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Introduction: Discourse, digital intimacies, & online dating
Guest editor: Riki Thompson

Discourse in Digital Dating Landscapes

The landscape of dating and intimacy has changed dramatically with the emergence of internet technology, followed by smart phones, and finally swiping apps. When the World Wide Web was launched in 1993, “cyberspace” was described by some as a new frontier to be explored, and by others as a place to be wary. Due to public fears and the stigma associated with meeting strangers online, early adopters of “Internet dating”—as it was initially called—tended to be reluctant to divulge their engagement with this practice. A decade later, Web 2.0 technologies would allow for a more interactive online environment which resulted in the rise of social networks (like *Facebook*) and greater comfort with “going online”; increasingly, then, people turned to online dating. In 2007, the invention of smartphones enabled dating platforms to move from desktop computers to mobile devices, allowing people to search for intimacy and communicate with potential partners on the go. The next advancement was in 2009 when *Grindr* integrated geolocation technology into their dating app, effectively blending the local and virtual as apps tracked and broadcast users’ physical location in connection to proximity affordances. In 2010, *Tinder's* launch of the swiping interface solidified the gamification of digital dating. For the next decade, countless apps employing geolocation and swiping affordances would be developed for the millions of people turning to digital platforms to make intimate connections.

While dating apps originated in the West with pioneers like *Match.com* and later *Tinder*, they have become a truly global phenomenon. As of 2024, dating app revenues have increased every year since 2015, reaching \$6.18 billion, and global dating app usage also continues to increase with 364 million people worldwide using dating apps (Curry, 2025). Despite recent reports that younger adults, specifically Gen-Z born between 1997 – 2012, are opting out of online dating (Battle, 2024), according to Goyal (2024), the global dating app user base is expected to exceed 500 million in 2025 and reach 750 million by 2031, with the fastest growth occurring outside Western markets. This expansion is driven primarily by emerging markets, including India, Southeast Asia, and Africa, as internet access expands and cultural attitudes toward digital matchmaking evolve.

The proliferation of platforms includes niche apps designed for diverse populations with vastly different needs, desires, and cultural contexts worldwide. However, for individuals with intersectional and marginalized identities, navigating digital romance presents particular challenges that mainstream app developers have struggled to address. Though swiping and online messaging have become commonplace practices, these platforms often fail to accommodate the complex ways that race, gender, sexual orientation, political affiliation, cultural contexts, linguistic backgrounds, and regional variations intersect to shape user experiences. For some daters, these overlapping factors can create barriers to authentic connection and make online dating spaces feel exclusionary or unsafe.

Online dating has thus evolved over three decades to become a ubiquitous part of modern courtship. What was once stigmatized has now become normalized, with dating apps fully integrated into daily life. Despite marketing themselves as revolutionary matchmaking tools, how intimacy apps actually shape relationship formation remains complex and often contradictory. For example, apps have transformed courtship dynamics by normalizing polymedia dating practices and gamifying romance through dopamine-driven matching systems. Research reveals the unprecedented scale of this transformation: one in five users actively manage five or more dating platforms simultaneously, with 15% checking apps 10 to 14 times daily and spending at least 3 hours per day on these platforms. Nearly 20% engage in conversations with 11 or more potential partners at once (Sharma, 2024; Zajechowski, 2025)—a scale of simultaneous romantic communication unprecedented in face-to-face dating contexts. This efficiency-oriented approach to dating, where users filter through hundreds of profiles in minutes, stands in stark contrast to the slow, organic process required for building genuine emotional bonds. Moreover, the "paradox of choice" gives users access to thousands of potential matches, yet the perceived abundance of options, presented as consumer options, leads many to perpetually search, believing there is always someone "better."

This special issue examines these differences by focusing on diverse contexts and highlighting how culture, context, and positionality influence digital dating behaviors, centering voices often overlooked in online dating research. Spanning cultural contexts from Hong Kong to Denmark to the United States, these studies advance crucial conversations about digital equity and inclusion in our increasingly mediated intimate lives. Through diverse discourse analysis methods—including Critical Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis, Queer Linguistics, and intersectionality frameworks—the collection reveals communicative strategies users deploy to navigate digital dating's unique constraints and affordances through examinations of platform features like binary choice structures, profile prompts, temporal limits, geolocation, and messaging spaces that both enable and restrict self-presentation and connection-building. Together, they demonstrate discourse analysis's power to expose the complex relations shaping contemporary digital intimacy across diverse contexts.

