DESCRIPTION

Online dating has become a widespread feature of modern social life. In less than two decades, seeking partners through commercial intermediaries went from being a marginal and stigmatized practice to being a common activity. How can we explain this rapid change and what does it tell us about the changing nature of love and sexuality?

In contrast to those who praise online dating as a democratization of love and those who condemn it as a commodification of intimacy, this book tells a different story about how and why online dating became big. The key to understanding the growing prevalence of digital dating lies in what Marie Bergström calls “the privatization of intimacy.” Online dating takes courtship from the public to the private sphere and makes it a domestic and individual practice. Unlike courtship in traditional settings such as school, work, and gatherings of family and friends, online dating makes a clear distinction between social and sexual sociability and renders dating much more discrete. Apparently banal, this privatizing feature is fundamental for understanding both the success and the nature of digital matchmaking. Bergström also sheds light on the persisting inequalities of intimate life, showing that online dating is neither free nor fair: it has its winners and losers and it differs significantly according to gender, age and social class.

Drawing on a wide range of empirical material, this book challenges what we think we know about online dating and gives us a new understanding of who, why, and how people go online to seek sex and love.
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