

Love Quest:  
The Pursuit of a 'Rational' Love Online

by

Amber L. S. Palmer

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Affairs  
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts

Department of Sociology and Anthropology

Carleton University  
Ottawa, Ontario

© 2011, Amber L. S. Palmer



Library and Archives  
Canada

Published Heritage  
Branch

395 Wellington Street  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

Bibliothèque et  
Archives Canada

Direction du  
Patrimoine de l'édition

395, rue Wellington  
Ottawa ON K1A 0N4  
Canada

*Your file Votre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87849-1*

*Our file Notre référence*

*ISBN: 978-0-494-87849-1*

#### NOTICE:

The author has granted a non-exclusive license allowing Library and Archives Canada to reproduce, publish, archive, preserve, conserve, communicate to the public by telecommunication or on the Internet, loan, distribute and sell theses worldwide, for commercial or non-commercial purposes, in microform, paper, electronic and/or any other formats.

The author retains copyright ownership and moral rights in this thesis. Neither the thesis nor substantial extracts from it may be printed or otherwise reproduced without the author's permission.

#### AVIS:

L'auteur a accordé une licence non exclusive permettant à la Bibliothèque et Archives Canada de reproduire, publier, archiver, sauvegarder, conserver, transmettre au public par télécommunication ou par l'Internet, prêter, distribuer et vendre des thèses partout dans le monde, à des fins commerciales ou autres, sur support microforme, papier, électronique et/ou autres formats.

L'auteur conserve la propriété du droit d'auteur et des droits moraux qui protège cette thèse. Ni la thèse ni des extraits substantiels de celle-ci ne doivent être imprimés ou autrement reproduits sans son autorisation.

---

In compliance with the Canadian Privacy Act some supporting forms may have been removed from this thesis.

While these forms may be included in the document page count, their removal does not represent any loss of content from the thesis.

Conformément à la loi canadienne sur la protection de la vie privée, quelques formulaires secondaires ont été enlevés de cette thèse.

Bien que ces formulaires aient inclus dans la pagination, il n'y aura aucun contenu manquant.

Canada

## **Abstract**

This study examines the ‘rationalization’ of love facilitated through online match-making services. By applying the concepts of institutionalized individualism, this examination understands these matching services as institutions of expert knowledge that play an increasingly prominent role in individuals’ creation of love lives. This study is concerned with the understanding of love as a precarious freedom in Western society, and as such, leads to an uncertainty of love. This study explores the strategies online match-making services use to assert themselves as the necessary institutions for the purpose of managing and even removing this uncertainty of love. Using a constructivist grounded theory approach I identify three main strategies employed by these services: (1) exaggerating the notion of an uncertain love, (2) granting access to ‘secret knowledge’ and (3) imparting individual responsibility. The findings from this examination suggest that rather than decreasing the number of uncertainties associated with finding and maintaining a romantic relationship, the ‘rationalization’ of love leads to an increase and reinforcement of the uncertainties of love. Thus, this study argues that an (un)certain path to love is generated by the ‘rationalization’ of love that is facilitated through online match-making services.

## **Acknowledgments**

I would like to thank my thesis supervisor Dr. Alan Hunt for all of his support and encouragement. Your calm certainty, although not always infectious, was reassuring and kept me focused and determined to complete my research. You showed a confidence in me and my abilities that I did not always see myself throughout the duration of this study and for that I thank you.

I would also like to thank Dr. Xiaobei Chen, my committee member for my thesis. The time and energy you invested in this study is greatly appreciated. Your thoughtful comments and suggestions were immensely welcomed and always pushed me to reflect and think critically about my research process. Your advice, assistance and encouragement enabled me to complete this study.

I could not have completed this study without the love and support of my mother and father. I would like to thank my mom for reading every word of this study and showing such interest in my work. I would like to thank my dad for always being proud of my accomplishments and allowing me to make my own choices and decisions even when they may have conflicted with his own. Both of you have never doubted me and I would like to thank you for supporting me, not only during the course of my MA and this study, but also during my undergraduate degree.

Thank you to Wiktor, who has experienced it all with me. Thank you for letting me vent when I was unsure, for listening when I was excited by my findings and forcing me to relax when I definitely needed a break. You were patient when the stress got the better of me, enthusiastic when I needed you to be and most importantly always there for me.

## Table of Contents

<b>Abstract.....</b>	<b>ii</b>
<b>Acknowledgments .....</b>	<b>iii</b>
<b>Table of Contents .....</b>	<b>iv</b>
<b>List of Figures.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>List of Appendices.....</b>	<b>vi</b>
<b>Introduction.....</b>	<b>1</b>
Analysis Strategy and Design .....	3
Research Design .....	4
Data Collection .....	7
Data Analysis Strategy .....	9
Overview of Chapters.....	13
<b>Chapter One: Searching For Love in All the Right Places .....</b>	<b>16</b>
Introduction .....	16
Make Love Not War.....	18
Utilizing CMC .....	19
Issues and Debates in Online Dating Research .....	20
Forming Romantic Relationships Online .....	21
Canadian Daters Online .....	25
‘Quality’ Counts .....	28
Consuming Love Online.....	32
Conclusion.....	34
<b>Chapter Two: Institutionalized Individualism and the Necessity of Love .....</b>	<b>36</b>
Introduction .....	36
Key Concepts .....	37
Institutionalized Individualization .....	37
Precarious Freedoms.....	39
Self-Biography.....	39
Modernity and Love .....	41
Individualization and Love Online.....	44
Individualization and Canadian Society .....	45
Planning Relationships Online.....	47
The Necessity of Others.....	50
Online Match-Making Services as Institutions.....	51
Limitations of Institutional Individualism.....	53
Conclusion.....	54

<b>Chapter Three: Love Quest: An (Un)certain Path to Love .....</b>	<b>56</b>
Introduction .....	56
Using Grounded Theory .....	57
Online Match-making Services .....	57
eHarmony.com .....	58
Perfectmatch.com .....	60
Match.com .....	62
A ‘Rational’ Quest for Love.....	65
Exaggerating the Notion of an Uncertain Love.....	66
Granting Access to ‘Secret Knowledge’ .....	79
Imparting Individual Responsibility.....	97
Locating Online Match-making Services.....	116
Conclusion.....	118
 <b>Chapter Four: The ‘Rational’ Pursuit of Love Online: Conclusions and Implications .....</b>	<b>121</b>
Introduction .....	121
Methods .....	122
‘Rational’ Love .....	123
Contributions .....	126
Considerations for Future Research .....	127
Concluding Thoughts .....	129
 <b>References .....</b>	<b>130</b>
 <b>Appendices .....</b>	<b>136</b>

## List of Figures

Figure 1 – ‘Rationalization’ of Love .....	66
--	----

## List of Appendices

Appendix A – Personal Characteristics Part II (eHarmony.com) .....	136
Appendix B – Life and Lovestyle (Perfectmatch.com) .....	140
Appendix C – His Appearance (Match.com) .....	144

## **Introduction**

This study is concerned with the conceptualization of romantic love through online match-making services. Specifically, this study is guided by a major focus on the ‘rationalization’ of love by these services. Romantic love is one of the most sought after and desired human experiences. However, love is also understood as something difficult to obtain and maintain in Western society. Love is something that happens to an individual; it is something that as individuals we perceive ourselves as having little or no control over, for the most part. Individuals actively pursue their quest for romantic love through both online and offline match-making services, through online and offline personal ads, and through the assistance of friends and family. This study is concerned with the search for romantic love strictly within online match-making services.

As millions of individuals in Western society turn to match-making services in order to find an ‘ideal’ love match, it is important to understand the role that these match-making services have on the creation of a relationship. Individuals come to trust these services with their love lives. Thus, coming to understand how these services present their understanding of love and success within romantic relationships is essential to understanding the creation of relationships facilitated through match-making services online. This study seeks to clarify the role of online match-making services in the quest for love.

It is the necessity of living a self-chosen life within a society of institutionalized individualism (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002) that enables an active pursuit of love. However, this active pursuit of love differs from others in that it is desired because of the perception that one can achieve a ‘scientific’ or “medically optimized” love that will enable individuals to find their perfect partner (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p 141). Individuals are



a romantic relationship (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Thus, studying the active pursuit of love online that is facilitated through match-making services offers a unique perspective of how love is impacted by the processes of institutionalized individualism, and how these services engage in this process in order to provide its members with a ‘rationalized’ love.

Research on online dating has highlighted the desire for a more easily attainable love (Henry-Waring and Barrket, 2008; Baker and Whitty, 2008). This has been argued by some to be fulfilled by online match-making services (Brym and Lenton, 2001). However, the very nature of Western society is presented as contributing to the uncertainty and difficulty in finding and maintaining love. That is, individuals no longer have a clear definition of love or what it means to belong and participate in a romantic relationship. Thus, individuals struggle with analysing and negotiating the various options and decisions that love requires. This uncertainty of love leaves individuals searching for answers and direction through various forms of expert knowledge (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). However, the question remains, if by understanding online match-making services as institutions of expert knowledge, do they in fact resolve the issues of uncertainty and difficulty of maintaining romantic relationships that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue exists. The answer to this question will highlight not only, the processes of online match-making services, but also the processes of finding and maintaining romantic love fostered by these services. It will be the answer to this question that will also be the major focus for this thesis. Thus, the central research question for this thesis is: how is institutionalized individualization enacted through online match-making services and what implications does this have on one’s pursuit and expectations of ‘rational’ love online?

I will argue that these institutions of expert knowledge create an (un)certain path to love through their ‘rationalization’ of love. I will demonstrate that these institutions generate and

and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue exists. The answer to this question will highlight not only, the processes of online match-making services, but also the processes involved in finding and maintaining romantic love fostered by these services. It will be the answer to this question that will also be the major focus for this thesis. Thus, the central research question for this thesis is: how is love conceptualized and promoted through online match-making services and what implications may this have on the pursuit and expectation of a ‘rational’ love online?

I will argue that these institutions of expert knowledge create an (un)certain path to love through their ‘rationalization’ of love. I will demonstrate that these institutions generate and reinforce the uncertainties of love through an understanding of individuals as living self-chosen lives. This study will use the literature of institutionalized individualism in order to argue that it is through these institutions’ understanding of the individual as being impacted by societal factors that allows for the necessity of a ‘rationalized’ love that is dependent on individual actions and choices. As such, I suggest that online match-making services attempt to exercise a measure of social control over their members. This social control is supported by the assertion that members will be faced with the trails of loneliness if they do not follow the services’ expert advice.

The following section presents the design and data analysis strategy. This study utilizes extant texts from three main online dating websites and two affiliate websites. Using a constructivist approach for this study, the goal of this section is to make transparent the methods employed in the analysis of these extant texts.

### ***Analysis Strategy and Design***

This section outlines the methods employed for both the collection and analysis of data. This research project utilized a constructivist grounded theory approach to gather and code data

(Charmaz, 2006; Corbin and Strauss, 1990; Duchsker and Morgan, 2004). Similar to any other research method, there are apparent strengths and weaknesses to this approach. This section addresses these strengths and weakness, and gives particular emphasis to the notions of validity and truth, and generalizability in qualitative research. This section will conclude with a discussion of the data analysis strategy. It will examine the coding process used in this study as well as the benefits of using such a coding process.

### *Research Design*

The research design of this study employs the use of qualitative research methods. A textual analysis of the dating websites eHarmony.com, Match.com and PerfectMatch.com has been used. A textual analysis of the dating websites has been utilized in order to analyse the promotion of a 'rationalized' love and the positioning of these websites as institutions of expert knowledge. From this textual analysis I hoped to gain an understanding of the type of individual and expertise that is promoted by the dating websites. As well, I hoped to gain an in-depth understanding of the individual websites' operations. That is, how each website matches its clients, what is similar and dissimilar between sites, how is the dating relationship conceptualized by each site and how do the websites define a successful relationship. The objective of my textual analysis was to define the strategies employed by online match-making services to achieve a 'rational' love.

This textual analysis makes use of extant texts. That is, the websites serve as data that as a researcher I have no part in producing. Using extant texts has provided me with valuable data that is easily accessible and unobtrusive in its collection (Charmaz, 2006). In this way, I was able to easily collect my data for my textual analysis through online sources.

The original research design of this study consisted of two qualitative research methods: a textual analysis of the dating websites eHarmony, Match.com and PerfectMatch, and interviews with online daters who have utilized the above dating sites in order to find a romantic partner. The textual analysis was meant to provide contextual information from which to base interview questions on (Brennan, 2005). Thus, the interviews were meant to build off of the textual analysis. This study originally intended to provide an independent source of data to compare with my personal collection of data (Charmaz, 2006).

Using interviews within this study was meant to enable a better understanding as to not only how the dating relationship is conceptualized by online daters, but also why individuals make use of online dating sites. From the interviews my objective was to gain a greater degree of information that I would not be privy to within my textual analysis of the online match-making sites. Interviews allow researchers to gain access to information that is not normally made public or is not easily known (Denzin, 2001). Therefore, by using interviews I hoped to achieve a greater degree of understanding of these institutions of expert knowledge from the members themselves.

Unfortunately, I was unable to acquire any research participants that were willing to discuss their online dating experiences. Even with ample recruitment postings around the Carleton University Campus, online and within three high-rise apartment buildings in Ottawa, Ontario, only one individual answered my recruitment postings. This individual, however, wanted to be financially compensated for his time; being unable to do this, this individual declined to participate in this study. I was surprised by the lack of participants for this study. Initially, I believed that it would be easy to acquire interview participants. After months without individuals showing interest in participating in this study I was required to redesign how I was

going to conduct this research project. I subsequently removed the use of interviews from my study and concentrated on the explicit processes of a ‘rationalization’ of love through a textual analysis of the websites.

Conducting a textual analysis does pose some limitations. The issue of validity and truth within qualitative research was originally perceived as an unattainable goal. The question of interpretation within qualitative research led many to believe that the results gleaned from this form of research was not valid. Traditionally, it was only the positivist or natural social science tradition that could claim authority over truth in research (Seale, 1999a). This claim to validity was grounded in the ability to create testable theories that were not dependent on the observable facts from which the theories were created (Seale, 1999a). However, this thesis takes a constructivist approach to the social phenomenon under study. A constructivist approach is part of the interpretative tradition and acknowledges that the results gathered from the textual analysis only provide a partial understanding to the social phenomena under study (Charmaz, 2006; 2009). As such, it proposes that absolute truth is impossible within social science research, nor is it the goal. Objective knowledge on a particular social phenomenon is seen as impossible to obtain, as every researcher brings with them one’s own past experiences and knowledge (Seale, 1999a; Flyvbjerg, 2001).

However, one must also be cognisant of the fact that extant texts are products that have been created for a specific purpose. Therefore, I did not assume that my textual analysis would provide me with the organizational processes, or “backstage” to these dating websites (Charmaz, 2006). This inability to account for the “backstage” processes of these sites can be seen as a limitation of this study. The use of multiple methods is meant to account for this limitation of a textual analysis (Charmaz, 2006). The inability to acquire interview data, therefore, creates

difficulties in coming to understand more than the explicit processes made available through the websites. Interviews with online daters would have added another dimension to this study by accounting for how individuals engage with the explicit processes of these sites.

Furthermore, another potential limitation of this study is that qualitative research has been argued to possess generalizability issues. Traditionally, only quantitative data could be seen as possessing generalizability (Seale, 1999b; Flyvbjerg, 2001). However, qualitative data can and is generalizable. By providing a rich and thick detailed analysis of multiple cases, Seale (1999b) argues that qualitative research can be generalized. Moreover, Flyvbjerg (2001) asserts that generalizability can be achieved from a single case. Conversely, generalizability within qualitative research is not about generalizing from cases to the larger population, but rather to social processes (Warren and Karner, 2010). Therefore, the goal of qualitative research is not always generalizability (Flyvbjerg, 2001; Warren and Karner, 2010). I am not striving for generalizable data in relation to the larger population within my thesis, but rather to provide thick, rich detailed accounts for my interpretations of the social phenomenon under study (Warren and Karner, 2010). From this, my goal is to generate a generalizable theory from my cases to the social processes.

### *Data Collection*

My main sources of data came from a textual analysis of three online dating websites. The data was collected between the months of May 2010 and July 2010. eHarmony.com, Match.com and PerfectMatch.com have been selected as cases for the potential information that they will provide. That is, I am using information-oriented cases for this study (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Two sister websites are also used in this study. CompatiblePartners.com, the sister site of eHarmony, has also been included in this analysis as this site is used to match same-sex couples.

Both PerfectMatch and Match.com match same-sex couples through their main site. Therefore, it is important to also include eHarmony's approach to same-sex relationships through an analysis of their sister site Compatible Partners. Chemistry.com, the sister site of Match.com, has also been used in this research project as Chemistry.com is presented to members of Match.com as an extra tool or approach to dating. In order to better understand Match.com's approach to dating and the 'tools' it makes available to its members, it is necessary to include Chemistry.com in this analysis.

Data was first pulled from the PerfectMatch website. All data, including the dating profile, personality questionnaire, general information pertaining to PerfectMatch and its expert authority, questions and answers with their on-staff expert, safety tips, matching methods, and dating categories and advice were used in this analysis. Any data that was generated by members was not included in the analysis. Member generated data was not used because the goal of this study is to understand how the sites conceptualize love and romantic relationships. Success stories and general member advice, for example, date night recipes, were not included in this study. Next, data was gathered from the eHarmony and Compatible Partners websites. Similar to PerfectMatch, online material generated by eHarmony and Compatible Partners' members were not included in this analysis. This included success stories and online community discussion boards. Rather, safety tips, the personality profile, the relationship questionnaire, general information for the site and expertise, advice, which included dating articles and eHarmony Labs, the matching methods and dating categories were used in this study. For the advice articles the first 15 articles for each dating category was included in this analysis. Lastly, data was taken from the Match.com and Chemistry sites. Again, data generated by members was not included in the analysis, specifically, the success stories. Similar to eHarmony, the first 15 articles of each

advice category in Match.com's online *Happen* magazine is included in this study. As well, general dating advice, matching methods for both sites, dating categories, the personality/dating preferences questionnaire, Match.com's profile, 'about pages' for the site and expertise, safety tips and MatchMobile were utilized as sources of data for this study.

### *Data Analysis*

Constructivist grounded theory, part of the interpretative tradition, asserts that the object of highest importance to one's research is the social phenomenon under study. As well, asking the how questions, that is, how individuals act and how meanings are developed, are central to constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 2006). Since this thesis is taking a constructivist approach, I acknowledge that the results gathered from the data are an interpretation of the processes of the selected online match-making services and that these websites only provide a partial understanding of their facilitation of romantic relationships and the formation of romantic love online (Charmaz, 2009).

The textual analysis was completed by hand and did not make use of computer software programs (e.g., NVivo) in order to aid in the analysis. According to Doucet and Mauthner (2003) the intervention of technology into the research process can lead to the assumption of objectivity. Using computer software programs can also lead to the construction of different codes and hence, a different analysis of the data in comparison to an analysis completed by hand. Constructivist grounded theory requires a constant comparison between and within codes and memos (Charmaz, 2006); therefore, I chose to complete my analysis by hand in order to remain close to my data and its analysis.

Using grounded theory, data taken from the websites was coded initially using open coding techniques. Open coding procedures fragment one's data in order to challenge the



researcher to remain open to whatever themes or categories emerge from the data (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss, 1987). As such, open coding is used to name these emergent themes by remaining close to one's data. The goal of this open coding process is to securitize previous understandings, held by both the researcher and others, in order to ignite new ways of understanding the phenomenon under study (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Thus, as a researcher I must be aware of my own assumptions held about the phenomenon under study and the impact this may have on the data analysis process. Charmaz (2006) argues that it is impossible for researchers not to possess previous skills and conceptualizations held about the phenomenon under study, but that the open coding process is meant to challenge, and thus account for a researcher's 'conceptual baggage'.

There are two main coding processes within open coding: line by line and incident to incident. I first coded the PerfectMatch site using line by line coding and wrote memos on the emerging themes. Memo writing is a crucial step in the grounded theory process, as it is used as a tool for writing and organizing initial drafts of the data analysis, and also assists the researcher in capturing emergent ideas, actions and processes from the data. Memos also help form the basis of the 'constant comparative method', whereby the researcher compares within and between different codes, categories and sources of data (Charmaz, 1995; Glaser and Strauss, 1967). Line by line coding requires the researcher to remain open to emerging themes, while deconstructing properties of the data. That is the researcher codes for each line of data and begins to construct categories and investigate processes (Charmaz, 2006). Strauss and Corbin (1998) argue that the development of categories early in one's research is crucial, as categories form the foundation for theoretical sampling. Line by line coding allows the researcher to remain close to the data, while still controlling for the imposition of one's own biases or motivations

(Charmaz, 1995). From the line by line procedure 75 categories were generated from PerfectMatch, 72 from eHarmony and 60 categories from Match.com. I then proceeded to write memos on these emerging categories in order to explicate emerging processes.

The last stage in the open coding process is incident to incident. Here, the researcher compares each incident, and moves back and forth between previously conceived notions of incidents with emerging ideas. From this process the researcher can begin to delineate the properties of a promising concept (Charmaz, 2006). I compared within and between the online match-making sites' use of safety tips, personality questionnaires, advice articles, matching methods, and profile tools. I also compared within and between the data for initial line by line categories. Memos were then written on similar and dissimilar events that emerged from the data. The open coding procedure of line by line coding and incident to incident enables the development of well-constructed codes that are grounded in the data (Charmaz, 2006).

The next coding procedure in grounded theory is focused coding. Focus coding refines initial codes and categories and brings forth emerging categories that make the most analytic sense from which to guide the focused coding process (Charmaz, 2006). Essentially, focused coding requires the researcher to utilize frequently occurring earlier codes as a guide to move through a large amount of data (Charmaz, 1995). The generation of categories through focused coding refers to the selection of codes that come to best reflect the processes in one's data. As such, by cultivating focused codes that are active, one is better able to see the processes that are emerging from the data (Charmaz, 1995). "As you engage in focused coding, you attempt to build and to clarify your category by examining all the data it covers and by identifying the variations within and between other categories" (Charmaz, 1995, p 42). Thus, focused coding requires the construction of memos that explicate the relationships and properties within and

between categories. I utilized memo diagrams throughout the focused coding process in order to visually construct the emerging relationships between categories and their properties. I then used free-writing memo techniques to begin to trace the relationships between categories as displayed in my diagrams.

Constructivist grounded theory is not a straight-forward process, typically the researcher does not move from one coding process to the next in a linear progression. I moved back and forth between focused coding and axial coding. Axial coding is a procedure used to delineate subcategories to categories. Whereas initial coding fragments data, axial coding seeks to re-unify the data in a new way (Charmaz, 2006; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). Axial coding requires the researcher to relate categories to subcategories by linking causal conditions to the phenomenon under study, context, intervening conditions, actions and consequences (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I utilized the conditional coding matrix as outlined by Scott (2004) in order to conduct axial coding. Here, I began by naming the category. I used my own code, generated by the data, to name the category, but also used quotes from the data itself to help illuminate and define the category. Next, the coding matrix helps delineate the properties of a category by asking when, where, why, how and with what consequences that a particular category emerges (Scott, 2004). The conditional coding matrix assists the researcher in bringing pieces of data back together, and enables the explicating of properties to categories. Thus, the conditional coding matrix assists in data interpretation and the generation of theory (Scott, 2004).

The last strategy in the grounded theory process is theoretical sampling and sorting, and ensuring theoretical saturation. Theoretical sampling is a procedure that assists in the generation of theory, whereby the researcher actively seeks out data related to a specific category and its properties (Charmaz, 2006; Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Strauss and Corbin, 1998). This is carried

out until no new properties are present. The inability to discover new properties within one's data is also known as theoretical saturation (Charmaz, 2006). Here, I went back through my data and coded for my main categories until my properties consistently repeated themselves. Theoretical sampling is a conscious and deliberate action regarding what one should sample in order to acquire relevant data (Strauss and Corbin, 1998). I focused on the advice literature, information pertaining to the sites' match-making methods and the provided assistance to members as part of my theoretical sampling.

As I engaged in theoretical sorting, I went back through my memos and constructed additional memo diagrams. I also rearranged my previous memos and changed the relational links between categories within my diagrams. By sorting categories, the researcher is able to perceive how categories work or do not work together. This helps to enable a logical ordering of categories and assists in the construction one's narrative of the data (Charmaz, 2006).

Three core categories emerged from my textual analysis: (1) exaggerating the notion of an uncertain love, (2) granting access to 'secret knowledge' and (3) imparting individual responsibility. Throughout the process of data analysis relevant literature was gathered on online dating in order to come to better understand this social phenomenon and to also situate the data within current approaches to online dating. The remaining chapters of this study will discuss this literature on online dating, situate the 'rationalization' of love within institutionalized individualism, and examine the three core categories in relation to the literature and this theoretical approach.

### ***Overview of Chapters***

This study is presented in four chapters. The first chapter addresses contemporary issues and debates in online dating research. Beginning with a discussion of early research on

computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the subsequent impact that this had on initial perceptions of online dating, this chapter charts out the changing attitudes and understandings of online dating. Canadians are increasingly turning to online dating as a means to find a romantic partner. Over one million Canadians visited an online dating site in 2000 (Brym and Lenton, 2001), though as internet trends have changed in the last decade this number has undoubtedly increased. Thus, who uses online dating websites is something that has changed drastically over the years. As more individuals ‘move’ online to find a romantic relationship, the importance of the space online where the relationship was initiated gains precedence in understanding online relationships. Therefore, not necessarily who finds love online, but where that love is initiated gains importance in online dating research (Baker and Whitty, 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006).

