

# Acculturation, gender, and views on interracial relationships among Chinese Canadians

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## Abstract

Acculturation to mainstream and heritage culture has been shown to influence attitudes and behaviors related to romantic relationships. Few studies have examined its influence on views regarding interracial relationships and whether the psychological processes underlying these relations vary across gender. Among Chinese Canadian participants ( $N = 248$ ), mainstream acculturation, but not Chinese acculturation, was associated with more personal openness to and less cultural values conflict about interracial relationships. Among men, stronger egalitarian gender role ideology mediated the relations between mainstream acculturation and the above interracial relationship variables. For women, fewer concerns about cultural preservation mediated the relation between mainstream acculturation and less cultural values conflict. The importance of understanding cultural influences on interracial relationships through a gendered lens is discussed.

The cultural-evolutionary norm of endogamy (i.e., pairing within groups) has always been quite strong for certain ethnic minority groups in Canada and the United States (Lalonde & Uskul, 2013). According to the Canadian Census in 2006, Chinese Canadians are the second most likely ethnic minority group to be endogamous (Milan, Maheux, & Chui, 2010). At the time, only 9.5% of Chinese Canadians in a couple were married to or living common-law with a non-Chinese person (most endogamous are South Asians—6.8% of those in a couple had a non–South Asian partner or spouse). Endogamy, however, is a norm

that is rapidly changing with history, immigration, and globalization as interracial relationships (i.e., exogamy) become increasingly common (Lee & Boyd, 2008; Wang, 2012), especially among individuals who are young, educated, and from large metropolitan areas (Milan et al., 2010). This growing number of mixed unions has generated interest in the cultural and psychological correlates of interracial dating and marriage (i.e., intimate relationships between individuals from different racial backgrounds).

A major influence on people's attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors in intimate relationships is cultural norms (Berscheid, 1995). Chinese cultural expectations surrounding dating and marriage, which stress the norm of endogamy, may lead to the low rates of mixed unions among Chinese Canadians, but they may not be the whole story (Mok, 1999). Chinese Canadians are often considered to be bicultural because they have access to two sets of cultural norms; they come into contact with the core cultural ideas and values of their heritage culture from their families, but their social systems and peers are predominantly Western (LaFromboise, Coleman, &

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Gerton, 1993). The mainstream and heritage cultures have similar views on many issues (Schwartz & Bardi, 2001), but for some issues, cultural views are at odds with one another. When the two cultures promote contradictory norms, values, attitudes, and behaviors, there is the potential for biculturals to experience culturally based conflict (Giguère, Lalonde, & Lou, 2010). Romantic relationships, particularly with someone from a different ethnic or racial group, is an issue around which mainstream Canadian norms and Chinese norms stand far apart; mainstream Canadian culture tends to support individual goals whereas Chinese culture tends to emphasize in-group needs and obligations (Uskul, Lalonde, & Cheng, 2007). Although there is tremendous variability in the degree to which biculturals are acculturated to their heritage and mainstream cultures (Ryder, Alden, & Paulhus, 2000), relatively limited attention has been given to the association between acculturation and Chinese Canadian young adults' openness to interracial relationships and the potential for culturally based conflict.

The primary goal of this study was to examine whether Chinese Canadians' degrees of acculturation to Chinese and mainstream Canadian norms are related to their views toward interracial relationships and experiences with culturally based conflict. The small body of research on culture and relationships has either concentrated on differences between groups, which are often operationalized by nationality and assume within-group similarity (Marshall, 2010), or lumped different ethnicities into a single pan-Asian category (e.g., Asian Americans), which overlooks the vast heterogeneity within this category. We aimed to address these gaps by (a) adopting a within-group approach to understand the role of individual differences within a group that varies widely on Chinese and mainstream Canadian acculturation, and (b) focusing on one specific Asian ethnic group (Chinese Canadians) with a particular background (Mainland China or Hong Kong). Finally, gender seems to play a key role in how culture influences individuals (e.g., Huang & Uba, 1992; Mok, 1999) and norms for romantic relationships (Dion & Dion, 1993). Few

studies, however, have tested the possibility that the psychological processes between acculturation and views on relationships might also differ between men and women. Thus, we adopted a gendered lens to unpack the associations between mainstream and heritage cultural influences and one's views about interracial relationships, specifically with regard to the mediating roles of gender role ideology and concerns about preserving one's heritage culture.

#### *Cultural norms about interracial relationships*

Chinese Canadians are exposed to their heritage norms primarily through the family (see Giguère et al., 2010; Phinney, 1990). They are often taught that the purpose behind the union of two individuals is to promote the maintenance, continuity, and well-being of two families (Dion & Dion, 1993). There is often heavy emphasis on traditionalism (e.g., gender roles), cultural continuity (e.g., family lineage), and proper/strict morals and expectations (e.g., chastity; Dion & Dion, 1996), and the idea that relationships should be formed with someone within one's own group to ensure cultural continuity. Interracial relationships are inconsistent with Chinese norms because they jeopardize this notion of heritage preservation and family lineage (Kibria, 1997; Mok, 1999) and challenge traditional gender role expectations.

