Representation of superficiality and an illusion of false intimacy in online dating sites.
Thesis Statement: Modern structure of online dating sites remove real intimacy from human relationships and add to a shallowness that naturally comes with a variety of options.

Primary Sources:
Youandiq.com
Eharmony.com
Match.com
-Ask about personal history, physical preferences, emotional preferences, ethnicity, height, hobbies, range
-Almost immediately bombarded with emails with info on 16 different matches already.
Tinder

OUTLINE

Thesis: The modern outline of online dating sites, while sometimes effective in matching successful partners, they ultimately encourage superficiality and a false sense of intimacy among users.

Introduction:
- Thesis
- Introduce what online dating sites are in general
- How they started and how they work today
- Which are some of the most popular and which were used in this paper as primary resources (YouandIQ, Match, TInder)

3rd: What it's attempting to replicate and replace
- Article
- "Mate Selection"

1st: The superficiality
- "Paradox of Choice"
- 1. Paralisis 2. Dissatisfaction 3. High expectations
- High Number of Emails from Match
- Business aspect of it
- "New World of online dating"
- Facial attractiveness
- Tinder
- Profile Pictures
- Testimonies
- Types of questions they ask for match
- Limitation of space for personal description on tinder

2nd: Illusion of Intimacy
- "The illusion of Intimacy"
- Profiles
- Dangers
- Articles

3rd: Implications for the Future

4rd: Conclusion

The Illusion of Intimacy:
Information retrieved and where to find it:
The Illusion of Intimacy Page: 43
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Chapter 5: Common Problems Owned by Online Dating
More illusion of intimacy page 64
Creation of fantasies
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40% of people lie in their profiles
Appearance page 66
We are more likely to date people who are at about the same level of attractiveness as us.
Large number of potential mates page 69

The Paradox Of Choice (Ted Talk):
Too Many Choices
- **Produces paralysis**
- (Too hard to decide which one),
- decides not participate
- **End up less satisfied with the result of the choice than we would be if we had fewer options**
- Different option that could've been better
- Imagined alternative leads to regret even if good decision
- More options there are, the easier it is to regret anything disappointing about your option
- Opportunity cost- value with comparison
- imagine attractive features of options you rejected, leads to dissatisfaction
- Nagged by the idea of what he's missing
- **Escalation of expectations**
- You do better but you feel worse
- With all these options, expectations go up, because one of them should've been perfect
- "Secret to happiness is low expectations"
- When you are dissatisfied you now blame yourself because you could've done better with all these options

Josué Llamas Rodriguez   ENG-0002-05

Final Research Paper   Rick Crano

12/06/16

<center>The Business of Love: Superficiality and False Intimacy in Online Dating Sites</center>

"It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune, must be in want of a wife", reads the opening line of Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice*. It is this infallible statement that lies behind almost any romantic story ever told in literature. As an audience, it is only logical that we aspire to such elevated ranks of romanticism and love in general. The innate nature of reproduction and companionship so deeply engraved in our biology is enough motivation to prompt anyone to seek a suitable mate. However, common wisdom has taught us that it is not only the destination we are concerned with, but the journey that takes us there. Most women at one point or another desire a Mr. Darcy, a Jack Dawson, or a Romeo in their lives. Likewise, most men at a certain point would also desire a Miss Elizabeth, a Rose DeWitt Bukater, or a Juliet. "Romantic love and the idea of the existence of a perfect companion are promoted by the media. Many young Americans believe in the idea of living 'happily ever after'" (Hamon & Ingoldsby 12). To be part of such a grandiose love story is a common dream, one apparently shared by millions upon millions of users of online dating services today. A scan in 2009 revealed that the top 5 most popular dating sites (Match.com, Chemistry, PerfectMatch, eHarmony, and Spark) had a collective amount of 64.5 million users (Bridges 2). This number, equivalent to the entire population of the United Kingdom, represents roughly 20 percent of the entire United States population; all seeking the same basic thing: a companion. Whether a gay man, lesbian, elder, teenager, widow, divorced, cheating husband or wife, or quite simply a single person in pursuit of something beyond what his or her surroundings have to offer, popularity of online dating sites has increased exponentially over the past decade and shows no signs of slowing down. As poetic and noble the concept

of these sites may be, truth of the matter is that the anonymity and unlimited vastness of the world wide web has made the already complicated journey of finding a mate for life even more stressful, difficult, and potentially dangerous. The modern outline of online dating sites has encouraged a vast array of superficiality accompanied by a false sense of intimacy; a superficiality that can be attributed to the large quantity of potential partners available (and the manner in which they are selected), and an illusion of intimacy motivated by these people's fantasies about what they expect to find. Current research does not show promising results nor a good outlook on those millions of people who still expect to find the love of their lives only a click away.

