

**CHINESE UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES
ON INTERETHNIC DATING**

Sihong (Julia) Wang

A Thesis Presented to the Department of Sociology
In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for the Degree of Bachelor of Arts with Honors

April 2012

Prof. Elizabeth A. Armstrong
Associate Professor of Sociology and Organizational Studies
Honors Faculty Professor

Prof. Pamela Smock
Professor of Sociology and Women's Studies
Director of Population Studies Center at the ISR
Honors Faculty Advisor

For Derek Fedeson

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Preface.....	4
Abstract.....	6
Introduction.....	7
Research Question.....	12
Hypothesis.....	13
Methodology.....	14
Results.....	18
Raised in US.....	21
Raised in China.....	31
Conclusion.....	44
References.....	46
Appendix.....	48
Acknowledgments.....	62

PREFACE

My background is unique. I was born in China and moved to the United States when I was eleven months old. I have lived in Ann Arbor for the past twenty-one years and assumed various cultural identities over time. I attended a predominantly black elementary school. I was sent to a rich, private middle school and hung out in a preppy white group of friends. Finally, I went to a diverse, public high school and was forced to meet new people in a crowd of unfamiliar faces. My ethnicity and cultural upbringing have undoubtedly influenced my intimate personal life. I use my senior thesis as an opportunity to reflect on my upbringing and the path that I took to get to where I am today. I have always been proud of my ethnic heritage and enjoyed its traditions, but American culture and values have shaped my academic, extracurricular, and personal life. My mother told me public dating (relationships known to family, friends, and teachers) was forbidden in China until the completion of one's educational career, as it distracts from studies. In her time, an academic institution could dismiss a student if a faculty member discovered the student was in an intimate relationship. My friends in China state that while such harsh repercussions no longer exist today, public relationships are still frowned upon before college.

In my experience, one of the defining characteristics of being raised in the United States is openness to intimacy and dating at a young age. Fake marriages took place during recess as early as second grade. Teachers taught sex education towards the end of elementary school. Students went to sixth grade dances with dates and played spin the bottle at seventh grade parties. "Official" relationships formed throughout middle school and into high school. This is the dating culture that I was familiar with growing up in the United States. It is one that has significantly influenced my choices, thus, I chose to focus my research project on interethnic

dating. While I consider my ethnic identity to be Chinese rather than Chinese-American, I recognize that my experiences have been more Chinese-American than Chinese. I am most attracted to Caucasian men on a physical and cultural level, but any person I choose to date would ideally learn to understand, respect, and appreciate the lifestyle associated with my ethnic heritage.

I am grateful for the opportunity to hear from people who share my ethnic identity and individuals who share my cultural identity. My parents have always insisted on speaking Mandarin at home. With my fluency in both English and Chinese, I was able to offer my participants the possibility of conducting the interview in either language. I believe my undergraduate status and casual dress provided a comfortable setting and encouraged a forum for thoughtful and honest dialogue. I relate to both Chinese women who moved to the United States after the start of high school and Chinese women who grew up in the United States. I have lived the best of both worlds and want to share these experiences.

ABSTRACT

The growth of the Chinese-American population within the United States has led to a corresponding increase in the opportunity for interethnic dating. I compare the roles that ethnic and cultural identities play in Chinese and Chinese-American women's consideration of dating partners. I conducted in-depth interviews with ten Chinese and fourteen Chinese-American undergraduate women. While all participants share the same ethnic heritage, their dating preferences varied based on cultural upbringing. The dating preferences of Chinese women were strongly shaped by ethnicity: they were mainly attracted to Chinese men. In contrast, Chinese-American women were more open to dating across ethnicity. For these individuals, shared American culture generally mattered more. This study focuses on the reasons for these differences and can be seen as a window into the social consequences of the movement of people across national borders.

INTRODUCTION

America is a melting pot of residents from all across the world. In the United States, Asian Americans represent the fastest growing ethnic group,¹ with Chinese residents comprising the largest share of the Asian population.² Growing up in the US and being exposed to its traditions and beliefs has many effects on individual perspectives, particularly romantic preferences. Comparing these individuals to those who grew up in the more homogenous country of China, we can ask the question: are those individuals of Chinese descent who grew up in the United States more likely to accept multiethnic dating? My research compares the views of Chinese undergraduate women (including those self-identified as either Chinese or Chinese-American) who grew up in the United States to those of Chinese undergraduate women who moved to America after high school. I capture the thought processes of these individuals in the American university context, analyze their similarities and differences in preferences, and investigate how cultural factors influence intimate partner choice in the United States. A young woman growing up in the United States might hold different attitudes about romance and engage in different dating practices than a young woman who grew up in China. Previous literature offers many reasons to believe that where one is raised influences romantic partner choice. The factors that I review and explore are homophily, social network composition, family and friend influence, cultural identity, assimilation, effects of stereotyping, and anticipatory mate selection.

In a discussion about “people like us,” McPherson et al. (2001) wrote that strong homophily (a tendency of individuals to associate with similar others) based on race and ethnicity often plays an important role in shaping personal affiliations. This is apparent in a wide range of relationships, from the most intimate bonds of marriage to the limited ties of schoolmate

¹ Day, Jennifer C. *N.d.* “Population Profile of the United States”

² 2011. “Population Statistics & Demographics”

friendship (McPherson et al. 2001). Homophily plays an important role in my research, as my participants come from different backgrounds. All of my participants identified as Chinese or Chinese-American, but the people they interacted with as they grew up varied. I believe ethnicity and culture to be related, yet distinct. I understand ethnicity to be a person's literal heritage and may be measured by skin color or self-identified nationality. Culture, on the other hand, encompasses all parts of an individual's upbringing, including his or her values and beliefs, observed traditions, and spoken languages.

The composition of an individual's social network, whether it is ethnically homophilous or heterophilous, may affect dating preference on the college campus. Marisol Clark-Ibáñez and Diane Felmlee claimed that, "...Those whose social network contacts are relatively varied ethnically are more apt to engage in an interethnic romantic relationship" (2004:293). These individuals may also find more support from their social networks for being in interethnic relationships.

Using open-ended questions, Clark-Ibáñez and Felmlee explored other factors influencing interethnic relationships, including gender, ethnicity, educational level, family values, socioeconomic status, and personal attitudes (2004). Following their example, I designed my questions in a similar manner such that the participants could fully express their views and so I could examine as many aspects of their responses as possible. By interviewing only ethnic Chinese women pursuing undergraduate degrees, I effectively control for gender, ethnicity, and educational level. The affective reaction of friends and family network members to an individual's partner also influences the viability of a relationship. I consider how family values, socioeconomic status, and personal attitudes influence openness to interethnic relationships. Clark-Ibáñez and Felmlee believed that the more that family members and friends approve of a

relationship, the more likely an individual would feel comfortable staying in that relationship. They noted one woman saying, “My parents would not agree with it and neither would my [H]ispanic friends. They’ve all told me not to mix blood” (Clark-Ibáñez et al. 2004:300). The two main items used to measure attitudes toward interethnic dating in Clark-Ibáñez and Felmlee’s research included respondents’ attitudes and the perception of parents’ attitudes toward their dating interethnically (Clark-Ibáñez et al. 2004).

