

Group Processes & Intergroup Relations

<http://gpi.sagepub.com/>

Personal openness toward interfaith dating and marriage among Muslim young adults: The role of religiosity, cultural identity, and family connectedness

Jorida Cila and Richard N. Lalonde

Group Processes Intergroup Relations 2014 17: 357 originally published online 23 September 2013

DOI: 10.1177/1368430213502561

The online version of this article can be found at:

<http://gpi.sagepub.com/content/17/3/357>

Published by:



<http://www.sagepublications.com>

Additional services and information for *Group Processes & Intergroup Relations* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://gpi.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://gpi.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations: <http://gpi.sagepub.com/content/17/3/357.refs.html>

>> [Version of Record](#) - Apr 30, 2014

[OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - Sep 29, 2013

[OnlineFirst Version of Record](#) - Sep 23, 2013

[What is This?](#)

Personal openness toward interfaith dating and marriage among Muslim young adults: The role of religiosity, cultural identity, and family connectedness

Group Processes & Intergroup Relations

2014, Vol. 17(3) 357–370

© The Author(s) 2013

Reprints and permissions:

sagepub.co.uk/journalsPermissions.nav

DOI: 10.1177/1368430213502561

gpir.sagepub.com



Jorida Cila and Richard N. Lalonde

Abstract

This study ($N = 234$) examined Muslim Canadian young adults' openness to interfaith dating and marriage. We extended previous research on interfaith dating by examining the role of mainstream cultural identification and family connectedness, in addition to religiosity and gender. Participants reported more openness to dating than marrying a non-Muslim, although the pattern of results was similar for both. As expected, stronger religious fundamentalism and stronger religious identification were predictive of less openness toward interfaith dating and marriage. Conversely, stronger identification with mainstream Canadian culture significantly predicted more personal openness toward intimate interfaith relationships with a non-Muslim. The role of family connectedness was indirectly transmitted through religious identification. Finally, being a man was predictive of more personal openness toward both dating and marrying a non-Muslim. Findings suggest that openness to interfaith romantic relationships among young Muslim Canadians is affected by multiple factors, including, but not limited to religious ones.

Keywords

family connectedness, gender, interfaith dating/marriage, mainstream cultural identity, religiosity

Paper received 8 March 2013; revised version accepted 9 July 2013.

With diversifying immigration over the years, many Western countries have become increasingly multicultural and multireligious. One of the products of this diversification is an increase in the number of interfaith couples. For instance, about one third of all marriages in the United States were interfaith as of 2007 (Campbell & Putnam, 2011). In Canada, in 2001, an estimated 19% of all married or common-law couples

consisted of partners from two different religious backgrounds (Clark, 2006).¹ Increasing rates of interfaith unions may reflect not only structural

York University, Canada

Corresponding author:

Jorida Cila, Department of Psychology, York University,
4700 Keele Street, Toronto, ON M3J 1P3, Canada.

Email: jcila@yorku.ca

changes brought about by political decisions to foster multiculturalism, but also society's changing attitudes toward members of other religious groups or toward religion itself. An understanding of interfaith romantic relationships from an individual's perspective, however, is limited, especially from a social psychological perspective. The present study addressed this gap in the literature by examining young Muslim Canadians and their personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage.

Despite being a religious minority in a predominantly Christian society, Muslim Canadians are the fastest growing religious group in Canada and they are most likely to be found in the largest metropolitan areas, notably Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal (Statistics Canada, 2010). An increased Muslim presence in Canada might suggest increased expectations of intergroup contact, including intimate relationships. Available statistics indicate that, compared to other religious groups, Muslim Canadians are among the least likely to marry outside of their religion (Clark, 2006), and a similarly strong pattern of endogamy (i.e., marrying within one's group) has been found among Muslims in various Western European countries (Lucassen & Laarman, 2009).

Most of our knowledge about intimate interfaith relationships comes from statistics that are based on census data. Although they highlight important demographic factors (e.g., gender, education), this kind of data contributes little to our understanding of the various psychological variables and processes that facilitate or hinder the formation of such relationships. Furthermore, census data are based solely on married or common-law couples, and thus, do not capture the whole spectrum of romantic relationships, including dating. Given that dating and marriage hold different meanings and entail different responsibilities and obligations, they were examined separately in the present study. Four individual-level variables (i.e., religious fundamentalism, religious identification, mainstream cultural identification, and family connectedness), as well as gender, were assessed as predictors of personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage. We

start with a discussion on religiosity, being the most obvious factor influencing openness to intimate interfaith relationships.

The Multidimensional Nature of Religiosity

Religiosity is not a single construct; people differ in the way they experience and practice religion, and theoretical and empirical work has tapped into different aspects of religiosity (see Saroglou, 2011). Religious fundamentalism represents one aspect of religiosity that reflects a relatively rigid orientation towards one's belief system. Individuals who are high on religious fundamentalism tend to strongly endorse the belief that their religion is the only true faith (Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992). Fundamentalism has been associated with a number of psychological variables that relate to intergroup processes, such as right-wing authoritarianism, and prejudice and hostility toward visible minorities and marginalized groups (e.g., Altemeyer & Hunsberger, 1992; Hunsberger, 1996; Mavor, Macleod, Boal, & Louis, 2009), as well as interfaith relationships and sociopolitical attitudes (e.g., Haji, Lalonde, Durbin, & Naveh-Benjamin, 2011).

Another important aspect of religion comes from recent theorizing that has placed religion within a social identity framework. Ysseldyk, Matheson, and Anisman (2010) have argued that religion needs to be conceptualized not only as a belief system, but also as a form of social identity. They further argued that under conditions of identity threat, religion might become the most salient social identity endorsed by the individual. Recent anthropological work with American Muslims has in fact suggested that religious identity can become superordinate to ethnic identity (e.g., one identifies first as a Muslim, then as an Arab) and that identification with Islam increases in the face of perceived or actual prejudice from the (Christian) majority (Grewal, 2009).