Good nature has always taught us that one should not judge a book by its cover. The reasoning seems pretty obvious. One's character, values, and unique idiosyncrasies that make them who they are, are often hidden behind layers of formal presentation that may only be peeled away through actual face-to-face interaction. It is almost certain that Elizabeth would have clicked on "not interested" after reading Mr. Darcy's profile, or only by glancing at his picture showing a serious demeanor on his face. However ridiculous this example may seem, it is the reality by which these sites work. It really comes down to how you look. As I was doing my research for this paper, I decided to become a part of it myself and sign up for Match.com and create a Tinder profile of my own. Over a lapse of ten days, starting on November 21st to December 1st, I received a total of twenty-one emails, most of which contained the "exciting news" that I had twenty-four new matches for that day. Inside these emails, were in fact twenty-four names accompanied by twenty-four pictures, ages, place of residence, and percent of compatibility based on my information provided during registration and completion of my own profile. Trying to get into the mindset of an active user, I indeed made notice of the ones who caught my eye as interesting. I confess that my decision was made first by noticing the picture, and then hoping that they had a high compatibility percentage.

John Bridges makes reference to this phenomenon in his book *The Illusion of Intimacy: Problems in the World of Online Dating*. "In OLD (Online Dating), it's all about how you look. Ours is a culture that rewards attractiveness, good looks, a nice body, and a nice smile...If it's not happening visually, then the response may be a cold one: 'Click. Goodbye. Next!' (66)" It's a harsh reality that few people will comfortably admit participating in, but probably do. Can anyone truly be blamed? To access the full benefits of these sites, one must pay certain fees, and with a great number of daily new matches, might as well select the most attractive, right?

A very interesting phenomenon described by Barry Schwartz in his famous book *The Paradox of Choice: Why More is Less*, shows why this is much more complicated and detrimental than it seems at first. While freedom of choice has always been linked with positivity and variety to life, Schwartz discusses in Part III of his book why more options spell trouble for us as humans in constant necessity of making everyday choices. "Part of the downside of abundant choice is that each new option adds to the list of trade-offs, and trade-offs have psychological consequences...it affects the level of satisfaction we experience from the decisions we ultimately make" (Schwartz 119). It makes sense how such a concept could be applied to the world of online dating. Say I finally make up my mind and decide to message Girl X. She was one of my daily matches, was pretty according to my particular standards, and showed a 82 percent compatibility with my profile. We go out, and things seem to be working out only until I receive a new email with a new match who lives closer, seems more attractive, and shows an 88 percent compatibility. Regardless of the hypothetical happiness I may be experiencing with Girl X, something in my mind will make sure to never let me forget what could have been with this new match. *If only I had chosen better*, is what I would be thinking over and over. It is this opportunity cost that is also further developed by Schwartz from an economic standpoint. Opportunity cost, he explains, is "that one of the 'costs' of any option involves passing up the opportunities that a different option would have afforded" (120).

Over the course of those ten days, I received a total of 232 new daily matches. A number that just keeps getting higher and higher with each passing day and, psychologically speaking, it's almost an impossible task to remain devoted to the *don't judge a book by its cover* logic. It's a burden, to know that no matter whom I choose, a more compatible partner was just two days away from appearing in my inbox. Consequently, with so many different options, it is inevitable that a fault on the other person will cause them to be easily overlooked. If you are not perfect, there are thousands of others waiting who could be, or so goes the mentality that may arise.

