

## **Match Made in Cyber**

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The tri-state region went from chilly-spring to mid-summer-like weather all in the month of May. Soon summer love madness will be in full effect before June is out. Do you have your options to meet your spouse-to-be or a summer amour? Many people choose cyberspace to connect with those special “someones”.

The pioneer of web romance connections is Match.com. Going live in 1995, Match.com still offers online and face-to-face local events. Quantcast.com, the digital advertising company, estimates 120.5 million Americans visit the site per month. 77% identify as Caucasian; 9% as African American; (% as Hispanic; and 5% as Asian or Other. If a subscriber has challenges in waxing dynamic statements to catch the imagination of prospects, Match.com has Profile Pro® that assigns writers to be the Cyrano de Bergerac for them.

Chemistry.com is the Match’s sophisticated sister site. Here subscribers take personality tests, write profile essays; and receive Chemistry Coaching to improve social skills. Dr. Helen Fisher is the in-house psychologist. While Quantcast.com estimates “84.6 thousand Americans visit this site monthly”, Chemistry.com boasts having “over 13 million people worldwide who completed the personality test.”

Apparently having a psychologist on staff adds to credibility. e-Harmony.com is founded by Dr. Neil Warren who established “the 29 Dimensions of Capability”. PerfectMatch.com relies on Dr. Pepper Schwartz and her Duet® Total Compatibility. Zoosk, the tidal wave the swept the online dating and social networking scene in 2006, doesn’t trumpet a Ph.D. but uses “Behavioral Matchmaking”. Why is Zoosk a tidal wave ? “Over 40 million people globally log onto to it and it has 12.5 million Facebook Likes.

Zoosk is “available in 25 languages and subscribers in over 70 countries”. As opposed to finding long-term, committed relationships, Zoosk positions itself as “a fun and social online

dating experience”. Zoosk offers a Facebook dating app, a Mobile dating app, a singles chat, and video messaging. These offerings can keep things flirty and non-tactile.

Dr. Julie Spooner, Ph.D. in Clinical Psychology, practicing in Brooklyn, recognizes the value of such sites. “As a clinician I have recommended it to people who have trouble meeting people. I don’t suggest it to everyone. If I see that the person can’t meet others, [I present it as a means] to exponentially increase the number of people to meet”.

If the income levels and educational attainment of subscribers to four of the reviewed sites are factual, then roughly 57% of subscribers have completed undergraduate studies and did some graduate studies. Most are prosperous with six-figure incomes. Is this truth or ‘rubbery’ truth?

Dr. Spooner “encourages moving to the telephone and then move to the face-to-face meeting. You shouldn’t interact exclusively online. The voice and facial expressions are not there for intimate communication”. Zoosk tries to keep things transparent by virtue of its parent Facebook. One need only visit FB profiles. Dr. Lisa Orbé-Austin, Ph.D., a partner in Dynamic Transitions Psychological Consulting, LLP, also sees the value in online dating and has clients who share the good and bad aspects of it. The bad being where “some women are surprised by men that were simply interested in a physical relationship. However, they later realized that it’s a function of the particular site to which they were subscribed”.

Some people reject the online scene. Take Hapi Kamenthu, Merr (director) of The Earth Center of Maanu, in New York. She believes it would be “disastrous” if online dating were to eclipse face-to-face as the first choice in the initial meeting between people. “It would be disastrous because the modern educational system doesn’t teach about themselves and their roles in life. Traditionally, [people] will do extensive family background checks”. Dr. Orbé-Austin doesn’t see it eclipsing face-to-face but, “thinks that online dating will be one of the primary ways that people meet. This is not a conversation that I was having with my clients 10 years ago, but now it’s a very normal part of the dating discussion.”