



## Articles

# Factors Contributing to Personal Commitment in Chinese Interethnic Couples

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## Abstract

Interethnic relationships are increasingly common in many societies, yet interethnic couples have a higher divorce rate compared to intraethnic couples. Given these facts and the dearth of research, this study aimed to identify factors that contribute to couples' commitment in interethnic relationships. This study investigated the personal commitment of Chinese interethnic couples in the United Kingdom and the United States. Specifically, whether love, dyadic adjustment and "couple cultural identity" (i.e. acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism) would predict personal commitment and whether each variable would account for unique variance in personal commitment of the participants. Thirty-seven Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples participated in the study and significant relationships between love and personal commitment, dyadic adjustment and personal commitment were found. Also, couple cultural identity was important for women's personal commitment. Multiple regression and structural equation modelling showed that partners in interethnic relationships defined personal commitment in different ways with men emphasizing love and dyadic adjustment, and women emphasizing love and acculturation to their partner. The discovery of the importance of couple cultural identity in contributing to personal commitment, besides love and dyadic adjustment, helps researchers to gain a greater understanding of such relationships and to extend the research on interethnic relationships.

**Keywords:** interethnic relationships, personal commitment, couple cultural identity, love, dyadic adjustment, Chinese couples

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## Introduction

There are growing numbers of interethnic marriages in many countries, including the United Kingdom (UK) and the United States (U.S.). In the U.S., the number of interethnic marriages rose from 0.15 million to 1.1 million between 1970 and 1994 (Alouise, 1998). Also, there was an increasing percentage of interethnic marriages (0.7% in 1970, 2% in 1980, 2.9% in 1990, and 5.4% in 2000) in all marriages recorded in the U.S. (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Similar increases were seen in the UK, a multi-ethnic country, and statistics showed that 2% of marriages were interethnic (Office for National Statistics, 2005).

Historically, Asians in the U.S. and the UK have tended to have higher percentages of interethnic relationships than Black and some other ethnic groups. For example, in the U.S. in 2000, 34.7% were Black/White marriages and 62.6% were Asian/White marriages among all the interethnic marriages (Fields & Casper, 2001). Statistical data on the composition of these Asian/White relationships are rare. According to the 1980 census, Chinese, other Asians and Hispanic Americans had substantially more interethnic marriages than did Black interethnic

marriages and White interethnic marriages (Sung, 1990). The 1980 census also showed that Chinese Americans were much more likely to marry White Americans than to marry individuals from other different ethnic groups, and that White Americans had much higher percentages of intermarrying Asian Americans (Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean and Vietnamese) than intermarrying with other ethnic minority groups (Lee & Yamanaka, 1990). The historical trend continues to this day as the 2010 census showed that Asian<sup>i</sup> people were more likely to marry interethnically than Black and White people (Kreider, 2012).

In the UK, according to the 1991 census, although more than 99% of White people partnered with other Whites, 13.2% of Chinese men partnered with White women and 24.9% of Chinese women partnered with White men; among Asians<sup>ii</sup> who partnered with Whites, the composition of Chinese/White and "Other Asian groups"/White had much higher percentage than the composition of Indian/White, Pakistani/White and Bangladeshi/White (Phoenix & Owen, 1996). Nearly 30% of Chinese women and 15% of Chinese men had married someone from a different ethnic group (Office for National Statistics, 2005) in the UK. Approximately 0.4% of the population identified themselves as mixed, within which one of the biggest groups, Asian/White, was 0.1% of the population (Phoenix & Owen, 1996). Unfortunately, more recent data is not available.

However, the divorce rate of interethnic marriages tends to be higher than intraethnic marriages according to the National Survey of Family Growth in the U.S. (Bramlett & Mosher, 2002). Schwertfeger's (1982) longitudinal research across 9 years in Hawaii found not only interethnic marriages had higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages, but also that while no Chinese intraethnic marriages ended in divorce in the sample, the divorce rate of Chinese interethnic marriages was as high as the overall interethnic divorce rate. Jones (1994) also found the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages in Australia. Although there are no current statistics/studies on the interethnic divorce rate in the UK, it is likely to be comparable to those as in the U.S. and Australia.

The Chinese ethnic group in the UK is growing rapidly, from 156,938 in 1991 (Owen, 1994) to 247,403 in 2001 (Office for National Statistics, 2005), likewise in the U.S., from 2,300,000 in 2000 (Barnes & Bennett, 2002) to 3,300,000 in 2010 (Hoeffel, Rastogi, Ouk Kim, & Shahid, 2012). As indicated earlier, Asian/Chinese individuals are more likely to be involved in interethnic relationships than individuals from some other ethnic groups (e.g. Blacks) in both the U.S. and the UK, it is important to study Chinese interethnic relationships in the UK and the U.S.

