trying to make a certain impression" and expressions given off are "non-verbal involuntary features such as tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, proxemics" (Merunková and Šlerka, 2019: p. 251).

In a virtual arena, expressions are the same as they are in person, but due to the altered nature of the online setting, how expressions manifest also changes. Many expressions Goffman considered as given off in face-to-face interactions are now structured into each Grindr profile that users can choose to provide or not (Lai, 2016). Merely replacing the adjective verbal with textual in considering expressions given does not provide theoretical consistency because the structure of profile information/façade expedites so much of the interaction process. Additionally, considering expressions given as simply those that are provided deliberately would confuse the theoretical framing here. For this research, I consider profile pictures as Personal Front, autobiographical information as part of expressions “given”, and the themes interpreted implicitly by me as expressions “given off”, as conceptualized by Goffman.

The frontstage on Grindr is the public side of the app that presents all the available profiles in the vicinity to a user (where that user's profile will show up for everyone else to see; Chan, 2016). The backstage can be considered at multiple sites (Chan, 2016). If only considering the application itself in the context of a content analysis, the chat feature is the main backstage. In contrast, if considering a larger context or the use of an interview methodology, one could identify more backstage management “in real life” from the app (Chan, 2016). Goffman (1959; 1963) also emphasized that the “self” and the performance to curate a “self” are dynamic and mediated by the context in which people find themselves. Context here refers to larger sociological structure, immediate environment, and individual identity. Chan (2016) suggested users also use the unique characteristics and interface of social-networking apps like Grindr to curate or enhance their self-presentation.

Virtual spaces like Grindr have four main features: (a) editability due to the asynchronous nature; (b) the ability to curate or refine profiles and send messages without

creating social awkwardness while interacting in real time; (c) the ability to hide or mitigate many undesirable involuntary cues and subsequently highlight positive cues; and (d) the ability for users to concentrate their efforts on communication only, due to a highly manufactured environment (Chan, 2016). As a consequence, online social-networking apps encourage highly selective self-presentation for users to take impression management of the curated, idealized self to another level. For nonbinary people navigating a space that is not welcoming or inclusive, considering these features of Grindr can be a useful frame to understand their experiences.

Impression management (which Goffman [1959; 1963] suggested is the basis for all human interaction) becomes particularly palpable when in virtual spaces like social-networking apps that use the profile feature where impression management is key (Hogan, 2010). In face-to-face interaction, it can be difficult to “present one’s identity in such a way as to be appropriate for all individuals who might become the audience of the user’s performance” (Merunková and Šlerka, 2019: p. 249), but in online interaction, this effect can multiply. This could be a major point of contention for nonbinary people navigating the app. Individuals attempt to present their “idealized” selves by exaggerating what might be considered positive aspects and suppressing what might be considered negative (Goffman, 1959; 1963).

Nonbinary people who navigate Grindr are required to “correctly interpret situations, to create an acceptable online identity, and to be able to control the impression that their behavior makes” (Blackwell, Birnholtz, and Abbot, 2015; Chan, 2016; Goffman, 1959 and 1963; Merunková and Šlerka, 2019: p. 248). How might nonbinary actors try to fulfill the expectations of the audience? To reiterate, “[Grindr] is an overexaggeration in the presentation of self because the general interaction process of acting, reacting, self-monitoring, and interpretation of feedback given by others is sped up” (Conner, 2019: p. 402). How do nonbinary people present themselves

to others when the structure and culture of Grindr presupposes cisness, maleness, and homosexual desire?

#### 4 DATA AND METHODS

My research question is, succinctly, how does a Goffmanian approach to social interaction inform an understanding of nonbinary peoples' self-presentation on Grindr profiles? In other words, what sorts of varied presentations, or façades, are nonbinary people giving and relating in their profiles on Grindr?

##### **Data**

I investigate how nonbinary people choose to present themselves in their dating profiles on Grindr through a content analysis. I collected 53 unique profiles with a total of 353 screenshots of all profiles. Mario Small's article on saturation provided qualitative researchers guidance on a potential answer to how many cases are needed for a study (as cited in Compton, 2018). For interviews, 30 seems have become a social fact in the academic lore (Compton, 2018). However, D'Lane Compton (2018) stated "clearly that assessments of how to draw a sample and what size the sample should be evaluated outside the context of a particular study and its goals" (p. 195). Thus, in a content analysis on nonbinary people's Grindr profiles, where users provide varying amounts of information, I was able to achieve some level of saturation with the 53 cases collected. I selected Grindr because of its popularity, the ability to conduct research without interacting with the users, and the increased use of the app by people who are not cisgender gay men (Anderson et al., 2018; Birnholtz et al., 2014; Enquix and Gomez-Narvaez, 2018; Fadzil and Hamid, 2020; Masullo and Coppola, 2021).

I accessed the research site the same way any user does: through a profile on the Grindr application on a smartphone. The sampling instrument for this study is my personal iPhone with Grindr downloaded onto it with a blank/empty profile I used to make myself invisible as a researcher. To address ethical concerns, I considered the reality that blank, faceless, or otherwise



anonymous profiles litter the application (Miller, 2015). These empty or anonymous profiles provide a norm in which it is socially unacceptable to “lurk” in general, and as a researcher. Following Laud Humphreys’ (1979) logic and justification of his study on public cruising, immersing oneself in the cultural networks and adhering to the social norms of one’s research site mitigates ethical concerns. Laud Humphrey’s research is often cited in examples of unethical research. I argue that his social position as a gay man, his considerations for the social consequences of his research subjects, and his own personal risk “illegally” engaging in ethnography demonstrate that the harsh criticisms lobbed against him misunderstand the social realities of homosexuality in the 1960s and are homophobic. I mean homophobic in a social sense and a methodological sense. Heteronormativity in society generally and research specifically frames “ethics” in a way that explicitly excludes the possibilities of doing “queer” research (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018).

To capture the data from Grindr and save it for analysis, I use the screenshot function of smartphones as a tool for collection. Searching for profiles requires each individual profile to be clicked on to identify nonbinary people’s self-described gender identity. To be included in this research, the individual must have self-identified on the dating profile as “nonbinary,” with any iteration of pronoun use acceptable. I took up to several screenshots for each profile, discerning: as many needed to capture each individual’s potential photograph album and as many needed to capture the potential biographical and demographic information for each person (ranging from two to eight screenshots). These screenshots represent the visual (pictures) and textual (biographic and demographic information) data taken from each profile. I saved each screenshot onto my smartphone, individually labeled, and then downloaded it onto a separate hard drive as a pdf file.

I conducted the initial data-collection process by using the search filter built into the application. The filter “trans” was used to quickly search the app for appropriate profiles, resulting in 20 cases from this search. According to D’Lane Compton (2018), sampling and recruitment in research benefits from multiple strategies, with useful ones not always being obvious. Consider D’Lane Compton’s (2018) experience when recruiting LGBTQ+ parents. The initial recruitment sites were LGBTQ+ parents’ groups and forums, which did provide some cases, but they ended up finding most of their sample from general parenting groups. Relying on the categorization nonbinary users as “trans” or “nonbinary” in the filter feature in the app may not provide access to the full scope of the population in question. Because nonbinary people are underrepresented on Grindr, I collected profile information of all self-identified nonbinary people I encountered on the app. Grindr profiles contain demographic, textual, and visual data. I coded demographic and written profile information separately from the visual data. Some profiles did not have photographs, whereas others had many. Blank profiles were equally meaningful; so I coded them as well. I conducted analysis on the textual and visual data using an extension of Goffman’s dramaturgical theory of self-presentation. Additionally, I extended the ideas on visual analysis of Grindr profiles from Fadzil and Hamid (2020) to assist specifically in analyzing profile pictures (see Methods, p. 38).

Grindr explicitly states in its rules that all information is public, and to expect the information to be accessed publicly by others regardless of their intentions (Grindr, 2015). However, I ensured anonymity and confidentiality of all the profiles included in my sample for ethical reasons, even though my study does not require Institutional Review Board approval. The structure and culture of Grindr assists in this endeavor, as well. Many users choose to anonymize themselves by not having profile pictures, not using real names, or providing limited information

(Lai, 2016; Whalen, 2017). I chose Grindr as my research site because most other apps require users to make a profile to explicitly “match” with others. On this app, I could remain “invisible” with the other blank profiles. By invisible, I mean my identity as a researcher was not to be known and contact with users did not occur. The gendered matching process in other apps poses a significant issue (for all researchers): how does one get a full cross-section of the nonbinary population when the profile forces you to be “seen” or “treated as” a man or woman algorithmically? The choice of methods and research site both complemented and justified each other.

## **Methods**

I collected data between the end of February 2022 and the middle of March 2022. I selected multiple sites for collection in and around the metropolitan area of Atlanta. I used three locations for data collection, chosen based on several factors: (a) proximity to the major universities; (b) high population and frequency of people in the areas; (c) areas in the city denoted as LGBTQ+ friendly; (d) time of day/night that reflected busy times of highly frequented areas; (e) location-based differences (to ensure varying ages, races, and socioeconomic statuses of the population as different demographics spread unevenly across the city); and (f) proximity to public transportation. To encourage anonymity, I do not name these locations here. The three locations are a university and business district location, another part of the city that is considered a fashionable, busy area for tourists and locals, and a more upper middle class and suburban-like area. To capture a well-rounded group of profiles, I collected data at each location twice. I collected data once at midday, between the hours of 1:30 pm and 4:30 pm on a weekday, and again between the hours of 8:30 pm and 12 am on a weekend night.

I used a purposive-sampling technique for data collection (Etikan et al., 2016; Sharma, 2016). Purposive sampling refers to subjectively choosing participants based on their presumed qualities (see Data, p. 33–34) that may be appropriate for the study (Etikan et al., 2016; Sharma, 2016). This method allows deliberate collection of information-rich cases and properly uses the resources available (Etikan et al., 2016; Sharma, 2016). For example, I used the search and filter features already built into Grindr for users to initially collect cases for the sample. Researchers have widely noted the unique sociological realities of conducting research on “hidden” or “hard-to-reach” populations (Lombardi, 2018; Moore, 2018; Pascoe, 2018). Several unique methodological issues were present: (a) Studies concerning “hidden populations” like LGBTQ+ people cannot solely rely on random sampling to collect data as it is an unreliable method (Compton, 2018); (b) The app Grindr has historically been made by and for cisgender gay men, which means most users are cisgender gay men; only random sampling for nonbinary people would provide too few cases; and (c) Although the numbers of nonbinary users have increased, the proportion of nonbinary individuals on this app is still low.

The methodological foundation undergirding my content analysis of Grindr profiles is abductive grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006; Creswell, 2012; Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). Scholarly discussion on grounded theory suggests that inductive approaches “incorporate a taken-for-granted vocabulary and discourses of positivism” (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014: 154). Deductive approaches are not able to accomplish goals of original, unbiased knowledge production (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). The researcher and participants come tainted with assumed understandings of any given phenomenon. Abductive grounded theory acknowledges the interconnection of inductive and deductive frameworks that allow researchers “to explain new...empirical data through the elaboration, modification, or combination of pre-existing

concepts” (Compton, Meadow, and Schilt, 2018; Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014: p. 154). Some qualitative scholars have curated and used a modified grounded methodology, an “abductive” approach, using the interconnection of inductive and deductive approaches that is both theoretically pragmatic to guide research and fluid to potentially new or changing themes (Thornberg and Charmaz, 2014). The abductive process includes inductive strategies that “explain new and surprising empirical data through the elaboration, modification, or combination of pre-existing concepts.” (Kelle, 1995, p. 34) and deductive strategies that allow for some predefined concepts to inform research and coding (Crabtree and Miller, 1992).

In line with deductive methods, the extension of Goffman’s ideas provides insight to preexisting themes that I drew on to construct a preliminary codebook for the textual data, called Initial Themes. These themes relate to Goffman’s conceptualizations of a “façade” and “expressive equipment.” In Table 2.1 I illustrate how, alongside Goffman, Fadzil and Hamid (2020) provided a model to analyze visual picture data, with five major themes identified (Clothing and Nudity, Social Distance, Visual Modality, Posing, and Gender Presentation).

[The photos go] through a visual content analysis based on variables related to the profiles’ visual components—i.e., whether the main profile photo showed full, partial, or no face; whether the default profile photo showed a shirtless man or not (shirtless in this context is considered anything showing pectorals or nipples, abs or stomach, or all of the above). (Fadzil and Hamid, 2020, p. 7),

and how users express their gender identity. It may seem odd to attempt to “gender” the presentation of nonbinary people from a researcher’s perspective. Even so, many users self-describe themselves with a certain gendered label. Following inductive methods, the themes and concepts that emerged from the profiles of nonbinary users provided separate codebooks.

*Table 2.1 A Grindr'ed Visual Analysis (Fadzil and Hamid, 2020)*

<i>Components of Visual Analysis</i>	<i>Visual Analysis of Grindr Profiles</i>	<i>Description</i>
<b>Clothing and Nudity</b>		“allude to the sexual nature of the profile pictures in terms of the amount of clothing – or lack thereof– in their profile pictures.” (p. 8)
	Highly revealing or shirtless picture	
	Revealing or exposed body parts	
	Wearing minimal clothing (wearing only one item of clothing and nothing else)	
<b>Social Distance</b>		“refers to the psychology of people’s use of space in taking pictures” (p. 9)
	Anonymize (body is the focus, but face is hidden)	
	Intimate (face and head only; close up)	
	Close personal distance (head and shoulders)	
	Far personal distance (from the waist up)	
	Far social distance (whole figure with or without mirror)	
<b>Visual Modality</b>		“interpolates to the degree to which certain means of pictorial expression such like colours, representational details, filters usage etc. are used to enhance realism.” (p. 9)
	Cropping out pictures on purpose	
	Blurring out pictures on purpose	
	Well-lit image (utilizing filters or not)	
	Filters to accentuate a particular feature or part of the picture	
<b>Posing</b>		“refer to the poses that were done in a [picture] that may

		connote sexuality, and are based on body posture and studies of sexualization” (p. 8)
	Standing upright or lying down	
	Sexually suggestive poses (lifting one’s arm[s] overhead, kinds of leaning or sitting, head-tilt, etc.)	
	Overtly posed for sexual activity (highlighting sexualized behavior and/or wearing sexualized clothing)	
<b>Gender Presentation</b>		Refers to a person’s behavior, mannerisms, interests, and appearance that are associated with existing notions of binary gender, particularly masculinity and femininity. See Section 5.1.10, pages 73–75 for more.
	Masculine	
	Feminine	
	Androgynous	
	Queer	

I transcribed all information from each screenshot of online dating profiles into NVivo for coding purposes. Using NVivo, I performed line-by-line coding of the text from the first 20 profiles provided by individuals using the Initial Themes codebook. I recorded all available demographic characteristics structured by Grindr for analysis as well. I kept the profile picture(s) for each individual unaltered and upload as is. I used the visual analysis model provided by Fadzil and Hamid (2020) as a frame when coding the profile picture(s) for everyone.