Asian American parents heavily influence their children’s perceived cultural identities on the college campus. Baozhen Luo (2008) argued that this identity plays an important role in intimate partner choice, particularly amongst second-generation Asian Americans. He discussed dating attitudes and behaviors through both Chinese and American lenses to provide constructions of the two dating cultures. This study found that many Asian American students criticized their Asian parents for lacking American dating values of openness and emotion-orientation toward romance. These students wanted to be able to discuss their dating life with their parents, but the difference in values created a barrier which discouraged them from broaching the subject. Furthermore, they felt that relationships not only required the consent of those involved, but also the consent of families. The students felt that dating by their parents’ traditional standards put less emphasis on a couple’s compatibility, but rather focused on the reception the couple would receive from the rest of the society. Their parents cared more about whether other members of their communities would approve of the relationship (Luo 2008).

On the other hand, these same Asian American students criticized American dating practices, which lack the more traditional criteria of commitment and love. Through Asian lenses, they saw a recreational orientation to dating in the US culture marked by an absence of exclusiveness and long-term commitment (Luo 2008). Since these second-generation Asian

American students reconstructed both Chinese and American dating cultures, they essentially invented one of their own—a hybrid that incorporated aspects and values of both communities.

The next factor that may influence intimate partner choice is assimilation and its cultural consequences. One researcher described cultural assimilation as a process in which individuals in one human group learn behaviors, languages, beliefs, attitudes, and values from individuals in other groups with which they interact and subsequently become more culturally similar (Parisi et al. 2003). Another researcher recognized the historical challenges that Asian American students face in trying to assimilate to the American culture during the traditional college years (Kibria 1999). She noted the complex position of these students, represented positively as a “model minority” group due to academic and socioeconomic achievements, but, at the same time, resented for being “damned curve raisers” (Kibria 1999). Asian American assimilation into US culture has not been easy. The high-achieving Asian American image is associated with the term “nerdy” and this has led to a “typical Asian student” label. Students may try to break out of this stereotype. I used my interviews to prompt Asian American women to reveal their use of interethnic dating as a vehicle to challenge cultural stereotypes within the community.

The “typical Asian student” label is not the only cultural stereotype that Asian American women hope to challenge. White society often portrays them as overly feminine with the following characteristics: passive, weak, quiet, excessively submissive, slavishly dutiful, sexually erotic, and available for white men (Pyke et al. 2003). These modern day stereotypes come from western observations of the traditional female role in Asian families. Following the respected Confucian moral code, males maintain superiority, authority, and power over women in family and social relations. Although the rise in women’s educational and economic opportunities in the United States has challenged the traditional roles that perpetuate these

gender inequalities, Asian American women still search for ways of breaking the stereotypes. Pyke et al. (2003) revealed that Asian American women who joined white sororities often did so to distance themselves from these images of femininity. Furthermore, they underwent complete personality reversals as they moved across cultural realms. Asian American students described as being reserved and passive around other Asian students are often outspoken and expressive around other Caucasian students. One woman claimed that she just “blends in with the situation” (Pyke et al. 2003).

Another researcher discussed Chinese-American stereotypes as projected through media (Weiss 1970). His interethnic dating study provided a nice historical context for my own research. In the late 1960s, Melford Weiss saw an increase in Chinese-American females entering into relationships with Caucasian males. The women explained their choice by arguing that male Chinese-American students did not meet their expectations of intimacy, companionship, and adventure (Weiss 1970). Further, Chinese-American women believed Caucasian men offered more in the ways of romance than Chinese-American men. This perception is consistent with stereotypes disseminated by American media, stereotypes Chinese-American females come to accept after living in a predominantly Caucasian society (Weiss 1970).

Two other researchers, Kara Joyner and Grace Kao, studied the development of interethnic relationships. They believed that individuals might less likely form interracial relationships at older ages because of greater anticipation that their relationships would eventuate in marriage, implying that interethnic relationships are less likely to lead to marriage than same-ethnicity relationships. The authors coined the term “anticipatory mate selection”—the choosing of an intimate partner with a long-term consideration. Individuals might select partners that they

could see as an eventual marriage partner (Joyner and Kao 2005:565). Weiss (1970) further claimed that Chinese parents opposed to interracial marriages are often less concerned with their daughter dating a Caucasian man than a Chinese man. They do not see Caucasian boyfriends as possible marriage partners, and are therefore more tolerant of casual dates with Caucasians. Chinese dates are scrutinized more because they are potential mates.

Another researcher disputed the “anticipatory mate selection” argument by writing that the dating culture in the United States focuses on enjoyment and pleasure rather than on mate selection and marriage considerations. He did, however, claim that in Chinese culture, dating is assumed to lead to marriage (Luo 2008). I incorporated the concept of anticipatory mate selection into my study to determine whether the level of seriousness of a relationship impacted my participants’ preference of ethnicity in a significant other.

RESEARCH QUESTION

My research question is: How do Chinese undergraduate women raised in the United States view interethnic dating compared to Chinese undergraduate women who moved to the United States after high school? I wanted to explore influences that could account for different dating preferences and practices between my two pools of participants.

HYPOTHESIS

I hypothesized that cultural differences would largely contribute to differing dating preferences. I expected to see more positive attitudes toward interethnic dating among undergraduates who grew up in the United States due to ethnic exposure in the community, cultural upbringing (western ideals), and communication (language). In contrast, I expected Chinese undergraduate women who moved to the United States after high school to prefer dating Chinese men due to traditional values, family influence, and language barriers.

Additionally, I expected to disprove Joyner and Kao's "anticipatory mate selection" theory. I believed that many Chinese undergraduate women intended on marrying a Chinese man. However, I did not think it would influence their present day intimate partner choice. Many friends within my social networks enter into casual relationships without any consideration of marriage. Anticipatory mate selection would only seem applicable if people thought that it was an appropriate life stage to begin considering marriage. Women attending an elite university are not typically considering marriage in the near future. I thought this would be true of both women who grew up in China as well as women who were raised in the United States.

Furthermore, I expected that Chinese undergraduate women who grew up in the United States would express disinterest in traditional Chinese men but interest in "Americanized" Chinese men with similar interests and characteristics to themselves. Homophily would suggest that these men would be most similar in terms of experience. Most literature on the topic explores ethnic homophily, but this thesis focuses more on cultural homophily.

METHODOLOGY

Sample Selection: I recruited Chinese undergraduate women to interview because I could best relate to this group. By interviewing only participants that match all three conditions (Chinese, undergraduate status, and female), I controlled for ethnicity, educational level and gender. While male input would have been interesting to analyze, the use of an all-female sample enabled me to produce clear results, reveal distinctive patterns, and reach certain conclusions.