Given the facts above, this study will address the important issue of growing numbers but unstable interethnic relationships in the UK and the U.S.. Specifically, this study adds to the current research literature by identifying factors that contribute to couples' commitment in Chinese interethnic relationships.

### Components of Commitment

Important theoretical models of relationship commitment include [Rusbult's \(1980\)](#) Investment Model and [Johnson's \(1991; Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston, 1999\)](#) commitment framework. The Investment Model looked at commitment as a single construct, whereas the commitment framework looked at commitment as a multi-faceted construct which consisted of personal, moral, and structural commitment. The Investment Model ([Rusbult, 1980](#)) suggested that satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size predicted commitment level. Later work by [Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, and Gaines \(1997\)](#) added moral and social prescriptive support to this model and found the validity of social prescriptive support along with satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size in predicting commitment level. However, this model has only been tested on people who have been involved in intraethnic close re-

relationships across several cultures and the majority of research was on dating relationships (e.g. Davis & Strube, 1993; Lin & Rusbult, 1995; Van Lange et al., 1997). Also, according to a qualitative study that examined Chinese interethnic married couples in the UK, couples' understandings on investment were different from Rusbult's definition, and love, moral aspects, and satisfaction were frequently mentioned as factors leading to commitment (Zhong & Cramer, 2010). Results of the qualitative study provided support for Johnson's (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) commitment framework, which was chosen for the current study. More specifically, personal commitment aspect was the focus. In Johnson's (1991) commitment framework, *personal commitment* refers to the *internal desires* to commit to a relationship and is composed of "Attraction to one's partner (love)", "Attraction to the relationship (marital satisfaction)" and "Couple identity" (Johnson et al., 1999, p. 162).

Moreover, cultural differences and related issues between partners of interethnic couples were also explored in Zhong and Cramer's (2010) qualitative study. In that study, 83% of participants thought they were culturally different from their spouse, and "cultural differences that cannot be resolved" was the most frequently mentioned reason (89%) for the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples. A new construct "couple cultural identity" was also proposed as one of the factors contributing to commitment, and it was endorsed by the participants.

### Couple Cultural Identity

Research has consistently found that one of the most important qualities for a successful interethnic relationship is the formation of a joint couple cultural identity/value orientation. For example, Ting-Toomey (1994) and Crippen and Brew (2007) both recommend that interethnic couples negotiate cultural differences and develop a "third culture" (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 68), which is based on the couple's similarities. Likewise, Strachman and Schimmel (2006) noted that interethnic partners should manage their different worldviews and form a "two-person mini-culture" (p. 976) in order to maintain commitment under threat. Eyman (1984) found that "merged identity", which was defined as "forsaking some aspects of individual identity in order to achieve a sense of unity or oneness as a marital couple" (pp. 13-14), had significant positive correlation with, and effect on, commitment. Falicov (1995) and Tseliou and Eisler (2007) also mentioned the existence of a combined cultural identity in interethnic relationships.

Another important characteristic of successful interethnic relationships seems to be that both partners have similar acculturation levels. Acculturation is about how an individual changes his/her cultural patterns in a new cultural setting (e.g. Segall, Dasen, Berry, & Poortinga, 1999). Two studies have found the cultural change/acculturation in interethnic relationships. Oey's (1990) research on 20 Chinese/White and 20 Chinese intraethnic married couples in the U.S. showed that interethnically married Chinese had higher levels of acculturation than did intraethnically married Chinese. According to Minatoya and Higa's (1988) study in Japan on three groups of women – intraethnically married Japanese women, intraethnically married American women and interethnically married Japanese women (Japanese/American couples) – interethnically married Japanese women made more efforts to change in behaviour and attitudes towards their husband's culture but certain deep-rooted cultural values such as individualism/collectivism took time to change. Oey's (1990) study highlighted the importance of partners having similar acculturation levels: for both interethnic and intraethnic couples, the more similar the couple's acculturation level (measured by the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn, Ahuna, & Khoo, 1992)), the greater their marital adjustment.

In the current research, the two aspects which have been posited as important interethnic relationship qualities – a combined cultural identity/value orientation and a similar acculturation level – will be combined into one construct

“couple cultural identity”, which means the extent the partners both follow a same set of cultural values. This definition of couple cultural identity was agreed upon by almost all the interethnic couples in the qualitative study, and it was treated as one of the factors leading to commitment by the majority of the interviewees (Zhong & Cramer, 2010). Examples of the understandings of this construct from the interviewees were: “both the couple agree that this is what we are doing as a couple”; “husband and wife follow the same principles”; “what the both couple mainly follow”; and “two people develop their own culture within their relationship”.