Tables 1.1 *From Goffman to Grindr* and 2.1 *A Grindr’ed Visual Analysis* provide a guide for how I framed the coding process. Although potential themes were guided by Goffman and prior research, this frame does not dictate or overshadow emerging patterns. Although I viewed

profiles through this framing of presentation of self, impression management, and visual analysis, new information had room to emerge from the data. When various themes appeared, I categorized them into their dramaturgical parts—the façade and the expressions (Table 1.1)—to make theoretical sense of how nonbinary people present themselves on Grindr.

I conducted a word frequency in NVivo using recorded text from the profiles to populate the 100 most common words used. Ignoring filler words such as like, and, or, and also, I then created a word cloud to emphasize the most frequently used 100 words. As themes emerged, I produced a word tree using the notable themes from the word cloud. This feature bridged the common words with specific quotations from the data itself. A word frequency offered the most common words. Then a word cloud provided the most used of those 100. This was an important step because it removed filler words (and, but, like, etc.). Then, the word tree pulled longer more meaningful quotations from the coded data. I then collapsed codes, sought patterns, and theoretically created existing themes and patterns and finalized several main codes. I entitled this codebook Emergent Themes. From there, following the abductive process, I compared the two codebooks to assess any overlap or consistencies. The result was the finalized codebook. With this codebook I then performed the final coding process on all the profiles ( $N = 53$ ).

### **Codes and Themes**

Through my consideration of existing research and Goffman's ideas, and after the completed coding process of the textual data, nine themes emerged: (a) Cis- and homo-normativity; (b) Explanation of gender identity, presentation, or body/genitals; (c) Gender and sexual preferences; (d) Miscellaneous (Minor Textual Themes); (e) Motivations for being on Grindr; (f) Nonsexual personal information; (g) Social and political discourse; (h) Substances References; and (10) T4T. Additionally, I used Fadzil and Hamid's (2020) existing visual-



analysis model, which considers four major categories in the visual data: (a) Clothing and Nudity, (b) Social Distance, (c) Visual Modality, (d) Posing, plus an additional theme, (e) Gender Presentation that I uncovered. Finally, I considered all themes and patterns through a Goffmanian framework and analyzed them as such (See Tables 1.1 and 1.2).

### **Researcher Subjectivity**

Researchers often negatively contrast subjectivity against objective standards of scientific research. All research, but especially research on human subjects, requires subjectivity and interpretation to make sense of the social reality in question. Additionally, subjective is exactly what I, as a researcher, was interested in uncovering. I argue a researcher's social positions are integral to the project. My social position and identities are precisely what led to me to decide to investigate this demographic and social experience. Being a racially ambiguous, queer, Grindr user is exactly what allowed me to realize there was a change happening in this virtual setting, an uninvestigated group of users, and the gap in the literature. As a Grindr user, I can interpret the personal front, expressions given, and notably the expressions given off in ways that a nonuser might not be able to. Again, the subjectivity of the researcher plays a part in how the data was collected, organized, and analyzed. I attempted to be aware of this by maintaining a focus on my theoretical and methodological framework for structure and rigor. Although researcher subjectivity is not inherently negative, reflexivity is a method of acknowledging how subjective perspectives can shape the research itself.

## 5 RESULTS

The results of my project centered around three major themes: (a) Nonbinary User Demographics, as “Expressions Given”, (b) Visual Analysis of Nonbinary User’s “Personal Front”, and (c) Textual Analysis of Nonbinary User’s “Expressions Given Off.” I begin by describing the sample, how nonbinary users identify, and context for the rest of the study’s results. I then illustrate, through a focus on profile pictures, the ways nonbinary users manage impressions of others and curate their idealized selves on Grindr. Finally, I demonstrate the unique ways nonbinary users navigate Grindr, manage impressions of others, and present their idealized selves to others through their autobiographical information.

### **Nonbinary User Demographics – as Expressions Given**

I provide a consolidated and truncated version of the nonbinary users’ demographics on Grindr. For a fuller generalized version, see Appendix B.

It is important to note that not every unique user provided every piece of potential information that could represent a Grindr profile. Varying levels emerged regarding the quality and quantity of information included in each profile. For example, only 37 users provided their self-identified race. However, as a requirement for participation in this content analysis, I ensured that every user (53) self-identifies as nonbinary.

Table 3 Nonbinary Grindr User Demographics

Nonbinary Users	Age	Body Type	Ethnicity	HIV Status	Height	Identities other than	no Last Tested Date	My Tribes 1	Position	Pronouns	Relationship Status	Weight
Cases\Profile #1	18-28	Slim	Black	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Trans, Twink	Top	They, Them	a Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile #2	18-28	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile #3	18-28	Toned	Mixed	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Trans	Top	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile #4	18-28	Average	Unassigned	Unassigned	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Trans	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile #5	18-28	Average	White	Negative	Unassigned	Unassigned	Within the last y	Unassigned	Versatile	They, Them, T	Unassigned	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile #6	18-28	Average	Black	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Trans, Twink	Versatile	They, Them	a Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile #7	18-28	Unassigned	Unassigned	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Versatile	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile #8	18-28	Stocky	White	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Ftm, trans masc, transge	Unassigned	Bear, Otter, Trans	Vers Bottom	They, Them	a Partnered	151lb-200
Cases\Profile #9	18-28	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Unassigned	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 10	18-28	Slim	Unassigned	Unassigned	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 11	40-50	Average	White	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Crossdresser	Within the last 2	Trans	Versatile	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 12	29-39	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Queer	Unassigned	Trans	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 13	18-28	Toned	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Twink	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 14	29-39	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Trans	Unassigned	They, Them	a Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 15	18-28	Slim	Mixed	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Daddy	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 16	18-28	Average	Black	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Ftm, trans masc, transge	Within the last 6	Daddy, Trans	Top	He, Him, His	Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 17	18-28	Unassigned	Latino	Negative	Unassigned	Unassigned	Within the last 6	Trans	Versatile	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 18	18-28	Slim	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 2	Trans	Top	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 19	18-28	Unassigned	White	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Discreet, Tranks, Twink	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 20	18-28	Stocky	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Unassigned	Vers Top	They, Them, T	Single	201lb-250lb
Cases\Profile 21	18-28	Average	Latino	Negative, on PrEP	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Clean-Cut, Daddy, Trans	Vers Bottom	He, Him, His	Partnered	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 22	Omitted	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Mtf, trans femme, trans	Unassigned	Trans	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 23	18-28	Average	White	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Queer	Within the last 6	Trans, Twink, Sober	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Married	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 24	18-28	Average	Other	Negative, on PrEP	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Unassigned	Bottom	They, He, She	Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 25	18-28	Slim	Unassigned	Negative, on PrEP	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Trans, Twink	Unassigned	They, Them, T	Unassigned	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 26	18-28	Unassigned	Black	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Trans	Vers Top	They, Them, T	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 27	18-28	Slim	Unassigned	Unassigned	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Versatile	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 28	18-28	Average	Black	Unassigned	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Versatile	They, Them	a Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 29	18-28	Slim	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 2	Geek	Top	They, Them	a Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 30	18-28	Average	Native Amei	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Tranks, Twink	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 31	29-39	Average	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Geek, Trans, Twink	Vers Top	He, They, It	Open Relationship	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 32	29-39	Toned	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Trans	Unassigned	Unassigned	Married	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 33	29-39	Toned	Black	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Leather, Trans, Sober	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 34	Omitted	Slim	Unassigned	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Versatile	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 35	29-39	Average	Mixed	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Geek	Vers Bottom	They, Them	a Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 36	18-28	Average	Black	Unassigned	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Ftm, trans masc, transge	Within the last 6	Leather, Trans	Versatile	They, Them	a Dating	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 37	18-28	Muscular	Native Amei	Negative	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Discreet, Geek, Jock	Versatile	Unassigned	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 38	18-28	Stocky	Unassigned	Negative	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 39	18-28	Slim	Unassigned	Negative	Unassigned	Mtf, trans femme, trans	Unassigned	Leather, Trans, Twink	Bottom	They, Them, T	Unassigned	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 40	29-39	Slim	Unassigned	Unassigned	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Unassigned	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 41	18-28	Average	Black	Unassigned	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Versatile	Unassigned	Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 42	18-28	Large	White	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Nonconforming	Within the last 2	Geek, Trans, Sober	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	251lb-300lb
Cases\Profile 43	29-39	Slim	White	Negative, on PrEP	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Mtf, trans femme, trans	Within the last 3	Trans	Top	They, Them	a Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 44	40-50	Toned	Mixed	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Discreet, Trans, Twink	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Single	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 45	18-28	Average	Black	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Otter, Trans, Sober	Unassigned	He, Him, His	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 46	18-28	Unassigned	Unassigned	Negative, on PrEP	Unassigned	Unassigned	Within the last y	Trans	Unassigned	Unassigned	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 47	29-39	Large	Unassigned	Negative	6ft 0in - 6ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Trans	Versatile	She, Her, Hers	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 48	18-28	Unassigned	White	Unassigned	Unassigned	Femboy	Unassigned	Leather, Tranks, Twink	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 49	18-28	Average	White	Unassigned	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Unassigned	Geek, Tranks, Twink	Versatile	They, Them, T	Open Relationship	151lb-200
Cases\Profile 50	18-28	Large	White	Negative	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	Trans	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	Unassigned
Cases\Profile 51	18-28	Unassigned	Black	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Unassigned	Within the last 3	Trans	Unassigned	Unassigned	Unassigned	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 52	18-28	Slim	White	Negative	5ft 7in - 5ft 11in	Trans	Within the last 2	Trans, Twink, Sober	Versatile	They, Them, T	Single	101lb-150lb
Cases\Profile 53	18-28	Average	Mixed	Positive, Undetectabl	5ft 0in - 5ft 6in	Unassigned	Within the last y	Poz	Vers Bottom	They, Them, T	Single	151lb-200

### 5.1.1 *(Nonbinary) Identity*

The most salient pattern explicitly provided by users through the demographics structured by Grindr was nonbinary users demarcating themselves as trans/nonbinary and their pronouns. I interpret this as the preference of all nonbinary users to find other trans/nonbinary people. Although all 53 users identified themselves as nonbinary in some way, several users used additional identities to describe themselves: Crossdresser (Profile 11), femboy (Profile 48), ftm/trans masc/trans man (multiple), mtf/trans femme/trans woman (multiple), nonconforming (Profile 42), trans (multiple), queer (Profiles 12 and 23), and lesbian (Profile 36, who also identified as trans masc and nonbinary).

Similarly, most users provided their pronouns for others but not all were solely they/them/theirs. Other options included he/him/his (three profiles), he/they/it (Profile 31), she/her/hers (Profile 47), they/he/she (Profile 24), they/them and he/him (eight profiles), and they/them and she/her (Profile 43). Users who used they/them and he/him were the second most common behind they/them (31 profiles).

### 5.1.2 *Sexual Health – “Safe only”*

As emphasized on Grindr and in cisgender gay culture, a focus emerged on the open discussion around sexual health by nonbinary users. Only about half of the 53 nonbinary users offered their HIV status on their profile, with 24 explicitly stating they are negative, five users stated they were on Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis (PrEP, a highly effective medicine taken to prevent contracting HIV), despite it being marketed toward cisgender gay men and transgender women. I argue that demonstrating awareness of sexual health culture in cisgender gay/queer men's spaces may manage positive impressions of nonbinary users by cisgender men. One user was forthcoming with their positive status as well as indicating an undetectable viral load. Viral

load refers to the level of possibility for transmitting HIV to others, undetectable means they cannot transmit HIV during sexual activity.

Considering that many users (and people in general) are not open about their positive status due to stigmatization and discrimination (Conner, 2019), this is significant. Being forthcoming about one's HIV status affects the impression that other users have, and often ensures a negative perception of the HIV+ person. Notably, this negative perception clearly affects the nonbinary user's idealized presentation of self, as they willingly identify themselves with a stigmatized label. However, being open about a stigmatized identity could mean this user is aware of this stigma and is looking for people who do not hold prejudice or engage in discriminatory behavior. According to Goffman (1963), some people are forthcoming with their stigmatized selves because they know it affects impressions of others and choose to actively manage their impression that way. One person's last HIV test date was also commonly included, although some of the test dates were 2 years old. Two people said they were last tested over 2 years ago, with one claiming to have been last tested in June of 2018. To be clear, Grindr only includes a specific focus on HIV, rather than STIs in general.

