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## Factors contributing to commitment in Chinese interethnic couples

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# **Factors Contributing to Commitment in Chinese Interethnic Couples**

**By**  
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A Doctoral Thesis

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## Abstract

Interethnic relationships are increasingly common in society, yet interethnic couples also have a higher divorce rate compared to intraethnic couples. Given these facts, it is important that researchers identify factors that contribute to couples' commitment in interethnic relationships, but to date, such research is rare. This thesis investigated the factors that contribute to the commitment of Chinese interethnic relationships. In order to do that, a qualitative study and a quantitative study were conducted. Johnson's commitment framework was found suitable in the qualitative study. Thus a cultural model that incorporated Johnson's personal commitment and a new construct "couple cultural identity" was established for the quantitative study to find whether love, satisfaction (i.e. dyadic adjustment) and "couple cultural identity" (i.e. acculturation to the partner and similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism) would predict personal commitment and whether each variable would account for unique variance in personal commitment of the participants. The quantitative study found significant relationships between love and personal commitment, satisfaction and personal commitment of Chinese interethnic couples. Also, couple cultural identity was important for women's personal commitment. These findings suggest that partners in interethnic relationships may define personal commitment in different ways with men emphasising love and satisfaction, and women emphasising love and acculturation to their partner.

Key words: interethnic relationships; personal commitment; couple cultural identity; Chinese couples.

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## Introduction

Our world is more and more like a global village, and with the help of modern transportation tools, it is easier and easier moving from one region to another, from one country to another, to work, to get education, to experience another culture, to seek a better life, and to escape persecution. People from different ethnic groups thus have more chance to meet as a result of these moves. Frequent meetings with other ethnic groups may encourage romance to develop, and as a consequence, long-term relationships may be formed. Statistics have shown the growing number of interethnic relationships, especially Asian/Chinese interethnic relationships. However, the divorce rate of interethnic marriages also tends to be higher than intraethnic marriages. Given these facts, it is important to identify factors that contribute to couples' commitment in interethnic relationships, but to date, such research is rare.

This thesis is dedicated to the research of interethnic relationships, specifically, the factors that contribute to their commitment, and the Chinese interethnic relationships is the focus. The first question that might come into mind about interethnic relationships is how these couples deal with their cultural differences. Culture seems important in interethnic relationships, so chapter 1 reviews the literature of culture. Culture is a complicated construct, so the first section of the chapter reviews different concepts of culture. Culture is very much likely to be evaluated according to subjective judgement, so the second section reviews the attitude towards other cultures. The third section discusses how culture might affect interethnic relationships, and points out the importance of the core of culture – value. Several cross-cultural psychologists conducted worldwide research studies trying to find universal cultural dimensions based on values. Therefore, the fourth section reviews four major research studies on cultural dimensions by Hofstede (1980, 2001), the Chinese Culture Connection (1987), Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990; Schwartz, 1992, 1994), and Trompenaars (1997; Smith et al., 1996). Among these research studies, individualism/collectivism was found to be a stable dimension, which is reviewed in detail in the fifth section. Except for the influence of individualism and collectivism, partners in interethnic relationships may also acculturate to each other's cultures, so acculturation is reviewed in the last section.

After reviewing culture and its related issues in chapter 1, chapter 2 reviews the literature of interethnic relationships. The very much interrelated constructs of race, ethnicity and culture are reviewed in the first section, in which ethnicity displayed the

suitability for the current research. In the second section, research on interethnic relationships are reviewed, including the statistics and demographic characteristics of interethnic relationships, interethnic marriage divorce rate, reasons for choosing/not wanting an interethnic relationship, issues that interethnic couples may face, society's attitude towards interethnic marriages, interethnic relationship insiders and outsiders, other opinions on interethnic relationships, and whether interethnic couples different from intraethnic couples on relationships quality. Issues related to cultural value differences are unique for interethnic couples, so the role of culture in interethnic relationships is reviewed in the third section. In the last section, the development of a newly proposed construct "couple cultural identity", which including similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism and acculturation to the partner, is presented and is proposed to enhance commitment and relationship quality.

Chapter 3 reviews the literature of relationship quality and commitment. In the first section, literature on relationship quality and stability are reviewed, including qualities that people are likely to look for in a relationship, factors may make a happy, unhappy, and committed and stable marriage, and some special topics that relate to marital quality and stability. In the following sections, three commitment models, namely Levinger's relationship cohesiveness, Rusbult's investment model, and Johnson's commitment framework, are reviewed respectively.

After the three chapters' literature review, chapter 4 is the interview study and the search for a suitable model of commitment for Chinese interethnic couples. It was found in the interview study that Rusbult's investment model was not suitable, but Johnson's commitment framework was. Based on Johnson's personal commitment, a cultural model was proposed, and it was hypothesised that satisfaction, love, and couple cultural identity were the factors that associated with and contributed to personal commitment. Thus the quantitative study of the cultural model is presented in chapter 5. The significant relationships between love and personal commitment, satisfaction and personal commitment of Chinese interethnic couples were found. Also, couple cultural identity was found important for women's personal commitment. The findings suggested that partners in interethnic relationships may define personal commitment in different ways with men emphasising love and dyadic adjustment, and women emphasising love and acculturation to their partner. Chapter 6 is the overall discussion and conclusion. The contribution of this thesis is the discovery of the importance of "couple cultural identity" in contributing to personal commitment, besides love and

satisfaction, which helps researchers to gain a greater understanding of interethnic relationships and to build up further research on such relationships, and allows relationship counsellors to help interethnic couples experiencing relationship problems.

## Chapter 1 Culture

When we think about interethnic couples, the first thing that may come into our mind is the cultural difference. What is culture? In which ways is one culture different from another? How would people be influenced by another culture? This chapter will try to answer these questions through introducing the concept of culture, the major research on cultural dimensions, individualism and collectivism, and acculturation.

### 1.1 What is culture?

Culture is an abstract term that has been used broadly. Lay people tend to use it for anything that can form a special pattern, such as youth culture, school culture, food culture, art culture, religious culture, as well as the Western culture and the Eastern culture. Culture also consists of many aspects, such as language, history, environment, politics and so on. Thus it is difficult to define culture, and therefore people tend to use culture as the reason for any differences between groups (Laungani, 2007).

There were many definitions of culture (e.g. Segall, Dasen, Berry & Poortinga, 1999; Hofstede, 1991; Matsumoto, 1996). Rohner (1984) defined culture as “the totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segments of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next” (p. 119-120). Here the “equivalent and complementary learned the meaning” pointed out the importance of sameness as well as the differences among individuals, as Rohner (1984) defined the equivalent meanings as “approximate sharing” (p. 121) and the complementary meanings as “status/role systems within society” (p. 122). This definition shows that culture is shared by a group of people who are in similar environment and situations and passed on between generations, at the same time, there can be many variations among people from the same region or social environment. So, there is no absolute homogeneous group but only relative homogeneous groups.

## **1.2 Attitude towards other cultures**

Having looked at the definitions of culture, but what attitude should we have when we look at other cultures? Right things in one culture can be totally wrong in another culture, should we judge other cultures according to our own culture?

It is not preferable to judge other cultures as this would stop people from understanding other cultures (Laungani, 2007). There is no good or bad culture, each culture is the product of trying to find the best solution to adapt to the environment (Segall et al., 1999). A good attitude to look at culture is through a “culture relativism” view, which describes looking at other cultures objectively and without evaluation, and at the same time recognising the judgement of other cultures is coming from one’s own cultural values (Segall, Campbell, & Herskovits, 1966 as cited in Berry et al., 1992, p. 169).

However, people tend to consider their own culture being the best one compared to other cultures, which is called ethnocentrism (Segall et al., 1999). Therefore people need to be cautious not to be judgemental of cultures and to respect other cultures. Each culture has advantages and disadvantages, and it is not respectful to judge the disadvantages as the disadvantages can be subjective and advantages in certain cultures.

## **1.3 Culture and interethnic couples**

Now, let us look at how we can apply what we have learned about culture to interethnic couples that the current research focuses on. People from different ethnic groups have learned different ways of life from the birth and have grown up in different physical and social environment, so they would have formed different norms, values, beliefs, languages and so on. They would also have different perceptions of things according to the underlying rules of thinking and behaviour in their cultures.

For interethnic couples, if they lack of understanding of each other’s cultures, they might assume the characteristics and interpret the behaviour of the partner according to their own cultural background, which might not be correct. If they are not aware of what these assumptions and interpretations are based on, the misunderstandings would arise, which can be a stressor of the relationship. Although this kind of misunderstanding can happen in intraethnic relationships as well, the

assumptions and interpretations might not be very far away from what they really are, as the couples share the same culture.

So, if both partners in interethnic relationships can make efforts to get to know each other's deep side of cultures, it could be easy for them to deal with problems related to culture in their relationships. There are already huge differences between two people from two different gender groups and families, the cultural difference might add another difficulty, as culture is something people learned from their birth.

But in which ways can interethnic couples understand more about each other's cultures, and how could cultural change possibly happen in interethnic couples? Culture is not only about the superficial things such as dresses and rituals, there are also something that is the core of culture which makes people from different cultures think and behave differently in the daily life.

Scholars have pointed out the importance of value in culture and defined the term value. Hofstede (1991) stated that value is the core of culture, and other visible practices, such as dress, popular figures, the way people interacting with others, are superficial. He described culture as multi-layered with value at the core and practices, such as rituals, heroes and symbols, at outer layers. Practices are visible but value is invisible and is the foundation of all the cultural practices (ibid). Allport (1954) suggested that value is "the most important category" people have (p. 24). Berry et al. (1992) noted that value is a stable characteristic that associates with culture. Hofstede (2001) defined value as "a broad tendency to prefer certain states of affairs over others" (p. 5). Allport (1954) looked at value through the way people categorise (generalise) things based on prejudgements in which people tend to simply (rationally or irrationally) cluster things into large categories, and people rarely think or evaluate but defend their own values.

Therefore, interethnic couples would have better relationship quality if they can have more understanding of each other's different values. Moreover, interethnic couples might gradually change their cultural values to a set of agreed cultural values within the couple. Just as people might change their cultures when move to a new culture, interethnic couples are in constant contact with another culture coming from their partner in daily life, hence both partners might change their original cultures.

In order to understand the value, many researches on this topic have been carried out around the world. Rokeach's (1973) value survey was one of the well-known studies on values, in which there were two sets of values, terminal values and instrumental values, and each set had 18 different values. However, this survey was

carried out in the United States and reflected values in the United States only (Hofstede & Bond, 1984). Later on, Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987) developed from the values of Rokeach's study and studied the values in several countries. There were also several cross-cultural studies on value trying to search for cultural dimensions that distinguished different cultures. Hofstede's (1980, 2001) research on work-related values across a great number of countries/regions found five cultural dimensions, which had a great impact in cross-cultural studies. The Chinese Cultural Connection (1987) also studied value in several countries/regions but their value survey was based on Chinese values, and four cultural dimensions were found. The next section will describe four major cultural dimensions on value.

### **1.4 Major cultural dimensions**

What aspects of cultural value differentiate us from others? How to unravel the cultural difference? To answer these questions, several cross-cultural psychologists conducted worldwide researches trying to find universal cultural dimensions. There were four major cultural dimensions researches across cultures with the sample of either company employees or students and teachers. These were studies by Hofstede (1980, 2001), the Chinese Culture Connection (1987), Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990; Schwartz, 1992, 1994) and Trompenaars (1997; Smith et al., 1996).

#### **1.4.1 Hofstede's (1980, 2001) cultural dimensions**

Hofstede pioneered the cultural dimensions research through a study of work-related values of employees in a large multicultural company across 72 countries from 1967 to 1973 with about 116,000 responses in 20 languages, and four country/region-level dimensions of culture were yielded by factor analysis or eclectic analysis: individualism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity/femininity (Hofstede, 2001). The questions in this survey were about employees' preferences of how their work should be like, such as whether they like competition in the company and how do they like the relationship between managers and employees (ibid). The questions used for this study generated from the values frequently used in American social science (ibid).

Hofstede (2001) constructed individualism/collectivism as individual's perception of the strength of the ties between oneself and others, and such perception is shared in a certain group (such as a cultural group). In an individualistic society, people tend to take care of themselves and their immediate family, and pursue their own interests; whereas in a collectivistic society, people tend to serve the group interests rather than their own and they adjust their behaviours according to the group norms (ibid). In this dimension, United States scored the highest (91) and followed by Australia (90), United Kingdom (89), and Canada (80) and Netherlands (80); Guatemala scored the lowest (6), and Hong Kong (25), Singapore (20), and Taiwan (17) scored among lowest 20 countries (ibid). One interesting result is that Japan, an Asian country perceived by most people that possesses a similar culture as other Asian countries, scored higher (46) than other Asian countries and ranked 22/53 on this dimension according to Hofstede (2001). The high score probably influenced partly by the high speed of economic growth, and the significant difference between Japan and other Asian countries might explain the high divorce rate (1 in 3 ended in divorce) of Taiwanese/Japanese couples in Taiwan (Yahoo News, 2008). There may be actually more cultural differences between Taiwanese and Japanese than people's perception. This individualism/collectivism dimension was strongly and negatively correlated with the dimension of power distance (Hofstede, 1980).

Power distance refers to the extent of inequality people can perceive between people with more power and less power (Hofstede, 1980). In this dimension, Malaysia scored the highest (104) and Hong Kong (68), Singapore (74) and Taiwan (58) also scored relatively high. Austria scored the lowest (11) and United Kingdom (35) scored relatively low (Hofstede, 2001).

Uncertainty avoidance refers to the level of threatening feeling to the uncertainties (Hofstede, 2001). In this dimension, according to Hofstede (2001), Greece scored the highest (112) and Singapore scored the lowest (8), which means Greece had the lowest tolerance of uncertainties, while Singapore had highest tolerance of uncertainties. United Kingdom (35), Hong Kong (29), Singapore (8) and Taiwan (69) scored differently (ibid). Cultures with uncertainty avoidance tend to find the truth, whereas cultures with long-term/short-term orientation, which will be introduced later, tend to find the virtue (ibid). This dimension has not been found by the Chinese Cultural Connection, as uncertainty and the avoidance of the uncertainty were less relevant to Chinese values (ibid).



Masculinity/femininity reflects the characteristics of men and women on culture – men were meant to be “assertive, tough, and focused on material success”, and women were meant to be “more modest, tender, and concerned with the quality of life” (Hofstede, 2001, p. 297). Japan was the most masculine country with a score 95 and Sweden was the most feminine country with a score five. United Kingdom (66), Hong Kong (57), Singapore (48) and Taiwan (45) scored in the middle among all the countries in the study (ibid).

Later, Hofstede (2001) added a fifth dimension, long-term/short-term orientation, which derived from the dimension Confucian work dynamism by the work of Chinese Cultural Connection in 1987. This dimension describes focusing on future (long-term orientation) or the past and present (short-term orientation) by encouraging relevant virtues (ibid). This dimension includes the values taught by Confucius: long-term orientation includes values of “thrift”, “perseverance”, “ordering relationships by status and observing this order” and “having a sense of shame”; short-term orientation includes values of protecting face, “respect tradition”, “reciprocation of greetings, favours, and gifts” and “personal steadiness and stability” (ibid. p. 354). Mainland China (118), Hong Kong (96) and Taiwan (87) were the top three of this dimension, which reflected their high long-term orientation; Singapore (48) was in the middle; United Kingdom (25) was relatively low (ibid). Hofstede (2001) compared this dimension with other studies of values, and summarised that people having high long-term orientation also tended to have the characteristics such as “leisure time not so important”, “large share of additional income saved”, “investment in real estate” and so on (p. 360).

Among Hofstede’s (2001) five cultural dimensions, individualism/collectivism has been widely used in many studies and showed validity. Researches have also shown the relations between this cultural dimension and other variables, such as level of discrimination between people from one’s in-group and people in out-groups (Han & Park, 1995), idiocentric/group self-descriptions (Bochner, 1994), speech rate (Lee & Boster, 1992), communication difference with one’s in-group and out-groups (Gudykunst et al., 1992), different needs (Hui & Villareal, 1989), and self-esteem (Tafarodi et al., 1999). Besides, this dimension was found significantly correlated with others’ cultural dimensions: the Chinese Culture Connection’s integration, Schwartz’s conservatism and autonomy, and one of Trompenaars’ cultural dimensions with the same name.

#### 1.4.2 The Chinese Culture Connection (1987)

Since the values that Hofstede used in his survey were designed solely by western people and reflected western values, some researchers began to formulate another value survey based on Chinese values. The Chinese Cultural Connection (1987) established the values solely from Chinese perspectives in their Chinese Value Survey (CVS) to “balancing out any Western theoretical egocentrism” (p. 145). Their research began with the investigation of Chinese values suggested by Chinese social scientists. After carefully choosing and combining similar suggested values, and adding another seven values from the Chinese literature, they established forty values (such as “working hard”, “tolerance of others”, “filial piety”, etc.) in the CVS questionnaire (p. 147-148), and distributed to students in high-standard universities in 22 countries/regions. Finally, the Chinese Culture Connection (1987) concluded four cultural dimensions by factor analysis, in which means of males and females were averaged on each value in each culture and then these scores were standardised in each culture: integration, Confucian work dynamism, human-heartedness, and moral discipline. Integration consists of values such as “tolerance of other” (positively loaded), “harmony with others” (positively loaded) and “filial piety” (negatively loaded); Confucian work dynamism consists of values such as “ordering relationships” (positively loaded), “persistence” (positively loaded) and “protecting your ‘face’” (negatively loaded); human-heartedness consists values such as “kindness” (positively loaded), “patience” (positively loaded) and “sense of righteousness” (negatively loaded); moral discipline consists values such as “moderation” (positively loaded), “having few desires” (positively loaded) and “adaptability” (negatively loaded) (ibid. p. 150-151). These cultural dimensions, especially the Confucian work dynamism, drew the attention of Hofstede. As a result, Hofstede (2001) added a fifth dimension, long-term/short-term orientation, to his former dimensions. He ascribed values that positively loaded in Confucian work dynamism in the factor analysis to long-term orientation and negatively loaded in Confucian work dynamism to short-term orientation.

The Chinese Culture Connection (1987) also compared their cultural dimensions with Hofstede’s (1980) dimensions, and they found that integration significantly correlated with individualism, moral discipline significantly correlated with power

distance, human-heartedness significantly correlated with masculinity, and Confucian work dynamism did not show any correlations with any of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions. These results not only confirmed most of Hofstede's (1980) dimensions, including individualism/collectivism, but also discovered an extra dimension, Confucian work dynamism, which reflected oriental values. Individualism/collectivism showed its existence again in this research.

#### 1.4.3 Schwartz's value dimensions

Schwartz and Bilsky (1987, 1990; Schwartz, 1992, 1994) created a new set of individual-level and culture-level value dimensions based on theories of values. They assumed that individual-level values are reflections of "universal human requirements", which including "biologically based needs of the organism, social interactional requirements for interpersonal coordination, and social institutional demands for group welfare and survival" (Schwartz & Bilsky, 1987, p. 551). Based on these requirements and Rokeach's (1973) values, seven value domains were formed, which were enjoyment, security, achievement, self-direction, restrictive-conformity, prosocial, and maturity (ibid). In Schwartz and Bilsky's (1987, 1990) study across seven nations using the smallest space analysis (clustering related values and showing them in a multidimensional chart), they found these domains of values were similar across nations, but the Hong Kong data showed some differences compared to other Western nations, for example, restrictive-conformity and maturity were incompatible in Western nations but compatible in Hong Kong.

Later, Schwartz (1992) revised the seven dimensions to 11 dimensions, in which each dimension became "more concrete and explicit" (p. 5). These dimensions were self-direction, stimulation, hedonism, achievement, power, security, conformity, tradition, spirituality, benevolence, and universalism (ibid). Except the dimension of spirituality, other ten dimensions were proved to be almost universal and exhaustive according to the value survey across 20 nations (ibid). Among these ten dimensions, power, achievement, hedonism, stimulation and self-direction were related to "individual interests" and benevolence, tradition and conformity were related to "collective interests" (ibid. p. 13). Smith and Bond (1998) compared these ten dimensions to Hofstede's (1980) dimensions, and ascribed security, tradition and

conformity to collectivism; hedonism, stimulation and self-direction to individualism; power and benevolence to the two poles of power distance; achievement to masculinity and universalism to femininity.

After looking at these individual-level values across cultures, Schwartz (1994) used smallest space analysis again to cluster the culture-level value types across 41 cultural groups, and seven value groups were found: egalitarianism commitment, hierarchy, harmony, mastery, intellectual autonomy, affective autonomy, and conservatism. Among these dimensions, autonomy (affective autonomy and intellectual autonomy altogether) was significantly and positively correlated to Hofstede's (1980) individualism, and conservatism was significantly and negatively correlated to individualism (Schwartz, 1994).

#### 1.4.4 Trompenaars' (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997; Smith et al., 1996) cultural dimensions

This is another cross-cultural study on company employees across 55 nations and including those former communist countries (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). The assumed dimensions were generated from the "basic pattern variables" (in any situation, people would go through and choose from these pattern variables which pertain to values) by Parsons and Shils (1951, p. 77) and studies of other scholars (Smith et al., 1996). Therefore seven dimensions were yielded: individualism/collectivism, universalism/particularism, neutral/emotional, specific/diffuse, achievement/ascription, attitudes to time, and attitudes to environment (Trompenaars & Hampden-Turner, 1997). The result of the study using the data from 43 nations through multidimensional scaling reconfirmed the existence of the dimension individualism/collectivism (Smith et al., 1996).

#### 1.4.5 Summary of the cultural dimensions

Above four major cross-cultural studies were conducted in different times, and had different respondents (Hofstede and Trompenaars used the samples of company employees; the Chinese Culture Connection and Schwartz used samples of students and school teachers). The values were looked at through different angles: Hofstede chose

the values based on the Westerners' perspectives, whereas the Chinese Culture Connection used the values based on Chinese culture; Schwartz's study of value was formed from careful examinations of past studies in the West as well as the East and derived fifty-six values that reflected all the value dimensions based on three fundamental needs of mankind; Trompenaars based his study on the idea of some sociologists and anthropologists. However, one dimension – individualism/collectivism – showed consistency and strong correlations across all the four studies. Therefore individualism/collectivism is a significant sign of the difference between different cultures/nations and using this dimension may accurately show the cultural difference. In the current study, this individualism/collectivism dimension will be treated as an important indicator of culture. The next section will be focusing on individualism and collectivism.

### **1.5 Individualism and Collectivism**

Individualism/collectivism has been found as a stable dimension in several different cross-cultural studies on value, but what individualism and collectivism are about? These will be closely looked at in this section.

We have seen from the last section that Hofstede (1980) firstly pointed out individualism/collectivism as one of the culture-level dimensions extracted from his worldwide survey. Individualism and collectivism have also had other names. Triandis, Leung, Villareal, and Clack (1985) used idiocentrism and allocentrism, and Markus and Kitayama (1991) used independent self and interdependent self to describe the individual-level of individualism and collectivism. In this section, all these different ways of looking at individualism and collectivism will be looked at.

The association between individualism and collectivism and philosophy will be described first, and then several different definitions of individualism and collectivism as well as idiocentric/allocentric and independent self/interdependent self will be presented. Difference between, and antecedents and consequences of individualism and collectivism will be looked at next, followed by a discussion of the coexisting nature of individualism and collectivism. Finally Triandis' horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism will be looked at.

### 1.5.1 Looking at individualism and collectivism through philosophy

According to Triandis (1995), the constructs of individualism and collectivism began in philosophy: individualism emphasised freedom, while collectivism emphasised obedience to authority, which was called authoritarianism. According to Kim (1994), individualism prevailed in North America and Western Europe, whereas collectivism prevailed in East Asia where people followed Confucianism. So what were the Western and Eastern philosophies that had strong impact and had reflected the individualistic and collectivistic values?

Western philosophers, such as Protagoras, treated success as the main goal, no matter using what means to achieve this success, whereas Socrates and Plato treated following the truth as the main goal, whether success is achieved or not; the West looks at “belief, logic, analysis, and theory” (Triandis, 1995, p. 21). Achieving success can be much reflected of individual goals instead of collective goals, and belief can be different to different people, which might reflect individualism characteristics.

On the other hand, Eastern philosophers, such as Confucius, treated virtue as the main goal and proper behaviour was emphasised; the East looks at “ethical behaviour, self-improvement, ritual, meditation, and the correct way of living” (ibid. p. 21). Proper behaviour reflects obeying to a group of people instead of obeying to oneself, and virtue reflects collective norms.

### 1.5.2 Several definitions to understand individualism and collectivism

Hofstede (1991) defined individualism and collectivism as:

*Individualism pertains to societies in which the ties between individuals are loose: everyone is expected to look after himself or herself and his or her immediate family. Collectivism as its opposite pertains to societies in which people from birth onwards are integrated into strong, cohesive ingroups, which throughout people's lifetime continue to protect them in exchange for unquestioning loyalty. (p. 51)*

Individualism and collectivism are cultural-level constructs, whereas Triandis et al. (1985) used idiocentric and allocentric for the individual-level of culture. Idiocentric people are those who behave in individualistic way, and allocentric people are those who behave in collectivistic way.

Markus and Kitayama (1991) looked at the independent self and the interdependent self, which is another way to understand individualism and collectivism. According to Markus and Kitayama (1991), having an independent self means separation from others and asserting the uniqueness of the self, whereas having an interdependent self means “seeing oneself as part of an encompassing social relationship and recognizing that one’s behavior is determined, contingent on, and, to a large extent organized by what the actor perceives to be the thoughts, feelings, and actions of *others* in the relationship” (p. 227), which emphasised the connection with others and asserting the relation with other people. It does not mean individual having interdependent self does not have a clear idea of self, instead the self is functioned by “a high degree of self-control and agency to effectively adjust oneself to various interpersonal contingencies” (ibid. p. 228). Although the interdependent self emphasises the relations with other people, people with interdependent selves do not constantly consider the relation with every other but only those from in-groups who have a similar fate, as people from out-groups are not considered being included in the interdependent self (ibid). Interdependent selves have the “willingness and ability to feel and think what others are feeling and thinking, to absorb this information without being told, and then to help others satisfy their wishes and realize their goals”, whereas independent selves are expected to say what their thoughts directly to others in order to get others’ understanding of their thoughts and feelings (ibid. p. 229).

All the definitions of individualism and collectivism have expressed the difference between the importance of individual self and the importance of the self related to others. Individualism and collectivism seem to be opposite constructs, however according to Triandis (1995), every individual can have both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics, and absolute individualistic or collectivistic person does not exist. This will be discussed later.

### 1.5.3 The differences between individualism and collectivism

According to the definitions of individualism and collectivism, collectivists emphasise harmony and relationships with others, whereas individualists emphasise separation from others and putting oneself at the centre; collectivists do things according to the norms of the ingroup, but individualists do things that can bring pleasure to themselves. Here the ingroup means the members within have much similarity.

Hofstede (1991) described some sharp differences between individualistic cultures and collectivistic cultures. Confrontation is not desired in collectivistic cultures but is treated as virtue in individualistic cultures; having one's own opinion is important in individual cultures but obeying group opinion is important in collectivistic cultures; communication with much explicit information is norm in individualistic cultures but communication based on unsaid common knowledge is norm in collectivistic cultures; guilt is felt in individualistic cultures but shame is felt in collectivistic cultures; individualistic cultures emphasise respecting oneself but collectivistic cultures emphasise not to lose face (face means behaving properly in relation to the social context) (ibid).

Sakamoto (1982 as cited in Triandis, 1995, p. 12-13) mentioned six conflicts in close relationships between individualists and collectivists: 1) individualists think "you and I are equal", while collectivists think "you are my superior"; 2) individualists think "you and I are close friends", while collectivists think "I am in awe of you"; 3) individualists think "you and I are relaxed", while collectivists think "I am busy on your behalf"; 4) individualists think "you and I are independent", while collectivists think "I depend on you"; 5) individualists think "you and I are individuals", while collectivists think "you and I are members of groups"; 6) individualists think "you and I are unique", while collectivists think "you and I feel/think alike". According to Triandis (1995), collectivists are reluctant to say the truth to upset another person if they have a good relationship, instead they might tell a white lie, which does not mean honesty is not important, but mean they do not want to sacrifice relationships for the sake of truth.



#### 1.5.4 Antecedents of individualism and collectivism and the association with interethnic relationships

The original development of individualism and collectivism can be understood from an ecological perspective by how individuals behave in order to survive in a certain environment (Kim, 1994). For example, where food was limited, individualistic characteristics were formed to cope with the situation, whereas where food was abundant, collectivistic characteristics were formed (Kim, 1994). Berry (1994) also described individualism and collectivism from an ecological view that human being is supposed to make adjustment to the ecological environment, hunter-gatherers need to be self-reliant and independent to survive, however agriculturalists need to learn how to relate to other people, therefore hunter-gatherers get individualistic characteristics whereas agriculturalists get collectivistic characteristics. In addition, people live in regions with continuous cold weather conditions may foster individualistic characteristics (Hofstede, 1991).

According to the literature, social and political systems, economy and other societal characteristics are also antecedents of individualism and collectivism. Capitalism encourages individualism, and communism (e.g. Karl Marx) encourages collectivism (Kim, 1994). Individualism is likely to happen by the influence of affluence and high social and geographic mobility (Triandis, 1995). Allik and Realo (2004) found that the higher the social capital (i.e. involvement with and the leadership in the community and other social groups, and trusting most people) the higher the individualism. A highly growing population (not by immigrants) would lead people to be collectivistic (Hofstede, 1991).

Confucianism would foster collectivism (Hofstede, 1991), so collectivism was prevailed in East Asia where people followed Confucianism (Kim, 1994). Confucianism emphasises fulfilment of duties and the morality is based on virtues, and individuals solve conflicts by compromise and concession to maintain harmony (ibid).

According to Triandis (1995), age, social class, childrearing method, travel, education and occupation, gender, religiosity were several factors contributing to people's tendencies toward individualism and collectivism. Namely, older people tended to be more collectivistic; the higher the social class, the more individualistic; children raised by individualistic parents tended to form individualistic characteristics and children raised by collectivistic parents tended to form collectivistic characteristics;

more traveling and more education led to more individualistic; more cooperation emphasised in the work led to more collectivistic; women tended to be more collectivistic and men tended to be more individualistic; religious groups tended to be more collectivistic (ibid). For the childrearing method specifically, individualistic and collectivistic characteristics can be reinforced by parents during childhood: parents would encourage individualistic behaviour or collectivistic behaviours of their children, so that children could learn what behaviour is encouraged and what behaviour is suppressed and form their individualistic or collectivistic characteristics at later ages (ibid).

Immigrants, who have left their collective group at home, are likely to be individualistic (Triandis, 1995). However, some immigrants still kept their original collectivistic ways of living in a new individualistic society instead of altering their collectivistic origin.

How might interethnic relationships relate to the antecedents of individualism and collectivism? Firstly, Confucian's teaching might contribute to the lower divorce rate in East Asian countries compared to Western European and North American countries where people have the freedom to seek individual desires and may be reluctant to compromise the other person when problems arise. Marriage can be looked as a collectivistic dyadic unit that is not seeking individual desires but the desires of the unit, and compromise and concession are needed in order to continuously maintain a harmonic relationship. So if one partner is more individualistic and the other partner is more collectivistic, the individualistic partner might have difficulty to compromise. Secondly, if partners in a relationship have different individualism/collectivism tendencies, it would be difficult to rear their children, as the dilemmas of whether to encourage children's individualistic behaviour or collectivistic behaviour. Thirdly, just as immigrants became more individualistic because they have left their collective group at home (Triandis, 1995), individuals who have married someone from another ethnic group might have left their intraethnic marriage group and they are like immigrants trying to adapt to their partner's different culture. If they treat love as the reason combining them together, they would have some individualistic characteristics.

### 1.5.5 Consequences of individualism and collectivism and the association with interethnic relationships

Several scholars mentioned or found that individualists interact with other people differently from collectivists. Individualists have many but not very intimate relationships, whereas collectivists have less but very intimate relationships (Triandis, 1995). Collectivists tend to interact with less people and have longer interaction time than individualists do (Wheeler, Reis & Bond, 1989). In close relationships, individualists see passionate love as important, whereas collectivists see “harmonized companionship” as the important (Ting-Toomey, 1994, p. 59).

Scholars have mentioned and found that Emotions and emotional expression are different between individualists and collectivists. According to Triandis (1995), individualists tend to have ego-focused emotions, but collectivists tend to have other-focused emotions. Markus and Kitayama (1991) also noted that independent selves are more likely to express and experience ego-focused emotions but interdependent selves are more likely to express and experience other-focused emotions: people with independent selves tend to express their feelings, such as anger and pride, directly, however people with interdependent selves “have learned the importance of attending to others, considering others, and being gentle in all situations, and as a consequence very little anger is elicited” (p. 236). Matsumoto, Kudoh, Scherer, and Wallbott (1988 as cited in Markus & Kitayama, 1991) found that Japanese expressed and experienced anger only to people in out-groups but not to people in close relationships, however Americans expressed and experienced anger mostly in close relationships. Besides the difference between ego-focused and other-focused emotions, according to Matsumoto, Wallbott, and Scherer (1992), there was also difference of the intensity of such emotions between the West and East Asia. For example, people from the West showed ego-focused emotions, such as anger, achievements and pleasures, more intense than the same emotions showed by people from East Asia, and people from East Asia showed relationship-focused motions more intense than the same emotions showed by people from the West (Matsumoto et al., 1992).

Cognitions were different between individualists and collectivists (Triandis, 1995). Markus and Kitayama (1991) noted that interdependent selves tended to be sensitive to and have more knowledge of other people while independent selves have more knowledge of themselves.

Motivations were different between individualists and collectivists (Triandis, 1995). Markus and Kitayama (1991) noted that independent selves are driven by their internal desires while interdependent selves are driven by others' or social needs, and "self-restraint together with flexible adjustment is often regarded as an important sign of the moral maturity of the person" in interdependent cultures (p. 242). So, ability is important for independent selves while approval of others is more important for interdependent selves, and as a consequence pride is natural and positive for independent selves but modesty is natural and positive for interdependent selves (ibid).

Scholars have mentioned and found that differences in attribution exist between individualists/ independent selves and collectivists/ interdependent selves. Individualists tended to emphasise internal attributions but collectivists tended to emphasise external attributions (Triandis, 1995). Individuals with interdependent selves tended to ascribe their success to external attributes, such as being assigned to an easy task, and ascribe failure to their insufficient effort (Shikanai, 1978 as cited in Markus & Kitayama, 1991), whereas individuals with independent selves tended to ascribe success to their inner attributes and ascribe failure to others or external reasons (Markus & Kitayama, 1991). Individuals with independent selves would also protect their inner attribute for the benefit of self-enhancement so they perceived themselves better than others, but individuals with interdependent selves had modest perception of themselves (ibid).

People from individualistic cultures are more likely than people from collectivistic cultures to deal with conflicts in close relationships actively (Triandis, 1995). Triandis (1995) mentioned that individualists tend to focus on maintaining one's own face which encourages conflict while collectivists tend to focus on maintaining other's face which prohibits conflicts. So collectivists tended to use passive accommodation styles (i.e. loyalty and neglect) more often than individualists, and individualists were more likely to express emotions while collectivists were more likely to control their expression of emotions in conflicts (Ting-Toomey, 1994). Besides, individualists and collectivists have different self-perceptions (collectivists tend to have reasonable self-perceptions but individualists tend to have exaggerated self-perceptions), identity (self-orientated identity for individualists and group-orientated identity for collectivists), attitudes, norms, values, social behaviour, thoughts on privacy, communication, dealing conflict, morality, responsibility, personality, and occupational behaviour (Triandis, 1995).

How might interethnic relationships relate to the consequences of individualism and collectivism? Firstly, if partners have different individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, they may have different attitude towards the way they interact with friends. Individualistic partner may feel the collectivistic partner having too few friends while collectivistic partner may feel the individualistic partner having too many friends with low levels of intimacy, which might lead to potential conflicts.

Secondly, the emotional consequences of independent and interdependent self would contribute to one of the difficulties of interethnic couples: partner with an independent self would show negative emotions directly while the other partner with an interdependent self would not understand such direct expressions and might generate negative feelings, as avoiding direct expression of emotions is a norm for interdependent selves. Difficulty would also arise for the partner with an independent self who copes with conflict actively and the other partner with an interdependent self who avoids conflict.

Thirdly, other differences between individualists and collectivists, such as norms and values, would also lead to difficulties. For example, people fall in love before getting married happened in most individualistic cultures, while fall in love after getting married happened in most collectivistic cultures (Triandis, 1995).

#### 1.5.6 Is a person from an individualistic culture definitely idiocentric?

In each culture there are much individual differences and each culture has the element of individualistic and collectivistic, and each individual's cognitive system has elements of individualist and collectivist, but different people have different proportion of each element (Triandis, 1995). Therefore, people from the same culture can have different individual-level cultures. For example, people can be allocentric in an individualistic culture and people can be idiocentric in a collectivistic culture (ibid).

It is hard to say individualism characterises the Western world and collectivism characterises the Eastern world, as individualistic and collectivistic elements can be found in both parts of the world in different periods of times and the two constructs meant differently in different times (Triandis, 1995), although Markus and Kitayama (1991) assumed that more people in the West individualistic cultures were having independent self than people in the East collectivistic cultures. Triandis (1995) has

given a good example of how individualistic people can be collectivistic as well: Western people follow individualism for daily life, but “religious collectivism in their understanding of the world” (p. 25).

Anthropological studies have shown that elements of individualism and collectivism can be found in all societies, and the absolute individualistic or collectivistic society does not exist, but rather certain situations may lead to individualistic behaviours and others to collectivistic behaviours (Triandis, 1995). For example, situations involving the family may have a dominant collectivist element, whereas at the workplace, individualism may be the norm (ibid). Hui (1988) used the situations of individuals with spouse, parents, kin, neighbours, friends and co-workers to measure individual’s different levels of individualism and collectivism. In a similar way, Triandis (1990) used social, truth, economic, political, religious and aesthetic situations. Triandis (1995) also noted that if a group is too individualistic or too collectivistic, it would have difficulties to relate to other groups.

#### 1.5.7 Triandis’ horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism

According to 1.5.6, individualism and collectivism cannot be a linear model with individualism on one end and collectivism on the other end, as one cannot have only individualistic or collectivistic characteristics. So, individualism and collectivism are not polar constructs (Triandis, 2001). There were also findings showed that individualism or collectivism alone could not explain the culture (Verma & Triandis, 1999).

Triandis (1995) took into account of the different forms of individualism and collectivism in different cultures, “same” self and “different” self, and Markus and Kitayama’s (1991) independence self and interdependence self, and set up the idea of four types of individual-level individualism and collectivism, which were horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism, and vertical collectivism. The following diagram (Table 1.1) shows how Triandis’ (1995) four cultural types were formed by the combinations of the four different types of self.

	Independence	Interdependence
Same	<b>Horizontal individualism</b>	<b>Horizontal collectivism</b>
Different	<b>Vertical individualism</b>	<b>Vertical collectivism</b>

Table 1.1 Triandis' horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism

According to Triandis (1995), horizontal describes the sameness of everyone, while vertical describes the difference and hierarchy. Therefore, horizontal individualism emphasises the harmony of independent people, vertical individualism emphasises the competition of independent people, horizontal collectivism emphasises the harmony and interdependent relationships among people, vertical collectivism emphasises sacrificing personal goals to the goals of the ingroup and the inequality between people (ibid).

According to Triandis (1995), individualistic countries tended to be horizontal individualistic, while collectivistic tended to be vertical collectivistic, because according to the findings by Hofstede (1980) that the dimension of individualism and collectivism strongly and negatively correlated with power distance. However, there are horizontal collectivists in collectivistic countries and vertical individualists in individualistic countries or people can be horizontal or vertical in different situations (Triandis, 1995).

Triandis (1995) compared his vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism with Fiske's (1990) sociality. Fiske (1990 as cited in Triandis, 1995) described four types of sociality, they were communal sharing (allocating resources based on need), authority ranking (allocating resources based on rank), equality matching (allocating resources equally), and market pricing (allocating resources based on individual's contribution). Triandis' (1995) vertical collectivism resembled communal sharing plus authority ranking; vertical individualism resembled market pricing plus authority ranking; horizontal collectivism resembled communal sharing plus equality matching; horizontal individualism resembled market pricing plus equality matching.

Triandis (1995) also compared his vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism with Rokeach's (1973) values. The combinations of two Rokeach's (1973) values, freedom and equality, make four categories of values. Low freedom and low equality resembles vertical collectivism; high freedom and low equality resembles

vertical individualism; low freedom and high equality resembles horizontal collectivism; high freedom and high equality resembles horizontal individualism (Triandis, 1995).

Bellah, Madsen, Sullivan, Swidler, and Tipton (1996) distinguished two types of individualism, namely utilitarian individualism and expressive individualism. Utilitarian individualism emphasises chasing one's own goals while expressive individualism emphasises love and feeling (ibid). Vertical individualism which emphasises achievement and competition resembles utilitarian individualism, and horizontal individualism which emphasises harmony resembles expressive individualism. The utilitarian individualism ideology suits single, divorce or short-term relationships (ibid), which implies vertical individualism may relate to the difficulty of sustaining committed long-term relationships.

Vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism have different percentages for different individuals: if an individual is vertical collectivistic, it is because he/she has vertical collectivistic tendency most of the time (Triandis, 1995). In each culture, people may show highest percentage of tendency of any one of the four types regardless the cultural-level tendency (ibid), for example, individuals can be horizontal individualists in a vertical collectivistic culture. Triandis' vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism have been found in both collectivistic cultures (e.g. Triandis & Gelfand, 1998) and individualistic cultures (e.g. Singelis, Triandis, Bhawuk, & Gelfand, 1995), and the horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale has shown convergence with other scales on individualism and collectivism (e.g. Singelis et al., 1995; Triandis & Gelfand, 1998).

#### 1.5.8 Summary of individualism and collectivism in the current research

According to the review above, great differences between individualism and collectivism do exist and these differences might affect relationships if partners have different individualism or collectivism tendencies. There are also different attitudes toward close relationships between individualists and collectivists that might cause difficulty.

Triandis et al. (1988) stated that individualist cultures emphasise horizontal relationships, such as husband-wife, friend-friend, whereas collectivist cultures emphasise vertical relationships, such as father-son. Therefore, if husband and wife



have different individualistic and collectivistic tendencies, it would affect their relationships. For example, a wife with a collectivistic tendency would prioritise the relationship between her and her children and/or her and her parents, while her husband with an individualistic tendency would prioritise the relationship between himself and her. Likewise, in collectivistic cultures, spouses would sacrifice their own relationships for the benefit of their parents or children, while in individualistic cultures, because the relationship between husband and wife is the most important bond, people would not sacrifice their own spouse relationship for the benefit of parents or children. Another example that might cause relationship difficulty is that, marriage is the union of two individuals in individualistic cultures, whereas the traditional idea of a Chinese marriage is the union of two families. The values of individualism or collectivism are learnt under the social context from birth and are taken for granted in each culture, so if interethnic couples are not conscious about these cultural specific values, it would be difficult to acknowledge the cause of and solve their conflicts.

However, it is neither an advantage nor a disadvantage to be more individualistic or more collectivistic, as individualism and collectivism have different characteristics. Advantages in a collectivistic culture can be seen as disadvantages in an individualistic culture and vice versa. Triandis (1995) suggested that the advantages of individualism or collectivism might turn into disadvantages. For example, too much freedom for individualists might lead to obsessively chase for the pleasure which would end up with drug addiction, divorce, AIDS and crimes (Donohue, 1990 as cited in Triandis, 1995). So there is no perfection in either individualism or collectivism, each has its advantageous sides and disadvantageous sides. In order to have a healthy life, Triandis (1995) suggested that people need to follow the values of the culture they are living in and to be collectivistic in the relationships with others, however keep individualistic characteristics so that one can know the best way for oneself to be successful.

A good way to reduce the difference between individualism and collectivism is that individualistic people and collectivistic people learn from each other's merits. For example, if individualistic people make more effort relating to other people they can get more social support in difficult times, or if collectivistic people make efforts in doing things different from others they can be more creative. For interethnic couples, it is a good chance for them to learn about each other as well as themselves and absorb the merits from each other.

How do individualism and collectivism associate with the relationship quality of Chinese/non-Chinese interethnic couples? Since each partner has both individualistic and collectivistic characteristics and each culture has variation of cultural tendencies, it would be inappropriate to look at either individualism or collectivism alone and to say the Chinese partners is definitely more collectivistic than their Western partner. What may count for the interethnic couples' relationship quality is how much interethnic couples have dealt with their individualism and collectivism difference, which may be looked at by the similarities of each category of Triandis' (1995) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism. It is not more or less individualistic, or more or less collectivistic of the couple matters, but the similar individualistic and collectivistic tendency within a couple matters.

Individualism and collectivism are about the individual tendencies. However people in interethnic relationships may also influence each other with other aspects of their individual cultures (other than individualism and collectivism) through their daily interaction. People in interethnic relationships are in continuous contact with another culture. They can accept, reject or combine with the other's culture as well as their own culture. This process is called acculturation. The next section will be focusing on acculturation.

## **1.6 Acculturation**

The term "acculturation" originated in the field of anthropology, and then spread to the field of sociology and psychology. Acculturation is the study about how an individual or a group change their cultural patterns in a new cultural setting (e.g. Segall et al., 1999). For example, how an ethnic group change their behaviours when they have migrated to a new culture.

All the studies were looking at acculturation through a macro point of view, in which two different cultures met at group level or individual-group level (i.e. two cultural groups meet or an individual meets another cultural group) and there were always one group smaller than the other (i.e. dominant culture versus minority culture, or individual versus dominant culture). However for the first time the current study will be looking at acculturation through a micro point of view, in which two different cultures meet at individual level (i.e. one meets a person of a different culture) and it is two people with different cultures in a close relationship (i.e. interethnic relationships).

So, there is no group size difference and partners ideally influence each other's culture equally (the dominant culture where the couple residing in might have an effect as well). Experiencing acculturation process in an intimate setting is one of the focuses of the current research, and this should be similar to the macro acculturation.

In order to understand the micro acculturation of interethnic couples, macro acculturation and micro acculturation theories will be closely looked at first, and then micro acculturation will be discussed within each section. Acculturation from anthropological, sociological, and psychological view will be looked at first, and then acculturation framework will be presented to understand the process of acculturation.

#### 1.6.1 Acculturation from anthropological view

Redfield, Linton, and Herskovits (1936) defined acculturation as "Acculturation comprehends those phenomena which result when groups of individuals having different cultures come into continuous first-hand contact, with subsequent changes in the original cultural patterns of either or both groups" (p. 149). This definition differentiated three constructions, culture change, assimilation and diffusion, as they are only one aspect/phase of acculturation or can happen without "having different cultures come into first-hand contact" (ibid. p. 149-150).

