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Together or Apart?: The Effects a Parent's Relationship Dynamic has on their Child(ren)'s
Romantic Relationship

By

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Abstract

The relationship between parents is considered one of the most influential interactions a child will experience; as it is usually the first relationship a child witnesses where personal values and interests develop (Stanger, 2019). Nonetheless, it is a consistently understudied population in family research and when studied, children are primarily examined during adolescence and often only in the context of conflict and rivalry. Additionally, much of this research does not examine the effects of a child's relationship(s) on the family system. This thesis seeks to address this gap in the literature by understanding how the relationship of a child's biological parents presents and defines a child's own romantic relationship through qualitative research (interviews, coding, etc). In doing so, it also seeks to examine whether these qualities can lead to a proposed idea of whether culture may play a role in this interaction.

Key words: marital status, relationship quality, child development and/or outcome, conflict resolution

Introduction

Over the years within the United States marriage rates began to increase. With that being said, so do the divorce cases. In many of these cases, there are children who are involved within their parent's marriage or divorce relationship dynamic. Throughout the years, there has been research that dives into how children of divorced parents differ from children with married parents in the financial, academic, emotional, mental, and even physical aspect. However, with this expansion in the literature it will assist in furthering the understanding of how children with married or divorced parents interact within their romantic relationships.

This literature analysis will examine the similarities and differences if any, not just by comparing the two groups (children of married parents, children of divorced parents) but also the relationship they witnessed as a child. The focus on children who grew up in the state of Hāwai'i in an attempt to see if culture plays a role in the way one interacts in their romantic relationship as well. This scholarship will focus around those who were affected by the marriage in their childhood years, with biological parents who are married or divorced, and are currently living or have lived within the state of Hāwai'i.

The type of relationship dynamic the parents have with one another may have the possibility to influence the romantic relationships their children have as young adults. As the child within the family could also be influenced through culture and other outside factors.

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Literature Review/Background

Theoretical Perspectives

To most individuals in society the idea of being married is an ideal dream since childhood, where two people can share a happy life long commitment journey together. However, this is not always the case with the divorce rates standing at just a bit over 40% (Crowley, 2022). A study done by journalist Anneli Rufus, found that 66% of couples that divorce are childless; compared with 40% of those who have children (Larson, 2011). Thus, causing a ripple effect, not only within the couple themselves, but within children, extended families, and friends (Roper, 2016).

Empirical Studies

An empirical regularity documented in the divorce literature is that couples with children are less likely to divorce (Staff, 2016). This may be either because the financial, and especially emotional costs of divorce are higher when children are involved or because couples only have children when they envision good long-term prospects for a marriage.

Another potentially important predictor of divorce is whether the marriage is an interethnic marriage. Differences in tastes, values, and communication styles may make it difficult for spouses of different ethnicities to make joint decisions, or they may lack the social support necessary to work out their differences (Kalmijn, 2004). Meanwhile, cross-ethnicity differences in endogamy rates may result from reasons completely unrelated to divorce taboos. For example, ethnic groups that are more residentially dispersed may find it difficult to find same-ethnicity spouses.

How Conflict Affects the Picture

Conflict is a normal part of everyday experience and can often be a positive learning one even for those who are not directly involved. So it is not whether parents fight that is important but rather how the conflict is expressed and resolved. Children pay close attention to their parents' emotions for information about how safe they are in the family, so when parents engage in destructive styles of conflict, the collateral damage to kids can last a lifetime (Divecha, 2016). On the other hand, when conflict is resolved in a healthy and productive way, it might even have a boosting effect on children. When parents can work out differences it can allow children to expend their energies elsewhere, to engage in more deeper and meaningful relationships of their own (Schreiber, 2020).

Married

Although martial quarreling is inevitable, the way in which parents argue can have an effect on children. Destructive conflicts can cause children to “perceive themselves and their social worlds more negatively” and to “have more negative pictures or internal representations of family relationships” (Sutherland, 2014). Researchers have proposed a variety of frameworks and mechanisms that may explain this process. For example, this could be because when children are raised in high-conflict homes they are more likely to develop poor interpersonal skills, problem solving abilities and social competence. On top of this, destructive conflict creates a domino effect where these problems will negatively impact their romantic relationships in adolescence and adulthood (Sutherland, 2014). It can become difficult to get a sense on not only who to trust but how.