Recruitment: I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval to recruit participants through campus-wide flyering, mass emailing to Asian interest organizations (publicly listed on Maize pages), and snowball sampling with a gift card incentive.³ I applied for funding through the Sociology department and Human Subject Incentives Program to purchase twenty, five-dollar Borders gift cards. I recruited a total of twenty-four Chinese undergraduate women at the University of Michigan. The first twenty women to interview with me received gift cards, and the additional four participants chose to contribute to my project without compensation. Fourteen participants grew up in the United States. Eleven of these women identified themselves as Chinese-American and three as Chinese. The remaining ten participants grew up in China and self-identified as Chinese. All of my participants listed “heterosexual” for sexual orientation so I refer to significant others or intimate partners as men.

Interview content: I designed a short survey and an interview guide with open-ended questions to gauge participants’ perceptions, preferences, and practices of interethnic dating. The brief survey gathered general information such as age, ethnicity, academic affiliations, and relationship status. It also contained a set of Likert-scale type questions to provide me with an initial sense of each participant’s perspective on interethnic dating. I explained to every woman

³ All recruitment and interview material are included in Appendix.

that “Chinese-(American)” stands for Chinese and/or Chinese-American for the purposes of this thesis. I specifically asked participants to choose one of the statements below to best describe her current preference of ethnicity when it comes to attraction and dating:

- 1) Attracted to Chinese-(American) individuals (CA)
- 2) Attracted to non-Chinese-(American) individuals (NCA)
- 3) Attracted to non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American) individuals (NCA ACA)
- 4) Ethnicity does not at all influence attraction to others (EDIA)

I use pseudonyms for all of my participants and identify each individual by pseudonym, country, and dating preference (as listed in parentheses above). For example, Dawn was raised in the United States and reported that she is most attracted to Chinese-(American) individuals. I will reference her as (Dawn, US, CA). Furthermore, I may refer to all women who selected *Ethnicity does not at all influence attraction to others* as “participants/women in the *EDIA* category.” Table 1 provides a breakdown of participants in their respective categories.

[Insert Table 1 here]

I chose not to broach the sensitive subject of sex, so I left the word “attraction” up to the participants’ own interpretations. I did, however, differentiate between dating preference and practice during the interviews. The interview guide posed questions that related to my literature review. I wanted to explore how the various factors come together to affect intimate partner choice. I address childhood diversity, family advice, cultural upbringing, social influences, and effects of relationship seriousness.

Data Collection and Field Methods: After my participants initially contacted me, I sent each woman two emails— one with a list of available days and times to meet and another confirming the date after I reserved the interview room of the LSA Building. I chose this space because it is in the conveniently located Sociology department and is perfectly sized for two

people to hold a private conversation. I arrived at the interview room at least fifteen minutes before each interview to prepare. Because my participants were essentially telling me the story of their entire dating lives, I tried to make the setting as informal as possible hoping that my respondents would be comfortable giving me thoughtful and honest responses. I dressed very casually and brought my interview materials in my everyday backpack. When each woman arrived, I started conversation about student life and my own background as an undergraduate before discussing the consent form and providing her with the introductory survey. I then briefly read through her survey before turning on my voice-recording device for the oral interview. Four Chinese women who came to the United States after the start of high school chose to conduct the interview entirely in Chinese and were very happy that I was willing to converse in my non-native language. Each interview lasted between 20 and 45 minutes long, and all but one participant provided answers to every single interview question.

After I finished each interview and gave the participant her five-dollar gift card, I stayed an extra fifteen minutes to jot down thoughts and highlight important sections of my notes. This reflection was important and allowed me to start analyzing data early in the process. Indeed, I transcribed throughout the data collection period. Finding motivation to complete this tedious task was the hardest part of the thesis work for me. I did not have a transcription machine with foot pedals to slow down conversations. I played each interview back in real time and I had to repeatedly review for accuracy as I typed along to the recordings.

My entire collection of interview notes, guides, and transcriptions were sorted, labeled, and filed away in a locked drawer. To avoid losing any data, everything was saved on my password-protected laptop and backed up on a flash drive dedicated to this thesis. My research

was qualitative in nature and I chose not to use a computer program to code and analyze my data. Instead, analysis was done by hand— with highlighters, colored pencils, and self-crafted tables.

I divided my data analysis tables into different sections by interview question, and subsequently organized responses into the same categories as in Table 1. From the printed transcriptions, I selected participants' key quotes and ideas to every question asked, and handwrote them in the appropriate sections of my tables. By doing this, I was able to see participants' responses to every question laid out side by side. This allowed for quick scanning of similarities and differences to factors I explored. See Table 2 for an example of a data analysis table. This section shows my participants' condensed responses regarding language barriers and how they affected dating preferences and practices.

[Insert Table 2 here]

As I transferred ideas from the transcriptions to the tables, I looked for patterns across the participants' responses within the different subgroups, and highlighted the most well stated responses so that I could easily refer back to the transcriptions for the full quote when writing my thesis. Throughout the entire data collection process, organization was key.

RESULTS

Where an individual is raised affects that person's dating preferences and practices later in life. A high percentage of women who grew up in the United States were more open to interethnic dating and a high percentage of women raised in China would only consider dating a Chinese-(American) man. My analysis provides an understanding of these patterns and also addresses the responses that did not fit the expected categories. I first examine the women who were raised in the United States. Of these fourteen individuals, seven gave the socially acceptable response of "ethnicity does not influence attraction to others." I consider all factors that contributed to this open attitude. I then briefly discuss factors that contributed to why the remaining women raised in the United States gave different perspectives. Five women stated that they were generally not attracted to Chinese-(American) men, with three making an exception for Americanized Chinese-(Americans). These five individuals were open to interethnic dating but listed specific limitations. The two other women who grew up in the United States said they were mainly attracted to Chinese-(American) men, which completely contradicted my hypothesis. After analyzing why most women raised in the United States did not consider ethnicity to be an important factor in romantic relationships and examining the few dissenting perspectives, I move on to a similar discussion of the women who were raised in China. Ten participants grew up in China, and six of these women claimed to be most attracted to Chinese-(American) men. After discussing this majority group at length, I provide insight into the few remaining differing dating preferences among women raised in China.

Overall, I found that culture and family were the two most influential factors in my participants' dating lives. Whether the women themselves cared about sharing a common language or celebrating the holidays together with their boyfriends, the significance of the

Chinese culture was passed on from their parents' generation and helped shape their identities. If nothing else, my participants stated that respect for their ethnic heritage was expected of a significant other. Twenty out of twenty-four women stated that they celebrated Chinese holidays, and most of these participants singled out Chinese New Year. A third of the women also claimed to celebrate American and/or Christian holidays (most of whom were raised in the United States), but there were fewer personal attachments to these festivities.

When asked about family members' opinions, all of the women discussed their parents' views, with only a couple mentioning additional family members such as grandparents. In general, I found that parental opinions were very important to all of my participants. However, more women raised in the United States claimed that while parental input was significant and would be considered, it was ultimately their own decision who to date. Parents of participants who grew up in the United States also seemed to be more open to interethnic dating. However, this was sometimes conditional. For example, my third participant said her parents did not have a traditional mindset, but had mentioned ethnicities of which they would not approve. In my remaining interviews, I thus asked participants if there were any ethnicities that were frowned upon in their family and received some very interesting responses from women in all of the categories.