In this definition, the condition is the "continuous first-hand contact" (ibid. p. 149) of different groups of people and the result is the change in one or both cultures. According to this definition, acculturation could occur in both partners of interethnic couples, as they have different cultures and they have continuously intimate contact with each other, which meet the requirements of acculturation in this definition. Most studies on acculturation were focused on minority groups' acculturation as they were supposed to make more changes than were dominant groups. However, each partner in interethnic relationships ideally enters another culture (i.e. the partner's culture) equally, unless if one partner from the dominant group of the society where the couple resides and the other from a minority group. In this case, the partner from the minority group may have to make more changes than the other one.

### 1.6.2 Acculturation from sociological view

Sociologist Gordon (1964) defined seven types of acculturation as follows. a) *Cultural or behavioural acculturation*, which includes “Change of cultural patterns to those of host society” (ibid. p. 71). b) *Structural acculturation*, which includes “Large-scale entrance into cliques, clubs, and institutions of host society, on primary group level” (ibid. p. 71). Gordon defined the primary group as the groups that one involves intimately in a relaxed setting and one can show the full personality to other people in the groups, such as family, religious groups, and recreational groups (ibid). c) *Marital acculturation*, which requires “Large-scale intermarriage” (ibid. p. 71). d) *Identificational acculturation*, which includes “Development of sense of people-hood based exclusively on host society” (ibid. p. 71). e) *Attitude receptional acculturation*, which includes “Absence of prejudice” (ibid. p. 71). f) *Behaviour receptional acculturation*, which includes “Absence of discrimination” (ibid. p. 71). g) *Civic acculturation*, which includes “Absence of value and power conflict” (ibid. p. 71).

There are also links between these seven types. Structural acculturation may lead to marital acculturation, identificational acculturation, attitude receptional acculturation, behaviour receptional acculturation and civic acculturation (ibid). Williams and Ortega (1990) did a factor analysis on these seven types of acculturation and found that structural and marital acculturation belonged to the same factor, as intermarriages are more likely to occur when people have more contact with other ethnicities and people are more often to contact with their spouse’s different ethnic group if they have intermarried. Besides, cultural, identificational and civic acculturation belonged to the same factor, and attitude receptional and behaviour receptional acculturation belonged to the same factor (ibid).

Most of these seven types of acculturation can be measured for the micro acculturation in the current research. *Cultural and behavioural acculturation* can be measured by asking the fluency of the language that the couple communicate with, food patterns (whether partners have different type of food or they have similar type of food), how much time spent on mass media of the partner’s country, and whether one has similar level of religious belief with the partner. These aspects have been used in William and Ortega’s (1990), and Lee, Sobal and Frongillo’s (2003) research. *Structural acculturation* can be measured by how much one involves in activities that allow developing intimate relationship with the members of the partner’s ethnic group,

and whether partners have similar friends' circle. For the *marital acculturation*, there is no need to ask any further as couples have already in interethnic marriages.

*Identificational acculturation* can be measured by asking the ethnic group one feels belonging to, whether one has strong ethnic identities, and whether one's interethnic marriage affects the ethnic identity.

*Attitude receptional acculturation* and *behaviour receptional acculturation* measure the negative attitude and behaviour towards the minority group from the host society. To look at it in a micro level (i.e. interethnic couples), if they discriminate and prejudice each other because of their ethnic background, they would not enter an interethnic relationship as these feelings could not generate love. Love is a positive feeling without discrimination and prejudice towards the other. Therefore, these two acculturation types will not be used for interethnic couples.

The last type of acculturation, *civic*, was measured by attitude towards alcohol use in Williams and Ortega's (1990) research, and was measured by whether people are interested to learn the new culture in Lee et al.'s (2003) research. Attitude towards alcohol use is more of reflecting the personal problem or societal problem, but to learn the new culture is more suitable for interethnic couples. Therefore, to avoid the value and power conflict in an interethnic relationship is to try to know more about the partner's culture and willing to introduce more about one's own culture to the partner. So in the current study, this can be measured by how well one knows about the other's culture and whether one is interested in introducing more about own culture to the partner.

### 1.6.3 Acculturation from psychological view

There are two major models to understand acculturation in the psychological field. One is a linear model and the other is an orthogonal model.

The linear model puts traditionalism (i.e. original culture) on one end and modernity (i.e. dominant culture) on the other end (Berry et al., 1992). So the result of acculturation may locate in anywhere on this line. One can be more traditional and less modern, more modern and less traditional, or in the middle of the line. The extreme example is individual adapting to all aspects of the new culture and losing all aspects of one's original culture (i.e. at the end of modernity end of the line), or keeping one's

original culture and refusing to adapt to the new culture (i.e. at the traditionalism end of the line).

The orthogonal model has one axis on whether retaining the original cultural identity and characteristics, and the other axis on whether maintaining relationships with the new culture (Berry, 1997). Both axes have two categories, which are “yes” and “no” to the questions, therefore four categories of acculturation strategies are formed: *integration*, retention of the original cultural identity and characteristics as well as maintaining relationships with the new culture; *assimilation*, maintaining relationships with the new culture but not keeping the original cultural identity and characteristics; *separation*, retention of the original cultural identity and characteristics but not maintaining relationships with the new culture; *marginalization*, neither keeping the original cultural identity and characteristics nor maintaining relationships with the new culture (Berry, 1997). According to Berry et al. (1992), the first generation of immigrants are more likely to identify themselves as the original culture that their parents come from, but the second and third generations are more likely to identify themselves as the combination of their original culture and the new culture they have moved into.

Among these four strategies, *integration* could happen when the dominant society accepts and meets the needs of all the ethnic groups, and the minority groups accept the fundamental values of the dominant society (Segall et al., 1999). According to Berry and Kalin (1995), there are four conditions to establish a multicultural society so that the *integration* strategy can be carried out: most people accept the society with multiple cultures; high on tolerance and low on prejudice; positive attitudes toward each other's cultures among all ethnic groups; people in all groups should more or less attach to the dominant society but at the same time each culture should be maintained. When looking at the micro level of these conditions, the unit of each interethnic couple resembles a two-culture society. If a couple intends to successfully manage its two cultures by integration, both of partners need to accept the value that each other's cultures are different, high tolerance of and low prejudice against each other's cultures, having positive attitudes toward each other, and more or less following the partner's culture but at the same time maintaining one's own culture.

The four categories associate with five phases of acculturation, namely pre-contact, contact, conflict, crisis, and adaptations (Berry et al., 1992). Along these five phases, individuals go through behavioural changes: individuals' behavioural changes

are the lowest at the pre-contact phase, and the changes become higher and higher from the point of the contact phase, go through conflict phase, to the crisis phase (ibid). For *integration* acculturation strategy, individuals remain the same level of change from the crisis phase until the adaptations phase; for *assimilation* acculturation strategy, individuals keep on changing towards a higher level from the crisis phase until the adaptations phase; for *separation* acculturation strategy, individuals change towards lower level from the crisis phase until the adaptations phase and the level of behaviour changes reverse to the similar level as at the conflict phase; for *marginalization* acculturation strategy, individuals cannot settle in the adaptations phase, instead they go back to the conflict phase and continuously suffer from the conflict between their original culture and the dominant culture (ibid).

Each of the four categories in the orthogonal model resembles anthropologists Redfield et al.'s (1936) three types of results of acculturation, namely acceptance, adaptation and reaction: acceptance resembles *assimilation* strategy, adaptation resembles *integration* strategy, and reaction resembles *separation* and *marginalization* strategies. Berry (1997) described the association between *integration* strategy and Gordon's (1964) *structural acculturation* and *cultural or behavioural acculturation*: high on *structural acculturation* (maintain the relationships with groups in the dominant culture) but low on *cultural or behavioural acculturation* (keep the original cultural identity and characteristics) resembles *integration* strategy. However, it is not necessary to be low on cultural or behavioural acculturation to keep the original cultural identity and characteristics, and one can be high on cultural or behavioural acculturation at the same time to keep the original cultural identity and characteristics. For example, one can keep the original cultural identity but at the same time assimilate to the culture or behaviour of the new culture, considering people who speak fluent languages of both cultures, who have preference of food of both cultures and so on. Also, if one intends to maintain the relationship with groups in the dominant culture (i.e. structural acculturation), having culture or behaviour acculturation is needed. In other words, in order to have high *structural acculturation*, one needs to have certain *cultural or behavioural acculturation*. For example, people who join groups of the host society have to speak the language well so that they can have communication in the groups with people from the host society.

In summary, the orthogonal model of acculturation explained more possibilities of acculturation strategies than the linear model. For interethnic couples who have first-

hand intimate contact with another culture, it might not be helpful for the relationship if both partners follow separation or marginalization strategy towards each other's cultures. If one partner/both partners in an interethnic relationship follow(s) integration strategy towards the partner, both of them need to accept the value that each other's culture are different, tolerate and not prejudice against each other's culture, have positive attitudes toward each other's cultures, and more or less follow the partner's culture but at the same time maintain one's own culture. If one partner follows assimilation strategy towards one's partner's culture, not only one needs to make effort to know more about one's partner's culture, but also the partner needs to be willing to introduce the culture.

#### 1.6.4 Acculturation framework

To understand the process of acculturation and factors contributed to adaptation, it is necessary to look at how Berry's (1997) acculturation framework can apply to interethnic couples. In his framework, psychological acculturation is influenced by five factors (society of origin, group acculturation, society of settlement, moderating factors existing prior to acculturation and moderating factors arising during acculturation) and has one outcome (adaptation). Society of origin, group acculturation, and society of settlement are group-level factors, while moderating factors existing prior to acculturation, moderating factors arising during acculturation, and psychological acculturation are individual-level factors (ibid). Among the group-level factors, group acculturation is influenced by society of origin and society of settlement; among the individual-level factors, moderating factors prior to acculturation is influenced by society of origin, and moderating factors during acculturation is influenced by society of settlement, and all the group level factors, moderating factors existing prior to acculturation and moderating factors arising during acculturation influence psychological acculturation (ibid). For the micro level acculturation on interethnic couples, only the individual-level factors will be looked at.

##### **Society of origin**

The societies of origin of the current study on interethnic couples consist of one partner with Chinese ethnic background (i.e. their parents are of Chinese ethnic origin)



and one partner with another ethnic background. The Chinese partners can be from China or other countries (e.g. Singapore, Malaysia or Britain) and their native language is Chinese (Mandarin or other local dialects) or another language (if they were brought up outside China). The native language of the non-Chinese partners is a different language from Chinese.

Both partners may have the same religion or different religions, and this can be related to the religion of the country of origin and the changes in lives. For example, a person from England may have the tradition of being a Christian, and a person from China may not have a religion; however a person from England may not have a religion but a person from China may have a religion due to the changes in lives.

The traditional Chinese values are based on the thoughts of Confucius. For example, “do not do to others what you do not want yourself” (Analects 12:2), working hard, having harmony with each other, kindness and forgiveness, and other rules guiding everyday life. The collectivistic cultural value is shared by most Chinese people. Members of Chinese ethnic group treat education as a very important perspective in life, perform well academically, work hard, and are frugal. The non-Chinese partner’s value can be similar as or different from the Chinese values. If the non-Chinese partners from the United Kingdom or the United States, they may have individualistic values, and may be influenced by Christian values, such as “do to others as you would have them do to you” (Luke 6:31, the Bible).

All the major Chinese societies, such as Mainland China, Hong Kong, Singapore, have rapid economic growth in recent years. The economic structure of the United Kingdom and the United States are capitalism, which have been established for a long time.

### **Society of settlement**

The society of settlement of the current study is mainly the United Kingdom and the rest the United States. The United Kingdom and the United States are both capitalist countries with individualistic cultures, and both have attracted lots of people from all over the world to settle down since a long time ago. Their population densities are far less than that of Mainland China, Hong Kong, Taiwan, Singapore, and so on. As plural societies, the two countries both permit immigrants to maintain their own cultures, so there are many different ethnic communities throughout the countries. Couples in the current study may be both immigrants to the United Kingdom or the United States, one

partner from the settlement country and the other immigrated, or both from the settlement country.

### **Group acculturation**

According to Berry (1997), when ethnic minority groups have lived in the new culture for some times, they tend to change a great deal – they will change physically (living in urban areas and rising population density), biologically (new food consumption and new disease exposure), economically (status loss and new chances of employment), socially (building up new friendships), and culturally (from superficial changes to deeply involved in language changes, conversions of religions, and value system changes). Group acculturation is influenced by the society of origin and the society of settlement (ibid). The influence of group acculturation on the Chinese partner in the current study is the Chinese group acculturation. The characteristic of this group in the United Kingdom and the United States is highly educated and living harmoniously with other cultural groups, however there are individual variations in the degree of acculturation. Partners from other ethnic minority groups would have been influenced by their own ethnic group's acculturation with individual variations.

### **Factors existing prior to acculturation**

According to Berry (1997), individual characteristics existing before acculturation may influence the process of acculturation, and these characteristics including age, gender, education, economic status, cultural distance, personality traits, and migration motives. Each characteristic will be presented as follows.

*Age.* The younger the person, the smoother the acculturation process (ibid).

*Gender.* Women tend to have different acculturation process from men (ibid) (see also Baldassini & Flaherty, 1982).

*Education.* More education helps better acculturation, as education equips people with more abilities of analysing and solving problems, education gives the opportunity of more social supports and stable income and occupation, and education gives the opportunity of pre-equipping with the knowledge of the new culture (such as language, values, etc.) before the actual move (ibid).

*Economic status.* Most migrants experience loss of status and limitations of status mobility in the new society, which could lead to acculturation stress and influence the degree of adaptation (ibid).

*Cultural distance.* If there are great differences between the culture of origin and the new culture (great cultural distance), it would be very difficult for people to adapt, because the greater the cultural distance, the greater effort needed on shedding the culture of origin, learning the new culture, and solving the conflict between the culture of origin and the new culture (ibid).

*Personality traits.* Several personality traits would influence acculturation process (ibid).

*Migration motives.* Some people voluntarily moved to a new culture but others were pushed to move, and these different attitudes would influence the acculturation process (ibid).

Looking at interethnic couples' acculturation in a micro level, the acculturation process to the partner might be easier if one enters the interethnic relationships in a younger age and with a free will, being more educated, has personalities that helps better acculturate to the partner, has less cultural distance with the partner, and/or keeps the economic status. Chinese culture is very different from most Western cultures, so for Chinese/Western couples, there might be more difficulties and more efforts to be made for both partners in order to adapt to each other's cultures.

### **Factors arising during acculturation**

There are strong relations between acculturation strategies and successful adaptation: integration is the best one for positive adaptation, assimilation and separation are in the middle, and marginalization is the worst one (Berry, 1997). Integration strategy makes people to have positive attitudes toward both cultures and almost no experiences of prejudice and discrimination, people can have social support from two cultures, and they can have a flexible personality; people who take assimilation strategy reject their own culture, they can have social support only from the new culture; people who take separation strategy reject the new culture, they can have social support only from their culture of origin; marginalization strategy makes people lose social support from both cultures (ibid).

For the interethnic couples in the current study, partners can both have the same acculturation strategy in acculturating towards each other, or they can have different strategies. But the most important things are whether both partners have managed to settle in each other's cultural habit or values, and whether they both have the knowledge of each other's cultures. If both partners use separation or marginalization strategy, they

may not achieve successful adaptation towards each other, as they may be confused with their identity as a couple; if partners use integration or assimilation strategy, they may achieve a stable identity as a couple. However, couples may sometimes use integration strategy but other times use assimilation strategy, and the direction of assimilation can be changed all the time. For example, sometimes a husband may assimilate to his wife's culture and sometimes the wife may assimilate to her husband's culture.

### **Psychological acculturation**

According to Berry (1997), psychological acculturation is more to do with the learning of the appropriate behaviour of the new culture. There are five major events that would occur during psychological acculturation, they are: (a) "experience of having to deal with two cultures in contact, and having to participate to various extents in both of them" (p. 18); (b) "individuals consider the meaning of these experiences, evaluating and appraising them as a source of difficulty or as benign, sometimes even as opportunities" (p. 18) (if individuals' acculturation experiences go smoothly, changes are likely and easily to be made; if individuals experience great conflicts, but these conflicts can be controlled and conquered, then acculturation stress appears and individuals will try all kinds of acculturation strategies and other strategies to cope with the stress; if individuals experience great conflicts that cannot be controlled and conquered, then individuals may use separation or marginalization strategy); (c) individuals trying to use different strategies to deal with problems and whether these strategies can be carried out depends on the attitude of the society of settlement towards the ethnic minority groups; (d) "psychological and emotional reactions" (p. 19) (i.e. stress) arising from the acculturation events; (e) "long-term adaptation" (p. 20) which means individual make "stable changes" (p. 20) according to the environment and this adaptation can be located anywhere between a good adaptation and a not adapted state (Berry, 1997).

The first event of psychological acculturation is influenced by society of origin, group acculturation, and society of settlement, and the rest four events are influenced by the previous event, factors existing prior to acculturation, and factors arising during acculturation (Berry, 1997). All the five major events during acculturation might be experienced by interethnic couples when they are trying to acculturate toward each other.

## **Adaptation**

According to Berry (1997), adaptation means people make changes according to what the new environment requires. Adaptation takes different length of time for different people after they have moved to a new culture, and adaptation tends to be stable after a while and becomes a long-term one (ibid). For assimilation and integration strategies, people are much settled in the new culture, but for separation and marginalization strategies, people remain to have conflict in the new culture which produces stress and psychological problems (ibid).

There are two forms of psychological adaptation, namely psychological adaptation and sociocultural adaptation, distinguished by Searle and Ward (1990). Their research showed that psychological adaptation relates to psychological feelings of satisfaction, whereas sociocultural adaptation relates to the skills and abilities to adjust and to fit in the new culture. Psychological adaptation can be predicted by personality, stress due to the life events, satisfaction with the new culture and sociocultural adaptation; sociocultural adaptation can be predicted by psychological adaptation, the expected difficulty in the new culture before leaving original culture and the cultural distance between the new and the original culture (Searle and Ward, 1990).

Berry (1997) mentioned that in order to generate positive outcomes of acculturation, the dominant culture should allow acculturation to happen and the minorities should be willing to pursue. So for interethnic couples, since there is no dominant culture or minority culture, both partners need to allow each other's acculturation strategy to the partner's culture and also willing to pursue the strategies themselves.

It is assumed that after a certain period of time, interethnic couples would learn how to deal with issues in their relationships which arise because of the cultural difference and will be able to learn a stable pattern to cope quicker and better as what long-term adaptation describes, and this would contribute to the establishment of couple identity. However for those couples who fail to settle down at long-term adaptation towards each other, continuous conflict between two cultures and acculturation stress are expected, which might damage their relationship and the formation of couple identity.

### 1.6.5 Other research on acculturation

According to Kim, Atkinson, and Yang (1999), acculturation process begins with behaviour change and then follows with value change, and the value change normally takes a longer time. They generated the Asian Value Scale (AVS) to measure how much Asian value retained by Asian Americans and by doing so acculturation level can be attained. Perspectives on collectivism has been found as one of the factors extracted by factor analysis and all the factors in AVS had concurrent validity with Triandis's (1995) horizontal and vertical collectivism, which means horizontal and vertical collectivism and AVS are both measuring similar things (ibid).

Félix-Ortiz, Newcomb, and Myers (1994) used "cultural identity" (p. 101) to describe acculturation as a multidimensional construct and a unique process that relates to the formation of personality. Four aspects were used to measure cultural identity: language, attitudes/values, behaviour, and familiarity with dominant and ethnic cultures (Félix-Ortiz et al., 1994).

Phinney (1990) distinguished "ethnic identity" from "acculturation" although the two terms have been used interchangeably: "ethnic identity" refers to one facet of acculturation and it focuses on individuals and the relation between them and their ethnic group. Self-identification is one of the most important aspects to measure ethnic identity, other aspects, such as language, friendships, religion were also widely used (Phinney, 1990).

There are two models about ethnic identity similar to the two acculturation models, the linear model emphasis the loss of ethnic identity while acculturating to a new culture; the orthogonal model, in which one axis is strong or weak "identification with ethnic group" and another one is strong or weak "identification with majority group" (Phinney, 1990, p. 502). However, although the axis of "identification with ethnic group" has similar meaning as Berry's (1997) retaining the original cultural identity and characteristics, the other axis "identification with majority group" and Berry's maintaining relationships with the new culture are different although Phinney (1990) treated them as the same. Maintaining relationships with the new culture does not necessary associate with identification with the dominant culture.

Phinney (1989) described the stages of the formation of ethnic identity, which were unclear about one's ethnic identity, having an ethnic identity based on one's socialisation, starting identity exploration and confusion with one's own ethnic identity,

and a clear ethnic identity achieved. These stages are very similar to Berry's (1997) stages of psychological acculturation.

#### 1.6.6 Summary

Acculturation is a rather complicated process that each individual experience differently. Studies in acculturation were frequently focused on how individuals acculturated to the dominant society. However, the current research study looks at how partners in interethnic relationships acculturate to each other's cultures (as they are from different cultures), which can be resembled as a person acculturating to a group-level culture. Studies on acculturation were also frequently focused on how minority groups acculturated to a dominant society. However, the acculturation process happens in interethnic couples does not consist of one partner as a dominant culture and the other as a minority culture, instead their cultures can be equal. It is proposed that if both partners have similar acculturation levels to each other's cultures, they would experience less acculturation stress and better relationship quality.

## Chapter 2 Interethnic relationships

Having closely looked at culture and acculturation in the previous chapter, research on romantic heterosexual relationships consisting of two people from different ethnicities will be closely looked at in this chapter. Such relationships were called interracial, interethnic or intercultural relationships, and the difference between them seems confusing. So the meaning of race, ethnicity, and culture will be looked at first and then the construct that the current research is using, namely ethnicity, will be clarified. Research on interethnic relationships and the role of culture in interethnic relationships will be looked at next. Finally, the development of the new concept “couple cultural identity” and the description of it will be presented.

### 2.1 Race, ethnicity and culture

When we talk about a relationship consisting of two people from different ethnicities, do we mean racial, ethnic or cultural difference between them? Do we concern more about the physical difference or cultural difference? In this section, the three constructs, race, ethnicity and culture, will be looked at one by one, with a special review on the controversial construct “race”. Finally, the construct that the current research is using will be discussed.

According to Betancourt and López (1993), the concept of culture, ethnicity, race, and nationality were very much interrelated and were used interchangeably. Most research has shown the boundaries of race, ethnicity and culture were not clear and there was no agreed definition on each of them, as we shall see from the following.

#### 2.1.1 Race

Research has shown that different countries/regions at different times have different definitions of race (e.g. Zuckerman, 1990; Fish, 1995). Physical appearance, skin pigment and so on are always the first things coming to people’s mind to differentiate race. However, according to Roberts (1994), a person might be defined as White in one place but Black at another place. People were defined as Blacks if their skins were dark no matter the degree of darkness in the United Kingdom, however



people were defined as Black if they had 1/32 Black heritage in South Carolina, United States (Zuckerman, 1990). According to Phoenix and Owen (1996), there were times in both the United Kingdom and the United States that people were defined as Black if they had a black parent even if the other parent was White, which were influenced by the Black-White polarization. However, people were defined as White if they had “Caucasian appearance” to whatever degree in Brazil according to Zuckerman (1990, p. 1298). Race were defined in Latin America and the West Indies according to the social status and physical appearance, so “a wealthy lawyer or doctor with some Negroid features might be classed as white, while an unskilled and unlettered slum-dweller might be classed as black despite the presence of some Caucasoid physical characteristics” according to Roberts (1994, p. 19). Race could be mainly related to social classes and other non-physical characteristics, such as cultural traits, in some countries; whereas race could be only related to physical characteristics in some other countries, such as Brazil (Roberts, 1994). As a consequence, different children of the same couple in Brazil could be categorised into different races (Fish, 1995). Since the ways to categorise race are different in different cultures (Fish, 1995), different countries/regions could have different numbers of categories of race, for example, it could have 40 divisions of race in certain parts of Brazil but only a few of racial categories in the United States (Roberts, 1994).

There were some definitions of race by biologists and anthropologists, but some definitions were problematic, and biological and phenotype based classification were not sufficient to define race. For example, Zukerman (1990) described the biological aspect of race – a group of people who isolated geographically reproduce offsprings within the group. However, the geographical isolation hardly exists nowadays, whereas according to Zukerman (1990), the isolation due to culture, religion and politics are more likely. It is difficult to categorise people into pure races in biology, as Fish (1995) suggested that races did not have “biological entities” (p. 45). Anthropologists categorised human beings into three groups – Negroid, Caucasoid, and Mongoloid (Montagu, 1972). However a Caucasoid could have a darker skin than a Negroid (Zuckerman, 1990), and the categorisation of human groups will be different in the future just as it was always changing in the past (Montagu, 1972).

Some psychologists pointed out the importance of the social and psychological aspects of race. López (1994) defined race from a social perspective as “a vast group of people loosely bound together by historically contingent, socially significant elements

of their morphology and/or ancestry” (p. 7). Helms and Talleyrand (1997) also suggested looking at race from sociological and psychological perspectives. Phinney (1996) emphasised the psychological side of race, which was obtained from others’ response to one’s racial appearance, and this response could shape one’s life and identity. Betancourt and López (1993) emphasised the importance of social and cultural factors as well as biological factors in understanding different races. However, Yee, Fairchild, Weizmann, and Wyatt (1993) stated that there was no established scientific definition of race in the field of psychology.

There were some negative opinions on the definition of race. Zuckerman (1990) highlighted the much more differences inside racial groups rather than between racial groups, according to the studies on temperament, personality traits, genetics and crime, and antisocial personality. According to Smedley (2007) racial difference was not a prominent problem before the decision of choosing Africans as slaves around 18th century in North America. According to Smedley (1999, p. 694) race was classified based on people’s subjective opinions according to the obvious physical differences (e.g, skin colour, hair texture), and Africans were treated as “lesser forms of human beings” in order for the slave owners to justify their using of Africans as slaves. Treating Africans as less than humans is not sound at all – the obvious physical difference is only a small and superficial part of differences between humans (e.g. Bonham, Warshauer-Baker & Collins, 2005), and since Africans are humans, how can they be less than humans? According to Smedley and Smedley (2005), race was invented to describe the differences between people by our cultures (in other words, physical characteristic itself could not cause prejudice but what we believed invented by our culture caused racial prejudice) and “The idea of race distorts, exaggerates, and maximizes human differences” (p. 22). They treated race as “the most extreme form of difference that humans can assert about another human being or group” when people believe that racial difference was fixed that cannot be changed (p. 22). Thus, it seems race was defined by the society with limited knowledge and subjective thinking. Based on this biased thinking of race, no wonder race was treated in historical and sociological research as: human could be divided into clear-cut groups and physical appearances were “markers of race status”; inequality existed between races; biological characteristics associated with behaviours, and they were both “innate and inherited”; “profound and unalterable” differences existed between races; and racial categories were included in the law (ibid. p. 20).

There was a heated debate on race in the 1990s by some psychologists. Some supported using the term race, some did not. For example, Rushton (1995a; 1995b) and Eisenman (1995) supported the idea of using race, but Yee et al. (1993), Fairchild, Yee, Wyatt and Weizmann (1995), and Dole (1995) objected to it.

Eisenman (1995) argued that the knowledge of the important racial differences could help design special ways to help disadvantaged racial groups, so he thought it was very necessary to study race. However it was the result of research on racial difference made certain racial groups being oppressed by so called “superior groups”, but the so called “superior groups” have disadvantage characteristics as well.

Rushton (1995a) advocated the idea of race, and described race from a zoological aspect, in which species were divided by apparent different combinations of morphological, behavioural and physiological characteristics that were passed from previous generations and would be passed on to following generations. He stated that the three divisions (Mongoloid, Caucasoid and Negroid) were very obvious according to the morphology of skeleton, appearance, and genes based on the evolutionary history.

Rushton (1995b) supported the idea that traits and behaviour were inheritable through reviewing the studies of twins, and he acknowledged the equal importance of genetic and environmental factors in contribution to the race differences; he then looked at the differences between the three racial divisions on brain size, maturation speed, personality, reproductive behaviour, intelligence, marital stability, crime and so on, and concluded the trend that Negroids were most different from Mongoloids with Caucasoids in the middle. For instance, Mongoloids’ brain sizes are larger than Caucasoids’ and in turn larger than Negroids’; Mongoloids’ intelligence is higher than Caucasoids’ and in turn higher than Negroids’; Mongoloids’ speed of maturity is lower than Caucasoids’ and in turn lower than Negroids’; Mongoloids’ marital stability is higher than Caucasoids’ and in turn higher than Negroids’; Mongoloids’ secondary sexual characteristics are less obvious than Caucasoids’ and in turn less obvious than Negroids’ (Rushton, 1995b). Rushton (1995b) then used “r-K” scale based on life-history theory to explain racial differences, and the linear “r-K” scale was presented with “r” at one end representing “high reproductive rates” and “K” at the other end representing “high levels of parental investment” (p. xiii). Although all the human beings are located towards the end of “K” (p. 6), Rushton hypothesised that Mongoloids had the most “K” characteristics, Caucasoids in the middle, and Negroids had the least “K” characteristics (ibid).

Although Rushton's research can help us to understand some of the trends of the differences between people from different parts of the world, it may be flawed. Firstly, Rushton's theory based on gene evolution, but according to Bonham et al. (2005), the gene differences between any two human beings are only 0.1%. So Rushton was comparing the little difference but ignoring the massive gene similarities between people. For the same reason, different from Rushton's (1995b) opinion that environmental and genetic factors were equally contributed to the difference between people, environmental factors may contribute much greater to the difference between people than genetic factors. The differences on brain size, intelligence, speed of maturity, marital stability, physical appearance, and so on may be mainly caused by environmental and cultural factors rather than genetic factors (e.g. these characteristics, such as speed of maturity, may be the best ways to adapt to the environment and in turn environment and culture shape these characteristics). Yee et al. (1993) also argued that Rushton failed to prove that gene differences affected intelligence and other trait differences. Unlike Rushton ascribed marital stability differences to biological differences, Smedley and Smedley (2005) noted that anthropologists did not ascribe the social behavioural differences to biological differences but to cultural differences.

Secondly, the r-K scale is not necessary to be linear, because people who have "K" characteristics may also have "r" characteristics. Thirdly, Plomin and Daniels' (1987) research found that within the same racial group, even siblings, had great differences in gene and behaviour. So it is possible that two people from different racial groups may not necessarily have more gene differences than two people from the same racial group. People who married across racial groups could have more similarities, including appearance, smell, behaviours and so on, which were described by Rushton (1995b) as the cues of selecting similar genes to maximise the survival of one's own genes.

Fourthly, Rushton (1995b, p. 2) talked about that even the children in the same family could be different greatly from each other although they shared the same parents and upbringing according to Plomin and Daniels (1987), then he extended this to the idea that there would be greater difference between people who lived far away from each other. However, how could he be so positive that differences between races were more than the differences between siblings? Why did he call it racial differences between people far away from each other but did not call it racial differences between siblings? Did he use race to solve the problem of describing people who were different from each other, and use race as the excuse of not wanting to know or to love those

people who were very different from him? This may reflect what Allport (1954) noted, human beings were lacking the skills of dealing with relationships and had hatred towards people from other groups.

Fifthly, the comparison of intelligence, crime tendencies, and other characteristics on different races would enlarge the difference between people and make certain group superior humans and others inferior humans. Sixthly, if racial difference is based on gene evolution, does it mean certain races more evolved than others? Certainly not! An example by Allport (1954), the facial characteristics of Negroids might seem like apes, but Caucasoids' thin lips, massive body hair and skin colour were much more like apes.

Finally, Rushton (1995b) mentioned that it was unsolved how the modern human originated but the racial differences could help to know more about the origin of human. However, if how the modern human originated was not clear, it is pointless to use the hypothesised racial difference to understand how human originated. Given the 99.9% shared gene among human beings (Bonham et al., 2005), modern humans seem to be the same when they were originated.

Besides, Yee et al. (1993) also rejected Rushton et al.'s opinion on race. Fairchild et al. (1995) commented the way Rushton categorised races were "superficial and simplistic examination of phenotypic characteristics" and there were much variations within each racial category (p. 46). Dole (1995) pointed out the disagreement of race among psychologists, anthropologists, sociologists and biologists, and the possibility that group differences would produce racism, so he suggested to stop using race but to start using a group of variables such as gender, generation of immigration and country of origin instead.

The UNESCO's (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) statements on race seem to have dealt with the term race in a better way. The 1950 UNESCO statement on race supported that mankind was one species – "*Homo sapiens*", which was agreed by most scientists (UNESCO, 1950, p. 7). It was also agreed in this 1950 UNESCO statement that there were great more similarities than differences among human beings from the biological point of view; people cannot be classified to races by the differences in nationality, religion, geography, language and culture (e.g. British people, Protestants, people who speak English or belong to a certain culture were not a race); race was rather a "social myth" than a "biological phenomenon" (p. 10); and that the suggestion of using "ethnic groups" instead of race (p. 9). In the

1951 UNESCO statement on race, it was agreed on using race for “*anthropological classification*” and classifying people by “*definite combinations of physical (including physiological) traits in characteristic proportions*” (p. 141); and that “‘pure’ races” did not exist (p. 145) (UNESCO, 1951). The 1964 UNESCO statement on race stated that there were no clear classifications of human beings even in biology (UNESCO, 1964).

In summary, race, a complicated construct, has been the most controversial construct, and is difficult to be classified into clear groups. Race is a very sensitive term in the United States, and research on racial differences was always the targets of attacks when race associated with advantage/disadvantage characteristics (Scarr, 1988; Rushton, 1995b). Human genes are very similar and the differences were mainly caused by the long history of environmental changes and the cultural factors. The presumed gene differences would stir up hatred between people, for example the racial genocide led by Nazi Germany in the 1940s. Since UNESCO statements suggested that all human beings are the same race biologically, the term “interracial relationship” seems not sufficient and appropriate to describe the relationship consisted of two people from different cultures.

### 2.1.2 Ethnicity

As complicated as race, ethnicity is also a “complex multidimensional construct” and the classification of ethnicity is different from time to time (Phinney, 1996, p. 918; 919). However, race is inherited whereas ethnicity is nurtured (Yee, et al., 1993); ethnicity represents both physical characteristics and “culture of origin” (Phinney, 1996, p. 919); ethnicity is a group of people who share the same culture and biological characteristics (Gaines, 1997 as cited in Gaines, Gurung, Lin, & Pouli, 2006); ethnicity is the combination of physical characteristics and cultural characteristics (including religion and national origin), and people have an “intimate identity” with the ethnic group they belong to instead of with the broader society (Gordon, 1964, p. 27, 29); “common nationality, culture or language” are the characteristics of ethnic groups, as the term ethnicity came from a Greek term which means “the ethnic quality or affiliation of a group” (Betancourt & López, 1993, p. 631); ethnicity is a group of people who share the same culture which makes them different from other people, and ethnic characteristics are learned and are “plastic and transmissible”, unlike race which

“conveyed the notion of differences that could not be transcended” (Smedley & Smedley, 2005, p. 17,19). Helms and Talleyrand (1997) reviewed the research between 1990 and 1996 related to race and ethnicity and found that race was frequently pointed to, as its influence was noticeable but the influence of culture could be hardly seen, so they suggested to emphasise the cultural aspect of ethnicity in order to differentiate ethnicity from race.

Phinney (1996) tried to understand ethnicity by unpacking “the packaged variable of ethnicity” (p. 918) and she pointed out three interrelated facets of ethnicity, which were cultural features such as values and behaviours, sense of membership of a particular ethnic group, and the experience of being a particular ethnicity. Specifically, the cultures of American and Western European are relatively individualistic and people are relatively independent, whereas Asian cultures are relatively collectivistic and people are relatively interdependent, and culture can be measured by not only the cultural characteristics (e.g. individualism/collectivism, values, etc.) but also acculturation characteristics (e.g. language, food, etc.) (ibid); the sense of membership is complex, one can change the sense of membership from time to time, and people from the same ethnic group could identify themselves differently (ibid); the experience of being a particular ethnicity is related to the ethnic status in the society (i.e. people in lower status ethnic groups experience more negative attitudes), but not everyone in a lower status group experience negative attitudes as different people respond to negative attitudes in different ways (ibid). Phinney (1992, p. 164) also developed a Multigroup Ethnic Identity Measure (MEIM), which consisted of “positive ethnic attitudes and sense of belonging” (e.g. “strong sense of belonging”; “strong attachment”; pride of own ethnicity (p. 172-173)), “ethnic identity achievement” (spending time to get to know more of one’s own ethnic group, such as history and traditions), and “ethnic behaviors or practices” (e.g. attending social groups of one’s own ethnicity; food and music preferences).

When talking about ethnicity, ethnocentrism cannot be ignored. Ethnocentrism is the attitude of favouring one’s own ethnic group more than another ethnic group according to their own knowledge and judgement (Rushton, 1995b). Rushton (1995b) suggested that people from the same ethnic group had more similar genes so that people like those in the same ethnic group more. However, the similarities of people from the same ethnic group might due to similar culture and social environment, instead of gene

similarity. Allport (1954) ascribed ethnocentrism to people's upbringing and education that encouraged prejudice towards other groups' members.

In summary, ethnicity is complex as it associates not only with physical characteristics and cultural characteristics but also the sense of belonging. Ethnicity also interacts with culture, as culture is passed on through interactions within an ethnic group (Betancourt & López, 1993). Compared with race, ethnicity has more emphasis on social and cultural characteristics of groups. Ethnocentrism can bring negative effects into ethnic groups, similar as the effect of racial prejudice in racial groups. Like racial prejudice, ethnocentrism is also a subjective opinion of ethnic groups.

### 2.1.3 Culture

The definition of culture was discussed in Chapter one. Gaines et al. (2006) stated that culture can include physical, psychological and superficial characteristics, and they pointed out the changing yet stable nature of culture.

### 2.1.4 The current research

Using race is problematic, as it is difficult to define and it can easily be the target of racial prejudice. So in the current research, the terms "race" and "interracial relationship" will not be used. Culture is a broad concept and people from the same ethnic group can have different cultures. For example, people from different regions of the same ethnic group or people have different religions can have different cultures. Intercultural relationships as such (i.e. inter-region, inter-religion, etc.) will not be looked at in the current research. Thus the term "ethnicity" will be used in the current research, as it focuses on both physical characteristics and cultural aspects. The term "interethnic relationship" will be used to describe the relationship in the current research, as Chinese from different countries/regions will not be treated as having different ethnicities but people with similar physical characteristics such as Chinese/Japanese and Chinese/Korean will be treated as having different ethnicities.

The current research is interested in having more knowledge on Chinese/non-Chinese relationships, which focuses on the Chinese ethnic group. The Chinese ethnic group in the current research refers to those who carry the heritage of Chinese culture



and Chinese physical characteristics, either grew up in China (Mainland Chinese, Hongkongness, and Taiwanese) or grew up outside China with Chinese parents (Chinese British, Chinese American, Chinese Singaporean, Chinese Malaysian, etc.). The interethnic couples in the current research are Chinese ethnicity married to/coupled with other ethnicities (beyond the definition of Chinese ethnic group in this research). The interethnic couples can be Chinese/British, Chinese/African, Chinese/Japanese, and so on.

In Phinney's (1992) MEIM, ethnic groups in the United States were categorised as: 1) "Asian, Asian American, or Oriental"; 2) "Black or African American"; 3) "Hispanic or Latino"; 4) "White, Caucasian, European, not Hispanic"; 5) "American Indian"; 6) "Mixed; parents are from two different groups"; 7) "Other (write in): \_\_\_\_" (p. 173). In the United Kingdom, Asian ethnic group is defined differently from the definition in the United States. In the United Kingdom, Asian ethnic group consists of Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other, and Chinese ethnic group is a separate category. Based on Phinney's (1992) MEIM, the popular ethnic group description in the United Kingdom, and the consideration of people with mixed ethnic background, one's ethnicity will be chosen from one of the six options in the current research, which are 1) Chinese/Chinese origin or Chinese British; 2) Black or Black British – Caribbean, African or other; 3) White – British or other; 4) Asian or Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other; 5) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups; 6) Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_. Although racial terms "Black", "White" and "Asian" were used, it was not used for the interest of the race itself, but it was used to group many ethnic groups together in "Black", "White", or "Asian" category. The current research is not going to look at the difference between Chinese/Black, Chinese/Asian, and Chinese/White relationships, but the interethnic relationships between Chinese and people from another ethnic group.

## **2.2 Research on interethnic relationships**

Interethnic relationships have not been studied more frequently than intraethnic relationships (i.e. partners are both from the same ethnic group). Shibazaki and Brennan (1998) stated that although there were more and more interethnic relationships, little was known of the people in such relationships (see also Gurung & Duong, 1999). Existing research on interethnic relationships were mostly focused on the rate and

patterns that people form an interethnic relationship and the differences between interethnic and intraethnic relationships on several variables, but there was no research on what factors make successful interethnic relationships/marriages. Also, most research on interethnic relationships were focused on Black/White relationships and conducted in the United States (see also Gaines & Leaver, 2002), few were looked at Chinese/non-Chinese relationships or interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom. Given the fact that the Chinese ethnic group is growing rapidly, from 156,938 in 1991 (Owen, 1994) to 247,403 in 2001 (National Statistics, 2004) in the United Kingdom, studying Chinese/non-Chinese relationships in the United Kingdom can contribute to the shortage of research on interethnic relationships, interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom, and Chinese/non-Chinese relationships.

In order to have better knowledge of interethnic relationships, research on interethnic relationships will be looked at in this section. Statistics of interethnic relationships, demographic characteristics of interethnic relationships, and interethnic marriage divorce rate will be looked at first. Then reasons of choosing interethnic relationships, issues that interethnic couples may face, society's attitude towards interethnic marriages, interethnic relationship insiders and outsiders, and other opinions on interethnic relationships will be looked at next. Finally it will be discussed of whether interethnic couples different from intraethnic couples on relationship quality.

### 2.2.1 Statistics of interethnic relationships

There are growing numbers of interethnic marriages. In the United States, the number of interethnic marriages has risen from 0.15 million to 1.1 million between 1970 and 1994 (Alouise, 1998) and 2%, 2.9%, and 5.4% of all marriages were interethnic marriages in 1980, 1990, and 2000 (Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Like the United States, the United Kingdom is also a multi-ethnic country with a rapid growth of interethnic marriages, and statistics showed that 2% of marriages were interethnic (National Statistics, 2005), which was as common as in the United States. In both United States and United Kingdom Asian (Chinese) interethnic relationships had higher percentages than Black/White and some other ethnic groups' interethnic marriages.

In the United States, at 1980 12.1% were Black/White marriages and 18.2% were Asian/White marriages among all interethnic marriages (U.S. Bureau of the Census,

1998). According to the 1980 census, Chinese, other Asians and Hispanic Americans had substantially more interethnic marriages than did Black interethnic marriages and White interethnic marriages, although it was 13 years after the law against Black/White marriages had been overturned by the U.S. Supreme Court (Sung, 1990). The 1980 census also showed that Chinese Americans were much more likely to marry White Americans than to marry individuals from other ethnic groups, and that White Americans had much higher percentage of intermarrying Asian Americans (Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese) than intermarrying other ethnic minority groups (Lee & Yamanaka, 1990). The 2010 census showed that Asians were more likely to marry interethnically than did Blacks and Whites (U.S. Census Bureau, 2012a). According to the U.S. Census Bureau (2012b), “‘Asian’ refers to a person having origins in any of the original peoples of the Far East, Southeast Asia, or the Indian subcontinent, including, for example, Cambodia, China, India, Japan, Korea, Malaysia, Pakistan, the Philippine Islands, Thailand, and Vietnam.” (p.2), and this was according to the guidance of the U.S. Office of Management and Budget’s 1997 Revisions to the Standards for the Classification of Federal Data on Race and Ethnicity (p.1).

In the United Kingdom, according to the 1991 census, although there were more than 99% of White people partnered with other Whites, there were about 13.2% of Chinese men partnered with White women and 24.9% of Chinese women partnered with White men; among Asians (including Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi, Chinese, and other Asian groups) who partnered with Whites, the composition of Chinese/White and “other Asian groups”/White had much higher percentage than the composition of Indian/White, Pakistani/White and Bangladeshi/White (Phoenix & Owen, 1996, p. 120). There were nearly 30% of Chinese women and 15% of Chinese men had married people from other ethnic groups (National Statistics, 2005) in the United Kingdom. There were about 0.4% of the population identified themselves as mixed, within which one of the biggest groups, Asian/White, was 0.1% of the population (Phoenix & Owen, 1996).

### 2.2.2 Demographic characteristics of interethnic relationships

Having looked at the statistics of interethnic relationships in both United States and United Kingdom, especially Chinese interethnic relationships, the demographic

characteristics of interethnic relationships, with an emphasis on Chinese interethnic relationships, will be looked at next. These will be looked at through generation of immigration, age and education, preference of ethnicity, gender, history of interethnic dating, history of interethnic marriage in family, socioeconomic status, and number of children on interethnic relationships.

#### Generation of immigration

Lee and Yamanaka (1990) analysed the data of 1980 census in the United States and found that Asian people (including Chinese, Filipino, Indian, Japanese, Korean, and Vietnamese) who were born outside the United States had less rate of interethnic marriage than those Asian people who were born in the United States, and they suggested the reason for this might be people who were born outside United States were likely to maintain close relationship with their own ethnic group, their lack of acculturation to the mainstream culture, and the rare interethnic marriages in Asian countries. Levin, Taylor and Caudle (2007) found Asian Americans who were in more generations of immigration had more possibility of dating White compared to the effect of Latino's and Black's generation of immigration on their possibility of dating White. Chan and Wethington (1998) suggested that Asian immigrants of the first generation tended to maintain more traditional culture, so they were less likely to marry interethnically.

#### Age and education

According to the New York City marriage license applications in 1982, the age of the Chinese Americans who were marrying someone from a different ethnic group tended to be older than those who were marrying within the Chinese ethnic group, especially for Chinese American women, which may be caused by spending more time in higher educations (Sung, 1990). The data also showed that Chinese Americans who interethnically married had substantially more education than Chinese Americans who intraethnically married (ibid).

#### Preference of ethnicity

Lee and Yamanaka (1990) found from the 1980 census data in the United States that 66.5% of Chinese married to White Americans, much more than the Chinese married to Blacks, Hispanics, Hawaiians, other Asian groups, and others. Fujino (1997)

surveyed 308 Chinese and Japanese American undergraduate students and found that Chinese and Japanese Americans preferred to date within the same ethnic group or White Americans but seldom date African Americans, and Chinese and Japanese Americans preferred to date more than to marry people from other ethnic groups.

