Romance and the Internet: the E-Mergence of E-Dating

Angeline Grace Close, University of Georgia/North Georgia College and State University

George M. Zinkhan, The University of Georgia

ABSTRACT -   Here, we explore the meaning and essence of a relatively new phenomenonCelectronic dating (E-Dating). We define key terms (e.g., E-Dating, O-Dating, Netiquette) associated with this emerging aspect of dating. In our exploratory study, we focus on the Internet-based form of E-Dating, by tapping into the experiences of college-aged singles in the U.S. Our methods include a survey, in-depth interviews, and a series of focus group interviews. We assume that through narrative description, human experience can be consciously expressed and explained. We furthermore consider online dating as a kind of social exchange and describe emerging sociocultural, semiotic, and humanistic trends.

[to cite]:

[url]:

http://www.acrwebsite.org/volumes/8872/volumes/v31/NA-31

[copyright notice]:

Romance and the Internet: The E-Mergence of E-Dating

Angeline Grace Close, University of Georgia/North Georgia College and State University[1]
George M. Zinkhan, The University of Georgia

ABSTRACT

Here, we explore the meaning and essence of a relatively new phenomenon—electronic dating (E-Dating). We define key terms (e.g., E-Dating, O-Dating, Netiquette) associated with this emerging aspect of dating. In our exploratory study, we focus on the Internet-based form of E-Dating, by tapping into the experiences of college-aged singles in the U.S. Our methods include a survey, in-depth interviews, and a series of focus group interviews. We assume that through narrative description, human experience can be consciously expressed and explained. We furthermore consider online dating as a kind of social exchange and describe emerging sociocultural, semiotic, and humanistic trends.

INTRODUCTION

"Now fate has met its match" (Yahoopersonals, 2003).

Dating is the process of ritualistically courting a partner with a perceived aspect of romantic potential. As such, this set of rituals can be seen as a component of consumer behavior that is currently in a transition stage. In 2001, there were more than 5 million regular users of dating or singles websites (Stone, Rogers, and Platt 2001). Revenue from these dating sites is expected to rise more than 100 percent in the next five years— from US $313 million (2002) to $642 million (2007) (Higgins 2003). In 2003, online dating is a $304 million industry, targeting primarily the younger, presumably single market (Higgins 2003).

There is a dating site for almost every conceivable religion (e.g., catholicsingles.com), region (e.g., chicagosingles.com), or cultural background (e.g., globalrishta.com). The most popular online dating services (e.g., match.com, emode.com, kiss.com, matchmaker.com, lavalife.com) draw patrons and curious counterparts from all financial, economic, and social backgrounds. The category leader, match.com, reports 5.7 million hits *per month*, matchmaker.com reports 3.2 million hits per month, and five other sites are in the million-plus range. *Udate Properties* has ten-million individual subscribers (*Newsweek* 2003). Such dating sites provide a virtual opportunity for consumers to interact and, in the process, re-invent dating patterns, rituals, scripts, and motivations.

Two central questions guide the present study. First, "What themes are salient among young (college-aged) daters in the U.S., who use the Internet to initiate and/or facilitate dating relationships? Second, "What concerns and outcomes do daters experience before, during, and after searching, posting, and/or joining an Internet dating/singles site?" In pursuing these questions, we seek:

1. to understand the emergence of Internet dating via informants' experiences
2. to present qualitative data that illustrate key themes related to Internet dating

Emergence of Netiquette-Based E-Dating

Based on our exploratory interviews and surveys, we synthesize the following definitions:

1. *O-Dater* (Offline)- One who only utilizes traditional, offline means to seek others for possible romance in person.

2. *E-Dater* (Electronic)- One who utilizes an electronic (e.g., the Internet) exchange to seek a dating relationship with another, typically with someone they have not met. This exchange is often one-way. E-Dating includes such activities as subscribing to a site, posting a personal ad or message, replying to messages, and so forth.