Several women brought up prejudice against particular ethnicities. Of all twenty-four interviews, fifteen women noted that their parents and/or grandparents would disapprove of an African American boyfriend. In addition, respondents mentioned objections to other ethnicities (n=5 for Hispanics, n=4 for Indians, n=1 for Muslims). Overall, my participants believed that there was a stigma against African Americans within the Chinese community, whether or not the women themselves would consider dating an African American man. Rachel (China, CA) said,

“Most Chinese do not like black [people] in terms of dating, but sometimes I think black people are actually attractive, [although] I may not consider dating them.” I asked my participants why they thought there was a stigma against “black people,” and no one could give me an explanation. The women shrugged it off and one claimed that it had simply always been there (Gwen, US, NCA). She said her grandmother gave her an hour-long lecture about not dating black guys, yet she could not understand why.

One of the few participants raised in China who said her parents were okay with her not dating Chinese-(American) felt it necessary to respond, “Yep, even black” (Irene, China, EDIA). Although Irene added “even black” to show how accepting and open her parents were, she still acknowledged and subsequently contributed to a racist way of thinking in this response. Eight of the nine women who did not list any ethnicities their parents would disapprove of stated ethnicity did not influence their attraction to others. Furthermore, most of the women whose parents were not okay with their daughters dating men of certain ethnic groups did not hold these attitudes themselves. Even the women who were raised in China and would only date Chinese-(American) men often found men of other ethnicities to be more attractive and could see themselves dating non-Chinese-(American) if cultural barriers did not get in the way.

I thought this unanticipated finding regarding “stigma” against African Americans by the Chinese community to be interesting, even though it did not provide conclusive data about any particular group of Chinese-(American) women that I interviewed. However, because the great majority of the women that I interviewed were not against dating certain non-Chinese-(Americans) simply due to ethnicity, the results of a similar research project conducted years down the road might be quite different. I believe the racist mindset discussed by my participants primarily described their parents’ generation of thinking. When it comes time for my participants

to discuss relationships with their own children in the future, I do not believe they will share the same racist thoughts.

Throughout my discussion on the various groups in which my participants belong (Raised in US—Ethnicity Does Not Influence Attraction, Raised in US—Attracted to Non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American), Raised in US—Attracted to Chinese-(American), Raised in China—Attracted to Chinese-(American), Raised in China—Attracted to Non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American), and Raised in China—Ethnicity Does Not Influence Attraction), it is important to note the relationship between culture and ethnicity. In the homogenous Chinese society, one's values and character may develop from being raised Chinese. Whereas culture and ethnicity are closely tied in China, culture is not associated with any specific ethnicity in the United States. One can be Caucasian, Hispanic, or Asian, and still participate in the American culture.

RAISED IN US—Ethnicity Does Not Influence Attraction

Fourteen of my twenty-four participants grew up in the United States. When asked about their current dating preference, half of these women stated that ethnicity did not influence attraction to others (EDIA). This was by far the most common response, as the remaining seven women were fairly evenly distributed into the other three categories. For all but one, they have not noticed a change in attraction over time. Rather, the six participants grew up in what they each perceived to be a diverse community and stayed open to dating interethnically.

Anna (US, EDIA) said, “I think [my surroundings] have been pretty diverse throughout. My school was mostly white, but it was a fair mix... we always had a fairly large Middle Eastern and black population.” It is easier for Anna to relate to someone who also grew up in the United

States whether he is Chinese or not. Even the few participants in this group who spent a couple of years in a predominantly Asian community or went to a predominantly Caucasian school stated that they experienced ethnic diversity at some point in their pre-college life.

Nicole (US, EDIA) had the least diverse childhood experience, yet it was still diverse. She said, “I attended a Chinese church and I had some Chinese friends there. I guess I remember there only being a handful in school though... My teenage years [were mostly spent] in St. Joe; it was very very white.” Except for exposure to other Chinese families through church in elementary school, Nicole was mostly around non-Chinese-(American) people at school and in the community at large. None of the participants raised in the US who claimed that ethnicity was not a critical factor in choosing a boyfriend experienced being in an ethnically homogenous community and this may have contributed to the reasons for their openness to interethnic dating.

The responses regarding pre-college diversity that I received from these Chinese-(American) women generally supported cultural homophily. They agreed that cultural similarity was more significant than common ethnic heritage. Mary (US, EDIA) said, “I was raised here, and that limits a lot of what I’d be comfortable with. There are a lot of international Chinese people here. It’s just harder to get to know them because we don’t share the same culture.”

Two important components of culture that I explored were traditions/holidays and language. Three women raised in the United States who stated that ethnicity did not influence attraction to others also claimed that they did not celebrate any traditions or holidays that they would want to share with their significant other. Mary (US, EDIA) said, “Barely, just put no. I do not care if we celebrate them or not.” The four other people in this group did celebrate certain holidays, but it was not crucial that a significant other partake in the same traditions. Eva (US, EDIA) said frankly, “It’s something I’d like to share with him because I like it, not because it’s

fundamentally important. But it's a personal preference, and if he doesn't like the food, what can I do about it?" While she would like to celebrate Chinese New Year and Spring Festival, she would not let these holidays determine the outcome of a relationship. As discussed later in the paper, this was not true of women who had an ethnic preference when it came to dating. The fact that the seven women in this category did not hold a clear-cut set of standards for a partner when it comes to traditions and other aspects of life perhaps reflected the openness of American culture. These women were generally less restrictive and were willing to adapt to the needs of a relationship if they met the right person. This was also true of language.

Although no participant raised in the United States faced a language barrier in either English or Chinese, the level of fluency and language expectations for a significant other varied. Of the seven women in the *EDIA* category, four were fluent in both English and Chinese and said that language didn't affect a relationship. Only Nicole (US, *EDIA*) spoke more about her fluency, adding that she "[is] fluent in both but [doesn't] have a deep understanding of the Chinese language." The other three women claimed to understand both languages, but speaking is a slight problem in Chinese. "I'm not familiar with the more technical terms and some slang because I did not grow up there. So sometimes there is a cultural language barrier. If they start talking about politics in Chinese then I'm lost, but colloquial stuff is fine" (Lisa, US, *EDIA*). One woman mentioned being appreciative, stating "I would appreciate it if he could communicate with my family better, but it's not necessary" (Nicole, US, *EDIA*). Language was not a determining factor in a relationship for all seven participants.

I asked each woman how influential their family members' opinions were, in particular their parents' opinions, and whether they would choose to date someone that their parents disliked. I also asked if their parents held a traditional mindset of dating within their ethnicity.

