Chinese Culture, Contemporary Dating and Tantan:

Exploring self-presentation in the Age of Mobile Dating Apps.

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Abstract

The rise of mobile dating applications has changed the nature of relationships, dating, and marriage. Although previous research has contributed to the understanding of Western online dating applications such as Tinder, which has transformed the dating market for young people in the West, it is interesting to explore the different usage of online dating applications by users from a traditionally different cultural context. Therefore, this study examines the motivations, expectations, and experiences of young Malaysian Chinese as they use Tantan – a mobile dating application originating from China. Furthermore, this study explores the way that gender is performed on this mobile dating application and considers the contextual effect it has on the users' understanding of their identity online. To meet these research objectives, a qualitative methodology that utilised semi-structured, face-to-face interviews with ten Malaysian Chinese participants from New Zealand and Malaysia was employed; two of the participants were from the LGBTQ community. This thesis contends that despite the modernisation of Malaysian Chinese families over several generations, a Chinese cultural upbringing and extensive tradition still plays a significant role in how young Malaysian Chinese navigate contemporary, mediatised spaces such as Tantan. Moreover, by drawing from key scholarship such as Goffman's theory of self-presentation and Butler's critique of hegemonic gender representation, the findings of this study demonstrate some of the ways that gender performance is constructed and received online, as well as the role these concerns play in the facilitation of personal and intimate relationships of young Malaysian Chinese.

Declaration

"I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person (except where explicitly defined in the acknowledgements), nor material which to a substantial extent has been submitted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institution of higher learning."

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Date   :   19 November 2020

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Chapter 1 - Introduction

This thesis explores and discusses the lived experiences of users on one of the dozens of mobile dating applications available in China: Tantan. The Tantan mobile dating application was developed by Tencent, a Chinese multinational technology conglomerate holding company, on June 2014. The mobile application has recently experienced a rise in popularity throughout the rest of Asia. Tantan used to compete with Momo, another dating application, but has now been acquired by Momo and become its full subsidiary (Russell, 2017). Momo was the first dating application that covered the whole of mainland China and was known to be the market leader for the heterosexual dating application market in Chinese-speaking regions, with over 85 million monthly active users at the beginning of 2017 (Chan, 2019). It used to be seen as an application for casual sex, but it has improved on its bad reputation by changing from a dating-focused application to an interest-based social networking application. In 2018, according to DMR business statistics, Tantan was bought by Momo for US$600 million (Smith, 2020). In February 2020, Sensory Tower, a market intelligence firm, posted that Tantan has become the world's fourth-largest earner for dating applications after Tinder, Bumble, and Pairs (Whitlock, 2020).

Tantan has gradually become a mainstream dating application in China compared to Western dating applications like Tinder and Bumble. have adopted features that are familiar to anyone that has experience in using online dating applications, like swiping left and right, chat boxes, and location-based discovery. One of the reasons Tantan is popular within the Chinese market is due to the change of views among contemporary Chinese youth in dating and intimate relationships. Although the world of dating has shifted in both Western and Asian societies, in the Chinese culture, these changes have been strongly impacted by the influence of individualist values. In traditional Chinese culture, romantic relationships would begin with social activities such as parties or an arranged date. These activities were usually coordinated by a marriage broker; typically, an elder female character that dominated the dating landscape. This is because the purpose of marriage was to continue the family line. Therefore, it was important for the marriage broker to collect information on the couple's eight characters such as year, month, day, and time of birth to ensure that the couple were compatible. This was also to ensure that the couple would be blessed by prosperity, posterity, and good health. In contrast, if the couple was not compatible, their marriage was seen to be filled with bad luck. Today, this process has been replaced by dating sites with compatibility

matching algorithms. In this case, the Tantan interface allows its users to know their potential matches' age and zodiac sign. The rise of these Chinese dating application markets is a logical extension of the traditional matchmaking culture.

China, the Internet and Region-specific Technology Development

When China's leader Xi Jinping vowed to restore China to greatness and protect it from Western influence, he took over the leadership of China's internet management and shifted China's digital landscape completely (Beech et al., 2015). According to Beech et al. (2015), this is due to the Communist Party's way of ruling which is opposed to free expression, and it has led to the barring of all tech totems such as Google, Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, Wikipedia, and YouTube. China's resulting internet filtering and censorship regime, also known as "The Great Firewall of China" (Beech et al., 2015), has allowed the Chinese government to regulate access to internet content through technical means. Thus, Chinese netizens live in a parallel universe that is partially separated from the rest of the digital world.

For many Chinese, the internet behind The Great Firewall works just fine. The speed is fast, and the price is cheaper than in the United States. They can still access goods delivery, services, and videos with a swipe from smartphone (Beech et al., 2015). The Chinese government claims its censorship regime and practice is desirable, as this is a good way to prevent the Western world from downloading information from them (Lee & Liu, 2012). Harwit (2016) also claims that China's technology is localizing rather than broadening its digital online community. This is because the Chinese government is still cautious of any technology that provides unrestricted communication among their citizens. This censorship technology has helped the Chinese government to control online information. Key topics of concern for the Chinese state that led to blocked websites tend to pertain to Taiwanese independence, Tibetan independence, Falun Gong, and other information that can be identified as a threat to the policies of the Communist Party (Lee & Liu, 2012).

In conjunction with a strong regulatory approach to the adoption of typically western Internet platforms in China, President Xi explained that he wants to build a modern society with strong Chinese technology firms that allows it to compete with other international technology (Beech et al., 2015). China has increasingly shifted from adopting foreign technologies to developing its own mobile applications on smart phones, such as WeChat (Harwit, 2016).

Therefore, the government has come up with new rules that allow Tencent, an internet-based platform company, to have their domestic communications monitored by the Chinese government in order to identify politically sensitive terms. By sending a request to Tencent, the Chinese government can easily access any WeChat user's information. This shows that instead of allowing the digital space to hide users' anonymity like in the West, Chinese netizens are required to unmask themselves on social media. With this surveillance law that exists beyond The Great Firewall of China, Harwit (2016) claims that it has become a potential problem for non-Chinese overseas users who choose to use this application, as this has become a threat for users who are worried that their messages are being monitored by Chinese government officials.

Furthermore, the blockage of Western social media platforms has created a niche market. Applications such as Tinder are not popular in China because it needs to be registered through Facebook, which is banned within The Great Firewall of China (Chan, 2018a). Tantan was then developed as the Chinese clone of Match Group's Tinder to operate within the censorship law. However, with a focus on expanding Tantan out of China, it has now successfully expanded to the rest of Asia, particularly in Southeast Asia. Chen and Liu's (2019) participants' assumptions were that Tinder users are mainly Westerners, while Tantan users are mainly Chinese. This is one reason why Tantan is now known as the Asian version of Tinder, primarily focused on people of Chinese ethnicity, in and outside of The Great Firewall of China.

Consequently, the purpose for this discussion or framing of the Tantan dating application is to consider the specific experiences of the applications users that extend from these embedded rules and context. The participants recruited for this study were all Malaysian Chinese that were not bound to the region-specific dynamics of Chinese censorship law, for example, though the Tantan dating application is not immune to China's internet censorship. With the use of Tantan as a site of investigation, I expanded my discussion to consider how young Malaysian Chinese users of Tantan enact a form of identity performance. Although there is an expectation that dating applications represent a recent change in the dating world, this thesis studies such changes from a Chinese cultural point of view through the use of Tantan. The challenges of cultural traditions and norms, shared amongst Malaysian Chinese, have been discussed closely within this study.

Malaysian Chinese

Research shows that the cultural orientation of Malaysian Chinese is still similar to Mainland Chinese (Fee, 1997). My own background is one of growing up in a very traditional family, where most of my family's teachings were based heavily on China's foremost ancient thinker, Confucius. This motivated me to look into the history of my ethnicity. The Confucius ideology first originated in mainland China, and since then, it has deeply influenced the upbringing of Chinese children around the world (Tu, 2017). Even if they do not live in China, the Confucius ideology has been passed down for generations and still dominates in most Chinese families as that is how generations were brought up. However, there are still many differences between Mainland Chinese and Malaysian Chinese. One difference is Malaysian Chinese culture has not been exposed to the influence of communism. Hence, Malaysian Chinese culture has taken a different evolutionary path from the culture of the People's Republic of China. Another difference is that Malaysian Chinese are more exposed to a multicultural society, and they are found to be more religious than the Chinese from Mainland China (Fee, 1997). Fee (1997) also found that the localization of Chinese identities in Malaysia is through the Chinese speaking dialect, Cantonese and Hokkien. These are the examples of sub identities that derive from the influence of localization.

Suryadinata (2007) claimed that around 80% of the Chinese ethnicity that are not residing in mainland China are living in Southeast Asia. Based on Hara's (2003) study, it was between the years of 1945 to 1957 when Chinese socio-political activities and practices in Malaysia (formally known as Malaya) shifted the Chinese from a "China oriented identity consciousness" to a "Malaysian identity consciousness". Gabriel (2014) claimed that the diversity in the Malaysian Chinese's sociocultural experiences has had a different impact on their ethnicity as they shifted from their early status as overseas Chinese, whose loyalty was towards China, to being one of the generations today that makes claims of their belonging to and rootedness in Malaysia.

As cultural loyalty to "Chineseness" does not mean disloyalty to the nation (Heidhues, 1992), the idea of Chineseness is "a racial form of identification that spread more than the boundaries of the nation state" (Gabriel, 2014, p. 1215). As argued by Louie (2004), the idea of Chineseness has allowed the existence of a category of people of Chinese descent, who no longer live on Chinese soil, to still be considered as racially Chinese. This argument is rather relevant to Malaysian Chinese as Chineseness is often understood in regard to race, and not

as a contextual construction (Gabriel, 2014). Most Malaysian Chinese today are the descendants of Chinese people who migrated from mainland China a few generations before. This lineage has formed a relationship between the Chinese in Malaysia and the Chinese in mainland China. Therefore, in postcolonial Malaysia, Chinese cultural identity awareness has become an important experience in building a multicultural society. There is an increase in the awareness of the international Chinese community, thus remaking the Malaysian Chinese cultural identity since 1980 (Matondang, 2016). As Chineseness is a strong cultural marker that has been used in the remaking of identity in many forms, the Chinese communities in Malaysia have found a cultural strategy to reclaim Malaysian Chinese identity in public spaces, rather than adapting to the ethno-national formation of Malaysia (Matondang, 2016).

In Yen's (2002) research, the exploration of Chinese cultural identity shows how the Malaysian Chinese have preserved their Chinese culture in opposition to the National Culture Policy of the Malaysian government, where the focus is on Malay culture, which is also the representation of the nation's identity. After going through a long sociocultural process and cultural dialogues (Matondang, 2016), a new hybrid culture has been created by adopting the patterns of the recommended cultural practices from the National Culture Policy. The combination of the global culture with overseas Chinese and the regulation of the Malaysian government have transformed the identities of Malaysian Chinese, creating a new hybrid culture that has been accepted by all ethnic groups in Malaysia (Bonn & Tafarodi, 2014; Matondang, 2016).

The "Malaysianization" of Chinese culture allows Malaysian Chinese to refer to their Chinese traditions, such as ancestral culture and Confucianism, in a modern setting. The process usually happens within the Chinese communities, and gradually shapes a realistic cultural identity by emphasizing the Chinese brotherhood. The Malaysianization of Chinese culture is not identical to the Chinese in mainland China; rather, the Malaysian Chinese have established a cultural organization that promotes Chinese cultural traditions blended with local elements. With that, the Malaysian Chinese have found it to be a strategic adaptation in the global economy, and that has brought about the idea of a cosmopolitan Chinese cultural identity.

Research Questions

This study aims to answer the research questions of 'What motivates the specific behaviour and/or practices of young Malaysian Chinese adults using Tantan?' and 'How do the considerations of gender contribute to the way young Chinese present their identity on mobile dating apps?'. It further seeks to understand how the structural and personal motivators behind Chinese dating and dating applications contribute to questions and problems raised about ethics, culture, and gender amongst young Chinese.

Researcher Background

Being the researcher and author, this study was in part motivated by my own experiences. As a young Malaysian Chinese woman, I am a representative of the participants included in this study. My personal and professional experiences to date are closely connected to experiences of matchmaking in the contemporary Chinese social and cultural context. In particular, when working as a wedding planner in Malaysia, I discovered my interest in the context of gender, and this has inspired me to explore gender from a masculinity and femininity point of view. While the concept behind online dating applications still fascinates me, I am also eager to explore the presentation of self through the lens of gender. This is because the conservativeness of society in Malaysia limits how each gender should present themselves, especially within the context of online dating applications.

When I was in New Zealand to further my studies, I had the opportunity to exchange and share my cultural background with other international Chinese students, such as Chinese from Mainland China, Indonesia, and Singapore. This is where I realised that we have so many differences as we have been brought up in different countries, yet we share similar traits of growing up as Chinese. Furthermore, the focus on family has become an added motivation for "proper behaviour" and conduct (Tu, 2017). As a Chinese ethnic, I was taught to obey and fulfil my parent's expectations, which includes morality, manners, and marriage. I was brought up with matrimony as my goal, which contributes to the idea of "the woman should follow the man" (Clark & Wang, 2004). To the best of my knowledge, there has not been much written about people of Chinese ethnicity using dating apps or of Chinese dating apps in particular. Most of the previous research has been on Chinese values such as 'face', 'hierarchy', and 'filial piety' (Chu, 1991; Hwang, 2012). Filial piety means the respect for

one's parents, elders, and ancestors. By conducting this research, I could also explore the background of other Chinese families in relation to my own.

Initially, I intended to have my research subjects to be a variety of Chinese ethnicity from overseas, regardless of nationality. However, as I conduct my interviews, most of the response and enquiries I got were from Malaysian Chinese. There are limitations on getting overseas Chinese to be part of my study during my trip back in Malaysia as the probability of meeting an oversea Chinese in the area I was recruiting was relatively low. After recruiting and interviewing a few Malaysian Chinese, I decided to shift the focus of my study to only Malaysian Chinese. During my recruitment in New Zealand, my limitation was not being able to recruit enough participants at the designated timeframe. I managed to obtain two Malaysia Chinese participants that are willing to participate in the interview.

This study had ended with only Malaysian Chinese from both Malaysia and New Zealand to represent the wider Chinese diaspora on the methodological level. However, it does not affect the core of this study although Malaysian Chinese are raised in an environment where the national policy and government rules are majority based on the Islamic rules. This is because Malaysian Chinese still possessed the Chinese heritage from the ancestors when they first came to the Malaya from mainland China. Therefore, this research aims to interview the younger generation that lived in this space where traditional Chinese values has been challenged and/or reinforced by contemporary Malaysian Chinese families.

In this study, Malaysian Chinese from Malaysia and New Zealand share their insights on how they constructed their Tantan profile in addition to experiencing the cultural dimensions of being young Chinese. As I was born and raised in Malaysia, through my childhood, I get to experience different forms of culture from different ethnicities as Malaysia is one the most multicultural nations in southeast Asia. I hope that this representation of young Malaysian Chinese would reflect on the understanding of the Chinese ethnicity group outside of mainland China.

Thesis Chapter Outline

Several researchers have examined the motivations of online dating applications users (Strugo and Muise, 2019; Timmermans and Courtois, 2018), however, to date there are few studies that have been conducted in a Chinese context. Chapter 1 discussed on what the study

looks into, such as the evolution of Malaysian Chinese as they change in different socio-economic and political contexts over generations. The identified Malaysian Chinese participants in this study have shared their experiences growing up in their Chinese families, and how the culture in different countries affected their upbringing. They also explored how they constructed their profile under the lens of Malaysian society's expectation of gender masculinity.

Chapter 2 looks into the existing research on dating and marriages in traditional Chinese culture. The research discussed illustrates the understanding of Chinese culture and gender performance from different scholars in both Asian and Western contexts. Research like Goffman's (1959) self-performance theory and Butler's (1990) gender performance theory is provided in this chapter to give the reader an overall idea of the theories used in this study. The purpose of this chapter is to highlight the limitations of the discussion of users using Chinese mobile dating applications, as most of the research is mainly focused on Western dating applications.

The qualitative methodology used for this thesis is outlined in Chapter 3. I conducted 10 semi-structured interviews Malaysian Chinese participants in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and Auckland, New Zealand. Most of the interview questions were modified to suit each individual's views and opinions. The phenomenological approach was used in order to extract real data from the participants.

The following two chapters discuss the findings, which have been organized into two core areas – Motivations for using Tantan and the performance of gender identity in online dating applications. The first findings chapter, Chapter 4, explores the main motivations of my Malaysian Chinese participants using Tantan. It is found that traditional traits such as filial piety, still exist in most of the Malaysian Chinese culture today. The section aims to find out on the reinforcement of traditional Chinese values and how it challenges these values within the contemporary Chinese families.

The second findings chapter, Chapter 5, explore how the expectations of masculinity and femininity influence the way the participants constructed their profiles on Tantan, on top of the cultural impacts as discussed above. Here, I discuss the presentation of femininity and masculinity through their performed appearance and behaviour. As the idea of hegemonic masculinity views are still strong among the young Malaysian Chinese, my participants

experiences showed that different identities were portrayed in their front stage and backstage performances.

To conclude the thesis, the conclusion summarises the key findings of this study and considers its contribution to contemporary dating research from a Malaysian Chinese perspective. With individual identity becoming increasingly common in contemporary Chinese families, the introduction of online dating applications has become a technology that impacts on the dating and marriage market among Chinese individuals. This study shows the importance of gender performance in facilitating love encounters and how Chinese culture affects young Malaysian Chinese in contemporary dating.

This study is important for a number of reasons. First, the themes developed are useful references to explore the development of Chinese culture and would contribute to the context of larger socio-economic developments. By exploring Tantan, I can discuss the performance and presentation of users not only from the perspective of mainland Chinese, but also from Chinese living abroad. This research can also help to identify existing gaps for future research, such as dating applications from non-Western regions.

Chapter 2 - Literature Review

Introduction

This chapter reflects on previous academic scholarship, which includes an analysis of Confucian ideology from the Han Dynasty, and the reformation of the Chinese economy that has shifted the structure of dating and personal relationships in today's society. As China is under a system of social control, Hsu (1948) suggested that this is due to the Confucian ideology that has encouraged Chinese individuals to live under their ancestors' shadow. However, it is argued by Blair and Madigan (2016) that the collectivist nature of Chinese culture has shifted due to an increasing prioritisation of a person's own needs ahead of those of their family. Today, Chinese youth tend to hold on to a more individualistic identity than the previous generations who were more influenced by a traditionally collective ideology (Sun & Wang, 2010). Research such as that conducted by Lange, Houran and Li (2015) has indicated that exposure to Western culture has also changed the process of seeking romantic partners, as Western culture encourages individualism. This has allowed Western values to replace traditional values, in terms of Chinese youths' preference for a free choice marriage and for romantic love in the recent times. Therefore, to understand the motivation of young Chinese adults using Tantan, this chapter examines existing research literature that discusses these shifts in Chinese culture, as well as the usage of online dating applications. This study also considers profiles on mobile dating applications as a type of self-presentation using Goffman's (1959) theory of multi-level identity to create impressions. This chapter also reviews literature from scholars such as Butler (1990) that consider the performance of gender where it is constructed and performed.

Chinese Culture

In Chinese culture, Chinese people are known to be introverted, especially in new environments where they tend not to make friends with their neighbours. Blair and Madigan (2016) argued that this is due to the influence of Confucian moral values of modesty that emerged as the state religion during the Han Dynasty (206 B.C. to 220 A.D). As Guo and Wang (2016) explain, Confucianism is the cornerstone of traditional Chinese culture; it promotes individual discipline and the ethics of the Zhou dynasty, one of which is filial piety. Therefore, some of the basic Confucian principles are teachable, such as showing obedience

and respect to authority. Confucian principles are also greatly reflected in Chinese people's attitude towards dating and marriage. As an old Chinese proverb expresses: "Marry a chicken, and share the coop; marry a dog, and share the kennel[1]". It means that for richer for poorer, the women have to follow and obey the husband once she is married to him. This shows that a Chinese woman's identity used to be defined by her unquestioning obedience and eternal attachment to her husband (Leung, 2003). Women were viewed as a temporary member of their biological family. Therefore, when a daughter was married, she had to leave her biological family and she is abided to her husband's household. This is because the traditional Chinese society was created as a masculine value system over thousands of years. This patriarchal system was usually dominated by the older generation in the family hierarchy, and power was usually given to the male head of the household (Guo, 2018).