3. *E-Dating Success*-A mutual online interaction (exchange), which may occur instantaneously (e.g., ICQ), or be lagged (e.g., an e-mail). Success may precede an offline date, yet an offline date is not always the goal of E-Dating.

4. *Dating Etiquette*-The pre-established, societal and culturally-based set of norms, traditions, and rituals in American O-Dating history. Much dating etiquette is gender-based.

5. *Dating Netiquette*-The emerging set of norms and expectations apparent in E-Dating relationships, generally less stringent/more causal than previous dating etiquette.

American dictionaries term a *date* as "an engagement to go out socially with another person, often out of romantic interest, or "one's companion on such an outing" (dictionary.com). We believe that there is a need for a separate component to describe non-traditional (e.g., Internet) dating. Thus, our working definition of an E-Date is:

the pre-set time to "meet" in a chatroom or on a dating/singles website to instant message (IM), or the actual online social exchange. The initiation of an E-Date may result via a personal posting, a chat room conversation, an email, some other computer-mediated communication, or even from offline correspondence.

We define E-Dating as:

the process of contact, courtship, and subsequent emotional, psychological, or spiritual bonding/ exchange at any level between persons via a singles, matchmaking, or online dating website/chatroom.

With these key concepts defined, we now explore E-Dating in more depth.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Economic theory can be applied to understand social behavior (e.g., Blau 1964, Gouldner 1960, Ekeh 1974). In marketing, Belk and Coon (1993) studied economic exchanges associated with dating (e.g., gift giving). From this perspective, American dating, mating, and courtship are market exchanges, where daters ritualistically exchange and gifts and spend money as a focal symbolic

vehicle (Belk and Coon 1991). A social theory of exchange (e.g., Malinowski 1922), however, suggests that such exchanges are associated with prestige—something that is distinct from financial or material exchange. As a caution, viewing dating as an exchange "may threaten to commoditize and destroy the illusions provided by the romantic model of love" (Belk and Coon 1991 p. 521) Nonetheless, we continue in the tradition of social sciences and consider E-Dating as primarily a social exchange.

METHODS

In this exploratory study, we employ multiple methods to explore E-Dating to triangulation in aims of providing corroborating evidence (Lincoln and Guba 1985). Data collection consisted of: a) an exploratory questionnaire, b) preliminary semi-structured, in-depth interviews and c) a series of focus-group interviews.

Questionnaires

To explore the definitions and user perceptions associated with E-Dating, we administered a preliminary questionnaire to all focus group informants, prior to any moderated discussion. The three questions on the questionnaire asked about security, the definition of E-Dating, and e-mail. We also provided a place for informants to write any feelings, elaborations, or comments they prefer not to share with the group as a whole.

In-depth Interviews

A trained and experienced qualitative researcher interviewed three E-Daters in order to get a preliminary feel of the individual perspective of E-Dating. The individual in-depth interviews ranged from approximately 30 to 120 minutes in length. Although the findings of the current study are based on the questionnaires, preliminary depth interviews, and three sessions of focus groups, the researcher has since conducted 27 depth-interviews with E-Daters.

Focus Group Interviews (FGI)

As a primary data source, we formed temporary "small communities" to explore dating perceptions and practices. We chose to concentrate on this method, as focus groups are "less structured and free-flowing" (Zinkmund 1985) and account for the social nature of dating. There were two rounds of group interviewing, with over a year elapsing between the rounds.

FGI Recruitment/Sampling. In Round A, via criterion sampling, we found individuals with E-Dating experience. We recruited singles that have tried (posted to or responded to) E-Dating services, primarily with classified advertisements in a local newspaper. Simultaneously, we drew upon other recruitment sources: a list of study informants on a related topic (chat), and a marketing listserv. Potential informants were sent a screener to ensure their E-Dating experience. We described the study's general nature, yet not the exact study purpose, to suspend bias. Informants received $30 for their time and insights.

