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“There’s no one new around you”: Queer women’s experiences of scarcity in geospatial partner-seeking on Tinder

...when you get to the end of Tinder and it’s like, “There’s no one new around you.” And it does refresh all the time – new people come on, but still – and you’re like, “There’s no more.” You’ve got to think, like, “Of course there are lesbians and people that don’t have Tinder and they’re still out there.” But you’re like, “That’s it. I know all of them. There’s only this many that are interested in me within this range. These are my only options.” So yeah, I get that feeling sometimes. – Danaë, 19, student

Danaë is describing her use of the popular dating app, Tinder, to find other women around her to date. Tinder is known for its “swipe” configuration (David & Cambre, 2016), whereby users are presented with profile cards that they can swipe left to dismiss or right to “like.” When two users swipe right on each other, they form a “match” and gain access to the app’s chat functionality. However, what Danaë terms the “end of Tinder” is a screen that appears when a user has swiped through all available profiles in an area. The screen declares, “There’s no one new around you” and prompts users to

invite their Facebook friends to join the app. Users searching for previously unknown potential partners have limited options when this happens. They can reconfigure their search criteria, relocate to a different area in hopes of uncovering profiles that were not previously in range or wait for new people to come into proximity, refreshing the screen in anticipation that new profiles will appear.

Despite these recourses, Danaë and several other queer women¹ who I interviewed encountered this screen frequently. Their experiences gave rise to a shared and deep-seated feeling of scarcity in relation to other queer women, both on the app and in physical space. This feeling of scarcity was precipitated not only by these queer women's interactions with the app but also by Tinder's technological arrangements. This chapter demonstrates how these social and technological influences combined with regard to key factors that intensified notions of scarcity. These factors included embodied constraints on search criteria, the propensity for unwanted recognition on the app and in physical space, and the abundance of accounts that did not belong to queer women. All of these sociotechnical conditions increased the frequency with which participants reached "the end of Tinder," especially in smaller cities and rural locales.

This chapter's findings augment existing scholarship regarding mobile apps, and dating apps in particular, through the addition of queer women's experiences with a particularly popular dating app. While scholars have often discussed how mobile technology seamlessly co-situates users by overlaying physical and digital space (Blackwell, Birnholtz, & Abbott, 2015; de Souza e Silva, 2006; Hjorth & Lim, 2012), the experiences included here reflect social and technological hindrances to co-situation. They also highlight a difference between between co-situation with other Tinder users in

general and desired co-situation with potential partners. While some men seeking men (MSM) on dating apps experience similar difficulties finding desired longterm partners (Cassidy, 2016), this chapter identifies a sense of scarcity that encompassed these queer women's use of Tinder.

Digital and geographic co-situation

With the widespread adoption of geolocation enabled mobile phones, this technology has shifted individuals' relationships with physical locations and digital *spaces* (communities, platforms, and networked infrastructures through which individuals connect). As de Souza e Silva (2006) explains, mobile technologies give rise to “hybrid spaces” that blur the borders between physical and digital spaces, bring digitally connected social networks into physical spaces, and alter interactions within urban spaces. In these hybrid spaces, mobile apps – ranging from location-based games to social network sites – invoke emotional and social engagement from users (Hjorth & Lim, 2012). This can generate forms of “mobile intimacy,” bringing individuals together through the “overlaying of the material-geographic and electronic-social” (Hjorth & Lim, 2012, p. 478). While this understanding of mobile intimacy attends to the materiality of geographic spaces and their digital enhancement, scholars have highlighted that the digital is also material (Dourish, 2016). Material elements of mobile phones and apps (e.g., features, interfaces, devices) shape social connections and physical interactions (Bucher & Helmond, 2017; McVeigh-Schultz & Baym, 2015). The research presented in this chapter attends to the way participants' social interactions and geographic contexts

intersected with the app's technological arrangements to form experiences linked to feelings of scarcity.

