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UNIVERSITY OF CALIFORNIA,
IRVINE

Intercultural Romantic Relationships:
Parent-Child Attitudes and Conflict across Ethnic Groups and Immigrant Generations

THESIS

submitted in partial satisfaction of the requirements
for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

in Social Ecology

by

Sharon Shenhav

Thesis Committee:
Professor Wendy Goldberg, Co-Chair
Professor Belinda Campos, Co-Chair
Professor Chuansheng Chen

2015

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ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS

Intercultural Romantic Relationships:

Parent-Child Attitudes and Conflict across Ethnic Groups and Immigrant Generations

By

Sharon Shenhav

Master of Arts in Social Ecology

University of California, Irvine, 2015

Professor Wendy Goldberg, Co-Chair

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Romantic relationships are situated within broader cultural and family contexts, and this may be particularly salient to those in intergroup relationships. This study examined young adults' experiences with intercultural romantic relationships within the family context. A sample of ethnically diverse young adults ($N = 628$; Asian, Latino, and European background) reported on self and parent attitudes toward intercultural dating, own current dating status, and disapproval and conflict with parents over current and past dating status. Findings showed the importance of including cultural variations into the conceptualization of intergroup relationships, particularly for ethnic minority and recent immigrant groups. Variations by ethnic group and immigrant generational status were found across study aims. Participants of Asian background reported greater attitudinal discrepancies over intercultural dating with their parents, as well as greater rates of intercultural dating conflict with parents, than did participants of Latino background. First- and second-generation participants reported greater levels of intercultural dating conflict with parents than did third-generation participants. No differences were found by ethnic group or

generational status for resolving conflict with parents over intercultural romantic relationships, however young adult men reported resolving conflict significantly more than young adult women. Findings show that the family context in response to intercultural dating relationships is important and varied across ethnic and generational status groups, and have implications for how we conceptualize intergroup romantic relationships.

Introduction

Dating and marriage are a common source of disagreement for parents and their young adult children (Ahn, Kim, & Park, 2009). Parents and young adults differ on the appropriate age to begin dating (Stuart, Ward, Jose, & Narayanan, 2010), on the appropriate pool of potential partners (Morales, 2012; Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012), and on the importance of particular traits in a romantic partner (Dubbs & Buunk, 2010; Hynie, Lalonde, & Lee, 2006). Familial factors can also influence these parent-child differences. For example, young adults from more collectivistic ethnic groups and those of more recent U.S. immigrant groups tend to support and report parental influence on dating choices to a greater degree than young adults from individualistic cultures and later U.S. generations (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010; Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012; Uskul, Lalonde, & Konanur, 2011). The current study sought to examine parent-child attitudes and conflict over intercultural romantic relationships across U.S. ethnic groups that vary in the extent to which its members are likely to be recent immigrants from more collectivist societies where parental influence on dating choice is an established norm.

Although national surveys reflect generally high levels of societal approval for intermarriage (77% of Americans say they approve of marriages between Blacks and Whites; Carroll, 2007), attitudes towards intergroup relations tend to differ across generations, with older individuals approving at lower rates than younger individuals (Carroll, 2007; Wang, 2012). Previous studies indicate that some young adults expect their parents to disapprove of intergroup dating (Edmonds & Killen, 2009; Morales, 2012) and opt to not engage in intergroup romantic relationships for this reason (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). At the same time, however, young adults are open to dating outside of their racial/ethnic groups (Uskul et al., 2011). Young adults are more likely than their parents to have increased contact with out-groups (Uskul et al., 2011),

which in turn leads them to hold more inclusive attitudes towards other groups (Edmonds & Killen, 2009). This inclusion extends to young adults holding more positive attitudes than their parents towards intergroup dating relationships in particular (Uskul et al., 2011). For example, recent survey results indicate that whereas 85% of 18-29 year olds said, “they would be fine if a family member were married to someone of a different race/ethnicity,” only 55% of 50-64 year olds agreed, revealing an intergenerational gap (Wang, 2012).

The potential for an intergenerational gap regarding intergroup relations may be exacerbated within minority and immigrant families. Intergroup romantic relationships are often cited as a major concern among immigrant parents (Chung, 2001) who may be particularly concerned about the loss of ethnic identity and cultural traditions such as family values, language retention, and religious identification (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012). Qualitative studies provide evidence to support this concern. Immigrant mothers revealed that a main parenting priority was to pass down their culture to their children (Inman, Howard, Beaumont, & Walker, 2007; Maiter & George, 2003), and they expressed worry over a lack of connection to grandchildren if their kids were to intermarry (Inman et al., 2007). The potential for a decrease in cultural identification also leads immigrant parents to worry that it may additionally lead a decrease in identification with the family in general (Stuart et al., 2010). For members of collectivistic cultures (e.g., Asian and Latino), where there is a strong emphasis on family input and preferences in regards to life decisions, including partner choice (Buunk et al., 2010; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999), lack of familial support may be especially distressing. Therefore, a young adult’s choice of a romantic partner who is outside of one’s in-group may be seen as especially threatening to the core of the family unit in immigrant and minority families.