Round B informants were recruited via a "snowballing" technique, which utilized fliers posted in the downtown area as a starting point. Round B informants were compensated in one of two ways: (1) with extra credit in an undergraduate business course, or (2) community service hours. In this recruitment round monetary incentives were not required to find individuals willing to share their E-Dating experience. Thus, before the second series of research begins, we found more individuals willing to talk about E-Dating experiences.

Data Preparation and Analysis

We compiled responses from the questionnaires from all respondents. We combined these data with field notes and hours of video and audio tapes. In addition, the transcribed preliminary in-depth interviews and researcher notes were incorporated into the database. Researchers extensively watched the videos for body language, reviewed field notes, listened to tapes, and classified questionnaire items. The data analysis procedure was based on immersion into the data, which came from extensive reading/viewing, arranging, coding, and comparing of the data (Creswell 1998). We related and classified the responses according to (1) popular issues, (2) research objectives, (3) source, (4) patterns, and (5) themes.

Open coding lead to axial coding (connecting a category with subcategories). Here, researchers classified the data into categories, according to common words (e.g., confidence) or phrases (e.g., "dating is scary"). We then refined and differentiated the emerging categories. After revisions and re-groupings, subcategories (e.g., time constraints), and their depth and breadth were formed. At this point, we were able to elaborate on how each category and subcategory relates. Finally, we identified the relationships among each code and category. We viewed the data in terms of the research objectives, and rechecked interpretation against the data until we reached saturation.

FINDINGS: EMERGING E-DATING THEMES

Establishing Relationships

In addition to seeking romance, our informants use E-Dating sites and services to establish friendships, or just to find someone to communicate with infrequently. Four informants from group A each used the Internet as a direct tool to establish a new relationship. Informant (A2, M) said he utilized an "online matchmaking service" in an attempt to meet new people—not necessarily romantic, when he first moved to a new city.

Informants likewise spoke of using the sites to find romance. Interestingly, males dominated in sharing personal E-Dating experiences, in almost a brag-like manner. One informant (A3, M) used such a site to seek romance. He "met" a woman in a chat room after seeing a woman on an E-Dating site. This woman lived in Tennessee (although he lives in Georgia). The two had not previously met; however, he made the trip to Tennessee to see her twice.

E-Dating Advances Friendships

Informants noted that the Internet often does keep a pre-established friendly relationship intact via computer-mediated-communication (CMC). CMC contributes towards making a friend into more:

> I would say that ICQ'ing during class and emails back and forth are probably as much as what created us going beyond friends, as time we spent together, even though we saw each other every day it was the late night humor emails and ICQs during class…that definitely created the flirtation. (A7, M)

It's a Small, Small World

Informant (A7, M) met a woman in a dating site. In this site, he came across a woman who intrigued him with common interests, goals, and career aspirations. After initial contact and chatting, he discovered that she was his coworker in a Texas-based satellite office. They then moved their chatting sessions from the dating site to their company's Intranet. Their online encounters lead to a three-week romantic involvement. The informant, from the Atlanta

office, told of his "business trips", which he took three weeks in a row. Such "E-affairs" may be especially of interest to managers who supervise "business related travel", as employees often use the Internet (or Intranet) for more than job-related tasks. We see that such work-based Internet tasks range from "paying an occasional cable bill", to facilitating/carrying out a romantic relationship. In the instance of (A7, M), he used his company Intranet to accomplish personal goals. We see that E-Dating is a tool, even on a regulated network (e.g., a company's Intranet), to seek an offline romance. As we reveal below, this tool often: a) facilitates offline encounters, and/or b) creates online relationships.

Facilitating Offline Encounters. In both E-Dates and O-Dates, informants seek pleasure and affirmation. The way in which they find and merit these goals is different offline than offline. In the exploratory group, six informants said they used the Internet to facilitate off-line relationships (A-2M, 3M, 6F, 7M, 9F, and 11F). These informants each used a dating site to maintain ties with people whom they had *first* met in real life. These instances consisted of romantic, platonic, and family relationships. For instance, informant (A9, F) met a man she developed romantic feelings for while studying abroad in Israel. Upon returning to the US, the international couple kept in touch through online means. CMC was the choice of keeping in touch, as international calls are "too expensive" and "the time zone differences became an issue". However, many Internet users who reportedly maintain relationships on dating sites have found methods of supplementing their contact through phone calls or meetings in person.