Compared to Chinese norms, mainstream Canadian norms for dating and marriage promote more egalitarian gender roles (Marshall, 2010) and are more liberal about sexual activity (Huang & Uba, 1992). Individuals in Western cultures tend to select their relationship partner based on romantic love and their own personal fulfillment (Dion & Dion, 1993, 1996). Parental and familial factors are taken into consideration, but parents should not intervene in their children's partner choice or relationship (Xie, Dzindolet, & Meredith, 1999). In addition, mainstream Canadian norms tend to facilitate interpersonal openness and support ethnic diversity (Cameron & Berry, 2008; Lalonde, 2002). Thus, interracial relationships may be more accepted in mainstream Canadian culture than in Chinese culture.

Given the differential norms and expectations stipulated by their traditional Chinese roots and the mainstream Canadian culture, it is not surprising that young Chinese Canadians might be reluctant to date or marry a non-Chinese person. Moreover, they may be likely to experience cultural values conflict over the issue of interracial relationships when contemplating the two opposing sets of norms and expectations. Inman, Ladany, Constantine, and Morano (2001) defined cultural values conflict as “an experience of negative affect (e.g., guilt, anxiety) and cognitive contradictions that results from contending simultaneously with the values and behavioral expectations” that are internalized from the heritage and mainstream cultures (p. 18). The extent to which each culture influences bicultural young adults’ openness toward interracial relationships and experience of cultural values conflict, however, may depend on the degree to which they have acculturated to the mainstream and heritage cultures.

#### *Predicting views on interracial relationships with acculturation*

Acculturation refers to the process and changes that result from continuous and direct contact with different cultures (Ryder et al., 2000). Bidimensional models of acculturation are based on the idea that individuals’ degree of identification with the culture of upbringing (i.e., heritage acculturation) and the predominant cultural environment (i.e., mainstream acculturation) are relatively independent of one another (Berry, 1997). Although acculturation to the values and norms of each culture play a large role in the identity, attitudes, behaviors, and sociocultural adjustment of individuals (Ryder et al., 2000), only a small number of studies have looked at how varying levels of acculturation might influence views and attitudes about romantic relationships (e.g., Lalonde, Hynie, Pannu, & Tatla, 2004; Tong, 2013). Even fewer studies have focused specifically on interracial relationships.

Research by Mok (1999) showed that for Asian Americans, mainstream acculturation was associated with more interracial dating experience with White Americans.

Consistent with these findings, Uskul et al. (2007) found that Chinese Canadians who were high in acculturation and identification with the mainstream culture expressed more personal openness toward interracial dating. The role of mainstream acculturation is also indirectly supported by generational status differences noted in census data on visible minority groups. A larger proportion of second-generation Chinese Canadians (who are more acculturated to the mainstream culture; see Ryder et al., 2000) were in mixed unions than the first generation (Fujino, 1997; Lee & Boyd, 2008; Milan et al., 2010).

Comparably, the role of heritage culture in interracial relationships is not as clear as the role of mainstream culture. Uskul et al. (2007) found that heritage identity was not related to openness toward interracial dating among Chinese Canadians and was a significantly weaker predictor of interracial dating history than mainstream identity. In a later study with South Asian Canadians, however, heritage identity negatively predicted openness to intergroup dating (Uskul, Lalonde, & Konanur, 2011). Mok (1999) also found a negative correlation between ethnic identification and the likelihood of dating a White American. When accounting for the effects of other key predictors (including mainstream acculturation), however, ethnic identity was no longer a significant predictor.

The differential effects of mainstream and heritage factors are not too surprising, given that mainstream and heritage cultures have been found to play relatively independent roles when it comes to acculturation processes (Ryder et al., 2000), mate preferences (Lalonde et al., 2004), and intergroup dating attitudes (Mok, 1999; Uskul et al., 2007) among Asian Canadians and Asian Americans. From the Chinese Canadian perspective, mainstream norms are more out-group focused, encouraging interpersonal openness to members of other cultures and accepting of ethnic diversity (Lalonde, 2002). Thus, mainstream identity may be more influential in out-group-focused aspects of relationships (e.g., interracial dating) or out-group-driven norms (e.g., libidinal sex). Heritage norms, in contrast, are more in-group focused and may be more likely to

facilitate in-group-focused aspects of relationships (e.g., endogamy) or in-group-driven norms (e.g., chastity; Lalonde & Uskul, 2013). The issue of interracial relationships then, which is out-group focused in nature, might be more closely tied to mainstream cultural influences than heritage cultural influences. The present study aimed to replicate the positive relation between mainstream acculturation and personal openness to date or marry a non-Chinese and to test the degree to which this issue would be associated with cultural values conflict. In addition, this study provided new insight on gender-related factors that may help explain the association between mainstream acculturation and one's personal openness and cultural values conflict related to interracial relationships.