Although young adults and their parents may have differing attitudes about intergroup relationships, young adults across cultures value family support of their romantic relationships (Jin & Oh, 2010), indicating that, at least implicitly, young adults understand that their individual decisions are affected by and affect other members in the family. At the same time, however, U.S. youth across ethnic backgrounds and generational statuses value the independence emphasized in mainstream U.S. culture. These values are often exemplified in a desire for autonomy in decision-making, such as what romantic partner to date (Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010; Phinney, Kim, Osorio, & Vilhjálmsdóttir, 2005). Previous research has supported this notion. Across a number of racial/ethnic (European-American, Mexican-American, Armenian-American, Korean-American) groups and individuals, both U.S.-born and foreign-born, the majority of adolescents and young adults reported that they would respond in a self-assertive manner (e.g., “do what I want to do”) if they disagreed with their parents over a hypothetical situation regarding intergroup dating disapproval (Phinney et al., 2005). These results suggest that even among adolescents and young adults who belong to collectivist cultural groups, dating situations may be a source of conflict with parents.

The combination of parent-child discrepant attitudes on dating in general and the direct nature of parental disapproval of intergroup dating (Edmonds & Killen, 2009) may set the stage for parent-child conflict. Indeed, there is some indication that U.S. Asian families, with differing expectations and values among parents and children, experience increased intensity in family conflict (Ahn et al., 2009; Choi, He, & Harachi, 2008), particularly surrounding dating and marriage (Ahn et al., 2009).

Gender Differences

Previous research has found that young women often experience more restrictive parental standards for dating behavior (Madsen, 2008; Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012) and report greater levels of conflict with their parents about dating than young men, in general (Chung, 2001; Stuart et al., 2010). In immigrant families, gender differences in cultural value gaps with parents appear to differ between young adult men and women. For example, Asian women have reported greater overall cultural value gaps with their parents than do Asian men (Park, Vo, & Tsong, 2009). These value gaps may translate into romantic relationships being experienced differently for young adult men and women, particularly in the family context. In terms of intergroup dating in particular, gender differences emerge as well both in majority group and minority group families, and immigrant and non-immigrant families; however, the findings are mixed. White women are less likely to approve of intermarriage than White men (Hughes & Tuch, 2003), and report more parental disapproval than do White men (Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004). However, among Chinese Canadian young adults, men expressed less approval of interracial dating than women (Uskul, Lalonde, & Cheng, 2007). Still, other research has found similar proportions of men and women approving of intergroup dating (Field, Kimuna, & Straus, 2013) and engaging in intergroup dating (Martin, Bradford, Drzewiecka, Chitgopekar, 2003). Given these disparate and inconclusive findings, gender was explored as a potential main effect in the current study.

Redefining Intergroup Relations

In national surveys, intergroup relations are often defined in terms of race/ethnicity (e.g., White, Black, Asian, Latino). Not surprisingly, researchers studying intergroup romantic relationships with North American samples have also tended to rely on these racial/ethnic distinctions to define in-group/out-group boundaries (e.g., AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011; Levin,

Taylor, & Caudle, 2007; Uskul et al., 2007). Whereas these distinctions can be useful, they reflect a categorization system that may not fully capture the ways in which individuals identify themselves and their relationships (e.g., Levin et al., 2007; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). With few exceptions (e.g., Bustamante, Nelson, Henriksen, & Monakes, 2011; Morgan, 2012), the literature typically does not account for differences in cultural background (e.g., relations between an individual of Japanese background and an individual of Chinese background) that are subsumed by broader racial/ethnic classifications (e.g., Asian) (e.g., Levin et al., 2007; Martin et al., 2003). In the present study, we utilized the term intercultural relationships to account for the cultural element of dating out which may be more likely to be experienced by immigrant and minority families (Morgan, 2012).

The Current Study

The current study extends previous research on family disapproval and conflict over intergroup romantic relationships by focusing on intercultural romantic relationships and examining ethnic and generational status variations in family disapproval and conflict in a diverse U.S. sample. Our work had three aims: (1) to examine how expanding the definition of intergroup romantic relationships to include cultural variations affects the rates of out-group dating in a sample that is diverse in ethnic and generational status; (2) to examine ethnic and generational status variation in parent-child attitude discrepancies towards intercultural romantic relationships; and (3) to examine ethnic and generational status variation in parent-child conflict and conflict resolution related to intercultural romantic relationships. Given mixed findings regarding gender differences in attitudes towards intergroup dating (e.g., Hughes & Tuch, 2003; Martin et al., 2003; Uskul et al., 2007) the possibility of gender differences was also explored.

Method

Participants

Participants in this study were 628 undergraduate students who met the criteria of being unmarried, self-identified as heterosexual, were between the ages of 18-25 years, and self-identified as being of Asian, Latino, or European background¹. To explore ethnic variations in the current study, we focused on the three largest ethnic groups in the sample, which represent three of the major ethnic groups in the state (U.S. Census, 2015). In addition, Asians and Latinos in the U.S. are intermarrying at the highest rates (Wang, 2012) and are members of traditionally collectivistic cultures where family opinion is highly valued (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010; Fuligni, Tseng, & Lam, 1999). Table 1 presents sample demographic characteristics.

Procedure and Measures

Students were recruited through the university research participant pool from two large West Coast universities and received extra credit for their participation. All study material and procedures were approved by each university's Institutional Review Board. Participants completed a one-hour online questionnaire using Qualtrics, an online survey platform. Informed consent was obtained via a study information sheet presented on the first page of the survey. Participants indicated their consent by continuing with the survey, and responded to questions about the interracial/interethnic and intercultural status of their romantic relationships, perceptions of their parents' disapproval of their romantic relationships and more generally about

¹ Participants constituted 82% of the initial sample ($N = 766$) which included individuals who self-identified as being of Asian (50.3%), Latino (19.5%), European (14.6%), Middle-Eastern (4.8%), Black/African-American (1.3%), and mixed ethnicity (9%) background.

intercultural relationships, reports of conflict with parents over previous intercultural relationships, and demographic characteristics.

