

Postdigital Intimacies, Online Dating, & Digital Discourses

Over the last three decades, the practices of finding love and sex have increasingly become mediated by digital dating platforms, notably in the US, Europe, India, and China (Buchholz, 2022). This panel attends to calls for more robust research methods to understand “how sexual and romantic relations are established and negotiated in discourse” (Mortensen, 2015). To theoretically and methodologically advance frameworks to study the role of language in relation to postdigital intimacy, this panel takes a critical approach to shed light on how individuals conceptualize and linguistically navigate online dating. Broadly, the panel explores the experiences of digital dating for members of different communities and across various contexts, with an eye towards exposing unexplored power dynamics in, normative expectations about, and social effects of communication relating to intimacy. Research findings shed light on linguistic and semiotic identity construction on profiles across mainstream and LGBTQ dating apps, metadiscourses about online dating, and implications for sexuality and safety as a consequence of circulating discourse. Assuming that digital interaction “is no longer a separate or exotic object of enquiry but inherent to the social lives of many people” (Tagg & Lyons, 2022, p. 3), this panel integrates and combines a variety of theoretical and methodological approaches to empirically enrich digital discourse studies (Barton & Lee, 2013; Jones et al., 2015; Vasquez, 2022). Presenters combine Discourse Analysis with other methods such as Multimodal Discourse Analysis, Conversation Analysis, and Digital Ethnography, thus providing a critical contribution to the growing body of work on online dating and language to inform our understanding of how media technologies influence communication in the search for love, sex, and intimacy (Heino et al., 2010; Kavroulaki, 2021; Licoppe, 2021; Milani, 2016; Mortensen, 2017; Thompson, 2022; VanderStouwe, 2019).

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