Most children raised in environments of destructive conflict have problems forming healthy, balanced relationships with their peers (Divecha, 2016). Thus the high-conflict relationship of one couple can produce other negative relationships in the next generation. Children of parents who engage in overt, unresolved conflict are at risk for a variety of developmental and emotional problems (Brock & Kochanska, 2016). Under such a condition, when a divorce occurs, these children are freed from a dysfunctional family environment and may genuinely welcome the shift to a calmer single-parent family (Booth & Amato, 2001). In other words, consistent with the stress relief hypothesis (Wheaton, 1990), children who were living with high-conflict parents may experience parental divorce as a stress relief event, which in turn, may lead to a postdivorce improvement in child outcomes (Strohschein, 2005).

Divorced

It is expected that while children sense an uncertainty within their parents' relationship, it will affect how they interact within their own interpersonal relationships. Children whose family is going through divorce may have a harder time relating to others, and tend to have less social contacts (Family Means, 2002). This can happen because when divorce comes into the picture, it does change how a child not only feels internally but interacts with the world externally as well. As a consequence, statistics show that children whose parents divorce are four times more likely to get a divorce themselves in the future (Parker, 2022). This could be due to a lack of sense of self, not witnessing a commitment, long marriage, etc. The life-changing event of divorce could even have a child suffer mentally. That they may also develop poor social and cognitive skills that damage their chances of forming a healthy marital relationship or succeeding in a career (Anderson, 2014). Overall the quality of the relationship between co-parents can also have a

strong influence on the mental and emotional well-being of children, and the incidence of anxiety and depression (Tomfohr-Madsen, 2020).

Moderating Factors

Age: A factor that may moderate the impact of parental divorce on child outcomes is age.

Although divorce is difficult for children at any time in their life, the way in which they experience the divorce may differ depending on their age/stage in their life of separation. For example, toddlers/infants (0-3 years old) do not have much cognitive function yet, so when asked to recall certain incidents, there may not be a significant recollection of events. Whereas, pre-schoolers (4-6 years old) need concrete information that they begin to ask questions to get a basic understanding of the concept of the divorce. In fact, they're likely "relying heavily on the security and stability of their parents' presence when branching out to new and unknown experiences and feelings" (Healthline, 2020). As for children who are elementary school aged (7-12 years old), they often feel powerless and may even blame themselves for the separation. However, when a child becomes a teenager or a young adult (13-19 years old), the family dynamic may be accepted because there is a greater sense of "independence and desire to move out" (Roper, 2016). Divorce is hard on everyone and can have lasting impacts on children and their potential relationships. Lifetime prevalence estimates suggest that up to 33% of children ages 5–17 experience internalizing disorders, and unipolar major depression in late childhood and adolescence is ranked among the highest with regard to global burden of disease (Brock & Kochanska, 2015). In spite of that, children as young as 6 months old can be sensitive to conflicts in their parents' marriage that they may struggle to maintain healthy relationships when they're older. This may be due to growing accustomed to family discord or in other words truly struggling to identify who they can really trust in life (Morin, 2019).

Culture: In addition, culture may also play a role in how one interacts in their romantic relationships. This is where past research has uncovered mixed results where some studies have found that there is no significant difference in how a child's relationship quality is linked to culture, whereas other studies have shown that the values held deeply to one greatly influences on their relationship with their significant other. Divorce may not be able to be generalized across cultures (Roper, 2016), because culture can also influence an individual's perception and expectations regarding marriage and family. In some cultures, men are seen as the breadwinners where they need to work in order to provide for their family; while women are seen as natural nurturers who stay home to cook and clean for their household. So much so, that if the two parental figures are found to pursue the same goals and ambitions it is frowned upon or even seen as disruptive in certain cultures (Kolzow, 2014). Other cultures see divorce as failure of societal duties that results from a personal flaw or weakness that either or both spouses possess. In contrast, some cultures prioritize individualism except that divorce is the product of personal incompatibility and "irreconcilable differences", (DiPietro Law Group, 2019). Parents surely instill in their children beliefs about the morality of divorce but children may also form their own attitudes based on perceptions of role models within their communities. This is not researched to the highest degree and would need additional information to understand the complete complexity of how culture influences relationships.