Interracial/Ethnic Relationship Status. The authors coded each participant as either currently being (1) or not being (0) in an interracial/interethnic romantic relationship based on participant report of own and partner's racial/ethnic group. As defined by U.S. national statistics (Wang, 2012), relationships between participants and their romantic partners that crossed major racial/ethnic boundaries – White/European American (*not* Hispanic/Latino), Black/African American, Hispanic/Latino, Asian, American Indian and those who were identified as being multiracial – were categorized as interracial/interethnic. For ease of discussion, the term 'interracial' is used in this study to refer to both interracial and interethnic relationships.

Intercultural Relationship Status. Participants assessed whether they deemed their romantic relationship to be intercultural (i.e., participant and partner were from different cultures, races, ethnicities, or religions). The intercultural category includes the interracial category and allows for variations in cultural background among individuals of the same race. Intercultural was defined for participants and examples were provided (e.g., Asian and Latino; Chinese and Korean; Jewish and Christian). Participants also were instructed that intercultural status was ultimately intended to “*encompass any relationship which you or your family considers to be between two different cultures/ethnic groups/races.*” Participants were coded as currently being (1) or not being (0) in an intercultural romantic relationship. Participants were additionally asked if they had *ever* been in an intercultural romantic relationship and responded by choosing one of four options (0 = never, 1 = yes, once, 2 = yes, twice, 3 = yes, three times or more).

Perceived Parental Disapproval of Current Romantic Relationship. A modified version of Sprecher and Felmlee's (1992) *Network Support Index* was used to measure

participants' perceived level of parental disapproval of his/her current relationship (two items; e.g., "To what degree do you think your parents approve/disapprove of your relationship with your boyfriend/girlfriend?"). Participants responded to these items on a scale ranging from 1 = *very much disapprove/discouraged a great deal* to 5 = *very much approve/encouraged a great deal*. Items were reverse scored such that a higher score indicated greater parental disapproval; Cronbach's alpha was .73.

Perceived Parental and Own Attitudes towards Intercultural Romantic

Relationships. A three-item scale assessed perceived parental attitudes towards intercultural dating. Items were: "My parents approve of me dating outside of our own cultural/racial group," "My parents want me to date someone from our own cultural/ethnic background," and "My parents would rather me date a member of our cultural/ethnic background than someone who is not." Participants responded on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The first item was reverse scored such that for the scale as a whole, a higher score indicated more negative attitudes towards intercultural romantic relationships; Cronbach's alpha was .83.

A two-item scale assessed participants' attitudes toward intercultural dating. The items read: "I am open to dating outside of my cultural/ethnic group," and "I would rather date members of my own cultural/ethnic group than other groups." Participants responded on a Likert-type scale ranging from 1 = *strongly disagree* to 5 = *strongly agree*. The first item was reverse scored such that a higher score for the scale would indicate more negative attitudes toward intercultural dating; Cronbach's alpha was .63.

A separate variable was created to assess the discrepancy between participant and perceived parental attitudes toward intercultural romantic relationships. Participant attitude was

subtracted from perceived parent attitude. Analyses were conducted on the absolute value of the discrepancy.

Parent-child Conflict and Conflict Resolution over Intercultural Romantic

Relationship. A single item assessed whether participants experienced conflict with their parents over a past intercultural romantic relationship. The item read, “Did you have conflict with one or both of your parents *specifically* because you were in an intercultural relationship? (*not* including your current relationship).” Participants responded by choosing either yes (1) or no (0).

For participants who chose *yes*, a single item then assessed whether the conflict with their parents was resolved; participants responded by choosing either yes (1) or no (0).

Demographic Variables. Questions assessing race/ethnicity of oneself and one’s parents, own and parents’ country of birth, gender, age, socioeconomic status, length of current romantic relationship, and current living situation were included. Following conventions used by other researchers in the field (e.g., Phinney, Jacoby, & Silva, 2007), generational status was determined by birthplace of participant and parents. First-generation participants were those who were born outside of the U.S., second-generation participants were U.S.-born and had at least one foreign-born parent, and third-generation participants were U.S.-born and had both parents who were U.S.-born. Socioeconomic status was indicated by participants on a 1-5 scale: lower working class (1), upper working class (2), lower middle class (3), upper middle class (4), upper upper class (5). Examples of professions were included with each category.

Plan of Analysis

Following data screening, preliminary associations among the major study variables were examined (see Table 2). Age and SES were significantly correlated with a subset of major study variables, and thus were included as covariates in the analyses that included these variables.

A series of ANCOVAs and logistic regression analyses were used to investigate variations across ethnic and generational status groups. Logistic regressions were run comparing each ethnic and generational group to one another to allow for a full exploration of distinctions between groups and not treat any specific group as normative. Due to the uneven distribution across cells, when examining variations in ethnicity, generational status was controlled for and vice versa. Table 3 presents the means and standard deviations of the main study variables.

Results

Descriptive Statistics

The three ethnic groups studied differed in their U.S. generational status and socioeconomic status (SES). Generational status differed significantly among ethnic groups, $\chi^2(4, N = 622) = 266.10, p < .001$. The majority of Asian (69.0%) and Latino (75.4%) background students were second-generation, whereas the majority of European background (68.9%) participants were third-generation or above. SES differed significantly across both ethnicity ($\chi^2(8, N = 628) = 60.87, p < .001$) and generational status ($\chi^2(8, N = 622) = 54.04, p < .001$). The majority of Asian (48.8%) and Latino participants (45.8%) came from lower middle class families, whereas the majority of European background (48.6%) participants came from upper middle class families. Looking at generational differences by SES, the majority of first-generation (39.1%) and second-generation (50.4%) participants were lower middle class and the majority of third-generation (50.0%) participants were upper middle class.

