

Dating Behavior of Black and White Adolescents Before and After Desegregation*

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Black and white adolescent dating behavior before and after desegregation in a Northeast Texas Community was analyzed. Questionnaires were administered in the segregated high schools in 1964 and the desegregated high school in 1974 (N's are 367 and 432, respectively). Eighteen multiple-choice questions were responded to by tenth, eleventh, and twelfth graders. Chi-square tests and one- and two-way analyses of variance were used in data analysis. Evidence was found to support the hypothesis that blacks' dating behavior has changed in the direction of whites, while whites have changed only slightly over time. It is suggested that reference group theory helps to explain this change.

Adolescence in American society has always been a time of breaking away from or joining with established modes of living. . . .

The winds of change are blowing particularly hard in the South, shaking the roots of old mores and laws almost out of their soil, leaving them exposed and tender: Southern adolescents . . . are perhaps the most vulnerable to these changes. (Powell, 1973:46-47)

Some evidence in the literature suggests a change in behavior of blacks in the direction of the numerically dominant group. For example, Frumkin (1954) found that a change in black family organization is taking place in the direction of "white norms and ideals." Frumkin's conclusion is substantiated in a more recent study by King, Abernathy, and Chapman (1974). The importance of both the family and peer group in the development of values of the adolescent has been pointed out, but most investigations have concentrated upon the influence of the family (Wilson, 1959). However, a growing body of research points to the conclusion that peers in some areas are at least as effective if not more potent than parents in their capacity to influence the behavior of the child (Bronfenbrenner, 1970:232).

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"Now there is evidence that modern youth have organized themselves into an adolescent society, which has its own status rewards, its own power structure, and its own norms" (Ramsey, 1969:28). The present study seeks to determine if this "adolescent society" exists between racial groups soon after desegregation by ascertaining if the peer influences regarding dating behavior are interracial. The 1964 study by the author revealed significant differences in black and white dating behavior in a racially segregated community.

With black and white adolescents being placed in the same social milieu of the desegregated school and thus being in situations like sitting in the same classroom, having lockers next to each other, eating in the same cafeteria, playing on the same athletic teams, participating in the same musical groups, and being members of the same voluntary organizations, it is assumed that interaction between racial groups will have increased over previous levels when the schools were segregated. With increased social intercourse the two racial groups will have the opportunity to observe the behavior of each other. Through such observations over time, the norms of one group could be internalized by the other.

Despite the continuance of intraracial dating after desegregation, it is hypothesized

*See Dickinson (1971) for details of these differences.

that since the white group is dominant, dating behavior of blacks will have changed more over time than whites and the direction of change will be toward whites' behavior.'

The dependent variables are age at first date, frequency of dating, activity on dates, parking on dates, requirement to be home at a certain time, specific time required to return home, and going steady; independent variables are race (white and black) and time (1964 and 1974).

METHODOLOGY

Procedures

Since change over time and the direction of change was sought, one- and two-way analyses of variance were used in analyzing the data. The *Chi-square* test of significance was used with the dependent variable "activity on dates" because of the nature of the data. The acceptable level of statistical significance is $p < .05$.

According to Hsu and Feldt's article entitled "The Effect of Limitations on the Number of Criterion Score Values on the Significance Level of the *F*-test" (1969), it is assumed that when using the *F*-test with score values as found in this study the *N* in each of the four groups by race and time will be equivalent. Thus, equal *N* random samples were selected for each analysis to satisfy this assumption (also see Dunlap's "*F* and *Chi-square* as Approximate Tests with Binomial Data," 1974). By assigning scores to the data at the ordinal level of measurement so that the means for each group can be calculated, analysis of variance is possible. Just to be consistent, coded scores were assigned to all data for which analyses of variance were used.