Mobile dating technologies present an apt case where social and emotional intentions are intensified in the pursuit of sexual and romantic partner seeking. Since in-person encounters are often the aim,² a range of technologies have long mediated dating in attempts to facilitate this, from newspaper personals to telephone hotlines, video dating, and online websites (Duguay, Burgess, & Light, 2017). Long before the uptake of dating applications, MSM used digital technologies to catalyse physical encounters by establishing mutual proximity through local chatrooms on Internet Relay Chat (IRC) (Campbell, 2004), Bluetooth technology on early mobile phones (Mowlabocus, 2010), and even the installation of computing terminals in gay venues (Fletcher & Light, 2007). With MSM's rapid uptake of dating apps, led by Grindr but accompanied by a range of others to suit varying tastes (Gudelunas, 2012), these apps have shifted MSM's perceptions of social and physical space.

Prior to Tinder's swiping functionality, the most common dating app interface used by Grindr and other apps for MSM provided a grid-like view of other users' profile pictures, displayed in order of proximity. The ability to easily identify others on the app alongside their locational information co-situates users in a common digital space across multiple physical spaces (Blackwell et al., 2015). This allows users who are physically embodied in heteronormative surroundings to be co-present with other MSM on the app. While few users of apps for MSM report that this co-situation gives them a sense of community, especially since much app activity is focused on sexual encounters, some men feel that it fosters familiarity with other non-heterosexual men nearby (Miles, 2017).

This familiarity can give rise to spaces of gay sociability, often occurring in individuals' homes or at parties (Race, 2014), and help MSM to gather information and social connections when they are new to a city (Shield, 2016). Therefore, these apps facilitate a sense that MSM are not alone in urban landscapes where physically denoted non-heterosexual spaces, such as gay bars and venues, have dwindled and become dispersed (Ghaziani, 2014; Nash, 2013). Although studies of MSM note their discontent with how dating apps often frame encounters as sexual transactions (Licoppe et al., 2016), sort men's bodies into hypersexualised masculine categories (Bonner-Thompson, 2017), and can preclude the formation of romantic connections (Cassidy, 2016), men rarely speak of a lack of other men available through these apps. Instead, the apps showcase an abundance of potential partners – a “catalogue of men,” as one participant in Brubaker, Ananny, and Crawford's (2016) study articulated. The co-situation of MSM on dating apps provides a sense that there is a volume of nearby users who share similar sexual desires.

A similar history of hybrid spaces is missing for queer women. Early technologies, such as the French Minitel (a precursor to the internet) and bulletin board services (BBS), connected lesbians across geographical space (Chaplin, 2014; Correll, 1995). Chaplin (2014) notes how the Minitel “made possible new forms of lesbian identity untethered to specific locations, organizations, embodiment, or proximity” (p. 452). While these connections over shared sexual identity facilitated the formation of online communities and fuelled activism, their geographically untethered connections did not frequently facilitate meeting in person. This theme of connecting online with physically disparate others is common throughout scholarly accounts of queer women's

use of web portals, chat rooms, and social media (Cooper, 2010; Cooper & Dzara, 2010; Gray, 2009).

The rise of dating apps marketed toward queer women has drawn attention to how mobile technologies may (or may not) co-situate these users. Murray and Ankersen (2016) identify the branding and design labour put into the lesbian dating app, Her, in attempts to accelerate temporal rhythms of lesbian dating to fit with the mobile marketplace. However, the success of these measures in the app's North American and United Kingdom markets has yet to be determined. On the other hand, Butterfly, a social networking app marketed to lesbian and bisexual women in Hong Kong, seems to have achieved this. Studies show that it facilitates mobile intimacy among users (Tang, 2017) and co-situates them across digital and public space, leading to sexual and romantic encounters (Choy, 2018). Similar to Blackwell et al.'s (2015) study of MSM on Grindr, Choy (2018) found that lesbian and bisexual women could connect through Butterfly even when in public spaces that were hostile toward homosexual people. However, Hong Kong's high population density and tremendous uptake of mobile technology (Tang, 2017) may contribute to the co-situation among queer women reported in these studies. This chapter examines a different set of digital and geographic influences with respect to the co-situation of queer women on Tinder.