Nearly half (47.5%; $n = 298$) of all participants were currently in an exclusive, non-cohabitating (98.3%), heterosexual romantic relationship. Of these participants, over half (53.0%; $n = 158$) were currently in an intercultural romantic relationship. The average relationship length was 20.80 months ($SD = 16.65, Mdn = 16.00$), and relationship length did not

differ by whether the romantic relationship was intercultural or not, $t(292) = .719, p = .473$. In terms of past relationships, 46.2% ($n = 265$) of participants reported having ever been in at least one intercultural relationship (excluding their current relationship) and 41.1% ($n = 109$) of that subgroup reported having been in two or more intercultural romantic relationships.

Preliminary Analyses

Utilizing the commonly used racial distinction of in-group/out-group romantic relationships, 31.2% ($n = 92$) of participant relationships were identified as interracial. However, by allowing participants to draw their own boundaries to define a relationship that they deemed was with a member of an out-group (termed “intercultural”), this percentage increased to approximately half (48.5%; $n = 143$). To further explore the interracial/intercultural distinction, parental disapproval of interracial and intercultural relationships were compared to same-race and same-culture relationships. An ANCOVA controlling for age revealed no significant differences when comparing participants in interracial relationships ($M = 2.36, SD = 1.05$) and those in same-race relationships ($M = 2.33, SD = 0.84$), $F(1, 287) = 0.06, p = .805, \eta_p^2 = .000$. However, a significant difference in parental disapproval emerged when comparing intercultural relationships to same-culture relationships, such that those in intercultural relationships reported greater levels of parental disapproval ($M = 2.46, SD = 0.97$) than those in same-culture relationships ($M = 2.22, SD = .084$), $F(1, 287) = 5.21, p = .023, \eta_p^2 = .018$ (see Figure 1). In addition to the greater number of intergroup relationships observed with the intercultural definition, we also observed that those relationships that crossed cultures (but not race) led to conflict at roughly the same rates as relationships that only crossed race (15.6% and 16.3%, respectively), suggesting that the more inclusive definition provides important information about disapproval and conflict.

For the sample as a whole, perceived parental attitudes towards intercultural dating had a mean level of 3.26 ($SD = 1.04$) on a scale of one to five, with higher scores indicating more negative attitudes. As expected, the mean participant attitude toward intercultural dating was significantly less negative than their perceived parental attitudes with a mean of 2.54 ($SD = 0.97$) (paired sample t-test, $t(619) = -16.15, p < .001$). The mean discrepancy between parent and young adult intercultural dating attitudes was 0.99 ($SD = 0.86$). In total, 51.6% ($n = 324$) of participants reported having at least one-point of discrepancy with their parents in regards to intercultural dating attitudes².

Overall, 21.7% ($n = 70$) of participants who reported ever having been in an intercultural romantic relationship reported that they had conflict with at least one of their parents specifically because their relationship was intercultural. In terms of conflict resolution, 27.1% ($n = 19$) of participants reported that the conflict between them and their parent(s) remained unresolved.

Main Analyses

Intergroup Romantic Relationships in an Intercultural Framework. Ethnic and generational variations emerged for engaging in *interracial* romantic relationships. Individuals of European background were 2.37 times more likely to be in an interracial relationship than individuals of Asian background ($\beta = .863, p = .025$), and were marginally more likely to be in an interracial relationship than individuals of Latino background ($\beta = 5.116, p = .077$), controlling for generational status. Third-generation participants were 2.90 times more likely to be in an interracial relationship than second-generation participants ($\beta = 1.07, p = .001$) and 2.36

² Fifty-five percent of participants reported little to no discrepancy between their own and their (less than a 1-point difference), 29% reported a 1-point to 2-point difference, 20.5% reported a 2-point to 3-point difference, and 4% reported a 3 to 4-point difference.

times more likely than first-generation participants ($\beta = .859, p = .029$), when controlling for ethnic background. However, when examining *intercultural* relationships, no significant ethnic or generational differences emerged. Table 4 presents the percentages of current interracial and intercultural relationships by ethnicity and generational status. Whereas the percentages of interracial and intercultural relationships remained quite similar among European background and third-generation participants, at about 40-50%, for Asians, Latinos, first- and second-generation participants the number of intergroup relationships increased from approximately one-fourth to about 40-50% when using the more inclusive intercultural definition.

Perceived Parent-Child Intercultural Dating Attitudes and Discrepancies. A one-way between subjects ANCOVA controlling for generational status and SES revealed a significant effect of ethnicity ($F(2, 609) = 5.58, p = .021, \eta_p^2 = .013$). Pairwise comparisons revealed significant differences between participants of Asian and Latino background ($p = .039$), with Asian participants ($M = 1.08, SD = 0.90$) reporting significantly greater discrepancies than Latino participants ($M = 0.90, SD = 0.74$), but no significant differences between those of Asian and European background or Latino and European background. A one-way between subjects ANCOVA controlling for ethnicity revealed a marginal effect of generational status ($F(2, 619) = 2.38, p = .093, \eta_p^2 = .008$), such that second-generation participants reported marginally greater attitudinal discrepancies than third-generation participants, $M = 1.06 (0.88)$; $M = 0.75 (0.73)$, respectively ($p = .098$).

