

Social reactions to interracial relationships



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The United States Supreme Court In 1967 ruled that Virginias anti-miscegenation laws were not in accord with the principles set forth in the constitution of the state and put a stop to all of the legal restrictions that were in place against marriages amongst mixed race (Erin, 2005). Since that time there has been a remarkable increase in the number of marriages amongst mix race in the United States (Lewis and Yancey, 1997), and the figures of interracial couples has also become twice as much every decade since 1960 (Killian, 2002). Statistics show that currently there are about 3 million interracial marriages, which make up 5% of all marriages in the United States, and another 2. 5 million mix race couples that are dating (Hibbler and Shinew, 2002).

Interracial marriages can include the combination of White, Blacks, Asians, Hispanics, and any other group. However, when people talk about interracial relationships, the first things that mostly come to their mind is relationships amongst black and white (Vernellia, 1998). The rate of growth of interracial marriages is increasing by the day. In particular, the kind of interracial intermingling involving Blacks and Whites has been constantly changing. Immediately after Emancipation, the figures of black and white interracial relationships increased, got to its peak in 1900, and subsequently decrease till 1940. However, this form of union is still the least common type of mix race union (Davidson, 1992), even though the Black and White intermarriages has been on the increase since the 90's (Tucker and Mitchell-Kernan, 1990).

There are a lot of reasons for the sharp increase in the figures of the different form of interracial marriages. One of the reasons is the Supreme

Court decision in 1967 that made anti- miscegenation laws unconstitutional (Kalmijn, 1993). The close in the gap narrowed down between Blacks and Whites education, occupation and income (Kalmijn, 1993). Also, data from National Center for Health Statistics indicates the decrease in White's prejudice against Blacks (Kalmijn, 1993). Further more, the increase in interracial marriage can be linked to the progress made by the Civil Rights movement, the increase in opportunities afforded Black people, and the increase in social contact between the races (Davidson, 1992).

This research aim at reviewing the historical background of interracial relationship both interracial dating and marriage, and also factors attributed to relationships amongst mix race. This research also focuses on the opinions of the youth to interracial relationship in the 21th century. In general, the main aim of this piece is to examine interracial relationships, whether marriage or casual dating and the attitude of the youths towards it, taking foreign pre- masters students at ICRGU from different regions as samples. The reason for the study of different forms of relationships is because some individual rather prefer to go into a causal date, than going into a serious relationships that might lead to marriage. But this research will not only look at attitude towards interracial relationships from perspective of preference. It will look at possible points of meeting a person from another region or origin, and what might probably propel someone into such relationship base on personalities and compatibility. The research questions are as follows:

What are the attitudes of the youths towards relationship amongst mix race in the 21th century?

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How popular is relationships amongst mix race.

Factors affecting relationships amongst mix race.

LITERATURE REVIEW

This section of review on the interracial relationships will basically focus on three major titles, which are

The characters of those going into interracial relationships

Theories why people marry outside of their race taking blacks and whites form of union as study sample.

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To start with, characteristics of those in interracial relationships, in terms of marriage, research shows that people who interracially marry tend to be younger, likelihood of being married before, live in developed environment like cities or town, or are older in age from their spouse compared to people who married within their own race (Erin, 2005). Research founds that male and female within a particular racial group to an extent have different tendency to get married to someone outside their racial group (Erin, 2005). For instance, Black male have high records of interracial compared to black females. Also, Japanese and Native American woman have much higher numbers of interracial marriages compared to their male counterparts (Erin, 2005). In the U. S interracial marriages currently are highest in the west and lowest in the southern region. However, Hawaii breaks the normal trends of interracial marriages. Hawaii has a unique racial makeup in that no single racial group makes up more than 25% of the population and nearly 40% of

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all marriages interracial (Solberry, 1994). Therefore, it is significant to note that interracial couples tend to often move to more hospitable areas of the country (Tucker and Mitchellkernan, 1990).

Further more, many theories have been established to explain the reasons behind people getting married to race other than their race, and success of such marriage to stand test of time. Structural theory states that marriages among mix race is more frequent in areas where community structure have been kept in place to support and authorize interracial marriages, and also community were there is increase in awareness of peoples personal decision to go into such a union. Recent attention given to interracial marriage in the media and in popular literature along with more people living and working in more integrated environments has lead to an increased acceptance of heterogeneous relationships (Hibbler and Shiness, 2002).

