

**EXPLORING OUT-GROUP DATING PREFERENCES, INTERGROUP  
JUDGEMENTS, AND OUTCOMES OF INTERCULTURAL ROMANTIC  
RELATIONSHIPS**

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## Abstract

Researchers have studied the topic of intergroup relations for decades and the majority of this research focuses on understanding the occurrence and reduction of intergroup conflict. Findings from this literature have proposed that positive intergroup contact fosters positive intergroup attitudes and behaviours. One indication that the relations between groups have improved is the number of increased intergroup friendships, demonstrating a loosening of boundaries between groups. However, statistics on intergroup dating and marriages indicate that there are significantly less intergroup romantic relationships than friendships. Although intergroup relations have improved, there is a clear distinction between having out-group friends and having intimate out-group romantic partners. The current research aimed to better understand intergroup romantic relationships by examining social psychological factors that may influence out-group dating decisions across different backgrounds (race/culture/ethnic; religious, socio-economic status) and cultural contexts (UK, US, India; Chapter 2). In Study 1, using a cross-cultural (US  $n = 245$ , UK  $n = 227$ , India  $n = 220$ ) correlational design I found that social approval played a powerful role in out-group dating decisions. Therefore, across two correlational studies (Study 2,  $n = 241$ ; Study 3,  $n = 235$ ) I then examined bystanders' judgements towards different intergroup relationships (Chapter 3). Next, I examined consequences that may arise due to experiencing an intercultural romantic relationship. In Study 4, using a correlational design, ( $n = 196$ ), I specifically investigated bicultural identity development and associated outcomes (Chapter 5). Results from this research demonstrated that social approval, social identity, direct and indirect intergroup contact, are factors that influence our out-group dating preferences. However, the extent to which they influence our decisions vary based on background category and cultural context. Additionally, I found that individuals are least willing to date out-group religious members and that interreligious romantic relationships are judged as having the least social support. Finally, I found that

individuals in an intercultural romantic relationship have the ability to develop a bicultural identity and that identity is linked to positive intrapersonal outcomes. Overall, research from this thesis contributes most notably to the areas of intergroup relations and culture and provides many outlets for future work.

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**Declaration**

I declare that this thesis is my own work carried out under the normal terms of supervision.

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Courtney K. Allen

## **Publications and Conference Presentations**

### **Chapter 2**

#### ***Publications***

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The empirical chapters included in this thesis are written independently as separate works. Tables and figures are numbered according to the chapter in which they appear.

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## BRIEF INTRODUCTION

“The line of contact between groups often seems drawn at the boundary between friends and romantic partners” (Miller et al, 2004, p. 354).

Miller and colleagues (2004) eloquently explained that an intergroup romantic relationship is a unique form of intergroup contact warranting independent investigation. An intergroup romantic relationship is a form of intergroup contact that consists of two individuals from different groups (e.g., race, culture, religious, class) engaging in an intimate interaction (e.g., dating, cohabitating, marriage). Similar to less intimate forms of contact (e.g., acquaintances, friends), this form of contact also has the potential to influence intergroup attitudes (e.g., Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015) and can serve as a barometer for intergroup relations. However, compared with other forms of intergroup contact (e.g., acquaintances, friendships), this form of contact has been studied less frequently.

The investigation of intergroup romantic relationships is important as it provides insight into the current intergroup relationship climate. In general, research has documented a strong link between intergroup contact (acquaintances, friendships) and a reduction of prejudice (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006; Welker, Slatcher, Baker, & Aron, 2014). Research that focuses on intergroup romantic relationships has also shown a link between this specific form of contact and positive intergroup attitude outcomes. For example, Paterson, Turner, and Conner (2015) found that intergroup dating relationships was linked to more positive perceptions of in-group norms related to intergroup contact (e.g., acceptance of intergroup interactions).

Data point to an increase in the number of individuals dating and marrying individuals from outside their in-groups (Office for National Statistics, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2015). For example, 17% of newlyweds in the U.S. are interracial/interethnic; while only 3% of newlyweds were interracial in the year 1967 (U.S. Census, 2010). Similar trends can be

seen in the UK with an estimate of 9% (2011) of all couples are interethnic, revealing a 2% increase from 2001 (Office of National Statistics, 2014).

In addition to the increase of intergroup romantic relationships, research shows that nearly 40% of U.S. adults believe that this increase is good for society (Pew Research Center, 2017). Furthermore, statistical data from online dating websites have revealed that the number of individuals that only consider dating within their own racial groups has decreased to 30%, a 10% drop since 2008 (OkCupid, 2014). Responses from survey respondents have revealed that approximately 60% of these users felt more confident in dating out-group members using online platforms (Tinder, 2018). This increase in the number of intergroup romantic relationships can be taken as an indication that the relations between groups are becoming more positive. However, given the diverse make-up of the many societies like the U.S. (U.S. Census, 2010) and the availability of opportunities (e.g., major multicultural cities, online dating platform) for individuals to form intergroup relationships, they are still rare. These statistics indicate a strong in-group bias when it comes to romantic relationships (Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995; Mendelsohn, Taylor, Fiore, & Cheshire, 2014). In-group bias dictates that individuals will most likely choose in-group members over out-group members as intimate partners (e.g., Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003). Apart from the statistics on intergroup dating and marriages, we find patterns of in-group bias from research conducted examining dating preferences (e.g., Eastwick, Richeson, Son, & Finkel, 2009; Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995; Ritter, 2015). For example, Herman and Campbell (2012) showed that white men and women were less willing to date interracial than date someone of their own race. Similarly, Harris and Kalbfleisch (2000) found that White participants preferred dating other White individuals over dating Black individuals. Thus, research in the last few decades has begun to focus on understanding the psychosocial factors determining engagement in romantic relationships with out-group members.

## CHAPTER 1

### **Intergroup Relations, Conflict, Contact, and Romantic Relationships**

*To comprehend the importance and necessity of studying intergroup romantic relationships, the current chapter provides a brief overview of the intergroup relations literature with an emphasis on the theoretical understandings of intergroup conflict and contact. A review of this literature provides a framework for understanding the current barriers for intergroup romantic contact. Following this overview, the remaining section of the chapter focuses on the links to prevalence of intergroup romantic relationships and the literature focusing on factors that influence these relationships. Finally, limitations within the literature on intergroup romantic relationships are discussed and the aims for this thesis are introduced.*

#### **Social groups**

There are a number of ways in which a group can be defined. A broad definition can simply refer to a group as an aggregate (e.g., a number of individuals standing together) or a group can be defined as encompassing two or more individuals that interact with each other while having a shared interest (e.g., political party, sports team; DeLamater, 1974). As social beings, we belong to a range groups defined by, for example, geographic criteria (e.g., country) or small family structures. We may belong to multiple different social groups with some being static to which we are born in (e.g., race/ethnicity) and others more dynamic which we choose to join (e.g., memberships to professional organizations). Furthermore, social groups, as defined by Tajfel (1982) are both “internal”, relating to group identification (e.g., I am American) and “external”, relating to the outside characteristics or commonalities (e.g., member of a union). Identification requires a cognitive awareness of our own membership (identity), how our group may be different from other groups (us vs. them) and

an emotional investment (Tajfel, 1982). An individual may belong to a group without having a psychological attachment to that group (e.g., racial group; Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). In addition, a group exists and functions on its own in relation to other groups (Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). Therefore, other individuals, not a part of the group, must also recognize that the group exists (Brown, 1988).

Having social groups and group categorizations are an important part of society as it helps us make sense of the world around us and function accordingly (Fiske & Taylor, 1991). Having our own group memberships gives us a sense of security and provides a reference for our behaviours and attitudes (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). Therefore, it is important to consider an individual's group membership as it can influence their behaviours and attitudes, such as choosing to be in an intergroup romantic relationship.

### **Intergroup Relations**

How groups, and the individuals within these groups form attitudes and behave towards each other is, broadly speaking, the study of intergroup relations (Sherif, 1966). The study of intergroup relations includes the formation of groups, the outcomes of collective representations and the individual processes and interpersonal interactions (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). From a social psychological perspective, the study of intergroup relations has helped to bring meaning to large and small scale social phenomena (i.e., intergroup conflict) and has introduced methods for reducing conflict, racism, prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Figueiredo, Valentim, & Doosje, 2014). A brief review of the intergroup relations literature is important as it provides a useful theoretical perspective to understand why individuals are less likely to form romantic partnerships with out-group individuals.

### **Intergroup conflict**

As formerly stated, one aspect of intergroup relations focuses on the interactions between groups. These interactions are often a potential source of conflict and have produced

an abundance of theoretical and empirical work (e.g., Sherif, 1966; Sherif & Sherif, 1969; Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Walker & Smith, 2002). Intergroup conflict can influence our attitudes, emotions, and behaviours towards other groups (e.g., prejudice, stereotypes, and discrimination; Turner, 1996; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010) and result in negative consequences (e.g., violent protests, wars, or genocide; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). Therefore, intergroup conflict provides a perspective to understand the attitudes and behaviours regarding an individual's lack of willingness to engage in intimate intergroup romantic relationships. Thus, it is imperative to discuss how intergroup conflict arises and how it can be defused, as this could shed light on when intimate intergroup interactions might increase or decrease.

Intergroup relations and the related conflict are complex. As a result, several theories are proposed to account for the complexity of intergroup conflict. For example, some theorists believe intergroup conflict develops due to conflicting group goals, such as, distribution of power or resources (e.g., Sherif, 1966), while others have suggested that it develops naturally under minimal conditions such as simple being randomly apart of one group over another (e.g., Tajfel, Billig, Bundy, & Flament, 1971). Of particular importance for intergroup romantic relationships are the theory of realistic group conflict, integrated threat theory and the theory of social identify and self-categorization. Each propose a different account of the antecedents of intergroup conflict and negative intergroup interactions. These theories were developed investigating less intimate forms of contact but are necessary to discuss and relevant because it provides a framework for understanding intergroup romantic relationship avoidance, engagement, and termination.

**Realistic group conflict.** Sherif (1966) proposed the realistic group conflict theory which postulates that negative intergroup attitudes and behaviours are an outcome of competition over scarce resources. Each group has their own set of goals (e.g., wealth, power,

land) and when groups have incompatible goals this can create a threat and breed competition, which fosters an instance of intergroup conflict. Empirical support for this theory stemmed from the well-recognized Robbers Cave experiment (Sherif, Harvey, White, Hood, & Sherif, 1961). In this experiment, Sherif and colleagues were able to demonstrate that merely placing a group of young boys in a camp together and simply introducing the idea of another group of boys created an in-group/out-group (us vs. them) mindset. Once in contact with each other this created competition and conflicting goals (e.g., winner of sport games, food resources). The conflicting goals resulted in conflict between the groups. This experiment demonstrated how with only minimum effort, individuals give meaning to arbitrary groups and putting into effect in-group/ out-group mentalities which can lead to extreme instances of intergroup conflict (Sherif et al., 1961). Related to more intimate forms of interactions such as friends or intergroup romantic relationships, individuals might also fixate on the in-group/out-group distinctions which might hinder intergroup romantic interactions. For example, some groups might perceive the occurrence of an interracial romantic relationship as a realistic threat to racial purity.

In addition, Sherif and colleagues also demonstrated instances of conflict reduction using superordinate goals and creating a common in-group identity among the two groups. Superordinate goals are goals that are compatible for both groups and require cooperation in order to successfully achieve the common goal. This goal would benefit both groups equally and cannot be achieved by one group alone. The creation of the common in-group identity decreases the separateness between groups which leads to a reduction of conflict. While this theory and the Robbers Cave experiment made great strides towards understanding circumstances that might increase or create intergroup conflict, it did not discuss the psychological aspects that may also shape intergroup interaction. I now turn to literature that encompasses other explanations for negative intergroup interactions.

**Integrated threat theory.** Integrated threat theory proposed by Stephan and Stephan (2000) encompasses both situational and psychological explanations for intergroup conflict and negative interactions. This theory describes four different types of threat: realistic, symbolic, intergroup anxiety, and negative stereotypes. This theory posits that when individuals feel that their in-group is threatened, this can alter their attitudes and behaviours towards out-group members and increase prejudiced attitudes (Stephan, Diaz-Loving, Duran, 2000; Stephan & Stephan, 2000). On a group level not personal level, group threat is felt when characteristics or important components of their group are perceived as being under threat.

A realistic threat is one in which the existence or the power of the group is challenged. These threats can be political, economic, or related to warfare and the welfare of the group (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). Symbolic threats are much less immediate and concern the attitudes, moral, values, or norms of the groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). When individuals feel that their group is being threatened then the reactions that follow are often negative intergroup interactions and conflict. For example, throughout history, violent wars have transpired as a result of one group believing to be under realistic or symbolic threats (e.g., 9/11 attack on the U.S. and the Iraq War).

Intergroup anxiety and negative stereotyping are also types of threat. Intergroup anxiety stems from threat that individuals personally feel when thinking about or engaging in an intergroup interaction. This anxiety arises due to beliefs that the interaction will result in a negative outcome (e.g., feelings of rejection or embarrassment; Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Negative stereotyping also poses a threat as it serves as a basis for our expectations regarding an intergroup interaction. Therefore, if an individual believes an intergroup interaction will be negative and have negative consequences, then it is perceived as being a potential threat. I will discuss more concerning intergroup anxiety later in this chapter.



An intergroup romantic relationship has the potential to be perceived as a threat from all four types. This intimate form of intergroup contact can be perceived as a realistic threat to the group. This relationship has the potential to weaken the perceived status of the group. By intermixing with other groups it weakens the distinctiveness of the group. Intergroup romantic relationships may also be perceived as a posing symbolic threat to a group as they have the potential to alter the morals, values, beliefs, and attitudes of the group. Previous research has demonstrated that individuals who perceive intergroup interactions as threatening (e.g., threats to power, culture, group values, norms, negative outcomes) are less likely to engage in or approve of these relationships (e.g., Lalonde et al., 2007; Uskul et al., 2007). Therefore, as intergroup romantic relationships pose a threat to groups, this might explain why these interactions occur less frequently. However, research is needed to understand why, despite these perceived threats, an individual might choose engage in an intimate relationship with an out-group member.

**Social identity theory and self-categorization theory.** Other theories developed to better understand the psychological development of intergroup conflict include social identity theory and self-categorization theory (Tajfel & Turner, 1979; Turner, 1985). An important concept to consider when studying intergroup relations is an individual's social identity. Different from personal (e.g., personal attributes, "I am kind") and relational (e.g., close personal relationships; roles; "I am a mother") identity, social identity refers to individuals defining themselves and referring to who they are based on the social groups that they belong to (Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). Our identification as a member of a specific social group consists of having a set of value connotations that are associated with that membership (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). When certain groups are salient, behaviours and interactions may be guided by our social group identities (Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010).

Social identity theory posits that group memberships that we adhere to contribute to our overall understanding of ourselves (Tajfel & Turner, 1979). It is through our social identities that we maintain and enhance our self-esteem (Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). In order to maintain or alter our self-esteem, we make social comparisons between our own social group and other groups. It is through these social categorizations and comparisons that we examine the world in an in-group/out-group way (e.g., I belong to this group, they belong to a different group). When making comparisons between our own group and relevant out-groups, we give our group, and members of our own in-group, positive attributes, which enhance our own self-esteem (Hogg, 2000; Hogg, Abrams, Otten, & Hinkle, 2004). For example, an individual may think that members of their group are intelligent and if they value intelligence then this will make them feel good about themselves as they are a part of that group. One outcome of processing our social world this way is that individuals engage in ethnocentrism (Sumner, 1906). Ethnocentrism encompasses viewing your own in-group as the standard for how individuals and groups should behave. This creates in-group bias or in-group favouritism which results in giving preference towards, or favours, to other in-group members over out-group members (e.g., Brown, 2000). However, research has shown that while individuals may engage in in-group favouritism it does not mean that these individuals automatically have negative out-group attitudes (Brewer, 2002). Therefore, if individuals demonstrate ethnocentrism in their dating practices, it might not be because of negative attitudes towards out-groups.

In extension of social identity theory, the self-categorization theory focuses on our identification with particular social groups. Unlike, social identity theory, self-categorization theory gives attention to the cognitive features and functions of how we perceive ourselves in the processes of social identity (Turner, 1985). While social identity is our identity that emerges through our social groups, self-categorization is how we identify on a personal level

(while acknowledging other levels of identity [individual, subgroup, superordinate], Turner, 1985). However, even at the individual level, how we conceptualize who we are is based on making social comparisons. Taken together, social identity theory and self-categorization present a coherent understanding of the psychological basis of identity and provide predictions for intergroup interactions.

Specifically relating to intergroup romantic relationships, studies conducted to examine out-group dating preferences have revealed that the more an individual identifies with their in-group the less willing they are to date or marry someone from a different background (Liu et al, 1995). Brown and colleagues (2003) found that individuals who have a strong Jewish identity were less likely to date or marry non-Jewish individuals. Furthermore, Liu and colleagues (1995) found that individuals who had a strong social identity to their racial group demonstrated ethnocentrism in their racial dating preferences. Similar findings are replicated across several other studies (e.g., Hwang, 2013; Yancey, 2009). Individuals who are strongly attached, cognitively and emotionally, to their social groups may find their own group members as the most acceptable romantic partners. Thus, we should expect in-group favouritism in dating preferences.

To summarize, the interactions between two distinct groups is the study of intergroup relations. Conflict and negative interactions can arise between groups due to incompatible goals, perceptions of threat, and/or individuals having a strong in-group identity. Thus, it is imperative to look at the social groups in which people belong to and identify with in order to fully understand intergroup interactions such as engaging in an intimate relationship with an out-group member. Based on these theoretical frameworks, I will now discuss literature on how to create positive intergroup interactions which can positively influence our attitudes and behaviours towards different groups.

## **Intergroup contact**

There is a rich literature which has focused on how we might reduce conflict and create positive intergroup relations (e.g., Pettigrew, 1998; Sherif et al., 1961). As previously discussed concerning the realistic conflict theory and the conflict that arises between groups due to conflicting goals; superordinate goals were proposed as a method for reducing conflict (Sherif et al., 1961). Thus, having to cooperate with others can create a common in-group identity and therefore help reduce the in-group and out-group boundaries and in turn prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Gaertner, Dovidio, Anastasio, Bachman, & Rust, 1993). While this theory made great strides in the efforts to understand the reduction of intergroup conflict and the improvement of intergroup relations, previous research shows that intergroup conflict can arise naturally without the occurrence of conflicting goals or competition (for a review see Bohm, Rusch, & Baron, 2018). I now turn to literature on intergroup contact that demonstrates how intergroup contact reduces intergroup conflict.

**Intergroup contact theory.** Originally introduced as the contact hypothesis by Allport (1954), Intergroup Contact Theory is a pivotal perspective of intergroup relations. (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). This theory suggests that we can reduce instances of prejudice, stereotyping, and discrimination through contact with out-group individuals (Pettigrew, 1998). In order for the contact to produce a positive outcome, the contact needs to occur under optimal conditions. There are four conditions: 1) the groups must have equal status in the given situation; 2) both groups need to have common goals; 4) intergroup cooperation needs to occur; 5) and both parties need to abide and support the same authorities, laws, or customs (Allport, 1954).

There has been a plethora of empirical evidence showing that positive contact occurs under these four conditions (for a review see Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). However, other research has demonstrated that while situations in which the four conditions are being met are

optimal for reductions in prejudice and discrimination, they are not always necessary or equally important (Koschate & Dick, 2011). Prejudice and discrimination is reduced and positive intergroup attitudes are developed when only minimal conditions are being met (Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). More importantly, a body of research has demonstrated that intergroup contact influences interpersonal contact with an individual person but can also generalize to overall intergroup attitudes, including different contexts and groups (Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). This is important as it suggests that positive interactions with out-group members might foster willingness to engage in intergroup romantic relationships.

Perhaps the most distinct factor that would influence the occurrence of an intergroup romantic relationship is whether there is opportunity. If there is limited opportunity for contact between groups then there will be limited opportunities for intergroup romantic relationships to develop. The concept of propinquity (the importance of proximity in finding a romantic partner or friends) is relevant for both intra and intergroup intimate relationship development (e.g., McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). When individuals are in proximity to out-group members (e.g., multicultural cities, schools, workplaces, and diverse social networks) and are able to interact, then there are more instances of intergroup romantic relationship development (e.g., Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004). For example, Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee (2004) found that ethnic diversity in individual's social networks greatly increased the odds of having an interethnic romantic relationship.

**Intimacy, direct, extended, and quality in contact.** Furthermore, research has demonstrated that characteristics of contact, such as, intimacy, direct vs. extended contact, imagined contact, and quality of contact, are beneficial in intergroup interactions. Studies conducted examining the role of intimacy during intergroup interactions has added substantially to our understanding of intergroup contact theory and the conditions that support

positive outcomes (Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). In particular, research focusing on intergroup friendships has shown that this type of intergroup contact is more beneficial in enhancing positive intergroup attitudes than other forms of less intimate contact (e.g., acquaintance) (for review see Davies, Tropp, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). In addition, research has since demonstrated that even distal forms of contact (indirect or extended, not direct) can improve intergroup attitudes (e.g., Brown & Paterson, 2016; Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). For example, just knowing an in-group member who has an out-group friendship can help with prejudice and discrimination reduction towards that out-group and this extended contact may even help improve intergroup attitudes more so than direct contact (Wright et al., 1997). Research conducted by Wright and colleagues (1997) found that extended contact improved intergroup attitudes, and improved to an even greater effect when that contact was through intimate intergroup friendships (platonic).

Another fundamental aspect of the intergroup contact theory is the quality of contact (for a review see Davies et al., 2011). Specifically, Cameron and colleagues (2011) found that the indirect contact that individuals are exposed to is most effective when that contact is of high quality (close friendships). Regardless of the number of intergroup friends one might have, what is important in terms of producing the greatest positive impact on intergroup attitudes is the quality of the contact (positive meaningful interactions) (Cameron et al., 2011). Thus, if individuals are having quality contact with individuals from different groups then it is more likely that more intimate interactions will arise.

Previous research has documented links between having previous intergroup romantic relationships and willingness to have future relationships with out-group members. In particular, Levin, Taylor, and Caudle (2007) found that previous direct intergroup dating experience was associated with reduced in-group bias in partner selection and less intergroup

anxiety. More specifically, they found that individuals who have had an intergroup romantic relationship in college were more likely to date or marry an out-group member after college. Additionally, Uskul and colleagues (2007) demonstrated that Chinese Canadian individuals who had previously been in an intergroup romantic relationship were more open to interracial dating and had more positive intergroup attitudes than Chinese Canadian individuals who had not had previous intergroup dating experience. Furthermore, recent research found that individuals with indirect experience of intergroup dating (e.g., family member or friend in an intergroup romantic relationship) have more positive intergroup dating attitudes (Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015). Thus, these individuals might give approval and show an openness to intergroup relationships.

### **Other factors influencing intergroup contact**

**Intergroup anxiety.** One circumstance that both influences the occurrence and quality of intergroup contact is intergroup anxiety. Intergroup anxiety is a specific form of anxiety that arises when individuals believe that they will or are interacting with an out-group member and they believe that it will be a negative interaction (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Intergroup contact has shown to reduce intergroup anxiety (Stephan & Stephan, 1985). Therefore, under the right conditions and with having quality contact, the apprehension of interacting with out-group members is omitted, thus reducing the threat (e.g., Brown & Hewstone, 2005). This decrease in intergroup anxiety can then influence and enhance intergroup attitudes, this has shown to occur as a result of either direct or indirect contact (Turner, Hewstone, Voci, Paolini, & Christ, 2007). Specific to intimate relationships; individuals high on intergroup anxiety are thought to avoid having intergroup romantic relationships (e.g., Barlow, Louis, & Hewstone, 2009). However, having intergroup contact which removes intergroup anxiety (by removing the imagined threat) might increase the chances of intergroup romantic relationships.

Social approval and group **norms**. Perceptions of societal approval and group norms play a pivotal role in the occurrence of platonic intergroup friendships and of intergroup romantic relationships. If individuals perceive that it would be a violation of in-group norms to interact with out-group members then it is less likely that the interaction will occur (Abrams & Hogg, 1990). This is especially true if individuals have strong ties to their in-group. Individuals who are strongly connected to their in-group are more likely to adhere to groups norms and display similar intergroup behaviours and attitudes (Hogg, 2010). Individuals that violate a social norm risk being ridiculed, rejected, and excluded by their group (Pettigrew, 1991). Therefore, it is costly to individuals to violate group norms. Additionally, previous research has shown that out-group norms regarding intergroup contact can influence our imagined or actual interactions with out-group members (Cameron, Rutland, Hossain, & Petley, 2011; Cameron, Rutland, Turner, Holman-Nicolas, & Powell, 2011).

Perception of group norms also strongly influences the occurrence of intergroup romantic relationships are group norms (e.g., Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995). Similar to norms that are associated with engaging in less intimate relations with out-group members (e.g. friendships), there are group norms that guide intergroup romantic relationship behaviours and attitudes towards them. In particular, the practice of endogamy is a very powerful social norm that expects individuals to date and marry within their own groups (e.g., Rosenfeld, 2008). The norm of endogamy serves as a mechanism for maintaining the group unique characteristics (e.g., morals, values, and cultural traditions; Surra & Milardo, 1991). This practice was profoundly prevalent in the U.S., as before the 1960s it was illegal to marry outside of their own racial group (Browning, 1951). This law was in place until 1967 when the U.S. Supreme Court ruled it unconstitutional during the *Virginia vs Loving* case. While as a country this law was deemed unconstitutional, there



were a number of individual U.S. States that had legal sanctions that banned the practise. In fact, it was not until the year 2000 that the last ban on interracial intimacy was removed by the State of Alabama. However, while these laws may no longer exist, there are still unwritten social group norms that maintain this practise (for a discussion see Walt & Basson, 2015).

Furthermore, while the acceptance and approval of intergroup romantic relationships have improved over time, it has progressed slowly and statistical data demonstrate remaining opposition towards this type of intimate interaction (e.g., Wang, 2012). For an example of how attitudes have evolved, in the 1980s nearly 50% of the UK disapproved of interethnic marriages and now that number has decreased to 15%. (Matthews, 2012). There has been a similar increase in approval in the U.S.: 48% of Americans approved of interracial dating and marriage in the 1980s and that percentage increased to nearly 83% (Pew Center Research, 2007).