Investigating queer women's experiences of Tinder

As Tinder gained popularity following its launch in 2012, media outlets heralded it as "Grindr for straight people" (Muston, 2013). By 2014, Tinder's CEO Sean Rad reported that users were swiping through 1.2 billion profiles per day and generating more

than 15 million matches per day (Bertoni, 2014). Surveys of Tinder users have found that their main motivations for using the app include entertainment and sexual partner seeking (Carpenter & McEwan, 2016; Ranzini & Lutz, 2016), with women tending to use Tinder more for friendship and self-validation and men focused more on sexual encounters (Ranzini & Lutz, 2016). Newett, Churchill, and Robards (2017) found that for Australians aged 18-30, Tinder was a commonplace tool in their intimate lives, overlaying physical space with a shared digital space to facilitate the formation of connections and meeting face-to-face. While the app's marketing and uptake has generally encompassed a heterosexual user base, it is possible for individuals to switch their search criteria to "seeking" partners of the same gender, enabling LGBTQ people to use it as a tool in their intimate lives.

The methods I used to investigate queer women's use of Tinder were twofold. First, I conducted an app walkthrough (Light, Burgess, & Duguay, 2018) as an examination of Tinder's digital material influences on user experiences. The walkthrough first involved establishing the app's environment of expected use by ascertaining its vision, operating model, and governance processes from a scan of Tinder's policies, promotional materials, and ancillary media. Then I executed the technical walkthrough, moving step-by-step through Tinder's screens to identify the mediator characteristics (interface design, features, symbols, and discourses) through which it guides user activity. The swipe is Tinder's central functionality (Duguay, forthcoming), which focuses user activity on sorting through profiles one-by-one. Departing from the grid interface of apps like Grindr, Tinder presents profiles for swiping based not only on proximity but also on personalised algorithms tailored to a user's search criteria, profile

information, and past swiping behaviour (Carr, 2016). Through the walkthrough, I established a foundational knowledge of Tinder's framing and functionality in which I grounded my subsequent research with users.

Secondly, I conducted interviews with ten queer, female-identified Tinder users. I recruited participants through LGBTQ communities and social media networks.

Participants ranged in age from 19-35, job status (from student to service industry and white-collar workers), and sexual identity, with three identifying as gay, three as lesbian, one as bisexual, one as queer, one as pansexual, and one as "homoflexible" (interchangeably identifying as bisexual and pansexual). Eight participants were located in Australia and two were in Canada. Since all participants were living in sizeable urban centres, their experiences of using Tinder did not differ greatly based on their country but participants noted specific aspects of physical locations that impacted their Tinder use. I conducted interviews in person and by Skype, asking participants to lead me through their Tinder profiles and swiping behaviour in a way that combined the walkthrough's attention to digital materiality with interviewee input (Light et al., 2018). Interviews lasted 60-90 minutes each and, following transcription, I iteratively coded them to identify descriptive, topical, and analytic themes (Morse & Richards, 2002). Participants' names have been replaced with their chosen pseudonyms. These methods posed some limitations, with recruitment leading to a sample of participants that was largely urban-dwelling, cisgender, and white. Therefore, this study only partially and initially addresses the need for research that explores the diversity of dating app users and their experiences. But for its part, this chapter examines the experiences of these ten women, which have

been shaped by their varied sexual identities, ages, employment statuses, and encounters in physical and digital spaces.

Scarcity: Not zero feet away

Participants were motivated to use Tinder through the promise of co-situation with other queer women on the app. Upon setting their search criteria to include women, they could sometimes identify other women using the same criteria. Julia (28, accountant) explained, “You can see them nearby, how many kilometres they are away. So yeah, and you can see some girls are obviously gay by their photos. It gives you a good indication.” While Julia did not assume that every profile Tinder presented belonged to a queer woman, she picked up indicators through individuals’ appearances and biographies. For Phyllis (23, student), installing Tinder in her densely populated neighbourhood was an eye-opening experience:

I didn’t realise there’s actually a lot of gay people in my building, and I didn’t realise that until I got the app. I figured out they must be screening [against] heterosexuality in my building because there’s actually so many gay people.

She joked and continued her reflection, “I must be running into them in the elevators a lot. I don’t see them unless they’re on Tinder – not that I’m recognising any of them... maybe eventually if I run into them enough.” Tinder provided Phyllis with a sense of co-situation by displaying queer women nearby and indicating they were close enough to live in the same building as her. However, her failure to encounter these women in shared physical space raised suspicion over the reliability of Tinder’s co-situational information.