In the current study, it needed to determine how to evaluate a combined cultural identity/value orientation and acculturation in interethnic relationships. Individualism/collectivism has been found as a significant sign of the difference between different cultures/individuals (Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede, 1980, 2001; Markus & Kitayama, 1991; Schwartz, 1992, 1994; Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, 1990; Smith, Dugan, & Trompenaars, 1996; Triandis, Leung, Villareal, & Clack, 1985; Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997), indicating a strong association with cultural value difference. According to Hofstede (1991, p. 51), “Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people’s lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty.” Moreover, dealing with differences of individualism/collectivism orientations between partners has been deemed as important for interethnic relationships (e.g. Falicov, 1995; Ting-Toomey, 1994). Therefore, a combined cultural identity/value orientation will be partly manifested by the couple’s similarity on individualism/collectivism. Acculturation will be looked at through a micro point of view in the current study, in which two different cultures interact at an individual-level (i.e. one individual interacting with another person from a different culture) and the two people form a close interethnic relationship.

Couple cultural identity reflects the ways that interethnic couples consciously or unconsciously negotiate their cultural differences. One example is negotiation between individualism and collectivism which finally results in a set of cultural values that both partners follow. Couple cultural identity emphasized the similarity of both partners’ cultural values and the extent they acculturate to each other’s cultures (not one partner’s cultural values or acculturation to the mainstream culture). Thus, couple cultural identity is unique for every interethnic couple, potentially reducing conflict over cultural issues and contributing to each partner’s commitment.

There can be several ways for dyads to achieve couple cultural identity. For example, they could choose to follow one partner’s cultural values, mix both partners’ cultural values and create a new couple cultural identity, and/or follow a third culture’s values. Happy interethnic couples may unconsciously form their couple cultural identity but unhappy interethnic couples may find it difficult to negotiate cultural differences, especially the difference in individualism/collectivism orientation. Partners in each interethnic relationship cannot change their own ethnic background but they can both change towards a couple cultural identity for a successful relationship.

Johnson and colleagues (1999) stressed the importance of couple identity in contributing to personal commitment. Johnson (1991) defined the couple identity as the degree to which one puts the relationship into one’s own identity. Couple identity was measured by “You would miss the sense of being a couple”, “Being married helps you feel good about yourself” and “You really like being a [husband/wife]” (Johnson et al., 1999, p. 176). Based on Johnson’s research and extrapolating from couple identity to couple *cultural* identity, one may say that interethnic couples would lose the couple cultural identity if their marriage were to end; that similar cultural values promotes good feelings as a couple due to the reduction of value contradictions with their partner; and that they would enjoy the

benefits of sharing a couple cultural identity. Given the salient cultural difference between the partners in interethnic relationships, having similar cultural values would also be an important part of couple identity. Since cultural value differences show prominently in interethnic couples, the sense of being a couple could be reflected strongly on couple cultural identity. Couples with strong couple identity would follow similar values and have strong couple cultural identity, and in turn, strengthen their couple identity. In order to display couple cultural identity as a component in personal commitment, couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism and acculturation to the partner were combined.

### Hypothesis

The hypothesis is that love, satisfaction (i.e. dyadic adjustment), and couple cultural identity (i.e. acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism) will predict personal commitment and each will account for unique variance in personal commitment of Chinese/non-Chinese interethnic couples. The relationships between love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity and personal commitment are: the more love, the more personal commitment; the more satisfaction, the more personal commitment; the more congruent couple cultural identity (more acculturation to the partner and more similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism), the more personal commitment. This model that consisted of love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity, and personal commitment was called the Cultural Model in the current study.

## Method

### Participants

**Recruitment Strategies** — The participants of this research, Chinese married to/cohabiting with non-Chinese, were approached in person in China towns and Chinese communities in the UK first. The response rate was not very high, so participants were then approached in the U.S., as there were more Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the U.S. than in the UK. Couples in the U.S. were approached through the first author's personal contacts either living in the U.S. or having contacts living in the U.S.. In order to increase the sample size of the study, all the participants were asked to approach or recruit other eligible couples (snowball method). All potential participants were informed that it was a study about the relationships of Chinese/non-Chinese couples, and both partners were encouraged to participate in.

**Demographic Characteristics of the Participants** — The participants were 25 Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the UK and 12 Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the U.S.. Of the 37 couples, 84% were married and 16% were cohabiting. Seventy point three per cent of women were in their first marriage and 13.5% of women were in their second marriage; 64.9% of men were in their first marriage, 8.1% of men were in their second marriage and 10.8% were in their third marriage. Participants' ages, marriage/cohabitation durations, and the duration of living in the UK or the U.S. are presented in [Table 1](#).