While the number of people who approve of intergroup romantic relationships has increased and indicates a change of intergroup relations, there are still individuals who do not approve of these relationships (Pew Research Center, 2007). Moreover, while individuals are expressing more positive and accepting views about intergroup romantic relationships, they still refrain from entering into one themselves. For example, Herman and Campbell (2012) found differences between global and personal attitudes towards dating or marrying out-group members. Specifically, this study revealed individuals' global attitudes did not match their personal attitudes as they were more accepting of other individuals in society dating outside of their race, but were not as willing or accepting to do so personally). Additionally, this study showed that individuals were far less willing to marry an out-group member than they were to date them. This may relate to social identity theory and ethnocentrism as individuals

are choosing in-group partners for themselves, but do not have negative attitudes towards out-groups. Therefore, they do not oppose to others' intergroup dating behaviours.

Furthermore, how society views intergroup romantic relationships is important in understanding the nature of these specific intergroup relations. Individuals' perceptions about the approval and support they might receive from society, peer groups, and family members are significant to their own attitudes and behaviours concerning intimate intergroup interactions (e.g., Kalmijn, 1998; Lehmiller & Agnew, 2006). Research examining the role of social support regarding intergroup romantic relationships has found that the approval or disapproval that individuals perceive from distant or close networks can hinder not only the development of an intergroup romantic relationship, but also influence the maintenance of an existing relationship and can be a factor that terminates such relationships (Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Lehmiller & Agnew, 2007). For example, one study found that a main hindrance for individuals developing a romantic relationship with an out-group individual was their perception that their family or friends would not approve of the relationship (Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). In support of this, Tsunokai and McGrath (2011) found that most parents would not approve of their children being in a relationship with someone from a different racial or ethnic background.

Other research has shown that there are both implicit and explicit prejudices against intergroup romantic relationships and have thus maintained a social stigma against these couples (McConnell & Leibold, 2001; Bonam & Shih, 2009). For example, these relationships are deemed as stressful, less committed, rebellious, less compatible, threatening, conflict-ridden (e.g. social marginalization, language barriers), and if married, prone to divorce (e.g., Bratter & King, 2008; Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001). Recent research has also shown that individuals can also feel disgusted by interracial relationships (Skinner & Hudac, 2017).

As a whole, intergroup contact theory suggests that positive direct or indirect contact as the most beneficial ways to reduce prejudice, discrimination, and stereotyping and improve intergroup relations (e.g., Pettigrew & Troop, 2006; Yzerbyt & Demoulin, 2010). In addition to the original four conditions first suggested by Allport (1954), the inclusion of intimacy in contact is also important and beneficial (Davies et al., 2011). Positive intergroup contact can also decrease intergroup anxiety, improve intergroup attitudes, and generalize across contexts. In addition to type of contact (direct or indirect), quality, norms, and intimacy; other researchers have also documented the importance of typicality and salience (Brewer & Miller, 1988), opportunity or mere exposure, familiarity (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006), and self-disclosure (Turner et al., 2007). Intergroup contact effects generalize best when members of the group are perceived to be typical and the group membership is salient. Therefore, when these conditions are satisfied we can predict higher instances of intergroup romance.

In summary, research that has focused on the interactions between groups and through empirical work and interventions have seen much change in society (e.g., Pettigrew & Troop, 2006). In particular, today there is significant increase in the opportunities (e.g., multicultural cities, international workplaces) that are available for intergroup contact whilst under the right conditions. This may be related to the increasing instances of intergroup friendships (e.g. Sigelman & Welch, 1993). Given our understanding of intergroup relations and the theoretical frameworks discussed, the increase of intergroup friendships indicates that the boundaries between groups are “loosening” and that relations between groups have greatly improved. However, the barriers between groups are still existent as evidenced by the scarcity of intergroup romantic relationships (e.g., U.S. Census, 2010). The next section of this chapter focuses on the literature surrounding other factors that enhance our understanding of the unique intergroup romantic relationship form of contact.

### **Intergroup romantic relationships**

While there are some parallels that can be drawn between intergroup platonic friendships and intimate romantic relationships (e.g., influenced by similar factors and influences intergroup attitudes and behaviours); intergroup romantic relationships are very different phenomenon. Intergroup romantic relationships may pose as a greater threat to group norms (e.g. endogamy) and might perhaps explain why intergroup romantic relationships occur less frequently than intergroup friendships. As such, intergroup romantic relationship give a unique opportunity to study intergroup relations, and as such is an important topic of study. As previously discussed, individuals show strong in-group bias when choosing an intimate romantic partner. This bias can be due to opportunities available, perceptions of threat, social identity, social approval and group norms. Beyond the investigation of factors that explain in-group bias, research in this area has also focused on other variables that influence willingness or participation in intergroup romantic relationships. For example, willingness to have intimate romantic interactions with out-group members has shown to vary on account of SES status, age, sex, location, and education. I now turn to literature that has explored these different factors of individual's willingness to engage in intimate romantic relationships with out-group members.

### **Demographic factors related to intergroup romantic relationships**

**Age.** Research has documented different patterns of attitudes and behaviours about dating and marriage preferences for out-group members across different age groups (e.g., Golebiowska, 2007; Poulin & Rutter, 2011). Attitudes that are most accepting and approving of intergroup romantic relationships comes from younger generations (Joyner & Kao, 2005; Poulin & Rutter, 2011). Poulin and Rutter (2011) found that nearly 90% of young adults from the millennial cohort approved of intergroup romantic relationships. However, other research has shown that adults over the age of 45 are slowly changing their attitudes and behaviours

about intergroup romantic relationships as individuals are showing more willingness to date an out-group member (Tsunokai & McGrath, 2011). Thus, while younger adults have the more positive attitudes about intergroup romantic relations, older adults are also positively changing their attitudes and behaviours.

**Sex.** Furthermore, research has shown differences in intergroup romantic relationship experience as a function of sex or gender. For example, research conducted in the U.S. specifically looking at openness to date interracially have found that while both men and women are open to dating someone from a different racial background, men generally tend to be the most open to dating interracially (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Herman and Campbell (2012) found that white men were more open to interracial dating and marrying than white women. Previous research has suggested that females may be less willing to date out-group members due to family pressures that males do not experience (e.g., Garcia et. al, 2012). In contrast, evidence from other research shows that women are just as willing, if not more compared to men, to have an intimate romantic relationship with an individual from a different background (e.g., Levin et al, 2007; Uskul, Lalonde, & Cheng, 2011). Thus, in some cases we find that men are more willing to date out-group members, while in other instances women are just as willing.

**Race.** Studies investigating willingness to date out-group members have also revealed that an individual's racial background can influence dating preference for out-group members (e.g., Clark-Ibanez, & Felmlee, 2004). However, evidence in this line of research is not always consistent. For example, some studies have shown that white Americans might be more open to dating interracially, while Black Americans are less open (Schoepflin, 2009), while others have revealed that minority group members are more willing to date across groups than majority group members (e.g., Mendelsohn et al., 2014).

Other research suggests that an interaction between gender and race may explain these conflicting findings (e.g., Garcia et al., 2012; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Johnson & Marini, 1998). For example, Garcia and colleagues (2012) found that Latino men and woman were both open to dating someone from a different racial background, but Latino men were less open to date interracially when considering dating a Black individual.

Additionally, one group that demonstrates positive attitudes and openness to dating out-group members are individuals who are multiracial (e.g., Bonam & Shih, 2009). Research conducted by Bonam and Shih (2009) found that in comparison with monoracial individuals, multiracial individuals are more comfortable with intimate relations with out-group individuals.

**Education.** In addition to age, gender, and race, research has also seen a trend of differences in attitudes and behaviours about intimate intergroup contact due to levels of education. Research suggests that individuals who have a higher educational background are more open to and approving of individuals engaging in intergroup romantic relationships. For example, Golebiowska (2007) found that individuals with a higher level of education have more open attitudes regarding out-group members. However, other research finds an interaction between race and education concerning willingness to engage in intimate relations with out-group members. For instance, research has shown that highly educated Black men who attend university are more open and willing to date interracially, while highly educated Black women show a decrease in willingness to date an out-group racial individuals (e.g., Schoepflin, 2009; Tsunokai & McGrath, 2011).

**Political orientations.** Another factor that has been shown to influence individuals' attitudes and behaviours towards intergroup romantic relationships is their political orientation. Research has found that individuals whose political beliefs fall closer to the conservative end of the spectrum tend to be less open and accepting of intergroup romantic

relationships (Eastwick, Richeson, Son, & Finkel, 2009; Golebiowska, 2007). For example, Eastwick and colleagues (2009) found that White individuals from the US who identified as conservative were less open to an interracial intimate relationship than White individuals who identified as liberal. However, this finding was opposite for Black individuals in that study (Eastwick et al., 2009). Therefore, similar to other factors that influence out-group attitudes and behaviours, political orientation might interact with race in how it shapes attitudes towards intergroup romantic relationships.

**Socio-economic status.** Furthermore, research has investigated the influence of socio-economic status on the likelihood of entering into an intergroup romantic relationship (e.g., Golebioska, 2007; Wang & Kao, 2007). Research conducted by Wang and Kao (2007) revealed that SES had little association with rates of interracial romantic relationships. However, they did find a trend in the types of individuals who were in an intergroup romantic relationship (Wang & Kao, 2007). For example, they found that when Black and Asians were in a romantic relationship with a White individual, their partner tended to have a lower SES than themselves (Wang & Kao, 2007). Golebioska (2007) found a negative correlation between income and attitudes towards interracial marriage.

**Other factors.** There are a number of additional factors that are linked to attitudes and behaviours regarding intergroup relationships. For example, research has shown that individuals who are high on social dominance orientation are less open to and have negative attitudes towards intergroup dating (e.g., Lalonde, Giguere, Fontaine, & Smith, 2007). Additionally, factors such as familiarity and similarity have also been associated the intergroup dating and marriage attitudes (e.g., Brooks & Neville, 2016; Byrne, 1971; McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). For example, Brooks and Neville (2016) found that individuals are more attracted to people who are similar to themselves and choose a romantic relationship with those individuals over out-group, less similar individuals.

Similarly linked, is the concept of familiarity as individuals are also more likely to date and marry those that they are familiar with and are less open to dating out-group members (e.g., Brooks & Neville, 2016; Norton, Frost, & Ariely, 2007).

Furthermore, research has shown that individuals who have strong religious beliefs are less open and have negative attitudes towards intergroup relationships (e.g., Golebiowska, 2007). Additionally, research has also documented the importance of physical attractiveness when considering an intergroup romantic relationship (e.g., Allen, 1976; Murstein, Merighi, & Malloy, 2001) as the more attractive the out-group individual the more likely an individual will engage in the relationship (e.g., exchange theory).

**Relationship length.** Research has also demonstrated that individuals alter their willingness to engage in intergroup intimate relationships based on the perception of how long the relationship will last or their expectations about the type of relationship it will become (e.g., McClintock, 2010). For example, research conducted with university students has shown that students were more willing to have an intimate relationship with an out-group individual when they perceived the relationship to just be a “hook-up” or a low commitment relationship (McClintock, 2010). This type of relationship may pose less of a risk as it could be hidden from social networks. Whereas the students perceiving the relationship to potentially develop into a long-term relationship or marriage may want to actively choose partners from their same background as they cannot avoid disclosing it to social networks.

To reiterate, intergroup romantic relationships are a unique form of intergroup contact. As widespread globalization provides greater opportunities for individuals to form relationships with out-group members, researchers should continue to explore whether or not the social distance between groups has declined and gives an indication of improved intergroup relations. There are several intergroup conflict theories (as discussed in this chapter) that provide a framework for understanding why there may be reduced contact



between groups. There are also theories that provide insight to how contact might increase between groups. However, both theories that explain conflict and reduction of conflict were developed to understand less intimate forms of contact, and as such, we cannot assume that these theories work the same in understanding the occurrence and outcomes of intergroup romantic relationships. Therefore, we should use them as frameworks for understanding intimate intergroup relationships rather than definitive knowledge.

As we have obtained from the literature, there are a number of factors that influence an individual's willingness to date out-group members. Research exploring out-group dating preferences have shown that willingness to date out-group members can function as on account of SES status, age, sex, location, education, and even previous contact experience. Continued focus on such factors is a sensible direction for further investigation, as despite the circumstances that may hinder these relationships (e.g., norms, perceptions of threat), there are still occurring (Office for National Statistics, 2011; Pew Research Center, 2015).

While there is research on preferences for romantic relationships with someone from one's own social group or someone from an outgroup, there is limited research that explores whether or not attitudes towards intergroup dating change as a function of specific type of out-group (racial/cultural/ethnic, religious, or SES). Focusing on different types of out-groups can provide important insight into indication of distance in social relations between specific kinds of backgrounds. Research is also limited in terms of understanding of how factors shaping intergroup romantic relationships might operate similarly or differently across groups and or in other cultural contexts. Finally, when we consider the attitudes people hold about intergroup romantic relationships our understanding is limited to the context of interracial romantic relationships (e.g., Black and Asian couple combination). We do not know how these judgments or attitudes may vary across different types of intergroup romantic relationships (interracial, interethnic, intercultural, interfaith, interclass). Additionally, there

seems to be a gap in the literature that explains identity consequences of individuals engaging in and intergroup romantic relationship. The current research aims to fill some of these important gaps in the literature.

### **Aims of the thesis**

The aim of this thesis is to further explore and investigate intergroup contact in the form of intergroup romantic relationships. More specifically, I will provide a better understanding and fill the gap in the intergroup romantic relationship literature about out-group dating preferences. Chapter 2 examines the willingness to date out-group race/culture/ethnic, religious, and socio-economic status members while investigating the roles of social approval, social identity, and previous dating experience using a cross-cultural (US  $n = 245$ , UK  $n = 227$ , India  $n = 220$ ) correlational design. Chapter 3, across two correlational studies (Study 2,  $n = 241$ ; Study 3,  $n = 235$ ), examines social judgments across different intergroup romantic relationships (interethnic, interreligious, interSES).

While Chapters 2 and 3 focuses on bystander judgements and willingness to date different types of out-group members, the rest of the thesis focuses specifically on individuals currently in intercultural romantic relationships and the outcomes of being in such relationships. Chapter 4 provides an overview of the literature on biculturalism and acculturation. Chapter 5, using a correlational design, investigates whether individuals ( $n = 196$ ) can develop a bicultural identity in and intercultural romantic relationship and whether or not they exhibit outcomes associated with biculturalism.

This thesis contributes to the intergroup relations literature on intimate intergroup contact, adds to the importance of conducting cross-cultural research, and in a novel way expands the literature on biculturalism in a unique context. This research has important implications for understanding the complex experience surrounding intergroup romantic relationships.

## Chapter 2

### Exploring Out-Group Dating Preferences

Continuous increase in immigration and globalization led many areas across the globe to become populated by individuals from different racial, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. One notable consequence of these diverse social environments is increasing number of intergroup interactions. The expansive line of research concerning intergroup relations demonstrates that intergroup interactions generally reduce prejudice and improve intergroup attitudes, when occurring under the right conditions (Allport, 1954; Davies, Troop, Aron, Pettigrew, & Wright, 2011). One unique way of understanding whether intergroup relations have improved is to focus on a more intimate type of interaction, namely intergroup romantic relationships. In the current study, I examine factors that shape intergroup dating attitudes in the context of dating across different race/culture/ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds in the UK, the US, and India.

According to the India Human Development survey (IHDS), in 1981, 3.5% of all marriages in India involved individuals who reported belonging to different castes within the country's stratified system which divides individuals into hierarchical groups and emphasizes endogamy (marrying individuals from one's ingroup). In 2005, this figure rose to 6.1%. Survey reports from 2011 show a similar percentage, 5.4% (IHDS, 2011; Desai & Vanneman, 2017). In 2001, 7% of couples living together in England and Wales were interethnic which rose to 9% in 2011 (Office for National Statistics, 2014). The 2010 U.S. Census report revealed that around 10% of all marriages in the U.S. were interracial showing an increase from 7% in 2000 (Lofquist, Lugalia, O'Connell, & Feliz, 2012; Simmons & O'Connell, 2003). Statistics from 2015 reveal that 17% of newlyweds in the U.S. are interracial (Livingston & Brown, 2017). This increase in intergroup marriages might be a

result of general improvement in intergroup relations. However, for example, statistically, given the make-up of the U.S. population in 2000, researchers suggested that, under random matching, 44% of all marriages should have been interracial (Fisman, Iyengar, Kamenica, & Simonson, 2008). Given that the demographic make-up of the U.S. is even more diverse since 2000, we should expect and even a greater percentage of intergroup marriages (United States Census Bureau, 2017). Thus, individuals still choose in-group members at a far greater rate than out-group members as marriage partners (Lofquist et al., 2012; Office for National Statistics, 2014). This has fuelled a plethora of studies on intergroup romantic relationships and how they compare to intragroup romantic relationships (e.g., Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Lui, Campbell & Condie, 1995; Schoepflin, 2009).

One explanation that was put forward as to why intergroup romantic relationships are still low in frequency concerns limited opportunities for intergroup dating and marriage to develop (Carol & Teney, 2015). This argument, however, is unlikely to be the main driver, especially in contexts such as the U.S., U.K., or India where the population make-up is heavily heterogeneous in terms of individuals social group memberships. In addition, with online dating becoming a popular outlet for meeting others (e.g., Alhabash, Hales, Baek, & Oh, 2014; Robnett & Feliciano, 2011), even individuals from more homogeneous or resegregated environments have the opportunity to form romantic relationships with out-group members (Ramiah, Schmid, Hewstone, & Floe, 2014).

Research has alluded to other explanations for why individuals may choose to be romantically involved with an ingroup member rather than an out-group member, including the principle of homophily, which states that there is a higher rate of intragroup interactions than intergroup interactions (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, & Cook, 2001). Another reason is the motivation to maintain kinships and alliances through endogamy (e.g., Dwyer, 2000). A further potential reason may be intergroup anxiety which is experienced when individuals

anticipate interacting or actually interact with an out-group member; this anxiety can prevent or hinder intergroup interactions (Stephan, 2014). Other factors include social norms (e.g., Allport, 1954; Pettigrew & Troop, 2006) and physical attractiveness (e.g. Murstein, Merighi, & Malloy, 2001). For example, Fisman and colleagues (2008) examined racial preferences in dating through a speed dating experiment and found that these preferences were influenced by the physical attractiveness of the potential partner. When the potential out-group partner was rated as less attractive, that partner was preferred less as a future partner (Fisman et al., 2008). Excluding arranged marriages, dating is the starting point before marriage for many; therefore, investigating out-group dating preferences is a reasonable starting point to investigate further why intergroup marriages are less frequent. As in marriages, research conducted on intergroup dating preferences point to in-group bias concerning dating preferences. For example, Yancey (2009) found that 98% of White Americans reported willingness to date other White Americans, but only 49% of White Americans reported willingness to date Black Americans, 59% Asian Americans, and 61% Hispanic Americans.

The goal of the current study was to focus on out-group dating preferences to enhance our understanding of the factors that shape views concerning intergroup romantic relationships in different intergroup contexts. Specifically, I focused on the role of social psychological factors (social approval, social identity, past dating experience) that have been previously associated with dating preferences. I examined the role of these factors in relation to romantic relationships occurring across different types of out-groups, namely for dating across racial/cultural/ethnic boundaries, religious groups, and socio-economic status. I examined this question with samples recruited in the United Kingdom, the United States, and India, representing three cultural contexts with heterogenous group compositions.

### **Out-group categories and countries**

Within social psychology, past research on out-group dating preferences and relevant predictors has paid attention primarily to one type of out-group background, namely preferences for dating individuals from racial, cultural, or ethnic outgroups. It is from this specific context that many researchers have drawn conclusions regarding our understanding about the social psychological factors that influence out-group dating preferences in general. In the current research, I asked whether these social psychological factors (social approval, social identity, previous dating experience) play an equally important role across different out-group categories. This is an important question to consider as these are different categories that represent different aspects of an individual's character. For example, the approval one receives from society may be an important factor when considering dating an individual from a different racial background because race is a visible physical characteristic, whereas it may not be as important if an individual were to date an out-group religious or socio-economic status member as these characteristics are not always easily visible. Thus, this study goes beyond existing research to examine the role of commonly studied social psychological factors in the context of intergroup dating preferences across three different types of out-groups: race/culture/ethnicity, religion, socio-economic status.

Furthermore, most research on intergroup dating preferences originates from North America. Accumulated cross-cultural evidence has shown that psychological findings do not always replicate in other countries or cultural contexts (for a review see Henrich, Heine & Norenzayan, 2010). To increase the diversity in this area of research and test the generalizability of findings observed in one cultural context to other cultural contexts, I investigated out-group dating preferences in samples drawn from three different countries (UK, US, India). I chose these countries because this three-way comparison makes it possible to examine dating preferences in countries that vary in values (e.g., individualism/collectivism; power distance) which may impact attitudes and behaviors in

relation to selecting a potential romantic partner (e.g., Hiew, Halford, Van De Vijver, & Liu, 2015; Pepping, Taylor, Koh, & Halford, 2017). Additionally, these countries provide ample opportunities for intergroup contact as they host many different racial and ethnic, religious (e.g., Hindu, Buddhist, Christian, Muslim), and socio-economic status (e.g., different castes and social classes) groups that live side by side (notably so in metropolitan areas such as London, New York, Mumbai).

Moreover, these countries have unique histories that influence intergroup relations. For example, the US has a history of slavery (which was not abolished until 1865), anti-miscegenation laws (that lasted until 1967, making it illegal to marry outside of your own race) (Browning, 1951), and Jim Crow segregation laws (that were enforced until 1965). This particular racial hierarchical system in the US might shape individuals' willingness to date out-group racial members, but may not impact their willingness to date religious out-group members. The UK also has a history of slavery, and a long history of religious divide, particularly between Protestants and Catholics and social class divide that is still relevant today (e.g., Cunningham & Savage, 2015). The US and the UK also have different patterns of immigration (e.g., Mexican immigrants in the US) (Waters, 2014). These different circumstances make it plausible, for example, that individuals may be more willing to date out-group members from different racial/ethnic groups, but not from a different social class depending on the country they live in. India has a well-known distinct divide between social classes (caste system) (e.g., Olcott, 1944; Woodburne, 1922) and hosts numerous groups of different religious/linguistic/cultural backgrounds. Finally, India has a tradition of arranged marriages. However, this tradition is slowly changing and Indian young adults are now increasingly having romantic relationships before marriage (Alexander, Garda, Kanade, Jejeebhoy & Ganatra, 2006; Gala & Kapadia, 2014; Ganth & Kadiravan, 2017) and with individuals from different backgrounds (e.g., Heitmeyer, 2016). It is therefore plausible that

historical factors that have shaped intergroup relations differently in these three countries might also play differential roles in shaping intergroup dating attitudes. To examine out-group dating preferences in different cultural backgrounds, I collected data from these three different settings on preference for dating individuals from different racial/cultural/ethnic, religious, and socio-economic status backgrounds.

### **Social psychological factors and out-group dating preferences**

Different social psychological factors have been examined in relation to out-group dating preferences including social approval, self-esteem, social identity, status, physical attractiveness, dating experience, religion, intergroup attitudes, and intergroup anxiety (e.g., Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003; Harper & Yeung, 2015; Levin et al., 2007; Liu, Campbell, & Condie, 1995; Perry, 2013; Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998). In this study, I investigate self- (social identity) and other-related (social approval) social psychological factors, as well as those that concern past personal and other-related experience with intergroup dating experience (previous intergroup direct dating experience and the indirect experience of having known others in an intergroup romantic relationship). These factors have been shown to play an important role in shaping outgroup dating attitudes, however this literature is almost exclusively limited to dating across cultural, racial or ethnic boundaries. Thus, it is yet to be investigated if these factors play a similar or different role in the context of dating across other group boundaries. I turn to each of these factors below.

**Social approval.** Social approval of intergroup romantic relationships can be defined as the positive attitudes held by that of family members, friends, community, and the overarching society towards intergroup romantic relationships (Bell & Hastings, 2015). Past studies have demonstrated a strong link between social approval and out-group dating preferences (e.g., Liu et al., 1995; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995; Yahya & Boag, 2014). Level of social approval has been shown to be associated with the initiation, maintenance,



and termination of intergroup romantic relationships (e.g., Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Lehmiller, Graziano, & VanderDrift, 2014; Miller, Olson, & Fazio, 2004; Sinclair, Felmlee, Sprecher, & Wright, 2015; Tillman & Miller, 2017; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995; West, Lowe, & Marsden, 2017). Individuals commonly express that social network aversion to intergroup romantic relationships is one of the leading hindrances to engaging in such a relationship (Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Liu et al., 1995; Remennick, 2005; Tucker & Mitchell-Kernan, 1995). Additionally, previous research has shown that views on intergroup dating are predicted by family allocentrism (connectedness to family) (Uskul et al., 2007). Thus, social approval, whether from close personal relationships such as family members or approval from society in general, plays an important role in intergroup dating preferences.

One reason for the important role played by social approval in intergroup dating preferences is that social approval is profoundly tied to social norms. For example, endogamy is a practice that expects individuals to only date and marry individuals from their own in-groups. This is particularly prevalent in countries such as India, which follows a caste system and has traditionally endorsed arranged marriages (e.g., Gala & Kapadia, 2014). This social norm remains prevalent still today for several reasons. One reason is that dating or marrying an individual outside of one's in-group is believed to threaten family and cultural traditions and even cultural identity (Carol & Teney, 2015; Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Uskul, Lalonde, & Konanur, 2011; Yahya & Boag, 2014). Thus, families may approve or not approve of a partner depending on whether they believe that the chosen partner would contribute to or disrupt the continuation of family traditions. Therefore, the endogamy norm works as a mechanism to protect valued characteristics of a group and its members, making social approval an important factor when investigating intergroup romantic relationships.

**Social identity.** Previous literature in intergroup relations in general has recognised the role of social identity and its connection to social interactions (Allport, 1954; Brewer & Pierce, 2005; Hogg, Abrams, & Brewer, 2017). Social identity refers to an individual's sense of belonging in the world through their social groups (Hornsey, 2008; Tajel & Turner, 1979). A component of having important connections to one's social group is that it compels individuals to create an in-group/out-group categorization of the world. This can lead individuals to view their own social groups as superior to other groups and use their group as a comparison marker for other groups (e.g., Hornsey, 2008; Reid & Hogg, 2005).