Several participants complained that Tinder was an unreliable tool for establishing co-situation with other queer women. ThunderGoddess (35, consultant) stated, “I don’t find the location is nearly as accurate as Grindr.” Identifying as bisexual, she frequently went to LGBTQ dance clubs with her gay male friends whose Grindr searches were more effective than Tinder at helping them find nearby potential partners. Grindr’s marketing boasts of the app’s ability to enable hookups at “zero feet away,” giving it a reputation of being effective for initiating spontaneous sexual encounters despite sometimes compromising users’ safety (Cook, 2014). In contrast, ThunderGoddess explained of Tinder:

It’s a location-based app but not a proximity-based app. It’s not like going on Zomato – aka Urbanspoon – and being like, “Find the closest restaurant to me, stat!” “Find the closest hot guy or hot girl next to me, stat!” I don’t use it at clubs.

She compared Tinder to Zomato, an app that identifies nearby restaurants. Although both Tinder and Zomato indicate a target’s distance in kilometres or miles, Tinder’s location accuracy was not reliable enough to enable ThunderGoddess to co-situate herself with other queer women in dance clubs.

More common than uneven experiences of digital but not physical co-situation were instances where participants swiped to “the end” of Tinder with no further profiles presented. Laura (34, project manager) identified this problem:

My friend and I would just sit beside each other on a quiet Sunday night and be like, “Let’s play Tinder together.” ...She was interested in men only, and at the time, I was women only, and I’d be done in ten minutes and she could go on, and on, and on.

Some participants again blamed the scarcity of profiles on Tinder's unreliable geolocation information while others, like Bec (30, unemployed), questioned Tinder's uptake:

The lesbians I do find on Tinder aren't usually that close to me...but then I can jump on that Brenda app or whatever it's called now, Whack Off or whatever, and they're 0.1 of a mile [away] – a lot of people. So, I know they're around but I don't think they're on Tinder.

She referred to Wapa, marketed as a “gay dating app for women” (Wapa, n.d.), which has a grid sorting interface, similar to that of Grindr, that displays women by proximity and with specific location information. Along with conjecturing about Tinder's inaccurate location detection, ThunderGoddess also thought that the sparseness of queer women in her searches could be attributed to Tinder's saturation with heterosexual male users and queer women's hesitancy to use the app:

I swipe through so many men to find so few women that it just gives me the impression that there really aren't that many queer ladies in [city]. Or at least [there aren't that many] that are really using it, because I know there are plenty of queer ladies in [city].

These women's experiences reflect that Tinder's technological mechanisms and its variable uptake among queer women contributed to a strong sense that queer women were scarce. This feeling of scarcity on the app, as announced by the “There's no one new around you” message, overlaid their experience of physical space to shake their hope of meeting nearby queer women. The factors explored in the following sections intensified this sense of scarcity.

Embodied partner-seeking

With the rise of location-based dating apps, partner-seeking has increasingly become focused on meeting people in close proximity (Quiroz, 2013). Participants reflected this preference to meet nearby others in their Tinder search criteria. While searches varied, from as near as 20km to as far as 117km, no participants expanded their search to Tinder's maximum radius of 160km. Their reasons for finding partners within this limited range were practical: for Caitlin (24, nurse), meeting locations needed to be "accessible via public transport." Phyllis asserted, "I don't want to have to drive too far or to Skype anyone." It was of utmost importance that matching on Tinder could lead to meeting in person: "I just sort of like hanging out with people in real life," ThunderGoddess concurred, "I don't want to meet somebody on Tinder that I can't be with in person." In contrast to the geographically untethered lesbian communities that older technologies facilitated, these women used Tinder's geolocation features with the intent of meeting face-to-face.

A small search radius also enabled participants to meet with matches more rapidly. Laura described:

Much like if you run into someone on the street and decided to go for coffee right then and there on the spot. So [Tinder] is more of an opportunity...to connect with someone, like have a spontaneous, kind of, drink or coffee, or go for a walk, or something.

Participants' desire to meet in person with little hindrance or delay departs from conceptions that lesbian dating is necessarily temporally slow (Murray & Ankersen,

2016). Their focus on in-person activities to increase familiarity also contrasts with the fast, transactional sexual encounters that MSM often arrange through apps (Licoppe et al., 2016). Instead, several participants wanted to connect through the app and meet face-to-face, after exchanging messages and background information, to determine if their connection would develop into a dating relationship. Danaë, who had set her radius the widest, was aware that her willingness to travel to meet her match was exceptional. She planned to drive about 100 kilometres to meet a woman with whom she felt an intense connection, “I matched her, like, two weeks ago and I’m seeing her for the first time on the weekend... So, she’s special because I’m making that journey. I think I’m a little bit in love with her.” By setting a narrow radius, based on the logistics of meeting in-person and a preference for spontaneity, most of the participants precluded the chance of meeting someone “special” for whom they would be willing to travel.

