Swiping Across Borders
Queer Migrant, Agency and Sad Dating Apps

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Sad dating apps

Sad, paranoid and still single: How the dating app destroyed us all

INDEPENDENT

Troye Sivan on dating in the digital age: 'I'm off the apps – I'm depressed by them'

attitude

'It's quite soul-destroying': how we fell out of love with dating apps

The Guardian UK

See also: Albury et al. (2020) Dating apps as public health 'problems'. Health Sociology Review 29(3): 232-248.

Sad dating apps

Swipe-based dating applications use and its association with mental health outcomes: a cross-sectional study
Nicol Holtzhausen, Keersten Fitzgerald, Ishaan Thakur, Jack Ashley, Margaret Rolfe & Sabrina Winona Pit

Dating Apps and Mental Health Status: Is There a Link?
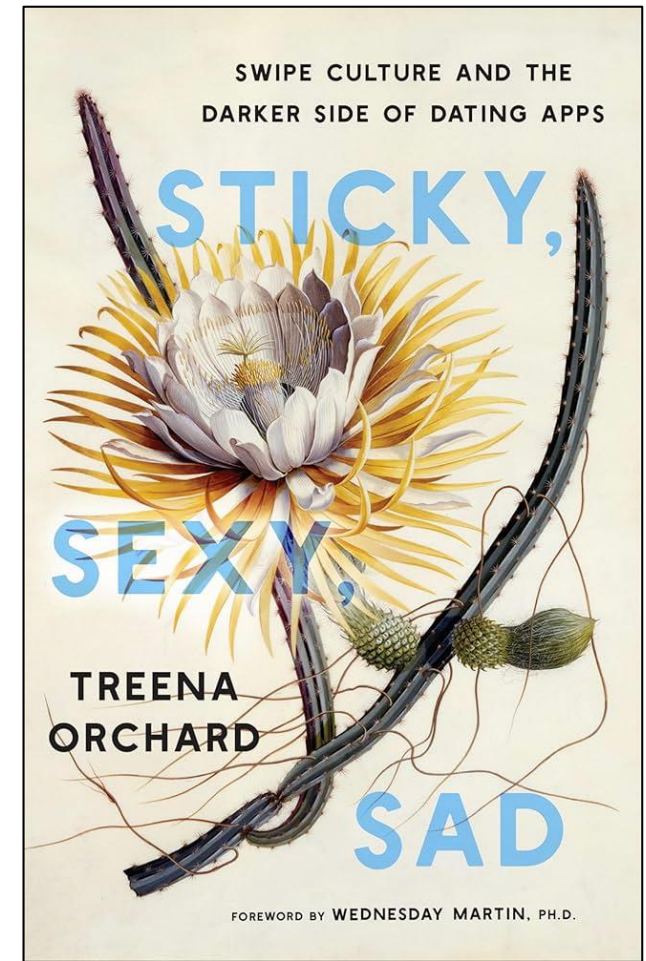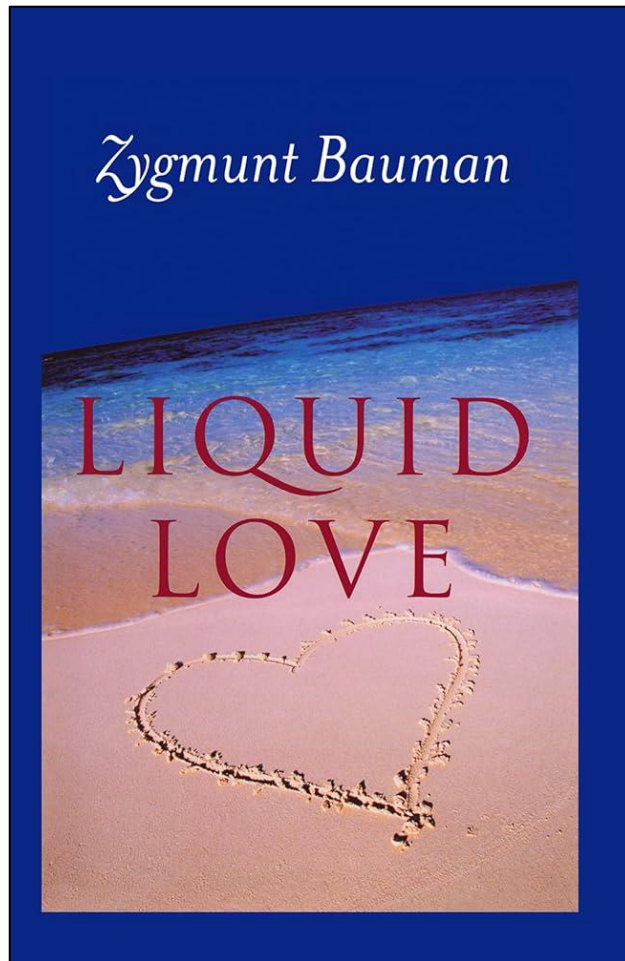Daniela Freire, João Rema & Filipa Novais

