

Secure Versus Avoidant: The Effect of Spirituality in Overcoming Conflict Created by Adverse Attachment Styles in Intercultural Couples

THOMSON, Tracy, Saint Paul University

Most married couples seek deeper connectedness within their marriage. The depth of connectedness is influenced by the behaviour of the individuals within a marriage and how their significant other perceives and interprets these behaviours. Since the interpretation of behaviours is based largely on the culture in which a person is raised, intercultural or interracial (hereafter referred to as intercultural) marriages face particular challenges in achieving a level of connectedness not experienced in intracultural or intraracial (hereafter referred to as intracultural) marriages. This experience is common to a growing number of Canadians as the rate of marrying outside of one's cultural or racial group is on a rapid incline. A unique sub-population with diverse cultural backgrounds is emerging. These diversities can enrich a marriage and at the same time cause struggles of connecting within the marriage. It has been shown that the way we seek attachment affects our ability to connect to others. An individual's attachment style (either secure, avoidance, or anxious/ambivalent) is influenced during childhood development and is stable when carried over into our romantic relationships as adults. Our ability to connect and love another is rooted in how we learned to love within the family we grew up in. Past research has shown that different cultural groups have different attachment styles. The majority of white American's tested displayed a secure attachment style while the majority of Asian American college students self-reported an avoidant attachment style. How do these different attachment styles influence connectedness between intercultural couples? This current research studies the attachment style of 150 married couples (intercultural and intracultural marriages). It also examines if spiritual and/or religious affiliations prove to be an important resource that gives intercultural couples the strength to stay connected when in the absence of cultural commonalities. Hypothesis 1: The majority of couples of intracultural marriages will have a better quality of marriage due to having a more secure attachment style when compared to intercultural couples. Hypothesis 2: Intercultural couples will rely on more spiritual/religious affiliation for a better quality of marriage compared to couples of intracultural marriages. Measurements of attachment style, quality of marriage, and spiritual/religious affiliation are collected using questionnaires available via online survey websites. The quality of marriage is measured using the Dyadic Adjustment Scale. This measure has been used extensively due its solid psychometric properties. Factor analysis has shown this scale to be reliable, valid and appropriate for this measure. Attachment styles are measured using the Experiences in Close Relationships Scale. This scale has been shown to have both convergent and discriminant validity. Spirituality and/or religion affiliation is measured using the Spirituality Transcendence Scale. Construct validity along with cross-observer convergence and incremental validity make this scale a preferred choice to for this measure. This research is directed at understanding the foundations of strong interpersonal bonds that exist in the absence of cultural commonality. These bonds are critical to maintaining stable family units in the face of the challenges unique to intercultural marriages.