Table 1

*Ranges and Means of Demographic Variables*

Demographic variable	Minimum (year/years)	Maximum (year/years)	Mean (year/years)
Marriage duration (for married couples)	0.5	34	9.87
Cohabiting duration (for cohabiting couples)	1	5	2.66
Duration of living together (for all the couples)	1	34	9.51
Women's age	21	64	39.32
Men's age	20	70	44.02
Duration of living in the UK or U.S. for women	1	41	12.28
Duration of living in the UK or U.S. for men	11	63	36.66

All of the female participants and almost all of the male participants (91.8%) grew up in the country of their birth. With one exception, all the men were from the same ethnic group as their parents. Participants' percentages of different ethnicities, educational levels, religions, socioeconomic status, percentage of immigrants, and percentages of different socioeconomic background and educational levels between partners are presented in [Table 2](#).

Table 2

*Percentages of Demographic Variables*

Variable	%
<b>Ethnicity</b>	
<i>Men</i>	
Chinese	13.5
White	83.8
Asian	2.7
<i>Women</i>	
Chinese	86.5
White	10.8
Other	2.7
<b>Education</b>	
<i>Men</i>	
Postgraduate	43.2
1st degree	32.4
< 1st degree	24.3
<i>Women</i>	
Postgraduate	54.1
1st degree	35.1
< 1st degree	10.8
<b>Religion</b>	
<i>Men</i>	
Christian	32.4
Other	27.0
None	40.5
<i>Women</i>	
Christian	24.3
Other	13.5
None	62.2



Variable	%
<b>Socio-economic status</b>	
Upper middle class	18.9
Middle class	67.6
Lower middle class	13.5
<b>Socioeconomic background</b>	
Men's=Women's	61.1
Men's>Women's	19.4
Men's<Women's	19.4
<b>Immigrants</b>	
Men	40.5
Women	91.9
<b>Educational levels</b>	
Men's=Women's	48.6
Men's>Women's	18.9
Men's<Women's	32.4

### Measurements and Scoring

Couples were asked to complete several measures. All measures were translated into Chinese by the first author, and then the Chinese questionnaire was back-translated into English separately by two other people who were fluent in both languages. The English questionnaire and the back-translated English questionnaire were then compared. During this process, unsuitable expressions in Chinese were revised. Participants completed the following measures:

**1. Romantic love scale (Rubin, 1970)** — This measure consists of 13 questions such as “If \_\_\_\_ were feeling badly, my first duty would be to cheer him (her) up” and “I feel that I can confide in \_\_\_\_ about virtually everything” and rates on a 9-point scale from “Not at all true; disagree completely” (1) to “Definitely true; agree completely” (9) (pp. 267-268). The score of romantic love is the sum of each item in this scale. High scores in this scale would reflect high levels of love.

**2. Commitment scale by Rusbult, Martz, and Agnew (1998)** — This scale has been identified as being effective in measuring personal commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999; Stanley & Markman, 1992). The scale includes seven items such as “I want our relationship to last for a very long time” and “I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future” (reverse scoring) and rates on a 9-point scale from “Do Not Agree At All” (0) to “Agree Completely” (8) (Rusbult et al., 1998, pp. 390-391). The score of commitment is the sum of each item in this scale. High scores in this scale would reflect high levels of personal commitment.

**3. Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS; Spanier, 1976)** — The DAS has 32 questions, such as the degree of agreement/disagreement on “Handling family finances”, “In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?”, and “Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?” (pp. 27-28). In the current study, a single score of DAS will be used based on the definition of satisfaction by Johnson (1991; Johnson et al., 1999), which was “attraction to the relationship”. One of Johnson’s (Kapinus & Johnson, 2003) studies used six questions to measure satisfaction within his framework of personal commitment, which

were all reflected in different aspects of DAS. Therefore, all items in DAS have been added together to form a single score of dyadic adjustment. High scores in dyadic adjustment would reflect high levels of satisfaction.

**4. Couple cultural identity scale** — This was measured by two scales, acculturation to the partner scale and Triandis' (1996) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale. The acculturation to the partner scale (see Appendix) was created specifically for this study and it was a 9-point scale. Items of the acculturation to the partner scale have been added together to form one part of "couple cultural identity". High scores would reflect high levels of couple cultural identity. Triandis' (1996) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale included 29 questions on a 9-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9). Eight questions on vertical individualism such as "It annoys me when other people perform better than I do", seven questions on horizontal individualism such as "Being a unique individual is important to me", eight questions on vertical collectivism such as "I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity", and six questions on horizontal collectivism such as "The well-being of my co-workers is important to me" (p. 415). The scores for the couple cultural identity from Triandis' scale have been calculated as: calculating each item's absolute value of the subtraction between partner's scores, and then adding this absolute value for each item in vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism together to form another part of "couple cultural identity". Lower score means highly congruent values on individualism and collectivism between partners, which would reflect a higher couple cultural identity.

**5. Demographic information** — Participants completed questions assessing socio-demographic characteristics and relationship variables.