Use of 'gay dating apps' and its relationship with individual well-being and sense of community in men who have sex with men.
Karyofyllis Zervoulis, David S. Smith, Rhiannon Reed & Sokratis Dinos

Gay dating apps in China: Do they alleviate or exacerbate loneliness? The serial mediation effect of perceived and internalized sexuality stigma.
Bolin Cao & Kumi Smith

Sad dating apps

Zygmunt Bauman

LIQUID LOVE

LOVE, INC.

DATING APPS, THE BIG WHITE WEDDING, AND CHASING THE HAPPILY NEVERAFTER

LAURIE ESSIG

SWIPE CULTURE AND THE DARKER SIDE OF DATING APPS

STICKY, SEXY, SAD

TREENA ORCHARD

FOREWORD BY WEDNESDAY MARTIN, PH.D.

Dating & emotional capitalism

The language of popular psychologizing and market economy is embraced in dating cultures.

Dating sites = technologies of interchangeability

The **abundance** of potential partners vs the earlier economy of scarcity (people are burdened with choice and if they fail, it's their fault).

Filtering through the abundance of potential partners by **atomizing** them. A rational approach to maximize the efficiency of partner selection.

Additionally, growing **dependency** on dating apps.
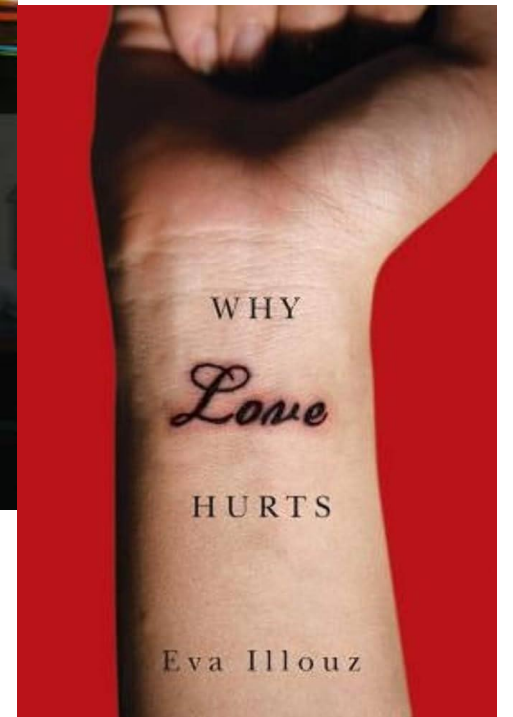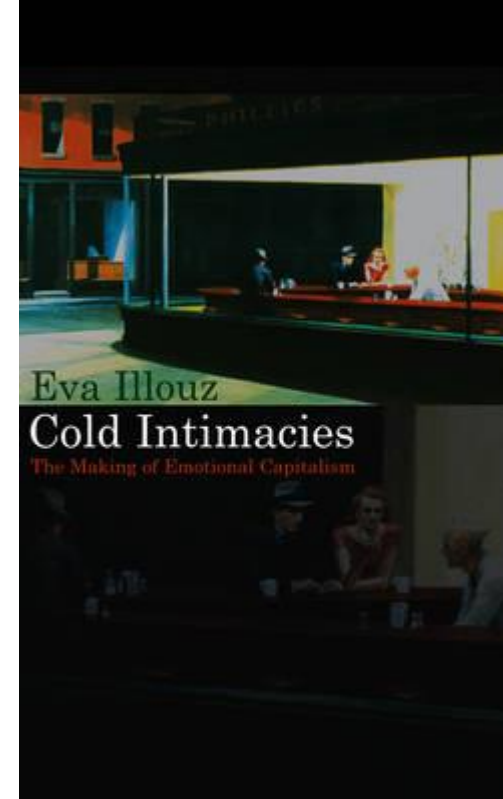
Emotional technological determinism

Instant gratification versus the melancholy of techno-sadness (in a technologically deterministic way).

Lovink (2019) argues that '**sadness is integrated into the design** of interfaces and the architectures of apps' (p. 51), exemplifying his point by discussing popular dating services Tinder and OKCupid.