The Present Study

The literature reviewed here documents many ways that children are impacted by parental divorce; however the magnitude and nature of this impact is influenced by a wide

variety of factors, including the degree of conflict between parents, child's gender and age at the time of divorce, family's culture, and the child's living situation. Less is known about how parental divorce impacts young adults' expectations and experiences vis a vis their own romantic relationships, and the literature that does exist has not uncovered consistent patterns among potential predictor variables. The literature examining how culture might come into play is even sparser, with no studies focusing on young adults from Hāwai'i particularly.

Given the lack of research to build on, the current study uses a qualitative approach to explore this topic in an open-ended way. The study sample includes young adults who grew up in Hāwai'i, some of whom experienced parental divorce as children. The study explores the young adults' perceptions about the ways their parents' relationships impact their own romantic expectations and experiences.

Method

Conducting qualitative research was the most beneficial to obtain the answers. The semi-structured interview contained 12 outline questions, with some probing questions. The interview lasted about one hour at least to approximately 2 hours at most. Those who were interviewed were in the ages of 21-24 years old living in Hāwai'i and one in Oregon. Before the interview began, a recruitment email was sent out to obtain a general idea of who the eligible participants will be.

From there a series of interviews was conducted. The study sample consisted of eight young adults, seven of whom are current residents of Hāwai'i (5-Maui, 2-O'ahu), and one of

whom currently lives in Oregon. Parents of four of the young adults are still married, three divorced when the young adults were children, and one set of parents cohabited during the young adult's childhood and continue to do so. Found in Table 1, it shows the participants age, gender, cultural identification, their parents relationship and living situation.

	Age	Gender	Cultural identification	Parental relationship/s, child living situation
S1	23	M	Filipino	PR: Married, long-distance relationship for 7+ years as mother is in Hāwai'i, father is in Philippines, will talk on the phone/ft once in a while, not intimate LS: would witness an intoxicated and abusive parental interaction, lives mostly with mother, except when father comes to visit from the Philippines, rarely interacts with father
S2	25	F	Caucasian	PR: divorced when S2 was 5, parents would not interact unless about S2, both families got involved till now no interaction at all as S2 began adolescent years LS: would move back and forth from mother/fathers house once a week until teenage years. Lives mostly with mother until 12 then mother's boyfriend came into the picture around that time, rarely sees or talks to father, not necessarily in the picture at all
S3	22	F	Filipino/Hawaiian	PR: Married when S3 was 5, divorced around age of 13, communicate when needed LS: lived with both parents until age of 14, then would walk back and forth to homes whenever felt like it up until age 23, still stays with mom, and visits father in the mainland every chance S3 is able.
S4	22	F	Hawaiian/Filipino	PR: In a relationship for 20+ years, not married but acts as though married, not intimate LS: Lives with both parents and siblings, except for when in college
S5	22	F	Filipino/Hawaiian	PR: Abusive, bickering, divorced around S5's elementary school years LS: No relationship with father, lives with mother except

				when in college.
S6	24	F	Filipino/Chinese/Japanese	PR: married, constant arguing, rarely intimate LS: only child, lives with both parents unless when in college
S7	23	F	Filipino/Japanese	PR: Married before born, constant stone-walling and bickering, yet, very loving and communication friendly at times LS: Lived with both parents all life, except when began college career, once graduated moved back with parents
S8	21	F	Filipino/Japanese	PR: Married before born, witnessed relationships where parents argue/about to file for divorce due to infidelity LS: Lived with both parents whole life, however

Table 1. S1-S8 (Studies 1-8) discussing their age at time of interview, gender in which they identify with, overall culture/cultures reside with, parental relationship that child witnessed the two bestowing, and living situation of where co-exist since they first could remember till time of interview.

Procedure

To begin the research a recruitment email was sent out to individuals that explained the purpose of the research, confidentiality/risks, benefits of participating, etc. One important section to note where to gather the sample study was through the inclusion criteria which was the following:

Any gender, ages ranging between 18-23, English language, aware of their biological parents and their relationship dynamic, experienced a romantic relationship between the ages of 18-23, born and raised in the island of Hāwai'i.

As for the exclusion criteria;

Exclusion criteria: ages younger than 18 or older than 23, foreign language, do not know their biological parents, do not know of their relationships, did not experience having a romantic relationship during the ages of 18-23, non-Hāwai'i locals.