Another predominant theory on reason people chose to marry outside of their race is the social exchange theory. Using Black-White interracial marriage for instance, social exchange theory states that when White women marry Black men, who usually are of higher economic status, they exchange the prestige of their skin color for the Black husband's higher economic status (Davidson, 1992; Kalmijn, 1993; Lewis and Yancey, 1997). However, Black women have been found to marry down in both interracial and same race unions, which seem to prove that Black-White interracial marriage is more complex than just an exchange of status (Foeman and Nance, 1999). An additional theory, which attempts to account for the union of interracial relationships, is the racial motivation theory (Kouri and Lasswell, 1993). The racial motivation theory states that many interracial

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marriages take place because of racial differences, not in spite of them (Kouri and Lasswell, 1993). From this view, it can be said that curiosity about differences in race, increases sexual interest or attraction to someone not of same race. This theory also says that those who intermarry may be acting in rebellion against social norms of racial endogamy and using the marriage as a way to state their independence (Kouri and Lasswell, 1993).

Finally, there has been a change in the societal view of interracial marriages. Many studies have shown that there is less pressure in society today to have racially homogeneous relationships than in the past (Lewis & Yancey, 1997). Never the less there are still some discriminations in some form of interracial union. Using the union of Black and White for instance, recent studies still suggest that the Black-White interracial union, especially the Black male-White female union, is still the most negatively viewed relationship type (Norment, 1994). There have been many researches on the history of discrimination against Black-White Interracial union. Today, the relationship between Blacks and Whites is seen as different from that of other minorities. When one speaks of "race relations" in America, the majority of people immediately think of the struggles between Black and White people (Killian, 2002; Wright et. al, 2003). Despite the dramatic increase in Black-White marriages, they are still the least favorable form of interracial marriage in America (Wade, 1991), and they are still considered to be a taboo subject by some (Harris and Kalbfleisch, 2000). According to survey carried out among Blacks and White marriage, in the study of 270 interracial couples, it was found that nearly half reported that marrying someone not from their race makes marriage difficult, while about two thirds reported that at least one of

the parent objected to their marriage (Fears and Deane, 2001). Although there is increase in the tolerance of interracial couples, there are still powerful forces in society that make Black-White interracial marriage hard and unappealing (Dainton, 1999). Many Black-White interracial couples report that they face discrimination from members of their own particular race; European Americans view them as being “ too Black” and African Americans view them as being “ not Black enough” (Orbe, 1999).

Another source of discrimination for those in interracial marriages is often the family. The majority of people in interracial marriages have said that they have had to face one or both parents express serious concern to outright disapproval of their choice to marry interracially. Most of the time , this disapproval are always expressed verbally, and in the case where couple goes on with the marriage, some certain members of the family not in support of the union might refuse to attend any important event organized by the couples, such as wedding, holiday celebrations, family reunion or even family visitation. In some extreme cases, members of interracial marriages have reported having lost all contact for years at a time with once close members of their families (Luke and Carrington, 2000). But, one part of the two’s couples tend to be more acceptant than the other. Studies have also found that acceptance of interracial marriages is increasing at a rapid rate and an increasing number of interracial couples are reporting that their families have openly accepted their interracial relationship, and they feel comfortable speaking about their relationship in public (Fears & Deane, 2001, Rosenblatt et. al., 1995). However, attitudes towards interracial relationships have been found to vary based on race, age, and gender. In a

study of Black and White people between the ages of 21 and 40, it was reported that men have more positive attitudes towards interracial relationships compared to women, and also those that are younger have more favorable views on interracial relationships (Datzman and Gardner 2000). It was also found that the families of the Black partner in interracial relationships tend to be more accepting and supportive than the families of the White partner (Hibbler and Shinew, 2002). In another study eighty-six percent of Black respondents said that their families would welcome a White person into their family compared to only 55% of White respondents who said their families would welcome a Black person into their family (Fears & Deane, 2001).

This research however is not just about interracial relationships among blacks and white, the review is to build up facts associated with interracial relationship considering researches already done on different topics on interracial relationships which can help answer some of the research questions. This research aims at cutting across all forms of interracial relationships, and types of relationships, whether casual dating or marriages and associated factors that influences the opinion of people towards going into it. Also, it aims at finding the opinion of the youth towards interracial relationships in the 21st century.

METHODOLOGY

The research targeted at getting the opinions and attitudes of the youths towards interracial relationships, whether just casual dating or marriages. Considering the limitation both time and resources, the research were conducted among international students of ICRGU who are from different

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parts of the world, namely, China, Nigeria and Kazakhstan. The final sample of students consist of 4 Chinese (1 males, 3 females), 3 Nigerians (2 males, 1 female), and 3 Kazakhstanis (1 male, 2 females), all between the age of 20-35. None of the participant is married.