The women raised in the United States who claimed that ethnicity did not influence attraction to others said that their parents' opinions were important but not determining. As Eva (US, EDIA) put it, "They give good advice, but ultimately I'm the one who gets to decide." Five of these seven participants stated that their parents did not hold the traditional view of dating within their ethnicity. Mary (US, EDIA) responded, "Obviously not really, since she [her mother] married a white guy. They do not really put rules on me. I definitely think personality and respect are more important." Even the two participants whose parents preferred a Chinese man for their daughter would be able to accept someone not Chinese. The most restrictive standard mentioned came from Lisa (US, EDIA): "I'm sure they would prefer Chinese so they can speak Chinese with that person, but they would be okay with other races. They would probably feel weird if I dated an African American, just because there's this stigma."

Some of my participants' eventual partners in the long run may be very different from who they currently date. I wanted to see if the women I interviewed thought about marriage when choosing who to date and how ethnicity factored into this consideration. The question I posed was: does the level of seriousness of the relationship impact your preference of ethnicity in a significant other? To clarify, I asked whether ethnicity mattered for casual dating, serious dating, and marriage. To distinguish between casual dating and serious dating, I told each participant that a serious relationship is exclusive, known to friends and family, and has potential to last for a long period of time.

Of the seven women raised in the United States who fell under the *EDIA* category, six said no, the level of seriousness of the relationship did not influence preference of ethnicity in a boyfriend. This was expected, as these individuals claimed ethnicity did not factor into their attraction and dating preferences. In general, their parents did not put ethnic restrictions on their

dating, and they cared more about a man's personality traits and values than his heritage. The one woman in the group who did respond yes to this question did so because of family, not because her own preferences changed with the seriousness of the relationship. She was dating a Caucasian man at the time of our interview, but explained that she was hesitant to take their relationship to the next level. It was not because her parents preferred Chinese-(American), but rather her reluctance to meet a non-Chinese-(American) man's parents. "I have been hesitant to meet my significant other's parents... I feel like they would consciously or not, be judging me. For a big commitment like marriage, ethnicity matters more because I want parents on both sides to truly accept us" (Eva, US, EDIA). The others simply responded "no" to this question.

RAISED IN US—Attracted to non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American)

Three participants raised in the United States claimed they were most attracted to non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American) (NCA ACA) men. Essentially, they chose not to date Chinese, but would make the exception for Chinese-(American) men who shared similar cultural backgrounds and values. Two additional respondents claimed they were only attracted to non-Chinese-(American) men (NCA). I believe women in both the *NCA ACA* and *NCA* categories chose responses that differed from the most popular "ethnicity does not influence attraction to others" option for specific and personal reasons.

Several participants expressed that their tastes had changed over time. "I used to be more indifferent about it when I was younger. I think, as I get older, I value more someone who would be able to communicate with my parents and my grandparents" (Kate, US, NCA ACA). Kate's relationship preferences became more restrictive over time. This adaptation was made in consideration of her family, linking the importance of communication and language in a

relationship. Her college ex-boyfriends included one Chinese-American and one Caucasian. At the time of our interview, she was dating another Caucasian man who spoke Mandarin.

Generally, she was more physically attracted to non-Chinese, but would consider dating an Americanized Chinese-(American) individual so her family members could communicate with her boyfriend.

Zelda (US, NCA ACA) presented a different story. Her preferences actually broadened with time. "...I was not interested in non-Chinese when I was younger, but as I got more experience in communicating with various people, I became more open-minded about [interethnic dating]" (Zelda, US, NCA ACA). Growing up, Zelda's family friends were exclusively Chinese. She had few close friends outside of this network until high school. There, she started interacting with non-Asian men and found that they shared more in common. Kate and Zelda shared stories that show cultural influences working in both directions. Unlike the women in the *EDIA* category whose openness to interethnic dating had generally never changed over time, participants in this group shared experiences of growth and self-discovery at various stages in life that led them to prefer non-Chinese and Americanized Chinese men.

One woman (Gwen, US, NCA) said that she liked white men who could share her culture. This preference likely arose in the conflicting environments of the public sphere and the private sphere. In the community, Gwen was exposed to a number of different people and developed her physical attraction to Caucasian men. Within her family home, she adopted her parents' culture. Her preferences were very similar to that of Kate's, but Gwen belonged in the *NCA* category because she cared more about ethnicity than other factors.

Women in this group felt that there were no language barriers. Gwen believed that learning other languages could be positive and was open to dating men who spoke other

languages. Sarah (US, NCA ACA) voiced the only additional consideration. “The plus of dating someone that does speak Chinese is that my parents feel less judged. My mom doesn’t speak English super well.” Language became significant because of its tie to communication with family members, but it was not the most important factor.

To see if there were similar considerations, I investigated the significance of traditions/holidays in relationships. One woman confronted the issue by saying, “If you care about me, why can’t you take part in something that’s important to my heritage? I’m Chinese, it’s a part of me” (Janet, US, NCA). This seemed to be a rather strong opinion for a woman who would prefer to date non-Chinese men. Even though Janet was attracted to Caucasian men, she did not want to lose touch with her ethnic identity. She explained that she always celebrated Chinese New Year with her family, and it was one tradition she did not want to give up. Sarah (US, NCA ACA), on the other hand, did not feel that her boyfriend would need to celebrate these holidays with her. He simply could not interfere if she chose to observe the traditions. “It doesn’t matter to me. It’s my free will. As long as he doesn’t say ‘you cannot eat that,’ it’s fine” (Sarah, US, NCA ACA). She indicated that Chinese New Year is also a really big celebration in her family. It was not necessarily for cultural reasons, but rather, for certain aspects like food. This again revealed the importance of family to this group of women.

When directly asked about how much family opinion influenced the women in the *NCA ACA* category, the general consensus was that although their parents’ opinions were important, it was ultimately their decision. “I’d say their opinions are important but not defining in the sense that, like, if they did not like the guy, it’s not something that I’d ignore, but it would not be the reason I chose not to date him” (Kate, US, NCA ACA). The women were independent, but still mindful of their families’ wishes. “It’s going to be my decision, but I will listen to what they

have to say. They know me well. I'll listen and I'll take it into consideration" (Sarah, US, NCA ACA). This woman believed that while she had the final decision, her family should be able to voice their opinions. Zelda (US, NCA ACA) claimed, "When I was younger, my parents had a more traditional oriental mindset of dating, but now they would be okay with me dating someone not Chinese or Chinese-American." Her parents' transition away from the restrictive traditional mindset mirrored her own increasing interests in dating non-Chinese-(American). It is evident that the parents of these women had a great deal of influence in their romantic lives, and thus, it is significant that no parents were adamantly against their daughter dating non-Chinese-(American) men.

The other two women, Janet and Gwen (US, NCA) also stated that their parents' opinions were very important factors in their decision-making and that their parents were generally encouraging of interethnic dating. Janet (US, NCA) stated, "I'm very close to my parents and I would not want to cause a rift, but I would not automatically yield to my parents." She was hopeful that this would never be an issue as her parents maintained a positive view of her dating a non-Chinese-(American). She claimed that her mother even told her, "I'm pretty sure you're going to marry a white guy." These women were very close to their parents, and this increased the importance of their parents' beliefs. With the parents supporting their daughters' relationships with men outside their own ethnicity, nothing prevented these women from acting on their attraction to non-Chinese-(Americans).