### Procedure

The first author obtained informed consent from the participants who then completed either an English or Chinese version of the questionnaire. As there were some private questions in the questionnaire, participants were assured of anonymity and confidentiality. The respondents were told that there was no right or wrong answer to each question and they were encouraged to choose the answers that best reflected their own personality and situation. All the participants were asked to answer the questionnaire separately from and not to compare answers with their partner. Some participants emailed their completed questionnaires back, some filled in the printed questionnaire, and one couple answered the questionnaires through telephone. Questionnaires from both partners were necessary for the study. After the data collection was completed, participants were thanked and debriefed about the study.

### Data Analysis

In order to test the hypothesis, the following methods will be used on the dyadic data. First, a correlation analysis will be carried out to see whether the correlations between love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity and personal commitment are significant and in the right direction for men and women respectively.

Second, standard multiple regressions will be carried out to see how much variance love, satisfaction and couple cultural identity account for in personal commitment, whether the regression model is significant, and whether each variable significantly predicts personal commitment for men and women, respectively. In order to see whether each variable accounts for unique variance in personal commitment, the significance of the regression model and the coefficients of each variable with personal commitment will be examined.



Third, the sample of the current research study consists of both partners, so *partner effect* will also be looked at through standard multiple regression to determine whether partner variables (the partner's love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity) significantly predicted one's own personal commitment together with one's own love, satisfaction and couple cultural identity. In order to have more knowledge of the sample, computing variables and descriptive statistics will be carried out to see the difference between partners' scores on each variable in the Cultural Model and both partners' individualism/collectivism tendencies. All above analyses will utilise Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 19 (IBM Corp., New York, USA).

Finally, structural equation modelling (SEM) will be used to test the model fitness of women's and men's commitment with all their significant predictors. This analysis will utilise Linear Structural Relationships (LISREL) 8.80 Student (Scientific Software International, Inc).

## Results

*Reliability analysis* was carried out in order to test the consistency of the questions on each scale for the current sample. Reliability alphas by gender for each of the identified scales are shown in Table 3. In general, the reliability alphas were acceptable. There was one exception: The reliability of the vertical individualism scale for women was very low ( $\alpha = .41$ ). However when one item, "Competition is the law of nature" (Triandis, 1996, p. 415) was deleted, the reliability rose to .74 according to item-total statistics. Therefore the item was deleted from the scale in the following analysis.

Table 3

*Reliabilities of the Scales*

	Women (alpha)	Men (alpha)
Rubin's measurement of romantic love	.85	.78
Rusbult's commitment scale	.88	.73
Spanier's DAS	.91	.91
Acculturation to the partner scale	.63	.60
Vertical individualism	.41	.70
Vertical individualism (after dropping one item)	.74	.63
Horizontal individualism	.85	.90
Vertical collectivism	.76	.66
Horizontal collectivism	.73	.77

Horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies (see Table 4) were examined through *computing variables* and *descriptive statistics*. Men and women's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies scores were taken from the maximum average score among the four categories. These results are partly consistent with Triandis (1995) who noted that individualists tend to be horizontal individualists while collectivists tend to be vertical collectivists. This was true for men in the current sample, but not for women. The most frequent value tendency for men was horizontal individualism, but for women was horizontal collectivism. There were only a few vertical individualists in the sample. Both men and women had higher percentages of horizontal characteristics than vertical characteristics. In the current sample, women were more collectivistic and men were more individualistic. This result might reflect the fact that most women participants were Chinese immigrants and most men participants were Westerners.

Table 4

*Men's and Women's Horizontal and Vertical Individualism and Collectivism Tendencies in Percentage*

	Horizontal individualism (%)	Vertical individualism (%)	Vertical collectivism (%)	Horizontal collectivism (%)
Men	67.6	5.4	10.8	16.2
Women	37.8	2.7	16.2	43.2

*Correlation analysis* was carried out for all the variables (see Table 5). Although there were some significant correlations, the coefficients were not particularly high, indicating that the scales were not measuring the same constructs. There were some significant correlations between personal commitment and love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, and couple's individualism/collectivism (i.e. couple's similarity on vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism) for men and women respectively. However, couple's individualism/collectivism did not correlate significantly to men's personal commitment. Note that couple's individualism/collectivism significantly correlated with both men and women's acculturation to the partner, and women's dyadic adjustment, which means the greater similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism tendency, the greater acculturation to the partner for both men and women, and the greater dyadic adjustment for women. However, couple's individualism/collectivism was significantly correlated to women's, but not to men's, personal commitment, love, and dyadic adjustment.