#### Gender

Lee and Yamanaka (1990) found that Asian women were more likely to marry someone from another ethnic group than did Asian men. Uskul, Lalonde, and Cheng's (2007) research on 61 Chinese Canadians and 59 White Canadians in a cultural diverse university in Canada found that Chinese Canadian male students had the most negative attitude towards Chinese/White dating and they were the least willing to date White, but Chinese Canadian female students did not show any difference from White Canadian female students on the attitude and willingness towards Chinese/White dating. They explained the reasons for Chinese Canadian male students' unwillingness towards interethnic dating might due to their pressure of maintaining the family tradition (ibid), and Asian males' slower acculturation than Asian females (Mok, 1999). Fujino (1997) stated that although Chinese and Japanese men and women had dated people from other ethnicities at a similar rate according to her research findings, more Chinese and Japanese women than men preferred to marry someone from a different ethnic group as Chinese and Japanese men played important roles to preserve traditional patriarchal structure in family.

#### History of interethnic dating and history of interethnic marriage in family

Lampe (1982) found that people who had dated someone from a different ethnic group either have changed to a more positive attitude towards the other ethnic group or at least maintained the same attitude. According to Alba and Golden (1986), people with ethnically mixed background tended to marry individuals from a different ethnic background.

#### Socioeconomic status

Levin et al. (2007) found that socioeconomic status did not have much influence on interethnic dating, in which Asians who had higher socioeconomic status tended to date Asians but Whites and Latinos who had higher socioeconomic status tended to date Whites. Fu (2006) found from the interethnic marriage and divorce data in Hawaii that

partners in interethnic marriages had generally similar socioeconomic status, and people with high socioeconomic status tended to choose their partner either from a different ethnic group or from the same ethnic group more freely and tended to end a marriage more freely.

#### Number of children

Chinese interethnic couples tended to have less number of children than Chinese intraethnic couples according to the 1980 census data in the United States, which may be caused by the interethnic couples being highly educated and their high socioeconomic status, or the worry of the difficulty in raising and socialising their mixed children (Sung, 1990).

In summary, Chinese people who entered interethnic relationships tended to be more educated, women, and older, have been immigrated for longer time, have White partners rather than partners from other ethnic groups, and have fewer children. However, socioeconomic status did not show much influence.

#### 2.2.3 Divorce rate of interethnic marriages

Research has shown that interethnic marriages had a higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages. Bramlett and Mosher (2002) analysed the data from the National Survey of Family Growth in the United States on 10,847 women across the United States who were born between 1951 and 1980, which consisted of White non-Hispanic (70.6%), Black non-Hispanic (13.6%), Hispanic (11.1%), and other non-Hispanic (4.6%, including Asian, Pacific Islander, and American Indian), and they reported that the divorce rate of interethnic marriages was higher than that of intraethnic marriages. The data showed that within 15 years of the first marriages, the divorce rate were similar during the first year of marriage for both interethnic and intraethnic marriages, but from the second year of marriage, the difference of the divorce rate began to rise and reached the highest at the end of tenth year of marriage with about 10% difference (ibid). White/Other were the most common interethnic couple composition in this sample, and Black/Other couples (whose divorce rate was similar as all Black couples' divorce rate) were more likely to end in divorce than were White/Other couples (whose divorce rate

was similar as overall interethnic marriage divorce rate), but no result was shown separately for Asian/Other couples (ibid).

Zhang and Van Hook (2009) investigated the data of the Survey of Income and Program Participation (SIPP) between 1990 and 2001 in the United States with majority of intraethnic couples, and found that interethnic marriages had generally higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages, Black/White marriages were less stable than Hispanic/White and Asian/White marriages, Black/White had higher divorce rate than Black or White intraethnic marriages, Hispanic/White had higher divorce rate than Hispanic or White intraethnic marriages, and the divorce rate of Asian/White marriages fell between White intraethnic marriages (which had a higher divorce rate) and Asian intraethnic marriages (which had a lower divorce rate). Wang, Kao, and Joyner (2006) found from a large scale study of 10,095 American adolescences that those who involved in interethnic relationships tended to end their relationships 11% more likely than those who involved in intraethnic relationships.

According to a longitudinal study across nine years in Hawaii (Schwertfeger, 1982), interethnic marriages had higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages, and the divorce rate of Chinese interethnic couples was higher than Chinese intraethnic couples (there were no Chinese intraethnic marriages ended in divorce) and was as high as the overall interethnic divorce rate. The ethnic groups involved in this study were Chinese, Japanese, Filipino, Caucasian, Hawaiian and other. Likewise, Fu's (2006) analysis of the marriages and divorces data in Hawaii between 1980s and 1990s showed that interethnic marriages were more prone to end in divorce than were intraethnic marriages.

According to Jones' (1994) analysis of Australian data after 1945, Australia-born and European-born Australians' interethnic marriages were generally more likely to end in divorce than intraethnic marriages. Jones (1994) also found that the divorce rate of interethnic couples was between one partner's ethnic group's intraethnic divorce of a higher rate and the other partner's ethnic group's intraethnic divorce of a lower rate.

However there were other researches showed that interethnic couples might not necessary have a higher divorce rate than intraethnic couples. Sung (1990) looked at the divorce data of New York City between 1981 and 1986 from the State Department of Health, and found that there were little difference between Chinese interethnic divorce rate and Chinese intraethnic divorce rate. According to Cahill's (1997) review of the

book by Penny and Khoo (1996), which found that the 1991 census data in Australia showed that the general divorce rate was higher than interethnic divorce rate.

Although some research showed interethnic relationships had a higher divorce rate than intraethnic relationships and some showed interethnic relationships had similar or even lower divorce rate than intraethnic relationships, majority of the research showed that interethnic relationships were generally more prone to end in divorce than were intraethnic relationships. Given the fact that interethnic marriages were more likely to end in divorce than were intraethnic marriages in the United States and Australia, there would be a similar situation in the United Kingdom.

Given the higher divorce rate of interethnic relationships, it seems that interethnic relationships are difficult to maintain. But what caused such instability? The following sections will try to find out this question by looking at the reasons that people enter interethnic relationships, issues that interethnic couples may face, society's attitude towards such relationships, what interethnic couples themselves and outsiders thought about their relationships, other opinions of interethnic relationships, and finally the discussion of whether interethnic relationships' quality different from intraethnic relationships'.

#### 2.2.4 Reasons for choosing/not wanting an interethnic relationship

Considering the development of relationships, the first step would be the choosing of a relationship partner. What are the reasons for choosing and not choosing an interethnic relationship?

##### 2.2.4.1 Reasons for choosing an interethnic relationship

###### Propinquity

Fujino (1997) found from the study of Chinese and Japanese American undergraduate students that if people of different ethnicities live closely then it would promote attraction between people from different ethnicities, and hence more interethnic relationships/marriages would be formed.



### Group size

Alba and Golden (1986) found that if the size of an ethnic group is small then there would be more possibility to form interethnic marriages.

### Attraction

Fujino (1997) found that Chinese and Japanese Americans who felt people from their own ethnic group less attractive tended to date Whites. However the feeling of attractiveness was based on the view promoted by the society, and Chinese and Japanese men who had strong view of Chinese and Japanese women reflecting “ethnic stereotyping” (such as submissive) tended to date Whites (ibid. p. 824).

### Acculturation level

Mok’s (1999) research on 157 Asian American (61% Chinese Americans, 24% Korean Americans, and 11% Japanese Americans) undergraduate students found that higher level of acculturation (measured by Suinn, Ahuna, & Khoo’s (1992) SL-ASIA), rating greater attractiveness of the White opposite sex, more interethnic dating experience, less Asian identity, less Asian friends, and less density of Asian people around significantly correlated with more possibility of dating Whites; higher level of acculturation, rating more attractiveness of the White opposite sex, and less Asian friends were significantly predicted the possibility of dating Whites. The non-significance of ethnic identity in predicting the possibility of dating Whites reflected that acculturation was stronger than ethnic identity in determining interethnic dating (Mok, 1999). Mok (1999) suggested the reason for more likelihood of Asian women than Asian men to date/marry Whites could be that minority women acculturate quicker to the mainstream society without putting much threat to the society than do men.

### Other reasons for choosing an interethnic relationship

Negy and Snyder (2000) interviewed 72 Mexican American/White (non-Hispanic) American interethnic married couples about their reasons of marrying someone from a different ethnic group, and most stated the reasons were unrelated to their partner’s ethnicity although a very small proportion of people were attracted to their partner’s unique culture. Lampe’s (1982) study on 251 Black, Mexican, and White American undergraduate students found that the major reason for choosing a dating partner from a different ethnic group was because of liking.

According to Sung's (1990) interview of 50 Chinese interethnic married couples, one of the reasons for Chinese Americans entering interethnic marriages instead of intraethnic marriages was the non-availability of Chinese to date. Cahill's (1997) review of the interview study of Australian interethnic couples by Penny and Khoo (1996) showed that physical attraction and the love of the difference and exoticness were the motivations of having interethnic relationships.

Lee and Gudykunst (2001) surveyed 283 university students with Asian, African, Latino, European and other origins in the United States, and found the factors that significantly predicted the initial attraction to someone from a different ethnic group were "perceived similarity in communication styles", "perceived self-concept support", "positive intergroup expectations", less ethnic identity, and less uncertainty (p. 380). Kalmijn (1998) concluded three factors contributing to the choosing of a partner according to the literature, which were the resources individuals looking for, social group influence, and the limitation of the marriage market. Levin et al.'s (2007) study on university students found that less bias between one's own ethnic group and other ethnic groups, lower anxiety in interaction with other ethnic groups, and less ethnic identity were factors contributing students to date outside their ethnic group. Shibazaki and Brennan's (1998) study compared 44 individuals in interethnic dating relationships and 56 individuals in intraethnic dating relationships, and found that those in interethnic relationships had less ethnic identity and perceived more dating opportunities from other ethnic groups than those in intraethnic relationships. Uskul et al.'s (2007) research found that greater Canadian identity of Chinese Canadians significantly correlated with more positive attitude and willingness towards Chinese/White dating. Gaines and Liu (2000) mentioned that exchanging racial status or socioeconomic status were always the focus that have been looked at as the reasons for choosing interethnic relationships, but the role of love in choosing such relationships were often ignored.

#### 2.2.4.2 Reasons for not choosing an interethnic relationship

Disapproval from family and friends has been found as the main difficulty for choosing to date interethnically in Clark-Ibáñez and Felmlee's (2004) study on 318 students (61% non-Whites and 39% Whites) in an ethnic diverse university in the United States. Lampe (1982) found the main reason for Black, Mexico and White

American students not wanting to date someone from a different ethnic group was not having desire and not having chance to know people from a different ethnic group, but not because of insufficient acceptance from family and the society. However not having desire and chance to know might reflect the prejudice towards and separation from certain ethnic groups, so as a result, no desire or contact with people from certain ethnic groups, and in turn people from the certain ethnic groups would have no desire and reluctant to contact with those ethnic groups who kept separate from them (ibid).

#### 2.2.4.3 Summary

In summary, people choose to enter interethnic relationships because of love and attraction. Lack of prejudice towards other ethnic groups is also a factor that promotes interethnic relationships. People have less prejudice towards other ethnic groups would have more contact with other ethnic group members, and hence more chance to marry someone from another ethnic group; however people who have prejudice towards other ethnic groups would have less contact with other ethnic group members, and hence are less likely to marry someone of a different ethnicity. Social disapproval may act as an important reason for not choosing a relationship partner of a different ethnicity.

#### 2.2.5 Issues that interethnic couples may face

After entering interethnic relationships, what issues that interethnic couples may face? These will be looked at from issues may stress interethnic couples, conflict in interethnic relationships, social and family acceptance, childrearing, and other issues.

Durodoeye's (1997) research on 19 interethnically married and 19 intraethnically married African American couples showed that interethnic couples had more "global distress" and less satisfaction on "disagreement about finances" and "time together" than intraethnic couples (p. 76). Interethnic couples may encounter stress from their very different worldviews and less support from family and society (Falicov, 1995). Gaines et al. (2006) pointed out that interethnic couples' different view on gender roles could be stressful.

Lind, Relvas, and Saraiva's (2008) study on comparison between 146 interethnic and 278 intraethnic couples reported that interethnic couples had greater conflict

although they also had greater intimacy. Chan and Wethington (1998) gave an example on how the conflict on expectations of gender roles might bring difficulties to interethnic couples: a non-Asian husband might expect his Asian wife to have Asian traditional characteristics (an unequal relationship) in the relationship, while his wife might expect a more equal relationship. Interethnic marriages are likely to bring conflicts between the two extended families who have different value systems, and their new relationships with kin, which based on ethnic group status, would be problematic especially when the couple's cultural difference is obvious, so interethnic couples need to readjust their relationships with each other, kin, friends and people in the community (Merton, 1941). Besides, according to Ting-Toomey (1994), partners in interethnic relationships may look at conflict in different ways. For example, conflict in close relationships is treated positively in Western cultures, which emphasise conflict resolving, but is treated negatively in Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures (ibid).

Lauer and Lauer (2000) stated that a good social environment, in which most people accepted interethnic relationships, could be helpful for interethnic couples to maintain stable relationships. Falicov (1995) also stated that for most people, having family approval of one's chosen spouse was very important psychologically. However interethnic couples often lack of support from their family (Falicov, 1995) as well as the society (Gaines & Leaver, 2002). Reiss and Lee (1988 as cited in Davidson & Moore, 1992) noted that the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples may partly due to the difficulty of finding social support when couples in difficulties (p. 171). Gaines and Leaver (2002) stated that frequent "racial stereotyping, prejudice, and discrimination" from the society might affect interethnic couple's relationship satisfaction and stability (p. 73). However, people in interethnic relationships may show prejudice towards their partner, which reflects society's prejudice on certain ethnic groups (Gaines, Chalfin, Kim, & Taing, 1998). Negy and Snyder's (2000) interviews on interethnic couples showed that insufficient acceptance from family and society was mentioned as one of the difficulties of interethnic relationships. According to Sung's (1990) interview study of Chinese interethnic married couples, families, especially Chinese families, did show less approval to interethnic marriages, and interethnic couples had to be strong when dealing with family objections. Cahill's (1997) review of the interview study on interethnic couples by Penny and Khoo (1996) showed that Australian families normally accepted the Chinese spouse, but Chinese families had less acceptance of the Australian spouse. Chen (2002) thought the less social approval and support may

require interethnic couples to be more sacrificial, patient, and committed to maintain a healthy relationship.

Gaines et al. (2006) pointed out that interethnic couples' different view on childrearing could be stressful. Durodoeye (1997) found that interethnic married couples showed less satisfaction on "conflict over child rearing" than intraethnic married couples (p. 76). Sung (1990) also stated that interethnic couples were likely to have conflict in bringing up the interethnic children, the interethnic children might confuse with their own identities as they were not fully of any mono-ethnicity, the relationships between parents and children might be difficult as it would be hard for the children to relate to the parent whose ethnicity the children did not want to identify with, and people in the society did have bias on people with mixed ethnicities more than on ethnic minorities. Crippen and Brew (2007) stated that the interethnic couples would have to negotiate cultural value difference on childrearing and come to an agreement, and the cultural value difference would add difficulty on childrearing compared to intraethnic couples who were less likely to have cultural value difference. Negy and Snyder (2000) also found more problem of childrearing in Mexican/White American interethnic couples than in intraethnic couples. An example of childrearing differences in different cultures: Chao's (1996) interviews on 48 Chinese mothers who immigrated to America in adulthood and 50 European American mothers revealed their different attitude towards children's education – Chinese mothers emphasised the value of education, were likely to invest and sacrifice a great deal towards their children's education, and were likely to put much control on and involve in children's education; however European American mothers did not put much weight on their children's academic success but emphasised the development of social abilities and self-esteem, and the enjoyment of learning.

However Gaines and Liu (2000) suggested that if parents could well-prepare their interethnic children for the difficulties from the society and help their children to accept the different identities, their children would have a healthy self-identity and grow healthily. A good example is Barack Hussein Obama, the 44th president of the United States and son of a Black father and a White mother, has successfully dealt with his identity and the difficulties from the society.

There are other difficulties for interethnic relationships. Lauer and Lauer (2000) mentioned about the society acceptance of interethnic marriages may lower the divorce rate, but difficulties because of different value systems in interethnic couples still

existed. Cahill's (1997) review of the interview study by Penny and Khoo (1996) showed that some of the Chinese partners' characteristics that were different from the Australian partners' may cause problems, such as less expressiveness of feelings, more control over children's education and life, and the different way of dealing with family finance. Lind et al.'s (2008) qualitative study on 29 Portuguese/German couples reported that tolerance and good social support may enhance satisfaction, but language and communication problems were likely to put the relationship into risk. However, Gaines and Liu (2000) suggested that difficulties on communication may not relate to the stability of interethnic relationships. Malhi (2009) suggested the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples in a White-mainstream society might partly due to the hurt caused by the negative reaction in the society experienced by the non-White partner, and also the White partner's lack of understanding of such hurt.

In summary, interethnic couples may face difficulties adjusting their relationships and rearing their interethnic children, due to culture/value differences, and lack of support from family and society. But what is the attitude from the society and why do people have less support of interethnic relationships? The next section will look into this question.

#### 2.2.6 Society's attitude towards interethnic marriages

Majority of people marry intraethnically, so according to Sung (1990, p. 347) interethnic marriages are not norm in people's mind and interethnic couples may represent "unconventional and rebellious" characteristics. Interethnic relationships, especially couples with obvious physical difference, were treated as "inappropriate" in America (Gaines & Leaver, 2002, p. 65). Interethnic marriages were assumed to be less stable than intraethnic marriages, partly because intraethnic marriages were supposed to have less chance of misunderstanding and conflict, and more support from friends and families (Zhang & Van Hook, 2009). Sung (1990) found that people in non-multicultural cities normally treated the social status of an interethnic couple as the social status of the partner with a lower status, and interethnic couples received more acceptance in the ethnic group of the partner with a lower status. The study of adolescents by Wang et al. (2006) has found that those in interethnic relationships were much less likely to inform other people about their relationships than those in

intraethnic relationships, which reflected the less social/family acceptance and support of interethnic relationships.

Black/White marriages were always treated negatively in both the United States and the United Kingdom (Phoenix & Owen, 1996). Before 1967, Black/White marriages were not allowed by laws in the United States (Young, 1995). Back in 1959, a married couple of a Black American woman and a White American man were sentenced to prison, the well-known case *Loving v. Virginia*, because interethnic marriages were prohibited by the law (Root, 1996). According to Davis (1941), there were 30 states in the United States banned interracial marriage around 1940s. Specifically, in the state of Georgia, White people were not allowed to marry anyone who possessed an “ascertainable trace of either Negro, African, West Indian, Asiatic Indian, Mongolian, Japanese or Chinese blood in their veins”; whereas in the rest states which did not ban interracial marriages, few such cases happened (ibid. p. 389).

Is the situation of Asian (Chinese) interethnic relationships similar as Black/White relationships? Although there were generally no laws prohibited Asian/White marriages, such relationships were not accepted by everyone (Mok, 1999). In the United Kingdom, about 50% of participants in a survey between 1983 and 1991 objected from a little to a great deal to interethnic marriages between their close kin and people with Asian or West Indian origin; and in 1991 31% of Whites, 39% of Asians, and 17% of Blacks agreed with that intraethnic marriages should be the only form of marriages in a public general opinion survey (Phoenix & Owen, 1996). Sung's (1990) interviews of 50 Chinese interethnic couples in the New York City showed that uncomfortable stares and biased attitude from the society were only in a few occasions, and Chinese interethnic couples, especially Chinese/Black couples, were less accepted by Chinese people and people outside New York City.

Not only in the United States and the United Kingdom, but also in South African, people have negative attitudes toward interethnic marriages, as the existence of racial caste (an extreme case is Nazi Germany) (Davis, 1941). However, in multi-ethnic regions such as Hawaii and Brazil, interethnic marriages were not forbidden as racial caste did not exist (ibid).

Besides the objection of interethnic marriages from the society, there were also negative attitudes toward interethnic children (parents from different ethnicities), especially children of Black and White parents (Phoenix & Owen, 1996). The interethnic children were thought to have problems to fit into any ethnic group (ibid).

Although Lampe's (1982) study on Black, Mexico and White American students' attitude towards interethnic relationships showed that most believed the similar divorce rate between interethnic marriages and intraethnic marriages, and most would like to date/marry someone from a different ethnic group (a relatively higher percentage (37%) of White students believed White/Black marriages had a higher divorce rate but 43% of White students believed that White/Black marriages had a similar divorce rate as intraethnic marriages), Lampe (1982) suggested that young people might like to date/marry someone from a different ethnic group, but the society established a barrier for interethnic relationships.

Mass media may also influence people's attitudes towards interethnic relationships (Gaines & Liu, 2000), but to date, there were few movies on Chinese/non-Chinese relationships. To name a few, *The World of Suzie Wong* (1960), a Hollywood movie, mentioned by Gaines and Liu (2000) and narrated a relationship between a girl from Hong Kong and a White American male; *Shanghai Kiss* (2007), a love story between a Chinese American male and a White American girl. Compared to the majority movies on intraethnic relationships, interethnic love stories on the screen are very rare, indicating that intraethnic couples are the mainstream and interethnic couples are still the minority.

It seems that the society generally views interethnic relationships as problematic and not preferable. Some views may explain such negative attitudes. Merton (1941) looked at interethnic marriage as inter-caste relationships and people from lower caste were not normally considered to be attractive although democracy and romantic love, which could transcend caste difference, were very popular in the United States. This was because romantic love and democracy were only allowed within a caste, so people from different caste would have less chance to form close relationships; and when relationships within the same caste were promoted, it could strengthen the group and maintain family stability (ibid). It was not surprising for the society's views on interethnic relationships as problematic, as According to Tseliou and Eisler (2007), ethnic stereotypes often operated in a way that people over-generalise some characteristics to the whole ethnic group and not paying attention to the diversity within each ethnic group, and people tended to treat their own ethnic group as very different from other ethnic groups with bias. Gaines and Ickes (1997) explained that within group interaction would enhance "social stability", whereas intergroup interaction would enhance "social change", which would negatively affect ingroup members' security (p.



202); and ingroup interaction could secure the gene to be passed to the following generations, so that they could “position themselves within status hierarchies”, which was essential for human beings to survive (p. 201). Fang, Sidanius, and Pratto (1998) found that asymmetry existed between different status of ethnic groups on relations between “social dominance orientation” (p.291) and attitudes against interethnic marriage, which means people from higher status ethnic groups with strong idea of keeping the hierarchical relations between different ethnic groups would object more to interethnic marriages involving a partner from a lower status ethnic group than people from lower status ethnic groups with strong idea of keeping the hierarchical relations between different ethnic groups object to interethnic marriages involving a partner from a higher status ethnic group.

In recent years, due to the increasing rate of interethnic marriages, people have more open attitudes towards interethnic marriages; however, majority of people still choose their spouse in the same ethnic group. Intraethnically married/dating couples may have more negative view on interethnic marriages than interethnically married/dating couples. Chan and Wethington (1998) suggested that less family support might cause the more likelihood of interethnic divorce, because there were less family opposition of divorce over interethnic marriages. However there are still couples who have overcome the obstacles from the society and other pressures (such as pressures due to history), and continue staying together (Gaines & Liu, 2000).

#### 2.2.7 Interethnic relationship insiders and outsiders

The society’s attitude towards interethnic relationships may greatly reflect the views from people who have never been involved in interethnic relationships, so these views are likely to be biased. Gaines and Ickes (1997) distinguished the difference between the views of people in interethnic relationships (insiders) and the views of people not in interethnic relationships (outsiders). Looking at both interethnic relationship insiders’ and outsiders’ view contributes to “A more complete understanding” (ibid. p. 200). Thus, after the outsiders’ (the society’s) views of interethnic relationships have been reviewed, the views from insiders will be looked at next.

Lowther and Lowther (1994), a Black/White couple, thought their marriage was nothing special, it was others who saw them differently. They said “race did not affect our early relationship, that we were just two people truly meant for one another.....marriage was difficult enough without adding the burden of being mixed”. O.Hill and O.Hill (1994), a Black/White couple, thought that if society approves interethnic marriages, there would be no problems for interethnic couples, and that it is always helpful for interethnic couples to continuously enjoy the merits of their differences as well as their similarities. Tartakov and Tartakov (1994), a Black/White couple, got married just because each of them was the one for each other, and their interest between each other was just the same as the interest between a man and a woman. They thought race was an issue for outsiders, not for insiders, and the background differences were strength rather than weakness. They said, “Why did I ask her out? Because she looked so good to me. Why did I get to know her so well? Because our values were so complementary. And why did I want to marry her? Because, to me, she was so fine. Race? It wasn’t an issue for us.”. Asuni and Asuni (1994), an African/American couple, said, “what may be the weakness/constraints of our mixed marriage can also be the strength/advantages, depending on how one looks at it.....if I had married someone from my background, my perspective of life would have been very limited, and I would not have developed the capacity to be flexible and understanding of other cultures”. They thought it would be boring to anticipate the things that they had already known very well if they were married to a person from the same ethnic background.

Johnson and Johnson (1994), a Black/White couple, thought cultural differences did not relate to successful/unsuccessful marriages, but the differences added excitement to marriages. They thought the most difficult thing in their marriage was to deal with their different culturally expected roles, but they have found ways to successfully shape into each other’s role expectations. Davenport and Davenport-Zanolli (1994), a Black/White couple, did not consider the society’s attitude towards them, and their ethnic difference had never been an issue for them, instead they thought their ethnic difference had made their mind more open and helped them always ready to change towards each other. They thought a good characteristic for a successful interethnic marriage was “being open and receptive for each other’s different experiences and really wanting to learn from each other” (p. 261). Warren and Warren (1994) made the comment on interethnic marriage: “the spouses must deal with a wider

array of issues, but that provides opportunities for increased human growth and understanding and that may make it all worthwhile” (p. 280). According to Johnson and Warren (1994), the difficulty of interethnic marriages was not cultural difference or ethnic difference as what outsiders assumed, but the “differences which exist between any two human beings trying to live together”. Gaines and Ickes (1997) also pointed out that people decided to marry each other because of love and the orientations towards long-term relationships regardless of interethnic or intraethnic relationships.

As we can see from the insiders’ views, they have a complete different view and they tended to view what were seen as weakness by outsiders as strength. Although people in interethnic relationships love each other just as people in intraethnic relationships do, cultural differences do seem to exist in interethnic couples.

What are the differences between insiders’ and outsiders’ views? Johnson and Warren (1994) pointed out that outsiders tended to view interethnic marriages as “intergroup relations, social control and social dominance”, but insiders tended to think interethnic marriages were the same as and not more or less than other marriages. Gaines and Ickes (1997) pointed out that outsiders tended to have fixed views of interethnic relationships, such as full of problems and less stable, regardless of how similar cultural values interethnic couples may have; whereas insiders tended to view interethnic relationships more exciting, sharing more similarities, and more similar to intraethnic relationships.

Why is the difference between insiders and outsiders’ view? Rose (1992) gave an explanation: superficial interethnic contacts would have more possibility of stereotype, would focus on physical characteristics, language, and other superficial things instead of deeper information, and people would be grouped by these superficial characteristics; whereas people in intimate interethnic relationships would have more information of each other, would have less stereotype, and would not group people by superficial characteristics.

There were few studies looked closely at insiders’ and outsiders’ view of interethnic relationships. Malhi (2009) interviewed interethnic relationship insiders and outsiders in Canada and found that the 38 university student outsiders tended to think interethnic relationships were more complicated and have more conflicts than positive characteristics, such as interethnic couples were more open-minded and have stronger relationships. Specifically, the following themes were expressed by the outsiders: interethnic couples’ different physical appearance would imply different values, society

generally had negative attitude towards interethnic relationships, difficult for interethnic couples to get social support, and interethnic relationships tended to have more problems (ibid). Malhi (2009) suggested that the outsiders might approve interethnic relationships publicly but disapprove privately. Her interviews of 11 White/non-White interethnic married couples (insiders), in which most of the non-White partners (82%) were immigrants with more than 10 years of residence in Canada, revealed the similarities instead of differences between partners in interethnic relationships, and that it was the society viewing them as different made them feel differently according to an insider. According to these insiders, although interethnic couples in Canada were more tolerated than in the United States, Germany, or Poland, they were still affected significantly by the negative reactions from the society and racism in the society was displayed in an indirect way. Malhi (2009) suggested that the ethnic difference between partners in interethnic relationships might not be relevant at all within the couples privately, but might become very obvious in the public. The insiders in this study were mostly White/Black couples (73%), and they were living in a city without much diverse ethnicity (ibid). The views of the outsiders in this study were obviously problematic. For example, does physical difference relate to value difference? For insiders in this study, it is possible that the negative reactions from the society experienced by non-White partners may be the inaccurate interpretation according to the non-White partners' worldview and personalities.

Another study included insiders and outsiders views was Tseliou's (2003) interviews on Greek/British, Greek intraethnic, and British intraethnic couples. The study revealed that people in intraethnic relationships treated the difference in an interethnic relationship as huge, and bringing more conflict and problems, but people in interethnic relationships treated their difference as exiting and enriching.

In Summary, insiders tend to see the strength and similarity regardless of ethnic differences, but outsiders tend to see the obvious ethnic differences and ignore the underlining similarities between partners in interethnic relationships. Interethnic couples need to negotiate the difference between insiders' and outsiders' view although it is not easy, as the outsiders can be their family members and friends whose opinion may be needed sometimes (Gaines & Ickes, 1997).

## 2.2.8 Other opinions on interethnic relationships

It seems that the society view interethnic relationships as definitely problematic and difficult because of the huge differences. However it was the society's negative view gave the difficulty to interethnic couples by "forcing them to look for pathologies where none exist" (Shibazaki & Brennan, 1998, p. 255). There are also some positive opinions on interethnic relationships.

### 2.2.8.1 Interethnic relationships are as difficult as intraethnic ones

Although intraethnic couples' value similarities promote attraction, understanding, participation of similar activities, confirmation of worldviews, and easiness of consensus on joint decisions (Kalmijn, 1998), any two people in a relationship have much differences (such as family background difference) (Merton, 1941; Falicov, 1995), and gender difference alone can provide very different ways to see and experience the world (Falicov, 1995). Thus every marriage is an inter-marriage and no marriage consists of two people who are similar in everything (Falicov, 1995; Merton, 1941).

### 2.2.8.2 Interethnic relationships can reduce social prejudice

Lampe (1982) suggested that the more interethnic relationships, the more positive attitudes toward different ethnic groups, and hence it would bring profit to both the society and people in interethnic relationships. Considering intergroup relationships, interethnic marriages are the links of two ethnic groups in an intimate level, so interethnic marriages would reduce prejudices and stereotypes between ethnic groups (see also Rose, 1992); whereas intraethnic marriages would keep ethnic groups closed (Kalmijn, 1998). Merton (1941) suggested that intraethnic marriages would promote isolation, exclusion, and fixed social distances between ethnic groups, but interethnic marriages would promote social mobility.

### 2.2.8.3 Beneficial characteristics of interethnic relationships

Lind et al. (2008) suggested that although language and value differences might add more difficulties for interethnic couples, interethnic couples would have much more personal growth and have relationships that are always interesting. Strachman and

Schimmel (2006) mentioned that not only the physical attraction but also the novel interactions bring people with different cultural values together. According to Falicov (1995), different cultural background between partners in relationships can enrich the relationship much more than those in intraethnic relationships, and the complexity of the interethnic relationship can hardly make the relationship boring. According to Sung (1990), Chinese interethnic couples' higher educational level, maturity, and better professions would give them more ability to deal with difficulties and differences in their marriages. Negy and Snyder's (2000) interviews of interethnic couples found the advantages of being in interethnic relationships were having more understanding and appreciation of another culture, that the children would benefit from being involved in two cultures, and getting cultural advantages from another culture that one's own culture does not have.

Gaines and Liu (2000) pointed out that interethnic marriages would contribute to a "new and vigorous change" in the society, and this change tended to be "exhilarating" but "frightening" and "challenging" (p. 98). There are satisfied and stable interethnic couples who have negotiated well of the obstacles and difficulties and have brought up children who are "physically and psychologically vibrant" (Gaines & Agnew, 2003, p. 249). Chan and Wethington's (1998) suggested that since it was often assumed that interethnic relationships were problematic, most research on interethnic relationships examined the negative aspects. Instead, they looked at interethnic marriages from a "resilience perspective" (p. 75), in which they hypothesised that, the special challenges (e.g. cultural differences, childrearing, and family/social disapproval) faced by interethnic couples would benefit their personal growth.

#### 2.2.9 Are interethnic couples different from intraethnic couples on relationship quality?

Having reviewed the interethnic couples' divorce rate, issues that interethnic couples may face, positive and negative opinions on interethnic relationships, and insiders' and outsiders' views, interethnic couples seem to have more challenges and risks as the higher divorce rate shows. Do the differences on relationship quality between interethnic couples and intraethnic couples cause their relationship instability?

Some research showed no significant difference between interethnic and intraethnic relationships on relationship quality. Troy, Lewis-Smith, and Laurenceau's

(2006) study on comparison between interethnic and intraethnic dating relationships of university students found that there were no significant difference on satisfaction, love, commitment, intimacy, passion, trust, and attachment style between 86 intraethnic couples and 32 interethnic couples. However dating couples in this study might still be in their honeymoon-like period, they were not facing the challenge that interethnic married couples would face, and they were in an ethnic diverse environment where they might have much social support (Troy et al., 2006). Gaines, Granrose, Rios, Garcia, Youn, Farris and Bledsoe's (1999) study on 103 interethnic couples with 75% married and 88% White/non-White couples revealed that significantly more individuals with secure attachment style than with insecure attachment styles. Gurung and Duong's (1999) study on 73 individuals involved in interethnic dating relationships and 58 individuals involved in intraethnic dating relationships found that there were no differences on satisfaction (measured by a shorter Dyadic Adjustment Scale by Spanier), commitment (measured by Lund's (1985) Scale), relationship expectation, self-esteem, self-clarity, and ethnic identity between interethnic and intraethnic dating relationships.

Lind et al.'s (2008) study on comparison between 146 interethnic and 278 intraethnic couples reported that their relationship satisfaction did not have much difference. Negy and Snyder's (2000) research found non-significant difference on satisfaction among 72 Mexican American/White American married couples, 75 Mexican American married couples, and 66 White American married couples, and that for the interethnic couples, the gender of the Mexican American spouse did not affect satisfaction either. However these results might be affected by the participants of this study who were living in a region that dominated by Mexican Americans (Negy & Snyder, 2000). Shibazaki and Brennan's (1998) study on comparison between 44 individuals in interethnic dating relationships and 56 individuals in intraethnic dating relationships showed that their satisfaction levels, measured by Spanier's (1976) satisfaction subscale in Dyadic Adjustment Scale, did not have significant difference. Gaines et al.'s (2006) review of the research on interethnic relationship processes through attachment theory, interdependence theory, and resource exchange theory showed that interethnic relationships did not show any difference from intraethnic relationships, so they ascribed interethnic couples' higher divorce rate to the difficulties of handling negative attitude from outsiders, such as family and friends, and the inaccurate negative images of interethnic couples in mass media.

Some other research showed difference between interethnic and intraethnic relationships on relationships quality. Fu, Tora, and Kendall (2001) did a research in culturally diverse Hawaii on 147 individuals in interethnic marriages and 135 individuals in intraethnic marriages with the same religious affiliation, and results showed that individuals in interethnic marriages who were different from their partner on both race (physical characteristics) and national origin/language were less happy than individuals in intraethnic marriages and individuals in interethnic marriages who were different from their partner only on national origin/language or only on race, although individuals in interethnic marriages who were different from their partner on both race and national origin/language showed a higher score, similar as those in intraethnic marriages, than average on the willingness to maintain the marriage. They also found that women in interethnic marriages who were racially different from their husband were significantly less happy than women in intraethnic marriages. Since people in this study who were in interethnic marriages had strong commitment because of their religious belief, their less happiness did not affect their relationship stability (ibid).

Shibazaki and Brennan's (1998) study on comparison between 44 individuals in interethnic dating relationships and 56 individuals in intraethnic dating relationships showed that individuals in interethnic relationships had significantly lower self-esteem and had significantly less approval from the public than did individuals in intraethnic relationships. In their study, it was also found that the approval from the public significantly correlated with satisfaction of interethnic relationships but not with satisfaction of intraethnic relationships, although approval from family and friends were both significantly correlated with satisfaction of interethnic and intraethnic relationships. It seems that society's attitude towards interethnic relationships may have a strong effect on relationship quality of interethnic relationships and may be a great obstacle for interethnic couples to overcome.

Gaines and Agnew (2003) compared interethnic and intraethnic relationships through an interdependence view and Rusbult's investment model (Cox, Wexler, Rusbult, & Gaines, 1997), and they suggested that interethnic couples might have lower satisfaction level, higher quality of alternatives, less investment size, and less social prescriptive support than intraethnic couples, which would result in interethnic couples' lower commitment levels compared to intraethnic couples. Specifically, interethnic couples' higher divorce rate may due to lower satisfaction levels, individuals in



interethnic relationships may have the opportunity of choosing romantic partner from a bigger pool (not only from their own ethnic group but also from other ethnic groups) which would result in an increasing number of alternatives, interethnic couples tended to have less investment (such as having fewer children), and interethnic couples may have less support from the family (ibid). However their suggestions did not have empirical evidence (Gaines & Agnew, 2003; Gaines & Leaver, 2002), and some of the predictions were not persuasive. For example, greater number of alternatives does not imply higher quality of alternatives.

In summary, there is lack of evidence of whether married interethnic couples with different combinations of ethnicities have lower relationship quality than did married intraethnic couples. However, having society's support and overcoming the negative attitude from the society may be important for interethnic dating couples' satisfaction.

#### 2.2.10 Summary

Interethnic couples are distinct in the society, and they "represent a new, more complex form of marriage than the traditional endogamous relationships" (Falicov, 1995, p. 232). In our world with remarkable boundaries, cultural and physical differences between ethnic groups, low social mobility, and lacking of knowledge in how to deal with other ethnic groups, interethnic relationships become obvious instead of being treated as common as intraethnic relationships (Merton, 1941). The small number of interethnic relationships also makes such relationships different from other relationships (Gaines & Ickes, 1997).

In summary, there are growing numbers of interethnic marriages, especially Asian interethnic marriages. People who enter interethnic relationships tend to be later generations of immigration, older, highly educated, and have fewer children. Minority women and highly acculturated individuals tend to marry/date someone from a different ethnic group. Interethnic relationships are generally more prone to end in divorce than were intraethnic relationships. People tend to choose entering an interethnic relationship because of love and attraction. However, social disapproval may act as an important reason for not choosing to enter an interethnic relationship. Interethnic couples may face difficulties that intraethnic couples may not face in adjusting their relationships and rearing their interethnic children. Interethnic couples may also lack of support from

family and society. Societies generally view interethnic relationships as problematic and not preferable, but interethnic couples view themselves as exciting and enriching being in different cultures. There are positive as well as negative opinions about interethnic marriages. However, there is lack of evidence of whether generally interethnic couples have lower relationship quality than are intraethnic couples.

Although researches have answered the question of why people enter interethnic relationships and what the differences between interethnic and intraethnic couples are, none of the research has explored the reasons that might cause interethnic relationships' higher instability, and the factors for committed and successful interethnic marriages. There is more percentage of but less research on Asian interethnic relationships than Black/White relationships, and there were no psychological research on interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom. Thus it is worthy to study Asian interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom. Besides, Chinese ethnic group has a high percentage of interethnic marriages and is growing rapidly in the United Kingdom, but little is known of this ethnic group. Therefore it is important to study Chinese interethnic marriages in the United Kingdom, and determine what factors contribute to commitment.

According to the researches that have been reviewed, the reason that greater background difference takes longer time and produces more complication for interethnic couples to adapt to each other (Falicov, 1995) might because certain cultural differences are hard to overcome. Chen (2002) also pointed out that cultural difference marks the distinct difference between interethnic and intraethnic relationships. What aspects of culture may be difficult for interethnic couples? The next section will look at the role of culture in interethnic relationships.

### **2.3 The role of culture in interethnic relationships**

In the previous section 2.2, we have closely looked at interethnic relationships' formation, relationship characteristics, and the issues interethnic couples may face. It was shown that interethnic couples were more or less similar as intraethnic couples on a number of things, such as relationship formation and attraction, but issues related to cultural value differences were unique for interethnic couples. For example, the cultural value differences were made explicit in adjusting interethnic relationships and

childrearing. Therefore, the role of culture in interethnic relationships will be looked at in this section.

Culture differences were found very important in interethnic relationships (Gudykunst, Gao, Sudweeks, Ting-Toomey, & Nishida, 1991). Fu et al. (2001) also noted that culture difference may influence marital satisfaction and commitment, and interethnic married couples face cultural differences needed to be dealt with. They found that even same-religion interethnic couples had less satisfaction. Lauer and Lauer (2000) mentioned that the society acceptance of interethnic marriages would lower the divorce rate, but difficulties because of different value systems of interethnic couples still exist. Rohrlach (1988) suggested interethnic couples to continuously communicate their cultural differences in order to have more effective communication, which is the most important aspect in interethnic relationships. Gaines et al. (2006, p. 180-181) pointed out the importance of culture that makes interethnic relationships “function differently from” intraethnic relationships, and that the ethnic difference in interethnic couples are most likely to become salient by their interaction with either each other or with other people. Lind et al.’s (2008, p. 9) research found that culturally related variables, such as language, value, and “Family and cultural rituals” are important elements to interethnic couples.

However, culture can be mistakenly used to explain some problems which are hard to accept and explain while the actual reason lies somewhere else, this is because using cultural prejudices can protect oneself from facing “personal failure” and protect one’s self-esteem (Falicov, 1995, p. 244). Cultural prejudice is very common in families, and people can use such prejudice to enhance or bring difficulties to their relationships (ibid).

How do interethnic couples achieve healthy relationships by dealing with cultural differences? What cultural aspects would affect interethnic relationships? These will be presented as follows.

#### Balanced/unbalanced view of cultural similarities and differences

Does cultural similarity outweighing cultural difference in contributing to healthy interethnic relationships? Falicov (1995, p. 233-234) introduced the idea of “balanced view” and “unbalanced view” in dealing with cultural similarities and differences in interethnic relationships. A “balanced view” of an interethnic relationship is that the couple look at their cultural similarities and differences in a balanced way (i.e.

not maximise/minimise differences and not maximise/minimise similarities), so that the couple can easily accommodate each other on cultural issues and have a healthy relationship; an “unbalanced view” of an interethnic relationship is that the couple maximise or minimise their cultural difference, which produces stress and conflict in a relationship (ibid. p. 233-234). It seems that both cultural similarity and difference are important for an healthy interethnic relationship, and whether relationship partners working together to have a balanced opinion of their cultural similarities and differences contributes to a healthy relationship.

Falicov (1995) noted that if an interethnic couple looked too much on their cultural differences, they would ignore their cultural similarities, so focusing on their similarities would balance their views; if an interethnic couple looked too little about their cultural differences, they would have very shallow knowledge of each other’s cultures and have difficulties resolving cultural problems, and they might ascribe the cultural problems to negative personalities. According to the cases presented by Falicov (1995), cultural stereotypes could make people in interethnic relationships think the unchanging nature of cultural traits, which is not helpful for solving problems, instead culture is flexible, and a cultural trait can be reflected in a negative way on certain things but in a positive way on other things.

#### Individualism/collectivism

Difference in individualism/collectivism orientation is one of the reasons cause conflict in interethnic relationships (Ting-Toomey, 1994), and most of the difficulties in interethnic relationships can come down to this difference. For example, the family disapproval may reflect the collectivistic characteristic in which marrying out means cutting off the family’s collectivistic tie; the difficulty on rearing interethnic children reflected the difference between individualistic attitude and collectivistic attitude. Ting-Toomey (1994) noted that conflict in close relationships tended to be viewed as positive in Western cultures, which emphasised conflict resolving, but negative in Eastern and Middle Eastern cultures. Wilson and Wilson (1994), a Korean/American interethnic couple, thought marriage has its implicit meaning in different cultures, however interethnic marriages make these meanings explicit. What the Korean partner said about marriages in Eastern cultures strongly reflected collectivistic characteristic: “marriage never was and is not a matter that concerns only two people, families, neighbourhoods,

and others may all be involved and their attitudes, values, and expectations regarding the marriage are often critically important” (ibid).

According to Triandis, Bontempo, Villareal, Asai, and Lucca (1988), horizontal relationships, such as spouse and spouse relationships, are emphasised in individualistic cultures, whereas vertical relationships, such as parent and child relationships, are emphasised in collectivistic cultures. Thus the individualism and collectivism difference would cause problem if one partner believes the relationships with parents and children are more important and the other partner believes the relationship between the partners themselves is more important (ibid). Falicov (1995) also pointed out that conflict in interethnic couples could be caused by different cultural codes, such as the difference between independent and interdependent orientations. This independence and interdependence difference strongly reflects the difference between individualism and collectivism difference or between independent self and interdependent self.

#### Acculturation

Research showed that acculturation was another factor associated with interethnic relationship quality. According to Falicov (1995), once both partners in an interethnic relationship begin to try to negotiate with each other’s cultural differences, “mutual acculturation” would happen (p. 234). Fujino’s (1997) study on Chinese and Japanese American undergraduate students’ dating patterns found that the first generation immigrants significant less likely than later generations immigrants to date/have dated people from different ethnic groups. The first generation immigrants normally acculturate less than later generations’ immigrants, so highly acculturated individuals are more likely in interethnic relationships. Negy and Snyder (2000) used Acculturation Rating Scale for Mexican Americans (ARSMA) by Cuellar, Harris and Jasso (1980) to measure Mexican American participants’ acculturation, which including the degree of acculturation to the mainstream White American culture on language fluency, friends’ ethnicity and so on. They found that Mexican American wives’ acculturation significantly correlated with their White American husbands’ childrearing conflict, disagreement on family finance rated by husbands, wives’ role orientation (the degree of non-traditional gender roles and marital roles preferences), and both husbands’ and wives’ dissatisfaction with children (the relationship with their children and the dissatisfaction with children’s wellbeing). These reflected that highly acculturated wives were more active in traditionally men’s role when dealing with family finance

and they had more non-traditional roles in childrearing, however generally interethnic couples reported having more problems in childrearing (Negy and Snyder, 2000). Although acculturation occurs in interethnic relationships, one partner's high acculturation level does not relate to less conflict. Oey's (1990) research on 20 Chinese/White married couples in the United States showed that the more similar acculturation level (measured by the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992)) between partners, the greater marital adjustment (measured by Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale) they were. Thus, it is not one partner's higher acculturation level, but the more similar acculturation levels between partners related to higher interethnic relationship quality.