Digital Intimacy's Triple Bind

This collection reveals how dating platforms operate within what we might call digital intimacy's "triple bind"—three interconnected contradictions that define contemporary mediated romance. Rather than simply documenting diverse user experiences, these studies expose fundamental

tensions embedded within the sociotechnical architecture of digital dating that reflect broader dilemmas of late modernity.

The Transformation of Intimacy in Digital Contexts

In certain Euro-American and Christianized contexts, sociologist Anthony Giddens (1992) argues that we've moved from idealized traditional courtship—with its rigid gender roles and religious rules—to what he calls "plastic sexuality." This alternative framework emphasizes individual choice over social expectations, positioning plastic sexuality as a "project of the self" where people constantly explore and redefine their sexual identities and practices within broader projects of self-identity. While this shift may offer greater freedom, it also creates uncertainty as established norms become destabilized, requiring people to perpetually manage their intimate lives reflexively without clear guidelines. Digital technology and geolocation-based dating apps both exemplify and intensify this transformation within these specific cultural contexts, creating new communication norms around relationship initiation while amplifying the liberating yet precarious nature of contemporary intimacy.

Zygmunt Bauman's (2003) concept of "liquid love" further theorizes these dynamics, describing the fragile, fleeting, and unstable nature of human relationships in late-modern society. Liquid love manifests through transience, individualism, and uncertainty in societies where social pressures to commit have lessened. Now, temporary connections have gained widespread acceptance as an available relationship option and for extended periods in people's lives. Contemporary social conditions—particularly neoliberalism, consumerism, and digital mediation—transform love into something anxious, ambivalent, and endlessly negotiable through this liquid framework. Individualism and technological advancement convert courtship into a commodified game resembling "relationshopping," where people easily seek new partners through digitally mediated networks (Heino et al., 2010). These proliferating romantic possibilities create challenges in moving beyond temporary connections to committed long-term relationships, as emotional bonds become mediated by technologies that simultaneously facilitate connection and cultivate a sense of abundant choice availability.

Dating apps become sites where plastic sexuality meets liquid love, creating unprecedented opportunities for self-expression alongside new forms of relational precarity. Building on this foundation of plastic sexuality and liquid love, dating platforms create what might be called digital intimacy's "triple bind"—three interconnected contradictions that intensify rather than resolve late modernity's core tensions around identity, choice, and connection in digital dating contexts.

The Intimacy Paradox: Connection Through Disconnection

The very digital technologies designed to facilitate intimate connection often undermine the slow, organic processes through which emotional bonds develop. This paradox manifests most clearly in how platforms simultaneously demand hyper-visibility while necessitating strategic concealment. Users are expected to populate detailed profiles with extensive self-disclosure, yet this enforced transparency requires sophisticated identity curation to manage risks ranging from rejection to harassment. Banks et al.'s (2025) analysis of Black women's experiences in this

collection reveals how this visibility/safety tension becomes particularly acute for marginalized users, who must balance accurate self-expression against protection from fetishization and algorithmic bias. The promise of "authentic" connection thus generates its opposite: highly performative self-presentation designed to manage the very risks that digital mediation creates.

The Fluidity Trap: Binary Choices in an Era of Identity Complexity

A second contradiction emerges between platforms' demand for categorical clarity and users' increasingly fluid identity expressions in an era of plastic sexuality. Traditional identity categories have become more porous and contextual, yet many dating apps require users to select fixed labels that carry unexpected interpretive consequences across diverse audiences. This creates what we might call the "fluidity trap"—the more nuanced users' identities become, the more constraining platform categorization systems feel. In this collection, Rowlett and Chung's (2025) examination of Hong Kong lesbian users demonstrates how even community-specific platforms impose normative constraints through built-in labeling systems. Their concept of "queering practices" reveals users actively negotiating predetermined categories, with many preferring "No label" options that transcend binary systems. Similarly, Sengul's (2025) analysis of *The Right Stuff* shows how platforms can weaponize this categorical rigidity, deliberately constraining identity options as a form of political exclusion. The technical architecture of profile construction thus becomes a site where broader cultural conflicts around identity recognition play out through seemingly neutral design choices.

The Abundance Paradox: Infinite Choice, Finite Capacity

Perhaps most fundamentally, dating platforms create what might be called the "abundance paradox"—they provide access to thousands of potential partners while generating cognitive and emotional overload that undermines users' capacity for meaningful connection. This contradiction reflects deeper tensions between digital capitalism's logic of endless consumption and human social cognition's documented limitations.