Marriage in Traditional Chinese culture

Previous research has shown that in Chinese culture, the traditional expectations of dating as a precursor to marriage are still heavily based on Confucian ideology (Blair & Madigan, 2016; Guo & Wang, 2010; Xing, 2010). This has had a lasting impact on Chinese society, as the ideas of Confucius are still greatly emphasized in regard to social and family hierarchies. In particular, the Confucian moral value of filial piety plays an important role in shaping personal conduct (Xing, 2010), even in the context of globalisation and the increasing influence of Western values (Hu & Scott, 2014). Filial piety is understood as respect for one's parents and ancestors, but it can also be applied to general obedience. Hwang (2012) claims the filial piety is the essential core of Confucianism. From a Confucian perspective, children do not have the choice to decide whether to be filial or not. This is because the Confucian viewpoint is that one's life is an extension of their parents' lives, therefore the duty of filial is an unconditional obligation (Hwang, 2011). Thus, as Pimentel (2000) suggests, dating and marriage in Chinese culture are both strongly affected by family pressure, as parents take responsibility for their children's marriage, leaving their adult children with little say in selecting who they are to marry; at the very least, it is important to gain parental approval in selecting romantic partners (To, 2013). As Tang and Zuo (2000) also explain, finding a suitable marital partner to establish a family is a central component of traditional Chinese culture, and marriage is mainly used to bring honour and glory

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[1] Jia Ji Sui Ji, Jia Gou Sui Gou (嫁鸡随鸡，嫁狗随狗)

continuation of the family line. Therefore, marriage is deemed essential within Chinese culture to avoid losing the family's 'face' and to avoid being condemned as an unfilial child.

The Sociological Chinese Concept of 'Face'

Saving face is given great importance in cultural and social life. Hwang (2012) explains the Chinese concept of "face" as the social respect offered by a group to individuals that has high morality. It is a form of highly valued social reputation by Chinese people and it can only be accumulated through effort and achievement throughout the course of an individual's life. Individual Chinese must depend on their social environment to gain affirmation from other people in order to obtain this kind of face, as it is often linked with close, personal relationships. As such, to maintain status in his/her interpersonal network, an individual would have high motivation regarding achievement, and high expectations on themselves in order to improve their social standing.

Various studies have shown that there are many factors that cause an individual to lose face (Chu, 1991; Hwang, 2012). Chu (1991) conducted a survey on the issue of face in Taiwan, where a total of 201 respondents described their experience of shame or loss of face. She then identified 110 situations from the collected responses that resulted in the participants feeling the loss of face. The results were subjected to factor analysis and four factors were obtained: reputation and esteem, ability and status, morality and law, and sexual morality. Chu's (1991) respondents also claimed that moral issues, such as sexual morality, are more likely to cause a stronger sense of losing face than achievement related issues, such as ability and status. Chu's findings further suggested that for the Chinese, the moral dimensions of face are more important than those concerning one's capability or status. In the context of dating choices in Chinese culture, children who do not get married by a certain age are considered as immoral and seen as an embarrassment to their family, more than those without distinctive achievements or promoted social status. Hence, many unmarried Chinese youth are pressured into marriage in order to save their family's honour.

Sexual Double Standards

In a non-Chinese study by Ababio & Yendork (2017), their results showed that most of their respondents from the University of Ghana believed that virginity had been stereotyped on women because of the patriarchal cultural system in Ghana. In this system, women are categorized as subordinates and are not expected to do things according to their own will, especially on issues around morality and decency. As Zhou (1989) explains, in any society which women are viewed as possessions, sex becomes a commodity. Therefore, cultures with patrilineal descent have a traditional concept of virginity that mainly focuses on young women because each woman can only be a virgin once, and the hymen is the significance virginity value. Similar to Ababio & Yendork's (2017) study, Zhou (1989) claimed that in China, the status of being a virgin is also only significant for females but not important at all for males. With female virginity being used as a behaviour control for women, it has become a social concept used for generations by the Chinese patriarchal system to instil moral values among women.

In China, an obsession with female virginity also remains strong amongst young men and women. In their study, He and Tsang (2019) explained that preserving a bride's virginity until marriage is essential to keeping the family's face (see also Yang, 2011). Virginity is therefore said to be one of the most valued symbols in traditional Chinese culture and this concept is sometimes explained as the "virginity complex" or the "virginity membrane adoration" (He & Tsang, 2019, p. 186). "Complex" is directly translated from Chinese characters which mean "a group of related, often repressed ideas and impulses that compel characteristics or habitual patterns of thought, feelings, and behaviour" (Wang & Ho, 2011, p. 186). For Chinese men, a woman's virginity is emphasized as an important criterion for dating and marriage selection. However, despite perceived adherence to traditional values, sexual double standards do exist in Chinese culture around premarital sex. Chinese men may also be eager to engage in premarital sex with their virgin girlfriends (Wang & Ho, 2011). For Chinese women, there is a feeling of responsibility for maintaining sexual purity due to the pressure of men looking for virgins as girlfriends. This is the complexity of virginity membrane adoration as women are expected to observe purity and succumb to the desires of their prospective husbands. Women will be expected to keep their virginity until marriage and are placed in a lower position in their husband household if they are not a virgin. As mentioned in He and Tsang's (2019) study, this traditional value has subsequently shaped the manner in which young Chinese seek romantic partners.

Tong (2003) found that most Chinese youth tend to be conservative when compared with other Asian cultures and they are less likely to engage in premarital sex due to an emphasis on sexual restraint in traditional Chinese morals. For example, it becomes important to only date one person, marry that person, and remain loyal to each other throughout marriage (Tong, 2003). There is however some sense that these traditional values are shifting with the increasing influence of Western values. Yang (2011) argued that contemporary Chinese society claims that virginity is no longer as important due to the values of an open society that promotes gender equality, but Wang and Ho (2011) maintain that women losing their virginity before marriage is still a taboo for women in Chinese society. This may be because women have exercised more power in courtship than men, and the power comes from her virginity and her resistance to early marriage (Zhou, 1989). As soon as a woman loses her virginity, she would lose her decisive power in a courtship.

Another reason for the importance of a woman's virginity is because her purity is again aligned with Confucius ideology, and open discussion about female sexuality is ignored within the country's cultural context. As Wang and Ho (2011) explain, the exposure of contemporary Chinese women to global discourses can be problematic when compounded by a general ignorance of sexuality and lack of sex education in China. Instead of looking at their adult children as individuals and sexually mature adults, most parents still prefer to view their daughters as pure children. In China, the education system still adopts a purified, sanitized, and moralised discussion on dating (Wang and Ho, 2011) and the idea of adolescents dating is generally deemed unacceptable by parents and teachers. Accordingly, sex has also become a forbidden fruit and there is no proper sex education offered to young people in Mainland China. In response to changes in contemporary society, Wang and Ho (2011) claim that it is crucial for social workers to begin conducting sex education in China, not just concerned with maintaining purity, but also in consideration of gender equality and enhancing knowledge of safety and sexual pleasure. Increasingly, sexual conduct is becoming an individual's free choice, and although Confucius ideology and traditional family values continue to influence behaviour, younger generations of Chinese are seeking self-fulfilment through desire, impulse, and personal freedom (Wang & Ho, 2011).

Dating in Contemporary China

Yan (2010) suggests that individualisation in China stems from the globalisation process that has taken place since the late 1970s, where the Chinese party-state has shed most of their previous provisions and responsibilities such as the state-controlled redistributive system of work, life and well-being after the reformation of the Chinese economy in 1979. It was triggered by the widespread experience of poverty, economic shortages, and suppression of civil rights and freedoms. After Deng Xiaoping became the paramount leader of the Communist Party in China in 1978, he embarked China on the road to reformation and opening up the country. He began with the de-collectivization of the countryside, followed by industrial reforms that decentralized government controls in the industrial sector. This triggered the realisation of three dreams in today's modern China: a strong state, a wealthy nation, and a prosperous individual –in exactly that order. Yan (2010) claims that it is due to the reformation of the Chinese economy that each individual has been pushed to become more competitive, self-dependent, and detached from the previous paternalistic redistributive system of Maoist socialism.

With ongoing migration towards urban centres, Feldshuh (2017) believes that Chinese women reaching middle age are having increasing difficulty finding a suitable partner because a Chinese women's perceived market value decreases as she ages, according to the norms of Chinese culture (Ji, 2015; Yang, 2017). According to Ji (2015), Chinese tradition suggests that women are valued for the roles as wives and mothers (Ji, 2015) and it is therefore important for Chinese women to get married as early as possible to start a family.

However, in the context of their own increasing career ambitions (Gaetano, 2014; Ji, 2015), or greater expectations of an equal division of household duties (Gaetano, 2014), single Chinese women have emerged as a social group judged as problematic and too picky, often being labelled as 'shengnü' (Feldshuh, 2017; Ji, 2015), which means "leftover women", when they are still unmarried by the age of 27. The marriage expectations placed on Chinese women can be a pressing cause for anxiety, as women are expected to balance the contradictions between personal achievement and marriage, thus the term leftover women emphasise the pressure on women to enter into marriage. Most of Ji's (2015) research informants bemoaned that age is unfair for women – especially for women in the workforce who have worked hard in their careers but are not yet married by their late 20s. These single, educated women in China end up finding themselves labelled as leftovers due to a cultural

tradition that only values their youth. This is because women are often used for reproduction and a women's youth is often associated with her fertility rate. Therefore, most women confronted with this situation have faced intense pressure from their relatives, friends, and family to find a spouse by the time they reached their thirties.

Feldshuh (2017) studied the misleading representation of leftover women on three popular television shows in Chinese media, where she found that the term "shengnü" was constructed through socially generated stereotypes and furthered through media messaging. These television case studies consisted of reality shows and fictionalized and comedic discussion of the treatment of leftover women which projected false representations and misleading messages about the educational trends of leftover women. It was suggested by Feldshuh (2017) that this demographic trend is reflective of larger economic and social changes that have impacted on Chinese society. Although these women are not responsible for the shift of marriage practices in China and late marriages among women, this was repeatedly used as a form of gender stereotype throughout the three television series. Thus, the term 'shengnü' has been constructed to become part of the semantic derogation of women. This also leads to heightened pressure on women regarding traditional gender roles and restrictive social expectations.

Feldshuh (2017) also claims that the introduction of China's one child policy has contributed to an excess of men, as generations of Chinese parents have had a strong preference for sons over daughters. This is because sons are more likely to stay in their parent's household after marriage to support the older generations and contribute to the continuation of the family line. This gender imbalance in China has caused the term leftover women to be manufactured so that these educated women would focus on the importance of marriage. Through a uniform narrative of leftover women, news media would discriminate and devalue females with educational achievements, thus shaming these women into changing their behaviours rather than finding a solution for the millions of surplus men that are the result of the Chinese government's one child policy (López, 2020).

Furthermore, it is still an expectation for Chinese youth to adhere to some existing, long-standing norms, and parents still play a key role by expressing their concerns and interests in their children's romantic decision-making. Wang and Nehring (2013) claim that the rise of cultural hierarchies has shaped the practice of how young women in Beijing select their dating partner. In their study, they define these cultural hierarchies as a hidden norm that

shapes their participants' dating practices. One such cultural hierarchy is expressed by the saying "marriage is arranged on the orders of the parents by the words of the matchmaker" (Wang and Nehring, 2013, p. 585). This phrase is commonly used to regulate the principle of mate selection in Chinese tradition with one particular criteria: a marriage between families of equal social rank. It requires the couple to have a similar education and family background, and also a balanced position in economic and social status. As a well-matched Chinese marriage requires a similar socioeconomic position (Guo & Wang, 2016), it is important for both sets of parents to check the background of each family before consenting to a marriage. Another reason for parents to be involved in their children's romantic decision-making is due to the expectation that elderly parents will be a burden by relying on their children after retirement. The expectation is that children will devote their lives to caring for their parents, and this has placed great pressure on unmarried sons to prioritise finding a spouse to take care of his aging parents (Blair & Madigan, 2016). These unmarried sons would then negotiate with their parents over the identification and selection of a suitable wife, who would also consequently provide assistance in this responsibility.

Wang and Nehring (2013) state that the rapid transformation of Chinese society in 1979 has also changed people's thoughts in regard to dating behaviour. This is also supported by Yang (2017) who claims that globalization and urbanization have influenced the economic and socio-cultural environment in China, thus enabling young people to see personal relationships as an important part of their individual happiness. Various studies indicate that personal interest and desire have driven the increasing domination of dating over arranged marriages (Blair & Madigan, 2016; Wang & Nehring, 2013; Yan, 2003). According to Yan (2003) and Blair & Madigan (2016), one of the reasons is the economic success of Chinese women that allows them to gain economic independence. This has resulted in a lower need for ensuring financial security through their spouse, thus giving the women the freedom to actively participate in their own courtship.

Despite these long-standing traditional practices and pressures, there has undoubtedly been a rise in individual privacy and rights, such as free choice marriage that values romantic love ahead of family duty. This has gradually influenced Chinese youth in this era of social reform and accelerated the adoption of Western dating culture (Wang and Nehring 2014; Yan, 2003; Yang, 2017). Thus, dating and relationships do not only change in coordination with values, but also reflect changes in societal structure. More specifically, Yang's (2017) research into the main features of dating and relationship practices found that the idea of romantic love,

which used to be defined as a form of intimacy resulting in a lifelong marital bond (Yan 2003), may not be able to fully explain the increasingly diverse dating practices and rising divorce rate among younger generations. Instead, it is suggested that the increasing popularity of speed dating and online dating has also played a role in these developments. Yang (2017) suggested that flash marriage, which is the term used for when two people get married after only knowing each other for a short period of time, is occurring in contemporary Chinese society. The Chinese that choose to have a flash marriage may feel that they have found true love, so they tend to not go through the long running period of creating understanding and tolerance in day-to-day life before getting married. In the Chinese tradition where there is on-going family pressure to get married, young professionals choose a flash marriage because they also have the self-expectation to settle down. The prioritization of emotional attachment over rational consideration in flash marriages reflects on the individualized values of the younger generation towards love, which has subsequently contributed to the rise of online dating (Sumter & Candenbosch, 2018; Quiroz, 2013).

The Sexual Revolution in China

According to Wang (2017), the increase in demand for individuals to freely select their romantic partners has diversified China's dating practices. They describe this as the development of a "sexual revolution", where people are more liberal when it comes to love and sexual matters, and the term has been widely used by other scholars to describe the transformation of individual selection in love, dating and sexuality (Farrer, 2004, 2008; Pan, 2006). In the West, scholars such as Giddens (1992) claim that the representative value of the sexual revolution is the separation of sex from reproduction and the increasing emphasis on sexual love and sexual pleasure. This has allowed the acceptance of non-reproductive sexual love, and also non-heterosexual relationships in most Western countries. Before the sexual revolution, premarital sex and premarital pregnancy were also seen as taboo; it was expected that most women who had sex before marriage only did so with the man they were going to marry. After the sexual revolution, premarital sex was made acceptable by the public, at least for those in a relationship (England et. al, 2012). However, in China, it was the introduction of the one child policy that disrupted the traditional link between sex and reproduction (Wang, 2017). Therefore, Wang (2017) claims that couples would engage in sexual intercourse due to the purpose of mutual affection and sexual pleasure when they were only

allowed to have one child. He also claims that there was increased accessibility to contraceptive devices and abortion procedures, behaviours that were once considered to be "abnormal" or illegal in Chinese society.

Thus, Pan (2006) has claimed that the sexual revolution has indeed taken place in modern day China and has almost successfully reached its conclusion. However, it is argued by Wang (2017) that the sexual revolution in China is still an unfinished process due to the revolution in sexual behaviour that is not equivalent to a real sexual revolution based on human rights. It still neglects gender equality, favours male patriarchy, and does not challenge the traditional moral and gender norms. Wang (2017) has also claimed that the current sexual revolution makes the existing sexual double standard even more intense in the country, as purity and faithfulness are expected from women but there is still tolerance and acceptance of men's pursuit of multiple sexual partners.

Gender & Identity in Online Dating Application

According to Eaton & Rose (2011), dating is defined as a practice taken by partners who are romantically interested in each other to get to know each other better. Dating is a form of courtship where both interested parties spend a significant amount of time participating in social activities, whether alone as a couple or with others. While the term "dating" has many meanings, it commonly refers to the trial period of two people evaluating each other before moving towards a more permanent relationship.

The Rise of Swiping Culture

An innovation of mobile technology that has had an effect on courtship is the location-based dating application, also known as mobile dating apps or online dating apps[2]. Recent developments have overcome many of the traditional challenges encountered when meeting new people in the early stages of finding a romantic partner. Now, with a simple swipe of a finger, the smartphone makes it easy for people to stay connected and also to access all platforms and geolocations. Several studies have highlighted the popularity of mobile dating through platforms such as Tinder, Grindr, Skout, and many more (Strugo and Muise, 2019; Sumter & Candenbosch, 2018; Quiroz, 2013). Quiroz's (2013) study focussed on location-

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[2] Apps is the short form of "application', which refers to software that are able to function on any electronic device such as smart phones.

based dating, explained as "Satellite, Mobile, and GPS dating". The term "location-based dating" is a form of online dating that uses GPS technology to allow users to identify and connect with other users, known as potential partners, based on location proximity.

Quiroz (2013) further explains that location-based mobile dating applications are promoted as a global network for meeting people as they allow users to connect with potential partners within a certain radius. These mobile applications have a different marketing strategy to target different audiences. For example, Grindr is advertised as an "all-male social network" and is marketed towards homosexual males, and Coffee Meets Bagel is aimed at busy professionals looking for quality dating. Perhaps the most recognised example of mobile dating applications is Tinder, which introduced the concept of swiping through other users' profiles, emphasising the simplicity of the application interface (Strugo & Muise, 2019; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). Users can download the application for their device and create a profile to start. Uploading a photo or answering questions about themselves are optional. The users are first presented with a selection of potential matches; then they evaluate the profiles shown and make choices based on the limited mediated interactions being presented (Strugo & Muise, 2019; Timmermans & Courtois, 2018). Users can easily select their matches by swiping left on users they are not interested in or swiping right on users they are interested in (Hobbs, Owen & Gerber, 2016). If both parties indicate interest in each other, they are declared a match, and this allows them to begin a conversation via the direct message chat box. Users also get notifications if there are potential matches nearby.

The Appeal of Dating Apps

Previous research has shown that Tinder is used for different reasons, from wanting to find a romantic partner to avoid being left out (Sumter, Vandenbosch, & Ligtenberg, 2017; Ligtenberg, 2017). As previously mentioned, the rise of mobile dating has also allowed users to be able to connect easily with similarly motivated users within close proximity (Quiroz, 2013). Sumter et al. (2017) found that the main motivation for using online dating apps is due to trendiness, as dating apps used to be a relatively new way to meet other people. Thus, some adults use Tinder due to the excitement of a new app. This motivation has decreased over time as Tinder has emerged into a well-known form of online dating. Sumter et al.'s (2017) research also shows that some users might be interested in exploring dating apps for

motivations such as relational, interpersonal, and entertainment, rather than the perceived priority of matchmaking, therefore circumventing the main functionality of the app.

Strugo and Muise (2019) investigated users' goals for Tinder use, as well as the dating experiences of users. They found that the success of dating through the application is often affected by a user's perception and their approach and avoidance goals on using online dating apps. Their research applied an Approach-Avoidance motivational theory, which differentiated between two categories of goals—approach and avoidance. Approach goals are based on the motivation to engage in positive outcomes in a relationship, such as intimacy and growth, whereas avoidance goals are based on the motivation to avoid negative outcomes in a relationship such as humiliation and denial. In their research, users with high approach goals were more likely to experience success, and in contrast, users with high avoidance goals would perceive less dating success. This is due to people with high approach goals having more positive beliefs about people on Tinder, and they perceived other Tinder users as more attractive or having traits and qualities they were looking for in a dating partner. Therefore, it was found that users with high approach goals would initiate more conversations, resulting in greater dating success. However, people with high avoidance goals were reported to have more negative interactions in social situations. This is because these users were found to be more hypervigilant to the possibility of rejection or embarrassment, thus they tended to perceive themselves as less competent and have more anxiety about their relationships. In turn, these users with high avoidance goals would claim less dating success and were found to have fewer second dates.