In Summary, cultural aspects, especially individualism/collectivism and acculturation, are unique for interethnic couples, either in adjusting their relationships or as the reasons for conflict. Specifically, well-negotiated individualism/collectivism and acculturation between interethnic partners may reduce conflict and enhance relationship quality. In interethnic relationships, culture should be used carefully, as other things, such as personality, can be mistakenly viewed as culture. To enhance relationship quality for interethnic couples is not to deny their cultural differences, but to have a balanced view of their cultural differences and similarities, and negotiate well of the cultural differences.

Although as can be seen in sections 2.2.4.1, 2.2.7 and 2.2.8 cultural difference is positive for interethnic relationships when it brings attraction and liking, cultural similarity seems to play a vital role for long-term commitment, as Amodio and Showers (2005) found that among lowly committed individuals, the more perceived dissimilarity on positive and negative attributions (self-description) the more liking, however among highly committed individuals, the more perceived similarity on attributions the more liking. So in the next section, Amodio and Showers' (2005) finding on similarity and commitment, and the prominent cultural aspects (i.e. individualism/collectivism and acculturation) in interethnic relationships will be considered together in a new construct "couple cultural identity", which is likely to associate with commitment in interethnic relationships.

## 2.4 Couple cultural identity

Having looked at the important role of culture in interethnic relationships, the search for how interethnic couples negotiate each other's different cultures to enhance relationship quality will be discussed in two aspects.

Some research have emphasised one of the most important qualities for a successful interethnic relationship is the formation of a joint couple cultural identity/value orientation. Strachman and Schimel's (2006) study on dating relationships showed that if thinking about different worldviews of the partner, when a threat such as death was reminded, commitment level was low. Thus they suggested that although interethnic couples who were under no threat would be the same as other couples who shared similar cultures, they need to be very willing to manage the different worldviews and form a "two-person mini-culture" (p. 976), as otherwise they would sacrifice their commitment when threats come. Ting-Toomey (1994) pointed out the potential conflict of interethnic couples could be due to individualism/collectivism difference, so she suggested such couples to have more knowledge of their partner's culture in order to better manage conflict, and to develop a "third culture", which is based on the couple's similarities, in order to have more "common ground" (p. 68). Falicov (1995) mentioned that there always is a "cultural transition" for each partner in interethnic relationships in order to achieve a balanced opinion of a couple's cultural similarities and differences, which marks a healthy relationship; and one consequence of this "cultural transition" is to have a "joint cross-cultural identity", which is a combination of some aspects of both partners' cultures (p. 234). Cahill's (1997) review of the interview study on Australian interethnic couples by Penny and Khoo (1996) suggested such couples to develop a unique culture in their relationship, either anywhere between the total assimilation to Australian culture and the total assimilation to the other partner's culture, or a creatively combined culture.

According to Gaines and Liu (2000), relationships, especially interethnic relationships, would be prone to end when there is no "well-developed relational identity" (p. 99). The relational identity is located between personal identity and group identity, and is "the product of two individuals and the social environment surrounding them" (ibid. p. 107). Crippen and Brew (2007) stated the importance of interethnic couples to negotiate the cultural difference and form a third culture. Kallen (1924 as cited in Gordon, 1964, p. 149) also suggested interethnic couples to both follow one

ethnic culture or generate a third culture. Tseliou and Eisler's (2007) analysed the interviews of 14 British/Greek couples in the United Kingdom and Greece and found that the ways they dealt with cultural stereotypes were: for positive cultural characteristics, either one partner changed towards the other's cultural identity or one made the other change towards oneself's cultural identity; for negative cultural characteristics, both partners changed towards a third culture identity (see also Tseliou, 2003). Eyman (1984) found that "merged identity", which was defined as "forsaking some aspects of individual identity in order to achieve a sense of unity or oneness as a marital couple" (p. 13-14), had significant positive correlations with, and effect on, commitment in 18 married couples in marital therapy and 25 married couples not in marital therapy. Merged identity was measured by items on "shared activities, tastes, attitudes, social affairs, financial arrangement, and decision making" (p. 41); although this scale overlapped a little with the Dyadic Adjustment Scale, most items were distinct (ibid). The items in merged identity scale reflect the importance of similar values in forming a merged attitude, tastes, decisions, activities and attitude to deal with social and financial matters. Erdreich and Shichor (1985) talked from a clinical perspective about couple identity that "good couple functioning implies a capability of introjecting a realistic image of the other in each partner's identity" (p. 237).

Some other research has found the culture change in interethnic relationships. Minatoya and Higa (1988) did a study in Japan on 276 Japanese women who married intraethnically, 101 American women who married intraethnically, and 51 Japanese women who interethnically married to American men (the majority were Japanese/White couples), and the results showed that the behaviours of women who married to American men were between those of intraethnically married Japanese women and intraethnically married American women, some of the attitudes of women who married to American men showed significant difference from those of intraethnically married Japanese women which in turn different from those of intraethnically married American women, and that some other attitudes of interethnically married women were falling in the middle. For the significant difference between the three groups on attitudes, the answers of intraethnically married American women reflected individualist values such as they would like to promote children's interest and feel less uncomfortable of inviting a divorced woman to their home, and some of the answers of Japanese women who married interethnically reflected collectivistic values such as they would like their children to consider about others and



would feel uncomfortable of inviting a divorced woman to their home even more than those intraethnically married Japanese women, however interethnically married Japanese women scored the highest on partners sharing similar opinion on “talking, sharing, and confiding in each other” which reflected the importance of communication in interethnic couples (ibid. p. 52). The behaviours that had significant difference between the three groups, in which interethnically married Japanese women fell in the middle between the other two groups, were behaviours such as affection expression and spending time doing activities outdoors with the spouse or children (ibid). Thus it seems that the behaviours are easier to change than are attitudes – those women in interethnic marriages did make efforts to change in behaviour and attitudes towards their husband’s culture, but some deep-rooted cultural values such as individualism/collectivism took time to change or was displayed in a way even more than intraethnically married women from their ethnicity.

Oey’s (1990) research on 20 Chinese/White interethnic and 20 Chinese intraethnic married couples in the United States showed that interethnically married Chinese had higher levels of acculturation than did intraethnically married Chinese, and for both interethnic and intraethnic couples, the more similar of a couple’s acculturation level (measured by the Suinn-Lew Asian Self-Identity Acculturation Scale (Suinn et al., 1992)), the greater marital adjustment (measured by Spanier’s Dyadic Adjustment Scale) they were. The higher acculturation levels of the Chinese who married interethnically found by Oey (1990) reflected their greater cultural change.

Two themes were very strong in the above researches for successful interethnic relationships: a combined cultural identity/value orientation and a similar acculturation level. According to the previous discussion on the role of culture in 2.3, individualism/collectivism and acculturation were also found important for interethnic relationships. Negotiating individualism/collectivism can be a main and important task for negotiating a combined cultural identity. According to Johnson, Caughlin, & Huston (1999), couple identity is a component of personal commitment, in which couple identity means the degree to which one puts the relationship into one’s own identity (Johnson, 1991). In the current research, the two themes (i.e. a combined cultural identity and a similar acculturation level) will be combined into a new construct “couple cultural identity”, which means the extent the partners both follow a same set of cultural values (including individualism/collectivism orientations and acculturation

characteristics), and this couple cultural identity is supposed to be strongly correlated with commitment.

Couple cultural identity reflects the ways that interethnic couples negotiate their cultural differences, and this negotiation can be consciously or unconsciously. Couples cultural identity does not emphasise both partners should be individualistic or collectivistic, but instead it emphasises the negotiation between individualism and collectivism and finally results in a set of cultural values that both partners follow. Couple cultural identity does not look at one partner's cultural value (i.e. individualism/collectivism) and acculturation to the mainstream culture, but it looks at the similarity of both partners' cultural values and the extent they acculturate (i.e. language, food, religion, etc.) to each other's cultures. So couple cultural identity is unique for every interethnic couple. People can be collectivistic even if they are from an individualistic culture and people can be individualistic even if they are from a collectivistic culture, so we cannot say two individuals from an interethnic marriage would surely have different cultural values, nor can we say that they are similar, as they have been brought up in different cultures. Cultural values tell people what is right and wrong and direct people's behaviour and attitude, so for interethnic couples, consciously or unconsciously changing towards a set of similar cultural values would reduce conflict on what is right or wrong, and enhance commitment.

There can be several ways for couples to achieve couple cultural identity. For example, one partner may follow the other one's cultural value, which means speaking his/her language, assimilating totally to his/her ethnic culture; partners may mix each other's cultural values and create a new couple cultural identity, which means one partner mix her/his language and culture with the other one's, partners communicate in two or more languages that they can both understand, and they follow a special set of rules, values and norms picking up from both cultures, so their couple cultural identity would become semi-separate from any of their own ethnic culture; partners may follow a third culture, which means partners communicate in a language which is not the mother tongue of any of them and they form a couple cultural identity that is different from their original ones, and this could often happen when partners reside in a third country and follow the culture of the third country. Happy interethnic couples may unconsciously form their couple cultural identity but unhappy interethnic couples may find it difficult to negotiate their cultural differences, especially the difference in individualism/collectivism orientation. Partners in each interethnic relationship cannot

change their own ethnic background but they can both change towards a couple cultural identity for a successful relationship.

Johnson et al. (1999) found the importance of couple identity in contributing to personal commitment. So how does couple cultural identity reflect couple identity in contributing to commitment? Johnson (1991) defined the couple identity as the degree to which one puts the relationship into one's own identity. Johnson et al.'s (1999) measurement on couple identity included 3 items "You would miss the sense of being a couple", "Being married helps you feel good about yourself", and "You really like being a [husband/wife]" (p. 176). Based on Johnson's research and extrapolating from couple identity to couple *cultural* identity, one might say that interethnic couples would lose the couple cultural identity if their marriage were to end; that similar cultural values promotes good feelings as a couple due to the reduction of value contradictions with their partner; and that they would enjoy the benefits of sharing a couple cultural identity. Given the salient cultural difference between the partners in interethnic relationships, having similar cultural values would also be an important part of couple identity. Since cultural value differences show prominently in interethnic couples, the sense of being a couple could be reflected strongly on couple cultural identity. Couples with strong couple identity would follow similar values and have strong couple cultural identity, and in turn, strengthen their couple identity.

## Chapter 3 Relationship quality and commitment

What do the journeys of relationships look like? Why relationship can be difficult sometimes? When people are just married, there normally starts with a beautiful picture of a journey and the storms may not be anticipated. But the picture may change afterwards, just like what Gottman (1994, p. 441-442) has described:

“Usually voyages begin with great optimism and hope. It is as if a majestic sailing ship sets off on a bright blue day and all spirits run high.... most marriages begin with a great celebration and with great expectations.... But on these voyages, no sailor expects the storm, and none is trained to deal with gales.... We are prepared only for the bright sunrises accompanied by the horn section of the orchestra singing our joyful gladness.... Yet inevitably the gales come. We find that our ship does not perform perfectly. We are disappointed.... Then come the storms, and the boat begins to leak. We wail as we repair it and continue all the while at breakneck speed on the journey. We become exhausted... Yet people regroup. The sky eventually clears, the sun rises again, sails are repaired, and a small voice inside begins tentatively to sing again. The trials make the story more interesting and it becomes a tale of a real journey.... The potential is there in marriage for great joy and healing, as well as the potential for anguish.”

Marriage is very common and nearly 90% of people getting married (Gottman & Carrère, 1994; Fitzpatrick, 1988). A stable marriage can bring much benefit to both men and women, such as physical health (Murphy, Glaser, & Grundy, 1997; Wickrama Lorenz, Conger, & Elder, 1997), mental health (Barnett, 1994; Kawakami, Roberts, Lee, & Araki, 1995), happiness (Stack & Eshleman, 1998) and subject well-being (Kamp Dush & Amato, 2005). Divorce can bring people “personal pain, guilt and a sense of failure at having fallen short of the ideal” (Clark & Haldane, 1990, p. 46) and can affect people’s health (Gottman & Carrère, 1994).

However in spite of the benefit of marriage and the pain of divorce, some relationships still ended when storms came. The marriage vow says “for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death us do part” (Church of England, 1980). Although everyone might have a good will that their marriage would last forever when they just married, in contrary to the marriage

vows, there were one third of marriages ended in divorce in the United Kingdom (Clark & Haldane, 1990) when the situation was worse, and the love ceased before parting by death.

The divorce rate has risen across the world. In the United Kingdom, divorce rate has increased five times from 1960 to 1980 (Clark & Haldane, 1990). It might be easy to commit to a relationship when everything is good and the two are rich and healthy, but relationships always have better and worse times according to Sternberg (2004) and everything can go to the worst. However in spite of the difficulties, there are still couples who love each other until death parts them.

So, what factors may make couples stay or leave the relationship? According to Cramer (1998), people could make this decision due to a great number of reasons. This chapter will discuss the factors may associate with relationship quality and stability first, then three major models on commitment, Levinger's (1976) cohesiveness model, Rusbult's (1980; Cox et al., 1997) investment model and Johnson's (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) commitment framework, will be presented.

### **3.1 Understanding relationship quality and stability**

In this section, relationship quality and stability will be closely looked at. Specifically, qualities that people are likely to look for in a relationship, factors that may make a happy marriage, factors that may make an unhappy marriage, factors that may make a stable marriage, and some special topics that associate with marital quality and stability.

#### **3.1.1 Qualities that people are likely to look for in a relationship**

According to a study of 1,496 undergraduates across the United States in 1984/1985 and 1996 by Buss, Shackelford, Kirkpatrick, and Larsen (2001), the most important criterion of choosing a marriage partner was *love*, across genders and regions, among the total 18 criteria such as "Dependable character", "Emotional stability, maturity", "Pleasing disposition", "Education", "Good looks", "Similar religious background", and so on (p. 494).

Weiss and Lowenthal (1975, p. 52, 54) looked at the quality of real friends and ideal close friends across different lifespan through “Similarity” (“Shared experiences”, “Shared activities”, “Verbal communication”, “Similar general behaviors”, “Similar interests”), “Reciprocity” (“Supportive”, “Understanding”, “Confidant”, “Trustworthy”), “Compatibility” (“Likeability”, “Enjoyment”), “Structural Dimensions” (“Duration”, “Proximity”), “Role Model” (“Respecting”, “advice”, “useful”) and “Other” (“personality”, close friendships, “Other”), and they found that *similarity* (36%), compared to 21% for reciprocity and 16% for compatibility, was mostly reflected in real friends but *reciprocity* (45%), compared to 28% for similarity and 17% for compatibility, was mostly wanted for ideal close friends. According to their research, the top qualities of real friends were “Shared experiences”, “Supportive” and “Likeability”; the top qualities of ideal close friends were “Understanding”, “Supportive” and “Likeability”. It seems that the top qualities of real friends and the desired qualities of ideal close friends were similar, but people tended to have friends who were similar but wanted friends who had reciprocity characteristics more than who were similar, which might reflect that although it was easy to find/have friends similar to them, being understanding and supportive rather than being similar were the ideal characteristics people looking for. The characteristics that people wanted in ideal close friends, namely reciprocity, understanding, supportive and likability, were all reflected in different aspects of love. When we look at interethnic couples who might be dissimilar in many ways, having reciprocated characteristics and love might be important qualities for their relationships.

There was a large scale survey in England by Gorer (1971) who interviewed 1986 people between 16 and 45 years old with approximately same portions of men and women, revealed the top two important qualities that majority of people thought a husband or a wife should have were “Understanding, consideration” and “Love, affection, kindness” (p. 72). However, men put slightly more emphasis on wives’ being “Good housekeeper” and “Good mother, love children”, and wives’ “Personal qualities” (the ability to make oneself physically and socially adorable) than the top two qualities mentioned above that women put top weight on for men (ibid. p. 72-73). Again, this research revealed the importance of love from both husband and wife, with husbands’ love required by women slightly more important.

Bizman (1987) did a study in Israel, in which participants were asked to what degree the reasons of money, love, social status, and physical attraction that their

friends/acquaintances would marry someone whose information was shown to them and they were also asked to rate the partners' compatibility, and he found that participants rated *love* as the most important reason for marriage compared to the other three reasons, and they rated love even higher for interethnic marriages than intraethnic marriages, but they rated compatibility higher for intraethnic marriages than interethnic marriages. This research showed the importance of love for marriage, which might compensate for partners' lower compatibility.

### 3.1.2 Factors may make a happy marriage

Gorer's (1971) research found the important factors most people thought that made a happy marriage, which were "Comradeship, doing things together", "Give-and-take, consideration", and "Discussing things, understanding" (p. 64). Harding, Phillips, and Fogarty (1986) did a large scale research on Europeans' attitude of marriage with different age groups and marital status, and found the top factors that made a good marriage were "Mutual respect and appreciation", "Faithfulness", "Understanding and tolerance" (p. 120). The factors in these two research reflected *love*, *marital cohesion*, and *moral aspects*.

Lauer and Lauer's (1988 as cited in Lauer & Lauer, 2000, p. 20) research on couples in happy marriages in the United States found that both husbands and wives chose almost the same factors leading to a happy marriage, and the order of the frequency of the factors from high to low were the same for the top seven items, which were good friendship, liking and respecting the spouse, commitment for lifelong, high morally understanding of marriage, consensus on goals, feeling the spouse interesting, and a strong personal desire of commitment. These factors making a happy marriage reflected *marital cohesion* (such as doing things together, friendship), *similarity* (rating similarly), *love* (appreciation, understanding, tolerance, respect), and *personal commitment*. Lauer and Lauer (2000) also suggested that consensus on important things was very important to have a happy marriage. This is included in *dyadic consensus* of Spanier's Dyadic Adjustment Scale.

Schafer, Wickrama, and Keith's (1996) research on 155 married couples found that the difference between how husbands perceive themselves (i.e. likeable, capable, confident, content, useful, intelligent and friendly) and how their wife perceive them

affected husband's marital happiness, and the difference between how wives perceive themselves and how wives thought their husband perceive them affected wife's marital happiness. So this research shows self-perception and the perception from/of the spouse affect marital happiness.

Antill (1983) found that both husband's and wife's femininity (measured by short version of Bem Sex-Role Inventory) led to a happy marriage. According to Bem (1974), the traits of femininity included "Affectionate", "Cheerful", "Childlike", "Compassionate", "Does not use harsh language", "Eager to soothe hurt feelings", "Feminine", "Gentle", "Loyal", "Sensitive to the needs of others", "Sympathetic", "Tender", "Warm", etc.; the traits of masculinity included "Aggressive", "Ambitious", "Assertive", "Competitive", "Dominant", "Independent", "Individualistic", "Masculine", "Self-reliant", "Self-sufficient", etc. (p. 156). The difference between femininity and masculinity reflected the cultural trait difference between individualism/idiocentrism and collectivism/allocentrism. So both husband and wife being collectivistic/allocentric may lead to a happier marriage.

In summary, although factors making a happy marriage are diverse, we can group them to several categories, which are marital cohesion, marital consensus, love, similarity, moral aspects, collectivism/allocentrism (femininity) and self-perception/partner's perception. Having looked at factors that may make a happy marriage, factors that may make an unhappy marriage will be looked at next.

### 3.1.3 Factors may make an unhappy marriage

Gorer's (1971) research found the factors that could destroy a marriage were those factors making a happy marriage not being met, such as "no give-and-take" and "bad communication" (p. 84). Harding et al.'s (1986) research found the top factors that made people want to divorce were "Violence", "Consistently unfaithful", and "Partner ceased to love" (p. 118). These studies reflected that lacking of love might be a significant factor leading to an unhappy marriage.

Research has shown that certain personality traits could reduce marital happiness. Cramer (1993) found that separated/divorced men and women, compared to those who stayed married, had greater neuroticism and extraversion. Kelly and Conley (1987) studied 300 couples from their engagement until about 42-45 years later, and



found that both men and women who divorced during the period of this study had much higher neuroticism than were those who remained married, men who divorced during this period had much less impulse control than were men who remained married, and wife's neuroticism, husband's neuroticism and husband's impulse control were strong factors predicting relationship satisfaction and stability. Geist and Gilbert (1996) found that wife's neuroticism significantly negatively correlated with wife's and husband's marital satisfaction, wife's extraversion correlated positively and significantly with both husband's and wife's anger expression, husband's extraversion correlated positively and significantly with husband's anger expression, and anger expression was not helpful to resolve conflicts and to maintain marital satisfaction.

Besides, the relationship between dissatisfied gender roles and marital dissatisfaction was found in research. Gottman and Carrère's (1994) longitudinal research reflected the problem of non-traditional gender roles that affected marital satisfaction, in which they found that husband's dissatisfaction with housework division and wife's dissatisfaction with parenting task division strongly negatively correlated with both husband and wife's marital satisfaction whereas husband's dissatisfaction with work and parenting task division did not correlate with both husband and wife's marital satisfaction, and wife's dissatisfaction with work strongly negatively correlated with both husband and wife's marital satisfaction whereas wife's dissatisfaction with housework division only strongly negatively correlated with wife's marital satisfaction (p, 221). Finally, Tsapelas, Aron and Orbuch (2009) looked at marital dissatisfaction from another point of view, and they reported that lacking of excitement in a marriage significantly predicted a decreased marital quality after nine years.

### 3.1.4 Factors may make a committed and stable marriage

#### 3.1.4.1 General research on marital commitment and stability

Research has shown that similarity and consensus associated with marital stability. Bentler and Newcomb (1978) found that husbands and wives who stayed married, compared to those who divorced after four years, had more similarity on background variables (age and occupation) and personality traits (such as attractiveness, thriftiness, art interest) assessed by Bentler Psychological Inventory, and among these

variables, similarities on age, attractiveness, art interest, and extraversion were significantly different between stable and divorced couples; couples who stayed married had significant less problems than were divorced couples on 12 problems, such as affection towards each other, sex immorality, friends, finance, and sex. Their research reflected the importance of *similarity* and *mutual consensus* for a stable marriage. Hohmann-Marriott (2006) found that the dissimilar belief in housework sharing/allocation negatively affected the relationship stability using the data of 1,039 married/cohabiting couples from National Survey of Families and Households in the United States between 1987 and 1994. Amodio and Showers (2005) found that perceived high similarity would reduce the effect of negative accommodation styles (i.e. neglect and exit) and keep the relationship going, but perceived low similarity would end the relationship by the effect of negative accommodation styles.

Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) acknowledged the importance of respect in relationships and found that respect had strong positive correlations with commitment and satisfaction for both dating and married participants. They looked at respect from emotion, mutuality and caring aspects, and the items they developed to measure respect were “I respect my partner”, “I am interested in my partner as a person”, “I am a source of healing for my partner”, “I honour my partner”, “I communicate well with my partner”, and “I approve of the person my partner is” (p. 899). Respect is an aspect of *love* to the partner, which shows how relationships survive even in difficult situations with unsettled conflicts. Interethnic couples may have different types of conflict, but love and commitment are likely to make their relationship stable.

Previti and Amato’s (2003) research looked at the responses of 2,034 married people on a single question: “What are the most important factors keeping your marriage together?” (p. 561), and they found that love, good friendship, good communication and respect were most frequently mentioned factors, in which love was mentioned by 60% of all the participants and was far more in percentage than any other factors. They also found people who were likely to answer factors that were rewarding (i.e. love, respect, trust, good communication, personal commitment, shared memory, good friendship, happiness, compatibility, emotional security, and good sex) were happy with their marriages and were less likely to think/discuss about divorce, however people who were likely to answer factors that were barriers (i.e. children, religion, financial need, interdependence in marriage, moral commitment, lack of alternatives, and other) were unhappy with their marriages and tended to think/discuss about divorce,

and people who thought barriers were the only reasons to keep the marriage going were more likely to end in divorce during or after 14 years. This research showed that *love* and *internal desires* instead of external barriers are important to maintain relationships.

The importance of love for relationship stability has also reflected in the following studies. Mackey and O'Brien's (1998) research on couples who have been married for more than 20 years found that the reasons for marital stability, even when the couples had unhelpful conflict styles, were trust, respect, commitment, and having desirable personal characteristics. Sabatelli and Pearce's (1986) research on married people showed that they tended to hold high expectations on love, respect towards each other, trust and commitment, and those who held high expectations tended to have high commitment level.

Dissatisfaction on sex was considered as one of the reasons to divorce (Davidson & Moore, 1992). But sex itself does not predict overall satisfaction, only when it was considered along with other factors that contribute to intimacy, and it was intimacy that contributes to sexual satisfaction (Lauer & Lauer, 2000). White, Speisman, Jackson, Bartis, and Costos (1986) measured different aspects of intimacy in three levels: "self-focused" (the lowest level), "role-focused", and "individuated-connected" (the highest level) (p. 155). Self-focused level reflects the characteristics such as chasing one's own desire and ignoring others' feelings, whereas individuated-connected level reflects characteristics such as valuing others and giving support if others in need (ibid).

Several studies showed that social support associated with relationship commitment and stability. Good social support (i.e. support from significant others, common friendships, and the liking of partner's friends) was found positively related to relationship quality, and women's perceived social support positively related to relationship stability in a three-year longitudinal study by Sprecher and Felmlee (1992). Wang et al. (2006) found in a large scale study of 10,095 adolescences in either intraethnic (88%) or interethnic (12%) relationships that telling mother about their relationship and greater number of friends knowing their relationship predicted their relationship stability. This finding might imply that if there are greater possibilities of disapproval, adolescences were less likely to tell their family about their relationship, which in turn might affect their relationship stability. Lehmiller and Agnew (2006) found that perceived social disapproval significantly and negatively predicted commitment, but people in less socially approved relationships, such as interethnic

relationships, same-sex relationships, and couples with more than 10 years age difference, were significantly more committed than were people in more socially approved relationships (although people in the above mentioned three types of relationship perceived less social approval than their counterparts). Etcheverry and Agnew (2004) found that not only the perceived social approval predicted commitment, but also the perceived social approval/disapproval combined with the extent to which one comply with the perceived social approval/disapproval significantly predicted commitment.

Sprecher (2001) looked at commitment and stability from an equity point of view in a longitudinal study across three and half years, and she found that underbenefit (i.e. give more than take) reduced both men and women's commitment and underbenefit predicted relationship breakup for women. Feeling of equity (one's giving and taking are equal) was also mentioned by Lauer and Lauer (2000) as a factor contributing to a stable relationship.

Weigel and Ballard-Reisch (1999) found that both husband's and wife's good behaviours to maintain the relationship, that is, acting positively to the partner, openly discussing about relationship, assuring of the continuation, using common friends, and using responsible behaviours in the relationship, related to couple's joint marital commitment, which equally influenced by husband's commitment and wife's commitment, and wife's good behaviours to maintain the relationship showed stronger relations to the joint marital commitment than did husband's good behaviours. The aspects of good behaviours to maintain relationships reflected characteristics of love and in Dyadic Adjustment Scale by Spanier. Gottman and Carrère's (1994) eight-year longitudinal study on married couples showed that unstable marriages, which broke up after eight years, compared with stable marriages, the husbands looked at things in a more negative way and were more defensive while the wives were less happy and had more negative response at the beginning of their marriages. They have also found that couples who seriously talking about divorce/separation strongly predicted of divorce after four years.

As mentioned in Chapter two, Strachman and Schimel (2006) suggested that although when under no threat interethnic couples would be the same as intraethnic couples, interethnic couples need to be very willing to manage the different worldviews and form a "two-person mini-culture" (p. 976), as otherwise they would sacrifice their commitment when threats come. Finally, Kurdek's (1993) research studied the

relationship between the motivation of entering a marriage and relationship stability, and it was shown that wives in stable relationships had more intrinsic motives for the marriage while husbands in stable relationships had less external motives for the marriage.

#### 3.1.4.2 The importance of satisfaction in marital commitment and stability

Kurdek's (1993) study over five years showed that unstable couples had lower satisfaction levels than stable couples, and the difference of satisfaction levels between husband and wife among unstable couples was larger than stable couples. Davidson and Moore (1992) also considered that the marriage quality perceived by couples was one of the reasons leading to divorce. Research based on interdependence theory revealed that satisfaction was one of the factors predicting relationship commitment (e.g. Rusbult & Buunk, 1993; Simpson, 1987). Givertz and Segrin's (2005) research showed that satisfaction measured by Hendrick (1988) Relationship Assessment Scale strongly predicted and correlated with personal commitment measured by Rusbult's commitment scale; satisfaction had stronger prediction to personal commitment than to moral and structural commitment; satisfaction, the strongest predictor, along with relationship togetherness and positive response in conflict explained about 40% of the variance in personal commitment (positive response in conflict did not show much power in predicting personal commitment); men's satisfaction alone explained substantial variance in men's personal commitment whereas women's satisfaction and relationship togetherness together explained substantial variance in women's personal commitment.

#### 3.1.4.3 The effect of demographic factors

Unstable relationships may relate to social class, that is, divorce rate decreases for higher social classes in the United Kingdom (Clark & Haldane, 1990). People with higher educational levels were unlikely to end in divorce, but income did not relate to marital stability according to a longitudinal study over five years on 1,349 married couples (Galligan & Bahr, 1978). Kurdek's (1993) five-year longitudinal study with a smaller sample also found that unstable couples had lower educational levels than stable

couples, but unstable couples had lower income than stable couples too. Tzeng (1992) found that similar educational level would promote marital stability.

### 3.1.5 Some special topics that relate to marital quality and stability

#### 3.1.5.1 Is similarity important in a relationship?

There were vast and long-standing research studies on similarity and attraction. Newcomb's (1956) research on university students who stayed in the same house for a semester from completely strangers showed that similarity and perceived similarity contributed to attraction, more interaction and more communication, and in turn these reinforce more similarity and perceived similarity, hence more attraction, interaction and communication, and this cycle goes on. He explained the attraction between people with different personalities as: they were more likely to have similar attitude towards their different interaction styles (e.g. attraction between dominant husband and submissive wife). According to Murstein (1970), people were likely to choose those who had similar self-acceptance level to form a relationship.

Stroebe and Stroebe (1984) noted that research on compatibility that affected attraction included attitude similarity and personality compatibility: attitude similarity refers to "individuals prefer others who share their beliefs, opinions and attitudes to those who do not" (p. 258) and personality compatibility refers to "both partners can produce behaviour which is rather valuable to the partner at low cost to themselves, their relationship should result in better outcomes than that of partners whose need constellations are not complementary" (p. 259). However they claimed that research on the relations between personality compatibility and attraction were less based on theories and less widespread than the relations between attitude similarity and attraction.

Byrne's (1971) well-known theory on attraction began with the review of past research on the relations between similarity in a broad area and relationship status/quality, which showed that the relation between similarity on attitude and attraction was the most common and the strongest, so then the relation between attitude similarity and attraction was tested, in which the attitude included attitude towards marriage, religion, recreational activities, politics, policy, war, social phenomena, personal preferences of life styles, money, education, gender differences and equalities, raising children and so on. The similarity on attitude had a powerful effect on attraction

regardless how attitude similarity was received (e.g. through reading the attitude of another person, through hearing the voice of another person's attitude, and through another person talking in person), and regardless of professions, however gender and attractive appearance added additional effect on attraction (ibid). Moreover, Byrne and Rhamey (1965) found that positive (negative) evaluations of A's personal characteristics from B, which confirmed (disconfirmed) A's self-concept, would rise (lower) A's evaluation of B's attraction, compared to that A merely consider the attitude similarity with B on general topics. Byrne (1971) suggested the history of human was to strengthen similar attitude within groups and to diminish dissimilar individuals.

The research by Terman and Bottenweiser (1935) revealed that happy couples were significantly more similar on attitude towards varieties of things than were less happy and divorced couples. Although similarity plays an important role in marital happiness, it does not mean being similar in everything, so long as the total rewards of each couple weighing much more than total punishments according to Byrne and Blaylock (1963). Their study found that couples were likely to assume significantly more similarity than their real similarity. Levinger and Breedlove (1966) extended Byrne and Blaylock's (1963) research and found that married people tended to assume significantly more similarities on goals in marriage and attitudes towards communication than actual similarities, and that assumed similarity significantly and positively correlated with marital satisfaction. They also reported that marital satisfaction significantly related to assuming more or less similarity than actual similarity, for example, people with low marital satisfaction were found assuming less similarity than their actual similarity.

Byrne (1971) reviewed research about the effect of race on attraction and came into conclusion that race itself did not show any more significant effect on attraction than did similar beliefs. However Stein, Hardyck and Smith (1965) found that although similar beliefs, other than race, had more effects on attraction and overall social distance, some items in social distance (i.e. "Invite home to dinner", "Live in same apartment house" and "Date my sister (brother)" (p. 287)) showed significant difference between people with different races, which might reveal the norm of the society of rejecting interracial relationships. Byrne and Andres (1964 as cited in Byrne, 1971, p. 150) found that people with high and low levels of prejudice towards Blacks showed significant different attitudes of interracial interaction. However Byrne and Wong (1962) found that people with high or low prejudice had significant more attraction towards people

with similar attitude of either race (i.e. Black or White) than towards people with dissimilar attitude of either race, and people with high or low prejudice had slightly more attraction towards White people with similar attitudes than Black people with similar attitudes and slightly less attraction towards White people with dissimilar attitudes than Black people with dissimilar attitudes. Hodges and Byrne (1972) found that attraction could be enhanced by open-mindedness towards dissimilar people as open-minded people were likely to show more respect for different views, yet every culture supports their people to be dogmatic on certain attitudes that they could identify with (Byrne, 1971), so it is harder to be open-minded than to be dogmatic.

Although research on similarity and attraction has gained much attention, similarity is not the only reason that people look for in a close relationship and dissimilarity can be also rewarding. Based on exchange theory, Murstein's (1970) theory of how people choose marriage partners through three stages, called "Stimulus-Value-Role" (p. 466), presented that in the stimulus stages, people attracted to each other according to the balance between reward and cost of the external qualities either physical or other attractiveness (e.g. a strong financial background), as well as how people see themselves; then in the value stage, people began to have interactions with each other and began to know each other's values – if the other person has similar values, one would feel being accepted and being rewarded by the similar interest of joining the similar activities; in the last role stage, people would try to find out whether they have compatible roles as women and men and compatible personality in a relationship. Although similarity played an important part in this theory, in the last stage, the roles and personality might not be similar but complementary.

Murstein (1971a) suggested that there were many and complicated reasons contributing to attraction, and whether similarity led to attraction dependent on the situation and other factors. For example, people with desirable characteristics tended to have relationships with those who were similar, but people with undesirable characteristics tended to have relationship with those who were dissimilar; confident people tended to associate with dissimilar strangers (ibid).

Walster and Walster (1963) suggested that different from people who are similar to us, people who are dissimilar from us could give us novel experiences and information, and could accurately see us from new perspectives. They also suggested that one thing that might keep us away from associating with dissimilar people was the fear that they did not like us. Their study on the preference of joining in similar or



dissimilar groups for a discussion showed that individuals who were ensured of being much liked by all the groups, were more likely to choose to join in dissimilar groups and were significant less likely to choose the similar groups than individuals who were not told the attitude of others towards them. Although their research have shown the tendency of associating with dissimilar people as long as one was much liked by dissimilar people, it did not show whether the preference of association with dissimilar people will last for a long time or whether intimate relationship will be developed with dissimilar people.

Aron and Aron (1997) developed a model called “self-expansion” to explain that the motivation people choose to enter a close relationship is to expand the self (p. 252). They acknowledged that every human being has the preference to be with others instead of having a life by his/her own, and relationships provide the chance for individuals to expand on what they have, what they know, who they are in the society, and who they are in the universe, thus the self in a relationship is no longer merely his/her own self but an expanded self by including others in the self. Aron and Aron (1997) suggested that initial attraction and satisfaction maintaining may be caused by new and arousal activities, and one would choose relationship partners if they could expand one’s self and this expansion would happen and be kept. Therefore dissimilarity could lead to attraction as the novel and dissimilar nature made more opportunities for self-expansion, and commitment may be the result of afraid of losing the existing expanded self (ibid). Both the self-expansion model and the interdependence theory seem to explain satisfaction in the same fashion as when the existing outcome/expansion higher than the comparison level/expected expansion rate (see Aron & Aron, 1997). To use self-expansion model to explain commitment, reduced commitment may be related to the unmet expectation of self-expansion or the cease of self-expansion. Thus, the self-expansion model can help us understand the formation and maintenance of interethnic couples as they have vast opportunities to expand the self with the dissimilar other.

A research by Aron, Paris and Aron (1995) found that after falling in love, either by entering a new relationship or increasing dramatically of romantic love feeling, people’s self-concept had been expended (more self-descriptions of who they are) and their self-esteem had been increased. Therefore, at the beginning of relationships, the speed of self-expansion can be very high, however then the speed begin to slow down and when the self-expansion cannot be perceived or the speed of self-expansion cannot meet the expectation, the satisfaction level will be lowered unless couples continue

expanding the self through “doing self-expanding activities together” (p. 257), such as doing new and arousal activities together (Aron & Aron, 1997).

In summary, similarity is important for relationships, as it plays an important role for the confirmation of the self, however dissimilarity can also be rewarding, such as expanding the self. So it is likely that similarity and dissimilarity are both important, although similarity has gained much more attention.

### 3.1.5.2 The influence of communication and gender differences

Research studies have shown that good communication affects the quality of marriage. The study of 76 married couples by Pollock, Die and Marriott (1990) showed that communication significantly related to marital adjustment. Weger’s (2005) study on 53 married couples showed that people who were more likely to use withdrawn communication behaviour would make their partner feel being less understood, which would reduce marital satisfaction. Young’s (2004) research showed that how the negative messages being expressed affected how the message being perceived by the partner. For example, a nice way to express negative messages (i.e. less message intensity) would be perceived helpful by the partner (ibid). Rosenfeld and Bowen (1991) found the level of self-disclosure, one aspect of communication, related to marital satisfaction. Lauer and Lauer (1986 as cited in Lauer & Lauer, 2000) found that the frequency of “Stimulating Exchange of Ideas”, “Laughing Together” and “Calm Discussions” significantly distinguished happy and unhappy couples – happy couples had more frequencies of these forms of communication whereas unhappy couples had much less frequencies (p. 257). These forms of communication are included in Spanier’s (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale and were termed as dyadic cohesion.

However, researches have shown that good communication between men and women is not an easy thing. According to Tannen (1990), women and men communicate in different ways as the society demands men to be competitive and women to be cooperative. So women focus on interdependence while men focus on independence, and they have different “genderlects” (ibid. p. 42). Men tend to perceive people are unequal in the world, which means some are superior while others are inferior, so men have developed the communication style that would maintain their status and avoid being defeated; women, on the other hand, see themselves being

connected to other people, so women have developed the communication style that would maintain the harmony among people, could end in agreement with others, and would avoid being separated from others (ibid. Men see talk as giving/receiving information which is less often used to maintain relationships than by doing activities together, but women see talk as interactions which are essential for maintaining relationships (ibid). Therefore, the content and the style of communication are hugely different between men and women, and the difference can be as much as cultural difference (see also Tannen, 1990). Thus since the communication between men and women are cross-cultural even if they are from the same culture and speak the same language, interethnic couples' communication may be more difficult as they may need not only to overcome cultural difference, language difference, but also gender difference in communication.

Gottman and Carrère (1994) looked at the gender differences that may cause difficulties for men and women to relate to and understand each other through the different ways men and women being brought up and socialised (e.g. girls are more likely to stop a game for emotional reasons and their focus is on relationships with each other, whereas boys are more likely to stop/suppress the emotions in order to continue a game and their focus is to keep the game going). They ascribed marriage problems (e.g. divorce) to such different socialisation and the long "sex segregation" (p. 204), where boys may find it difficult to relate to girls and girls may find it annoying to relate to boys as boys do not know how to deal with emotions which are girls' expertise.

### 3.1.5.3 Conflict and interaction in relationships

Conflict is unavoidable in close relationships (Raush, Barry, Hertel, & Swain, 1974 as cited in Gottman, 1994, p. 35), however it is not the conflict itself affects the quality of relationship but the ways couples handle it count (Gottman, 1994), and couples who do not have the ability to deal with conflict tend to seek divorce (Davidson & Moore, 1992). Geist and Gilbert (1996) suggested a vicious circle that impedes conflict resolution for dissatisfied couples: one's feeling of less listening behaviours from one's partner would promote one's negative affect expression, such as anger and complaining, and the more negative affect expression would in turn encourage one's partner to show less listening behaviours. Mackey and O'Brien (1998) interviewed both

husbands and wives in 60 marriages who had been married for at least 20 years and had experienced three stages of marriage – early stage, childrearing stage, and empty nest stage – with different ethnic background, and they found that the amount of significant conflicts differed from one ethnic group to another. It could not be extended from this research that interethnic couples are likely to have more significant conflicts than intraethnic couples, but it is likely that members of interethnic relationships might expect different amount and intensity of conflict.

According to Gottman (1994), happy couples tend to interpret negative behaviours of the partner as momentary but unhappy couples tend to interpret the negative behaviours of the partner as permanent; happy couples tend to interpret positive behaviours of the partner as permanent but unhappy couples tend to interpret the positive behaviours as momentary. Ting-Toomey's (1983 as cited in Gottman, 1994, p. 61) study showed that couples who had high scores in Dyadic Adjustment Scale tended to use constructive interaction styles frequently, but couples who had low scores in Dyadic Adjustment Scale tended to use destructive interaction styles frequently, such as complaint, confrontation and defence, with which could form several vicious circles during interactions.

Gottman (1994) distinguished satisfied couples from dissatisfied couples according to their interaction styles, in which dissatisfied couples had more negative and less positive behaviours in conflict, and their negative behaviours were reciprocated more. He suggested and tested a marital dissolution model called "cascade model", in which decreased satisfaction leads to separation consideration, separation, and divorce (p. 109). He identified three types of regulated couples and two types of non-regulated couples, which were validator, volatile, avoider, hostile, and hostile/detached. Validators promote "we-ness" so that they share a lot together, they try not to have much conflict, and they follow the traditional gender role expectations (p. 175); volatiles promote individuality and they see themselves as equals so that they do not have much shared activities, they engage in as much conflict as they can, and they do not follow the traditional gender roles; avoiders try to avoid conflict but they emphasise separateness and not much sharing; hostile couples engage much in conflict but with destructive communication styles; hostile/detached couples detached with each other and they engage in destructive communication styles (ibid). He then found that stable couples had the ratio of positivity to negativity of about 5:1 and the couples tended to engage in constructive ways to solve conflict, such as validator, volatile and avoider,

whereas unstable couples had the ratio of less than 1 and they tended to engage in destructive ways, such as hostile and hostile/detached, to solve conflicts. Gottman (1994) called this balance between positivity and negativity “A Balance Theory of Marriage” (p. 181). It seems that validator partners both display collectivistic characteristics, volatile partners both display individualistic characteristics, and avoider partners both display mixed individualistic/collectivistic characteristics, and they all engage in constructive communication and their relationships tend to be stable. So if partners both have similar couple cultural identity as described in chapter two and both engage in constructive communication, their marital stability might be promoted. The positivity-negativity ratio for stable couples also reflects their relationships are rewarding and satisfied.

#### 3.1.5.4 The influence of religion

Mahoney et al. (1999) found that couples who shared the same religious activities, which would enable couples to have similar values, was significantly positively correlated with their marital satisfaction, receiving benefit from the marriage (i.e. how much would living standard, social and sex life, chances of career, and parenting change if divorced), engaging in helpful ways to solve problems (e.g. good communication, good listening, understanding), and significantly negatively correlated with conflict (frequency of minor and major conflict). However, for both husbands and wives, individual religious activities and religious sameness (both partners believe in the same religion) were not significantly correlated with satisfaction and conflict, and individual religious activities, but not religious sameness, significantly positively correlated with receiving benefit from the marriage (ibid). It can be seen from this study that only looking at whether both husband and wife believe in the same religion may not be enough to explain marital quality, instead, whether both husband and wife believe in the religion to the same extent may count for the marital quality.

#### 3.1.6 Summary

Love has been a main theme that people look for in a relationship. The important qualities of a partner, such as understanding and considerate, were descriptions of love

as well. Factors like marital cohesion, marital consensus, love, similarity, moral aspects, collectivism/allocentrism (femininity), and self-perception/partner's perception were all important for a happy marriage. We can also learn from the factors that could make an unhappy marriage to know the undesirable things in marriages, which were lack of love, lack of commitment, having certain undesirable personality traits (i.e. neuroticism, extroversion, and impulse control), having imbalanced gender roles, and lack of excitement. Love, satisfaction, intimacy, a rewarding relationship, similarity, consensus, affection expression, respect, perceived good social support, constructive interactions and some demographic factors (i.e. higher educational levels and social classes) were important factors that could make a stable marriage.

Similarity did show more important than race in drawing people together but happily married couples can be disguised by assumed high level of similarity. Byrne and Blaylock (1963) also emphasised the importance of total rewards in relationships rather than the importance of similarity in everything between partners. Having the chance to expand the self can draw people together too regardless of similarity. Extended from Gottman's (1994) research on conflict, partners with similar couple cultural identity and both engaging in constructive communication might be helpful in solving conflict and promote marital stability. Both husband and wife believe in the religion to the same extent may count for the marital quality. Gender difference plays an important role in communication and conflict, and gender difference can be as much as cultural difference.

For interethnic couples, love seems particularly important, as it may compensate for couple's lower cultural similarity and compatibility. Having reviewed research about relationship quality and stability, three commitment models will be looked at next.

### **3.2 Relationship Cohesiveness**

Levinger started his research on marital commitment through looking at marital cohesiveness. His theory was based on Lewin's (1951, p. 259) "*driving forces*" (positive forces) and "*restraining forces*" (obstacles) and Thibaut and Kelley's (1959) interdependent theory on reward and cost. Levinger (1965 as cited in Levinger, 1976) resembled a marital dyad as a group contains two people and people make the decision

of whether to stay or to leave according to the “attractiveness of the group”, alternative attractions, and “the strength of the restraints against leaving it” (p. 23).

Thus, Levinger (1976) developed three factors for relationship cohesiveness: attractiveness, barriers (the cost to leave a relationship) and alternative attraction, and the “pair cohesiveness” equals to the subtraction between the sum of attraction and barriers of the current relationship and the sum of attraction and barriers of the most significant alternative relationship (p. 28). Any single possible factor contributing to attractiveness, barriers or alternative attraction cannot determine cohesiveness; it is the combination of the factors in all the three areas that can determine cohesiveness (ibid). Levinger (1976) also looked at each of the three factors through three aspects: material, symbolic and affectional. These three aspects on each of the three factors of cohesiveness will be presented as follows.

Attractiveness was described as positively related to the reward such as love and negatively related to the cost such as time (ibid). Material attractiveness includes income, shared properties, and so on; symbolic attractiveness includes educational level, occupation, and similarity on social status, race and religion; affectional attractiveness consists of companionship, esteem and sexual satisfaction (ibid).