Orchard (2024) contends that users' experiences with Bumble 'are common enough to suggest that **they're shaped by the design** of the app itself' (p. 11)

Geert Lovink

S A D

BY DESIGN

On Platform Nihilism
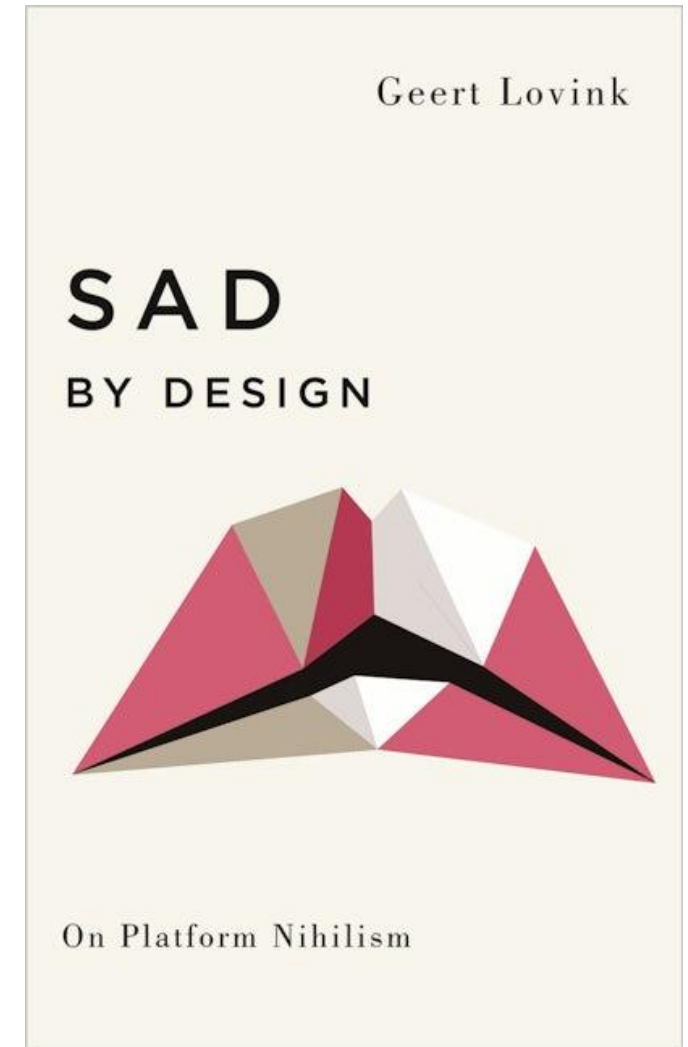
Sad dating app users?

Where is the agency of dating app users?
Who exactly are we talking about?
Where do they use dating apps?

sad dating apps VERSUS sad dating app users

Methods

Research with Polish LGBTQs who moved to the UK

767 valid responses to an online survey

30 face-to-face in-depth interviews

A diverse group of people between 19 and 54, based in urban centers and small towns, from across the LGBTQ spectrum

Two have never used online dating, others used it in the past or at the time of the interviews to a different extent