An understanding of religion from a social identity perspective becomes particularly important when religion transcends the private, individual sphere, and becomes engaged in an

intergroup process (e.g., interfaith dating). This conceptualization of religion might be particularly fitting for Islam, given its strong emphasis on community (e.g., Daneshpour, 1998). In the present study, we therefore adopted both the religious fundamentalism and the social identity approaches to examine religion's role in interfaith romantic relationships, expecting that stronger religious fundamentalism and religious identity would both uniquely predict less openness to dating or marrying outside of one's religion. Among Jewish Canadians, Haji et al. (2011) found that individuals scoring higher in both religious fundamentalism and religious identification were less open to interfaith relationships.

Gender Differences in Islam

The norms and expectations related to religion and intimate relationships are different for Muslim men and women. When it comes to marriage, traditional interpretations of the Quran state that men are allowed to marry a chaste non-Muslim woman provided she is "of the book" (i.e., Christian or Jewish). A Muslim woman, however, is simply not allowed to marry someone who is not Muslim (Leeman, 2009; Peek, 2006). Data from the 2001 Canadian Census supports this interpretation: Muslim men were almost twice as likely as Muslim women to be married to someone from another religion (11% and 6% respectively; Clark, 2006). Findings from qualitative research provide some further insights into the gendered nature of interreligious unions by pointing to the role of parental attitudes and expectations toward their children's dating and marriage behavior. Specifically, British Muslims expressed strong disapproval of their daughters' outmarrying (Al-Yousuf, 2006), and Muslim Iranian American parents were more permissive of their sons' than their daughters' dating life (Hanassab, 1998).

These gendered norms can be explained in part by the women's role within the household. Since women traditionally have been the ones responsible for the upbringing of children, women are often considered as the primary

carriers of cultural and religious continuity for future generations (see Clycq, 2012). Some Muslims, however, express concern that a Muslim woman married to a non-Muslim man might not have the freedom or the possibility to raise her children in her own religion. A Muslim man marrying a non-Muslim woman would be less likely to face a similar problem, given the Islamic tradition of the father having the final say in how children are raised (Peek, 2006). Thus, interreligious unions are seen as posing a threat to the intergenerational transmission of religion, particularly for Muslim women. Hence, it is reasonable to expect that personal openness toward dating or marrying a non-Muslim should vary as a function of gender, with Muslim women being less open to forming romantic relationships with non-Muslims compared to Muslim men.

The Role of Canadian Identity and Family Allocentrism

Given the paucity of research in the area of interfaith intimate relationships, it is still unclear what psychological factors, besides religiosity, might influence attitudes toward dating and marrying a religious outgroup member. For this, we draw on the interracial dating literature given that both interracial and interfaith romantic relationships fall under the broader umbrella of intimate intergroup relationships. Uskul, Lalonde, and Cheng (2007) found that, among Chinese Canadians, identification with mainstream (i.e., Canadian) identity was an important predictor of openness toward interracial dating. They suggested that stronger identification with the mainstream culture is associated with more openness toward members of the mainstream culture, including openness to intimate relationships such as dating. In addition to a greater acceptance of diversity, Lalonde and Uskul (2013) have argued that a strong endorsement of Canadian cultural identity also implies an ascription to a common ingroup identity. For instance, individuals identify as being Canadian, despite their racial or ethnic backgrounds. This superordinate identity hypothesis

was examined in a study by West, Pearson, Dovidio, Shelton, and Trail (2009), who followed U.S. college students of diverse racial or ethnic backgrounds over a period of several weeks and found that those scoring high on perceptions of a common ingroup identity reported consistently stronger intergroup friendships compared to those who scored lower on that measure. Perceptions of a common ingroup identity (e.g., we are all Canadians) are particularly important in societies that are not only diverse, but which also value and take pride in their diversity. Thus, a young Muslim Canadian with a strong sense of connectedness to his or her mainstream identity might be more open to form romantic bonds with a religious outgroup member with whom he or she shares a common identity as Canadian. In line with findings from the interracial dating literature, we expected that higher endorsement of the superordinate Canadian cultural identity among Muslim Canadians would predict more personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage.

Another cultural factor that was expected to be associated with openness toward interfaith relationships is family allocentrism, or the degree of connectedness or collectivism at the family level (Lay et al., 1998). Families are the primary source of religious learning (Ozorak, 1989), especially for religious minority youth who might otherwise lack adequate access to alternative sources for religious learning. Moreover, families all over the world do have some influence on who their children date or marry, although the degree of such influence varies cross-culturally (Buunk, Park, & Duncan, 2010; Dwyer, 2000). Families also have some influence on the characteristics that adult children prefer in a mate (e.g., same religion), in part through children's own feelings of connectedness with their family (Hynie, Lalonde, & Lee, 2006). Further, Muslim families have a much stronger sense of connectedness and place more emphasis on maintaining family harmony and family hierarchy, in comparison to Anglo-American families (Daneshpour, 1998). Thus, young bicultural Muslim Canadians are simultaneously exposed to two sets of norms about intimate relationships, one coming from their family (which values maintenance of tradition and

endogamy) and the other coming from the mainstream culture (which values individual autonomy when choosing a romantic partner; see Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010). Thus, we expected that the more strongly connected Muslim Canadian young adults are to their families, the less open they will be to intimate interfaith relationships, anticipating or knowing that their parents would not approve of such relationships.