After obtaining a study group a semi-structured interview was conducted on Zoom where the participants were recorded for quality purposes. The interview's time commitment was no less than one hour and no more than two hours. The Interview guide can be found below.

Interview Guide

****answer if you are a child of biological parents who are still married or have been divorced***

Goal of this interview/evidence-based research question: *Are young adults, raised in Hāwai'i by divorced parents more likely to experience negative effects on their romantic relationships compared to young adults in the state of Hāwai'i with married parents?*

1. How would you describe your parents' relationship during your childhood?
 - a.
2. On a scale of 1-10, how important is a romantic relationship to you? And why? *
 - a.
3. What is the longest relationship you have encountered?
 - a.
4. What is your definition of a healthy relationship?
 - a.
5. How would you describe your experience in relationships?
 - a.
6. In the long run, are you thinking about getting married and why? *
 - a.
7. What is your view on divorce? (*another way to ask, would divorce be an option?)
 - a.
8. What are some areas you see of your parents' relationship, being expressed in your relationships now?
 - a.
9. Are there any ways in which you think that your parents' culture, or any culture of Hāwai'i, or other aspects of living in Hāwai'i, influences your current relationships or your relationship goals?
 - a.

10. Do you try to change anything with the interpersonal relationships you have now, once you realize some of these aspects developed from your parents relationships?
a.
11. Is there anything you would change in your relationship or your parents? Why or why not?
a.
12. Is there anything else you would like to share/add? Or that you feel is vital to this interview? **PLEASE SHARE IF THERE IS SOMETHING I COULD CHANGE/IMPROVE FOR THIS IS A ROUGH DRAFT**

Results

Quantitative Results

In this section each interview question will be separated into a table to describe and see the similarities and differences amongst the eight interviewees.

Question	Q2	Q3	Q6	Q7	Q9	Q10	Q11
S1	2	5 Months	No	Yes	No	No	No
S2	8	1 ½ years	Not really	Yes	No	No	No
S3	4	2 years	One day	Yes	No	No	No
S4	7	3 years	Yes	No	No	No	No
S5	5	4 years	One day	Yes	No	No	Yes
S6	4	2 ½ years	One day	Yes	No	No	Yes
S7	9.5/10	7 years	Yes	No	No	No	No
S8	5	4 years	Yes	Yes	No	No	No

In question 2 there were various answers as expected. Throughout the whole interview S7's answers were the ones that differed the most from the rest of the interviewees. This might be because of the relationship her parents exhibited along with S7's own personal romantic relationship she experienced. The relationship S7's parents displayed had begun a foundation in which she could build her own relationships off of, so much so that she herself had a long term relationship of 7 years. Throughout her long-term relationship she came to the realization that "it was not the best in the end, but I still stuck around because of how well my parents made their relationship work, regardless what obstacles came their way so I figured I could do the same. Even when I knew it was not right for me". This information shared was enlightening, that it was no surprise when it came to question 7, if divorce was an option S7 immediately responded with "no" as her answer. She touched on how "divorce is not even an idea" because she wants her "first marriage to be her last and only marriage" just like a few others that have been interviewed. On the other hand, the participants who responded with *yes* as their answer that divorce could be an option saw that being separated was a choice they would consider. There are ways, S6 explained that you could do "before you finalize the divorce such as, marriage therapy or counseling, date nights, regular check-ins/sit down talks". That you could do before you do it, but if someone's just not happy and exhausted all their efforts, then it is best to split. This response was interesting, because S6 felt strongly about having their first marriage to also be their only/last but knew after witnessing their parents relationship that "sometimes things do not always go how we plan, but we can make the best of it."

When it came to question 11, *is there anything you would change in your relationships or your parents relationship?* "no" was a more prominent answer. It was expected that almost each interviewee would say "yes", however S8 explained, "my parents' relationship was not perfect