Table 5

*Means and Standard Deviations, and Correlations Between All the Variables in the Cultural Model*

	<i>M</i>	<i>SD</i>	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
1. women's personal commitment	52.11	6.04								
2. men's personal commitment	52.73	4.83	.45**							
3. women's love	86.30	14.53	.60**	.20						
4. men's love	94.73	10.50	.22	.61**	.27					
5. women's acculturation to the partner	42.00	6.51	.59**	.09	.23	-.02				
6. men's acculturation to the partner	41.49	6.58	.43**	.29*	.49**	.32*	.52**			
7. women's dyadic adjustment	114.11	18.16	.61**	.44**	.59**	.39**	.52**	.56**		
8. men's dyadic adjustment	112.31	15.68	.31*	.56**	.39*	.52**	.20	.53**	.71**	
9. couple's individualism/collectivism	1.34	0.53	-.33*	.02	-.29*	.09	-.50**	-.39**	-.30*	-.19

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

*Standard multiple regression* was carried out to see how the variables of satisfaction, love and couple cultural identity predict personal commitment. The scores entered for the predictors were love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, couple's individualism/collectivism.

Results for women showed that women's dyadic adjustment ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ), love ( $r = .60, p < .001$ ), women's acculturation to the partner ( $r = .59, p < .001$ ), and couple's individualism/collectivism ( $r = -.33, p < .05$ ) significantly correlated with women's personal commitment. Thus all the predictors in the Cultural Model significantly correlated with women's personal commitment. The results also showed that the more love (i.e. high score of love), satisfaction (i.e. high score of dyadic adjustment) and couple cultural identity (i.e. high score of women's acculturation to the partner and low scores of couple's individualism/collectivism), the more the personal commitment of the women. In the standard multiple regression, love ( $\beta = .43, p < .01$ ) and women's acculturation to the partner ( $\beta = .45, p < .01$ ) explained significant variance in women's personal commitment, women's love explained 11% and women's acculturation to the partner explained 12% of the total variance. However the rest of the scales did not show

unique variance in explaining personal commitment. All the predictors explained 59% of variance in personal commitment,  $F(4,32) = 11.43, p < .001$ . Therefore, greater women's love and women's acculturation to the partner predicted greater personal commitment of women.

Results for men showed that men's dyadic adjustment ( $r = .56, p < .001$ ), men's love ( $r = .61, p < .001$ ), and men's acculturation to the partner ( $r = .29, p < .05$ ) significantly correlated to men's personal commitment. However, unlike women, couple's individualism/collectivism did not correlate significantly with men's personal commitment. The results showed that the more love (i.e. high score of love), satisfaction (i.e. high score of dyadic adjustment) and couple cultural identity (i.e. high score of men's acculturation to the partner), the more the personal commitment of the men. Standard multiple regression showed that men's love ( $\beta = .43, p < .05$ ) and dyadic adjustment ( $\beta = .36, p < .05$ ) explained significant variance in personal commitment, men's love explained 12% and men's dyadic adjustment explained 8% of the total variance. The rest of the scales did not show unique variance in explaining personal commitment. All the predictors explained 46% of variance in personal commitment,  $F(4,32) = 6.79, p < .001$ . Therefore, greater men's love and men's dyadic adjustment predicted greater personal commitment of men.

Two more standard regression analyses were carried out to see whether partner's scores account for significant variance in men and women's personal commitment. A regression on women's personal commitment showed that all the variables explained 60% of variance in women's personal commitment,  $F(7,29) = 6.36, p < .001$ . Women's acculturation to the partner ( $\beta = .50, p < .01$ ) and women's love ( $\beta = .45, p < .01$ ) were significant predictors, but variables of men did not show any significance in predicting women's personal commitment – a result similar to the previous regression of women's variables on women's personal commitment.

Moreover, regression analysis on men's personal commitment showed that all the variables explained 47% of variance in men's personal commitment,  $F(7,29) = 3.65, p < .01$ . Only men's love ( $\beta = .44, p < .05$ ) significantly predicted men's personal commitment; variables of women did not show any significance in predicting men's personal commitment. Men's dyadic adjustment, which was a significant predictor of men's personal commitment in the regression of men's variables on men's personal commitment, was no longer a significant predictor.

Finally, structural equation modelling was used to test the model fitness, in which women's commitment was affected by women's love and acculturation, and men's commitment was affected by men's love and dyadic adjustment (see Figure 1). The errors of manifest variables were set as the calculation of one minus the measurement's reliability, and the path between the manifest variables and latent variables were set by using the square root of the measures' alpha reliabilities. The model showed that women's love ( $\gamma = .49, p < .001$ ) and acculturation ( $\gamma = .48, p < .001$ ) significantly affected women's commitment; men's love ( $\gamma = .44, p < .01$ ) and dyadic adjustment ( $\gamma = .34, p < .05$ ) significantly affected men's commitment. This model is almost non-significant ( $\chi^2(5) = 10.86, p = 0.054$ , RMSEA = 0.18, CFI = 0.89), which shows the model fitness was nearly good.

