



The Effects of Cross-Cultural Relationships on Society

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Abstract

Cross-cultural intimate relationships can bring about positive changes to society as a whole. Although many cross-cultural couples face a plethrum of challenges, many of them overcome those challenges. Differing of opinions, morals, and values can strain relationships and bonds. There are many stereotypes associated with different religious, racial, and ethnic backgrounds. Cross-cultural relationships go against the status quo by introducing new ideas and perspectives to different demographics. Children who are products of cross-cultural matches introduce new identities to society, creating more diversity.

Keywords: cross-cultural, relationships, stereotypes, diversity

Introduction

Through globalization, immigration, and other forms of cultural fraternisation, cross-cultural relationships and marriages are increasing. There are more interactions between different peoples of the world, and with world travel more people are gaining the opportunity to mingle. As society advances, the number of interracial and cross-cultural marriages and relationships that are present will only increase. With these interactions, there are positive and negative results that can arise. Different cultures have different customs, and major differences between two cultures can cause a clash resulting in conflict. Rigid societies often impose strict marital and courting rules on the individuals, which makes it difficult for maligning outside one's culture or religion. However,

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through factors such as immigration, globalization, and online dating have improved the odds of cross-cultural matches. Cross-cultural interactions can bring upon positive changes to society.

The interactions of different cultures can bring awareness of different customs and traditions from different parts of the world. Immersing oneself into a different culture can bring about more awareness of the world. Cross-cultural interactions have become a part of daily routine for people in most of North America. A society that is integrated with multiculturalism is beneficial to all, because of the knowledge and new experiences that can be shared with others. Although cross-cultural relationships can have their downfalls it also brings positive lights and ideas into society. These relationships can decrease the number of prejudices that people experience daily, because introducing new cultures to others can shape their personal thinking and reduce stigma. There are many races and cultures that are stigmatized because of certain narratives that are associated with that culture or background. By exposing new parts of the world to others who may be oblivious can open new doors and shed new light on stereotypes. As time goes on and more immigrants move to Canada and other countries, there will be an increase of interracial and cross-cultural relationships. Other technological advancements will also aid in the growth of relationships between different cultures.

Morals, Ethics and Values

People living in a close-minded society, often have narrower worldviews. Being exposed to different cultures can broaden one's worldviews and values. Couples who come from difficult cultural backgrounds can introduce each other to new foods, languages, traditions and so much more. Having more knowledge of what is outside one's own culture can create a sense of awareness. A society that aims for cultural awareness can lead to an environment of less discrimination and racism, and more acceptance. Negative stereotypes and privileges that have been engrained into society and the system can be looked at in a different light with more cultural interactions (Villalobos-Buehner, 2020). There are negative connotations associated with certain cultures due to history and certain traumas they have endured. For example, the indigenous population in Canada faces many prejudices and stereotypes that limit their potential. Stereotypes such as these refrain people from exploring different cultures intimately, creating a closed-minded society.

Cross-cultural relationships can also have different ideas on how to raise children, split finances, and other necessary components of married life. When these conflicts are not properly resolved it can create a hostile environment for other in space of the couple, and it can bring about mistrust and dishonesty (Sha, 2020). Parenting styles between different cultures can differ depending on personal beliefs. Disagreement in parenting styles can also create conflict in relationships. For example, some European countries have normalized smoking while pregnant, however smoking is not as normalized in other countries around the world (Sundsbo, 2022). A couple of European decent and another background, would have disagreeing views about smoking either in front of a child or while pregnant with a child. Conflicting views on how to raise children will differ based on how the people were raised themselves. Those raised in strict and authoritative

homes, may impose those same rules on their own children. Having parents with high expectations of someone will increase the chances of having similar expectations on their own children.

Western cultures tend to have more individualistic ideologies, where people mostly worry and think about the betterment of themselves. People keep their lives separated from one another, however in other parts of the world they have more collectivistic views. In western cultures, parents typically are not as involved in their children's marriages and relationships however, in other cultures it is the acceptable standard for parents to be involved. Many cultures have the custom where people marry the entirety of families. If a person's family does not approve of the mate of their choice, their union often does not go on successfully. Many people get shunned, disowned, insulted, and sometimes thrown out due to their choice of partner. Family dynamics play a large role in certain societies, where the two families who will be involved in the union must get along with each other. Arranged marriages is an example of a union that involves multiple families. Often, the families get to know each other before the individuals getting married. If there is conflict between the two families, the marriage would not go on as planned. A study conducted by Epstein et al., (2013) found the people in arranged marriages were more satisfied than those in love marriages. Families must be compatible with one another on many levels such as socioeconomic status, educational background, religion, and personal beliefs. The mates that meet these standards for families often come from the same or very similar cultural backgrounds. Language barriers deter families for seeking potential mates for their family member because communication connects people. Finding mate who are of the same cultural background can limit certain conflicts that arise in relationships.