Creating Online Relationships. The second round of informants expressed a new theme. The finding here is that they are *creating* meaningful personal relationships online (chat rooms, email) in addition to just utilizing the Internet to maintain existing relationships. The dating sites serve more so to introduce than to rekindle prior relationships. Relationships that have been created online are often due to common personal characteristics such as shyness or interest in common sites. Such relationships blossom on the E-Dating sites and chat rooms.

The Electronic Edge

Informants say the Internet provides an extra edge, by serving as a confidence-builder for creating romantic relationships. That is, E-Dating sites may give some individuals the confidence to pursue a date. More aggressively, one woman met a man online from halfway across the country. Two months later, they moved in together. "I was scared out of my mind…but I was enough of a hopeless romantic to do it" (A6, F). She felt the Internet aided her decision to "go for it".

E-Dating Geographical Barrier

E-Dating is best for finding singles living in or near the same city. That is, the Internet brings new daters together from local communities much more frequently than any other search option. Informants frequently claim a key attribute of the Internet is that it "reduces geographic boundaries in both relationship formation and maintenance" (A9, F), but they do not report this in their actions. While it is possible to meet others from distant geographic boundaries via E-Dating, informants rarely spoke of such experiences in a positive note.

Resulting from solely online encounters, (A6, F) moved from North Carolina across the country (to South Dakota) for an attempted romantic relationship. This move came after two months of online contact. Not only did she go for a weekend, as the previous informant, yet she went with her belongings and intentions of permanently moving in. She did just that. Note here, e-interactions were the sole motivation for her move, as there were no additional career or familial persuasions. The informant did not consider this

move to be risky. When probed concerning the risk of such a drastic move, she replied, "I've been talking to him online—he is not a complete stranger" (A6, F). She was back in North Carolina after just five weeks of living with this "non-stranger". Most other informants expressed some sense of the risks associated with making the transition from E-Dating to O-Dating.

Sacred Place. Whichever area of the country (or world) an E-Dater resides, the sacredness of the home remains. The home is a sacred place, and there are sacred relationships created in the home. (E-Dating) "is good for nights you don't want to go out, but want some sort of social interaction" (B5, F). Most E-Daters enjoy the presence of their own home—complete with material and familiar comforts, as they E-Date. However, the Internet is a medium that can cross time barriers and space boundaries. Wireless capabilities reduce space limitations, and make E-Dating available almost anywhere (e.g., via wireless communication).

Time Wasted, Time Saved

Although technology is lessening physical space limitations, individuals' time remains a constraint in dating. All of the focus-group informants in Round A mentioned severe time constraints in their lives, stemming from both school and other extra-curricular activities. Informants A-2M, 7M and 10F provided the best examples of how the Internet has saved them time in respect to their off-line relationships. Informant (A2, M) used an Internet dating service to meet people when he first came to Athens. He claims that the Internet is a mainstay of his current relationship, since both he and his girlfriend are "graduate students and consequently have little time." Similarly, one informant primarily uses the Internet to maintain relationships, due to her "time constraints in life" (A10, F). We see that technology makes E-Dating appear as a time-efficient activity. Two attractive features are: a) matching services, and b) the E-Dating screener.

Matching Services. Along with real-time analysis of potential E-Dates, high-speed connections provide "sophisticated and speedy matching services". Because of the fast-paced American lifestyle and the emphasis on career establishment, the Internet is progressively being utilized as a dating tool. As one informant shares, "there is little time available after work. I don't want to go out to meet people; I interact with people all day. I don't have time to do both" (B6, M). Without time to go to social events, gatherings, and the traditional places to meet dates, informants report to be "strapped for time to meet someone." A collaborative virtual environment saves time for all parties involved. For instance, while chatting on an E-Dating site, there is no need to wait on technology, as messages are generally quickly (if not instantaneously) sent and replied to.