Overview of the Present Study

The aim of this study was to examine Muslim Canadian young adults' personal openness toward dating and marrying outside of their religious group. We were primarily interested in four individual-level variables predicting such openness, namely religious fundamentalism, religious identity, mainstream Canadian identification, and family allocentrism, alongside relevant demographic variables (i.e., gender). Importantly, we expected that strength of identification with mainstream culture and degree of family connectedness (variables previously not examined in the interfaith dating literature) would contribute above and beyond the influence of religious fundamentalism, religious identity, and gender in predicting attitudes toward intimate interfaith relationships. Specifically, we expected that higher religiosity (i.e., higher scores on religious fundamentalism, and/or stronger Muslim identification), stronger connectedness with one's family, and being a woman would predict less personal openness to intimate interfaith relationships. On the other hand, stronger identification with the Canadian culture and being a man were expected to predict more personal openness to interfaith relationships. It was further predicted that participants would generally be more open to interfaith dating than interfaith marriage.

Method

Participants

Participants were 234² undergraduates (67.9% women; $M_{age} = 19.50$, $SD = 2.21$) recruited through a psychology research participant pool

of a large university in Toronto in exchange for course credit. The only prerequisite to take part in this study was for participants to self-identify as Muslim. All participants were citizens (82.5%) or permanent residents (17.5%) of Canada. The majority of participants were first-generation Canadians (i.e., born outside of Canada; 63%), and most arrived from Iran, Pakistan, and Afghanistan at a young age ($M_{\text{age}} = 9.94$, $SD = 5.81$). All the other participants were second-generation Canadians (i.e., born in Canada; 37%).³ In terms of relationship status, eight participants (3%) reported being married, 86 (37%) reported being in a dating relationship, and 140 (60%) were not in a relationship at the time of the study. Many participants (41.9%; 59.2% women) reported they had or were currently involved in an interfaith romantic relationship. Although more women than men reported having been in an interfaith relationship, reflecting the gender distribution of our sample, women (37%) were actually less likely to have had an interfaith dating experience compared to men (54%), $\chi^2(1, N = 233) = 6.40, p = .01$.

Procedure and Primary Measures

Data for this study were collected online. Participants were informed that the study intended to gather information on how young people feel about romantic relationships with individuals from a different religious background. The online questionnaire consisted of the measures described next. All responses to items were given on 7-point Likert scales, ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*).

The revised religious fundamentalism scale. An adapted version of the Altemeyer and Hunsberger (2004) measure was used to assess extreme views on religion (e.g., "To lead the best, most meaningful life, one must belong to the one, fundamentally true religion"). Two original items, which make reference to Satan, were removed as the concept is not always applicable in Islam (Haji, Lalonde, & Cila, 2013). A higher mean score indicated a more extreme and rigid view of

Islam and its teachings. Scale reliability in this sample was very good, $\alpha = .88$.

Canadian cultural identity. The 12-item Cameron (2004) measure of social identification was used. This measure assesses three dimensions of social identity, namely ingroup ties (e.g., "I have a lot in common with other Canadians"), centrality (e.g., "I often think about the fact that I am Canadian"), and ingroup affect (e.g., "In general, I'm glad to be a Canadian"). A higher mean score across the 12 items indicated a stronger identification with the mainstream culture. Reliability for this scale was acceptable, $\alpha = .79$.

Muslim identification. This was an adaptation of the Cameron (2004) measure described above, with the word "Canadian" being replaced by "Muslim" (e.g., "In general, I'm glad to be a Muslim"), with higher scores indicating stronger Muslim identification. Scale reliability was very good, $\alpha = .87$.

Family allocentrism. The 21-item Family Allocentrism Scale (Lay et al., 1998) was used to assess the degree of connectedness with one's family (e.g., "I respect my parents' wishes even if they are not my own"). A higher mean score indicated higher degree of connectedness with one's family. Scale reliability was good, $\alpha = .83$.

Openness to interfaith dating and marriage. Sixteen items (see Appendix) were adapted from Lalonde, Giguère, Fontaine, and Smith (2007) to assess openness toward interfaith dating (eight items; e.g., "I am open to dating a non-Muslim") and openness toward interfaith marriage (eight items; e.g., "I am open to marrying a non-Muslim"). Higher mean scores for the dating and marriage subscales indicated greater openness to dating or marrying someone who is not Muslim, respectively. Both subscales demonstrated excellent reliabilities, $\alpha_{\text{dating}} = .95, \alpha_{\text{marriage}} = .95$.

Qualitative data. Participants responded to an open-ended question regarding the perceived obstacles related to dating or marrying a non-Muslim. Only themes that were identified by at

Table 1. Descriptive statistics for primary measures by gender and interfaith dating experience.

Measures	Previous interfaith dating experience		No previous interfaith dating experience	
	Men (<i>N</i> = 40)	Women (<i>N</i> = 58)	Men (<i>N</i> = 34)	Women (<i>N</i> = 101)
	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)	<i>M</i> (<i>SD</i>)
<i>Personal openness to:</i>				
Interfaith dating	5.67 (1.34)	5.31 (1.46)	4.36 (1.60)	3.18 (1.75)
Interfaith marriage	4.98 (1.68)	4.79 (1.76)	3.88 (1.58)	2.79 (1.61)
<i>Other measures</i>				
Religious fundamentalism	4.13 (1.49)	3.77 (1.40)	4.64 (1.28)	4.85 (1.13)
Religious identification	5.21 (1.16)	5.09 (1.08)	5.47 (1.01)	5.66 (.98)
Family allocentrism	4.62 (.53)	4.60 (.72)	4.91 (.67)	4.98 (.67)
Canadian identification	5.26 (.77)	5.11 (.69)	5.05 (1.00)	5.13 (.82)

least 10% of the participants were retained in the analysis. Two independent raters coded the responses and demonstrated good interrater reliabilities for three predominant, nonindependent themes: *beliefs and practices*, defined as responses explicitly mentioning differences in beliefs or religious practices (55.6%; $\kappa = .96$); *family*, defined as responses that explicitly mentioned parental and/or family disapproval of their relationship (34.6%; $\kappa = .95$); and *faith of children*, defined as responses explicitly mentioning the challenge and difficulties of raising a child in an interfaith household (18.4%; $\kappa = 1.00$).

