

## From virtual cabinets to digital death camps: intersection of Grindr factory Chilean gayness\*

*De armarios virtuales a campos digitales de exterminio: interseccionalidad de Grindr fábrica de gaycidad chilena\**

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### Abstract

The present work is conceived as an intersectional study between the different technologies of information, bodies, sexualities, class and race. Its focus of analysis are the online platforms intended for gay men, which make up a set of web pages and mobile applications (*app*), which mediate, manage and govern the desire of its users and the exercise of hetero-dissident sexualities. Technologies that set up emerging forms of sociability in real time and zero meters away, finding its expression in virtual cruising, which models the subjectivities of its users. The Grindr application that uses the geolocation of its users is centrally analyzed. The question guiding this research is how Grindr becomes an intersectional space that generates immediate intimacy and/or virtual cruising, which conveys forms of sociability and sexual practices, and ultimately configures and reconfigures gayness today, in Santiago, Chile.

**Keywords:** Intersectionality, sexuality and technology, Grindr, digital mediation, online cruising.

### Resumen

El presente trabajo es concebido como un estudio interseccional entre las distintas tecnologías de información, cuerpos, sexualidades, clase y raza. Su foco de análisis son las plataformas virtuales destinadas a hombres homosexuales, que componen un conjunto de páginas web y aplicaciones móviles (*app*), que median, gestionan y gobiernan el deseo de sus usuarios y el ejercicio de las sexualidades heterodisidentes. Tecnologías que configuran formas emergentes de sociabilidad en tiempo real y a cero metros de distancia, encontrando su expresión en un *cruising* virtual, que modela las subjetividades de sus usuarios. Se analiza centralmente a la aplicación *Grindr* que utiliza la geolocalización de sus usuarios. La interrogante que guía este trabajo de investigación es cómo Grindr se convierte en un espacio interseccional que genera intimidad inmediata y/o *cruising* virtual, que vehiculiza formas de sociabilidad y prácticas sexuales, y en última instancia, configura y reconfigura la gaycidad en la actualidad, en Santiago de Chile.

**Palabras claves:** Interseccionalidad, Sexualidad y Tecnología, *Grindr*, mediación digital, *cruising* virtual.

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\* This research has been funded by FONDO DAE de Apoyo a la Investigación de la Dirección de Asuntos Estudiantiles, College of Social Sciences, Universidad de Chile.

## 1. Introduction

We begin with the following question: Why study *Grindr*? Or rather why make a mobile application, such as *Grindr* -which has been created and designed to be a mobile app, that facilitates encounters between homo and bisexual men- as an object of intersectional study that, at the same time, is an intangible, virtual, individual and private object in its use, and that, at the same time, is one of the most popular applications in the gay community and of men who have sex with other men (HSH) worldwide. This research project begins with these questions in order to lead to a discussion on the scopes and effects of digital mediation of sexuality, putting our focus on the analysis of a profile database made between 2016 and 2019, in addition to a digital ethnography, that will allow us not only to characterize *Grindr* users, but also allow us to understand the complex interactions and uses that the application has.

The production process of an object of research can be performed via something as common to daily life, in current times, as opening a mobile app as *Grindr* and seek some form of *immediate intimacy* or rather for pure enjoyment or curiosity to know, who is close by and available, to start or a virtual conversation, an encounter or talk, share a joint, a cigarette or any other form of immediate intimacy.

The queer theory uses different types of files and materials, that many times are banished or belong to popular culture. Therefore, the objects of research found within it are objects of constant movement, interrelation, and tension. They are objects that are minimal, marginal and embodied, being singular and also glamorous; they go unnoticed, because they are mass consumer goods. Therefore, *de facto*, they tend to be invisibles/lack-luster, are naturalized and become very common, like the widespread use of the internet and smartphones, that manage desires and learn from the habits and consumption of users.

The mobile app is a digital platform facilitating and governing the desire of users via their profiles, expressed in grids, that are shown in cascade form, making visible a multiplicity of fragmented bodies, desiring some sexual practice, or rather empty and anonymous frames, that offer some type of ser-

vice. Overall, *Grindr* and its intersections as object of investigation asks the question *what the locas<sup>1</sup> do and don't do*, in a cell phone application, like *Grindr* and how, by using this platform, there is a virtual cruising, as emerging form of sociability at zero meters distance.

## 2. Paradigm of intersectionality: when bodies are run over on the overlapping highways of domination

The concept of intersectionality emerges from the analysis of black feminism, in relation to gender violence and triple domination and oppression caused by racism, sexism, and class. To women of color (Crenshaw, 1991), intersectionality provides a frame to better understand situated violences embedded in such dimensions.

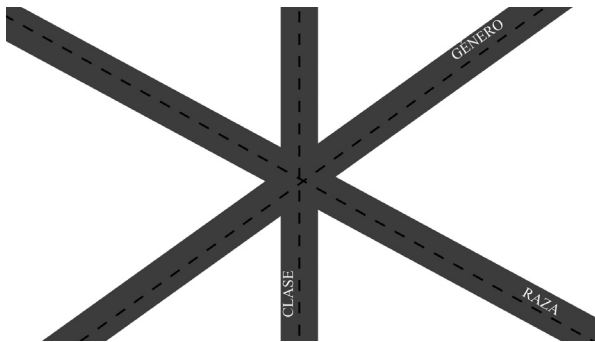
Costa (2013) points out that the notion of intersectionality allows us to understand the forms of political articulation of movements of class, feminists, and blacks. Such articulations were first conceptualized by Kimberlé Crenshaw (1991) and Hill Collins (2000), who criticized hegemonic feminism of modern western societies.