Researchers have shown that social identity is relevant for out-group dating preferences (Brown et al., 2003; Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998). For example, Brown and colleagues (2003) found that the more Jewish students identified as being Jewish, the stronger their preference was for dating Jewish individuals over non-Jewish individuals and awarded the potential Jewish (vs. non-Jewish) partners more positive evaluations. Liu and colleagues (1995) also found that individuals who identified more with their ethnic group had a higher dating preference for other in-group ethnic members than other ethnic out-group members. Similarly, research has shown that individuals who do not hold strong ethnic group identifications are more likely to date interracially in college (Levin et al., 2007). Additional research has found that among second-generation immigrants, stronger identification with the mainstream culture was associated with more positive views on intergroup romantic relationships (Uskul, Lalonde, & Konanur, 2011; Uskul et al., 2007). Furthermore, in terms of religious identities, Perry (2013) found that when compared with non-Christians, Protestants were the less likely to be involved in an intergroup romantic relationship.

**Direct and indirect intergroup dating experience.** The contact hypothesis suggests that having contact with out-group members can serve to reduce prejudice and improve intergroup attitudes (Allport, 1954; Pettigrew, 1998; Pettigrew & Tropp, 2006). For example,

individuals' previous personal intergroup dating experience is associated with a decrease of intergroup anxiety and in-group bias (Levin et al., 2007). In addition, Uskul and colleagues (2007) found that when compared to European Canadians, Chinese Canadians who have previously been in an intergroup romantic relationship showed more openness and positive attitudes towards intergroup dating than those who have not (Uskul, Lalonde, & Cheng, 2007). Moreover, research has shown that experiencing intergroup dating in college can lead to intergroup dating and marriage after college (Levin et al., 2007).

The extended contact hypothesis asserts that intergroup attitudes can be altered in a positive manner when an individual has knowledge of other in-group members having relationships with out-group members (e.g., Wright, Aron, McLaughlin-Volpe, & Ropp, 1997). For example, Paterson, Turner, and Conner (2015) found that having extended contact by knowing an individual in an intergroup romantic relationship resulted in greater perceived social acceptance and improved attitudes towards mixed group romantic relationships. Thus, both direct and indirect contact are important factors to account for in examining intergroup romantic relationships.

Thus, the goal of the current study was to expand the current understanding of out-group dating preferences by examining whether a) out-group dating preferences vary across different out-group backgrounds and countries and b) the predictive power of factors (social approval, social identity, past dating experiences) that have previously been linked with out-group dating preferences varies across different out-group backgrounds and in different countries/cultural contexts. Comparisons across countries are exploratory and specific hypotheses were not made. However, based on past research on the role of different social psychological factors in attitudes towards intergroup romantic relationships, in the current study I tested the following predictions:

**H1:** Social approval will be positively associated with out-group dating preferences.

**H2:** Strength of social identity (defined as in-group identity) will be negatively associated with out-group dating preferences.

**H3:** Previous dating contact experience will be positively associated with out-group dating preferences.

**H4:** Previous indirect contact will be positively associated with out-group dating preferences.

## Method

### Participants

I recruited 271 participants (227 women) ( $M_{age} = 19.78$ ,  $SD = 3.44$ ) from an undergraduate participant pool at a UK university, 245 participants in the US (125 women,  $M_{age} = 35.50$ ,  $SD = 11.1$ ) and 220 participants in India (64 women,  $M_{age} = 30.28$ ,  $SD = 7.34$ ) using Amazon Mechanical Turk (Mturk; final sample sizes. Participants recruited in the UK received course credit and participants from the US and India received \$.50 for their participation (see Tables 5, 6, 7 for demographic characteristics per sample). Participants were excluded ( $n = 96$ ) due to completing less than 70% the questionnaire or failing attention checks.

### Procedure and measures

After giving consent, participants filled out an online questionnaire presented to them as a study on the self, others, and dating. The questionnaire included several measures assessing dating partner preferences, social identity, and social approval. Participants also responded to questions regarding their own out-group dating experience (direct and indirect) as well as several demographic questions. Descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients for all measures per sample are presented in Table 1.

**Dating preferences.** Dating preferences were measured using a modified version of a scale by Liu and colleagues (1995). The first two questions in the scale included normative items asking participants to rate the appropriateness of dating someone and then marrying

someone from a different racial/ethnic/cultural, religious, or socio-economic status group (“Everything else being equal, how appropriate a dating partner would you consider someone who is of a different racial/cultural/ethnic background than of your own”; “Everything else being equal, how appropriate a marriage partner would you consider someone who is of a different socio-economic status background than of your own”). The third question asked participants to indicate their likelihood of dating someone from the three different backgrounds. Items were assessed using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “not at all appropriate” to 7 “extremely appropriate” (for the first two items) and 1 “not at all likely” to 7 “extremely likely” (for the last item) and were averaged to create an index for each type of dating preference, with higher mean scores indicating higher appropriateness and likelihood.

**Social approval.** Participants then completed the social approval scale separately for each out-group target, using a 7-point Likert scale ranging from 1 “extremely negative” to 7 “extremely positive”. Each scale included three items, with the first two items asking participants to rate the approval they would receive from friends and family if they were dating a partner from a different background (e.g., “How do you think your parents would feel about your dating someone who is from a different socio-economic status than of your own?”). The third item asked participants to rate the approval they would receive from the friends and family of the partner (“How do think the parents and friends of a partner who has different religious beliefs would feel about your dating?”). Items were averaged to create an index for each type of dating preference, with higher mean scores indicating higher perceived social approval.

**Dating experience.** Next, participants were asked to respond to six questions pertaining to their past dating experience. They responded with yes/no to whether they have ever dated someone who was of a different out-group background than their own. This question was asked for each out-group category (racial/cultural/ethnic, religious, socio-

economic status). For each background, participants were also asked to indicate whether they know anyone personally who has dated someone who was of a different out-group (yes/no) (see Table 2 for frequencies).

**Social identity.** The 12-item social identity scale (Cameron, 2004) was used to assess three facets of social identity: centrality, in-group affect, and in group ties. The scale was adapted to measure the strength of participant's social identity for each group membership: racial/cultural/ethnic; religious; and socio-economic status (e.g. "In general, I'm glad to be a part of my racial/cultural/ethnic group") (1: "strongly disagree" to 7: "strongly agree"). Several items were reverse scored and higher values indicate stronger identification (see Table 1 for reliability coefficients).<sup>1</sup>

## Results

Information on descriptive statistics and reliability coefficients are presented in Table 1. Table 2 lists the frequencies concerning participants previous dating experiences (see supplementary material for an overview of demographic characteristics). Comparing the three samples as a function of age and gender revealed a significant difference in gender,  $\chi^2(2) = 157.29, p < .001$ , and age,  $F(2, 733) = 267.79, p < .001$ .

First, to examine whether out-group dating preferences varied as a function of type of out-group (race/culture/ethnicity; religious, SES) and country (UK, US, India), I conducted a repeated measures ANOVA with out-group dating preference scores as the within subject variable and country as the between-subjects variable. This analysis revealed a significant

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<sup>1</sup> For exploratory purposes, I also included a 21-item measure for general disgust sensitivity that captured moral, sexual, and pathogen disgust (Tybur, Lieberman, & Griskevicius, 2009). For the purposes of this chapter I did not include results associated with this measure and discuss it any further.

main effect of type of out-group background,  $F(1.92, 732) = 86.56, p < .001, \eta^2 = .11$ , and a significant out-group dating preferences X country interaction,  $F(3.84, 1406.41) = 16.43, p < .001, \eta^2 = .04$ . The main effect of country was not significant,  $F(2, 733) = 2.56, p = .08, \eta^2 = .01$ .

Table 1

*Descriptive Statistics and Reliability Coefficients of Key Variables for the Total Sample*

Independent Variables	Race/Culture/Ethnic <i>M (SD),<math>\alpha</math></i>	Religious <i>M (SD),<math>\alpha</math></i>	Socio-Economic Status <i>M (SD),<math>\alpha</math></i>
<b>Total Sample</b>			
Social Identity (Combined)	4.55 (0.91) .82	4.46 (0.97) .83	4.37 (0.75) .71
Centrality	3.79 (1.27) .73	3.62 (1.38) .75	3.69 (1.13) .62
In group Affect	5.09 (1.19) .75	5.04 (1.23) .73	4.73 (1.27) .77
In group Ties	4.57 (1.14) .69	4.41 (1.19) .69	4.49 (1.04) .63
Social Approval (Combined)	4.39 (1.34) .81	4.18 (1.33) .79	4.55 (1.25) .80
Parents	4.10 (1.74)	3.90 (1.72)	4.39 (1.56)
Friends	4.88 (1.47)	4.69 (1.48)	4.86 (1.39)
Partner Parents and Friends	4.19 (1.49)	3.96 (1.56)	4.39 (1.46)
<b>United Kingdom</b>			
Social Identity (Combined)	4.69 (0.93)	4.35 (0.98)	4.44 (0.73)
Centrality	3.76 (1.45)	3.29 (1.40)	3.49 (1.18)
In group Affect	5.43 (1.08)	5.21 (1.20)	5.05 (1.19)
In group Ties	4.71 (1.15)	4.26 (1.12)	4.58 (0.95)
Social Approval (Combined)	4.69 (1.22)	4.22 (1.33)	4.65 (1.16)
Parents	4.56 (1.64)	3.94 (1.74)	4.56 (1.45)
Friends	5.15 (1.30)	4.73 (1.46)	4.89 (1.38)
Partner Parents and Friends	4.36 (1.38)	3.98 (1.46)	4.49 (1.29)
<b>United States</b>			
Social Identity (Combined)	4.59 (0.96)	4.69 (1.01)	4.34 (0.79)
Centrality	3.74 (1.36)	3.75 (1.59)	3.71 (1.25)
In group Affect	5.24 (1.08)	5.31 (1.18)	4.56 (1.49)
In group Ties	4.53 (1.25)	4.57 (1.33)	4.45 (1.21)
Social Approval (Combined)	4.25 (1.39)	4.21 (1.27)	4.59 (1.26)
Parents	3.91 (1.77)	4.04 (1.59)	4.54 (1.52)
Friends	4.78 (1.56)	4.67 (1.44)	4.86 (1.37)
Partner Parents and Friends	4.07 (1.53)	3.92 (1.55)	4.38 (1.52)
<b>India</b>			
Social Identity (Combined)	4.34 (0.79)	4.33 (0.85)	4.31 (0.98)
Centrality	3.90 (0.87)	3.89 (0.98)	3.89 (0.88)
In group Affect	4.53 (1.13)	4.53 (1.18)	4.52 (1.00)
In group Ties	4.44 (0.99)	4.41 (1.06)	4.41 (0.93)
Social Approval (Combined)	4.18 (1.35)	4.11 (1.42)	4.37 (1.33)
Parents	3.76 (1.74)	3.69 (1.82)	3.99 (1.72)
Friends	4.67 (1.51)	4.66 (1.54)	4.83 (1.41)
Partner Parents and Friends	4.11 (1.82)	3.97 (1.69)	4.28 (1.58)
<b>Dependent Variables Dating Preference</b>			
Total	4.98 (1.36) .88	4.49 (1.38) .85	5.03 (1.19) .84
UK	5.11 (1.25)	4.34 (1.34)	5.01 (1.20)
US	5.06 (1.56)	4.51 (1.51)	5.29 (1.20)
India	4.72 (1.23)	4.66 (1.26)	4.77 (1.23)

Table 2

*Dating Experience Frequencies*

	Total	UK	US	India
	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
<b>Race/culture/Ethnicity</b>				
Direct contact	53%	51%	62%	47%
Indirect contact	84%	91%	87%	73%
<b>Religious</b>				
Direct contact	59%	42%	77%	60%
Indirect contact	78%	76%	85%	74%
<b>SES</b>				
Direct contact	63%	57%	72%	61%
Indirect contact	79%	80%	82%	75%

Note. Frequencies out of a 100 percent.



Table 3

*Correlations Between Out-Group Predictor and Outcome Variables for the Entire Sample*

<b>Race/Culture/Ethnicity</b>					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. DP					
2. SA	.60***				
3. SI	-.08**	-.004			
4. Dated	.25***	.15***	-.05		
5. Known	.213***	.138***	.104**	.266**	-
<b>Religious</b>					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. DP					
2. SA	.62***				
3. SI	-.25***	-.17***			
4. Dated	.24***	.17***	-.02		
5. Known	.09**	.05	.05	.33***	-
<b>Socio-Economic Status</b>					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. DP					
2. SA	.51***				
3. SI	-.12***	-.01			
4. Dated	.19***	.15***	-.03		
5. Known	.18***	.12**	.03	.35***	-

*Note.* \*  $p < .10$ , \*\*  $p < .05$ , \*\*\*  $p < .001$ . DP = dating preference, SA = social approval, SI = social identity, Dated = previously dated out-group member, Known = have known someone who has dated an out-group member.

Pairwise comparisons used to unfold the main effect of type of out-group background revealed that dating preference for religious out-group targets ( $M = 4.49$ ,  $SD = 1.38$ ) was significantly lower than dating preference for racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members ( $M = 4.98$ ,  $SD = 1.36$ ),  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .36$ , 95% CI [.36, .58] and dating preference for SES out-group members ( $M = 5.03$ ,  $SD = 1.19$ ),  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .42$ , 95% CI [-.63, -.41].

Dating preferences for racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members did not differ significantly from dating preferences for SES out-group members ( $p = .12$ ).

Unfolding the out-group dating preferences X country interaction effect using simple effects analysis revealed differences between countries in race/culture/ethnic out-group dating preference scores: participants from India had a significantly lower preference ( $M = 4.72$ ,  $SD = 1.23$ ) than did participants from the UK ( $M = 5.11$ ,  $SD = 1.25$ ) ( $p = .002$ , Cohen's  $d = .31$ , 95% CI [-.62, -.14]) and the USA ( $M = 5.06$ ,  $SD = 1.56$ ) ( $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .24$ , 95% CI [-.59, -.09]); scores did not significantly differ between participants from the UK and the US ( $p = .72$ ). Religious out-group dating preference was significantly lower in the UK sample ( $M = 4.34$ ,  $SD = 1.34$ ) than in the Indian sample ( $M = 4.66$ ,  $SD = 1.26$ ) ( $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .25$ , 95% CI [-.57, -.08]); there was not a significant difference between participants from the UK and the US ( $p = .72$ ) or between participants from the US and India ( $p = .24$ ). Finally, participants from India scored lower on SES out-group dating preferences ( $M = 4.77$ ,  $SD = 1.13$ ) than did participants from the USA ( $M = 5.29$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) ( $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .45$ , 95% CI [-.73, -.29]), and participants from the UK ( $M = 5.01$ ,  $SD = 1.20$ ) ( $p = .03$ , Cohen's  $d = .21$ , 95% CI [-.45, -.03]). Participants from the USA had a significantly higher dating preference for out-group SES members than did participants from the UK ( $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .23$ , 95% CI [.07, .48]).

Concerning out-group dating preferences within each country, results revealed that UK participants had a significantly lower preference for dating religious out-group members than dating SES out-group members ( $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-.81, -.52]) and race/culture/ethnic out-group members ( $p < .001$ , 95% CI [-.91, -.62]). They did not differ in their preference for dating race/culture/ethnic or SES out-group members ( $p = .13$ ). In the US sample, preference for dating SES out-group members was significantly higher than preference for dating race/culture/ethnic out-group members ( $p = .001$ , 95% CI [-.35, -.09]) and for religious out-

group members ( $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.62, .92]). Preference for dating individuals from another race/culture/ethnic out-group was also significantly higher than preference for dating religious out-group members ( $p < .001$ , 95% CI [.39, .70]). India participants did not differ significantly between their dating preferences across the three types of out-groups.

Controlling for age and gender in the above analysis did not change the pattern of results, with the exception that the main effect of out-group background became marginally significant,  $F(1.92, 730) = 2.53$ ,  $p = .08$ ,  $\eta^2 = .003$ .

### **Predictors of out-group dating preferences for total sample**

I conducted separate multiple regression analyses for each dependent measure (preference for dating racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members, religious out-group members and SES out-group members) to examine the predictive power of social approval and social identity, country, and previous direct and indirect dating experience while controlling for age and gender.

**Preference for dating racial/cultural/ethnic out-group member.** Together predictors explained 41% of the variance in preference for dating racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members,  $F(8, 724) = 63.04$ ,  $p < .001$ . Having previously dated a racial/cultural/ethnic out-group member ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $t(724) = 4.07$ ,  $p < .001$ ), perceptions of social approval ( $\beta = .58$ ,  $t(724) = 19.28$ ,  $p < .001$ ), and knowing someone who previously dated a racial/cultural/ethnic out-group member ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $t(724) = 3.39$ ,  $p = .001$ ) significantly predicted more positive dating preference for racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members. Stronger in-group identity ( $\beta = -.12$ ,  $t(724) = -2.74$ ,  $p = .01$ ) predicted lower levels of preference for dating racial/cultural/ethnic out-group members. Gender, age, and cultural group ( $p > .08$ ) did not emerge as significant predictors.

**Preference for dating religious out-group member.** Together predictors explained 43% of the variance in preference for dating religious out-group partners,  $F(8, 724) = 71.17$ ,

$p < .001$ . Social approval ( $\beta = .60, t(724) = 20.09, p < .001$ ) and previous dating experience ( $\beta = .31, t(724) = 3.48, p = .001$ ) were significant positive predictors of preference for dating religious out-group members, whereas social identity ( $\beta = -.22, t(724) = -5.20, p < .001$ ) was a negative predictor. Gender also emerged as a significant predictor, where men had a higher dating preference than women ( $\beta = .18, t(724) = 2.02, p = .04$ ). However, age, country, and knowing someone who previously dated a religious out-group member ( $p > .14$ ) did not emerge as significant predictors.

**Preference for dating SES out-group member.** Together all predictors explained 31% of the variance in preference for dating SES out-group members,  $F(8, 724) = 39.99, p < .001$ . Social approval ( $\beta = .46, t(724) = 15.06, p < .001$ ), previous dating experience ( $\beta = .16, t(724) = 1.93, p = .05$ ), extended contact ( $\beta = .26, t(724) = 2.66, p = .01$ ), emerged as significant positive predictors of preference for dating SES out-group members, while social identity emerged as a significant negative predictor ( $\beta = -.18, t(724) = -3.56, p < .001$ ). Gender, age, and country ( $p > .05$ ) were not significant predictors.

### **Multiple-group SEM and measurement invariance**

I examined the role of our predictors across the three cultural group samples in this study. To do this, I examined structural equation models (SEM) and tested multi-group invariance (Guenole & Brown, 2014). In addition, I conducted tests of equivalence between groups to use composite scores in the final models for social identity. All model analyses were conducted using IBM SPSS AMOS 23 (Byrne, 2004).

Testing for cross-group invariance involved comparing two nested models: (1) baseline model where no constraints were specified and (2) a second model where all factor loadings were constrained to be invariant between groups. Then I conducted a chi-square difference test to determine if there were no significant differences between the unconstrained and constrained model, indicating cross-group invariance.

**Social identity.** Tests of invariance between cultural groups for each social identity (race/culture/ethnic, religious, SES) were conducted. First, a baseline model for race/culture/ethnic was created based on (Cameron, 2004) 3 factor model of social identity. The unconstrained model resulted in a chi-square value of 377.051, with 132 *df*. The CFI and RMSEA revealed values of .941 and .050, indicating a relatively good fit across the three cultural groups. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the constrained model (386.691, 138 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 9.640 with 6 *df*, which is not significantly significant ( $p = .14$ ). Thus, we can conclude that the three cultural groups are partially invariant (some parameters needed to be freely estimated in the constrained model) for the social identity model. Therefore, composite scores for the race/culture/ethnic social identity three subscales; centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties can be created to use in subsequent models.

The same method was used for religious social identity model. The unconstrained model resulted in a chi-square value of 381.877, with 126 *df*. The CFI and RMSEA revealed values of .943 and .053, indicating a relatively good fit across the three cultural groups. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the constrained model (400.117, 140 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 18.240 with 14 *df*, which is not significantly significant ( $p = .19$ ). Thus, we can conclude that the three cultural groups are partially invariant (some parameters needed to be freely estimated in the constrained model) for the social identity model. Therefore, composite scores for religious social identity and the three subscales; centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties can be created to use in subsequent models.

Additionally, the unconstrained model resulted in a chi-square value of 409.355, with 126 *df*. The CFI and RMSEA revealed values of .920 and .055, indicating a relatively good fit across the three cultural groups. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the

constrained model (418.000, 132 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 8.645 with 6 *df*, which is not significantly significant ( $p = .19$ ). Thus, we can conclude that the three cultural groups are partially invariant for the social identity model. Therefore, composite scores for the SES social identity three subscales; centrality, in-group affect, and in-group ties can be created to use in subsequent models.

### **Multiple group SEM path analysis**

After further testing for measurement invariance, three exploratory multiple group structural equation path models were created and tested for each out-group background (race/culture/ethnicity, religious, socio-economic status) to examine if the predictor variables predicted the three outcome variables. Each model included social identity (all three subscales combined), social approval, gender, age, direct dating experience, and indirect dating experience as independent variables and dating preference as the dependent variable (see Figure 1 for an illustration of the general model structure).

**Race/culture/ethnic out-group dating preference.** A baseline model was created to test out-group race/culture/ethnic dating preference. Fit indices showed that the fully unconstrained model provided adequate fit the data [ $\chi^2$  ( $df = 144$ ,  $N = 736$ ) = 371.697]; RMSEA = .46 (90% CI = [.04, .05]); CFI = .93]. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the constrained measurement model (392.271, 160 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 20.574 with 16 *df*, which is not statistically significant ( $p = .19$ ). Thus, we can conclude that there is partial invariance across the three countries for the out-group race/culture/ethnic model.

Furthermore, constraining the structural parameters in the path model to be equal across the three countries resulted in a statistically significant worsening of overall model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 64.460$ ,  $df = 28$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Rejecting the null hypothesis that the paths (as a whole) are equally strong across the three countries. Table 4 shows the significant and non-significant

results of direct effects by country for each model. Results showed that country membership moderated the relationship between: a) having previously dated an out-group member and dating preference, b) social identity and dating preference, c) having previously known someone who has dated an out-group member, d) age and dating preference, e) gender and dating preference. Members of the three countries did not differentiate on the path between social approval and dating preferences, where there was a significant direct effect for all groups. The direct effect from having previously dated to dating preferences was significant only in the UK model ( $\beta = .26, p = .04$ ). The path from social identity to dating preference was only significant in the India model ( $\beta = -.19, p = .04$ ). The direct effect of previous extended dating contact experience on dating preference was significant in the US model ( $\beta = .79, p < .001$ ).

**Religious out-group dating preference.** A baseline model was created to test religious out-group dating preference. Fit indices showed that the fully unconstrained model provided adequate fit the data [ $\chi^2 (df = 144, N = 736) = 360.347$ ]; RMSEA = .04 (90% CI = [.04, .05]); CFI = .93]. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the constrained measurement model (385.865, 162 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 25.528 with 18 *df*, which is not statistically significant ( $p = .11$ ). Thus, we can conclude that there is partial invariance across the three countries for the religious out-group model.

Additionally, constraining the structural parameters in the path model to be equal across the three countries resulted in a marginally significant worsening of overall model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 213.107, df = 42; p < .001$ ). This demonstrates that the paths may not all be the same across the three countries. Results showed that country group membership moderated the relationship between a) social identity and dating preference for religious out-group members, b) previous dating experience and dating preference, c) gender and dating preference. However, cultural group membership did not moderate the relationships between

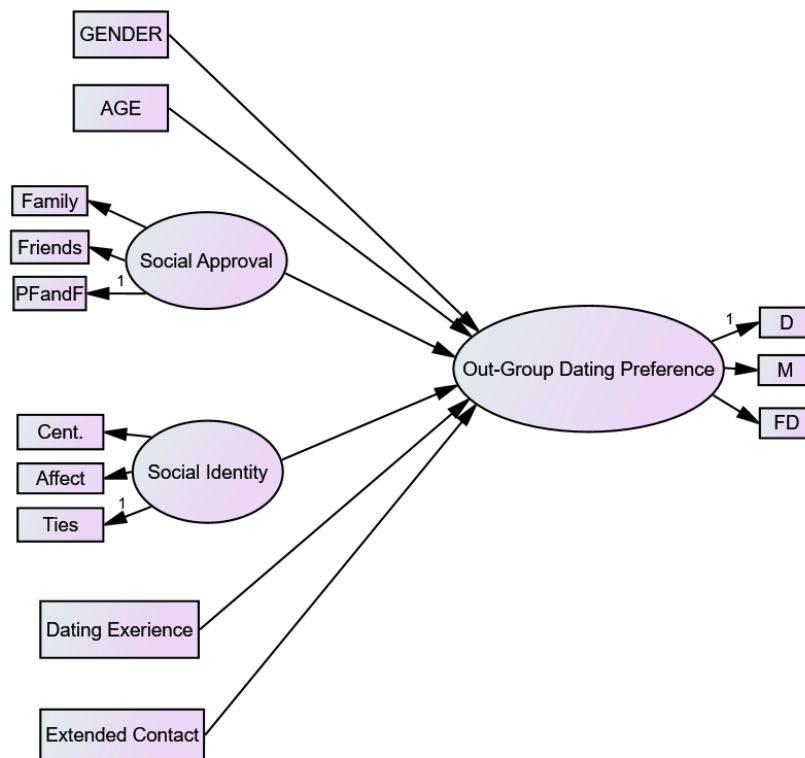
social approval and dating preference (significant in all models), age, dating preference (not significant), and having previously known someone whose dated an out-group member and dating preference (not significant). The relations between social identity and dating preference was significant in the India model ( $\beta = -.15, p = .04$ ) and the US model ( $\beta = -.22, p = .01$ ), but not significant in the UK model ( $\beta = -.08, p = .35$ ). The relationship between gender and dating preference was only significant in the India model ( $\beta = -.37, p = .02$ ). Additionally, the relationship between having previously dated a religious out-group member was only a significant predictor in the US model ( $\beta = .45, p = .03$ ).

**Socio-economic status out-group dating preference.** A baseline model was created to test out-group socio-economic status dating preference. Fit indices showed that the fully unconstrained model provided adequate fit the data [ $\chi^2 (df = 144, N = 736) = 316.190$ ]; RMSEA = .04 (90% CI = [.03, .05]); CFI = .93]. Comparing the chi-square for the unconstrained model to the constrained measurement model (330.212, 154 *df*) yielded a chi-square difference ( $\Delta\chi^2$ ) value of 14.022 with 10 *df*, which is not statistically significant ( $p = .17$ ). Thus, we can conclude that there is partial invariance across the three countries for the SES out-group model.