If this seems like an undesirable position to be in, it is. And the way people respond, according to Schwartz, is that most of them simply avoid making a decision altogether. During my research, not once did I feel convinced enough to make a decision, and as a consequence, nothing happened. It is further discussed in the book that regret is a direct result of these comparisons, as "the power of the human imagination enables people to think about states of affairs that don't exist...regret will make us feel worse after decisions -even ones that work out- than we otherwise would…" (153-154). The reason for such a regret is apparently a rise in expectations from ourselves. Browsing through Match.com, which boasts the slogan *Find Love. Guaranteed,* makes for an inevitable set of expectations it could not possibly live up to. This however does not stop the sites from promoting them either. Two of the emails I received in this span were of stories of other users who had "succeeded" and "made it happen". Emails with titles such as *Learn From The Successes of Match Couples*, narrate the anecdotes of some of the couples who met online, fell in love, and got married. With such accounts of success and perfection, how could I, the average user, conform for anything other than that? Schwartz remarks on this by commenting how "unattainable expectations, plus a tendency to take intense personal responsibility for failure, make a lethal combination" (214). For the average Joe who lives in a small town in the middle of nowhere, where there might be five or six partners truly appealing to him, his decision process is much simpler. If it works out, wonderful. If it does not however, no one is really to blame as there was not much to choose from to

begin with. It's the town's fault. However, for the regular Joe who gets hundreds of different options every single day, failure in his decisions will be blamed on no one but himself for not choosing better.

All of this said, it is now clear how mental peace is literally at stake with every decision we make. It is then understandable that superficiality and shallowness has been developed in order to try to make the most appealing and simple decision, even though we probably never will. As previously said, I also interacted with Tinder during this time lapse, and the importance of an appealing profile picture has soared to unprecedented proportions. The decision of whether we swipe left (not interested) or right (interested) takes normally less than a second or so. The space to write something actually representative of the person itself has been reduced to only a few characters, leaving the majority of the decision to what our eyes tell us.

> The main or primary photo is the first place where narcissism and deception enter our discussion. Sometimes that photo is the only thing a person browsing the profile sees...many will "click out" of your profile for no other reason than the perceived weakness of that primary photo, without looking any further (Bridges 69).

This process of beauty discrimination is much more of an issue in Tinder than it is in online dating sites such as Match, but the same underlying causes nevertheless subside.

But what exactly is this facial beauty being referred to anyway? Isn't it a strictly subjective matter that varies within each individual? That is the common belief, that one cannot quantitatively or systematically measure beauty, agreeing with the '*beauty is in the eye of the beholder'* logic. However, an article by Anthony C. Little describes how there actually seems to be a general agreement across different individuals and cultures on what is considered attractive. Still, it should be noted that the article also makes clear that despite these findings, variety and other external factors do play crucial roles in this determination as well. The question that follows is why is facial beauty and attractiveness so important to us as a whole in the first place? A possible explanation given by the article, is that there could be a strong

evolutionary approach involved. Sexual selection, famously discussed by Charles Darwin, depicts how the goals of survival and reproducing as well and as much as possible, are at the top of our biological priorities.

> Individuals with attractive faces have been found to live longer and produce more children than individuals with less attractive faces. Individuals who partner with attractive-faced people are then likely to produce more children and have a long-lived partner who can invest in themselves and their offspring. Furthermore, if all of these traits are heritable, then those who can select attractive-faced partners will also produce offspring who are attractive, long-lived, and who will themselves produce more children (Little "Facial Attractiveness").

So while there certainly seems to be a social disapproval on the physical judgment approach, there definitely seems to be an engraved preference to individuals with desirable facial traits such as youth, weight, color, averageness, symmetry, masculinity/femininity, and health among others (Little). With such an unconscious (yet sometimes conscious) screening system in our being, it can be seen how online dating does nothing but promote this superficiality by allowing people to judge their interest in a person solely on their picture, whether it's Tinder or Match.com.

While signing up for Match.com, there were two main parts of the profile that had to be completed. One was about my personal information, which comprised of questions regarding my income, marital status, interests, height, number of kids, desire to have kids, smoking habits, frequency of exercise, faith, ethnicity, color of eyes and hair, among others. After completing such, I am given the option of noting down my preference in all the aforementioned in my potential partner. Not only does this narrow the scope of my potential partners, but it also adds to the shallowness encouraged by the site itself. There is the very likely possibility that a smart, articulate, and agreeable partner will be overlooked just because she's five feet tall and does not have the blue eyes and brown hair specified in my interests. This

focus on the importance of these preferences being met is what takes away the general variety and interesting nature of dating. Additionally, it gives us the erroneous assumption that we actually know what we are looking for.