Results

Descriptive Analyses

Means and standard deviations for the primary measures are presented in Table 1, and bivariate correlations are reported in Table 2. A consistent effect was observed for interfaith dating experience. Compared to participants who reported no interfaith dating experience, those participants who had such experience scored lower on religious fundamentalism, $F(1, 228) = 18.40, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .08$, religious identification, $F(1, 223) = 7.58, p = .006, \eta^2_p = .03$, and family allocentrism, $F(1, 225) = 12.69, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .05$, and they scored higher on openness to

interfaith dating, $F(1, 229) = 57.02, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .20$, and openness to interfaith marriage, $F(1, 229) = 42.88, p < .001, \eta^2_p = .16$. The only nonsignificant effect of experience was observed for mainstream cultural identification, $F(1, 223) = 0.66, ns$. Given this pattern of results, we decided to control for the effect of previous interfaith dating experience in our main analyses.

As predicted, participants indicated more personal openness toward interfaith dating ($M = 4.30, SD = 1.91$) compared to interfaith marriage ($M = 3.82, SD = 1.91$), $t(233) = 7.91, p < .001, d = .25$.

Openness to Interfaith Dating and Marriage

Two hierarchical regression analyses were conducted, one for personal openness to dating a non-Muslim and the other for personal openness to marrying a non-Muslim. The predictor variables entered in each step were identical for both models. In Step 1, we controlled for the effect of previous interfaith dating experience (dummy-coded, 0 = previous experience, 1 = no experience). Religious fundamentalism, religious identity, and gender (dummy-coded, 0 = man, 1 = woman) were entered in Step 2.

Table 2. Zero-order correlations between primary measures.

		2	3	4	5	6
1	Religious fundamentalism	.66***	-.01	.31***	-.61***	-.64***
2	Muslim identification		.12	.38***	-.49***	-.59***
3	Canadian cultural identification			.10	.14*	.10
4	Family connectedness				-.32***	-.32***
5	Openness to interfaith dating					.88***
6	Openness to interfaith marriage					

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

Table 3. Predicting personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage.

Predictor	Personal openness to interfaith dating				Personal openness to interfaith marriage			
	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	β (<i>t</i>)	<i>F</i>	<i>R</i> ²	ΔR^2	β (<i>t</i>)
Step 1	73.68***	.25***	.25***		62.34***	.22***	.22***	
Experience				-.50 (-8.58)***				-.47 (-7.90)***
Step 2	58.77***	.53***	.27***		72.39***	.58***	.35***	
Religious fundamentalism				-.39 (-6.10)***				-.40 (-6.69)***
Muslim identification				-.15 (-2.37)*				-.25 (-4.18)***
Gender				-.20 (-4.24)***				-.17 (-3.71)***
Step 3	42.90***	.55***	.03**		50.25***	.59***	.01*	
Canadian identity				.16 (3.30)**				.11 (2.46)*
Family allocentrism				-.06 (-1.18)				-.03 (-.67)

* $p < .05$, ** $p < .01$, *** $p < .001$.

Canadian cultural identification and family allocentrism were entered in Step 3. A summary of the results from the regression analyses are presented in Table 3.⁴

The overall pattern of results was similar for openness to dating and marriage. Each step accounted for a significantly larger proportion of variance in personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage than the previous step. As expected, higher religious fundamentalism, stronger religious identity, as well as being a woman predicted less personal openness to both interfaith dating and marriage. In Step 3, stronger Canadian cultural identification predicted more openness to interfaith dating and marriage. Contrary to expectations, however, family allocentrism did not emerge as a significant predictor for either outcome variable.

Mediational Analysis

Although family allocentrism did not emerge as a significant predictor for either outcome variable, it is possible that its effect might be transmitted through a third variable, namely religious identification. Given that families are the primary source of religious learning for children, how connected one feels to his/her family will likely affect how strongly one identifies with the family's religion as well. We tested the indirect effect of family allocentrism through religious fundamentalism and Muslim identification using a bootstrapping procedure (5,000 bootstrapping samples) developed by Hayes (2012). Confidence intervals (CIs) that do not contain zero indicate the presence of an indirect effect. Controlling for the effect of the other predictors, we found a significant indirect

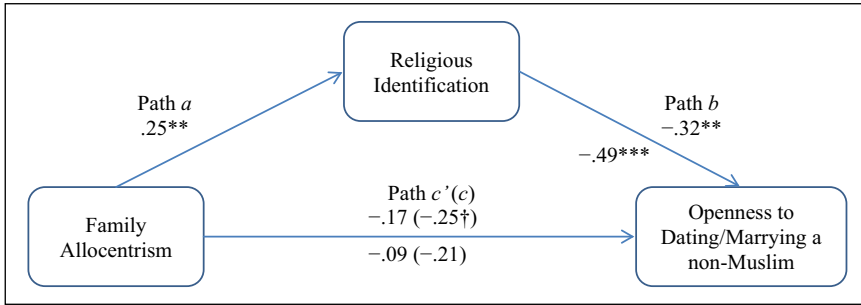


Figure 1. Path coefficients for mediation models testing the effect of family connectedness on personal openness to dating or marrying a non-Muslim.

Note. For openness to *dating* a non-Muslim, path coefficients are reported on the outside of Path *b* and on top of Path *c*. For openness to *marrying* a non-Muslim, coefficients are reported on the inside of Path *b* and below Path *c*.