Finally, constraining the structural parameters in the path model to be equal across the three countries resulted in as significantly different overall model fit ( $\Delta\chi^2 = 224.724, df = 42; p < .001$ ). This demonstrates that the paths may not all be the same across the three countries. Results showed that country membership moderated the relationship between having previously dated an out-group member and dating preference, social identity and dating preference, gender and dating preference. Country membership did not moderate the relationship between social approval and dating preference (all significant), age and dating preference (not significant), nor on the path between previous extended contact and dating preference (not significant). The direct effect of previous dating experience on dating



preference was significant in the US model ( $\beta = .35, p = .02$ ), but not significant in the UK model ( $\beta = -.03, p = .84$ ) nor in the India model ( $\beta = .07, p = .59$ ). The direct effect of gender on dating preference was significant in the India model only ( $\beta = -.29, p = .03$ ). Social identity was only a significant model in the US model ( $\beta = -.20, p = .02$ ).



*Figure 1.* Predicting dating preference across countries. This figure illustrates the basic exploratory multiple group SEM model used to predict out-group dating preferences including scale items for each latent variable. See Table 4 for estimates for each model.

Table 4

*Unstandardized Path Coefficients from Unconstrained Multiple-Group Path Models by Cultural Group*

<b>R/C/E Model</b>												
	Dated →DP		SA→ DP		SI→DP		G → DP		Known →DP		Age →DP	
	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.
UK	.264**	.130	.853***	.089	-.077	.085	.390**	.166	.063	.235	-.009	.019
US	.258	.160	.841***	.084	-.119	.078	.040	.145	.785***	.229	.000	.007
India	.136	.154	.420***	.077	-.188**	.093	-.361**	.153	.283*	.162	-.003	.009
<b>Religious Model</b>												
	Dated →DP		SA→ DP		SI→DP		G → DP		Known →DP		Age →DP	
	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.
UK	.181	.137	.836***	.077	-.078	.083	.012	.170	.044	.157	-.024	.019
US	.448**	.200	.939***	.111	-.245**	.076	.001	.147	.052	.233	.013*	.007
India	.269*	.160	.529***	.072	-.152**	.074	-.037**	.154	-.039	.166	-.001	.009
<b>SES Model</b>												
	Dated →DP		SA→ DP		SI→DP		G → DP		Known →DP		Age →DP	
	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.	Est.	S.E.
UK	-.027	.135	.929***	.107	.001	.009	.092	.162	.231	.165	-.016	.018
US	.349**	.148	.536***	.079	-.203**	.090	-.064	.124	.175	.176	.003	.006
India	.070	.131	.287***	.058	-.108	.081	-.286**	.131	.250*	.142	.001	.008

*Note.* Dated previously dated out-group member, SA social approval, SI social identity, G gender Known previously known someone who has dated an out-group member, DP out-group dating preference, Est. estimate

\* $p < .10$ , \*\* $p < .05$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$

Table 5

*Demographic Characteristics (US Sample)*

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percent	<i>M (SD)</i>
Gender			
Male	120	49%	
Female	125	51%	
Age			35.5 (11.1)
Race			
White, Euro-American	188	76.7%	
Black, African American	17	6.9%	
American Indian	5	2.0%	
Hispanic, Latino	12	4.9%	
East Asian	18	7.3%	
Native Hawaiian	1	0.4%	
Mixed	3	1.2%	
South Asian, Indian	1	0.4%	
Education			
Some High school, no diploma	2	0.8%	
High school graduate, diploma, GED	20	8.2%	
Some college, no degree	55	22.6%	
Trade/Tech/Vocational Training	6	2.5%	
Associate degree	29	11.9%	
Bachelor degree	91	37.4%	
Master degree	32	13.2%	
Professional degree	1	0.4%	
Doctorate degree	7	2.9%	
Political Orientation			
Democratic	97	39.6%	
Republican	69	28.2%	
Independent	73	29.8%	
Other	6	2.4%	
Religious Identity			
Catholic	47	19.2%	
Jewish	8	3.2%	
Mormon	1	0.4%	
Buddhist	5	2.0%	
Hindu	8	3.3%	
Atheist	44	18%	
Agnostic	33	13.5%	
Muslim	1	0.4%	
Other	18	7.3%	
Christian	80	32.7%	

Table 6

*Demographic Characteristics (UK sample)*

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percent	<i>M (SD)</i>
Gender			
Male	43	16.0%	
Female	227	84.0%	
Age			19.78 (3.44)
Ethnic Origin			
British/English/Scottish/Welsh/Northern Irish	147	54.2%	
Irish	1	0.4%	
Any other White Background	31	11.4%	
White and Black Caribbean	8	3.0%	
White and Black African	5	1.8%	
White and Asian	6	2.2%	
Any other Mixed Background	8	3.0%	
Indian	6	2.2%	
Pakistani	5	1.8%	
Bangladeshi	1	0.4%	
Chinese	4	1.5%	
Any other Asian background	13	4.8%	
Caribbean	8	3.0%	
African	20	7.4%	
Any other Black background	2	0.7%	
Arab	1	0.4%	
Any other ethnic group	5	1.8%	
Year in School			
1 <sup>st</sup> year	173	63.8%	
2 <sup>nd</sup> year	89	32.8%	
3 <sup>rd</sup> or 4 <sup>th</sup> year	4	1.5%	
Postgraduate	5	1.8%	
Political Orientation			
Conservative	55	20.3%	
Labour	129	47.6%	
Liberal Democrat	35	12.9%	
Other	52	19.2%	
Religious Identity			
Catholic	32	11.8%	
Presbyterian	1	0.4%	
Baptist	5	1.8%	
Protestant	24	8.9%	
Jewish	4	1.5%	
Methodist	2	0.7%	
Buddhist	5	1.8%	
Hindu	3	1.1%	
Atheist	70	25.8%	
Agnostic	44	16.2%	
Muslim	19	7.0%	
Sikh	1	0.4%	
Other	18	6.6%	
Other Christian	43	15.9%	

Table 7

*Demographic Characteristics (India sample)*

	Frequency ( <i>n</i> )	Percent	<i>M (SD)</i>
Gender			
Male	156	70.9%	
Female	64	29.1%	
Age			30.28 (7.34)
Ethnic Origin			
Australoid	12	5.5%	
Mongoloid	23	10.5%	
Europoid	17	7.7%	
Caucasian	29	13.2%	
Negroid	1	0.5%	
Other	19	8.6%	
Mixed	4	1.8%	
Asian	67	30.5%	
Indian	48	21.8%	
Education			
Middle	1	0.5%	
Secondary	4	1.8%	
Senior secondary	5	2.3%	
Undergraduate degree	94	42.9%	
Postgraduate degree	107	48.6%	
Other	1	0.5%	
Trade/Tech/Vocational degree	7	3.2%	
Political Orientation			
Bahujan Samaj Party	2	0.9%	
Bharatiya Janata Party	119	54.1%	
Communist Party of India	11	5.0%	
Other	23	10.5%	
Communist Party of India (Marxist)	6	2.7%	
Indian National Congress	52	23.6%	
National Congress Party	7	3.2%	
Religious Identity			
Sikh	6	2.7%	
Hindu	166	75.5%	
Atheist	4	1.8%	
Agnostic	2	0.9%	
Muslim	16	7.3%	
Other	4	1.8%	
Christian	22	10%	

## Discussion

The aim of this was to study an intimate form of intergroup contact to better understand current intergroup relations and to go beyond current knowledge on out-group dating preferences by examining the role of social approval, social identity and dating experience in out-group dating preferences across different out-group backgrounds (race/culture/ethnicity, religious, socio-economic status) and countries (UK, US, India).

### Out-Group Dating Preferences

First, findings revealed differences in dating preferences based on out-group background. Individuals overall preferred to date others from a different race/culture/ethnic or socio-economic status group over those from another religious out-group. This finding suggests that while individuals are willing to date out-group members, they prefer dating members of some out-groups over others. It is possible that individuals were less willing to date out-group religious members because they could not imagine engaging in that particular type of relationship or imagined that it might be more burdensome than the two other types of relationships as it relates to core fundamental beliefs that may hinder a relationship. Therefore, these relationships might be more threatening. These results, while unique in context, reveal a similar pattern to past findings which demonstrated that individuals are willing to engage in an interracial relationship, but prefer to date some racial out-groups over others (Robnett & Feliciano, 2011). From this past research we know that those findings are driven in part by racial hierarchies (e.g., SDO, integrated threat, racism) and perceptions of racial class differences. Individuals are less willing to engage in an interracial relationship if the target individual comes from a lower racial class. This finding points to the importance of examining out-group dating preferences across different out-group categories as it captures a better understanding of current relations between different groups (e.g., less social distance between social class groups and greater social distance between religious groups).

Furthermore, findings revealed that out-group dating preference for the three backgrounds varied across countries and varied within each country. For example, in terms of dating preferences across the three samples, participants from India reported a lower preference for a partner from a different race/culture/ethnic out-group compared with individuals from the UK or US who did not differ from each other. Individuals from another religious out-group were the least preferred overall in all samples. Moreover, while individuals from the US gave the highest preference for SES out-group members, individuals from the UK gave highest preference for race/culture/ethnic out-group backgrounds. Furthermore, while differences in preference varied across the backgrounds within the US and UK, individuals from the India group gave similar preference ratings for all out-group backgrounds.

These patterns of findings demonstrate variation in preferences of individuals from different countries and may attest to the unique intergroup relations within each country/cultural context. For example, poorer historical intergroup race relations in the US and poorer historical class relations in the UK may explain why individuals from the UK were most willing to date out-group racial/cultural/ethnic individuals while individuals from the US were most willing to date SES out-group members. Investigating the reasons for country variation in dating preferences for different outgroup members was beyond the current study's goals; future research is needed to examine the factors underlying these group differences. However, this comparative picture points to the importance of studying out-group dating preference in different contexts without assuming universality.

### **Social Psychological Factors Predicting Out-group Dating Preferences**

In the current study, I investigated several social psychological factors as potential predictors of out-group dating preferences. In support for Hypothesis 1, I found that individuals' perceptions of social approval were pivotal when considering dating an out-

group member which emerged as a positive predictor across all out-group backgrounds. This finding is particularly interesting as it shows, with great significance, how much we as social beings care about the perceptions of others concerning our romantic relationship choices. This was demonstrated in contexts that are viewed as being individualistic (US, UK) and in a context that is labelled collectivistic (India). One would expect the influence of social approval to be greater in a collectivistic environment, but these finding emerged just as powerful in countries that value individualism. While I was able to uniquely capture this pattern across countries, this finding mirrors previous research showing the relationship between perceived social approval and willingness to date out-group members (e.g., Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Liu et al., 1995) and attests to the continued association between group norms and intergroup relations.

Results regarding the role of social identity in willingness to engage in an intergroup romantic relationship indicated that the more individuals identified strongly with their in-group, the less willing they were to date out-group members, supporting Hypothesis 2. This was true for each background category that individuals identified with. These results mirror related findings in the literature and predictions related to social identity theory (e.g., Brown et al., 2003; Liu et al., 1995). Extending from the previous research, I was able to demonstrate these findings in different contexts. Given the literature on social identity theory, these results were expected. However, this study is fruitful as I was able to examine multiple group identities (ethnic, religious, SES) an individual holds and show how strength with one identity does not mean strength with other group memberships.

Results also demonstrated support for intergroup contact theory (direct contact) as findings indicated that individuals with a previous intergroup relationship showed a greater willingness to date out-group members in the future. This finding showed support for Hypothesis 3 and past findings showing similar patterns (e.g., Levin et al., 2007; Uskul et al.,



2007). Whether or not individuals have previously had known someone who was engaged in an intergroup romantic relationship (indirect contact) also emerged as a predictor for willingness to date race/culture/ethnic and socio-economic status out-group partners, supporting Hypothesis 4, but was not as a predictor for dating preference for religious out-group partners. It is plausible that this indirect contact with an interreligious couple not a predictor because within this category it might be more important for individuals to experience the relationship themselves versus through others. However, this pattern suggests that further research is needed to understand why extended contact might influence dating preference more for some backgrounds than for others.

Overall these findings demonstrate that not all factors predict out-group dating preferences similarly across all out-group backgrounds, highlighting the importance of investigating out-group dating preferences in different contexts.

### **Findings Regarding Social Psychological Predictors in Each Sample**

**Race/culture/ethnic out-group dating preference.** Findings revealed country differences concerning the relationships between the social psychological factors and out-group dating preferences. When considering the decision to date race/culture/ethnic out-group individuals, having previously dated members from this out-group emerged as a positive predictor for dating preference only among individuals from the UK only. This finding is surprising as previous literature would suggest that direct contact would also be a predictor for individuals from the US context. Perhaps due to the combination of the out-group categories (race, ethnic, cultural) this might have affected what participants from the US might have been imagining. In addition, in previous literature these studies gave specific racial categories for individuals to think about. Furthermore, perhaps due to the lack of measuring the quality of contact. Individuals' strength of identification with their race/culture/ethnic group was predictive in dating preferences among individuals only from

India. This finding was surprising that this findings as previous research would predict social identity to be important in the US and the UK. However, this finding makes sense in the India context given the importance group hierarchy in this country. Further, whether individuals have had previous indirect contact with intergroup race/culture/ethnic couples was a positive predictor only for individuals from the US only. This is very interesting as extended contact, but not direct contact was an important factor in the US. Perhaps individuals from the US context are more concerned with what others have experienced than from what they have experienced themselves. Finally, social approval was the only social psychological factor predicting race/culture/ethnic out-group dating preferences across all countries.

**Religious out-group dating preference.** Country differences also emerged for religious out-group dating preference and the predicting social psychological factors. Identifying with one's religious group emerged as a negative predictor of willingness to engage in a romantic relationship with a religious out-group partner for individuals from India and US only. The lack of religious identity being important among individuals from the UK might be due to the increase of the number of individuals declaring that they identify with having no religion (Office of National Statistics, 2012). Thus, we should expect that social identity to be important only in the two cultural contexts where religiosity is still important. Direct contact through previous intergroup dating experience was a predictor of future interreligious dating for individuals only in the US. I believe further research is needed to tease apart why this finding only occurred in the US context. Social approval was a significant positive predictor of out-group dating preferences in all samples, while previous extended contact was not predictive of willingness to date a religious out-group member for all samples.

**Socio-economic status out-group dating preference.** Finally, when considering to date out-group socio-economic status members, having previous direct dating experience was a positive predictor only for individuals from the US. Social identity was a negative predictor only for individuals from the US. Social approval was a positive predictor for SES out-group dating preference across all countries. Previous extended contact did not predict willingness to date SES out-group members in any country. Considering that most of the literature concerning direct contact and social identity in the dating context emerges from the North American culture, it is not surprising that these factors are significant in predicting their future intergroup interactions. The lack of social identity and direct contact finding in the UK or India might be that due to the very prominent historical class divide in these countries. Further research is needed to understand why previous direct contact and social identity did not influence dating preference towards out-group SES members.

These group difference demonstrate that these social psychological factors do not always act comparably in predicting out-group dating preferences across countries. Social approval was the only social psychological factor that similarly predicted out-group dating preference across all backgrounds in each country, which highlights the importance of examining intergroup relations in different contexts to better understand how these factors may vary as a function of country origin.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

As with all studies, this study also had limitations. First, the main limitation is that I combined race/culture/ethnicity into one background category. Future research should examine these categories separately to further tease out if individuals' evaluations vary across different ethnic, cultural, and racial groups. Furthermore, in this study I did not specify which specific group participants thought about when considering to date an out-group member (e.g., dating a lower or higher socio-economic status member). Thus, I cannot infer which

race or class participants considered when responding to our questions. I also did not consider participants' own ethnic/cultural/racial, religious or SES background, their current relationship status, and the quality of their past intergroup relationships (if they had any). A future study could examine these as potential moderating factors. In addition, future research should examine country-level predictors of intergroup dating preferences in different cultural settings (e.g., percentage immigrants living in a country; democratization). Moreover, due to recruitment-related reasons, I had an imbalanced representation of participants across the three samples (e.g., UK participants were mostly young women; in India and US the mean age was in mid-thirties; most participants from India were men). Although findings remained similar when I controlled for age and gender in our analyses, findings should be interpreted with caution given these differences between samples. These limitations provide further venues to explore in future research.

Despite its limitations, this research expands existing literature on intergroup romantic relationships by illustrating that dating preferences vary across out-group backgrounds and across samples from different countries. With this research, I show how our perceptions of social approval have comparable importance for out-group dating preferences across different out-group categories, not just in the context of dating across racial, cultural, or ethnic boundaries. Additionally, I replicate the importance of racial and ethnic social identity when predicting out-group dating preferences. I also demonstrate that religious and socio-economic status social identity are similarly important when considering to date out-group individuals. This pattern was also true for direct contact experience, but not for indirect contact experience. Future research should examine other social psychological factors (e.g., intergroup anxiety, self-esteem) that have been associated with out-group dating preferences across different categories.

Furthermore, as I have shown here, when considering a dating partner, individuals' least and most preferred type of out-group and the predictive role played by important social psychological factors can vary widely as a function of where data originate. For example, while I did demonstrate the equal importance of social approval, social identity, and previous direct dating experience on dating preference across out-group categories, I find that these patterns of importance change across cultural context. This strongly highlights the need for researchers to consider the cultural context as well as the type of out-group that is studied in the domain of intergroup romantic relationships. Overall, this research demonstrates how individuals may belong to different categories, but some categories might be more important to them than others (e.g., strength of identity). These different categories have the potential to influence their interactions with specific out-group members. It is plausible that individuals will engage in intimate interactions with someone from a different racial background or class background, but are much more reserved when considering members from a different religious category. While we can only speculate, these group category differences might be capturing broader intergroup relations. These dating preferences might be mirroring the social climate in each of these particular cultural contexts. These preferences might be influenced by the current environment and reflecting the unique histories in each of these countries. These group category differences within and across these cultural differences demonstrate that we cannot treat all group categories the same and a lack of willingness to date one group over another shows a lingering prejudice and might give indication which group categories might experience discrimination.

### Chapter 3

#### **Examining Judgements Towards Intergroup Romantic Relationships**

*Chapter two (Study 1) focused on individual out-group dating preferences across different out-group backgrounds while investigating relevant social psychological factors. Findings from Study 1 provided evidence for the importance of examining intergroup romantic relationships across groups. Results from Study 1 also demonstrated the crucial role of social approval in the context of intergroup romantic relationships. As perceptions of social approval was an important factor to individuals dating preferences, Chapter three (Study 2 and Study 3) was designed in an effort to capture a better understanding of the judgments that individuals make about different types of intergroup romantic relationships. Therefore, in this chapter, the discussion moves from research concerning the willingness to engage in an intergroup romantic relationship to research that focuses on our judgements of these relationships. In addition to narrowing the focus on social approval through bystander judgements, this chapter, while exploratory, briefly discusses relevant theoretical perspectives that help provide a framework for this area of study.*

Intergroup romantic relationships are intimate relationships that occur between individuals from different groups (e.g., ethnic and religious groups, socio-economic class). Due to increasing diversity in large metropolitan areas and online dating, there are more opportunities than ever to engage romantically with individuals outside one's own ethnic, religious, or socioeconomic background. This is evident in the increasing rate at which individuals are dating and marrying members from different social groups (e.g., Office for National Statistics, 2014; Ortega & Hergovich, 2017). For example, the 2011 UK Census revealed that the number of intergroup couples increased from 7% (2001) to nearly 10% (Office for National Statistics, 2014). According to the intergroup contact theory, these relationships are an important and unique form of intimate intergroup contact and have the

potential to promote positive intergroup attitudes beyond that of less intimate forms of intergroup contact (Paterson, Turner, & Conner, 2015; Pettigrew, 1998), making them an important topic to further our understanding of intergroup relations. I now turn to a discussion concerning theoretical perspectives for understanding intergroup romantic relationships.

### **Theoretical underpinnings**

Previous research has explored the opposition of intergroup romantic relationships and have suggested several theoretical perspectives that may provide explanations for attitudinal and behavioural differences (e.g., Robnett & Feliciano, 2011; Lalonde, Giguere, Fontaine, & Smith, 2007). The social dominance theory postulates that individuals form and adhere to collective social hierarchies that are sustained by diverging status group members and social policies (Pratto, Sidanius, & Levin, 2006). Past research has shown that strong beliefs in social hierarchies and in-group superiority (e.g., social dominance orientation) is associated with attitudes towards intergroup romance (e.g., Lalonde et al., 2007). For example, Lalonde and colleagues (2007) found that support for intergroup relationships and openness to these relationships were hindered by social dominance beliefs.

Furthermore, research has also posited that perceptions and attitudes about intergroup interactions are driven by perceptions of threat (e.g., Stephan & Stephan, 2000; Vedder, Wenink, & Van Geel, 2016). The integrated threat theory (Stephan & Stephan, 2000) suggests that individuals prejudiced attitudes and behaviours stem from perceptions of realistic or symbolic threat based on intergroup anxiety and negative stereotypes of particular out-groups (Stephan & Stephan, 2000). For instance, previous research that examined attitudes between Muslims and non-Muslims found that higher perceptions of threat explained their intergroup prejudice (Vedder, Wenink, & Van Geel, 2016). From this

perspective, negative perceptions of out-groups would be associated with negative attitudes towards intergroup romantic relationships.

Additionally, social identity theory presupposes that an individual strength of identification to their social groups drives their attitudinal beliefs about intergroup interactions. Previous research has shown that individuals who hold a strong Jewish identity were less open to an intergroup romantic relationship (Brown, McNatt, & Cooper, 2003). Similar research by Haji and colleagues (2011) revealed that opposition to interfaith relationship was negatively predicted by Jewish identification. These theoretical perspectives provide a framework for studying intergroup romantic relationships. I now turn to social psychological research that examines the association of social approval with attitudes and behaviours regarding intergroup romance.

### **Social approval**

One psychological factor that shapes the occurrence and maintenance of intergroup romantic relationships is social approval. Social approval in the context of intergroup romantic relationships refers to the extent that family, friends, community members, and the general society welcomes and accepts these relationships (e.g., Bell & Hastings, 2015). Researchers have highlighted the importance of examining attitudes in social networks towards intergroup romantic relationships as individuals' relationship behaviours can be influenced by the support, attitudes, and judgements of others outside of the relationship (e.g., Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Felmlee, 2001).

Past research has shown that perceptions of social approval towards intergroup romantic relationships can impact the initiation and maintenance of intimate intergroup relationships (e.g., Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000). For example, individuals report that aversion from their social networks towards intergroup romantic relationships is a primary hindrance to entering into such relationships (e.g., Clark-Ibanez & Felmlee, 2004; Harris & Kalbfleisch,



2000; Remennick, 2005). Moreover, research demonstrates that lacking social approval can influence the perceptions of individuals in an intergroup relationship about their relationship satisfaction and well-being (e.g., Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998; Sinclair, Felmlee, Sprecher, & Wright, 2015; Tillman & Miller, 2017), which can in turn shape their decisions about exhibiting public displays of affection, getting married or having children (e.g., Fu, 2008; Vaquera & Kao, 2005). Given the strong role social approval, or lack thereof, can play in intergroup romantic relationships, it is important to understand the evaluations and judgments made by individuals' immediate and distant social circle.

Research on social approval towards intergroup romantic relationships has generally concentrated on the perceptions held by the individuals who are already in an intergroup romantic relationship or may be considering engaging in such a relationship (e.g., Schoepflin, 2009; Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998; Wang, Kao, & Joyner, 2006). Although less frequently so, researchers have also explored the perceptions and judgments made by the bystanders of these intimate intergroup relationships such as friends or family members connected to the individuals in the relationship, acquaintances or unfamiliar members of society (e.g., Carol & Teeny, 2015; Herman & Campbell, 2012; West, Lowe, & Marsden, 2017). This research has revealed that bystanders have the perception that intergroup romantic relationships are less satisfying, less stable, and more likely to terminate than intragroup romantic relationships (Bratter & King, 2008; Fu, 2006). Other research has shown that individuals tend to disregard the legitimacy or sincerity of intergroup romantic relationships because they believe that within these specific relationships the individuals are incompatible (Garcia, Riggo, Palavinelu, & Culpepper, 2012; Lewandowski & Jackson, 2001; Schoepflin, 2009) and the relationship was not developed for love, but was related to rebellion against family wishes, sexual curiosity, or a short-term "hook-up" relationship (e.g., Schoepflin, 2009; Yancey, 2003).

## **The Present Research**

Despite growing evidence on bystander perceptions of intergroup romantic relationships, research investigating bystander judgments across different types of intergroup romantic relationships and at different stages of the relationship is missing. The current research aims to fill this gap. Thus, in the current studies, I examine judgements concerning intergroup romantic relationships from the perspective of individuals outside of the intimate relationship (bystanders). Specifically, I investigate whether bystander judgements about the consequences of a relationship (e.g., level of happiness, family approval) vary based on the characteristics of the couple's background (e.g., ethnic, religious, SES). Through this approach, I hope to gain a better understanding about how intergroup romantic relationships are perceived and how it contributes to the overall approval or disapproval.

Additionally, I examine if judgments about intergroup romantic relationships vary depending on whether individuals evaluate a potential relationship or an actual relationship. Previous research has demonstrated differences in opinions regarding intergroup romantic relationships based on whether individuals are considering dating or marriage (e.g., Blackwell & Lichter, 2000). Relatedly, for example, Blackwell and Lichter (2000) found that intergroup couples are more likely to cohabitate than to get married, as there are less barriers to overcome (e.g., social support). Therefore, I explore bystander judgements in both a potential relationship context and in the context of an already dating couple. Based on previous research (e.g., commitment, Garcia et al, 2012; Schoepflin, 2009) and the theoretical reasoning in this area of research (e.g., threat, Stephan & Stephan, 2000), we might expect couples in an actual relationship to be more threatening than hypothetical ones. Therefore, more opposition and less support might be given to these relationships.

Furthermore, previous research examining interracial relationships has shown that attitudes and perceptions about interracial dating can vary according to the characteristics of

the interracial couple (e.g., Black/White vs. White/Asian). For example, Field and colleagues (2013) found that individuals were more accepting of Asian American/White than of African American/White relationships. To my knowledge, research has not examined these perceptions across different backgrounds. Thus, this study goes beyond the current literature by examining bystander evaluations of intergroup romantic relationships across different ethnic, religious and socio-economic backgrounds. This extension of the literature will shed light on whether these relationships received comparable amount of approval or whether some forms of intergroup romantic relationship receive more or less approval than other forms of intergroup romantic relationships. This is important to investigate as it might indicate that some forms of intergroup romantic relationships might receive less social support and experience more discrimination than others. As social approval can hinder an intergroup romantic relationship, it is best to understand which of these relationships are at a greater risk to experience prejudice and discrimination.