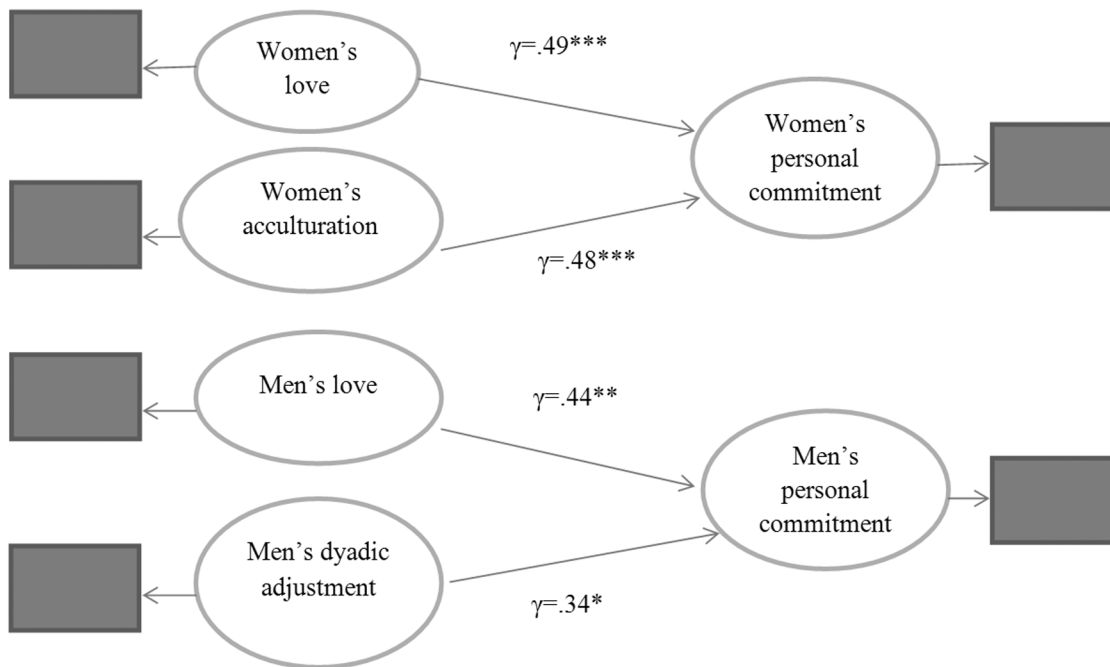


Figure 1. Pathway diagram of the structural equation modelling analysis.

## Discussion

The aim of this study was to determine whether the Cultural Model, which consists of love, satisfaction (dyadic adjustment), couple cultural identity, and personal commitment, fits Chinese/non-Chinese couples. Specifically, whether there were significant relationships between love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity and personal commitment, whether love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity (acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism) predict personal commitment, and how each of the variables accounts for unique variance in personal commitment.

The correlations between the variables in the Cultural Model did show that women's love, women's satisfaction, women's acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism were significantly correlated with women's personal commitment. Also, men's love, men's satisfaction and men's acculturation to the partner were significantly correlated with men's personal commitment. However the correlation between couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism and men's personal commitment was not significant.

The significant relationships between love, satisfaction and personal commitment are consistent with previous research. For example, several studies (e.g. Previti & Amato, 2003; Sabatelli & Pearce, 1986) found that most people mentioned love as the most important factor for a stable marriage. Fletcher, Simpson, and Thomas (2000) identified a strong positive correlation between love and commitment. Satisfaction has also been found to be strongly related to stability (Givertz & Segrin, 2005; Kurdek, 1993; Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

For the new variable couple cultural identity, both women's acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism significantly correlated with women's personal commitment, but for men, only men's

acculturation to the partner significantly correlated with men's personal commitment. Consistent with [Strachman and Schimmel's \(2006\)](#) finding on couple's similar values in enhancing commitment, the current study also found personal commitment was higher for those who had greater acculturation to the partner and greater couple's similarity on individualism and collectivism. However only acculturation to the partner was significant for both men and women; couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism was only significant for women. As [Minatoya and Higa's \(1988\)](#) study showed, it is possible that behavioural change, which reflected mostly in acculturation to the partner, is easier than changing core values such as individualism/collectivism, which was reflected in couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism. An alternative explanation for these results is that most women in the sample were from Eastern countries, suggesting that they would pursue collectivistic similar values with their partners. Also, most women in the sample were immigrants (thus, might feel the need to change their values to adapt to the host country), or women may generally be more concerned about similar cultural values in a couple than men do. The discovery of the relationship between couple cultural identity and personal commitment supports and extends [Eyman's \(1984\)](#) research on "merged identity", [Tseliou and Eisler's \(2007\)](#) discovery of a combined cultural identity in interethnic relationships, and [Oey's \(1990\)](#) finding of similar acculturation levels in relating to marital adjustment.