Chapter Two examines the work of Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim contributions to the study of institutionalized individualism. Institutionalized individualism is a process whereby institutions (e.g., the education system) act on individuals in order to produce an outcome that is of benefit to society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). This chapter proposes a necessity of love within a society of institutional individualization that requires an active pursuit of love. That is, that love, understood as a precarious freedom, requires individuals to define, plan, calculate and negotiate what love means, and how to find and maintain it (Beck and Beck- Gernsheim, 1995). The means to acquire this precarious freedom, I argue, is believed to be through online match-making services. Within this chapter online match-making services are defined as institutions of expert knowledge. Therefore, similar to the education system or welfare state, online match-making services can play an important role influencing individuals in order to produce a desired outcome, which in this instance is love.

Chapter Three presents the data analysis and discussion of key findings. Beginning with a discussion of the three selected online match-making websites, this chapter first provides what services these websites claim to provide for their members, as well as the differences and similarities that exist between them. Here, I argue that the ‘rationalization’ of love occurs through three strategies exercised by online match-making services. It is through these processes that I argue an (un)certain path to love develops.

Chapter Four concludes this study and addresses the implications of the data analysis on the understanding of love in contemporary society. It also examines the contributions that this study has on online dating relationships and the understanding of love online. It will also present possible areas for future research and concluding thoughts on the examined match-making services.

## **Chapter One: Searching For Love in All the Right Places**

Living in an ever increasing technologically driven and dependent society, the movement of contemporary dating practices into online forums appears to be perceived as a natural progression of the facilitation of romantic relationships. Online spaces where the prime intent was not to initiate romantic relationships such as discussion boards, chat rooms, massive multiplayer online games (MMOGs) and various other virtual realms that bring people together, have been used to foster close relationships for a few decades now (Whitty and Carr, 2006). This access to a potentially limitless supply of online strangers from which to meet romantic partners was originally only available to certain segments of society who were able to afford both a computer and internet access. However, the now widespread use of the internet and the increase in computer literacy in Western society is positioning the computer as a popular and powerful tool for the initiation of relationships across social strata (Lea and Spears, 1995). Thus, where and how one is able to meet potential romantic partners is expanding as technological innovation continues to affect how individuals communicate with others (Lawson and Leck, 2006; Whitty, Baker and Inman, 2007).

This study is concerned with the pursuit of romantic love facilitated through online match-making services. Thus, this study is looking at websites that foster romantic relationships with the intention that the relationships will eventually move offline. However, the studies discussed in this chapter highlight online relationships that are initiated through other forms of online dating in addition to match-making services, as well as relationships that may or may not move offline. As online dating is a relatively new area of study, the use of multiple forms of online dating is necessary in order to adequately discuss research on this social phenomenon, as

well as to situate my study within the body of literature on romantic relationships that are fostered through various online services.

Online dating encompasses a variety of forms, from one night stands to committed long-term relationships, from strictly online encounters to eventual encounters offline. Many Canadians have turned to sites geared at specifically creating romantic relationships through various search functions, such as Match.com and/or personality matching systems, like eHarmony.com, in order to find potential partners. Though online match-making services are a relatively new social phenomenon, much research has been conducted on them, particularly from a psychological perspective (for example, Baker, 2000; 2002; Ben-ze'ev, 2004; Levine 2000; Valenburg and Peter, 2007; Whitty, 2003; 2009) and with the intent of discerning the formation and legitimacy of these relationships (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006). This chapter will address some of the main issues and debates that have arisen from this research. This chapter is divided into two parts. The first section will discuss the origins and original purposes of the internet, which will be followed by a discussion of the research on early computer-mediated communication (CMC) and the first online "dates". This chapter will begin with a discussion of early CMC research in order to help to situate not only theories related to previous CMC technologies that have been applied to contemporary dating sites, but will also provide a greater degree of understanding of the progression of online dating services.

The second section will cover more contemporary online dating research. The first portion will address the formation of relationships online, including Canadian online dating demographics. Some of the key issues pertaining to the 'quality' of online relationships will then be discussed, in order to address some of the debates surrounding the meaningfulness of online



relationships. Lastly, the market metaphor that has been applied to online match-making services will be examined and will conclude this chapter.

### ***Make Love Not War***

The original intent of the internet, upon its creation in the 1960s, was to ensure that the United States government maintained a leading “technological and tactical defensive advantage over their Communist foes” (Merkle and Richardson, 2006, p 187). The internet was used to facilitate a quicker and easier means of communicating between the American government and defence experts (Cooper and Sportoari, 1997). It was the Defensive Advanced Research Projects Agency (DARPA) that successfully networked the first computers and developed “defensive applications for the internet” (Merkle and Richardson, 2006, p 187). However, after the Cold War, DARPA became a private civilian organization known as the Advanced Research Projects Agency (ARPA) and was comprised of various American academic institutions. The ARPA proceeded to develop networking capabilities across wide area networks (WAN). By the end of the 1970s, email became the central means of communication via the internet and because of the ease of email, was used amongst academics to aid in the exchange of information (Merkle and Richardson, 2006; Parks and Roberts, 1998). In the 1980s, the internet became commercially available (Merkle and Richardson, 2006), and by the 1990s research into the effects of CMC on socio-emotional engagement as juxtaposed to face-to-face communication was already underway (Cooper and Sportoari, 1997). From the very beginnings of the internet, researchers have been fascinated by the possibilities and determinants of CMC on the social lives of individuals.

From the 1990s onward, the internet became an increasingly important part of everyday life for members of Western society. The integration of social applications of the internet into offline spheres penetrated more and more aspects of the internet as, for example, online

communities organized offline events and online romantic partners moved their relationships offline. The new trends in communication that were brought on by advances in CMC reinforce the notion that technology can be the driving force behind societal change (Merkle and Richardson, 2006). Today, the very system that was once used to ease fears during the Cold War is now being used to find and maintain interpersonal relationships all over the world.

### *Utilizing CMC*

The first “scientific” matching service was not facilitated over the internet and did not match individuals instantaneously as online match-making services do today. Rather, in the 1960s in the United States, computers were used to match individuals based on data collected from questionnaires (Hardey, 2002). Operation Match was created by Harvard University students who had grown tired and disillusioned by traditional dating strategies (Sprecher, Schwartz, Harvey and Hatfield, 2008). During this same time period and into the 1970s, campuses across the US also carried out studies on “computer daters”, whereby relationships were initiated via the internet within laboratory settings (Sprecher et al., 2008). These “computer dater” studies found that CMC was essentially a hostile environment for the creation of interpersonal relationships and thus, that relationships formed online were not healthy because they were perceived as more uninhibited and dishonest than face-to-face communication (Parks and Roberts, 1998). Since this time, the use of computers has drastically changed the landscape of interpersonal communication and relationship formation. Perspectives on online dating and relationship formation have also changed greatly, and will be discussed in more detail in section two.

CMC in the 1990s enabled individuals to engage with others in a variety of new ways and across vast distances (Lawson and Leck, 2006). For example, in Parks and Roberts (1998) study

on relationship formation in multi-user dimensions (MUDs), they found that almost 94% of participants had formed a minimum of one continuing personal relationship within an MUD. These relationships were characterized as similar to their face-to-face counterparts in terms of length and intensity (Parks and Roberts, 1998). This understanding of online relationships as not intrinsically negative, but as possessing the ability to foster sincere and “real” relationships is supported by the work of Cooper and Sportoari (1997). The authors argue that understanding an online relationship as merely computer-mediated communication does not fully capture the essence of the diverse range of relationships online. Rather, computer-mediated relating (CMR) more aptly characterizes “the varied interpersonal dimensions of interactions” online (Cooper and Sportoari, 1997, p 8).

CMR is continuing to advance how individuals interact online. Photos, videos and sounds clips are now part of the online relating experience and have come to impact online dating practices (Lawson and Leck, 2006). As the internet is ever-changing how individuals connect and interact online and for some, subsequently offline, it is therefore important to understand why individuals are turning to online dating sites to find potential partners.

### ***Issues and Debates in Online Dating Research***

The traditional pattern of education, entrance into the workforce, dating, marriage and parenthood is no longer as clear in contemporary society (Valentine, 2006). There are now more options available to individuals, however, no assistance or authority in making decisions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Increasing numbers of Canadians are turning to online dating sites and introduction services in order to assist them in finding a potential partner. One’s development of a romantic relationship highlights not only how society promotes the attachment of individuals, but also how individuals have come to view contemporary dating practices.

Individuals are finding themselves with less free time to adequately invest in finding a partner by one's self and have subsequently delayed marriage (Arvidsson, 2006; Brym and Lenton, 2001; Hardey, 2008; Merkle and Richardson, 2000). This increase in the single population is what has allowed for a tremendous growth in dating and match-making services both online and offline (Hardey, 2002).

However, what online dating services are able to provide over their offline counterparts is the large number of individuals that one can be connected with, within a very short period of time (Cooper and Sportoari, 1997). It is this wider dating pool that can expedite the process of finding a romantic partner (Whitty, Baker and Inman, 2007). Online relationships also tend to develop more quickly and intensely than strictly offline relationships because of high levels of similarity. McKenna, Green and Gleason (2002) argue that if online relationships are developing more intense connections as juxtaposed to traditional offline relationships, then these online relationships should also prove to possess greater degrees of longevity and stability.

#### *Forming Romantic Relationships Online*

Individuals now actively seek casual, long-term and marriage partners online (Henry-Waring and Barraket, 2008). What many scholars argue to be of the utmost importance when understanding the formation of relationships online, are where the relationships were formed. “[C]yberspace is not one generic space and ... there is an assortment of ways for singles to find romance on the internet. How these relationships begin and progress vary depending on which space online we are referring to” (Whitty et al., 2007, p 2). Different websites have different reputations, ways of connecting individuals and suggestions for relationship progression; these factors impact where individuals choose to find a romantic partner and how that relationship will develop (Baker and Whitty, 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006). As previously mentioned, similarity

has been argued to be pertinent to long-lasting, stable online relationships (McKenna et al., 2002); however, it is the space online that can determine this similarity (Baker, 2002) and thus how that relationship will form and be acted out.

The differing options available to find a romantic partner online are plentiful. The multitude of online dating services highlights the plethora of dating wants and needs; with specialty sites catering to various religious, sexual, dietary and ethnic preferences. The majority of online dating services are, however, geared towards heterosexual relationships (Hardey, 2002; 2008). Of the many ways to meet potential romantic partners online, they have been organized into three online dating categories by Fiore and Donath in 2004. The three categories are: search/sort/match systems, personality matching systems and social network systems. Search/sort/match systems allow individuals to search for matches based on various search and filter functions (Barraket and Henry-Waring, 2008). Match.com, one of the websites analysed in this thesis, falls under this category, but has started to expand into the personality matching category with the recent launch of their affiliate website Chemistry.com. Personality matching systems, as the name implies, matches individuals based on some form of a personality questionnaire. Within this form of dating service, control rests with the matching provider who shows potential matches to the individual (Barraket and Henry-Waring, 2008). Clients of these websites may or may not have the ability to search through online dating profiles. For example, eHarmony.com does not allow its members to search, but Perfectmatch.com makes use of both a personality matching system and allows search functions. Lastly, social network systems offer the opportunity for friends to recommend matches between members of the same social networking site (Barraket and Henry-Waring, 2008).

In North America, there has been a movement from individual attributes as the basis of research on relationship success, to the interactions between individuals within the relationship, as the source for either the success or failure of that relationship. That is, similarity and compatibility are presented as the most important influences on the stability and longevity of a relationship (Carter and Snow, 2004). It is this belief in similarity and compatibility as the main contributors to relationship success or failure that forms the basis for most personality match-making services. By online match-making services inserting themselves into, what Eva Illouz (2008) has termed a “parascientific discourse”, many have argued that users of such match-making sites possess increased expectations of their matches.

Houran and Lange (2004) conducted a study on whether or not members of match-making sites possessed idealistic expectations of their matches. That is, if online daters believed that their matches would result in higher levels of relationship success and compatibility. The authors argued that individuals who possess positive unrealistic expectations, with regards to their matches, may develop “serious relationships and even marriage prematurely with other online daters based on the illusionary belief that they have found ‘the right one’” (Houran and Lange, 2004, p 299). Interestingly enough, even though match-making services promote increased ease and efficiency in finding one’s ‘soul mate’, Houran and Lange (2004) found that their respondents did not maintain unrealistic expectations of their matches. However, consistent with literature on mate selection, initial mate selection was either realistic or largely judicious, and as individuals progressed through the relationship and invested more time and energy, became more idealistic (Houran and Lange, 2004). It is because of the ease of online dating and finding love online that has led Ben-ze’ev (2004) to assert that the drive for perfection in online romantic relationships is embedded. Ben-ze’ev’s (2004) study on romantic online relationships

and participation in cybersex that were initiated predominantly with the intent that the relationship would not move offline will be discussed in greater detail later on in this chapter.

Conversely, a study conducted by Carter and Snow (2004) on marital success rates of newlywed eHarmony couples, claims that successful (i.e., married) eHarmony couples experience greater degrees of commitment, compatibility and satisfaction in comparison to married couples who had not met on eHarmony. This study has subsequently been criticised by Houran, Lange, Rentfrow and Bruckner (2004) for its inadequate measurements of relationship success, its use of Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) scores and the significant differences in age, income and education levels between the comparison group and eHarmony couples. The authors argue that measuring success based on marriage is “questionable” considering the high rates of divorce in North America (Houran et al., 2004). As well, since eHarmony uses DAS scores to match its members, the fact that Carter and Snow found such high DAS scores among their eHarmony respondents is irrelevant, as these couples were matched by eHarmony because of their DAS scores (Houran et al., 2004).

Though Houran and Lange (2004) and Houran et al., (2004) purport that online dating expectations are realistic and that online daters have no real grounds for assuming that their online relationship facilitated by match-making services fare any better than offline relationships, studies do show that individuals believe that one has a better chance of meeting a potential romantic partner online. For example, according to a study by Ipsos-Ried on Lavalife, a popular dating site, over half (52%) of the respondents believe that individuals have an equal or greater chance of meeting a potential partner online in comparison to a singles bar. As well, that 40% of respondents, from the same study, perceived online relationships as having a greater or equal chance of success as juxtaposed to a couple that met at a bar (Baker and Whitty, 2008; Henry-

Waring and Barrket, 2008). Even though there is some debate surrounding the potential increased success rate members of match-making services may have, it is important to note that the expectations that individuals have, with regards to match-making services and their matches will most likely continue to be one of the dominating reasons why individuals choose to go online and where online they will initiate their relationships.

Besides the promised ease by which one can find a potential romantic partner through match-making services, research has also pointed to other reasons why individuals turn to online dating. It is the very nature of the internet itself that creates the allure for some individuals. "The major features responsible for the great romantic seductiveness of cyberspace are imagination, interactivity, availability, and anonymity" (Ben-ze'ev, 2004, p 18). This, according to Ben-ze'ev (2004), creates a love "high", characterized by initial intense feelings, which is quickly followed by more "dull" feelings towards the romantic partner as the mundane reality of life sets in. Ben-ze'ev's (2004) study focused on romantic relationships that predominantly remained online and were often absent of visual cues. The lack of visual cues can account for the mysteriousness of one's online partner and thus, the seductiveness of which Ben-ze'ev speaks. As discussed previously, the location or space online is an important component of relationship progression. Depending on where a relationship has been formed greatly impacts the expectations one has of the relationship, its duration and any subsequent feelings (Baker, 2002; Baker and Whitty, 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006; Whitty et al., 2007). Therefore, where and how a relationship is formed online will impact how couples and individuals experience their romantic relationship.

#### *Canadian Daters Online*

Though being single is a main qualifier for using some online dating sites, almost 18% of Canadian online daters are married or common-law, with over 80 % of online daters reporting



being single (Brym and Lenton, 2001). In Canada, divorcees make up 31% of online daters (Brym and Lenton, 2001). This relatively high number of divorcees who use online dating sites may be influenced by their age, as they may be uncomfortable re-entering the bar scene to find a romantic partner or lack an adequate social circle to introduce potential partners (Stephure et al., 2009). Thus, many divorcees cited the ability to meet new people as one of the main reasons for using online dating sites (Brym and Lenton, 2001). Divorced and widowed online daters also cited using online dating sites to find a marriage partner or long-term relationship more than any other marital status (Brym and Lenton, 2001).

Males are more likely than females to use online dating sites in Canada, with the ratio of males to females being more than two to one (Brym and Lenton, 2001; Valkenburg and Peter, 2007). Males (53%) tend to use online dating considerably more than females (20%) in order to establish sexual relationships (Brym and Lenton, 2001; Couch and Liamputtong, 2007; Hardey, 2008). However, for both males (36%) and females (37%) finding a long-term committed relationship that will lead to marriage is not typically why individuals use online dating in Canada, according to a study conducted by Brym and Lenton in 2001. Conversely, males (58%) and females (60%) both similarly cited finding a long-term relationship as one of the main motivations for using an online dating site (Brym and Lenton, 2001). This distinction between marriage and long-term relationships is important to note as eHarmony.com, one of the websites analysed in this thesis, is geared specifically at individuals looking for a marriage partner, as eHarmony measures relationship success by marriage. Contemporary dating practices do not maintain this same measurement of “success”, as more couples opt to delay or not enter into marriage at all.

Another important predictor of online dating in Canada is age. The majority of online daters are between the ages of 30 to 49, comprising of almost 57% of the online dating population, with 18 to 29 year olds making up just over 33% of the population (Brym and Lenton, 2001). Individuals using online dating sites to find a long-term relationship is equally cited as reasoning for using such sites between the ages of 30 to 49 and 50 plus, each consisting of 63% of online daters within the above age groups. Roughly one in two of online daters 29 and younger cited the same as a motivating factor. Significantly lower numbers were found in all age groups for the desire to find a marriage partner, with 29 and younger at 28%, 30s and 40s at 41% and 50 plus at 39% (Brym and Lenton, 2001). Overall, Canadian online daters tend to be urban, educated, employed and earn a higher income in comparison to Canadians in general (Brym and Lenton, 2001).

One of the important contributions Brym and Lenton's (2001) study on Canadian online dating practices and demographics has on online dating research is that it challenges previous misconceptions of online daters as unsocial and/or desperate. The Pew Internet and American Life Project found that just over 60% of internet users do not perceive online daters as "desperate" (Madden and Lenhart, 2006). Thus, the stigma attached to online daters is beginning to wane, as the online dating population comes to reflect the offline population (Valkenburg and Peter, 2008), and individuals' perspectives on online dating begin to change. Brym and Lenton argue that the perception of online daters as desperate possessed some validity in the 1990s, however, Canadian online daters today are "sociable and self-confident" (2001, p 16). Their study found that online daters are not reclusive, but are members of various clubs and organizations, frequently visit friends and family, enjoy engaging in social leisure activities offline, and attend religious services (Brym and Lenton, 2001). Conversely, there are still many

who support pre-existing theories on online dating and purport that online romantic relationships are inadequate and foster relations that are essentially “meaningless” in comparison to offline relationships.

*‘Quality Counts’*

The very fact that there is a designation between online and offline relationships points to the belief in inherent differences between the two. Romantic relationships formed through match-making sites require individuals to complete a personality questionnaire, create a profile, read profiles, and write and respond to messages and emails (Hardey, 2002). The individuals involved in an online romantic relationship initially do not physically meet and thus must rely on provided visual and written information in order to come to know and trust their online partner.

Ben-ze’ev (2004) argues that online daters differ from traditional offline dating relationships because they place less emphasis on physical appearance and attribute more weight to an individual’s personality and other non-physical characteristics. This may be true for couples who initiate a romantic relationship in the absence of visual cues, because an emotional bond is formed (Cooper and Sportoari, 1997). However, according to Match.com, an online match-making site, many of their members do not look at profiles that do not contain at least one photograph. Therefore, it may be argued that physical appearance does play a larger role in online romantic relationships than previously conceived, especially within online relationships that will eventually move offline. According to Rosen, Cheever, Cummings and Felt (2008), online daters reported communication style and physical attractiveness as what they most often look for in a potential date, whereas offline daters cited education, personality and personal information. Thus, physical appearance is an important contributor to relationship initiation

online (Baker and Whitty, 2008) and one should not assume that online daters fail to factor this into their initial attraction.

Subtle differences do exist between online and offline relationships. Characteristics of offline attraction such as self-presentation, similarities, proximity, expectations and mutual exchange have been shown to be present online (Ben-ze'ev, 2004). The differences exist in how these characteristics of attraction are carried out online. Self-presentation, is facilitated through emails and online profiles, physical proximity is overcome through written communication (Ben-ze' ev, 2004), and video and audio software. Many online match-making services match individuals based on similarity. One's expectations on the romantic relationship online can be determined by the space or location where the relationship was initiated (Baker, 2002; Baker and Whitty, 2008; Whitty and Carr, 2006; Whitty et al., 2007) and through online written exchanges between partners. Lastly, the presence of reciprocity online can be seen through the time and energy invested in exchanging long emails (Ben-ze'ev, 2004).

In order for a romantic relationship to develop, some level of intimacy is required. The internet "has been herald" as the means through which to return to a more traditional manner in which to 'fall in love'. That is, online daters fall in love first with their partner's mind and spirit and second, if at all, with their physical appearance (Ben-ze'ev, 2004). However, within online match-making services this order of falling in love may not be the case. New uses of visual media online and the promotion of personal pictures on online match-making sites are now important contributors to relationship initiation. Depending on the space in which these relationships develop the absence of visual cues has been shown to invite more open and inclusive communication (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006). Physical appearance can

impact with whom one initiates a romantic relationship (Whitty et al., 2007), therefore being aware that online daters may base relationship initiation on physical appearance is important.

A study conducted by Scott, Mottarella and Lavooley (2006) on intimacy online found that individuals involved in online relationships possessed lower scores of intimacy on the Sternberg and Rubin Scales, in comparison to their offline romantic relationships. This difference in intimacy levels may be attributed to the length of the romantic relationship. Studies show that the more time invested in the online relationship, the more intimacy tends to develop (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006). Therefore, as would be expected the length of the romantic relationship impacts the experience of intimacy online.

Women appear to want to establish more emotionally invested relationships online in comparison to men. In Hardey's (2008) study on online dating practices and behaviours, she categorized daters by behaviour online. According to this study, the Wooers are comprised mostly of women, who are concerned with establishing emotionally committed relationships. It was the perceived emotional investment and "real connection" established that determined for the Wooers how much time investment they were going to give to the relationship. At the opposite end of the spectrum are the Players. The Players are predominantly male and participate in online exchanges from the perspective that the internet is an unreal space that is more conducive to play and fantasy. As such, the Players do not engage in online interactions in the same way they would offline. The goal for the Players is to quickly establish an online relationship, obtain their desired goal and then promptly terminate the relationship. Thus, the difficulty arises when individuals are not aware of the intentions and expectations of the individuals that they are communicating with online who they hope to initiate a "real"

relationship with (Hardey, 2008). Conversely, the ability to love online and emotionally invest in a relationship is bound to one's sense of trust and/or feelings of risk online.

Online dating involves some degree of trust and risk, similar to any offline relationship. Research on the risk of online dating has focused predominantly in three main areas: the level or degree of risk associated with online dating in comparison to that of offline, online daters' perceptions of this risk, and thirdly, the ways in which this risk is then managed online. Online dating is purported to be safer in comparison to traditional face-to-face dating strategies (Brym and Lenton, 2001). What contributes to this view is the perception that there are no, or very few, consequences associated with online dating because of the anonymity and physical distance provided by the internet (Valentine, 2006).

Two main forms of risk associated with the initiation of any romantic relationship are physical and emotional; online daters are no exception to this. Online daters may perhaps be more exposed to the emotional risks involved in a relationship, as the ability to lie about one's age, gender, physical appearance and background information can be easily achieved online (Cornwell and Lundgren, 2001). Before the online dater decides to move their relationship offline, and has the opportunity to verify the accuracy of the information they have been given, some level of emotional investment may have occurred. The discovery of any deception can thus have serious emotional consequences for those involved. The majority of Canadian internet users and online daters believe that deception is a disadvantage of online dating, with women more likely than men to perceive this, according to Brym and Lenton (2001). The fact that online daters are aware of, and perceive online deception as a major issue, highlights the risks individuals are willing to take in order to find a romantic partner. In the same study, Brym and Lenton (2001) also found that more than a quarter of the online dater participants have

misrepresented themselves online; particularly in terms of their age. The reason why online daters may be more prone to deception in comparison to their offline counterparts, may be due to the relationship itself. If the relationship is perceived as less serious by those involved, this may lead individuals to be deceptive online. Thus, it is not necessarily the nature of the internet itself that leads to the deception (Cornwell and Lundgren, 2001). That is, the expectations held about the online relationship may impact the use of deception within relationships.

Many online daters have been found to employ certain strategies to detect deception online. For example, online daters may avoid profiles with “cheesy clichés” (Whitty and Carr, 2006, p 142), and progress through different stages of trust in the relationship, such as moving from email to phone to a face-to-face meeting (McCown, Fischer, Page and Homant, 2001). This face-to-face then allows the individual to double-check the accuracy of some of the information shared by their romantic partner (Whitty and Carr, 2006). These findings suggest that online daters are hesitant about trusting others online, but that the very nature of a romantic relationship requires them to establish some level of trust. Requiring individuals to find a balance between paranoia and gullibility with the information they receive. The issue of trust and risk associated with online dating is important, as it impacts not only who initiates romantic relationships online, but also the progression of that relationship.

### *Consuming Love Online*

The relative ease by which individuals are able to meet romantic partners online and the vast quantity of available matches through online match-making services, begs the question of how individuals wade through all the romantic possibilities to find ‘the one’. Jagger (1998; 2001) contends that daters market the self in order to attract potential partners. Based on analysis of newspaper advertisements, Jagger (2001) argues that female daters market themselves based on

their physical attractiveness, and their ability to nurture and listen. Whereas female daters tended to promote a stereotypical female identity, males portrayed a more diverse range of identities in their dating advertisements. Roughly one third of males in Jagger's study, promoted a patriarchal mentality in their advertisements. However, the majority of males marketed their physical attractiveness, and energy and activity levels (Jagger, 2001).