### ***5.1.3 Display Name and About Me – The Hooks***

Users used the display name feature in the same way, as a “hook” to attract people. Some used name-related things or emojis to elicit some idea of who they are, but several used that section (15 characters) to display something sex-related. Examples include: “wannafindomyou” (Profile 16), “smoke me out” (Profile 15), “swallow me” (Profile 3), and “FTM bottom” (Profiles 21 and 33). Interestingly, very few users fully used the “About Me” section, which has a 255-character limit. Many used that space as a short, quick addition to the already structured demographic data from Grindr, rather than for more autobiographical information. The original

premise of this study was based on the hypothesis that nonbinary users would use the “About Me” section to manage impressions and present forms of their idealized selves. This assumption led me to believe I would have rich qualitative data to consider. Most users did not fill out this section; instead, they relied heavily on Grindr’s preset profile demographics and structure to present themselves to others. The quantity of the data somewhat diminished. The qualitative meanings remained, albeit more difficult to identify.

Many nonbinary users (43 profiles) focused the “About Me” on their body, their motivations, or nonsexual interests. Some nonbinary-user profiles emphasized the physical traits of the body (including gender expression). “7.5+ top” (Profile 3), “Ostomy haver so I’m basically a cyborg” (Profile 7), “I have tats” (Profile 15), “cute lil bottom w fat tits” (Profile 19), “Beards make my brain go brrrrrr” (Profile 40), “I’m not hung but I am pierced” (Profile 47), “Must be hung” (Profile 21), and “I’ve been told I have a magical mouth” (Profile 53). Of users, 24 took the space to reinforce their mostly sexual motivations. Still others (six profiles) explicitly listed multiple motivations simultaneously: “Looking for chats, nudes, or fucks” (Profile 33), “I’m here to get needy and/or kinky” (Profile 31), and “open to whatever, but definitely would like to make connections” (Profile 28). Here, users can directly describe their specific desires and preferences. The explicit nature of this method of presentation of self is conducive to efficiently finding suitable matches while excluding those who do not adhere to or desire the noted qualities.

Of users, 18 navigated Grindr with opposite or different intentions: making friends with a marked deemphasis on the body (Close Personal Distance, little or no demographic information, etc.). A total of 11 users even provided an incredibly vague “About Me”: “Idk” (Profile 34) and “NOT LOOKING FOR ANYTHING IN PARTICULAR” (Profile 23). This contrasting method

of presentation of self surely encourages others to message them to find out more. However, vagueness may be a disincentive as well. Notably, these users do not exclude anyone by being vague. In contrast, identifying one's desires can inherently be exclusionary for users who do not adhere to them. Some nonbinary users manage impressions by not being overbearing or offensive and letting their bodies do the talking.

#### ***5.1.4 Social Links***

Twelve users included links to their social-media accounts. Instagram was the most common, with a few users also linking to their Twitter accounts. No user in the sample provided links to a Facebook account. Instagram and Twitter help present an idealized self, while also encouraging authentic interaction between users ("I'm real, I promise"). Including social media links may increase the likelihood of positive interaction from others, especially if one is looking for platonic connection or networking.

#### ***5.1.5 Stats – How Nonbinary Users Stack Up***

Users aim to influence impressions from others by deciding whether to include their demographics (or "stats"). Sexuality and desire are built around physical aspects of the body. I argue that impression management regarding these traits is clear from distribution of the sample of nonbinary users' "stats." Notably, most nonbinary users in the sample reported having a certain kind of body type: Average (17), Slim (12), and Toned (5). Most users were taller (32 users were between 5ft 7in and 6ft 6in), thinner (only seven users chose the body types Large [3], Muscular [1], and Stocky [3]), and White (17). Thirty-seven users provided their self-identified race. Other than the 17 White users, 10 users are Black, two Latino, five Mixed, two Native American, one Other, and no Asian, South Asian, or Middle Eastern. Fifteen users' racial identities were missing. However, I could identify in the profile pictures that there were both

(presumably) White users and users of color who did not provide their race. The proportion of White people surprised me because my research was conducted in various locations in Atlanta, Georgia, that I explicitly chose locations to enhance the chance of acquiring racial and class diversity. The most common body types chosen were slim and average (more than half of the 53 users), with large and stocky (only six users) being the least common. Furthermore, the most common sexual positions were versatile (21) and vers bottom (12), with only 11 total users choosing any other position. Additionally, most users (40) were in the 18 to 28 age group, which makes sense considering generational differences in queer culture, labels/identity, and gender expression. No one reported their age above 50, while two omitted it entirely. The only person who identified with crossdressing was the oldest (age 45) person in the sample. The person identified as a “trans masc, nonbinary, lesbian” was one of the youngest (age 22) in the sample. I wonder how many people identified as nonbinary before the year 2000? This social fact is indicative of a changing culture and lexicon between generations of LGBTQ+ people.

This conglomerate of traits (taller, thinner, younger, White, versatile) seems to be indicative of sexual-desirability politics, broadly (Conner, 2019). Due to cultural norms of trans- and queerphobia, White supremacy, fatphobia, femmephobia, and ageism, some trend in the type of person who is likely to identify as nonbinary may exist. Despite collecting data in the metropolitan area of Atlanta, the sample was overwhelming homogenous. Further, in the face of this reality, I specifically chose to include a range of nonbinary users as examples in the Visual Analysis portion of the results.

Most users identified with the “trans” tribe (39). The second and third most used tribes were “twink” (13 users) and “geek” (12 users). I wonder how associations of the body and identity connect with the broader experiences of gender. Thomas (2021) opined that nonbinary



identity is often associated with Whiteness, thinness, androgyny, and masculinized AFAB people. Thomas argued that people hold a perception about nonbinariness that revolves around qualities considered desirable in the United States. Although my sample includes nonbinary who are not white or thin, I wonder if people with other types of bodies feel that a nonbinary identity on Grindr is inaccessible to them or undesirable to others? It is also possible that users who did not provide their demographic information were not forthcoming due to impressions management (i.e., mitigating “undesirable” qualities).

On Grindr, users may pick up to eight “tags” from hundreds offered, to include on their profile to enhance efficient searching and matching. The most salient ones in my study (those with more than five references) are: Bi (9), Dom (7), FtM (6), FWB (9), Gaymer (9), Geek (10), Kink (8), Poly (8), T4T (15), Trans (22), Twink (9), and Vaccinated (16). Trans and T4T were clearly the most important tags identifiers for nonbinary users. For many nonbinary users, demarcating oneself as trans/nonbinary articulates their idealized version of self for potential partners to see. Nonbinary users managing impressions this way provide context for cisgender male users and other nonbinary people for how to potentially interact with them. Although these tags may discourage some cisgender people from engaging with nonbinary users, tags ensure that if cisgender people were to interact with them, they would have a correct understanding. In contrast, being forthcoming with this version of the self allows for the proliferation of the T4T phenomenon. To be clear, one risks negative and positive impressions simultaneously from others.

Although few referenced other tags, some minor themes emerged. For example, users who stated receiving the COVID-19 vaccine were more likely to prefer vaccinated potential partners. The moralization of COVID-19 (Pickergill, 2020) has led to navigating virus

transmission through social status and blame (i.e., mask wearing and vaccine status are viewed through a lens of morality). Thus, managing one's impressions based on COVID-19 is palpable in some nonbinary-user profiles. Choosing to include this information could affect how people interact or whether they do so at all. Again, the geek and gaymer labels were also present. Although these labels are stereotypically applicable to cisgender men, they often align with traits like Whiteness and sometimes thinness.

Identifying one's tribes can be a way to present an idealized self for others, as tribe provides information regarding body type and nonsexual interests. The bi(sexual) tag seemed to be important to delineate a sexuality that is not monosexual. Regardless of how an individual defined their bisexuality, it became an important marker in self-presentation and impression management. More self-described as female to male (FtM) trans people than male to female (MtF) users.

Transgender men and women use Grindr currently, but their adherence to the gender binary does not require the same impression management as do nonbinary users. Some nonbinary users clearly felt comfortable using existing language for other trans identities. For example, 17 nonbinary users in the sample augmented their description to explain their identities, bodies, and genitals to others, due to lack of prior education. It seems that choosing to use this language was a way to manage impressions from cisgender users: "I am nonbinary! Not a man – Not FtM" (Profile 26). Other nonbinary and trans users did not need this type of impression management. The labor provided by nonbinary users demonstrates the potential multiple versions of an idealized self, depending on audience and context.

### **Visual Analysis of Nonbinary Users' Personal Front**

The Visual Analysis section covers the preexisting themes—Clothing, Nudity, Posing, Social Distance, and Visual Modality—from Fadzil and Hamid's (2020) study on Grindr users. During the coding process, I uncovered two more themes—one major and one minor—present in the data. The major theme is “Gender Presentation or Expression” and the minor theme is “General Profile – Minor Visual Themes.” Gender Presentation or Expression has to do with my subjective perception of the gendered nature of physical presentation for the nonbinary users in the sample. I considered Androgynous, Feminine, Masculine, and Queer expressions as codes for this theme. General Profile has to do with the aspects of the profile that were consistently used by some in the sample. These aspects include whether a profile picture is present and whether a mask was worn in at least one profile picture.

Also, note that most nonbinary users provided multiple pictures and subsequently each unique profile can illustrate multiple coded themes simultaneously. I provide examples below.

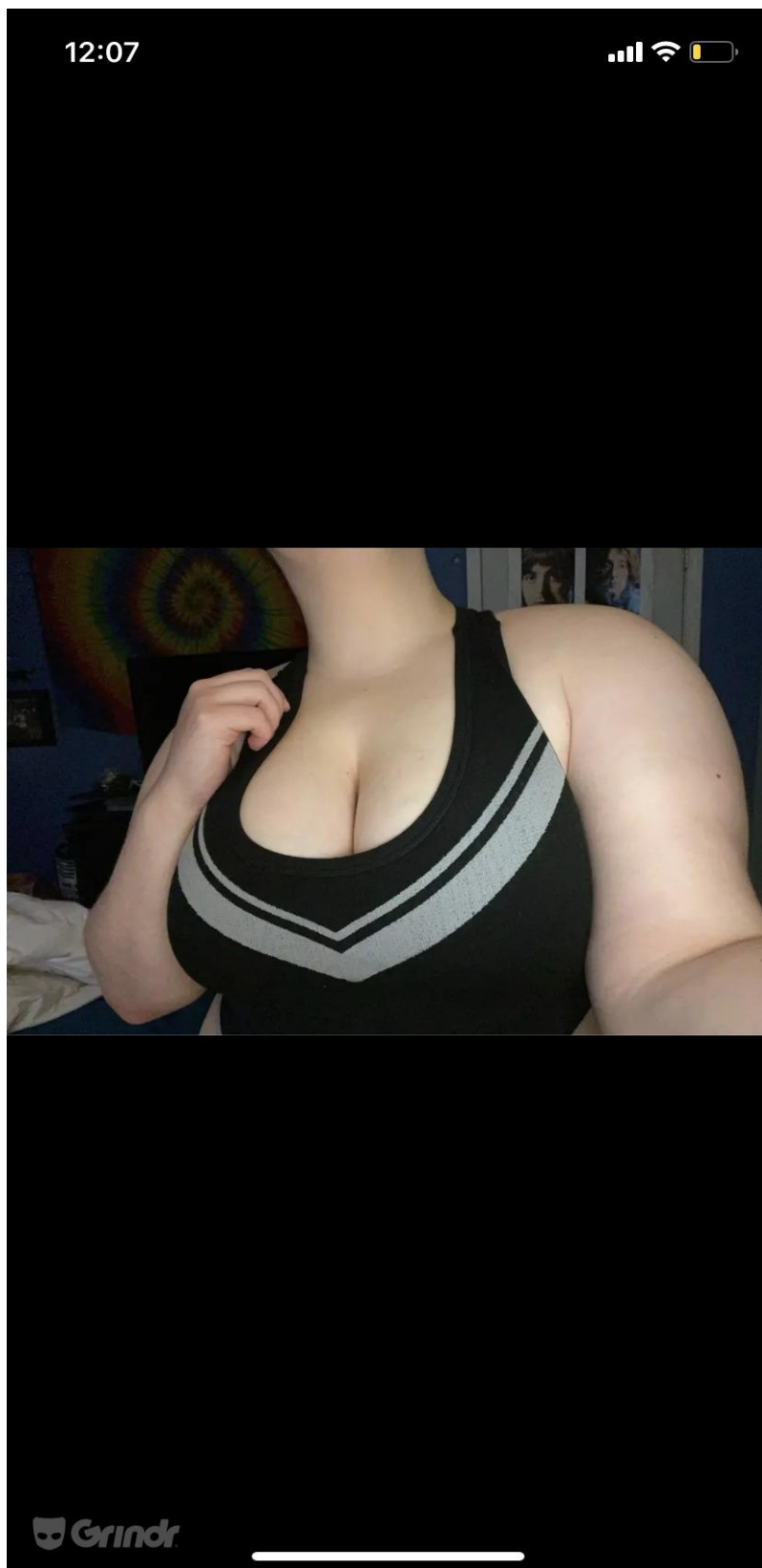
#### ***5.1.6 Clothing and Nudity***

Three codes relate to this theme: Highly revealing or shirtless picture, revealing or exposed body parts, and wearing minimal clothing (wearing only one article of clothing). Of the 53 user profiles in my study, 26 revealed various parts of their bodies (i.e., legs, buttocks, chest, or stomach) in their profile pictures. Managing one's impression by providing photos that highlight one's body can encourage interaction from certain users and discourage interaction from others. Nonbinary users providing a focus on body parts in the profile can inform other users of what to expect and what is appropriate interaction. Some users even provided several types of pictures.