Why is there such a big focus around this sense of compatibility? Dating in the United States has evolved a great deal since it was first established as the vehicle for courtship in the 1920's (Hamon & Ingoldsby 7). "Romantic love was firmly entrenched as the basis for marriage, and love and sex were promoted by the media" (7). Hamon & Ingoldsby's book *Mate Selection Across Cultures*, describes the basic structures of dating and marriage in North America. Willard Waller (1937) described the dating practices of his time as the "Rating and Dating Complex", in which the goal of dating among college students had been shifted.

> From love and mate selection to competition and pleasure. Men desired the most beautiful and popular women for the status that dating these women gave among their peers, and men pushed for as much sexual interaction as possible. Women rated their dates by things such as whether or not men had cars, were athletic, and were popular. This short-term focus separated dating from true courtship, where it is useful to develop good communication skills and find a mate who is mature and ready for family life (Hamon & Ingoldsby 7-8).

Such a transformation is significant even seventy years after it first began happening. While it is debatable that culture as a whole is trying to push us away from this trend and drive us towards a less objective approach, it also cannot be denied that this tendency is to a large extent very much alive. This being true, it is easy to understand why people who do not possess all of these "standard qualities", such as being athletic or rich, feel pressured to lie in their online dating profiles to seem more appealing and be able to compete for the most beautiful and desirable women according to them. Dating services provide users with the opportunity to describe themselves and what they desire to find in a potential mate. "Men tend to

stress their occupation, education, and financial status, whereas women tend to highlight their physical appearance" (Hamon & Ingoldsby 11). With the high number of different factors which can get a person rejected in online dating, it makes sense that some deception will inevitably take place.

Whereas it's fairly difficult to lie about one's physical appearance and general personal information in a face-to-face encounter, it is an effortless task online. Through the use of altered photographs, omission of discouraging truths, or just blunt lying, these factors hinder the credibility of these sites and deeply discourage users who now feel cheated. Bridges also explores this by revealing how more than forty percent of individuals lie in their profiles in one way or another. He explains how given the concept of screening and high levels of competition, it's not surprising that these people describe themselves the best way possible, despite meaning sometimes "'fudging' the profile, outright lying, or using whatever means of deception is necessary to have that 'best chance to make a sale'" (Bridges 66).

While filling out my profile for Match.com, I was astounded by the specificity level that some of these questions got to. Questions such as ethnicity, distance range you'd be interested in dating, religion, etc. By placing the option of specifying what one is looking for, it stresses the importance placed in those aspects. Of course, the option of "no preference" is always offered, but endogamy and propinquity usually encourage people to specify preferences. Endogamy is the social pressure to marry within your own group (same racial, ethnic, religious, and social background). And despite the fact that interracial marriages have doubled since 1980, they still only account for five percent of total marriages (Hamon and Ingoldsby 11). The other aspect is propinquity, which is to marry someone who is geographically near (12), as it's inevitable that the odds of marriage and general interaction are affected by someone's address. Others, such as hypergamy, which is when women marry older men, and hypogamy, which is men marrying younger women, are also prevailing tendencies in the world of online dating (12).

Although this tendency of focusing on superficial traits is repeatedly seen in the world of online dating, biological and social norms, and shifts throughout time has made it seemingly impossible not to.

That is not to say that superficiality and intimacy issues do not take place in face-to-face encounters, but the ridiculous amount of possible options and the easiness of anonymous screening definitely seem to encourage it. A screening process is definitely necessary for any choice in our lives, yet it should be a screening based on real assets that may only be accessed through real personal courtship. After a decision has been made, it is only logical that we should enjoy the benefits of our judgement rather than second guess it and long for those options we missed out on.

> Finding a life partner is not a matter of comparison shopping and 'trading up'...agonizing over whether your love is 'the real thing' or your sexual relationship above or below par, and wondering whether you could have done better is a prescription for misery (Schwartz 229).

So even if one is somehow able to make a satisfying and smart decision about who to message, email, or 'wink' at in a dating site, there's still the issue of whether or not the appropriate and expected intimacy will develop with that person.