It was considered that the dimension of gender could not fully explain the situation of oppression women experienced, given that it left out the processes of racialization, class, xenophobia, racism, and sexuality. These dimensions are intersected by gender to constitute situations of hidden violence, which many times are simultaneous and opaque.

At the beginning of the conformation of the intersectionality paradigm, the intersection of the key categories of class, race, and gender were conceptualized, using the crossing of various highways as a metaphor (See Figure 1), where each road represented one of these three categories, but each one of them was considered to have the same value and form.

Intersectionality has been an analytical framework that has gained popularity under which new perspectives have emerged questioning it, criticizing it, and expanding it, but it is still based on the profound theoretical and jurisprudential commitment originally proposed by Crenshaw's metaphor (Hancock, 2011, pp. 39)

**Figure 1: Metaphor of intersectionality according to Crenshaw.**



Source: Based on Hancock (2011).

Although the concept of intersectionality refers to oppression, inequalities, and discrimination, as proposed by Costa (2013), even the oppressed in situations of exclusion can mobilize to overcome these conditions and generate collective change.

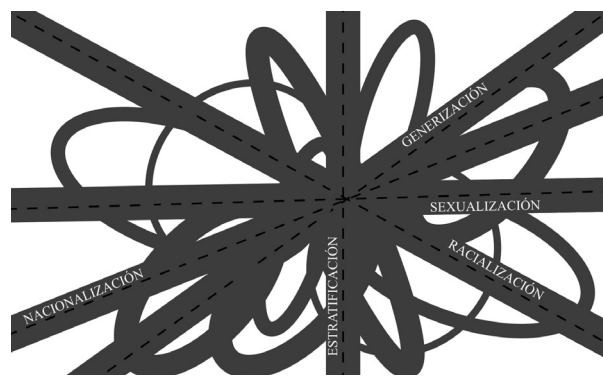
Crenshaw's approach to intersectionality can be understood as systemic, contrary to other similar focuses like those of Avtar Brah (1996), that possess a more constructionist approach (Moutinho, 2014). Along these lines, it is stated that:

Feminist theories of intersectionality focus on the analysis revealing the roads via which the sex/gender system interacts with other socio-cultural categories and how the unbalance of power distribution and identity construction, based on gender, class, race, ethnicity, geopolitical position, nationality, sexuality, abilities/disabilities, and age are interacting and mutually influencing one another (Likke 2010, p. 208)

Marxist feminism has theorized the relationship between gender and class; postcolonial and anti-racist feminism has emphasized the co-construction of gender, race, ethnicity, geo-political position and nationality; queer feminism has focused on the relationship between gender, sex, and sexuality. Such reflection questions the transversal character between gender, class, race, ethnicity, geopo-

litical position, nationality, sexuality, handicap and age. These are integrated into feminist research, taking different perspectives, situating it under the conceptualization of intersectionality, taken from American English as "crossroads", "intersection", which became relevant starting in 1990 (Likke, 2010), concept which has become more complex in current times, (See Figure 2).

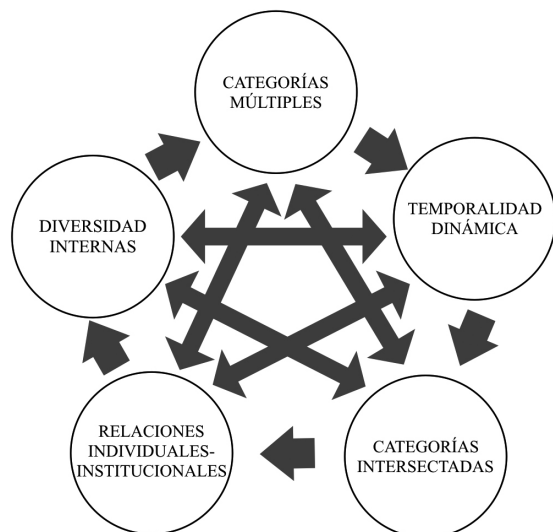
**Figure 2: Metaphors of intersectionality according to current perspectives.**



Source: Based on Hancock (2011).

The dimensions of the intersectionality paradigm (See Figure 3) point out the need to analyze multiple categories defined by their internal diversity, operating in a given and dynamic time, configuring relationships between individuality and institutionalism, indicating which categories intersect each other (Hancock 2011, pp. 51-52). This paradigm proposes an approach that goes beyond identity, with the purpose of creating and developing coalitions and agency regarding the multiple levels or dimensions in which domination interacts, with the purpose of dismantling and ceasing the complex Olympic games of oppression and generate a solidarity policy for the millennium, following Ange-Marie Hancock (2011).

**Figure 3: Dimensions of the intersectionality paradigm.**



Source: Based on Hancock (2011).

### 3. From the sexed and gendered body to virtual incarnations

The categories implicated in the intersectional analysis of the present work are highly problematic. Therefore, it is necessary to make their scopes of the processual analysis visible, understood as constructivist processes operating in a given context and must be formulated as sexualization, gendering, racialization/ethnicization, and economic stratification. The coming of black feminisms, post-colonial studies, and de-colonial feminism have reformulated the concept of race and the process of racialization, situating itself in a protagonist role in that regarding the study of inequality (in particular), and social research (in general), thus opening up new analytical perspectives under the paradigm of intersectionality.