#### *Gender role ideology and concerns about preserving heritage culture*

One variable that has been empirically linked to higher mainstream acculturation is more egalitarian attitudes about gender roles (Marshall, 2010; Phinney & Flores, 2002). Lalonde et al. (2004) found that mainstream Canadian identity (but not heritage identity) was associated with less traditional (in other words, more egalitarian) attitudes about gender roles among South Asian Canadians. Participants who held more traditional views about gender were more likely to indicate a preference for traditional mate attributes, which included characteristics like "similar cultural background." More egalitarian views on gender roles associated with the mainstream acculturation, therefore, may subsequently shape one's perspective on whom to date or marry. There is also preliminary evidence connecting higher mainstream acculturation to less cultural and parental influence on attitudes and behaviors, and specifically, to more familial pressure regarding interracial dating and relationships (Mok, 1999). Thus, gender role ideology and familial and cultural pressures may serve as mediators of the relation between mainstream Canadian acculturation and views on interracial dating for Chinese Canadians.

It is also important to consider gender differences with respect to these two variables,

and how gender may help reveal the exact role that each mediating variable plays in the relation between mainstream acculturation and attitudes toward interracial relationships. For example, Asian Canadian men tend to be more traditional than women when it comes to gender role ideology (Dasgupta, 1998; Dion & Dion, 1996; Tang & Dion, 1999) and intimate relationships (Levin, Taylor, & Caudle, 2007). Gender differences may also be found in pressures to carry on the family name and cultural heritage. Under patriarchal family structures, sons are traditionally seen as representatives of the family name and heritage culture (Fujino, 1997; Kibria, 1997). Despite the tremendous importance Asian parents place on passing on their heritage traditions and language to their sons, they are typically more concerned with the dating and sexual practices of their daughters (Tong, 2013). The role that sons have in carrying the family name may be sufficient for keeping the heritage lineage regardless of whom they marry. Daughters, on the other hand, may be subject to stricter intermarriage restrictions, including expectations to marry within one's culture (Dasgupta, 1998), in order to maintain the heritage in the family history. A qualitative study by Lee and Cochran (1988) revealed that Chinese Canadian immigrant women who chose personal fulfillment (more aligned with mainstream cultural norms) over cultural prescriptions and family traditions (more aligned with heritage cultural norms) expressed fear of isolation from one's family. In the present study, egalitarian gender role ideology and concerns about preserving one's heritage culture, which have been linked to acculturation and aspects of romantic relationships, were examined as potential mediators in the relation between acculturation and views on interracial relationships. We also explored whether the roles of these two mediators differed between Chinese Canadian men and women.

#### *The present study*

The current research examined the relation between acculturation to (Chinese) heritage and (Canadian) mainstream cultures

in Chinese Canadians' openness to interracial relationships and experience of cultural values conflict. This study built upon the limited research on the association between acculturation and attitudes on interracial relationships for Asian Americans or Canadians by not only directly testing this relation within a more homogenous sample (rather than a pan-Asian sample), but also investigating the roles of two gender-related mediators. First, we hypothesized that personal openness to interracial relationships would be associated with higher acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture, more egalitarian gender role ideology, and less concern about preserving Chinese heritage culture. The opposite pattern was predicted for cultural values conflict, such that cultural values conflict would be associated with lower acculturation to mainstream culture, less egalitarian gender role ideology, and more concern about preserving Chinese heritage culture. Neither openness to nor cultural values conflict about interracial relationships were expected to be significantly correlated with Chinese acculturation.

Second, we investigated whether endorsing egalitarian views on gender roles and being concerned about preserving one's heritage culture would mediate the relation between mainstream acculturation and openness to interracial relationships and experience of cultural values conflict. Being more acculturated to mainstream culture should be associated with more egalitarian views on gender roles, which in turn, should be associated with more personal openness and less cultural values conflict about interracial relationships. Mainstream acculturation should also lead to fewer concerns about preserving heritage culture; fewer concerns then, should be related to more personal openness and less cultural values conflict. Considering that Asian bicultural men and women vary in their attitudes toward gender roles (Tang & Dion, 1999) and pressures to carry on the cultural heritage (Kibria, 1997), we explored whether the importance of these two factors as mediators between mainstream acculturation and interracial relationship attitudes differed across gender. Thus, the proposed multiple mediation model

was tested separately for male and female participants.

## Method

### *Participants and procedure*

All participants were 248 Chinese Canadian undergraduates (134 women) at a large university in Toronto. Their age ranged from 17 to 30, with a mean age of 19.74 ( $SD = 2.37$ ). Of the participants, 105 were first generation (i.e., born outside of Canada) and 137 were second generation (i.e., born in Canada); 5 did not report. Those born outside of Canada arrived at a mean age of 9.54 ( $SD = 6.08$ ). All participants had at least one parent who was born in China or Hong Kong. In terms of relationship history, 89 participants had the experience of a relationship with someone from another cultural/ethnic/racial group, and 154 did not (5 missing). No participants were married at the time of the study. Participants completed an online questionnaire, which consisted of the measures described below. All items were presented with 7-point Likert type scale ranging from 1 (*strongly disagree*) to 7 (*strongly agree*), unless otherwise indicated.