Sometimes, a single profile contained sexualized, revealing photographs as well as photographs showcasing their fully clothed selves, regular interests, or nonsexual contexts. This choice by users can articulate the multiple possible motivations of being on Grindr and opens a wide possibility of potential interaction from other users. Twenty users in the sample only included nonsexualized pictures of themselves. By choosing to resist the hypersexuality of the space, these nonbinary users managed the potential assumed impressions from other users. Notably, those who had shirtless pictures (16 unique profiles of the 53) were those with “masculine” chests (i.e., no breasts; whether they were removed or never had them [see Figure 2]). Again, not all users provided photographs with emphasis on the body, but for some users (particularly trans masc/FtM) a focus on the work put into crafting an idealized self is palpable. However, one person’s profile heavily focused on their breasts in a sexualized manner, which is unique to Grindr (à la cis- homonormativity [see Figure 3]). This user made their breasts the focal point of the pictures, while hiding their face, and reiterating their desires in their “About Me”: “cute lil bottom with fat tits lookin for fun” (Profile 19). The idealized self for this person hinges on emphasizing body parts that are not traditionally desirable on Grindr, albeit with some required impression management. Also, for clarity, I have included additional examples of the varying levels of Clothing and Nudity, with users wearing minimal or one piece of clothing and exposing body parts only slightly (see Figures 4 and 5).



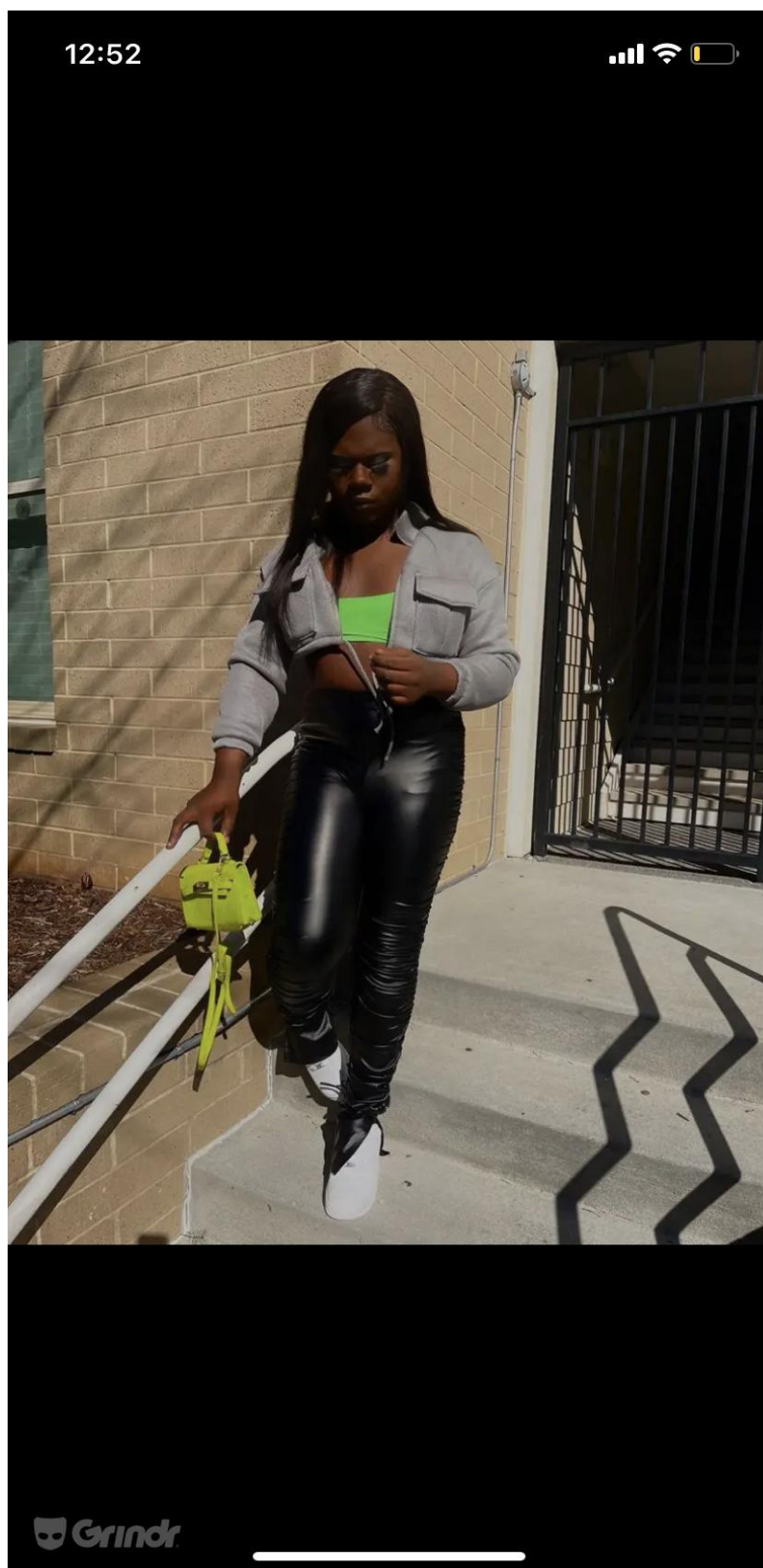
*Figure 1 PROFILE 33 PICTURE C – Highly Revealing or Shirtless Picture*



*Figure 2 PROFILE 19 PICTURE A*



*Figure 3 PROFILE 2 PICTURE B – Wearing minimal clothing (wearing only one item of clothing and nothing else)*



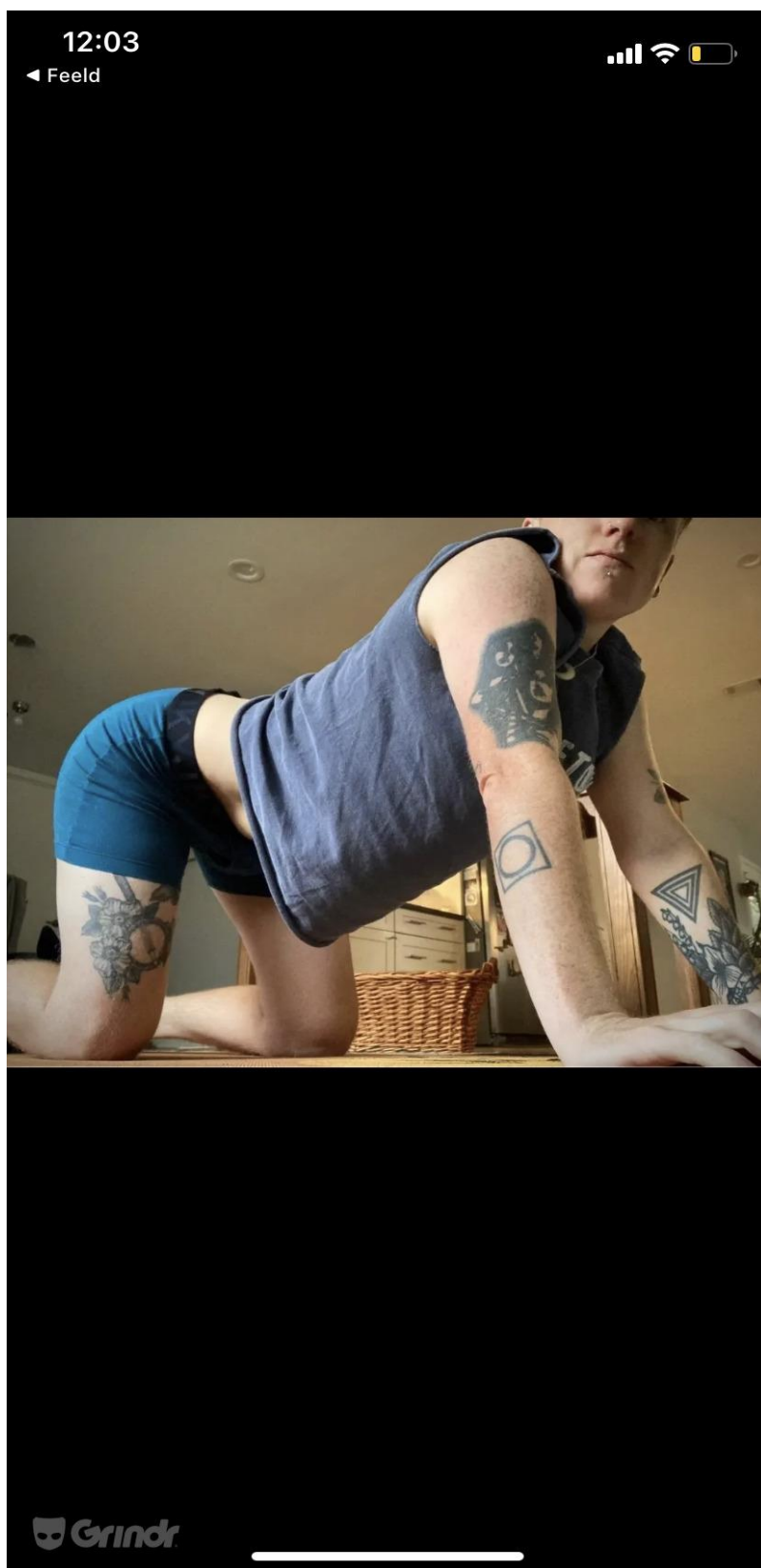
*Figure 4 PROFILE 41 PICTURE A – Somewhat revealing or exposed body part(s)*



### 5.1.7 *Posing*

Three codes relate to this theme: Overtly posed for sexual activity (highlighting sexualized behavior or sexualized clothing), sexually suggestive poses, and standing upright or lying down (desexualized). All 53 users presented themselves with multiple posed images in each unique profile, except for people with one or no photographs. Notably, 11 unique users provided a total of 15 profile photographs that were overtly posed for sexual activity (see Figure 6 as an example). Even if users did not present themselves with revealing clothing or were near-nude, 28 unique profiles offered sexually suggestive poses in 47 profile photographs. Although I found many sexualized suggestive poses and photographs included (see Figure 7), most people provided presentations of themselves that were explicitly desexualized, with a total of 122 profile pictures (see Figure 8).

Although sex may be the main focus on Grindr, the variation in types of profile photographs for each unique user demonstrates that nonbinary users are communicating openness to multiple motivations from others as a form of impressions management. Additionally, many users used the gendered nature of posing and bodily affect to emphasize the expression of their preferred gender identity and idealized self (more on this in the Gender Presentation section). The frequency of posing and bodily affect was particularly salient for users who identified as trans nonbinary. Trans masculine and trans feminine users tended to offer bodily poses that expressed traditional binary gender presentations of masculine and feminine.



*Figure 5 PROFILE 12 PICTURE C – Overtly posed for sexual activity*



*Figure 6 PROFILE 21 PICTURE D – Sexually suggestive poses*



*Figure 7 PROFILE 48 PICTURE A – Standing upright or lying down*

### 5.1.8 *Social Distance*

Originally, four codes related to Social Distance, the psychology of people's use of space in taking pictures: close personal distance (head and shoulders), far personal distance (from the waist up), far social distance (whole figure with without mirror), and intimate (face and head only; close up). In the coding process I uncovered a fifth code related to the types of photographs provided by nonbinary users: Anonymize. This code refers to when the body is showcased but the face is hidden. Nonbinary users provided photographs with varying levels of Social Distance overall and sometimes within each unique profile. One common type of photograph (34 unique profiles and 64 total photographs) was those that showcased the face but still showed a little of the body (see Figure 9). Some people chose to conceal their bodies, even though the focal point of interaction on Grindr appears to be the body itself. Impression management where the face is emphasized humanizes the user for others and encourages interaction that is not purely sexual. Notably, sometimes it can be difficult to appropriately gender an individual with photographs that only show the head and shoulders. For me, as the subjective researcher, most users who provided these kinds of photographs presented as androgynous, without the gendered cues from other parts of the body. I wonder how purposeful this might be from nonbinary users. Ensuring ambiguity to gendered presentation furthers the goal of curating an idealized self for nonbinary users. Nonetheless, this type of photograph seems to impart important information that researchers could further investigate with interviews.

Some nonbinary users simply seem more concerned with emphasizing the face rather than the body (see Figure 12). The rest of nonbinary users provided varying amounts of the rest of their body in their profile photographs. More than 26 of the 53 users had at least one photograph in their profile presenting most of their physical selves. Although it can be difficult

to get the whole figure in a single photograph (see Figure 11), especially in a selfie, most users focused on waist-up visibility (see Figure 13).

Notably, up to 26 of the 53 users chose to engage in the coded theme that I call Anonymize (see Figure 10). I believe this choice is indicative of existing cultural norms of discreet, downlow, and anonymous interaction on Grindr, and that nonbinary users pick up on and replicate it. However, not all users who had photographs that hid their faces were exclusively anonymous; some users acknowledged that all photographs do not necessarily have to showcase the face. In this vein, the goal was to emphasize several parts of the body, depending on individual desires and their intended audience.