Source of Data

The population from which data were obtained for this investigation was composed of the sophomore, junior, and senior classes of the two high schools in 1964 and the desegregated high school in 1974 in a northeast Texas community (population in 1970 was 5007). The school system was

²Two-thirds of the high school population is white. It should also be noted that the school system is dominated by whites with an all-white school board, a white superintendent, and a white high school principal. Thus, with decision-makers of the school system being white, political dominance by whites is suggested.

desegregated in 1970. The number of respondents in 1964 was 367 (260 whites and 107 blacks) with a total of 432 adolescents (289 whites and 143 blacks) responding in 1974. The respondents both in 1964 and 1974 constituted 87 per cent of the student enrollment. Less than one per cent of the students present on the days the questionnaires were administered refused to complete the questionnaires. The other students were absent on the days of administration. No attempt was made to follow up the absentees.

Research Instrument

The research instrument was a questionnaire administered during the school day by the author in all English classes of the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth grades in both the 1964 and 1974 studies. The 18 multiple-choice questions in the 1974 survey were taken from the 1964 questionnaire which contained a total of 56 questions.

FINDINGS

Age at First Date

Since the two-way analysis of variance of age at first date revealed a significant interaction ($p < .001$) between race and time (see Table 1), the simple effects were analyzed by means of one-way analyses of variance. The mean age of first date for blacks changed from 14.91 years in 1964 to 13.93 in 1974.³ This difference was significantly different ($F = 12.05$, $df = 1/184$, $p < .001$). While age for first date lowered for blacks over the decade, whites changed less with the age actually increasing slightly—from 13.59 in 1964 to 13.88 in 1974. This difference was not statistically different. A statistical difference between whites and blacks was found for 1964 ($F = 49.15$, $df = 1/184$, $p < .001$) while no statistical difference was found for 1974 suggesting that the gap between the races for the age at first date has narrowed considerably over time. While blacks are beginning to date a year earlier than in 1964, whites are actually dating slightly later than in 1964. These data give support to the hypothesis that black dating behavior has changed more over time than for whites with the direction of change being toward white behavior.

³Means reported are calculated from the total number of respondents.

TABLE 1. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION (IN PERCENTAGES) AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF AGE AT FIRST DATE BY YEAR AND RACE*

Age at First Date	Whites		Blacks		
	1964	1974	1964	1974	
9	0	3	0	7	
10	3	0	1	1	
11	3	1	1	1	
12	14	11	1	8	
13	23	19	5	17	
14	34	30	22	23	
15	16	25	36	22	
16	5	10	28	15	
17	2	1	4	6	
(N)	(244)	(272)	(98)	(133)	
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time	6.19	1	6.19	2.83	NS
Race	42.68	1	42.68	19.51	<.001
Time x Race	31.35	1	31.35	14.34	<.001
Error	804.90	368	2.19		

*In the 1964 survey 12 whites and 9 blacks had never had a date; the 1974 survey showed that 11 whites and 7 blacks had never had a date. The analysis of variance was run with a randomly selected sample of 93 for each of the four groups so that each group would have an equal N.

Frequency of Dating

As can be seen in Table 2 the difference in frequency of dating for blacks and whites over time is slight and does not show an interaction of time and race at the .05 level. Thus, these data do not support the hypothesis that black dating behavior has changed more over time than white behavior.

Activity on Dates

Most frequent type of activity on dates for blacks and for whites revealed a statistically significant change in distribution over time ($p < .001$) using the *Chi-square* test (see Table 3). The *Chi-square* test was used rather than analyses of variance due to the nature of the data. Whites changed slightly from 13 per

cent attending parties and dances in 1964 to 17 per cent in 1974 while the most frequent activity of blacks changed from 75 per cent going to parties and dances in 1964 to only 38 per cent in 1974. Blacks in 1974 tend to participate more in activities which require money like movies and driving around. These data suggest that dating activities of blacks and whites are becoming more similar with blacks changing more than whites with the direction of change being toward white behavior. Thus, support is found for the stated hypothesis.