### *Measures*

#### *Mainstream and Chinese acculturation*

An adapted version of the Asian American Multidimensional Acculturation Scale (AAMAS; Gim Chung, Kim, & Abreu, 2004) was used to assess acculturation to mainstream and Chinese cultures (e.g., language use, knowledge of history and culture, participation in traditions and holidays). A total of 34 items were presented in pairs, alternating between the two referent groups (e.g., "How well do you speak Chinese?" "How well do you speak English?"). Responses were given on a 7-point scale ranging from 1 (*not very well/often/much*) to 7 (*very well/often/much*). Mean scores were computed for the *mainstream (Canadian) acculturation* and *Chinese acculturation* subscales (17 items for each), and higher scores indicated higher levels of acculturation. Both scales showed good reliability in this sample,  $\alpha_{\text{mainstream}} = .89$  and  $\alpha_{\text{Chinese}} = .93$ .

### *Egalitarian gender role ideology*

Hoffman and Kloska's (1995) 10-item measure was used to assess participants' views on gender roles. This scale taps into ideologies regarding marital roles (e.g., "Men should make the really important decisions in the family"; reverse scored) and childrearing roles (e.g., "Education is important for both sons and daughters, but is more important for a son"; reverse scored). Higher mean scores indicated a more egalitarian view of gender roles. The reliability of this measure in our sample was good,  $\alpha = .93$ .

### *Concerns about cultural preservation*

Three items were created to assess the extent to which participants believed that interracial relationships would lead to a loss of preservation of Chinese culture. The items were "It is not okay for Chinese men to date outside of their racial group because carrying on the family name and ancestral bloodline is an important task for them," "Chinese women are responsible for transferring values of our heritage culture to the next generation so they should not engage in interracial relationships," and "Interracial dating can lead to a loss of Chinese cultural heritage." A higher mean score indicated greater concern for the preservation of Chinese culture. The reliability of this measure in our sample was acceptable,  $\alpha = .72$ .

### *Openness to interracial relationships*

Five items were adapted from Uskul et al.'s (2007) study on personal openness to interracial dating among Chinese and European Canadians. Examples items were "I am open to involvement in an interracial relationship with a person outside of my racial group" and "I would date a person outside of my racial group." A higher mean score indicated higher personal openness to interracial dating. The measure showed good reliability in our sample,  $\alpha = .94$ .

### *Cultural values conflict*

Three items from Inman et al.'s (2001) Cultural Values Conflict Scale (CVCS), specifically related to interracial relationships, were

used to assess the degree of psychological conflict (e.g., feelings of guilt, cognitive contradictions) participants experienced from being faced with the different norms and values of mainstream and Chinese cultures surrounding this issue. The three items were "I would feel guilty if I were dating someone from another racial group," "I would experience anxiety if I decided to marry someone from another racial group," and "An interracial marriage would be stressful to me." A higher mean score indicated more cultural values conflict. The measure showed good reliability in our sample,  $\alpha = .88$ .

### *Demographic information*

Participants also provided background information, including their gender, generational status (first generation, second generation), and whether they had any interracial relationship experience (yes, no).

## **Results**

### *Preliminary analyses: Gender, relationship experience, and generational status*

Independent samples *t* tests were first conducted to determine whether gender, generational status, and previous interracial relationship experience had significant effects on any of the predictor or criterion variables. Gender differences were found for gender role ideology and concerns about heritage cultural preservation. Female participants reported having more egalitarian gender role attitudes,  $t(242) = -3.44$ ,  $p = .001$ ,  $d = .45$ , and fewer concerns about cultural preservation,  $t(241) = 4.34$ ,  $p < .001$ ,  $d = .56$ , in comparison to their male counterparts (see Table 1 for descriptive statistics). There were no gender differences in personal openness to interracial relationships, cultural values conflict, mainstream acculturation, and Chinese acculturation,  $t < -1.32$ ,  $ps > .19$ , or in the rate of interracial relationship experience,  $\chi^2(1) = 2.28$ ,  $p = .13$ , with 31.5% of males and 40.9% of females having interracial relationship experience.