*Figure 8 PROFILE 4 PICTURE A - Close Personal Distance*





*Figure 9 PROFILE 28 PICTURE E - Anonymize*





*Figure 10 PROFILE 3 PICTURE A - Far Social Distance*



*Figure 11 PROFILE 11 PICTURE A - Intimate*

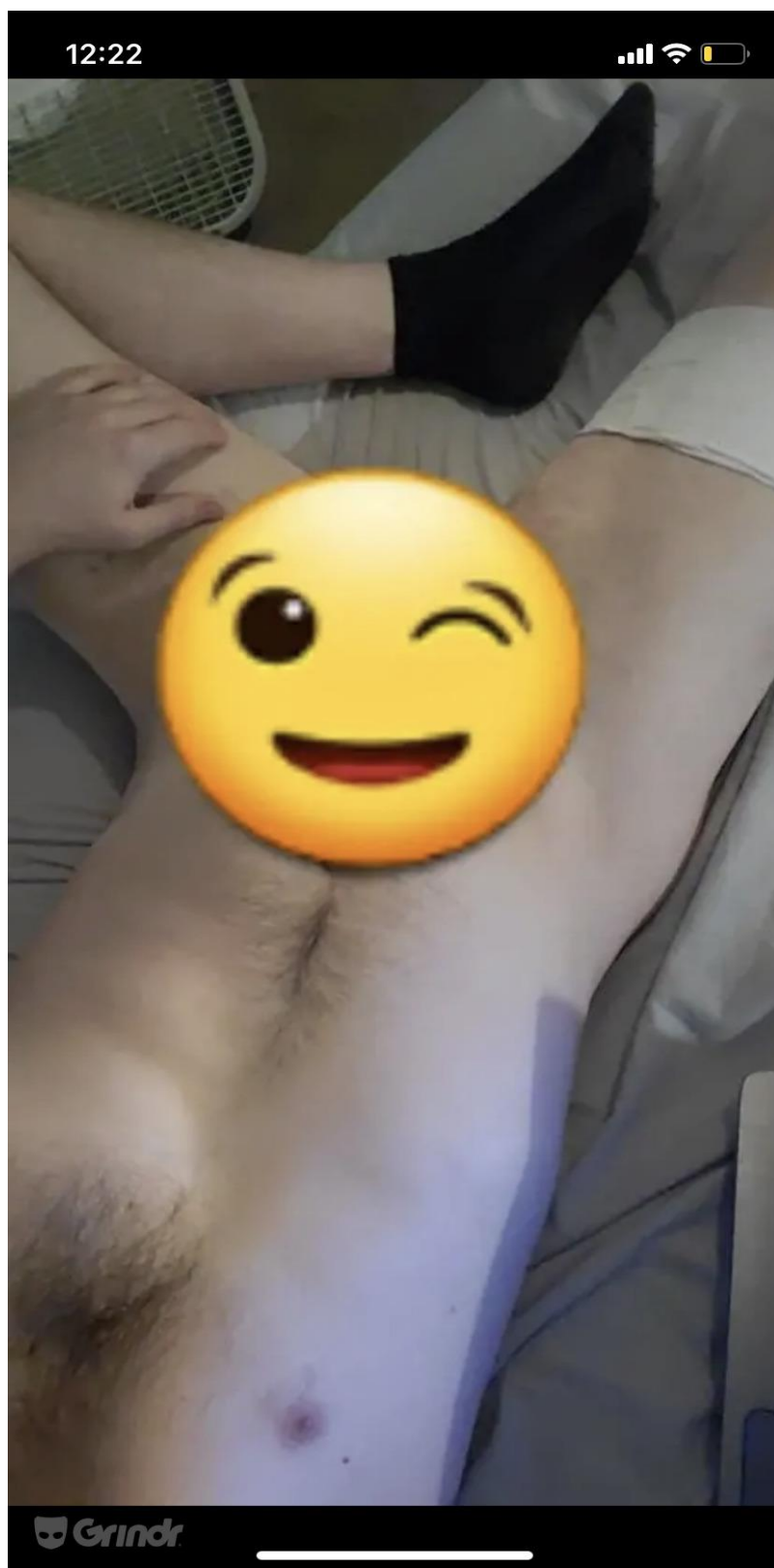


*Figure 12 PROFILE 14 PICTURE B - Far Personal Distance*

### ***5.1.9 Visual Modality***

Four codes related to the theme Visual Modality: blurring photographs on purpose, cropping out photographs on purpose, filtering to accentuate a particular feature or body part, and well-lit images. Users did not seem to try to alter or edit the images they posted on their profiles. However, most users provided at least one well-lit image, except for the two who did not have photographs at all. On an app where anonymous interaction can be a norm, consistent well-lit photographs are interesting.

For most of the sample, crafting an idealized self means that they should show their full body. Due to the assumptions of cisgender maleness and homosexual desire, being nonbinary on Grindr may provide some psychosocial pressure that encourages users to be forthcoming with their physical selves. Nineteen users with a total of 28 photographs used cropping features to emphasize parts of the body or to hide their faces. The main pattern I found with cropping was that users usually cropped to emphasize something sexual or a body part while simultaneously deemphasizing the face (see Figure 14). However, for example, trans masculine nonbinary users could use cropping to (de)emphasize surgical scars (see Figure 15). Also, people did not blur their photographs (except for one semiblurred mirror photograph due to shower steam), despite blurring being common on Grindr by users and particularly those who are discreet or downlow. Seven users used filters to emphasize a body part (i.e., the eyes, see Figure 16), but not necessarily sexually.



*Figure 13 PROFILE 31 PICTURE C – Cropping on Purpose*



*Figure 14 PROFILE 8 PICTURE D - Cropping on Purpose*





*Figure 15 PROFILE 32 PICTURE A – Filters to accentuate a particular feature or part of the picture*

### ***5.1.10 Gender Presentation or Expression***

I created a new code while engaged in the reiterative coding process because it seemed important to identify users' varied gender expression overall and individual variations in the same profile. I considered Androgynous, Feminine, Masculine, and Queer expressions. Fadzil and Hamid (2020) did not denote gender expression because they focused on a relatively homogenous group of cisgender men. However, delineating gender presentation of cisgender male Grindr users seems important too, as researchers noted a palpable antifeminine culture on Grindr, perpetuated by users (Conner, 2019). Stereotypical binary gender presentation relates to style of clothing, bodily affect, interests/desires, and overall physical appearance. Masculine expression can evoke an essence of confidence through upright posture, a cheeky smile or staring off with self-assuredness and swagger, being comfortable or casual, and sometimes highlighting one's muscles.

In contrast, feminine expression can evoke an essence of decorum through demureness, reticence, gracefulness, and sometimes highlighting one's body with tighter clothing. Androgynous expression fits between and evokes an essence of possessing masculine and feminine characteristics in a way that ensures the inability to immediately gender (in the gender binary) an individual by looking at their appearance. Androgyny contrasts with queer expression, which can evoke an essence of rejecting cisnormativity in a way that distances oneself from stereotypical modes of gender presentation. In other words, queer expressions can occur when individuals present themselves in ways that position themselves against normalized and dominant expectations of gender, sexuality, and the body.

I coded 33 users were masculine presenting in at least in one of their photographs (see Figures 17, 18, and 19). Ten users presented themselves in a feminine manner. The culture of



femmephobia and transphobia on Grindr makes this small number unsurprising (see Figures 20 and 21). I coded 23 users as presenting Androgynous in at least one profile photograph. Some users presented androgynous in all their profile photographs, whereas again, other individual users expressed varying gender presentations within a single profile (See Figures 23, 24, and 25).

Interestingly, only 13 users expressed themselves with a Queer presentation. Queer expression can provide unique, dynamic, and complex ways of coalescing gendered aesthetics. The few who did express themselves this way offered an array of queer gender expressions across photographs in their profile (for one user's example, see Figures 26–30). The unique feature of online interaction allows nonbinary users to present their idealized selves efficiently in a myriad of ways all at once. It would be incredibly difficult or impossible to provide a multitude of gender/queer expressions in one outfit, at one time, during in-person interaction.

A static nonbinary identity may exist. However, fluid/dynamic gender presentation is integral to some people's idealized self and nonbinary identity. Indeed, many users showcased their varied idealized gender presentations. Trans masculine users may have perceived their gender presentations as emphasizing their masculinity (see Masculine examples). Trans feminine users may have perceived their gender presentations as emphasizing their femininity (see Feminine examples). For some, gender presentations emphasize their queerness (rejecting what it means to be masculine or feminine by explicitly coalescing gendered aesthetics) to not get categorized as "just another guy/girl" (see Queer examples). For other nonbinary users, gender presentation can mean emphasizing androgyny to potentially inform others that again, they are not "just another girl/guy" or to make their gender identity more obvious (see Androgynous examples). Even more, for some nonbinary users, gender presentation meant discursively rejecting the gender binary logics but adhering to masculine and feminine gendered presentations

(i.e., “trans masc nonbinary” or “trans femme nonbinary”). For others, gender presentation meant the exact opposite; that is, discursively using gender binary logics but rejecting gender expressions associated with binary logics. Examples include femboy, femme enby, lad, and “ain’t exactly a guy, but ain’t exactly not a guy either.” The myriad gender expressions and presentations in just 53 nonbinary-user profiles is testament to the notion that no single definition of nonbinary exists and that individuals will provide unique interpretations to what nonbinary means to them.