McPherson et al. (2001) found that human beings tend to interact with people who are like themselves. It is explained that this is the concept of "homophily", which is a principle that connects similar people at a higher rate than people who are not similar. When meeting someone outside of the online dating world, people would be judged based on their physical appearance. This concept is also applied in Tinder's user interface where the appearance motivation has also been greatly emphasized. Timmermans and Courtois (2018) stated that Tinder users would only be motivated to meet other users offline when they found compatibility in the other users' level of physical attractiveness to their own. As the level of physical attractiveness differs between each individual, as such, Franzoi and Herzog (1987) found that men focused their decisions around attractiveness on sexually related body parts, but women tended to focus more on the appearance of buttocks, eyes, legs, and health. Consequently, it is not surprising for many of the offline meetings to end up in sexual

encounters (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018), even when the users were not interested in pursuing a romantic relationship. This is because the interface of Tinder, or any other online platform, has the in-built potential to distort or manipulate physical appearance. Moreover, the use of chat box and private messaging has reduced real life interaction, which leads to a lower level of commitment and engagement, thus increase the likelihood of physically rewarding encounters that do not extend to a full relationship.

The heterosexual male respondents in Hobbs et al.'s (2016) research expressed their frustration around the lack of potential matches. The researchers noted a small number of survey participants believed that the minor percentage of highly attractive people hooking up all the time made the majority of the users miss out on intimate experiences. This is because these individuals that conform to society's ideology of attractiveness would hold a better position in a digital dating network. It was also expressed by some participants in Hobbs et al.'s study that they felt the interactions offered by technology could not provide a fair picture of a person's personality as many would begin a conversation based on physical attraction. The complicated performance of communicating one's suitability as a potential partner, amidst varying motivations, lower investment, and increased ease of access, can be analysed and interpreted by applying Erving Goffman's (1959) theory of the "presentation of self".

Contextual Theory on Gender Differences

Erving Goffman's Presentation of Self

The rise of online dating has prompted new considerations as to how identities are formed and understood in the online world. As dating sites are social, they are also related to someone in real life. When a person enters the presence of another person, regardless of whether it is online or offline, it is common for both parties to mobilize their personal activity to respond to the intention they have in mind. The individual will consciously, or sometimes unconsciously, express themselves in order to construct a certain impression or obtain a specific response. According to Goffman (1959), self-performance differs between signs that are given off unconsciously, and signs that are given off consciously. For example, signs about gender or marital status can be given away almost unconsciously through conversation or body language, but they can also be purposefully supressed to construct a different impression. These withheld identities are also an important component of self-expression.

Goffman (1959) suggested that although intentional presentation is a basic strategy in shaping a personality, there is no authentic identity or "true self"; the true self is also a form of performance. A performance, as Goffman explains, is defined as the activity of a person during a period of time in front of a set audience, and it has some influence on the audience. This performance of identity can be moulded and modified to fit into the understanding and expectations of society. In this case, to produce self, there is a back region and a front region. He claims that the front region, known by the term "frontstage", is the performance of an individual to deliver an appearance to maintain certain standards, whereas the "backstage", which is the identity behind the screen where people prepare their image and retreat from them, is also a form of performance. These performances are shaped by social norms.

In Dijick's (2013) study, the performance of users on LinkedIn and Facebook was examined using Goffman's multi-level identity. It found that the interface of these platforms has an effect on how users present themselves. For example, the timeline layout on Facebook allows users to customize their personal information and shape their public identity through a narrative interface. On LinkedIn's interface, which is geared towards professionals, it enables users to highlight skills that promote their strengths instead of revealing a more detailed personal narrative. Although in Dijick's (2013) study both Facebook and LinkedIn played a powerful role in the shaping of normative behaviour, it was found that Facebook engineered its interface to stimulate self-expression, self-communication, and self-promotion, while LinkedIn mainly focussed on professional performance and experiences. Therefore, Dijick (2013) claims that these social platforms are tools used for shaping identities, and by using these tools, users perform their different roles as friends, employees, employers and more. Subsequently, they will change their attitudes to fit into the norms of these platforms. The result is that Dijick (2013) provides an example of the manner in which Goffman's theories can be applied to analyse the performance of identity online. This study similarly draws from these concepts to understand the performance of identity and how the role of gender is played in the specific context of a mobile dating application.

Gender Performativity

In her book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler (1990) claims that gender is not an expression of nature but is itself a kind of performance that is highly influenced by social and political constructions. Although the notion of performance is consistent, Butler's attempt to theorize

gender as a performance represents a marked departure from Erving Goffman's account, "which posits a self which assumes and exchanges various 'roles' within complex social expectations of the 'game' of modern life" (Butler, 1988, p. 528). Butler instead claims that gender cannot be recognized as a role that expresses or disguises an interior self; but it is instead an "act" which constructs the social fiction of its own psychological interiority. These gender realities are performative, which means it is real to the extent that it is performed, but it is often mistaken for being a natural form of expression. Gender is not passively scripted on the body, nor is it determined by nature, language, the symbolic, or the overwhelming history of patriarchy. The performance of gender is consequently just its core identity that conforms to certain expectations (Butler, 1988).

Gender is established through repeated performed behaviours over time (Butler, 1988); this can be seen in Feldshuh's (2017) argument that the media representation of leftover women in contemporary Chinese media has created pressure on Chinese women to be married. In Feldshuh's study, all three television shows shared a uniform narrative of presenting leftover women as a major concern. Thus, the idea of leftover women was artificially constructed through socially generated gender stereotypes and sexist myths around womanhood and femininity.

Masculinity and femininity are configurations of symbolic meaning and are not inherent traits. Rather than expressing the pre-given identity, the performance of gender is a product of cultural effect (Butler, 1990). Gender has become a socially constructed binary that defines "men" and "women" and acts as a guiding principle for certain behaviours, personality traits, and desires for each category (Butler, 1990). In the West, heterosexual desire is the defining feature for both men and women, which binds masculinity and femininity in a binary, hierarchical relationship.

Hegemonic masculinity, as defined by Connell (1987), is a structure of gender practice that ties into the problem of patriarchy, which is based upon the dominant position of a man and the subordination of a woman. Kimmel's (1996) study found that hegemonic masculinity comes from the competition between different masculine types, and it has exerted a pervasive influence on a given culture's understanding of ideal male behaviour. For example, in Western cultures, hegemonic masculinity tends to be coded as white and heterosexual. As there are significant differences between Chinese and Western cultures, my research investigates the construction of gender identity not only in the Western discourse, but also in

the East Asian context. Therefore, with considerations for Butler's analysis on the social constructed nature of gender, my research explores how the social constructed nature of gender appears in the specific context of Chinese culture and tradition, as well as on Tantan.

Gender differences in dating

In the Chinese patriarchal structure, sexual division of labour is explained by one of the principles of Confucius. There are still parts of ancient Chinese wisdom, such as the appreciation of harmony, that affects the conduct of dating and relationships in modern China. A common expression, "men are primarily outside the home, and women are primarily inside the home [3]", has encouraged Chinese women to submit to their husband in order to become a virtuous wife and good mother while remaining disconnected from the world beyond their domestic space (Leung, 2003). These traditional expectations in regard to gender still play an important role for men, who assess a woman's behaviour and ambitions before moving into a relationship.

Beyond Chinese culture, Rose and Fieze (1989) examined dating advice books from the 1980s and claim that the dating etiquette was highly gendered and has not changed much over the past two decades (Eaton & Rose, 2011). These gender roles established an attitude that still exists in modern day society; as England (2010) claims, there is still an expectation of hegemonic masculinity for men to ask women on dates, propose marriage, and initiate most of the sexual behaviour. Gender role attitudes describe an individual's beliefs about appropriate role-related behaviours for men, women, girls, and boys (McHugh & Frueze, 1997). Traditionally, men are also supposed to initiate, plan, and pay for dates; women should be attractive and limit sexual activity (Rose & Frieze, 1989). Women should be home caregivers whereas men should be the head of households (McHugh & Frueze, 1997). Research has found that men and boys who endorse these traditional gender role attitudes have encoded these social scripts into an expectation that men are tough, and can obtain sexual privilege in romantic relationships (Eaton & Rose, 2011; Lee et al., 2010). This combative view of gender relations has characterized men as dominant and aggressive, and viewed women as attempting to turn the tables by controlling men (Lee et al., 2010). This has contributed to the retrieval of dominance scripts in dating interactions, which circles around

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[3] Nan Zhu Wai Nv Zhu Nei (男主外，女主内)

the belief that women should be controlled by men. Calogero (2004) claims that girls are often treated as sexual objects since they were young, and it is normal for women to live in a culture of the female body being treated as an object to be evaluated and measured. Similarly, in Chinese culture and tradition, the traditional gender role attitudes have justified the male domination in dating interactions such as 'women should be controlled by men' or treating women like sexual objects (Lee et al., 2010).

There is a general perception that men and women are defined differently in the process of dating. For example, according to He and Tsang (2016, p 195), sex is found as a female resource that the male makes exchanges for by inputting enough investment, such as time, money, and energy, but the same investment within an intimate relationship may have different social meaning for males. In Smith et al.'s (2010) study, they claimed that heterosexual males often sought attractiveness in their partner and offered financial security, whereas heterosexual females often offered physical attractiveness and sought financial security in a partner. Garza et al. (2016) also found that their male participants projected longer visual attention on reproductive-relevant body parts of the female body, such as the head, breast, and midriff.

In a study published before online dating applications, DeLucia (1987) claimed that the relationship between gender role identity and self-reported dating behaviour of undergraduates' dating experiences is evident, as it was found that people who view themselves as possessing masculine traits tend to display more masculinity in dating behaviours, and people who view themselves possessing feminine traits tend to display more femininity in dating behaviours. The researcher included specific masculine behaviours such as "open doors for the other", "paying for activities you do together", and "express sexual preferences", and specific feminine behaviours like "supports the other in decisions", and "waits for the initiation of sex". It also found that the masculinity and femininity behaviour portrayed was consistent with the subjects' biological sex.

Gender difference in online dating apps

In Chan's (2018) study, most of his female participants would first identify men's objectives on the use of dating apps by examining their written profiles and photos. They claimed that men with long, well-crafted written profiles were less likely to look for a casual relationship,

whereas men posting half-naked pictures at midnight were usually looking for a hook up. In a patriarchal society, women are expected to limit hook ups with people they are interested in (England et al., 2012) and invest more in committed relationships (Tolman et al., 2003); men are supposed to play an active role in sexual encounters (England et al., 2012; Rose & Frieze, 1989; Tolman et at., 2003). In line with these identities, men are found to be more active on online dating than women (Abramova et al., 2016; Sumter & Candenbosch, 2018). Several researchers have found that a male online dater will attach more importance to physical attractiveness, whereas female online daters will select their potential partner based on breadwinning abilities or socio-economic attributes (Abramova et al., 2016; Su & Hu, 2019). It is also noticeable that there are a few gender differences in the motivation for using dating apps, strongly driven by one's identity. Two studies (Ranzini & Lutz, 2017; Sevi et al., 2018) found that men have a higher motivation for using online dating apps for casual sex compared to women. Ranzini & Lutz (2017) also reported that there are more men using online dating apps to seek a relationship than women as men are less choosy and more likely to be motivated by short term romantic pleasure.

Chan's (2018a) research looked into the use of online dating apps among women in urban China. In his paper, he concluded that dating apps are a feminist tool due to the structural gender inequalities that are less evident on the app, which has led to less biased gender relations. However, in Wajcman's (1991) study, the author claims that women are still subjected to surveillance and fewer protections, and by treating dating apps as a celebration of feminism, it may conceal other gender inequalities embedded in sexual double standards, state policies, and marriage expectations. Besides, Chan's (2018a) study found that women also enjoyed looking at pictures of men on dating apps. Although it is widely known that the notion of gaze, also known as the indicator of power and pleasure, has been discussed in film theory with the classic arrangement of male audiences looking at female characters in Mulvey's (1975) study, these young women had also derived gratification from looking at men's pictures on their devices. Dating apps have allowed users to break away from the traditional unidirectional gaze of men towards women, as it allows Chinese women to judge the appearance of men through swiping and clicking (Chan, 2018a). It has become a liberating tool that has allowed women to assert power over men through a feminine gaze, but these apps are also embedded in a larger socio-political environment and would end up having far-reaching consequences. Technology alone is not a solution to advancing women's

rights in contemporary China as fundamental changes in the socio-political environment are needed too.

Hook Up Culture

"Hook up" is a vague term as different scholars have a different approach to defining the term. According to Bogel (2007) and England et al. (2012), the term hook up is used to describe a situation of two people with no expectations of moving towards a relationship engaging in sexual behaviour, which may or may not include intercourse.

Stinson (2010) states that the process of trial and error is important when it comes to building and maintaining a committed relationship. By reducing the challenges of proximity and time - key benefits of dating services in the app industry (LeFebvre, 2017; Quiroz, 2013) - the popularity of apps like Tinder has increased the opportunities for users to engage in a hook up. This is because its user-friendly interface emphasizes the profile picture which encourages a focus on physical attraction through a less-structured form of communication. Additionally, the balance of disclosure and anonymity of personal characteristics has also allowed users to willingly hunt for more potential partners (LeFebvre, 2017). This has created a likelihood for users to think that they "might not meet again", but they are still easily accessible through prearranged proximity parameters, which allows them to engage in hook ups with minimal consequences (LeFebvre, 2017).

Research has shown that more than half of studied users acknowledged Tinder as an app that is designated for hook-ups, more so than dating (LeFebvre, 2017; Timmermans, De Caluwé & Alexopoulos, 2018), and it is common to view Tinder as an app for casual sex relationships and experiences (Claxton & Van Dulmen, 2013; Hatfield et al., 2012; LeFebvre, 2017). These same studies also suggested that more than half of the studied users had participated in sexual activity which included a wide range of behaviours such as French kissing, genital contact, sexual touching, vaginal or anal intercourse, and oral sex when meeting offline with other Tinder users ((Bogle, 2007; LeFebvre, 2017; England et al., 2012; Timmermans et al., 2018; Strugo & Muise, 2019). Stinson (2010) stated that the hook-up culture can perpetuate unhealthy relationships and anxiety amongst users due to the promotion of "no strings attached" arrangements. This was especially true for women, who would cycle through

relationships very quickly to seek love, but find themselves engaging in consensual, but unwanted, sexual experiences.

England et al. (2012) claim that the hook up culture is also a clear product of the sexual revolution where the permission of certain sexual behaviours is viewed as casual and mainstream among college students in the United States. The sequence of dating has changed, such as getting into a relationship often happens after engaging in some sexual behaviour. However, it is found that many of these hook ups do not lead to a relationship, and some would only lead to more hook ups with the same person. Although the idea of a hook-up does not have expectations of moving towards a relationship, studies by England et al. (2012) and Bogel (2007) showed that their participants would hook up with the same person more than once. According to England et al. (2012), two-thirds of their participants had dates and hook ups before getting into a relationship. Their research explains that a hook up is used to express interest in a possible relationship, usually after engaging in sexual behaviour. This is also backed by Stinson (2010), where both adolescents and young adults were reported to have a desire in developing a dating relationship with their hook up partners. However, Bogle (2007) found this to be an unlikely outcome as her research claims that it is less likely for hook-up partners to form any kind of relationship, even when they are involved in repeated physical encounters.

The "hook up culture" has been perceived as normal among heterosexuals (Stinson, 2010). Bogle (2007) stated that it does not matter if the hook up partners are strangers or well-known to each other. In fact, England et al.'s (2012) research shows that hooking up has been normalised to the point where the domination of casual sex has made romance and relationships seem undesirable. Soon, the absence of monogamous relationships could move from subcultural practice into becoming a mainstream cultural practice as the hook up culture has existed for decades. Nevertheless, in recent studies, James-Kangal et al. (2018) contradicted England et al.'s (2012) conclusion, stating that the level of engagement in hook-ups is not necessarily associated with the expectations of future committed relationships and marriage. Their findings suggest that hooking up is just for a specific time-bound exchange, whereas marriage is still considered as an important future goal regardless of current sexual attitudes and behaviour (James-Kangal et al., 2018).

While most studies claim that Tinder has a reputation that allows users to hook up with someone easily (LeFebvre, 2017; Timmermans et al., 2018; Strugo & Muise, 2019), there are

still studies that argue Tinder is a new way for adults to form committed romantic relationships (Sumter et al., 2017; Timmermans and Courtois, 2018). Sumter et al.'s (2013) study shows that besides physical gratification, such as passion, adults also tend to seek psychosocial gratifications, such as intimacy and commitment, when it comes to relationships. Studying the Tinder user data of 1038 Belgians, Timmermans and Courtois (2018) found that more than a quarter of offline meetups did successfully result in a committed relationship.

Various studies have also shown that women tend to have a stronger indication of interest in having a relationship after a hook up (Bogle, 2007; England et al., 2012). This is due to the pressure of social norms that lead both genders in opposite directions. The increase of sexual permissiveness has allowed both heterosexual men and women to have sex outside of a relationship. Women tend to hold a stricter hook up standard because men would decide if a woman was relationship material if she chose not to hook up with them on the first date (England et al., 2012). Timmermans and Courtois (2018) also claim that this is possible as women are known to be more selective in their swiping process than men and this could also decrease the number of successful matches for men. As England et al. (2012) state, the main path into a relationship is through a hook-up, but this could also risk the impression a male user has of his female counterpart as not being relationship material. Thus, the persistence of sexual double standards will still lead to an environment for women to be labelled and shamed (Bogle, 2007; England, 2010). As discussed in relation to Chinese tradition, there can be expectations of a woman's virginity before marriage, but today, sexual double standards are judged based on the differences of men and women in the hook-up culture, such as women are devalued when they sleep with more men. Therefore, women tend to desire a relationship to prevent themselves from being condemned after engaging in sexual behaviour (England et al., 2012).

Sexual double standards do not only exist in Chinese culture, but also in Western culture. During the 1970s, sexual norms often followed a patriarchal gender system where men are the head of the family and women play the secondary role of a wife and a mother. England et al. (2012) explored a gender system in the West that was a male domination culture where men were expected to initiate more sexual interactions. Secondly, men's sexual pleasure was to be prioritized as they orgasm more frequently than women. Finally, the sexual double standards persevered as women tended to get a bad reputation when they were found to hook up with more than one partner. Gilmartin (2006) claims that women that engage in casual sex

would be called "sluts" as most cultures believe that women who are open to casual sex are more likely to engage in hook ups all the time. However, men who engaged in hook ups earned more respect and honour from other men.

In another study by Guo (2018), the researcher explored the sexual double standards between White and Asian Americans. The study analysed how the adoption of American mainstream culture and remaining close to Asian traditional culture has shaped the attitude of sexual double standards among Asian Americans. It found that the Asian American participants demonstrated a stronger attitude of sexual double standards, specifically towards females with a high number of sexual partners. This shows that the sexual double standard, regardless of whether it involves the Chinese culture or American culture, has placed men and women in different positions of power and privilege. These men are given more flexibility in their sexual behaviour and would not have their reputation threatened to the same degree as women.

Based on a techno-feminist perspective, Chan (2018a) examined on the existing gender dynamics on dating apps in China. As such, technologies can be feminist if they are designed to improve the condition of women's lives. He explained that there is a debate within techno-feminism about how a technology can be feminist; therefore, his study evaluated how dating applications can disrupt and reproduce existing gender relations. He found that although there are female dating apps users who use dating apps to escape from the workplace and home, such as by exploring their sexual desires and searching for romance and marriage, these women were also facing challenges when using dating apps, such as social stigma and undesirable sexual solicitations from men. Therefore, it is not surprising that all of the women participants in Chan's (2018a) research encountered invitations for hook-ups.