Research on social cognition suggests humans can meaningfully maintain approximately 150 social relationships, with conversational cohesion optimal in groups of four or fewer (Dunbar, 1993). Yet dating apps encourage users to maintain simultaneous conversations with dozens of strangers while navigating regular daily obligations—a practice that undercuts human social capacity. Thompson's analysis of *Bumble's* temporal constraints reveals how platforms intensify this overload by adding time pressure to already complex communicative demands, creating what she identifies as distinct forms of "intimate labor" that disproportionately burden women users.

This abundance paradox helps explain the rising phenomenon of "dating fatigue" (Solovyeva & Laskin, 2022) and the emergence of "slow dating" movements (Fisher & Garcia, 2019) as resistance to app culture's accelerated temporalities. It also illuminates how platforms profit from the very anxieties they generate, creating market demand for self-help solutions to manage digital dating's overwhelming demands.

Toward a Critical Analysis of Digital Intimacy

These three contradictions—the intimacy paradox, fluidity trap, and abundance paradox—collectively reveal dating platforms not as neutral matchmaking tools but as complex sociotechnical systems that embody and intensify late modernity's core dilemmas around identity, choice, and connection. The studies in this collection demonstrate how users develop sophisticated strategies to navigate these contradictions, yet their individual solutions cannot resolve the structural tensions embedded within platform design itself.

Understanding digital intimacy therefore requires analytical frameworks that can account for how technological affordances, commercial imperatives, and cultural ideologies intersect to shape intimate possibilities and constraints. The "postdigital intimacies" framework developed by Evans and Ringrose (2025) provides such an approach, recognizing that intimacy now emerges through dispersed agency across assemblages that include algorithms, devices, and social actors rather than being purely human and physical. This framework reveals how meaning-making occurs fluidly across interconnected online-offline spaces while remaining attentive to how power relations shape these intersections differently for different users.

Critical to this understanding are media ideologies—users' beliefs about how communicative technologies convey meaning, which shape both communication choices and interpretations throughout relationship formation and dissolution (Gershon, 2010a, 2010b). This theoretical lens reveals dating platforms as critical sites where discourse, identity, power, and technological design converge to both enable and constrain contemporary intimate practices (Tagg & Thompson, forthcoming)—serving simultaneously as spaces of connection and of discipline, recognition and marginalization, empowerment and exploitation.

Research Contributions and Findings

This special issue presents empirical research about discourse and dating across diverse platforms, populations, and regional contexts. The collection spans geographical contexts including Danish *Tinder* users (Andersen), Hong Kong lesbian communities (Rowlett & Chung), American conservatives (Sengul), women using *Bumble* (Thompson), and Black women navigating various platforms (Banks et al.). In terms of platforms, the papers examine mainstream global applications (*Tinder*, *Bumble*), a locally-developed community-specific app (*Butterfly*), and a politically-oriented niche platform (*The Right Stuff*). Collectively, these studies highlight ongoing tensions between local cultural contexts and global platform logics, demonstrating how users navigate technological affordances while working within and against platform constraints.

Opening the collection with a powerful examination of race and algorithmic design in **“What's Algorithms Got to Do With It? Exploring Black Women's Pursuit of Black Love on Dating Apps,”** Jasmine Banks, Mel Monier, and Ariana Samuel (2025) examine the experiences of one of the most marginalized populations on dating apps in the US—Black women (Rudder, 2014). Centering Black women's lived experiences through interviews and narrative walkthroughs, they deploy Critical Technocultural Discourse Analysis (CTDA) (Brock, 2018) alongside intersectionality frameworks (Crenshaw, 1989) to reveal how dating algorithms encode racial and gender hierarchies despite claims of neutrality. Their methodological approach allows for examination of both systemic exclusion and individual agency, illuminating how

technological systems simultaneously marginalize and become sites of resistance for users navigating multiple identity intersections. Banks et al. expose how dating platforms actively shape desirability hierarchies that systematically disadvantage Black women while privileging whiteness. Their groundbreaking research identifies key dimensions of Black women's experiences—from algorithmic bias awareness to strategic identity curation—which collectively illuminates the precarious terrain these users must navigate when seeking connection online. The study's distinction lies in revealing a paradoxical safety dilemma: to increase visibility, Black women must engage in sophisticated self-presentation practices that balance what they view as authentic expression against protection from fetishization and harassment, illuminating both systemic exclusion and individual agency within technological systems of resistance.