*Figure 16 PROFILE 20 PICTURE B - Masculine*



*Figure 17 PROFILE 28 PICTURE A - Masculine*



Figure 18 PROFILE 36 PICTURE D - Masculine





*Figure 19 PROFILE 44 PICTURE A - Feminine*



*Figure 20 PROFILE 52 PICTURE C – Feminine*



*Figure 21 PROFILE 17 PICTURE B - Feminine*





*Figure 22 PROFILE 38 PICTURE B - Androgynous*



Figure 23 PROFILE 51 PICTURE D - Androgynous



*Figure 24 PROFILE 17 PICTURE C - Androgynous*

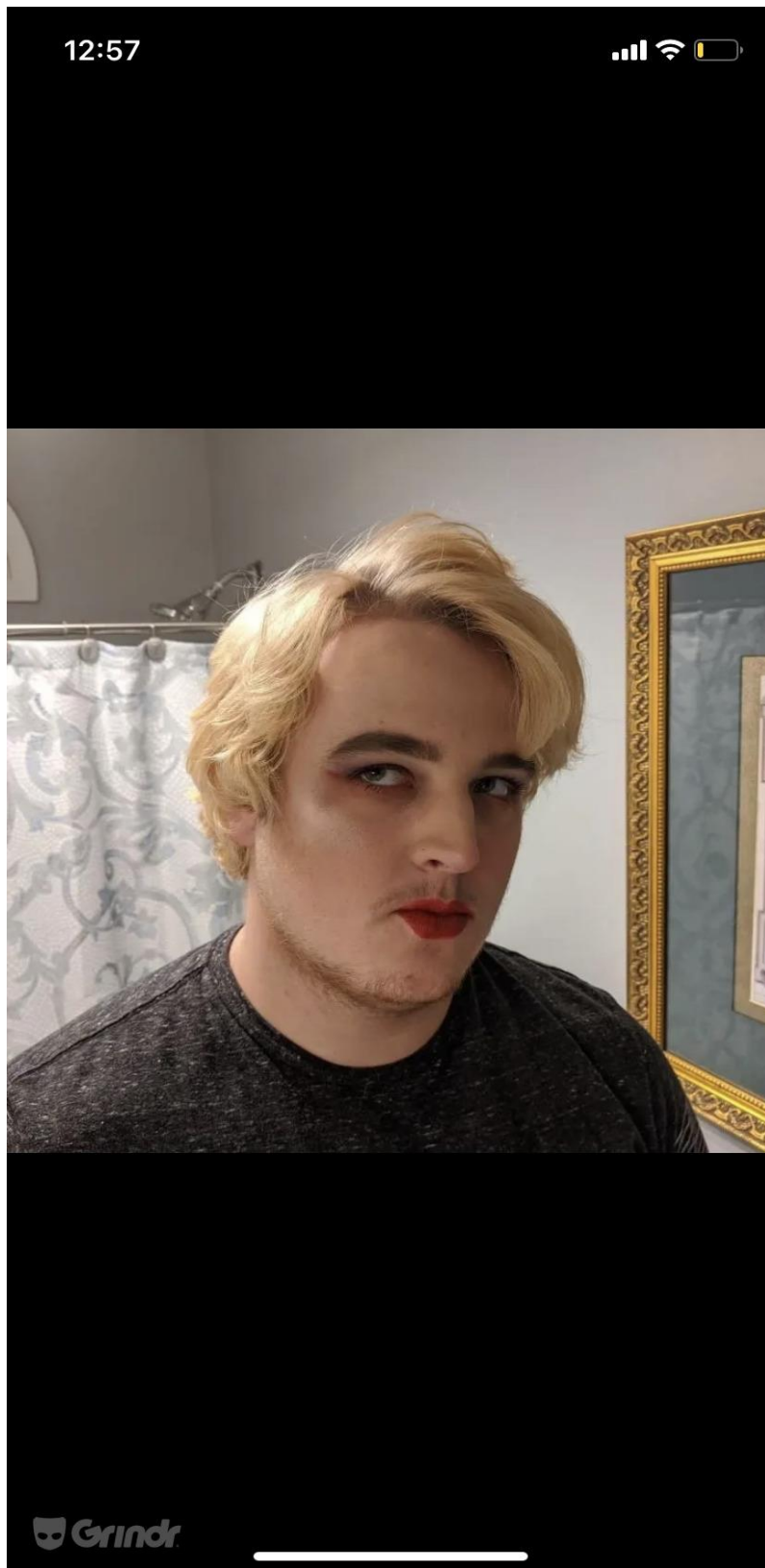


*Figure 25 PROFILE 42 PICTURE A - Queer*



*Figure 26 PROFILE 42 PICTURE B - Queer*





*Figure 27 PROFILE 42 PICTURE C - Queer*



*Figure 28 PROFILE 42 PICTURE D - Queer*

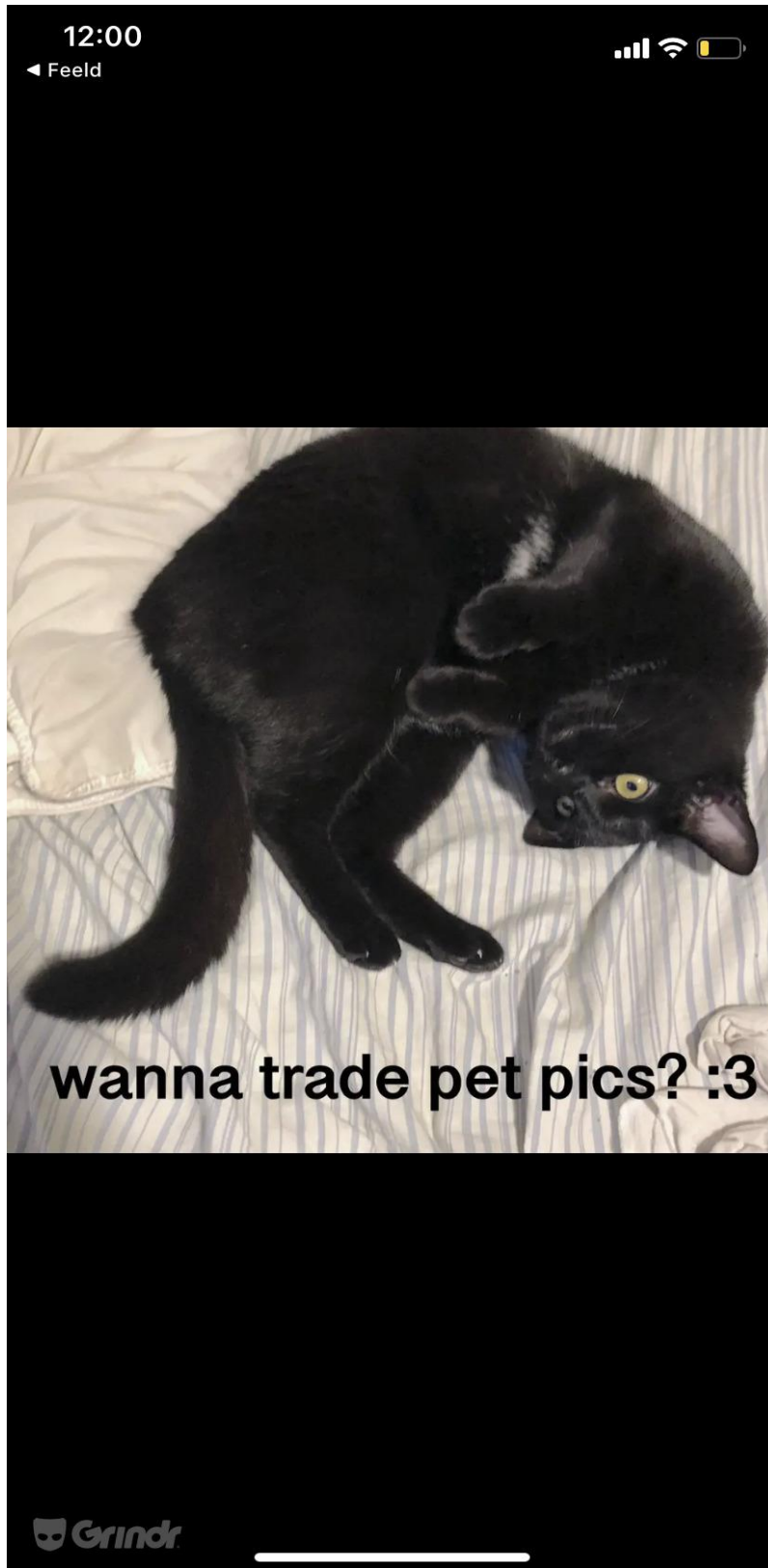


*Figure 29 PROFILE 42 PICTURE E - Queer*



### ***5.1.11 General Profile – Minor Visual Themes***

“General Profile” is another new theme that emerged in the coding process. Only two users did not have profile photographs, which is significant as it relates to the norm of blank profiles on Grindr. Potentially, nonbinary people might want to reject discreet or downlow culture or the norm of blank profiles. As noted previously, blank profiles could relate to curating an idealized presentation of self for others. Interestingly, six users provided profile photographs that were not of themselves (see Figure 31). These included hobbies, interests, and a filler picture to avoid a completely blank profile. Using alternative photographs offers an alternative for users that allows them to be less forthcoming with autobiographical information. Six people wore face masks in at least one of their profile photographs (see Figure 32). I interpret the method of mask-wearing as conveying the user’s COVID-consciousness as well as assisting in anonymizing themselves.



*Figure 30 PROFILE 9 PICTURE D - Picture not of the User*



*Figure 31 PROFILE 1 PICTURE A - Mask in Profile Picture*

### ***5.1.12 Nonbinary Users' Visual Personal Front***

In this sample of 53 nonbinary users, I found evidence to suggest a trend and style of posting photographs on Grindr. Just as Fadzil and Hamid (2020, p. 10) found, “Attitude, sex appeal, mannerisms, body language and poses are conveyed in all of the profiles that adhered to a certain style – that relies upon what the [users] are looking for from the app.” Regardless of motivation, nonbinary users who included photographs acknowledged existing cultural expectations on Grindr. However, even if some upheld cis- and homonormative logics, it was clear that most users provided unique and varying themed expressions of Clothing and Nudity, Gender Presentation or Expression, Posing, Social Distance, and Visual Modality. Differences emerged in style of picture posting depending on motivations, though. Nonbinary users who articulated they were only looking for friends or had explicitly vague intentions tended to provide only desexualized and Close Personal Distance or Intimate pictures. At the same time, users who articulated purely sexual motivations did not necessarily only provide sexualized photographs, as well. I deduce that nonbinary users engage in varying levels and types of impression management in their profile pictures. Depending on their motivations and their intended audience, nonbinary users craft their own idealized selves through carefully choosing how or whether to showcase the face, body, sexuality, and gender expressions. For some users, impression management meant ensuring their profiles contained a multitude of visualizations to demonstrate their personal “fronts.”

That more than 90% of the sample included a multitude of clear, well-lit photographs that included their face was initially surprising to me. Even though there were a few discreet users, the discreet and downlow cultures do not seem to extend to nonbinary users. Altering images was not a trend for nonbinary users, as it was for the cisgender male users in Fadzil and Hamid's

(2020) study. In this vein, the profiles were a chance for nonbinary users to present versions of their idealized selves to their intended audiences, whereas the cisgender male users in the Fadzil and Hamid's study were concerned with concealing their "true" identity, due to pervasive norms of homophobia. Interestingly, potential trans- or queerphobia did not seem to deter nonbinary users from presenting their idealized selves in unique ways through varying gendered presentations.

Nonbinary users used profile photographs in specific ways that assisted their presentation as nonbinary people and curated their idealized selves in the context of Grindr. Some users wanted to "fit" in and provided pictures of themselves that deemphasized their transness or nonbinary identity and elicited an ethos of gender and sex binary logics. Nonbinary users provided endless examples of other profiles to replicate or reimagine their idealized gendered presentation. To be clear, an idealized self does not implicate that there is "one true self"; rather, it is a contextualized version of oneself based on the dramaturgical stage and the intended audience.

### **Textual Analysis of Nonbinary User's Expressions Given Off – Transnormativity on Grindr**

The Textual Analysis section covers seven codes that I uncovered (see Codes and Themes section). Existing literature and data from the sample nonbinary users informed these themes. T4T refers to trans users focusing on interacting with other trans people for various reasons; Cis- and homonormativity refer to resisting or replicating; Explanations refer to users working to articulate necessary information in their autobiographies; Discourse refers to a number of various social topics; Gender refers to the nonbinary user's preference of partners and Sexual refers to the nonbinary user's one position preference; and finally Miscellaneous refers to

a number of common (albeit minor for the sample) themes on Grindr. Also, an important note: some information from nonbinary-user profiles can be applied to multiple codes simultaneously.

### *5.1.13 Trans4Trans – T4T*

Users used the T4T acronym in several sections of the profile. Some users simply used the My Tags or Display Name feature to note that T4T was one the main purposes of their presence on Grindr. Others (nine users), went further to describe more detail in the About Me section about their specific intentions and what they sought from other nonbinary people: “mainly looking for other trans friends/fwbs or a relationship and stuff” (Profile 1). Notably, some users had T4T in more than one place in their profile, ensuring few people missed it. Last, a few users added that they are also looking for queer connections, opening the possibility for interaction with people who are not trans or nonbinary. These users may have focused on T4T but were unwilling to exclude everyone from potential interest. For example: “T4T more often than not” (Profile 8) and “Seeking nonbinary, trans, and queer friends in town” (Profile 11).

T4T was the most palpable theme throughout my sample of nonbinary users. Not only are nonbinary people entering a virtual space where the majority is gay cisgender men, but they are explicitly stating that their primary purpose is to find other trans and queer people. Although the T4T acronym is sometimes sexually charged, many nonbinary users made it clear that “looking” does not have to be sexual. They are intending to expand their nonbinary, trans, and queer networks in a multitude of ways. These folks’ efforts to find other nonbinary people seemed to indicate that they feel disconnected from each other socially and that any networking opportunity could be worth it. For some, if sex or a relationship occurs from a Grindr interaction, that could be a bonus to their other goals. Other dating and hook-up applications exist (and nonbinary people undoubtedly use them), but clearly, something about Grindr encourages nonbinary users

to join. Grindr uniquely encourages and emphasizes no-strings-attached, short-term sexual interaction in ways other dating applications do not do (Grindr, 2015). The historical culture of cruising, on Grindr, at least, seems to be encompassing other populations of LGBTQ+ people (Miles, 2020).

Nonbinary users manage their impressions from others by portraying disinterest in interactions with the majority demographic. Carving their own identity, space, and networks in the face of cisgender male hegemony seems to be a common method of presenting an idealized version of the self. Nonbinary users managed potential stigma from cisgender male users by simply excluding them from potential interaction altogether.

#### ***5.1.14 Cis- and Homonormativity—“I think the gender roles erode y’all... brains”***

I found coding for whether users replicate and/or resist cis- and homonormativity interesting because, arguably, the presence of a nonbinary person on Grindr rejects these hegemonic forces. Yet 12 users went further to explicitly, discursively reject or critique the existing cisgender, monosexual binary logics: “I’m Queer, Polyamorous, AMAB nonbinary, sober—Age, race, size, etc. not an issue, just be respectful” (Profile 23), “I think the gender roles erode y’all [n -word slur] brains” (Profile 53). Notably, six users rejected “masc4masc” norms on Grindr (due to femmephobia, a culture of masculine superiority exists). They did this with statements such as “No toxic masculinity!” (Profile 23), “No bros” (Profile 31), “I hate the word pussy” (Profile 33), and “If you’re a man I won’t respond” (Profile 36). The main method of rejecting cis- and homonormativity was by articulating the acronym T4T somewhere in their profile, whether it be in their About Me, Display Name, or My Tags. Here, nonbinary users presented themselves in ways that opened them up to stigma from others, by resisting the taken-for-granted cultural and bodily norms on Grindr. Simultaneously, these users encourage

interaction from other users who agree with the resistance, who nonbinary people want to engage with anyway. These nonbinary users maintain their idealized selves by not compromising their motivations and identity in the face of potential stigma.

Eight users seemed to uphold or replicate cis- and homonormative values by using culturally constructed language like bisexual (instead of queer or pansexual, such as Profile 32) or adhering to sexual-position identities. Existing cultural scripts, roles, and norms are convenient and structurally embedded for Grindr users. Does it feel odd to say “nonbinary bisexual”? Regardless of an individual’s personal definition of bisexual, this word historically has constituted gender and sex binary logics. In other words, one part of their identity rejects the binary, while another part simultaneously emphasizes it. Interestingly, nonbinary users who described themselves using the LGB lexicon were open to interaction from any user, not just other nonbinary people. Even more interestingly, the person (Profile 19) who identified as a “trans masc, nonbinary, lesbian” replicates cishomonormativity by adhering to existing gender and sexual binary logics.

Notably, engaging in cis- and homonormativity is not an either/or binary where one does or does not. Also, I argue that replicating hegemony should not be a moral indictment on nonbinary users, as it is not inherently wrong or bad. As mentioned, using gay cultural knowledge on Grindr is necessary to be socially legible to other users. Being socially legible to cisgender male users helps nonbinary users manage stigma and present their idealized selves.

#### ***5.1.15 Explanations of Gender Identity or Presentation, Body, and Genitals—“I don’t have a dick, lol learn how to read”***

Seventeen total nonbinary users went out of their way to demarcate who they are and what their body and genitals are like: “I aint exactly a guy but I aint exactly not a guy either”



(Profile 6), “I don’t have a dick, lol learn how to read” (Profile 7), “nonbinary, queer person, on the ftm spectrum” (Profile 12), “Nonbinary/Trans Feminine Hottie” (Profile 22), “I’m Queer, Polyamorous, AMAB nonbinary” (Profile 23). According to zamantakis (2018), these actions can be considered preemptive labor done by nonbinary people to mitigate the potential anxieties inherent with interacting with cisgender people. Managing one’s impression this way can mitigate the need to constantly explain oneself to other users with whom nonbinary users interact. I assume that some nonbinary users have had to engage in such preemptive and real-time labor. Note this example from Profile 26 where they—in three different ways—explain what their gender is, body looks like, and genitals are: “I am nonbinary! Not a man. Not FTM.” For nonbinary users, presenting an idealized self seems to hinge heavily on ensuring those who might interact with them come correct. Despite the nonbinary label, users using language that describes transgender experiences can ensure social legibility for others. Illustrating one’s identity, body, and genitals through existing language can be useful in potential interactions for nonbinary and cisgender users alike. The varying nonbinary user explanations of these themes demonstrate the complex narratives and experiences that inform what it means to be nonbinary.

#### ***5.1.16 Motivations for Being on Grindr—(Not) Everyone is Tryna Get Fucked***

Almost half (21 of 53) of nonbinary users explicitly reported sexual motivations. Grindr is, after all, the most infamous queer dating/hook-up app (Conner, 2019; Grindr, 2015). Examples include: “Really want to get fucked” (Profile 8), “Here for flirting, dick pics, and casual fun” (Profile 12), “Safe only. Must be hung” (Profile 21), “Kinky, poly. Either Scene partners or FWB” (Profile 40), “Freaky submissive bottom. Sometimes top dom. A pansexual bdsm switch, who loves to role play, a sub bottom boi toy or sissy cd I literally have no boundaries” (Profile 44). While some users managed their impressions by not focusing on

sexuality, the culture on Grindr ensures that being explicitly sexual is not stigmatized. This feature of Grindr is potentially why it is becoming so popular among all LGBTQ+ people (Miles, 2020; Grindr, 2015). On Grindr, the idealized self can be explicitly sexual with few or no negative consequences.