On one hand, such juxtaposition of critical perspectives allows to address the processes of exclusion and violence that generate the silence of the bodies and voices racialized in the west (Mignolo, 2009) and address the thought of the *status quo* (Keating, 2013, p. 37), where the social system of oppression is naturalized and normalized according to the racialization and gendering of the bod-

ies, which is considered as inexpugnable. Finally, it poses the possibility to think and experience the borders, edges and interstices, for the bodies sexualized, gendered and racialized by the hetero-patriarchy, that are exiled and sacrificed; where the half-blood, foreigner, lesbian is an incarnation of this process. (Anzaldúa, 1999)

Following Bastos (2016), sexual, gender, and racial oppressions operate based on a colonial, capitalist, and hetero-sexist frame, given that the forms of oppression that articulate in an intersectional form. With this, the subjects that are positioned at the intersection of such crossroads suffer specific forms of violence and exclusion, that overlap and operate simultaneously facilitating multiple discriminations (Platero 2014; Martinez-Exposito, 2016)

### 4. Methodology. Digital ethnographies and virtual phenomenology

The present work proposes characterizing *Grindr* virtual platform virtual users via their profiles under an intersectional perspective that adheres to the constructivist paradigm (Creswell & Poth, 2018), with an ethnographic focus and from a qualitative methodological perspective (Faris, 2019). The data production/collection strategy is based on participant observation of profiles *in situ* on the application which is coherent with the self-ethnography posed by queer researchers (Faris, 2019). Said self-ethnographic participant observation was performed interacting as users on the application, defining two city sectors embodied by a place of specific geo-localization, being the respective subway stations:

- Downtown Santiago (Universidad Católica Subway Station)
- Puente Alto (Plaza Puente Alto Subway Station)

Said city sectors were chosen for their location, to denote the downtown-periphery relation according to the distribution of income (Agostini, Hojman, Román, & Valenzuela, 2016), assuming a priori, that it responds to a relation based on class, as possible intersectional axis of analysis. Within the self-ethnographic participant observation, the photographic register of profiles on the application

is performed at two different times: September 2016 and March 2019, providing for a diachronic vision of what happens with the application and the characteristics of the profiles between these two years. The smartphones have the ability to photographically record an image on the screen via a screenshot, which is what was used for recording purposes during this project.

Both records were performed on workdays and at midday, with which a synchronic vision of the phenomenon is maintained, given that the profiles are captured at a specific time of day, there is a new chance to track changes. These specific years were selected given that they come from a database of profiles between 2016 and 2019, belonging to a larger research project.

The free-version of the Grindr app was used for participant observation. During 2016, the recording of profiles was performed in person at subway stations in the Metropolitan Region and during 2019, said recording was done using the geo-localization tool belonging to the application, locating itself geo-referentially in each subway station of the region.

All the profiles observed in the app via its cascade function became units of analysis, thus creating a universal sample, given that all the profiles were included in the analysis.

Analysis used two different times:

- First time: There is a description of the profiles according to their characteristics, in order to later analyze them from an intersectional perspective. The characterization is performed via observation and analysis of visual and textual components present in the profile cascade, with approximately 30 profiles analyzed (See Figure 4), categories are generated inductively, which were grouped in a hierarchical graph to denote how the main characteristics of the profiles are distributed according to their geo-localization.

The most frequent categories observed are:

**a)** Connection: (connected or disconnected) It must be stated that even when the profile is identified as

“not connected” the user was using the app less than an hour ago, given that this is the time that the app’s algorithm is programmed to delete it from the profile cascade. Also, even when he is not connected, the app sends notifications to the users so that they review the message sent to their profile. For this reason, it seems that *Grindr* operates in a ubiquitous and total time, without pause.

**b)** Virtual cruising: This category is based on the interpretation of the sector of the profile described by the app as “my name” and “about me”, that ranges from “getting to know” to “sex now”, understood as explicit declarations of sexual type interactions.

**c)** Full body with partial nudity: The application has strict community rules as to profile image, not allowing frontal or explicit nudity, allowing such in images that users send each other privately via application messages.

**d)** Muscular Body: This category emerges from observation and review of profile images that show a toned body, good fitness, and gym work outs.

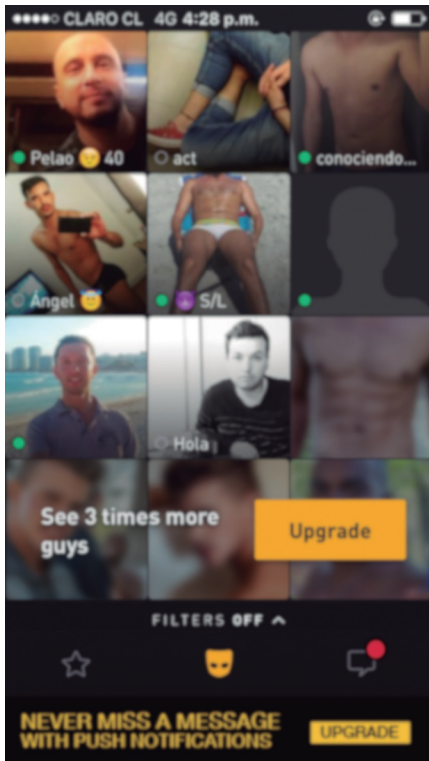
**e)** Sexual Role: For classification of profiles, the application has specific categories related to the sexual role. However users in the profile area described by the app as “my name” and “about me” exhibit their role with phrases such as “Pas”, “top”, or emojis like the peach or eggplant that are supposed to represent physical attributes “good butt” and penis size; or signs/ symbols that represent the role, arrows pointing up (active) arrows pointing down (passive) and circular arrows (inter/versatile).

**f)** Face; **g)** Naked Torso; **h)** Random image; **i)** Name or Nickname; **j)** No profile pic.

- Second time: based on the profile data built, a convenience sampling was performed to select “type profiles” that show the main characteristics of application users, to later sketch an intersectional analysis from the visual and written information that said type profiles have. Some 8 profiles were chosen that stood out due to their sexual identity (homosexuals, bisexuals, hetero-



Figure 4: Grindr<sup>2</sup> profiles cascade.



Source: Grindr App.

sexuals), gender identity (hombre cis, trans woman)<sup>3</sup>, visual and written information they contained, to show the phenomena and processes of domination, exclusion and violence, operating widespread within the application.