Romantic relationships initiated online through match-making services are decided before any communication has taken place (Whitty and Carr, 2006). Therefore, how one presents one's self through their online profile greatly determines who will attract a date online. Individuals are able to decide which aspects of themselves they would like to reveal and which they would like to hide (Lawson and Leck, 2006). "This type of strategic packaging of the self in computer mediated environments is facilitated by the medium's ability to support selective self-presentation, a carefully controlled and orchestrated type of self-presentation" (Hancock and Toma, 2009, p 369). Hardey (2008) characterizes this presentation of self online as their 'front stage' image. The time online daters invest in their 'front stage' image is in the hopes of attracting as large a number of individuals as possible. The online dater's 'back stage' image comprises what the individual perceives as negative characteristics that may turn away potential partners (Hardey, 2008). By marketing the self online in as positive of light as possible, some argue that online daters come to expect a partner that also lives up to their higher expectations of who they can attract (Heino, Ellison and Gibbs, 2010; Whitty, 2009).

Having higher expectations of who one is able to attract online characterizes a second feature of the market metaphor applied to online dating. That is, the perception of search and filter functions of match-making services acting as a shopping list of desired qualities in a romantic relationship (Kambara, 2005). The numerous matches one can receive through an



online match-making site require some method to minimize the number of potential partners. This has led some to perceive online dating sites as fostering “relationshopping”. Heino et al., (2010) study on what they have termed “relationshopping” shows that the notion of the marketplace is used by online daters to explain their experiences online. They found five marketplace themes used by online daters: “assessing others’ market worth, determining one’s own market worth, shopping for perfect parts, maximizing inventory and calibrating selectivity” (2010, p 434). These assessment tools were then used to see if an individual was a suitable match (Heino et al., 2010).

### ***Conclusion***

This chapter has discussed some of the issues and debates currently present within online dating research. This chapter has also shown the changing perceptions and use of the internet in Western society. Thus, who uses the internet for the facilitation of romantic relationships has changed drastically over the years and research on online dating has subsequently shifted gears in order to adjust to the changing norms and attitudes on online dating. What has gained importance in online dating research, in terms of online romantic relationships initiated through online match-making services, is the quality of these relationships. That is, these services, for example, claim to initiate relationships perceived to be superior to their offline dating counterparts. Thus, research is placing more emphasis on where relationships are initiated online and how this impacts the perceptions and/or expectations for a romantic relationship.

Research on online dating initiated through online match-making services show that there is a distinct difference in how individuals conceptualize the dating process and the search for a romantic partner. That is, individuals come to apply market principles to the quest for love. “This ‘market worth’ is not only based on their self perception of desirability, but also market

dynamics of the ‘demand’ for them and ‘supply’ of other potential partners” (Heino, Ellsion and Gibbs, 2005, p 16). The application of the market metaphor to the development of online relationships is a starting point from which to understand the rationalization of love. However, it fails to take into account the impact of the specific sites’ promotion and understanding of relationship progression and success may have on online daters’ conception of love online. This study addresses these issues. It examines how online match-making services promote love and romantic relationships, through their services. It focuses on the positioning of these online match-making services as institutions of expert knowledge and the processes involved in the rationalization of love and subsequently, relationship success or failure. This is important to the study of online relationships because it shows how these services understand love and thus, can be used to understand how this may impact relationship progression and expectations online.

The following chapter will address the arguments of institutionalized individualization, the theoretical approach used in this thesis, as well as its usefulness in aiding in the analysis of a ‘rational’ love online. The relationship between modernity and love, the key concepts of institutionalized individualization, precarious freedoms, and self-biography will also be addressed. A discussion of individualization and love, that is, how the process of individualization in Western society impacts the type, formation and maintenance of love will then be examined. The following chapter will conclude with a discussion of the limitations of this theoretical perspective.

## **Chapter Two: Institutionalized Individualism and the Necessity of Love**

This thesis will be using the theoretical approach of institutionalized individualization in order to study the pursuit of a ‘rational’ love online through match-making services. Thus, this thesis is concerned with understanding the presence of individualization within Canadian society, the promotion of expert knowledge within this society in terms of relationship success, and the importance of planning and constructing a self-biography. The purpose of this chapter is to lay out the arguments of institutionalized individualization and its relationship to the search for love online.

In order to address the relationship between the experiences of individualization in Canada and love online, I will first define the important concepts that will be used in this chapter. Next, I will briefly argue why this theoretical approach is useful for understanding online relationships and will provide a general discussion of the presentation of individualization in the first and second modernity. Then, I will examine the experience of individualization in Canada, with particular emphasis on the notion of precarious freedoms, and how this may lead individuals to turn to online match-making services in the face of uncertainty. Next, I will demonstrate that the promotion of dating expertise by online match-making services can be linked to the theoretical understanding of ‘life as a planning project’. I will then argue how individualization helps explain the pursuit of a ‘rational’ love online, with particular emphasis on the impact of living individually within a collective. This chapter will conclude within a discussion of the limitations of this theoretical approach and an examination of the implications of the conclusions drawn from my argument.

### ***Key Concepts***

In order to be able to better understand the use of key concepts throughout this chapter and study, they will be defined using the work of Ulrich Beck and Elisabeth Beck-Gernsheim. However, other theorists' definitions of key concepts and contributions to understanding individualization and romantic relationships will also be used. Throughout this chapter, unless otherwise specified, individualization will refer to institutionalized individualization.

#### ***Institutionalized Individualization***

Individualization is used to express a societal change, one that affects the relationship between society and its individuals (Beck and Willms, 2004). It is the consequence of modernity that individualization is experienced in Western society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) not by the free-accord of individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Individualization is a compulsion, albeit a paradoxical one, to create, to stage manage, not only one's own biography but the bonds and networks surrounding it and to do this amid changing preferences and at successive stages of life, while constantly adapting to the conditions of the labour market, the education system, the welfare state and so on (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002 p 4).

Individualization calls on individuals to be the creator of one's life. However, this life now encompasses more options and more demands on the individual that are no longer constrained by religion, class, gender or tradition, but by societal institutions (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Individuals are now bound to institutions, be it the education system, the welfare state or the labour market, as institutions have come to organize society as individuals not as family units.

This thesis uses the understanding of individualization as one that is produced by institutions acting upon individuals in order to produce particular life outcomes based on the needs of society (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck, 2000). Individuals now are required to negotiate new demands, options and questions brought forth by individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim,

1995). Though the individual is no longer constrained by religion, tradition or role-sets, and the support brought on by these constraints, individuals are now tied to the restrictions imposed by the labour market. The regulations of the welfare state, medical and psychological trends, the education system, and all facets of the market comes to impact one's experiences in Western society, as the individual comes to be dependent on them (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

It may now prove useful to distinguish between the neo-liberal conceptualization of individualization and institutionalized individualism, as the two differ greatly. Neo-liberalism concerns itself with market-based competition and the privatization of goods and services, along with increased individualism within society (Mudge, 2008). This form of individualization promotes competition (Peters, 1999), self-interest, self-management and that one should be self-enterprising (Rose, 1990; Ong, 2006).

Institutionalized individualism does not possess the same egoism that is present within a neo-liberal conception of individualization (Beck and Willms, 2004). Beck (2000) proposes that the individualism promoted within neo-liberalism is actually atomization. Neo-liberal individualism asserts that individuals are capable of "master[ing] the whole of their lives" and that this ability to be self-enterprising comes "from within themselves" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p xxi). Thus, atomization dissolves any ties to the notion of communal duty, as individuals are perceived as entirely autonomous. What this atomization leads to, according to Beck and Beck- Gernsheim (2002), is the weakening of the welfare state. For what leads to the sense of freedom in the second modernity is not the awareness and freedom of choice, but rather the capacity of the self to be cognisant of its inability to be complete (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Whereas atomization implies an individualism that ignores the influence of others and the impact of the state and assumes an individualism that is self-sufficient,

institutionalized individualism recognizes the impact that institutions have on the experience and creation of individualism in Western society. That is, institutionalized individualism assumes that individuals are governed by the compulsion to organize their lives in relation to societal institutions.

### *Precarious Freedoms*

The experience of freedom afforded by individualization comes at a cost. Everything that was at one point held with such conviction, be it marriage, religion, or love in Western society, no longer possess the same experience of certainty, as they are now considered precarious freedoms, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue. While these traditions at one point offered support and answers, they were also limiting. Being freed from these traditions may have opened up new possibilities and life paths, this also entails losing the support that these traditions once provided (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Thus, individuals must now negotiate, define, plan, critically analyse and calculate every aspect of their lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Individuals, exposed to these new freedoms, become ‘homo optionis’, as they must now choose among the endless possibilities of what it means and entails to live one’s own life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). With more freedoms, comes greater responsibilities; individuals must now be held accountable to the decisions they have made (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

### *Self-biography*

The self-chosen life encompasses the pursuit of the “true self”. The individual must construct their own biography, for both their home and professional life. These self-biographies must also now come to live and operate together, within a relationship (Beck and Willms, 2004). According to Beck, the self-chosen life becomes necessary and possible within a “society [that] is highly differentiated” (2000, p 165). That is, when individuals within society are no longer

permanently contained to specific places or roles. Rather, individuals have the ability to move freely between numerous spaces, roles and life paths (Beck, 2000). However, there is a 're-embedding' of individuals in relation to societal institutions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Self-biographies become a task for the individual because traditional role-sets and traditions no longer apply. Thus, more aspects of life call for a decision on part of the individual (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). As such, the self-chosen life is determined by the labour market. That is, individuals are educated, mobile and flexible (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995) and the self-chosen life is of benefit to the individual and society (Beck, 2000). The welfare state is set up in such a way as to provide benefits to individuals, thus promoting the construction of one's life in individualistic terms. Therefore, the self-chosen life is a life reliant on institutions, as opposed to a life dependent on religion and traditions. The incapacity to manage and construct one's own life can thus leave the individual facing economic disadvantages, if individuals are unable to cater to the demands of the labour market (Beck, 2000). Consequently, living a self-chosen life also demands that individuals bear the responsibility for their choices (Beck, 2000).

Prevention becomes an important component of individualization. Individuals are confronted with the need to plan out and control their lives in order to avoid any misfortune in the future (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Life becomes a 'planning project', whereby the increase in freedoms calls individuals to plan out what was once known, but is now unknown (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Faced with a mass of uncertainty, possibilities, choices and decisions the individual, Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) assert, searches for answers in sources outside of him or herself and is greeted by an influx in self-help literature and advice.

To plan one's life, an individual is required to educate themselves, gather information about the possible options available and to securitize, analyse, reject or accept this information

that they have been given. Beck-Gernsheim (2002, p 46) argues that society facilitates the creation of secular “guiding agents” in the form of experts, specialists, and advisors. In order for an individual to plan his or her life, they are expected to actively seek out this expert knowledge. However, this expert knowledge will always be flawed, according to Beck-Gernsheim (2002), for knowledge is constantly changing and growing, leaving some expertise obsolete. Thus, the support provided by expert knowledge is forever changing, but continues to hold sway over individuals’ lives as they plan and construct their self-biographies.

### ***Modernity and Love***

Individualization is useful for discussing online dating, as it is the promotion of the individual within the labour force and institutions that creates difficulties in not only finding a romantic partner, but also maintaining a romantic relationship. That is, the promotion of institutionalized individualization in Canadian society encourages individuals to be mobile, flexible, competitive, and to put one’s personal career goals ahead of commitments that pertain to one’s personal relationships. In this sense, romantic relationships are meant to be expendable (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Thus, online match-making services have arisen to aid in the development of fulfilling romantic relationships for those individuals who do not have the time or means to find and maintain a relationship.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), assert that individuals in contemporary society no longer have an authority, be it religion or societal norms, to guide them through the various choices and decisions that need to be made within romantic relationships. There are now more options available to individuals within a relationship, but no assistance in making these decisions. Marriage and couple counsellors flourished in order to fill this void that was created by changing social norms (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). ). I, however, propose that the



online match-making industry is positioning itself as a new authority or expert on dating relationships. That is, the online match-making industry is positioning itself as a dating authority by grounding their advice and match-making methods in expert knowledge. I argue that online match-making services, acting as institutions of expert knowledge, have the potential to influence individuals and produce in them a specific understanding of love and relationships. This is accomplished by requiring individuals to organize their lives in relation to these institutions, by engaging in prescribed behaviours in order to achieve relationship success.

Through provided self-assessments and personality questionnaires, online match-making services show individuals what they need in a relationship through the matches provided and by grounding these matches in expertise. Thus, these institutions of expert knowledge may influence the individual to produce a desired outcome: love. The implications of this is that individuals may never have felt a 'connection' towards their matches if it had not been for the match-making services themselves informing the individual that 'scientifically' an 'ideal' love could develop. As such, the freedom that Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue accompanies individualism, really is a conditional freedom, as institutions are acting upon individuals to produce what is deemed 'rational' by expert authorities. In order to better understand this change in romantic relationships it is pertinent to differentiate between the first and second modernity, and discuss the impact of changing gender roles on the societal landscape.

Within the first modernity there were clear-cut gender roles. These gender roles worked together to form interlinked role-sets, also comprised of roles based on class and race. Thus, there were fewer options available for certain role-sets because they worked as the mechanism through which society functioned, by enforcing specific life paths for particular role-sets (Beck and Willms, 2004). By the last half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, these stringent role-sets became "fluid

and flexible” (Beck and Willms, 2004, p 64). More options become available to individuals in the second modernity, and taken for granted role-sets, now must be negotiated.

Instead of role-sets that had evolved to fit together, we now have the institutionalization of individual options, the necessity of choosing among them, and the indeterminateness of the final outcome. The pre-given compatibility of role-sets has been replaced by one that has to be individually produced through negotiation with no guarantees that any given set of choices actually is compatible (Beck and Willms, 2004, p 66).

That is, the freedom of choice in the second modernity is creating difficulties in deciphering what one should do with their life and how they should do it; always aware that what they have chosen may be inadequate or cause misfortune in the future.

Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002) argue that two main processes of individualization occur in the second modernity. First, that democracy is extended into private relationships and second, that society comes to promote individualization through the labour force and various institutions. This process of individualization occurs in society through the institutions themselves, like the education system, which come to impact life paths as opposed to role sets alone. Within the second modernity individuals are acted upon by institutions through the organization of society as individuals, in order to enable individuals to come to organize their lives as separate and distinct from others (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004). This separation of individuals and identity from the family is enacted on individuals through individualism for the benefit of society. Here, the maintenance of separate and distinct lives from others is promoted in order to produce a highly competitive and flexible labour force (Beck, 2000).

Of particular importance to this thesis is the impact that this opening up of gender roles has on romantic relationships. The entrance of women on a large scale into post-secondary education, brought on by this change in the second modernity, has generated much societal change (Beck and Willms, 2004), for men and women, as women became more independent

(Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Thus, the once central role of the nuclear family in society is dissolving, as women and men are no longer tied to traditional gender roles (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The social becomes reproduced in the individuals themselves, not through one's class, family or gender (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). However, this freedom from gender roles, for men and women, and the desire to live one's own life, still draws individuals together in the hopes of creating a meaningful relationship, as they have come to perceive other social attachments as unpredictable, according to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995). Therefore, the allure of a quick and easy means of finding a romantic partner online through match-making services feeds into the promotion of an institutionalization of individuals. That is, the lack of direction or authority that once provided guidance for one's life through work and family has dissolved, leaving individuals searching for some form of guidance to help them in their quest for love.

### ***Individualization and Love Online***

This chapter argues that individualization is a useful tool for understanding the pursuit of rational love online. Thus, understanding the experience of individualization in Canadian society can shed light on the impact that this has on the formation of romantic relationships online. The promotion of planning one's own life within individualization will be used to aid in the discussion of the role of online match-making services in contemporary society and the promotion of dating expertise online. Lastly, the discussion of living individually as part of a collective will be used to address how individualization can be applied to the understanding of the desire for a rational love.

*Individualization and Canadian society*

As discussed above, the self-chosen life is one that is dependent on institutions not traditions. This does not mean there are no traditions because of the process of individualization. Rather, that the traditions need to be chosen, rejected, or invented through the actions of individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). One such tradition that requires negotiation in Western society is that of love. Love is a precarious freedom in Canadian society. There is a host of new options and decisions that need to be negotiated, planned and calculated in the name of love, together as a couple (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). While at the same time, this freedom instills in individuals a sense of uncertainty (Bauman, 2001). The desire for love in contemporary society is presented by Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), as something that takes on a new and more powerful position. The need to be part of a loving relationship becomes central to individuals' lives because love becomes perceived as the one constant in one's life, where all other traditions have been cast aside. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) argue that love has become a "refuge" and thus will always be strived for, but has become more difficult to obtain in Western society.

Attached to this yearning to share one's life with another, there is also a more important aspiration; the desire to live one's own life (Beck, 2000). It is this desire to live for one's self, first and foremost, that has led to drastic changes in the family, and gender roles and relations (Beck, 2000). What it means to be involved in a "successful" marriage or romantic partnership is no longer confined to roles of husbands as breadwinners and wives as housekeepers. Marriage partners now need to be emotionally available to each other, respectful of each other's wants and needs, and enjoyable to be with (Illouz, 1997). Thus, if one's emotional well-being is dependent

on other individuals, “then love acquires a new significance as the very heart of our lives” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p 49).

Conversely, the high importance placed on love is made more difficult to achieve in Western society because love is no longer predefined. As such, love no longer means one thing alone, just as marriage, sexuality and parenthood can no longer be explained in one way. Rather, what love means and the experience of love, within individualization, changes from one relationship and individual, to another; forcing couples to define for themselves what love is (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). This desire for love, but never truly knowing and comprehending what it is, leads individuals to long to return to tradition and to an “unfreedom”, as the demands to plan, negotiate, define and decide within the process of individualization becomes overwhelming (Beck and Willms, 2004). Consequently, the precarious freedoms, experienced within individualization, lead to a desire for security (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

The presentation of love in Western society as something that requires time and energy to decipher what it is, in addition to time and energy in order to maintain it, leaves love and all it entails characterized as work. Love and commitment in a relationship requires effort, time and energy, and thus the work involved, Illouz (1997) asserts, comes to replace the spontaneity and “magic” typically associated with love. The process of individualizations thus, leaves individuals in a world of uncertainty as they attempt to navigate the precarious freedoms that have arisen. It is this lack of time and certainty in the world around them that lead individuals to use online match-making services in Canadian society. According to Brym and Lenton (2001), the demands and time constraints posed by the work force in Canadian society is making it more difficult for individuals to invest time in finding a romantic partner through traditional dating practices (e.g., single bars, and organized clubs and sports). “People are looking for more efficient ways of

meeting. Online dating has emerged as a credible alternative” (Brym and Lenton, 2001, p 9).

With the increased ease and efficiency of finding love online, online match-making services also promise guidance, advice and support. That is, online match-making services attempt to provide some level of certainty or guarantee in this uncertain world, in the form of a ‘scientific’ love.

### *Planning Relationships Online*

More Canadians are turning to online match-making services in an attempt to find their perfect or real love of their life. As demonstrated in the previous section, online dating has become a worthwhile option in Canada in the quest for love due to time constraints (Arvidsson, 2006; Brym and Lenton, 2001; Hardey, 2008; Merkle and Richardson, 2000) and a lack of understanding of how to navigate the various choices and decisions that are required because of the precarious freedoms that individuals have been thrust into (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Online match-making services, I argue, are thus positioning themselves as the guiding compass for an individual’s love life, as these services provide not only dating expertise and advice, but also a means through which one can plan out their experience of love.

The increased pressure on individuals to define and create their understanding of what love is and means, has altered what individuals perceive as a “successful” marriage or partnership. Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), assert that the desire for personal happiness within marriage, and the fulfillment of one’s personal wants and needs is creating the foundation of marriage to be on the individual. The desire to find a partner that fulfills certain requirements in a relationship in order so that each can achieve personal happiness, separately, but together, is reflected in online match-making services ability to either allow their clients to search or to provide them with matches said to be based on very specific and individualized needs. This is also apparent in the plethora of specialty dating sites (Hardey, 2002), each claiming to be able to

meet specific dating needs and thus provide a better dating experience. According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995), the reason that love and marriage come to take on an individualized tone is because the traditions of love and marriage have become more a part of an individual's identity. That is, the search for love and relationship fulfillment is really "an outcome of our modern concern with ourselves" (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p 51). As such, the stress to find and maintain a perfect union can only lead individuals to be disappointed with their romantic relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). What is subsequently required of individuals is to actively plan and organize one's life in an attempt to avoid undesirable situations and predicaments (Beck, 2000).

Individuals can and do, plan and actively seek out romantic partners online (Henry-Waring and Barraket, 2008). Planning one's life becomes necessary when individuals are forced to lead a life of one's own, through the endless requirements of the process of individualization to calculate, define, choose and analyse all aspects of one's life (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Online match-making services can be said to aid in this process by providing and basing their matching methods on expert knowledge. With individualization the seeking out of expert knowledge is now common-place and a normal part of living one's life. The drastic changes in gender roles and relations between men and women have changed what is expected in a relationship. This change in expectations led to a rise in psychological and various other professionals being sought out for support and advice (Illouz, 2008). However, what experts offer individuals is vastly different from what was previously promoted in society. This expert knowledge is also becoming increasingly specialized, in order to cater to more specific and individual demands (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

By seeking expert knowledge through online match-making services, individuals are attempting to find more compatible and personally satisfying relationships, according to some scholars (Carter and Snow, 2004). The desire to ground relationships in expert knowledge and advice can be attributed to the placement of failure within a life of one's own (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Individuals are now accountable for their own failures at love and thus must bear the personal responsibility of failing to attract a mate or maintain a romantic relationship. Thus, the ability to follow the advice of someone else who is presented as wiser and more knowledgeable would be highly enticing in Western society, as individuals crave a more calculable and certain world (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). However, Beck-Gernsheim (2002) warns, expert advice does not equal easy answers. Individuals must also accept, reject and analyse multiple forms of expert knowledge and competing advice (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

Conversely, regardless of this expert knowledge, Bauman (2003) argues that one is not able to learn to love.

The promise to learn the art of loving is a (false, deceitful, yet keenly wished to be true) promise to make 'love experience' in the likeness of other commodities, that allure and seduce by brandishing all such features and promise to take the waiting out of wanting, sweat out of effort and effort out of results (Bauman, 2003, p 7).

That is, far from all that online match-making services promise the individual in terms of ease and efficiency at finding love, it is impossible to take the work out of love and present a ready-made love to the individual. However, what becomes important for the individual is not whether or not experts can help decipher and find love for their clients, but rather if individuals invest and believe in what advice experts are providing. Thus, individuals can be conceived as having grown dependent on professional advice (Furedi, 2004) within individualization, in order to navigate the landscape of romantic relationships. Online match-making services may influence an individual's understanding of romantic relationships that are fraught with difficulties that can



be eased or completely removed by having access to this expert knowledge provided by the matching site. In part, this turning to expert knowledge in the face of uncertainty is in the hopes of securing a perfect relationship, one that reflects a complete democracy (Beck and Willms, 2004) and thus the belief in rationalizing love breeds hope in this desire.

*The Necessity of Others*

Individualism can only be understood as part of a whole (Elias, 1991). That is, the process of individualization calls for an understanding of individuals in relation to others, not as separate and distinct from other individuals (Beck, 2000). The only medium through which to obtain individual growth and fulfilment is with and through others (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004). Therefore, difficulties arise within relationships as each individual tries to live individually, together (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995).

According to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, the family and romantic relationships are developing into “elective relationships”; relationships that are no longer bound together by traditions and role-sets, but by an active and conscious decision by each individual (2002, p 97). Thus, living a life of one’s own requires more conscious decisions of how one will live a social life. Within the first modernity individuals were only required to fulfil the duties prescribed by their particular role-sets. Now, living a life of one’s own within a family or romantic relationship calls on individuals to balance their chosen and changing life paths with the needs and requirements of their relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004). “What used to be carried out as a matter of course now has to be discussed, justified, negotiated and agreed, and for that very reason it can always be cancelled” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995, p 7). This precariousness of love and romantic relationships, therefore speaks to the uncertainty of love and commitment in a relationship (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002).

The feelings of uncertainty and fear of personal failure brought on by the precarious freedoms of individualization, led to an increase in the availability and development of professional support and advice (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The rationalizing of love by experts has created, argue Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, a perfected or idealized love that is “safe, calculable and medically optimized” (1995, p 141). This rational love, I argue, is presented by online match-making services as both necessary and possible.

The reasoning for wanting to rationalize love is grounded in an attempt to avoid loneliness (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). One wants and desires to be in a loving relationship, but is constantly up against the difficulty and conflicts posed by joining individual and self-chosen life paths (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The belief in an ideal or true love thus draws individuals in, in a hope at avoiding loneliness, but also causes individuals to terminate a relationship when two lives are incapable of coexisting because of the belief that with someone else they can (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). This is the hope and allure of finding a rationalized love online through match-making services. That one must find a perfect soul mate in order to happily coexist with that individual and make it through the problems and difficulties that will inevitably arise as each individual attempts to construct and navigate their own lives, together.

#### *Online Match-Making Services as Institutions*

Online match-making services can be understood as institutions that have the potential to influence members to engage in certain behaviours (i.e., time investment in site or online dating etiquette). Similar to the labour market where individuals are called to organize their lives in accordance to the demands of global market competitions, and be competitive, educated and mobile (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), individuals who are searching for love online must

also play by the rules of online match-making services in order to avoid the future misfortune of failing at love, from the perspective of these services.

Individuals become institutionalized through the processes of a 'disembedding' from traditional role-sets and life paths, and a 're-embedding' of the individual into various spaces and locations in society that must be negotiated by the individual (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Online match-making services have the potential to institutionalize individuals by assisting in the 're-embedding' process. That is, online match-making services provide guidance and assistance in negotiating some of the new uncertainties that have arisen due to the dissolution of role-sets in the second modernity. What these services attempt to provide is a means to find love and to educate their members on love. As such, members are institutionalized when they internalize and display the promoted meanings of love or the promoted behaviours used to acquire love. This thesis cannot address whether individuals actually become institutionalized by these services. Rather, this study is concerned with the potentiality and thus, what it is these services seek to inspire within their members.