[†] $p = .08$, * $p < .01$, ** $p < .001$.

effect of family allocentrism on personal openness to dating, $\beta = -.08$, CIs $[-.01, -.16]$, and marriage, $\beta = -.12$, CIs $[-.26, -.04]$ through Muslim identification, indicating that family allocentrism was associated with stronger Muslim identification, which in turn was associated with less openness to dating or marrying a non-Muslim (Figure 1). Religious fundamentalism, on the other hand, did not mediate this effect for either openness to date, $\beta = -.08$, CIs $[-.19, .03]$, or marry, $\beta = -.08$, CIs $[-.21, .03]$.

Qualitative Data

In response to the question of what the main obstacles were to dating or marrying a non-Muslim, obstacles most frequently mentioned by participants were related to differences in religious beliefs and practices, parental disapproval, and the faith of the children. Exploratory analyses indicated that women were more likely than men to report religious beliefs and practices as obstacles to interfaith romantic relationships, $\chi^2(1, N = 223) = 5.36, p = .02$, but no gender differences were observed for parental disapproval and faith of the children, both $\chi^2 < .90, ns$. Participants with no previous interfaith dating experience were more likely to mention obstacles related to religious beliefs and practices, compared to those with such experience, $\chi^2(1, N = 224) = 7.90, p = .005$. Notably, participants with

interfaith dating experience reported more obstacles related to their family's acceptance of the non-Muslim partner, $\chi^2(1, N = 224) = 5.19, p = .02$, presumably because they had already encountered such barriers. Experience was not related to obstacles regarding faith of children, $\chi^2 = .07, ns$.

Discussion

The goal of this study was to examine the various psychological variables that would predict openness to interfaith romantic relationships. Our findings point to the complex reality of interfaith dating and marriage among young Muslim Canadians and show that multiple factors may influence whether one dates or marries outside of one's religious group. Not surprisingly, we found that the more religious individuals were—as measured by religious fundamentalism and religious identification,—the less open they were to intimate interfaith relationships. The role of religious fundamentalism in predicting openness toward interfaith relationships parallels findings from previous research. For instance, Haji et al. (2011) found that Orthodox Jews, who were higher on religious fundamentalism compared to Conservative or Reform Jews, displayed less positive attitudes toward interfaith relationships. Conversely, those holding less extreme religious beliefs (i.e., the Reform Jews) were more open to such relationships. Similarly, Marshall and

Markstrom-Adams (1995) found that religious orthodoxy was associated with less willingness to engage in interfaith dating among Jewish Canadian adolescents.

Importantly, we found that both religious fundamentalism and religious identification uniquely predicted openness to interfaith dating and marriage. We interpret this as further evidence of the multifaceted nature of religion and religiosity, in particular one that emphasizes the importance of conceptualizing religion from a social identity perspective. Religious identity, as a distinct and powerful form of social identity (Ysseldyk et al., 2010), provides a basis for categorizing prospective dating or marriage partners as either an ingroup (i.e., Muslim) or an outgroup (i.e., non-Muslim) member. Individuals who are strongly identified with their religion are thus less likely to engage in intimate interfaith relationships with a religious outgroup member.

Gender also emerged as an important predictor, with men being more open to interfaith dating and marriage compared to women. This finding mirrors actual rates of Muslim–non-Muslim marriages in Canada (see Clark, 2006). It is important to note, however, that we did not find any gender differences in reported religious fundamentalism or strength of religious identity, which suggests that the observed gender differences are probably the result of differential socialization patterns for men and women. Traditional interpretations of the Quran regarding gender differences with respect to marriage, as well as empirical research provide support for this hypothesis. For instance, in the United States, Badahdah and Tiemann (2005) analyzed “lonely heart” advertisements in newspapers and magazines, and found that women tended to advertise their religiosity and indicate their preference for a religious partner significantly more often than men. Hanassab (1998) found that Iranian American parents were stricter with their daughters’ than with their sons’ dating life, and Al-Yousuf (2006) noted that British Muslims showed stronger disapproval of their daughters’ outmarrying compared with their sons’. This phenomenon is not specific to Islam, however, as parents across

different cultural and religious groups tend to be stricter and more controlling of their daughters’ dating or marrying behaviour compared to their sons’ (see Clycq, 2012). If women are socialized from an early age with norms that favour endogamy, it is not surprising then that they would grow up holding less favorable views toward romantic relationships with relevant outgroup members compared to men.

This study also shed light on the importance of mainstream cultural identification in predicting views on intimate interfaith relationships. In particular, stronger identification with mainstream Canadian culture was predictive of more personal openness to both interfaith dating and marriage, paralleling findings from the interracial/interethnic dating literature (see Lalonde & Uskul, 2013). Given that Canada is perceived as a country that fosters multiculturalism and values ethnic diversity (Lalonde, 2002), it is likely that stronger identification with Canadian culture implies greater acceptance or endorsement of these values. Mainstream cultural identification also implies more openness to members of that culture (Uskul et al., 2007), who, in the present study, were predominantly non-Muslim. Hence, it is likely that Muslim Canadians for whom being Canadian is an important part of their social identity perceive fewer differences between themselves and fellow (non-Muslim) Canadians, thus opening the boundaries of the ingroup. Stronger endorsement of this superordinate identity (West et al., 2009) can thus lead to greater openness to romantic relationships with non-Muslim Canadians. It is worth noting that the importance of one’s Canadian identity was largely unrelated to religiosity, suggesting that Canadian identity and Muslim identity operate independently. This is not surprising, given that each identity is developed in unique ways; whereas religious identity emerges primarily within one’s home, Muslim youth’s identification with the mainstream culture happens primarily through the peer network, school, and the media (Phinney, 1990). Both family and peers can influence one’s attitudes toward dating in general, and out-dating in particular. The two different social identities that they foster

may uniquely and independently predict attitudes toward intimate interfaith relationships.