There are natural conflicts that every relationship encounters, and the way they resolve the conflict will determine the longevity of their relationship. Conflicts such as differing ideologies and values. How one manages their money is dependent on how and where they grew up. Financial distress can lead to the decline of emotional well-being of couples in long term relationships (Dai et al., 2022). Financial distrust and dishonesty can lead the deterioration of the relationship. A relationship without a foundation of trust can cause more conflicts and insecurities within the match. In collectivistic cultures, it is more typical for the male of the relationship to become the sole breadwinner and provider for the family. For instance, a male who was brought up in a traditional home marries someone who is not as traditional from a different culture, there maybe be tension in the way he wants to provide. One party may want all the finances split evenly between the two, however culturally most of the responsibility must lie on one person. In some African cultures, the role of the man in a relationship is to provide for the children and his wife. Because of their upbringing, this preference is not negotiable for some of these men. Since this has been instilled in them since childhood, it is hard to introduce a new way of thinking and living. Similarly, to African women, they have been brought up to serve as a future wife and mother. Their sole roles are to take care of their husbands, their children, and their homes while their husbands provide for them financially. This is an outdated ideology that is still practiced in many cultures around the world, however it is slowly becoming less common. Because of factors such as travel and social media have influenced how women are viewed around the world.

Due to high demands of society and the economy, more women are entering the workforce, leaving less stay at home mothers. The option to stay at home and solely take care of the house and children is not an option for many. With the mixing of different cultures, different views have been amalgamating and people have been creating new and innovative ways to function in their relationships. Creating a mixture of different viewpoints that work for both parties of in the relationship can be a solution for differing ideologies and viewpoints. Compromising in a relationship is vital to resolving conflicts that can be detrimental. Finding common ground to integrate both cultures and ensuring both partners are satisfied with the agreed outcome can be the difference between successful and failed cross-cultural marriages. There are many differences and finding a balance is the key. Cross-cultural relationships require work, commitment, and openness to accepting new ideas to support the union.

Religiosity

Everyday issues can become larger problems if they are not resolved. People coming from different cultural backgrounds can have differing opinions on how to dress, how to eat, and how to spend their personal time. Lifestyle disagreements can cause conflict and tension between the couple. A person's upbringing can shape the way they view the world, and what is acceptable and what is not acceptable. Different parts of the world have different morals and standards of living. In North America, it is normalized for both men and women to work and contribute financially to the home. Different parts of the world dress differently according to personal beliefs and religious beliefs. Predominantly Muslim countries tend to dress more conservatively, whereas in Northern American cultures it is not as conservative. Mannerism such as speech and physical gestures also matter from country to country. In a relationship, it is important for ideologies pertaining these small details to somewhat match for a relationship to be successful. Daily household mannerism that are not agreed upon can also have negative effects on intimate partners.

Conflicting religions is a common conflict modern day couples often face. Some couples decide to end their relationship due to this problem that may arise. Being brought up in a certain religion can shape and mould certain views that one might have towards the world and others. In Christianity, there are acceptable rules and non-acceptable rules that are associated with dating and courtship. For example, pre marital sex is frowned upon in Christian churches. Islam, Judaism, and Buddhism all have similar viewpoints on pre-marital sex (Jung, 2016). There are negative social consequences associated with these actions. Aragoni et al., (2021) states in their research that there is a positive correlation to religiosity and positive marital outcomes. In their research, the couples reported having the same religious backgrounds. Practicing the same religion in a household can bring about support and connection. Coming from different religious backgrounds can cause a clash in the household and in the relationship. Conflicting views on freedom, dress, sex, and prayer can bring about stress in a relationship. Having children in the household can cause confusion for them as well. At a young age, children do not have the full authority to make decisions such as these for themselves, due to their dependency on their parents. Once they come to an understanding of religion, they can make their choice of which religion to practice or none

of them at all. Couples who practiced the same religion reported to have higher levels of commitments and loyalty (Aragoni et al., 2021). Religious practices shapes individual's morals and values, and loyalty and commitment are an important part of many religions. Furthermore, there tends to be younger marriages that end in fewer divorces in religious couples in comparison to non-religious couples.

In some cultures, there are still strict rules in place regarding gender roles. Expectations from oneself and from others to uphold these gendered norms can influence wellbeing. Women tend to have high expectations that are placed upon them from very young ages. These expectations can often be overwhelming for women to bare, and some fear disappointing themselves or their families. With high expectations often follows high levels of stress, lower self-esteem, and an overall decrease in emotional and mental well-being (Hall et al., 2003). Some of the expectation may include finding a partner of the same religion or cultural background. Immigrants to a new country do not always have resources and social connections that bring them to others of the same religion and cultural background. Dating culture starts at a very young age in North America. Youth often begin looking for mates while in junior high or high school. The public school system is filled with different cultural and religious backgrounds, and the likelihood of finding a partner who is not of the same background is high. However, ideas of settling down with a person of the same background is instilled into their minds from young ages, and this can bring about stress. Some women may crack under the pressure and settle with a partner who they are not completely happy with, rather they are fulfilling expectations that have been put in place by other, typically family members. Years of holding onto such pressure can cause a high level of stress, and low levels of self-worth. These types of people are often hesitant to step into a new role, due to fear of judgment by family members who they look up to.