Barriers are costs which make couples difficult to break up (ibid). Material barriers are the financial costs of breaking up and can also be derived from material attractiveness; symbolic barriers are moral and social restrictions, and responsibility of marriage; affectional barriers include the affection lost towards the children that could be brought by divorce (ibid).

Attraction to alternatives means attractions to either an alternative relationship or attractions of being alone (ibid). Material alternative attraction is to have an independent financial and social status; symbolic alternative attraction is to have the freedom to achieve personal goals and live independently; affectional alternative attraction is to get a better affection from others (ibid).

For interethnic couples, there is no such attraction on similar race/ethnicity but this can be substituted with the attraction from dissimilarities and the novelty of a different culture. Levinger (1976) stated that dissimilar couples could still have a stable cohesiveness, so long as they can deal with their dissimilarity.

Despite of the strengths of this cohesiveness model, one of the weaknesses of Levinger’s model is that the three factors were not clearly separated (Levinger, 1976;

Johnson, 1991). Having looked at Levinger's relationship cohesiveness, Rusbult's investment model will be looked at in the next section.

### **3.3 The Investment Model**

Inspired by interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959), Rusbult (1980a) originated the Investment Model, which consisted of satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment level. The relationships between the four variables in this model are: high satisfaction level, low quality of alternatives and high investment size lead to high commitment level (ibid). This model is distinct from some other research on attraction and satisfaction, as it emphasises that commitment, instead of attraction and satisfaction only, mediated relationship stability (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993).

Commitment was constructed by Rusbult (1983) as individual's intention to continue a relationship and the feeling of attachment to the relationship. Commitment mediates the decision of staying or leaving a relationship (Rusbult, 1983), and is composed of "conative, cognitive, and affective" properties, which mean the internal motivation to continue a relationship, "long-term orientation" and "psychological attachment" respectively (Drigotas, Rusbult & Verette, 1999, p. 391). Commitment level was defined as "a psychological state that globally represents the experience of dependence on a relationship" (Rusbult & Buunk, 1993, p. 180).

According to Rusbult et al. (1994), satisfaction level was evaluated by the comparison of the current outcomes and the comparison level (CL, refers to what people think they deserve and what they expect in a relationship). Individuals will feel satisfied if the current outcomes are above CL, and individuals will feel unsatisfied if the outcomes are below CL (ibid).

In the same way, according to Rusbult et al. (1994), quality of alternatives is evaluated by the comparison of the current outcomes the comparison level of alternatives [ $CL_{alt}$ , refers to "the lowest level of outcomes a member will accept in the light of available alternative opportunities" (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959, p. 21)]. The alternative can be either another person or staying alone). Individuals will be more committed if the current outcomes exceed their  $CL_{alt}$  and less committed if current outcomes less than  $CL_{alt}$  (Rusbult et al., 1994).



Investment size means the direct (e.g. time spent together, self-disclosures) and indirect (e.g. children, household possessions) investment that are attached to the relationship, and it could not be regained if the relationship were to end (Rusbult et al., 1994). Rusbult (1980a) suggested the reason that people were less likely to end a relationship if they had made investment as: both intrinsic (investment occurs between the couple; direct investment) and extrinsic (investment which might not associate with the relationship at the beginning but would associate with the relationship when losing the relationship; indirect investment) investment are “nonportable” so they “would be lost” if the relationship were to end, and the more the investment people put into their relationships, the more likely that the commitment would be enhanced (p. 174). Rusbult and Buunk (1993) suggested that “personal sacrifice” may also be a form of direct investment, and “personal identity” (people in close relationships are likely to put the partner into their own personal identity, so if the relationship were to end, the personal identity with a component of the partner would be lost), “cognitive interdependence”, “social norms” and “moral prescriptions” may also be the forms of investment (p. 184-185).

Lin and Rusbult (1995) added “*normative support*” (p. 9), referenced from Johnson (1991), to the investment model, which means the level of support of the relationship that people get according to norms of the family/society and personal norms. However it was not found significant contribution in predicting commitment (ibid).

Cox et al. (1997, p. 81-82) added “prescriptive support”, which derived from Johnson’s (1991) moral commitment and structural commitment and included “personal prescription” and “social prescription”, to the investment model to predict commitment level. Cox et al. (1997) defined “prescriptive support” as “the sense of obligation to remain with a partner – the belief that persisting in a relationship is ‘advised,’ ‘ordered,’ or ‘ordained’ by either personal or interpersonal sources” (p. 81). Social prescription means the extent that people believe their significant social network support their relationships; personal prescription means the extent that people’s personal beliefs (e.g. religion beliefs) support the continuation of their relationships (ibid). Social prescription represents “social pressure” in structural commitment in Johnson et al.’s (1999) commitment framework; personal prescription represents all the components in moral commitment – moral values on commitment, obligations to the person, and consistency value – in Johnson et al.’s (1999) commitment framework. It was found in Cox et al.’s

(1997) study that social prescription significantly and positively correlated with commitment level and accounted for unique variance in predicting commitment level along with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size, whereas personal prescription only significantly correlated to commitment level but did not contribute unique variance in commitment level.

The positive correlations between satisfaction, investment and commitment, negative correlation between quality of alternatives and commitment, and the unique variance in commitment accounted for by each of the three factors have been found in many studies (e.g. Rusbult, 1983; Rusbult, Johnson, & Morrow, 1986; Rusbult, Martz, & Agnew, 1998). According to Le and Agnew's (2003) analysis of 52 studies of diverse samples, satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment altogether accounted for an average of 61% of the variance in commitment.

The longitudinal research of seven months among 17 males and 17 females by Rusbult (1983) revealed not only the increased satisfaction, decreased quality of alternatives and increased investment resulted in increased commitment over time, but also commitment mediated relationship stability. The latter has been also found in Rusbult and Martz's (1995) and Le and Agnew's (2003) research.

Research on abused relationships has found that poor quality of alternatives and high investment size were the reasons that women stayed in unsatisfied relationships (Rusbult & Martz, 1995). The investment model has also been tested on heterosexual/homosexual relationships (Duffy & Rusbult, 1986), dating/married relationships (Rusbult et al., 1986), and friendships (Rusbult, 1980b), and the results showed that all the three factors had the right pattern of relationships with commitment. In addition, the investment model has been tested among non-western cultures. For example, Davis and Strube (1993) studied Black dating couples and Lin and Rusbult (1995) studied Taiwanese who were in dating relationships. Both studies have found that commitment had the right pattern of relationships with satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size.

Since the investment model was derived from interdependence theory, it is worth to look at the interdependence theory and to see whether it is appropriate to be used on interethnic couples. The next section will introduce Thibaut and Kelley (1959), and Kelley and Thibaut's (1978) interdependence theory.

### **Interdependence Theory** (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959)

Interdependence Theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) has often been used in relationship research (Brehm, Miller, Perlman, & Campbell, 2002), which recognises the rewards and costs of relationships. According to Kelley and Thibaut (1978), rewards refer to the things that bring people joy through the interactions in the relationship and are positive; costs refer to the unhappy and punishing experiences (e.g. physical and psychological burdens) in the relationship and are negative.

Only using rewards and costs to decide the outcome of a relationship is not enough, and a relationship with more rewards than costs might not necessarily be satisfied and dependent on the relationship, because people have expectations of their relationships and feelings of alternative others (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Therefore, if the outcomes are not lower than the expectations of rewards versus costs then individuals will be satisfied, and if the outcomes of the current relationship are not lower than the feelings of staying with an alternative, which could be either with another person or staying alone, then individuals will be more dependent on the current relationship (*ibid*). These two factors, namely expectations and feelings of alternatives, were termed by Thibaut and Kelley (1959) as comparison level (CL) and comparison level for alternatives (CL<sub>alt</sub>).

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) defined CL as “the standard against which the member evaluates the ‘attractiveness’ of the relationship or how satisfactory it is”, and CL<sub>alt</sub> as “the standard the member uses in deciding whether to remain in or to leave the relationship” (p. 21). CL is what people think they deserve and expect; CL<sub>alt</sub> means “the lowest level of outcomes a member will accept in the light of available alternative opportunities” (p. 21), and if the outcomes one can get from an alternative surpass the current relationship then people are more independent of the current relationship (*ibid*). CL and CL<sub>alt</sub> are different, so whether a relationship is satisfied or interdependent can be shown by the location of outcome relative to CL and CL<sub>alt</sub> (*ibid*). According to Rusbult and Van Lange (1996), although sometimes CL and CL<sub>alt</sub> can be influenced by each other, they are generally independent.

Thibaut and Kelley (1959) emphasised the importance of interaction in understanding relationships – two people in a dyad would “emit behavior” in front of each other, communicate or “create products” to each other (p. 10). The rewards and

costs described above are the products of such interactions (ibid). According to Blau (1964), social exchange occurs when one person voluntarily behaves towards another person in expecting of getting rewards as a return and it was exchanged with “*unspecified obligations*” (p. 93) which is different from business exchanges (specify the obligations of the exchange), and mutual trust will grow in the development of social exchange but not in business exchanges. In order to make exchange relationships grow stable, both partners in relationships need to make commitment and investment to their relationship (ibid). According to Homans (1961), people exchange not only rewards, but also costs. Although social exchange theories seem similar as interdependence theory in many ways and Rusbult and Van Lange (1996) stated that “The earliest formulation of the [interdependence] theory” had some similarities with “early presentations of social exchange theory” (p. 564), the interaction in social exchange theories is only one form of “interaction process” (p. 565), thus interdependence theory, which focused on interaction instead of exchange, is not a social exchange theory (ibid).

Interdependence theory (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Thibaut & Kelley, 1959) uses outcome matrices to explain an interaction. For example, a 2x2 matrix (see Figure 3.1) describes an interaction between two people:

	A1	A2
B1	<div> <div>O<sub>11A</sub></div> <div>O<sub>11B</sub></div> </div>	<div> <div>O<sub>12A</sub></div> <div>O<sub>12B</sub></div> </div>
B2	<div> <div>O<sub>21A</sub></div> <div>O<sub>21B</sub></div> </div>	<div> <div>O<sub>22A</sub></div> <div>O<sub>22B</sub></div> </div>

Figure 3.1: An outcome matrix, adapted from Kelley and Thibaut (1978, p. 10).

The outcome matrix is designed to understand interpersonal interactions and it can show the pattern of such interactions (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). In Figure 3.1, A1 and A2 are person A’s behaviour repertoire, and B1 and B2 are person B’s behaviour repertoire; each cell in the matrix has two outcomes which represent the outcome of A or B when A behaves in a certain way and B behaves in a certain way (ibid). For

example,  $O_{11A}$  is the outcome for A when A behaves A1 and B behaves B1;  $O_{11B}$  is the outcome for B when B behaves B1 and A behaves A1.

According to Thibaut and Kelley (1959), when two people are at the stage of forming a relationship, if both people's  $CL_{alt}$  are below the outcomes of their relationship then they are willing and have the motivation to repeat their interactions; when two people are in courtship, they will need to give up their former state of independence (absence of any relationships) or dependence (former relationship) to become dependent in the new relationship. Before people fully feel the absolute advantages of having dependency in a relationship, they would not give up their state of independence and would appreciate carefully of their new partner, and at this stage, there are two kinds of uncertainties toward the relationship – uncertain about whether their new relationship surpasses any alternate relationships or the independence of staying alone, and uncertain about whether the outcomes of the new relationship will be continuously stable (ibid). Once people are dependent on a relationship, low outcome is difficult to endure when compared with previous high outcomes above their CL (ibid).

After a relationship has been formed, people would feel significantly about the outcomes of their interaction and would normally prefer a better outcome than previous outcomes, and activities resulting in good outcomes would be favoured and activities leading to bad outcomes would be avoided (ibid). All these judgement are associated with CL (ibid).

However many things could influence CL, such as one's personal experience and others' outcomes that one knows, and also, "CL is subject to situation-to-situation and moment-to-moment variations" (ibid. p. 82). Thibaut and Kelley (1959) reviewed the findings by Chapman and Volkman (1939) and Festinger (1942) on the influential factors when people determine CL: people will expect a similar level of outcome as people who are similar to themselves, a higher level of outcome than people who are disadvantaged, and a lower level of outcome than people who are advantaged, but much personal experience on a certain task would make people's expectation of outcomes less influenced by the outcomes of others. CL sometimes is affected by the outcomes but other times is affected by personal characteristics: if people have control on something to a certain degree, then the outcome is more significant and the CL is more on what people feel they deserve than what people expect from the experience, thus the outcomes contribute much weight in determining the location of CL; if people's outcome is extremely high or low on things they cannot control or have insufficient

experience, the outcome would not have much weight when determining the location of CL; individual differences can also affect CL – people with confidence and strong motivation tend to value rewards more whereas people who always fail and fearful tend to value costs more (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959).

According to Brehm et al. (2002), things associated with  $CL_{alt}$  are complex too. If people think leaving a relationship is more costly, they may not leave their partner even there is an attractive alternative; people with low self-esteem may not think they are desirable by alternatives; people may not think any alternative is better if they have been in an unsatisfying relationship for a long time;  $CL_{alt}$  may be lower for people who have less opportunities to socialise; people in happy relationships may not notice alternatives even if they are around (ibid).

There are two types of control about the dependence over the interaction between people – fate control and behaviour control (Thibaut & Kelley, 1959). Fate control means “If, by varying his behavior, A can affect B’s outcomes *regardless of what B does*, A has *fate control* over B” (p. 102), if A has a large range of control on B’s outcome, then A has a greater fate control on B, and B’s lowest outcome is B’s  $CL_{alt}$ , and the highest can be the average position B has over the interaction; behaviour control means “If, by varying his behavior, A can make it desirable for B to vary his behavior too, then A has behavior control over B” (ibid. p. 103).

Rusbult’s investment model and the interdependence theory have been introduced. Johnson’s commitment framework will be looked at in the next section.

### 3.4 Johnson’s Commitment Framework

In his framework, Johnson (1991; Johnson, Caughlin & Huston, 1999) developed three components of commitment: personal commitment, moral commitment and structural commitment, which distinguished the differences between internal desire to continue, “ought to” continue, and “has to” (p. 119) continue the relationship (see Figure 3.2). Johnson (1991) described personal and moral commitment as internal to individuals but structural commitment as external to individuals; personal commitment is chosen by individuals but moral commitment and structural commitment are constraint. Structural commitment is influential only when personal or moral commitment is low (Johnson et al., 1999).

Johnson (1991) had the idea of the three components from Heider's (1958) study of interpersonal relations through common-sense psychology, in which the desire and the "ought" are separate in interpreting interpersonal interactions (p. 17). Heider (1958) explained the desire as people want to do certain things so they bring about changes; "ought" does not like desire, it is a "suprapersonal objective order" (p. 222) that makes people think what is right and what is wrong.

Johnson (1991) used the term commitment to highlight "*continuation*" (p. 118), and commitment of maintaining a relationship is to continue the interdependence between the two people. He explained the psychological model of commitment as: the perception of the three types of commitment affect people's motivation of continuing or ending a relationship, and then this motivation affect people's plans for action, which lead to the final action of continuing or ending a relationship.

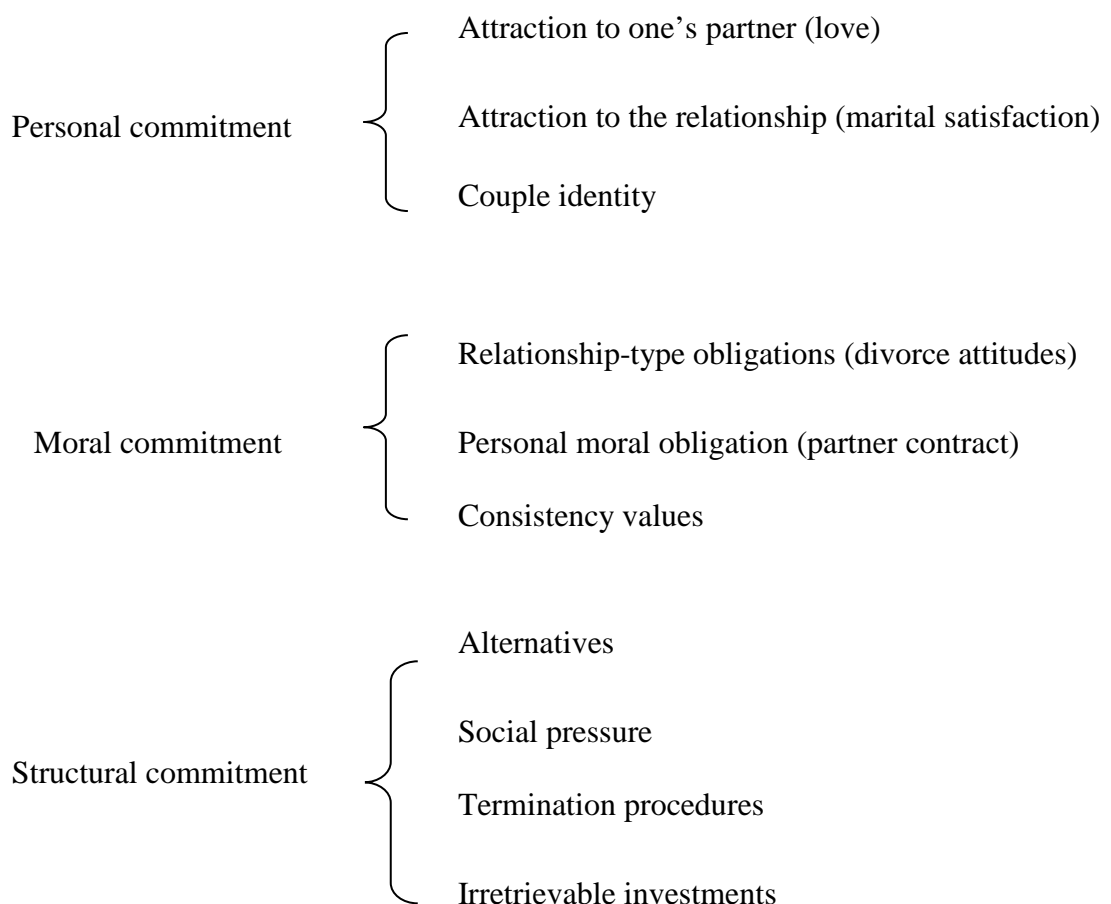


Figure 3.2 Johnson's commitment framework, adapted from Johnson et al. (1999, p. 162).

According to Johnson (1991; Johnson et al., 1999), personal commitment, the internal desires to commit to a relationship, composed of "Attraction to one's partner

(love)", "Attraction to the relationship (marital satisfaction)" and "Couple identity" (Johnson et al., 1999, p. 162). The reason to separate the attractiveness of the partner from the attractiveness of the relationship is because people may be attracted to the partner but may be not attracted to the relationship or vice versa (Johnson, 1991; Johnson et al., 1999). Johnson (1991) defined the couple identity as the degree to which one put the relationship into one's own identity. Lin and Rusbult (1995) also found that the "*centrality of relationship*" (p. 9), which means the degree of importance and meaningfulness of a relationship to a person and the degree to which the relationship has been incorporated into one's own identity, accounted for a unique variance in commitment beyond the factors in Rusbult's (1980a) investment model (i.e. satisfaction level, investment size, and quality of alternatives). The variable "centrality of relationship" seems similar to couple identity, as they both emphasised the importance of putting the relationship into one's own identity. So, Lin and Rusbult's (1995) research confirmed the importance of couple identity in predicting personal commitment, as Johnson et al. (1999) found that Rusbult's commitment scale was more of a measurement for personal commitment. Moral commitment, the internal personal values that "one *ought to*" (Johnson, 1991, p. 121) commit to a relationship, composed of "Relationship-type obligations" (e.g. marriage vows cannot be broken), "Personal moral obligation" and "Consistency values" (i.e. the value of continuing what has been started) (Johnson et al., 1999, p. 162).

Structural commitment is determined by external factors and is influential only when personal commitment or moral commitment is low (Johnson et al., 1999). This was shown in Johnson et al.'s (1999) empirical study, in which moderate negative correlations between personal commitment and structural commitment had been found. Structural commitment composed of "Alternatives" (similar as Rusbult's same-name component and Levinger's alternative attractions, but is more than alternative relationships) which means not only an alternative relationship but also an alternative life after breaking up, "Social pressure" (similar as Cox et al.'s (1997) social prescription and Levinger's barriers) which means the reactions of significant others, according to their own values on moral commitment, and the change of the structure of social interaction after the couple breaks up, "Termination procedures" (similar as Levinger's barriers) which means the complex and difficult relationship termination process, and "Irretrievable investment" (similar as Rusbult's investment size) (Johnson, 1991; Johnson et al., 1999, p. 162). Johnson (1991) explained the irretrievable



investment as the things such as time that people put into a relationship in hoping higher values being returned, and the irretrievable investment will be wasted if the relationship were to end. However, whether the irretrievable invested will be wasted if the relationship were to end depends on people's attitudes toward the investment – not everyone wants to get profit from what they have put into a relationship and according to Johnson et al. (1999), not everyone perceives what they have spent will be wasted.

The combinations of the three types of commitment, not one single type of commitment, affect the actual continuation or end of a relationship (Johnson, 1991). For example, people may stay in an undesired relationship without any moral constraints to continue only because of the high structural commitment – the external constraints make it difficult to break up, which could be the difficulties going through the divorce process or the pressure from one's social network. There was a news on BBC (September 2008) describing a couple could not get divorced because they could not sell their house due to their country's economic situation. In the same fashion, people might stay in an undesired relationship because they are morally obliged and structurally burdened to stay.

Unlike Rusbult who did research mainly on unmarried individuals, Johnson et al. (1999) did a quantitative research on 187 married individuals who had been married for 12 years. Johnson et al.'s (1999) study found that the correlations between the three aspects of commitment, namely personal, moral and structural commitment, were sufficient to distinguish the three aspects using the single item question for each type of commitment – “How much do you WANT to stay married to [partner's name] at this stage?” for personal commitment, “How much do you feel that you SHOULD stay married to [partner's name] at this stage?” for moral commitment, and “How much do you feel that you HAVE to stay married to [partner's name] at this stage?” for structural commitment (p. 166). The hierarchical multiple regression confirmed that the three components of personal commitment explained the majority of variance in the one item question of personal commitment, and the three components of moral commitment explained the majority of variance in the one item question of moral commitment among all the components of the three aspects of commitment, however components of structural commitment did not show majority of variance being explained in the one item question of structural commitment (ibid). Johnson et al. (1999) explained this non-significant finding on structural commitment might be that participants were staying in stable marriages so that they were less likely to consider structural commitment.

Global commitment, extracted from Rusbult et al.'s (1998) commitment scale, was found correlated with the one item question of personal commitment much more significantly than moral and structural commitment (Johnson et al., 1999). Much more significance was also found in the correlations between global commitment and each component of personal commitment than the correlations between global commitment and each component of moral and structural commitment (ibid). Besides, hierarchical multiple regression showed that the one-item personal commitment or its three components, other than the one-item moral commitment and the one-item structural commitment or their components, explained majority of the variance in global commitment (ibid).

Johnson et al.'s (1999) study also investigated the association between some external variables and each of the three types of commitment. For example, life satisfaction had been found primarily associated with personal commitment and its components, and religiosity had been found primarily associated with moral commitment and its components (ibid).

Consistent with Johnson et al.'s (1999) findings, several other studies have also found the distinction of the three types of commitment and that Rusbult's commitment scale was measuring personal commitment. Stanley and Markman's (1992) factors analysis on 60 items measuring commitment (Commitment Inventory) on a sample with majority married individuals showed that the three factors found through the factor analysis resembled personal, structural and moral commitment, and the relationship satisfaction measured by Marital Adjustment Test (Locke & Wallace, 1959) did not significantly correlate with either items describing structural or moral commitment but significantly and positively correlated with items describing personal commitment, which included "*Couple Identity*" (couple as a whole instead of two individuals), "*Primacy of Relationship*" (the priority of relationship over other things), willingness to sacrifice for the partner, the internal desire to continue a relationship, attitude and ability to commit, and attraction to the partner over alternatives (p. 596). They also found that Rusbult's commitment scale had the strongest significant correlation with the internal desire to continue a relationship, which represented that Rusbult's commitment scale was measuring personal commitment.

Adams and Jones (1997) reviewed the literature of commitment and summarised three categories, which were "devotion to and satisfaction with their partner", "belief in the sanctity of marriage as a sacred institution as well as their personal sense of

obligation to honor their marriage vows”, and “desire to avoid financial or social penalties that might result from divorce or separation” (p. 1171). Then they tested 200 married individuals on items describing these categories and found that these items were well reflected in three factors by factor analysis and that the three categories were separated categories. These three categories strongly reflected Johnson’s three types of commitment (ibid). Adams and Jones (1997) also looked at the correlations of each type of commitment with other scales, and found that Locke and Wallace’s (1959) Marital Adjustment Test, Rusbult’s (1980) commitment scale, and Stanley and Markman’s (1992) scales of the internal desire to continue a relationship, couples identity, primacy of relationship, willingness to sacrifice for the partner, and attraction to the partner over alternatives had significantly stronger correlations with the items on personal aspect of commitment than structural and moral aspects of commitment.

Both Adams and Jones (1997) and Stanley and Markman (1992) have confirmed that Rusbult’s commitment scale was measuring personal commitment, and the factors may contribute to personal commitment were satisfaction, couple identity, attraction to the partner over alternatives, willingness to sacrifice for the partner, and primacy of relationship. The last three factors, namely attraction to the partner over alternatives, willingness to sacrifice for the partner, and primacy of relationship, reflected love in Johnson’s (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) personal commitment.

Lauer and Lauer (1986 as cited in Lauer & Lauer, 2000, p. 20) found that the reasons for unhappy couples to stay in the marriage were moral obligations and children. The unhappiness reflected low satisfaction in Johnson’s personal commitment, the moral obligations reflected in Johnson’s moral commitment, and the reason of children reflected in Johnson’s structural commitment. So Lauer and Lauer’s (1986) research showed that the three types of commitment by Johnson were all important to determine the commitment and stability of a marriage. Lauer and Lauer (1986 as cited in Lauer & Lauer, 2000) also distinguished commitment “to the person” and commitment “to the institution” (p. 238), in which the former reflects Johnson’s personal commitment and the latter reflects moral and structural commitment. Couples who commit to each other, compared with couples who commit to the institution, are likely to commit to work out the conflict instead of avoiding facing the conflict, and therefore are likely to have better relationship qualities (Lauer & Lauer, 2000).

Adams and Jones (1997) found that people in unsatisfying marriages, compared with people in satisfying marriages, felt more constrained in the marriage. This finding

reflects that structural commitment is likely to be more salient to people in unhappy marriages. A study of 13,017 households in the United States by Heaton and Albrecht (1991) also showed that committing to the institution and believing that divorce diminishes happiness predicted staying in unsatisfying marriages. The factors associated with commitment of unsatisfied couples in this study reflected Johnson's moral and structural commitment.

### **3.5 Summary**

In this chapter, relationship quality and commitment have been reviewed. Specifically, important factors contributing to relationship quality and commitment, and the three commitment models.

Love is what people look for in a relationship, the important qualities of a partner, an important aspect of happy relationships, and an important factor for stable relationships. Without love, relationships are likely to be wrecked. Other factors, such as marital cohesion, marital consensus, similarity, moral aspects, collectivism/allocentrism (femininity), and self-perception/partner's perception were also important for happy marriages. Besides, lacks of commitment, having certain undesirable personality traits, having imbalanced gender roles, and lacks of excitement were also undesirable in marriages. Except for love, satisfaction, intimacy, a rewarding relationship, similarity, consensus, affection expression, respect, perceived good social support, constructive interactions and some demographic factors were important factors that could make stable marriages. Similarity is important to draw people together, but greater total rewards in relationships and having the chance to expand the self can also draw people together. For interethnic couples, love seems particularly important.

Levinger (1976) developed three factors for relationship cohesiveness, namely attractiveness, barriers and alternative attraction, and he highlighted that the combination of the three factors could determine relationship cohesiveness. Rusbult (1980a) developed the investment model based on interdependence theory by Kelley and Thibaut (1978) and Thibaut and Kelley (1959). The investment model consisted of satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment level; the relationships between the four variables in the model are: high satisfaction level, low quality of alternatives and high investment size lead to high commitment level (Rusbult, 1980a). Later work by Cox et al. (1997) found that social prescription significantly and

positively correlated with commitment level and accounted for unique variance in predicting commitment level along with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size. Johnson (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) developed three components of commitment, namely personal commitment, moral commitment and structural commitment, and he suggested that structural commitment is only influential when personal or moral commitment is low.

In order to decide which model suits interethnic couples in the current research, an interview study will be carried out based on the investment model, taking into account that this model has been widely used. The next chapter is the pilot interview study, interview study, and the model of commitment that will be chosen for the current research.

## Chapter 4 Interview study and the commitment model

According to the literature that has been reviewed in previous chapters, there is a dearth of research on interethnic relationships, especially Chinese interethnic relationships. To carry out an interview study seems necessary to have more knowledge of these couples.

It has been reviewed in previous chapters that interethnic marriages have a higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages. According to Rusbult's investment model, which has been used most frequently among the three commitment models that have been reviewed, satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size are factors that contributed to commitment level. There was lack of evidence that interethnic relationships' satisfaction levels are lower, qualities of alternatives are higher and investment sizes are lower than those of intraethnic relationships, so the comparison between interethnic and intraethnic relationships may not find significant differences. Therefore only interethnic relationships will be focused in the current study.

However Chinese people in both interethnic and intraethnic relationships will be interviewed in the pilot study, in order to better understand how Chinese people fit in the investment model and how to revise the interview questions. Given the fact that interethnic relationships are not likely to be favoured in the society, which can be a reason for instability of interethnic relationships, Cox et al.'s (1997) investment model which included social prescriptive support will be used.

The interview is aimed to answer the following questions. (i) The investment model has been widely used in the Western world. Does this model fit relationships that include Chinese people? (ii) Cultural difference may be one of the reasons for the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages. But how does culture relate to interethnic relationships? Is it truly difficult to deal with in interethnic relationships? How do the couples deal with it? (iii) Couple cultural identity was proposed to be one of the factors contributing to interethnic couples' commitment. Do these couples agree with this?

In this chapter, all these questions will be answered from interview studies – a pilot interview study and a subsequent interview study. Then the commitment model for Chinese interethnic relationships will be chosen according to the findings of the interview study. Finally components in the chosen commitment model and their

relations with the current research will be looked at for the preparation of the subsequent quantitative study.

#### **4.1 Pilot interview study**

The pilot interview study was aimed to see how Chinese people in intraethnic and interethnic relationships think the factors in the investment model (i.e. how satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and social prescriptive support relate to commitment), what factors they think that could lead to marital satisfaction and commitment, how cultural differences could affect interethnic relationships and how different cultures being balanced, and whether the similarity of couple's cultural values could contribute to interethnic couples' commitment. After the completion of the pilot interview study, unsuitable questions will be revised or deleted, and additional useful questions will be added for the subsequent interview study.

#### **Method**

##### *Participants*

Four Chinese women in romantic relationships were interviewed. Two women partnered with British men and the other two partnered with Chinese men. In both the intraethnic and interethnic relationships, one woman was married and the other one was cohabiting. The durations of the interethnic relationships were 11 years and 6 years; the durations of the intraethnic relationships were 11 years and 5 years. The ages of the participants were ranged from 26 to 62 years old with the mean age of 40 years. The lengths of time that the participants had been living in the United Kingdom were 1 year and 5 years for women in intraethnic relationships, 8 years and 12 years for women in interethnic relationships. Partners in the intraethnic relationships had similar educational levels, whereas both women in the interethnic relationships had higher educational levels than their partner.

##### *Procedure*

Before starting each interview, the participant was thanked and informed the content of the pilot interview, which was "the attitudes toward relationships". Then the

interviewer obtained informed consent from the participant, and reassured that all the answers would be kept strictly confidential and would not be judged by anyone. At the end of each interview, the participant had the chance to talk freely beyond what had have already been answered. Finally, each participant was thanked again for the participation.

Three women (one in an intraethnic relationship and two in interethnic relationships) were interviewed alone – a woman in the intraethnic relationship was interviewed face to face and the two women in interethnic relationships were interviewed by telephone. Another woman who was in an intraethnic relationship was interviewed alone at the beginning then her husband joined in for the last few questions. Each interview lasted from 45 minutes to two hours. After each interview, unsuitable questions were revised for the following interview(s).

### *Interview questions*

The interview was designed as a semi-structured interview. Most questions were adapted from the investment model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998) and acculturation scale (Lee et al., 2003). Other questions consisted of questions on cultural aspects, relationship formation, and background information.

According to the investment model scale, questions on satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives and social prescriptive support were asked, such as “do you think your relationship is better than others’ relationships?”, “please assess your relationship (e.g. satisfied, unsatisfied)”, “do you think it would be better not to be in a relationship?”, “do you feel there are attractive people who may bring you a better relationship than your current one?”, “what do you feel about people’s attitudes toward your relationship, such as people in the society, your friends, and your family respectively?”, “do you believe people that you care about support your relationship?”, and “what people that you care about would do if you tell them that you want to break up with your partner?”. Questions about investment were particularly explored, such as “what do you think about the meaning of ‘investing in a relationship’?”, “what forms of investment have you put into your relationship?”, and “what forms of investment do you think that could make your relationship stable?”. Questions on what factors the participants think that could lead to a satisfactory and committed relationship were also asked.



Questions from the acculturation scale were selected to ask participants in interethnic relationships on how they deal with language and food differences, their similarity of circles of friends, their similarity on attending activities, the extent to which they know about each other's cultures, the Chinese partners' ethnic identities, and the Chinese partners' English media consumption.

Questions for participants in interethnic relationships on how they balance their different cultures, whether they have changed their cultural values after the marriage/cohabitation, whether they have similar cultural values, whether cultural difference is the cause of conflicts, what it would be like if they had married/partnered with someone from the same ethnic group, the reasons that might cause the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriage were asked in order to find out what aspects of culture may lead to commitment for interethnic couples.

Demographic questions such as age, educational level, duration of marriage/cohabitation, number of children, ethnic identity, religion, and social-economic status were asked at the end of the interview.

### *Analysis*

Content analysis will be used to analyse the interviews.

## **Results**

### *How the couple met and the initial attraction*

Three out of four women met their partner as they were both in the same social/professional group; one woman in the interethnic relationship was introduced to her partner by a friend. All the four women described the initial attraction to their partner as their partners' good personality. On the other hand, their husband/partner was attracted to their wife/partner's appearance, kindness and caring. Only one woman in the interethnic relationship said her husband was attracted to her because of her ethnicity which reflects certain favourable characteristics.

### *Commitment level*

All the four women were willing to continue their relationships for a long time. A woman in the interethnic relationship thought herself and her partner would have a better relationship in the future.

### *Satisfaction*

The interviews showed that all the four women were satisfied and happy with their relationships. However, when they were asked whether their relationship was better than others' relationships, only one woman in the intraethnic relationship thought so. The other three women thought there was no difference between their relationship and others' relationships and it was not comparable between relationships.

### *Quality of alternative*

For all the four women, they did not have or did not think about attractive alternatives, nor would they like to stay alone. However, one woman in the interethnic relationship said if she could get the happiness and support from her relatives, she might choose to stay alone, but at the moment she did not get these things from her relatives.

### *Investment size*

Investment, an important term in the investment model, seems to play an important role. However, the four women understood this construct differently, although they all had invested a lot into their relationships. They thought investment as caring for the family, respecting each other, or enhancing one's own knowledge and ability. One of the participants who was in the interethnic relationship thought "investment" indicated that people wanted to get something in return after they have put efforts into their relationships, however people should not ask for anything in return from their relationships. So the questions that included the term "investment" were changed to "putting efforts" for her. Only one participant in the intraethnic relationship thought that material possession was a form of investment. One participant in the interethnic relationship thought that having children was not a form of investment and having children could not make people more committed to the relationship. Three women thought they were enjoying the investment that they had have put into their relationships, so it was not a burden and they would not lose the investment if their relationships were to end. But one woman in the cohabiting interethnic relationship thought she would lose the investment if her relationship were to end. All the four women pointed out that "doing chores", "taking good care of the husband" and "raising the child" were the top three important forms of investment.

### *Social prescriptive support*

All the four women believed that people they cared about supported their relationships and if all these people were not supporting their relationship they would stop their relationships except one woman in the intraethnic relationship who would continue no matter what these people's attitudes were.

When they were asked "what people that you care about would do if you tell them that you want to break up with your partner", most participants said that these people would persuade them to continue but at the same time these people would respect their decision.

### *Society's attitude*

Three women thought people in the British society do not care about their relationships. Two women in interethnic relationships thought their British partner's friends and family did not care about their relationships. One of these two women thought her friends did not care about her relationship, while the other one thought some of her friends supported her relationship and some did not. It seems that British people tended to not judge and comment on others' relationships or they might not have unfavourable opinions of Chinese interethnic relationships.

### *Relations between the variables in the investment model*

In this pilot interview study, all the four women had high satisfaction levels, low quality of alternatives, high investment size and social prescriptive support, and high levels of commitment. So the relations between the social-psychological variables in the investment model (i.e. satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and social prescriptive support) and commitment level for Chinese women in both interethnic and intraethnic relationships tended to be similar as described in the investment model, in which high satisfaction level, low quality of alternatives, high investment size, and high social prescriptive support associated with high commitment level.

### *Factors leading to a happy and stable relationship*

Two women in intraethnic relationships thought that similar values, similar educational levels, similar family background, and caring and understanding for each other were likely to lead to a happy and stable relationship. Whereas two women in

interethnic relationships thought that good personalities and being considerate to each other were likely to lead to a happy and stable relationship. The cohabiting couples both mentioned that no financial pressure and no external troubles were likely to lead to a stable relationship, but none of the married couples mentioned about these.

#### *Acculturation levels in interethnic relationships*

Of the two women in interethnic relationships, one woman was happier than the other one. The happier woman showed a higher level of English fluency, and she tended to have the same food together, have more mutual interests, have more mutual cultural values and attitudes, and have more common social activities with her partner. All of these reflected the woman's higher level of acculturation toward her partner, which might associate with a higher level of relationship quality.

#### *How cultural differences affect interethnic relationships*

The happier woman in the interethnic relationship did not think that any difficulties in her relationship were caused by cultural differences, although she said that she sometimes misunderstood her partner because she was not a native speaker of English. Whereas the other woman thought that she was significantly different in culture with her partner – she had misunderstandings with her partner because of language and culture differences, and almost all of her conflicts with her partner were caused by cultural differences.

#### *How interethnic couples deal with cultural differences*

When the two women in interethnic relationships were asked about how they balance the different cultures in their relationships, one said that she and her partner were open to both cultures and were not stubborn of any particular culture, and the other one said that she had been trying to be closer to British culture as she and her partner were living in the United Kingdom.

#### *Reasons for the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages*

The two women in interethnic relationships thought that the reasons which caused higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages were different cultural backgrounds, different living styles, different attitudes, difficulties in communication, and being less educated.

### *Ethnic identity*

Some researchers found that people in interethnic relationships tended to have less ethnic identity of their own ethnic group (e.g. Lee & Gudykunst, 2001). In this pilot interview study, both women in the interethnic relationship continued identifying themselves as Chinese and their ethnicity identities had not been changed because of their interethnic relationships. However one woman had a strong ethnic identity before entering the relationship and she continued the strong ethnic identity afterwards, the other one did not have a strong ethnic identity before entering the relationship and she continued the low ethnic identity afterwards.

## **Discussion**

This pilot interview study was the first attempt to get to know more about Chinese people in married and cohabiting relationships. Although only four women were interviewed, their answers could help to recognise the changes that need to be done for the following interview study and could represent some of the common trend to some extent.

### *Relationship formation*

This pilot interview study showed that all the four women met their partner in similar ways and they attracted to each other in similar ways too.

### *Satisfaction*

One of the questions to measure satisfaction in Rusbult's investment model scale (Rusbult et al., 1998), "My relationship is much better than others' relationships" (p. 388), might not be able to measure couples' satisfaction, as most women in the pilot interviews thought that relationships were not comparable.

### *The meaning of investment*

Rusbult et al. (1998) defined the investment size as "the magnitude and importance of the resources that are attached to a relationship – resources that would decline in value or be lost if the relationship were to end" (p. 359). However, most women did not think the resources they had put into their relationship would lose if the relationship were to end. Also, one woman pointed out that the term "investment"

would be better to be replaced with “putting efforts”. Therefore further investigation on “investment” is needed to be carried out in the following interview study.

### *Social prescriptive support*

Social prescription, as studied in Cox et al.’s (1997) research, was described as “the belief that significant network members support persisting, for either moral or pragmatic reasons” (p. 82). In the current pilot interview study, most women’s family members were likely to be more supportive than were their friends and other people; and if the women wanted to break up with their partner, people they cared about were likely to help them analyse but not to force them continue. This could probably partly answer the question left in Cox et al.’s (1997) research: 1) whether closer social network is more important than less close social network; 2) whether people’s commitment in a relationship would be influenced by other people’s opinion when they have different opinions. For the first question, the pilot interviews did show the difference between closer social network and less close social network’s level of support for Chinese women. However it may be different for people from a culture, in which people either in closer social networks or less close social networks do not care about others’ relationships. This will be investigated further in the next interview study to see whether culture would influence people’s attitude on others’ relationships. For the second question, all the women except one in the pilot interviews would agree with the opinion from people they cared about if these people did not support their relationship, and these people they cared about would agree with them if they wanted to break up their relationship. It seemed there were less disagreement and more respect between people in the relationship and people they cared about, but the influence of people they cared about were two folded – these people’s opinion might only be influential if they did not support the relationship, and these people’s opinion might not be influential if they supported the relationship while people in the relationship wanted to break up.

Some researchers pointed out that interethnic couples could get less social approval, such as Shibazaki and Brennan (1998) found that interethnic couples had less public approval than intraethnic couples. However, less social approval did not show in the Chinese interethnic relationships in the current sample.

### *Relations between variables in the Investment Model*

It seemed that all the participants in the pilot study had similar satisfaction level, quality of alternative, investment size, social prescriptive support, and commitment level, as they all seemed to be satisfied, have low quality of alternatives, have invested a lot, have high social prescriptive support, and have high commitment levels. So it was not known from this pilot study whether low level of satisfaction, high quality of alternatives, low investment size, or less social prescriptive support associated with low commitment level.

### *Participants' views on factors leading to a happy and stable relationship*

For the factors leading to a happy and stable relationship, participants in intraethnic relationships showed greater concerns on the similarities in educational levels, family background and values; however participants in interethnic relationships showed greater concerns on good personalities and being considerate. External factors were likely to be concerned by cohabiting participants, whereas internal factors, such as similarity and compatible personalities, were more likely to be important for married participants. Interviewing more interethnic couples would likely to show whether it is common that similarities are not important factors for a happy and stable interethnic relationship, and whether external factors are not likely to be concerned by married couples.

### *The influence of culture*

For the two women in interethnic relationships in the pilot interviews, it seemed that cultural factors did have much effect on their commitment, and if couples could be flexible to identify with mutual cultural values, it might help them to have better relationships. According to the reasons that the participants given for the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages, cultural differences, including value differences and lower acculturation levels, were pointed out as one of the reasons. Since the two women were both living in the United Kingdom and had a British partner, acculturation to British culture would mean acculturation to both the culture of their partner and the culture of the society. Whether acculturation to the host culture is more important than acculturation to the culture of the non-Chinese and non-British partner is a question that hopefully will be answered by the next interview study.

### **Planning for the following interview study**

Firstly, according to the pilot interview study, the understandings of the term investment were different from what Rusbult has defined. As this interview study only interviewed Chinese women, it is necessary to find out whether only female participants tended to think the investment like this. So, the male and the non-Chinese partners will also be interviewed in the next interview study to see their attitude towards investment and other factors in the investment model.

Secondly, married couples may have more long-term commitment than cohabiting couples, and breaking up may be harder and more complicated for married couples than for unmarried couples. So the next interview study will be focused on married interethnic couples.

Thirdly, to better understand factors contributing to commitment, several questions such as “what factors would make you want to stay in your marriage/continue your marriage” and “what factors would make you want to break up with your spouse” will be added. Fourthly, to better understand how ethnic differences may affect relationships, questions such as “what are the advantages of having an interethnic relationship”, “what are the disadvantages of having an interethnic relationship”, “what are the advantages of having an intraethnic relationship”, and “what are the disadvantages of having an intraethnic relationship” will be added.

Fifthly, the meaning of “couple cultural identity” and its association with commitment will be directly asked, in order to see whether couples have the same understanding as it was proposed. So, “what do you think about ‘couple cultural identity’”, “do you think having a similar couple cultural identity is important for a satisfied and committed marriage”, “do you think generating a ‘couple cultural identity’ is a form of investment to your marriage” and “do you think you will lose this identity if your marriage were to end” will be added in the next interview study.

Sixthly, to better understand how culture differences may cause interethnic couples’ conflict, the question “are there any conflicts were caused by cultural differences” will be added in case the participants do not mention any cultural difference in their marriage.

Finally, the order of the questions will be changed slightly. Questions related to culture will be asked at the end and before the demographic questions.



## 4.2 Interview Study

Based on and improved from the previous pilot interview study, this interview study has been carried out on Chinese interethnic married couples to investigate firstly whether Rusbult's investment model (Cox et al., 1997) can be applied to Chinese interethnic married couples. Specifically, whether their satisfaction levels, quality of alternatives, investment size, and social prescriptive support are factors that associate with their commitment. Secondly, given the salient cultural difference between people from different ethnic groups and the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples, how cultural differences may affect such relationships and how "couple cultural identity" may associate with commitment will be investigated.

### *Reasons to study Chinese interethnic marriages in the United Kingdom*

Interethnic marriages are more and more common and fast growing (Alouise, 1998; National Statistics, 2005; Lee & Edmonston, 2005). Among all the interethnic marriages, Asian (originally from/descendant of Asian countries) interethnic marriages was outnumbered than other ethnic groups' interethnic marriages (e.g. U.S. Bureau of the Census, 2012a; Phoenix & Owen, 1996). However, little is known of interethnic marriages, especially Chinese interethnic marriages. Besides, Chinese ethnic group in the United Kingdom is growing rapidly (Owen, 1994; National Statistics, 2004), but there has been lacking of studies on this ethnic group and studies of Chinese interethnic marriages in the United Kingdom.

Researchers have found that the divorce rate of interethnic marriages was higher than intraethnic marriages (e.g. Bramlett & Mosher, 2002; Schwertfeger, 1982). The most notable research was by Schwertfeger (1982), who found in a longitudinal research across nine years in Hawaii that the divorce rate of Chinese interethnic couples was higher than Chinese intraethnic couples (there was no Chinese intraethnic marriage ended in divorce) and the divorce rate of Chinese interethnic marriages was as high as the overall interethnic divorce rate. However there was no empirical study on the reasons that cause less stability of interethnic marriages.