Although dating apps have rapidly increased in uptake (Smith, 2016), there remains some stigma around their use (Ahlm, 2016; Race, 2014). Participants were conscious of this when deciding where to access Tinder. Phyllis was wary of others spotting her using the app:

I’m not one of those people that stands out in public and like, “Yeah, I’m using Tinder. I don’t care.” Because if I’m using it on the train or something, like I’m messaging someone, I’ll be like, “Is there a security camera behind me? ...Are they watching me on Tinder and laughing at me?”

She was concerned not only about the privacy of her messages but also about being seen as actively looking for dates on Tinder. For HotChocolate (35, administrative assistant), Tinder helped her to pass time in her workplace but she worried about homophobic

colleagues seeing her using the app. She hid her Tinder use and did not discuss dates at work: “I didn’t feel that it was necessary to openly out myself at work because I’m there to work as a secretary. I’m not a lesbian secretary; I’m just a secretary.” These participants did not want to be situated in physical space with unknown others or formal acquaintances while looking for more intimate connections in the app’s digital space. This contributed to a tendency to swipe on profiles from home or other regular, fairly private locations, which constrained the volume of women they encountered.

Tinder tourism, rural locales, and recognisability

Several participants engaged in Tinder tourism, using the app to meet people and arrange social and intimate encounters while travelling (Lean & Condie, 2017). On a trip across Europe, Julia paid for the premium version of Tinder so she could swipe on users in advance of arriving in her next location, “If I waited till I got there and was swiping, then it’d be too late because I’d match with someone and wouldn’t have enough time to talk to them and try to organize a time to see them.” Using the premium version added a temporal dimension to the app that allowed for arranging co-situated encounters in the future. Similarly, Briana (28, student) used Tinder while travelling through Hong Kong and Bangkok, “I got a few invites to a pool party; another [match] was a DJ. It was kind of cool to see that there was a queer community over there.” Making connections with women on the app enabled her to enter a queer social scene and gave her a sense of community. Gertie (34, accountant) could see how Tinder would be useful for queer women travelling through her city because there was no gay village demarcating the LGBTQ social scene, “It’s not in tourist books [to] go down this street and that’s the gay

street...there's no fricking rainbow on the bloody road." Similar to how MSM use dating apps not only for intimate encounters but also to find friends, employment, and accommodation when arriving in a new city (Shield, 2016), participants formed these sorts of connections through Tinder.

Despite their experiences with Tinder tourism, some participants also felt that tourists just passing through their cities highlighted the lack of local queer women. ThunderGoddess sighed, "I've connected with so many people – probably a third of the people on that [match] list are people who don't live here." Phyllis also felt like she was close to swiping through all the queer women who lived in her city, "I think there's so few gay people in [city]...it's sort of a challenge to get every single gay person in [city] on my Tinder – I'm going to do it eventually." She was certain she could map out her city's small queer community simply by swiping through the profiles of users who were not just travelling through.

However, participants found it easier to meet women on Tinder in urban centres than in less populated areas. Julia's travels took her to small cities and towns where Tinder was useless, "[The] Greek islands, Ibiza – there were a few people but not many at all, and then I went to the south of France and there was none." While MSM in less populated areas often still use Grindr and await new users to enter their proximity (Blackwell et al., 2015), several of the women I spoke with were reticent to use Tinder in rural locations. Imminently moving to a small town, Caitlin was undecided, "It could be useful to meet people...but there's no privacy when you're using social media in a small town." She felt a lack of control over who would see her Tinder profile and she believed

that most people would recognise her from the app in physical spaces around town.

Phyllis was adamant that it was not a useful tool in her small hometown:

There's no one, and everyone knows everyone there too, because it's just a small city. There [are] three lesbians there so you can't use Tinder. If you want to date someone there, you go down to the bar and you find that other lesbian and you date that lesbian. That's what you do. Everyone will know in five minutes, and then if you've got to break up with [her], you've got to move cities.