One must consider the reason why people use online dating sites in the first place. People go there in pursuit of something they apparently don't believe can be found through conventional methods. Or have simply adopted the idea that this is the way of the future. Online dating sites are filled with users eager to meet some nice people, date, and fall in love. That's what they're paying for and that's why they go through the trouble of creating a detailed self-description in their profile and specify their preferences. The promises of '*happily ever after*' made by these dating sites, combined with the testimonies of other couples who succeeded, create a sense of excitement that can be detrimental for any potential relationship. Though it is true that some people use these sites in their search for casual sexual encounters, most cases reveal that users are in fact in the search for lasting, long term relationships (Bridges 43). As already discussed, it is not uncommon for people to lie in their profiles and reveal information that creates their

desired persona. This misrepresentation of the reality of people, combined with excitement by readers, creates a mistaken illusion that they finally found everything they were looking for.

> By engaging his or her own imagination, the reader now begins to create a 'reciprocal illusion'- a fantasy of his or her own, in which the reader sees that 'perfect fit' and can imagine (and may actually envision and see) himself or herself together with the individual who posted the profile (Bridges 48).

All of this of course, without the reader knowing that some (or sometimes all) of the profile is false, exaggerated, or simply written by someone else.

Truth of the matter, is that people who begin talking to each other via online dating sites are complete strangers. Strangers who open up to uncharacteristically quick flirting, sharing, and arrangements to meet each other based on the assumption that their shared interests and the fact that they are both looking for the same thing, will suffice to make it a reasonable risk. The fact that they are in a dating site already implies that they are there for that specific purpose, and thus it is very common that relationships move forward unusually fast. Reading someone's profile, along with an encouraging picture and flirtatious emails/texts, make it seem as though they are having real interactions. By the time they meet for the first time, they are very motivated to believe that they fulfill each other's needs and desires, making them believe they are ready to take on the next step in the imagined relationship. However, they are really just strangers meeting for the first time in person, and no real intimacy exists yet. Any real connection they hope to acquire is really only just beginning, and a separate process of its own must take place (Bridges 51). This phenomenon can be seen virtually in any platform in which texting is available. I can testify from my own experience that on several occasions, I held conversations with people online, built them up on my mind and was then disappointed when I actually had a chance of meeting them in person. This "formula for a perfect match" that is so advertised by these sites, tends to create this artificial relationship in our minds that crumbles upon a single dose of reality. Lauren Rosewarne discusses this

phenomenon in her book *Intimacy on the Internet*. She argues how given that communication is a quintessential aspect of real relationships and people in these sites are basically communicating all the time online, it may seem that online relationships are more real and intimate in comparison to what they end up encountering (76).

In a nutshell, it seems to be the case that imagination and excitement take the uncharacteristic role of perpetrators for the crime of creating false intimacy. By participating in online dating sites, one is inherently skipping all the necessary steps that make the connection between two people so exciting and significant. The gradual discovery of a person's character and the unexpected challenges that go along with them, are what ultimately make love stories so appealing to us. Paradoxically, people who play active roles in these sites are looking for romantic love, yet there is something quite *unromantic* about the idea of meeting the future mother or father of your children on the internet. "computers -and technology more generally- are widely construed as soulless and, as in the words of the feminist theorist Eileen Boris, 'the antithesis of intimacy'" (Rosewarne 41).

It is quite common to recognize that online dating is socially frowned upon because of its apparent connection with words such as "desperate" and "lonely". However, if the risks of deception and superficiality do not present a significant problem to users, then online dating does seem to significantly increase people's chances of meeting nice individuals. For people without time to actively go to social gatherings and other events to meet people, online dating might really be the only viable option for them. Exclusively speaking numbers, dating sites significantly increase chances of contacting potential long-lasting partners who live relatively near them but would never come in contact with in their normal routines. Andrea Orr makes notice of this in her book *Meeting, Mating, and Cheating*, discussing different cases in which people definitely faced difficulties for a long time, but eventually found what they were looking for in online dating. Some of these couples lived in the same neighborhood yet only found each other online. "What the internet can do is help people cast a wider net to locate however many

sympathetic individuals are out there" (Orr 66). Again however, the number of these successful cases only make up a tiny portion of the range of total users. Superficiality and false intimacy are and probably will always be present in online dating, tagging along with the outline of the system itself. Notwithstanding, people have been proven to love the idea of hope; hope of finding success against all odds seems to be a driving force that can't easily be dissuaded. If hope is the underlying motivator behind the mentality of online dating users, then little can be done to deter them.