## **Study 2**

Study 2 examines bystanders' evaluations of couples who might potentially develop an intimate interethnic, interreligious, or interSES romantic relationship.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

I recruited 241 participants (199 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.91$ ,  $SD = 3.04$ ) using a psychology research participant pool at a British university. Ethnically, the majority of participants reported to be White British (52%), other White (9%), Indian (7%), or of African (5%) origin. In terms of religious identification, most participants reported to be Atheist (26%), Agnostic (13%), Catholic (15%), other Christian (11%), Protestant (9%), or Muslim (7%).

### **Procedure**

Participants took part in a study on online dating and were asked to share their opinions about two individuals who could potentially form a romantic relationship. After

giving consent, participants were presented with descriptions of online dating profiles of a woman (Kimberley) and a man (Eric). The descriptions included some of the key characteristics each person supposedly listed in their online profile. For example, participants read “Eric described himself in his profile as being adventurous, charming, reliable, kind, and generous. He also described himself as being honest, intelligent, and open-minded” and “Kimberly described herself as someone who loves traveling, playing games, and painting. She also described herself as someone who enjoys spending time with her family and friends”. Both individuals were described as students and of similar age to each other. Up to this point, both descriptions were kept identical for all participants.

**Background manipulation.** Next, participants were randomly assigned to one of the four conditions to read that Eric and Kimberley differed in their socio-economic status, religious background, ethnicity, or personality (control condition). Participants read “According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have different socio-economic background”, where socio-economic status was replaced with religious background, ethnic background, or personality characteristics depending on the condition.

Next, participants were asked to think about the profile summaries they just read and to indicate how much they believed that the two individuals would be a match (0% match to 100% match), how similar they are (0% similar to 100% similar), and how different they are (0% different to 100% different). Because the similarity and difference ratings were conceptually similar, we averaged them to form a similarity index ( $r = -.64, p < .001$ ).

Participants were also asked how much they believed that Eric and Kimberley’s family members would approve of them being in a relationship (1 = *extremely approve* to 7 = *extremely disapprove*), how much their friends would approve of them being in a relationship (1 = *extremely approve* to 7 = *extremely disapprove*), and if they believed that they should

date (1 = *definitely yes* to 5 = *definitely not*). Table 1 presents descriptive statistics and correlations between variables.

### Results and Discussion

I examined the dependent measures as a function of background manipulation using a MANOVA which revealed a significant overall effect,  $F(15, 643) = 3.83, p < .001$ , Wilks  $\lambda = .79, \eta^2 = .08$ . Inspection of univariate effects showed that the condition had a significant effect on family approval,  $F(3.237) = 8.18, p < .001, \eta^2 = .09$ . Follow up Post Hoc tests (using the Sidak correction to limit familywise error) revealed that participants in the religious condition ( $M = 3.46, SD = .16$ ) believed that families would give less approval to the couple than did participants in the interSES ( $M = 2.69, SD = .16, p = .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 4.8$ ), interethnic ( $M = 2.77, SD = .16, p = .02$ , Cohen's  $d = 4.3$ ), or personality condition ( $M = 2.34, SD = .17, p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 6.78$ ).

Table 1

*Study 2 Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables for Each Condition*

Experimental conditions	Ethnic ( <i>N</i> = 60)	Religious ( <i>N</i> = 61)	SES ( <i>N</i> = 61)	Personality ( <i>N</i> = 59)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	
<b>Dependent Variables</b>					
Match	76.73 (16.32)	74.61 (14.62)	75.72 (17.57)	72.41 (10.95)	
Should Date	1.90 (0.73)	2.16 (0.78)	1.89 (0.64)	2.02 (0.66)	
Similar	69.96 (15.18)	70.53 (15.96)	67.91 (17.41)	62.89 (15.53)	
Friend Approval	2.23 (1.18)	2.28 (1.14)	2.30 (1.13)	2.22 (1.20)	
Family Approval	2.77 (1.27)	3.46 (1.39)	2.69 (1.27)	2.34 (1.14)	
<b>Correlations</b>					
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.
1. Match		-.57**	.59**	-.39**	-.18*
2. Should Date			-.53**	.56**	.38**
3. Similar				-.46**	-.22*
4. Friend Approval					.59**
5. Family Approval					

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$

Condition did not affect participants' ratings on how well the profiles matched,  $F < 1$ , the extent to which friends would approve them dating,  $F < 1$ , and the extent to which participants believed that the two individuals should date,  $F(3, 237) = 2.06, p = .11, \eta^2 = .03$ . Condition had an overall significant effect on similarity rating ( $p = .04$ ) but none of the Post Hoc tests were significant (all  $ps > .05$ ). Thus, findings from this study showed that bystanders indicated that potential couples from different backgrounds appear to be similar, should date, and would have approval from their friends. However, bystanders indicated that a potential interreligious couple would receive less family approval than did couples that differed in other ways.

### **Study 3**

In Study 3, I asked participants to evaluate a couple currently in an intragroup, interethnic, interreligious, or interSES romantic relationship. Based on the findings of Study 1, we predicted that interreligious couples would receive less support than other inter-background couples.

### **Method**

#### **Participants**

I recruited 235 participants (203 women,  $M_{\text{age}} = 19.63, SD = 2.92$ ) using a psychology research participant pool at a British university. Ethnically, the majority of participants reported to be of White British (54.9%), Other White (13.6%), Indian (5.5%), or of African (5.5%) origin. In terms of religious affiliation, the majority of the sample reported to be Atheist (26.4 %), Christian (17.9 %), or Agnostic (17.4%).

#### **Procedure**

Participants read about a romantic couple and answered questions about them. After giving consent, they were shown the scenario that described how the couple met, their

Table 2

*Study 3 Means and Standard Deviations of Dependent Variables for Each Condition*

Experimental conditions	Ethnic ( <i>N</i> = 60)		Religious ( <i>N</i> = 58)		SES ( <i>N</i> = 59)		Control ( <i>N</i> = 58)	
	<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )		<i>M</i> ( <i>SD</i> )	
<b>Dependent Variables</b>								
Should Date	1.62 (0.99)		1.91 (1.32)		1.54 (0.59)		1.79 (0.81)	
Get married	2.93 (1.19)		3.24 (1.20)		2.85 (1.14)		3.12 (0.92)	
Long-lasting	2.38 (1.17)		2.66 (1.09)		2.34 (0.86)		2.34 (0.79)	
Happy	1.95 (1.08)		2.21 (1.17)		2.03 (1.27)		2.28 (0.91)	
Have children	2.33 (1.20)		2.64 (1.44)		2.44 (1.14)		2.95 (1.15)	
Friend Approval	1.90 (1.20)		2.52 (1.34)		2.66 (1.60)		1.86 (0.89)	
Family Approval	3.13 (1.59)		4.40 (1.71)		3.53 (1.77)		1.90 (0.97)	
<b>Correlations</b>								
	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	
1. Should Date		.29**	.39**	.37**	.39**	.27**	.19*	
2. Get Married			.62**	.52**	.55**	.30**	.29**	
3. Long-Lasting				.48**	.52**	.32**	.34**	
4. Happy					.54**	.53**	.36**	
5. Have Children						.36**	.23*	
6. Friend Approval							.66**	
7. Family Approval								

Note. \*\* $p < .001$ , \* $p < .05$



similarities, and their differences. Similar to Study 1, participants were randomly assigned to read one of the four scenarios which described no differences between the two individuals forming the couple or described them to differ in their ethnic, religious, SES backgrounds. Participants were then guided to think about the similarities and differences between the two individuals and answer several questions. Participants were asked whether they agree that the couple should continue to date (1 = *strongly agree* to 7 = *strongly disagree*); how likely they would eventually get married (1 = *extremely likely* to 7 = *extremely unlikely*); how likely the relationship would be long-lasting (1 = *extremely likely* to 7 = *extremely unlikely*); would they be happy if they got married (1 = *extremely happy* to 7 = *extremely unhappy*), should they eventually have children (1 = *definitely yes* to 7 = *definitely not*); to what extent they believed the couple's friends and their family would approve of their relationship (1 = *extremely approve* to 7 = *extremely disapprove*). Table 2 presents descriptive statistics and correlations between study variables.

### Results and Discussion

To examine bystander evaluations of actual intergroup romantic relationships, I conducted a MANOVA with all study variables as outcome measures and background difference as the independent variable which revealed a significant overall effect of,  $F(21, 646) = 6.09, p < .001, \text{Wilks } \lambda = .59, \eta^2 = .16$ . An investigation of univariate effects revealed that condition had a significant effect on participants' evaluation of whether the couple should eventually have children,  $F(3, 231) = 2.79, p = .04, \eta^2 = .04$ . Follow up Post Hoc tests (using the Sidak correction to limit familywise error) revealed that participants in the ethnic condition ( $M = 2.33, SD = 1.20$ ) believed that the couple should have children significantly more so than did the participants in the control condition ( $M = 2.95, SD = 1.15$ ),  $p = .04$ , Cohen's  $d = .53$ . Other conditions did not differ significantly from each other.

Condition also had a significant effect on couple friend approval,  $F(3, 231) = 6.07, p = .001, \eta^2 = .07$ . Follow up Post Hoc tests revealed that participants in the SES condition ( $M = 2.66, SD = 1.60$ ) believed that the couple's friends would approve less of their relationship than did participants in the ethnic condition ( $M = 1.90, SD = 1.20$ ),  $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .54$ , and the control condition ( $M = 1.86, SD = .89$ ),  $p = .01$ , Cohen's  $d = .62$ . Participants in the religious condition ( $M = 2.52, SD = 1.34$ ) gave significantly lower friend approval ratings than did participants in the control condition ( $p = .04$ , Cohen's  $d = .58$ ) and marginally significant lower approval ratings than participants in the ethnic condition ( $p = .06$ , Cohen's  $d = .49$ ).

A significant effect of condition on the evaluation of family approval was also found,  $F(3, 231) = 26.24, p < .001, \eta^2 = .25$ . Participants in the control condition ( $M = 1.90, SD = .97$ ) gave significantly more family approval towards the couple than participants in all other conditions, ethnic ( $M = 3.13, SD = 1.59$ )  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .93$ , SES ( $M = 3.53, SD = 1.77$ )  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.14$ , and religious ( $M = 4.40, SD = 1.71$ )  $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = 1.79$ . Moreover, significantly less family approval was given by participants in the religious condition than in the ethnic ( $p < .001$ , Cohen's  $d = .77$ ) and SES condition ( $p = .02$ , Cohen's  $d = .49$ ).

Condition did not affect evaluations concerning if the couple should continue to date, their likelihood of getting married, having a long-lasting relationship, or how happy the couple would be if married ( $F < 2$ ). Overall, findings revealed that bystander judgments varied depending on the type of intergroup relationship evaluated (interethnic, interreligious, interSES).

### **General Discussion**

Given the momentous findings regarding the social approval from Study 1, the aim of the current research was to explore bystander judgments towards intergroup romantic

relationships. This research contributes to intergroup romantic relationship literature by showing, across two separate studies, that bystander judgments vary based on the type of intergroup relationship (interethnic, interreligious, interSES). Furthermore, from this research, I found that, in both Study 2 and Study 3, judgments varied as a function of type of intergroup relationship that was evaluated. This variation across types of backgrounds is similar to the findings from study 1, demonstrating variation in dating preferences across groups. Thus, again alluding to the importance of research examining cross-group relationships beyond one type of background (e.g., ethnic or race).

Specifically, when individuals rated family approval, less approval was perceived for interreligious couples than couples described as differing on other characteristics. Perhaps individuals believe that couples who do not come from the same religious background will have a difficult time gaining approval from family members. While I can only speculate, it is possible that families will perceive an interreligious relationship as more threatening to their own religious and family values, traditions, and morals. Either members of the family may feel that there will be a difficult time adjusting to each other's religious beliefs (e.g., choosing holidays to celebrate or attendance to religious events) or that a loss of religious beliefs/practices will occur. It is also plausible that these families are thinking about the couple's future and the decisions that they will need to make regarding any children they will have. Therefore, a lack of perceived family approval of interreligious couples over other combinations makes logical sense as an interethnic or interSES relationship would not face the same difficulties.

Additionally, regardless of whether individuals were evaluating a potential or actual relationship, differences about perceived family approval emerged. This aspect of the relationship seemed to matter more to the individuals making the judgments than other aspects. Thus, perception of family approval did not vary depending on the status of the

relationship (hypothetical vs actual). However, when evaluating couple's friend approval, this was only an important aspect when judging actual relationships. It may be that individuals believe that family members might always think about what will happen in the future so the status of the relationship does not matter. Whereas individuals might perceive that friends might only be concerned with the present state of a relationship. Therefore, since the couple was presented as a potential relationship, but not an actual relationship, it was not a concern. In general, the findings regarding limited social approval towards interreligious relationships, parallels previous research focusing on interracial relationships showing that some types of interracial relationships are accepted more than others (Field et al., 2013).

Examining these findings from a theoretical perspective, they may be interpreted using social dominance, integrated threat, or social identity theory. It is possible that the patterns of findings in both Studies 1 and 2 reflect differences in threat perception. It is plausible that couples that were described, as being from two different religious backgrounds were perceived as more threatening (e.g., symbolically or realistically) than interSES or interethnic relationships and would receive the least social approval. Furthermore, individuals who may be driven by maintaining social hierarchies and group heterogeneity (e.g., SDO) might give less support towards intergroup romantic relationships. However, since the findings revealed differences in social support only towards interreligious couples and not interethnic or interSES, SDO may not be the best perspective to take to interpret the findings. Whereas this study was conducted in the UK, these findings may reflect the country's divided religious history. Perhaps an integration of religious beliefs is more threatening than the other two backgrounds. In addition, an interreligious relationship might also threaten one's social identity. Individuals making judgments about these relationships might be thinking that a religious identity might be the most important to hold onto as it can be most vulnerable to change.

While these studies provide fruitful insight regarding bystander judgments of intergroup romantic relationships, they have several limitations. Across these two studies, we did not specify which type of category within each background participants should think about. For example, the couples in the scenarios were not described as one being from a high SES and the other low SES, or one individual being Muslim and the other Catholic. Future research should examine specific combinations of backgrounds to examine whether patterns of findings might show variation as a function of combination type. Furthermore, future research might consider assessing individuals' social identity and social dominance orientation to in order to provide a clear connection to theoretical frameworks. Finally, in both studies I refer to the two individuals in the scenario as "Eric and Kimberly", this may be a limitation as these two names are stereotypically Euro-American names that may not translate the same in a UK population. It may be that it was harder for participants to imagine that study scenario, because the names used were not native to them. Future research might want to use stereotypically British English names.

In conclusion, given the increased number of intergroup romantic relationships, it is important for researchers to distinguish between the different types of intergroup romantic relationships when determining whether these relationships are approved of or not as these types of relationships have unique characteristics and may elicit different responses from bystanders. For instance, we can speculate from our research that perhaps interreligious romantic relationships may be at risk of higher levels of prejudice and discrimination than other intergroup romantic relationships. This implies that individuals in a relationship with someone from a different religious background may receive the least amount of societal support, which can affect the relationship negatively. Thus, our research findings contribute to the intergroup relations literatures and we encourage future research to focus on the perceptions of bystanders regarding different types of intergroup romantic relationships tested

in different cultural contexts where intergroup relations may vary as a function of historical and political context.

## CHAPTER 4

### Intercultural Romantic Relationships, Acculturation, and Bicultural Identity

#### Development

*Chapters 1 through 3 discussed the existing literature on intergroup romantic relationships and introduced studies that examined intergroup dating preferences across different backgrounds (racial/cultural/ethnic, religious, SES) and cultural contexts (UK, US, India). Literature on bystanders' judgements of intergroup romantic relationships was also discussed and empirically tested across different combinations of intergroup romantic relationships (interethnic, interreligious, interSES). This chapter turns to the literature on intercultural romantic relationships and the psychological consequences they bring about.*

*As the essential aspect that composes an intercultural romantic relationship is culture, this chapter begins with a more detailed discussion about its meaning (beyond that of discussions had in previous chapters). Previous research investigating intercultural romantic relationships are discussed. Highlighting the current limited understanding about changes that result from engaging in an intercultural romantic relationship, the theory of acculturation is discussed. Next, findings associated with the acculturation outcome, biculturalism, are examined. The chapter concludes by discussing the need for empirical work that links biculturalism with the experience of being in a romantic relationship with someone from a different culture.*

#### Culture

There are several perspectives concerning the definition of culture (Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952). Culture is generally understood as a shared form of interaction that is passed across generations. Culture includes behaviours and attitudes (e.g., habits, communication, norms, superstitions, stereotypes) as well as artefacts (e.g., art, clothing, and food). In that way, it is a system of shared knowledge (Cohen, 2009; Shiraev & Levy, 2017;

Rohner, 1984). An important aspect of culture is that it can be learned (implicitly and explicitly; Heine, 2010; Hong & Khei, 2014; Richerson & Boyd, 2005).

Understanding an individual's cultural background is important as it provides insight into how they perceive themselves and the world-including how they might behave in different situations and interact with others (Hong & Khei, 2014). More important for this thesis is what happens to perceptions and behaviours when an individual is exposed to more than one cultural repertoire (e.g., through an intercultural romantic relationship). The following section discusses literature on intercultural romantic relationships.

### **Intercultural Romantic Relationships**

An intercultural romantic relationship is a unique context in which each partner is from a different cultural background (e.g., one White American partner and one South Korean partner). This is a unique type of cultural exposure as it is more intimate than other cultural exposures (e.g., studying abroad, immigration) that have been traditionally studied in the social psychological research. According to the most recent data comparing marriages across Europe, nearly one in twelve marriages was intercultural (Lanzieri, 2012). Furthermore, the most recent marriage statistics in the UK shows that one in ten residents is in a cross-cultural relationship (Office for National Statistics, 2014). As there is an increase in individuals forming romantic unions with members from different cultural backgrounds, it is crucial to examine the consequences of being intimately exposed to a different cultural background. The following section examines previous findings on intercultural romantic relationships.

### **Intercultural romantic relationships and identity**

Previous research that focuses on the experience of being in a relationship with someone from a different cultural background has generally aimed at informing marriage counsellors whose work focuses on intercultural couples (e.g., Molina, Estrada, & Burnett, 2004). Research in this field has focused on how these relationships may be difficult,



demanding, and more straining than same-culture counterparts (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). For instance, similar to other types of intergroup romantic relationships (see Chapter 1 for review), members of intercultural romantic relationships are often exposed to social ridicule and disapproval and have more limited social networks than do intracultural couples (e.g. Silvia, Campbell, & Wright, 2012). This negative feedback from social networks has shown to affect cultural transition (a period of adjustment) (Falicov, 1995).

Unique to intercultural romantic relationships, as opposed to other intergroup romantic relationships, is research highlighting that some couples may be unaware of how their cultural differences are influencing their interactions and in other cases some partners experience of culture shock (Falicov, 1995). Falicov (1995) suggests that intercultural couples that are having marital issues may have a distorted view of their cultural similarities and differences and will have trouble distinguishing between problems that arise naturally in a marriage versus arising due to cultural issues.

Literature that has focused on same-culture marriages have extensively documented the link between marital stress and having children (e.g., Berg-Cross, 2001; Jouriles et al, 1991; Tseng & Hsu, 1991). Specifically, the addition of children into a marriage creates a period of adjustment and stress for couples (e.g., Beck, 1988; Deater-Deckard, 2008). For intercultural couples, this marital experience of child-rearing risks increases stress as partners may have different cultural expectations concerning child-rearing practices (Crippen & Brew, 2007). Furthermore, there may be cultural differences in how much extended families play a role in raising their children, which language they want the child to learn, and when necessary, which religion the child will be taught to follow (Crippen & Brew, 2007; Rodriguez-Garcia, 2006). In addition, researchers have suggested that other unique problems that partners in intercultural romantic relationships may experience concern the culturally

different expression of emotion and choosing which holidays will be celebrated (e.g., Sullivan & Cottone, 2006; Horowitz, 1999).

Other research has indicated that couples with more culturally distant backgrounds have a more complicated adjustment than intracultural couples or couples with lower levels of cultural differences (e.g., a relationship between an American and British person) (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). This problem is further enhanced if the couple has difficulty with communication (both verbally and non-verbally) within the relationship (e.g., Cools, 2006; Reiter, & Gee, 2008). Part of research on intercultural marriage has shown that individuals outside of the relationship presume that any relationship difficulty must be due to the cultural differences (e.g., Falicov, 1995; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). The following section shifts focus to adjustment and identity in intercultural romantic relationships.

**Adjustment and identity.** Research that aims to better understand individuals' experiences in intercultural romantic relationships have detected that they are likely to go through a period of adjustment and identity transformation (e.g., Ruebelt, Singaravelu, Daneshpour, & Brown, 2016; Silvia, Campbell, & Wright, 2012), partly to accommodate each other's cultural backgrounds (Falicov, 1995). This experience is unique for each couple. This process of adjustment, documented in the marriage literature has interchangeably been referred to as acculturation, transculturation, adaptation, adjustment, second culture learning, and marital adjustment (Cools, 2006; Markoff, 1977; Silva, Campbell, & Wright, 2012).

Research investigating this process has concluded that intercultural romantic couples go through different stages or phases of adaptation or adjustment (McFadden & Moore, 2001). Proposed solutions have been for one partner to adopt the culture of the other, alternating cultures, mutually agreeing to compromise with both cultures, mixing both cultures, or removing both cultures and creating a new one (for a review see McFadden & Moore, 2001). For example, research conducted by Ruebelt and colleagues (Ruebelt,

Singaravelu, Daneshpour, & Brown, 2016) specifically examined marital adjustment between Iranian American women and their European American husbands. This study found that these couples experience a marital adjustment period that results in the couple creating a shared “reality” or marriage identity that either encompasses aspects of both of their cultural backgrounds in this new identity. This was represented in the way the couples decided to communicate (e.g., languages spoken) or the roles that each partner decides to take on (e.g. cooking, working, and child rearing). Additionally, the new culture or family identity that they create can incorporate or exclude different cultural traditions that come from both cultural backgrounds (Silva, Campbell, & Wright, 2012).

The research that investigates the adjustment within the context of intercultural romantic relationships has provided a more comprehensive view of the consequences that emerge from these specific intergroup relationships. However, this research focuses on the shared journey of adjustment and a shared resulting identity of the partners. This research does not provide an understanding of the consequences of these relationships that are unique to the individual. More specifically, the research does not explore if the individual goes through the process of adjustment and if their own individual identity changes as a result.

It is important to understand the process that the couple, as a unit, goes through, but it is equally important to understand how the partner may change and the outcomes that emerge as a result. To better understand the experience of the individual in an intercultural romantic relationship, the following section focuses on the acculturation literature as it provides a framework for understanding the process that an individual experiences when exposed to more one cultural group.

### **Acculturation**

The process that individuals go through following exposure to more than one culture is called acculturation (Sam & Berry, 2010). Acculturation has been the subject to research in

different social science disciplines, including anthropology, sociology and social psychology (for review see Sam & Berry, 2006). Berry's (1990) seminal work on acculturation specifies this process as psychological adaptation. Original acculturation research studied acculturation primarily as a singular direction process (Sam & Berry, 2010). This meant that an individual exposed to another cultural group was taken as experiencing this process of change as resulting in that individual stripping away their heritage culture and fully immersing themselves into the new cultural group. Therefore, these individuals would assimilate completely into a new culture (e.g., Gordon, 1964; LaFrombosie, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993). Researchers now understand that the process of acculturation can vary across individuals (Berry, 1980). Berry (1994) proposes four different strategies for acculturation, all of which are understood in terms of one's motivation to participate in their own cultural group (heritage) and their motivation to be a part of the new one (non-heritage; Sam & Berry, 2010).

*Assimilation* is conceptualised as a unidimensional process of acculturation (similar to original formulations of acculturation) where an individual fully detaches themselves from the old culture and adopts the new one (Berry, 1997). *Marginalization* describes the process by which individuals detach themselves from both the old and new culture, due to lack of motivation. Those individuals do not engage in behaviours and/or attitudes that reflect their heritage cultural group or their new non-heritage cultural group (Berry, 1997; Sam & Berry, 2010). Individuals who choose to participate in their heritage cultural group and not participate in the non-heritage cultural group are seen to endorse a *separation* strategy of acculturation. Those individuals who are equally motivated to participate in both cultural groups are seen to endorse an *integration* strategy of acculturation (also referred to as biculturalism; e.g., Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martinez, 2011). In this case, the individual maintains the customs of the heritage cultural group but also adopts the customs of the new cultural group (Sam & Berry, 2010), thus allowing the opportunity to develop a bicultural

identity. This latter point is of great importance to this thesis and will be discussed in further detail later in this chapter.

**Choosing an acculturation strategy.** Research has shown that choosing an acculturation strategy can depend on a variety of intra and inter-personal factors. One such factor is an individual's personality which can play a role in how they choose to interact with the two cultures (e.g., Brinkmann & Van der Zee, 1999; Schmitz, 1994). Specifically, an individual who is open to new experiences would be more likely choose a strategy that would result in the participation in the new cultural group, whereas an individual who is less open to new experiences and resistant to change might adopt a strategy that allows them to remain active in their own cultural group (e.g., Van der Zee & Oudenhoven, 2004).

The general policies held by the dominant culture can also influence an individual's acculturation strategy (Benet-Martinez, 2012; Berry & Sam, 2014). For instance, an individual may migrate to a new country in which that country expects them to assimilate to their cultural background. For example, Berry and Sam (2014) proposed that in countries like France, there is a strong desire to remain culturally homogeneous (Berry & Sam, 2014). It is commonly accepted that migrants and other out-group members that relocate to France are expected to behave in culturally-appropriate / culturally-consistent ways, requiring them to strip away their heritage cultural practices and adapt to the dominant culture (Berry & Sam, 2014). Berry and Sabatier (2011) argue that cultures like France, that expect assimilation, make it more psychologically costly to express one's ethnicity.

Finally, Berry and Sam (2014) provide an understanding of how exposure to discriminatory attitudes from members of the dominant culture may result in newcomers' rejection of the new culture and negatively related to psychological and sociocultural adaptation. Overall, it appears that the motivation to acculturate is dependent on individual factors as well as social ones. While these findings are important in understanding the process

of acculturation, they fail to inform on the consequences of it. The following section will discuss findings on the psychosocial outcomes associated with each acculturation strategy.

**Acculturation strategy adjustment.** The type of strategy that individuals use or which category they fall under have been determined in research by methods of self-report measures such as scales, questions pertaining to cultural identification, demographic questions, and one dimensional or two-dimensional scales (Benet-Martinez, 2012). Following the identification of the specific strategy an individual aligns with, researchers are able to determine differences in adjustment outcomes based on acculturation strategy (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013; Tsai & Li, 2012).