Another important variable we examined in this study was family connectedness. Literature shows that families tend to influence their children's dating and marriage decisions in various ways (e.g., Buunk et al., 2010; Daneshpour, 1998; Dwyer, 2000; Hanassab, 1998; Hynie et al., 2006; Marshall & Markstrom-Adams, 1995). In this study, individuals' sense of connectedness to their family was an indirect predictor of openness to interfaith dating and marriage. Specifically, stronger connectedness with one's family predicted a stronger Muslim religious identification, which, in turn, predicted less personal openness to interfaith dating and marriage. This is not surprising considering that individuals learn about their religion primarily through their families (Ozorak, 1989). Young people who are more connected to their families will be likely to value their parents' wishes and expectations, which tend to favor endogamy when it comes to choosing a romantic partner. Qualitative answers provided further support for the importance of parental approval for a successful relationship, although some indicated that approval by the larger Muslim community was also a factor to consider. The religious community is important not only because it offers believers a sense of belonging, but also because it provides rules and guidance for what is acceptable behavior (Saroglou, 2011).

In line with predictions, we found that participants were more open toward dating than marrying a religious outgroup member. This is in line with research showing that as relationships progress from dating to cohabiting to marriage, they tend to become more homogamous in terms of education, race, and religion (Blackwell & Lichter, 2004). Intermarriages also jeopardize the transmission of religion from one generation to the next (e.g., Hoge, Petrillo, & Smith, 1982; Ozorak, 1989), and as such they can threaten the long-term survival of one's group (Heaton, 1990). Furthermore, given that marriage in Islam is viewed as a social contract between two families, and not simply between two individuals, it entails entry in and navigating a more intricate network

of relationships, including extended families (Daneshpour, 1998). Thus, when it comes to marriage, individuals are more likely to consider the broader ramifications that an interfaith union might bring about.

Limitations and Future Research Directions

Despite the contributions of this research, a number of limitations, as well as future research directions, are worth noting. As with any study conducted with undergraduate university students there are limits to the generalizability of the findings (e.g., highly educated participants who have an interest in psychology). It is also possible that openness toward dating outside of one's faith might be somewhat conflated with openness to date in general, including within one's faith. There is in fact some initial evidence that this might be the case among young Muslim Canadians of Somali background (Ibrahimi, 2013). Nevertheless, we do not think that such conflation was problematic for our sample, as most of our participants had dated at one point or another, either within or outside of their faith, which indicates that they did not endorse very restrictive views toward dating. Importantly, our findings with regard to the role of mainstream cultural identification might not replicate in multicultural societies that endorse a different approach toward multiculturalism, or where multiculturalism might be seen as threatening national identity (e.g., Moran, 2011; Sprague-Jones, 2011). Future research in other multicultural contexts is thus necessary to examine how and when a young bicultural individual's identification with the mainstream culture might indeed predict openness to intimate intergroup relationships. Finally, future research would benefit from examining actual interfaith dating experiences, instead of relying solely on attitudes.

Conclusion

We believe that this study has made a few significant contributions to the literature. First, we

shifted the focus of intergroup research involving Muslims from areas of prejudice and discrimination (e.g., Saroglou, Lamkaddem, van Pachterbeke, & Buxant, 2009; Velasco González, Verkuyten, Weesie, & Poppe, 2008; Verkuyten & Yildiz, 2007) to what is potentially a more positive intergroup process such as interfaith dating and marriage. Second, we provided a social-psychological perspective to the study of interfaith dating and marriage among Muslims. Third, we examined openness toward both interfaith dating and marriage; and finally, we showed how such openness is affected by a multitude of factors, not limited to religious ones. It is worth noting that, despite the many biases propagated especially by the media, our data suggest that Muslim Canadian young adults are open to and do in fact get intimately involved with religious outgroup members. While such relationships may have significant implications for those involved (see Al-Yousuf, 2006), they also present an opportunity for greater understanding of different religious groups (Campbell & Putnam, 2011). The scope of the effect that these intimate interfaith relationships may have on intergroup communication and understanding, however, remains open to further empirical investigation.

Acknowledgments

The authors would like to thank Michaela Hynie, Evelina Lou, the action editor, and two anonymous reviewers for their helpful comments on an earlier draft.

Funding

The writing of this manuscript was supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) CGS doctoral scholarship (767-2012-2297) to the first author.

Notes

1. This figure includes interdenominational marriages (e.g., Protestant–Catholic), making it difficult to ascertain the number of interfaith unions that cross major religious group boundaries (e.g., Christian–Muslim). In the present paper, the terms “interfaith” and “interreligious” are used interchangeably to refer to the latter type of union.
2. Data for this study were collected online, which leaves open the possibility for participants to

engage in simultaneous tasks and not pay undivided attention to the survey. A measure to identify random responders (Marjanovic, 2011) was therefore included in the study. This measure consists of five test items interspersed throughout the survey (e.g., “In response to this question, please select ‘slightly agree’”). At the beginning of the survey participants are informed that for some of the questions in the survey they will be instructed how to respond. We employed the strictest criterion in determining random responders, retaining data only from those participants who had answered correctly all five test items. An initial sample of 406 participants completed the study. Of these, 172 participants were determined to be random responders, resulting in a final sample size of 234 participants. Although the application of this measure reduced our sample size, we can be more confident in the reliability of our findings.