Phyllis was concerned not only with a lack of Tinder users in her town but also with how well everyone there knew each other. In contrast to Tinder's interface, which necessitates swiping to get a sense of whether others are nearby and its 160km limit on non-paying users' searches, Grindr displays users across a broad radius, giving the sense that other MSM exist even if they are fairly distant (Blackwell et al., 2015). Grindr's ads for its premium version promise users that they will be able to see "6x the guys"³ if they pay, providing certainty that there are indeed more men on the app. Tinder only allowed Phyllis to see the limited number of lesbians situated in her hometown and, like other participants, she did not want to be recognisable both on a dating app and in that familiar physical space when she may not want to pursue a relationship with these particular women.

This unevenness of co-situation posed a problem for several participants. They were wary of Tinder when they were likely to be recognised in physical spaces by app users in whom they were disinterested or prior to confirming mutual interest. Bec's profile photos were older snapshots from before she cut her hair "because I've been to some lesbian events where I can tell people recognise me from some of the dating apps

and that's a little bit awkward." She preferred to surprise Tinder matches with her short hair rather than be instantly recognisable to women with whom she had not sparked a connection in physical spaces. When Danaë encountered an acquaintance from an in-person context on Tinder, she attempted to intensify their connection through the app, "I swiped her and turned out, she swiped me, and then I said something like, 'Well, now we matched on Tinder, I guess we're obligated to flirt.'" But Danaë was embarrassed when the woman did not flirt back, "I felt so disappointed... Like, now I'm going to have to see you again IRL [in real life] and we've matched on Tinder but not had a conversation. So, that failure's just going to loom above us." With this woman already in her social network, Danaë was concerned about seeing her again in physical space when their encounter on Tinder had not worked out. In instances when these queer women did not want to be recognisable to others, whether because of failed flirtations or the airing of their dating desires across contexts, co-situation on Tinder became a problem rather than a sought-after outcome. Scarcity in these situations was experienced as a surplus of acquaintances but a lack of viable (often equated with previously unknown) dating or sexual partners.

Intrusions in co-situated space

Queer women's scarcity on Tinder was highlighted by the volume of profiles in participants' searches that belonged to other kinds of users. Even participants who set their search criteria to show "only women" often encountered three other types of profiles. First, participants spoke about "fake" profiles, which were unlikely to be operated by the individual depicted in the profile. Julia recounted:

There was this one [user] that was a girl and then they're like, 'Can you send me some photos? Send it to this number.' And then I got my housemate to call the number and it was a guy's voicemail.

Several participants noted that sexually aggressive conversations and photoshopped pictures were often indicators of fake accounts (those with deceptive intentions). Julia became an expert at spotting these users, noting that they often had few Facebook friends, and warned, "If they start talking dirty straightaway or they ask for nudes, then it's a guy. That's happened to me probably five times – probably more than that actually." Profiles operated by men were common in participants' searches and sometimes appeared forthrightly as such. Participants assumed this was a glitch in the app or a user purposely invading searches by switching gender settings.

The second type of account that frequently appeared in participants' searches belonged to heterosexual couples looking to match with bisexual women. Caitlin found that most of these accounts stated in their profile, "We're looking for someone to have some fun with" and she found it easy to "just screen them out." However, Julia noted that some couples' accounts were challenging to identify, "There's a lot of those and some of them you can't tell from the profile. It might just be photos of the girl and not a girl and a guy. Yeah, or single – if they just said single." Although some Tinder users may be looking for sexual or romantic arrangements with multiple partners, couples' accounts that omitted their intentions perpetuated a form of deception similar to that of the aforementioned fake accounts. Since Tinder does not have options to specify non-monogamous relationship formats, the app also contributes to these accounts appearing out-of-place in queer women's searches for other single women.

Third, participants found that they encountered several accounts belonging to heterosexual women looking for friends or to engage in flirtatious behaviour without the intention to start a relationship. Danaë spotted these accounts by the women's "duck face selfies," posing with a pouty mouth to emphasise their femininity, and explained:

The straight girl look is like the, "I'm going to go out tonight and get drunk and have sex with a guy and it's going to be so much fun. And I'm just on Tinder for friends/sleep with me and my boyfriend.