E-Dating Screener. The robust scalability and data archiving of personal pages allows a more time-efficient E-Dating experience. Even to one who does not "take the time" to join a specified E-Dating site (e.g., match.com), common ISPs (e.g., CompuServe, Mindspring, AOL, MSN) provide personals for the busy individual. Personals allow one "to screen" thousands in the time it would take to interact with a mere few…if any…at a social gathering or event" (B4, M). Such pages or specific personal ads can even be saved for future reference.

Recurring E-Dating Patterns

E-Dating does not necessarily follow the pre-existing courtship principles or dating patterns of earlier eras. That is, a new form of netiquette faces the generation of E-Daters with: a) less intimacy, b) community based self-disclosure, c) looks that may deceive, and d) lies.

Less Intimacy. Where traditional, offline relationships assume some physical proximity, relationships formed online are often entered into with the understanding of the limited potential for

physical contact. This limited or lack of proximity is repeatedly associated with E-Dating. Consumers are more likely to seek gratification from face-to-face communication than from the Internet (Flaherty et al. 1998). Much gratification in relationships comes from intimacy. Our informants agree: "I like the intimacy of the whole person, not a cold screen" (B7, M).

Community Based Self–Disclosure. Although E-Dating lacks intimacy, our informants do tend to be more candid more rapidly with those they have just met on E-Dating sites, as compared with people they have just met in person. However, such candid disclosure seems to occur most with E-Dating in one's community (e.g., geographical, interest-based, racial, religious). Likewise, the amount of time spent building a sense of trust with co-members of one's community, is shorter than the time taken to formulate trust with an E-Dater *outside* of one's community. This expedited sense of trust seems especially true if the chance of having the two communities cross is slim or if multiple communities are shared (e.g., finding another German Harley-Davidson member online). "We had a lot in common, so I didn't waste time explaining about my background; I could quickly tell he understood" (B8, F). Similarly, anonymity creates an opportunity for self-revelation that may not be present in the context of the traditional O-Date.

Looks May Be Deceiving. Without a photo, the aspect of attractiveness is "out of the picture", and attention focuses on written material. Hence, an E-Dater's personality may show through, without becoming overpowered by looks. The cues used in life (e.g., body language, dress, personal hygiene, tone of voice) are not available online. In addition, many deceptions occur online (e.g., via photos). A submitted photo may be outdated, doctored up, or actually represent someone else all together. Most commonly, the photo posted is from a distant perspective or just a "very good picture". "I didn't recognize her from the photo she sent me. When I met her, she had really bad skin" (B3, M).

Lies, Lies, Lies. While not always harmful or ill-intended, lies are a problem associated with E-Dating. Female informants reluctantly shared that they have lied about their weight and their age. One 20 year-old informant (B1, F) told a man she met on kiss.com that she was 21. Her rationale was to be "included in the drinking scene" on potential future O-Dates. Men reported lying about their athletic condition, income, and relationship status. Some male informants (e.g., B6, M) claimed to lie for the "entertainment value of it". One informant described how he occasionally gets together with friends and they go online (to E-Dating sites) to pretend they are interested in "ugly chicks." They pursue this prank with flattering e-mails to the girls, with no intentions of sincere communication.

E-Dating's Dark Side

Many informants reported positive experiences, yet some informants also expressed negative opinions and outcomes concerning their E-Dating experiences. Overall, negative perceptions did not outweigh the potential benefits of E-Dating, as none of the participants spoke of a negative experience that has prevented continuation of E-Dating.

Potential Danger in E-Dating. E-Dating can be dangerous, in a different manner than traditional dating. When and if one first meets an E-Date offline, it is common to feel as if the other is not a true stranger. "I felt as if I had known him for years, just after a few chat sessions" (A6, F). By chatting, information on favorite sports teams, authors and foods may have been shared with another E-Dater. Individuals seem to know many personal facts; however these "facts" are often misrepresentations. It is difficult to treat this person as a stranger, yet it is important to exercise normal precautions.