### *Factors that may associate with stability*

Rusbult's (1980) investment model may be able to answer the question of what associate with stability. The original investment model suggested that satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size predicted commitment level, and the later work by Cox et al. (1997) added moral and social prescriptive support to this model and found the significance of social prescriptive support along with satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size in predicting commitment level. However the investment model has only been tested on people in intraethnic close relationships across several cultures (e.g. Van Lange et al., 1997; Davis & Strube, 1993; Lin & Rusbult, 1995) but has never been tested on interethnic couples, and has not been tested much on married couples and couples from non-Western cultures.

As cultural difference between partners exists in most interethnic marriages, cultural aspects may count for interethnic relationships' stability. According to the literature and the pilot interview study, how to solve cultural differences may play a vital role in interethnic marriages and may influence the decision to continue or dissolve a marriage. So, couple cultural identity has been proposed to contribute to interethnic couples' commitment. Couple cultural identity was defined as a set of cultural values that the partners both follow, and the "cultural values" in this definition does not necessarily mean a set of cultural values from a particular culture, it can be a set of mixed cultural values. However these ideas will be investigated in the interview study.

### *Aims of the interview study*

The first aim of the interview study was to find out the factors contributing to commitment for interethnic couples. Specifically, whether the investment model can be applied to Chinese/non-Chinese interethnic couples living in the United Kingdom, and what are the couples' opinions on the factors contributing to commitment. So, questions on 1) interethnic couples' attitudes about their relationship satisfaction, quality of alternatives, investment and social prescriptive support, and 2) factors that could make them commit to their marriage will be asked.

The second aim of the interview study was to know the role of culture in interethnic marriages. Specifically, how cultural aspects affect interethnic marriages, how couples think about the new construct "couple cultural identity", whether forming a couple cultural identity is a factor contributing to commitment, how culture acts in the marriages (i.e. positively/negatively), and whether cultural difference associate with the

less stability of interethnic marriages. So questions on 1) how cultural aspects (language, food, religion, etc.) and cultural differences influence the marriage, and how couples balance different cultures, 2) couples' understandings on "couple cultural identity" and whether this factor is important to have a satisfied and committed marriage, 3) couples' opinions about the advantage/disadvantage of interethnic and intraethnic marriages, and 4) reasons of the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples will be asked.

## **Method**

### *Participants*

Participants were recruited from personal contact. All the participants were asked to approach or recruit other eligible couples (snowball method) in the United Kingdom.

Ten married couples (eight couples and two wives) were interviewed. The oldest husband was 62 years old and the youngest 38 years old ( $M = 50.9$ ,  $SD = 8.48$ ); the oldest wife was 61 years old and the youngest 38 years old ( $M = 46.4$ ,  $SD = 6.96$ ). The average length of their marriages was 10 years ( $SD = 5.16$ ). Among the 10 married couples, eight couples were composed of a British husband and a Chinese wife, one couple was composed of a Northern American husband and a Chinese wife, and one couple was composed of a Chinese husband and a European wife. All the wives were immigrants to the United Kingdom and their lengths of residence in this country were ranged from 1 year to 40 years ( $M = 14.33$ ,  $SD = 11.83$ ). Six couples did not have any child; one couple had one child; two couples had two children; one couple had three children. Seven men and five women were in their first marriage; two men and five women were in their second marriage; one man was in his third marriage. All the 10 couples considered themselves as middle class. For the couples that composed of a non-Chinese husband and a Chinese wife, except one couple, the wife's family's (back in their country) socio-economic status was equal to or higher than their husband's. Eight women's educational levels were equal to or higher than their husband's and all the 10 women had higher education qualifications while not all the husbands had higher education qualifications. Seven men and six women did not have any religion, three men and four women were Christians. All the participants considered themselves as belonging to the ethnic group that they were originally from, and their marriages did not change their ethnic identities.

### *Procedure and design*

Before starting each interview, the participant was thanked and informed the content of the interview, which was “the attitudes toward relationships”. Then the interviewer obtained informed consent from the participant, and reassured that all the answers would be kept strictly confidential and would not be judged by anyone. At the end of each interview, the participant had the chance to talk freely beyond what had have already been answered. Finally, each participant was thanked again for the participation.

For each couple, the husband and the wife were interviewed separately and they were asked not to discuss their interview with each other until both of them have completed the interviews. The participants were free to choose the language (i.e. English or Chinese) that they were most familiar with for the interview. One couple and one woman were interviewed face to face, and the remaining seven couples and one woman were interviewed through telephone. The durations of the interviews were ranged from 45 minutes to 90 minutes for each participant. After the completion of the interviews, they were all transcribed, and the Chinese interviews were translated into English for analysis.

### *Interview questions (see APPENDIX 1)*

The interview was designed as a semi-structured interview. Questions were adapted from the pilot interview study, plus some additional questions.

The first set of questions was on commitment. Based on the investment model scale, questions on satisfaction, investment, quality of alternatives and social prescriptive support were asked, such as “do you think your marriage is better than others’ marriages?”, “do you feel there are attractive people who may bring you a better relationship than your current one?”, “do you believe people that you care about support your relationship?”. Questions about investment were particularly explored, such as “what do you think about the meaning of ‘investing in a relationship’?”, “what forms of investment have you put into your relationship?”, and “what forms of investment do you think that could make your relationship stable?”. “What factors would make you want to stay in your marriage/continue your marriage” and “what factors would make you want to break up with your spouse” were also asked.

The second set of questions was on the role of culture. Questions from the acculturation scale, such as language proficiency and food preference were asked. How

interethnic couples balance their different cultures, whether they have changed their cultural values after their marriage, whether they have similar cultural values, and some other questions on this topic were asked. Besides, “what are the advantages/disadvantages of having an interethnic marriage”, and “what are the advantages/disadvantages of having an intraethnic marriage” were also asked.

The third set of questions was on couple cultural identity. The questions “what do you think about ‘couple cultural identity’”, “do you think having a similar couple cultural identity is important for a satisfied and committed marriage”, “do you think generating a ‘couple cultural identity’ is a form of investment to your marriage”, and “do you think you will lose this identity if your marriage were to end” were asked.

The final set of questions was on demographic questions. Age, educational level, number of previous marriage(s), duration of marriage, number of children, ethnic identity, religion, and social-economic status were asked.

All the interviews started with some easy questions, such as “how did you meet husband/wife”, “what attracted you initially to your husband/wife”, “would you like to tell me any happy memories in your marriage?”, to break the ice and to help the participants relax. Then questions on acculturation and the investment model were asked. Questions on how culture and couple cultural identity affect the relationship were asked at the end and before the final demographic questions in the interview.

### *Analysis*

Thematic analysis will be used to analyse the interviews. Answers from the participants will be read and re-read to extract themes both explicit (what the participants have said) and implicit (what the participants did not say).

## **Results**

The themes emerged from the interviews by thematic analysis are listed as follows. All the themes can be grouped into four categories, which are relationship formation themes, themes of the Investment Model variables, couple cultural identity themes, and interethnic and intraethnic marriage themes.

## Relationship formation themes

*Met each other through personal social networks.* Majority of the couples met each other through their personal social networks, such as through friends, being colleagues, through social activities. However with the emergence of World Wide Web, there were two couples knew each other through internet.

*Initially attracted to each other's good characteristics and similarities as well as differences.* The good characteristics mentioned by the participants were good personality, good communication, good physical appearance, good friendship, and interesting characteristics. The similarities mentioned by the participants were similar values, interest and goals. About a third of the participants mentioned about the attraction that came from differences, such as "his difference attracted me a lot", "his cultural background", and "her first email is very difference from the norm".

*Appreciation of interethnic marriage and spouse's culture.* Throughout the interview, most participants expressed the appreciation and preference of interethnic marriage over intraethnic marriage and the appreciation of their spouse's culture. For example, a non-Chinese husband appreciated the benefit of Chinese collectivistic cultural on his relationship and said this "may not happen if it hadn't been a mixed cultural relationship". A wife had a strong view that men from her own ethnic group would not appreciate her. Another wife mentioned that men from her own ethnic group would not do certain things that she liked and she thought that her interethnic marriage was definitely better than intraethnic marriages of her own ethnic group. A Chinese wife expressed her liking of westerners and the attractiveness of interethnic relationships, and she thought that "marrying a Chinese will not bring a better marriage". A Chinese wife, a non-Chinese wife, a non-Chinese husband expressed that it would be worse in an intraethnic marriage. A non-Chinese husband commented on the cultural difference between spouses as "opposite often attracts". A non-Chinese husband felt a different culture always "appealed" to him, he did like and understand some Chinese mentality, and he would be very "sad" if he married intraethnically as he would miss a lot of the interestingness. A Chinese wife said although an intraethnic marriage could be easy but it might not work. There was a couple who liked each other's cultures and the non-Chinese husband attracted by Chinese culture more than his own culture, appreciated her wife being "totally Chinese" instead of westernised Chinese. A Chinese wife showed her interest to know more about his husband's culture.

## Themes of the Investment Model variables

*Love and moral aspects are important factors leading to commitment.* Love was the most frequently mentioned by the participants as an important factor for a committed marriage, such as love, care, trust, forgiveness, and respect. Love and emotional support were also frequently mentioned forms of effort that could contribute to commitment. Moral aspects were also frequently mentioned as an important factor for a committed marriage, such as loyalty, faithfulness, and personal belief that marriage should be a life time commitment. Other aspects such as spending time for the family and satisfaction (such as happiness, togetherness, and satisfied housework share) were also mentioned as factors for commitment. Some participants mentioned that responsibility for the children could contribute to commitment.

There was an unsatisfied participant who had a high level of commitment, not because the quality of alternatives was low, the social prescriptive support was high, and the investment size was high. There was another committed participant with high quality of alternatives and low satisfaction level, who maintained the marriage not because the investment size was high and the social prescriptive support was high. Their reasons for commitment were love, moral beliefs, and responsibility for the children.

The importance of love and moral aspects for commitment also reflected in the factors for breaking up. Cease of love and infidelity were the most frequently mentioned factors for breaking up.

*Committed and satisfied couples do not look for alternatives.* All the participants were committed to their marriage either personally or morally, and none of the participants thought there were attractive people who might bring a better relationship than their current one. Most participants thought that once they entered a marriage, they would stop looking for or thinking of potential alternatives, or they believed that attractive people would not necessarily bring them a better relationship. Only one participant in an unsatisfied but committed marriage thought that being alone could be an option, however this participant's moral beliefs and responsibility for the children made being alone impossible.

*Togetherness, similarity, and consensus are factors leading to satisfaction.* Most participants thought that the factors for a satisfactory marriage were doing things together, having similar values, having similar attitude, having similar goals, and agreeing on majority of things. Some participants thought that understanding, good communication, novelty, and sexual aspects were also important for satisfaction.

*Not comparing with others' marriages.* Majority of the participants were satisfied and happy with their marriage and thought their marriage was close to ideal. Most participants said they did not compare or could not compare with others' marriages. One participant in a very satisfied marriage said, "it is difficult to compare across marriages.....each person has a different marriage, because the dynamic". Another participant in a very satisfied marriage thought different people have different requirements for the marriage, so marriages are not comparable.

*Investment is a form of effort and will not lose if marriage were to end.* Most participants were not clear about the meaning of the term investment. After prompting, most of them agreed on "making effort in a relationship" or "contributing to a relationship" to describe investment. Almost all the participants were willing and happy to make these effort and contribution to their relationship, and these effort were not burdens and not costly. Most participants thought that investment means getting profit from what one had put into the relationship and it was a financial term, however relationships should not be like the investment and making effort for the relationship was more of a responsibility. For example, a participant pointed out that all the efforts that had been made for the marriage were done out of love, so these efforts were not investment. Another participant expressed that "'investment' imply for return, that's not a good attitude; you don't love someone and expect them to love you back, that is not real love" and "if you are happily, naturally and spontaneously doing these to someone you love, it's not investment at all". Material things were seldom mentioned as a form of investment. Despite the different understandings of investment, all the participants had made a lot of effort for their marriage.

Most participants said that they would not lose their investment if their marriage were to end. Among the remaining participants who thought that their investment would lose, most thought that they would not regret it or it would not be a big deal for them. The explanations of why most participants would not lose the investment if their marriage were to end are as follows:

"I get the pleasure of that time.....it is a part of experience"; "I make effort and he makes effort as well"; "I enjoy doing it and it's not a burden"; "you need to start again..... I don't feel sad and see the investment as a loss"; "if our marriage end, I'll still be there if she needs support"; "you are willing to do those things and you are willing to give"; "investment is a financial term, I don't think relationships in this way"; "I won't lose the time we spent together; it's good experience".



*Love and satisfaction instead of investment were effort for commitment.* Instead of investment, love and satisfaction were the frequently mentioned effort leading to commitment. One participant expressed that none of the investment could affect the marriage.

*Sufficient social prescriptive support.* Majority of the participants believed that people they cared about supported their relationship, and the rest of the participants did not care whether people they cared about supported their relationship. For example, one participant said her friends thought her marriage was not their business. Another participant said that “I don’t care and they don’t care too”. One participant thought the parents did not fully support, but this participant did not agree with the parents’ opinion on the marriage although this participant cared about the parents.

For most of the participants, people they cared about would persuade them to continue if they wanted to end the marriage, a proportion of participants’ significant social network members would not interfere with their decision of ending the marriage, and the rest participants did not know these people’s reactions.

*Accepted by the British society.* Most participants thought that the British society had positive attitude towards their interethnic marriage and a smaller proportion of participants did not know or care about the society’s attitude. However one participant, who had been living in the United Kingdom for over 40 years, pointed out strangers might have negative attitude towards their interethnic marriage, and they thought that they were not suitable for each other and their marriage did not have love and trust. Some participants ascribed the acceptance of interethnic relationships to the current large number of interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom, whereas interethnic relationships were less accepted 20 years ago when there were not many interethnic relationships.

#### Couple cultural identity themes

##### 1. Cultural differences themes

*The existence of cultural difference.* Majority of the participants thought that they were culturally different from their spouse. When participants were asked to list the reasons for the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages, most frequently and the first mentioned reason was cultural/value differences that could not be resolved. Some participants emphasised that cultural difference was huge and some participants thought that cultural difference affected their marriage. Some participants mentioned about the

cultural difference that reflected individualism and collectivism difference was the biggest one. For example, the different closeness between friends in different cultures reflected the loose ties between friends in individualistic cultures and tight ties and loyalty between friends in collectivistic cultures, the difference between independent and interdependent self, and self-centredness in individualistic cultures and considering others and emphasising virtues in collectivistic cultures. Individualism and collectivism difference was also reflected in childrearing. For example, one participant had very different views from the spouse on how to raise their child, which could lead to divorce. The different views on how to raise the child reflected freedom in individualistic cultures and obedience to authority in collectivistic cultures.

*Dealing cultural difference by following a mixture of both spouses' cultures.* The couples tended to have mixed cultural values based on the values which were reasonable and agreed by both spouses, or religious values. The couples either followed one culture, or compromised, mixed with, respected, accepted/embraced, and learned from the other culture. Most of the participants were following a mixture of both cultures in their marriage. For example, one participant said the English spouse adopted some Chinese culture and the Chinese spouse adopted some English culture and it is a mixed culture in the marriage. Another participant described: "we are on some middle island between two cultures.....you can both look into each other's world.....it's mixed and cross over two cultures, not divide".

*Dealing cultural difference by learning/changing to the spouse's culture and love.* There were some common ways to deal with cultural difference. First, most participants mentioned love the spouse and spouse's culture, which included understanding, compromise, and acceptance. Second, some participants mentioned to learn and/or change to the spouse's culture.

*Different communication in interethnic relationships.* The communication in interethnic relationships can be quite different from that in intraethnic relationships, due to language differences. For example, an English husband thought "Chinese language is completely different from European languages", and in order to fully understand each other, "you cannot just talk to each other; you have to explain lots of things to each other".

*Balanced view of cultural similarities and differences.* Couples who are satisfied with their marriage tended to have a balanced view of their cultural similarities and differences. For example, satisfied couples talked about the similarities as well as

differences throughout the interview. However, for all the unsatisfied couples, cultural similarities were seldom mentioned and cultural differences negatively affected their marriages.

*Cultural difference can be in conjunction with personality and gender difference.* Several participants mentioned about the difference on the attitude, such as attitude towards time and money, that affected the marriage, however this difference can be partly due to culture and partly due to personality. Some other cultural differences can be partly due to gender difference.

## 2. Acculturation to the spouse themes

*Improved language skills after marriage.* English was the main language of communication for all the couples. For the spouses whose native languages were not English, they all had have improved a great deal of English after marriage and majority of them spoke fluent English. However some of them pointed out the language barriers, as their English could not be the same as English native speakers even if they had have made much effort to learn the language. According to these participants, the language barriers could affect communication in their marriage. For example, a Chinese wife said “I cannot express completely what I really want to say”.

*Having mixed food together.* Majority of the couples had the same mixture of food together to accommodate each other’s different cultural dietary. The only one couple who mostly had different food together understood each other’s different dietary needs, although occasionally the wife accommodated the husband to have western food together.

*Having mutual friends from diverse background.* Among all the 10 couples, the husband’s friends were also the wife’s friends and vice versa. Most couples had friends from different cultures, and the rest had either higher percentage of Chinese friends or higher percentage of English friends. Quite a few couples had friends who were also in interethnic relationships.

*Making effort to know the spouse’s culture.* Most participants expressed their effort to know their spouse’s culture. Half of the participants knew a lot about their spouse’s culture, and for the rest who only knew some or little of their spouse’s culture, most of them had been making effort to know more. Some of the techniques to learn about the other culture were learning the language, history, and culture. Some participants made effort to introduce their culture to their spouse, which helped their spouse gain more knowledge of the culture. For example, a Chinese wife had been

patiently listening to her husband talking about English history and culture and she also watched TV on these topics. A non-Chinese husband thought learning another culture is a “wonderful thing”.

*The importance of knowing each other's cultures.* A British husband pointed out that he was attracted to his Chinese wife partly because she was “interested in finding out about things in Britain” than most of the Chinese he previously met. A Chinese wife expressed her expectation of her husband to know more about Chinese culture so that he could understand more of her. A British husband pointed out that “not understanding the other one's culture” is a factor that could make him divorce his wife.

### 3. Couple cultural identity themes

*The existence of difficulties on acculturation and individualism/collectivism in interethnic marriages.* Examples are given as follows, and the reflections in acculturation and/or individualism/collectivism were marked in brackets.

“A lot of cultural background differences, language barriers. so (we) cannot talk very deeply and cannot communicate our in-depth thinking, (we) only talk about the trivial things in life” (acculturation); “you don't fully understand what each other are saying” (acculturation and individualism/collectivism); “greater likelihood of misunderstanding simply from linguistic difficulties if two people got different first languages” (acculturation); “it's difficult to mix with the two families – if our families are from the same ethnic group, it's easy, we know what we expect.....there will be frictions and arguments on how to raise the child” (individualism/collectivism); “lots of problems with expectations of the (spouse's) family” (acculturation); “it takes more effort to understand the behaviours because the way they were brought up in different cultures” (individualism/collectivism); “two different people live together, that is difficult enough; with two different cultures, (and) you try to merge one life style, that is hard work.....unless you prepare to commit and have certain level of sacrifice, (otherwise) that's not going to work” (acculturation and individualism/collectivism); “like and dislike in taste” (acculturation); “different opinions because of different upbringing” (individualism/collectivism); “at the beginning (of our marriage), there were different values and attitudes, and our expectations were not met.....we need to take time to solve these differences, and if we cannot make it, then there would be difficulties” (individualism/collectivism).

*The necessity for interethnic couples to develop couple cultural identity.*  
Throughout the interview, most participants implicitly talked about the necessity of

developing couple cultural identity. Examples such as wishing the spouse to know more about one's culture, compromising, changing towards spouse's culture, adjusting oneself for another, growing similar cultural values and attitudes over time, and stressing the importance of same religious belief in developing similar cultural values. One participant pointed out that spouses in interethnic marriages would lose their cultures as time went on, which reflected the development of couple cultural identity from another angle. Some others mentioned cultural differences could lead to breaking up.

*Couple cultural identity is important for interethnic marriages and it is unconsciously developed.* The participants' understandings of the newly created variable "couple cultural identity" were investigated. Almost all the participants agreed on the definition "a set of cultural values that the partners both follow", and their own understandings of this variable were very similar. Examples of their understandings were: "both the partners agree that this is what we are doing as a couple", "husband and wife follow the same principles", "what both the partners mainly follow", "it'd be very difficult for each member of the couple pursue its own culture, I think somehow they do have a joint cultural identity", "two people develop their own culture within their relationship", and "if the two people [in the marriage] still have two separate cultural identity, then it's not successful". Almost all the participants believed that having couple cultural identity was important for a satisfied and committed marriage. Almost all of the participants thought that generating couple cultural identity was a form of effort for their marriage and couple cultural identity was generated unconsciously.

For the only a few childless couples who did not think developing couples cultural identity was important, cultural difference did pose problems in their marriages. They either accepted each other as individuals and accepted each other's differences, or denied cultural difference. These strategies reflected individualistic characteristics and independent selves of both spouses.

*Having child(ren) increases the need for interethnic couples to develop couple cultural identity.* Although majority of participants believed the importance of developing couple cultural identity in their marriage, having children could increase the need of this identity and marriage could be difficult without such identity. For example, an unsatisfied participant who did not develop much of couple cultural identity said, "we began to have more and more conflict after having children", and expressed that if they had couple cultural identity, their marriage would not end. Another unsatisfied

participant expressed that more commitment would be in their marriage if they had not have children. One couple who did not think developing couple cultural identity was necessary expressed the difficulty they would have if they had children. One Chinese participant said that the different ways of raising children is quite significant in different cultures, and since they did not have children, cultural difference did not strongly affect their marriage. At the same time, satisfied couples had successfully developed couple cultural identity in childrearing. For example, one participant said “there are lots of cultural differences on educating our children, but we can both see the advantages of each other’s cultures (on childrearing); my partner changes a lot to me on educating our children”.

*More effort is needed for interethnic marriages compared to intraethnic marriages.* All the participants believed that marriage itself needed lots of effort, and interethnic marriages needed more effort. For example, a Chinese wife said “if two different people live together, that is difficult enough; with two different cultures, you try to merge one life style, that is hard work”. The frequently mentioned extra effort was taking time to communicate in order to understand due to cultural difference. Language difference could also contribute to the extra more time to explain things. Besides, having family across continents could be difficult and needed more effort as well.

Some participants expressed the difficulty in communication. For example, a Chinese wife thought that “communication is not just about language” and although she spoke fluent English, she felt the way she expressed herself was very different from her husband. An English husband said “you cannot just talk to each other, you have to explain lots of things to each other”, but sometimes he could not quite explain, and sometimes he forgot his wife was a Chinese so he spoke to his wife as if she were an English. A Chinese wife said her husband’s “way of thinking” was different from her, so they had to work hard to communicate, which could be tiring.

Some participants described the more complicated nature of interethnic marriages. For example, an English husband said interethnic marriages had “additional complication of the cultural difference”, which made the situation more complicated. Another English husband said “I always fall back into English way which my wife doesn’t understand that and she falls back into Chinese way which I don’t understand”. Still, another English husband felt that members of interethnic marriages needed to be patient with each other’s cultures and find out “what behind that difference”, “rather than judging different opinions”.

*The necessity of immigrant spouses to change to the host culture.* A lot of immigrant spouses, mostly women, were likely to change to fit into the host culture, where their spouse came from.

Several couples said they follow the host culture because they were residing there. For example, an English husband said that “what is important for our relationship is that she learns and understands English culture as we were chosen to live here”. Another English husband said that he would follow English culture in the United Kingdom but would follow Chinese culture in China. A Chinese wife expressed the need to follow English cultural as she was residing in the United Kingdom. An English husband expressed the difficulty to learn Chinese culture as he was surrounded by English culture.

Also, spouses from the host culture might not perceive the cultural difference as much as their immigrant spouse does; hence they were less likely to change towards their spouse’s culture. For example, a Chinese wife thought cultural difference existed in and affected their marriage and made it difficult to “fit into each other’s life styles”, but her husband did not think they were culturally different from each other and he perceived his wife as “very English” and coming from the same ethnicity as himself. This Chinese wife revealed the underlying reason that because she was in a foreign land, she could sense more of the prominence of cultural difference than her husband, who was in his homeland, did. Besides, individualists may perceive other people as individuals no matter how much different culture they have, and hence may perceive less cultural difference than collectivists (i.e. mostly immigrants in this study) do.

#### Interethnic and intraethnic marriage themes

*Novelty and personal growth in interethnic marriages.* Most participants expressed that interethnic marriages could bring much novelty and personal growth. For instance, interethnic marriages could make life more interesting and never boring, allow the chance of experiencing another culture and learning the best part of both culture, bring chance to meet new friends and travel around, and allow personal growth. On the contrary, intraethnic marriages were described as less interesting and having less chance to grow.

## Discussion

### *Relationship formation*

The Chinese interethnic married couples met each other and attracted to each other in a quite common fashion as any married couples. For example the participants met their spouse through their personal social networks and attracted by the spouse's good characteristics and similarities.

Most participants expressed their strong appreciation of interethnic marriages and their spouse's different culture. These reflected the interethnic couples' positive attitude towards interethnic marriages rather than intraethnic marriages.

### *The Investment Model*

In this interview study, a question for satisfaction in Rusbult's investment model scale, "my relationship is much better than others' relationships" (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 388), had a similar result as in the pilot interview study. Most of the participants, including very satisfied individuals, did not compare or thought that marriages were not comparable. It seems that this question may not be able to reflect individual's satisfaction level.

Rusbult and colleagues (1998) defined investment size as "the magnitude and importance of the resources that are attached to a relationship – resources that would decline in value or be lost if the relationship were to end" (p. 359). Investment was also explained as:

"as a relationship develops, partners invest many resources directly into their relationship in the hope that doing so will improve it ..... some investments are indirect, and come into existence when originally extraneous resources such as mutual friends, personal identity, children, or shared material possessions become attached to a relationship ..... the act of investment increases the costs of ending a relationship....." (ibid. p. 359)

This interview study showed that investment was not considered as an appropriate term to describe individual's effort and contribution to the marriage, and these effort and contribution might not be lost if the marriage were to end. Majority of the participants were enjoying making these effort and contribution, and these effort and contribution were not costly for them. These findings showed that what the couples had put into their relationship might not raise "the costs of ending a relationship" (Rusbult et



al., 1998, p. 359), and most of the couples made these effort and contribution as a responsibility or out of love, instead of hoping to improve the relationship. Even if divorce would occur, most of the participants did not feel their investment would be lost. These attitudes towards investment were very different from Rusbult's (1980; Rusbult et al., 1998) definition of investment. Possible explanations could be related to the different relationship status of the participants, as studies of Rusbult's investment model were mostly conducted on dating relationships, while married couples were studied in the current study. People in dating relationships may think that investment and the relationship between investment and commitment are very important, as they may not have long-term commitments and responsibility to make effort and contribution in their relationships. Therefore according to the current study, investment size may not be appropriate and may not be an important factor contributing to commitment in Chinese interethnic married couples.

For the variable "social prescriptive support", the participants either thought that they were supported even if they were thinking of divorce, or did not care about others' opinions of their relationship. None of the participants thought of anything related to social prescriptive support that would make them more or less committed. However moral prescriptive support was frequently pointed out as one of the reasons for the less satisfied couples to continue the relationship. The interethnic couples could have overcome the negative opinion from other people before getting married, by associating with people who supported their marriage (e.g. other interethnic couples), caring less about other people's opinions, or using other methods. These are similar as what Chan and Wethington (1998) had suggested: married interethnic couples might have the ability of successful dealing with oppositions from the society and the family. So "social prescriptive support" may not be an important factor that contributes to commitment of married interethnic couples.

The participants either felt positive attitude from the society towards their interethnic relationships, or did not know or care about the society's attitude, except one of the Chinese participants who had been living in the United Kingdom for a very long time felt negative attitude from the society. It seemed that Chinese interethnic couples did not have much trouble with the British society as Black/White couples with the American society. However the present positive attitude towards Chinese interethnic couples might not be the same as in the past when there were not many Chinese interethnic couples, as the participant who had been living in the United Kingdom for a

very long time still felt about people's negative attitude towards Chinese interethnic couples. The scarcity of interethnic relationships might associate with people's negative attitude and curiosity towards such relationships, as one of the British participants pointed out that there were not many interethnic marriages and people had negative attitude towards such relationships 20 years ago, "but things has changed a lot in this country (i.e. United Kingdom).....for western people it's not a big deal at all on mixed couples as there's a lot (such couples).....but in China, mixed couples are minorities..... we get more curious look from Chinese people".

Rusbult's (1980) investment model suggested that satisfaction level, quality of alternatives and investment size predicted commitment level and the later work by Cox et al.(1997) added moral and social prescriptive support to this model and found that social prescriptive support along with satisfaction, quality of alternatives and investment size significantly predicted commitment level. However the interview study on 10 Chinese/non-Chinese marriages does not fully support this model.

Firstly, the participants had different opinions on the term investment. As has been described above, most Chinese interethnic married couples did not like to use this term, and they did not think all the effort and contribution that had been put into the marriage would be lost if the marriage were to end. This main term/concept in the investment model seemed not plausible by Chinese interethnic married couples.

Secondly, there was a trend for satisfied or morally committed couples not to look for alternative others and not wanting to be alone. This reflected Johnson's (1991) commitment framework, in which structural commitment, such as alternatives, is not influential if personal commitment, such as satisfaction, or moral commitment is high. Therefore quality of alternatives may be influential only to couples who have low personal or moral commitment.

Finally, the committed couples who were unsatisfied and had an attractive alternative of being alone, love, moral beliefs, and responsibility for the children were mentioned as the reasons for their commitment, instead of high investment size and high social prescriptive support. For example, an unsatisfied participant maintained a high level of commitment not because the quality of alternatives was low, social prescriptive support was high, and investment size was high, but because of love and the moral beliefs of continuing the marriage. Responsibility for the children was not treated by the participants as a form of investment, so responsibility for the children might be the moral belief that parents should be responsible for their children. Besides,

love and moral beliefs were mentioned frequently by the participants as the factors leading to commitment. Therefore love and moral beliefs are likely to be the factors that associate with commitment.

#### *Factors leading to a satisfactory and stable relationship*

The participants frequently emphasised similarities and consensus for a satisfactory marriage. Considering the factors leading to commitment and the factors leading to breaking up said by the participants, love, moral aspects (e.g. loyalty, faithfulness, and responsibility) and satisfaction were frequently mentioned as factors leading to commitment; cease to love and immoral aspects (i.e. infidelity) were frequently mentioned as factors leading to breaking up. Therefore, love and moral aspects may also be important factors leading to commitment beyond satisfaction.

There was a participant expressed that unbearable cultural differences would be one of the reasons to break up the marriage, however this was not mentioned by other participants. It is possible that other participants either did not have unresolved cultural difference or did not aware of cultural differences simply because the question was asked at the beginning of the interviews and before the questions on cultural differences. When questions on couple cultural identity and reasons of higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages were asked at the end of the interviews, participants might begin to recognise that culture could associate with commitment. Therefore, cultural differences may also be a factor leading to commitment for Chinese interethnic couples.

#### *Couple cultural identity*

Majority of the participants thought that they were culturally different from their spouse. Although some of the participants did not think that cultural differences caused any difficulties in their marriage, when they were asked the reasons for the higher divorce rate of interethnic couples, almost all the participants pointed out things related to “cultural differences” as the first reason. Therefore cultural difference may be difficult but important for the commitment of Chinese interethnic couples, and if couples cannot solve cultural difference problems, it might cause friction. However, cultural difference sometimes is in conjunction with personality and gender difference.

Communication problems and cultural difference, especially individualism and collectivism difference, were frequently mentioned by the participants. Communication problems reflected acculturation (e.g. language fluency, knowledge of spouse’s culture).

However culture is like a two-edged sword, as cultural differences could also make the relationship more exiting and give individuals more chance for personal growth.

Most of the participants solved and balanced their cultural differences by following a mixture of both spouses' cultures, including learning/changing to the spouse's culture and love the spouse and the spouse's culture. All the participants in the current study tended to acculturate to the spouse, such as communicating in the same language, having mixed food together, having similar friends, making effort to introduce own culture to the spouse and to know the spouse's culture, and having similar religious belief.

The participants who were satisfied with their marriage tended to have a balanced view of cultural similarities and differences. However, unsatisfied participants seldom mentioned cultural similarities and their marriages were negatively affected by cultural difference. These echo Falicov's (1995, p. 233-234) idea on healthy "balanced view" and unhealthy "unbalanced view", in which "balanced view" means interethnic couples do not maximise/minimise their cultural differences and do not maximise/minimise their cultural similarities, and "unbalanced view" means interethnic couples maximise or minimise their cultural difference.

Difficulties on acculturation and individualism/collectivism, the two aspects of couple cultural identity, seem to exist in interethnic marriages. Most of the participants in the interview study agreed with the definition of couple cultural identity that was developed for the current research, and they thought couple cultural identity was an important factor for a committed marriage and would be lost if the marriage were to end. Although happy and satisfied couples did not feel there were cultural problems in their marriages, they either had similar cultural values or they unconsciously changed towards a similar couple cultural identity. Therefore couple cultural identity may be one of the factors that associate with commitment for Chinese interethnic married couples, and couple cultural identity has two aspects: a set of similar cultural values between spouses and acculturating towards the spouse.

Besides, having child(ren) seemed to increase the need for interethnic couples to develop couple cultural identities, and immigrant spouses tended to change to the host culture. Since women were likely to be the immigrant spouse in interethnic marriages, women were likely to change to the host culture. Immigrant spouses also found cultural difference more prominent than their spouse from the host culture did.

## Conclusion

Two main questions have been investigated by this interview study on Chinese interethnic married couples. The first one is whether Rusbult's investment model can be applied to Chinese interethnic married couples. It was found that 1) investment had been treated as inappropriate and was not likely to associate with commitment, 2) it might be the high level of commitment that caused low quality of alternatives, and 3) love and moral aspects as well as satisfaction were likely to be associated with commitment. Most of the participants had high levels of social prescriptive support. Society's views on Chinese interethnic couples were also investigated, as society's negative views had always been a problem for Black/White relationships (e.g. Gaines & Leaver, 2002; Malhi, 2009). It was found that with an increasing number of interethnic relationships in the United Kingdom, most Chinese interethnic couples were not treated in a negative way (e.g. being stared with hostility). Besides, one of the questions for satisfaction in Rusbult's investment model scale, "my relationship is much better than others' relationships" (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 388), may not be able to measure satisfaction in the current study, because not everyone compared their marriage with others' and marriages were not necessarily comparable.

The second question is whether couple cultural identity is one of the factors associated with commitment for Chinese interethnic married couples. Although the participants met and attracted to their spouse in a quite common fashion as any married couples, they did think that they were culturally different from their spouse and cultural differences could cause divorce. The couples tended to follow a mixture of both partners' cultures and acculturate towards each other, which reflected the two aspects of couple cultural identity, namely similar cultural values between spouses and acculturating towards the spouse. The different cultural values reflected individualism/collectivism differences, such as values in childrearing. The definition of couple cultural identity (i.e. a set of cultural values that the partners both follow) had been agreed by the participants. Couple cultural identity was treated as an important factor for a committed marriage, and this identity would be lost if the marriage were to end. Therefore couple cultural identity may be one of the factors that associate with commitment for Chinese interethnic married couples.

### Limitations and future directions

However there are limitations as well. The participants who agreed to be interviewed might be committed in their marriage, and might only mention positive things in their marriage. So interviewing more Chinese interethnic couples who are seeking counselling or attending marriage enhancing programmes may gain more insight.

The lengths of the marriages, ranged from 1 year to 40 years, were very diverse in this study. So individuals at the early stage of their marriage may experience less cultural problem as disguised by “honeymoon effect”, but may experience more cultural problems in later stages of their marriage, especially after having children. This study only studied the couples at one point of time, so it would be helpful to study the couples at different points of time to see the changes of their opinions on commitment and their cultural differences as time goes on.

Most of the participants thought that being in an interethnic marriage would never be boring and individuals would gain much personal growth, which could not be fulfilled in intraethnic marriages. So it would be interesting to investigate how these excitement and personal growth, which served as rewards, interact with the cultural difference problems, which served as costs.

The difficulty of communication in interethnic marriages indicates that more research is needed to be done on effective interethnic communication in close relationships. For example, the individualistic spouse may adopt low-context styles, while the collectivistic spouse may adopt high-context styles in communication. This could bring difficulty in understanding due to different communication goals and focus.

The couples in this interview study were Chinese/Western interethnic couples. However more knowledge of whether the findings from this current study can be generated to other interethnic married couples would be gained to study interethnic married couples with different combination of ethnicities and living in different countries.

#### **4.3 The search for a suitable model of commitment for Chinese interethnic couples**

The interview study had been carried out in order to have more knowledge of Chinese interethnic couples, which would help design the following quantitative study. Rusbult's investment model has been widely used in several cultures (e.g. Van Lange et al., 1997; Davis & Strube, 1993; Lin & Rusbult, 1995), so this model was supposed to apply to the current sample, which was 10 Chinese/non-Chinese married couples (18 participants). According to Rusbult's (1980; Cox et al., 1997) investment model, greater satisfaction level, lower quality of alternatives, greater investment size, and greater social prescriptive support contributed to greater commitment level. However, it was found in the interview study that investment model did not fully apply to Chinese interethnic married couples. Specifically, the term investment was described as inappropriate and was different from Rusbult's (1980) definition and explanation of investment, and social prescriptive support and quality of alternatives seemed unable to make individuals more or less committed, but some additional factors, such as love and moral aspects, contributed to commitment beyond satisfaction.

The investment model was originated from reward/cost from the interdependent theory (Rusbult, 1983). However Murstein (1970) looked at interdependence theory as understanding behaviours through economics. Murstein (1971a) noted that reward and cost were not considered by the couples who greatly committed to each other, and exchange theory was too much like business and was self-focused (p. 18-19). It seems that exchange theory may be useful in the initial attraction and the formation of relationships, but according to the findings of the interview study, exchange theory may not be very useful in maintaining relationships.

Foster (2008) argued that Rusbult's investment model scale was "highly self-focused" (p. 214) (i.e. all the items were about self-feelings instead of considering the partner, and commitment was considered as individuals' direct reward and cost) and he found that the level of narcissism, which means feeling of superiority and less intimacy, moderated between satisfaction level, quality of alternatives, investment size, and commitment – low satisfaction, high quality of alternatives, and low investment size predicted more significantly on low commitment for high narcissists (i.e. high in "superiority, entitlement, exhibitionism, exploitativeness, authority, vanity, and self-sufficiency" (p. 213)) than low narcissists, but high satisfaction, low quality of alternatives, and high investment size did not show any difference in predicting

commitment between high and low narcissists. He stated that weighing reward and cost, which was the main theme of the investment model, was more likely to influence commitment level for high narcissists, whereas “interpersonal factors” (p. 220) (i.e. considering the partner) were more likely to influence commitment level for low narcissists. High narcissism reflects the characteristic of hierarchical individualism, so people who are low in hierarchical individualism could have a different opinion of the investment model.

From a collectivistic point of view, individuals in a relationship are willing to make sacrifice for the relationship no matter how much it would cost, as they are focusing on the need of the relationship (Triandis, 1996), however the investment model emphasises individual’s reward and cost in a relationship, which may reflect an individualistic point of view. For this reason, investment model may be not suitable for interethnic couples, especially with one partner from a relatively collectivistic culture.

In the interview study, moral aspects were frequently mentioned as one of the reasons for commitment. Lund (1985) also found this from her open-ended questionnaire survey on 30 female students and 30 male students about the meaning of commitment. Most of the students thought that commitment meant long-lasting and exclusive relationships, and with obligations of carrying on (Lund, 1985). The long-lasting and exclusiveness aspects showed the nature of a committed relationship and the obligation aspect showed the moral aspects. However investment model did not include moral aspects as a factor for commitment.

Although the research by Rusbult et al.’s (1986) on dating and married relationship showed the generalizability of the investment model regardless of gender, marital status, age, educational level, income, or duration of relationship, there were two limitations. Firstly, the investment size questions were only included the general amount of investment that the participants have put into the relationship, in which the participants were taught that the meaning of investment was “shared friends”, “self-disclosures”, “financial security”, “material possessions” (ibid. p. 84) and so on without mentioning that these investment would be lost if the relationship were to end. So, the meaning of investment size may be understood as the efforts that people put into the relationship, and if the relationship were to end the investments may not necessarily be thought as lost. Secondly, although investment size showed significant correlations with commitment for married people and the whole sample in their research, it did not show significant correlations with commitment for unmarried people, married/unmarried



people less than 35 years old, and married/unmarried people who had been in the relationship for more than 10 years. So, the inconsistency of the correlations between investment size and commitment for different groups might reflect the different opinions toward investment size.

Thus Rusbult's investment model seems not appropriate for Chinese interethnic couples, but what model can be applied to Chinese interethnic couples? In chapter three, literatures on relationship stability and three models on commitment, namely Levinger's marital cohesiveness, Rusbult's investment model, and Johnson's commitment framework, have been reviewed. According to the literature on the factors leading to commitment, love, satisfaction, intimacy, a rewarding relationship, similarity, consensus, affection expression, respect, and perceived good social support were important factors. Among these factors, similarity can be reflected in couple cultural identity; satisfaction, intimacy, consensus and affection expression can be reflected in Spanier's dyadic adjustment; a rewarding relationship and respect can be reflected in love. However, the significance of perceived good social support was not found in the interview study. Considering the importance of love and moral aspects in the interview study and the literature on relationship stability, Johnson's (1991) commitment framework may be suitable for Chinese interethnic couples. In Johnson's framework, love, satisfaction, and couple identity were included in personal commitment; moral values, obligations, and value of consistency were included in moral commitment; "Alternatives", "Social pressure", "Termination procedures", and "Irretrievable investments" were included in structural commitment (Johnson et al., 1999, p. 162). Among the three types of commitment, structural commitment can be only influential when personal or moral commitment is low (Johnson et al., 1999).

Personal commitment emphasised love and satisfaction (Johnson et al., 1999), which had been found not only in the literature on relationship stability but also in the interview study. Love was also found different from satisfaction in the interview study, as a high degree of love towards the spouse was found in an unsatisfied marriage. Besides, Ting-Toomey (1994) suggested that love could reduce cultural conflicts in interethnic couples. Couple identity, another component of personal commitment, means the degree to which one puts the relationship into one's own identity (Johnson, 1991). Couple culture identity could be treated as the extent to which one includes the partner's cultural concept into one's own cultural concept. Since the salient cultural differences were found in the interethnic couples in the interview study, cultural identity

could be the most salient identity in couple identity for interethnic couples. Besides, couple cultural identity was also found important for commitment in the interview study and the literature on relationship stability. So, couple cultural identity may be one of the components of personal commitment, in the place of couple identity, for Chinese interethnic couples (see also section 2.4 in chapter two). Personal commitment, other than moral commitment, had significantly stronger association with Rusbult et al.'s (1998) commitment scale (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999). Moral commitment has also been found important for commitment in the interview study, especially when individual's personal commitment was low.

The explanation of structural commitment (i.e. according to Johnson et al. (1999), structural commitment can be only influential when personal or moral commitment is low) was very much similar to what has been found in the interview study, which is, when the participants were personally or morally committed, investment and social prescriptive support were not treated as important factors for commitment, and these participants were not thinking about alternatives either. Investment, social prescriptive support, and alternatives can be reflected in Johnson et al. (1999, p. 162) "Irretrievable investments", "Social pressure", and "Alternatives" in structural commitment. According to Johnson's (1973) study on 19 married couples and 19 cohabiting couples, married couples were significantly higher in personal commitment than cohabiting couples. So, this might explain why married individuals in the interview study did not treat investment, alternatives, and social prescriptive support as important factors for their commitment, whereas unmarried individuals in Rusbult's samples (e.g. Rusbult et al, 1998) did treat these as important factors.

Johnson's commitment framework combined all the elements in the investment model and the cohesiveness model, clearly pointed out the aspects for three different types of commitment, and well explained all the possible elements of commitment. This framework also explained some of the results of the interview study: 1) why most couples in the interview study were not thinking of investment as something that would be lost if the marriages were to end and were not looking for alternatives. This is because investment and alternatives are both structural commitment, which are not prominent when people have strong personal or moral commitment. 2) Why moral aspect was not a strong predictor to Rusbult's commitment (e.g. Lin & Rusbult, 1995; Cox et al., 1997) but was a strong factor for the couples' commitment in the interview study. This is because Rusbult's commitment scale, which was used in Lin & Rusbult's

(1995) and Cox et al.'s (1997) study, is a measure of personal commitment (Adams & Jones, 1997; Johnson et al., 1999), so moral aspect could not show much correlation with such measurement for personal commitment. Thus, Johnson's (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) commitment framework best fit the results of the interview study, which may fit more Chinese interethnic couples.

The following quantitative study will be focused on personal commitment. The reasons are as follows. 1) Investment was one of components in structural commitment, however it was treated with different understandings and it was thought to be inappropriate in long-term relationships. Most married couples in the interview study tended to have less structural commitment, so structural commitment may not be found as significant as personal commitment and moral commitment. 2) In Johnson et al.'s (1999) personal commitment, love and satisfaction were two components that had also been thought as important factors for commitment in the interview study. So the associations between love and personal commitment, satisfaction and personal commitment are likely to be strong. 3) One of the focuses of the current research is to investigate the role of culture in commitment. Couple cultural identity, a component of personal commitment for the current research, was treated as an important factor for commitment in the interview study. So the associations between couple cultural identity and personal commitment are likely to be strong. 4) Although moral commitment is an important aspect of overall commitment, the focus of this current research is not on moral commitment. The following quantitative study in the next chapter will be focusing on how love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity interact with personal commitment among Chinese interethnic couples.

## Chapter 5 Quantitative study

### 5.1 Introduction of the quantitative study

The results of the interview study showed that Rusbult's investment model is not appropriate for Chinese/non-Chinese married couples. However, among the models on commitment, Johnson's (1991) commitment framework best fit the results of the interview study. Johnson (1991) developed three components of commitment for this framework: personal commitment, moral commitment, and structural commitment. The three components explained the differences between *internal desires* to continue, "ought to" continue, and "has to" (p. 119) continue the relationship (ibid). Structural commitment is not prominent when personal or moral commitment is strong. This framework could explain several important questions in the interview study, such as why most participants in the interview study did not think investment would be lost if the marriage were to end, social prescriptive support was not thought by the participants as important for commitment, and the participants were not looking for alternatives. The couple identity component in personal commitment will be replaced by the new construct "couple cultural identity" in the quantitative questionnaire study on Chinese interethnic couples. Interethnic couples with strong couple identity would follow similar values and have strong couple cultural identity, and in turn, strengthen their couple identity. Because difficulties on cultural values differences have been shown significantly in the interview study, the sense of being a couple would be reflected strongly on couple cultural identity. Couple cultural identity was also treated by the participants of the interview study as an important factor for commitment and this identity would be lost if the marriage were to end, just as the couple identity would be lost if the marriage were to end.