Among the four different strategies, research has shown that marginalisation can result in a variety of negative psychological outcomes and is the least beneficial to adopt (Berry, 2003; Berry & Sabatier, 2010). For example, marginalization is associated with high anxiety, depression, anger, and low life satisfaction (for a review see Berry & Sam, 2014).

Conclusions from previous research suggest that those individuals who have adopted the assimilation strategy have poor psychological outcomes and negative sociocultural outcomes like individuals who have adopted the marginalization strategy (Berry, 2003). Individuals that were classified under the separation strategy showed positive psychological outcomes but poor sociocultural outcomes (Berry & Sam, 2014). Individuals who have adopted the separation strategy show outcomes similar to individuals that have adopted the assimilation strategy. For example, these individuals are high on anxiety and anger and have lower life satisfaction (e.g., Neto, 1994).

Furthermore, the integration strategy is most commonly used (Sam & Berry, 2006) and is associated with more positive adjustment outcomes than other strategies (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). These positive adjustment outcomes include higher life satisfaction, self-esteem, career success, and social skills (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). However,

these association appears only when this strategy is measured appropriately (e.g., two dimensionally) (Benet-Martinez, 2012).

Additionally, individuals who are classified as actively using the integration strategy are better able to respond correctly to contextual stimuli, such as being able to respond in a culturally American way when introduced to an American prime (Statue of Liberty) (Benet-Martinez, Leu, Lee, & Morris, 2002; Hong & Khei, 2014). This thesis emphasises the role of biculturalism in psychological adjustment and intercultural relationships. Accordingly, the following section will focus on a more comprehensive understanding of biculturalism.

### **Biculturalism**

Generally, an individual who is motivated to participate equally in two cultural groups will display bicultural practices (e.g., language, media and culinary preferences), values (e.g., individualistic or collectivistic behaviours), and identifications (e.g., cultural identity) that are related to both their heritage and non-heritage cultural groups (LaFrombosie, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013).

As discussed earlier, research has consistently demonstrated a link between acculturation and adjustment, where the most beneficial consequences are demonstrated by those who adopt the integration strategy (Berry, 1997; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Although individuals who adopt the integration strategy have a better opportunity for positive adjustment outcomes, research has shown individual differences within that category (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; Marks, Patton, & Coll, 2011; Hong, Zhan, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2016).

The Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) model explains the differences between bicultural individuals and adjustment based on how they view themselves in relation to their two cultures (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). The BII is used to determine whether bicultural individuals see their heritage culture and their dominant culture as compatible.

Accordingly, individuals who perceive their heritage and new cultures to be compatible identify themselves as living within one culture (high BII). Those who perceive the two cultures to be incompatible, view themselves as living in-between them (low BII) (Benet-Martinez, 2012). These two different bicultural views refer to how the two cultures harmonize and how they blend. It is the individuals who see themselves living within these two cultures (high BII) and not between (low BII) that positive adjustment outcomes are most associated with (Cheng, Lee, Benet-Martinez, & Huynh, 2014). I have previously discussed the consequences that have been documented in the literature when an individual chooses to adopt the integration strategy. I now, further discuss the cognitive consequences that are associated with individuals who are bicultural and have ties to two or more cultural groups.

**Creativity and biculturalism.** One line of research has focused on the cognitive advantages that bicultural individuals have demonstrated when compared to monoculturals. For example, Tadmor, Galinsky, and Maddux (2012) have shown that bicultural individuals achieve greater integrative complexity and this gives them a greater capacity to consider and combine multiple perspectives. This capacity allows them to forge conceptual links among those different perspectives. Biculturals' integrative complexity allows them to effectively conduct information search, have greater tolerance for ambiguous information, and be less susceptible to informational overload (Hong & Khei, 2014).

Compared with mono-cultural individuals, biculturals have greater ability to generate creative uses through fluency, flexibility and novelty (Tadmor et al., 2012). Other research investigating creativity and professional success of bicultural individuals in professional settings has observed that bicultural employees achieve higher promotion rates and have more positive reputations compared to individual who are not bicultural (Tadmor et al., 2012). Researchers have investigated their creative and professional success in the real world by examining how many businesses were started by biculturals, how many new/novel products



or services were invented, and how many process innovations were created. The findings showed that bicultural employees achieved more of these compared with monoculturals (Tadmor et al., 2012).

In addition, bicultural individuals, by having the opportunity to participate in more than one culture, tend to have an awareness of cultural differences and have the ability to act as a mediator between two different cultural groups (Grosjean, 2013). Individuals who may not be considered bicultural, but have had multiple exposures to diverse cultural backgrounds have been examined (e.g., Leung et al., 2008). To potentially understand how an individual in an intercultural romantic relationship may not develop a bicultural identity, but still show consequences; the following section examines the literature that discusses the link between multicultural experience exposure and creativity.

**Multicultural experience and creativity link.** Recent findings have also shown that individuals who have been exposed to different multicultural experiences and are not traditionally perceived as bicultural (e.g. migrant) may also benefit from similar cognitive outcomes. According to Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, and Chiu (2008) a multicultural experience can include any or all direct or indirect experiences with any aspects, such as elements or people from foreign cultures. These experiences can come from living abroad, job transfers, or educational programs. An intercultural romantic relationship may also be a multicultural experience.

Several studies have shown a positive link between exposure to multicultural experiences and creativity (Crisp, 2015; Saad, Damian, Benet-Martinez, Moons, & Robins, 2012; Leung & Chiu, 2010; Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008). Thus, like bicultural persons, individuals who have gained more multicultural experiences display more creativity than those who have not. However, the benefits from these experiences depend on whether an

individual has had, and retains a psychological connection to both cultures (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008).

The multicultural experience-creativity link has been demonstrated in several correlational and experimental studies, both in lab and real-world settings with integrative complexity mediating this relationship (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Some of the tasks used to measure creativity levels that were completed in a lab setting, have had individuals participating in activities such as the Duncker candle problem, constructing a new creative version of the Cinderella fairy tale for young Turkish children, an idea sampling task, a gift generation task, Lego model building, and creating a list of unconventional uses for a common object (Leung, Maddux, Galinsky, & Chiu, 2008).

Generally, individuals use what they have learned from their culture to understand their experiences through their cultural routines and conventional knowledge. Having multicultural experiences, allows individuals to expand their conceptual structures and how they interpret experiences. Therefore, having one culture limits your creativity because what you know about the world is on distinct cultural practices (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Leung and Chiu (2010) stated that original ideas often result from combining two or more seemingly non-overlapping concepts, and this creative conceptual expansion process has been singled out as an original cognitive process that produces extraordinary results in everyday creative pursuits. This leads to more out-of-the-box thinking (Cheng & Leung, & Wu 2011).

Having a multicultural experience has beneficial effects on cognitive complexity and cognitive flexibility (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Previous research findings suggest that multicultural experiences allow for opportunities to advance individuals' cognitive complexity, and increase their ability to draw upon what is known in different cultures to meet current task demands, fostering and expansion of creative ideas (Leung & Chiu, 2010; Chiu & Hong, 2005). Additionally, from these multicultural experiences, individuals can

switch quickly from culture to culture when presented with different cultural cues (Leung & Chiu, 2010).

The theory of motivated cultural cognition suggests that we actively use the intellectual resources from different cultures and that we do not passively receive cultural influences (Chiu, Morris, Hong, & Menon, 2000). We then are motivated to use these different resources to help address any current matters. Leung and Chiu (2010) posit that two of the driving forces that motivate individuals is the need for cognitive closure (NFCC) and existential terror. These two motivations have shown to hinder the link between multicultural experiences and creativity (the generation of new and original ideas) (Leung & Chiu, 2010). Additionally, others have argued that being in these types of cultural encounters can, for some individuals, trigger negative emotional reactions such as fear, anxiety, and anger, all targeted towards individuals from the cultural context that is creating these unwanted feelings (Cheng, Leung, & Wu, 2011). However, these exposures can also lead to the elicitation of integrative emotional reactions such as, admiration for desirable qualities or achievements of a foreign culture. This can then lead to enhances in creativity and a more readily engagement in cognitive process, implicated in creative thinking (Cheng & Leung, & Wu, 2011).

Being a part of more than one culture can lead to individuals becoming aware and focusing on the contrasts between the two cultures. Having this heightened awareness of the contrasting cultures coupled with a strong in-group identification can lead to an individual blocking the influences from the new cultural context, which then hinders creativity instead of fostering it (e.g., Leung & Chiu, 2010). However, this heightened sense of cultural differences can also lead to an admiration of ideas from different cultures, and that in turn increases creativity (Cheng, Leung, & Wu, 2011). Cheng, Leung, and Wu (2011) argue that effortful processing of combining seemingly incompatible cultural knowledge can lower positive affect or increase negative affect, which can in turn motivate an individual to have a deeper level of

cognitive processing of cultural discrepancies and inspire creativity. Furthermore, the effects of mood states on creativity are context dependent. Some research points to positive mood leading to greater creativity, whereas, other researchers have found that negative moods can also lead to greater creativity (Cheng, Leung, & Wu, 2011).

To summarize, the literature that has been documented has provided us with a framework of understanding the experiences of individuals who are exposed cultures other than their own. Exposure to other cultural backgrounds (by reasons of migration, immigration or travel) leads to a process of acculturation which can impact psychological and sociocultural adjustment. Accordingly, the acculturation strategy of integration/biculturalism (participate in both cultural groups) allows the development of a bicultural identity which is associated with several intrapersonal (e.g. decreased anxiety and depression, greater satisfaction with life), interpersonal (openness to diversity), and cognitive outcomes (e.g. increased creativity).

The literature on intercultural marriages, acculturation, biculturalism, and multicultural experiences falls short as it rarely focuses on the experience of being in an intercultural romantic relationship. Do these individuals go through the process of psychological acculturation? If they are able to go through the process of acculturation, is it similar to other individuals that are exposed to more than one culture in a different context? Thus, are these individuals able to adopt one of the four acculturation strategies and if so will the consequences associated with those strategies similarly apply to the individuals in the romantic relationship context? These are all important questions to consider. Therefore, in an effort to provide clarity in the literature concerning what happens to an individual in an intercultural romantic relationship, the next chapter empirically investigates bicultural identity development in the context of an intercultural romantic relationship and associated outcomes.

## Chapter 5

### Biculturalism in Intercultural Romantic Relationships

The boundaries that were once in place, limiting opportunities for intergroup contact, have greatly decreased, in part due to migration, economic growth, globalization, the ease of digital communication, and mass tourism. As a result, cultural diversity has become an everyday reality in many parts of the world. This has led to an increase in the attention paid to the study of psychological consequences resulting from the repeated exposure to different cultural backgrounds (e.g., Benet-Martinez, 2018; Berry, 2005; for a recent review see Ward & Geeraert, 2016). One noticeable development resulting from this growing intercultural contact and mixing is the increasing numbers of individuals who consider themselves bicultural or multicultural (Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007).

Biculturalism has been defined through individuals' demographic characteristics (e.g., mixed race or mixed ethnic), individuals self-categorizing as bicultural (e.g., I am bicultural) or as those who have been exposed to and have internalized characteristics of two different cultural groups (LaFromboise, Coleman, & Gerton, 1993; Luna, Ringberg, & Peracchio, 2008; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007; Padilla, 2006).<sup>i</sup>

Bicultural individuals may be those who are immigrants, migrants, refugees, sojourners, indigenous people, ethnic minorities, mixed-ethnic individuals, international students, and asylum seekers (Arasaratnam, 2013; Benet-Martinez, 2018; Benet-Martinez & Hong, 2014; Crippen & Brew, 2007; Marks, Patton, & Coll, 2011; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). Researchers have also suggested that individuals who are in an intercultural romantic relationship can be bicultural (Huynh, Nguyen, & Benet-Martinez, 2011; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). To my knowledge, however, this assertion has not been previously examined. In the current study, I aimed to fill this important gap in the literature by examining biculturalism in the context of intercultural romantic

relationships, where individuals are exposed to two cultural backgrounds over an extended period.

Individuals in intercultural romantic relationships are those who consider themselves to be from a different cultural background than of their partner (e.g., an intercultural couple consisting of an individual of Mexican background and an individual of White-British background) (Ruebelt, Singaravelu, Daneshpour, & Brown, 2016; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006; Yahya & Boag, 2014). Over the last few decades, the number of individuals in a romantic relationship with someone from a different cultural background has increased rapidly (e.g., Lee & Bean, 2004). Specifically, in the United Kingdom the number of people in a relationship from a different ethnic group has increased from 660,000 in 2001 to 1.2 million in 2011 (Bingham, 2014).

The increasing rates of individuals in intercultural romantic relationships led researchers to investigate how being in these relationships shapes individuals' identity and other important psychological outcomes. In the absence of any literature specifically focusing on bicultural identity development within the context of intercultural romantic relationships I turn to literature focusing on bicultural individuals studied in other groups (e.g., immigrants; mixed ethnic individuals).

### **Biculturalism and Acculturation**

The process of change that arises from contact occurring between individuals from different cultural groups has been studied in the field of acculturation (Berry, 1997; Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Redfield, Linton, & Herskovits, 1936). The bidimensional model of acculturation asserts that individuals can maintain attachment to both cultures without sacrificing one for the other (Berry & Sabatier, 2010; Lou, Lalonde, & Wong, 2015; West, Zhang, Yampolsky, & Sasaki, 2017). This approach suggests that individuals can adopt an acculturation strategy that reflects their motivation and behaviours towards participating in

their heritage culture and participating in their non-heritage culture (Berry, 2005).

Biculturalism, also referred to as integration within the framework of acculturation, is one of the four acculturation outcomes (along with assimilation, marginalization, and separation) (Berry & Sam, 1997; Crisp & Turner, 2010; Huynh et al., 2011; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2007; Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012). However, knowing which acculturation strategy an individual prefers or adopts behaviourally does not reveal how s/he navigates the two cultural worlds and their possible intersection. I now turn to literature capturing how individuals think and feel about being bicultural.

### **Bicultural Identity Integration (BII)**

Expanding on the theory of acculturation and the integration strategy, researchers have investigated how bicultural individuals accommodate or move between cultural groups (e.g., Benet-Martinez, 2018; West et al., 2017) and the associated psychological and sociocultural consequences (e.g., Hong, Zhan, Morris, & Benet-Martinez, 2016). This line of research is important as it provides insight into the process, rather than just the outcome, of acculturation and examines why some biculturals might show greater benefit than other biculturals.

The concept of Bicultural Identity Integration (BII) takes the perceived relationship between the two cultures into account (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005). The BII framework examines individual differences in bicultural individuals' subjective beliefs of whether the two cultural groups are compatible, overlapping, and harmonizing or separate, oppositional, and conflicting (Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005; for recent reviews of the accumulated literature on BII see Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Cheng, in press). On one hand, biculturals high on BII experience their two cultural orientations as compatible and easy to integrate, and see themselves as part of a combined culture. On the other hand, individuals low on BII perceive tension and conflict between their cultures and feel that they are caught in-between (Benet-Martinez, 2018). Whether biculturals are high or low on BII can vary as a

function of several individual and group level factors including personality, perceived cultural distance, and government policies (Benet-Martinez, 2018; Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Cheng, in press). Research has shown that BII moderates different psychological processes, such as cultural frame switching (Mok, Cheng, & Morris, 2010; Chiou, 2016), and is also associated with different outcomes, such as level of anxiety (Hirsh & Kang, 2015) and cognitive complexity (Benet-Martinez, Lee, & Leu, 2006). Thus, in addition to examining whether individuals self-label as being bicultural, it is important to consider and assess BII.

### **Biculturalism Correlates and Outcomes**

Individuals, who adopt an integration acculturation strategy and have developed a bicultural identity, have shown to be more culturally competent and more likely to display behaviours (e.g., foods eaten, clothing worn, participating in cultural traditions) and attitudes (e.g., cultural norms) that relate to both cultural groups (e.g., LaFromboise et al., 1993). Research points to the bicultural strategy as the most adopted (e.g., Van Oudenhoven, Ward & Masgoret, 2006) and most beneficial to adopt as it is associated with more positive outcomes (e.g., greater psychological and sociocultural adjustment) compared with other acculturation strategies (Sam & Berry, 2010; Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Brown et al., 2013; Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013).

Being motivated to participate in both heritage and non-heritage cultural groups (i.e., biculturalism), is linked to positive cognitive, social, and psychological outcomes in both intrapersonal and interpersonal domains (see Table 1 in meta-analysis by Nguyen & Benet-Martinez, 2013). This biculturalism-adjustment link is stronger than the association between having one culture (dominant or heritage) and adjustment. Biculturalism is associated positively with life satisfaction, self-esteem, curiosity, social skills, subjective well-being, self-concept clarity, higher optimism, and increased gratitude (Berry & Sabatier, 2011; Brown et al., 2013; Lou, Lalonde, & Wilson, 2011; Stroink & Lalonde, 2009; Yamaguchi, Kim,



Oshio, & Akutsu, 2016). It is also associated with lower depression, distress, pessimism, social anxiety, and perceived stress (Yamaguchi et al., 2016). Additionally, bicultural individuals tend to have higher professional success (Tadmor, Galinsky, & Maddux, 2012) and more diverse social networks (Mok, Morris, Benet-Martinez, & Karakitapoglu-Aygun, 2007; Repke & Benet-Martinez, 2018).

Furthermore, researchers have identified a positive link between biculturalism and cognitive functioning (see Crisp & Turner, 2010 for an overview). As a result of managing norms and expectations from different cultural groups and repeatedly engaging in cultural frame switching, biculturals have greater integrative complexity, which is linked to increased creativity (Cheng, Sanchez-Burks, & Lee, 2008; Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014; Tadmor et al., 2012). Having integrative complexity is also associated with the ability to engage in effective information search, having greater tolerance for ambiguous information, and being less susceptible to information overload (Hong & Khei, 2014). Following these past findings, we investigated biculturalism in the context of romantic relationships assessing intrapersonal (including cognitive) and interpersonal outcomes.

### **Intercultural Romantic Relationships and Biculturalism**

Berry (2008) argued that the process of acculturation begins when people from two different cultural groups interact. In line with this, Crisp and Turner (2010) argued that all individuals exposed to different cultures can acculturate, not just immigrants, the group that has been most frequently studied. For example, researchers have begun to investigate acculturation among tourists as a way of understanding their motivation to participate in the destination culture while also maintaining their heritage culture (e.g., Rasmi, Ng, Lee, & Soutar, 2014). Additionally, research has also explored the acculturation process for majority culture members who are situated in their heritage environment, but are adapting to individuals coming into their environment from different cultural backgrounds (e.g.,

Lefringhausen & Marshall, 2016). This research suggests that acculturation is a two-way process and that members in the receiving group acculturate as well (Huagen & Kunst, 2017). Following this, we would also expect individuals in intercultural romantic relationships to experience acculturation as they are exposed to their heritage culture and their partner's culture (non-heritage) and would need to process and adjust accordingly.

Research on intercultural marriages that used an acculturation framework in exploring how intercultural couples adjust to each other's culture and practices (e.g., Wieling, 2003) and create a family/marriage identity (e.g., Crippen & Brew, 2007; Ruebelt et al., 2016) is rare and it has not examined partners' bicultural identity development (and related outcomes) in the context of such relationships. In addition, research on intercultural relationships has examined relationship satisfaction, perceptions of cultural similarities/differences, and social support within such relationships (e.g., Crippen & Brew, 2007; Ruebelt et al., 2016; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006; Wise & Velayutham, 2008), without considering individuals' possible bicultural identity development in these relationships and its related outcomes. Therefore, research is needed to investigate individuals' bicultural identity and related outcomes in intercultural romantic relationships.

The aim of the current study was to investigate bicultural identity in the context of intercultural romantic relationships. To this end, I first examined whether these majority-culture individuals in an intercultural romantic relationship identify themselves as bicultural (self-labelling, "I am bicultural") and how they experience (think and feel about) their dual cultural involvement (Bicultural Identity Integration). Second, I examined whether the possible associations between biculturalism and psychological outcomes (e.g., satisfaction with life; creativity; attitudes towards diversity) reported in the immigrant literature also emerge for bicultural identity developed in the context of intercultural romantic relationships. Third, to investigate the influence of the partner on individuals' bicultural identity

development, I examined the participants' perception of their partner's heritage and non-heritage cultural orientation. Finally, I examine the roles of relationship satisfaction, perceived cultural similarity, and perceived social approval as moderating factors that may shape bicultural identity development in the context of intercultural romantic relationships.

## **Method**

### **Participants**

Using G\*Power software, we conducted a power analysis which suggested a sample size of 129 for a statistical power of .95 with a medium effect size (.25). Expecting to lose participants who did not meet the study criteria of identifying as White British<sup>2</sup>, and being in a romantic relationship with someone from a different cultural background, I recruited 382 participants through Prolific Academic (a UK-based crowdsourcing for scientific research, see Peer, Brandimarte, Samat, & Acquisti, 2017) (receiving a pay rate of £5 per hour), university's research participation scheme (in exchange of course credit), through posters and online adverts, social media, university newsletters, and by word of mouth (gaining a chance of receiving a £100 Amazon Voucher in a raffle). After excluding 186 participants who did not meet at least one of the study criteria, a final sample of 196 (111 women) ( $M_{age} = 38.42$ ,  $SD = 11.71$ ) was retained for analyses.

### **Procedure and Materials<sup>3</sup>**

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<sup>2</sup> Given this is, to my knowledge, the first study designed to investigate bicultural identity in the context of intercultural romantic relationships, I decided to keep the sample ethnically/culturally homogenous for increased control in making meaning of the findings.

<sup>3</sup> In addition to the measures described below, I also assessed participant's previous multicultural experiences and attitudes using the Multicultural Experiences Questionnaire (MEQ) (Narvaez, & Hill, 2010). The MEQ was excluded from the analyses, as, in hindsight, the scale did not allow teasing apart whether participants' multicultural experiences were shaped by their current intercultural romantic relationship or their experiences prior to their current relationship.

Participants completed the study online, presented to them as one designed to examine experiences of being in an intercultural romantic relationship. They provided demographic information and answered questions about their current and previous romantic relationships, and completed several measures I describe below.

**Romantic relationship questions.** After giving consent, participants were asked to indicate whether they are in an intercultural romantic relationship (yes/no).<sup>4</sup> Participants who answered negatively were taken to the end of the survey. Participants who responded positively continued to indicate their relationship status (e.g., married, dating) and how long they have been in this romantic relationship. They also indicated whether they have previously been in an intercultural romantic relationship (yes/no).

**Bicultural identity.** We assessed bicultural identity focusing on its two possible origins. Participants completed two items: “I consider myself to be bicultural mainly because of my exposure to my current partner’s culture” (BI-R) and “I consider myself to be bicultural mainly because of my own upbringing” (BI-U) (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree).

Participants also completed a 6-item scale that assessed whether they viewed their own and their partner’s culture as compatible. These items were adapted from the Bicultural Identity Integration Scale (BIIS-1; Benet-Martinez & Haritatos, 2005) to fit the relationship context examined in this study. Example items are: “I feel part of a combined culture that includes my and my partner’s culture”, “I am conflicted between my culture and my partner’s

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<sup>4</sup> An intercultural romantic relationship was defined to participants as a relationship consisting of partners in a couple belonging to two different cultural groups. I accompanied this definition by the following example: ‘For example, an intercultural couple could consist of one partner whose background is British and the other partner whose background is Mexican.’

cultures' way of doing things" (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) ( $\alpha = .79$ ).<sup>5</sup>

**National identity.** To assess the extent to which participants felt British and attached to that identity, I included a modified 3-item measure from the Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (Phinney, 1992). Participants responded to one item related to identity belongingness (I feel that I am apart of British Culture) and to two items related to affirmation aspects of identity (I am proud of being British; I am happy to be British) (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) ( $\alpha = .85$ ).

**Self and partner acculturation orientation.** Acculturation orientation was assessed by an adapted version of the 8-item Brief Acculturation Orientation Scale (BAOS) (Demes & Geeraert, 2014), with four items assessing orientation towards own heritage cultural (British) background (e.g., It is important to me to have friends from my own cultural background,  $\alpha = .86$ ), the other four items assessing orientation towards one's partner's cultural background (e.g., It is important to me to take part in traditions from my partner's cultural background,  $\alpha = .86$ ). Next, participants responded to the same 8 items, this time based on their perception of their partner's acculturation orientation (e.g., partner heritage cultural orientation: "It is important to my partner to have friends from his/her own cultural background",  $\alpha = .87$ ; partner non-heritage cultural orientation: "It is important to my partner to hold on to characteristics of my cultural background",  $\alpha = .89$ ).

### Outcome variables

**Satisfaction with life.** The 5-item Satisfaction with Life Scale (Diener, Larson, & Griffin (1995) was used to measure participants life satisfaction (e.g., "In most ways, my life is close to ideal", "So far, I have gotten the important things I want in life") (1 = Strongly

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<sup>5</sup> A factor analysis confirmed that a one factor solution best fit the covariation among the 6 BII items (see Manzi, Ferrari, Rosnati, & Benet-Martinez, 2014; Repke & Benet-Martinez, 2018; for examples of relevant studies that have also relied on a single composite of BII scores).

Disagree to 7 = Strongly Agree) ( $\alpha = .88$ ).

**Attitudes towards diversity.** I measured participants' attitudes towards diversity using a modified version of a 6-item measure from the International Social Survey Program: National Identity II-ISSP 2003 (Diez-Medrano et al., 2002) (e.g., "It is impossible for people who do not share Britain's customs and traditions to become fully British", "Immigrants are generally good for Britain's economy") (1 = Strongly Disagree to 7 = Extremely Agree) ( $\alpha = .81$ ).

**Creativity tasks.** Participants completed the Unusual Uses Test (Guilford, 1967; Saad, Damian, Benet-Martinez, Moons, & Robins, 2012) which assesses ideational fluency and creative originality. Participants were shown a picture of a single brick and asked to list as many uses for the brick as possible. Two independent raters, blind to the study, counted the number of independent ideas generated to assess ideational fluency (interrater reliability, 74%). Inconsistencies were resolved by discussion. They then rated the subjective originality of the total uses described on a scale from 1 (Not at all Original) to 10 (Extremely Original).