E-Daters may have a tendency to set aside precautions associated with blind dates. For example, one informant assumed that the men she met on dating sites were sincere, stable, and single. Yet, she stated that several people she had dated online were either abusive or in committed relationships. Interestingly, her offline dates did not cease after one bad experience—even with physical abuse.

> He promised me everything. At first I found it hard to believe, here was someone who I would move to the other end of the country to be with. Well maybe I shouldn't have had so much faith in him. It hurts now, but I am glad for every second he gave me and for every moment I was in his arms. I know I have the capacity within to love… and one day I will love again. Only this time I will get it right! (A6, F)

Without spite, she characterizes her past negative dating experiences as "very fruitful and positive learning experiences."

Risky Business

There are always risks in dating, especially in the care of blind dates, first dates or E-Dates. The risks associated with twenty-first century dating "far exceed the risks in recent history" (B1, F). Much of the risk in E-Dating stems from: a) the unknown audience, and b) security risk.

Unknown Audience. There are social risks associated with E-Dating. For instance, while some CMC has a known audience (e.g., e-mail), E-Dating site subscriptions involve posting information or graphics to an unknown audience (e.g., personal advertisements). While E-Dating may allow one to interact with many individuals or pursue O-Dates in a "socially ascending" manner, E-Dating may tarnish one's reputation. One informant described how E-Dating is socially risky: "Anytime I type personal information, there is no telling where it may end up. My picture as well, may end up on someone's desktop or even printed and framed on their bedside table" (B11, F). This thought is disturbing to her, and is risky according to other informants—as providing personal information and photographs on a personal advertisement is, in essence, giving this information to strangers.

Security Risk. Security is an issue in online relationships: "I'm very much aware of the temptation many have to use their networking skills to look at online transactions and information that they are not privy to" (B4, M). Another informant echoes this sentiment, "I absolutely am concerned about security. I am a computer tech and know all holes in systems. I only conduct transactions with 128 bit-encryption and NEVER with my social security number" (B3, M). Most respondents are hesitant to give out their general e-mail address and instead use the address provided by the E-Dating service. One informant noted that he has two real e-mail addresses and one fake "spam account." Identity stealing is also a concern to informants (B4, M; B11, F; B3, M).

DISCUSSION

Here, we present a "snapshot" of perceptions related to E-Dating, as experienced by single, college-aged Americans. The Internet has been around for over thirty years, but it took the invention of the web browser to make it available to a wide audience. It is approximately in the last five years that E-Dating has become popular with a large segment of the population. In 2002, the market for paid Web content jumped 105% overall. Yet, the personals/E-Dating industry witnessed even higher growth. In the third quarter of 2002, the personals realm saw a 387% gain, earning higher revenues than any other segment of online paid content—even more than the business/investment and entertainment/lifestyle segments (Elkin 2002).

It has been argued that the Internet may cause every power relationship on the planet to be renegotiated. It also appears that the Internet will be both a revolutionary and evolutionary force in a variety of human endeavors. For instance, the Internet has revolutionized business practices, especially in the area of B2B marketing (Zinkhan 2002). At present, it appears that the Internet may have even more profound consequences for human dating rituals. In one sense, these rituals may be traced to the distant past, as some human courtship rituals seem to have interesting counterparts in the animal kingdom (e.g., courtship patterns among great apes, birds, or higher mammals). Nonetheless, consider the profound impact of the automobile on human courtship. The impact of E-Dating may be just as strong and far reaching as the impact of the automobile. From a postmodern perspective, the Internet will have a strong influence on human consciousness and relationships (Watson et al. 2000). E-Dating may prove to be just one example of how the Internet transforms human behavior in the immediate future.