By swiping and clicking on dating apps, it breaks away from the traditional unidirectional gaze of a man at a woman because women that are being looked at by men are also looking at men at the same time. Even though dating apps have been seen to be a liberating space for women to exercise sexual agency (Timmermans & Courtois, 2018), female dating apps users have also reported experiencing more condemnation for using them than men. Calogero's (2004) study investigated the internalized male gaze that negatively affects women. It found that the participants that encountered male gaze reported experiencing social physique anxiety and body shame. In Chan's (2018b) study, the female participants reported experiencing first-hand negative judgement from men using the online dating apps. These

women would then rewrite their profile, delete sentences about their sexual openness, and hide their sexual intentions after being heavily criticized. Chan (2018b) also reported that these women tended to receive harsh judgements from others when they were found to be using dating apps, no matter for what purpose. Thus, many women preferred to keep quiet among their social circle regarding their use of dating apps.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have explored the work of other scholars to build a pathway for this present study. Although the introduction of mobile dating applications has successfully altered the dating landscape (Finkel et al., 2012), there are few studies on Chinese users using Asian mobile dating applications such as Tantan. This chapter has highlighted existing research on dating apps that are mostly focused on the Western context, such as Tinder. Only a limited amount of research has investigated American and Chinese profiles on homosexual dating apps such as Jack'd (Chan, 2016), and the more popular Western dating apps, like Tinder (Strugo & Muise, 2019). There is a lack of available research on Chinese dating via technology, not because of the unavailability of the technology, but it is mostly due to the traditional values that limited the research in this area. Most studies that exist have focused on Mainland Chinese (Chan, 2018b) and its impact on Mainland Chinese culture are also not transferable in a straightforward manner to the Malaysian Chinese context. Although both Malaysian Chinese and Mainland Chinese are ethnically connected, these two communities are operating in different social, cultural, political, and digital contexts. Hence, this study will contribute to an alternative perspective of Chinese dating from the context of Malaysian Chinese using a Chinese-developed application, Tantan. In the following chapter, the present study's research design is discussed in detail, highlighting the methodological approach of this study.

Chapter 3 - Methodological Approach

Introduction

This chapter outlines the methodological approach used to answer the research questions: 'What motivates the specific behaviour and/or practices of young Malaysian Chinese adults using Tantan?' and 'How do the considerations of gender contribute to the way young Chinese present their identity on mobile dating apps?'. This methodological approach is similar to Chan's (2018a) study, where the purpose of conducting a qualitative interview was to understand the significance or non-significance of dating apps in the lives of the participants. Each interview was carefully constructed and modified to align with the participants' responses, and to explore the participants' perceptions and motivations more deeply. As this chapter will explain, a phenomenological approach was adopted in this study and the original empirical data was analysed using thematic analysis to uncover the life experiences of young Malaysian Chinese and their use of the Tantan dating app.

Qualitative Approach

A qualitative approach helps researchers to understand the nature, strength, and interactions of variables in a study (Black, 1994). It involves observation and analysis to seek answers for the 'what' question. According to Gilham (2005), qualitative research is also used to understand other people's worlds and is useful where the researcher is concerned with discovery. Unlike quantitative research, qualitative methods typically use a holistic perspective to preserve the complexity of human behaviour instead of measuring the count of occurrences of states or events.

Prasad (2019) claims that although quantitative analysis is able to make the object of the study quantifiable and findings generalizable, by using a qualitative approach, a researcher that is skilful in reading words and understanding symbols could produce brilliant insights. Researchers could discover the intentions and motives of the participants by identifying the emphasis of words or the number of times a certain word is used, although the frequency count does not always reflect on the participant's psychological state, but the characteristics and meaning of the content could still be decoded in the overall context (Prasad, 2019). Qualitative researchers also stress the socially-constructed nature of reality; they want to

know about the creation of social experience and how meaning is given to it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Qualitative research contributes to the research field by improving quantitative work. Some research topics present variables that do not immediately reveal a clear outcome and this requires the use of a qualitative approach to be thoroughly instigated. Therefore, qualitative research aims to reveal a closer reflection of the participants' reality by exploring deeper into the context. As Black (1994) claims, qualitative research is used to assist quantitative research by increasing the understanding of complex situations where an outcome is not apparent. An example is waiting lists for surgery in the United Kingdom (UK), which has become a great public and professional concern. The lack of impact of quantitative research had created a false idea of the nature of the waiting lists, such as focusing on searching for methods to reduce the size or waiting time. Despite these studies, the waiting lists in the UK increased. However, a qualitative study that involved interviewing the patients, doctors, administration staff, and observation of hospital records led to a closer reflection of the reality, thus developing a conceptual model which successfully improved the management of patients' wait times. In this case, it shows that a qualitative method was more beneficial than quantitative research from a traditional model.

The subject of my study is better investigated using a qualitative approach. I sought to investigate the motivations driving specific behaviours of young Chinese adults using Tantan. This was further interpreted through a critical lens regarding gender, to interpret the way young Chinese present their identities on mobile dating apps. The study necessitated a discussion of modern Chinese families and gender role differentiation. Initially, I wanted to use a quantitative approach such as a 7-point Likert scale (1 = completely disagree, 7= completely agree) to explore the motivations of Chinese Tantan users in both Malaysia and Auckland. However, quantitative research, as the name suggests, is primarily about numbers. It usually involves surveying a large group of people using a structured questionnaire that contains predominantly closed-ended, or forced-choice, questions. It was found that the population of Malaysian Chinese using Tantan in Auckland is relatively low. Therefore, instead of going for a large sample size, I decided to use a qualitative approach to achieve an in-depth understanding of the lived experiences of members of the identified social group: young Malaysian Chinese adults. The way I define Malaysian Chinese in this study is Chinese individuals with current residency in Malaysia, or children of both Malaysian Chinese parents with or without residency in Malaysia. The focus of my research included

Malaysian Chinese living in Malaysia, and Malaysian Chinese living in Auckland, and the use of qualitative research can also contribute to the understanding of the culture by creating a dialogue between traditions (Jones, 1995).

Research Reflexivity

This study was largely motivated by my own life experience. Hence, the sample is somewhat informed by my own reflexive which I had identified a participant demographic which I am familiar with and had access to. The advantage of my familiarity with Tantan is an ability to make sense of the dynamics and functions being described to me by my participants. After a significant amount of deliberation, the intended research subjects were initially identified as young Chinese adults, aged 20-35, that use Tantan. This is to make sure I would not disrespect other cultures, and also to minimalize the challenges of trying to speak on behalf of the culture or ethnic demographics that I am not a member of. Moreover, it is to my understanding that Malaysian Chinese exist in between the People's Republic of China and the West. Therefore, Malaysian Chinese are in between different worlds as their tradition, culture, and ethnicity do not automatically correlate with the regional citizenship concerns of being Chinese in mainland China. I have anticipated, inevitably found that the experience of being in-between two cultures is similar to a young Malaysian Chinese online dating application user.

Besides being a member of the identified cultural group, I am also an experienced user of the Tantan online dating application and would subsequently meet the inclusion criteria of my own study. I had been a Tantan users since a few years ago. Compared to other dating application such as Tinder or Coffee Meets Bagel, I found that Tantan was a Chinese-developed application, hence, the ratio of Chinese users on Tantan is relatively high in comparison to other mobile dating applications. Although I am the fourth generation of Malaysian Chinese residing in Malaysia, I am still raised under the influence of Chinese traditional culture. Tantan has allow me to meet many Chinese users that share similar background and upbringing as me, and also be relatable to the values I was taught. Another reason I chose Tantan is because I was also interested in looking into the influence of the Tantan application outside of mainland China with restrictions from The Great Firewall of China. This make Tantan a suitable platform for this research study to be conducted as it can be used within and outside of the censorship wall.

Recruitment Process

A recruitment notice was posted on the Tantan app as well as my personal social media channels. The first search for potential participants was made through my social group, peers, and any relevant sources. This included an advertisement on my Facebook page and my Tantan app's forum. Users that came across the recruitment notice were encouraged to spread it to different mediums and social media. This allowed exposure to a wider community to search for participants that fit the criteria of this research. During this process, questions and suggestions from these potential participants were answered, such as the legality and confidentiality of the research. For example, one potential participant requested for a friend to be present during the interview process. The request was politely declined as it would not allow confidentiality of the research study to be maintained.

Each potential participant could contact the researcher through replying in the comments section or via email. They would then receive an email with a brief summary of the research with the formal invitation and the consent form. If the participant continued to express interest by identifying their status as a Tantan user, their English-language proficiency, key features of their identity including age, identified gender, and cultural background, they then received a subsequent email with the participant information sheet. This was to confirm that they had met the inclusion criteria and they were qualified to participate as a research subject. The potential participant was asked to reply to the email address given to set up a formal time, date, and location for the interview. In the event that a participant did not reply after 14 days, a follow up email was sent, after which it was assumed that the participant was no longer interested in joining the study and no further contact was initiated. This was to avoid discomfort and harassment for the participants who no longer wished to participate in the research.

For the recruitment in Malaysia, it is difficult to find overseas Chinese participants as most of the Chinese in Kuala Lumpur are third or fourth generation Malaysian Chinese, where their parents and grandparents are born and raised in Malaysia. Whereas for the recruitment in Auckland, the first search for potential participants was made through my social group, and the recruitment message did not pass along too far. I only managed to obtain two Malaysian Chinese contact from one of my peer's social group and also another one from Tantan. Although I intended to recruit other nationalities of Chinese around the world, the limitation

on time and proximity has forbid me to recruit more suitable research subjects. Even so, my Malaysian Chinese participants is still a strong representation of overseas Chinese because most of them still maintained their traditional values and heritage from mainland China.

Table 1

Participants' Details

	Identified Gender	Sexuality	Residing Location When Being Interviewed
Participant 1	Male	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 2	Male	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 3	Male	Homosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 4	Female	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 5	Female	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 6	Male	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 7	Female	Heterosexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 8	Female	Bisexual	Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
Participant 9	Male	Heterosexual	Auckland, New Zealand
Participant 10	Male	Heterosexual	Auckland, New Zealand

Interview Process

There is a wide range of approaches that can be used in a qualitative study, including interviews, activity observations, and interpreting written material (Black, 1994). In this study, the researcher and the participants worked primarily together in the format of a qualitative semi-structured interview to explore and examine the participants' motivations for, and experiences of, using Tantan. To facilitate and conduct the interviews, both the researcher and the participants cooperated and mutually agreed on acceptable conditions such as time, location, and the duration of the interview. Participants' voluntary participation was always respected.

The brief interview questions were developed by evaluating academic journal articles with similar research topics. These questions were then modified to fit the purpose of this study. "How" and "Why" questions were frequently asked to elicit a more detailed and elaborate response from the participants. As the interviews went on, questions within each major area were developed and edited to suit individual participants' responses. Both the researcher and the participants contributed new knowledge to the research topic which concerns a shared specific cultural group - young Malaysian Chinese. The knowledge and information acquired in this study will be shared to a wider academic community and any interested parties through publication and other forms of knowledge transfer.

Various researchers claim that in most qualitative research, some and occasionally all of the data is mainly collected through interviews (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Rubin & Rubin, 2012). A research interview, as defined by DeMarrais (2004), is a process where the researcher and participant engage in a conversation that focusses on the questions related to a research study. Patton (2015) explains that an interview is used by the researcher to find out what is in and on someone's mind, and to obtain a specific form of information which would contribute to the field of study. Researchers can find out things that cannot be observed directly such as feelings, behaviours, thoughts, and intention that took place at a certain point in time. Rubin & Rubin (2012) claim that the basic forms of in-depth qualitative interviews are usually semi-structured or unstructured. Both responsive interviewing styles can take place as a scheduled, extended conversation between the researcher and the participants. All interviews are structured based on a chronological sequence known as the narrative.

Gillham (2005) claims that unstructured interviews place responsibility for the flow of the interview with the participants, allowing them to lead the way and tell the story. It can be a popular technique for researchers to explore dimensions of someone else's life experiences, as themes can be identified by allowing the participants to express themselves without the fragmentation of structed questioning to avoid losing the thread of the narrative. Conversely, Gillham (2005) explains that in a structured interview, the researcher knows what needs to be found out in specific detail, thus the researcher must have a high level of prior knowledge of the area being researched. But in an unstructured interview, the researcher can focus on different topics with members of the group the research focuses on (Gillham, 2005).

Although unstructured interviews are useful as an exploring technique, it can be difficult to keep the conversation going. Most importantly, as a researcher, I already had clear ideas on

the specific topic I wanted to learn about. Thus, I proposed the use of a semi-structured interview as suggested by Rubin & Rubin (2012), as the specific process of this interviewing is more relevant to the context of my research. A semi-structured interview is useful due to its flexibility to prioritise a balanced structure where quality data can be obtained. The form of questions asked goes through a process of development where it covers the focused topic (Gillham, 2005), but adapts to new revelations throughout the interview process. It also allows the planning of the interview to be more focused around the proposed research questions. In relation to this study, I narrowed the study to topics revolving around Chinese culture, dating, and the use of the Tantan app.

Gillham (2005) suggested that a well-constructed interview schedule consists of one question leading to another. Therefore, I decided to follow a flexible research design by vaguely formulating my research questions as suggested by Taylor & Bogdan (1998). First, I prepared a few topics in relation to the participants' demographics before meeting them. The plotting of question development was then constructed during the interview as each participant had different points of view that lead to different results that would be useful to the study. This is because I could only ask specific questions after I spent some time in the setting with my participants. After learning of my participants' experiences on Tantan, I could identify the topics developed and decide on the additional data to be collected on the basis of what I had already learned from the interview.

It was important to prepare open ended questions that allowed my participants to respond in any way he or she chose. These questions were adjusted to lead in from previous discussions to ensure the flow of narrative response. My participants could disagree with the question, raise new issues, or elaborate upon answers as they wished. They were encouraged to express their views freely and answer the questions at length and in detail. I did not need follow or ask the given set of questions in order. It was also acceptable to skip questions and change the wording according to the situation.

Gillham (2005) stated that a semi-structured interview provides a balance between structure and openness, where the analysis of the data is facilitated by the level of structure. The main differences between unstructured and semi-structured interviews are the degree of control which the researcher maintains throughout the interview process (Rubin & Rubin, 2012). Hence, in applying semi-structured interviews to my study, I observed that by developing questions on the spot to follow up new insights, I could extract refined information in areas of

the interviews that had not been properly explored and treated with enough detail. Although the process was time costly in terms of preparing, transcription, analysis, and writing up, I gained equivalent coverage of the topic by ensuring the right methods were being used to generate the right questions.

This overall research project was approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) as it is recognized that romantic issues can be sensitive and embarrassing to talk about. Therefore, all my participants have been given a degree of anonymity in this study. Before the interview, all 10 participants went through a consent process where anonymity and confidentiality issues were discussed. They were reminded that they only needed to express their views and share information that was within their comfort levels. They then signed the participant consent form in both Mandarin and English before proceeding to the interview. All ten of the semi-structured interviews were conducted by the researcher herself for between 25 minutes and 45 minutes each. The topics covered were their experiences in using online dating apps, as well as their roles in their family and how culture plays a part in their life.

Eight of the participants were interviewed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and two participants in Auckland, New Zealand. Of the eight participants interviewed in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, four of them identified themselves as male and four of them identified themselves as female. Of the participants recruited in Kuala Lumpur, three of the male participants and three of the female participants identified themselves as heterosexual, whereas the other male and female participant identified themselves as homosexual and bisexual. For the remaining two participants interviewed in Auckland, New Zealand, they both identified as heterosexual male.

All ten interviews were audio-recorded with two recorders rented from Auckland University of Technology. The two recorders were each placed in front of the participant and the researcher to make sure that the recording was clear from both sides. They were also used as an alternative in case one of the recorders did not work. The recorded audio was then uploaded to *Trint* for a full transcription. In some of the extracts presented in the findings section, the symbol […] is used to show the condensed conversation after removing irrelevant information from the transcript. All transcripts were initially coded in detail by the main researcher using *Trint*.

Processing and Interpreting the Data

Thematic Analysis

Braun and Clarke (2006) explained that thematic analysis has become a popular approach for analysing qualitative data since the 1980s and the 1990s when the interest in qualitative research started. Although thematic analysis was known to be a "poorly demarcated and rarely acknowledged, yet widely used qualitative analytic method" (Boyatzis, 1998; Braun & Clarke, 2006), in over a decade, it has become an increasingly recognized approach (Braun et al., 2019).

Braun & Clarke (2006) claim that thematic analysis offers flexibility for analysing qualitative data. It lays a foundation by providing a core skill for first time researchers to conduct qualitative analysis effectively. Braun and Clarke (2006) claim that thematic analysis is another method to identify, analyse, and report patterns and themes within data. This organization of data allows researchers to describe the data set in detail.

During this process, it is suggested by Braun et al. (2019) that the researcher must first familiarize themselves with the data. This is where the researcher would shift focus from data generation, such as transcription, to analysis (Braun et al., 2019). In my study, I familiarized myself with the data by rereading the textual data and listening to the audio data repeatedly to take note of the interesting features. At the same time, I also made notes about the individual data items that were shaped by the research questions and colour coded them using the text highlight function on Microsoft Word. By using various colours to code my data, it allowed me to group and identify themes easily.

Theoretical Framework

Another benefit of thematic analysis is that it can be used within different theoretical frameworks. Here, I used the phenomenological approach as my theoretical framework. A phenomenological approach attempts to study specific phenomena related to an individual's situation by examining their lifeworld experiences in a social cultural space, moulded by social belief systems, values, and language. It is widely used in academic research to develop a deeper understanding of different issues that cannot be identified through immediate responses (Bhar, 2019). This is because as Braun and Clarke (2006) explain, it can be a realist method, which is reporting on the reality and meaning of the participants' experiences;

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or as a constructionist method, where the way reality, experiences, and meanings operate within the society is examined.

The use of the phenomenological approach allowed me as the researcher to get a first-person description and the lived experiences of a specified phenomenon. This theoretical framework is suitable for research that investigates the impact of the individual's life narrative, self-identity, and how the individual sees in the future. The core of the phenomenological approach guided me to focus on communicating on the context of these experiences. The underlying insights of these experiences resulted in a great contribution to the research.

Developing Themes

According to Braun & Clarke (2006), a theme is defined as the capture of something important about the data in relation to the research question that has some level of patterned response. Themes are also known as a central organized concept, reflecting on the pattern of shared meaning organized around a core concept or idea (Braun et al., 2019). It often is explained as a large portion of dataset that captures the unspoken ideas within the data, uniting different data that occurs in multiple contexts, building from smaller units of meaning called codes (Braun et al., 2019).

Themes are determined by the frequency across the data item and the frequency across the entire data set. Preferably, there will be several themes repeated across the data set, but that does not mean that the themes that are constantly repeated are more important. According to Braun & Clarke (2006), there are no shortcuts when trying to develop the display of data for it to be considered as a theme in qualitative analysis. This is because the themes are not decided based on proportion and frequency, but rather a researcher's judgement is necessary to decide what a theme is (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

Developing Inductive Codes

Boyatzis (1998) stated that there are three ways to develop a thematic code. In this study, I have used an inductive approach to help develop a data-driven code. These codes were identified through the themes related to the specific questions that my participants were asked, and it was not be driven by the researcher's theoretical interest in the topic. Therefore,

by using inductive analysis, it allowed the process of coding the data to occur without the researcher's bias and without trying to fit into a pre-existing coding frame (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

First, I gathered the information needed for this study through face to face interviews. Then, these contents were minimized into an organized chunk of text and grouped according to their similar meanings. Clear labels were also placed on the chunk of text to help me organize the information around meaning-patterns. According to Braun et al. (2019), there are two orientations to coding. One is the inductive orientation, where the analytic process starts from the data, and the researcher works from bottom up to identify the meaning without importing ideas; the other is known as deductive orientation, where the information is approached with several concepts, theories, ideas, and potential codes in mind, based on what is explored within the dataset. In discovery-oriented research, Diesing (1971) stated that the deductive approach uses an assumption to apply principles to the phenomenon. The insights are often derived from hypothesis testing and the search for consistency and abnormalities. In contrast, the inductive approach searches for patterns, and the concepts discovered are subjected to change during the inquiry process (Boyatzis, 1998).

As Braun et al. (2019) and Braun and Clarke (2006) suggested, I used the data as a starting point instead of beginning from an existing theory. Data driven codes are constructed inductively from raw data; this means that the finding's meaning would only be interpreted to construct a theory after the discovery of results. By working directly with the raw data, it could also enhance the understanding of information as the researcher has a complete view of the available data. This allowed me to consider the previously silenced voices or any complex aspect of information. Therefore, I decided to use an inductive, data-driven approach to develop my themes and codes.

According to Boyatzis (1998), one of the main problems experienced by researchers in their early career is that they have issues identifying their dependent variable when using inductive approaches to thematic analysis. As these sorted categories are not decided before the coding of the data, the ideas of interest can only be finalized after the analysis, thus, the specific nature of themes explored are not predetermined. According to Ezzy (2002), the research data may result in problems and issues the researcher has not encountered before. Therefore, I introduced the usage of thematic maps during the development of codes to help me have a clearer understanding of how each theme was related to the others. As Braun et al. (2019)

suggested, thematic maps are useful to visualize the fitting together of the themes and tells an overall story of the data; it is also used to check if the themes overlap with each other.