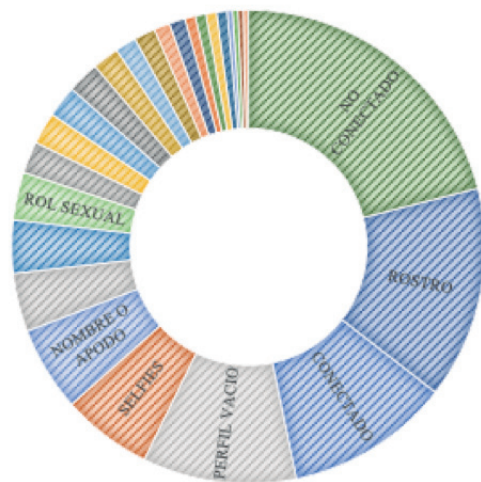
A relevant aspect in this investigation is that referring to ethnic aspects, given that an informed consent made to profile users is not possible, we propose protecting the anonymity of subjects by eliminating their profile images so that they cannot be identified, maintaining only their relevant information.

### 5. Analysis of Grindr user profiles: from body materiality to cyber-incarnation

From 2016 to 2019, there was a transformation regarding characteristics present in the profiles in the city sector of Puente Alto, where the face of

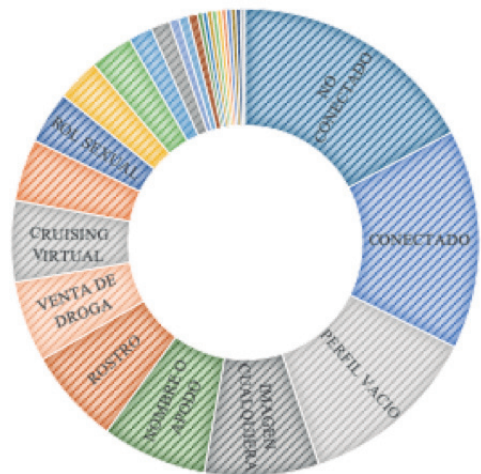
the profile is changed to a picture-less profile or any random image. It can be inferred that said phenomenon is due to the homophobia that operates as a sign of class. Therefore, in low-income areas, there tend to be more profiles without pictures or information in order to maintain anonymity, and continue maintaining one's privacy, in a virtual space that is already private within the app.

Graph 1: profiles at Plaza Puente Alto Subway Station 2016.



Source: Author

Graph 2: profiles at Plaza Puente Alto Subway Station 2019.



Source: Author

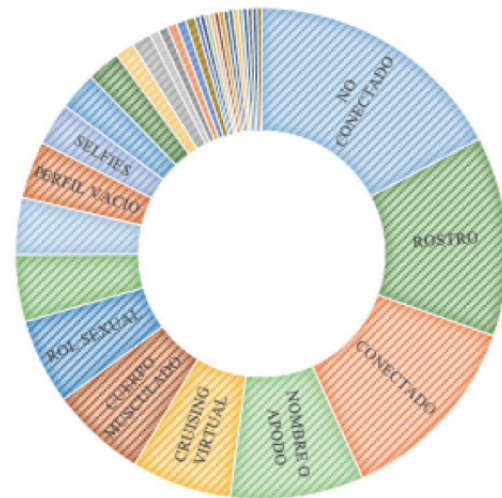
To explain the discovery of the increase in pictureless profiles, there could be a possible homophobia applied, together with that indicted by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Epistemología del armario* (1998), where homosexuals try to pass as heterosexuals creating a coherent performance for the heteronormative society. However, this always fails, causing anguish in the face of the exposure and discovery of the homosexuality itself. It is possible to reflect on the “digital closets” that the application creates, on one hand, as space for maintaining desire in total anonymity and on the other, as protection for sexual dissidents, in the cases of material homo/transphobic violence contexts against them. Yet said digital closet has its limit, at the time when the interaction materializes, since it is necessary to leave *Grindr* in order to have an encounter with another. This leaving of the digital closet does not operate as *the outing* (Spargo, 2004), given that the need to assume any identifying identification is not proposed here. It’s even possible to continue anonymously.

This app’s two-fold private characteristic is interesting, since it allows fluid identity and total anonymity (Gomez, 2018). However, said anonymity also poses a risk to the integrity and safety of users (Beas Anduaga-Beramendi, Maticorena-Quevedo, Vizcarra-Melgar, & Mariño, 2016)

It is also relevant how virtual cruising is positioned as a category. It is observed in the affective and sexual economies that the app proposes, forged by the intersection of the processes of sexualization, generation, racialization and stratification of bodies (Raj, 2011). The recent appearance of the sale of drugs in the use of the app, in the territorialized context of the city sector, which can be understood base on the logic of the two-fold of the private, with which *Grindr* becomes another space, not only for the virtual cruising, but rather for criminal activity.

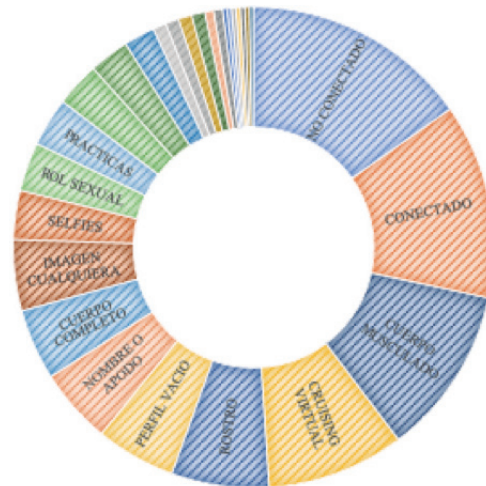
In the sector of downtown Santiago known as Santiago Centro, in the geo-localization of subway station Universidad Católica, you can see the categories of face in the profile, the muscular body, the virtual cruising, and the declaration of the sexual role in 2016. This is accentuated and increased in 2019, where the muscular body and virtual cruising take preponderance as categories, surpassing the face in the hierarchy. The aforementioned can possibly be explained due to the fact that this sector

Graph 3: profiles at Universidad Católica Subway Station 2016.