The second most noted goal of finding platonic relations (chat, dates, and friends) was clear for 17 nonbinary users, particularly in meeting other trans/nonbinary/queer people. “Mainly looking for other trans friends/fwbs or a relationship and stuff” (Profile 1). As such, “T4T” riddled the sample. Some individual users even went so far as to state it more than once. Four users expressed goals of networking and even full relationships. Although as noted by nonbinary users, relationships would look much different for polyamorous and monogamous people. Eleven users were vague, stating: “not here for anything in particular, open to whatever comes my way.” Although sexual motivations were rampant, 20 users offered others their hobbies, interests, and occupations to elicit meaningful interactions. Examples include “who loves movies and tv, gaming and anime, also like to smoke” (Profile 1), “I love music—punk, post punk, alternative, and goth. Also love hiking, biking, gaming, and Sc Fi” (Profile 11), “miscellaneous interests: vandalism, kicking rocks, long talks, long walks, open tunings” (Profile 17), “Freelance concept artist and illustrator, lover of dogs, hater of cops, enjoyer of the occasional grilled cheese” (Profile 18), and “I’m interested in bugs, making out, body hair, dancing, and experimental choir” (Profile 38).

Notably, most nonbinary users (up to 35) explicitly reported multiple motivations for being on Grindr. Even if they had a primary goal, users offered multifaceted presentations of self that mitigated stigma from potential users by positioning themselves as humans open to multiple possibilities. Including nonsexual information like occupation or hobbies encourages interaction

that is not purely sexually charged and desensitized to amicable conversation. Nonbinary users maintaining that they are open in this way manage impressions from others by being the most socially agreeable and not excluding any potential interactions.

#### ***5.1.17 Social and Political Discourse—Must Be Woke (or Problematic) for Chat***

Cultural commentary was fairly common overall, but most of the specific themes were rare: (age [“No old men”; Profile 31], body [“Must be hung”; Profile 21], race [“Don’t be racist”; Profile 23], politics [“No trump supporters pls.”; Profile 4], HIV [“positive, undetectable”; Profile 53], hormones [“ftm on T since: 9/7/2021”; Profile 7], body [“Lf plus sized friends”; Profile 18], and [dis]ability [“ostomy haver so I’m basically a cyborg”; Profile 7]). The one exception that was consistently found throughout concerned vaccine discourse. Twenty users provided their vax status and three even requested others also be vaxxed to interact with them (“Triple vaccinated. You should be too!”; Profile 4). Navigating politically charged cultural commentary risks stigma and requires impression management. The potential stigma is possibly one reason only one user mentioned each theme (excluding vaccines); engaging social commentary ensures lower agreeability with Grindr users. Self-presentation for these nonbinary users meant that they navigated the stigma head on. An idealized self maintains one’s beliefs in the face of potential stigma. As such, impression management in this context can mean mitigating interaction from users who have inappropriate beliefs or, vice versa, encouraging interaction from those who are a proper match.

#### ***5.1.18 Gender and Sexual Preferences—Psych or Not***

I assumed gender and sexual preferences would be common since sexuality is structured around gender, the body, genitals, etc. However, nonbinary users stating their preferences were not a norm and, overall, nonbinary users seem unconcerned. If they were concerned, nonbinary

users refused rigidity with the roles and expectations associated with sexual interaction. For example: “If you’re cute, queer, fem, and/or bottom, let’s get together and we’ll have a great time” (Profile 43) and “my tastes vary” (Profile 52). However, 10 people were comfortable using those scripts for themselves and thus others: “ftm bottom” (Profiles 21 and 33) and “submissive tgirl” (Profile 39). As mentioned, in some ways nonbinary users uphold cis- and homonormativity. Considering sexual and gender preferences, many nonbinary users a desire to distance from or rejecting binary logics. Impression management by nonbinary users meant that some were looking to fit into existing gender and sexual logics while navigating Grindr, whereas others articulated no preferences. However, the ten users who did not reject existing conceptions of gender and sexuality did not necessarily leave their idealized nonbinary identities in question.

#### ***5.1.19 Miscellaneous—Minor Textual Themes***

I consolidate some minor themes—those related to safe sex, dick pics, substances, “generous” users, and discreet or downlow culture—in one category.

Only one user explicitly stated that they have safe sex only (Profile 21), but a handful of users used the tags “condom” or “safesex”. I kept this as a code because I thought it would be important to show that although it is Grindr, safe sex is not an explicitly common theme. It should be noted that Grindr does encourage sexual healthy practices in their announcements, advertisements, and emphasis on “knowing your (HIV/STI) status.” Nonbinary users managed their impression by being forthcoming with HIV status. On the other hand, forgoing sexual protections did not guarantee the same stigmatization HIV+ status does.

Dick pics! First, imagine for a moment that the first message you receive from a random user of a dating application is... a picture of the person’s dick—that is the greeting. Related to this theme, most users just identified whether they accept NSFW pics as “not at first” in the

Expectations section on their profile. Of course, some encouraged them: “yes please.” Notably, four users rejected them and called others out for even having the audacity to send them: “stop sending me dick pics u sick fucks” (Profile 6), “Stop sending me picture of your dick before getting consent” (Profile 8), “if u open with an ugly dick pic you WILL lose my interest” (Profile 25), “bro don’t send me no dick pics” (Profile 41). In these cases, impression management for nonbinary users meant that they were not concerned about stigma from users who sent unsolicited dick pics; they were the ones attempting to stigmatize others. In crafting their idealized selves, nonbinary users were keen on ensuring that their lived experience on Grindr was consensual and enjoyable.

References to substances occurred but were infrequent. The only substances mentioned were marijuana (4) and poppers (1), although it should be noted that meth (sometimes referred to with a capital T or as “chem sex”) is popular with some users on Grindr. Notably, five users identified themselves in the sober tribe or tag as well to denote removal from cultures surrounding drugs. Explicitly referring to substances can potentially cause stigmatization or positive reactions from users who share the interest, as it all depends on the audience. Nonbinary users who articulated their lifestyles (sober or not) chose to manage others’ impressions by being forthcoming with the information, so people knew what to expect from them.

Sugar daddies or generous people were sought out by four users as well, albeit passively. Examples include: “gen gets priority” (Profile 3), “smoke me out—Not mobile—can’t host” (Profile 15), “I need help with rent” (Profile 24), or “Love people who know I’m worth fun and fancy things” (Profile 43). Any users explicitly looking for generous people risk the stigmatized identity of desperation or shallowness. However, nonbinary users positioning themselves as being open to the *possibility* of that kind of power dynamic mitigate potential stigma. The one

user who stated: “smoke me out—Not mobile—can’t host” risks a negative reaction from many users as this is not intuitively a mutually beneficial dynamic. However, by being exclusionary, this user presents themselves in a way that expedites interaction with users who are down for taking on that type of responsibility.

Lastly, no Black or Latin American users identified themselves as part of DL culture, but three users (one Native American, one Mixed person, and one who did not provide their ethnicity) identified themselves as “discreet”. Interestingly, the two profiles with no picture at all were not from the self-identified discreet users. They chose to identify as discreet but were not necessarily anonymous. The broader cultures of racialized homophobia inform the discreet and downlow experiences. So, I must wonder, what motivates a nonbinary person to be discreet or downlow generally, and on Grindr specifically? Providing a publicly accessible version of the self seems to be part of nonbinary users’ idealized presentation of self.

#### ***5.1.20 Expressions Given Off Nonbinary Users***

In a virtual context, I consider expressions given off to manifest differently from those in person. For in-person interactions, expressions given off resemble nonverbal expressions (body language, mood, affect, etc.). For my study, I consider these expressions as themes given off by nonbinary users through autobiographical text in their profiles. Alongside the images users upload to their profile and the demographic information explicitly provided, the written self-presentation is everything other users can see. As such, this section articulates sociological themes nonbinary users did not explicitly provide. In other words, these users may not necessarily have *known* they were navigating or engaging with these social processes and dynamics. So, in a way, these themes were offered involuntarily, much as the nonverbal

expressions would be if the research method were interviews. The virtual context changes the nature of the possibilities for Goffmanian analysis.

Nonbinary users gave off expressions that were centered around cis- and homonormativity. In the process of demarcating themselves as nonbinary, trans, and/or LGBTQ, users position themselves to navigate Grindr's cis- and homonormative culture. Nonbinary users intuitively understand that without this preemptive labor, they would be subject to gender and sexual binary logics and their accompanying assumptions. Although the presence of nonbinary people inherently rejects normative ideology and structures, some are completely comfortable with adhering to stereotypical notions of gender and sexuality. All users engaged in varying degrees of replicating and resisting cis- and homonormativity, involuntarily and explicitly.

Challenging or adhering to existing notions of identity produces new aspects of Grindr culture in real time. Gay cisgender male users can no longer expect an entirely homogenous virtual space. Cisgender users can no longer expect a virtual space that caters to their lived experiences and their taken-for-granted understandings of gender or sexuality. Trans users can now expect to find more transgender people, and more those are nonbinary specifically. Notably, users can have expectations of finding other nonbinary people who are actively searching for people who share their identity. As more cisgender users get used to the presence of nonbinary people, knowledge surrounding ever-changing concepts of gender, sexuality, and identity proliferates. Resisting cis- and homonormativity through nonbinary users' presence and their discursive efforts can implicitly educate others on their own social position and how to interact with people who are not cisgender.

On the other hand, emphasizing transness or nonbinariness also involuntarily reifies cisgenderness and cisnormativity by demarcating and separating them (Compton, Meadow, &

Schilt 2018). Notably, nonbinary people reiterate their distance from cisgender identity for safety and to mitigate potential violence. However, identifying trans/nonbinariness in this way brings about a discursive quagmire (Namaste, 1994). To identify as nonbinary, an individual must inherently uphold normative conceptions of cisgender and hegemonic gendered structures. In other words, to identify as nonbinary, there must be a binary to reject (Namaste, 1994). This quagmire is the main theoretical and evidentiary reason that all nonbinary users simultaneously and implicitly resist and uphold cis- and homonormativity, no matter the nature of their explicit communications.

While a nonbinary person theoretically rejects cis- and homonormativity, many users effortlessly use the existing lexicon from cisgender and gay/lesbian cultures to articulate their desires. Utilizing language that was created from the lived experiences of same-“sex” relations and adapting it for people with different identities and bodies clearly challenges what it means to be any of the letters in LGBTQ+. Notably, one user’s identity (trans masc, nonbinary, lesbian) calls into question the existing logics of gender, sexuality, and nonbinariness. First, their profile states “If you’re a man I won’t respond.” While the language is rooted in gender and sexual binaries, the user still engages in queering the space through the resistance of interacting with a majority demographic.

Finally, after the initial write up of my results, an overarching theme became apparent. I came to realize that through these various expressions given off, nonbinary users curated and shaped the virtual space they navigated. I argue that through this complex navigation of resisting, rejecting, and upholding cis- and homonormativity, nonbinary users produce some type of transnormativity on Grindr. I borrow Austin Johnson’s definition of transnormativity: As a regulatory normative ideology, transnormativity should be understood alongside



heteronormativity (Berlant and Warner, 1998; Ingraham, 1994; Warner, 1991, as cited in Johnson, 2016) and homonormativity (Duggan, 2003; Seidman, 2002, as cited in Johnson, 2016) as both an empowering and constraining ideology that deems some trans people's identifications, characteristics, and behaviors as legitimate and prescriptive while marginalizing, subordinating, or rendering invisible others' (Jackson, 2006; Rich, 1980, as cited in Johnson, 2016). The users, not explicitly or knowingly, are collectively changing the culture of Grindr in real time. Albeit slowly, nonbinary users' presence provides more acceptance for nonbinary/trans people in predominately cisgender and monosexual virtual spaces. As more cisgender users interact with nonbinary people, more of them become knowledgeable of gender, sexuality, and identity and how to interact with nonbinary users. Potentially, this improvement in knowledge could reach an extent where nonbinary users may not have to demarcate their identities and engage in preemptive labor.

According to the sample, the varied notions of nonbinary identity and idealized presentation of self notably inform the cultures of transnormativity on Grindr. Nonbinary users engage in impression management to varying degrees depending on their intended audience and methods of navigating cis- and homonormativity. As such, some nonbinary users feel their idealized self is centered on carving out a space where they are openly nonbinary. Not all users make it a point to emphasize their nonbinary identity, instead attempting to become socially legible by using the existing lexicon. Additionally, normalizing transness on Grindr will subsequently change the ways in which nonbinary users navigate the application. Idealized presentations of self morph with the context of the dramaturgical stage and associated cultural characteristics. Methods of impression management will also morph with the changing culture. As mentioned, nonbinary users' presence inherently contributes to notions of transnormativity.

However, these notions are informed by the specific ways in which some nonbinary users reject, resist, and uphold cis- and homonormativity on Grindr.

## 6 CONCLUSION

This research demonstrates that (nonbinary) identity is not fixed, static, or singular but can be highly varying. No one type or idealized presentation of self captures all nonbinary people navigating Grindr. I argue that this research and nonbinary identity challenges all existing notions of gender, sexuality, and identity. The fact that an entire gender category, which sometimes uses cisgender gay language, is in a space where they are the minority demonstrates the rapidly changing social space. Further, nonbinary users provided varying presentations of self and mitigations of stigma across the visual and textual data. As such, I argue there is no *right way* to navigate Grindr as a nonbinary person and the decisions surrounding impression management depend on the user's own conception of identity, nonbinariness and their intended audience. Many of the nonbinary users in this sample demonstrate that they accomplish an idealized self by curating a "personal front" and expressions that vary individually. For some this ideal emphasizes their nonbinariness, and for others it emphasizes normative conceptions of gender and sexuality to potentially mitigate stigma. This study demonstrates that LGBTQ+ (virtual) spaces are rapidly changing with the everincreasing acceptance and knowledge surrounding nonbinary/trans identities. If nonbinary user presence says anything, it is that nonbinary people desire to be a part of broader LGBTQ+ culture and spaces, rather than siloed or segregated. Even the users who express desires for T4T are still open to the possibility of interaction with LGBQ cisgender people. If anything, I argue that users and researchers need to stop calling Grindr an app for men who seek sex with men.