3. Generational status, however, had an effect only on family allocentrism, with foreign-born participants reporting stronger connectedness with their families compared to their Canadian-born counterparts, $t(228) = 3.19, p = .002, d = .44$. There was no effect of generational status on any of the other variables, $t_s < 1.7, p_s > .09$. Inclusion of generational status in the regression analyses had no effect on the pattern of results, therefore, the analyses presented are those not controlling for the effect of generational status.
4. We also explored for any potential significant interactions by including these as a fourth step in our regression analyses. There was, however, no clear or consistent pattern of results. Specifically, one significant interaction emerged between Muslim identification and Canadian identification, $\beta = -.14, p = .05$, when predicting openness to dating a non-Muslim. The practical significance of this interaction, however, is limited given that the overall step containing the interaction terms did not add significantly to the model, $\Delta R = .04, p = .12$. With respect to openness to marrying a non-Muslim, neither the overall step, $\Delta R = .03, p = .32$, nor the individual interaction terms were significant, all $\beta_s < .11, p_s > .15$.

References

- Altemeyer, B., & Hunsberger, B. (1992). Authoritarianism, religious fundamentalism, quest, and prejudice. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion*, 2, 113–133. doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr0202_5

- Altemeyer, B., & Hunsberger, B. (2004). A revised religious fundamentalism scale: The short and sweet of it. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 14*, 47–54. doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr1401_4
- Al-Yousuf, H. (2006). Negotiating faith and identity in Muslim–Christian marriages in Britain. *Islam and Christian–Muslim Relations, 17*, 317–329. doi:10.1080/09596410600794996
- Badahdah, A. M., & Tiemann, K. A. (2005). Mate selection criteria among Muslims living in America. *Evolution and Human Behaviour, 26*, 432–440. doi:10.1016/j.evolhumbehav.2004.12.005
- Blackwell, D. L., & Lichter, D. T. (2004). Homogamy among dating, cohabiting, and married couples. *The Sociological Quarterly, 45*, 719–737. doi:10.1111/j.1533-8525.2004.tb02311.x
- Buunk, A. P., Park, J. H., & Duncan, L. A. (2010). Cultural variation in parental influence on mate choice. *Cross-Cultural Research, 44*, 23–40. doi:10.1177/1069397109337711
- Cameron, J. E. (2004). A three-factor model of social identity. *Self and Identity, 3*, 239–269. doi:10.1080/13576500444000047
- Campbell, D. E., & Putnam, R. D. (2011). America's grace: How a tolerant nation bridges its religious divides. *Political Science Quarterly, 126*, 611–640. doi:10.1002/j.1538-165X.2011.tb00714.x
- Clark, W. (2006). *Interreligious unions in Canada*. Statistics Canada, Catalogue No. 11-008. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/11-008-x/2006003/pdf/9478-eng.pdf>
- Clycq, N. (2012). “My daughter is a free woman, so she can't marry a Muslim”: The gendering of ethno-religious boundaries. *European Journal of Women's Studies, 19*, 157–171. doi:10.1177/1350506811434395
- Daneshpour, M. (1998). Muslim families and family therapy. *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy, 24*, 355–390. doi:10.1111/j.1752-0606.1998.tb01090.x
- Dwyer, D. (2000). *Interpersonal relationships*. London, UK: Routledge.
- Giguère, B., Lalonde, R., & Lou, E. (2010). Living at the crossroads of cultural worlds: The experience of normative conflicts by second generation immigrant youth. *Social and Personality Psychology Compass, 4*, 14–29. doi:10.1111/j.1751-9004.2009.00228.x
- Grewal, Z. A. (2009). Marriage in colour: Race, religion and spouse selection in four American mosques. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 32*, 323–345. doi:10.1080/01419870801961490
- Haji, R., Lalonde, R. N., & Cila, J. (2013). *Multidimensionality of Muslim identity*. Manuscript in preparation.
- Haji, R., Lalonde, R. N., Durbin, A., & Naveh-Benjamin, I. (2011). A multidimensional approach to identity: Religious and cultural identity in young Jewish Canadians. *Group Processes and Intergroup Relations, 14*, 3–18. doi:10.1177/1368430210370602
- Hanassab, S. (1998). Sexuality, dating, and double standards: Young Iranian immigrants in Los Angeles. *Iranian Studies, 31*, 65–75. doi:10.1080/00210869808701896
- Hayes, A. F. (2012). *PROCESS: A versatile computational tool for observed variable mediation, moderation, and conditional process modeling* [White paper]. Retrieved from <http://www.afhayes.com/public/process2012.pdf>
- Heaton, T. B. (1990). Religious group characteristics, endogamy, and interfaith marriages. *Sociological Analysis, 51*, 363–376. doi:10.2307/3711077
- Hoge, D. R., Petrillo, G. H., & Smith, E. I. (1982). Transmission of religious and social values from parents to teenage children. *Journal of Marriage and the Family, 44*, 569–580. doi:10.2307/351580
- Hunsberger, B. (1996). Religious fundamentalism, right-wing authoritarianism, and hostility toward homosexuals in non-Christian religious groups. *International Journal for the Psychology of Religion, 6*, 39–49. doi:10.1207/s15327582ijpr0601_5
- Hynie, M., Lalonde, R. N., & Lee, N. (2006). Parent–child value transmission among Chinese immigrants to North America: The case of traditional mate preferences. *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology, 12*, 230–244. doi:10.1037/1099-9809.12.2.230
- Ibrahimi, M. (2013). *Exploring Somali-Canadians' personal openness to interethnic relationships* (Unpublished undergraduate honors thesis). York University, Toronto, Canada.
- Lalonde, R. N. (2002). Testing the social identity–intergroup differentiation hypothesis: “We're not American eh!” *British Journal of Social Psychology, 41*, 611–630. doi:10.1348/014466602321149902
- Lalonde, R. N., Giguère, B., Fontaine, M., & Smith, A. (2007). Social dominance orientation and ideological asymmetry in relation to interracial dating and transracial adoption in Canada. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 38*, 559–572. doi:10.1177/0022022107305238
- Lalonde, R. N., & Uskul, A. (2013). Openness to interethnic relationships for second-generation Chinese and South Asian Canadians: The role of Canadian identity. In E. Fong, N. Chiang, & N. Denton (Eds.), *Immigrant adaptation in multi-ethnic societies: Canada, Taiwan, and the United States* (pp. 138–158). New York, NY: Routledge.