Thus, a Cultural Model for Chinese/non-Chinese couples is developed (see figure 5.1) based on Johnson's personal commitment. It is hypothesised that satisfaction, love, and couple cultural identity are the factors that associate with and contribute to personal commitment.

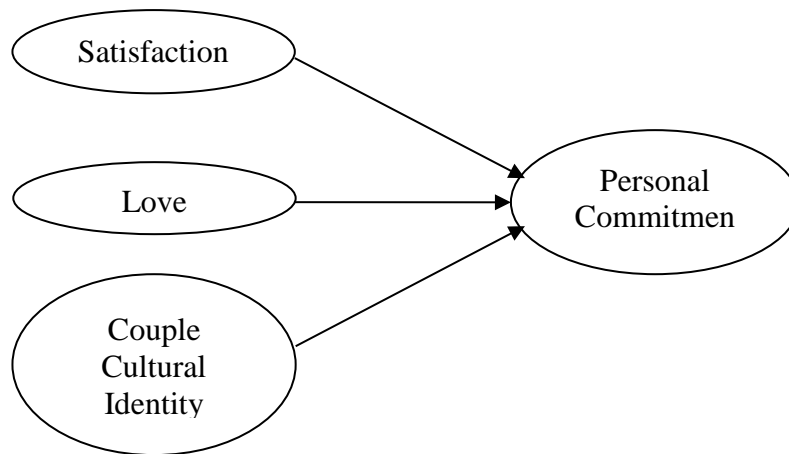


Figure 5.1 The Cultural Model for Chinese/non-Chinese couples

In the cultural model, personal commitment refers to the extent that people want to continue the relationship (cf. Johnson et al., 1999). In Johnson et al.'s (1999) empirical study on personal, moral, and structural commitment, each type of commitment was measured by only one item, which according to Johnson et al. (1999), this might not clearly describe each type of commitment. Lund's (1985) commitment scale has nine items – it included not only personal commitment, such as “How likely is it that your relationship will be permanent” (p. 15), but also moral and structural commitment, such as “How obligated do you feel to continue this relationship” and “How much trouble would ending your relationship be to you personally” (p. 15). So this commitment scale seems unable to measure personal commitment in the quantitative study. However, Adams and Jones (1997), Stanley and Markman (1992), and Johnson et al. (1999) have confirmed that Rusbult's commitment scale was a measurement for personal commitment. Thus, Rusbult et al.'s (1998) commitment scale will be used to measure personal commitment in the quantitative study. This scale contains seven questions on the degree of agreement/disagreement on items such as “I want our relationship to last for a very long time” and “I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future” (ibid. p. 390).

Satisfaction refers to the attraction towards the relationship (cf. Johnson et al., 1999). Measurement of satisfaction in Johnson et al.'s (1999, p. 176) study consisted of two items, in which the overall satisfaction was assessed and eight opposite meaning pairs, “miserable-enjoyable”, “hopeful-discouraging”, “lonely-friendly”, “empty-full”, “interesting-boring”, “rewarding-disappointing”, “worthwhile-useless”, “doesn't give

me much chance-brings out the best in me” extracted from a life satisfaction scale were rated. However only one item on the overall satisfaction was too general and the rating of the opposite meaning pairs may not sufficient to assess special aspects of close relationships. Rusbult et al. (1998) measured satisfaction by the questions of the level of fulfilling one’s needs in a relationship. However, fulfilling needs may be confounded with the variable love (cf. measurement of love in Johnson et al., 1999). And according to the interview study, one item in Rusbult’s satisfaction scale on comparing with others’ relationships might not be able to measure satisfaction. Satisfaction and the measurement for satisfaction will be looked at in section 5.3.

Love refers to attraction towards the partner (cf. Johnson et al., 1999). Love is different from satisfaction because people can be attracted to the partner but not necessarily attracted to the relationship, which was found in the interview study and shown in Johnson’s (1991; Johnson et al., 1999) research. In Johnson et al.’s (1999) study, measurement of love consisted of only two items, which were the level of love and the level of need of one’s partner. The single item measuring love may be not reliable because people’s feelings on the single item could be different at different times (Cramer, 1998). Love and the measurement of love will be closely looked at in section 5.2.

Couple cultural identity, the new variable, has been closely looked at in section 2.4. The measurement for couple cultural identity will be looked at in section 5.3.

The next three sections will look at love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity, and the measurement for each of them that will be used in the quantitative study. The last section of this chapter will present the quantitative study.

## **5.2 Love and its measurement for the quantitative study**

Love was frequently mentioned as a factor that contributed to commitment in the interview study. But what is love, what are the characteristics of love? This section will explore the different definitions of love and find the most suitable concept and measurement of love for the quantitative study.

Love has been an eternal subject for research, novels, poems, dramas, music and daily talks among ordinary people, but it seems not easy to see the whole picture of love, as according to Rubin (1988), different individuals have different understandings of love. Can love be looked at only through feelings or behaviours? According to Murstein

(1988), feelings can be changed and behaviours can be misinterpreted, and according to Fromm (1957), love is more than intense feelings.

Instead of only looking through the intensity of love, Lee (1988) looked at love as different love-styles, namely eros (passionate love), storge (friendship), ludus (game playing), and the different combinations of the three styles (e.g. mania, pragma, agape). However the love-styles can be changed throughout the lifetime and people can have multiple love-styles at the same time (ibid).

Shaver et al. (1988) looked at love as attachment, which originated from the attachment between infant and the caregiver, and secure, anxious/ambivalent and avoidant were the attachment styles between lovers. Love was also looked at through evolutionary point of view, in which the goal was to increase “reproductive success” (p. 100) and love was acted through resource displaying, exclusion, “Commitment and Marriage”, “Sexual Intimacy”, “Reproduction”, Resource Sharing”, and “Parental Investment” (Buss, 1988, p. 101-109).

In the current research, love is a factor for commitment, so the love-styles, attachment styles and the evolutionary goals are not the main focus. Instead, Sternberg’s triangular theory of love, Rubin’s measurement of love, and the relationship between love and commitment will be looked at next. Finally, the measurement for the quantitative study will be presented.

### 5.2.1 The triangular theory of love (Sternberg, 1986, 2004)

According to Sternberg’s (1986) triangular theory of love, love was looked as “a complex whole” (p. 120) and it could be looked at through three components, which were “intimacy”, “passion”, and “decision/commitment” (p. 119). Intimacy is the “feelings of closeness, connectedness, and bondedness in loving relationships” (p. 214); passion is “the drives that lead to romance, physical attraction, sexual consummation, and related phenomena in loving relationships” (p. 214); decision/commitment is the decision to love someone and the commitment to keep the love or the relationship, and decision/commitment has control over the development of intimacy and passion (Sternberg, 2004). Sternberg (1997) developed a scale for his theory and the questions for intimacy were “I have a comfortable relationship with \_\_\_”, “I feel that \_\_\_ really understands me” (p. 329), “I feel emotionally close to \_\_\_” (p. 318) and so on;

questions for passion were “I adore \_\_\_\_”, “Just seeing \_\_\_\_ is exciting for me” (p. 318), “I find \_\_\_\_ to be very personally attractive” (p. 329) and so on; questions for commitment were “I view my relationship with \_\_\_\_ as permanent” (p. 318), “I feel a sense of responsibility toward \_\_\_\_”, “I plan to continue in my relationship with \_\_\_\_” (p. 329) and so on. In this theory, love refers to any type of love and all the components are important to a loving relationship such as a romantic relationship, a child-parent relationship, or a friendship (Sternberg, 1986). However certain component(s) are more significant than others in different types of relationships, for example, intimacy component exists in any type of loving relationships but passion component is likely to exist in romantic relationships (ibid). Sternberg’s (1997) scale for his theory showed that the three components were highly correlated to each other ( $r$  was around .80 for lovers and around .90 for ideal lovers) in romantic relationships, which indicated that the three components may mean the same thing. Sternberg’s (1997) scale for commitment included all three types of commitment defined by Johnson (1991). So personal commitment, the commitment that the quantitative study will be looking at, may not have the same strong correlations with passion and intimacy as Sternberg’s (1997) commitment does.

### 5.2.2 Rubin’s (1970) measurement of romantic love

Rubin (1970) developed a love scale according to the literature about the “nature of love” (p. 266) and “interpersonal attraction” (p. 266) that described love in comply with the assumption that “love is an *attitude* held by a person toward a particular other person, involving predispositions to think, feel, and behave in certain ways toward that other person” (p. 265), and the love was focused on romantic love, which meant the love between male-female pairs who were dating and might have the possibility of marriage. A liking scale was also developed to be distinguished from the love scale. One hundred and ninety-eight university students were asked to rate on the love scale and the liking scale, with the further categorisation by students and university faculty, for both lovers and platonic opposite-sex friends, and the highly loaded 13 items for love and 13 items for liking in factor analyses were selected for the final love scale and liking scale (Rubin, 1970). There were three components in the love scale although love was treated as a whole concept: “*Affiliative and dependent need*” (e.g. “if I could never



be with \_\_\_\_, I would feel miserable”), “*Predisposition to help*” (e.g. “I would do almost anything for \_\_\_\_”) and “*Exclusiveness and absorption*” (e.g. “I feel very possessive toward \_\_\_\_”) (Rubin, 1970, p. 267-268). The final love scale and liking scale were distributed to 158 dating couples, and it was found that the alpha reliability of the love scale was very high (.84 and .86 for women and men respectively), love for the dating partner was much stronger than love for same-sex friends, and love (measured by the love scale) was highly correlated with the possibility of marriage but not the length of dating (Rubin, 1970).

### 5.2.3 The relations between love and commitment

In Sternberg’s (1986, 2004) theory, commitment was looked as a part of love, but Rubin (1970) did not include commitment into the concept of love. So, are love and commitment the same or different?

Love does relate to commitment as Lund (1985, p. 5-6) described “love and commitment usually go hand in hand in modern relationships”. Research also showed the strong correlations between love and commitment (e.g. Fletcher, Simpson, & Thomas, 2000).

Kelley (1983) looked at love and commitment through two dimensions, with one dimension of 1) positive forces that hold two people together and 2) the rest forces (e.g. constrains) that hold two people together, and the other dimension of the stable and unstable state of the first dimension, and these two dimensions made four categories. Kelley (1983) located 1) love on two categories as “a particular subset of the positive factors that draw and hold people together” (p. 267), in which the positive forces that hold two people together can be stable and unstable; 2) commitment on two categories, including the stable positive and the rest forces that hold two people together. There is a category for love does not include commitment, and although love and commitment overlap in one category, there is a category for commitment does not include love.

When people talking about romantic love, would commitment be considered as a part of love by most people? Lund (1985) separated commitment, the wish to keep a relationship going, from love, “positive feelings” (p. 3) toward a certain person in a close relationship, and a factor analysis of all the items of her commitment scale and Rubin’s (1970) love scale showed that items in commitment scale had higher factor

loadings in factor one than in factor two, and items in love scale had higher factor loadings in factor two than in factor one, which meant the two scales were separated scales. In Lund's (1985) factor analysis, there were two items had relatively low factor loadings than other items in the commitment scale, and the possible reason might be that the two items were related to what Johnson (1991) called moral commitment and structural commitment. The current research is looking at personal commitment, and all the items related to this type of commitment in Lund's (1985) commitment scale were highly loaded in factor one; personal commitment and Rubin's (1970) love scale were shown as distinct from each other. Lund (1985) found that commitment significantly correlated with the length of the relationship and the stage of the relationship (such as seriously involved, engaged) but love did not show such significant correlations with these two variables.

#### 5.2.4 Summary and the measurement of love for the quantitative study

Like culture, which has been discussed in chapter one, love is also complicated, and it is hard to make an exhaustive list of all the elements of love, as all the elements of love relate to each other. In Johnson et al.'s (1999) study, measurement of love consisted of only two items, which might be too general. Rubin's (1970) love scale focused on romantic love and was generated from empirical studies, but Sternberg's (2004) triangular theory of love was on all types of love (e.g. brotherly love, romantic love, parental love) and was not generated from empirical studies. The commitment in Sternberg's theory of love included personal, moral and structural commitment and his research showed strong correlations between commitment, intimacy, and passion, so intimacy and passion components may contain moral and structural elements, which is out of the scope of the current research. Besides, Lund's (1985) research supported that love is distinct from commitment.

Therefore, Rubin's (1970) concept of love and his love scale will be used in the quantitative study. The items in the love scales will be rated from 1 (not at all true/disagree completely) to 9 (definitely true/agree completely) and the items are: "if my partner were feeling badly, my first duty would be to cheer him (her) up", "I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually everything", "I find it easy to ignore my partner's faults", "I would do almost anything for my partner", "I feel very possessive toward my partner", "if I could never be with my partner, I would feel miserable", "if I

were lonely, my first thought would be to seek my partner out”, “one of my primary concerns is my partner’s welfare”, “I would forgive my partner for practically anything”, “I feel responsible for my partner’s well-being”, “when I am with my partner, I spend a good deal of time just looking at him (her)”, “I would greatly enjoy being confided in by my partner”, “it would be hard for me to get along without my partner” (adapted from Rubin, 1970, p. 267).

### **5.3 Satisfaction and its measurement for the quantitative study**

#### **5.3.1 Research on satisfaction**

Satisfaction has been regarded as the relationship quality that judged by individuals in the relationship, and satisfaction has been described as relationship adjustment, relationship quality, relationship happiness, and “lack of distress” (Fitzpatrick, 1988, p. 32). Comparing with the importance of obligations in old times for the continuation of a relationship, satisfaction had more weight for a stable relationship nowadays (Levinger, 1997).

According to the psychoanalytic perspective, marital distress relates to personality and it emerges when one cannot deal with the difference between one’s ideal characteristics of the spouse, which match one’s needs, and the spouse’s real characteristics; according to the behavioural perspective, marital satisfaction relates to interaction outcomes (reward and cost; exchange theories) and the skills to solve relationship issues (Doherty & Jacobson, 1982). Research has been carried out on each of these three aspects, namely, personality, interdependence, and interaction skill (e.g. communication).

Personality has been found associated with satisfaction. Buss (1991) did a research on 107 young married couples, and he found that high levels of surgency (dominate-submissive, extraverted-introverted), and low levels of agreeableness (warm-cold, trust-suspicious), conscientiousness (reliable-undependable, well-organised-disorganised), emotional stability (secure-nervous, even-tempered-temperamental), and intellect-openness (perceptive-imperceptive, curious-uncurious) significantly associated with spouse’s dissatisfaction. Blum and Mehrabian (1999) found that the personality of greater pleasantness and having more control over life and relationships strongly

associated with greater marital satisfaction. Lester, Haig, and Monello (1989) found that neuroticism and spouse's extraversion negatively associated with marital satisfaction. However, Patrick, Sells, Giordano, and Tollerud's (2007) factor analysis on 124 married couples' personality characteristics, marital satisfaction (measured by Spanier's (1976) adjustment scale), and intimacy, and they found that marital satisfaction was not in the same factor as personality characteristics. Richard, Wakefield and Lewak (1990) found that similarity of personality traits between husband and wife associated with marital satisfaction. However, Shiota and Levenson (2007) found that greater similarity of personality did not associate with marital satisfaction at the beginning of the marriage but associated with greater marital dissatisfaction over the following 12 years.

Interdependence theory looked at satisfaction through comparison level (CL) -- individuals will be satisfied if the outcomes are above CL and individuals will be unsatisfied if the outcomes are below CL (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978). CL means what people think they deserve and expect in a relationship (Kelley & Thibaut, 1978; Rusbult et al., 1994). However Sternberg and Barnes (1985) found that both CL and actual levels (outcomes) significantly associated with satisfaction, and each significantly predicted satisfaction. From an evolutionary point of view, marital satisfaction was explained as the evaluation of reward and cost in a marriage, that is, satisfaction would be enhanced when couples' behaviours encourage reproductive rewards, such as guarding spouse positively (e.g. showing care, showing love), whereas dissatisfaction would be encountered when couples' behaviours encourage reproductive costs, such as guarding spouse excessively/no guarding and guarding spouse negatively (e.g. manipulate spouse) (Shackelford & Buss, 1997).

Communication has been found associated with satisfaction. Pike and Sillars's (1985) research showed that satisfied couples had less reciprocity of negative communication and more reciprocity of neutral communication on important issues than unsatisfied couples. Hendrick and Hendrick (2006) found that respect had strong positive correlations with satisfaction for both dating and married individuals. Meeks, Hendrick and Hendrick (1998) found that not only one's own communication variables (i.e. self-disclosure, understanding of the partner, and positive and negative ways to solve conflicts) but also the perceived partner's communication variables (i.e. perceived partner's self disclosure, perceived partner's understanding of oneself, perceived partner's positive and negative ways to solve conflicts, and perceived partner's ability in communication) associated with one's satisfaction. Emmers-Sommer (2004) did a

research on the quality and quantity of communication and relationship satisfaction, and found that quality of communication (i.e. “depth”, “smoothness”, satisfaction, orientating towards task, orientating towards “social functions”, helping the relationship, and doing/not doing other things during communication (p. 405)) significantly predicted relationship satisfaction but quantity of communication (i.e. frequency and length of face to face and phone communication) did not.

Besides, Cramer (2002) found that satisfaction had significant negative correlations with conflict, no matter the conflict were on important or less important issues. Cramer (2006) found that greater satisfaction significantly associated with greater support from the partner and less conflicts in the relationship, and among all the types of support from the partner, care was found the significance in associating with satisfaction. Less conflict in the relationship and greater care from the spouse may reflect greater satisfaction and love.

Cross-cultural studies have found the similar factors that associated with satisfaction. Kamo (1993) found that spending time together, having similar social circles, and benefit from housework sharing strongly related to satisfaction for both the Western married individuals (i.e. Americans) and the Eastern married individuals (i.e. Japanese). Epstein, Chen, and Beyder-Kamjou (2005) found that the “degree of togetherness” (p. 60), “time and energy” (p. 60) that have been put into the relationship, decision making strategies (share or one dominate the decision making), and the consensus between husband and wife of all these aspects were all possible factors that could strongly predict marital satisfaction, measured by Spanier’s (1976) dyadic adjustment scale, for both Western and Chinese couples.

In the cultural model that the current research has proposed, satisfaction was one of the factors and predictors of personal commitment. The significant association between satisfaction and commitment, and satisfaction as a significant predictor of commitment have been found in many studies (e.g. Rusbult et al., 1998; Fitzpatrick & Badzinski, 1994; Hendrick, Hendrick, & Adler, 1988; Broderick & O’Leary, 1986; Fletcher et al., 2000).

Another factor that correlates with and predicts commitment along with satisfaction in the cultural model is love. But does satisfaction associate with love? Hendrick (1988) included love into her measurement of satisfaction, but satisfaction has been found different from love in some other researches.

Vangelisti and Huston (1994) reviewed psychological, communicational, and sociological literatures on satisfaction, reasons for divorce and how couples negotiate their time together, and they developed eight aspects that were likely to associate with satisfaction and love, which were communication, influence over decision making, sex, how one pursue one's leisure, housework allocation, time with partner, time with other people, and financial situation. They tested these eight aspects along with overall satisfaction and love on 168 working class newlywed couples, and the interviews (face-to-face and interviews and phone interviews) took place at the beginning of their marriage, at their first anniversary, and at their second anniversary. They found that both the overall satisfaction and love and the majority of the eight aspects decreased in the first two years of their marriages, and some of the eight aspects, such as communication and influence over decision making, significantly associated with satisfaction, but others, such as sex and how one pursue one's leisure, significantly associated with love. These findings showed that satisfaction was distinguished from satisfaction, as satisfaction was the pleasure of the relationship, but love was an attitude and was related to the partner's intrinsic characteristics, so one can be in a dissatisfactory marriage but deeply in love with the partner (ibid).

According to Aron and Henkemeyer (1995), marital satisfaction, measured by Spanier's (1976) whole dyadic adjustment scale, was found no significant association with passionate love for husbands and only a little association for wives among 100 married individuals; for both husbands and wives, satisfaction was significantly associated with marital happiness, excitement with the relationship, boredom with the relationship, "frequency of sex minus arguments" (p. 143), time together, and "frequency of kissing" (p. 143), however husbands' passionate love did not associated with any of these variables although wives' passionate love significantly associated with these variables to some extent.

Besides, O'Leary, Fincham, and Turkewitz (1983) pointed out that "caring for a spouse" (i.e. love) (p. 950) is not the same as marital satisfaction. In the interview study of the current research, satisfaction was also shown different from love (e.g. love the spouse but was not satisfied with the marriage).

### 5.3.2 Measurements of satisfaction

Given the lengthy scales in early marital adjustment measurements, Locke and Wallace (1959) developed a short 15-item Marital-Adjustment Test (MAT) to measure “accommodation of a husband and wife to each other at a given time” (p. 251). They selected 15 non-repeated important items from previous scales with high discrimination levels. Then these 15 items were tested on 236 young (around 30 years old) middle class married individuals (118 men and 118 women) in different marriages, and the scores of the 48 maladjusted and 48 well-adjusted individuals in the sample were compared. They found that the reliability of the scale was .90 and the maladjusted individuals had significant lower scores than the well-adjusted ones. MAT contains a general question on marital happiness, eight items on agreement and disagreement over issues in marriages, and several other questions. Items in MAT were all included in Spanier’s (1976) scale, except two questions: “When disagreements arise, they usually result in:” (“husband giving in”, “wife giving in”, or “agreement by mutual give and take”), and “If you had your life to live over, do you think you would:” (“marry the same person”, “marry a different person”, “or not marry at all”) (Locke & Wallace, 1959, p. 252). The item on how couples resolve disagreements (i.e. give and take) might reflect love (see section 5.2), which is another variable in the quantitative study, and the item on whether one would marry the same person, different person or stay alone if one were live again might reflect alternatives in Johnson’s structural commitment (see section 3.4). Although this scale had a very high reliability, the items that reflected love and structural commitment are not in the scope of satisfaction in the quantitative study.

Spanier’s (1976) Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS) was designed to measure the quality of relationships, especially marriages, and each individual would be in “a position on a continuum from well-adjusted to maladjusted” (p. 16-17), although the level of adjustment can be at different positions in the continuum at different times. Spanier (1976) collected all the items in all the past measurements that related to marital adjustment, and then deleted the repeated items, and finally three other people judged the suitability of the items. After these, some new items which had been unconsidered in the past measurements were added (ibid). Then all the items were tested on 218 married individuals and 94 divorced individuals (divorced individuals were asked to answer the questions according to the last month of marriage before their divorce) (ibid). Items without symmetry frequency distributions and without high variance and items

had non-significant mean difference between married and divorced individuals were deleted, and the rest items were factor analysed – items with low factor loading were deleted (ibid). Thus the final 32 items were selected and the two items related to love and structural commitment in Locke and Wallace's (1959) MAT were not included.

Both the overall score and each of the 32 items showed significant difference between married and divorced individuals (ibid). Four factors were found through a factors analysis of the 32 items, which were dyadic consensus, affectional expression, dyadic satisfaction and dyadic cohesion, and these subscales showed high reliabilities with alphas .90, .73, .94 and .86 and the overall alpha .96 (ibid). Dyadic consensus included 13 questions of the degree of agreement/disagreement on "Handling family finances", "Matters of recreation", "Aims, goals, and things believed important", etc.; affectional expression included two questions of the degree of agreement/disagreement on "Demonstrations of affection", "Sex relations" and two yes/no questions on "Being too tired for sex" and "Not showing love"; dyadic satisfaction included 10 questions, such as "In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?" and "How often do you and your partner quarrel?"; dyadic cohesion included five questions, such as how often "Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together" and how often "Have a stimulating exchange of ideas" (ibid. p. 27-28). DAS also showed high correlation with Locke & Wallace's (1959) MAT (ibid). Eyman (1984) found that DAS significantly correlated with commitment on 43 married couples.

Snyder (1979 as cited in Snyder, Wills & Keiser, 1981) developed a Marital Satisfaction Inventory (MSI) included 280 items covering areas such as overall affective communication, communication in solving problems, quality and frequency of time together, financial disagreement, dissatisfaction with sex. This scale seems to cover all the aspects of satisfaction, but it is very lengthy. However, Spanier's DAS has covered most areas in MSI.

Hendrick (1988) developed a 7-item Relationship Assessment Scale (RAS) and was first tested on 125 university students who were "in love" (p. 94) and then was tested on 57 dyads who were in dating relationships. Both samples showed that all the items had high factor loadings on one factor through factor analyses. In the second sample, the scale reliability was .86, the RAS score was significantly correlated to each of the four subscales of Spanier's (1976) DAS and was significantly correlated with the whole DAS scale at .80, and partners significantly correlated to each other on each RAS



item except the item on whether expectations have been met in the relationship whereas randomly paired couples did not show any significant correlation with each other (ibid). The seven RAS items were: “How well does your partner meet your needs?”, “How much do you love your partner?”, “How good is your relationship compared to most?”, “In general, how satisfied are you with your relationship?”, “How often do you wish you hadn’t gotten into this relationship?”, “To what extent has your relationship met your original expectations?”, and “How many problems are there in your relationship?” (ibid. p. 94). The first two items were measuring love, and the third item might be problematic as the interview study in the current research showed that most couples thought their marriage was not comparable to others’. Although RAS was found a little more predictable than DAS for the relationship stability in the follow-up study of 30 couples from the second sample (ibid), the item measuring love in RAS might make RAS predict commitment slightly better than DAS, as DAS only measured satisfaction but love and satisfaction are both factors for commitment.

Rusbult et al. (1998) measured satisfaction by the questions of the level of fulfilling one’s needs in a relationship. However, level of fulfilling needs might be confounded with Johnson et al.’s (1999) construct of love (see the measurement of love). Johnson et al. (1999) used two items to measure satisfaction (see section 5.1), which might be too general and might not be sufficient to assess special aspects in close relationships.

Thus Spanier’s (1976) DAS will be used for the quantitative study, as it is short (32 items), has been widely used, has a high reliability, include important aspects of satisfaction and other measurements of satisfaction, has strong correlations with other measurements of satisfaction, and does not have items reflecting love.

#### **5.4 Measurement of couple cultural identity**

Couple cultural identity has been closely looked at in chapter two, so only the measurement of this construct will be looked at in this section. The scale that will measure couple cultural identity in the quantitative study consists of an acculturation scale for couples and a measurement for individualism/collectivism.

### **Acculturation scale for couples**

Studies on acculturation frequently focused on language fluency, cultural familiarity, cultural values, friend preferences, and food preferences (Félix-Ortiz et al., 1994; Suinn et al., 1992; Lee et al., 2003; Phinney & Flores, 2002; Williams & Ortega, 1990). In the previous studies, acculturation symbolised individual's cultural change, however in the current research, acculturation means acculturating to the partner's culture instead of acculturating to another particular culture and it emphasises the two-way acculturation between the two partners. So instead of asking a certain language's fluency as in most acculturation scales, the fluency of the language that the couple communicate with will be asked in the quantitative study. The language can be a particular language (e.g. English or Chinese) or a mixture of different languages. The same applies to the questions on food preferences and friend preferences. Cultural familiarity was measured by how much one is familiar with a particular culture in most acculturation scales, however the current research is interested in how much one is familiar with one's partner's culture, and how much one is willing to introduce one's own culture to the partner (this could help the partners to be more familiar with each other's cultures). Besides, religious belief is an important acculturation aspect (e.g. Berry, 1997), and Lee et al. (2003) included religious group participation in their acculturation scale. So, this aspect will be included as well. Thus six questions on acculturation, which were extracted from previous acculturation scales, and designed for the quantitative study are: "how well do you speak the language that you communicate with your partner?", "how similar of the food you have to your partner's?", "how well do you know your partner's culture?", "how willing are you to introduce your culture to your partner?", "to what extent are your friends also your partner's friends?" and "to what degree are your religious belief the same as your partner's?".

### **Individualism/collectivism scale**

Hofstede (1980, 2001) was the first researcher who conducted research to find cultural dimensions, and he found five dimensions from his data: individualism/collectivism, power distance, masculinity/femininity, uncertainty avoidance and long-term orientation. Most of later researches (e.g. Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Markus & Kitayama, 1991) also found that individualism/collectivism (although different names were used to describe this

dimension) had a higher impact than other dimensions. Individual/collectivism differences were also found significant for Chinese interethnic couples in the interview study. So the quantitative study will use this dimension to measure couple's cultural values. Hofstede's questionnaire was about work-related values, but merging couple cultural identities do not involve much work-related aspects, so this questionnaire is not appropriate to measure couples' cultures in relationships. Hui (1988) developed INDCOL scale to measure the dimension of individualism/collectivism through the value orientations toward the spouse, parents, kin, neighbours, friends and co-workers. However this scale has not been widely used and the reliability was low. Triandis' (1996) scale on horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism has been used widely and had high reliabilities: .82 for vertical individualism, .81 for horizontal individualism, .73 for vertical collectivism, and .80 for horizontal collectivism. Therefore the questions on individualism/collectivism will be measured by Triandis' (1996) scale.

Referenced from Triandis (1996), questions will be answered on a 9-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9). Eight questions on vertical individualism such as "It annoys me when other people perform better than I do" and "Competition is the law of nature" (ibid. p. 415). Seven questions on horizontal individualism such as "I often do 'my own thing'" and "Being a unique individual is important to me" (ibid. p. 415). Eight questions on vertical collectivism such as "I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity" and "I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group" (ibid. p. 415). Six questions on horizontal collectivism such as "The well-being of my co-workers is important to me" and "If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud" (ibid. p. 415). The scores for the couple cultural identity will be calculated as: calculating each item's absolute value of the subtraction between partner's scores, and then adding this absolute value for each item in vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism together. Each item in horizontal individualism, vertical individualism, horizontal collectivism and vertical collectivism will also be added respectively to form each individual's scores on each category.

### **5.5 Quantitative study on interethnic couples**

In the previous sections, all the variables (i.e. love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity, and personal commitment) and their measurements for the newly proposed cultural model have been looked at in detail. In this section, a quantitative study on Chinese/non-Chinese couples using the cultural model will be presented.

#### **Hypothesis**

In section 5.1, the cultural model was introduced, in which depicted the hypothesis of the quantitative study. The hypothesis is that love, satisfaction (i.e. dyadic adjustment), and couple cultural identity (i.e. acculturation to the partner and similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism) will predict personal commitment and each will account for unique variance in personal commitment of Chinese/non-Chinese interethnic couples. The relationships between love, satisfaction, couple cultural identity and personal commitment are: the more love, the more personal commitment; the more satisfaction (i.e. the more dyadic adjustment), the more personal commitment; the more congruent couple cultural identity (more acculturation to the partner and more similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism), the more personal commitment.

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

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

Third, the sample of the current research study consists of both partners, so *partner effect* will also be looked at through standard multiple regression to determine whether partner variables (the partner's love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity) significantly predicted one's own personal commitment together with one's own love, satisfaction and couple cultural identity. Fourth, demographic variables might have effects on personal commitment, so these will be tested using t-tests and ANOVA. Whether men's and women's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies have effects on personal commitment will also be tested by ANOVA. Hierarchical multiple regressions will be carried out in order to see how well love, satisfaction (dyadic adjustment) and couple cultural identity predict personal commitment with the demographic variables being controlled for men and women respectively (the demographic variables are those which have been found having significant effect on personal commitment). In order to have more knowledge of the sample, t-tests and descriptive statistics will be carried out to see the difference between partners' scores on each variable in the cultural model and both partners' individualism/collectivism tendencies. All above analyses will utilise Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) Version 19 (IBM Corp., New York, USA).

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

## **Method**

### *Method of finding the participants*

The participants of this research, Chinese married to/cohabit with non-Chinese individuals, were approached in the United Kingdom first. The response rate was not very high, so participants were then approached in the United States, as there were more Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the United States than in the United Kingdom. Couples in the interview study were approached first (five couples from the interview study have completed the questionnaires), and then couples were approached in the China towns and Chinese communities in the United Kingdom (only a few questionnaires back). Couples were also approached from all the occasions that the

researcher was attending. Couples from personal contacts (i.e. through the researcher and the researcher's social networks) had a significant high response rate, which means that if there was a person who knew both the researcher and the couples, either directly or indirectly, would encourage the couples to participate. Couples in the United States were approached through the researcher's personal contacts either living in the United States or having contacts living in the United States. The researcher much relied on the contacts in the United States to actually approach the couples in the United States, as the researcher was in the United Kingdom. In order to increase the sample size of the study, all the participants were asked to approach or recruit other eligible couples (snowball method), however the message could only pass onto one further step in a few occasions.

### *Participants*

The participants were 25 Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the United Kingdom and 12 Chinese/non-Chinese heterosexual couples in the United States. Of the 37 couples, 84% were married and 16% were cohabiting. For the married couples, the marriage duration ranged from 0.5 to 34 years with a mean of 9.87 years. 70.3% of women were in their first marriage and 13.5% of women were in their second marriage; 64.9% of men were in their first marriage, 8.1% of men were in their second marriage and 10.8% were in their third marriage. For the cohabiting couples, the cohabiting duration ranged from 1 to 5 years with a mean of 2.66 years. To consider the marriage duration and cohabiting duration (for cohabiting couples and for married couples who had cohabited before marriage) together, the total duration couples living together ranged from 1 to 34 years with a mean of 9.51 years. Women's age ranged from 21 to 64 with a mean age of 39.32 years. Men's age ranged from 20 to 70 with a mean age of 44.02 years. The duration of living in the United Kingdom or United States for women ranged from 1 to 41 years with a mean of 12.28 years. The duration of living in the United Kingdom or United States for men ranged from 11 to 63 years with a mean of 36.66 years. Thirty-four women and 15 men were immigrants to the United Kingdom or United States, and they were all first generation immigrants. The ethnicities of the women consisted of 86.5% Chinese, 10.8% White, and 2.7% other ethnicities. The parents of women were all from the same ethnic group as the women. All of the female participants grew up in the country of their birth. The ethnicity of the men consisted of 13.5% Chinese, 83.8% White, and 2.7% Asian (Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other).

With one exception, all the men were from the same ethnic group as their parents. Almost all of the male participants (91.8%) grew up in the country of their birth. Of all the couples, 67.6% were middle class, 18.9% were upper middle class, and 13.5% were lower middle class. For the socio-economic status of the family that each partner came from (i.e. their parents' socio-economic status in the country that they were living), 61.1% couples in which the partners had the same family socio-economic background, 19.4% couples in which women had a higher socio-economic background than the partner's, and 19.4% couples in which women had a lower socio-economic background than the partner's. For women's education, 54.1% had postgraduate degrees, 35.1% had first degrees, and 10.8% had less than the first degree. For men's education, 43.2% had postgraduate degrees, 32.4% had first degrees, and 24.3% had less than the first degree. 48.6% couples in which partners had similar levels of education, 32.4% couples in which women had a higher educational level than the partner's and 18.9% couples in which women had a less educational level than the partner's. 62.2% of women and 40.5% of men did not have any religion, 24.3% of women and 32.4% of men were Christians, and 13.5% of women and 27% of men had other religions.

#### *Measurements (APPENDIX 2 and APPENDIX 3) and scoring*

Couples were asked to fill in the measurement of romantic love (Rubin, 1970), Commitment scale by Rusbult et al.(1998), Dyadic Adjustment Scale (Spanier, 1976), couple cultural identity scale (questions extracted from acculturation scales and Triandis's (1996) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale) and demographic questions. All measures were translated into Chinese by the researcher, and then the Chinese questionnaire was back-translated into English separately by two other people who were fluent in both languages. The English questionnaire and the back-translated English questionnaire were then compared. During this process, unsuitable expressions in Chinese were revised. Participants completed the following measures:

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

2. Commitment scale by Rusbult et al. (1998): This scale has been identified as being effective in measuring personal commitment (Johnson et al., 1999; Adams & Jones, 1997; Stanley & Markman, 1992). The scale includes seven items such as “I want our relationship to last for a very long time” and “I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future” and rates on a 9-point scale from “Do Not Agree At All” (0) to “Agree Completely” (8) (Rusbult et al., 1998, p. 390-391). The score of commitment is the sum of each item in this scale. High scores in this scale would reflect high levels of personal commitment.
3. Dyadic Adjustment Scale (DAS: Spanier, 1976): The DAS has 32 questions, such as the degree of agreement/disagreement on “Handling family finances”, “In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?”, and “Do you and your mate engage in outside interests together?” (p. 27-28). In the current study, a single score of DAS will be used based on the definition of satisfaction by Johnson (1991; Johnson et al., 1999), which was “attraction to the relationship”. One of Johnson’s (Kapinus & Johnson, 2003) studies used six questions to measure satisfaction within his framework of personal commitment, which were all reflected in different aspects of DAS. Therefore, all items in DAS have been added together to form a single score of dyadic adjustment. High scores in dyadic adjustment would reflect high levels of satisfaction.
4. Couple cultural identity scale: This will be measured by two scales, acculturation to the partner scale and Triandis’ (1996) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale. The acculturation to the partner scale (see Appendix 2 and Appendix 3) was created specifically for this study. Items of the acculturation to the partner scale have been added together to form one part of “couple cultural identity”. High scores would reflect high levels of couple cultural identity. Triandis’ (1996) horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale included 29 questions on a 9-point scale ranging from strongly disagree (1) to strongly agree (9). Eight questions on vertical individualism such as “It annoys me when other people perform better than I do”, seven questions on horizontal individualism such as “Being a unique individual is important to me”, eight questions on vertical collectivism such as “I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity”, and six questions



on horizontal collectivism such as “The well-being of my co-workers is important to me” (p. 415). The scores for the couple cultural identity from Triandis’ scale have been calculated as: calculating each item’s absolute value of the subtraction between partner’s scores, and then adding this absolute value for each item in vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism together to form another part of “couple cultural identity”. Lower score means highly congruent values on individualism and collectivism between partners, which would reflect a higher couple cultural identity.

5. Demographic information: Participants completed questions assessing socio-demographic characteristics and relationship variables. Questions asked for information including participant’s age, gender, length of current marriage, whether it was the first marriage (if not, how many prior marriage(s)), number of children of the current marriage, current social status, parents’ social status, educational level, religion, ethnicity, and parents’ ethnicities.

### *Procedure*

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

## Results

*Reliability analysis* was carried out to test the consistency of the questions on each scale for the current sample. Table 5.1 shows the reliabilities of Rubin's measurement of romantic love, Rusbult's commitment scale, Spanier's DAS, acculturation to the partner scale, and four categories of Triandis's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism scale for women and men respectively. In general, the reliability alphas were acceptable. There was one exception: the reliability of the vertical individualism scale for women was very low ( $\alpha=.41$ ). However when one item, "Competition is the law of nature" (Triandis, 1996, p. 415) was deleted, the reliability rose to .74 according to item-total statistics. For men, the reliability for the scale dropped to .63 after the same item was deleted. Therefore the item was deleted from the scale in the following analysis.

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

Table 5.1 Reliabilities of scales

Horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies (see Table 5.2) were examined through *computing variables* and *descriptive statistics*. Men and women's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies scores were taken from the maximum average score among the four categories. These results are partly consistent with Triandis (1995) who noted that individualists tend to be horizontal individualists while collectivists tend to be vertical collectivists. This was

true for men in the current sample, but not for women. The most frequent value tendency for men was horizontal individualism, but for women was horizontal collectivism. There were only a few vertical individualists in the sample. Both men and women had higher percentages of horizontal characteristics than vertical characteristics. In the current sample, women were more collectivistic and men were more individualistic. This result might reflect the fact that most women participants were Chinese immigrants and most men participants were Westerners.

	horizontal individualism (%)	vertical individualism (%)	vertical collectivism (%)	horizontal collectivism (%)
Men	67.6	5.4	10.8	16.2
Women	37.8	2.7	16.2	43.2

Table 5.2 Men's and women's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies in percentage.

*Correlation analysis* was carried out for all the scales; Table 5.3 describes the correlations between all the variables used in this study. Although there were some significant correlations, the coefficients were not particularly high, indicating that the scales were not measuring the same constructs. There were some significant correlations between personal commitment and love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, and couple's individualism/collectivism for men and women respectively. However, couple's individualism/collectivism did not correlate significantly to men's personal commitment. Note that couple's individualism/collectivism significantly correlated with both men and women's acculturation to the partner, and women's dyadic adjustment, which means the greater similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism tendency, the greater acculturation to the partner for both men and women, and the greater dyadic adjustment for women. However, couple's individualism/collectivism was significantly correlated to women's, but not to men's, personal commitment, love, and dyadic adjustment.

*ANOVA* of men's and women's horizontal and vertical individualism and collectivism tendencies on men and women's personal commitment did not show significant differences. However men's horizontal individualism yielded the highest men's personal commitment, followed by men's vertical collectivism and horizontal

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16
1. women's personal commitment																
2. men's personal commitment	.45**															
3. women's love	.60**	.20														
4. men's love	.22	.61**	.27													
5. women's acculturation to the partner	.59**	.09	.23	-.02												
6. men's acculturation to the partner	.43**	.29*	.49**	.32*	.52**											
7. women's dyadic adjustment	.61**	.44**	.59**	.39**	.52**	.56**										
8. men's dyadic adjustment	.31*	.56**	.39*	.52**	.20	.53**	.71**									
9. couple's individualism/collectivism	-.33*	.02	-.29*	.09	-.50**	-.39**	-.30*	-.19								
10. women's horizontal individualism	.03	.01	.05	.25	.05	-.00	-.05	.08	-.21							
11. men's horizontal individualism	.04	.14	.09	.31	-.10	.20	.24	.23	.09	.25						
12. women's vertical collectivism	.41*	.36*	.25	.27	.30	.27	.39*	.33*	-.21	-.27	-.15					
13. men's vertical collectivism	-.12	-.05	-.01	.02	-.09	.07	.09	.23	-.07	-.30	-.15	.06				
14. women's horizontal collectivism	.22	.07	-.04	.14	.17	-.09	.02	-.12	.00	.08	-.24	.31	.02			
15. men's horizontal collectivism	-.03	-.17	.06	-.07	-.12	.04	-.01	-.08	-.32	-.24	-.03	.15	.52**	.15		
16. women's vertical individualism	-.31	-.18	-.16	.20	-.34*	-.21	-.19	.03	.23	.22	.13	-.28	-.12	-.09	-.32	
17. men's vertical individualism	-.26	-.07	-.08	.05	-.23	-.13	-.08	-.05	.10	.17	.20	-.27	-.39*	-.16	-.34*	.33*

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5.3 Correlations between all the variables in the cultural model

collectivism. Women's horizontal collectivism yielded the highest women's personal commitment, followed by women's vertical collectivism and horizontal individualism. Both men's and women's vertical individualism yielded the lowest personal commitment.

*Within-sample T-tests* were carried out to examine the difference between the couples on personal commitment, love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, vertical individualism, horizontal individualism, vertical collectivism, and horizontal collectivism. Table 5.4 describes the means and standard deviations (SDs) and the *t* scores/significance level. Women's love scores were significantly lower than men's, women's horizontal individualism scores were significantly lower than men's, and women's horizontal collectivism scores were significantly higher than men's. The other *t*-tests did not show significant differences between women and men.

	Women (Mean)	Women (SD)	Men (Mean)	Men (SD)	T score
Personal commitment	52.10	6.04	52.73	4.83	-0.65
Love	86.30	14.53	94.73	10.50	-3.31**
Dyadic Adjustment	114.11	18.16	112.31	15.68	-0.84
Acculturation to the partner	42.00	6.51	41.49	6.58	0.49
Vertical individualism	28.46	9.20	29.62	8.73	-0.68
Horizontal individualism	42.24	11.57	48.35	11.31	-2.65*
Vertical collectivism	44.24	9.61	42.76	9.06	0.71
Horizontal collectivism	39.08	6.62	35.46	7.37	2.42*

\*\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

\* . Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level.

Table 5.4 Means, SDs, and the *t* scores/significance level between men and women.

*ANOVA* and *t-tests* were carried out to find out which demographic variables had significant effects on personal commitment. It was found that the number of previous marriages for both women and men significantly differentiated men's personal commitment. According to Table 5.5, men had the highest personal commitment scores if they and their partner were in a first marriage, followed by men and women in a second marriage, and men in their third marriage. Cohabiting couples had the lowest

personal commitment scores. Having child/children had significant impact on both men's and women's personal commitment. According to Table 5.6, couples who had child(ren) had significantly higher personal commitment scores than couples who did not have a child.

	Cohabit	First marriage	Second marriage	Third marriage	F-ratio
Women	47.33	53.85	53.40		5.63**
Men	47.33	54.29	53.33	51.00	4.55**

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 5.5 Mean scores, F-ratios and the significance of men's personal commitment on the number of marriage of both women and men.

	No child	Having child(ren)	T score
Women	49.65	55.00	3.19**
Men	50.85	54.94	3.01**

\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level.

Table 5.6 Mean scores, t scores and the significance of men and women's personal commitment on having/not having children.

	Less than college	More than college	T score
Women	56.00	51.64	-4.02***
Men	50.00	53.60	1.57 ns

\*\*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.001 level.

Table 5.7 Mean scores, t scores and the significance of men's personal commitment on men's educational level and women's personal commitment on women's educational level.

Women's educational level had significant effect on women's personal commitment, but men's educational level did not have significant effect on men's personal commitment. According to Table 5.7, highly educated women had significantly less personal commitment but highly educated men had slightly more personal commitment. Women's religion had significant effect on women's personal commitment. However men's religion had no effect on either women or men's personal commitment. Women with religion had significantly higher personal commitment than women without religion ( $t=2.93$ ,  $p<0.01$ ). Other demographic variables did not have

significant effects on personal commitment. For example, couples' age difference did not have significant effect on women's personal commitment. As well, given the fact that most women participants were immigrants to either the United Kingdom or the United States, women's length of residence in these countries might be likely reflect the women's length of immigration. However, women's length of residence in the United Kingdom or the United States had no significant effect on both women and men's personal commitment. Socioeconomic status, difference of parents' socioeconomic status between the partners, ethnicity, cohabiting/ not cohabiting before marriage, and difference of education level between the partners did not have significant effects on men and women's personal commitment.

*Standard multiple regressions* were carried out to see how the variables of satisfaction, love and couple cultural identity predict personal commitment. The scores entered for the predictors were love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, couple's individualism/collectivism (i.e. couple's similarity on vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism).