Institutionalized individualism is useful for a discussion of online match-making services as it provides a perspective that highlights how individuals must come to live their lives due to the processes of modernization. That is, how external mechanisms (i.e., societal institutions) work to influence the individual into organizing their lives in a particular way (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Online match-making services also require the same organization. Therefore, using institutionalized individualism within this study enables an examination of these services from the perspective of how they conceive of love and relationships, and how they subsequently promote the organization of one's life in order meet the needs and requirements of love according to these services.

### ***Limitations of Institutionalized Individualism***

Institutionalized individualism enables a discussion of love and interpersonal relationships in relation to overarching societal processes. It illuminates the influence of modernization on one's quest for love and stability within a romantic relationship.

Institutionalized individualism poses some limitations to this study and has been criticized, especially for its discussion on class by many scholars. The criticism of Beck's work in relation to class does not possess much bearing for this study, but it does highlight some of the weaknesses of this theory.

Beck's work on institutionalized individualism has been widely criticized for its lack of a consistent and thorough definition. That is, several scholars have argued that Beck's discussion of individualism fluctuates and is contradictory in some instances (Atkinson, 2007; Elchardusa and De Keerea, 2010). Specifically, the issue of 'disembedding' and 're-embedding' within the process of individualization has garnered some attention. There are instances where Beck describes individualization as a 'disembedding' followed by a re-embedding, and in other discussions claims that there is only a 'disembedding' (Atkinson, 2007). Atkinson (2007, p 357) argues that this distinction is important to note as a 'disembedding' "indicates a more free floating existence". However, a 'disembedding' followed by a 're-embedding' consists of a re-positioning of individuals within "new social relations and ties, and new modes of 'reintegration and control'" (Atkinson, 2007, p 357).

Moreover, Elchardusa and De Keerea (2010, p 744) argue that the detraditionalization which Beck perceives as leading to individualization can actually be demonstrated as leading to a "new mode of social control". That is, the self becomes the impetus of control. As such, they propose that detraditionalization should not be assumed to lead to individualization. Rather, the

influence of institutions is only possible because of a new mode of self-control. This self-control is subsequently made possible through detraditionalization (Elchardusa and De Keerea, 2010). This argument fails to acknowledge that institutions acting on individuals can lead to new measures of self-control because of the demands of the welfare state, education system or labour market. However, what Elchardus and De Keerea's (2010) study makes apparent, is that a more precise definition of institutionalized individualism is needed.

These criticisms are important to discuss in relation to this study for as a researcher I am required to negotiate my own understanding and interpretations of institutionalized individualism because it is not clearly defined. Thus, a limitation of this study is that the definition and subsequent application of institutionalized individualism may not be entirely reflective of Beck's theory. (See Beck, 2000; Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004). However, within this study a working definition of the processes of individualism has been provided and every attempt has been made to ensure it is reflective as much as possible to Beck's work.

### ***Conclusion***

Through the discussion of the key concepts of individualization, precarious freedoms and the self-biography, this chapter has argued that the pursuit of a rational love online can be understood through the process of individualization. The increased dependence on institutions, expert knowledge, and the changing face and role of love in Western society brought on by individualization, highlights the purpose and functions of online match-making services. Online match-making sites promote their ease and efficiency at finding love online and their grounding of relationship advice and match-making methodologies in expert knowledge. These services have also been shown in this chapter to aid in the management of uncertainty through the promotion of expert knowledge and assistance with planning a life of one's own. Lastly, the

experience of fusing two separate lives in Canadian society as something that requires an ideal love, supports the promotion of an attempt to rationalize love online by online match-making services. Thus, the experience and conceptualization of love brought on by the process of individualization in Western society has changed how one participates in and defines their romantic relationships. It is this contribution of individualization to the understanding of love that will aid in my analysis and discussion of the pursuit of a rational love online.

The following chapter will present the findings from the data analysis. It will also present a discussion of the key findings in relation to the literature. Three core categories emerged from the data analysis process. These three core categories: (1) exaggerating the notion of an uncertain love, (2) granting access to 'secret knowledge' and (3) imparting individual responsibility, characterize the processes of a 'rationalization' of love made by these institutions of expert knowledge. The following chapter will argue that it is this 'rationalization' of love that ultimately leads to an (un)certain path to love.

### **Chapter Three: Love Quest: An (Un)certain Path to Love**

Past research on online dating has focused on the location or space where the relationships were initiated and the subsequent impact that this had on relationship expectations (Whitty et al., 2007). This study takes a similar approach. It examines the promotion and conceptualization of love, and romantic relationships made by online match-making services. It also analyses the explicit processes that are presented by these online services. This chapter outlines the ‘rationalization’ of love made by these services.

This chapter appears in six sections. The impact of grounded theory on data interpretation and analysis will be presented in section one. Section two compares the three online match-making services used in this study. It discusses the major similarities and differences that exist between the sites. Each site promotes a specific orientation to love and relationships. These differing perspectives come to affect not only how love is defined, but also how love can be created.

The following three sections address the research data. Section three discusses the promotion of love in society, and the difficulty in finding and maintaining love that is put forth by these services. It is this feeling of uncertainty that leads to the necessity of online match-making services. Thus, section four presents the claim to ‘secret knowledge’ that online match-making services argue they possess. It is this ‘secret knowledge’ that not only attracts individuals to their site, but that also allows for the creation of love. Section five will discuss these services’ views on the individual’s role in their quest for love. These services argue, for example, that ultimately it is the individual’s responsibility to foster and maintain a loving relationship, even though the services guarantee that one will find love with their services. Lastly, section six will conclude this chapter and provide a critique of these online match-making services.

### ***Using Grounded Theory***

This chapter presents the analysis of five online match-making websites using constructivist grounded theory. Grounded theory offers a systematic approach to qualitative research. As an inductive research methodology the data is meant to guide the research process, not the researcher's held ideas and biases on the social phenomenon under study (Mills, Bonner and Francis, 2006). However, as an interpretive method of research the results gleaned from the analysis are a product of social and cultural contexts (Charmaz, 2009).

The flexibility of constructivist grounded theory allows the researcher to possess “guiding empirical interests” and “sensitizing concepts” that shape the research process (Charmaz, 2006, p 16). Using the concepts and theoretical assertions of institutionalized individualism attuned me to particular processes and potentialities in the data. Conversely, I utilized the sites' own words to describe the processes of the ‘rationalization’ of love online in order to illuminate my analysis of the data. I immersed myself, as much as possible, into the challenges and benefits of participating in a match-making site. I took all personality/relationship questionnaires from the examined sites' and poured over profile tools, subscription plans, online relationship advice, safety tips and dating advice categories.

### ***Online Match-Making Services***

As outlined in chapter one, there are three categories of online dating sites: (1) search/sort/match systems, (2) personality matching systems, and (3) social network systems (Barret and Henry-Waring, 2008). This study is concerned with the first two categories, as the online match-making websites analysed in this thesis provide matching, searching and/or personality matching software for its members. In order to aid in the discussion of the analysis of the three online match-making services a brief explanation of each website will be presented as it



is important to address what these online services are and what they claim to provide for their members. I will first provide a description of eHarmony.com. This will be followed by a discussion of PerfectMatch.com and lastly, Match.com will be examined.

### *eHarmony.com*

eHarmony entered into the world of online dating in 2000, boasting that it is the first online dating service to make use of scientific methodologies in order to match its clients. Dr. Neil Clark Warren, cofounder of eHarmony, was a practicing clinical psychologist for 35 years counselling married couples. It was this experience that led him to believe that compatibility is the most important contributor to a successful marriage. Dr. Warren subsequently created eHarmony along with Greg Forgatch, who currently sits on the Board of Directors at eHarmony.

eHarmony claims that it is not a dating site. Rather, eHarmony is about creating long-term committed relationships that will eventually lead to a successful marriage. Originally, eHarmony only matched heterosexual couples. However, eHarmony has recently launched Compatible Partners, a match-making website for same-sex couples, based on eHarmony's research on heterosexual married couples. For eHarmony and its sister website Compatible Partners, the goal is to bring together individuals who are committed to establishing long-term romantic relationships.

eHarmony's matching system, for its main and sister site, is based on 29 Dimensions of Compatibility that are presented as the important components of personality. These 29 Dimensions of Compatibility are said to be able to predict long-term relationship success. The 29 Dimensions are divided into core traits and vital attributes. Core traits are emotional temperament, social style, cognitive mode, and physicality. These traits, according to eHarmony, stay relatively unchanged throughout the duration of one's adult life and characterize who one is

as a person. Vital attributes are relationship skills, values and beliefs, and important experiences. These attributes tend to change during one's adult life and are defined by one's personal experiences. It is from the vital attributes and core traits that eHarmony comes to match its clients through their personality questionnaire.

eHarmony requires all of its clients to fill out a relationship questionnaire, which will enable them to match their clients with other compatible matches. (Please see Appendix A for a sample of eHarmony's questionnaire). eHarmony members are not able to search through profiles, but are instead dependent on eHarmony to provide them with matches that they will feel a 'connection' with. Filling out the questionnaire and reviewing one's matches is free. If one wants to view pictures of potential partners or communicate with matches, a membership fee applies. A basic plan includes the ability to view photos, request photos of matches, see who has viewed one's profile, and send and receive communication requests. In addition, by subscribing to the total connect plan members also have the ability to talk on the phone without needing to share one's phone number and an additional personality analysis is available.

To aid in the development of a strong, lasting relationship eHarmony provides its members with 'expert guidance'. Members have access to relationship advice articles that cover a wide range of topics and are geared towards particular dating categories. For example, Christian dating and dating after divorce, are just two of the many advice categories available. eHarmony also conducts scientific research and publishes their findings online through their eHarmony Labs website.

Members can also choose whether or not they want to participate in the 'guided communication process', which provides suggestions for ice breakers, questions to ask and not ask, as well as what information to share or withhold when one first begins communicating with

a match. Conversely, members can also choose to ‘face-track’. This choice allows members to immediately move into ‘open communication’, which includes emailing and phone calls at one’s own pace. What also must be noted is that eHarmony is pointing out that one should not waste one’s time. In other words, that members need to ask certain questions, such as how much money one earns or how many children one would like to have, and if the answers received do not coincide with one’s own values or lifestyle then one needs to move on, before one becomes too invested in the relationship. The importance of time is very much a component of eHarmony.

### *PerfectMatch.com*

PerfectMatch, like eHarmony, arose out of over 30 years of scientific research. PerfectMatch was founded by a team of individuals, three of which work as part of the PerfectMatch management team, and one, Dr. Pepper Schwartz, acts as the resident relationship expert. Launching in 2003, PerfectMatch claims to be the first online match-making service to use the Duet Total Compatibility system. This Duet system enables PerfectMatch to match an individual based on more than just compatibility. Rather, PerfectMatch claims to match members based on the ‘whole’ individual. That is, members are matched using several different self-assessment tools looking at one’s values and ideals, personality, personal preferences, life and lovestyle, and one’s love and money assessment that are then gathered through the completion of PerfectMatch’s questionnaire. (Please see Appendix B for an example of the PerfectMatch questionnaire). The completion of the questionnaire produces a Duet analysis that is used to match each member with their ‘perfect’ match. Unlike eHarmony, PerfectMatch matches both same-sex and opposite-sex couples through one site. Similar to eHarmony, the goal of PerfectMatch is to foster long-term committed romantic relationships. PerfectMatch guarantees that their members will find success on their site with their ‘love guarantee’.

Besides providing members with matches through their Duet system, PerfectMatch also allows members to search through profiles using three different search tools. The ability to search through profiles by oneself is presented to members as a way to save time. Thus, members do not need to wait for matches to be shown to them, but can actively seek out partners through search and filter tools. To aid in the initial communication process between matches, PerfectMatch provides members with 'ice breakers'. 'Ice breakers' are pre-written questions by PerfectMatch that are used to assist members 'break the ice' with their matches. Like eHarmony, PerfectMatch acknowledges that initial communication between matches can be difficult for some members, therefore, in an attempt to lessen this burden on members, assistance is provided to help members build a romantic connection through written communication. Members also have access to the expert knowledge of Dr. Schwartz, who answers member relationship and PerfectMatch questions. PerfectMatch also provides specific dating advice based on age, ethnicity, religion and lifestyle.

PerfectMatch maintains three membership levels. Their basic plan is free and allows members to receive matches, have access to dating advice articles and send level one 'ice breakers' through PerfectMatch. However, the ability to send emails and level one and two 'ice breakers', search profiles, receive the 'love guarantee' and ask Dr. Schwartz relationship advice is restricted to premium members. The platinum membership provides the same features as the premium plan, but also allows members to communicate with basic plan members and designates members as part of their featured profile. That is, platinum members come up higher in search results over other memberships. Similar to eHarmony, PerfectMatch acknowledges that their services may cost more than other online dating sites. However, PerfectMatch argues that the high cost of finding love is worth what members will receive in return.

*Match.com*

Match.com claims to be one of the first online dating sites, beginning as an online personal ad database in 1995. Match.com has evolved into a more advanced personal ad site; now matching members based on personal preferences and desired qualities in a potential partner. For example, what interests one wants their partner to pursue and what occupation one would like their partner to have, are used to help match members. (For more information on the Match.com questionnaire please see Appendix C). Matches are provided through the 'daily 5'. That is, everyday members can receive up to five new matches. Members may also receive a 'singled out' match. This form of matching provides members with an individualized match that is suited to a member's specific wants or needs based on provided information. Conversely, members can also search through profiles on their own using four different search and filter functions. This site maintains a very individualized approach to dating, whereby matches are presented as being unique to an individual's desired partner criteria, which is impacted by particular individual qualities.

As an additional tool for its members, Match.com has launched Chemistry.com. Chemistry.com is a separate site that matches members based on personality. The relationship expert for this site is Dr. Helen Fisher, a biological anthropologist. Similar to the two previously discussed sites, Chemistry.com claims to be based on 30 years of scientific research. Offering personalized matches, Chemistry.com also provides several tools to aid in relationship formation and maintenance. For example, 'First Meeting' is a tool designed by Chemistry to help lessen the burden and stress associated with meeting a match face-to-face for the first time. Individuals send a 'First Meeting' request to a match they would like to get to know better through a face-to-face meeting. Chemistry then suggests locations for a 'First Meeting'; however, members

ultimately have the ability to decide where they would like to meet. After the 'First Meeting' each match provides feedback on this meeting and their match. Certain elements of this feedback are then shared with the individuals involved. Specifically, Chemistry informs each individual if either of them would like to pursue or end the relationship. Chemistry's tools are meant to save time and energy for their members, but also ease any awkwardness or embarrassment associated with declining or wishing to pursue a relationship with their match. Thus, Chemistry acknowledges that dating can be extremely difficult and uncomfortable for some people and tries to compensate for this by integrating tools and services that leave the individual dependent on Chemistry to do the communicating on behalf of the individual.

Time is also an important component of Chemistry and Match.com. Through the Chemistry site, members can 'nudge' other members. In other words, members can send an email reminder to individuals who have not responded to requests or messages within 48 hours. As well, Match.com has created a mobile application for smart phones. That is, members have the ability to access Match.com through their cell phone at anytime. MatchMobile also presents matches within geographical proximity to a member's location using GPS technology. Thus, members can search for matches close to their workplace, home or gym. These services highlight the desire and need for efficiency in the online dating world, by not only demanding quick responses from members, but also through the desire for constant access to potential matches.

To assist members with their dating troubles and enquiries Match.com publishes an online relationship advice magazine called *Happen*. Contributors of *Happen* are a mix of 'experts' as showcased by their academic credentials, freelance writers, and coaches, both relationship and astrological. Articles are predominantly geared towards heterosexual couples; same-sex articles are largely available within advice columns for strictly gay and lesbian

relationship advice. This is interesting to note, even though Match.com matches same and opposite sex couples there is an emphasis on heterosexual couples present throughout the site. Advice is also geared specifically for Christian dating, deciphering one's astrological signs, and love online. These are just a few of the many topics covered by *Happen*. Several of the articles are also published within eHarmony's online advice articles, particularly from authors that possess academic credentials and are understood to be 'experts' in the field of love and relationships.

Similar to eHarmony and PerfectMatch, Match.com offers more services to subscribed members. All subscription plans allow members to see when a match has received one's sent email, or viewed one's profile. It also allows members to communicate with other matches and receive 'singled out' matches. More importantly, subscribers' profiles are shown more frequently and sent sooner to new members than non-subscribers. As well, subscribers have the ability to make their profiles more attractive using colour and special formatting. When online services have members numbered in the millions, the ability to set oneself apart by being shown to, or matched with new members more frequently than non-subscribers, this can have an impact on which members receive more requests and communication by other members for potential dates, and which members have more difficulty attracting a partner.

All three websites possess many similarities, but also maintain distinct differences. The following sections of this chapter will discuss how these websites attempt to 'rationalize' love and the impact that these differences have on their strategies of 'rationalizing' love online. As such, understanding the individual operations of each site will shed light on these processes and provide an analysis of how, together, these sites may impact one's quest for love online.

### *A 'Rational' Quest for Love*

From the data analysis three strategies emerged describing how love is 'rationalized' in particular ways by online match-making services. For this study a 'rationalized' love is understood as the employment of expert assistance and guidance. That is, a 'rationalized' love is a love based on 'scientific' expertise that is used to produce 'scientifically ideal' matches, in order to foster longevity and a 'perfect' romantic love. This conceptualization of a 'rational' love differs greatly from previous understandings of its meaning. For example, a 'rational' love can also be used to define a marriage relationship that was economically advantageous for two families. This study's attempt to understand the pursuit of a 'rational' love is not the first of its kind. However, it differs by its exclusive examination of online match-making services and the potential for a 'scientific' love. (1) Exaggerating the notion of an uncertain love, (2) granting access to 'secret knowledge' and (3) imparting individual responsibility, are used by online match-making services to promote the necessity of their services and to showcase the role of the individual in acquiring and maintaining love. Thus, online match-making services position themselves as essential for the creation of love, because of the increased difficulties associated with finding love in Western society, but ultimately place the blame for failure to attract a potential partner, even after using their services, on the individual. That is, the individual is presented as not participating adequately in the site and its services, which subsequently leads to personal failure at love. Figure 1 presents the relationship between the three strategies utilized by online match-making services to construct a 'rational' love and thus, the necessity of their services.



I argue that the ‘rationalization’ of love produced by these institutions of expert knowledge leads to a (un)certain path to love. That is, even though these services claim to lessen the uncertainty of love by providing ‘ideal’ or ‘perfect’ matches, ultimately more uncertainties are generated and previous uncertainties are reinforced. These uncertainties take the form of one’s personal wants and needs, the insecurities of deception, the difficulty associated with understanding the opposite sex and the difficulty associated with living a self-chosen life within a romantic relationship. By delineating the properties of the core categories that characterize the expression of a ‘rational’ love online, I will examine the emergence of this (un)certain path to love.

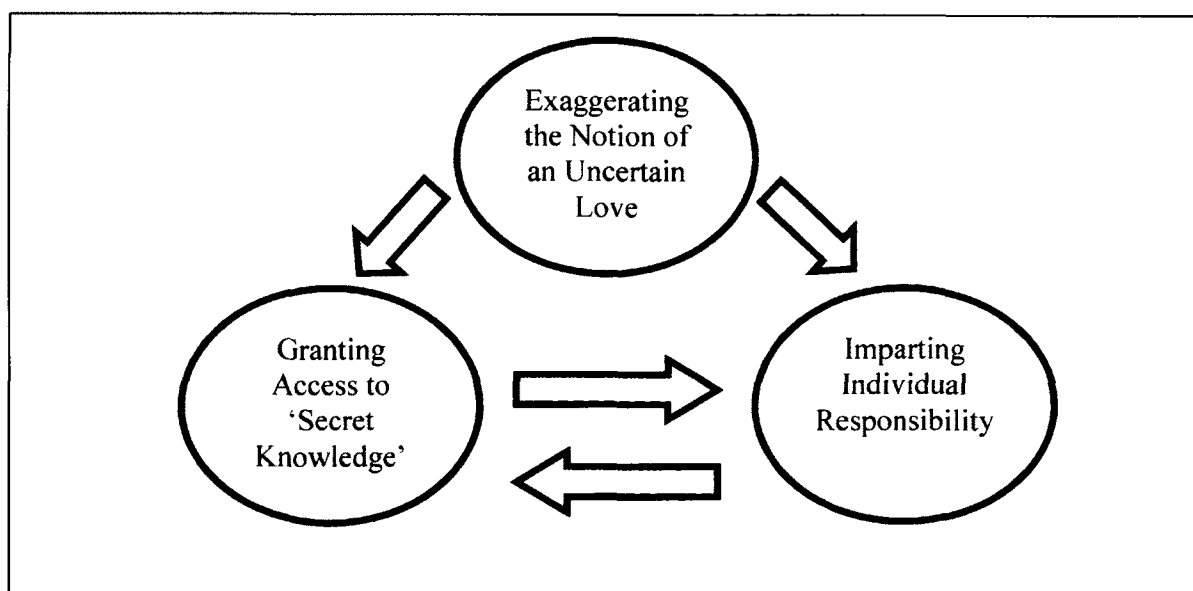


Figure 1. ‘*Rationalization*’ of Love

The following section will discuss the uncertainty of love. The use of a ‘secret knowledge’ by these services will be examined in section four. Section five will address the issue of individual responsibility and personal failure. Lastly, section six will present a critique of the online match-making services.

### ***Exaggerating the Notion of an Uncertain Love***

The exaggeration of the uncertainty of love by online match-making services refers to the overt emphasis on the difficulty of finding and maintaining a romantic relationship in Western society. It also refers indirectly to the necessity of an 'ideal' or 'perfect' love, in order to make it through the inevitable difficulties that will arise within a relationship. It is an approach that recognizes individual and societal factors' role in the formation, maintenance and understanding of love. The notion of uncertain love impact individuals by causing them to expect the dissolution of a relationship based on a number of different circumstances. The uncertainty of love manifests as internal to the individual, as well as externally. The individual is presented as having little or no control over either. By portraying love as something that is difficult to find and maintain, online match-making services position themselves as a superior alternative to traditional offline dating strategies and, subsequently, foster a belief in the necessity of their services.

This understanding of society as having a negative impact on romantic relationships has been shown in other studies. For example, Brym and Lenton's (2001) study on Canadian online daters found that individuals turn to online dating sites because of the demands of the labour market and the issue of sexual harassment in the workplace. The workplace is perceived as no longer providing a viable pool of potential romantic partners. The similarities between the literature and the online dating sites' understanding of the difficulty of finding love in society highlights these services' acknowledgement of the impact of societal factors on the individual and their quest for love. How these difficulties are then problematized will be discussed in the following portions of this section.

*Cautioning on the Dangers of Love*

The uncertainty of love means that there are love dangers. In other words, there are certain actions or behaviours that an individual does or does not do, or that he or she may not know about love, that creates this uncertainty of love. For example,

We all know the first signs of love: Intense interest in the other person; a quickening pulse when he or she enters the room; consuming thoughts about them when they are gone; desire for their approval; desire for union; and knowing that their love is valuable, special, and unique in your life.

But is that really love? Are those feelings you can trust, or that you can use to make a commitment to help guide you to stay when things get rocky.

You know it's not easy to tell the difference sometimes. Because when there is strong attraction and physical desire for another person, anything your head wants to tell you that might be negative, your heart can over power  
(<http://www.perfectmatch.com/onlinedating/love/are-you-in-love.asp>).

and,

Given that definition, plenty of singles might want to get a mental health check-up. Why? Because lots of men and women are attracted to potential partners they're pretty sure are wrong for them—confirmed by a history of failed relationships—but convince themselves that “This time it’s going to be different!”  
(<http://advice.eharmony.ca/article/are-you-attracted-to-the-wrong-type.html>).

The passages illustrate the potential for individuals to not know what they really need or want in a relationship. This lack of knowledge on love, or love ignorance, is portrayed as a cycle of failed attempts at love that will not stop until someone intervenes. Individuals are unaware of their love ignorance and continue to make the same mistakes at love, over and over again. The failed attempts at love occur because individuals do not know what love means or entails. Furthermore, individuals are presented as actively engaging in activities that sabotage their chances at love.

The nature of society itself is also presented as acting on the individual to produce in them a desire to be efficient, hardworking and career-oriented. Thus, individuals are presented as

constructing self-biographies that are bound to the labour market (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Consequently, individuals suffer from the pressures of time constraints. This leads individuals to not invest an adequate amount of time to their relationship, if they are in one, or to finding a partner. The following passage from a PerfectMatch article showcases these points:

You've made the decision that no matter what, it's high time you devoted some time to looking for love. Problem is, you don't know how to do it. The idea sounds great, but by the time you are through with work, household issues, seeing friends, doing basic personal maintenance and handling everyday crises, you fall into bed...single another week, month, year or even years. If this describes you, even a little, it's time to get serious and change your life. Here are 10 pointers to help you do it. If you even do half of them, you will make enough time to date, fall in love, and eventually, commit to a life partner. If you do all of them, you speed up the time it takes to do all that to warp speed! (<http://drpepperschwartz.com/Relationships.asp>).

Thus, dating and love is not something that happens to someone. Rather, one needs to construct their life in such a way as to provide time to actively seek out and create love. Studies show that increasing numbers of the single population are following this advice and are turning to online dating services in order to actively seek out love (Henry-Waring and Barraket, 2008). This is important to note, because it shows that individuals feel, in increasing numbers, that they must do something in order to find a romantic partner. As such, traditional dating strategies (i.e., offline dating strategies) are, for many singles, no longer as beneficial in Western society.

Love is presented as essential to one's life and something that one should invest time in. Love is a "refuge" for individuals living in a society that no longer blindly accepts traditions. Love, therefore, is now held to a higher esteem and is presented as the only constant in one's life, if one can find it (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The notion that love is something that requires an active search and that there is a personal responsibility to find love is present within the site's discussion of the dangers of love. While the risk exists that one may never find love

because of individual internal factors, online match-making services also warn daters of the risks that exist outside of one's relationship that can threaten its longevity and commitment.