The participants in this group shared stories that helped to explain why they were specifically attracted to non-Chinese-(Americans) and Americanized Chinese-(Americans). While they still valued certain parts of their ethnic heritage, they were generally attracted to non-Chinese-(American) men because of physical appearances and cultural similarities.

RAISED IN US—Attracted to Chinese-(American)

The final group of women raised in the United States presented the most surprising responses. These two participants were mainly attracted to Chinese-(American) (CA) men and represented the minority perspective.

I received two very similar responses when I asked the women about their personal preference in ethnicity when choosing who to date and if their feelings on the subject had changed over time. Faye (US, CA) said, “I have mostly been attracted to people with the same ethnicity and I do not think it has changed that much over time.” Dawn’s response was more detailed.

“I think I’ve always thought of my Chinese ethnicity as something important. So I wanted to keep that image in myself... my parents brought me up in this kind of like thinking process that they want me to have someone that come over to our house that would know our customs and understand that we eat these certain things, and they would not be like ‘Ughh kind of odd.’”

(Dawn, US, CA)

Dawn provided an intimate description of how she thought about her ethnicity and how she felt her significant other should behave accordingly. The emphasis on family is indicative of her close relationship with her parents and I believe is the source of her position on ethnicity in relationship decisions.

Probing deeper into why these two women contradicted my predicted responses, I explored their childhood. Both indicated that they led a rather sheltered life in their early childhood, being exposed primarily to families and friends of the same ethnicity. “During my childhood, most of [the kids my age] were my same ethnicity” (Faye, US, CA). This ethnic

separation during their early years of life could help explain why these two women had a preference for Chinese-(American) men.

I also learned that both of these women would prefer to celebrate Chinese holidays with their significant others. Faye (US, CA) said that she would want to celebrate “all the major Chinese holidays.” Presented with a scenario in which her significant other had no interest in observing these holidays and asked if it made a difference, she said that it did. “I think it would. Because mostly the thing about these traditions is that you celebrate them with family. And it’s really important that my significant other respects the tradition my family has” (Faye, US, CA). Dawn’s response also reflected an affiliation of ethnic traditions with family practices. “Probably the Chinese New Year because that’s a big thing at home” (Dawn, US, CA).

Dawn and Faye then discussed how much their parents influenced their dating lives, revealing the source of their dissidence. “Umm they’re [actually very] influential. Because they know more than me, I guess, they point me in the right direction. I tell them certain things and then they’ll be like ‘oh you should not be doing that, or, you should be less clingy to him’” (Dawn, US, CA). Faye shared a very similar story. “Uhh I’d say pretty big; especially my mom’s opinion [because] she’s a really good judge of character” (Faye, US, CA). When asked about how she would respond if her parents disapproved of a relationship and asked her to end it, she replied, “I would [because] it might... I mean I would not do it right away, but I’d consider it. Because they might see something that I’m missing.” These statements further confirmed that family opinion heavily influenced relationship consideration for these women.

With this influence in mind, I asked the participants if their parents had ever expressed a desire for their daughters to date within their own ethnicity. Both responded that although their parents did not stress this preference, the women believed that their parents wanted them to date

Chinese men. “They say they do not mind, but I feel like they would prefer that I date within my own ethnicity” (Faye, US, CA). This led me to believe that these women’s dating preferences and claims of attraction were a reflection of their parents’ wishes. Faye (US, CA) aptly summed up her interpretation of ethnicity’s importance in her dating life. “I think why I consider ethnicity to be important in relationships is because like I said, I really value family, and I think it’s important that my significant other, like my future husband, is able to not only communicate with my parents in their native language, but also understand our culture” (Faye, US, CA).

RAISED IN CHINA—Attracted to Chinese-(American)

Ten of my participants were raised in China. Supporting my hypothesis, six of them (a majority) stated that they were mainly attracted to Chinese-(American) (CA) men. For all six, this never really changed over time since they had always been around Chinese people exclusively growing up. This group of women felt most comfortable being with Chinese-(American) men, even though many of them did find non-Chinese-(American) men to be attractive. This was due to the way Chinese popular media portrayed attractiveness. In China, to be fair-skinned is beautiful. Caucasian actors, models, and even mannequins represent the ideal body image. Beth (China, CA) stated that she thought Americans were handsome in movies but always had a preference for dating Chinese men. Wendy (China, CA) admitted that she was physically attracted to non-Chinese-(American) men, but felt that she would not be able to connect with them because of her heritage. “I’m attracted to non-Chinese men physically. I like their faces. I like their body types and stuff, but I would not imagine dating [them] per say because there’s a huge cultural difference” (Wendy, China, CA). Other participants in this group

indicated that a lack of experience and interaction had some role in their preference. To them, dating a non-Chinese individual had never been an option.

Many specific cultural differences led these women to only date other Chinese-(American) individuals. The majority indicated that language played an important role in how they considered prospective relationships. Rachel (China, CA) felt that a language barrier prevented her from fully connecting with individuals who did not speak Chinese, and therefore she was more comfortable dating Chinese men. She said, “Talking in English is okay, but there is still a language barrier there that I cannot explain. It’s not as comfortable as Chinese, and if I dated someone Chinese, we do not need to speak English.” Another woman said that while she had no trouble communicating with other women in English, she found it difficult to hold a conversation with non-Chinese-(American) men (Quinn, China, CA). Whether from the nervousness of speaking in a foreign language with the opposite gender or the inability to express emotions sufficiently, inadequate communication seemed to be a key issue when considering reasons why some women raised in China shied away from interethnic dating.

Another important component of culture to Chinese women was traditions and holidays. Four of the six interviewees in this group indicated that they would prefer their significant others to respect and celebrate some of the traditional Chinese holidays, most notably, Chinese New Year and Spring Festival. I perceive this not only to be driven by the desire to maintain their individual cultural identity, but also by their desire to share similar experiences with their significant others. It is likely that a Chinese-(American) boyfriend would have celebrated these holidays and observed these traditions in the past, and they would be more compatible as a couple having shared these experiences. It is far less probable that they would share these holidays and traditions with a non-Chinese-(American) or third generation Americanized

Chinese-(American). Trying to explain what the activities mean and their significance to a non-Chinese-(American) could be difficult and uncomfortable. Wendy (China, CA) frankly said, “It is important that he shows interest in my cultural background. I want him to want to share the same traditions.” It became evident that observing these traditions and holidays might be a make or break in the relationship for these women. When asked if she would continue seeing someone who chose not to celebrate the Chinese traditions, Beth (China, CA) responded, “No, I would not date him.”

In addition to celebrating the Chinese holidays, many Chinese women upheld other traditions and mindsets. Roughly half of the participants who identified themselves as only being attracted to Chinese-(American) men said that they held the traditional Chinese “No dating at a young age” mentality. Justifications offered in defense of this belief included: dating at a young age is immoral and dating at a young age will distract a young woman from her studies. The first is often connected to religious affiliation and the second is typically associated with Chinese parenting. This stance helped to explain why these women would most likely date a Chinese-(American) man. Perhaps they wanted to be with someone who maintained the same lines of traditional thought on such sensitive topics.