Boyatzis (1998) stated that the criterion variable must be concise and direct, as multiple criteria would complicate the sampling process, and thus increase the researcher's workload during the code development phrase of the study. Here, I selected gender as one of the criterion variables, which resulted in having two criterion groups: men and women. Another criterion variable that was selected is culture (Asian and Western) and family values (traditional and contemporary). The sampling of unit coding became an important concept, and this split helped me identify and differentiate the participants' Tantan experiences from these criterion groups.

In short, coding is the process that defines what the data is all about (Ezzy, 2002). Coding finished when I was satisfied with the theory outcome. The key is to review by compiling all coded data for each participant's themes and reviewing them to ensure the data is related to the central organizing concept (Braun et al., 2019).

Challenges Faced

There were no clear problems encountered in the conduct of the data gathering and analysis. There were some normal challenges which occurred during the participant recruitment process. As such, I initially wanted to interview twelve participants: three identified male and three identified females from Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and another three identified male and three identified females from Auckland, New Zealand. Due to time constraints in Auckland, New Zealand, I only managed to recruit two male participants for my study. This was not a significant issue as I would still generate sufficient data to meet the initial proposal's aims. However, there were no issues recruiting participants in Malaysia as Chinese is the second largest ethnicity in Malaysia. It is interesting to note that I initially wanted to keep the sample open to all Chinese Tantan users, not just limited to Malaysian Chinese. However, as the recruitment process progressed, I ended up recruiting only Malaysian Chinese participants for my study.

According to Merrian & Tisdell (2016), an effective form of interview is usually conducted face to face. This allows the interviewee to produce useful information for the interviewer. Therefore, I was physically present in both Malaysia and New Zealand to recruit and

interview the participants face to face. The amount of time spent in both cities was the same, where a month was spent recruiting in Malaysia (November 2019) and another month recruiting in Auckland (January 2020).

Conclusion

My research formed insights, concepts, and understandings based on the meanings people attach to things in their lives (Jones, 1995; Taylor & Bogdan, 1998), which in this case, involved identifying how the world affects the way the participants see things in relation to the way they were brought up in their respective families. As a qualitative researcher, I studied the participants in their natural settings, and interpreted situations based on the meaning that was brought to my participants. Therefore, my research findings are mainly based on the participants' own (spoken) words. The next chapter will demonstrate the outcomes and interpretation of what the participants said in contribution to this study.

Chapter 4 – Motivations for using Tantan

The findings of this study are divided into two chapters: the motivation of using Tantan and the contemporary forms of dating in Chinese culture, and also on the performing of gender through my participants on their Tantan profiles. Both chapters will present several evident and connected themes which emerged from the interviews. This chapter covers the discussion on the key element that motivates the specific behaviours or practices of my participants, whom are young Malaysian Chinese users of Tantan. The first section reveals the primary motivations for using Tantan, including: sustained familiarity with Chinese communities, traditions and culture; the desire to meet new people beyond the constraints of family; to respond to the pressure to be married; to cure boredom; and also, to express individual identity on a safe platform. The second section will explore the various social and cultural tensions that my participants continue to navigate when using modern applications like Tantan.

The interview data discussed in this section ultimately reveals that for these Malaysian Chinese participants, Chinese traditional values are simultaneously reinforced and challenged on Tantan. The phenomenological analysis used in this section also helps to situate each participant's personalized narrative into the larger environment and to help understand the cultural background which has influenced the making of these personalized meanings.

The Primary Motivations for using the Tantan Dating Application

The participants of this study were motivated to use Tantan for various reasons. As Tantan is an online dating platform dedicated to Asian users, particularly those that are Chinese, it appeals to a specific demographic of users, that may not be similarly catered for on alternative dating applications, such as Tinders. This motivates users, like my participants, to be on this platform to meet people and form relationships within varying degrees of cultural familiarity.

Meeting New People

Put simply, the main motivation found among most of my participants for using Tantan was to meet new people. This was irrespective of the intended nature of a potential relationship, towards romance or friendship. Six out of ten participants initially expressed that they were looking for only for friendship or relationship, but they are also open to the possibility of

other forms of relationship. For example, Participant 1 claims that he is on Tantan to look for love, but he also wanted to make friends.

"To find true love or maybe just try to make friends."

(Participant 1, Male)

Similar to Participant 1, a few of my participants also claims to use Tantan to look for friendship, but they are also open to the possibility of finding love.

"The main reason is to look for friends. But normally it leads to somewhere else, and it doesn't really matter."

(Participant 5, Female)

This is because they were taught that finding love and getting married is an essential part of life. Chinese adolescents are not encouraged to date during their schooling years, but some participants have been pressured to find a partner after stepping into the working world, but it is hard to find love through their social circle, therefore, online dating application has provided a better platform and a higher chance to seek for love.

"It's more because I'm in engineering, so there are not many like people because in engineering school everyone is very robotic, all we do is talk about games, memes and engineering… I want to have different input, like different perspectives from different walks of life, it is just another platform to meet new people."

(Participant 9, Male)

"I'm studying in the accounting field and in my class, 80 percent are female. So it's kind of difficult for me to approach males. And I'm not a very active person, so I rarely meet people outside of my university, which is something I should work on. And so through online dating apps, I can actually expand my circle of friends and meeting people that I would not meet on a daily basis."

(Participant 5, Female)

My participants find it difficult to progress in finding a relationship within their social and work circles. As a natural outcome, they used Tantan to broaden the potential of making new relationships. Therefore, this has motivated them to use Tantan, because my participants view

Tantan as a platform to meet new people, and also in the hope to develop genuine relationships and meet the love of their life.

Familiarity with Chinese communities

Amongst the participants of the study, it was also found that Tantan is popular because of its familiarity with, and ability to incorporate Chinese communities. For instance, three of the participants claimed that they are on Tantan because the application has greater representation of Chinese ethnicity in comparison to other dating applications.

> "I would say in Tantan the Chinese community is pretty big and for Tinder, otherwise it's more the English community. I want to meet Chinese speaking friends on Tantan and also a lot of my Chinese friends uses Tantan to find partner as well."
>
> (Participant 1, Male)
>
> "For Tantan, it is also meeting someone around you, but most of them are using Chinese."
>
> (Participant 4, Female)

Participant 4 also further explained that she prefers finding a Chinese partner because she wanted someone to share similar upbringing and mindset with her.

> "I prefer finding someone who has the same mindset and interests with me."
>
> (Participant 4, Female)

Moreover, Participant 6 claims that she uses Tantan because she prefers someone who can communicate in the Chinese language.

> "Everyone is mostly Chinese. I think that you must be Chinese to be on Tantan because everything is in Chinese and you need to know to read them. So, I assume that everyone on Tantan is Chinese."
>
> (Participant 6, Female)

It is found that these participants have a strong racial or ethnic preference when it comes to selecting a partner. This is because they are taught that familiarity would breed understanding and dating someone from your culture are more likely to have a happier relationship than those who have nothing in resemblance. There is also a saying in Chinese called the "look of the couple" and it refers to wives and husbands who look so alike that they are often mistaken

for siblings (Manthey, 2012). It does not only limit to looks, but it is also thought that people who look alike would have similar facial expressions, and would also have similar personalities, similar interests, and similar lifestyle. Unlike the idea of "opposite attracts" in the Western community, Chinese people believes that dating someone alike, the prospect of staying together are stronger and it is less likely to break up. My participants find that they will have better prospects of falling into this ideal, as the Tantan dating app will allow them to meet people of similar looks, interests and upbringing. Therefore, it gives them confidence to have better chances of finding the ideal partner, as opposed to using other apps.

Responding to Pressure to Get Married

The third main motivations for my participants to use Tantan is because they were pressured to get married. As indicated by the previous research from Chen et al. (2009) and Wang & Ho (2011), adolescent dating is still highly opposed by Chinese parents, but there is still an expectation for children to get married once they have reached adulthood. One of my participants have experience the pressure of starting a family, thus, forcing them to turn to the online dating world to search for a fast relationship. For example, Participant 3 explained how he was pressured into getting married and having children since his early twenties by his relatives:

> "As Malaysian Chinese, I would say my family is very traditional. I am
> single and at this age [age 23], my relatives will ask questions like: Hey,
> when are you going to find a girlfriend? When are you going to marry?
> When are you going to have children? They did not care if you are prepared
> or not."

> (Participant 3, Male)

Chinese family expectation as such is still evident in Chinese families and continue to have an impact on unmarried young adults with their families. The result of this pressure has pushed them towards online dating platforms like Tantan to fulfill their parental expectations for marriage.

Cure Boredom and Loneliness

However, there are also three participants said that Tantan allows them to cure their boredom.

"Because every day I work till bored. My friend recommended this app to me to cure my boredom in the office when my boss is not around."

(Participant 2, Male)

"I'm just bored, to share memes, make friends, you know, and see what happens."

(Participant 9, Male)

One of my female participants also expressed that she is on Tantan due to loneliness, and she has nothing much to do. By using online dating apps, she gets to talk to someone new.

"Probably because I feel very lonely, and I feel that I need someone to accompany me. Especially when I got nothing to do."

(Participant 4, Female)

My participants demonstrate that using online dating applications is an avenue for satisfying their boredom or loneliness. When socialising is not readily available, online dating platform, in this case, Tantan has allowed my participants to satisfy their inner loneliness.

Expression of Identity on a "Safe" Platform

Another main reason found in this study is expressed by my bisexual participant, where she claimed that she used Tantan to express her identity. This is because it is common for the Malaysian media to look down upon gays and lesbians, as the Malaysian Islamic Department and the Islamic priests often criticise this behaviour and emphasize that people who engage in sodomy will be punished by the law. According to a news article by The Star (2018), Malaysia is listed as one of 72 countries that criminalize homosexuality. With that, Participant 8 is aware of this issue as she fears that her sexuality would get her into trouble.

"As I mentioned, we are Malaysians. Specifically saying, everyone cannot like the same gender, but it is more serious towards Malay people… I just try not to swipe on Malay people because there is law which punishes them from doing things with the same sex."

(Participant 8, Female)

As confirmed by YB Mujahid Yusof Rawa in a parliamentary conference on August 6th, 2018, "The rights of the LGBTQ community to practice their lifestyle is still subject to the law which does not allow it in Malaysia." (The Star, 2018). China used to list homosexuality

as a form of mental illness, until a critical change happened in 1997, when a law against male homosexuality was abolished (Chan, 2016). Today, there is still discrimination and violence against the LGBTQ community in Malaysia (Outright Action International, 2016). This is the reason Participant 8 would only market herself through online dating application as she is afraid that she will be punished for her sexuality.

The Reflection of Tantan in Chinese Traditions and Values

Tantan and the Reinforcement of Chinese Traditions and Values

As highlighted earlier in Chapter 2, Confucianism is a system of ethics where the teaching of Confucius and his followers have been highly encouraged and consequently, it has influenced the thinking and behaviour of Chinese for centuries (Tan, 1983). Likewise, Malaysian Chinese that have come from a long history of mass migration from Mainland China, starting in the early 19th century. From these initial migrations, the dominant position of Confucianism in Chinese culture has been passed on to descendants. In this study, it is found that there are still a number of traditional norms being practiced on Tantan. Many of my participants has possessed the traits of growing up in a Confucianism Chinese household. In this case, all the heterosexual female participants in this study expressed that they are very passive when it comes to initiating conversations. As some of the participants stated:

> "I never initiate conversation in my three years of using online dating app. Most of the guys will take the first step."
>
> (Participant 5, Female)

> "I would say I've got some matches before and I never start conversation… I met my current boyfriend on Tantan and he started the conversation."
>
> (Participant 7, Female)

Similarly, three of my male participants claims that they would always make the first move.

> "I usually make the first move allowing the girl need to make the second move."
>
> (Participant 2, Male)

This shows that my participants are aware of the dominant and submissive roles that exist within the online dating context, especially within the Chinese Tantan user community.

Hegemonic masculinity was well in place within Chinese society before the online era and the introduction of online dating apps. My male participants feel like they need have the obligation to initiate the conversation as they notice that most of the Chinese girls are passively responding to dating apps.

Chinese women are expected to maintain the Confucian philosophy of Three Obedience and Four Virtues, where one of the lessons claims that the ideal role of a woman is to be a submissive daughter, wife, and mother (Cheng, 2009). This belief was found to be reflected in some of the female participants' responses as they claimed that the probability of them ever initiating the first move was relatively low. This was due to the traditional Chinese scripts that were instilled in them since they were young. These scripts, framed by Confucianism, promote an order that depends on generation, age, and gender, and establishes societal norms such as elder generations are superior to the younger ones, and males are superior to females (Mao, 2015). It is not surprise for these female participants to acknowledge that they had been educated to suppress their feelings and remain as passive as possible:

> "We should be reserved and not approach them in any way; it should be the male who is putting in all the effort. If a female makes a move, she is known for being 'cheap'. It is like degrading yourself in value, degrading yourself as a female and being too easy for the guy."

(Participant 5, Female)

After further enquiry, Participant 5 claims that her passivity extends from the norms of traditional Chinese culture where she recognises the male's responsibility to pursue a potential female partner. In a Confucianism teaching, men should have the financial capability and responsibility in raising a family. Within this traditional mindset, she explained, the man should put in all the effort and pay for all the meals and as a female, it is not appropriate for her to contribute in any way.

These female participants expressed that they were made aware of these traditional values at a very young age through constant reinforcement. This is because in Confucianism, emphasis is placed on family and its role in children's moral development (Wang, 2017) is taught within the Malaysian Chinese education system. In Malaysia, adolescents who received a Chinese education had to undergo a similar experience to China's education system, where

they were also taught to be obedient to parental authority and their demands. Therefore, these literatures were incorporated in the earlier development of Malaysian Chinese education where students at the very lowest levels of schooling within the formal Malaysian Chinese education system are introduced to these literature (Curdt-Christiansen & Hancock, 2014).

It is recommended that behavioural training should start from a child's earliest years, and even in contemporary Chinese culture, Chinese caretakers still actively initiate these moral themes with their young children by introducing children's enlightenment literature such as the 'Three Character Classic' and 'The Rules of Conduct for Peers' before their formal education begins (Wang et al., 2012).

For example, Malaysian Chinese adolescents in middle school and colleges are not encouraged to date as it is not acceptable to parents or teachers and the adolescents are perceived to be immature. This early establishment of family influence can be seen through Participant 7's responses where she claims that she was repeatedly told by her father that she was not supposed to date, at least, not until she finished her studies.

> "I was not supposed to date. I was asked to not to date. I am not sure for
> how long, but my dad just mentioned that if I am studying, I am not
> allowed to date. Maybe till I start working, then only then I am allowed to."

> (Participant 7, Female)

Participant 10 had also encountered a similar situation. Despite growing up in Auckland, New Zealand, Participant 10 had stated that his upbringing was "quite Asian" as both his parents were Malaysian Chinese. They would send him to learn his cultural language, which is Mandarin, in the hope that he would adopt some of his Chinese heritage in a Western country. When being asked about dating as an adolescent, he claimed that his parents did not explicitly tell him to stop dating at that age, but they had reinforced the idea of focusing on other aspects of life instead of dating.

> "They will say like: Do you think it's too young? They would not explicitly tell me to
> stop dating, but they would tell me it's probably better to focus on other things at that
> time."

> (Participant 10, Male)

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These findings support similar observations by researchers like Jensen and Dost-Gozkan (2015) that opposition to adolescent dating is common among Asian contexts. In fact, in some studies most of the Asian parent's state that children are not expected to make independent dating decisions at any age (Jensen & Dost-Gozkan, 2015; Pimentel, 2000). It also shows that it is common among Chinese parents to exercise a lot of control over their children's romantic life and expect great obedience, even though their children are already adults.

Tantan and the Challenge to Chinese Traditions and Values

As the older generations view the internet as a world with exploding information and uncertainties, it is hard for them to build trust, especially in the circumstances where they are not familiar with the digital ecology. During these interviews, my participants stated that the most commonly used words to describe the digital world by their parents were "unsafe", "scammers", "dangerous individuals", and "safety". This can be seen in Participant 1's response as he claims that:

> "I would say if you're more traditional minded like the elderly, they don't usually approve this kind of methods because they're afraid of scammers, afraid of cheaters outside."
>
> (Participant 1, Male)

Likewise, Participant 4 also claimed that she was requested by her parents to not expose too much of her personal information online because her parents were very concerned about her safety. She uses the term "Asian being Asian" to show that it is common among Asian families for parents to be concerned about their children's safety, especially when it comes to disclosing personal information on the internet.

> "Parents, you know, Asian being Asian, if they know you are on social media would tend to tell you to not expose too much of information online, especially if they know that you are on dating apps."
>
> (Participant 4, Female)

Participant 6's and Participant 8's statements are similar to Participant 4's on the stigma of online dating among Asian parents. The three of them claim that they were told by their

parents that it is very dangerous to meet someone online because online dating means meeting a complete stranger without the presence of a mutual friend or family member, and this reduces the credibility of the other person.

From here, it is found to be common among traditional Chinese families to disapprove of the use of dating apps. Participant 6 explained that this is because of the media portraying online dating apps as high risk for meeting strangers.

> "Because there's a stigma on online dating which is very dangerous to meet up with people who you've met online. It could be dangerous individuals… from the media, news, social media, from friends, mouth to mouth."

> (Participant 6, Male)

It is found that all of my participants are aware that filial piety is part of Chinese culture. Children are obligated to their family as the role of filial piety is still the central aspect of families and family life. However, it does not stop my participants turning to online dating applications to seek for love, although most parents are against of the idea of their children going on online dating application to seek for a partner. For example, Participant 2's expressed that he was aware of his parents' disapproval of him looking for a relationship on Tantan, but he still continues to use Tantan to seek for a relationship. He claims that his parents have gone to the extent of trying to set him up with a girl from their circle of friends throughout the period when he is seeing someone of Tantan.

> **"**I think they won't look at my choices before they make a move. They will make a move first, then I have to choose within their choice."

> (Participant 2, Male)

This has brought discomfort to Participant 2 because he feels that his parents do not take into consideration his preferences, but he claims that he still feels obligated to follow his parents' teaching. Nevertheless, he claims that he would rather hide his Tantan usage from his parents rather than confronting his parents.

As for Participant 6, when being asked about the influence of parents in his dating decisions, he claims that it is important to follow the rules of the family and obey the teaching of your parents because children will eventually go back to their family. He stated that:

> "You just have to respect your parents enough to bring them [your partner] home, introduce your partner to your parents… You can't just marry someone and then bring that person home before telling your parents about it. I feel that that's just unfair to your parents."

> (Participant 6, Male)

However, when being asked about how he met his girlfriend, he told his parents that he met his girlfriend through a mutual friend despite meeting her on Tantan, but most of his friends knew he met his girlfriend online. It shows that parents' approval is still an important factor for Participant 6 when it comes to selecting his dating partner, regardless of traditional matchmaking or modern matchmaking in dating applications, but he would choose not to tell his parents about Tantan to avoid confrontation.

Participant 7 described a similar experience, where she claims her parents would not agree with her exposing herself on online dating application.

> "I don't think that my parents know anything about dating apps, but they have heard about online dating. I think they would not agree to it."

> (Participant 7, Female)

Participant 5 also tried changing the perception of people who are against the use of dating apps. She said that:

> "I feel they are normal people too, cause if I'm a normal person using the app, they can be normal people."

> (Participant 5, Female)

Although her parents have no issues with her using online dating, there are still people around her, such as her colleagues at work, who do not have a good impression of the application and would mock her for using the online platform to look for romance. She stated that she is not bothered would still continue to use online dating application to find partner.

This shows that my participants would choose to hide that they are using online dating applications from family members or friends who are against it to avoid being condemned or getting into trouble. The commonly known cultural themes such as 'face', 'hierarchy',

'harmony', and 'filial piety' going through constant changes through political and socioeconomic development.

Still, it also occurs in this study that a few participants mentioned that their Chinese parents knew that they were on dating apps, but they were either worried about their safety, or they would assume apps like this would not produce a "good quality" husband or wife. This does not affect the usage of Tantan on my participants. They will still be fighting to move away from the control of their parents because they are aware of the safety measures on these digital matchmaking platforms.