Each respondent was asked if he/she "parked" on dates. Since the two-way analysis of variance of parking on dates

TABLE 2. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION (IN PERCENTAGES) AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE OF DATES BY YEAR AND RACE*

Frequency of dates	Whites		Blacks		
	1964	1974	1964	1974	
Less than once a month	23	17	23	13	
Less than once a week but at least once a month	10	24	12	31	
At least once a week	67	59	65	56	
(N)	(216)	(270)	(88)	(128)	
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time	.07	1	.07	.12	NS
Race	.23	1	.23	.37	NS
Time x Race	.07	1	.07	.11	NS
Error	213.36	344	.62		

*Analysis of variance was run with a randomly selected sample of 87 for each of the four groups so that each group would have an equal N. Unequal N's on the tables result from no response to some questions by participants in the survey.

TABLE 3. MOST FREQUENT ACTIVITY ON DATE BY YEAR AND RACE IN PERCENTAGES

Activity	Whites		Blacks	
	1964	1974	1964	1974
Parties	9	17	33	11
Dancing	4	0	42	27
Movies	64	49	17	27
Driving Around	21	25	8	33
Bowling	2	9	0	2
(N)	(204)	(221)	(83)	(104)
	$\chi^2 = 29.008, p < .001, df = 4$		$\chi^2 = 28.093, p < .001, df = 4$	

revealed a significant interaction ($p < .01$) between race and time (see Table 4), the simple effects were analyzed by means of one-way analyses of variance. A statistical difference ($F = 15.12, df = 1/194, p < .001$) for blacks over time was found while no statistical difference for whites over time was shown.

The frequency distributions in Table 4 give further evidence of these differences with the response of white adolescents remaining basically unchanged over the decade (81 per cent "parked" in 1964 and 78 per cent in 1974) while blacks went from only 44 per cent "parking" in 1964 to the majority (76 per cent) "parking" in 1974. In looking at racial differences within specific years a statistical difference ($F = 28.49, df = 1/194, p < .001$) was noted for 1964 but not for 1974, again suggesting that the gap between the two racial groups is narrowing. Thus, "parking" in both racial groups is found to be to nearly the same degree today. This supports the hypothesis that black dating behavior is changing more than whites and the direction of change is in the direction of white behavior.

Required to be Home at Certain Time from a Date

The majority of whites responded in the affirmative regarding the requirement to be home at a certain time from a date both in 1964 (72 per cent) and in 1974 (70 per cent) as did the blacks in 1964 (89 per cent) and in 1974 (53 per cent). Because the two-way analysis of variance of requirement to be home from a date at a certain time revealed a significant interaction ($p < .01$) between race and time (see Table 5), the simple effects were analyzed by means of one-way analyses of variance. The one-way analysis of blacks' requirement to be home at a certain time showed a significant difference over time ($F = 35.02, df = 1/198, p < .001$) while no statistical difference was found for whites over time. A statistical difference ($F = 7.67, df = 1/198, p < .01$) using the one-way analysis of variance was found between blacks and whites for the year 1964, but no statistical difference was found between blacks and whites for the year 1974. Thus, analysis of the data pertaining to the requirement to be home from a date at a certain time supports the hypothesis that

TABLE 4. FREQUENCY DISTRIBUTION (IN PERCENTAGES) AND ANALYSIS OF VARIANCE FOR PARKING ON DATES BY YEAR AND RACE*

Park on Dates	Whites		Blacks		
	1964	1974	1964	1974	
Yes	81	78	44	76	
No	19	22	56	24	
(N)	(232)	(272)	(97)	(105)	
Source	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	p
Time	1.47	1	1.47	7.38	< .01
Race	4.08	1	4.08	20.51	< .001
Time x Race	1.99	1	1.99	10.05	< .01
Error	77.22	388	.20		

*The analysis of variance was run with a randomly selected sample of 97 for each of the four groups so that each group would have an equal N.