

Review of: "Young love in contemporary China: Attitudes and behaviors in romantic relationships"

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Research on Chinese attitudes toward sex and dating is relatively scarce. Moreover, due to the dynamic cultural changes in East Asia, most of the research done in the 1990s and at the beginning of the 21st century is hardly relevant today. No wonder I read your article with great interest. Below I made some comments that I hope will help to improve it.

I will start with formal remarks. Although the paper is readable, it still needs some English editing. It also requires much more focus. While the title reads "Young love in contemporary China. Attitudes and behaviors in the romantic relationships", and you discuss these issues in the introduction, it seems that what you researched here are primarily Chinese dating practices.

The introduction is definitely too long; it reads more like a textbook chapter than an article. Although I found it very informative and learned much about recent research in China, e.g. Hu (2019) and Chan (2020) studies, you also covered many irrelevant issues. At the same time, you decided not to approach a problem that, in my opinion, makes dating in China particularly interesting. I'm speaking of the "one-child policy" *implemented between 1980 and 2015, which heavily skewed the country's sex ratio toward men*. I expect it affected the gender differences in dating practices. For instance, while many young men have severe problems finding their date or romantic partner, young women have the luxury of being picky.

There is another problem. You assumed that there is a clear line between traditional and "modern" dating practices and marriage arrangements; however, research shows that such division is no longer clear-cut, and many combinations are still evolving. One of the first who described this phenomenon in East Asia was J.-P. Baldacchino in a paper, "Eros and modernity in modern Korea" (2008). I greatly recommend this article.

I also had the impression that some parts of the paper lack objectivity. First of all, moral judgments should be avoided in a scientific paper. Consider a sentence: "Many youths in contemporary China appeared to maintain a high moral standard and traditional value of romantic relationships, while some of them seemed to adopt a more western-style of dating and relationships.". Maybe it is just a wrong wording, but it seems that adopting Western-style of dating is something you find "immoral."

The biggest shortcoming of this paper is its methodology. There seems to be no theoretical framework guiding your research. For instance, why do you expect regional differences? Do you think that some regions in China are more conservative or liberal than others? I also don't understand why you didn't use any validated tools. If you're interested in

love research, there are many questionnaires available. The gravest problem, however, is sampling. The sample size is surprisingly small, especially for the online survey. It is also very specific because you focus on the well-educated urban youth. Psychologists rarely rely on representative samples; however, having at least two different groups in research like yours seems essential. For instance, you compare educated youth from big cities and small towns. You address this limitation in the last section of the paper; still, the specificity of the sample should also be reflected in the paper's title. Moreover, it would be best to justify your decision in the introduction. The sample size is a much more serious matter, especially when you're conducting research in a country so vast, diverse, and densely populated as China. Your sample is also too small to make many of your comparisons meaningful. For instance, you cannot compare regions of China or any other country having 10 or 15 cases in a cell. Moreover, mixing participants from mainland China and overseas is a big mistake. These are different populations.

To summarize, this interesting paper needs a major revision. Especially the methodological aspects of the study need to be improved substantially, and I strongly recommend extending the sample size. In my opinion, the revised paper may constitute a valuable contribution to the research. Also, considering the two of you are Korean, I recommend studying Chinese-Korean differences in dating attitudes as your next step. You might get fascinating results; however, cross-cultural research requires adequate methodology.