In the second article, Benedict J.L. Rowlett and Kwan Ting "Jasmine" Chung (2025) shift the regional focus to Asia, exploring **"Queer(ing) language practices in a Hong Kong lesbian dating app"** through analysis of *Butterfly's* forum. Their queer linguistics approach enables examination of sexual normativities (Motschenbacher, 2019) while revealing opportunities for resistance and negotiation within local cultural contexts. Through mixed-method analysis of forum posts, the authors combine quantitative distribution analysis of identity markers with qualitative examination of linguistic practices, capturing how Hong Kong lesbian users navigate *Butterfly's* predefined labeling system. Rowlett and Chung suggest that "queering practices" can facilitate the discursive construction and negotiation of geographically situated sexual identities, both in users' self-representations and preferences for desired others. Their findings reveal users' movement toward complexity beyond binary categorizations; while traditional local identity labels like "Tomboy" (TB) and "Tomboy's girl" (TBG) appear frequently, the increasing preference for neutral markers such as "No label" (NL) demonstrates users' desire for identity options that transcend normative systems. A significant contribution of this piece is how it reveals some digital intimacy spaces as linguistic and sexual borderlands (Anzaldúa, 1999; Callis, 2014); here, identities are not merely expressed but actively contested, preserved, and reimagined. Thus, Rowlett and Chung's examination of *Butterfly* reminds us how locally-developed platforms can center community-specific experiences against transnational app homogenization.

In the next article, the collection turns toward political dating contexts in the United States with Kurt Sengul's (2025) study **"'View profiles without pronouns': The politics of the 'anti-woke' right-wing dating app on *The Right Stuff*"**. Unlike mainstream platforms that market inclusivity, *The Right Stuff* celebrates its rejection of progressive discourses, promising users a "return to normal" and "profiles without pronouns" (p. 1) through design choices that offer only binary gender selections and invite-only access limited to cisgender, heterosexual users. In examining promotional materials for *The Right Stuff* on multiple social media platforms, Sengul weaves together Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) (Pettersen & Karlsen, 2024; Van Dijk, 2015) with theories of affective polarization, right-wing radicalization, dating app cultures, and cultural backlash theory to show how the app deliberately celebrates exclusion as a feature rather than a flaw. Sengul demonstrates how *The Right Stuff* leverages contentious social and political issues around gender and sexuality, mobilizing far-right discourses marked by mockery to construct friend-enemy distinctions and embed exclusionary politics within technological architecture itself. His analysis reveals something more troubling than mere market segmentation: the app functions as a deliberate political project within the far-right digital

ecosystem, transforming intimate partner selection into explicit ideological alignment. This piece makes an important contribution to understanding how dating platforms serve as sites of ideological contestation where identity is negotiated through digital communication practices and platform allegiances in the United States' increasingly polarized landscape.

Continuing the critical examination of political dimensions in dating technology in the United States, "***Bumble's Ticking Clock: Dating App Temporal Design as Neoliberal Discipline***" by Riki Thompson (2025) exposes the contradiction between feminist marketing rhetoric and disciplinary design features. Focusing on *Bumble's* "women message first" design, Thompson's analysis zeroes in on the 24-hour messaging window, revealing how temporal constraints create distinct forms of labor that disproportionately burden women users and potentially undermine the platform's stated feminist claims. Drawing on frameworks of neoliberal postfeminism (Banet-Weiser et al., 2020) and disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1977, 1988), Thompson employs multimodal critical discourse analysis (MCDA) (Machin & Mayr, 2023) to examine how discourse and design intersect in reproducing power dynamics, incorporating temporal analysis as a critical dimension of how dating platforms participate in broader systems of social control through their sociotechnical architecture. This integrated approach combines ethnographic insights into users' experiences with analysis of institutional discourses like marketing materials, where *Bumble* employs *virtual synthetic personalization* to manufacture intimacy. Engaging with the emerging field of postdigital intimacy studies (Evans & Ringrose, 2025), Thompson's work examines how users negotiate communication and relationship formation across fluid online-offline boundaries. Thompson's work examines how users negotiate communication and relationship formation across fluid online-offline boundaries. Thompson's contribution lies in demonstrating how *Bumble* exemplifies corporate governmentality through disciplinary mechanisms that shape intimate interactions. The platform's postfeminist discourse simultaneously challenges and reinforces gender norms, suggesting women can overcome gendered dating structures through individual initiative. Yet this empowerment rhetoric masks how the platform profits from digital interactions, thereby enacting neoliberalism's prioritization of personal empowerment over systemic change.