Individuals must also be wary of the potential that someone outside of the relationship will try and "steal" or "poach" one's partner. Thus, individuals can never be certain if their relationship will last. For example, an article within Match.com's *Happen* magazine illuminates this discussion,

No wonder we tend to co-opt that term when it comes to romantic relationships. "Partner poaching" — in other words, "stealing" someone who's already taken — can be disastrous, even affecting friendships.

Despite its inherent danger, partner poaching remains fairly common. A survey conducted by the International Sexuality Description Project, founded by Schmitt, revealed that up to 20 percent of long-term relationships began when one or both partners were involved with someone else. In the U.S., 62 percent of men and 40 percent of women said they'd tried to mooch someone else's mate; 47 percent of men and 32 percent of women were successfully stolen away (<http://lifestyle.msn.com/relationships/article.aspx?cp-documentid=23528262>).

Here, love is presented as fragile. It is something that can be easily 'stolen' away. This is exasperated by the notion that there are only a limited number of people that one can truly fall in love with. Thus,

Out of all the singles you may meet online, very few of those individuals are actually compatible with you, and it can be challenging to determine the level of compatibility of a potential partner through traditional online dating methods — browsing profiles and photos. Determining compatibility could take years of dating and interaction. At eHarmony, we do the work for you (<http://www.eharmony.com/christian-dating>).

Therefore, there are very few people one can truly be happy with. This leads individuals to desire a way to find this 'ideal' love in a more efficient manner and online match-making services are presented as a means to this. At the same time, an inherent danger of this love is the difficulty that arises when two individuals attempt to merge two separate lives.

Individuals construct their own self-biographies because the welfare state acts on individuals to organize their lives in individualistic terms (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). As such, individuals need to live a life of their own (Beck, 2000). It is this desire to live one's own life that creates difficulties in merging two independent lives (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; 2002; Beck and Willms, 2004). The re-entrance of many newly single daters creates increased difficulties in merging one's life with another. "When adults merge their lives, of course, they bring with them their histories, their families, and their hang-ups. It is stressful to constantly feel you must explain yourself to someone with whom you're in love" (<http://yahoo.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11699>).

Though the majority of online daters in Canada are single (80%), 31% of this single population are divorced (Brym and Lenton, 2001). The significance of this number is that divorced singles make up a large proportion of the single online dating population. Thus, extra "baggage" is attached to individuals who have gone through a divorce or have been widowed. Not only does the couple need to learn how to bring their two lives together, but the potential for two separate sets of children also need to be factored into the decision to merge two lives. A successful merger is perceived as pivotal to the success or failure of a relationship, as outlined in the following quote taken from the PerfectMatch website,

Part of making that relationship healthy and happy is working on the flaws-and giving generously of oneself so that when hard times come, there is a lot of positive history to counter balance the inevitable problems that come with intimacy and fusion. There is the need to maintain oneself, one's identity and the things that make life fulfilling and factor in the needs of a relationship: compromise, communication and negotiation. It is the process of seeking balance- so that both partners can give and grow - but also keep their personal integrity and individual formula for happiness. Putting it all together isn't easy-and that's what causes the growth-and with it, personal pride in becoming a better, more flexible, more empathetic person ([http://www.perfectmatch.com/pepper/columns/column\\_april10.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/pepper/columns/column_april10.asp)).

The above passage stresses the importance of staying true to oneself and one's identity, but also needing to balance the needs of a relationship. The merging of two lives is presented as difficult because it requires that each individual allows their partner to also express their own personal identity. Neither partner can try to change the other's sense of self, or move one's sense of identity from the individual, to the couple or family unit. Thus, individuals are required to live a self-chosen life, while navigating the precarious freedom that is love as a couple (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). Love is also presented as the key to personal growth. That is, one cannot achieve personal fulfillment or improvement without the merging of two lives and the subsequent 'give and take' that is necessary for love to survive. The uncertainty of love is also grounded in inherent differences between males and females. A lack of understanding of the opposite sex can leave one unable to attract an opposite sex partner.

#### *Positioning Males and Females as Love Opponents*

The uncertainty of love also means that men and women have difficulty not only expressing themselves in ways the opposite sex will understand, but also, that each sex does not know or understand what the opposite wants and needs in a relationship. This creates difficulties in merging two individual lives and also maintaining committed relationships.

Women, more often than men, are presented as the least aware of their desired wants and needs. Females are portrayed as wanting to control the relationship, its progression and the man she is romantically involved with. This can be seen in the following example,

This nonspoken agreement is ironic: After she snags her tough guy, the woman who *thought* she wanted Rambo decides he's really Dumbo — too distant and unwieldy to love. So she replaces Marlboro Man with Marshmallow Man, whom she believes it is her mission to mould. See, somewhere in her upbringing, she deduced that she's the Relationship Police, and no man is complete until she "fixes" him. Unfortunately, her new and improved model soon loses his appeal because this guy has become a backbone-challenged jellyfish without spine or spurs. Now the woman complains he's too soft! *What a relationship mess!*

and, from the same article,

**Rule 6:** Don't let a woman try to change anything about you with which you are content — unless you're into dangerous or unhealthy acts. Display your strength by projecting *who* you are and let her know you're happy *as* you are (<http://www.match.com/magazine/article.aspx?trackingid=516307&bannerid=566769&lid=0&articleid=11060>).

This article is directed at male daters in order to educate them on why they should not let a woman change who they are. Conversely, it is also an educational tool for women. That is, women can learn from this article if the behaviours discussed mirror those that they enact within relationships. Either way, the passage highlights the indecisiveness of females and their ulterior motives of wanting to change every man that they are involved in a relationship with. Here, females do not know what they want and need in a relationship. They are also presented as not knowing what 'type' of man they are looking for. As well, males are presented as at fault for also not knowing what they want and need in a relationship, and by not catering to their own individual desires.

More options become available within the second modernity for understanding romantic relationships (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). As such, individuals are presented by these services as struggling with their new freedom from stringent gender relations. Women and men can demand more (or less) from their romantic partners (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995); thus, there are now 'types' of women and men one can choose from. These different 'types' of women and men must now be negotiated, evaluated and defined. Here, these institutions of expert knowledge suggest that the uncertainty of love arises when males and females do not understand what each conceives as a 'successful' relationship or how either perceives love. The difference in how each sex approaches relationships causes uncertainty in the relationship if each partner is not aware of this difference between the sexes.



Moreover, the expectations that males and females are presented as having for relationships also differ significantly. For example, “[l]adies, are you confused by guys who come on strong during your first date then quietly disappear, never to call you again? Maybe it’s time to adjust your dating expectations with these five tips” (<http://www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11775>). Males are presented as less serious when it comes to relationships. The development of intimacy within a relationship is also presented by these services as occurring in a slower progression for males than females. That is, males may not possess the same feelings towards a relationship and their “partner” as a female may have at the same time.

Studies that examine male and female online relationships present some contradictory findings. Brym and Lenton (2001) found that in their study on Canadian online daters, that both males and females cited the desire to find a long-term relationship similarly as a main motivation for using online dating services; 58% and 60% respectively. As well, that males (53%) utilized online dating forums to find sexual partners more so than females (20%) (Brym and Lenton, 2001). Conversely, a study conducted by Hardey (2008) examined male and female expectations for their online relationships. Hardey (2008) found that females desired committed relationships, whereas males were more concerned with fantasy and role-playing online. Males tend to feel no commitment to an online partner because they interpret the internet as an unreal space (Hardey, 2008). The difference between these studies may be due to the space or location online. Brym and Lenton (2001) analysed users of online personal ads in Canada, whereas Hardy (2008) examined online newsgroup threads in the UK that focused on online dating experiences. Neither study focused on the online daters that have used online match-making services. However, the argument that males and females may have different relationship expectations online is a

possibility, according to the literature. Therefore, these institutions reinforce the uncertainty of love that males and females maintain conflicting relationship expectations.

This uncertainty of love and relationships caused by differing expectations for a relationship can leave females unsure as to what they did wrong to potentially drive a partner away. This notion that one can actively increase or decrease one's chances at love will be discussed in greater detail later in this section. However, linked to this notion of an active participation in finding love, are the expectations that males and females have for a 'successful' date. This can be seen in the following example,

As you've probably discovered by now, men and women have very different concepts of what makes for a successful first date. If you're a guy, just making it to the end of dinner without spilling your drink means you've practically scored; women, however, tend to pay more attention to complicated stuff like courtesy, conversation, and charisma  
([www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11305](http://www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11305)).

Thus, not being aware of what the opposite sex expects during a first date can lead to misperceptions over the possibility of future dates. Males and females are presented as attributing success to different factors. These factors are in-line with stereotypical ideals of males and females. Females are more concerned with talking and sharing, and the potential qualities of a man as a potential partner, whereas males are concerned with just making it through the date. These inherent differences between males and females create difficulties in attracting a partner and maintaining a relationship as each sex is ignorant of what the opposite sex wants or needs. Therefore, individuals require assistance in deciphering what their partner's needs are and what expectations a member of the opposite sex may possess. Here, there is a positioning of online match-making services as a necessity in order to create a meaningful relationship between males and females. How these services attempt to combat the differences between the sexes will be discussed in the following section.

Though these services claim to take the uncertainty out of love by grounding their match-making methods in ‘scientific’ expertise, the promotion of the uncertainty of love made by these services, and specifically, the divide that is created between the sexes can be seen as generating more uncertainties of love. Individuals are expected to not just know and understand their own personal desires within a relationship and conceptualization of love, but also what their partner wants and needs, and as a member of the opposite sex, how their partner understands love. It is the creation of new responsibilities for their members made by these institutions that leads to an increase in the uncertainties of love.

### *Taking a Chance on Love*

The uncertainty of love also means that individuals make an active contribution to either increase or decrease their chance at success with love. Thus, individuals can learn how to improve their ability to attract and maintain a relationship through specific education that is put forth by these match-making services. The belief that one can increase their chances at love leads to the assertion that one should not give up on love and that one should continue searching for love no matter what, or how long it takes. This is demanded by these institutions of expert knowledge by requiring individuals to organize their lives in relation to these match-making services. This will be discussed in greater detail throughout this chapter.

Thus, love is a skill that must be mastered or the individual may be faced with a lifetime of loneliness. Individuals must organize their lives as a planning project in order to account for future misfortune, through the endless analyzing, evaluating, calculating and defining that is demanded by the process of individualization (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Individuals have a personal responsibility to find love. Love becomes understood as something that is impacted by one’s choices and actions as individuals are required to live a self-chosen life. Thus,

Tired of hanging around at the local coffee shop in the hope of meeting someone special? Don't leave love up to chance! Meet compatible local singles online at eHarmony. eHarmony has matched thousands of local singles for happy, fulfilling relationships that last. The single guy or girl next door could be your next date, and that date could be the best one of your life (<http://www.eharmony.com/local-dating>).

Therefore, individuals need to actively seek love in order to find it. The above example highlights the difficulty of dating and the need to do more than wait to have love present itself. Rather, individuals need to turn to other options in order to find love. This option is online match-making services. It is also the promotion of love as something that can be made easier or harder to achieve depending on one's actions and choices, that highlights the necessity of online match-making services and a 'rationalization' of love; whereby individuals only need the availability of a larger dating pool and access to a 'secret knowledge' on relationship success to find their 'ideal' love.

It is the perception of the uncertainty of love, according to these match-making services, that leads individuals to seek out, or require the assistance, advice and support of experts:

We realize it can be a challenge to meet other singles with whom you share common goals, interests, and backgrounds within your geographical area, and eHarmony can help. The eHarmony membership pool is a racially, ethnically, and religiously diverse group of quality individuals, hailing from all 50 states and approximately 200 countries. No matter what type of person you are looking for, chances are you will find that type of person on eHarmony ([www.eharmony.com/black-dating](http://www.eharmony.com/black-dating)).

Thus, as would be assumed for any business wanting to make a profit, the online match-making services present themselves as a necessity because of the uncertainty of love. However, the necessity of these services operates under the guise of a true commitment to the individual to 'sell' them a product (love) that will last a lifetime. These services work under the presentation of their services as offering something that is of benefit to the individual that they would normally not have access to. This 'secret knowledge' allows the individual to accomplish in love and relationships what one would not be able to accomplish on his or her own. Thus, the granting

of access to 'secret knowledge' by these services is meant to ease the feelings of the uncertainty of love. This 'secret knowledge' is presented as information that the average person does not have access to independently, and thus is dependent on these institutions to share this 'secret knowledge' with them. These institutions of expert knowledge may come to influence individuals by producing in them a fear of love because it is presented as uncertain and difficult to obtain. Thus, individuals internalize an understanding of love that leads individuals to require these institutions to organize their lives in such a way as to achieve success at love.

The exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love shows a conceptualization of love and relationships that is similar to Beck and Beck-Gernsheim's (1995) examination of love as a precarious freedom within a society of institutionalized individualism. Individuals are faced with a rash of uncertainties and subsequently turn to secular "guiding agents" (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p 46), for support. Online match-making services emerge as a guide and mentor to all the 'ins and outs' of finding and falling in love. Individuals have become 'disembedded' from previous role-sets and life paths (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002), which is addressed by these services in the form of assistance and advice on how to maintain one's identity and how to navigate through the various 'types' of women and men that are available.

Moreover, this 'disembedding' is also seen through the difficulty of merging two independent lives. The dissolution of gender roles and norms within the second modernity (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995; 2002), means that the taken for granted assumption that women will curtail their career aspirations for their husband is replaced by two individuals, each with their own career goals, passions and interests, and neither is required to succumb to the wishes of the other if they choose not to. This section shows how precarious freedoms and self-biographies are

used by online match-making services to create the necessity of their services. The remaining sections will show how online match-making services can be understood as institutions.

### ***Granting Access to ‘Secret Knowledge’***

Access to ‘secret knowledge’ refers to the online match-making services possession and generation of expert knowledge on love and relationships. It means that these services provide members with information that they would not be privy to if it were not for these institutions of expert knowledge. This ‘secret knowledge’ is touted as leading to an ‘optimization’ of success. It also means that these websites construct a hierarchy of expertise, whereby each site claims to be the “leading” expert authority. By granting access to this ‘secret knowledge’ these institutions work on individuals to produce in them a certain understanding of love and what one needs in a relationship. Thus, individuals require the assistance of these institutions to show how individuals are to find and maintain love. That understanding of love begins with an in-depth understanding of the individual based on personality self-assessments, which are then interpreted by these services using their ‘secret knowledge’.

### ***Calculating Love***

This granting of access to ‘secret knowledge’ also refers to the calculating and creating of love by these services; predominantly using profiling based on extensive ‘scientific’ research. This combination of personality profiling and research is used to find compatibility amongst members. Thus,

We developed Duet®, our exclusive Total Compatibility System, with leading relationship authority Dr. Pepper Schwartz. Duet® is the result of over 30 years of scientific research. This unique system is grounded in a serious exploration of the characteristics that lead to successful relationships.

Duet® is proven to be more effective than any relationship tool on the Web. By identifying your traits, we determine your romantic compatibility type and suggest

ideal matches for you. And unlike the eHarmony® experience, you're free to accept those matches or do your own search based on any criteria you choose.

**ALLAN'S LETTERS: SCTE  
Structured, Compromising, Temperate,  
Extrovert**

Allan prefers structure in his life and likes to plan in advance. But he's willing to compromise. He is communicative, open and has a cooler temperament.

**JANE'S LETTERS: FDHE  
Flexible, Dominant, Hot,  
Extrovert**

Jane is intense, yet willing to be flexible. She is neither rule-bound nor compulsive even though she has strong opinions. She welcomes intimacy. Structured types are attracted to her flexibility.

**ARE THEY COMPATIBLE?**

Yes! In short, Allan, an SCTE, prefers structure but he's able to deal with conflict without ruffling feathers. Since he and Jane, an FDHE, both welcome intimacy and are communicative, they're likely to be very compatible.

(<http://www.perfectmatch.com/hp/duet/Duet14.asp?v=0&rt=/index.asp>).

Here, PerfectMatch is grounding its match-making services in a “leading” expert authority and research, and uses this knowledge to place individuals into specific personality groups, based on particular traits. These personality profiles are then used to determine compatibility. It is this calculating of love that allows for the ease and efficiency of receiving matches, selecting a partner and finding love, because it is grounded in the profiling and “expertise” of these services.

As a passage from the Match.com websites states,

**ONLINE DATING AT MATCH.COM**

Every year, hundreds of thousands of people find love on Match.com. Match.com pioneered the Internet dating industry, launching in 1995 and today serves millions of singles in 24 countries. Match.com continues to redefine the way single men and single women meet, flirt, date and fall in love, proving time and again that you can make love happen through online dating and that lasting relationships are possible. Match.com singles are serious about finding love. And Match puts you in control of your love life; meeting that special someone and forming a lasting relationship is as easy as clicking on any one of the photos and singles ads available online. Whether you're interested in Christian Dating, Jewish Dating, Asian Dating, Black Dating, Senior Dating, Gay Dating, Match.com can help you find the date or relationship that fits you best. Search free through all of our online personals. Literally, hundreds of

thousands of single men and single women right in your area have posted personal ads on Match.com (Match.com).

These services promote an individual approach to finding love that is steeped in gendered understandings of relationship wants and needs. That is, that one's individual characteristics produce unique matches that are special to the individual alone. However, members are grouped under general labels according to lifestyle, religion, ethnicity and personality. Most online match-making services do not disclose of their matching methods, and according to Houran et al., (2004) this makes them highly dangerous. The product that these services supply (eligible partners) will only be as "good" as the matching methods employed. As such, Houran et al., (2004) argue that individuals should not trust these services with their love lives because the services' matching methods have not been independently approved. Though the actual validity of these methods may be called into questions because of a lack of openness regarding the actual methods employed to match members, ultimately as this thesis suggests, individual responsibility plays an important role in relationship success or failure. Therefore, these services make claims to scientific knowledge, but leave the negotiation of decisions up to the individual members. Thus, even though these institutions may influence individuals in order to enable an 'optimization' of success, the validity of their methods is not as important because of the imparting of individual responsibility

This profiling of members made by these services, however, does not produce unique matches, but rather groups of individuals who will receive the same or similar matches, because their personalities determine which matches one will receive. PerfectMatch and Match.com are able to account for this by also allowing members to search for matches themselves. eHarmony, however, relies strictly on their personality and relationship questionnaire to find the 'ideal' match for their members. Thus,



### **Scientific Matching**

Out of all the people you will meet in your life, only a very few would make a great relationship partner for you. Some aren't attractive to you. Others aren't ready for a relationship. Of the rest, many are great people who you might enjoy spending time with initially, but they aren't compatible with you in the important ways that make long term relationships work. That's where eHarmony starts. By combining the best scientific research with detailed profiling of every member, we screen thousands of profiles to bring you only the ones that have the potential to be truly right for you ([www.eharmony.ca/why/science](http://www.eharmony.ca/why/science)).

eHarmony promotes the saving of time and energy by using their services, but also an inability, on part of their members, to find a match that will actually be suited to their needs and personality. The notion that these services maintain a 'secret knowledge' is apparent. That is, that eHarmony "knows" what an individual needs to make a relationship work. It is the understanding of love as a precarious freedom that leads individuals to struggle with defining what love is and means for them (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Through the process of modernization there are more options and understandings of love made available to individuals (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). In order to negotiate this, individuals are prompted to organize their lives in relation to these institutions of expert knowledge. This is accomplished by presenting members with definitions of what love means in contemporary society. By doing so, these institutions require individuals to organize their lives in order to meet the needs of what love entails according to these institutions.

The research and profiling utilized by these services is conducted in an attempt to create love through their matching technology and thus, define love for the individual. In order to create love these services need to define what love is. Chemistry.com provides a very specific neurological understanding of love,

Romantic love is one of three basic brain circuits that evolved for reproduction: the sex drive motivates all of us to look for a range of partners. Romantic love, the

elation and obsessive thinking that is produced when you first fall in love, focuses our mating energy on just one individual. Following that, attachment sets in, the calm and security you can feel with a long term mate, enabling you to sustain your relationship to rear your children as a team.

Romantic love is the most powerful, and the beginning of the cascade. And what we found in our brain scanning experiments is that romantic love is a drive, an instinct that arises from primitive parts of the brain associated with dopamine, a powerful stimulant. Romance is a chemical high, which is why your beloved begins to take "special meaning." As a man once said to me, "The world had a new center and that center was Mary" ([www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/interviewdrfisher.aspx](http://www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/interviewdrfisher.aspx)),

and, from eHarmony a slightly different perspective,

Psychologists have identified a "secret" to wonderful relationships: Our love for another person is strongly influenced by how that individual makes us feel about ourselves. Since one of the most potent motivations in life is to feel good about ourselves, we will be drawn to a person who gives a boost to our self-esteem. Some may say this principle sounds self-centered and egocentric, but it is a basic fact of human nature. And indeed this can be a powerful positive force: couples with the best relationships are the ones who encourage, praise, and build up each other (<http://advice.eharmony.ca/article/the-power-of-a-compliment.html>).

These services ground their understanding of love in expert knowledge. However, each provides a slightly different approach to understanding love. Chemistry, which maintains a biological anthropological conceptualization of love, presents love as chemical reactions in the brain, which creates intense emotional feelings toward another individual. Love is presented as a necessity and an innate compulsion. One's "instinct" is to seek out romantic love.

Conversely, eHarmony, which promotes a psychological perspective of love, explicitly states that their knowledge on love is not widely known, but can optimize one's success at love. Similar to Chemistry, love for eHarmony is a drive or "motivation" that leads people to seek out love. The success or failure of that relationship is then dependent on the way their partner makes them feel. Individuals are "motivated" to find sources that make them feel good about themselves and this is found in love. Here, online match-making services present their interpretation of love. It is then used to gauge the success or failure of one's relationships. By

deciphering what love is through 'scientific' research these services then claim to be able to calculate and find love for their members.

Studies have shown, however, that the claim to 'scientific' matching made by online match-making services has little impact on online daters expectations of romantic success facilitated by these services. Houran and Lange (2004) argue that overall, members of online match-making services do not possess unrealistic positive expectations of success. However, they do propose that individuals who are using online match-making services to find a serious relationship may maintain an 'optimistic bias', because these individuals are intent on finding a life partner (Houran and Lange, 2004). Thus, the intent behind the use of these services may impact the expectations that members have of these institutions' ability to foster romantic love. Therefore, the more intent one is on finding a romantic partner, arguably, the more likely one will internalize the sites' teachings, and trust in their 'secret knowledge' and its ability to produce 'ideal' matches.

The differing perspectives on love and the use of different forms of expertise utilized by these services, can lead individuals to be confused and uncertain regarding which advice to follow. When individuals are confronted with the need to organize one's life as a planning project, they turn to experts and specialists in order to find answers and solutions to the uncertainties that they face in a world of precarious freedoms. What ultimately arises, however, is the uncertainty of the expert advice provided, as individuals must scrutinize various forms of competing expert knowledge (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). These services then turn against each other in order to claim a superiority of expertise over other match-making services, both online and offline.

*Grounding Authority in a Hierarchy of Expertise*

Granting access to ‘secret knowledge’ means providing members with expert advice that will help lead to a successful relationship. This advice is grounded in the level of education received, the number of works published, media appearances, and current and previous occupations. Thus, the relationship experts made available to members of these services must be negotiated because of the differing forms of expertise provided. It is the perspective or educational background that guides the direction of the site. Therefore, what kind of relationship that is promoted and how to achieve relationship success, depends on the type of expert authority. How individuals will come to find love will slightly differ because of the differences in expertise. For example,

She’s a world-renowned biological anthropologist, author and expert in the science of human attraction. She spent the last 3 decades figuring out why love makes us go weak in the knees and causes our hearts to skip a beat. Her research has shown that we are searching for someone to complement us. And, that’s why we recruited her as the brains behind our personality profile ([www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/fisher.aspx](http://www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/fisher.aspx)).

and,

In 1997, after 35 years practicing as a clinical psychologist and counselling thousands of married couples, Dr. Neil Clark Warren had come to believe that there was a better way to find love than leaving it up to chance. He knew from his experience in clinical work that although some American marriages were ending in divorce, many others were deeply satisfying unions of two fulfilled individuals. He observed that, in many cases, the marriages that endured were composed of compatible people, while marriages that deteriorated often did so because the differences between the individuals became harder to resolve over time. What if he could define the traits most likely to lead to relationship success? Could certain characteristics predict compatibility and lead to more satisfying relationships? ([www.eharmony.com/about/eharmony](http://www.eharmony.com/about/eharmony)).

Each site claims to possess the true knowledge that will enable one to find long-term relationship success at love. Though the above passages highlight this difference in perspective: biological anthropologist and clinical psychologist; each arrives at the same outcome, but merely

takes a different approach to get there. That is, that love requires compatibility, that every individual needs someone that they share certain characteristics with and that are dissimilar with in other traits. The implications of these services taking different perspectives and knowledge to come to the same conclusion, is that there is an illusion of difference. This illusion of difference creates difficulties for the individual. One must now analyse and securitize these “different” forms of knowledge, in order to arrive at which service will provide one with the best chance at love.

The negotiation between different forms of expert knowledge can be seen as increasing the number of uncertainties of love because individuals need to decipher which service to use, which expert possesses the most authority and which site maintains the most successful path to love. These are new uncertainties that must be negotiated because the wrong choice has the potential to lead to personal failure at love.

These services try to differentiate themselves from other services by showcasing their academic credentials as reasoning for not only using their services, but to also claim superiority over other services. Thus,

The leading relationship expert in the nation, Dr. Schwartz holds the distinction of being the only relationship expert on the Web who's a published authority, as well as a professor at a major U.S. university. Dr. Schwartz has received many awards, including the Matrix Award for Achievement in Education, and the International Women's Forum Award in Career Achievement in Washington State. Dr. Schwartz is the author of 15 books and was recently named the national love and relationships Ambassador for AARP.