Parent-Child Intercultural Dating Conflict and Conflict Resolution. A logistic regression revealed that participants who reported greater perceived discrepancies with their parents in attitudes towards intercultural romantic relationships were more likely to experience conflict over intercultural romantic relationships, $\beta = 1.199, p < .001$. More specifically, as the

attitudinal discrepancy increased by 1 point on the scale, participants were 3.32 times more likely to report conflict. This relationship was significant across all ethnic and generational status groups (p 's ranged from $< .001$ to $.018$).

Controlling for generational status, Asians were significantly more likely to report conflict over their intercultural dating relationships than Latinos, $\beta = .810$, $p = .034$, such that Asians were 2.25 times more likely to report parent-child conflict than Latinos. There were no significant differences between Asians and Europeans in likelihood of reporting conflict over intercultural dating. No ethnic differences were found in resolving intercultural dating conflict.

Controlling for ethnicity, a main effect of generational status was found such that first-generation ($\beta = 1.611$, $p = .010$) and second-generation participants ($\beta = 1.819$, $p = .003$) reported greater likelihood of conflict as compared to third-generation participants. First-generation participants were 5 times more likely, and second-generation were 6.2 times more likely, to report conflict over intercultural dating with their parents than third-generation participants. No generational status differences were found for resolving intercultural dating conflict.

Gender Differences. We also explored the possibility of participant gender differences. No significant gender differences were found for involvement in either interracial or intercultural relationships ($\beta = -.313$, $p = .244$ and $\beta = -.084$, $p = .709$, respectively). Although the women in the study reported significantly greater levels of parent-child attitudinal discrepancies over intercultural dating than did the men ($F(1, 617) = 5.97$, $p = .015$), no gender differences were found for experiencing conflict over intercultural dating ($\beta = .103$, $p = .709$). However, gender differences were significant in regards to resolving intercultural dating conflict with one's parents ($\beta = -1.735$, $p = .011$), with young adult women reporting unresolved conflict more

frequently than young adult men (39.5% v. 10.3%, respectively). Table 5 presents a summary of the results.

Discussion

The aim of the current study was to examine young adults' intergroup romantic relationships through an intercultural perspective, as well as to examine ethnic and generational status variations in (1) the number of intercultural romantic relationships, (2) extent of parent-child discrepancies of intercultural dating attitudes, and (3) levels of parent-child conflict and conflict resolution regarding intercultural romantic relationships. Significant ethnic and generational status variations emerged for engaging in interracial, but not intercultural, romantic relationships. Significant ethnic, but not generational status, variations emerged for parent-child attitudinal discrepancies towards intercultural relationships, and lastly significant ethnic and generational status variations were found for experiencing conflict with parents over an intercultural romantic relationship, but not in resolving the conflict. Particularly noteworthy are the ethnic group differences that emerged between the two minority groups in the sample, Asian and Latino, two cultures that prioritize interdependence. Reasons for why variations may have emerged will be discussed in the following paragraphs. Overall, findings have implications for the conceptualization and study of intergroup relations and for parent-adult child communication.

By redefining intergroup relationships beyond census-based interracial/interethnic categories to include relationships that cross culture as well as race/ethnicity, we see an increased number of relationships that would be considered to be intergroup. The more expansive intercultural definition seems to be part of a small, but growing number of studies that look at out-group dating (e.g., Morgan, 2012). This conceptualization may be particularly pertinent when examining the intergroup relationships of more recent immigrant groups, particularly

individuals of Asian and Latino background, as compared to those of later generations and European background. These groups are likely to have cultural values of familial interdependence and to hold distinct cultural elements of their native countries such as language and traditions that tend not to be shared among the greater population. As such, intergroup relations may pose a threat to the continuation of values and traditions. Whereas there were significant ethnic and generational status differences in the number of interracial relationships (using a census-based definition), there were no differences when using the more inclusive, intercultural definition, suggesting that defining intergroup relationships through the typical race/ethnic categories may overstate ethnic and generational differences, and is at best incomplete for at least certain segments of the population.

Consistent with national statistics indicating intergenerational differences in approval of intergroup relations (Carroll, 2007; Wang, 2012), this study found that approximately half (52%) of participants reported intercultural dating attitudes that were discrepant with their parents' attitudes. Participants of Asian background reported greater discrepancies than those of Latino background, and although not significant, a marginal finding was found for second-generation participants reporting greater discrepancies than third-generation participants. The ethnic difference is noteworthy, as a difference was found among the two minority groups in the sample rather than with the majority group. This finding seems to be driven by parental attitudes towards intercultural relationships; whereas there were no significant differences between self-reported intercultural attitudes among the student participants, differences were found for perceptions of parental attitudes toward intercultural relationships, with participants of Asian background reporting most negative attitudes for their parents as compared to participants of Latino ($p < .001$) and European background ($p = .007$). Future research should incorporate parent report to

investigate what factors may be driving this difference, such as level and type of acculturation strategies or contact with out-group members.

Although significant generational status variations did not emerge for parent-child discrepancies, the marginal finding of second-generation participants reporting more discrepant attitudes than third-generation participants is consistent with previous literature that reports parent-child value gaps among second-generation adolescents and young adults, and particularly in realms of autonomy such as choice of a dating partner (Ahn et al., 2009; Giguère et al., 2010). Second-generation students are likely to have more contact than their parents to groups outside of their own (Uskul et al., 2011), particularly on multiethnic college campuses, which may lead them to developing a different set of perspectives in regards to intergroup relations.

The current study adds to the growing literature that indicates that value gaps between parents and their children are associated with greater likelihood of conflict (Ahn et al., 2009; Smokowski, Rose, & Bacallao, 2008), as greater reported discrepancy with parents over intercultural dating attitudes predicted increased likelihood of conflict over intercultural dating relationships. Study findings confirmed intercultural dating as a source of conflict between parents and their college-aged children; for the sample as a whole, conflict with one's parent(s) was reported by almost one-fourth (22%) of participants who had ever been involved in an intercultural romantic relationship.