Source: Author.

Graph 4: profiles at Universidad Católica Subway Station 2019.



Fuente: Elaboración propia

of Santiago Centro, together with Bellas Artes and the sector of Providencia, have a territorial identity for homosexuals in the city of Santiago (Cortés, 2016) as well as a mass concentration of app profiles, which would cause the sense of higher protection against homophobia that operates in terms of class and territorial inequality. Plus, it insinuates a possible configuration of idea of sociability that produces a “gay community”, which is a protective element for subjects, whether real or not.

However, said community, using the logics of virtual cruising and immediacy, operates more like a “virtual sexual neighborhood” -and not a community-, given that there is no participation of sociability in the public space, but rather there is an anonymous virtualization of the sociability with purposes of *immediate sex* (Roth, 2016; Mowlabocus, 2016; Miskolci, 2015). On the other hand, when the muscular body emerges in profile images, it also denotes a certain superposition of processes associated to marking class, sexualization and gendering of bodies, given that these respond to an hypermasculine aesthetic, where what is valued and praised is the masculinity, the investment of hours in the gym, steroid supplements, etcetera.

Setting itself up as a circuit of production not only of a body, but rather of a body for -in benefit of a gay subjectivity permeated by the market- the pornographic industry that points to a specific type of desirable body that molds the gay desire and transforms the gay identity in *gayness*, that consists of the conjunction and sedimentation of these aspects. (Roth, 2016; Reyes Gil, 2018; Mowlabocus, 2015).

The following shows the 8 type profiles, selected from the database in order to carry out global analysis and illustrate the relationships of dominations and power within the application.

Figure 5. User Profile.



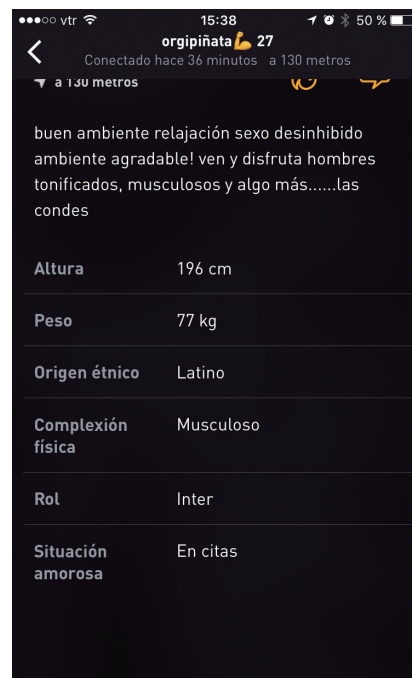
Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile Databases.

The subject refers to himself as “Xunxo-Flayte”, which puts him in a particular class identity. “I am an active male pervert, dominant, good dick I seek hairy men”, with this description of himself, he situates himself in the hegemonic masculinity interwoven into homosexuality, given that it reinforces his dominant sexual role, his sexual practices, characteristics of his penis and the search for subjects similar to him.

“no lokas, no old men, maximum age 35, I don’t send pics, I decide whether I do it or not!, If you want to fuck it’s your problem..I’ve got stomach, I don’t have sex with just any ol’ thing that offers it. just so you know”

By affirming that he does not like “lokas” denotes the exclusion of the feminine/effeminate, like a form of interrelation between homosexuality and hegemonic masculinity, where masculinity is praised as normal. There is also an expressed age discrimination, men of a certain age are desired and others are excluded (35 years old). Finally, it declares that photography is a means of proving the body type of the other, as desirable and with it affirms that his standards will exclude all that he considers “kualquier wea”<sup>4</sup>.

Figure 6. User Profile.



Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile Databases.



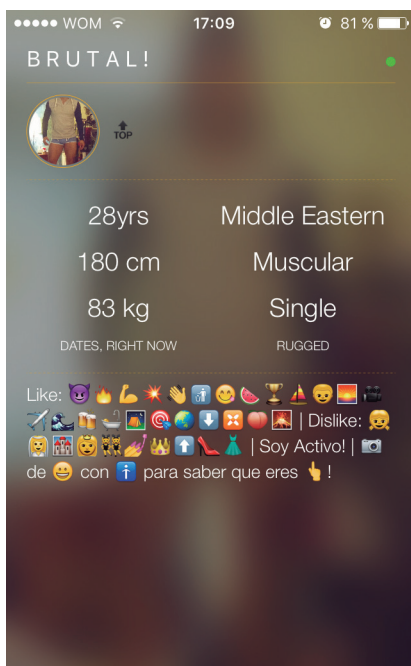
This profile does not belong to an individual person but rather a group/collective “*Orgipiñata*”.

“good ambiance, relaxation, uninhibited sex, good ambiance!, come and enjoy well-toned, muscular men and more... Las Condes”.

This person offers a virtual and material cruising, but it could be interpreted even as sex trade. It is emphasized that the bodies are masculine and toned and muscular, with which it clearly defines a body standard, for whoever wants to participate in an orgy. Finally, it shows the social class to which he belongs by stating his location in a high-income sector in Santiago (Las Condes).

“Height: 196 cm, weight: 77 kg, ethnicity: Latino, physique: muscular, role: Inter, relationship status: dating”. *Grindr* allows the choice of characteristics to describe oneself and this subject has a body structure associated to certain canons of body beauty and fitness, as well as reveling his sexual role and sentimental situation, the application having provided such parameters by default.