The reasonable age to date is only one area in which parents of my participants might have influenced the women’s dating practices and preferences. All of the participating women in this group said that they would at the very least consider and respect what her parents had to say about a significant other in a serious and committed relationship. Wendy pointed out a cultural root for seeking parents’ approval. “In Chinese culture, marriage is not between two people but between two families, so it’s really important that his parents really like me as a daughter-in-law and my parents also accept him” (Wendy, China, CA). Overwhelmingly, the women raised in

China who were mainly attracted to Chinese-(American) men seemed to prioritize their family's desires above their own. Olivia (China, CA) stated, "I will respect my parents' wishes. If they disliked someone I was dating, I would make them explain why. If what they said is reasonable and makes sense to me, then yes, I would break up with him."

The women also spoke about the nature of the union itself. Five of the six interviewees said that their parents had a traditional mindset of dating and marrying within their Chinese ethnicity. Beth indicated that she herself would date either a white or Chinese man, but restricted herself to dating Chinese men because of her parents. "I do not really mind dating a white or Chinese guy, but why I'm against it is because of my parents. They're really, really against dating a white guy" (Beth, China, CA). The ethnic preference of my participants' parents along with my participants' desires of obeying their parents' wishes greatly contributed to the women's stated preference for Chinese-(American) men.

Parental opinion was so influential in the dating lives of the women raised in China that it was clearly reflected again in their responses relating to anticipatory mate selection. For these participants, I saw a correlation between the seriousness of the relationship and the importance of a significant other's ethnicity. Five out of the six women believed there was a direct link between the seriousness of the relationship and how much of a factor ethnicity played. They unanimously agreed that in considering marriage, ethnicity would seriously impact who they would choose to date. Tina said, "When it comes to serious relationships and marriage, having a similar cultural background is very important so I might choose someone who is Chinese" (Tina, China, CA). Rachel made a statement along very similar lines. "As it gets more serious, ethnicity will matter more" (Rachel, China, CA).

Ethnicity played an important role when contemplating serious relationships, but many of the women said that the importance of ethnicity was diminished in casual dating. If the relationship was not serious and the participant did not have to make it a public affair, then she might try to date someone who is not Chinese-(American) to see what it was like. A few women said that they would not tell their parents about dating someone non-Chinese, because it would not be serious enough for marriage consideration. Overall, anticipatory mate selection was apparent in the group of women who were most attracted to other Chinese-(American) individuals. All of the women lived in the United States at the time of our interview and were around non-Chinese-(American) men (who many of the women find to be attractive). They would consider dating non-Chinese men casually, but ultimately hoped to seriously date and marry someone Chinese.

Based on the responses I received from these women raised in China, it was fairly clear that they were more comfortable dating within their ethnicity and preferred to be with someone that shared similar values and traditions. After coming to America, they all had to establish a new social network on the university campus. All of the women attracted to Chinese-(American) men reported that their social networks primarily consisted of Chinese-(American) individuals and/or other Asian Americans. Beth reported being in the most diverse social group and said that her friend circle was split fifty-fifty between Chinese and other ethnicities. Wendy described hanging out with mostly Chinese-Americans or Asian-Americans (Korean and Japanese Americans), but also having a number of white acquaintances. She then went on to describe how she and her “acquaintances” did not interact.

“I think I mainly hang out with people who are Chinese-Americans or Asian-Americans but I have a lot of acquaintances, like white acquaintances. I do not think I’m comfortable

enough to be very good friends. Like we will not call each other to go to bars or have a phone call once in a while to catch up. Not comfortable enough to hang out every day.”

(Wendy, China, CA)

This showed that familiarity is a driving social factor. Wendy, along with the rest of the participants in this group, stated that she had not formed a more diverse social group because she was more comfortable with Chinese-(American) people who shared a common cultural background.

Overall, the participants in this group tended to hang out more in Asian-(American) social circles and were more comfortable getting to know other Chinese-(American) men. Four of these women stated that they joined the Chinese Undergraduate Student Association (CUSA), a student organization mentioned exclusively by women raised in China. One purpose of this group is to unite Chinese international students at the University of Michigan.⁴ Olivia (China, CA) said, “I joined CUSA because when Chinese people come to the US, they like to stick together.”

While these women who grew up in China might be physically attracted to men of other ethnicities, they surrounded themselves with other Chinese-(American) individuals and saw themselves dating and eventually marrying within their own ethnicity (Chinese). This group of women accounted for a majority of my participants who were raised in the China and their responses supported my hypothesis. I expected Chinese undergraduate women who moved to the United States after high school to shy away from interethnic dating due to traditional values, familial influence, and language barriers. These factors did indeed account for the reluctance of these participants to date non-Chinese-(American) men.

⁴ 2012. “Chinese Undergraduate Student Association.”

RAISED IN CHINA—Attracted to Non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American)

Of the ten women raised in China, two stated that they were most attracted to non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American) (NCA ACA) men. The individuals within this group still expressed reservations about dating non-Chinese-(American) for various reasons, but were not against dating interethnically. Their unique influences explained why they did not choose the popular response of “Attracted to Chinese-(American) individuals.”

Both admitted to an initial hesitance to date individuals who did not speak Chinese. Clara, (China, NCA ACA) said that when she first moved to the United States for college, the language barrier played an active role in her social life, but gradually diminished as she became accustomed to her surroundings. Violet, (China, NCA ACA) said, “I don’t think I would actively pursue someone who did not speak Chinese, but I would not turn someone down because of language.” Even though she would date non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American) men, she would only pursue an individual if he could speak Chinese, irrespective of ethnicity. It was quite important to these women that a significant other could share a common language.

In addition to ease of communication, both interviewees expressed a desire to share their traditions and celebrate Chinese holidays with their significant others. Clara said that while she would date a man who would not celebrate these holidays with her, she would not marry him. Violet simply said that although she would like to celebrate with him, if he chose not to, it would not be a deal breaker for the relationship. I believe the sense of familiarity and common background are reasons why celebrating holidays and observing traditions are important. It is clear that these women did not feel as strongly about the topic as the women who identified themselves as only being attracted to Chinese-(American) men. They maintained their ethnic

traditions and would like to continue observing them, but would not necessarily reject a man for choosing not to participate.

Clara and Violet gave very different answers to the question about family influence. Both claimed that their parents' opinions on serious relationships were very important to them. Clara rated the importance of her parents' opinion on a Likert scale. "For dating, none. For marrying, I guess seven or eight on a scale of one to ten. My parents' opinions are really important to me." (Clara, China, CA). Violet stated that her mother had the last say in her relationships and she would end it if her mother thought it was best. "I would respect my parents' opinions. They are really important to me... If my mother definitively disproves of someone, I will break up with him because she is more important to me than a boyfriend" (Violet, China, NCA ACA). Both Clara and Violet shared similar attitudes of respecting parental opinion to the women who only wanted to date Chinese-(American) men, but their parents' opinions were far more influential.