FULL REPORT: https://eprints.lse.ac.uk/101767/

SAGE journals
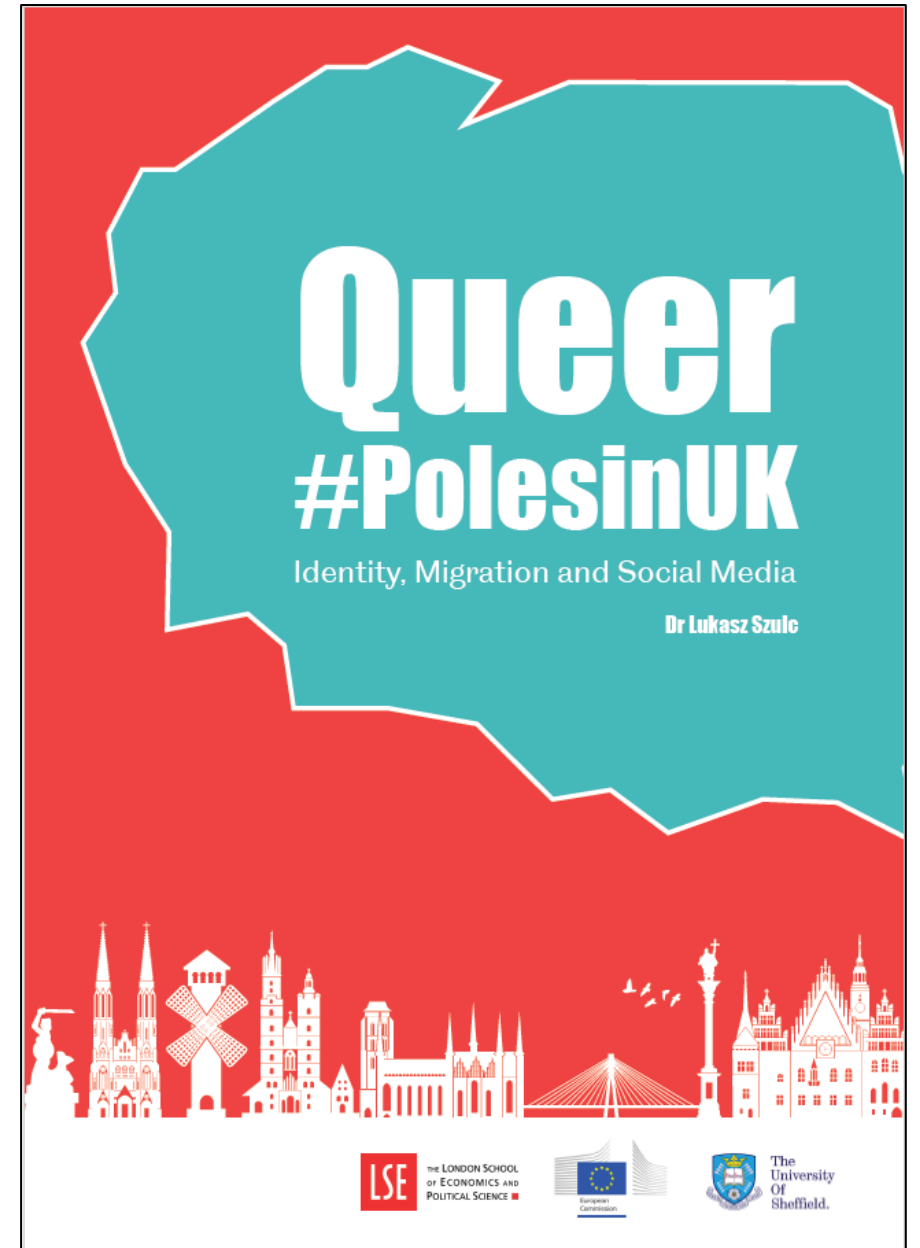
Article

Uncanny Europe and Protective Europeanness: When European Identity Becomes a Queerly Viable Option

Łukasz Szulc

https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/00380385211024117

Digital Gender Disidentifications: Beyond the Subversion Versus Hegemony Dichotomy and Toward Everyday Gender Practices

LUKASZ SZULC[1]

https://ijoc.org/index.php/ijoc/article/view/15396

FORUM

A Lot of Straddling and Squirming: Taking Queer Migrant Stories beyond the Academic and Digital Walls

Łukasz Szulc

https://academic.oup.com/ccc/article-abstract/15/2/276/6556263

Abundance: Partner scarcity

*I opened **Grindr** [on a campus in Poland] to see if there were other people in the area, to see if I was the only queer person. It turned out I was. There was no one else on the entire campus. I was the only one. The first people [on the grid] were kilometers away. So, that was sad.* (Sam, non-binary, in their 20s)

*I created a profile on **Innastrona.pl** [after moving to the UK]. Suddenly, the internet world opened to me and it was the rainbow world. […] It was nice. I created a profile and everybody could see it. And I could see the profiles of other girls and flirt with them. For me, this was the first actual contact with the LGBT community*. (Paulina, cis lesbian woman in her 20s)

Abundance: Partner scarcity

For Sam and Paulina, the abundance of queer people on dating services was not a problem. Sam was sad that there weren't enough queer people on Grindr and Paulina was excited to see many queer women on Innastrona.pl, even though they were located in a different country.

Technological affordances matter:
- Grindr is a geolocation-based dating app
- Innastrona.pl is a website that allows but not requires filtering profiles by location

An important distinction between **global dating apps** and **Polish dating sites**.

Abundance: Partner scarcity

Paweł, a gay man in his twenties, preferred to date Poles when in the UK as he felt he could build a more meaningful connection with Polish native speakers. He used geolocation-based **Grindr** for quick hook-ups in his mid-size city but preferred the popular Polish gay dating site, **Fellow.pl**, for finding dates. Similar to Queer.pl, Fellow.pl affords users to see many registered profiles and filter them by location.

While Paweł could see only two profiles in his city on Fellow.pl, he did not mind traveling to nearby cities and ended up dating another Pole from Manchester for a while.

Switching between dating services to navigate the abundance and scarcity of particular profiles points to creative ways of exercising agency and reducing disappointment.

Conclusion

The abundance of potential partners on dating apps is not a default for everyone.

People are creative in navigating between the abundance and scarcity of partners on dating services (e.g. appropriating mainstream dating apps, using Polish dating sites, travelling between cities, etc.).

It is difficult to know exactly how this navigating made my participants feel but to talk about it, they usually used unemotional language.

To better understand the role of dating apps in society and culture, it is crucial to **go beyond the studies of global dating apps and relatively privileged dating app users**. My findings demonstrate that it is easier to sustain the idea of sad dating app users when research focuses on heterosexual middle-class people based in Western cities and is limited to a handful of mainstream dating apps that do not essentially dramatically differ from one another.

Thank you!

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