Figure 7. User Profile.



Source: 2016 to 2019 Profiles Databases.

The image of the profile in Figure 7 shows a toned, young man standing in his underwear, in a somewhat messy room, which could be his bedroom. Although the torso is covered, you can see his toned body, as exhibited by his legs in his profile picture. His posture and way of dress, also creates an erotization of this body, to make him desirable. Therefore, in this case the masculine body becomes a desirable body, a sexualized body, a body worked for sexual cruising, terminating in a transaction of body for pleasure.

The user “*brutal*” is “♂️” which can be interpreted from the language of the *emojis* as “*active*”, this being his sexual role. Via his use of *emojis*, you can observe and interpret some of his sexual preferences: likes perversion, hot sex, muscles, and spanking (striking the buttocks of his sexual partner) and hygiene. Bottoms with a good but and that are hot, as well as group sex, except for that this *emoji* is not currently available, in which various arrows converge on one point.

By reading the *emojis* of Figure 7, one can clearly interpret that he doesn’t like effeminate, girls, queens, princesses and any type of feminized subject, excluding them from his search. He indicates that his sexual role is active, articulating like in other profiles, the discourse of homosexuality together with that of hegemonic masculinity. He is dominant and once again this articulates sexual role, with sexual and gender identity. Finally, he needs a picture of face and body, to know who he is speaking to, and thus evaluate esthetically who would be his sexual partner.

Figure 8 shows a young woman in a suggestive pose, in a tight pink dress. It is not easy to deduce that the person is trans or has gone through a male to female transition. “\$Nicole” is one of the few trans bodies that could be found on the application, the symbol “\$” indicates that the person is a sex worker. “*She-wolf travesty escort recently arrived in Santiago*”. This description shows the position of the trans person, as a gendered subject, sexualized and in this case possibly pauperized. In addition, she states that she has recently arrived in Santiago, which implies that she may have come from another region of the country, or be an immigrant. She describes herself as trans (travesty) declares her sexual role (modern) and that she offers sex for money. One could say that she is Chilean

Figure 8. User Profile.



Source: 2016 to 2019 Profiles Databases

due to her use of expressions like “altiro” or “right away”, which is not used by immigrants, given that they do not understand that this means “immediately”.

Figure 9. User Profile.

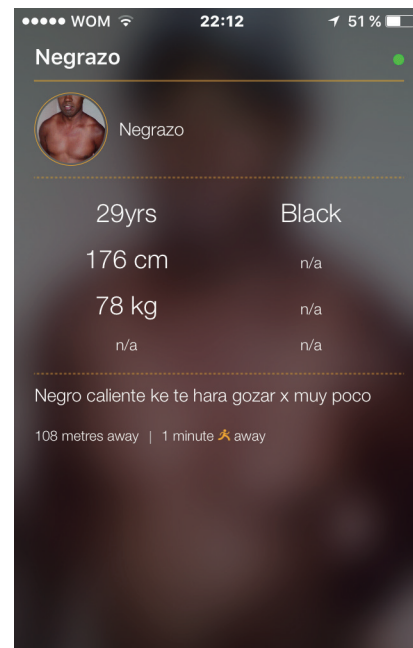


Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile databases.

The “machos?” profile in Figure 9 uses the emoji “👉”<sup>5</sup> to describe his sexual role, which is passive: “masculines?varonils?machos?heteronormed?low-keys?discretos?non-versatiles. Someone to have sex with on Sundays?”. This describes something very common on *Grindr* profiles, the search for guys that *build themselves around hegemonic masculinity*. It is this citing of the heteronormative that seems to attract app users. It is not heterosexuality itself, but rather that which is produced in the intersection of heterosexuality and masculinity, which is an identity, that is located in the supposed vertex of the hierarchy and in the apex of the privileges.

Related to this it “is once again the devaluing of the feminine and effeminate in subjects, requiring that their sexual orientation be imperceptible, so that no one notices. It is self-denominated as “discrete”, and therefore, we can assume such a subject has not, and cannot assume his sexual orientation in the material context, where he lives, and experiences a homophobia that is already applied and projected even in this virtual space.

Figure 10. User Profile.

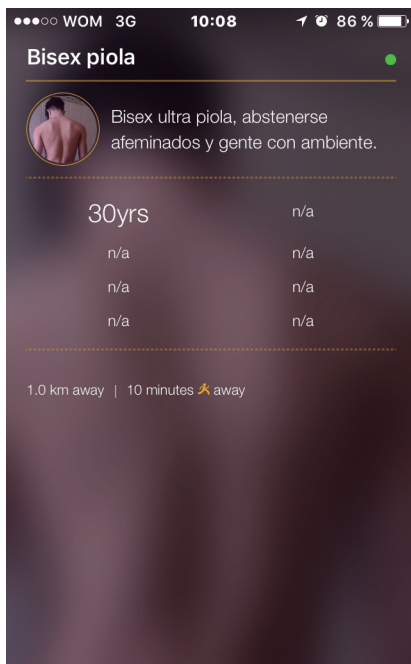


Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile databases.

The user “Negrazo” is a racialized body. He describes himself as: *“hot blackman that will make you enjoy for very little”, “29 years old, 176 cm, 78 kg, black”*. One can infer from the profile description that he is a prostitute. Together with the racialization of his body, there is an erotization to sexualize him like an object/subject of desire. Current migration processes in Chile concentrate in Santiago, as the capital, making for a larger number of immigrants, who have faced racism and xenophobia that are acute towards black people. They are discriminated against and excluded from the workforce, making the sex trade a survival strategy.