Results indicate that likelihood of conflict varies depending on ethnicity and generational status. Specifically, Asian/Asian-American students reported greater instances of conflict than did Latino/Latino-American students. Although both Asian and Latino cultures emphasize interdependent values (i.e., values that underscore close family relations) (Phinney et al., 2005), they differ in the way these interdependent values are represented. Interdependence in Latino

culture places value on positive interpersonal interactions (Ruby, Falk, Heine, Villa, & Silberstein, 2012), whereas Asian culture often takes the form of obedience and responding to others in a hierarchical fashion (Phinney et al., 2005). Open communication of negative emotions may also be more common among those of Asian background (Williamson et al., 2012). This cultural distinction may make instances of outright conflict more likely among Asian participants than Latino participants. Additional data was examined to lend empirical support for this explanation. In the current study, participants of Latino background reported marginally higher levels of seeking to avoid conflict with their parents than participants of Asian background ($p = .082$) and significantly higher levels than participants of European background ($p = .004$). This difference, along with Latino culture's emphasis on positive family interactions, may account for those of Latino background reporting fewer instances of outright conflict with their parents over their intercultural relationships. On the other hand, greater acceptance of negative communication and familial values of hierarchy, may explain greater instances of intercultural dating conflict among Asian participants who engage in these relationships against one's parents' approval.

In terms of variations by generational status, significant differences were found between second-generation participants and third-generation participants, such that second-generation participants reported more conflict with their parents over their previous intercultural relationships than third-generation participants. Second-generation young adults tend to report greater value discrepancies with their parents (Phinney, Ong, & Madden, 2000), and these value discrepancies make conflict more likely (Ahn et al 2009; Choi et al., 2008). Opinions about dating and marriage tend to be particularly discrepant among parents and children in immigrant families, as this topic typically represents an emotionally laden situation that can elicit both

individualistic values of autonomy in choosing one's partner and collectivistic values of incorporating family opinions in decision making and retaining family ethnic identity (Giguère et al., 2010). Intercultural romantic relationships may be particularly contentious among immigrant parents and their young adult children as the parents may view it as their children's assimilation into the majority culture and the loss of the native culture of the family (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012).

Overall, over one-fourth (27%) of participants reported that the intercultural dating conflict with their parents had remained unresolved. Although there were significant ethnic and generational status variations in instances of conflict over intercultural relationships, there were no reported differences in the amount of conflict *resolution* across ethnicity or generational status. Previous research has shown that across ethnic backgrounds, young adults report to “do what I want to do” when it comes to conflict with their parents, particularly in the area of dating/marriage (Phinney et al., 2005), which may make conflict resolution similarly challenging across ethnic and generational status backgrounds. In addition, dating conflicts are likely to evoke strong emotions, which could make conflict resolution equally as difficult across groups and should not necessarily be related to one's ethnic background or generational status. Research on parent-child conflict resolution over young adults' dating relationships, and intercultural dating relationships in particular, is sparse; future research should systematically study conflict management strategies and relationship outcomes across ethnic and generational backgrounds. Future research might also examine the strength of the emotional ties in young adult's intergroup romantic relationships in relation to the likelihood of resolving conflicts with one's parents.

This study did not find any significant differences for attitudes, conflict, or conflict resolution among participants of European background or first-generation participants as

compared to the other groups. We interpret three possible explanations from these data showing no differences between participants of European background and the other two ethnic groups. Participants of European background, although the majority ethnic group in the U.S., were the smallest group represented in our sample. Whereas studies have found that Whites, at the top of the racial hierarchy in the U.S., would be least open to out-group dating (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011), the cultural diversity of the U.S. west coast makes it likely that participants have significant exposure to diverse ethnic groups, which may increase out-group acceptance and minimize out-group attitude variations across ethnic groups. The smaller proportion of European background participants may also provide comparatively lower power to detect group differences. In addition, as the majority group in the U.S. it may be more socially undesirable to report negative attitudes towards other groups, as cultural loss is likely less worrisome and thus majority group members may have anxiety about being perceived as prejudiced (e.g., Richeson & Shelton, 2007).

A lack of significant findings among first-generation participants as compared to second- and third-generation participants may be explained by noting that length of time in the U.S. are quite varied. First-generation participants who moved to the U.S. at a very young age are likely to hold values similar to second-generation participants, whereas those who have more recently moved to the U.S are likely to have had similar cultural upbringings as their parents and hold cultural values from the home country. This possibility suggests the utility of examining 1.5-generation students in future studies with a sample that is large enough to support that categorization.

There were no significant gender differences in the likelihood of being in an interracial or intercultural romantic relationship or in rates of parent-child conflict over intercultural dating

relationships. The lack of gender differences in reporting of conflict attests to the idea that intercultural dating conflict is a phenomenon experienced by both men and women. However, young women reported more attitudinal discrepancies with their parents than did men and men reported resolving the conflict over dating more often than women. Given that the study sample was predominantly second-generation (61.3%), and of Asian background (60.0%), the gender differences in attitudinal discrepancies are in line with previous literature showing that Asian women report greater cultural gaps with parents than Asian men (Park et al., 2009). Although participants' experiences of conflict did not vary by gender, the higher rates of men resolving conflict with their parents may be due to the more permissive attitudes parents tend to adopt with their son's than their daughter's (Madsen, 2008; Nesteruk, & Gramescu, 2012). The increased level of unresolved conflict among the women in the sample suggest that researchers delve further in understanding the different patterns in which young adult women and their parents communicate and manage conflict and examine possible gender differences that may account for varied levels of conflict resolution.