This study considers nonbinary users' bodily affect and aesthetic choice in their personal fronts, expressions mediated by Grindr's application structure are given, and expressions are given off through discursive-theme analyses of individual profiles. These nonbinary users were

not simply navigating cis- and homonormativity. Specifically, the users in the sample are coproducing a culture of transnormativity on Grindr. By resisting, rejecting, and upholding cis- and homonormativity, nonbinary users are creating new ways of being, presentation, and social interaction based on the lived experiences and discourses of nonbinary people themselves.

Transnormativity is not fully contingent upon nonbinary users only presenting idealized versions of the self. However, Grindr's culture is being reimagined and reformulated through nonbinary users' choices. As such, the majority demographic on Grindr is now forced to interact with self-assured nonbinary users and assist in the creation of transnormative cultures on the application. Nonbinary people are routinely understudied and typically excluded when researching sex and dating apps. This is not the first study on nonbinary people's experiences navigating the gender binary, but this research will contribute to the growing body of knowledge about nonbinary people's experiences surrounding gendered sexuality, hook-up culture, virtual reality, presentation of self, the gender binary, monosexuality, cis- and homonormative spaces, and transnormativity. By studying nonbinary user's Grindr profiles, my research may illuminate how nonbinary people make sense of how cisgender gay men view their presence in spaces predominately inhabited by cisgender gay men.

### **Limitations**

Unfortunately, as with all research, this study has some major limitations. The most prominent limitation is the narrowness of the method of content analysis. I also chose a specific genre of sociological theory—symbolic and dramaturgical interaction—to interpret the data from nonbinary users on Grindr. Every analysis is an interpretation of conjecture. A future study that wishes to extend this research should be sure to interview nonbinary users.

The original goal was to reach saturation with the data provided by the sample of 53 profiles. In the beginning of the coding process, I thought I was doing this. As the coding process finished and data analysis began, I came to realize that there were trends and patterns I had not initially noticed. Notably, these patterns were the coded themes that I added to the analysis. Also, themes that did not seem salient eventually became so. For example, I finally realized that “social and political discourse” could be a consolidated theme encompassing multiple minor codes.

Qualitative research and literature have concluded that a sample size of 30 is sufficient for saturation (Compton, 2018, p. 195). However, this number assumes rich data, such as interviews. Unfortunately, the level of detail included in the autobiographical sections of nonbinary users' profiles was not as rich as I had expected. While still meaningful, the level of saturation in the data was not high. A larger sample would have provided more important data, especially considering the “minor” visual and textual themes. Another similar study should use a larger sample for greater saturation.

While the sample was diverse, young, white, thin, and AMAB users who identified with the geek and gaymer tribes (which are associated with body type and nonsexual interests and the versatile sexual position) were disproportionately represented. While this discussion is in my limitations section, I suspect that the demographics of my sample have more to do with trends in nonbinary identity (as mentioned in the “stats” section). Interestingly, I collected every single nonbinary profile I found within the parameters outlined in Methods, so no nonbinary users were excluded from the study. Further, I ensured that one of my data collection sites reflected a majority Black geographic area. While collecting the data, I noticed the demographics of cisgender users varied widely, whereas that of the nonbinary users did not. Lastly, due to the

nature of content analyses and dating-application profiles, many elements of demographic information were missing

### **Future Research—(WWGD?) What Would Goffman Do?**

First, if another study like this one were conducted, I would encourage the researcher(s) to address my limitations. A larger sample would ensure better saturation. Supplementary understandings on how to study social phenomena regarding presentation of self in an online sexual context (focused on nonbinary populations) are also needed. Such a study would need to include all dating apps nonbinary individuals frequent, as well as face-to-face interviews. This way, nonbinary users' "true" intentions could be interrogated more authentically. Goffmanian analysis provides a fascinating blueprint for the study of social interaction and identity. It also led me to think further about the concept of transnormativity. While not a new concept, I believe I am one of the first to consider and conceptualize transnormativity in virtual spaces or by nonbinary users of Grindr. Future research should consider how nonbinary people cocontribute to this burgeoning culture. From my research, it appears that the nonbinary identity is not always clearly defined—even by nonbinary people in online spaces. Why does their identity come across as so ambiguous, amorphous, and fleeting? What does it mean to be a virtual nonbinary person? I wonder what Goffman would say.

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## APPENDICES

### Appendix A

#### Definitions

AFAB – Assigned female at birth.

AMAB – Assigned male at birth.

Cisgender – an umbrella term for people who do identity with the gender they were assigned at birth.

Cisnormativity – the ideological assumption and institutionalized conception that all people are cisgender or identify with the gender they were assigned at birth as well as the subsequent societal consequences of this assumption.

Crossdressing – someone who periodically dresses up and performs as another gender that they do not typically inhabit from day-to-day.

Down-low/DL – a term associated with the hypermasculine and racialized ways of being for African and Latin American men who socially identify as heterosexual but have sex with men “on the side” but without publicly disclosing to others in their networks. This social experience is contrasted with the term “in the closet”, which is associated with effeminacy, white (LGBTQ+) culture(s), and an assumption towards the eventual progression of “coming out” of the closet into broader accepting communities.

Gender Binary – the ideological assumption and institutionalized perception that there are (only) two opposing genders that are designated, at birth, based on the sexual organs with which an individual is born.

Gender nonconforming – an adjective describing various ways of being associated with behavior, personality, gender expression and presentation, and identity that do not match with the expectations that come with the gender an individual was assigned at birth or gender with which they currently identify (i.e., cisgender or transgender people can be gender nonconforming).

Geolocation Social Networking Applications (GSNA) – a type of online networking in which geographic services and capabilities such as geocoding and geotagging are used to enable additional social dynamics. User-submitted location data can allow social networks to connect and coordinate users with local people or events that match their interests in real time.

Heteronormativity – the ideological assumption and institutionalized perception that all people are heterosexual or engage in exclusively heterosexual social relations and the subsequent societal consequences of this assumption.

Homonormativity – the ideological assumption and institutionalized perception that cisgender and heterosexual normative ideals and values should be privileged and replicated in LGBTQ+ culture and identity.

Hook-up – brief and noncommittal sexual encounters between individuals who are not necessarily dating each other within a (sub)culture of complex rules and expectations undergirding the behaviors of the participants.

HRT – Hormone replacement therapy (HRT), a medical intervention used in various contexts for gender and sexual minorities is an affirmative path taken by some to help align their bodies with the way they view their gender. It is a form of hormone therapy in which sex hormones and other hormonal medications are administered to transgender or gender nonconforming individuals for the purpose of more closely aligning their physical bodily characteristics with their gender identity.

LGBTQ+ – Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, asexual +; an inclusive acronym for all gender and sexual minorities.

Monosexuality/Monosexual – a romantic or sexual attraction to members of one gender only. A monosexual person can be either heterosexual or homosexual.

Nonbinary/Enby (shorthand used by users) – a static identity for people who do not identify with how gender-binary ideology structures gender. Although not a “third” gender per se, it delineates another way for people to present, express, and identify with gender outside of the gender binary.

QTPOC – Queer and transgender people of color.

Queer – an historically unique political identity that can be adopted by people who do not feel comfortable aligned with the often-rigid expectations surrounding gender/sexual presentations

and expressions that are rooted in the gender binary of labels like lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender.

Sexual positions – term used to describe people's role in sexual and romantic encounters that also informs the way they navigate and express gender identity. Examples include top (often someone who is penetrating their partner(s) with a penis or toy); bottom (often someone who is being penetrated by their partner(s) with a penis or toy); versatile (someone who is being penetrated and penetrating their partner(s) with a penis or toy); and side (someone who does not care for penetration generally and but other sexual acts); and more.

T4T – Trans4Trans, a colloquial term used by transgender people to resist cisgender normative culture and ensure pleasure and safety by explicitly searching for other transgender people as sexual and romantic partners.

Transgender/Trans – an umbrella term for people who do not identify with the gender they were assigned at birth.

- MtF – Male to female gender transition
- FtM – Female to male gender transition
  - On Grindr, the terms trans and FtM are used colloquially. Although not 100% of the time, but often, individuals who use the term trans are referencing transgender women or transfeminine people. Thus, individuals who use the term FtM are referencing transgender men or transmasculine people. This is the case for individuals who are transgender or those who are interested in transgender people.
  - Additionally, some nonbinary users employ this type of language to efficiently describe their physical bodies in their autobiographies before interacting with other potential users.

Tribe (Grindr demographic) – a historical term used by sexual minorities to delineate a person's gender and sexual position in the romantic and sexual networks that represent various segments of LGBTQ+ culture. Tribe often describes people's body types, physical appearance, personality, and fashion, among others.

## **Appendix B**

### **Grindr Demographics**

#### Section 1

- Display Name
  - Up to 15 characters to be used as an attention-grabber.
- “About Me”
  - A potentially lengthier and more intimate autobiographical portion that can be up to 255 characters.
- “My Tags”

- A filter feature with a list of tags that Grindr provides (such as: 'adventurous', 'carplay', 'condomsonly', 'cruising', 'dogperson', 'dtf', 'feet', 'hosting', 'hung', 'masc', 'monogamy', 'roleplay', 'romantic', 't4t', 'vaccinated', and more) that users can identify for other likeminded users to find them easier. Up to 8 tags can be utilized at one time and users can send in suggestions for tags to Grindr.

### Section 2 (Stats)

- Age
- Height
- Weight
- Body Type
- Sexual Position
  - 'top', 'vers top', 'versatile', 'vers bottom', and 'bottom' are the options to choose from.
- Ethnicity
  - 'Asian', 'Black', 'Latino', 'Middle Eastern', 'Mixed', 'Native American', 'White', 'South Asian', and 'Other' are the options to choose from.
- Relationship Status
  - 'Committed', 'Dating', 'Engaged', 'Exclusive', 'Married', 'Open Relationship', 'Partnered', and 'Single' are the options to choose from.
- "My Tribes"
  - 'Bear', 'Clean-Cut', 'Daddy', 'Discreet', 'Geek', 'Jock', 'Leather', 'Otter', 'Poz', 'Rugged', 'Trans', 'Twink', and 'Sober' are the options to choose from.

### Section 3 (Expectations)

- "I'm Looking For..."
  - Users can select what specific purposes they are on the application for and what others should expect from them.
  - 'Chat', 'Dates', 'Friends', 'Networking', 'Relationship', and 'Right Now' are the options to choose from
- "Meet At"
  - Users can select the context in which users will potentially rendezvous.
  - 'My Place', 'Your Place', 'Bar', 'Coffee Shop', and 'Restaurant' are the options to choose from.
- Accepts NSFW (Not Safe for Work) Pictures
  - This feature allows users to set boundaries for themselves and was created after Grindr developed a reputation where users would routinely send unsolicited NSFW pictures to others, often as a greeting or in place of one.
  - 'Never', 'Not at First', and 'Yes Please' are the options to choose from.

### Section 4 (Identity)

- Gender

- Grindr allows users to choose a gender identity from a curated list separated into 3 options: 'Man', 'Woman', and 'Non-Binary'.
- Users can choose to be as specific or general as they want in these categories
  - The 'man' category includes: 'Man', 'Cis Man', 'Trans Man', and a 'Custom' option.
  - The Woman category includes: 'Woman', 'Cis Woman', 'Trans Woman', and a 'Custom' option.
  - The Non-Binary category includes: 'Non-Binary', 'Non-Conforming', 'Queer', 'Crossdresser', and a 'Custom' option.
- Pronouns
  - Grindr allows users to choose a set of pronouns for their profile so users are aware of how to interact with them.
    - The options include: 'He/Him/His', 'She/Her/Hers', 'They/Them/Theirs', and a 'Custom' option.

### Section 5 (Sexual Health)

- HIV Status
  - Grindr offers users the option to be forthcoming with information in their profile. This is done with the intention to normalize discussions around sexual health and destigmatize HIV and HIV+ people.
  - The options include: 'Negative', 'Negative', on 'PrEP', 'Positive', and 'Positive', 'Undetectable'.
- Last Tested Date
  - Grindr offers users the option to include their last STI/HIV test date. This is done with the intention to normalize discussions around sexual health and destigmatize HIV and HIV+ people.
- Testing Reminders
  - Grindr offers users the option to select when they want to be reminded to get STI/HIV tested by Grindr itself. On the appropriate date, an Inbox message from Grindr will appear for the reminder.
    - The options include: 'Off', 'After 3 months', and 'After 6 months'.
- Sexual Health FAQ ("Learn more about HIV, PrEP, getting tested for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), Grindr's commitment to privacy regarding this information, and other frequently asked questions.").
  - 'Community Resources'
    - 16 articles related to sexual health
  - 'Gender Identity'
    - 19 articles related
  - Anti-Racism
    - 1 article related
  - Users can utilize this information for themselves and choose to provide a link to this information for others on their Grindr profile.

### Section 6 (Social Links)

- Grindr offers the option (and encourages) for users to directly link their existing social media profiles to bolster their profiles, prove their authenticity, and distance themselves from the anonymous culture that proliferates on the application.

‘Instagram’, ‘Spotify’, ‘Twitter’, and ‘Facebook’ are the options to choose from.

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<sup>i</sup> The key terms in Appendix A include the following: AFAB; AMAB; Cisgender; Cisnormativity; Crossdressing; Down-low/DL; Gender Binary; Gender Nonconforming; Geolocation Social Networking Application (GSNA); Heteronormativity; Homonormativity; Hook-Up; HRT/Hormone Replacement Therapy; LGBTQ+; Monosexuality; Nonbinary; QTPOC; Queer; Sexual Positions/Identity; Trans4Trans; Transgender/Trans; and Tribe.