I cannot personally say that I was not even a little intrigued by the possibility of said unlikely success. Despite all my research indicating the opposite, I can still understand why somebody would go through all the hassle of the process. The quest for love has taken different means throughout human history. Letters in pigeons, mail, fax, telegrams, phone calls, emails, have served as the ways of such communication. Perhaps online dating is quite simply what is next in the field of love. New technologies seem to be aimed at resolving some of the common intimacy issues of online dating. An article by Brenda K. Wiederhold discusses the possibility of virtual reality as a means of restricting awkward physical encounters and prevent people from being deceived. "Most users will want to meet a potential partner in person to integrate their CMC [computer-mediated communication] and face-to-face impressions into a coherent whole before pursuing a romantic relationship" (Wiederhold "VR Online Dating: The New Safe Sex). However, it can be said that no matter how seemingly effective and efficient technology may become, it will never be able to fully recreate a gaze into someone's eyes, the tension of a first kiss, or a simple unexpected smile. Chemistry between people is not a result of similar interests and attractive "resumés", but an indescribable spark attributed to romance which cannot be systematically created through a business such as online dating sites.

Annotated Bibliography

Bridges, John. *The Illusion of Intimacy: Problems in the World of Online Dating*.

PRAEGER, LLC, 2012.

This very developed book about Online Dating discusses the overall issues concerning online dating at its source. Chapter 5: *Common Problems Owned by Online Dating*, discusses specifically the problems, and stays temporarily away from the possible and very real benefits of online dating. Problems such as intimacy, attractiveness, age, marital status, deception, occupation, lust, digital breakups, and more, are discussed and explored with the help of testimonies from users themselves. Given that I try to address the problems of intimacy and superficiality in online dating, I specifically find the parts of deception and attractiveness particularly useful and interesting from this chapter. According to Bridges, the deception in user's profiles tend to doom the possible long-term relationship right from the start, as people often lie to seem more appealing to possible viewers. Also, a very influential factor concerning attractiveness is often overlooked when in reality, most people base their decision of contact solely on that. I completely agree with the author's attitude, and integrate his opinions into my argument.

Hamon, Raeann, and Bron Ingoldsby. *Mate Selection*. SAGE Publications, 2003.

This is a very extensive and dense text regarding the different factors that seem to contribute in the decision process in the creation of couples all over the world. The book is further broken down into different regions of the world, and discusses some other aspects of romantic couples, including rituals in different cultures. My interest in this book limited to North American couples and the factors that make these potential mates more attractive than others. This further enhances my arguments referring to the way people lie in their profiles and even alter their profile pictures in order to increase their chances of successfully meeting up with desirable mates. The rituals discussed in the book, such as marriage, also helps explain why people would go through the trouble of signing up and paying for a dating site at all. While many people

use these sites with casual sexual encounters as their main motivation, thousands others

actually expect to find a suitable mate to potentially marry and spend the rest of their lives with.

American marriage is thoroughly explained in this section of the book, and used in the paper

with the purpose of explaining the motivation of these hopeful people.

Hitsch, G.J., Hortaçsu, A. & Ariely, D. Quant Mark Econ (2010) 8: 393.

doi:10.1007/s11129-010-9088-6.

http://link.springer.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/article/10.1007%2Fs11129-010-9088-6

This article, contrary to the print book resources that I used previously, is strictly more technical

and scientific in its approach. The abstract for this article provides an explanation of the goals

and methods of their experiment to try to decipher the mentality and factors concerning the

decision process when browsing for a potential mate. Some of the findings in this study were of

relevance to my paper, and thus contributed useful scientific backup to some of the claims

made in it. Specifically, the finding that both men and women find attractiveness in similar

attributes, for example same race. Interestingly, women have a larger preference than men for

income rather than physical attributes, which reveal interesting psychological causes discussed

in the paper. There is little to dispute in the findings in this article, other than the confounding

variables that might have played a role in the creation of misleading results. Consequently, I

agree in most things discussed here, and consider the findings valuable additions to the

credibility and scientific aspect of my paper.