Dr. Schwartz appears frequently on network television, including "Oprah," "The Today Show," "Dateline NBC," "Good Morning America" and "CNN". Dr. Schwartz has contributed to many magazines, journals and newspapers including the New York Times "Parent and Child" column, Sexual Health, Psychology Today and Contexts. Dr. Schwartz is the author of more than 40 scholarly articles, and has served as a consultant to many national organizations. She lectures nationally and internationally on various relationship topics, women's issues, parent and child

issues, communication between men and women in intimate and work relationships, and maintaining personal and family well-being in today's world ([www.perfectmatch.com/pepper/bio.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/pepper/bio.asp)).

Here, the presentation of the relationship expert for PerfectMatch solidifies Dr. Schwartz's role and contribution to understanding love and romantic relationships. This is accomplished by distinguishing her from other online match-making experts, by grounding her expertise in her publications and media appearances. Thus, showing that other people want to hear what she has to say and, therefore, that having access to her 'secret knowledge' would be beneficial and trustworthy. This trustworthiness is grounded in how other people have legitimated what she is saying by publishing her work in academic journals and by wanting her to appear on popular television programs, like Oprah.

Conversely, expertise is also promoted by one's acceptance in the academic community and general public, and also through one's experiences and level of research. Dr. Fisher, the relationship expert for Chemistry.com, bases her expertise on her vast knowledge of the experience of love cross-culturally. However, she also identifies with the general public and the sentiment that there is an element of "magic" to love. Thus,

**What have all your years of studying romantic love done for you?**

Well, my studies have given me a deep feeling of connectedness to people in all the corners of the earth. I know how men and women feel in the Kalahari Desert of Southern Africa, up the Amazon river, and in New York, Tokyo and Moscow. Everywhere people fall in love. I also have a clearer view of the complex situations people struggle with when they are in love, even how to handle some of them. And I have learned some of the things one can do to sustain romance in a long term partnership. But none of my work has jeopardized my feelings of romantic love. You can know every single ingredient in a piece of chocolate cake, but when you sit down and eat it, you still feel that joy. In the same way, I know a lot about romantic love, but I still feel that magic ([www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/interviewdrfisher.aspx](http://www.chemistry.com/drhelenfisher/interviewdrfisher.aspx)).

Dr. Fisher showcases her expertise by claiming to know and understand how people fall in love all over the world. The implied implications of this being, that her immense knowledge of love

will enable her to successfully assist anyone who is searching for love. However, her use of “magic” to describe love is interesting to note.

“Magic” implies an unknown quality of love; that something indescribable occurs when one falls in love that cannot be rationalized. Here, Dr. Fisher presents the best of both worlds to Chemistry members. That is, that one can rationalize love and the feelings associated with love, in order to assist individuals in their quest for love, but also that this rationalization will not infringe on the spark or “magic” that people associate with an all-consuming romance. That is, that her expertise will enable an easily calculable, rationalized love, that is ‘natural’ and no different from any other means of finding love. The way to find and maintain that love is then presented in the form of ‘love lessons’.

A study conducted by Ebling and Leveson (2003) examined the accuracy of marital judgements, made by both professionals, that is, individuals who possess some form of professional training associated with marriage, and non-professionals, individuals who do not possess any professional training in relation to marriage. These authors found by showing short video clips of couple disputes, that having professional training did not increase the accuracy of marital judgements (i.e., marital satisfaction or dissatisfaction). Rather, age, specifically younger participants, and individuals who have parents that are divorced are more likely to accurately judge marital conflicts. As well, high marital satisfaction is easier to predict than lower marital satisfaction (Ebling and Levenson, 2003). Thus, the claim to expertise over the general public that the experts for these online match-making services are making ignores the general public’s own personal experiences dealing with interpersonal relationships. However, it is the precarious freedom of love that makes it hard to define and find. Though marital expertise may not trump personal experience when it comes to deciphering marital satisfaction, their claim to expert

knowledge does fill a void for many individuals who do not know how to navigate the precarious freedom of love. Thus, the plethora of experiences associated with love, makes it hard to define what love is and the 'scientific' knowledge these experts claim to possess, is presented as helping to educate the public on the many faces of love.

### *Educating through 'Love Lessons'*

These sites educate their members through 'love lessons'. 'Love lesson' is a term used by the PerfectMatch expert Dr. Schwartz to describe the knowledge on love she is imparting to the general public. However, this *in vivo* code, named such because it uses the site's own words, is present within all three main sites used in this study. These 'love lessons' come in the form of advice articles, as in eHarmony and Match.com, and questions and answers with Dr. Schwartz on PerfectMatch. Specifically, these 'love lessons' are geared at educating members about what love is, and how to find and maintain it. For example, the following excerpt from the PerfectMatch website geared at the 50 plus dating population,

#### **Flirting 101**

Flirting is ageless and open to everyone! Flirting remains an easy and meaningful way to spark the interest of someone you've just met. Here're some fun tips from Flirting 101 to increase your cute quotient.

#### *How to Be a Good Flirt*

1) Break the Touch Barrier. It can be as obvious as touching your arm or knee while making a point. It can be as faint as having your knees come into contact under the table.

2) Laughter. A big part of flirting involves reactions to the partner. When telling a funny story, it may elicit comments encouraging interest, including asking "really?", saying "wow" and simply opening your mouth in amused disbelief ([www.perfectmatch.com/onlinedating/seniors/senior-dating-tips.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/onlinedating/seniors/senior-dating-tips.asp)).

This 'love lesson' is meant to show daters how to attract and show interest in a potential romantic partner. Though the lesson appears to be common-sense, by legitimizing certain



behaviours this can give confidence to individuals who are re-entering the dating scene after many years of not participating in it. Thus, these services are acting on individuals to produce certain outcomes. In this instance, it is to promote the participation in certain behaviours that are deemed useful as a means to attract a partner. Similar to these institutions calling on individuals to organize their lives in relation to what love entails, individuals are expected to organize their lives around what these institutions deem as appropriate behaviours to achieve relationship success. This is accomplished through the promotion of an internalization and participation in the provided 'love lessons'.

Conversely, 'love lessons' are used to foster long-term relationship success. At the root of all 'love lessons' is the notion that members do not know how to date because of the uncertainties of love. Traditional rules of love no longer apply as love is understood as a precarious freedom and individuals are left navigating different love paths. The following 'love lesson' is an attempt to clarify the love path in order to facilitate a long-term romantic relationship. Thus,

Many singles mistakenly believe that getting to know someone consists of mating, dating, and relating — in that order. But this proves to be a lopsided progression. The peculiar need for making dinner plans that will lead to breakfast in bed together does not always work. I know, I know, hormones move us too soon toward slumber parties and the natural drive of attraction is often misconstrued as rapport. But the "comfort" you describe that came from the "arms" of the women you held offered nothing lasting once the covers were lifted. Now *that's* dull!

The only sequence of events that will allow you to discover whether a relationship will last is to date, relate, and THEN to mate. The mating step should be an expression of the harmony you have already built up together outside the boudoir. And that harmony can only occur through shared similarities and experiences over time (<http://www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11781>).

Here, the progression of love is clearly outlined: "date, relate, and THEN to mate". This example highlights the confusion over how to foster love: "[m]any singles mistakenly believe

that getting to know someone consists of mating, dating and relating – in that order”. Thus, there is an understanding of singles as struggling to find a way to get to “know” someone. That is, that direction is required to assist these singles. This ‘secret knowledge’ presented in the form of ‘love lessons’ is meant to influence individuals by producing a certain understanding of how to maintain and foster love within a committed relationship. There is an assumption that many of the individuals using these services are searching for a long-term partner. All of the websites in this study claim to be able to facilitate this. However, the promotion of a long-term committed or “serious” relationship highlights the desire to find one’s “refuge” of which Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995) speak. There is a desire to find someone that one can navigate the uncertainties of life with. Thus, there is a promotion within society that one should share one’s life with another in order to experience the true joys of life.

These ‘love lessons’ also highlight an understanding of gendered relationships as ones that are fraught with difficulties. ‘Love lessons’ are also, therefore, geared towards a particular gender in the hopes of educating each sex on the opposite sex. All sites match same-sex couples though very few ‘love lessons’, relatively speaking, deal with same-sex relationships. Those that do exist are largely contained within specific advice columns for same-sex relationships.

‘Love lessons’ geared at females strives to educate them on the partners they should avoid and how to attract the man one wants. Thus,

Usually, if you look closely at someone's written material, there are key words which should give you pause. These words, or phrases, are worth asking about when you start talking on the phone. Here are some variations on common themes to look out for:

"I want a woman who knows how to please a man." Could be a harmless response, but it usually indicates he's thinking of a "woman as servant" vs. a "woman as partner".

"I want someone who will join me and do all the things I like to do." Quite a few of

the men's profiles indicate if he joins up with a woman, she will have to fit into his lifestyle and activities. However, he will not fit into hers at all. A man who has liberal attitudes about gender roles will probably say something like, "I like (fill in the blank), but you don't need to do those things, although it would be a plus" (<http://www.perfectmatch.com/Pepper/askpepper.asp?tid=6>).

and,

### **The Surprising Way to Make A Loving Connection**

What is it that makes a man feel a truly strong connection with a woman - the kind of connection that makes him fall in love? The answer may surprise you.

**By Rori Raye Author of best-selling eBook 'Have The Relationship You Want' and free newsletter**

### **Wrong Road #1: The Logical Road (MIND)**

As a smart, independent woman, you're probably very good at shining during a discussion and engaging a man on an intellectual level. You'll impress a man and make him enjoy your company, but you may feel disappointed to learn that he feels no chemistry - even if you have a great deal in common.

That's because when you try to **connect** with a man through his mind, he doesn't feel a thing!

For a man to fall in love with you, he needs to feel touched by you in a deep, connected, emotional sense (<http://advice.eharmony.com/article/the-surprising-way-to-make-a-loving-connection.html>).

Each of the above passages position males and females as ignorant of each other. In the first passage, not only are men presented as not knowing how to relate to women, but also, that women do know how to choose a "worthy" man. This is also apparent in 'love lessons' geared at men. For example,

### **7 Rules for Relating to Women**

**Rule 1:** You may not *understand* women (and many women admit they don't understand themselves), but you can ask questions about a woman's life and dole out honest compliments.

**OUTCOME:** Women's egos are massaged when they feel noticed and desired. This is separate from trying to seduce them.

**Rule 2:** Women want supportive love. If your woman doesn't know how to give it, show her by example.

**OUTCOME:** Your behaviour, not your words, is a woman's greatest teacher on how to return the love YOU want. Inconvenience yourself unconditionally, and deliver niceties that are totally unexpected.

Honour your alpha, but maintain your truth. Steadfast, chivalrous men are very attractive — because a self-accepting guy knows he loses nothing by also being vulnerable. Plenty of women seek compassionate cowboys with spines AND spurs AND souls. Most of these men dwell far from home on the range! (<http://www.match.com/magazine/article.aspx?trackingid=516307&bannerid=566769&lid=0&articleid=11060>).

Again, these 'love lessons' are educating both males and females even if they are geared at one gender. In the above example females are, again, portrayed as not aware of what they want or need in a relationship. As such, males also do not know what a woman wants or needs. Here, the uncertainty of love and the numerous differences between the sexes is presented as wrecking havoc on romantic relationships. The goal of these 'love lessons' is to teach the opposite sex how to successfully attract a member of the opposite sex. However, what they also do is create a divide between the sexes; implying extreme differences that make it difficult for members of the opposite sex to relate.

However, the implied inherent differences between the sexes that makes it difficult for women and men to relate is dependent on stereotypical male and female gender roles and relationships. These roles and relationships can also be perceived as diminished or, according to Beck and Willms (2004) can be understood as 'zombie categories'. That is, the use of gender roles is still based on traditional roles-sets that no longer apply (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). The dissolution of traditional gender roles can be seen in the contemporary understanding of marriage. The clear division of labour between the sexes that promotes males as providers and females as household managers are no longer as distinct. Women and men desire romantic

partners that they enjoy being with, that are emotionally available and that respect their individual identity (Illouz, 1997). Therefore, the uncertainties that these institutions create by implying extreme differences between the sexes does not take into account the changing gender roles of males and females within the second modernity.

As in the exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love, these institutions create a divide between the sexes based on their 'secret knowledge'. Here, as discussed previously, individuals are expected to become knowledgeable on the opposite sex in order to optimize one's success at love. Therefore, the 'rationalization' of love calls on individuals to master skills that will enable them to successfully attract and maintain a relationship with a member of the opposite sex. Individuals are left never truly knowing if they will be able to decipher the needs of a partner simply because they are members of the opposite sex. As such, the 'rationalization' of love produces a (un)certain path to love, whereby instead of decreasing the uncertainties of love they are reinforced and increased.

An interesting form of 'love lessons' appears only on the Match.com website. Whereas most 'love lessons' educate the public on how to find and maintain a romantic relationship, one form of 'love lesson' seeks to predict relationship success based on astrological signs. These 'love lessons' attempt to educate members on how to present oneself online and how to tell if someone is interested in them, for example, based on one's sign or based on their match's sign. Thus,

#### **Aries**

Independence is your default position. Dating requires making yourself accessible to someone else by listening intently and allowing for quiet pauses. You don't have to fire yourself up to find warmth; let the sparks fly between you, slowly and with intensity.

**Do:** Show your natural enthusiasm, kindness and interest even if you don't feel it. Karma plays a big role in finding love.

**Don't:** Assume you know how someone else will react. Surprise is one of cupid's greatest pranks and most effective arrows  
([www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11814](http://www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11814)).

Here, members are profiled based on their astrological, or birth sign to determine how best to attract a partner. Unlike most 'love lessons', the use of signs is not general to all members or gender, but specific to each individual birth sign. Whether or not individuals follow this advice cannot be determined in this study, however, there are several articles dedicated to the impact of one's sign on relationship success in Match.com's *Happen* magazine. Therefore, some form of popularity must be attached to these articles because of their prevalence. This form of 'love lesson', like the other examples provided, is based on a 'secret knowledge'. That is, not everyone has the capacity to interpret the stars. For individuals who do believe in the influence of birth signs on their life, these articles could have a serious impact on their love life, as they instruct the individual on what to do and not do within a relationship. An uncertainty of love may then arise if one's partner is not astrologically suited to one's birth sign.

Granting access to 'secret knowledge' allows online match-making services to solidify their position as maintaining an essential and guiding purpose within the quest for love. The calculation of love refers to each site's desire to, and attempt at, 'rationalizing' love. This is the 'science of love', whereby the amount of research and expertise is used to explicate how members can create love. 'Love lessons' provide the how and the why an individual should attract and maintain a relationship, and calculating love provides the means to create love. The calculation of love leads to a profiling of individuals based on personality. Whereby individuals are matched based on necessary similarities and differences. Thus, who one has a connection with is based on what the institutions calculate someone should have a connection with.

From the literature it has been shown that preconceived notions of an individual impacts one's perceptions of that individual (Pines, 1999). Therefore, by these services informing their members that they will have a 'connection' with someone can lead to a romantic relationship simply because one held this preconceived belief. When one acts towards an individual in a particular manner, the individual responds by mirroring one's expectations of them (Pines, 1999). Thus, a relationship can grow based on one's expectations, and within online match-making services, these expectations largely come from the services themselves. Therefore, by acting in accordance with these institutions, individuals may come to internalize the projection of matches as 'ideal'. As such, the organization of one's life in relation to institutions has the potential to foster relationships between individuals that may have not developed otherwise. By potentially organizing one's life in order to meet the demands of these institutions of expert knowledge, individuals are engaging in the quest for an 'unfreedom' of which Beck and Willms (2004) argue becomes desirable to individuals who are forced to plan, define, calculate and negotiate because of the existence of precarious freedoms.

This is important to note because these services not only match, but educate their members, thus leading to a belief that one can 'do something' to increase their chances at love. Therefore, following 'love lessons' and trusting in the 'secret knowledge' presented by these services, is ultimately presented as enabling one to optimize their success at love. This belief that one has the capacity to increase one's success at love, also speaks to an individual responsibility to act on these 'love lessons' in order to achieve the level of success these services claim to provide. However, even though these institutions claim to do and provide much for their members, the 'rationalization' of love still leaves the individual responsible for finding and maintaining love.

Granting access to ‘secret knowledge’ provides members with appropriate behaviours and conceptualizations of love that will enable members to achieve romantic success. Building off of the perception of love as a precarious freedom and that individuals are engaging in ‘elective relationships’ (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995), these services build the foundation of what individuals need to do to find love. As individuals internalize and display the promoted behaviours they begin to take part in the ‘re-embedding’ process. That is, individuals partake and organize their lives in accordance with “new forms of reintegration and control” (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002, p 203). One can begin to see online match-making services as institutions for they seek to educate members on the behaviours and definitions of love through the use of expertise and ‘scientific knowledge’. Members are instructed by individuals who are presented as having superior intellects, how online daters should find love and with whom that love will flourish. As such, a new form of social control develops when individuals feel the need to follow the guidance and advice of experts. The following section will examine how the individual is expected to relate to these services as institutions. Though this study cannot address whether individuals do organize their lives in accordance to these services as institutions, the following section will outline the expectation that individuals should.

### ***Imparting Individual Responsibility***

Imparting individual responsibility means that these services place the blame of failure to find or maintain a relationship on the individuals themselves. Thus, even though these services claim to provide essential services for their members, ultimately it is the individual’s responsibility to successfully attract and maintain a romantic relationship. It reflects the notion that love is attainable through one’s actions and choices, and yet unattainable if the wrong choices and actions are made. It refers to the impact of the individual on the dating process



facilitated through online match-making services. It also refers to the requirement of active participation from its members, the negotiating of decisions and the attributing of personal failure.

These institutions claim to take the ‘work’ out of love by providing members with highly compatible matches that are presented as ‘ideal’. However, through this ‘rationalization’ of love, an (un)certain path to love presents itself. That is, even though these services claim to possess a ‘secret knowledge’ that enables them to assist members in their quest for love, ultimately the individual bears the responsibility of finding their ‘ideal’ match and maintaining their relationship. These institutions claim to the lessening of uncertainty is for the most part unfounded as individuals are still subject to personal failure. This personal failure implies that these services cannot remove some or all of the uncertainty attached to love, at least for some individuals.

### *Employing Dating Strategies*

The employing of dating strategies in order to ‘optimize success’ at love, means that members should utilize the tools and services, and ‘love lessons’ made available to them through these match-making websites. ‘Optimizing success’ refers to the steps one can take to improve their chances at love. It means that individuals have the ability to make an impact on the creation and maintenance of love. It also means that individuals can increase their chances at love by participating actively in the site. Conversely, this also means that individuals can decrease their chances at love by not utilizing the site’s tools and expertise. Thus, living a self-chosen life calls on individuals to be accountable for their actions and choices (Beck, 2000). That is, individuals are instructed by these services to take advantage of the opportunities the internet and thus, the

match-making service provide. For example, individuals are instructed to engage in strategic self-presentation within their profiles,

One thing that I see in so many profiles that annoys me is the answer to this question: The first thing you'll probably notice about "Person's Name" when you meet her. It seems that almost 90% of the time the answer to this question is something along the lines of "I think that at first people would notice that I am quiet. It takes a while for me to warm up once I meet someone new." I translate that as, if we meet you will have to facilitate the talking because in a social setting I am not good at starting up a conversation with someone I don't know. Why not just spin it into a positive and write: "I'm easy to talk to" (<http://advice.eharmony.com/article/users-share--tips-for-building-an-effective-eharmony-profile.html>).

Within strategic self-presentation, individuals are required to play up their 'strengths' and downplay any 'weaknesses'. By engaging in strategic self-presentation these services are highlighting a dating hierarchy, whereby certain members are perceived as more desirable than others. The increased number of potential matches requires individuals to set themselves apart in some way. This is accomplished by presenting a 'better' version of themselves to prospective partners.

Hyperpersonal theory proposes that many of the disadvantages associated with computer mediated relating (CMR) due to a lack of social presence or cues can be negated. Hyperpersonal theory argues that online relationships are characterized by the expression and disclosure of more personal and intimate information earlier in a relationship because of the nature of the internet. Relationships are able to develop more quickly online because of the very nature of CMR as more intimate. That is, more time is being dedicated to meaningful conversation in comparison to offline interactions (Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Baker, 2002; Henry-Waring and Barraket, 2008). It is the ability to take one's time thinking and reflecting on what and how one presents themselves online that allows individuals to be "strategic" in their presentation of self. This strategizing of self-presentation is then perceived to lead to more intimate relationships

(Anderson and Emmers-Sommer, 2006; Merkle and Richardson, 2000; Parks and Roberts, 1998; Sprecher et al., 2008; Whitty, 2008).

Conversely, strategic self-presentation can be seen as leading to a marketing of the self (Hancock and Toma, 2009; Hardey, 2008; Jagger, 2001). The finding within this thesis that these institutions promote the use of strategic self-presentation is consistent with other studies that have found that online daters tend to emphasize their strengths and ignore their weaknesses when presenting the self online. Thus, individuals are called to follow the advice of these institutions and organize their lives as these services see fit. By not doing so, individuals are presented as contributing to their failure at love. Photographs are also portrayed as a means to present one's 'best' self. Thus,

#### **THE HOOK**

Whether it's fair or not, your online profile pic is your first hand in the card game of dating life. Yes, be thoughtful when presenting your innermost thoughts and desires and outlining your plans, your passions and your hobbies, but when presenting that photographic image, spend time and get it right. Go for a selection of flattering photographs that show you at your best: for the men, tidy yourself up a little, for the women, just the merest hint of skin wouldn't go amiss. Just one photo isn't enough – prospective daters are going to want to catch a few angles – but also make sure that you look at least similar in each of the pics. And make sure they look like you: flattering is one thing, fabrication another entirely. After all, the ultimate aim is to actually meet this person: make sure they're meeting the person that's in the photos (<http://advice.eharmony.ca/article/how-to-succeed-in-the-dating-world.html>).

Photos need to be perceived as causal, but are 'better' when they are staged. Time and energy needs to be invested in the selection of photos for one's profile. Multiple photos give members an added advantage, as daters have come to expect multiple photos in order to "catch a few angles". The reasoning for this, according to these services, is that online daters not only want to visually see their matches in order to determine physical attractiveness, but to also verify that their matches actually look the same in every photograph in order to ensure that their matches are not engaging in any deception through their photographs.

The use of deception by one's matches becomes another form of uncertainty that members must deal with. Individuals need to decide if they trust the person they are communicating with. These services provide instructions in order to help lessen any insecurities associated with the use of deception by members and the issue of personal safety, but only the individual can truly decide if they trust a match or not. The uncertainty associated with whether or not one should trust their matches may lead members to constantly question the integrity of the online relationship, the authenticity of photos, and even the age, gender or physical appearance of their matches. This issue of deception will be discussed in greater detail later in this section.

Subscriptions are also used as a means of employing dating strategies because of the access to tools and services not available to non-subscribers. Subscribers, therefore, have access to more opportunities to be exposed to other matches, opportunities to communicate with matches and have access to particular resources, such as asking relationship questions of the resident expert. The following table highlights the increased availability of tools and services for subscribers as juxtaposed to non-subscribers for Match.com,

### **Our subscribers seriously love it here**

	Match.com	Match.com
<b>Contact other singles!</b>	✓	
<b>Connect faster with IM</b>	✓	
<b>Send &amp; receive email messages</b>	✓	
<b>Respond to email messages</b>	✓	
<b>Remove members from view</b>	✓	
<b>See who's viewed you</b>	✓	
<b>One click search type</b>	✓	
<b>Receive SingledOut matches</b>	✓	
<b>Search for matches</b>	✓	✓

Create a profile and appear in search results	✓	✓
Post a photo	✓	✓
Send winks	✓	✓

(<http://www.match.com/morelikethis/mktmlt.aspx?lid=0&handle=>).

Dating strategies enable the individual to receive and/or attract a high number of ‘quality’ matches and make the individual more ‘appealing’ to other members. By utilizing the resources provided to subscribers, members have the capacity to engage with their matches on a higher level. That is, subscribers are able to send and receive email communication; they have the ability to see who has viewed their profile, and in the case of PerfectMatch and Match.com, show up higher in search results.

Essentially, subscribing is presented as removing the “barriers” of love. However, the differentiation between subscribers and non-subscribers can be limiting. Though all members are matched, who is matched with whom on Perfectmatch and Match.com is largely influenced by whether or not one is a subscriber,

The New Perfectmatch Platinum membership is the best Perfectmatch experience. Platinum provides all the features available with a Premium Membership, plus 100% of our members with a completed, approved Duet profile will have the ability to reach out to and read and respond to your emails for FREE, regardless of what type of membership they have! With a Platinum Membership, love has no barriers; you'll never miss a chance to connect! ADDITIONALLY, with your Platinum Membership you'll enjoy preferred search results - your profile comes up higher in search results! ([www.perfectmatch.com/faq.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/faq.asp)).

Therefore, the “barriers” to love are re-enforced by these services themselves. One’s dating pool of potential matches online is, therefore, influenced by who has the monetary resources to afford a subscription plan. The goal of these dating strategies is to increase one’s chances of success by attracting and maintaining more matches. If one wants to achieve an optimization of success, individuals need to follow the dating advice and strategies provided. This acceptance of the provided dating strategies thus calls for a trust in the dating services themselves.

### *Trusting in Expertise*

The ability to 'optimize' one's success at love requires a trust in the dating expertise provided. This is required because their expertise is presented as steeped in 'secret knowledge'. Thus, individuals must trust in the matching process, and the tools and services offered by these institutions. In the end, a trust in these services is not only perceived to lead to the facilitation of love, but also save one time, energy and money. Trusting in the expertise of these services is present within all three sites used in this study, though it is particularly prevalent on eHarmony. For example,

So guys, if you take this information and use it effectively, you'll increase rates which you'll communicate with your matches.