> "In my opinion, I think it is pretty appropriate because dating apps, they have different methods and different procedures for you to verify yourself. So, I would say it is pretty legit, appropriate and is way more safer than before."
>
> (Participant 1, Male)

As stated by Participant 7 and Participant 8, they are very careful on these platforms and know how to protect themselves from strangers.

> "For me, I think personally, I think I'm very careful in this kind of thing. I think I could take care of myself."
>
> (Participant 7, Female)

> "If they knew the fact that I know how to protect myself from strangers, because basically everyone you know from online dating apps are strangers... I think they know that I am old enough to take care of myself. We are capable to take care of ourselves."
>
> (Participant 8, Female)

The rise of internet and social media has created new relationships and community where trust has to be negotiated with people that cannot be seen. This finding is supported by Bill Birtles (2018), a correspondent in China for ABC News, who wrote an article on "marriage markets" and the generation gap on trust in the digital world of matchmaking (2018). In his article, he wrote that Wang Yu, the founder, and CEO of Tantan, claims that the absence of flirting culture in China has allowed dating apps like his to be suitable for the Chinese market, because flirting is often viewed as a bad behaviour in a reserved dating culture. Therefore, when a person approaches someone they do not know and starts to flirt, they are

seen as a scoundrel. Even though the phrase "marriage market" is not a common phenomenon in Malaysia, Participant 7 expressed that the generation gap regarding trust in the digital world still occurs when comparing their own perceptions with their parents or grandparents. To avoid explaining to them, she only chose to hide her usage of Tantan from the older generations.

> "After we started dating, I only told my sisters, I didn't tell my parents. I told my sisters that I met him on Tantan then they kind of sarcastically clapped. That was their first reaction, I understand, because none of my family members played online dating. But after that day they start to accept it"

> (Participant 7, Female)

Participant 7 claims she only told her sisters because she believes her parents would doubt the authenticity of her relationship if she told them she met him through an online platform. Participant 7 when she decided to meet offline with her match for the first time, she was unsure about causing disrespect towards her culture, so she hid it from everyone in her social circle, including her family.

> "Well, no one knows. Yeah. I don't even know if I'm doing it right or wrong. So, I did not tell anyone."

> (Participant 7, Female)

Although Participant 7's parents have accepted the fact that their daughter is dating, they did not know that she was dating someone from Tantan. Similar to Participants 7, Participant 8 revealed that she has hidden the fact that she is interested in the same gender on online dating application from their parents, but not her brothers. She claims that her siblings would be more accepting of her sexuality compared to her parents.

> "I will say my brothers wouldn't be shocked, but my parents might be. As I said, they are quite traditional."

> (Participant 8, Female)

She then further expressed that her parents might be shocked if they knew she was interested in women, but her brothers might not be. This is because her parents still possess the traditional mind-set of their generation, and it is hard for them to accept something not of the norm. This confirms the point made before as both Participant 7 and Participant 8 do not talk

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to their parents about their use of online dating apps; however, they were open to talk to a younger family member such as siblings or cousins.

Tantan and the Modernization of Malaysian Chinese Families

In traditional Chinese culture, most parents are known to exert a form of power superiority over their children called authoritarian parenting, where parents are extremely strict, and they demand a sort of blind obedience from their children (Baumarind, 1991). This authoritarian parenting can be seen on Participant 4's parents as they still insist parental strictness and obedience although she is already an adult, she is reluctant to follow these traditional Chinese values even though she is mindful of these rules. She claims that she is aware that her parents have a say in her dating decisions and thus, she is not allowed on any form of online dating platforms.

> "I think most of the Chinese in Malaysia share the same upbringing with me, and most of them I don't think their parents will allow it if they know about it."
> (Participant 4, Female)

This widespread stereotyped belief about Chinese authoritarian parenting is known to produce high levels of academic achievement in children and this parenting style has been used by generations of parents in Asian contexts. In the traditional culture where the parents' power is highly valued, children are often discouraged from making independent decisions, thinking differently, and expressing their feelings. However, with the modernization of Chinese families, contemporary Chinese parents are now being observed following authoritative parenting techniques. Unlike the former authoritarian parenting, authoritative parenting promotes high levels of both sensitivity and demandingness, allowing parents to care for their children's wellbeing while having high standards of behaviour (Lu & Chang, 2013; Ren, 2015). It has been observed in this research that the modernization of Malaysian Chinese families has allowed some of the participants to be brought up through authoritative parenting, where parents are characterized as making reasonable demands and also being highly responsive. For example, Participant 3 explained what it is like to live in a traditional family where the assumption of heterosexual relationships is strong. He finds it difficult to express his sexual orientation to his relatives when it comes to dating and marriage.

> "Most of my family members would just assume that guys will like girls, and girls would like guys. That's it."

(Participant 3, Male)

Although he was being pressured by his extended family to get married, but his mother had a different insight when it comes to marriage.

"My mom is more open. She told me: "Don't have to get married, get married will end up like my life, so sad.""

(Participant 3, Male)

This response could possibly indicate that Participant 3's mother's married life was not as she expected, so she has encouraged her son to enjoy moments of being single and not rush into marriage. Participant 3 agrees with his mother's opinion, and he claims that marriage is not his ultimate goal in life, but he still wishes to have a proper relationship and start a family. This has demonstrated that the values of dominant parenting that was previously identified has been shifted. With that, Participant 3 insists that he will still choose his way of doing things and he does not need approval from others.

"Although my parents have gave me a life, I should appreciate this by listening to them, but no, this is actually very toxic… Just because you gave me a life doesn't mean I live by your rule. You gave me a life and I still need to live by my rules."

(Participant 3, Male)

He elaborated that he is willing to take responsibility if anything goes wrong, either by absorbing it as a good experience or a life lesson. Participant 3 was brought up with an authoritarian parenting style, but he demonstrated a strong individual identity. Xu et al.'s research (2017) results showed that this attitude is unusual, as children who grew up with authoritarian parenting were found to have high social anxiety and less confidence.

Nowadays, most of the participants' parents recognized their children's rights and individual differences and they were open to discussing the reasoning behind each rule. Although some of them still had high expectations, they would only set basic limits and would apply discipline fairly. For example, in Participant 7's case, she was not allowed to date before she finished her studies, but they had permitted her to continue dating her boyfriend after she confessed that they had been dating for the past two years.

Another example would be Participant 10's parents, who also used authoritative parenting to ensure that their child had appropriate support and guidance in using online dating apps.

Although they disapproved of him using online dating apps, they still approved of the girl he brought back from Tantan.

> "Well, you get the, you know, time to time talk from your parents. Like during when I was single, and they would give advice about who do you look out for in a relationship and things like that. But in the end a day, it's always your choice."

> (Participant 10, Male)

For Participant 4, she claims that her friends' parents are open-minded with their children using online dating apps, but her parents are still close minded about it. Hence, she claims that her friends are more likely to have a more stable or long-term relationship than her because they have had reasonable and supportive parents that continually conveyed caring, warmth, and love to them. Children who grew up in homes with a positive parenting style, such as displays of emotional warmth, would also be the same with their partner. This shows that the promotion of parental acceptance and responsiveness in authoritative parenting can reduce adolescents' social anxiety (Xu et al., 2017), which contributes to forming healthy relationships.

With Chinese families being encouraged to respect their children and understand their feelings, two of the participants said that although their parents are strict, they are still accepting in many ways. As discussed above, Participant 7 mentioned that her parents used to against the idea of her dating at a young age, but they did not force her to break up.

> "They are not like those parents that: 'Oh you are dating? No, cannot, break up.' They are not that kind of strict parents. They are a bit more casual."

> (Participant 7, Female)

Many Chinese parents are at the crossroad of traditional and modern values and have mixed parenting styles. As such, Participant 7's example is a demonstration of mixed parenting style because although she was not allowed to date, her parents still showed compassion when they knew her daughter was dating someone.

In this research, Participant 5 stated that she is a westernized Malaysian Chinese. She claims to have adopted the Western culture into her daily life. For example, she stated that she prefers the Western side of things when it comes to TV, dramas, or movies. She also tends to date only English speakers or Chinese men that follow the Western culture.

> **"**Yeah, they're all pure Malaysian Chinese. But somehow their parents brought them up in a way like sending them for international school, boarding school. So, they do not have a Chinese education and they are more westernised in terms of thinking and language."

> (Participant 5, Female)

In this statement, Participant 5 defines and places emphasis on Westernization as a form of individual freedom in opposition to the Chinese traditional culture. This is because in my experience of being a Malaysian Chinese, it is believed by many Chinese that the Western ideas of individual liberty and human rights are incompatible with the Chinese culture, and the younger generation would prefer to follow Western values over Chinese traditional values. However, it is argued by Fung (2006) that the idea of freedom in modern China has been modernized instead of being Westernized. In opposition to Participant 5's opinion, Fung (2006) study claims that the Chinese concept of freedom is not totally different from the West, but they would borrow these concepts from the West, modify the meanings, and make it more suitable to the Chinese context by incorporating resources from the Chinese traditions.

Therefore, in this study, I tend to use 'modernization' instead of 'westernization' to explain the transformation in Malaysian Chinese families. This is because according to a dated study, Kishimoto (1963) pointed out the differences between modernization and Westernization by defining Westernization as replacing the cultural elements traditional in the East with a penetrating Western element; modernization is defined as the remoulding of a cultural system into a new mode. I agree with Lal's (2000) findings that the idea of Westernization is just a sub-process of modernization and society can still modernize without Westernizing.

It has been found that the modernization of Chinese culture has transformed the thinking and behaviour patterns of Malaysian Chinese in the Chinese context. It has also changed how women of recent generations perceive courtship as women used to not have power over their dating decisions. However, the rise of dating apps has given women the power to choose freely of their partners. This can be seen in Participant 5's response as she clarifies that she only used Tantan for a short period of time and did not meet anyone through the app because she felt the people there were "too Chinese". She further explained that she would have a barrier in communicating with people on Tantan because she is not into the Chinese culture

and she does not watch Chinese TV series. Thus, she would not have many interests in common with fellow Tantan users.

> "Although I am a Malaysian Chinese, I'm not really into the Chinese culture."

> (Participant 5, Female)

As Kishimoto (1963) stated, the modernization of Asian countries usually means accepting parts of Western cultures into daily life, and Participant 5's preference for the Western side of things has resulted in major changes in her everyday life, such as not being comfortable with communicating through text in Mandarin.

Similar transformations are also seen in Participant 9, who was brought up in Auckland by his Malaysian Chinese parents. He claims that his family is "conservative, but not traditional". This is an interesting take as Participant 9's experience of conservatism is a selective interpretation of Chinese traditions. In this case, he explains that his family is conservative as in he is encouraged to live with integrity; and 'not traditional' in the sense of not being involved much in Chinese cultural celebrations.

> **"**Conservative in the sense that, you know, you don't randomly hook-up with someone, play around with people's heart. You are living with integrity, but not traditional in the sense that we don't celebrate Chinese New Year as much."

> (Participant 9, Male)

Though growing up in a conservative family, Participant 9 mentioned that he only has experiences in hooking up on Tinder instead of Tantan. This is because Tinder was more commonly viewed as an app to hook up on rather than to develop actual online dating relationships (LeFebvre, 2017). All the participants in this study agreed that Tinder is used among users from the Western community and Tantan is more directed towards the Asian community, specifically Chinese users. When Participant 9 stated that he only hooked up on Tinder instead of Tantan, it matches with Vallverdu's (2017) claims on the normalisation of sex in Westernized culture as something for pleasure and fun.

Similar claims were given by Participant 7 as she suggested that the adoption of Western culture contributes to the idea of the hook up. This was also supported by Giddens (1992) that the separation of sex from reproduction has allowed the acceptance of pleasure sex and thus, is contributing to the rise of hook up culture. According to researchers like England et al.

(2008) and Bogle (2007), people who engaged in hook ups have no expectations for going into a relationship. This is because people who place heavy emphasis on self and career development would seek casual hook ups as a means to enjoy sex and romance without time-intensive commitment (Bogel, 2007). As marriage and family are still the central elements of life in the Chinese culture (Blair & Madigan, 2016), getting married is seen as a marker of normality and a significant milestone of adulthood. Participant 7 stated that the reason she used Tantan was to seek a relationship because she adores the idea of falling in love with strangers in the hope that she would find someone to marry.

> "I like the way that falling in love with a stranger. That is my thing… I like to rush into a relationship. So online dating is kind of my thing."

> (Participant 7, Female)

It is known by Participant 7 that the idea of hook ups is not acceptable in the traditional Chinese context due to the emphasis of face in Chinese culture. She claims that she did not encounter as many hook-up invitations because she mainly swiped right on Chinese males, thus reducing the possibility of her encountering hook-up invitations.

> "Probably what I swipe right on is mostly Chinese, they are not those kinds of Western culture that would do hook ups."

> (Participant 7, Female)

Hook ups are viewed as losing the family's face and would bring shame to the individual's family. Family members were ubiquitously described as disapproving of casual hook ups (Allison, 2016) as it is in relation to the losing of virginity before marriage and not following the Confucius teaching of morality. However, two of the participants explained that the concept of Chinese face has been modernized in today's society. Due to the modernization of Chinese culture, this has allowed the younger generation to place more emphasis on personal affection. This can be seen on Participant 5's answer when being asked about other users going on for hook up experiences. She claims that:

> "Even if they are looking for hook-ups, I wouldn't judge them in any way. Plus, it is their sexual preference. I don't mind."

> (Participant 5, Female)

Participant 9 also claims that he would not make any comments on other people's life choices as long as they were not hurting anyone.

> "I wouldn't set up any comments about it, just like everyone has different intentions. Do whatever you want, as long as you are not hurting anyone… Yeah. It is not my life; it is your life."

> (Participant 9, Male)

It is recognized that Participant 5's and Participant 9's upbringing was in a non-traditional family; therefore, they have different views on the concept of Chinese face. This is especially evident when Participant 9 stated that: "It is not my life; it is your life."; he expressed that he is less concerned about other people's lives, which is not typical of traditional Chinese thinking. Similar to Participant 9, Participant 5 also claims that she is not judgemental about other people's personal sexual preferences. Face used to be highly valued by Chinese people as it is the highest social respect given to people with the highest morality (Hwang, 2011), but it is now less significant to the younger generation. This is due to the shift of collectivism to individualism among younger Malaysian Chinese, and the formation of individual identity allows these young Malaysian Chinese to prioritise personal pleasure over their family's glory.

Conclusion

Online dating applications, or Tantan in this study, have been perceived by young Malaysian Chinese adults as a fundamental part of the new technological landscape in dating and Chinese culture. In this chapter, the research found that my participants were motivated to use Tantan for various reason such as meeting new people, being pressured to get married, to cure boredom and loneliness, express identity on a safe platform, and finding familiarity within the Chinese communities.

It is also found that Tantan has not only reinforced the Chinese traditional values, but it is also challenging the Chinese traditional values. For example, though most of my participants claimed that they were aware that the older generations do not trust online dating sites, they were still motivated to use Tantan to exercise their own autonomy away from the control of their family. Thus, to avoid being known as an unfilial child that disobey their parents, they would choose to hide their usage of dating apps from their parents.

Similar to Cheah & Singarevelu's (2017) participants, my LGBTQ participants find it hard to talk to an elder family member about same-sex attraction. This is because in the Chinese context, children must fulfil their filial duties to get married, have children, and support parents in their old age (Baba, 2001). Both of them are facing the extremely strong social expectation to enter a conventional heterosexual marriage, as Malaysia does not support same sex marriage. Just like most of the homosexuals in Baba's (2001) study, my LGBTQ participants would keep their sexuality hidden from society and family members as homosexuality is still a forbidden topic to discuss among the Malaysian community and the lack of sex education in Malaysia has created an environment of fear and confusion for children who may wish to explore their sexual identity. Given the fact that Malaysia has limited opportunities for gay men and lesbian women to come out openly in a safe environment, there is also limited positive awareness for people in the LGBTQ community.

It is also found that the experiences of the study's participants coincide with changes in the dynamics of Malaysian Chinese families that situates them between both traditional and modernised realities. Although most of the Malaysian Chinese culture has derived from Mainland Chinese, the modernization of these Malaysian Chinese families has transformed the style of parenting and how children have been brought up. These findings support those of Ren (2015), who has found that Chinese parents in modern society understand how to be better parents, and it involves much more than just academic excellence or high-status extracurricular activities, but also their child's psychological health and emotional well-being. Instead of being influenced by traditional collective ideology, Malaysian Chinese youth are able to prioritise their personal goals when these traditions and values are being implemented less strictly. The following chapter will explore how gender performance influenced the way the participants of this study constructed their profiles on Tantan on top of the cultural influences as discussed above.

Chapter 5 - Performing Gender

Introduction

This chapter is the second part of my findings and discussion section as it also shares the same interview data as Chapter 4. I will be analysing the masculinity and femininity presentation of the participants on their Tantan profiles through two identified genders, male and the female. The key themes identified and discussed in this section are the performing masculinity of the male participants through appearance and behavior, and the performing femininity among the female participants through appearance and behavior. The motivations of these gender performances are also analysed using Butler's gender theory and Goffman's self-presentation theory.

From an interactionist perspective, Burke and Tully (1977) claim that identities are meanings recognized by the individual as objects. Hegelson (2017) also states that gender is the term used to refer to the social categories of male and female. Traditionally, gender identity is the meaning that guides behaviour along the lines of masculinity and/or femininity, typically associated with being male and female, and how people respond to themselves as objects along the male and female spectrum. In a contemporary setting, as according to Statistics NZ's (2015) glossary, gender identity is now defined as a person's internal sense of being wholly female, wholly male, or having aspects of female and/or male identity. This chapter analyses the social frames that present the ideas of masculinity and femininity that have continuously influenced the performance of gender on Tantan among young Malaysian Chinese.

Performing Masculinity

Widespread views on gender, sometimes understood as stereotypes, suggest that men are perceived to be more masculine than women and women are perceived to be more feminine than men. However, as Butler (1999) argues, gender is not an expression of nature but a construction of performance by the body, infused with sociality. There is an expectation for men and women to behave according to their gender roles, and as such, men are expected to portray a strong, dominant, and independent identity in traditional society. In this case, it is not surprising that the male participants of this study suggested they had prioritised strong

masculinity performance on Tantan as expected for their identified gender, and the female participants suggested they had prioritised a strong femininity performance on Tantan as expected for their identified gender. It was interesting to find that most of the male participants still adhered to traditional masculinity that portrays how men are expected to behave a certain way.

Moreover, in the book "The Presentation of Self in Everyday Life" written by Goffman (1959), he claims that performance of self is influenced by social norms, and in the production of self, these performances are often modified to fit into public expectations. In this case, the male participants in my study were found to construct their presentation of self on Tantan through appearance and behaviour. It was also found that the female participants constructed their profile by presenting themselves as a subordinate role that is consistent with the expectations of hegemonic masculinity. The idea of hegemonic masculinity, a term coined by Connell (1987), defines the perfect form of masculine character "in relation to women and subordinated masculinities" (p.61). According to Connell (1987), masculinity has always been described as "the flight from women" or the rejection of femininity. This is because the build-up of masculine power often derives from the powerless feminine, which ensures the dominant position of men and subordination of women (Connell, 1987). This rejection of femininity can be seen in Participant 10; when asked about how he would present himself on Tantan, he claimed that:

> "They were selfies in the mirror. I did try to adjust myself up a bit like more outgoing bad ass but not really what I usually am, I am quite neat and tidy. Most probably going for the rough look."
>
> (Participant 10, Male)

The "bad boy" figure is something that is commonly associated with traditional masculinity, where the sensitive and caring nature of masculinity is often rejected. With masculinity being built on distinction from femininity, these gender stereotypes are attached to Participant 10 when he considers his profile as neat and tidy would be viewed as signs of greater commonality with women.

It was also found that three out of six of the male participants were less expressive when it came to considering how they constructed their profile. This is due to the fact that conversation around appearance is usually focused on the feminine perspective, whereas

males are less likely to converse on their appearance. Therefore, when asked to describe their profile, many male participants may not have quite known how to express themselves. For example, two of the male participants immediately declared that there was "nothing much to it".

"Not much, I would say."

(Participant 6, Male)

"There was not much to it, to be honest. I think that was part of the idea was that I had only a few photos."