Little, Anthony. "Facial Attractiveness" *Wires, Cognitive Science*. **Volume 5, Issue 6.**

September 2014.

http://onlinelibrary.wiley.com.ezproxy.library.tufts.edu/doi/10.1002/wcs.1316/abstract;jsessionid=FDD61FC0A65C40B366D5A427A906FC1E.f03t02

This article discusses the psychological and biological effects and causes for what is perceived as facial beauty. Given that such a topic is touched in a great extend by some of the other resources, it was very useful to address a more scientific aspect of why someone might be considered more attractive than someone else. Aspects such as age, health, symmetry, and averageness, and others, are posed as an evolutionary aspect almost universally acknowledged. Given that I try to address the aspect of superficiality in this paper, the misconception that facial attractiveness is shallow might be misleading, and this article helps to provide some insight into why people might choose or overlook someone's profile if their picture is promising or not. However rich this article may be, it also states that facial attractiveness is overall very complex and difficult to fully define, which is why I only make reference to it as a possible explanation but necessarily a defining cause.

Orr, Andrea. *Meeting, Mating, and Cheating, Sex, Love, and the New World of Online Dating*. Pearson Education, Inc. 2004.

This books by Orr is rather more general about the love relationships found online. Chapter 4: Love minus Chemistry Equals Friendship, and Chapter 5: Needle in a Haystack, address points of interest to my paper. The book as a whole uses personal tales as backup and evidence for points trying to be made, which aren't necessarily as useful for a research paper. However, the author does a formidable job in not letting a story stand by itself, and provides some genuinely helpful information regarding how difficult it is to navigate these websites at times. Some of the testimonies from psychologists and other professionals in the field of relationships address how chemistry isn't as simple as finding common interests, but rather it is inexplicable and

sometimes idiosyncratic reasons that account for that. Numbers can also be very encouraging or discouraging, with some people receiving hundreds of responses every day and other not a single one. Overall, I refer to this book in a more general manner, using these interpretations from personal stories and testimonies to back up some of the more technical approaches found in some of the other resources I use for this paper.

Rosewarne, Lauren. *Intimacy on the Internet*. Routledge, 2016.

This is a very well renowned book that is praised for its reading fluidity and its explanation of topics already widely known regarding the internet and its uses. Through the use of extensive interviews and other research methods, a thorough analysis regarding the new role the internet plays in our lives to enhance or sometimes replace previously existing outlets for expression of love and sexual desire. It's recency also adds credibility and relevance to the paper, as it was published this year, and is thus updated in the modern statistics and technological trends that lack in other older texts. *Intimacy on the Internet* discusses just that, the increasing problem with intimacy because of the anonymity that is so easily accessible through fake names and pictures. Supporting my argument with the extremely scientific yet readable data in this book, I further enhance my thesis statement and have reliable sources to fall back on.

Schwartz, Barry. *The Paradox of Choice*. HarperCollinsPublishers, 2004.

This is probably the most useful text that I used for my paper. The Paradox of Choice basically discusses the many issues regarding the high number of possible options we have about any decision. Having too many options, according to Schwartz, is very harmful to us psychologically, as it makes us less satisfied with our ultimate decision because of the paralysis we experience, the regrets aftewards, and the sense of dissatisfaction we feel in the end because of all the

other options we're missing out on. This concept fits perfectly into the point I'm addressing regarding superficiality in online dating sites, as users have an endless number of matches, leaving the user confused and mentally stressed about what he/she decides and how. Its statements regarding the happiness related to the simplicity of fewer options fits perfectly with my concept of superficiality vs real happiness discussed in my paper.

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This is a very short article describing some of the trends of online dating, but also discussing some of its limitations and dangers. Dangers that can be solved, according to this article, by virtual reality encounters that would grant users the psychological pleasure of face to face contact and avoid the "sexbots" that sometimes trick people into giving information and money. Though not directly helpful to the arguments around my thesis, there are some interesting quotes regarding the internet and the dangers of the concept of the internet itself. Most of the arguments and technical support in my paper is taken from the more dense stuff, such as the print books, however, some ideas from this article certainly help. The article also begins by discussing some of the previous articles, providing the most vital key points in a very concise manner. I don't go very deep into the virtual reality aspects of the article, but definitely make reference to the limitations and problems with online dating it discusses.