The final paper shifts to a European context and brings us to the final phase of online dating experience for users—in-app conversations that precede an in-person meeting. In these explorations of post-match conversations, Elisabeth Andersen's (2025) "***'So fast on the keys, when do you have time to meet': Interactionally generated invitations in Danish Tinder chats***" demonstrates how daters navigate risk and loss of face through collaborative discourse strategies. For analyzing the delicate transition from online chat to offline meetings, Andersen adapts traditional Conversation Analysis (CA) techniques for digital contexts by incorporating Microanalysis of Online Data (MOOD) (Giles et al., 2015) to accommodate *Tinder's* unique platform features. Rather than treating emojis and other visual elements as mere embellishments, this methodological innovation analyzes them as substantive communicative actions, revealing sophisticated face-saving practices developed specifically for digital dating environments. Through close attention to messaging exchanges, Andersen identifies three sophisticated strategies *Tinder* users develop when negotiating offline encounters: they interpret rapid response times as interest signals; they leverage situational factors like proximity to present meetings as convenient, low-commitment options; and they craft invitations around recipients' disclosed preferences to create proposals that feel collaboratively developed. What makes these

findings particularly compelling is how they reveal dating platforms as environments of heightened social vulnerability, where users must simultaneously demonstrate genuine interest while protecting themselves from the emotional costs of rejection.

Together, these papers trace the journey through contemporary digital dating landscapes—from initial algorithmic matching shaped by racial hierarchies, through identity negotiation and political contestation, to the final moments of arranging face-to-face meetings. By examining diverse platforms, populations, and geographical contexts, the collection illuminates how dating technologies function as complex sociotechnical systems that simultaneously facilitate connection while reproducing existing power structures and serving as battlegrounds for broader cultural conflicts. Articles in this collection shed light on how identity, power, risk, rejection, and belonging are negotiated through discourse as seen in platform design, in-app features, app marketing, and user perceptions of their experiences navigating online dating contexts. These integrated approaches collectively reveal the interrelationships between platform design, user practices, and broader social structures, offering valuable models for digital discourse research that move beyond traditional methodological frameworks in favor of interdisciplinary approaches more attentive to personal experiences and contexts.

The Politics of Platform Design in Digital Intimacy

Throughout the collection, researchers expose how technological design choices encode specific ideological positions that shape user behavior and experience. Banks et al. (2025) demonstrate how mainstream dating app algorithms function as digital gatekeepers of desirability, systematically disadvantaging Black women while privileging whiteness as the normative standard—a finding that directly challenges industry claims of algorithmic neutrality. Interface elements across all examined platforms—whether *Butterfly*'s locally-specific identity labels, *The Right Stuff*'s deliberate omission of pronouns, or *Bumble*'s countdown timer—reflect specific political values embedded within seemingly neutral technical decisions.

The collection illuminates how dating platforms function within broader political-economic systems, serving commercial interests while simultaneously operating as battlegrounds for cultural and ideological contestation. Thompson's (2025) analysis of *Bumble* reveals how the platform's 24-hour messaging window—marketed as empowering women—functions as a disciplinary technology that creates anxiety, drives engagement metrics, and ultimately serves the platform's commercial interests. This temporal constraint generates three distinct forms of labor for women users (communicative, relational, and postdigital) while masquerading as a feminist innovation. Similarly, Sengul (2025) positions *The Right Stuff* within the broader Alt-Tech movement, demonstrating how this dating app functions not merely as a business venture, but as a deliberate political project within the far-right digital ecosystem, laundering extremist ideologies through the seemingly personal domain of romantic connection.

These studies collectively reveal how dating app design features and algorithmic systems have the potential to shape user behavior and enforce particular social norms—that discipline users in particular ways by building structures of governmentality into the app itself. This critical examination of platform design reveals dating apps not as neutral matchmaking tools but as complex sociotechnical systems with multiple functions. They simultaneously mediate intimate connection while serving corporate interests and reinforcing social hierarchies. These platforms function as sites where broader cultural conflicts around identity, power, and belonging are re-

enacted through seemingly mundane technical choices and the discursive practices they enable or constrain.