Implications for Social Exchange Theory

Social Exchange Theory assumes individuals, in this case, E-Daters, may accurately anticipate the payoffs of different decisions (Thibaut and Kelley 1959). However, daters often do not know precisely what they are looking for in a dating partner. Sometimes, they are not looking for a commitment (e.g., just to chat). Other times, interactions may cause "instant attraction." E-Daters make impulsive choices (e.g., no children, only blondes, medium build). An E-Dater may express a desire to avoid a date with someone with pale skin, under 5'7", or with red hair. However, these "rules" may be disregarded for a variety of reasons.

Limitations

In our study, there is not much age or gender diversity. There may be important differences in E-Dating perceptions depending on age, gender, occupation, motivations, interests, and geography. International comparisons, as well as cross-national differences may present further insight, especially in terms of consumer confidence (Zinkhan and Balzas 1998).

Future Research

In-depth interviews, case studies, and surveys remain promising methods for conducting research on the topic of E-Dating. Our working definitions (e.g., E-Date, netiquette) may aid in understanding this new phenomenon. Future researchers may wish to validate or amend these definitions. In addition, they may seek to discover the degree of intimacy E-Daters allow online, and how online relationships progress to off-line relationships. Our study is a pilot designed to stimulate such future inquiries.

REFERENCES

Belk, Russell W. and Gregory S. (1991), "Can't Buy Me Love: Dating, Money, and Gifts", *Advances in Consumer Research*, 18, 521-527.

Blau, Peter (1964), *Exchange and Power in Social Life,* New York: Wiley.

Creswell, John W. (1998), *Qualitative Inquiry and Research Design: Choosing Among Five Traditions,* London: Sage Publications.

Ekeh, Peter (1974), *Social Exchange Theory: The Two Traditions,* Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press.

Elkin, Tobi. (2002), "Online Paid-Content Revenue up 105% Over Last Year", *AdAge.com*, December 23. AAO30X

Flaherty, Lisa M., Kevin J. Pearce, and Rebecca B. Rubin (1998), "Internet and Face-to- Face Communication: Not Functional Alternatives," *Communication Quarterly*, 46 (3), 250-268.

Gouldner, Alvin (1960), "The Norm of Reciprocity," *American Sociological Review,* 25 (April), 161-178.

Higgins, Marguerite (2003), "Online Dating Services Posted Record Revenues for 2002," *Knight Ridder Tribune Business News,* Feb 1.

Krugman, DM. (1985), "Evaluating the Audience of the New Media," *Journal of Advertising*. 14 (4), 21-27.

Lathed, David L. and John M. Johnson (1994), "Criteria for Assessing Interpretive Validity in Qualitative Research," in *Handbook of Qualitative Research*, ed. Norman K. Denzin and Yvonna S. Lincoln, Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage, 485574.

Malinowski, Bronislaw (1922), *Argonauts of the Western Pacific,* London: Routledge & Sons.

MSNBC News (2002), "Online Dating: Everyone's Doing It". September 9, *http://www.msnbc.com/news/ 806278.asp?cp1=1#BODY*

Moustakas, C. (1994), *Phenomenological Research Methods,* Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Stone, B., Rogers, A, & Platt, K. (2001), "On the Internet, Love is Really Blind," *New York Times*, January 18, p. 1. (2001). Love online. *Newsweek*, 137, 46-51.

Thibaut, J.W., & Kelley, H.H. (1959), *The Social Psychology of Groups,* New York: John Wiley & Sons.

Watson, Richard T., Pierre Berthon, Leyland F. Pitt, George M. Zinkhan (2000), *Electronic Commerce: The Strategic Perspective,* Harcourt, Fort Worth, TX.

Zinkhan, George M. and Anne L. Balzas (1998), "The Institution of Advertising: Predictors of Cross-National Differences in Consumer Confidence," *Journalism and Mass Communication Quarterly*, 75 (3), 535-547.

Zinkhan, George M. (2002), "Promoting Services via the Internet: New Opportunities and Challenges," *Journal of Services Marketing* 16 (5), 412-423.

Zinkmund, William G. (1985), *Exploring Marketing Research*, Hinsdale, IL: Dryden.