

Mating competition in humans: An exploration using big Twitter data

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We propose to test the exciting new idea that economic inequality among households also shapes mating competition, giving rise to many of the stark sex differences in dress, spending patterns, and mental and physical health that pervade societies. While wealthy Western countries have progressed steadily toward gender-equitable opportunities over the last century, differences between women and men in aggression, interests and the incidence of diseases like anxiety and depression have, paradoxically, increased. It is clear that ossified old ways of understanding gendered traits as either biologically essential or socially constructed have little to offer in terms of further understanding.

To test our hypotheses, this project exploits a pre-existing dataset of big twitter data. Social media provides a rich and novel source of insight into mate preferences and intrasexually competitive behaviours cross-nationally. Algorithms developed by our laboratory geolocate a large portion of tweets, thus allowing us to test whether geographic variation in economic inequality affect mating-related behaviours. Our approach transcends old territorial boundaries, and promises a newer, better and more general way to understand gendered behaviours, including those implicated in harm to mental health, safety, and happiness.

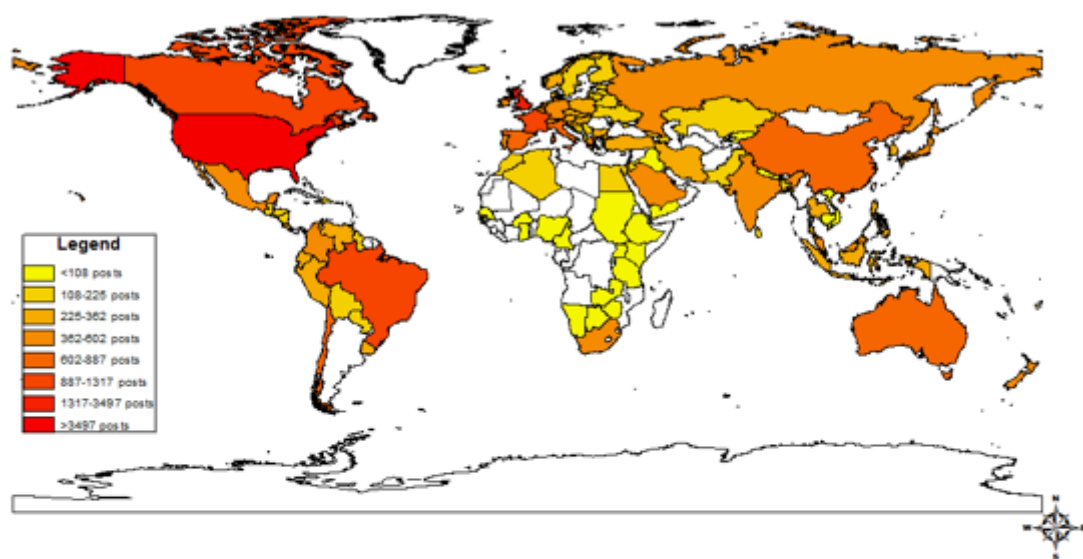


Figure 1. Sexy selfie Twitter posts across 113 nations, adjusted for English language Twitter posting frequency, population size, and level of human development.

Note. The figure presents the predicted number of sexy selfies posted on Twitter across 113 nations, after accounting for English language posting frequency, population size, and human development level. Excluded countries are colored white.