You'll also increase your chances of finding success on the service. This information is a goldmine and that's why I'm giving it to you - because I want you to succeed. Guys just know this -- Jack is on your side. Next time, I'll help you navigate that most overlooked next -- the first phone call  
(<http://advice.eharmony.com.au/article/using-eharmony-online-profile-photo-tips-for-guys.html>).

Here, not only is the expert positioning himself as possessing 'secret knowledge', but that following his advice will increase one's "chances of finding success on the service". Thus, individuals are instructed to trust in the expertise of the service. This is also apparent in the match-making methods employed by these services. Individuals need to trust that the methods are producing appropriate, or in other words, matches suited to one's personal preferences, wants and needs, without really knowing how their matches are produced. Thus,

Third, pick someone who is likely to be a psychological match. Don't disregard the Personality Profiler, it's a very valuable tool that can really help. For example, there are some questions on both the similarity and complementary part of the profiler that makes it more likely to find someone serious. And, there's a question on risk seeking versus risk averse. I would imagine in most cases, someone who is risk averse is more interested in a steady relationship than someone who is risk seeking. Look also for a lot of similarity in your guy's profile to your own, that is the most likely way to get compatibility for a lifetime. There are two ways to use the profile: look at the

pictures and see who attracts you, and then look for a compatible Personality Profile; or use the Profiler first and then see if the people suggested arouse your hormones. You can combine this with a keyword search so you find someone who has lifestyle desires that you have. In other words, do as much homework as you can to make sure you are raising the odds in your favour that this guy and you could be right for one another

([www.perfectmatch.com/onlinedating/dating/Ask-Dr-Schwartz-on-dating.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/onlinedating/dating/Ask-Dr-Schwartz-on-dating.asp)).

Individuals are presented as trusting in these matching methods in order to provide them with matches that they will be able to foster a long-term romantic relationship with. By not trusting in these services individuals are perceived as actively decreasing their chances of success.

eHarmony uses the term “disappointed match” or DM to refer to individuals who do not have faith in their services,

All matches a member receives are highly compatible with them based on our rigorous matching system. While a match's profile may give you a sense of who they are, even the most dynamic About Me page and photos can't fully represent a match or you. It is only through communicating with a match that you can really determine if they have potential to be the one. DM's, unfortunately, aren't willing to trust our matching system and do at least some communicating with most of their matches. This means a lot of disappointed matches and missed opportunities for the DM. Don't follow their example. Instead follow the example of many of our successful members and give yourself and most of your matches the chance to discover if you are each other's special match! (<http://advice.eharmony.ca/article/using-eharmony-how-not-to-become-a-disappointing-match.html>).

Here, eHarmony is not only chastising those who do not “trust [in their] matching system”, but also showcases that success is achieved by following and trusting in their advice. Therefore, there is a perception that ultimately one is responsible for one's success at love.

As discussed previously, the (un)certain path to love gains traction within the ‘rationalization’ of love produced by these institutions. Individuals are called to trust in these institutions of expert knowledge in order to remove the uncertainties of love. It is the access to ‘secret knowledge’ that these services present as removing the uncertainties of love. This ‘secret knowledge’ however, creates uncertainties for individuals by creating barriers between members

of the opposite sex and by forcing the negotiation of decisions that individuals may not have the answers to. As such, individuals are expected to educate themselves on how to attract a partner. This requires individuals to wade through enormous amounts of information. Therefore, an uncertainty of love is created because individuals are now expected to understand love and attraction, when previously this was not necessary for the formation of a relationship. Individuals also need to ensure that they are following the provided advice appropriately. This ample supply of advice requires individuals to learn and then apply this knowledge. If the advice is not followed, then individuals are presented as subject to personal failure.

‘Optimizing success’ occurs because there is an exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love by online match-making services. This optimization of success however, can only occur through the granting of access to ‘secret knowledge’ because individuals are perceived as not knowing how to find and maintain love. Individuals are, subsequently, dependent on these institutions to provide for them a means and how, to achieve success. Though these institutions provide the how, why and means to create love, in the end one’s success in love is dependent on the individuals themselves not the institutions.

#### *Requiring Active Participation*

Members are required to manage their matches and any potential risks that may arise when using their services or dating offline. That is, a self-chosen life requires individuals to employ ‘active management’, as multiple demands require one to plan and account for potential uncertainties (Beck, 2000). Individuals are, therefore, required to ‘help’ these services find love for them. Individuals need to know what they want and need in a relationship in order to be able to receive ‘quality’ matches. Thus,

There really is no defined timeline for when you'll receive your first - or subsequent Perfect match. While the Duet® Profiler is \*constantly\* searching and filtering



through well over 4 million active profiles - this can indeed be a time-consuming process. However, your Premium membership includes access to our 4 distinct and powerful Search tools - creating an additional dimension to your Perfectmatch experience by allowing you to actively search Perfectmatch.com for members matching \*your criteria - while waiting for a Duet®-calculated Perfect Match to occur. Finding the right person for you and getting to know them can take time. Generally speaking a period of three (3) to twelve (12) months is the best way to increase your chances of locating your perfect match since some relationships take time and others happen faster than you plan! It's also the best value. However, we've created several membership plans to accommodate everyone's needs ([www.perfectmatch.com/faq.asp](http://www.perfectmatch.com/faq.asp)).

and,

**Get to Know Your Matches' Interests and Habits** Understanding yourself as well as your matches' needs is an important key to building a strong relationship. And part of that is knowing what you need in a partner. We'll help you make a list of "must haves" and "can't stands". Is it really important to you that your partner save money wisely? Or that he spends money to enjoy life? We'll prompt you to ask some important questions, and share those with your match to see if your lists line up (<http://www.eharmony.com/why/expert>).

Individuals need to actively participate in the process of managing one's matches. This can refer to the searching for matches, as in PerfectMatch and Match.com, as well as the deciphering of one's wants and needs, in order to assist these services in showing members matches that are best suited to one's 'individual' needs.

The passage from PerfectMatch also highlights the importance of time. That is, not only is PerfectMatch saving one time, by searching through millions of potential partners for their members, but encourage their members to be proactive and search for partners on their own. Here, PerfectMatch, and also Match.com, give their members the ability to search through profiles in order to save time. Conversely, eHarmony does not allow its members the ability to search. This lack of search functions is presented to members as a means to help manage potential risks. This is accomplished by allowing only eHarmony staff the ability to see all available profiles, while members only see profiles that they are matched with.

While these services do attempt to manage some of the potential risks their members may encounter, for the most part, members are expected to conduct ‘active management’ in order to manage their own risks and maintain their own safety. This is linked to following one’s “gut feelings” or “instincts”. Even though these services provide members with instructions to manage one’s privacy and safety, it is up to the individual to actively follow them. Furthermore, it is up to the individual to be aware of their “gut feelings” in order to listen to them. Thus, there are aspects of risk associated with dating that can only be recognized by the dater. The following example from Match.com highlights the importance of listening to one’s “gut” and the grounding of responsibility in the individual,

**Red Flags: 7 signs you might want to steer clear**

DO listen to your gut.

"If it sounds too good to be true, it probably is." Mama was right on target with this bit of advice. Remember that, when it comes to your personal safety, it's not only OK to snoop, it's your duty. Here are a few additional guidelines:

Never do anything you feel unsure about. If you are in any way afraid of your date, use your best judgment to diffuse the situation and get out of there. Excuse yourself long enough to call a friend for advice, ask someone else on the scene for help or slip out the back door and drive away. If you feel you are in danger, call the police; it's always better to be safe than sorry. Never worry or feel embarrassed about your behaviour; your safety is much more important than one person's opinion of you ([www.match.ca/help/safetytips.aspx](http://www.match.ca/help/safetytips.aspx)).

and, from eHarmony's sister site, Compatible Partners,

**Do Your Own Research**

As mentioned above, it is important to note that Compatible Partners does not perform background checks on its members. Compatible Partners does not perform criminal background checks on its users because there is no national database of criminal convictions in the United States and many crimes are never reported or prosecuted, so background checks would provide a false sense of security. It is important to use caution and common sense with every match received.

It is also important to note that our optional identity verification service, which is powered by our partner RelyID, is not a background check. We rely on the honesty of our members when filling out our Relationship Questionnaire to supply us with

their date of birth, marital status, city and state of residence, occupation, educational background and a myriad of additional items. Regardless of the connection you feel with any of your matches, we encourage you to do your own research before meeting in person. This can be anything from typing your match's name into a search engine, contacting your state or local municipalities to obtain public information, or using a paid service to obtain a full background report. Above all else, use common sense. Pay attention to the details someone shares and if you find anything that doesn't seem to add up, follow your intuition and close the communication ([www.compatiblepartners.net/safety/tips](http://www.compatiblepartners.net/safety/tips)).

Members need to do their “homework” on potential partners. That is, in order to manage one’s risks, individuals need to actively “snoop” on their matches, and discover and verify as much as they can on their matches. The potential implications of this are that members will come to expect that their matches cannot be trusted. Though in many ways initial minor distrust when members first begin communicating with their matches can be beneficial, ultimately, couples need to foster a high degree of trust in their partner in order to maintain their relationship.

Here, Compatible Partners even suggests utilizing “a paid service to obtain a full background report”. Thus, members are expected to plan one’s life in order to avoid future misfortune (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). In this instance, individuals are instructed by these institutions to organize their own life in order to plan for the risks associated with dating and to recognize these risks while on a date. However, most importantly, one must “follow [one’s] intuition”. Once again, these services provide instructions for their members in order to manage risk, but leave individuals struggling with the uncertainty of trusting in their partner, and deciphering how to follow their “gut”.

Negative theories of CMR highlight the perceived “weak” bonds that are formed online that limit “healthy” offline relationships and create “unhealthy” relationships online. Social presence theory posits that because of an absence or limited feeling of social presence, interactions online become impersonal since deception, discrimination and abuse are fostered

online (Whitty, 2008). Thus, the use of deception by some online daters may be due to a decrease in social presence. As such, these services promote the management of risk, both physical and emotional to account for the possibility of deception. Risk is now believed to be the consequence of individual actions and choices (Couch and Liamputtong, 2007). These services acknowledge the impact of the individual on risk management and thus, provide instructions to maintain one's safety and privacy. These institutions have the potential to influence individuals' decisions to manage their own risks. Thus, to optimize one's success at love, individuals are expected to organize their lives in relation to these institutions' perceptions and management of risk.

There have been several studies conducted on the use of deception and the perceived risk of dating online. Whitty and Joinson (2009) propose a 'truth-lies paradox' that is present on the internet. That is, individuals online have been argued to be more open and truthful, and also have the capacity to be more dishonest. Cornwell and Lundgren (2001) study of chat room users found that online daters are more likely to engage in deception if they perceive their relationship to not be serious. This can pose problems if each individual possess different expectations of the relationship. However, most online daters do appear to use at least some form of risk management techniques, according to the literature. (For example, Brym and Lenton, 2001; Lawson and Leck, 2006; Whitty and Carr, 2006). Therefore, the positioning of individual responsibility to manage potential risks associated with online dating made by these institutions, appears to be a preventative measure that most individuals engage in on their own. This, as mentioned previously, may be due to societal perceptions that one's choices and actions have consequences and thus, can impact one's experience of risk (Couch and Liamputtong, 2007).

### *Negotiating Decisions*

Individuals are expected to navigate their way through numerous questions relating to one's wants and needs in a relationship. Thus, individuals are forced to decide what it is they ultimately desire in a mate. (Please see Appendices A, B, and C for examples of eHarmony, PerfectMatch and Match.com's site questionnaires). This is then used by the matching service to find matches for their members. Individuals are ultimately responsible for negotiating their wants and needs in a relationship; by doing so, these services can provide individualized 'quality' matches to their members. Thus,

**Inadequate self-understanding.** People who find themselves in one unsuccessful relationship after another usually do not know themselves well. They haven't done much introspection, reflection, and self-evaluation—and therefore, they aren't clear about what kind of person would make a marvellous match. If you want to select a superb partner, the place to start is with a careful understanding of exactly who you are. The more you know about yourself, the clearer will be your sense of inner direction when it comes to finding the love of your life (<http://advice.eharmony.ca/article/are-you-attracted-to-the-wrong-type.html>).

By not adequately understanding the self, individuals will never be able to find true love, because they do not know what they desire in a partner. Consequently, match-making services are also not able to provide an 'ideal' match to a member that does not know their relationship preferences. By deconstructing the self through relationship self-assessments, these institutions seek to explicate what an individual wants and needs in a relationship. However, much of what an individual is presented as needing in a relationship is not known to the individual and thus, he or she is dependent on the 'secret knowledge' that these services claim to possess in order to show what one's needs are. Nonetheless, in the end it is still the individual's responsibility to acquire this knowledge on the self and apply it in order to avoid personal failure.

Individuals are forced into deciding their own preferences in a relationship. Do I want a man who is short or tall? Do I want to only date women who are Jewish; Christian; or Hindu? Do

I want children now; later; or never? These are questions that may confront someone who is not using an online match-making service, but for those who are, these questions need to be carefully thought out for they can either limit or expand one's potential dating pool. Whereas within offline dating strategies individuals are limited by who they can encounter, online daters are limited by the decisions they make on their personal preferences. Thus, these services can create more uncertainty in love as individuals are forced into negotiating decisions that they may not fully know what their preferences are. There are areas within the relationship questionnaire where one can select all available categories for a given trait or lifestyle. For example, one can select to be matched with someone from any religion, but for many selections within the site's questionnaire and within one's profile, individuals are encouraged to be selective and specific.

However, the negotiation of decisions also applies to who it is one wants to date. That is, individuals must choose to close or pursue a provided match. For example,

In order to receive additional New Matches, you must first move your matches to either Connections, Decide Later or to your "Not Really" list.

- If you indicate that you are interested in a new match, Chemistry will move that match to Connections.
- If you would like more time to decide on a match, you can select Decide Later and we will move that match into a "Decide Later" list.
- If you are not interested, that member will be moved to your "Not Really" list and made inactive.

You should review their profile and let us know if you are interested in moving forward. Based on your level of interest, the profile will be either moved to your Connections where you can start to get to know them or moved to your "Not Really" list ([www.chemistry.com/faqs/MatchesStarters](http://www.chemistry.com/faqs/MatchesStarters)).

By forcing the negotiation of decisions these institutions are not removing the uncertainty of love. Rather, these services are merely placing the responsibility of choices and actions on the individual in order to avoid the blame of failure. Conversely, the fact that these services are forcing the decision making process for their members in order to allow for an 'optimization' of

success, does allow for the ease and efficiency of finding a partner. The more time one invests in the negotiating of decisions amongst matches, the quicker one will be presented with their 'ideal' match.

### *Personal Failure*

Individuals experience personal failure when they fail to discover their wants and needs, even after utilizing self-assessments. It also occurs when individuals do not invest an adequate amount of time on one's self-presentation. That is, the construction of one's profile. Lastly, personal failure occurs when individuals do not learn from past love mistakes and continue to engage with individuals who are not 'right' for them according to these services. Thus, the individual shows no self-improvement or growth concerning their understanding of love, relationships, and their wants and needs. By attributing personal failure to members who have not found success through their services these match-making services not only have the potential to instil a sense of self-doubt in their members, but also a reliance on expertise because the individual is presented as not engaging with the provided tools and services appropriately. For example,

These days when it comes to dating there are two common mistakes. One is not picking the right person. The other is not getting out quickly enough when you realize you haven't picked the right person. A woman whose boyfriend throws his garbage on the floor. Another whose date won't drive to pick her up for dinner (even though it means only going ten minutes out of his way). Another whose guy will never put her before a golf game. In Barbara Davilman and Liz Dubelman's *What Was I Thinking: 58 Bad Boyfriend Stories* you'll find the stories of women who put up with everything from a bad command of the English language to men who think of other women when they're making love to you. Everyone is bound to have a bout of bad behaviour now and then and sometimes leopards do change their spots. There are definitely stories about first impressions being wrong, but this article is not about those instances. More often than not, there are little hints at the outset of a relationship of things that will become big problems later on ([singlemoms.eharmony.com/exit-strategies-how-to-stop-wasting-your-time.html](http://singlemoms.eharmony.com/exit-strategies-how-to-stop-wasting-your-time.html)).

and,

First, I noticed your profile doesn't contain a picture. In addition to your "main" photo; you really should take advantage of the opportunity to post as many pictures as possible. They not only provide a window about you and your life, but they also communicate you've taken the step to commit to the process by putting yourself out there.

Secondly, you haven't filled out your narrative (or bio). The narrative's essential as it gives you an opportunity to share valuable details about yourself. When doing this, avoid negativity. No one wants to hear out of the gate about what a cad your last boyfriend was! Be hopeful and positive. Think of your narrative as an opportunity to attract those prospects you might be interested in! It's about getting responses from the type of person you're attracted to ([www.perfectmatch.com/rss/askpepper.rss](http://www.perfectmatch.com/rss/askpepper.rss)).

and,

Misguidedly, you have romanticized your marriage as a model for your future. Hey, Ritchie, if you keep on keeping on, this pattern will end your next marriage, too! Right now you should be enjoying sharing common interests with dates that you're getting to know better. That's how to define "dating." Step beyond conventional movies and dinners and pursue hobbies you never explored. Most of all, follow this Gilda-Gram: "Allow your passion to direct your future, instead of allowing your past to direct your passion."

Happiness occurs by choice, not chance. When you decide that you have suffered enough, it's time to leave what you think is your comfort zone. That involves taking the chance to be uncomfortable in new surroundings for a while, so you can achieve new goals ([www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11781](http://www.match.com/magazine/article0.aspx?articleid=11781)).

These services attribute the failure to achieve and/or maintain love onto individuals themselves. This means that even though these services guarantee that one will find love on their site, or that their matching technology produces matches more likely to lead to long-term success, it is still the individual members' fault. It is the responsibility of the individual to find and maintain love. Thus, individuals are expected to accept personal failure for their lack of ability to find love, not blame the tools, services or methods offered by these institutions. When members take responsibility for the choices and actions, and accept personal failure these services can then help members "achieve new goals".



It is the portrayal of the individual as living a self-chosen life that leads to the placement of responsibility on the individual (Beck, 2000). As individuals attempt to navigate the precarious freedom of love, one turns to various forms of expert knowledge in order to deal with the uncertainty (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 1995). However, the negotiation of expert knowledge is also the responsibility of the individual (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Therefore, the individual must accept the responsibility of one's choices and actions through the construction of one's self-biography (Beck, 2000). Thus, it is the positioning of individuals by these institutions as living self-chosen lives that enables the positioning of failure on the individuals themselves.

The self-biography requires individuals to plan their life and, consequently, maintain responsibility for one's choices and actions (Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Online match-making services encourage members to take control of their love lives through 'scientific' matching methods. Thus, there is an acknowledgement by these online matching services of the role that individuals must play in order to achieve a 'rational' love. However, the promotion of a self-biography and thus, personal responsibility for one's love life by using an online matching service comes at a cost. The desire for a perfected, scientific love as planned through the self-biography also leaves the individual subject to personal failure when, and if, one fails to find love online. As such, as members of online match-making services are roused to cultivate their love lives through these services, their self-biographies are also used as the excuse when one fails to achieve love online. Therefore, the self-biography can potentially lead individuals to participate in online match-making services as they attempt to plan out their lives, but it is also used by online match-making services as a means to blame their members for failing at love through their services, as opposed to considering the inferiority of their matching methods or sites' resources.

Individual responsibility calls on individuals to actively participate in the procedures and processes outlined by the institution. Thus, the institution itself seeks to create individuals that are self-managing, seek out advice and follow provided 'love lessons'. Individuals are also forced to make quick decisions regarding the pursuit or closing of matches. These choices become important life-changing decisions that need to be carefully thought-out, but quickly negotiated in order to receive more matches and/or start a relationship. The negotiating of decisions is the most important individual responsibility. The institutions can influence the individual and force the negotiating of decisions in order to allow for ease and efficiency. Personal failure is used by these services in order to maintain the successful image of their match-making methods. Even though these services claim to do and provide much for their members, ultimately, it is the individual responsibility to successfully attract and maintain a relationship.

The imparting of individual responsibility assists in the 're-embedding' process that is pivotal for understanding the influence of institutions on individuals. The new form of social control created by institutions due to modernization requires individuals to navigate a multitude of new options, and do so, in accordance with institutions (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). Members of online match-making services can be understood as engaging in this 're-embedding' process if they act in accordance to the demands of these institutions. That is, if they come to display the attitudes and beliefs about love that are consistent with these services. As such, online match-making services engage in a new form of social control. Online match-making services proclaim that members will be inflicted with loneliness and failure at love if one does not follow their advice and guidance. Thus, individuals may feel a need to follow the advice of experts or suffer from future misfortune. Whether or not individuals do come to be 're-

embedded' by online match-making services is not addressed here. Rather, the very fact that these services attempt to foster certain behaviours under threat of romantic failure shows that these services are, at the very least, attempting to impose a social control that is influenced by their expert knowledge.

Thus, online match-making services use an understanding of love and relationships that is consistent with an understanding of love and relationships within institutionalized individualism that has suffered a 'disembedding'. These services seek to necessitate a 're-embedding' of the individual by grounding their authority on love and relationships, and the promoted behaviours to achieve love, in expertise. As such, a new mode of social control may develop in relation to online match-making services as institutions, as individuals may feel it is necessary to engage in the promoted behaviours or face a life of loneliness. This ultimately leads to the necessity of online match-making services and their expertise and subsequent dependence on part of the individual, on these services, as individuals are constantly in need of 'love lessons'.

### ***Locating Online Match-Making Services***

As individuals are confronted with numerous compatible or 'ideal' matches they must come to organize their lives in accordance with these institutions of expert knowledge. That is, individuals are presented by the online match-making services as dependent on them as institutions in order to navigate through one's various matches and narrow the field of potential romantic partners. One means by which to accomplish this is through institutionalized genderism.

These institutions offer an overly simplistic view of female-male interactions, and hence, a simplistic view of how women and men should, and do relate within a romantic relationship. These match-making services and their provided advice produce an "institutional genderism".

Whereby, according to Goffman (1977, p 305), it is the institution which produces gendered behaviours and traits that are subsequently internalized and displayed by its members. It is not, therefore, a product of an individual gender, but rather, a product of the organization itself (Goffman, 1977). By utilizing a 'men are from Mars and women are from Venus' framework, these institutions of expert knowledge are merely promoting an archaic male and female genderism. Goffman (1977) argues that what an individual needs in a relationship as a male or female is not required because of the individual, but because of their own 'gender-based identity'. That is, the cultivation of an identity based on one's understanding and judgement of self in relation to masculine or feminine ideals. Thus, these match-making services promote a gendered understanding of relationships, as opposed to seeing individuals within a relationship.

Therefore, for all the expertise these institutions claim to possess, they promote a conceptualization of gendered relationships and desires in a long-term romantic partner that fosters a difference between the sexes. Moreover, the extreme differences created between the sexes are not largely experienced by all individuals in Western society and is merely perpetuated by institutionalized genderism. The match-making services examined in this study need to refocus their understanding of romantic relationships, not on what females as females and males as males need, but what each individual needs in a relationship for a romantic partner.

Furthermore, the claim to superiority of expertise compared to competing match-making services generates an illusion of difference between services. Relationship and personality questionnaires may slightly differ, but to a large extent each online match-making service is utilizing similar understandings of love and similar conceptualizations of how to achieve relationship success. As such, these institutions require individuals to negotiate and organize their lives in relation to the promotion and understanding of love maintained by a match-making

service that is more similar than not to its competitors. The organization of one's life in relation to the institutions of expert knowledge is meant to be accomplished through 'love lessons'. By advising that individuals will acquire greater degrees of success by following the provided 'love lessons', these match-making services are requiring individuals to organize their lives in relation to these services as institutions. Consequently, desired behaviours are meant to be internalized and displayed by its members. This does not occur organically by individuals, but because of the institutions itself influencing the individual (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). The individual is presented as either organizing their lives in accordance with the institution and achieving success, or acting against the institution as a 'DM' and experiencing personal failure.

### ***Conclusion***

The 'rationalization' of love occurs through the three strategies outlined in this chapter. (Please refer to Figure 1 for more information). It is the exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love that leads to a desire for expert knowledge and a belief that it is through one's choices and actions that one may obtain success or failure at love. The uncertainty of love leads to a granting of access to 'secret knowledge' and an imparting of individual responsibility. The granting of access to 'secret knowledge' provides the tools and means to create love that is, ultimately, contingent on individual participation. The imparting of individual responsibility is then dependent on this 'secret knowledge' that is provided to members (e.g., 'love lessons'). Failure to follow the provided 'love lessons' and achieve success at love is attributed to individual members. The personal failure attached to individuals who were unable to find an 'ideal' match through a match-making service are presented as unable or unwilling to adequately invest time, energy and money into the site, and refused to trust in the matching methods and provided advice.

The (un)certain path to love, I argue, presents itself through the ‘rationalization’ of love. It refers to the increase and persistence of uncertainties associated with attracting and maintaining a relationship, rather than a decrease in uncertainties. Though the ‘rationalization’ of love does remove some uncertainties, for example, where to find a romantic partner and how to start a relationship, individuals are still left struggling with new and more pressing uncertainties. Individuals need to deal with the negotiation of decisions that they may not have answers to, and which also cannot be answered by these match-making services. Individuals also need to come to understand members of the opposite sex in a manner that was previously not required. The divide created between the sexes makes it difficult for an individual without access to their ‘secret knowledge’ to navigate. Even so, this ‘secret knowledge’ leads to greater uncertainties as women are positioned as ignorant of their true desires in a relationship and men are presented as simply not understanding women.

Individuals need to learn and apply ‘love lessons’ in an appropriate manner, by failing to do so, individuals can subsequently suffer from personal failure. Uncertainties of love are created when individuals do not know or understand the ‘love lessons’ provided to members. The issue of deception leads to the uncertainty of who to trust and create a relationship with, as these institutions strive to instil a sense of fear or caution when interacting with matches. The imparting of individual responsibility and the blaming of personal failure made by these institutions highlights the difficulties that still exist within a ‘rational’ quest for love. These services are unable to account for all of the uncertainties that love can bring, but yet claim to solve the uncertainties of love through their expertise and scientific matching methods. In order to account for the failure of a ‘rationalized’ love, the blame is shifted onto the individual and their lack of understanding of, and investment in, love.