- Lay, C., Fairlie, P., Jackson, S., Ricci, T., Eisenberg, T., Sato, T.,... & Melamud, A. (1998). Domain-specific allocentrism–idiocentrism. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 29*, 434–460. doi:10.1177/0022022198293004
- Leeman, A. B. (2009). Interfaith marriage in Islam: An examination of the legal theory behind the traditional and reformist positions. *Indiana Law Journal, 84*, 743–771. Retrieved from <http://www.repository.law.indiana.edu/ilj/vol84/iss2/9/>
- Lucassen, L., & Laarman, C. (2009). Immigration, intermarriage, and the changing face of Europe in the post war period. *History of the Family, 14*, 52–68. doi:10.1016/j.hisfam.2008.12.001
- Marjanovic, Z. (2011, January). *A new measure for identifying random responders in questionnaire data*. Poster presentation at the Annual Meeting of the Society for Personality and Social Psychology (SPSP), San Antonio, TX.
- Marshall, S. K., & Markstrom-Adams, C. (1995). Attitudes on interfaith dating among Jewish adolescents: Contextual and developmental considerations. *Journal of Family Issues, 16*, 787–811. doi:10.1177/019251395016006006
- Mavor, K. I., Macleod, C. J., Boal, M. J., & Louis, W. R. (2009). Right-wing authoritarianism, fundamentalism and prejudice revisited: Removing suppression and statistical artefact. *Personality and Individual Differences, 46*, 592–597. doi:10.1016/j.paid.2008.12.016
- Moran, A. (2011). Multiculturalism as nation-building in Australia: Inclusive national identity and the embrace of diversity. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*, 2153–2172. doi:10.1080/01419870.2011.573081
- Ozorak, E. W. (1989). Social and cognitive influences on the development of religious beliefs and commitment in adolescents. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion, 28*, 448–463. Retrieved from <http://www.jstor.org/discover/10.2307/1386576?uid=3738664&uid=2&uid=4&sid=21102568757773>
- Peek, L. (2006). Women, gender, and marriage practices in the United States. In *Encyclopedia of women and the Islamic cultures* (Vol. 3). Retrieved from http://wsnet.colostate.edu/CWIS584/Lori_Peek/Data/Sites/1/1-research/publicationpdfs/peek-2006womengenderandmarriage.pdf
- Phinney, J. S. (1990). Ethnic identity in adolescents and adults: Review of research. *Psychological Bulletin, 108*, 499–514. doi:10.1037/0033-2909.108.3.499
- Saroglou, V. (2011). Believing, bonding, behaving, and belonging: The big four religious dimensions and cultural variation. *Journal of Cross-Cultural Psychology, 42*, 1320–1340. doi:10.1177/0022022111412267
- Saroglou, V., Lamkaddem, B., van Pachterbeke, M., & Buxant, C. (2009). Host society's dislike of the Islamic veil: The role of subtle prejudice, values, and religion. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 33*, 419–428. doi:10.1016/j.ijintrel.2009.02.005
- Sprague-Jones, J. (2011). Extreme right-wing vote and support for multiculturalism in Europe. *Ethnic and Racial Studies, 34*, 535–555. doi:10.1080/01419870.2010.512665
- Statistics Canada. (2010). *Projections of the diversity of the Canadian population, 2006–2031*. Retrieved from <http://www.statcan.gc.ca/pub/91-551-x/91-551-x2010001-eng.pdf>
- Uskul, A. K., Lalonde, R. N., & Cheng, L. (2007). Views on interracial dating among Chinese and European Canadians: The roles of culture, gender and mainstream cultural identity. *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships, 24*, 891–911. doi:10.1177/0265407507084189
- Velasco González, K., Verkuyten, M., Weesie, J., & Poppe, E. (2008). Prejudice towards Muslims in the Netherlands: Testing integrated threat theory. *British Journal of Social Psychology, 47*, 667–685. doi:10.1348/014466608X284443
- Verkuyten, M., & Yildiz, A. A. (2007). National (dis)identification and ethnic and religious identity: A study among Turkish-Dutch Muslims. *Personality and Social Psychology Bulletin, 33*, 1448–1462. doi:10.1177/0146167207304276
- West, T. V., Pearson, A. R., Dovidio, J. F., Shelton, J. N., & Trail, T. E. (2009). Superordinate identity and intergroup roommate friendship development. *Journal of Experimental Social Psychology, 45*, 1266–1272. doi:10.1016/j.jesp.2009.08.002
- Ysseldyk, R., Matheson, K., & Anisman, H. (2010). Religiosity as identity: Toward an understanding of religion from a social identity perspective. *Personality and Social Psychology Review, 14*(1), 60–71. doi:10.1177/1088868309349693

Appendix

Personal openness to dating/marrying a non-Muslim (adapted from Lalonde et al., 2007).
Please indicate the extent of your agreement with each of the statements below:

1. I would feel guilty if I dated a non-Muslim (*r*)
 2. I am open to dating a non-Muslim
 3. I do not think that I could date a non-Muslim (*r*)
 4. Being in a dating relationship with a non-Muslim could be a very positive experience
 5. I would experience anxiety if I decided to date a non-Muslim (*r*)
 6. I could see myself happily dating a non-Muslim
 7. Dating a non-Muslim would be stressful to me (*r*)
 8. Dating a non-Muslim is not an option (*r*)
-

Note. The scale includes the eight items used in this study to assess personal openness toward dating a non-Muslim. For openness toward marrying a non-Muslim, the word “dating” in each of the items was replaced with “marrying.” Items ending in (*r*) represent reverse-keyed items.