Participants with interracial relationship experience ( $n = 89$ ) differed from those

**Table 1.** Descriptive statistics of the primary measures by gender

Measure	Men ( <i>n</i> = 114)		Women ( <i>n</i> = 134)	
	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )	<i>M</i>	( <i>SD</i> )
Mainstream acculturation	5.35	(0.79)	5.35	(0.88)
Chinese acculturation	4.58	(1.21)	4.79	(1.28)
Egalitarian gender ideology	3.87 <sub>a</sub>	(1.30)	4.44 <sub>b</sub>	(1.26)
Concerns about cultural preservation	3.56 <sub>a</sub>	(1.21)	2.87 <sub>b</sub>	(1.25)
Personal openness to interracial relationships	5.02	(1.31)	4.88	(1.64)
Cultural values conflict	3.45	(1.58)	3.55	(1.56)

*Note.* Means in the same row that do not share a common subscript differ at *p* < .01.

without interracial relationship experience (*n* = 154) on all primary variables, *t*s > ±3.17, *p*s < .02, *d*s > .31. Participants with experience were significantly higher in mainstream acculturation, egalitarian gender role ideology, and personal openness to interracial relationships. They were also significantly lower on Chinese acculturation, concerns about cultural preservation, and cultural values conflict than participants without experience. First-generation and second-generation participants differed on the acculturation measures, such that the second-generation participants were higher in mainstream acculturation (*M* = 5.50, *SD* = .74 vs. *M* = 5.15, *SD* = .93), *t*(240) = 3.13, *p* = .002, *d* = .42, and lower in Chinese acculturation (*M* = 4.39, *SD* = 1.12 vs. *M* = 5.14, *SD* = 1.27), *t*(240) = -4.80, *p* < .001, *d* = .63.

*Correlations*

Zero-order correlations between the primary measures are presented in Table 2 by gender. In support of the first hypothesis, personal openness to interracial relationships was positively correlated with mainstream acculturation

and egalitarian gender role ideology, and negatively correlated with concerns about preserving one’s heritage culture. Cultural values conflict, on the other hand, was negatively correlated with mainstream acculturation and egalitarian gender role ideology, and positively correlated with concerns about heritage cultural preservation. Neither personal openness nor cultural values conflict was significantly associated with Chinese acculturation. The pattern of correlations was similar across both gender groups.

*Testing gender role ideology and cultural preservation as mediators*

To test our second hypothesis, we examined whether the association between mainstream acculturation and personal openness to interracial relationships and cultural values conflict were mediated by egalitarian gender role ideology and concerns about heritage cultural preservation. Moreover, we were interested in whether the underlying mechanisms for these effects differed by gender. Separate bootstrapping analyses (5,000 bootstrap samples) were conducted for each outcome variable (personal openness to interracial relationships or cultural values conflict) and with either men or women, using the methods described by Preacher and Hayes (2008) for estimating direct and indirect effects with multiple mediators; 95% confidence intervals that do not include zero are reflective of statistical significance at the .05 level. Mainstream acculturation was entered as the predictor, personal openness (or cultural values conflict) was entered as the outcome variable, and gender role ideology and concerns about heritage cultural preservation were entered as proposed mediators in the SPSS macro created by Hayes (2013). We controlled for any effects of generational status and interracial relationship experience by entering them as covariates.

*Personal openness to interracial relationships (men)*

The bootstrap results indicated that for men, the total indirect effect of mainstream acculturation on personal openness through both mediators together was significant, with a

**Table 2.** Zero-order correlations between the primary measures by gender

Measure	2	3	4	5	6
<b>Men</b>					
1. Mainstream acculturation	.12	.29**	-.14	.37***	-.20*
2. Chinese acculturation	—	-.11	-.08	-.01	.08
3. Gender ideology		—	-.35***	.32**	-.49***
4. Cultural preservation			—	-.26**	.39***
5. Personal openness to dating				—	-.64***
6. Cultural values conflict					—
<b>Women</b>					
1. Mainstream acculturation	-.03	.40***	-.21*	.49***	-.42***
2. Chinese acculturation	—	-.07	-.01	-.17	.13
3. Gender ideology		—	-.45***	.27**	-.36***
4. Cultural preservation			—	-.29**	.38***
5. Personal openness to dating				—	-.64***
6. Cultural values conflict					—

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

point estimate of .11 ( $SE = .06$ ) and 95% (bias-corrected) CI [.020, .253] that did not include zero. The total (zero-order) effect of mainstream acculturation on personal openness to interracial relationships was significantly reduced when the mediators were included in the model (see Figure 1a for coefficients). Thus, gender role ideology and concerns about cultural preservation significantly mediated the relation between mainstream acculturation and personal openness to interracial relationships. When controlling for the effects of the other mediator, the indirect effect through gender role ideology was significant, point estimate = .08,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI [.007, .209], whereas the indirect effect through concerns about cultural preservation was nonsignificant, point estimate = .03,  $SE = .03$ , 95% CI [-.008, .141]. Thus, for these Chinese Canadian males, higher mainstream acculturation was associated with more egalitarian views toward gender roles, which in turn were related to greater personal openness to interracial relationships.