The remaining chapter will discuss the key findings from this study and examine the implications of this (un)certain path to love created by the 'rationalization' of love facilitated by these institutions of expert knowledge. It will address the contributions of this study as well as possible areas for future research.

## **Chapter Four: The Pursuit of a ‘Rational’ Love Online: Conclusions and Implications**

This study concerned the impact of the space or location online on the pursuit of romantic love. It examined the promotion of a ‘rationalization’ of love by online match-making services. It has been argued in this study that this ‘rationalization’ of love leads to an (un)certain path to love. That is, that the ‘rationalization’ of love creates as well as reinforces previously existing uncertainties of love, as opposed to decreasing the uncertainties associated with the pursuit and maintenance of a romantic relationship. This study is important to the field of sociology because as greater numbers of individuals turn to online match-making services it is essential to understand the conceptualization of romantic love and relationships that these services have. As such, coming to understand the promotion of a necessary ‘rationalized’ love made by these match-making services can help to explicate the conceptualization of love and relationships maintained by these services that are subsequently influencing millions of love lives across Canada and globally. Thus, this study asked: how is love conceptualized and promoted through online match-making services and what implications may this have on the pursuit and expectation of a ‘rational’ love online?

This (un)certain path to love facilitated by the ‘rationalization’ of love gains precedence due to the prevalence of institutionalized individualism in Western society. It is the perception of the individual as living a self-chosen life that requires planning and negotiating, that calls for a ‘rationalization’ of love. It is also this individualism that enables an (un)certain path to love to develop, as individuals must claim responsibility for their own choices and actions in a world of precarious freedoms. The use of institutionalized individualism in this study has illuminated the potential relationship between the individual and their quest for love, and how online match-making services, as institutions of expert knowledge have the potential to maintain an



influencing power over the individual in order to produce a 'rationalization' of love. By not complying with the sites' processes of 'rationalizing' love, the failure to obtain and maintain love is placed on the individual because of the perception of individuals as living self-chosen lives.

### ***Methods***

Using a constructivist grounded theory approach this study used a textual analysis of three online match-making sites and two sister sites: eHarmony.com and CompatiblePartners.com, Match.com and Chemistry.com, and PerfectMatch.com. As discussed previously, these websites were chosen as information-oriented cases (Flyvbjerg, 2001). Utilizing all available online information except member generated data; I performed a textual analysis on the website data.

Constructivist grounded theory was used as the data analysis strategy for this study because it promotes the value of qualitative research through the guidance of systematic coding processes, while embracing the issues of generalizability and data interpretation, that are often perceived as limitations of qualitative research. The data was coded using open, focused and axial coding techniques. Theoretical sampling was conducted until theoretical saturation occurred. Theoretical sorting was then used to create a narrative with and through the data. Throughout the entire coding process the crucial step of memo writing was utilized to define codes, concepts, categories and their properties. The memo writing process also formed the foundation for early drafts of the analysis chapter. From this coding process three core categories emerged from the data, which I argue explains the 'rationalization' of love online.

### ***‘Rational’ Love***

This study proposes an understanding of a ‘rationalization’ of love online that operates via three main processes. This ‘rational’ love, I have argued, generates and reinforces the uncertainties of love as understood as a precarious freedom.

The findings of this study reveal that while promoting the necessity of a ‘rationalized’ love, these match-making services seek to foster uncertainties of love by cautioning on the supposed dangers of love. This uncertainty of love is presented in the form of both individual and external factors. Individuals are presented as not being aware of their wants and needs in a relationship, and subsequently suffer from personal failure of love because of this. Individuals also construct lives that offer little time to invest in romance. Thus, individuals are presented as choosing to put career goals and other engagements ahead of their own personal relationships. Individuals are, therefore, presented as both not knowing what they want in a relationship and not knowing how to get it. That is, that individuals do not know how to define love for themselves and also do not know how to define love with an opposite sex partner. Males and females come to be understood as love opponents, whereby each partner is struggling to maintain control of the relationship, and defining what he or she wants from the relationship and their partner. Love is also presented as a skill. Thus, the online match-making services purpose that most individuals wait for love to happen to them, instead of actively pursuing love. Individuals are merely ‘taking a chance on love’ because they are uncertain as to what love means and entails. Individuals are perceived as in desperate need of expert guidance and authority, in order to guide one’s choices and actions. The implications of this being that if one is to understand these match-making services as possessing the influencing power of an institution, then individuals will also come to perceive themselves as having little to no knowledge on love, that

love requires a rational pursuit, and that males and females desire very different qualities from a romantic partner, when this is not necessarily the case.

Furthermore, this study suggests that the expert guidance provided to members generates greater uncertainties of love, and claims responsibility only for romantic successes, while blaming individuals for their failure to find love using their services. The granting of access to 'secret knowledge' made by these institutions speaks to a knowledge and understanding of relationships that is presented as being able to help or assist members in their quest for love. It is this 'secret knowledge' that enables a 'rationalization' of love through their matching methods and 'scientific' research on love. It refers to the calculation of love based on personality profiling, and the understanding and perspective of love taken by each match-making service. However, a hierarchy of expertise leads individuals to need to negotiate between competing forms of expert knowledge in order to decipher the "best" path to love. This 'secret knowledge' is presented as expert advice that will enable individuals to 'optimize' their success at love by merely trusting in the tools and services provided. Thus, it is the access to 'secret knowledge' that also enables an understanding of a 'rational' love as an individual responsibility because one's actions are perceived as contributing to the success or failure of a relationship.

However, understanding online dating practices requires a scrutinizing look at how websites promote the use of their services. This study revealed that it is because of the access to 'secret knowledge' and the exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love made by these institutions that individuals take on an individual responsibility within their quest for love through online match-making services. Individuals need to employ an active management of both their matches and the potential risks associated with online dating and dating in general. The employing of dating strategies is a result of the access to 'secret knowledge' which promotes

the use of strategies in order to enable individuals to more effectively attract a potential partner. Individuals are also forced to decide what one's personal preferences are in a relationship, even if one may not know the answer. It is from these decisions on what one wants and needs in a relationship that these institutions can then use their 'secret knowledge' to show members who one should have a 'connection' with. Most importantly, the imparting of individual responsibility leads to the placement of failure on the individual. Therefore, the claim made by these institutions that they can take the 'work' out of dating and the call to individuals to trust in their services, even without fully understanding them, still places personal failure on the individual because of an understanding of the individual as living a self-chosen life.

The exaggeration of the notion of an uncertain love speaks to the precarious freedom of love. Online match-making services, as understood as institutions, use the precarious freedom of love to their advantage; highlighting the difficulty that can be created within a romantic relationship when two individuals merge their lives or the quandary of finding one's 'type' in a world of various 'types' of women and men. By utilizing the precarious freedom of love, these institutions attempt to create the necessity of their services.

Granting access to 'secret knowledge' feeds into the 're-embedding' process of institutionalized individualism. Online match-making services seek to educate their members through 'love lessons' and influence their behaviours and conceptualizations of love and relationships. Institutions come to exercise a measure of social control when individuals organize their lives in accordance to them (Beck and Beck-Gernsheim, 2002). As such, online match-making services can be said to engage in this form of social control when they attempt to influence individuals' actions, choices and behaviours through their services and provided resources.

Furthermore, the need to construct a self-biography is also used by online match-making services to not only ignite the precarious freedom of love and the necessity of their services, but also to blame the individual for their failure to find love through these services. The imparting of individual responsibility uses the self-biography and necessity of living a self-chosen life to encourage members to participate in their sites' resources. This study cannot speak to the presence of a 're-embedding' process of members in relation to online matching services. However, this section showed that online match-making services do attempt to facilitate a 're-embedding' process through their endeavour to have members internalize and display what these services feel is necessary to achieve relationship success. By not following the advice of the provided expertise, these services suggest that one can be faced with loneliness and failure at love because they have not followed the appropriate advice. The imparting of individual responsibility showed that understanding online match-making services as institutions creates the necessity of a self-biography, which in turn enables these services to blame members for their failed attempts to achieve love through the matching service.

### ***Contributions***

Current developments in the study of online dating have begun to securitize the implications of the space within which an online relationship was initiated. Few studies have dealt with the examination of the space online that characterizes match-making services. Of the studies that have, they have largely centered around how individuals choose a partner on an online match-making site. This study builds off of the literature on the influence of online spaces and locations on romantic relationships by examining how online match-making services promote the use of their services, their conceptualization of relationships and relationship success, their promotion of expert authorities, their insertion into a 'parascientific' discourse, and

subsequently, how the individual is expected to participate within their sites. The conclusions drawn from this study contributes to the body of knowledge on online dating and contemporary romantic relationships in Western society by suggesting that online match-making services are not only positioning themselves as a necessity in a world of precarious freedoms, but that a 'rationalized' love is also a necessity in a world full of love dangers. Furthermore, this thesis proposes that an (un)certain path to love develops in response to the 'rationalization' of love. As such, these institutions of expert knowledge not only promote stereotypical male and female gender roles within romantic relationships in order to foster 'successful' relationships, but also come to blame individuals for their failure to trust, seek out and perform their expert advice, while still maintaining credit for the millions of success stories across Canada and internationally.

### ***Considerations for Future Research***

This research project has contributed to the much needed study of online match-making services conceptualizations of love and relationships and the potential impact that this may have on individuals who use online match-making services. However, there is still much more that needs to be explored in this burgeoning field of inquiry. As discussed in the introduction of this study, the original research design consisted of a textual analysis of online match-making websites, in addition to interviews with members of these services. Extenuating circumstances required a redesign of this research project, and the interview portion of this study was removed. Thus, an area for future research would be the inclusion of interview participants who are members of an online match-making service, or have been in the past. Here, the inclusion of online daters' voices is crucial to understanding how they come to engage and interact with these match-making services. For example, as online match-making services become more "scientific"

in their matching methods, what impact does this have on online daters' negotiation between sites and subsequent participation?

Future research should also consider individuals who have not found 'success' through match-making services. For example, this study argues that online match-making services blame their members for not finding love through their services. As such, it is important to discern how this is dealt with and understood by such online daters. Thus, future research should consider the possibility that online dating may not be suited to some individuals because, for example, the perception of a lack of social presence or feelings of distrust towards online matches.

This study also examined the impact of gender on these match-making services conceptualization of romantic relationships. By incorporating interviews future research may consider the implications of the promotion of stereotypical gender roles made by these services on daters' perceptions of their wants and needs in a relationship, and subsequent participation with, and presentation on, these sites.

Conversely, this study analysed an active pursuit of love online, whereby the means through which to find a romantic partner were examined. As such, this study used the work of Beck (2000), Beck and Beck-Gernsheim (1995; 2002), Beck and Willms (2004) and Beck-Gernsheim (2002), which promotes an understanding of love as a necessity, and hence, something that is eternally sought after. Future research may thus consider an understanding of romantic love from the perspective of individuals who actively and consciously engage in a non-pursuit of love. That is, how individuals who choose not to participate in or search for romantic love, conceive of love in a society that promotes the acquisition of love and the pursuit of intimate attachments.

### ***Concluding Thoughts***

This study found that the path to a ‘rational’ love is one that is fraught with newly constructed uncertainties generated by online match-making services. These constructed uncertainties of love manifest through these institutions of expert knowledge as fears of deception, as the premature negotiation of decisions, the influence of astrological signs, the illusion of difference created between competing forms of expertise and advice, the command to follow expert advice and the divide that is created between the sexes. While providing ‘ideal’ or ‘perfect’ matches in order to enable their members to battle against the dangers and uncertainties of love, these services appear to create more difficulties for some members as opposed to decreasing them. Unless these services make more transparent their imparting of individual responsibility and the potential difficulties that may arise, individuals will potentially continue to turn to online match-making services as an “easy” solution to finding love. As such, individuals may fail to recognize the potential impact that these services can have on one’s participation in a romantic relationship.



## References

- Anderson, T. L., and Emmers-Sommer, T. M. (2006). "Predictors of Relationship Satisfaction in Online Romantic Relationships". *Communication Studies*, 57, 153-172.
- Arvidsson, A. (2006). "'Quality Singles': Internet Dating and the Works of Fantasy". *New Media and Society*, 8, 671-690.
- Atkinson, W. (2007). "Beck, Individualization and the Death of Class: A Critique". *The British Journal of Sociology*, 58, 349-366.
- Baker, A. J. and Whitty, M. T. (2008). "Researching Romance and Sexuality Online: Issues for New and Current Researchers". In S. Holland, (Ed.), *Remote Relationships in a Small World*, (pp. 34-52). New York: Peter Lang Publishing, Inc.,
- Baker, A. J. (2002). "What Makes an Online Relationship Successful? Clues from Couples who Met in Cyberspace". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 4, 363-375.
- Baker, A.J. (2000). "Two by Two in Cyberspace: Meeting and Connecting Online". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 3, 237-242.
- Barraket, J. and Henry-Waring, M. S. (2008). "Getting it On(line): Sociological Perspectives on E-Dating". *Journal of Sociology*, 44, 149-165.
- Bauman, Z. (2003). "Falling In and Out of Love". *Liquid Love: On the Frailty of Human Bonds*, (pp.1-37). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Bauman, Z. (2001). "Faith and Instant Gratification". *The Individualized Society*, (pp.153-162). Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishers Inc.
- Beck, U. (2000). "Living Your Own Life in Runaway World: Individualisation, Globalisation and Politics". In W. Hutton and A. Giddens (Eds.), *Global Capitalism*, (pp. 164-174). New York: The New York Press.
- Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (1995). *The Normal Chaos of Love*. (M. Ritter and J. Wiebel, Trans.). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck, U. and Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). *Individualization: Institutionalized Individualism and its Social and Political Consequences*. London; Thousand Oaks, California: Sage.
- Beck, U. and Willims, J. (2004). "Individualization". *Conversations with Ulrich Beck*. (M. Pollak, Trans.), (pp.62-108). Cambridge: Polity Press.
- Beck-Gernsheim, E. (2002). "Life as a Planning Project". *Reinventing the Family: In Search of New Lifestyles*. (P. Camiller, Trans.), (pp.42-63). Cambridge: Polity Press.

- Ben-ze'ev, A. (2004). *Love Online: Emotions on the Internet*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Brennan, J. (2005). "Mixing Methods: The Entry of Qualitative and Quantitative Approaches into the Research Process". *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 8, 173-184.
- Brym, R. J. and Lenton, R. L. (2001). "Love Online: A Report on Digital Dating in Canada". [Online] available at <http://www.nelson.com/nelson/harcourt/sociology/newsociety3e/loveonline.pdf>
- Carter, S., and Snow, C. (2004). *Helping singles enter better marriages using predictive models of marital success*. Poster presented at the 16 Annual Convention of the American Psychological Society, Chicago, IL, May 27- 30.
- Charmaz, K. (1995). "Grounded Theory". In J. Smith, R. Harre, and L. Langenhive (Eds.), *Rethinking Methods in Psychology*, (pp. 27-65). London: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2006). *Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide Through Qualitative Analysis*. California: Sage.
- Charmaz, K. (2009). "Shifting the Grounds: Constructivist Grounded Theory Methods". In *Developing Grounded Theory: The Second Generation*, (pp. 127-193). Walnut Creek, California: Left Coast Press, inc.
- Cooper, A. and Sportolari, L. (1997). "Romance in Cyberspace: Understanding Online Attraction". *Journal of Sex Education and Therapy*, 22, 7-14.
- Corbin, J. and Strauss, A. (1990). "Grounded Theory Research: Procedures, Canons, and Evaluative Criteria". *Qualitative Sociology*, 13, 3-21.
- Cornwell, B. and Lundgren, D. C. (2001). "Love on the Internet: Involvement and Misrepresentation in Romantic Relationships in Cyberspace vs. Realspace". *Computers in Human Behavior*, 17, 197-211.
- Couch, D. and Liamputtong, P. (2007). "Online Dating and Mating: Perceptions of Risk and Health around Online Users." *Health, Risk and Society*, 9, 275-294.
- Denzin, N. K. (2001). "The Reflexive Interview and a Performative Social Science". *Qualitative Research*, 1, 23-46.
- Doucet, A. and Mauthner, N. (2003). "Reflexive Accounts and Accounts of Reflexivity in Qualitative Research". *Sociology*, 37, 413-431.
- Duchscher, J. E. and Morgan, D. (2004). "Grounded Theory: Reflections on the Emergence vs. Forcing Debate". *Journal of Advanced Nursing*, 48, 605-612.

- Elbling, R. and Levenson, R. W. (2003). "Who are the Marital Experts". *Journal of Marriage and Family*, 65, 130-142.
- Elchardus, M. and De Keere, K. (2010). "Institutionalizing the Self". *European Societies*, 12, 743-764.
- Elias, N. (1991). *The Society of Individuals*. Oxford, England: Blackwell.
- Flyvjerb, B. (2002). *Making Social Science Matter*. (S. Sampson, Trans.). Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Furedi, F. (2004). "Targeting Privacy and Informal Relations". *Therapy Culture: Cultivating Vulnerability in an Uncertain Age*, (pp. 66-83). London: Routledge.
- Glaser, B. G. and Strauss, A. L. (1967). *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. Chicago: Aldine.
- Goffman, E. (1977). "The Arrangement between the Sexes". *Theory and Society*, 4, 301-331.
- Hancock, J. T. and Toma, C. L. (2009). "Putting your Best Face Forward: The Accuracy of Online Dating Photographs". *Journal of Communication*, 59, 367-386.
- Hardey, M. (2002). "Life Beyond the Screen: Embodiment and Identity through the Internet". *The Sociological Review*, 50, 543-569.
- Hardey, M. (2008). "The Formation of Social Rules for Digital Interactions". *Information, Communication and Society*, 11, 1111-1131.
- Heino, R. D., Ellison, N. B., and Gibbs, J. L. (2005). *Are We a 'Match'? Choosing Partners in the Online Dating Market*. New York, NY: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the International Communication Association.
- Heino, R. D., Ellison, N. B. and Gibbs, J. L. (2010). "Relationshopping: Investigating the Market Metaphor in Online Dating". *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 27, 427-447.
- Henry-Waring, M. and Barraket, J. (2008). "Dating and Intimacy in the 21st century: The Use of Online Dating Sites in Australia". *International Journal of Emerging Technologies and Society*, 6, 14-33.
- Houran, J. and Lange, R. W. (2004). "Expectations of Finding a "Soul Mate" with Online Dating". *North American Journal of Psychology*, 6, 297-308.
- Houran, J., Lange, R. W., Rentfrow, P. J. and Bruckner, K. H. (2004). "Do Online Matchmaking Tests Work? An Assessment of Preliminary Evidence for a Publicized 'Predictive Model of Marital Success'". *North American Journal of Psychology*, 6, 507-526.

- Illouz, E. (1997). *Consuming the Romantic Utopia: Love and the Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism*. Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Illouz, E. (2008). "The Tyranny of Intimacy". In *Saving the Modern Soul: Therapy, Emotions, and the Culture of Self-help*, (pp. 105-151). Berkeley, CA: University of California Press.
- Jagger, E. (1998). "Marketing the Self, Buying an Other: Dating in a Postmodern, Consumer Society". *Sociology*, 35, 795-814.
- Jagger, E. (2001). "Marketing Molly and Melville. Dating in a Postmodern Consumer Society". *Sociology*, 35, 39-57.
- Kambara, K. M. (2005). *The social construction of online dating: Towards an understanding of technological use and consumption*. Philadelphia, PA: Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the American Sociological Association.
- Lawson, H. M. and Leck, K. (2006). "Dynamics of Internet Dating". *Social Science Computer Review*, 24, 189-208.
- Lea, M. and Spears, R. (1995). "Love at first Byte? Building Personal Relationships over Computer Networks". In J.T. Wood and S. Duck (Eds.), *Under-studied Relationships: Off the Beaten Track*, (pp.197-233). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.
- Levine, D. (2000). "Virtual Attraction: What Rocks your Boat?". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 3, 565-573.
- Madden, M. and Lenhart, A. (2006). *Online Dating*. Pew Internet and American Life Projects. [Online] available at <http://www.pewinternet.org/Reports/2006/Online-Dating.aspx>.
- McCown, J. A., Fischer, D., Page, R., and Homant, M. (2001). "Internet Relationships: People who meet People". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 4, 593-596.
- McKenna, K. Y. A., Green, A. S. and Gleason, M. E. J. (2002). "Relationship Formation on the Internet: What's the Big Attraction?". *Journal of Social Issues*, 58, 9-31.
- Merkle, E. R. and Richardson, R. A. (2000). "Digital Dating and Virtual Relating: Conceptualizing Computer Mediated Romantic Relationships". *Family Relations*, 49, 187-192.
- Mills, J., Bonner, A., & Francis, K. (2006). "The Development of Constructivist Grounded Theory". *International Journal of Qualitative Methods*, 5, 1-10.
- Mudge, Stephanie, L. (2008). "The State of the Art: What is Neo-liberalism?". *Socio-Economic Review*, 6, 703-731.

- Parks, M. R. and Roberts, L. D. (1998). "'Making MOOsic': The Development of Personal Relationships Online and a Comparison to their Off-line Counterparts". *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships*, 15, 517-537.
- Peters, M. (1999). "Neoliberalism". In *Encyclopaedia of Philosophy of Education*, (pp. 1-9). London: Routledge. [Online] available at <http://www.ffst.hr/ENCYCLOPAEDIA/lib/exe/fetch.php?media=neoliberalism.pdf>
- Pines, A. M. (1999). *Falling in Love: Why We Choose the Lovers We Choose*. New York; London: Routledge.
- Ong, A. (2006). "Introduction: Neoliberalism as Exception, Exception to Neoliberalism". In *Neoliberalism as Exception: Mutations in Citizenship and Sovereignty*, (pp.1-27). Durham, N.C.; London: Duke University Press.
- Rose, N. S. (1990). *Governing the Soul: The Shaping of the Private Self*. London: Routledge.
- Rose, N. S. (1999). *The Powers of Freedom: Reframing Political Thought*. Cambridge, United Kingdom; New York, NY: Cambridge University Press.
- Rosen, L. D., Cheever, N. A., Cummings, C. and Felt, J. (2008). "The Impact of Emotionality and Self-disclosure on Online Dating versus Traditional Dating". *Computers in Human Behaviour*, 24, 2124-2157.
- Scott, K. W. (2004). "Relating Categories in Grounded Theory Analysis: Using a Conditional Relationship Guide and Reflective Coding Matrix". *The Qualitative Report*, 9, 113-126.
- Scott, V. M., Mottarelle, K. E. and LaVooy, M. J. (2006). "Does Virtual Intimacy Exist?; A Brief Exploration into Reported Levels of Intimacy in Online Relationships". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 9, 759-761.
- Seal, C. (1999a). "Trust, Truth and Philosophy". In *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, (pp. 19-31). London: Sage.
- Seal, C. (1999b). "Generalizing from Qualitative Research". In *The Quality of Qualitative Research*, (pp. 106-118). London: Sage.
- Sprecher, S., Schwartz, P., Harvey, J. and Hatfield, E. (2008). "The Business of Love.com: Relationship Initiation at Internet Matchmaking Services". In S. Sprecher, A. Wenzel and J. Harvey (Eds.), *Handbook of Relationships Initiation*, (pp. 249-265). New York : Psychology Press.
- Stephure, R. J., Boon, S. D., MacKinnon, S. L. and Deveau, V. L. (2009). "Internet Initiated Relationships: Associations Between Age and Involvement in Online Dating". *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication*, 14, 658-681.

- Strauss, A. L. (1987). *Qualitative Analysis for Social Scientists*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Strauss, A. L. and Corbin, J. (1998). *Basics of Qualitative Research: Techniques and Procedures for Developing Grounded Theory (2nd ed.)*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage
- Valentine, G. (2006). "Globalizing Intimacy: The Role of Information and Communication Technologies in Maintaining and Creating Relationships". *Women's Studies Quarterly*, 34, 365-393.
- Valkenburg, P. M. and Peter, J. (2007). "Who Visits Online Dating Sites?; Exploring Some Characteristics of Online Daters". *CyberPsychology and Behavior*, 10, 849-852.
- Warren, C. A. B. and Karner, T. X. (2010). *Discovering Qualitative Methods: Field Research, Interviews and Analysis (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.)*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Whitty, M. T. (2003). "Cyber-flirting: Playing at Love on the Internet". *Theory and Psychology*, 13, 339-357.
- Whitty, M. T. (2008). "Liberating or Debilitating? An Examination of Romantic Relationships, Sexual Relationships and Friendships on the Net". *Computers in Human Behavior*, 24, 1837-1850.
- Whitty, M. T. (2009). "E-Dating: The Five Phases on Online Dating". In Celia Romm-Livemore and Kristina Setzekorn (Eds.), *Social Networking Communities and E-dating Services: Concepts and Implications*, (pp. 278-291). Hershey: Information Science Reference.
- Whitty, M. T., Baker, A. J. and Inman, J. A. (Eds.). (2007). *Online Matchmaking*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Whitty, M. T. and Carr, A. (2006). *Cyberspace Romance: The Psychology of Online Relationships*. Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Whitty, M. T. and Gavin, J. (2001). "Age/Sex/Location: Uncovering the Social Cues in the Development of Online Relationships". *CyberPsychology and Behaviour*, 4, 623-630.
- Whitty, M. T. and Joinson, A. N. (2009). *Truth, Lies and Trust on the Internet*. London and New York: Routledge.
- Whyte, M. K. (1990). "Dating". In *Dating, Mating and Marriage*, (pp. 17-44). New York: de Gruyter.

Original questionnaires from  
eHarmony.com, perfectmatch.com  
and match.com were removed.

While these forms may be included in the  
document page count, their removal does not  
represent any loss of content from the  
dissertation.