Participants also completed the Dunker Candle Problem (Dunker, 1945; Maddux, Adam, & Galinsky, 2010) which assesses insight creativity. Participants were presented with a picture that showed a candle, a box of matches, and a box of tacks on the top of a table next to a wall. Using only the objects on the table, participants were asked "How can you attach the candle to the wall so that the candle burns properly and does not drip wax on the table." Participants were also told that the table was attached to the wall and could not be moved. To solve the problem correctly participants needed to use of the box of tacks as a candleholder, the box of tacks needs to be emptied and tacked to the wall with the candle inside. Responses were coded as 1 = correct, 2 = partially correct [i.e., suggested candle be put in the box, but not attached to the wall], or 3 = incorrect). This problem is typically used to measure creative insight because participants need to have the ability to realize that objects can have different

functions. Participants were told this task was to measure problem solving abilities, and were asked to write the solution to the problem underneath the picture.

### **Moderators**

**Relationship satisfaction.** The Relationship Assessment Scale (Hendrick, 1988) was used to measure general relationship satisfaction. Participants responded to 7 items using a 5-point Likert scale with different response options (e.g., “How well does your partner meet your needs” [1 = Poorly to 5 = Extremely Well], “How satisfied are you with your relationship” [1 = Unsatisfied to 5 = Extremely Satisfied]) ( $\alpha = .91$ ).<sup>6</sup>

**Cultural similarity.** Cultural similarity was measured using the 12-item Brief Perceived Cultural Distance Scale (BPCDS) (Demes & Geeraert, 2014). Participants were asked to think about their cultural background and their partner’s cultural background and indicate how similar or different their cultural backgrounds (1 = Very Different to 7 = Very Similar) based on different cultural aspects (e.g., family life, people, language, social norms, food, natural environment) ( $\alpha = .90$ ).

**Social approval.** Participants responded to 5 questions on whether they believed that people in the UK approve of intercultural romantic relationships in general and whether they believed, specifically relating to their own intercultural relationship, that their friends, family, partner’s friends, and partner’s family approved of intercultural romantic relationships (1 = extremely disapprove to 7 = extremely approve) ( $\alpha = .73$ ).

Finally, participants were thanked and debriefed. The study ended with the following question: “For an accurate interpretation of the results, your honesty is import to us. While completing the Brick or Candle wax tasks, did you use outside help? For example, did you ask a friend or use the internet?” (yes/no). One participant who responded positively to this

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<sup>6</sup> Due to an oversight, the label “extremely” was omitted from the response options for both items.

question was excluded from the analyses.

## Results

### Correlations

Table 1 presents the demographic background of participants' partner. Table 2 presents descriptive statistics for study variables. Correlations between study variables are presented in Table 3 and regression results can be found in Table 4.<sup>7</sup>

### Regression analyses

I conducted a series of multiple regression analyses to investigate the predictive value of our predictor variables (participant's and their partner's heritage and non-heritage cultural orientation, British identity, and the length of relationship) with regard to two bicultural identity-related criterion variables (self-reported bicultural identity through relationship [BI-R] and BII). In each model I controlled for whether or not participants reported having been in a previous intercultural romantic relationship (yes/no) and their self-reported bicultural identity through upbringing (BI-U) to capture the unique identity development through their current intercultural romantic relationship.

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<sup>7</sup> Among the demographic questions that may be of interest, religiosity or religious identity of partners [same or different] was not related to bicultural identity development,  $ps > .05$ ). Being bilingual/multilingual was associated with BI-R [ $r = .19, p < .01$ ], but not with BII,  $p = .83$ ). Participants also indicated whether their partner was born in Britain (yes/no). If no, participants indicated how long their partner has been living in Britain. We found that partners' length of stay in Britain was correlated with BII [ $r = .33, p < .01$ ], but not with BI-R,  $p = .15$ .



Table 1

*Ethnic Origin of Partner described by Participant*

Partner Background			
Arabic (2)	Caribbean	Italian (4)	Pathan
American (18)	Cypriot	Indonesian	Polish (5)
Algerian (2)	Chinese (5)	Irish (6)	Polynesian
Australian (2)	Colombian	Jewish American	Philippines
Afghan	Czech	Japanese (7)	Russian (3)
Ashkenazi Jewish	Croatian	Korean (2)	Sri Lankan
Austrian (2)	Dutch (4)	Latin American	Spanish (2)
Asian Indian	Ecuadorean	Lebanese	Spanish Asian
Afrikaans	Filipino (6)	Middle Eastern (2)	Slovakian
Argentinian	Fijian	Malaysian (3)	South African Asian
Asian (4)	French	Malay Malaysian	South African (3)
Brazilian	Greek	Mexican (3)	South American Latin
Black African (7)	Greek Cypriot	Mongolian Chinese	South East Asian
Black Caribbean (2)	German	Native American (3)	Thai (4)
Black Indian	Hong Kong Chinese	New Zealander (2)	Tunisian
Bangladeshi (2)	Hispanic	North African	Turkish-Cypriot
Belarusian	Indian (8)	Pakistani (6)	Vietnamese
	Iraqi Arab	Palestinian	Zambian

Note. (N) = number of participants that described their partner as being from that background.

Table 2

*Means, Standard Deviations, and Scale Properties for all Variables.*

<i>Variables</i>	<i>Scale Range</i>	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Frequency</i>
Age		38.42	11.71	
Perceived cultural similarity	1-7 (very similar)	3.77	1.38	
British identity	1-7 (strongly agree)	5.65	1.32	
Participant heritage cultural orientation	1-7 (strongly agree)	4.32	1.38	
Participants non-heritage cultural orientation	1-7 (strongly agree)	4.71	1.19	
Partner heritage cultural orientation	1-7 (strongly agree)	5.04	1.24	
Partner non-heritage cultural orientation	1-7 (strongly agree)	4.45	1.29	
Satisfaction with life	1-7 (strongly agree)	4.57	1.27	
Attitudes towards diversity	1-7 (extremely agree)	5.17	1.13	
Perceived social approval	1-7 (extremely agree)	5.65	.98	
Previous dating experience				Yes (34.7%) No (65.3%)
BI-R	1-7 (strongly agree)	4.17	1.78	
BI-U	1-7 (strongly agree)	2.93	1.67	
BII	1-7 (strongly agree)	5.30	1.12	
Relationship satisfaction	1-5 (satisfied)	4.27	.79	
Ideational fluency		6.78	4.38	
Creative originality	1-10	5.23	1.65	
Insight creativity		1.74	.73	Correct (52%) Incorrect (48%)
Relationship Length		141.05	112.83	

Table 3

*Correlations Between Variables.*

Variables	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.	7.	8.	9.	10.	11.	12.	13.	14.	15.	16.	17.	18.	19.
1.Age	-																		
2.Perceived cultural similarity	.06	-																	
3.British Identity	.02	.12	-																
4.Heritage Cultural Orientation	.19**	.08	.45**	-															
5.Non Heritage Cultural Orientation	.09	.03	.27**	.47**	-														
6.Partner Heritage Cultural Orientation	.15*	-.05	.13	.40**	.51**	-													
7.Partner non Heritage Cultural Orientation	.10	.03	.35**	.54**	.51**	.47**	-												
8.Satisfaction With Life	-.09	.08	.23**	.09	.19**	-.03	.07	-											
9.Attitudes Towards Diversity	-.04	.05	-.24**	-.24**	-.08	-.001	-.18*	.04	-										
10.1.Perceived Social Approval	-.02	.15*	.29**	.16*	.25**	.04	.21**	.23**	-.01	-									
11.Previous Dating Experience	-.04	.03	.09	.06	-.01	.03	-.01	.01	-.01	.003	-								
12.BI-R	.29**	.02	-.03	.05	.23**	.22**	.07	.13	.09	.004	-.09	-							
13.BI-U	.05	-.06	-.03	-.12	.03	.05	-.05	.06	-.09	-.01	-.22**	.20**	-						
14.BII	.13	.19**	.20**	-.08	-.04	-.19**	.05	.25**	.07	.26**	.08	.04	-.06	-					
15.Relationship Satisfaction	-.08	.23**	.19*	-.07	.08	-.12	.06	.49**	.04	.21**	.04	.02	-.09	.38**	-				
16. Ideational Fluency	-.07	-.06	-.12	-.06	-.02	.04	-.09	.004	.12	.03	-.12	.002	-.03	-.02	-.02	-			
17.Creative Originality	.06	-.04	-.08	-.07	-.07	-.06	-.04	.02	.19**	.08	-.09	-.03	-.14	.05	-.04	.71**	-		
18.Insight Creativity	.10	.05	.08	.05	-.02	-.11	-.004	.05	-.11	-.02	-.12	.08	-.01	.07	.05	-.12	-.22**	-	
19. Relationship Length	.71**	.10	.003	.11	-.02	.02	.02	-.02	.03	-.03	.05	.19**	.05	.20**	-.11	.09	.10	.13	-

Note. \* p < .05, \*\* p < .01

**Bicultural identity (BI-R).** The multiple regression analysis with BI-R as the criterion variable revealed an overall significant model,  $F(8, 185) = 4.92, p < .000, R^2 = .18$ , with relationship length,  $\beta = .003, t(185) = 3.13, p = .002$ , participants' non-heritage cultural orientation,  $\beta = .35, t(185) = 2.73, p = .01$ , partner's heritage cultural orientation,  $\beta = .25, t(185) = 2.08, p = .04$ , and BI-U,  $\beta = .18, t(185) = 2.39, p = .02$ , emerging as significant positive predictors. Strength of British identity ( $\beta = -.07, p = .49$ ), participants' heritage cultural orientation ( $\beta = -.08, p = .52$ ), partner's non-heritage cultural orientation ( $\beta = -.11, p = .37$ ), and previous dating experience ( $\beta = -.28, p = .28$ ) did not significantly predict BI-R.

**BII.** The same analysis with BII as the criterion variable revealed an overall significant model,  $F(8, 184) = 4.51, p < .000, R^2 = .16$ , with a similar percentage of variance explained as in BI-R. Relationship length,  $\beta = .002, t(184) = 2.92, p = .004$ , partner's heritage,  $\beta = -.19, t(184) = -2.62, p = .01$ , and non-heritage cultural orientation,  $\beta = .15, t(184) = 1.95, p = .05$ , participant's heritage cultural orientation  $\beta = -.21, t(184) = -2.76, p = .01$ , and strength of British identity  $\beta = .23, t(184) = 3.43, p = .001$ , emerged as significant predictors of BII. Participants non-heritage cultural orientation acculturation ( $\beta = .04, p = .64$ ), previous dating experience ( $\beta = .12, p = .46$ ), and BI-U ( $\beta = -.04, p = .41$ ) did not significantly predict BII.

**Moderators.** I also examined the moderating role of relationship satisfaction, perceived cultural similarity, and perceived social approval in separate regressions with each of these variables and their interaction with main study variables entered into the above described regression models.

Including social approval as a moderating variable revealed an overall significant main effect model,  $F(9, 184) = 4.35, p < .000, R^2 = .18$ , and full model,  $F(12, 181) = 3.29, p < .000, R^2 = .18$ . Social approval ( $\beta = -.02, p = .88$ ) did not emerge as a significant predictor of BI-R. There were no significant interactions (social approval x length of relationship,  $\beta$

= .001,  $p = .41$ ; social approval x heritage acculturation,  $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p = .61$ ; social approval x non-heritage acculturation,  $\beta = .02$ ,  $p = .88$ ).

Table 4

*Regression outcomes for the predicting BI-R and BII*

	BI-R			BII		
Overall Model	$F(8, 185) = 4.92, p < .000, R^2 = .18$			$F(8, 184) = 4.51, p < .000, R^2 = .16$		
<i>Predictors</i>	$\beta$	$t$	$p$	$\beta$	$t$	$p$
Participant heritage cultural orientation	-.08	-.64	.52	-.21	-2.76	<b>.01</b>
Participant non-heritage cultural orientation	.35	2.73	<b>.01</b>	.04	.47	.64
British identity	-.07	-.69	.49	.23	3.43	<b>.001</b>
Length of relationship	.003	3.13	<b>.002</b>	.002	2.92	<b>.004</b>
Partners heritage cultural orientation	.25	2.08	<b>.04</b>	-.19	-2.62	<b>.01</b>
Partners non-heritage cultural orientation	-.11	-.91	.37	.15	1.95	<b>.05</b>
<i>Controlled variables</i>						
BI-UP	.18	2.39	.02	-.04	-.83	.41
Previous dating experience	-.28	-1.09	.28	.12	.74	.46

Exploring the moderating role of relationship satisfaction, both the main effects  $F(9, 184) = 4.61, p < .000, R^2 = .18$  and full model  $F(9, 184) = 3.50, p < .000, R^2 = .19$  were significant overall. In the full model relationship satisfaction ( $\beta = .22, p = .17$ ) does not emerge as significant predictor. There were no significant interactions between relationship satisfaction and length of relationship ( $\beta = .000, p = .77$ ), heritage acculturation ( $\beta = -.07, p = .58$ ), and non-heritage acculturation ( $\beta = .09, p = .48$ ),

Finally, investigating the role of cultural similarity as a moderator, results from this analysis showed an overall significant main effects  $F(9, 184) = 4.35, p < .000, R^2 = .18$  and full model  $F(12, 181) = 3.47, p < .000, R^2 = .19$ . Cultural similarity ( $\beta = .02, p = .82$ ) was not a significant predictor. Additionally, there were no significant interactions (cultural similarity

x length of relationship,  $\beta = .000$ ,  $p = .62$ ; social cultural similarity x heritage acculturation,  $\beta = -.13$ ,  $p = .12$ ; cultural similarity x non-heritage acculturation,  $\beta = .04$ ,  $p = .66$ ).

I also tested participant sex as a moderator variable. The regression analyses revealed an overall significant main effects model,  $F(9,184) = 4.57$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .18$ , and overall full model,  $F(12,181) = 3.84$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $R^2 = .20$ . Length of relationship ( $\beta = .003$ ,  $t(181) = 3.26$ ,  $p = .001$ ), non-heritage acculturation ( $\beta = .34$ ,  $t(181) = 2.62$ ,  $p = .01$ ), BI-U ( $\beta = .18$ ,  $t(192) = 2.37$ ,  $p = .02$ ), and partner heritage acculturation ( $\beta = .24$ ,  $t(192) = 2.01$ ,  $p = .05$ ) remained a significant predictors of BI-R. Participant sex ( $\beta = -.52$ ,  $p = .04$ ), British identity ( $\beta = -.06$ ,  $p = .58$ ), heritage acculturation ( $\beta = -.03$ ,  $p = .82$ ), partner non-heritage acculturation ( $\beta = -.15$ ,  $p = .23$ ), and previous romantic relationship ( $\beta = -.25$ ,  $p = .33$ ) did not emerged as a significant predictor. There was a significant interaction between sex and heritage acculturation ( $\beta = .39$ ,  $t(181) = -1.98$ ,  $p = .05$ ). However, there was not a significant interaction between sex and relationship length ( $\beta = .001$ ,  $p = .53$ ), or between sex and non-heritage culture ( $\beta = -.09$ ,  $p = .68$ ).

In none of the three models did any of the moderators emerge as significant predictors, nor did they interact significantly with any of the study variables. This indicates that level of perceived social approval, relationship satisfaction and cultural similarity vis-à-vis one's partner were not associated with bicultural identity in the context of intercultural romantic relationships.

**Outcomes associated with biculturalism.** I conducted multiple regression analyses to examine the predictive power of BI-R and BII for psychological outcomes associated with biculturalism while controlling for BI-U. The outcome variables included three measures of creativity (insight creativity, ideational fluency, and creative originality), satisfaction with life, and attitudes towards diversity. The regression analysis with satisfaction with life as the criterion variable revealed an overall significant model,  $F(3,191) = 5.49$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $R^2 = .08$ ,

with BII emerging as the only significant predictor,  $\beta = .28$ ,  $t(191) = 3.58$ ,  $p < .001$ . The regression analyses with insight creativity, originality, ideational fluency, and attitudes towards diversity as criterion variables all revealed nonsignificant models ( $F(3,191) = .77$ ,  $p = .51$ ,  $R^2 = .01$ ,  $F(3,183) = 1.31$ ,  $p = .27$ ,  $F(3,183) = .09$ ,  $p = .96$ ,  $R^2 = .002$ ,  $F(3,191) = 1.71$ ,  $p = .17$ ,  $R^2 = .03$ , respectively).

### Discussion

In the absence of previous research on bicultural identity emerging in the context of intercultural romantic relationships, this study attempted to fill this important gap in the literature. First, I found evidence that individuals in an intercultural romantic relationship can self-identify as bicultural due to their experience of being in an intercultural romantic relationship. This type of bicultural identity was predicted by the length of this relationship, White British individuals having a desire and motivation to participate in their partner's culture, and their perception that their partner has a desire and motivation to participate in their own heritage culture.

Furthermore, individuals' bicultural identity integration (perceiving that one's own and the partner's cultural orientations are compatible) was predicted by the length of their relationship with their partner and the perception that their partner is motivated to participate in their own heritage culture. In addition, BII was also predicted by how strongly individuals identified as British and the extent to which both partners were motivated to participate in the mainstream British culture. This finding suggests a strong desire from one's partner to be greatly involved in British culture is associated with White British individuals' assessment that their culture and their partner's culture are compatible. Finally, importantly, perceived social approval, cultural similarity, or relationship satisfaction did not moderate these findings.

Moreover, unlike experiment-based studies showing a link between biculturalism and

creativity (e.g., Cheng & Leung, 2012; Gaither, Remedios, Sanchez, & Sommers, 2015; Saad et al., 2012; Tadmor et al., 2012), in the current correlational study, across three different creativity measures, I did not observe that relationship-based bicultural identity was associated with greater creativity. This finding might be explained by the fact that we examined bicultural identity among majority culture members (British White individuals) who might or might not have the bicultural competencies (e.g., multilingualism, wider social networks and behavioural repertoires) that are typically found among bicultural individuals who develop their identity through the experience of migration, having an ethnic minority status, and daily meaningful multicultural engagements beyond their heritage culture (Cheng et al., 2008; Gocłowska & Crisp, 2014). Similarly, I also did not find a relationship between bicultural identity through romantic relationships and overall satisfaction with life; a finding that has been reported in the literature (e.g., Yamaguchi et al., 2016). Like for the null findings for creativity, perhaps the psychological gains of being bicultural require repeated engagement with a culture different from one's own beyond the context of one's private relationship and household (e.g., in the workplace, media, neighbourhoods and communities). However, I did find that Bicultural Identity Integration (the perception that the partner's culture and one's own are compatible and blended) related to overall satisfaction with life.

### **Contributions and Limitations**

The current research contributes to the literature on biculturalism in the following ways. First, to our knowledge, this is the first study examining and demonstrating that individuals can develop a bicultural identity through their experience of being in an intimate relationship with someone of a different cultural background. This shows that bicultural identity can evolve in contexts beyond what has traditionally been studied. Second, unlike most studies on acculturation, the current research focuses on the majority members of a cultural group. This provides further evidence that monocultural individuals living in their



own cultural environment can experience the process of acculturation and develop a bicultural identity. Third, this study demonstrates that the length of an intercultural romantic relationship is an important and consistent predictor of bicultural identity through relationship and BII, although this association is not moderated by perceptions of social approval, relationship satisfaction, or cultural similarity. This work also shows that that both partners' heritage and non-heritage cultural orientations play a role in how majority group members develop a bicultural identity.

As all studies, this study has its limitations. First, I invited participants without specifying the background of their partner. This resulted in a very rich and diverse set of partner cultural backgrounds, but it might also have introduced too much heterogeneity in statistical patterns. Examining specific types of intercultural romantic relationships (e.g., interreligious, interethnic) might reveal a more detailed insight into the dynamics of such relationships. Future research should also examine whether the current findings replicate when the focus is on the experiences of non-White UK residents who are in an intercultural romantic relationship with a White British individual, as well as experiences of members of different minority groups being in a relationship with another minority member.

To conclude, being in a romantic relationship with someone from a different cultural background is an enriching experience that, over an extended period, can be associated with the development of a bicultural identity. When this bicultural identity is based on the perception that the cultures involved are compatible, this identity contributes to greater life satisfaction.

<sup>i</sup> For the sake of simplicity, in my writing I favor the narrower terms *bicultural* and *biculturalism* over the terms *multicultural* or *multiculturalism*. Regardless of the term used, I refer to individuals who position themselves between two (or more) cultures and who incorporate this experience (i.e., the values, knowledge, and feelings associated with each of their cultures and their intersection) into their sense of who they are.

## Chapter 6

### Summary, Discussion, and Future Directions

Taking a holistic approach to investigating intergroup romantic relationships, in this thesis I examined individuals' attitudes, judgements, and identity outcomes linked to romantic intergroup interactions. Trying to capture the essence of what drives individuals to engage in or refrain from intimate intergroup relations, I first examined several social psychological factors associated with out-group dating attitudes. I explored these factors while simultaneously investigating whether these influential social components fluctuate in different cultural contexts and across different intergroup combinations. Following this investigation, I explored social judgments targeted towards interethnic, religious, and SES relationships. Finally, to foster an improved understanding of the consequences that arise due to intergroup romantic relationship experiences, I investigated inter and intrapersonal psychological consequences that emerge due to exposure to another cultural group in an intergroup romantic relationship context. I will now summarize the results from each study and then interpret those findings, discuss limitations and future directions.

#### Summary of results

##### *Chapter Two*

To address the first goal of Study 1, I examined dating preferences for out-group religious, SES, and racial/cultural/ethnic individuals and found that when individuals are considering involvement in an intergroup romantic relationship, the out-group category (race, religious, SES) is an important component. Individuals in this study demonstrated lower preferences for dating an out-group religious individual compared with dating an out-group SES or ethnic individual. However, the boundary between willingness to date out-group SES and racial/cultural/ethnic members was less pronounced. This finding provides evidence suggesting that the religious background of a potential partner is a more important

characteristic than their race/culture/ethnicity or SES background. This finding provides insight into understanding how background characteristics take part in the role of intergroup dating preferences.

A second goal of Study 1 involved examining important social factors that might help explain dating preference decisions and if these factors remain equally important across out-group categories. In Study 1 I focused on factors (social approval, social identity, previous direct contact, and previous indirect contact) that have been investigated in the past and shown to be linked to out-group dating preferences. However, by examining these factors simultaneously across three different out-group categories I was able to uniquely show how these psychological components vary by background type.

Evidence from this Study 1 showed that our perceptions held by family, friends, and society is a powerful correlate of our decisions to date out-group members. Social approval is a social psychological factor that was equally important in individuals' dating preference decisions regardless of whether they consider engaging in an interracial, interSES, or interreligious romantic relationship. If people perceive a positive reception from family, friends, and society concerning an intergroup romantic relationship, then the more willing they are to engage in these relationships.

Similar to social approval, individuals' perceptions of how much they feel connected and identify with their own in-groups remained an important factor across different out-group categories. In this study, individuals that held a strong identity to their in-group were less willing to engage in a romantic relationship with an out-group member from that outgroup. For instance, stronger in-group religious identity meant that less dating preference for out-group religious members. This is notable as it shows how individuals perceive their identities across different categories and how it can be associated with their intergroup dating decisions.

Furthermore, I examined two factors that relate to previous intergroup contact. Investigating previous direct contact in Study 1, I found that whether or not individuals were previously in an intergroup romantic relationship with an out-group individual from a specific background category was an important factor in dating preference influence. Individuals who have previously been in an interracial/cultural/ethnic romantic relationship were more open to dating and interracial/cultural/ethnic individual in the future. The pattern replicated for interreligious and interSES dating preferences.

Concerning previous extended contact and its connection to intergroup dating preferences, this factor varied across categories. Personally knowing someone in an interracial/cultural/ethnic or interSES relationship was associated with higher willingness to date individuals from those two background categories. However, when considering to date an individual from a different religious background, having previously and personally known someone in an interreligious relationship did not predict dating preference decisions.

Investigating these four factors across three difference backgrounds provided fruitful knowledge concerning dating preferences and the impact categories can have on our intergroup romantic relationship decisions. These finding are important and telling, but do not provide an understanding of how these findings might change in different cultural contexts. Therefore, I also investigated these preferences in three different cultural contexts (UK, US, India). This provided a unique opportunity to investigate dating preferences within and across different countries while also examining the importance of social psychological factors that are typically investigated in single cultural contexts.

Study 1 revealed that when we investigate these preferences in the UK, US, and India similarities as well as differences in preference patterns arose. To start, this study revealed that across three countries out-group religious members were the least preferred in all cultural groups. I also found that in the US context out-group SES partners were the most preferred,

but out-group racial/cultural/ethnic partners were the most preferred in the UK context. In the Indian sample, there was a similarly low preference for all out-group categories. Thus, preferences varied within and across each of these cultural contexts.

I also investigated whether the social psychology factors might vary in their predictive value within and across the three cultural contexts. With regard to social approval, findings showed that this factor was a powerful predictor of individuals' outgroup dating preferences and it played a similar role across all three cultural contexts. This particular finding provides strong evidence to suggest that social approval might be a stable predictor in a variety of background and country contexts.

The importance and pattern of findings regarding individuals' social identity varied as a function of cultural context. Individuals from India demonstrated a high strength of their racial/cultural/ethnic identity which resulted in a reported less willing to date out-group race/culture/ethnic members. This category of identification was not of equal importance in the US and UK context. Social identity remained a predictive factor in the India context when examining interreligious dating preference. This factor emerged as being important in the US context, but remained unimportant in the UK context. When individuals were thinking of an interSES relationship, social identity was now only an important influential factor in the US context.

Furthermore, I found that previous direct intergroup romantic contact also demonstrated differences in importance for predicting dating preferences across cultural contexts. Previous intergroup dating experience did not emerge as a significant predictor for individuals in the India context for any out-group background category. However, this pattern was different for participants in the UK and US context. Previous contact was a significant predictor in the UK context for out-group race/culture/ethnic members, but not for the other out-group categories. For individuals in the US context this finding was reversed. Having

previously dated an out-group religious and out-group SES individual resulted in an increased willingness to engage in a romantic relationship with members from that out-group category in the future. However, this previous contact experience did not influence interracial/culture/ethnic preferences.

Turning to indirect contact experiences, this factor played a similar role across the cultural contexts except for in the US context. In the US context, when individuals had previously and personally known someone in an interracial/ethnic/religious romantic relationship this was positively associated with their dating preference decisions for this out-group category. Indirect dating experience in this sample was not a significant factor for predicating dating preference in the other cultural contexts in the other out-group categories.

In sum, findings from Chapter 2, Study 1 demonstrated the importance of examining social psychological factors associated with out-group dating preferences across different out-group background categories and different cultural contexts. Examining dating preferences this way provides an improved understanding of how social psychological factors operate differently or similarly across contexts.