The results of the analyses showed that the Cultural Models for men and women were both significant models, but not every predictor accounted for unique variance in personal commitment. Women's love and acculturation to the partner were significant predictors of women's personal commitment, and men's love and satisfaction were significant predictors of men's personal commitment; however women's satisfaction and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism did not show significant predictions on women's commitment, and men's acculturation and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism did not show significant predictions on men's commitment. Only love was a significant predictor of both men's and women's personal commitment. This supports the results of [Zhong and Cramer's \(2010\)](#) qualitative study which found the importance of love in relating to commitment.

In the current sample, women were more collectivistic and men were more individualistic. Also, most women were immigrants and men were non-immigrants. So, couple cultural identity may associate more significantly with personal commitment for the collectivistic partner than for the individualistic partner, for women than for men, and/or for immigrants than for non-immigrants. The finding of the significance of women's acculturation to the partner in predicting women's personal commitment partly confirmed the hypothesis on couple cultural identity. Therefore, the Cultural Model was partly supported by the current study.

Some partner effect was expected to be found in this study. However partner's love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity hardly had any effect on one's own personal commitment.

## Conclusion

This research showed the significance of the Cultural Model on Chinese/non-Chinese couples with majority (84%) married couples. It has provided evidence that love, satisfaction (dyadic adjustment) and couple cultural identity significantly correlated with and predicted personal commitment, and that couple cultural identity had more effect on women's personal commitment than on men's.

Men and women in the sample maintained their relationships in different ways: men emphasized love and satisfaction, whereas women emphasized love and acculturation to their partner. However these might be confounded with gender, migrant status, and the person's individualism/collectivism orientation. For example, women, migrants

and more collectivistic individuals may be more likely to maintain commitment by acculturation to their partner. Most women were migrants and more collectivistic than their partner in the current sample, so it is unknown whether similar results would occur if a good proportion of men in the sample were migrants and were more collectivistic than their partner.

### Limitations and Future Directions

The current sample consisted of 37 men and 37 women partners in Chinese/non-Chinese relationships, so the findings may be more generalizable if the sample size was increased. It was also a highly educated sample – 89% of women and 75% of men had college education or more, and the majority of the couples were middle class. So, a sample with more diverse educational level and social classes would help to determine whether the Cultural Model can be applicable for people with different educational levels and social classes.

Married couples comprised 84% of the sample, so it is not known whether the Cultural Model fits both married and unmarried couples or only fits married couples. Comparing samples of married and unmarried couples on the Cultural Model would answer this question.

Most women (32 out of total 37 women) in the current sample were Chinese, which is congruent with the literature that more Chinese women than Chinese men marry someone from another ethnic group. However, having more Chinese migrant men in the sample would indicate whether Chinese men's acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism affect their personal commitment as Chinese women did in the current sample.

The data collection was very difficult, especially getting both partners' questionnaires. Questionnaires from only one partner were dropped if there was a failure to obtain their partner's data. Therefore, strategies for recruiting participants from a different location would make the data collection process much easier. For example, searching for Chinese/non-Chinese couples in a culturally diverse city with a great percentage of Chinese. Getting respondents from couple counselling organizations in a cultural diverse city may also serve to reduce self-selection bias, as participants who chose to answer the questionnaire in the current study may be more committed than those who did not choose to answer the questionnaire.

Couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism did not show significant predicting ability for both man and women's personal commitment, and this variable only significantly correlated with women's personal commitment, but not men's. Future research should find the reason why the strongest cultural indicator (i.e. individualism/collectivism) did not significantly predict personal commitment. Possible reasons may include issues with the scale, sample size, men are not affected by similar individualism/collectivism in the relationship, or that most men in the current sample were not migrants.

Since the idea of couple cultural identity is based on the concept of couple identity, research should also be carried out to see what elements contribute to couple identity for interethnic couples – it may not only relate to acculturation to the partner and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism, but also other cultural dimensions or other variables. Finally, to test the Cultural Model on other combinations of interethnic couples would be helpful to find out whether couples of other ethnic combinations will show the same patterns as Chinese/non-Chinese couples.

This study is an important step in addressing the dearth of research in interethnic relationships, especially Chinese interethnic relationships. The discovery of the importance of "couple cultural identity" in contributing to personal



commitment, besides love and dyadic adjustment, helps researchers to gain a greater understanding of such relationships and to build up further research on interethnic relationships. Also, given the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages, findings from this study may allow relationship counsellors to help interethnic couples experiencing relationship problems.

## Appendix: Acculturation to the Partner Scale

1. How well do you speak the language that you communicate with your partner?
2. How similar is the food you have to your partner's?
3. How well do you know your partner's culture?
4. How willing are you to introduce your culture to your partner?
5. To what extent are your friends also your partner's friends?
6. To what degree are your religious beliefs the same as your partner's?

### Notes

i) According to Hoeffel et al. (2012), "Asian' refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam." (p. 2), and this was according to the guidance of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget's 1997 Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (p. 1).

ii) The "Asian" included Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and other Asian groups.

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