She noted an overlap between "straight girls'" profiles and those of couples looking for threesomes, since these women were often looking to temporarily experiment with their sexuality. Briana suggested that Tinder could provide a filter regulating the visibility of these profiles by including a "sexuality" field in the search criteria. This would help her to "know if that person is going to swipe on me or whether they're just looking for – like, if they're straight and looking for friends." Tinder has since acquired the app Hey! Vina, which it markets as "Tinder for (girl) friends!" but also promotes its original app as a place where users can meet new people for a range of purposes including friendship (Recode, 2016). Altogether, men, couples, and heterosexual women crowded the digital space on Tinder where participants attempted to co-situate themselves with other queer women.

Conclusion

This chapter has illustrated that these queer women's notions of scarcity in relation to other queer women on Tinder stemmed from two outcomes of the app's technological arrangements, user choices, and social context. These outcomes involved

Tinder's failure to co-situate participants with other queer women and, when co-situation occurred, the common experience of unintended or undesirable co-situation. With regard to technological arrangements, failure to co-situate emerged from Tinder's reportedly unreliable locational information, constraints on search proximity, and the swipe interface that displayed others one-by-one with a finite supply of users due to its 160km cut-off. Social factors precipitating failed co-situation included the app's variable uptake among queer women, their reluctance to meet women who were not in close proximity, and their tendency to swipe in repeated and private locations. Through these sociotechnical arrangements, these queer women did not experience Tinder in the same way that some MSM experience dating apps as catalogues of men or tools for indicating possible hook-ups that are zero feet away. Instead, participants' lack of co-situation with queer women on Tinder contributed to feelings of despair and scepticism that they would meet potential partners near them in physical space. None of them spoke about Tinder fostering familiarity or a sense of community among queer women. Rather, their queer communities convened in physical spaces where recognition through Tinder posed awkward complications of uneven co-situation. In these instances, participants felt a lack of control over who might have seen their profile and whether rejection in one space would bleed into the other.

This kind of undesirable co-situation and other forms of it were also subject to sociotechnical influences, with social norms and meanings playing a large role. Participants often felt that co-situation was undesirable when they were recognisable to broad audiences both on the app and in physical space. This sort of co-situation was experienced as potentially reputation-damaging, reflected in Caitlin's worries about

having her sexual desires disclosed as she settled in a small town. Recognisability in digital and physical space impeded participants' ability to first make an impression either on Tinder or in person and then carefully guide the melding of these spaces. Participants were also co-situated with deceptive accounts, couples, and heterosexual women, which they often found undesirable since these users complicated their search for other queer women. While MSM sometimes encounter women on apps like Grindr (e.g. Beusman & Sunderland, 2015), Tinder's widespread user base makes co-situation with a range of users highly likely without providing controls for users to limit their visibility to these audiences or more finely filter their searches.

Tinder's failure to co-situate these queer women with desired potential partners on the app and in physical space had a tangible impact on their views toward the geographical proximity of other queer women. While some participants expressed that they knew other queer women were located in the same city based on their experiences in queer spaces and connections they had already made, participants also often responded with despair. This chapter's opening quote demonstrates this oscillation, as Danaë wavered between the sentiment, "Of course there are lesbians...that don't have Tinder" and the feeling of, "That's it." While this chapter has outlined both social and technological influences on queer women's digital co-situation, it is clear that there are tangible aspects of Tinder's design (e.g. search options, profile fields, and interface layout) that could help to alleviate this sense of scarcity. Any dating app seeking to include queer women in its user base should recognise the importance of these design considerations for making users feel less alone on the app and in their surroundings.

Endnotes

1. I adopt Gray's (2009) definition of "queer" as "the action of identity work" (p. 26), which involves "the collective labor of crafting, articulating, and pushing the boundaries of identities" (p. 26). Queer encompasses identities in tension with presumptions that individuals are heterosexual and cisgender. I refer to "women" as female-identified individuals, aligning with how participants identified their gender, including androgynous and genderfluid women. For lack of a neutral umbrella term for people of diverse sexual and gender identities (Barker, Richards, & Bowes-Catton, 2009), I refer to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer people in aggregate as LGBTQ people.
2. Race (2015) has discussed how some dating app users may only aim to engage with others through the app to exchange sexual photos or entertain fantasies without acting on them.
3. In-app Grindr advertisement from the 2018 version for iPhone.

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