Identity Negotiation within Technological Constraints

In light of such cultural re-enactments, the collection also explores the complex interplay between technological design and identity expression on dating platforms. These digital spaces simultaneously enable new forms of identity articulation while imposing structural constraints that users must navigate. Across these studies, we see how dating platforms create paradoxical spaces where identity becomes both hyper-visible and strategically performative. The very design of these platforms demands extensive self-disclosure—users must populate detailed profiles with photos, preferences, and personal information—yet this enforced visibility simultaneously necessitates strategic concealment and careful curation. Banks et al.'s (2025) participants navigate this paradox by developing sophisticated approaches to profile construction that balance visibility with safety, revealing themselves enough to attract matches while protecting against discrimination and harm. The technical architecture of these platforms—from *Butterfly*'s locally-specific identity labels to *The Right Stuff*'s binary gender options—encodes particular ideological assumptions about who their users are and how they should express themselves, creating a tension between the platforms' demand for categorical clarity and users' complex, fluid identities. These studies collectively demonstrate that identity expression on dating platforms emerges through ongoing negotiation between the paradoxical demands of hyper-visibility and the strategic agency users develop to manage these constraints.

The tension between emancipation and constraint runs throughout the collection. While some platforms create opportunities for challenging normative identity categories—as in *Butterfly*'s enabling of "queering practices"—others reinforce traditional hierarchies despite some platforms' claims to the contrary. Through these analyses, the collection illuminates how dating platforms function as sites where broader cultural tensions around identity, power, and recognition are enacted through seemingly neutral technological design choices and the discursive practices they enable or constrain.

Intimate Labor

The paradoxical demands of hyper-visibility and strategic performativity generate what we might call 'intimate labor'—the extensive emotional, communicative, and identity work required to navigate dating platforms successfully while managing compounded risks. This collection documents the strategies users develop to pursue connection while protecting themselves from various forms of harm—from social rejection to algorithmic bias, from identity erasure to harassment and objectification. For example, Banks et al. (2025) document the compounded emotional labor required of Black women navigating both algorithmic bias and safety concerns, identifying six key dimensions including strategic identity curation and sophisticated safety vigilance practices. This labor extends to the communicative strategies users develop within platform constraints. Thompson (2025) reveals how *Bumble*'s 24-hour messaging window creates distinct forms of communicative, relational, and postdigital work for women under time pressure.

Implications and Future Directions

A central insight across this collection is the extensive emotional, communicative, and identity work required to navigate dating platforms successfully. Across all studies, we see how digital dating contexts create unique conditions of risk and vulnerability that users must navigate through sophisticated discursive practices. The heightened stakes of explicitly romantic/sexual contexts, combined with the relative anonymity and reduced social context of digital platforms, necessitate forms of communicative, emotional, and identity work that differs from that required in merely face-to-face dating contexts. This is even more so the case for those who identify outside dominant normative identity categories, while users occupying more privileged context-dependent positions may experience these platforms with less risk and required labor. These findings challenge simplistic narratives about dating apps as frictionless matchmaking tools, revealing instead the significant labor required to transform technological affordances into meaningful human connection.

This special issue represents a significant contribution to our understanding of how discourse, identity, technology, and intimacy intersect across social groups, especially for those who experience higher degrees of marginalization in physical and digital spaces. By bringing together diverse methodological approaches, geographical contexts, and theoretical frameworks, it provides a comprehensive picture of how dating platforms are transforming contemporary relational practices while simultaneously reproducing and challenging existing social hierarchies. The theoretical framework developed through this collection—particularly the concept of digital intimacy's "triple bind"—opens multiple avenues for future research that could deepen our understanding of postdigital intimate practices and their broader social implications. Critical areas for investigation include the cognitive and emotional demands of "relational multitasking"—managing multiple simultaneous romantic conversations that violate fundamental principles of human social capacity and create unprecedented forms of emotional labor.

Future research should also examine how dating app use affects users' broader relationship ecologies, investigating how online dating demands intersect with offline relationships, professional obligations, and daily social responsibilities in our postdigital society where boundaries between digital and physical intimacy continue to blur. This echoes what Gregg (2011) terms "presence bleed" in professional contexts—the way technologies enable work to seep into personal spaces—yet dating apps create their own form of intimate presence bleed, transforming romantic connection into labor that infiltrates daily life with the constant demands of profile maintenance, message management, and strategic self-presentation. The phenomenon of "digital dating fatigue" and emerging "slow dating" movements as resistance to app culture's accelerated temporalities represent another crucial area for longitudinal investigation, particularly as platforms intensify engagement strategies through temporal constraints and algorithmic manipulation. Finally, the political economy of dating apps deserves critical attention for how it generates both technological problems and market-based solutions—including dating coaches, relationship experts, and self-help resources that emerge from genuine attempts to help users navigate digital dating's contradictions. These responses become entangled within neoliberal systems that transform collective technological challenges into personal deficits requiring individual market-based interventions.

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