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Cultural Differences in Dating

Relinda Pearson

Dating constitutes an important activity in two developmental stages: adolescence and young adulthood (Sheming & Jiping, 2000). Dating is seen as recreation or an opportunity to have fun, as a means of status grading, as an opportunity for companionship with members of the opposite sex, and also as a way of sorting and preference. Lindenwood University has a very diverse student body. Many students that attend Lindenwood University are from many different places on the globe. The student body of Lindenwood University assumes that they are one in the same, but that assumption ranges in many aspects. Dating is one area that different cultures view differently. I am African American, and a friend of mine of the same race was interested in a Chinese girl. Since I knew the Chinese girl he asked me if I could ask her if she would be interested in going on a date with him. I went to her and told her that my friend was interested in her and wanted to talk, and immediately in a very distressed manner she responded, "I'm not like that," and walked away in a panic.

To this very day I am still very puzzled about the incident. I know that societies are different but this incident flamed my curiosity. I am hypothesizing that American born young adults hold the same liberal attitudes about dating as Americans. Attitudes being defined as Americans such as dating very young, date more frequently, and are more likely to engage in sexual relationships as opposed to their first generation Chinese young adult immigrants.

First generation Chinese young adults hold less permissive views toward dating much later and are less likely to engage in sexual activity with their dates (Mills &

Granoff, 1992). There are no previous studies on this specific research, but similar studies have indicated that American and Chinese samples differ greatly when it comes to dating (Hansen, 1977).

Method

Participants

There will be three groups of participants, a group of 50 Chinese American young adults, 50 American young adults, and a group of 50 first generation Chinese young immigrants. The participants will be recruited from the undergraduate student body of Lindenwood University. This will be a matched subjects design meaning that there will be an equal amount of females and males assigned to each group. A female researcher will conduct the experimental study.

Materials

The study will be conducted in a classroom setting and the materials that will be to conduct the study were as follows: writing utensils (pens and pencils), and a two-part questionnaire. The first part of the questionnaire will be used to measure dating behaviors, and the response categories that will be used the Likert Scale format, and will range from “strongly agree”, “agree”, “undecided”, “disagree”, to “strongly disagree”. The second part of the questionnaire will measure dating behaviors and consisted of free response-typed questions. Sample question: When you first began to date, did you date at an early age (age 14 would be considered to be early).

Procedure

Each group of participants will be separately escorted to a different research area (classroom setting), and will be asked to complete the questionnaire. The participants

were then instructed to take as much time as they needed, being informed that there will be no time limit assessed. Once the participants completed the questionnaire they will be encouraged to ask questions. After all the data will be gathered the researcher will evaluate the data and determined the results.

Implications

Upon completion of the study I will be able to conclude that there are many difference between U.S. born Chinese young adults and first generation Chinese young adults. If my hypothesis is correct then seventy-five percent of the Chinese American young adults will show the same liberal attitudes towards dating as Americans as predicted. Chinese Americans will have adapted the same dating attitudes as Americans despite their ethnicity. If my hypothesis in not supported then there will be no dating differences in Americans, and Chinese born Americans. The researcher will use a MANOVA, on dating attitude including the four factors (age, education, commitment, and sexual relationship). Just like Americans, Chinese Americans are non-traditional; boys are not necessarily the one to initiate a date, and cover the dating cost. Chinese Americans seem to have abandoned their traditional dating attitudes and behaviors. This study shows how even the most different societal traditions can be influenced. This research will be valuable to society because it demonstrates how an environment can affect values and beliefs.

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