Contemporary Cross-Cultural Dating

The internet and other various media platforms have created a gateway for cross-cultural relationships to flourish. Social media and technology connect people with each other across the world. Strangers use social media to get to know one another and build a connection and a relationship. Genuine relationships that are formed can lead to healthy happy relationships. There are hundreds of success stories of individuals who found each other through social media, and now have built a life together. There are also people who are unsuccessful in finding a match online. Online dating apps create a space for people of different cultural backgrounds to interact with each other. Although online dating apps have filtered that can be altered to generate a potential match, they still present higher chances for people of different backgrounds to mingle. In modern day, people do not approach potential mates in person, they would rather interact with them virtually. There are multiple factors that have contributed to this, one of which is the pandemic. With bars, restaurants, and other social places closed, it was hard for people to find partners. Online dating became a solution for many people who were afraid to get sick. Online dating is one of the fastest growing ways of finding mates. People can connect with each other from different parts of the world and make meaningful connections. Online dating apps also create a space for people who

would not normally interact with each other to do so. People of differing cultural backgrounds sometimes do not interact with each, because people often stick to other who are like themselves. Online dating can eliminate this barrier and open doors that would not be possible. Others may have the desire to explore other cultures through an intimate partner, however they may have a shy personality that limits them from interacting.

Television programs such as 90-day fiancé also promotes cross-cultural relationships and marriages, however majority of the couples have trouble integrating their livelihoods with their partner's. 90-day fiancé follow couples who live in two different countries who have met online. The program follows their story of how they integrate their lives together. A common problem between many of the couples is the disapproval of the families. The families often fear someone is getting played or used for citizenship or for money. The couples also find it challenging to fit into each other's cultures due to conflicting ideologies, or misunderstandings of each other's cultures. This program highlights the struggles that couples face, and the sacrifices they must make to make their relationship a success. Some of the couple uproot their livelihoods and move to another country to be with their partner. When they arrive to the new country, they are face with major cultural differences they must learn to adjust to. For example, cultural customs such as dowries and greeting customs are often misunderstood. Introducing these new ideas to a new person can be frustrating and time consuming. This level of understanding and acceptance was often missed within these couples, which resulted in many failed marriages and dating relationships.

Identity and Children

Children who are a product of cross-cultural relationships often face challenges in their day to day lives as well as in their self-identity. They often feel a decreased sense of belonging, due to having a split identity. These children that come because of cross-cultural relationships often struggle with their identity, because they cannot fully identity with one culture or the other. A person's identity is what makes them who they are and tells a story of where they come from. When a person loses a sense of belonging, it can cause a ripple effect for other emotional and mental problems. In a study conducted by Mitchell (2022), it states:

In an attempt to place a child into whatever racial category they plan to segregate and/or judge them by, individuals question what a mixed child 'is.' Hence the idea of racial profiling or profiling each other based on our skin color and group membership (Carter & Murphy, 2015). There are benefits and challenges to this categorizing. On the one hand, representation is important and shared experiences support positive development and in this case self-categorization can serve as a mechanism for mixed-race individuals to find community and support. On the other hand, in the U.S., this categorization by others often manifests in discriminatory and racist ways (such as racial hierarchies) resulting in a parent's desire to socialize their children as a means of protection. (p. 678)

It is evident that mixed cultural and mixed-race individuals face their own unique struggles in society that challenge their sense of self and belonging. Having a support system who one can relate to is an important part of growing up. Children need to have strong supportive system and role models in their lives whom they can look up to. These supports will make a more impactful change if they can relate to the children. With the increase of mixed relationship, mixed cultured children are experiencing more representation of their kind. They within themselves can come together to create a network and a sense of community. Bonding over shared experiences can increase self-esteem and promote safe spaces and a sense of belonging. There are certain privileges and disadvantages that come with being mixed biologically. Mixed individuals often face both the prejudice and discrimination of both their cultural background, yet there is still a sense of privileges that is associated with it. Because they do not fully come from one cultural background, they are often not fully accepted in either culture. They are stuck in the middle, and it can restrict them from fully indulging in either background. Cross-cultural children are essential to society because they introduce new identities that are unique to them. Creating more diversity sparks new ideas, and their presence can reduce the discrimination and prejudices that are seen around the world.