### ***Chapter Three***

The goals of Study 2 and Study 3 from Chapter 3 were to further investigate the social psychological factor of social approval. As this factor was a strong predictor of dating preferences across out-group backgrounds and cultural context, Study 2 and 3 were designed to further explore the connection between social approval and intergroup romantic relationships. Additionally, Study 2 and 3 were designed to further examine intergroup romantic relationships across different backgrounds. Chapter 3 investigated bystander judgments towards interethnic, interreligious, and interSES potential and actual couples. By investigating potential and actual relationships, I was able to capture a sense of whether the

existence of a relationship might alter judgements made about intergroup romantic relationships.

Specifically looking at Study 2 I focused on potential intergroup relationships development and bystander judgements towards them. Separating the different sources of social approval, in both studies I individually examine family, friend, and partner family and friend. Study 2 showed that when a potential couple was described as being from different religious backgrounds individuals gave less approval to those potential individuals based on their opinions of family approval. Family approval was similar for interSES and interethnic couples. Evaluations of these relationships were similar across the other measures.

Study 3 examined bystanders' judgments concerning individuals that are already in and interethnic, interSES, and interreligious relationship. As engagement in this relationship was already occurring and was not a potentially developing relationship, the relationship can be seen as more important. From Study 3 results showed a similar pattern to Study 2 with regards to family approval of an interreligious couple. Compared to the interSES and interethnic couples, couples from different religious backgrounds were judged as receiving the least family approval. Individuals that were not described as having background differences were granted the highest family approval compared to the intergroup relationships.

Furthermore, unlike Study 2, Study 3 also showed findings that revealed differences in judgments regarding friend approval. Individuals believed that when a couple was from two different religious or status backgrounds then their friends would approve of their relationships less when compared to intragroup relationship or interethnic relationships. Additionally, responses from Study 3 indicated that bystanders believed that individuals in an interethnic relationship should eventually have children, more so than when compared to the other couple combinations.

Taken as a whole findings from Chapter 3 provide insightful information regarding the judgments that individuals have towards intergroup romantic relationships. This gives indication to how and which types of relationships might encounter approval or disapproval and which source of approval (friend or family).

### *Chapter Five*

Chapters 3 and 4 focus broadly on different types of intergroup romantic relationships. Chapter 5 narrowed this broad focus of intergroup romantic relationships and investigated one specific type: an intercultural romantic relationship. This study examined the experience individuals have while currently in an intercultural romantic relationship. There were several goals for this study. One goal was to understand whether individuals in these relationships are capable of developing a bicultural identity specifically through their intimate relationship. A second goal of this study was to understand if those individuals who developed a bicultural identity began to display outcomes that are similar to the outcomes associated with bicultural identity developed in different contexts. A final goal of this study, guided by the literature on acculturation, was to investigate bicultural identity development from a majority member individual (White British individual in the UK).

Findings from this study were informative in regards to the study goals. First, from this study results indicated that White British individuals in an intimate romantic relationship with someone from a different cultural background have the capability of developing a bicultural identity. This bicultural identity development is through the relationship and not their upbringing. This identity development was indicated by self-labelling and also a measure of bicultural identity integration.

Individuals perceived bicultural identity development was more likely to happen when the individual had been in the relationship for a longer period of time. It was also important that the individual was motivated to participate in their partner's culture as well as



the partner's motivation to continue participating in their own culture. In regards to bicultural identity integration, this was also predicted by the amount of time an individual had been in the romantic relationship. However, in order for the individual to perceive the two cultures as compatible they needed to be a motivation to participate in their own culture, their partner's culture, also by having a strong British identity and a partner who desired to participate in British culture.

Concerning the outcomes that are associated with having a bicultural identity, results from this study revealed that when a bicultural identity is developed in the context of an intercultural romantic relationship this is related to individuals having a higher satisfaction with life. Taken together this study demonstrated that individuals in intercultural romantic relationships have the ability to develop a bicultural identity.

### **Interpretation of findings**

Findings from Chapter Two extended the knowledge concerning intergroup romantic relationships by examining important factors across different out-group backgrounds and cultural contexts. First, this is important as previous literature on intergroup romantic relationships have not been able study these factors in a variety of contexts in one study, allowing for comparisons. By examining out-group dating preferences across backgrounds I was able to demonstrate that while individuals may show a general willingness to date out-group members, they have a strong preference for some backgrounds over others. This finding is extremely important and interesting as it shows that out-group dating preferences are not "all or nothing". We may engage in a romantic relationship with someone not a part of our in-groups, but this only extends to certain types of out-group backgrounds. This particular finding is telling as it might serve as a barometer for current intergroup relations. If individuals are selective in the type of out-group members they have contact with rather than avoiding all out-group contact then there must be an explanation that goes beyond in-group

bias. We can only speculate, but perhaps this finding emerged because individuals believe and perceive less social distance between their own in groups and other ethnic or SES groups. Whereas, there might be greater social distance between religious groups which might explain findings from Study 1 in which individuals were less willing to date out-group religious members over other out-group background categories. Perhaps there might be greater social distance between religious groups as individuals might perceive there to be a greater difference (e.g., morals, values, beliefs) between two religions than between two ethnic or social class groups. Additionally, this interpretation may also explain why Study 2 and 3 from Chapter 3 showed that family approval judgements were more negative for interreligious intimate pairings than other backgrounds.

In addition, I found that when considering to date and out-group member, individuals in the UK context preferred out-group racial/cultural/ethnic members while individuals in the US context preferred out-group SES members. These findings are interesting as they may relate to the historical backgrounds in these contexts. For instance, perhaps more preference is given to out-group SES individuals in the US context because out-group race/culture/ethnic individuals might be perceived as more threatening due to the adverse racial history in that country (e.g., slavery, anti-miscegenation laws). Whereas, the opposite might be happening in the UK context. For example, because the UK's history of segregation between social classes, there is a higher preference for out-group ethnic members rather than SES members. This indicates that individuals in the UK may perceive an interSES relationship as more threatening or less socially accepted than out-group racial/cultural/ethnic background. This is a captivating finding as it suggests that our history is being reflected in our current out-group dating preferences. This also demonstrates the importance of continuing to include intergroup romantic relationships as a topic of study within the intergroup relations literature.

Furthermore, taking together these findings it is possible to suggest that perhaps religious out-groups may be perceived as a threat to their in-groups than other backgrounds. We know from integrated threat theory that perceptions of group threat can hinder intergroup interactions (Stephens & Stephan, 2000), in this case hindering engagement in interreligious romantic relationships or approving of these relationships. Interreligious couples have the ability to reconstruct the foundations of a family's beliefs, values, morals, and practices, more so, than other types of intergroup couples. Therefore, it is not surprising that these relationships are threatening and are disapproved by social networks. We need to give more attention to these particular intergroup couples as they may be experiencing the greatest disapproval and might be at a greater risk for discrimination and relationship turmoil.

Additionally, findings from Study 1 further highlighted the importance of social identity in intergroup interactions as explained by the social identity theory. These findings were able to obtain an understanding of how our strength of identification can vary across categories and play different roles in out-group dating preferences. I found that consistent with the theory that individuals who held a strong in-group identity were less willing to interact with out-group individuals (Liu et al., 1995; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). This was consistent in all categories and cultural contexts in which identity was important to individuals. This is important because it further demonstrates that while we may belong to different social groups, we do not identify equally with them. This is demonstrated in by the findings which show that in-group identity did not always predict out-group dating preference. Someone may hold their ethnic identity as important, but not their SES identity. The reasons for why someone might hold on to one identity over another is difficult to say as there may be several factors influencing those identity ties. Additionally, because differences arose when examining dating preferences in various cultural contexts, this research showed the importance of examining social phenomena in different cultures.

The most persistent finding from this research is the demonstration of results from Study 1 concerning social approval. This finding attests further to the powerful impact social norms have on our intergroup interactions (e.g., Harris & Kalbfleisch, 2000; Rosenfeld, 2008). When we do not feel it is appropriate (based on our beliefs of how other group members might behave) then we have less willing to approve of these relationships or engage in these relationships ourselves. This is because we are social beings and care about what others might think of us. If we behave in a way that we think others will shun, ridicule, or object to, then we are more likely avoid that behaviour. In the case of intergroup romantic relationships perhaps this social approval is the greatest hindrance to our developing an intimate relationship with someone not a part of our in-groups.

Results from this research also relate to previous findings in intergroup contact literature. In the case of Study 1, findings indicated that individuals who have had previous intimate intergroup contact were more willing to engage in intimate intergroup contact in the future. Even though these studies were not designed in a way that measured the quality of contact, findings still revealed that having intimate contact with an out-group member resulted in openness for further intimate contact with other out-group members. Thus, these finding support previous findings showing how direct contact with out-group members have positive interpersonal outcomes (Levin et al., 2007; Uskul et al., 2007). This is an important finding as it demonstrates that even the most intimate form of intergroup contact can have positive outcomes and this can happen across multiple out-group backgrounds.

Furthermore, the findings from Study 1 provided further support for indirect/extended contact showing that by simply knowing someone who has been in an intergroup romantic relationship can have a positive impact on future intergroup interactions (e.g., Paterson et al., 2015). While the direct and indirect contact findings did not always play a role in the dating preference decisions across the different backgrounds or cultural contacts,

when it was an important element it was always a positive predictor. Again, this shows how intergroup contact can have positive interpersonal outcomes.

Moreover, concerning outcomes of intergroup romantic relationships, the findings from this thesis also demonstrated that while these relationships may experience negative consequences, such as, disapproval from family, friends, or society, there are some positive consequences of these relationships. By bridging the intergroup relations, acculturation, and biculturalism research I was able to demonstrate that individuals in these relationships have the ability to develop a bicultural identity which was shown from this research to be associated with a higher satisfaction with life. This is a novel and exciting finding. Individuals in these relationships are learning, adapting, and internalizing a whole different culture in an intimate way and this is having a positive impact on their well-being. This finding provides evidence that intimate romantic relationship can shape us in a way that goes beyond that of what previous intergroup relations literature has explored. If we can continue to provide evidence for this positive experience, then this information has the potential to reshape our perceptions of intergroup romantic relationships. If we can change the way in which we view these relationships then this might eliminate the relationship threat, as positive consequence might outweigh the negative consequences. Additionally, this finding shows that while we may be intimately interacting with an out-group member, it does not pose a threat to our in-group identity. Demonstrated through this research, we can maintain our heritage identity while we develop a new one.

Taken together the studies that comprise this thesis have generated valuable findings that can be applied to our understanding on intergroup romantic relationships. Beyond providing support for previous findings in this area of research, the research from this thesis also extended what is known in several ways. First Chapters 2 and 3 were designed to make comparisons across different out-group backgrounds and cultural contexts. As most of the

previous literature in this area has tended to focus on only one out-group background (race/ethnicity) or in only in one cultural context (US), the current research went beyond those limitations and provided support for why we must examine intimate intergroup relationships in different contexts across different backgrounds. Furthermore, while there is an abundance of research that contributes to our understanding regarding acculturating individuals, research has previously ignored biculturalism in the context of an intergroup romantic relationship. Chapter 5 uniquely investigated this intergroup consequence.

### **Limitations and Future Directions**

Findings from this thesis provide avenues for future research in a variety of directions. The limitations that have been discussed in the previous chapters are a logical starting point for future research. One limitation from Chapters 2 and 3 is that specific characteristics were not provided with category descriptions (e.g., low SES dating with high SES; Catholic/Muslim; Irish/Spanish), hence based on the current findings, one cannot extrapolate what participants were thinking when they were considering to date an out-group individual or making judgments towards an intergroup couple. This limitation can be addressed by future research comparing of different out-group backgrounds with specific category combinations. It may be that out-group religious members were the least preferred and perceived as having the least family approval because they were imagining religious groups that were perceived as vastly different than their own. Perhaps these findings would have been different if we were able to get individuals to imagine religious groups that were more similar to their own current religious beliefs.

Another limitation from Chapter 2 (Study 1) was the imbalance of the sample. Future research should aim for a balanced representation of sex, education, and age. Having a more balanced sample might give a clearer understanding regarding some of the patterns found in the study. In Chapter 2 and 3 I did not have participants indicate whether or not they were

currently in a relationship, nor did I control for participants in Chapter 3 having intergroup romantic relationship experience. Given what we know from the intergroup contact literature, about quality of contact and interpersonal outcomes, this information may be useful in understanding perhaps why some direct contact or indirect contact did not emerge a significant predictors. Having a fuller picture concerning individual's previous intimate intergroup romantic experience will help us to better understand future romantic preferences. Furthermore, concerning Chapter 5, future research might consider using a measure that gives a clear understanding about individuals' previous multicultural experiences in order to tease apart which cultural encounters they have had. This is crucial to consider when making a claim that bicultural identity develops solely due an individual's current intercultural romantic relationship.

Beyond designing research that will address these limitations, there are several directions that future research can take. One area related to the findings and discussions from Chapter 2, would be to continue to focus on out-group dating preferences and the social psychological factors that shape intergroup dating decisions, including understudied ones such as physical attractiveness, intergroup disgust, and social networks. Additionally, these factors should be explored in different cultural contexts. By exploring these factors and investigating these intimate relationships across cultures we will be able to expand greatly on the current intergroup romantic relationship literature.

Another outlet for future research is a continued focus on bystander judgments. As social approval is a pivotal factor for intergroup romantic relationships, research is needed to gain a comprehensive understanding of when and why intergroup relationships gain or lose social support. I believe this area of research should be further developed. We know how these judgements might impact the relationships (e.g., initiation, maintenance), but we know much less about the aspects of the relationships that these judgments are based on. For

example, is the problem with an interethnic relationship, simply based on the racial category or is it concerned with beliefs regarding how the relationship might function based on these categorical differences.

Additionally, Chapter 5 (Study 4) demonstrated how our cultural identities might alter as a result of an intercultural relationship experience. As little is known about this experience, more research is needed to fully understand these identity changes and how it may impact other inter and intrapersonal aspects. This is perhaps the most promising outlet for future work on intergroup romantic relationships as it explores an aspect of these relationships that have not been looked at before. Additionally, it benefits to important areas of literature (intergroup relations, biculturalism). Future work in this area should first try and replicate the findings that I have presented. In general, acculturation research does not focus on majority members and this is a limitation. As I have demonstrated with my research, majority members also go through the process of acculturation and this process occurs in an intimate, and very personal context. Therefore, future work should continue to investigate the majority members in these intercultural romantic relationships. However, it is also equally important to also to continue to include minority cultural members in this research as examining this particular relationship experience is still novel. For example, I think it is important to understand is the process of acculturation for minority members if different when they live in a new cultural environment, but with a romantic partner who is native to that environment. Perhaps having an intimate relationship with someone from this new cultural environment might foster acculturation orientations that are associated with positive outcomes, such as adopting the integration orientation. This area of study alone can generate many future questions to be investigated.

## **Conclusion**



Overall, the findings of these four different studies presented in this thesis uniquely adds to our understanding of intergroup romantic relationships. This thesis as a whole provides a multifaceted approach to examining intimate relations between members from different groups. Research from this thesis demonstrated an integrated investigation of intimate intergroup interactions by capturing individuals' judgments of these relationships (Chapter 3), dating preferences (Chapter 2), and intrapersonal outcomes from experiencing these types of relationships (Chapter 5). Taken together this thesis contributes to the literature on intergroup relations supporting perspectives related to social identity theory, intergroup contact theory, integrated threat theory, and social dominance theory. Additionally, this thesis presents research that supports the importance for studying psychological concepts cross-culturally and adds to the knowledge on acculturation and biculturalism.

Specifically, focusing on social identity theory, this thesis (Chapter 2) provides further support that an individual's attachment to their in-groups influences their intergroup interactions. In particular findings from Study one demonstrated that when individuals hold a strong identity to their own personal in-group then they demonstrate a decreased willingness to develop an intimate relationship with an out-group member. Therefore, showing that individuals committed to their social groups display in-group favouritism when thinking of potential romantic partners. The current research provided more insight regarding social identity theory within the intergroup romantic relationship literature.

Additionally, Study 1 provided further support for intergroup contact theory. Study 1 specifically focuses on the power of direct and indirect intergroup contact on individual's eagerness to engage in an intergroup romantic relationship. From the current study I was able to demonstrate that both forms of contact have the capacity to influence willingness to engage in intergroup romantic relationships. While I did not focus on the quality of contact, I did look at different types of intergroup contact. These findings were insightful as it expanded

our knowledge concerning in which contexts the effects of direct or indirect contact might work. I was able to test for these effects simultaneously across three different forms of contact (ethnic, SES, religious) and in different cultural contexts. This is important as it demonstrates the importance of examining direct and indirect contact in separate contexts as what we may expect to find in one situation may not generalize to other. Furthermore, while the main focus of Study 4 was not on previous direct intergroup romantic contact, I did examine it in a unique context in which I investigated whether previous intergroup intimate contact might influence future bicultural identity development. Previous contact in this context was not significant, but I was able to again extend our previous theoretical knowledge by examining this intimate contact in a new context.

While the research from this thesis did not use measures to directly test integrated threat or social dominance theory, the finding from this research may be explained in part by these theoretical perspectives and warrant further research. As mentioned previously, the diverging findings across the different backgrounds' studies might be related to the perceptions of threat. These threats might be symbolic or realistic and might alter social structures that are not wanted by members across groups. For example, individuals might be more threatened by interreligious contact than interethnic contact. Further research should look into these perceptions of threat and highlight how this might relate to the current findings.

As previous research and current population data have repeatedly demonstrated an in-group bias in selection of romantic relationship partners, I examined social psychological factors that help to understand these preferences. Additionally, as the majority of previous research that investigated intergroup romantic relationships has focused on interracial relationships, my research extended this limitation by examining intercultural, interreligious, and interSES relationships in addition to interracial and ethnic ones. Furthermore, my

research demonstrated how individuals are open to intergroup romantic relationships, but are less open to an interreligious relationship. Additionally, research from this thesis showed that intergroup romantic relationships are not all perceived the same and that interreligious relationships might receive less approval than other relationship combinations. Finally, this research demonstrated how individuals are able to develop a bicultural identity by engaging in an intercultural romantic relationship. Overall the findings from this work contributes to the literature and our understanding of intergroup relations, acculturation, and biculturalism. Most notably, this research focuses on the most intimate form of intergroup contact and bridges together acculturation and biculturalism literature with the previous literature on intergroup romantic relationship.

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## Appendix A

### Chapter 3: Example of Study 2 Scenario and Difference Manipulation

**For this part of the study we will provide you with information pertaining to two individuals who have created profiles on a dating website. Your task will be to read through the summary of information and decide whether or not you believe these two individuals would be a good match.**

**Here is a summary of the two profiles. Please read carefully.**

#### Profile A: Eric

Eric is 21 years old. He is a student, studying Law at the Uni. Eric described himself in his profile as being adventurous, charming, reliable, kind, and generous. He also described himself as being honest, intelligent, and open-minded.

Eric enjoys hanging out with his family and friends. He also enjoys traveling, reading, and playing video games.

Eric said that he would like to find a partner who shares similar interests and characteristics as his.

#### Profile B: Kimberly

Kimberly is 20 years old. She is a student, studying Photography at the Uni. Kimberly described herself in her profile as being intelligent, confident, kind, and optimistic. She also described herself as being dependable, cultured, and adventurous.

Kimberly loves traveling, playing games, and painting. She enjoys spending time with her family and friends.

Kimberly said she would like to find someone whose interests and characteristics were similar to hers.

### **A. Here is further information comparing the two profiles.**

#### Profile Similarities

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have a lot in common. They both have a similar taste in music and films. They both enjoy the same types of food and share similar political opinions. They also match each other's preferred set of personality and physical characteristics in a potential partner.

#### Profile Differences

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to come from different socio-economic backgrounds.

**B. Here is further information comparing the two profiles.**Profile Similarities

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have a lot in common. They both have a similar taste in music and films. They both enjoy the same types of food and share similar political opinions. They also match each other's preferred set of personality and physical characteristics in a potential partner.

Profile Differences

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to come from different religious backgrounds.

**C. Here is further information comparing the two profiles.**Profile Similarities

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have a lot in common. They both have a similar taste in music and films. They both enjoy the same types of food and share similar political opinions. They also match each other's preferred set of personality and physical characteristics in a potential partner.

Profile Differences

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to come from different ethnic backgrounds.

**D. Here is further information comparing the two profiles.**Profile Similarities

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have a lot in common. They both have a similar taste in music and films. They both enjoy the same types of food and share similar political opinions.

Profile Differences

According to the questions that both Eric and Kimberly answered, they appear to have very different personality characteristics.

## Appendix B

### Chapter 3: Example of Study 3 Scenario and Difference Manipulation

**For this part of the study we will provide you with a scenario of two people who are in the process of forming a romantic relationship. Your task will be to read the following paragraphs carefully and indicate whether or not you think these two individuals would be a good match.**

A.

A young man called Eric and a young woman called Kimberly are both single and in their 20's. Both are looking for a romantic relationship that might perhaps turn into a long-term relationship.

Eric and Kimberly both attend the same university and are currently in the same module. One day Eric and Kimberly were put in the same group and were assigned to giving a class presentation. While having to spend time together to prepare for the presentation, they both discovered that they found each other very interesting and decided to go on a date.

On their first date they discovered that they both share similar interests and hobbies. Eric and Kimberly decided that they really liked each other and decided to go on a few more dates. After their latest date, both Eric and Kimberly felt that they could potentially see themselves as a long-term couple.

While Eric and Kimberly share a lot of similarities, such as both having a similar taste in music and films, liking the same types of food, and sharing similar political opinions. However, they also have some differences. The biggest difference between the two is that they come from different ethnic backgrounds.

B.

A young man called Eric and a young woman called Kimberly are both single and in their 20's. Both are looking for a romantic relationship that might perhaps turn into a long-term relationship.

Eric and Kimberly both attend the same university and are currently in the same module. One day Eric and Kimberly were put in the same group and were assigned to giving a class presentation. While having to spend time together to prepare for the presentation, they both discovered that they found each other very interesting and decided to go on a date.

On their first date they discovered that they both share similar interests and hobbies. Eric and Kimberly decided that they really liked each other and decided to go on a few more dates. After their latest date, both Eric and Kimberly felt that they could potentially see themselves as a long-term couple.

While Eric and Kimberly share a lot of similarities, such as both having a similar taste in music and films, liking the same types of food, and sharing similar political opinions. However, they also have some differences. The biggest difference between the two is that they come from different socio-economic backgrounds.

## C.

A young man called Eric and a young woman called Kimberly are both single and in their 20's. Both are looking for a romantic relationship that might perhaps turn into a long-term relationship.

Eric and Kimberly both attend the same university and are currently in the same module. One day Eric and Kimberly were put in the same group and were assigned to giving a class presentation. While having to spend time together to prepare for the presentation, they both discovered that they found each other very interesting and decided to go on a date.

On their first date they discovered that they both share similar interests and hobbies. Eric and Kimberly decided that they really liked each other and decided to go on a few more dates. After their latest date, both Eric and Kimberly felt that they could potentially see themselves as a long-term couple.

While Eric and Kimberly share a lot of similarities, such as both having a similar taste in music and films, liking the same types of food, and sharing similar political opinions. However, they also have some differences. The biggest difference between the two is that they come from different religious backgrounds.

## D.

A young man called Eric and a young woman called Kimberly are both single and in their 20's. Both are looking for a romantic relationship that might perhaps turn into a long-term relationship.

Eric and Kimberly both attend the same university and are currently in the same module. One day Eric and Kimberly were put in the same group and were assigned to giving a class presentation. While having to spend time together to prepare for the presentation, they both discovered that they found each other very interesting and decided to go on a date.

On their first date they discovered that they both share similar interests and hobbies. Eric and Kimberly decided that they really liked each other and decided to go on a few more dates. After their latest date, both Eric and Kimberly felt that they could potentially see themselves as a long-term couple.

While Eric and Kimberly share a lot of similarities, such as both having a similar taste in music and films, liking the same types of food, and sharing similar political opinions. However, they also have some differences.

## Appendix C

### Chapter 5: Example of Creative Uses Task Creative Originality and Ideationally Fluency

**Instructions:** Please spend at least two minutes thinking about all the possible uses of a brick. It is important that you complete this task without any outside help.

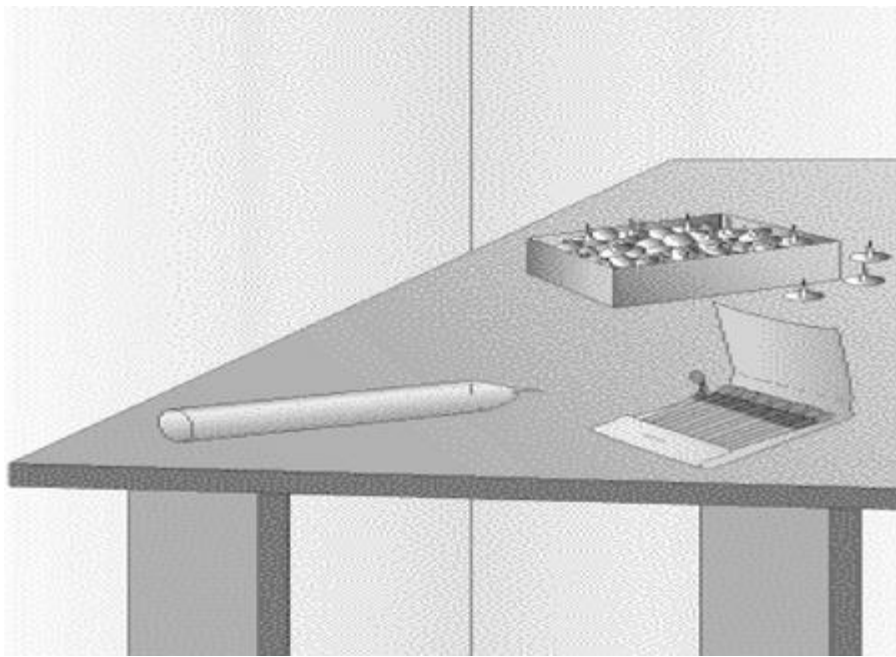


Now please write down as many uses for the brick you have thought of.

## Appendix D

### Chapter 5: Example of Duncker Candle Problem Insight Creativity

In the picture below on the table, there is a candle, matches, and a box of tacks.



**Task:** Explain how you can attach the candle to the wall and light it without wax dripping onto the table.

*Be aware that the table is attached to the wall and cannot be moved or used to aid you in the task.*

Please spend at least 2 minutes solving the task.

It is important that you complete this task without any outside help.

Write your answer below.