It is also necessary to indicate that the sex trade exercised by men differs from that of women, given that they do not face trafficking or sexual exploitation. On the other hand, the men that exercise it are mainly heterosexuals, due to the use of this survival strategy, they have sex with other men, generating a reconfiguration in the space of the sexual identity, that many times is not tensed, but is made flexible, causing the emergence of categories such as men that have sex with men (MSM).

Figure 11: User Profile.



Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile Databases.

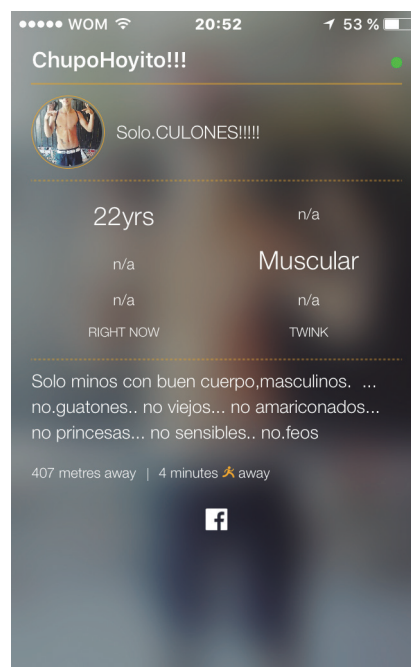
The user “Bisex piola”, thus reveals his sexual identity, not heterosexual or homosexual, which given the context of hetero/homo dichotomy, is ignored. The word “piola” refers to the need for anonymity, possibly due to biphobia, from both the heterosexuality and the homosexuality, for the incomprehension of bisexual desire.

He describes himself as: *“bisex, very private, look elsewhere effeminates and obvious gays”*, which once again describes positioning in the hegemonic masculinity, where being “ultra piola” is based on anonymity and in not belonging to homosexuality. “Gente sin ambiente” are signs of this heteronormative command. Finally, hegemonic masculinity and sexual identity once again appear, with the purpose of excluding the feminine /effeminate, in this case, as prohibited forms of homosexual desire.

The user “ChupoHoyito!!!” positions himself based on his sexual practices, emphasizing his sexual role. Being homosexual subject, he gives a list of desirable and excludible people:

*“big butts only”, “22 years old, muscular, looking for right now, tribe: Twink” “only hot guys with a good body, masculine, no fat men, no old men, no effeminates, no princesses, no sensitive guys, no ugly guys.”*

Figure 12: User Profile.



Source: 2016 to 2019 Profile Databases.

The aforementioned once again reveals the intersecting of sexual identity and gender, with its homosexuality and its non-heteronormative sexual practices articulate unencumbered with the hegemonic masculinity as subjectivity producing axis. For this user in particular, as well as various other users on *Grindr*, desire operates around a toned or muscular body, together with a masculine performance. In contraposition, there is “fat-phobia” (Navajas-Peretegás, 2017; Suárez García, 2017), age discrimination, misogyny and homophobia, the devaluation of the feminine, together with the “ugly-phobia”, generating hierarchization, exclusion and violence within the application.

This is a complex scenario, where the material context of the application users is highly violent, given this intersectional overlapping of domination. It could be expected that on *Grindr* there would be a *heterotopia* (Foucault, 2010), where the processes of exclusion, domination and violence that operate in the social scene are suspended. However, this “virtual closet” of protection, is no more than a virtual symbolic extermination camp, in which violence is digital.

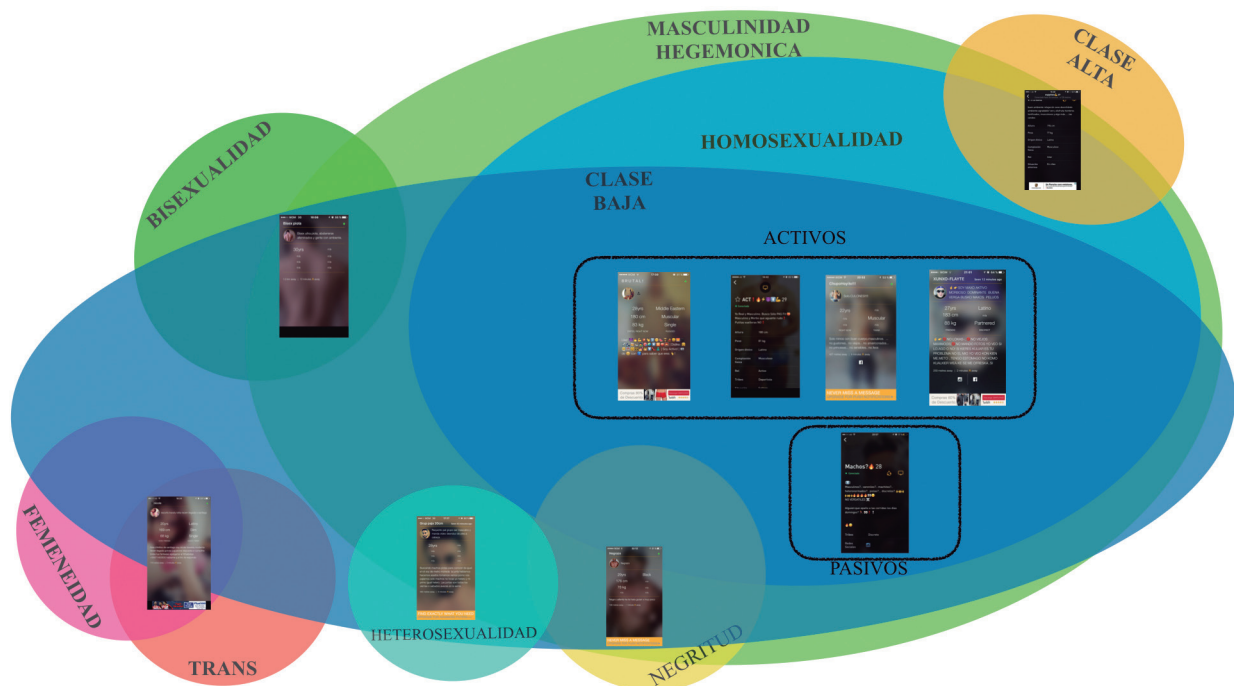
## Conclusions: The Olympic Games of domination on online platforms of desire

Figure 13 presents the interrelation of the profiles previously described, using an intersectional logic, where the axis of class and its processes of stratification apply to all the profiles. Gendering is founded by hegemonic masculinity, sexualization is given by sexual identity that the users declare in their profiles with their sexual roles associated with their identities, while racialization and feminization are peripheral processes of articulation.