Implications

Overall, results from the current study have implications for the conceptualization of culture in research on social relationships. Allowing for a self-defined interpretation of intergroup relationships, or at the very least a definition that includes cultural variations, is an appropriate step forward in defining intergroup relations, especially in the romantic context. Research with intergroup couples supports the importance of incorporating culture in addition to race; when couples spoke of challenges in their relationships, cultural differences appeared to take the forefront, whereas race was noted as more relevant when talking about interactions with the larger society (Seshadri & Knudson-Martin, 2013). The subjective, culturally inclusive

definition is also consequential for parent-adult child relationships: in this study, although parental disapproval of interracial as compared to same-race relationships was not significant, a significant difference emerged when comparing intercultural as compared to same-culture relationships. Given that family support of relationships is deemed important (Jin & Oh, 2010), parental disapproval of one's romantic relationship may be experienced as a challenge. Although effect sizes were small, small effect sizes may be very meaningful (e.g., Belsky, 2001), especially as they pertain to personally salient and increasingly common issues, such as those of intergroup experiences. The significance of experiences among those in intercultural relationships is supported by the literature on counseling of intercultural couples. Sullivan and Cottone (2006) note that "the greatest shortcoming of racially based analyses of intercultural relationships is that they have no application to many intercultural couples who are not racially different" (p. 222). The emphasis on cultural nuances in the counseling literature in particular (Bustamante et al., 2011; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006), suggests that these cultural distinctions may have real-world implications for the daily lives of intercultural couples. This intercultural framework may be even more consequential among immigrant and minority families. Losing cultural elements, such as language, food, and holiday traditions through intermarriage is something that ethnic minorities and immigrant parents often worry about (Nesteruk & Gramescu, 2012) and would not be fully captured by examining interracial relationships alone.

Limitations and Future Directions

The current study advances our understanding of how intercultural romantic relationships are distributed across different groups in the U.S. and how they are experienced within families. However, the study relied on young adult self-reports and did not obtain parent reports. Some researchers have suggested that children's perception of parental attitudes may be valuable, as

children tend to base their perceptions of their parents' out-group attitudes on their observations of parents' behaviors, which may be a more accurate assessment of attitudes (Degner & Dalege, 2013) and be less susceptible to socially desirable responding (Edmonds & Killen, 2009). Nonetheless, it would be worthwhile to obtain parent data directly in future research. In addition, conducting mixed-methods studies including qualitative and behavioral data with both parents and their young adult children can answer questions about what factors drive disapproving attitudes and how conflict is experienced across parent-child dyads.

Our two recruitment sites were located in a region of the U.S. where many minority and immigrant populations, particularly individuals of Asian and Latino background, co-exist with one another and with the majority population. Given the literature suggesting that interaction and exposure to out-groups makes one more likely to have positive attitudes towards out-groups and intergroup interactions (Crystal, Killen, & Ruck, 2008; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008), this may mean that this specific sample may be overall more open to intergroup attitudes than individuals in other parts of the country. It would be fruitful for future research to study such intergroup relationships, and in particularly *intercultural* interactions, in other regions of the country to examine whether areas with different ethnic and generational status compositions experience disapproval and conflict similarly. Lastly, future research should attempt to recruit larger and more equal numbers of participants across generational statuses within ethnic groups, as well as more equal proportions of men and women within generational and ethnic groups, so that two and three-way interactions can be explored, something that was not possible in the current study.

Conclusion

The current study argues for redefining intergroup relationships through a lens that includes culture, in addition to the often-used definition based on race/ethnicity. The current

study establishes that intercultural romantic relationships are common and are similarly distributed across ethnic groups and generational statuses. Intercultural romantic relationships are important to examine within the family context, as they may be met by disapproval, and may lead to conflict among parents and their young adult children. Certain ethnic and generational status groups may be particularly vulnerable to such disapproval and conflict. Future research should further explore the family context in which parent-child intercultural attitudinal discrepancies exist to gain additional insight into the factors leading to disapproval and the ways in which conflict is managed across ethnicity, generational status, and gender over time.

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Appendix A

Table 1

Demographic characteristics of the study sample

	Asian (<i>n</i> = 377)	Latino (<i>n</i> = 144)	European (<i>n</i> = 107)	Overall Sample (<i>N</i> = 628)	<i>F</i> (<i>df</i>) or χ^2 (<i>df</i>)
Mean Age (<i>SD</i>)	20.32 (1.44)	20.03 (1.48)	20.47 (0.86)	20.3 (1.49)	2.96(2, 625)
Gender (% women)	54.4%	73.6%	68.2%	61.1%	18.95(2)***
Mean SES ^a	2.96	2.53	3.27	2.91	22.93(2, 625)***
Generational Status ^b					266.10(4)***
First	27.1%	12.7%	12.3%	21.2%	
Second	68.4%	75.4%	18.9%	61.3%	
Third	3.7%	12.0%	68.9%	16.6%	

^a5-point scale; 1 = lower working class; 2 = upper working class; 3 = lower middle class; 4 = upper middle class; 5 = upper upper class.

^bFirst-generation participants were born outside of the U.S.; second-generation participants were U.S. born and had at least one foreign-born parent; third-generation participants were U.S. born and both parents were U.S. born.