Results for women showed that women's dyadic adjustment ( $r=.61, p<.001$ ), love ( $r=.60, p<.001$ ), women's acculturation to the partner ( $r=.59, p<.001$ ), and couple's individualism/collectivism ( $r=-.33, p<.05$ ) significantly correlated with women's personal commitment. Thus all the predictors in the cultural model significantly correlated with women's personal commitment. The results also showed that the more love (i.e. high score of love), satisfaction (i.e. high score of dyadic adjustment) and couple cultural identity (i.e. high score of women's acculturation to the partner and low scores of couple's individualism/collectivism), the more the personal commitment of the women. In the standard multiple regression, love ( $\beta =.43, p<.01$ ) and women's acculturation to the partner ( $\beta =.45, p<.01$ ) explained significant variance in women's personal commitment, women's love explained 11% and women's acculturation to the partner explained 12% of the total variance. However the remaining scales did not show unique variance in explaining personal commitment. All the predictors explained 59% of variance in personal commitment,  $F(4, 32)=11.43, p<.001$ . Therefore, greater women's love and women's acculturation to the partner predicted greater personal commitment of women.

Results for men showed that men's dyadic adjustment ( $r=.56, p<.001$ ), men's love ( $r=.61, p<.001$ ), and men's acculturation to the partner ( $r=.29, p<.05$ ) significantly correlated to men's personal commitment. However, unlike women, couple's

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

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

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

Given the findings from the ANOVA and t-tests that several demographic variables had effect on personal commitment, *hierarchical multiple regressions* were conducted to control the demographic variables when testing the prediction on personal commitment. Demographic variables, education, number of previous marriages, number of children, and religion, were entered first as a block, then love, dyadic adjustment, acculturation to the partner, couple's individualism/collectivism were entered into the next block. Some of the variables were recoded as dummy variables as significant differences were found in ANOVA and t-tests, such as number of children (0 – no child;



1 – having child(ren)), religion (0 – no religion; 1 – having religion), number of previous marriages (times1: 1 – first marriage, 0 – not the first marriage; times2: 1 – second marriage, 0 – not the second marriage; times3: 1 – third marriage, 0 – not the third marriage), and education (0 – less than college; 1 – more than college)..

*Regression on women's personal commitment.* Women's religion, women's educational level, and number of children were entered as the first block into the regression, then women's love, women's dyadic adjustment, women's acculturation to the partner, and couple's individualism/collectivism were entered as the second block. The dependent variable was women's personal commitment. Results showed the two blocks of variables explained 68% of the variance in women's personal commitment. The demographic variables were significant predictors to women's personal commitment,  $F(3,33)=3.35$ ,  $p<.05$ , and explained 23% of the variance. The predictors in the cultural model were also significant predictors to women's personal commitment,  $F(4,29)=9.92$ ,  $p<.001$ , and explained another 44% of the variance. Only women's love ( $\beta =.42$ ,  $p<.01$ ) was a significant predictor of women's personal commitment. Different from the regression analysis where demographic variables were not controlled, women's acculturation to the partner only showed marginal significance in predicting of women's personal commitment when considering demographic variables. Thus it is possible that demographic variables have taken some variance from women's acculturation to the partner in explaining women's personal commitment. However, compared to women's psychological variables in explaining women's personal commitment, demographic variables only explained half of the variance

*Regression on men's personal commitment.* Men's number of previous marriages, women's number of previous marriages, and number of children were entered as the first block into the regression, then men's love, men's dyadic adjustment, men's acculturation to the partner, and couple's individualism/collectivism were entered as the second block. The dependent variable was men's personal commitment. Results showed the two blocks of variables together explained 67% of the variance in men's personal commitment. The demographic variables,  $F(5,31)=4.14$ ,  $p<.01$ , and the predictors in the cultural model,  $F(4,27)=5.53$ ,  $p<.01$ , were both significant predictors to men's personal commitment, and they explained 40% and 27% of the variance in men's personal commitment respectively. Men's dyadic adjustment ( $\beta =.50$ ,  $p<.01$ ) and whether having children ( $\beta =.36$ ,  $p<.05$ ) were significant predictors of men's personal commitment. Note that all the demographic variables explained much more variance than the variance

explained by psychological variables in predicting men's personal commitment. Different from the regression analysis where demographic variables were not controlled, men's love did not show significance in predicting men's personal commitment when demographic variables were considered. So it is possible that whether having children and other demographic variables have taken some variance from men's love in explaining men's personal commitment.

Finally, structural equation modelling was used to test the model fitness (see Figure 5.2), in which women's personal commitment was affected by women's love and acculturation, and men's personal commitment was affected by men's love and dyadic adjustment. The errors of manifest variables were set as the calculation of one minus the measurement's reliability, and the paths between manifest variables and latent variables were set as the square root of the measurement's alpha reliability. The model showed that women's love ( $\gamma=.49, p<.001$ ) and acculturation ( $\gamma=.48, p<.001$ ) significantly indicated women's personal commitment; men's love ( $\gamma=.44, p<.01$ ) and dyadic adjustment ( $\gamma=.34, p<.05$ ) significantly indicated men's personal commitment. This model was almost non-significant ( $\chi^2(5)=10.86, p=0.054, RMSEA=0.18, CFI=0.89$ ), which showed that the model fitness was nearly good.

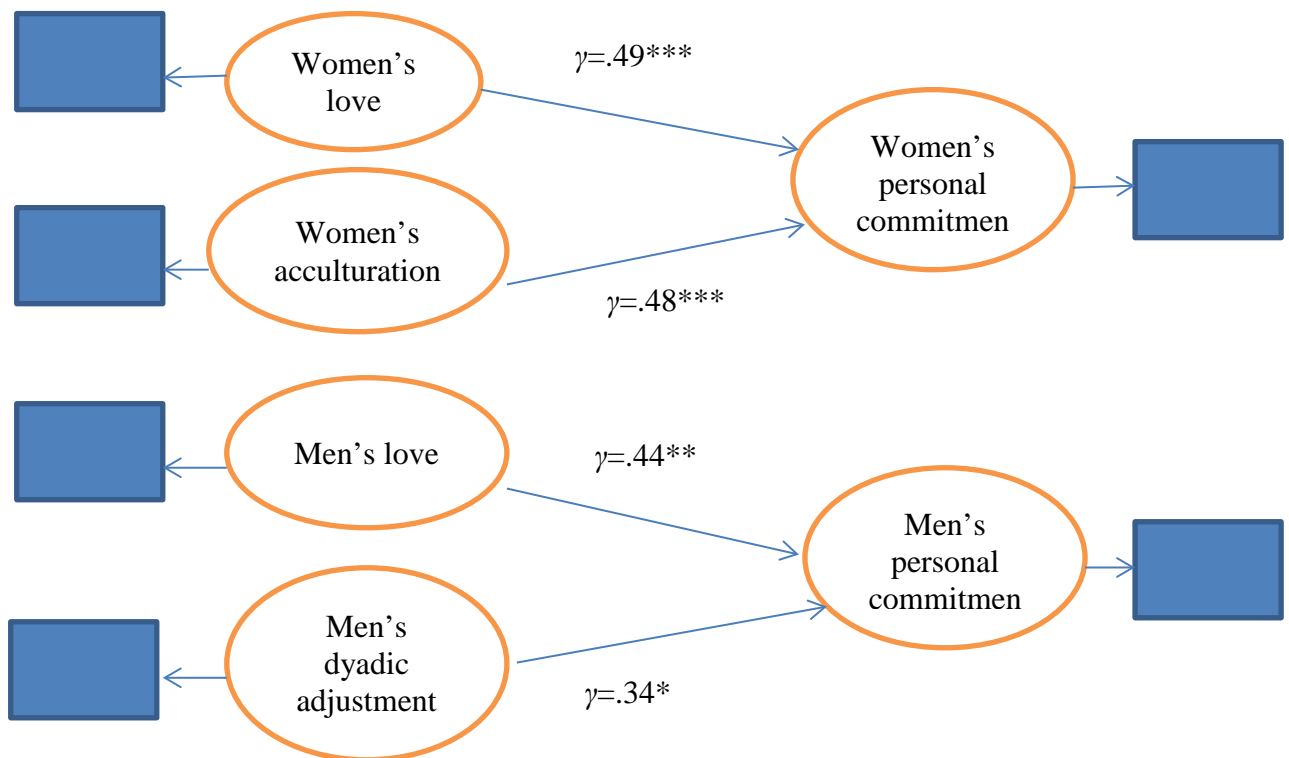


Figure 5.2 Pathway diagram of the structural equation modelling analysis

## Discussion

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

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

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

For the new variable couple cultural identity, both women's acculturation to the partner and the similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism significantly correlated with women's personal commitment, but for men, only men's acculturation to the partner significantly correlated with men's personal commitment. Consistent with Strachman and Schimmel's (2006) finding on couple's similar values in enhancing commitment, the current study also found personal commitment was higher for those who had greater acculturation to the partner and greater couple's similarity on individualism and collectivism. However only acculturation to the partner was significant for both men and women; couple's similarity on individualism and collectivism was only significant for women. As Minatoya and Higa's (1988) study

showed, it is possible that behavioural change, which reflected mostly in acculturation to the partner, is easier than changing core values such as individualism/collectivism, which was reflected in couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism. Kim et al. (1999) also stated that the behaviour change goes before value change, which normally takes a longer time. An alternative explanation for these results is that most women in the sample were from Eastern countries, suggesting that they would pursue collectivistic similar values with their partners. As well, most women in the sample were immigrants (thus, might feel the need to change their values to adapt to the host country), or women may generally be more concerned about similar cultural values in a couple than men do.

The results of the analyses showed that the cultural models for men and women were both significant models, but not every predictor accounted for unique variance in personal commitment. Women's love and acculturation to the partner were significant predictors of women's personal commitment, and men's love and satisfaction were significant predictors of men's personal commitment; however women's satisfaction and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism did not show significant predictions on women's commitment, and men's acculturation and couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism did not show significant predictions on men's commitment. Only love was a significant predictor of both men's and women's personal commitment. This supports the results of the previous interview study which found the importance of love in relating to commitment

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

It was expected to find some partner effect in this study. However partner's love, satisfaction, and couple identity hardly had any effect on one's own personal commitment.

Demographic variables showed significant effects on both men and women's personal commitment. This might reflect the general trends in relationships, such as commitment generally associated with educational level, number of previous marriages,

whether having child(ren) and religion. For example, in the current study, women being more educated decreased women's personal commitment, both men and women being in the first marriage significantly increased men's personal commitment, having child(ren) significantly increased both men and women's personal commitment, and religious women significantly increased women's personal commitment. Contrary to Galligan and Bahr's (1978) finding, the current study found women's educational level was inversely related to personal commitment. Tzeng (1992) found that couple's similar educational level promoted marital stability, but the current study did not find any significant relationship between couple's similar educational level and personal commitment, considering personal commitment is different from relationship stability. Unlike Clark and Haldane's (1990) finding that higher social class enhanced stability, the current research did not find any relationship between socioeconomic status and personal commitment.

When the predictors in the cultural model predicting personal commitment with demographic variables being controlled for, demographic variables explained much more proportion of significant variance in men's personal commitment (i.e. nearly two thirds of the total variance was explained by demographic variables) than in explaining women's personal commitment (i.e. only one third of the total variance was explained by demographic variables). However, both demographic variables as a whole and psychological variables as a whole significantly predicted personal commitment for both men and women. According to the significant predictors that were found in the analyses, it seems that maintaining a strong personal commitment for men did not involve much cultural assimilation to their partner but rather satisfaction and demographic variables, whereas cultural assimilation to the partner and other psychological variables are more important than demographic variables for women's personal commitment. Again, cultural assimilation to the partner might significantly relate to the immigrant partner's personal commitment, and might be more important to the more collectivistic partners and women partners.

According to the analysis on the effect of men's and women's vertical and horizontal individualism and collectivism tendencies on men's and women's personal commitment, individualism or collectivism alone cannot be treated as having any effect on personal commitment. However, horizontal characteristics tended to enhance both men's and women's personal commitment, although it was horizontal collectivism for women but horizontal individualism for men.

## **Conclusion**

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

As found in several research studies, demographic variables, such as women's educational level, number of previous marriages, having or not having child(ren), and having or not having a religion, had significant effects on personal commitment. However, women's psychological variables were stronger predictors of women's personal commitment than were demographic variables, but demographic variables were stronger predictors of men's personal commitment than were psychological variables.

Men and women in the sample maintained their relationships in different ways: men emphasised love and satisfaction, whereas women emphasised love and acculturation to their partner. However these might be confounded with gender, migrant status, and the person's individualism/collectivism orientation. For example, women, migrants and more collectivistic individuals may be more likely to maintain commitment by acculturation to their partner. Most women were migrants and more collectivistic than their partner in the current sample, so it is unknown whether similar results would occur if a good proportion of men in the sample were migrants and were more collectivistic than their partner.

## **Limitations and future directions**

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

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

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

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

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

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

This study is an important step in addressing the dearth of research in interethnic relationships, especially Chinese interethnic relationships. The discovery of the importance of “couple cultural identity” in contributing to personal commitment, besides love and dyadic adjustment, helps researchers to gain a greater understanding of such relationships and to build up further research on interethnic relationships. As well, given the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages, findings from this study may allow relationship counsellors to help interethnic couples experiencing relationship problems.



## Chapter 6 Overall discussion and conclusion

### 6.1 Overall discussion and conclusion

In order to find the factors that contribute to commitment of Chinese interethnic couples, a qualitative study and a quantitative study were conducted. The qualitative study was conducted in order to have more knowledge of Chinese interethnic couples and to find whether Rusbult's investment model could be applied to such couples. It was found that 1) Rusbult's concept of investment was treated as inappropriate and might not associate with commitment; 2) committed relationship partners were not likely to look for alternatives; 3) love and moral aspects as well as satisfaction were important factors for commitment; 4) Chinese interethnic couples were quite accepted in the society and had high levels of support from significant social networks; 5) partners in interethnic relationships did have cultural difference and this difference could cause divorce; 6) partners in interethnic relationships tended to follow a mixture of both partners' cultures and acculturate towards each other; 7) couple cultural identity was thought as an important factor for committed relationships, and the definition of couple cultural identity was agreed by the participants. According to these findings, Johnson's commitment framework seemed suitable. Therefore a cultural model that incorporated Johnson's personal commitment and the new construct "couple cultural identity" was developed for the quantitative study. The cultural model posits that love, satisfaction, and couple cultural identity will predict personal commitment and each will account for unique variance in personal commitment, and the more love the more personal commitment, the more satisfaction the more personal commitment, and the more congruent couple cultural identity the more personal commitment.

The results of the quantitative study supported the cultural model by the significant correlations between the three factors and personal commitment, and the significant predictions of the three factors on personal commitment. It was also found that couple cultural identity, which included similarity of couple's individualism/collectivism and acculturation to the partner, had more effect on women's personal commitment than on men's. This may be due to women participants were more likely to be immigrants and immigrant partners were found to be more likely to change to the host culture in the qualitative study. However, acculturation to the partner seemed to have better correlation and prediction abilities than similarity of couple's

individualism/collectivism on personal commitment, which might be worthy to be investigated further. It was also found that partner's love, satisfaction, and couple identity hardly had any effect on one's own personal commitment. Several demographic variables, such as educational level, number of previous marriages, whether having child(ren) and religion, showed significant effects on both men and women's personal commitment. Demographic variables explained much more proportion of significant variance in men's personal commitment than in explaining women's personal commitment, although both the demographic variables as a whole and the psychological variables as a whole significantly predicted personal commitment for both men and women. Horizontal characteristics (i.e. horizontal individualism and horizontal collectivism) tended to enhance both men's and women's personal commitment, which reflects that horizontal characteristics may be more beneficial than vertical characteristics in interethnic relationships. Women's love score significantly lower than men's may suggest the cultural difference in expressing and understanding love, with collectivistic partners (mostly women) express love less than individualistic partners (mostly men) do. Whether difference of expressing love affects relationship quality may be worthy to investigate further.

The hypothesised unique variance of each psychological variable in the cultural model in personal commitment was partly supported, as men emphasised love and satisfaction and women emphasised love and acculturation to their partner to maintain their personal commitment. Since women were more likely to be the immigrant and the collectivistic partners and immigrant partners were found to be more likely to change to the host culture in the qualitative study, couple cultural identity may associate more significantly with personal commitment for the more collectivistic partner than for the more individualistic partner, for women than for men, or for immigrants than for non-immigrants.

Besides, some themes that were found in the qualitative study as well as the findings in the quantitative study may draw attention. It was found in the qualitative study that partners in interethnic relationships appreciated interethnic relationships and their partner's culture, and in interethnic relationships could bring much novelty and personal growth in interethnic relationships. These themes may indicate the attraction of a dissimilar other and the reward of having a dissimilar partner, which can be considered as a variation to the long standing concept of the close relationship between similarity and attraction. The attraction of a dissimilar culture could contribute to

individuals' willingness to learn and change towards another culture, which may explain the significant correlations between both women's and men's acculturation to the partner and their personal commitment and between couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism and women's personal commitment that were found in the quantitative study.

In spite of the reward of interethnic relationships, there are costs as well. It was found in the qualitative study that more effort was needed for interethnic relationships compared to intraethnic relationships and having children increased the need for interethnic couples to develop couple cultural identity. These themes indicate that interethnic couples need to work harder to overcome their dissimilarities and rearing interethnic children may reveal and magnify the cultural difference between interethnic partners that are needed to be dealt with. The significant effect of having children on personal commitment that was found in the quantitative study may in accordance with more need to develop couple cultural identity for couples with children as found in the qualitative study. Couples with children may have developed more couple cultural identity and hence enhance their personal commitment. The immigrant partners in the interethnic relationships are likely to change to the host culture theme indicates that the immigrant partners are likely to be aware of the cultural differences and the necessities of changing towards the culture that they are residing in. This theme was echoed in the quantitative study, in which couple's similarity on individualism/collectivism significantly correlated with women's personal commitment and women's acculturation was a significant predictor for their personal commitment.

## **6.2 Contributions**

This thesis contributed to the dearth of research in interethnic relationships, especially Chinese interethnic relationships. The two studies could help researchers/counselling practitioners to gain a greater understanding and insight of interethnic relationships. For example, the significant role of culture in interethnic relationships, the inappropriateness of the concept of investment in married couples, the importance of love in contributing to personal commitment. This thesis can also help researchers/counselling practitioners avoid looking at interethnic couples through a biased point of view. For example, the attraction that comes from dissimilarity, the

beneficial characteristics of interethnic relationships, and the opposite opinions between interethnic relationship insiders and outsiders.

Another contribution is the discovery of the importance of “couple cultural identity” in contributing to personal commitment, besides love and satisfaction. There are two aspects of “couple cultural identity”, namely similarity of couple’s individualism/collectivism and acculturation to the partner. The novelty of using partners’ similarity on individualism/collectivism, instead of individualism and collectivism per se, and using acculturation to the partner instead of acculturation to a certain culture, could bring new contributions to the existing literature on culture and acculturation in relationships. The two aspects of couple cultural identity might help researchers/counselling practitioners pay attention to these aspects and identify the problems in interethnic relationships. Since couple cultural identity showed more significance for women, who were more collectivistic and were likely to be immigrants, it could give counselling practitioners more insight for counselling and give researchers more knowledge to build up further research.

As a result of the growing number of interethnic relationships and the higher divorce rate of interethnic marriages, the number of counselling clients in such relationships is likely to grow. Counselling practitioners can gain from this thesis in helping such clients on relationship issues. For example, counsellors could help interethnic couples to recognise and understand the difference caused by individualism/collectivism difference, and counsellors could help partners who reside in their own culture to acknowledge the cultural difference with their immigrant partner and the effort that their partner made to change towards the host culture.

All in all, this thesis can benefit Chinese interethnic couples and interethnic couples in general. Since cultural differences may exist in intraethnic couples, this thesis can benefit the intraethnic couples as well.

### **6.3 Implications for future research**

Marriage/long-term relationship itself is full of challenges, and the culture aspect of interethnic relationships do seem to make it more challenging, so interethnic couples might need to put more effort in their relationships. This thesis made a good contribution to the research on the quality of interethnic relationships. However the followings are worthy to be pointed out.

In a close relationship, the boundaries between culture and personality, between gender differences and culture differences might be blurred. Hofstede (2001) pointed out that “it is difficult to draw a sharp dividing line between individual personality and collective culture or to distinguish exceptional individuals from their cultural system” (p. 2). Lin and Church (2004) found that a Chinese personality dimension was more significant to people who maintained Chinese culture than people who did not, which also revealed the connections between personality and culture. So the future research on interethnic relationships could pay attention to personality and gender differences and their relationships with culture, so it could be clearer whether the effect of culture cannot be separated from personality and gender differences.

Since couple cultural identity was found important for Chinese interethnic couples, couple cultural identity might be important for interethnic couples with any different ethnic combinations and intraethnic couples as well, for even partners with the same ethnicity could have different cultures. Future research could employ the idea of couple cultural identity to couples with any different ethnic combinations and from the same ethnic group.

Personal commitment was solely focused in the quantitative study, but moral commitment and structural commitment might be important as well. For example, moral commitment was frequently mentioned in the qualitative study as a factor that contributed to commitment. So, future research could include these two types of commitment and examine their different contributions in relationships.

Rohrlich (1988, p. 42) stated that “To marry an individual from another culture is to marry that culture as well”, which emphasised not only the importance of culture, but also the importance to love the partner’s different culture. I sincerely hope that this thesis will encourage more and more research on interethnic relationships.

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## **APPENDIX 1 – Interview questions for married Chinese interethnic couples in the United Kingdom**

How did you meet your husband/wife?

What attracted you initially to your husband/wife?

Would you like to tell me any happy memories in your marriage?

(Prompt: birth of a child, time with friends, ceremonies...)

Do you think your marriage is better than others' marriages?

- If better than, in which way?
- If worse than, in which way?
- If no difference, why?

What languages do you speak?

What is/are the language(s) you speak with your husband/wife?

- How fluently do you speak this/these language(s)?

Before your marriage, did you speak as fluently as the language(s) that you speak to your husband/wife now?

(If the husband/wife is a British) How much time do you usually spend a day reading British newspapers/magazines, watching British TV/video programs or listening to British radio programs?

What kind of food do you and your husband/wife eat? (Chinese food, English food, Mixture of both, Mixture of Chinese and the other)

What is your expectation for your marriage (what form an ideal marriage)? (Last forever, fulfil intimacy...)

- Do you think your expectation has been met in your marriage?

Consider your marriage,

- What factors do you think that could lead to a satisfactory marriage?
- What factors would make you commit to your relationship (want to stay in your relationship/continue the relationship)?
- What factors would make you want to break up with your husband/wife?

Do you talk freely to your husband/wife about yourself?

What do you think about the meaning of 'investing in a relationship'?

(To see whether they mention sharing together, having children, buying property, etc and whether they mention other forms of investment which Rusbult did not mention)

What forms of investment have you put into your marriage?

- Which form you have put the most time?
- Will you lose these investments if your marriage were to end?
- What forms of investment do you think that could make you more committed to your marriage?
- Can you put these forms of investment in the order of importance?
- Can you put these forms of investment in the order of amount you've put in?

Overall, do you think you have invested a lot into your marriage?

Do you share any similar interests with your husband/wife? What are they?

What do you feel about people's attitudes toward your relationship?

- People in the society (this country)
- Your friends
- Your family

- Do you believe that people you care about support your relationship?
- What people that you care about would do if you tell them you want to break up with your husband/wife? (Prompt: persuade you to continue, support you to break up...)

Have you ever had a misunderstanding? (If they mention misunderstanding because of cultural difference, then ask them whether this always happen)

- Is there any kind of thing you always have misunderstandings about?

How similar are your attitudes with your husband/wife's?

- Do you feel you have more similarity with your husband/wife after your marriage? (If so, do you change towards your husband/wife or the other way round or you both change?)

Do you think it would be better not to be in a relationship?

Do you feel there are attractive people who may bring you a better relationship than your current one?

What social activities do you go to? (clubs, societies, religious and recreational groups)

- Wife:
- Husband:

What are the composition of people in these events?

Do you go to these activities regularly?

Do you go to these activities with your husband/wife?

Do you want to go to these activities continuously in the future?

Are the friends of any of you are also the friends of the other one of you?

- Can you please describe some of these friends' characteristic (ethnicity)?  
(To see whether their friends are from a particular ethnic group)

Do you think you have any difference with your husband/wife that affects your relationship?

What kind of difference?

(If it's cultural difference) How does the cultural difference affect your relationship?

Positive side:

Negative side:

- If no differences
  - Do you have any difficulties or problems in your marriage?  
(If these are because of differences) If any of these differences are problems?
  - If no differences or problems
    - People in any given marriage are different as they were raised up in different families. So, do you think your background is different from your husband/wife's?
    - How do these differences positively and negatively affect your relationship?
  - If still no cultural differences
    - Do you think you are culturally different from your husband/wife?
    - If yes, what kind of difference? How does cultural difference positively and negatively affect your relationship? How did you handle these cultural differences?

People in every marriage have experienced conflicts and having conflicts is good for strengthening relationships. Can you give me an example of how you deal with a conflict in your marriage?

- (if this is because of cultural difference) Do you think you always have such conflict?
- (otherwise) What do you think caused this conflict?



Are there any conflicts were caused by cultural differences? If yes, how did you solve it?

How well do you know about your husband/wife's culture?  
(History, politics, country)

After your marriage, do you think you have changed your cultural values?

Do you think you have similar cultural value with your husband/wife?

Do you identify yourself with your husband/wife's ethnic group?

- If so, how did you achieve that?
- If not, do you feel you and your husband/wife belong to different ethnic groups?

Imagine you have married to a person from your own ethnicity, what would the relationship be like?

Now there are 2 cultures around you: British, wife's and husband/wife's culture (if they are both not from the UK). Is there any other culture(s) influencing you?

How do you balance these cultures? Which value do you follow? Which value does your husband/wife follow?

How do you balance these cultures?

What culture(s) do you follow?

What do you think the meaning of 'couple's cultural identity'? Does it mean "A set of cultural values that the couple both follow"?

Do you think having a similar couple's cultural identity is important for you to have a satisfied and committed marriage?

Do you think generating a 'couple's cultural identity' is a kind of investment to your marriage? Have you invested a lot to this identity?

Do you think you will lose this identity if your marriage were to end?

Now can you please make an assessment of your marriage? (0-100 scale)  
(Happy, satisfied, close to ideal, attached to relationship, committed, need more effort to improve, unsatisfied...)

Can you see the picture of what your marriage will be like after many years?

What are the advantages of having an interethnic marriage?

What are the disadvantages of having an interethnic marriage?

What are the advantages of having an intraethnic marriage?

What are the disadvantages of having an intraethnic marriage?

What do you think the reasons of the fact that interethnic marriages have a higher divorce rate than intraethnic marriages?

Would you like to add anything to what you have already answered?

## APPENDIX 2 – English questionnaire for Chinese interethnic couples in the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>

**Please use any methods to indicate your answers (e.g. type a “x” beside the chosen number). Please do not compare your answers with your partner’s and please answer them separately from your partner. There are no right or wrong answers, so please choose the answer that best reflects your view. All your answers will be kept strictly confidential.**

**Please answer each of the following questions in terms of how you generally feel about your partner taking into account the last few months. The rating you choose should reflect how you actually feel, not how you think you should feel. Please rate from “not at all true/disagree completely” (1) to “definitely true/agree completely” (9).**

	Not at all true/ disagree completely				Moderately true/ moderately agree				Definitely true/ agree completely	
1. If my partner were feeling badly, my first duty would be to cheer him (her) up.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
2. I feel that I can confide in my partner about virtually everything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
3. I find it easy to ignore my partner’s faults.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
4. I would do almost anything for my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
5. I feel very possessive toward my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
6. If I could never be with my partner, I would feel miserable.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7. If I were lonely, my first thought would be to seek my partner out.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
8. One of my primary concerns is my partner’s welfare.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
9. I would forgive my partner for practically anything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
10. I feel responsible for my partner’s well-being.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
11. When I am with my partner, I spend a good deal of time just looking at him (her).	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
12. I would greatly enjoy being confided in by my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
13. It would be hard for me to get along without my partner.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
	Not at all true/ disagree completely				Moderately true/ moderately agree				Definitely true/ agree completely	

**Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding your current relationship during the last few months.**

	Do not Agree at all				Agree Somewhat			Agree Completely	
1. I want our relationship to last for a very long time.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. I am committed to maintaining my relationship with my partner.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. I would not feel very upset if our relationship were to end in the near future.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. It is likely that I will date someone other than my partner within the next year.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. I feel very attached to our relationship – very strongly linked to my partner.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. I want our relationship to last forever.	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. I am oriented toward the long-term future of my relationship (for example, I imagine being with my partner several years from now).	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

**Please indicate below the approximate extent of agreement or disagreement between you and your partner during the last few months for each item on the following list.**

	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
1. Handling family finances	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. Matters of recreation	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. Religious matters	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. Demonstrations of affection	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. Friends	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. Sex relations	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. Conventionality (correct or proper behaviour)	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. Philosophy of life	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. Ways of dealing with parents or in-laws	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. Aims, goals, and things believed important	5	4	3	2	1	0

11. Amount of time spent together	5	4	3	2	1	0
	Always Agree	Almost Always Agree	Occasionally Disagree	Frequently Disagree	Almost Always Disagree	Always Disagree
12. Making major decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. Household tasks	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. Leisure time interests and activities	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. Career decisions	5	4	3	2	1	0

	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
16. How often do you discuss or have you considered divorce, separation or terminating your relationship?	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. How often do you or your partner leave the house after a fight?	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. In general, how often do you think that things between you and your partner are going well?	5	4	3	2	1	0
19. Do you confide in your partner?	5	4	3	2	1	0
20. Do you ever regret that you married/lived together?	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. How often do you and your partner quarrel?	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. How often do you and your partner “get on each other’s nerves”?	0	1	2	3	4	5
	All the time	Most of the time	More often than not	Occasionally	Rarely	Never

	Every Day	Almost Every Day	Occasionally	Rarely	Never
23. Do you kiss your partner?	4	3	2	1	0
	All of them	Most of them	Some of them	Very few of them	None of them
24. Do you and your partner engage in outside interests together?	4	3	2	1	0

**How often would you say the following events occur between you and your partner during the last few months?**

	Never	Less than once a month	Once or twice a month	Once or twice a week	Once a day	More often
25. Have a stimulating exchange of ideas	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. Laugh together	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. Calmly discuss something	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. Work together on a project	0	1	2	3	4	5

**Following are some things about which couples sometimes agree and sometime disagree. Please indicate if either item below caused differences of opinions or were problems in your relationship during the past few weeks. (Check yes or no)**

	Yes	No
29. Being too tired for sex.	0	1
30. Not showing love.	0	1

**31. The dots on the following line represent different degrees of happiness in your relationship. The middle point, "happy", represents the degree of happiness of most relationships. Please choose the dot which best describes the degree of happiness, all things considered, of your relationship during the last few months. ( Please circle, tick or use other methods to indicate the number)**

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
.	.	.	.	.	.	.
Extremely Unhappy	Fairly Unhappy	A little Unhappy	Happy	Very Happy	Extremely Happy	Perfect

**32. Which of the following statements best describes how you feel about the future of your relationship? Please circle, tick or use other method to indicate your answer.**

- 5 I want desperately for my relationship to succeed, and would go to almost any length to see that it does.
- 4 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do all I can to see that it does.
- 3 I want very much for my relationship to succeed, and will do my fair share to see that it does.
- 2 It would be nice if my relationship succeeded, but I cannot do much more than I am doing now to help it succeed.
- 1 It would be nice if it succeeded, but I refuse to do any more than I am doing now to keep the relationship going.
- 0 My relationship can never succeed, and there is no more that I can do to keep the relationship going.

**Please indicate the degree to which you agree with each of the following statements regarding yourself during the last few months.**

	Strongly disagree				Moderately agree				Strongly agree
1. It annoys me when other people perform better than I do.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. Competition is the law of nature.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. When another person does better than I do, I get tense and aroused.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. Without competition, it is not possible to have a good society.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. Winning is everything.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. It is important that I do my job better than others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. I enjoy working in situations involving competition with others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. Some people emphasise winning; I'm not one of them	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. I often do "my own thing".	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. Being a unique individual is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. I'd rather depend on myself than on others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. I rely on myself most of the time; I rarely rely on others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. My personal identity, independent from others, is very important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Strongly disagree				Moderately agree				Strongly agree
14. I am a unique person, separate from others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
15. I enjoy being unique and different from others.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
16. I would do what would please my family, even if I detested that activity.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
17. I usually sacrifice my self-interest for the benefit of my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
18. We should keep our aging parents with us at home.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19. I would sacrifice an activity that I enjoy very much if my family did not approve of it.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

20. Children should be taught to place duty before pleasure.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Strongly disagree				Moderately agree				Strongly agree
21. It is important to me that I respect the decisions made by my groups.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
22. Self-sacrifice is a virtue.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23. It annoys me if I have to sacrifice activities that I enjoy to help others	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
24. The well-being of my co-workers is important to me.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
25. If a co-worker gets a prize, I would feel proud.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
26. If a relative were in financial difficulty, I would help within my means.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27. It is important to me to maintain harmony within my group.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
28. I like sharing little things with my neighbours.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
29. It is important to consult close friends and get their ideas before making a decision.	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

**Please answer these questions.**

	Not fluent at all				Moderately fluent				Very fluent
1. How well do you speak the language that you communicate with your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Having totally different food								Having totally the same food
2. How similar is the food you have to your partner's?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Do not know any at all								Knowing almost everything
3. How well do you know your partner's culture?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Not willing at all								Very willing
4. How willing are you to introduce your culture to your partner?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	None at all								All of

									them
5. To what extent are your friends also your partner's friends?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	Not the same at all								The same degree
6. To what degree are your religious beliefs the same as your partner's?	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

What is your ethnicity? (Please choose the number below or write in)

- (1) Chinese/Chinese origin or Chinese British
- (2) Black or Black British – Caribbean, African or other
- (3) White – British or other
- (4) Asian or Asian British – Indian, Pakistani, Bangladeshi or other
- (5) Mixed; Parents are from two different groups
- (6) Other (write in): \_\_\_\_\_

What is your father's ethnicity (write the number above or write here)\_\_\_\_\_

What is your mother's ethnicity (write the number above or write here)\_\_\_\_\_

Sex: Male\_\_\_\_ Female\_\_\_\_

Age: \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you born? (please indicate the country's name) \_\_\_\_\_

Where were you brought up? (please indicate the country's name) \_\_\_\_\_

If you are married:

How long have you been married to your current spouse? \_\_\_\_\_ years

Did you cohabit with your current spouse before marriage? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If so, how long before marriage? \_\_\_\_\_ years

Is this your first marriage? Yes\_\_\_\_ No\_\_\_\_

If not, how many marriage(s) you had before? \_\_\_\_\_ marriages

If you are not married:

How long have you been cohabiting with your current partner\_\_\_\_\_years

How long have you (only yourself) been living in the UK? \_\_\_\_\_ years

How many children do you have in your current relationship? \_\_\_\_\_

What is your current socio-economic bracket?

Upper class Upper middle class Middle class Lower middle class Lower class

What are your parents' socio-economic bracket in the country that they are living?

Upper class Upper middle class Middle class Lower middle class Lower class

What is your education level?

Less than GCSE GCSE A-level First degree Postgraduate

What is your religion? \_\_\_\_\_

What is the initial of your name? format: "first name's initial" "middle name's initial"(if you have one)

"surname's initial" \_\_\_\_\_

What is the initial of your partner's name? format: "first name's initial" "middle name's initial"(if he/she has one)

"surname's initial" \_\_\_\_\_

**Please make sure that the initials you have written are the same as what your partner has written in his/her questionnaire. Thanks!**

Thanks for your participation! If you would like to participate a following-up study, please write your contact details (email, telephone or address) here:

\_\_\_\_\_



### APPENDIX 3 – Chinese questionnaire for Chinese interethnic couples in the United Kingdom<sup>1</sup>

請用任何方式標註您的選項(例如在您所選數字旁標註“x”)。請不要對比您和您配偶的答案，並請您和您配偶單獨填寫。答案沒有對錯，請按您的真實情況填寫。您的回答將被嚴格保密。若您尚未結婚，請把“婚姻”替換成您的“親密關係”。

請按照您在過去幾個月中總體的真實感受，而不是您認為應當有的感受，對您當前的婚姻選擇相應適當的真實或同意程度。從“完全不真實/完全不同意”（1）到“完全真實/完全同意”（9）。

	完全不真實/ 完全不同意				有些真實/ 同意一些				完全真實/ 完全同意
1. 假如我配偶情緒不好，我的首要責任是讓他（她）高興起來。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
2. 我覺得我幾乎可以毫無保留地向我的配偶吐露心事/秘密。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
3. 我發現我可以很容易地忽視我配偶的錯誤。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
4. 我幾乎會為我的配偶做任何事情。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
5. 我覺得我對我的配偶占有欲很強。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
6. 假如我再也不能和我的配偶在一起，我會感到非常痛苦。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
7. 假如我感到孤獨，我第一個念頭就是去尋找我的配偶。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
8. 最讓我關切的事情之一是我配偶的幸福。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. 我幾乎會原諒我配偶的任何事情。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. 我對我配偶的幸福負有責任。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. 當我和我配偶在一起的時候，我會花很多時間只是註視著他（她）。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. 被我配偶信任給我帶來極大享受。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. 假如沒有我的配偶，我很難生活得很好。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	完全不真實/ 完全不同意				有些真實/ 同意一些				完全真實/ 完全同意

請根據您過去幾個月中對您當前婚姻的感受，選擇相應的同意程度。

	完全不同意				同意一些				完全同意
1. 我希望我們的婚姻能持續很久。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
2. 我忠誠地維持我和配偶的婚姻。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
3. 假如在不久的將來我們的婚姻結束，我不會非常不高興。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
4. 有可能我會在明年與另一個人（而不是我配偶）約會。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
5. 我覺得我非常依附於我們的婚姻—與我配偶關聯非常緊密。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
6. 我想讓我們的婚姻永遠持續下去。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8
7. 我傾向於婚姻的久遠（例如，我想像我和我的配偶直到若干年後還在一起）。	0	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8

請選擇您和您配偶在過去幾個月的婚姻中對下列事情的意見相同程度。

	意見總是一致	意見幾乎總是一致	意見偶爾不一致	意見經常不一致	意見幾乎經常不一致	意見總是不一致
1. 處理家庭財政	5	4	3	2	1	0
2. 娛樂活動	5	4	3	2	1	0
3. 宗教問題	5	4	3	2	1	0
4. 表達感情	5	4	3	2	1	0
5. 朋友	5	4	3	2	1	0
6. 性關係	5	4	3	2	1	0
7. 傳統習俗（什麼是正確的或適當的行為）	5	4	3	2	1	0
8. 人生哲學	5	4	3	2	1	0
9. 處理與父母或親家父母關係的方式	5	4	3	2	1	0
10. 目標，目的和重要的事情	5	4	3	2	1	0
11. 在一起相處時間的長短	5	4	3	2	1	0

12. 作較重要的決定	5	4	3	2	1	0
13. 家務事	5	4	3	2	1	0
14. 休閒活動和興趣	5	4	3	2	1	0
15. 職業選擇	5	4	3	2	1	0
	意見總是一致	意見幾乎總是一致	意見偶爾不一致	意見經常不一致	意見幾乎經常不一致	意見總是不一致

	總是	大部分時間	有時	偶爾	很少	從不
16. 你們是否經常討論或考慮過離婚或分居？	0	1	2	3	4	5
17. 你或你的配偶是否經常吵架後離開家？	0	1	2	3	4	5
18. 總體來說，你是否經常認為你和你配偶之間一切順利？	5	4	3	2	1	0
19. 你是否信賴你的配偶？	5	4	3	2	1	0
20. 你是否曾經後悔和你配偶結婚？	0	1	2	3	4	5
21. 你和你配偶經常吵架嗎？	0	1	2	3	4	5
22. 你和你配偶是否經常令對方心煩不安或發脾氣？	0	1	2	3	4	5
	總是	大部分時間	有時	偶爾	很少	從不

	每天	幾乎每天	偶爾	很少	從不
23. 你吻你的配偶嗎？	4	3	2	1	0
	全部	大部分	一些	極少數	無相同的
24. 你和你配偶一起進行業余愛好嗎？	4	3	2	1	0

以下的描述在過去的幾個月裏經常發生在您和您配偶之間嗎？

	從不	少於一個月一次	一個月一次或兩次	一個星期一次或兩次	每天一次	更加頻繁
25. 興奮地交換想法	0	1	2	3	4	5
26. 一起大笑	0	1	2	3	4	5
27. 冷靜地討論事情	0	1	2	3	4	5
28. 一起做一個項目	0	1	2	3	4	5

以下是一些夫妻有時會同意，有時會不同意的事情。請指出這些事情是否在過去的幾個星期裏導致你們不同意見或是你們婚姻中的問題。（請選擇“是”或“否”）

	是	否
29. 過於疲勞而無性關係。	0	1
30. 沒有顯示愛。	0	1

31. 以下橫線上的“.”代表您在婚姻中不同的快樂程度。位於中間的“.”（“快樂”）代表大多數婚姻的快樂程度。請全面考慮您在過去幾個月中的婚姻，選擇最能代表您婚姻的快樂程度。

0	1	2	3	4	5	6
.	.	.	.	.	.	.
極不快樂	比較不快樂	有些不快樂	快樂	非常快樂	極快樂	極完美

32. 以下哪句最恰當地描述您對您婚姻未來的想法？

- 5 我極想要我的婚姻成功，並且我會想盡一切辦法讓它成功。
- 4 我非常想要我的婚姻成功，並且會盡一切努力讓它成功。
- 3 我非常想要我的婚姻成功，並且會做一些努力讓它成功。
- 2 當然如果我的婚姻成功是件好事，但我不能做比現在多得多來讓婚姻成功。
- 1 當然如果我的婚姻成功是件好事，但我拒絕做比我現在做得更多來維持婚姻。
- 0 我的婚姻永遠不可能成功，我也無法做什麼讓婚姻持續下去。

請按您過去幾箇月中對下列陳述的看法，選擇相應的同意程度。

	非常不同意				同意一些					非常同意
1. 如果別人比我出色，會使我煩惱。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
2. 競爭是自然法則。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
3. 當別人比我做得好，我會變得緊張和興奮。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
4. 沒有競爭就不可能有一個好的社會。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
5. 取勝就是一切。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
6. “比別人做得好”對我是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	
7. 我喜歡在和別人有競爭的環境中工作。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	

	非常不同意				同意一些				非常同意
8. 有些人強調取勝，我不是其中之一。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
9. 我經常做我自己的事情。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
10. 去做一個獨一無二的人對我來說是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
11. 我情願依靠自己，而不是別人。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
12. 我大部分時間都信靠自己，很少信靠別人。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
13. 我的個人認同獨立於其他人對我來說是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
14. 我是脫離於別人的獨一無二的人。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	非常不同意				同意一些				非常同意
15. 我喜歡獨特，和別人不一樣。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
16. 我會做讓我家人高興的事，即使我厭惡做。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
17. 我經常犧牲自己的興趣為了集體的利益。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
18. 我們應該讓上了年紀的父母住在我們家裏。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
19. 假如我家人不贊成，我會犧牲我非常喜歡的活動。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
20. 孩子們應當被教育成把職責置於享受之前。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
21. 尊重集體的決定對於我來說是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	非常不同意				同意一些				非常同意
22. 自我犧牲是一種美德。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
23. 如果我不得不犧牲自己喜歡的活動去幫助別人，會使我煩惱。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
24. 我同事們的幸福對我是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
25. 如果我的同事得到了獎賞，我會覺得驕傲。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
26. 假如我的親戚經濟有困難，我會在我能力範圍內給予幫助。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
27. 與集體保持和諧一致對我來說是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

	非常不同意				同意一些			非常同意	
28. 我喜歡和我的鄰居們分享小東西。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
29. 在做決定之前征求親密朋友們的意見是重要的。	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

請回答下列問題。

	一點也不流利				一般流利				非常流利
1. 你用語言跟你配偶交談的流利程度如何？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	吃完全不同的食物							吃完全相同的食物	
2. 你和你配偶飲食的相似程度如何？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	一點也不知道							幾乎知道所有	
3. 你是否很了解你配偶的文化？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	一點也不願意							非常願意	
4. 你是否很願意向配偶介紹你自己的文化？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	一個都不是							我所有的朋友都是	
5. 你的朋友也是你配偶的朋友嗎？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
	一點都不一致							非常一致	
6. 你的宗教信仰程度和你配偶一致嗎？	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9

您的民族群體是(請從以下選項中選擇)

- (1) 華人/華裔
- (2) 非洲人/非洲裔, 加勒比裔或其他
- (3) 英國白人或其他
- (4) 印度裔, 巴基斯坦裔, 孟加拉裔或其他
- (5) 混血; 父母來自不同的民族群體
- (6) 其他 (請具體指出): \_\_\_\_\_

您父親的民族群體 (請從以上的選項中選擇或寫在這裏) \_\_\_\_\_

您母親的民族群體 (請從以上的選項中選擇或寫在這裏) \_\_\_\_\_

性別: 男                      女

年齡: \_\_\_\_\_

您在哪國出生? \_\_\_\_\_

您在哪國長大? \_\_\_\_\_

若您已婚:

您和您當前的配偶結婚多久了? \_\_\_\_\_ 年

您和您配偶在結婚前是否同居? 是\_\_\_\_ 否\_\_\_\_

如果是, 結婚前同居多少年? \_\_\_\_\_ 年

這是您的第一次婚姻嗎? 是              否

如果不是, 您之前有過幾次婚姻? \_\_\_\_\_ 次

若您未婚:

您和您當前的配偶同居多久了? \_\_\_\_\_ 年

您在英國生活多久了? \_\_\_\_\_ 年

您和您當前的配偶有幾個孩子? \_\_\_\_\_ 個

您和您配偶當前的社會經濟地位?

上層階級      上層中產階級      中產階級      下層中產階級      下層階級

您父母在他們居住國的社會經濟地位?

上層階級      上層中產階級      中產階級      下層中產階級      下層階級

您的受教育程度?

高中以下                      高中                      A-level                      大學                      大學以上

您的宗教信仰? \_\_\_\_\_

您名字的大寫首字母是: (若您的名字是 Ann Lee, 大寫首字母是 AL) \_\_\_\_\_

您配偶名字的大寫首字母是: (若有中間名, 請加在中間) \_\_\_\_\_

**請確認您和您配偶所填的名字大寫首字母一致。謝謝!**

謝謝您的參與! 如果您願意參與此研究的後續研究, 請填寫您的聯系方式 (電郵地址, 電話號碼或地址)

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Note 1: For couples from the United States, “UK” was changed to “US”, and “British” was changed to “American” for the relevant demographic questions in both the English and the Chinese questionnaires.