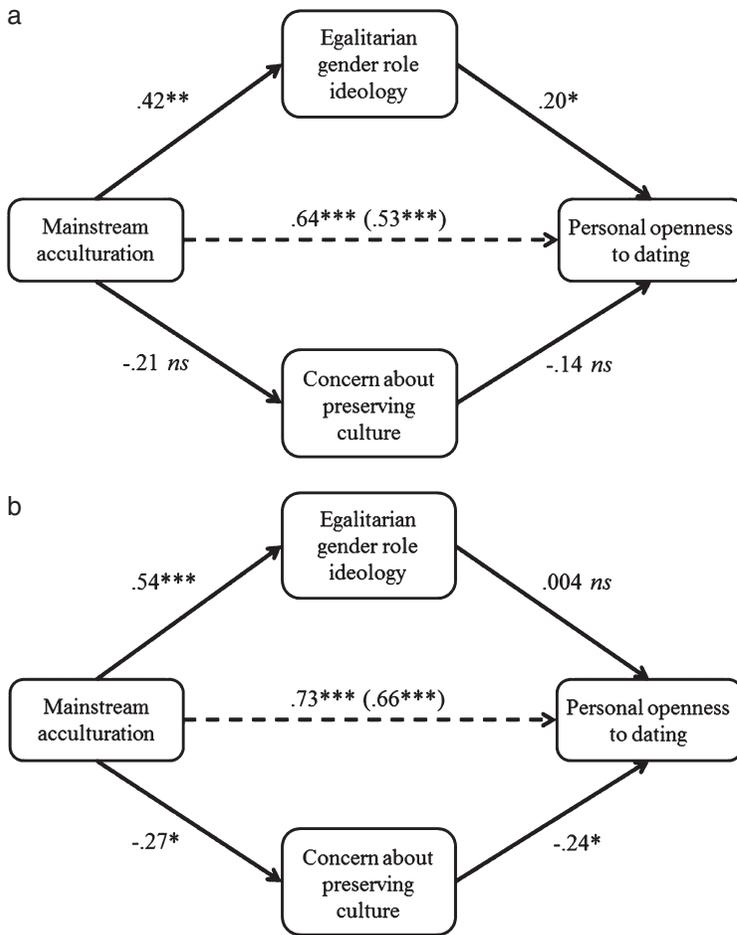
#### *Personal openness to interracial relationships (women)*

For women, when controlling for the other proposed mediator, the specific indirect effect

through gender role ideology was nonsignificant, point estimate = .002,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI [-.137, .148], but the specific indirect effect through concerns about cultural preservation was significant, point estimate = .07,  $SE = .04$ , 95% CI [.006, .193] (see Figure 1b). The total indirect effect of mainstream acculturation on personal openness to interracial relationships through both mediators, however was nonsignificant, point estimate = .07,  $SE = .07$ , 95% CI [-.059, .216]. This latter finding suggests that the combined indirect effects in the model did not account for significantly more variance in personal openness than that explained by the direct effect of mainstream acculturation alone.

#### *Cultural values conflict (men)*

The multiple mediational model for cultural values conflict among male participants was similar to the model for personal openness to interracial relationships. When their indirect effects were combined, gender role ideology and concerns about cultural preservation significantly mediated the relation between mainstream acculturation and cultural values conflict, as the total indirect effect had point estimate = -.26,  $SE = .10$ , 95% CI [-.482, -.093]. As shown in Figure 2a, the total (zero-order) effect of mainstream acculturation on cultural values conflict was no



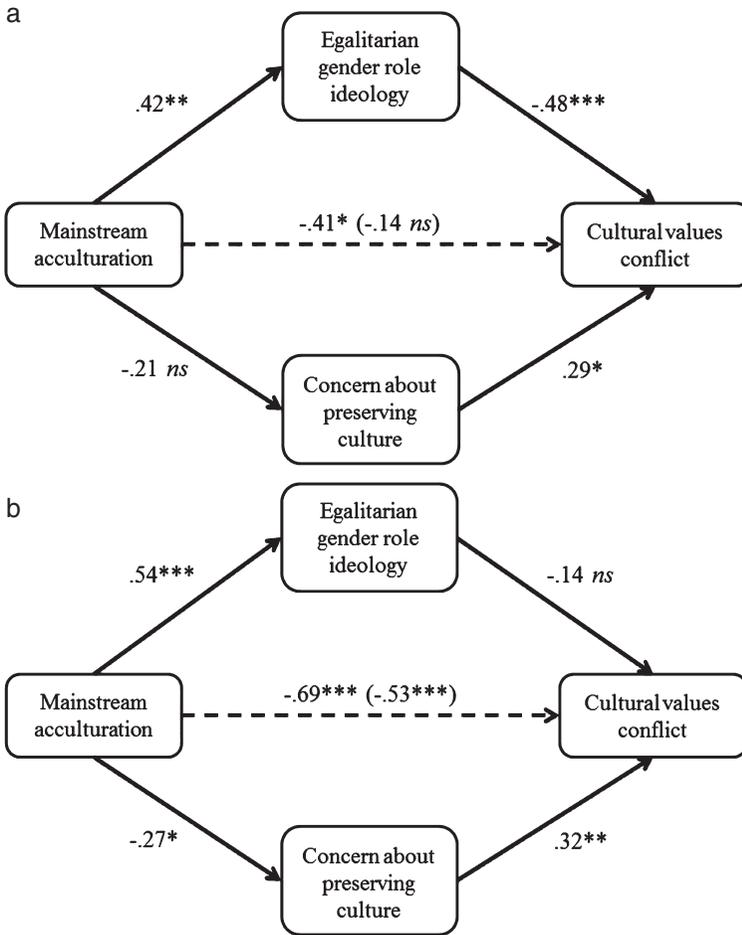
**Figure 1.** (a) Multiple mediation of the effect of mainstream acculturation on men’s personal openness to interracial dating via egalitarian gender role ideology and concern about preserving heritage culture. Generational status and interracial dating experience were included as covariates. All coefficients are unstandardized. (b) Multiple mediation of the effect of mainstream acculturation on women’s personal openness to interracial dating via egalitarian gender role ideology and concern about preserving heritage culture. Generational status and interracial dating experience were included as covariates. All coefficients are unstandardized. \* $p < .05$ , \*\* $p < .01$ , \*\*\* $p < .001$ .