but even with their flaws and hardships, I would not change a thing because it helped them learn and grow. I learned from their relationship things I want and don't want." This insight tells that even through the hardships she had to face witnessing her parents go through almost a divorce, she felt comfortable that regardless of how positive or negative their parents' interactions were, it was a learning experience. Contrastingly S5 answered "yes" that she would definitely change the relationship of her parents. Although it was emphasized numerous times that she was "happy they are not together" she yearned for her father to treat her mother well without verbally and physically abusing her. "I believe my parents constantly arguing back and forth, even though it was unhealthy, it gave me a healthy relationship perspective because I don't stay in a relationship for long. The moment or once I see signs that remind me of my parent's relationship, I leave." This too became a learning experience for S5, she says. A huge portion of what "I do not want out of a partner was learned through how my parents treat one another" yet if her parents had somehow managed their relationship after the marriage dissolved it could teach her other important characteristics to build off of in the future for her relationship she has now. S5 adds, "I would want to get to know what makes a relationship work, or go to my parents instead of my friends for relationship advice but I do not ever see that happening. That sometimes I hold it all in, because all I can recall are the negative times they shared. Even after the divorce they can never act like they like one another". It was not that she wanted their overall relationship to change, but rather how they treat one another after the divorce because S5 knew their relationship needed to end because "it was just not healthy for either of them."

Qualitative Results

For this section, it will dive into what and how conflict in parents' relationships have an impact on young adult relationships.

Conflict between parents

The main categories that interviewees talked about are the ways that their parents' relationship have impacted their relationships. These categories include: trust in romantic partners, ways they manage conflict with romantic partners, degree to which they are able to form relationships, satisfaction with relationships, commitment to relationships. When diving into the question of *what is your definition of a healthy relationship*, each interviewee said trust. S1 illustrates that even though he experienced a five month relationship, trust was a key factor that broke it. That “without trust there is no foundation to build upon. I feel that once trust is gone, there really is nothing left.” There are ways to maneuver around trust or grow on this aspect, like S5 shared. She believed being vulnerable is the ultimate way, “I shared with my partner secrets about me that I was afraid to share with even myself. For the first couple months of therapy, I would tell him I’m driving around. He would question my whereabouts from time to time, so one day I just said to myself that *if this is my person, I should be open with him*” Although S5 experienced a negative parental dynamic, her mental problems such as anxiety and depression that stemmed from that, did not get into her relationship she has now. It became a learning experience, that a parents' past mistakes does not define one's future.

Another thing to discuss is that they are trying to be different from their parents where it influences their current relationships. S4 verbalized how she did not realize that there are some aspects she has taken into her current relationship, until she began the interview. One thing she

noticed she takes into the relationship is how she wants to discuss situations head on. Her parents would be excellent examples of dealing with conflict, in the end she began to express her feelings in a mature way with her partner. Her partner however, is the opposite. Whenever their parents would argue, it would turn into a heated argument, that resulted in stone-walling, swearing, etc. that he brings into their relationship. "It is difficult to be with someone who grew up in a different environment than I have, but we are learning together." Each relationship is different, that there can be different communication styles and love languages the other associates with more than the others.

Analysis

To help derive the results, the application called Dedoose was used in order to code each interview, alongside jotting down hand written index cards to sort through each quote. Some of the most popular codings include the following: traditional marriage, physical interaction (positive/negative), and conflict resolution.

Traditional marriage is significant to highlight not only because of how often it was prevalent in each interview, but also because of how similar each interviewee perceived it as. Traditional marriage can best be defined as a lifelong commitment between two people in love (Farzad, 2002). In the interview with S4, she shared how her parents are not in a binded marriage with the law but due to the duration of their dedication to one another, she feels as though they are in a traditional marriage. Their "title of marriage does not really define their relationship, but rather the love they have for one another and I can honestly say they are happily married and it was like any other traditional marriage with or without the legal documentation." On the other

hand, S3 experienced her parents facing a divorce when she was around the age of 13. “They had like what any other traditional marriage would be like, they were faithful and loved one another so much that even when they are no longer together, it still shows even after they separated”. Once the two ended, they were still in constant communication regardless of how old their children got in order to “establish a healthy relationship we both could look at” S3 tells. This showed S3 that a traditional marriage could end in a healthy manner and that divorce did not have to be so messy.