(Participant 10, Male)

In comparison to the female participants of the study, the male participants tended to post less information about themselves online. Although these male participants claimed that they would only post limited information on their profile such as their name and one or two pictures without showing their face, they were still open to discussions about themselves after they matched with other users. One of the participants even mentioned that he preferred putting only emoji on his bio instead of a large paragraph of text to start up a conversation.

"I also prefer putting emoji on my bio… I just tell them whatever they want if I match with them, but I will just put an emoji. They will then ask me about the emoji, it tends to increase the connectivity.

(Participant 2, Male)

He also further explained that the reason behind him being less expressive is because he believed being expressive was more likely to drive people away.

"I do not like to be so detailed; I do not like to show. These types of caption will 'scare' people away… The girl will feel that you are very naggy."

(Participant 2, Male)

It was found that Participant 2 also had a differentiated masculinity based on the rejection of femininity, where he associates 'naggy' as a trait of femininity. These findings are generally consistent with the stereotypes in modern society (Snell, 2011), where men are portrayed as silent and tight-lipped, and women are seen as gossipy and blabbermouths. Thus, Participant

2 chose to conform to society's standards of masculinity by portraying himself as a man of a few words.

Similar to Participant 2, Participant 6 expressed that he does not give many details about himself online because he prefers to have a smaller digital footprint on the internet.

> "I don't really like a footprint on the internet, so I tend to keep as little of my life on it… if you want to find out, you have to swipe back."
>
> (Participant 6, Male)

In Fein and Schneider's (2014) book on teaching women how to capture men in online dating, one of the rules was for women to hold back and stay mysterious. As a male, Participant 6 had applied a similar rule in the hope of sparking interest among Tantan's female users. This can be interpreted as that Participant 6 is using the male advantage and performing themselves as the "strong, silent type" (Nelson, 2011). According to Nelson (2011), "strong, silent type' men would use silence as a way to be in charge and they would convey their power as a form of non-verbal control. This can be seen on Participant 6 as he claims that although he did intentionally withhold his identity, it did not affect the number of his matches on Tantan.

Performing Masculinity Through Behaviour

Besides appearance, the performance of masculinity was also demonstrated through a range of behaviours after they matched with a female user. All the male participants had conformed to the conventional dating norm in the West that men should initiate the conversation or simulate the courtship first. This can be seen in Participant 6's comment as he claims that he tends to lead the conversation after getting a match. He would initiate conversation to make them speak so he could evaluate if she was a suitable match for him:

> "I mean, I try to lead conversations online and try to make them speak... and if I find them not to my taste online, I will just not even think about meeting them."
>
> (Participant 6, Male)

As shown by Participant 6, by taking the lead and being in control over the female, such as through leading the conversation, this set of standards and practices has been used to define

the dominant form of masculinity. This finding is also related to Stets' (1995, p. 132) claims that people with a masculine gender identity will perceive that they are able to control their partners; the idea of controlling is consistent with masculine identity in the Chinese culture, and by being in control, it could enhance male dominance or male power.

In addition, Participant 1 also expressed his masculine identity by being the person who initiates a meet up if everything goes well. He also further explained that as a male, he would also take the initiative to arrange more dates, giving small gifts, or using pickup lines when he is interested in pursuing a dating relationship with his online matches.

> "You start off with going to more dates for sure. Yeah, and you could do some small surprises for them. Maybe giving gifts and small gifts or just arrange a really romantic dinner. Small details could hint your messages throughout the date."

> (Participant 1, Male)

Similar to Chan's (2018b) study, both Participant 1 and Participant 6 had followed the traditional cultural script of men initiating the conversation first as it is associated with being masculine. Therefore, they were able to communicate the masculine identity based on societal stereotypes, where assertiveness and performance are viewed as signs of greater agency in men (Kite et al., 2008). With masculinity being made acceptable within a patriarchal culture, the definition of manhood is most likely maintaining power over other men and having power over women.

One of the male participants stated that male masculinity is frequently expressed through traditional methods such as sex, thus, this is also the reason why the majority of male users going on Tantan are looking for sex:

> "Being male, one of the reasons using Tantan is just for fun… fun as in sex."

> (Participant 2, Male)

This is connected to Bogle's (2007) and England et al.'s (2012) findings that men tend to be revered when they have more sexual partners. Masculinity is exerted through affirmation from other males, and by getting as many matches with other female users, women are seen as an object, or in this case, women are seen as trophies being collected by other men.

> "I think as a male I just want to see how successful we are by how many matches we can get."

(Participant 2, Male)

As a male, Participant 2 perceived masculinity as getting as many matches as he could to show how successful he is among other men. Hence, he suggested that most of the men that use online dating apps search for relationships because women on online dating apps would also have a similar intention. He believes that women on Tantan are more likely to look for a relationship compared to women outside of online dating.

"Dating apps is open to everyone. It is easier to date them online because they are already open to welcoming other people."

(Participant 2, Male)

Male online dating apps users often believe that women on online dating apps are already open to the idea of dating. Therefore, instead of going through a long traditional process of courtship, these men can easily satisfy their masculine ego through a swipe of the finger. It is also widely known to these Tantan male users that they can express their masculinity through having sexual relationships with various women. According to Kontula (2009), men have shown a greater interest than women in having a diversity of sexual partners. This is because the construction of dominant masculinity values in a hegemonic male society defines manhood as a man of power, in power, and with power. Although the male participants in this study did not report engaging in any hook up relationships through Tantan, they were still open to any form of relationship, including sexual relationships. This shows that the number of sexual experiences with different sexual partners is seen as an important way of proving masculinity, and this has played a central role in the affirmation of these males' masculine identity.

Similarly, all of the female participants agreed that a big percentage of the male users on Tantan were looking for hook ups, and half of the female participants had already encountered male users on Tantan that had asked them for hook ups.

"Especially for those that came up to you and say: Hey, do you want one-night stand? …They will be very straightforward on what they want."

(Participant 4, Female)

From this comment, it is seen that one of the expressions of masculinity is being straightforward. It shows that the male is in control of the situation by being clear about their

motivation while using this app. One of the female participants also encountered male users on Tantan for non-dating matters, such as asking for recommendations from the locals while travelling.

> "I met with people with intention to hook up someone and one-night stands. The foreigners I match with in Malaysia are people who come here for a short trip and they just want to meet locals like us… Either to hook up or to ask for recommendations, to travel, to eat."
>
> (Participant 5, Female)

This shows that masculinity has been performed by putting pressure on the female participants. Although the female participants had not responded to every request, there was an expectation for them to submit to male dominance. These female participants then further shared the ways they identified if a male user was looking for a hook ups or serious relationships through the portrayal of the profile picture.

> "I actually noticed that those that ask for sex, they have pictures that will be mainly showing their body, showing their gym body and so on. Some would show how wealthy they are, just to get people to hook up."
>
> (Participant 4, Female)

> "You can really judge it from their bio and pictures… I don't really swipe right on guys that takes very close up selfies and half naked photos, cause normally half naked photos indicate that he's showing off his body."
>
> (Participant 5, Female)

As the interface of Tantan mainly focuses on photo presentation and appearance, these female participants stated that the male users on Tantan would construct their profile by posting photos that they believed could impress the female users. Thus, the visual semiotic has become an important criterion in swiping right as it reflects the perceived intent of the user.

It is interesting to see how the female participants were able to infer the motivation of these male users roughly based on the visual semiotic presented on their profile. One of the visual semiotics is the expression of wealth, where Participant 4 and Participant 8 shared their experience on how the male users on Tantan use pictures of their expensive cars and luxurious lifestyle as markers of masculinity to engage in hook ups.

"I actually have a friend, for his profile he took a picture of his BMW, so the picture shows that he's very wealthy… just because of his picture with the car right, every week he gets to sleep with different girls."

(Participant 4, Female)

"I have had quite a few friends who used Tinder and Tantan for hook ups. Most of my friends are guys, and most of them are rich, and some of them are handsome. It's very easy for them."

(Participant 8, Female)

This is because online daters are eager to present the best image of themselves online (Chan, 2018). With physical attraction being the focus on online dating apps, these male users that intend to use online dating apps for hook ups instead of serious relationships are prone to showcasing objects that act as a straightforward indication of their motives and masculinity, such as physical looks and wealth. Especially in the Chinese context, the dominant ideology of masculinity has been restructured to revolve around men's capacities to make money (Osburg, 2013).

There were no male participants in my study that claimed to use wealth as an indicator of masculinity; instead, they would rather post muscular images of themselves. It is interesting to note that the expression of masculinity by the male participants through physical feature is viewed as an interpretation of hook ups by the female participants. For instance, two of them claimed that they had carefully constructed their profile by posting pictures that portrayed their masculine physical features.

"Pictures with a good lighting, taken in a good spot that could enhance your attractiveness… my jawline, my tan skin, my body shape, for example."

(Participant 1, Male)

"My back facing the camera with half a face."

(Participant 6, Male)

Participant 6 had portrayed his masculinity through the presentation of his back on his profile picture. This is because the definition on a male's back (the latissimus dorsi muscle) could enhance the male physical trait that fits into society's expectations of masculinity. In Hakim's (2018) study where he claims that more and more men had shared images of their muscular

bodies on social media platforms to feel vulnerable, it is recognized that this form of performing masculinity had been portrayed before the swiping process existed. Therefore, the male participants understand what it means to be masculine and have strategically posted photos to create a hypermasculine identity.

In Bengtsson's (2016) study, the researcher defined hypermasculinity as the understanding of masculinity that builds on assumed male superiority. Using Goffman's (1959) theory, hypermasculinity is a performance of gender for men to negotiate what it means to be a real man. With the limitation to express oneself on online dating apps, the male participants used a straightforward way of expressing their hypermasculine identity, which was through the presentation of muscular images.

Performing Femininity

With the great emphasis on appearance on online dating apps, the level of physical attractiveness was an important criterion for the participants when deciding whether to swipe right on their potential matches. However, there is a common presumption within society and the media that men respond to visual stimulation more than women. This is in line with Garza et al.'s (2016) study, which found that male participants projected longer visual attention on the female reproductive body parts. The expression of this internalized male gaze from a masculine, heterosexual perspective (Mulvey, 1975) has undoubtedly had an effect on how the female participants in this study constructed their Tantan profile. This can be seen in Participant 4's statement when she claims to present herself on online dating apps based on masculine standards of beauty. For instance, she posted her height on her biography because she understands that being tall is often associated with less femininity.

> "I am a very tall girl. So, when you swipe on Tantan, most of them would be Malaysian, but the Chinese guys from Malaysia are very short. Basically, what I wrote on my biography is my height, so the guys would back off."

> (Participant 4, Female)

This is because a sufficiently large and tall man is often associated with masculinity and power (Tischner, 2013), whereas a small body signifies the ideal feminine woman. Participant 4 is aware that being 'large' in height or size is constructed as defeminising. Unlike the powerful large male body which has been interpreted as commanding respect and

power, the thin female body represents a person whom a man does not have to take seriously or feel threatened by (Malson, 1998). This also shows the inferiority of women in a patriarchal society, as femininity is constructed as a female body being generally less capable than a man's body.

Participant 4 also claims that her performance of femininity is mainly through pictures, so she would only post pictures of herself with makeup or from a constructed angle to look slimmer.

> "Of course. See, I put a picture with heavy makeup or light make up just to portray that I look better. But I might not look too well in real life. And also, I am actually getting fatter in these few years, so I tend to use older picture when I was slimmer."

> (Participant 4, Female)

This is due to femininity in the Chinese culture equated to being thin. Zhu & Wu (2015) claimed that Asian cultures encourage female celebrities to be thin "the thinner the better" - and most advertisements and television programmes promote thinness as a symbol of beauty. As a male, Participant 10 proposed that body shape is also an important criterion when selecting a partner. He then further expressed that he would swipe left on female users who looked overweight.

> "Oh yeah. Not to be wretch. I didn't look for people that were like a bit overweight looking, like unhealthily overweight."

> (Participant 10, Male)

According to the male participants' responses in this study, the main criteria for them to swipe right was the matching of physical attractiveness of other users to their own. As explained by Participant 6, this is because most males are visual animals, and they are more likely to swipe right if the other person is good looking.

> "If the person has an interesting bio then you would say that there are more chances of me swiping right. But obviously, we are males. We are visual animals. Appearances is quite an important factor, if someone is below average looking, I will be more incline to swipe left instead of right."

> (Participant 6, Male)

Participant 2's statement also matched with Participant 6, who also claims it is normal for males to look at appearance first before swiping right.

"The first would be appearance. I think most of the guys swipe right due to appearance."

(Participant 2, Male)

The comments of these participants suggested that the objectification of women's bodies has been normalised by most of the male users of Tantan. Historically, it is a common perception for males to be visually stimulated because the female body is often more visible than the male body in today's society, such as beauty pageants or on TV advertisements. Szymanski et al.'s (2009) study on the criterion to form a sexually objectifying environment, where the researcher has found that the approval of male gaze is acknowledged through the setting. It is common for women to be objectified is a regular occurrence on online dating apps.

In this study, the approval of male gaze through Tantan is emphasized as the interface of this online dating app uses visual media, which has turned female users into interpersonal experiences. Therefore, one female participant stated that she did not post selfies or anything that relates to physical attractiveness, but she had constructed her profile in an aesthetically pleasing manner that conforms to society's idea of femininity. She then proceeded to show the author these visuals of her, constructed from an artistic angle.

"I did mention just now. It is artistic, my photos are. I think it is aesthetic in a way, not like those common selfies photos."

(Participant 7, Female)

She claimed that the way she constructed her profile was in the hope that she could attract someone with similar interests. She also stated in her bio that she is only looking for friends. Instead of using dating apps as a platform to meet dating partners (Strugo & Muise, 2019), all the female participants claimed that they were on Tantan mainly to look for friends.

"The main reason is to look for friends. But normally it leads to somewhere else and it doesn't really matter.

(Participant 5, Female)

"I did mention in my bio that I only want to make friends."

(Participant 7, Female)

This finding is consistent with England's (2010) research, as the traditional gender role that expects women to be passive was still found within the female participants. Although women are allowed to choose who they date today, there is still some conservativeness around the idea of searching for a partner online. All of the female participants were aware of the stereotype of women being passive on online dating apps, therefore, to avoid being condemned, all of them claimed that they used this platform to 'look for friends', instead of talking about wanting a relationship, in order to show others that they are not desperate.

It was also not surprising for two of the female participants, who initially claimed they were looking for friendship online, had ended up in long-term relationships. It shows that they were not expressing their true desires on Tantan.

> "I would say actually dated four to five before from the use of the online dating apps and two of them became a serious relationship… One of them I have dated for more than a year seriously."
>
> (Participant 5, Female)
>
> "I only have one experience of meeting offline, which is my boyfriend."
>
> (Participant 7, Female)

One of the understandings of this behaviour is they did not want to be viewed as potential relationship material, and this would allow room for the friendship to develop into a different relationship in the future. By stating that they were not interested in dating relationships, it showed that they had no expectations regarding male attention, male resources, or anything that is associated with male power.

Performing Femininity Through Behaviours

In contrast, Participant 5 constructed her profile according to masculinity standards, but she still claimed that she would prefer to present her true self on online dating apps.

> "I want the person on the first match to know who I am. I don't want them finding out this person is not what she meant to portray at the start."
>
> (Participant 5, Female)

Therefore, she had put as much information about herself, including a link to her Instagram account, on her profile. However, she was told by her online matches that they had a different first impression of her.

> "Actually, a lot of my online dating experience, when they tell me their first impression about me. I was a bit awkward, socially awkward, quiet and introverted. Maybe I just need time."

> (Participant 5, Female)

This finding supports Goffman's (1959) theory as he claims that the authentic self is also a presentation of body language and internal feelings. Even though Participant 5 claims that she had only portrayed a usual identity of herself, her body language had unconsciously signalled that she was feeling uncomfortable. This conforms to Goffman's (1959) multi-level identity where Participant 5 and Participant 6 layered their identity based on the social group they interacted with. The unintentional presentations, such as discomfort, had become part of Participant 5's self-performance when she was interacting with her match. Thus, she would construct multiple levels of 'self' to cater to different social groups.

Additionally, as a bisexual female, Participant 8 is very conscious of her self-performance on the online platform. Thus, she would selectively construct and represent her identity online. She refused to let people know that she is bisexual; therefore, she did not put the rainbow tick like other users from the LGBTQ community.

> "So basically. I will say that I do not want people to know that I am bisexual. OK, so I only put one photo on it. So, the interesting part of being a bisexual is that on the bio, they will put like the rainbow flag. But I did not specifically put that on because I do not want people to see it, screenshot it."

> (Participant 8, Female)

This is because one of the most significant aspects of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality. By not performing the identity as a bisexual female on Tantan, she can still hide this identity from the homophobes among her social circle outside of Tantan. She also further explained that this has not affected her matches on women, being objectified is a regular occurrence on online dating apps because the identification of LGBTQ community is not an important criterion when swiping online.

> "The one which I mention. As today on *Tantan*, there is an option to choose 'only men' or 'only women', or 'men and women'. Technically saying, no one knows which one you select. If you can swipe on the girls, means they have also selected 'only women' or 'men and women'."

(Participant 8, Female)

She also claims that she would play an introvert on online dating platforms, but she does not mind revealing her true self after meeting with the person. This is to ensure her matches have given her enough chance to know more about her.

> "I would say if you allowed the person to know you directly through meeting online or one-off chance, you are revealing everything to someone, like a naked person in front of them. I think you should keep some to yourself. I am just saying this so that he or she might be interested in you. Cause if you show everything, if they find that they cannot accept your flaws, then it might not work out."

(Participant 8, Female)

Goffman (1959) suggests that in a social world there must be an effort to manage impressions. By adopting certain roles in society, Participant 8 does not have much choice over her frontstage performance because she is required by social norms to act in a certain way. Therefore, in line with Goffman's (1959) theory, Participant 8 has intentionally created and maintained her social identity by hiding her sexuality online, as the culture in Malaysia is hostile to homosexuality. It is also identified that Participant 8's frontstage performance is on her Tantan profile, where she portrays a character of anti-homosexuality, but for her backstage performance, she is still attracted to women and she still would swipe right on them.

Historically, women have always been disadvantaged by the institution of marriage because families would control their daughters' marriages, and virginity was often an emphasis for women instead of men. In contrast, in modern society, most women already have the freedom to select who they want to engage with in a relationship. As discussed previously, the female participants are still reluctant to make the first move due to their performance of passiveness. This is because the gender-typed social script has suggested women demonstrate passiveness in mate selection by allowing men to exert masculinity on them and giving men the opportunity to pursue.

> "I put a minimum information there because I want the person to find out himself through talking to me."

> (Participant 5, Female)

Similar to Participant 5, Participant 4 says that she would not disclose her personal contact details or social media accounts to her matches if they did not interact much. This is because she wants the man to put in more effort in pursuing her.

> "People that didn't chat much but still asked me for my personal contact, I would say no."

> (Participant 4, Female)

These feminine passiveness as performed by my female participants have affected how my male participants masculinity performance. Some of the male participants felt the pressure of making a move or initiating a conversation to attract a female's attention. They would lose interest to pursue things further when they perceived that their matches were not interested in them. One participant stated that:

> "I do not want to be the one carrying the conversation. So maybe after a few messages and I feel the conversation is forcing, I would let it go."

> (Participant 6, Male)

Another participant expanded on how he perceived females who are too passive:

> "Normally, the Chinese girls are more passive. Usually, they will put captions like 'I wouldn't talk to you unless you talk to me'. This will discourage me to swipe right on them. Same goes to people who reply with a short message, it will also discourage me as a male. They are expecting the guy to make a move, and conversations like this would not last long."

> (Participant 2, Male)

At this point, it was found that the male participants in this study did not fully conform to these expectations of masculinity. Using Goffman's (1959) theory, the male participants would act according to social norms; in this case, they would start the conversation first as a form of impression management. While Chinese women have been universally known as a subordinated womanhood (Teng, 1996), three out of four male participants in this study

claimed to have encountered female users that made a move on them first. One of the participants even recognized this phenomenon as 'a general thing you do on the dating app'.

> "Well, there are a couple of times, but I think it's the general thing you do on the dating app… They were more willing to be out there a bit."
>
> (Participant 10, Male)

This shows that the expression and performance of masculinity and femininity is varied. According to Leung (2003), the maintaining of a harmonious relationship between two unequal people is meaningless when the dominance of the male in opposite to the subordination of the female, therefore, these variations exist.