longer statistically significant when the two mediators were included in the model. The specific indirect effects showed that gender role ideology was again a significant mediator, point estimate =  $-.20$ ,  $SE = .09$ , 95% CI  $[-.417, -.064]$ , whereas concerns about cultural preservation was not a significant mediator, point estimate =  $-.06$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI  $[-.215, .004]$ , when controlling for the effect of the other mediator. For Chinese Canadian male participants, higher mainstream

acculturation was associated with more egalitarian views toward gender roles, which in turn were related to less cultural values conflict.

*Cultural values conflict (women)*

For female participants, concerns about cultural preservation significantly mediated the relation between mainstream acculturation and cultural values conflict, point estimate =  $-.09$ ,  $SE = .05$ , 95% CI  $[-.233, -.013]$ , but gender



**Figure 2.** (a) Multiple mediation of the effect of mainstream acculturation on men’s personal cultural values conflict via egalitarian gender role ideology and concern about preserving heritage culture. Generational status and interracial dating experience were included as covariates. All coefficients are unstandardized. (b) Multiple mediation of the effect of mainstream acculturation on women’s personal cultural values conflict via egalitarian gender role ideology and concern about preserving heritage culture. Generational status and interracial dating experience were included as covariates. All coefficients are unstandardized.  $*p < .05$ ,  $**p < .01$ ,  $***p < .001$ .

role ideology did not, point estimate =  $-.07$ ,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI  $[-.263, .055]$ . As seen in Figure 2b, the more these women were acculturated to the mainstream culture, the fewer concerns they had about preserving their heritage culture; having fewer concerns, in turn, was associated with having less cultural values conflict. The total indirect effect of mainstream acculturation on cultural conflict through both mediators together was significant, point estimate =  $-.16$ ,  $SE = .08$ , 95% CI  $[-.351, -.018]$ ,

indicating that the mediators helped explain the relation between mainstream acculturation and cultural values conflict among these Chinese Canadian women.

**Discussion**

In the current study, we investigated the relations between acculturation and Chinese Canadians’ personal openness to and cultural values conflict about interracial relationships, as well

as some of the psychological processes (i.e., gender role ideology, heritage culture preservation) that may underlie these influences. Providing support for previous research (e.g., Mok, 1999; Uskul et al., 2007; Uskul et al., 2011), mainstream culture was significantly associated with interracial relationship openness, whereas heritage culture was not. The higher one's level of mainstream acculturation, the more open they reported feeling toward dating or marrying a person of a different racial group and the less they reported experiencing cultural values conflict about interracial relationships. The null effect of Chinese culture in predicting our measures of interracial relationships is consistent with the previous research showing that out-group-focused issues (i.e., involving out-group members), such as intergroup relationships and sexual permissiveness are driven more by mainstream culture than by heritage culture (e.g., Lalonde, 2002; Ryder et al., 2000).

#### *The indirect effects of mainstream acculturation*

Our research identified some of the processes that may underlie the relation between self-reported mainstream acculturation and openness to interracial relationships. We argued that gender role ideology, which has been linked to mainstream acculturation (e.g., Dion & Dion, 1996; Lalonde et al., 2004), and concern with preserving one's cultural heritage would account for the interracial relationship outcomes associated with mainstream acculturation. Considering the gender differences that have been documented for gender role ideology and pressures to maintain one's cultural heritage, we expected that the particular psychological processes at work might differ between male and female participants.