Some couple may face a loss of identity once they enter a cross-cultural relationship. They may find themselves sacrificing their own values and traditions to make space for the other person's values and traditions. For instance, one partner may stop making a certain cultural dish because the other partner does not like the taste or the smell. Some couple try to integrate a sense of both their backgrounds into their lives, however this creates a risk to lose parts of each culture. Fully embracing both cultures can be difficult, especially if they are being introduced to said culture later in life. The partner's own sense of identity may be lost in its entirety or in parts due to compromise. While in a relationship, certain traditions and customs may not be practiced as frequently because the other partner does not understand. Out of respect people push aside traditions in attempt to create a space of inclusivity or their partner. Over time certain traditions will completely die off, and as new generations come these customs will get more diluted. The loss of traditions can impact future generations negatively. For instance, the indigenous populations of Canada are struggling to keep some parts of the indigenous culture alive due to assimilation and out of culture marriages. The indigenous population is fighting to bring more of that culture back to life. Many languages around the world are being lost due to the significant decrease of people speaking these languages. Similarly, to intimate relationships one person culture may get drained out by the other, especially if the person themselves is not highly knowledgeable on the matter.

Divorce

All the factors that factors that contribute to cross-cultural intimate relationships and the quality these relationships will operate at. There are some cross-cultural relationships that are not successful. A study conducted by Bratter & King (2008), concluded that the black and white couples were more likely to get divorced after ten years of marriage. There are many factors that can lead to divorce in a cross-cultural relationship. Societal pressures and expectation may cause an increased disapproval of one's mate choice, and this influences how successful the marriage

will be (Robinson, 2017). All the potential problems that can arise in any given relationship, however especially those mentioned above, can all be factors of divorce. Each couple and their circumstances are different, and although there are many challenges that come along being in a cross-cultural relationship, the benefits are also endless. The end of cross-cultural relationships can be hard on both parties because of certain sacrifices that were made to make the match possible. Each culture has different attitudes towards divorces, which can create more tension in the partnership. Depending on the culture, divorce can be harder on the woman in some cultures due to stigma. In certain societies, women who are divorced or have been married multiple times have negative attitudes towards them. It is not culturally accepted in some communities, creating a double standard. Men on the other hand can marry multiple time, and some may have multiple wives at the same time.

Children also experience hardship when their parents are going through divorces. It is hard to young children to picture a life without their parents being together. Coming to terms with this idea can be emotionally draining for children. Children are vulnerable, and some do not yet understand the complexities of the world and relationships. Being torn apart from a home that was filled with unity can be a traumatic experience. Women who do not have custody over their children are often judged and misunderstood. These women can be labelled through a negative lens. The parent who spends majority of their time with the child will have greater influences on them. As the child get older, there will be a culture that is more dominant to in their life, and the other culture might completely disappear. The traditions, customs, and possibly language from one side may be eliminated. Disconnecting with one parent can bring about emotional damage to the child later in life, as well as the mother.

Western cultures are more accepting of divorces due to the normalization of the independence of woman. Women are viewed as independent beings, who do not necessarily need men to operate and survive. In other communities around the world, women are dependent on men financially which traps them in the marriage they do not necessarily want to be in. Women's rights and equality are more advanced in western cultures, but due to globalization and media those ideologies are spreading around the world. Women's movements have been making a difference all around the world. There are more initiatives to bring gender equality to outdated perspectives and practices in certain countries. Cultural differences make it more acceptable for women in westernized parts of the world to get divorced without significant social consequences. Women in some developing countries can get disowned and mistreated by their families and friends due to a divorce. As divorce rates increase in western countries, it is being normalized to upcoming generations as well. Because western countries are viewed as more individualistic, there is not a strong emphasis on family reputations.

Conclusion

Through cross-cultural relationships, there is an increase in cultural awareness within the couple, which can expand to the larger society. Through various forms of media, society is more socially connected. This aids in the matching of couples with different cultural backgrounds. With an increase in cross-cultural connections and relationships, there are various positives and nega-

tives that are associated with these relationships. Religion, childhood upbringing, and personal beliefs play a role in the success of a cross-cultural match. Being in a cross-cultural relationship can broaden one's views on other religions and cultures around the world. These views can trickle down to children, and as they grow spread, they can be more open minded about cultures and backgrounds they are unfamiliar about. Overall, cultural differences and mating creates a society with more unity and acceptance of everyone. It opens minds of people who may have a narrow and dated perspectives on various cultural and religious backgrounds. In prejudicated and discriminatory societies, it is important to have these relationships to help promote racial and cultural equality. There are many negative stereotypes and perspectives towards different religions, races, and ethnicities, and introducing more couples and children to society can ease the tensions and stereotypes. The betterment of society as a whole is dependent on cross-cultural interactions, and the elimination of outdated ideologies that create segregation, discrimination towards minority groups.

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