Conclusion

The female participants had intentionally constructed their performance based on masculinity expectations, such as posting pictures that made them look smaller or by being reluctant to initiate conversations. However, the male participants acknowledged that there were still a number of female Tantan users outside of this study that were still willing to make the first move. This shows that hegemonic masculinity still exists among the Malaysian Chinese context, but there are exceptions. I also found that due to the strong hegemonic culture in Malaysia there is strong anti-homosexuality. Therefore, the homosexual participants would hide their sexuality and create a favourable frontstage impression to fit into the social norms.

The findings in this study fit well with Goffman's (1959) study, which showed that people tend to interact and perform in situations that are socially acceptable. Although traditional masculinity still occupies a hegemony position in Chinese culture, but it is acknowledged in this study that the participants do not universally adhere to these gender expectations.

Chapter 6 - Conclusion

This study has demonstrated the motivations of young Malaysian Chinese using Tantan and how Chinese tradition is emphasized or challenged in contemporary dating situations, and also the importance of gender performance in facilitating love encounters. As discussed in Chapter 4, most of the participants claim to use Tantan to meet new people, to pass time, or to cope with the pressure to get married. Another factor that motivates the use of Tantan among Malaysian Chinese users is the discrimination of the LGBTQ community in Malaysia as homosexuality is still a prohibited topic and there are laws that criminalise homosexuality. Therefore, both the LGBTQ participants have chosen not to express their sexuality to avoid getting into trouble.

The Reflection of Chinese Tradition on Tantan

As the outcome of this study was a close examination of the dynamics that persist in Malaysian Chinese families, I found that Chinese culture still plays an important part when it comes to making romantic decisions.

For example, the influence of Confucian ideology has affected how the participants behaved on Tantan. It is found that the female participants chose to remain as passive on Tantan and allowing the male users to initiate the conversation. With that, my female participants clams that their passivity extends from the norms of traditional Chinese culture where it is recognises the male's responsibility to pursue a potential female partner.

Furthermore, the idea of being a filial child is still a core teaching in most Malaysian Chinese families. It was found that two of the participants had agreed to obey their parents' decisions regarding love as it was still important to them to gain parental approval when it comes to dating and relationships. To avoid being known as 'unfilial', most of the participants in this study reported to have hidden their online relationships from their parents. This aspect appeared strongly throughout the conversations with the participants as they still felt pressure from their families to not date during their adolescence years. Another reason is due to the older generation tending to not trust technology when it comes to dating and relationships. One of the participants further claimed that it is common among Asian parents to worry about their child's safety, especially in the context of online dating. These comments suggest that online dating has less credibility compared to traditional matchmaking, where the relationship

is often instituted by a mutual family member or friends. This is another reason why most of the participants hid their relationships from their parents because they were aware of the importance of obedience and filial piety, but they did not want a confrontation that would turn them into an 'unfilial child'.

Another point found is reflected on the LGBTQ participants where they have hidden their sexuality from their parents and elderly family members. In Chinese culture, children are expected to fulfil their filial duties by getting married, having children, and taking care of their parents (Baba, 2001). This suggests that it is common for the LGBTQ participants to be confronted with social expectations to enter conventional heterosexual marriage, especially in a traditional Chinese context.

Furthermore, I found that the modernization of Malaysian Chinese families has contributed to a change in parenting style. Many parents have started to pay more attention to their children's psychological health and emotional well-being. For example, in one of the interviews, a participant claimed that she was forbidden to date before she finished her studies. However, when she admitted that she had been dating her boyfriend for the past two years, her parents did not forcefully stop the relationship. This shows that the importance of Chinese face has become less dominant due to the modernization of Malaysian Chinese families. The rise of individualism among the younger generation of Malaysian Chinese has allowed them to focus more on their personal happiness and become less concerned about family pride and bringing honour to the family.

Gender Performance

Tantan users are known to be predominantly Chinese. Thus, it was not surprising to find that more than half of the users in this study are still practicing the traditional gender norms found in the Chinese culture. This can be seen among the male participants in this study who performed their masculinity through their interactions with female users and the construction of their profiles. Most of the male participants had conformed to these expectations by portraying masculine traits through appearance and behaviours, such as posting pictures that enhanced their physiques and initiating the conversation with the female users to show that they were in control.

Connell (1987) argued that masculinity could be considered as the rejection of femininity, and approximately half of the male participants in this study had consciously chosen to portray themselves with minimal feminine traits as a way of articulating their masculinity. One of these traits was understood as being less expressive, since traditional Chinese society (Snell, 2011) portrayed men as quiet and women as chatty. Another trait of hegemonic masculinity is heterosexuality. Therefore, the female bisexual participant in this study did not reveal her sexuality on Tantan as there is a stigma against homosexuality in Malaysia. As discussed before, she also feared that because of the criminalization of homosexuality in Malaysia, she would get into trouble.

This study also supports the research outcomes of Butler (1990) and Butler (2004) because the participants still performed their gender identity based on societal construction. As children, we are taught to possess traits of men or women according to our biological sex. This is relatively common in Chinese culture as one of the feminine traits taught by Confucius is passiveness. In other words, women are taught to adopt these characteristics in order to become a woman; and men are taught to adopt the characteristics of a man in order to become a man. For example, the female participants in this study showed traits of femininity, such as not initiating the conversation after getting a match and posting pictures of themselves in makeup, so they were more likely to meet societal beauty standards. However, a few of the male participants reported to have encountered female Tantan users that were the first to initiate the conversation. It is interesting to note that the female participants in my study had adhered to traditional gender expectations, but the male participants had reported they encountered users that existed outside of these traditional gender expectations. Nonetheless, the male participants stated that their experiences with women that subverted gender expectation had given them enough confidence to exert their masculinity and had been able to keep the dialogue going.

From this study, I found that the participants constructed their profile according to Goffman's (1956) presentation theory. The frontstage is where the participants would perform a constructed character to impress their potential matches. However, there was a backstage performance where the suppressed character would make an appearance, such as the female participants would play the role of introvert before opening up to the person. This showed that in backstage performance, the participants would avoid portraying characteristics that did not benefit them, but these characteristics were still part of the individual. Moreover, by using the backstage of self-presentation (Goffman, 1959), young Malaysian Chinese constructed

their Tantan profile in the lens of hegemonic masculinity and femininity. This study has thus expanded on Chan's (2018b) paper on how Chinese heterosexual men perform and negotiate their masculinity through interpretation, self-presentation, and interaction on dating apps. It is suggested that further research can consider the performance of gender outside of these conventional expectations.

Limitations

Previous researchers like Chan (2016) have completed studies on the comparison of profiles on a homosexual dating application, Jack'd, within the United States and China. This study builds on the limitation of Chan's (2016) research by further discussing the use of the Chinese dating application, Tantan, among Malaysian Chinese living in New Zealand and Malaysia.

This study has a few limitations. I acknowledge that the time of my study was restricted. Therefore, due to the time constraints, the qualitative research to carry out interviews was only for a small sample size; in this case I only managed to collect a limited number of interviews of young Chinese Tantan users living in Malaysia and New Zealand. My intention was to explore in depth the participants' living experiences to uncover the nature and motivation of gender performance. A larger quantitative study would have more likely produced more generalizable results, although it would have been unlikely to capture these experiences in the necessary depth. In this case, I have managed to capture the performance of femininity that does not adhere to these traditional gender expectations from the male participants' point of view.

While this study goes some way towards understanding the experiences of young Malaysian Chinese, it does not provide insights on all the users of Tantan, or the average users of Tantan from Mainland China. Therefore, the effects of The Great Firewall of China and the potential comparison with a Western context have not necessarily been captured in this study. However, I have identified the unique values, such as the localization of Chinese culture, in the specific, hybrid culture of the Malaysian Chinese context.

Future Research

Further research could explore the experiences of Tantan users of different ethnicities and also Malaysian Chinese from different locations, as this thesis aimed to contribute to a greater representation of Chinese dating applications and the wider socio-demographic of Malaysian Chinese in the research literature. There is potential to apply the same methodology and framework to Chinese ethnicities from different countries such as Thai Chinese, Singaporean Chinese, or Indonesian Chinese, or other categories of Tantan users such as users from Mainland Chinese, users from Hong Kong or Taiwan, or Chinese diaspora in Australia or New Zealand. This could develop meaningful comparisons among Malaysian Chinese Tantan users and Tantan users from around the world. Future research could also address the localisation of dating applications in different places where variables such as Chinese censorship could also be taken into account.

Furthermore, a focus on homosexual Malaysian users might provide an opportunity to focus the approach of the study towards a more targeted group of participants. I initially did not consider using homosexual participants in this study. However, two participants identified themselves as homosexual, which inspired new considerations and questions about this research, such as family acceptance and the performance of sexuality on online dating applications. Although studies about mainland Chinese homosexual men and United States homosexual man (Chan, 2016) have been conducted in the past, future research could apply a similar framework on the LGBTQ community and different genders, ethnicities, and geography.

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Glossary

Chineseness   To illustrate the race of an individual who are ethically Chinese.

Coffee Meets Bagel   An alternative online dating application for users that are not into blind swiping. Users are presented with a limited number of matches per day and liking a profile would use up beans (in-app currency). It also encouraged users to exchange personal contact outside of this application as the chat box would be expired after 7 days.

Confucius   Confucius was a Chinese philosopher. His philosophy, known as Confucianism, emphasized on personal and governmental morality, correctness of social relationships, justice, kindness, and sincerity.

Filial piety   Filial piety means the respect for one's parents, elders, and ancestors. It also means engage in good conduct not just towards parents, but also outside the home so as to bring a good name to one's parents and ancestors.

Grindr   Grindr is one of the first geosocial apps for gay men. It is a location-based social networking and online dating application for gay, bi, trans, and queer people.

Leftover women   This refers to any unmarried female above the age of 27.

Tinder   Tinder is an American geosocial networking and online dating application that allows users to anonymously swipe to like or dislike other profiles based on their photos, a small bio, and common interests. Once two users have "matched", they can exchange messages.

Tantan   Similar to Tinder, Tantan is a location-based dating app, alerting users about possible matches nearby. It also features Tinder's signature "swipe right" and "swipe left" gestures to indicate interest or not.

Appendix One: Ethics Approval Letter
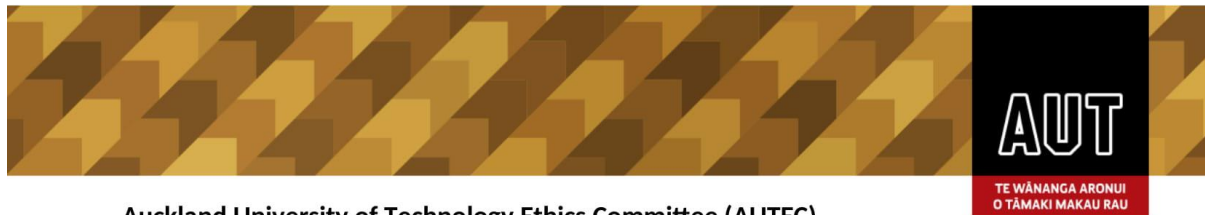
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC)

Auckland University of Technology
D-88, Private Bag 92006, Auckland 1142, NZ
T: +64 9 921 9999 ext. 8316
E: ethics@aut.ac.nz
www.aut.ac.nz/researchethics

7 November 2019

Rufus McEwan
Faculty of Design and Creative Technologies

Dear Rufus

Ethics Application: 19/398 **Chinese culture, contemporary dating and Tantan: Exploring self-presentation in the age of mobile dating apps**

I wish to advise you that the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee (AUTEC) has **approved** your ethics application at its meeting of 4 November 2019.

This approval is for three years, expiring 4 November 2022.

Non-Standard Conditions of Approval

1.   Amendment of the Information Sheet:
    a.   Removal of the offer for counselling;
    b.   Consistency with the application for the amount of time it will be take;
2.   Inclusion of a date on the Consent Form as per the Information Sheet;

Non-standard conditions must be completed before commencing your study. Non-standard conditions do not need to be submitted to or reviewed by AUTEC before commencing your study.

Standard Conditions of Approval

1.   The research is to be undertaken in accordance with the Auckland University of Technology Code of Conduct for Research and as approved by AUTEC in this application.
2.   A progress report is due annually on the anniversary of the approval date, using the EA2 form.
3.   A final report is due at the expiration of the approval period, or, upon completion of project, using the EA3 form.
4.   Any amendments to the project must be approved by AUTEC prior to being implemented. Amendments can be requested using the EA2 form.
5.   Any serious or unexpected adverse events must be reported to AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
6.   Any unforeseen events that might affect continued ethical acceptability of the project should also be reported to the AUTEC Secretariat as a matter of priority.
7.   It is your responsibility to ensure that the spelling and grammar of documents being provided to participants or external organisations is of a high standard.

AUTEC grants ethical approval only. You are responsible for obtaining management approval for access for your research from any institution or organisation at which your research is being conducted. When the research is undertaken outside New Zealand, you need to meet all ethical, legal, and locality obligations or requirements for those jurisdictions.

Please quote the application number and title on all future correspondence related to this project.

For any enquiries please contact ethics@aut.ac.nz. The forms mentioned above are available online through http://www.aut.ac.nz/research/researchethics

Yours sincerely,

Kate O'Connor
Executive Manager
Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee

Cc: yapkhaishin@gmail.com

Appendix Two – Participant Information Sheet

Participant Information Sheet

Date Information Sheet Produced:

14 October 2019

Project Title

Chinese culture, contemporary dating and Tantan: Exploring self-presentation in the age of mobile dating apps.

An Invitation

你好 (nǐ hǎo), my name is Yap Khai Shin. I am currently doing my Master of Communication Studies in AUT. I am interested in users of Tantan in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia; and Auckland New Zealand. Would you be able to help me by participating in a 60 minutes interview?

What is the purpose of this research?

I am wanting to understand how young Chinese adult experience mediated dating using the application Tantan. I have been quite interested in the interaction between traditional Chinese practice and Western practice in terms of sexual constraint and gender identity. Therefore, I would like to investigate on:

RQ1: What motivates the specific behaviour and/or practices of young Chinese adults using Tantan?

RQ2: How do considerations of gender contribute to the way young Chinese present their identity on mobile dating apps?

The findings of this research may be used for academic publications and presentations.

How was I identified and why am I being invited to participate in this research?

You have been identified to participate in this research due to your Chinese ethnicity or background, you age between 20-35, and your experience with Tantan, the Chinese social dating application. You have also look and respond to my advertisement on my Facebook page and Tantan notice board. As you met the inclusion criteria, you are invited to participate in my study.

How do I agree to participate in this research?

You can confirm your participation in this research by responding to this invitation via email (email address: yapkhaishin@gmail.com). You will be required to complete a Consent Form which will have been included with the initial email correspondence. A physical copy will also be provided at the time of conducting an interview in person.

Your participation in this research is voluntary (it is your choice) and whether or not you choose to participate will neither advantage nor disadvantage you. You are able to withdraw from the study at any time. If you choose to withdraw from the study, then you will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to you removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of your data may not be possible.

What will happen in this research?

You are invited to participate in a semi-structure interview for approximately 1 hour. The interview will be audio-recorded for accuracy purposes and would not be shared with anyone other than the primary supervisor. The interview would be the full extent of the participants required contribution to the research process, participants will only have to be available for the duration of the interview and there is no further meet up required in relation to this study.

In this study, you will be asked to read the participant information sheet (the present document) and signed on the consent form. Following that, you will be asked questions regarding your Chinese cultural background, user experiences and performances on Tantan. Please take note that this interview will be interviewed and transcribed.

What are the discomforts and risks?

You will be offered a reasonable expectation of privacy and confidentiality throughout the study. The collected data will only be accessed by the researcher and the primary supervisor during the collection and analysis process.

It is not expected the participants will experience discomfort and be at risk in this research, but it is advisable to be aware as the questions would be asked based on your Chinese heritage or background, and also your experience in online dating.

What are the benefits?

There are no direct or material benefits for the participants of the study, but it will contribute to greater representation in the study of online dating apps and Chinese dating. Participants are also given an opportunity to talk about their experience in online dating as a Chinese. To date, most academic research tends to focus on western cultural context. The discussion this study will provide relates to Chinese communities including participants who are culturally Chinese but have lived outside mainland China for generations.

The participants of this study will be highly aware of experiences of gender and dating based on Chinese social norms, and able to contribute to the presentation of a unique cultural context, which will expand a diverse representation of the relevant social phenomena.

As a Malaysian Chinese, the researcher can contribute academic knowledge to her own culture. This is important for Chinese like us to understand our culture and not to blindly follow the Western culture. This research would also contribute to a consequential benefit for the student researcher in completing her Master qualification.

How will my privacy be protected?

All data will be downloaded to an encrypted external storage device and will be safely keep with the researcher locker in a locked box within AUT premises. Only the researcher and the primary supervisor have access to the raw data for this study. In any form of publication, the participants identity would not be shown, and they will be address by their code numbers (User 1, User 2). The researcher is not going to use any findings of information to identify the participants.

What are the costs of participating in this research?

The interview will be conducted for approximately 1 hour with each participant. The interview would be the full extent of the participants required contribution to the research process. You are eligible to get a copy of the researcher's findings at the end of the research.

What opportunity do I have to consider this invitation?

We would be grateful if you could please advise of your willingness to participate in the research within 7 days, hopefully by [date].

Will I receive feedback on the results of this research?

Participants will be provided with a summary report of research findings at the completion of the study upon request.

What do I do if I have concerns about this research?

Any concerns regarding the nature of this project should be notified in the first instance to the Project Supervisor, *Dr Rufus McEwan, rufus.mcewan@aut.ac.nz, +6499219999 ext. 6895*

Concerns regarding the conduct of the research should be notified to the Executive Secretary of AUTEC, Kate O'Connor, *ethics@aut.ac.nz* , 921 9999 ext 6038.

Whom do I contact for further information about this research?

Please keep this Information Sheet and a copy of the Consent Form for your future reference. You are also able to contact the research team as follows:

Researcher Contact Details:

Yap Khai Shin
Email: yapkhaishin@gmail.com
Contact number: +64027610039

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on *4th November 2019*, AUTEC Reference number *19/378*.

Appendix Three: Participant Consent Form

Consent Form

Project title:	Chinese culture, contemporary dating and *Tantan*: Exploring self-presentation in the age of mobile dating apps.
Project Supervisor:	**Dr Rufus McEwan**
Researcher:	**Yap Khai Shin**

O I have read and understood the information provided about this research project in the Information Sheet dated _____.

O I have had an opportunity to ask questions and to have them answered.

O I understand that notes will be taken during the interviews and that they will also be audio-taped and transcribed.

O I understand that taking part in this study is voluntary (my choice) and that I may withdraw from the study at any time without being disadvantaged in any way.

O I understand that if I withdraw from the study then I will be offered the choice between having any data that is identifiable as belonging to me removed or allowing it to continue to be used. However, once the findings have been produced, removal of my data may not be possible.

O I agree to take part in this research.

O I wish to receive a summary of the research findings (please tick one): YesO   NoO

Participant's signature: ………………………………………….…………………………………………………..

Participant's name: ……………………………………….…………………………………………………..

Participant's Contact Details (if appropriate):

………………………………………………………………………………………

………………………………………………………………………………………

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………………………………………………………………………………………

Date:

Approved by the Auckland University of Technology Ethics Committee on 4ᵗʰ November 2019 AUTEC Reference number 19/378

Note: The Participant should retain a copy of this form.

同意书

项目名称　　　　：中华文化，当代约会，和探探：探索现代约会软件时代的自我表现

项目主管　　　　: *Dr Rufus McEwan*

研究员　　　　　: *Yap Khai Shin*

○　　我已阅读并理解信息表中有关此研究项目的信息。日期: _____

○　　我有机会提出问题并得到答复。

○　　我了解到笔记将在面试过程中记录下来，并且还将被录音和转录。

○　　我了解参加这项研究是自愿的（我的选择），我可以随时退出研究而不会受到任何不利影响。

○　　我了解，如果我退出研究，那么将为我提供以下选择：删除任何可识别为属于我的数据，或者允许其继续使用。 但是，一旦得出结论，就不可能删除我的数据。

○　　我同意参加这项研究。

○　　我希望收到研究结果（请勾选一个）：是▲　　　不是▲

参与者签名：　　．．

参与者名字：　　．．

参与者的联系方式（如果适用）：

．．

．．

．．

．．

日期：