As for physical interaction, this is where one person interacts with another in an intimate way, whether this be a positive or negative experience. Positive or negative interactions could best be generalized in the physical touch setting. Most interviewees would witness both positive and negative aspects when it came to how parents spoke to one another, even more so when it came to physical interaction. Witnessing domestic violence can lead children to develop an array of age-dependent negative effects. They are more likely to have social competence problems and difficulty in relationships. Child witnesses display inappropriate attitudes about violence as a means of resolving conflict and indicate a greater willingness to use violence themselves. (Stiles, 2002). S1, described the late nights he observed as a child, when his father would come home intoxicated only to verbally and physically abuse his mother. S1 continued that once he reached his teenage years, there was no sign of abuse. However, this took a toll on him, that he does not have the urge to seek for relationships as heavily as others his age, he shared. Moreover; S5, although at a young age, she would remember her parents' constant bickering that would lead to constant physical abuse. One incident she recalled was one late night when they all arrived home from a nice dinner, but it did not last long once the argument started. She knew immediately to head towards the living room, to cover her ears and eyes under her pillows. “I wish I could get

away from all of that, even if it was a few feet away, it still felt like I was right there.” The relationship she is in now is seemingly healthy.

The third coding that is important to note, is how two people solve a conflict with one another. Research tells us that the intensity of the fighting in front of the kids, and the lack of repair is more impactful than just the number of fights the parents have. The fights that have the greatest negative impact on children are fights characterized by high levels of verbal or physical aggression (Shetgiri, 2016). When S7 would witness her parents getting into a disagreement, she talked about how they made it a point to have sit down conversations behind closed doors so that her and her sister would not have to be in the proximity of their arguments. When these arguments would happen in front of them, she noticed how they would never yell. Their conflict resolution would be so significant, that S7 expresses how beneficial their discussions are that she decides to bring that into her relationship she is in now. As for S2, she emphasized how her parents were not the best at conflict management. It got so “unhealthy that each time they would talk, it would turn into an argument” S2 expressed, so much so that it drove S2 to take a look at how they would solve conflict so that she would not have to deal with the “complications conflict would share”.

After taking careful examination of the data, an interesting finding was that whether one’s parents are divorced or married, it does not play as significant of a role as believed to be but rather how healthy the parents' relationship is. For example, non-custodial parents who are able to put their differences aside in order to maintain consistency, while supporting one another’s decisions can generate a healthy co-parenting system for their child(ren). Co-parenting and/or joint custody is definitely not easy however, when parents are able to cooperate with one another, it can establish a life pattern their children can carry into the future to build and maintain

stronger relationships (Block, 2020). This could be because of how secure the child feels knowing that although their parents are no longer with one another they are still able to coexist by providing the child with security, benefits from consistency, better understanding of problem solving, healthy examples to follow, and are mentally and emotionally healthier (Cardona, 2021).

On the other hand, parents who are married but bicker often are seemingly more detrimental to their child's health than parents who are separated in a coexisting way. In a three year study done by Dr. Harold, a researcher at Cardiff University, he looked at more than 300 families and how adults engage in different styles of arguing (Critchlow, 2014). Oftentimes, your argument may have nothing to do with your kids, but if you fight in destructive unregulated ways, it threatens their emotional stability. According to Amy Morin, there are a number of ways in which parents arguing will affect a child mentally. Some of these ways include; decreased cognitive performance, relationship issues, behavior problems, eating disorders and physical issues, substance use, and a negative outlook on life (Morin, 2019). Being exposed to parents fighting increases the chances that kids will treat others with hostility. Children may also struggle to maintain healthy relationships when they're older if they've grown accustomed to family discord or they may struggle to identify who they can really trust in life.

In this research, culture was another prominent aspect to look at. Yet, throughout this study it was believed that one's culture does not alter anything in a romantic relationship. Most people in the islands of Hāwai'i have divorced parents, however, we are also big on 'ohana. The Asian culture is strongly influenced by how other people view you, that they are less likely to get a divorce. After interviewing the eight interviewees, they each did not see how that would play a role in their relationship nor their parents relationship.

Conclusion

All in all, children of married parents in this study saw themselves as no different than children of divorced parents when it comes to the interactions they have with a partner. Although children of married parents have grown up with the legal term of their parents being married, it is solely dependent upon the relationship in which they interact while conflict arises. While children of divorced parents grew up with their parents separated they also grew up with co-parenting skills. There is still more research that needs to be done in this area of study. Moreover, on how conflict is natural in relationships.

To touch on the culture, interviewees believed that culture plays a role, but not as a big difference to the point their relationship would be affected in a negative or positive way. Culture is one that people hold near and dear to their heart, however, when it comes to having a relationship they are often not putting that as their priority or learning factor as to why they do not need to be with someone.

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