****p* < .001

Appendix B

Table 2
Correlations among demographic and major study variables

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13
1. Gender	--	.117**	.026	-.099	-.063	-.021	.010	-.096	-.061	.004	-.060	.021	.320**
2. Age		---	-.002	.137*	-.011	-.006	.107**	-.200**	-.011	-.036	.020	.035	.073
3. SES			--	-.080	.017	-.014	.065	-.205	-.031	.062	-.087*	-.063	.081
4. Relationship length				--	.017	-.042	-.130*	-.205**	-.075	-.063	-.016	-.171*	.258
5. Current interracial					--	.480***	.203***	.016	-.205**	-.356**	.123*	-.075	-.122
6. Current intercultural						--	.253***	.132*	-.220**	-.467**	.199**	-.043	-.190
7. Ever intercultural							--	-.015	-.075	-.233*	.136**	.177**	Not calculated
8. Current Relationship Disapproval								--	.247**	-.067	.297**	.095	-.213
9. Parental intercultural attitudes									--	.401**	.593**	.408**	-.105
10. Own intercultural attitudes										--	-.501**	-.066	.003
11. Parent-child Intercultural Discrepancies											--	.448**	-.078
12. Ever intercultural conflict												--	Not calculated
13. Ever intercultural conflict resolution													--

Note. Pearson correlations were calculated for two continuous variables, point-biserial correlations were calculated for one continuous and one dichotomous variable, and the Phi coefficient was calculated for two dichotomous variables.

* $p < .05$ ** $p < .01$ *** $p \leq .001$

Appendix C

Table 3
Means and standard deviations of major study variables

	Ethnicity			Generational Status			Overall Sample
	Asian	Latino	European	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
Current Parental Relationship Disapproval ^a	2.48 (0.89)	2.24 (0.90)	2.06 (0.89)	2.42 (0.85)	2.45 (0.91)	1.99 (0.88)	2.34 (0.91)
Parental Intercultural Attitudes ^a	3.48 (0.93)	2.88 (1.06)	3.00 (1.17)	3.36 (1.02)	3.38 (0.97)	2.67 (1.11)	3.26 (1.04)
Participant Intercultural Attitudes ^a	2.56 (0.92)	2.42 (0.97)	2.64 (1.11)	2.52 (0.94)	2.58 (0.96)	2.42 (1.00)	2.45 (0.97)
Parent-Child Intercultural Discrepancies ^b	1.08 (0.90)	0.91 (0.74)	0.81 (0.79)	1.02 (0.84)	1.06 (0.88)	0.75 (0.88)	0.75 (0.73)

^a5-point scale; higher numbers indicate greater disapproval.

^bPossible range is 0-4; higher numbers indicate greater attitudinal discrepancies.

Appendix D

Table 4
Current percentages of interracial and intercultural relationships

Relationship Status	Ethnicity			Generational Status			Overall Sample
	Asian	Latino	European	1 st	2 nd	3 rd	
% Interracial	25.5%	29.1%	50.9%	28.8%	25.1%	50.0%	31.2% (n = 92)
% Intercultural	54%	41.8%	41.8%	49.2%	48.5%	48.4%	48.5% (n = 143)

Appendix E

Table 5
Ethnic, generational, and gender differences among main study variables

	Current Interracial	Current Intercultural	Parent-Child Attitudinal Discrepancies	Intercultural Dating Conflict	Intercultural Dating Conflict Resolution
Ethnicity	Euro > Asian* Euro > Latino†	No differences	Asian > Latino*	Asian > Latino*	No differences
Generational Status	3 rd > 1 st * 3 rd > 2 nd ***	No differences	2 nd > 3 rd †	1 st > 3 rd ** 2 nd > 3 rd **	No differences
Gender	No differences	No differences	Women > Men*	No differences	Men > Women*

Note. Contrasts not listed were not significant at $p < .05$ nor trending at $p < .1$.

* $p < .05$ ** $p \leq .01$ *** $p \leq .001$ † $p < .1$

Appendix F

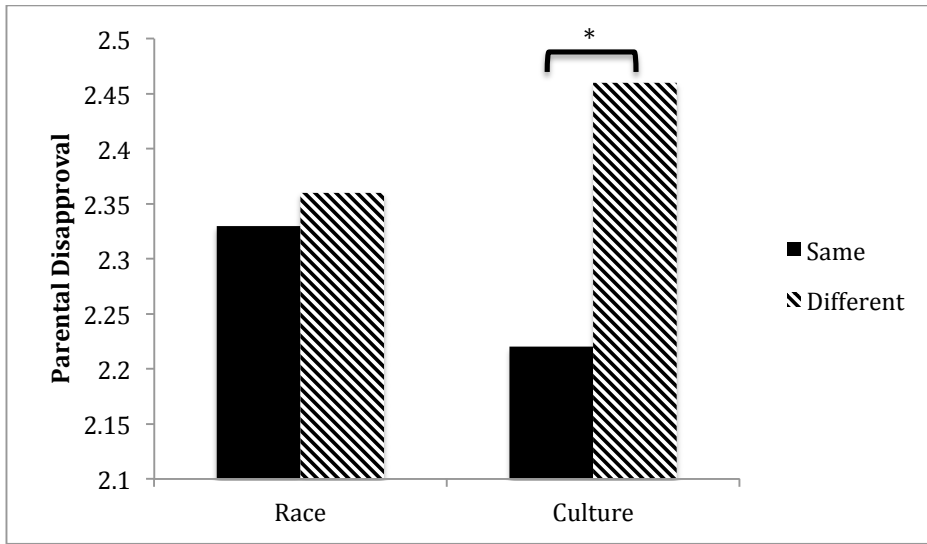


Figure 1. Parental disapproval of same and different racial and cultural relationships
* $p < .05$