This hypothesis was generally supported. For male participants, the observed relation between mainstream acculturation and personal openness to interracial relationships was associated with the egalitarian views about gender roles that men internalized from their acculturation to mainstream Canadian culture. Likewise, the relation between mainstream acculturation and feeling less conflicted

between two sets of norms among men was also accounted for by higher endorsement of egalitarian gender role ideology. Although men expressed more concern about preserving Chinese culture relative to women, these concerns did not help explain why mainstream acculturation was related to their level of openness and cultural values conflict, when controlling for the effect of gender role ideology. Rather, mainstream acculturation was associated with greater openness to interracial relationships and less cultural values conflict because of the egalitarian gender attitudes men internalized from acculturating to mainstream culture. In other words, Chinese Canadian men who were highly acculturated to mainstream society were more likely to endorse egalitarian gender attitudes; these gender role views that were associated with their mainstream acculturation were linked to greater openness to interracial relationships and less experience of cultural values conflict.

For female participants, the story was different. It was the concern about preserving their heritage culture, rather than their gender role ideology, that determined the extent to which female participants reported experiencing cultural values conflict about interracial relationships. That is, women who were highly acculturated to mainstream society were less concerned about preserving their Chinese culture and, thus, were less likely to experience cultural values conflict about interracial relationships. This finding is consistent with the stricter intermarriage restrictions, more pronounced expectations to marry within their own cultural group, and the higher levels of conflict with parents regarding intimate relationships that women face compared to men (Chung, 2001; Dasgupta, 1998). For women, neither gender role ideology nor concerns over heritage culture preservation significantly accounted for the relation between mainstream culture and personal openness to interracial relationships, suggesting that this relation may be mediated by other variables, such as those linked to family as well as culture (Mok, 1999). Our results suggest that although the issue of interracial relationships is tied to the extent to which one is acculturated to mainstream culture for both men and women,

how this association plays out differs across gender.

### *Limitations and future directions*

The research context of this study was an extremely diverse university setting, where many different racial, ethnic, and cultural groups interact on a regular basis and where individuals are relatively well educated. The likelihood of dating or marrying someone outside of one's racial group is affected by the number of opportunities that are present in the social context (Mok, 1999). It makes sense that the openness and internal conflict individuals have toward interracial relationships would also be influenced by their social surroundings, whether this influence comes from their personal interactions or relationships that they observe among their peers. Thus, the findings of this study may not generalize to other contexts that are not as racially and culturally diverse contexts and where norms and attitudes toward interracial relationships may not be the same. Future comparative studies should aim to examine the cultural and gendered influences on interracial relationships for young adults in rural and urban environments, where rates of mixed unions have been found to differ (Milan et al., 2010), or among Chinese individuals in other contexts (e.g., United States), where the mainstream norms are not the same as Canadian norms (Cameron & Berry, 2008; Lalonde, 2002).

This study focused on the influences of culture and gender on interracial relationships. In future work, it would be interesting to investigate the issue of interethnic relationships. Chinese Canadians, particularly in the Toronto area, where these data were collected, tend to live and socialize in ethnic enclaves, surrounded by others from their own ethnic group and immersed in their ethnic group's cultural traditions (Walks & Bourne, 2006). Depending on how individuals and their families interpret the boundaries of their own social identity (e.g., as Chinese or as Asian), being in an intimate relationship with an Asian person who is not Chinese may still elicit some cultural values conflict. Fujino (1997) noted that among Chinese Americans, women were more likely

than men to date Whites, whereas men were more likely than women to date other types of Asians (e.g., Japanese). In cases where the two sets of norms are not as far apart as Chinese and mainstream Canadian norms, such as intimate relationships among different Asian groups or among different Western European groups, other variables not included in this study might play important roles in predicting cultural values conflict. In addition to having the potential for internal conflict, such intergroup relationships can alter the way in which individuals view their own cultural and social identities (AhnAllen & Suyemoto, 2011).

Most of the literature on interracial relationships has presented a dichotomous conception of outdating or marriage (Kibria, 1997), such that people either date or marry someone from their own racial group or someone from another racial group. For Chinese Canadian biculturals, who identify with both their heritage culture and the mainstream culture (LaFromboise et al., 1993), the distinction is likely not that simple. They may prefer having a relationship with someone who also strongly identifies as both Chinese and Canadian (i.e., other Chinese Canadian biculturals). Kibria (1997) observed that second-generation Chinese and Korean Americans preferred to marry other Asian American biculturals because of a common set of experiences and shared understanding of cultural values, Asian American culture, and immigrant history. This finding indicates that the issue of intergroup relationships, including how we define "intergroup" relationships in research, may be much more complex than our study suggests.

Interracial dating and marriage are increasingly common behaviors that challenge the traditional norms of endogamy and strict gender roles. It is important to examine the issue of interracial relationships among bicultural young adults, who sometimes feel caught between the opposing ideals of marriage and love and the discrepant norms and values promoted by their heritage and the mainstream cultures. The present study may be used to inform clinical work, particularly at community mental health and family therapy settings by facilitating a better understanding of the dynamics underlying potential cultural, family,

and marriage conflicts that might differ as a function of the gender of the client. Moreover, research that includes a focus on gender helps to deepen our understanding of the different psychological processes at work for men and women, when it comes to uncovering the multifaceted role that culture plays in shaping important life decisions like choosing one's lifelong partner.

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