Interviews were conducted on each of the participants to explore their attitudes toward interracial relationships. Qualitative data were collected by the means of follow-up interviews with the respondents who participated in the survey. The interviews with the respondents were semi- structured interview, including general questions as well as sets of questions for individuals who either have family members or friends, or know someone who was is into interracially relationship. Generally, all the questions aimed at getting disposition towards interracial relationships, and also general opinion towards interracial relationships.

DISCUSSION

Over the decades now, many studies have been made on interracial relationships and so far shown many controversies. The study on interracial relationships is a wide study, but very interesting study. This research however focused on the opinion of the youths towards interracial relationships, and has been proven that there is increase in the awareness of youth towards interracial relationships, unlike in the past.

The table 1 shows the numbers of participants both male and female who took part in the survey, and their opinion on whether they can go into a relationship with someone not of their race. About 60% agreed they can go into interracial relationships, while about 20% disagree not to going into

interracial relationships. 20% percent others would want to, but are restricted because of some factors like family acceptance or their culture.

Table 2, shows the participants general opinion towards interracial marriages, and from the table, there is a trend of acceptance in some region compared to other regions. Fig 2. 1 and 2. 2 shows the percentages of both male and female's opinions towards interracial marriages. Figure 2. 1 shows individual dispositions towards interracial marriage and about 60% sounded positive of getting married to someone outside their race, and about 40% wouldn't want to get married to someone not from their race. Figure 2. 2 shows the general opinion on interracial marriages, and about 90% feels nothing is wrong in going into interracial marriages, while about 10% feels interracial marriages isn't ideal.

Even with challenges faced in interracial relationship, it's still something one can rule out from happening. According to Mr. John, he feels with high speed travel and communication technology in this age of globalization interracial marriages will always happen irrespective of the family, cultural believes, or societal opinion. But he feels to preserve culture, interracial marriage is not ideal. Miss Ama also feels marriage has nothing to do with culture or believes. She feels as long as there is love and the both parties understand themselves, marrying each other shouldn't be a problem. She also didn't rule out difficulties that might come with the marriage such as language barriers but she said if the 2 parties are strong enough to overcome the challenges that will make them strong.

Generally, from the research, it was observed most believe interracial relationships have to do with the personal decisions and feeling. According to Miss Beauty, she feels going into interracial relationship is a personal thing. She also said as long as there is respect and happiness, there is nothing wrong about interracial relationships. To add to this, Miss Ama said feeling is a thing of the mind irrespective of color, culture or religion, you don't expect it, it just happens. When happens and you feel the person is the right choice for you, you just go for it.

One of the limitations in this research is the time frame. The time frame to complete this research isn't long enough to get more samples for analyzing the topic in context. The research was restricted to little numbers of participants and limited questions to elaborate more on the factors affecting opinions so as to have enough time to execute the aim of the research. However, with previous review on related research, the aim of the research was accomplished. Another limitation was the numbers of different regions available. In the pre masters class of ICRGU where the survey was carried out, presently have students mainly from 3 countries namely, Nigeria, China, and Kazakhstan. The effect of this is that, there were limitations to cultural behaviors and believes considering the topic was generally on opinion of the youths in the 21th century, and just 3 countries were available for the survey.

CONCLUSION

An interracial relationship is where there is marriage, sexual or romantic relations between individuals of different races. In the past, interracial marriages were in fact taboo in some parts of the world, but with

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globalization there has been a change in ideology about interracial relationship. From the result of the survey, it suggests that there is increase in the awareness of interracial relationships. It also suggests there is an increase in the acceptance of going into a relationship with someone of different race. However, there are still some believes that interracial relationships, especially marriage if encourage, could lead to cultures being eradicated, in this light very few persons wont support such union so as to preserve culture. The finding in the studies also shows that about 90% of the participants feel there is nothing wrong in going into interracial relationships, as long as both parties love each other and have reasons to want to go into such relations, and also can solve their differences.

There are some attitudes common to the participants of this survey which are,

All participants are in their 20's and are all international students of ICRGU who are from different countries, and might want to try something new.

They have been opportune to meet with other students from other countries. Considering might be the first time most of them have the opportunity to meet different people with different culture, color, background and country.

They believe as long as the 2 parties are willing to pass the huddles, there is nothing wrong in interracial relationships

Lastly, they feel relationship is the thing of the heart. It has nothing to do with color, culture or country. As long as the two parties can cope with their differences.

There are a lot of controversies on interracial relationships because beliefs of every individual varies. But according to this research, it can be said to some extent that interracial relationships is somehow accepted and there is increase in awareness. In light of the increasing rates of interracial relationship and the opinion of people towards it, there is still a great deal of research that needs to be done on this topic. One of the researches needs to discuss more on the success of interracial marriages.