The intersectionality in *Grindr* is proposed like an overlapping and crossing of variables like sex, gender, race/ethnicity, class, age, body type, belonging to a tribe, sexual role, just to name a few. These crosses generate *corporal capital* (Bourdieu, 1990, p.137) and *erotic capital* (Hakim 2012), this concept that goes beyond sexual attractiveness, intersecting body, sexuality, attractiveness, charm and vitality.

This intersectionality produces an ideal profile type as failure of the hegemonic white heterosexual masculinity. This highly-attractive profile is positioned as ideal homo/normative, located in the

Figure 13. Intersectionality on Grindr<sup>6</sup>



Source: Author.



higher socio-economic sectors of Santiago. The muscular body is the norm of globalized *gayness*, central axis of the gay masculinity that gets its eroticization codes and commercialization from the gay pornographic industry (Roth, 2016; Mowlabocus, 2016).

On the other hand, there are rejected profiles characterized by the intersection of categories considered negative or discriminatory inside this application, due to its hierarchized positioning and valuation of features. Femininity acts as a differential of exclusion, manifesting in the absence of bodies gendered as women in the application, including that considered *effeminate* is rejected (Gómez Beltrán, 2018).

The class or economic stratification acts as a differentiating factor on profiles when they present aesthetic characteristics like: image quality, their aesthetic, white physical features, together with muscular bodies, their clothes and cellphone. When the profile is geo-localized in a place of high income, the frequency of hyper-masculinized, muscular, eroticized and pornographic bodies increases. Here there is access to a gym, diet, use of steroids; they are technologies of corporal production mediated by class. Even when it was possible to find those same aesthetic characteristics in geo-localized profiles in sectors of low income, they are infrequent and respond to the logic of homogenization proposed by the hegemony of homonormativity.

Trans and living with HIV (both characteristics considered tribes on the app) profiles are almost non-existent on the application. With it we return to the idea of valuation and discrimination that operates throughout the application. Therefore, one could say that the phenomena of *transphobia* and *serophobia* present in society appear in the application. Adhering to or using said categories locates the profile and whoever uses it in a place of rejections and discrimination.

Empty profiles can be interpreted via their geo-political location, given that it is highly frequent in low income sectors both in Santiago and outer regions, illustrating the nationwide central-peripheral relationship, which is a product of the homophobia operating in various social and cultural contexts in Chile. Not showing, not being visible constitutes a

form of personal physical protection, but also proposes the paradox present in the *epistemology of the closet*. This application is a two-fold of the private realm within the public realm, because it exists in the private fold of the cell phone that is private and personal. The heteronormativity makes those who use *Grindr* believe that their performances of passing as heterosexuals are believable (Sedgwick, 1998).

Therefore we will understand *corporal capital and erotic capital* (Bourdieu, 1990; Hakim, 2012) as that capital based on the value of the body, building itself via the investment, intervention, and actions taken on corporality, in order to increase its value for purposes of optimization. Its goal is to comply with the ruling aesthetic standards, which will generate later exchanges and will convert the body into a good for consumption. *Grindr* is a place of emergence and exchange of *corporal capital and erotic capital* that enters into the logics of disposability of the neo-liberalized gayness (Gómez Beltrán, 2018; Gomez, 2018).

The complexity of the analysis lies in detangling the overlapping of the categories of oppression and how they generate processes of violence and exclusion. This study explores how a mobile app becomes a hegemonic space of construction of the gayness that generates overlapping exclusions from sexualization/gendering and produces *gayness/masculinity*, as well as territorialized homonormativity (Brown, 2012) and homo-nationalism (Andrade, 2014) articulated with capitalism in neo-liberal key of the Chilean context (Salazar, 2011).

One asks whether it is possible to understand *Grindr* as production of desire and technology of government and administration (Deleuze & Guattari, 1985). This technological application behaves like a technology of government and production of desire, in the sense that everybody desires to be manufactured in the logic of consumption, whose final destiny is disposal. There are subjects disposed of *a priori*, and others that are disposed of in the process. However, in all bodies, there is an operating government of desire.

Lemebel stated that *to be poor and to be gay is worse* (Lemebel, 2009). However, among the intersectionalities built by *Grindr*, there are various that go way beyond the previous or that magnify it and worsen

it. These affect the material lives of application users and therefore, this article concludes that this virtual closet only becomes an online extermination camp.

## Notes

1 Chilean slang term used to refer to effeminate homosexuals.

2 Pictures are blurred to protect their identity.

3 Note that cis women and trans men were not found, and therefore cannot be included in the analysis.

4 This Chilean figure of speech translates to “any of thing”

5 App users use these arrow up and arrow down emojis to indicate sexual role. Arriba=top, Abajo=bottom, arrows in both directions indicate versatility.

6 Images with faces were eliminated to protect identity.

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- How to cite?

Parra, L. & Obando, A. (2019). De armarios virtuales a campos digitales de exterminio: interseccionalidad de Grindr fábrica de gaycidad chilena. *Comunicación y Medios* (40), 98-113.