When asked about how her parents would feel about dating non-Chinese-(American) men and if they had a traditional mindset about dating within her ethnicity, Clara (China, NCA ACA) responded, "I do not think she cares. I do not actually know." While this did not reveal what her parents expected from her, it did show that her parents put few restrictions on her dating life. Since parental opinion was as important to Clara as it was to other women raised in China, it was significant that her parents did not encourage a traditional mindset of dating within one's ethnicity. This may be a very important part of the explanation for Clara's preference for non-Chinese-(American) and Americanized Chinese-(American) men.

Violet's story is unique. Her parents had been divorced for an unknown period of time and she now lived with her mother. Her father started a new family. She stated, "I was raised in a single parent household so my parents' relationship greatly influenced me. I will always think

about my mom's experience" (Violet, China, NCA ACA). Her mother taught Violet a very different lesson from most of the parents from China.

"My mom doesn't want me to date someone Chinese... A lot of my mom's friends have also experienced failed marriages and she thinks maybe there's a reason for broken families amongst Chinese couples. Divorce rates are really high in China now and she doesn't want that culture to influence my life. She hopes I find someone who is not Chinese."

(Violet, China, NCA ACA)

Her mother's experiences influenced her own view on traditional Chinese values and justified how she raised Violet. It seems probable that her divorce played a role in altering traditional Chinese views. I think Violet's mother's encouragement to date non-Chinese-(American) men when she came to the United States largely explains why Violet did not have the more common preference for dating within her ethnicity.

Despite the unique family backgrounds presented by these individuals, the way in which they constructed their social networks is similar to the other women raised in China. Clara said that her social circle was composed of sixty percent Asian Americans and forty percent non-Asian Americans. Violet claimed her network was "part Chinese and part American." While both claimed that their best friends were still Chinese, they were eager to meet and become friends with non-Chinese individuals as well. Both of these individuals were more interactive with non-Chinese-(Americans) than the group of women who identified as only being attracted to Chinese-(Americans). Perhaps the increased openness to interethnic dating can be attributed to increased interethnic interactions.

RAISED IN CHINA—Ethnicity Does Not Influence Attraction

Two other women, Irene and Paige, also shared preferences that vastly differed from most of the individuals who grew up in China. They both claimed that ethnicity did not influence whom they are attracted to (EDIA), but that is not to say various aspects of Chinese culture and ethnicity did not influence them. While the two women claimed to be comfortable with both English and Chinese, language had noticeable effects on their dating mentality. Irene (China, EDIA) had been dating a “white guy” for approximately four months at the time of our interview. The young man that she was seeing also spoke Chinese and I inquired about how this influenced their relationship. She responded, “Because he speaks Chinese, he is more receptive to the culture.” Even though Irene did not require that her significant other engage in her native culture, it certainly was an added bonus that he could understand certain aspects of her ethnic heritage.

Both of the women said that it would not matter to them if their significant other did not want to celebrate any of the Chinese holidays. In the other groups, ethnic traditions and holidays were very important to those who held a traditional mindset about dating within their ethnicity. The fact that these two women did not hold the same view and did not care about participating in ethnic festivities indicates that they are relatively non-traditional. Naturally, Irene and Paige would be able to date a wider range of men if they did not care about celebrating ethnic holidays with their significant others. Their responses to this question contributed to my understanding of their deviance from the popular response: “Attracted to Chinese-(American) individuals.”

Not only did Paige and Irene dismiss the significance of Chinese traditions/holidays, both women stated that they had never adopted the traditional “no dating at a young age” mentality, and neither indicated that their parents had ever held this belief. Furthermore, they both seemed to have a stronger sense of independence from their families than the other women raised in

China. They ranked their own preferences as more important than their parents' opinions. Paige claimed, "I would respect my parents' opinions but it is not the deciding factor. I would listen to their reasons for not liking my boyfriend. If it doesn't make sense [to me], I would not necessarily do what they say" (Paige, China, EDIA). Irene gave an almost rebellious statement. She said, "I would try to make them see why I like him first" (Irene, China, EDIA). If her parents insisted that she broke up with her significant other, she said, "Then I would secretly date him." From all of those raised in China, this was the most independent attitude exhibited in my study.

I expected these two women to have diverse social networks in the United States because of their openness to interethnic dating. However, Paige reported that her network was "mostly Chinese" (Paige, China, EDIA) and Irene indicated that she had established a group of primarily Asian and Asian American friends. Irene previously attended Arizona State University and Wisconsin Lutheran College for one year each, prior to her enrollment at the University of Michigan. At both, Caucasians primarily surrounded her, as there was little inherent diversity at the two universities. Even though she made a lot of Asian American friends at the University of Michigan through ethnic student organizations, I believe that her past exposure to other ethnicities played an important role in how Irene became so open to the idea of interethnic dating.

These two young women were more independent than the others who grew up in China. They both indicated an attraction toward non-Chinese men and were not afraid to date men of different ethnicities, regardless of their parents' wishes. Neither placed restrictions on boyfriends' language preferences, religious affiliations, or holiday celebrations. In general, they were open-minded about their dating lives.

OTHER

While most of the patterns have been accounted for in the above discussion of my participants and their respective dating preference categories, there were a few other factors to consider that did not fall into the previous discussions, namely religion, student organization affiliation, and friends' opinions.

Religion seemed to be a highly polarized issue. Several women across all ethnic boundaries expressed that religious affiliation is entirely unimportant in their decision making while the others adamantly required that their partner be of a specific faith, often the religion that they themselves practiced. Christianity was the religion most frequently cited by those who identified religion as an important criterion in their selection process. A few women stated that it was the most important consideration and this may have slightly skewed my data. For those women who had a preference for ethnicity, religion was still the deterministic factor. Wendy stated a preference for Chinese-(American) men, but the more important condition was he must be Christian. When asked if her significant other must be Christian like herself, she responded, "Yes, religion is very important to me." Another woman, Nicole (US, EDIA), seemed to accept interethnic dating and generally followed the American ideals of openness, yet she put one of the most firm and restrictive standards on dating when she talked about her faith. In regards to religion, she said, "It's a make or break, definitely. No question. My significant other has to be Christian and has to follow the same belief system I do." While she was quite open about other factors in an intimate partner, Christianity was one aspect that could never be compromised. There were many other women who stated that they had no preference for any religion for both themselves and their partners, as well as several participants who stated it did not matter as long as "the religion doesn't affect the relationship" (Violent, China, NCA ACA). The data collected

for this section did not support any further claims besides the observation that religion is an issue that crosses all ethnic and cultural boundaries.

Two other factors that did not provide concrete support or evidence against my research were student organization affiliation and friends' opinions. All twenty-four participants claimed that their friends' judgments were important, but no woman stated that she would make a decision regarding dating based solely on friends' opinions. Regardless of the scale of significance, all of the women stated that their friends would be encouraging of interethnic dating, and so there was no point of comparison between my two groups of participants. Similarly, there was no notable comparison to be made in terms of participation in various student organizations. Women who were raised in both the United States and China generally stated that they were involved in at least one ethnic organization for various reasons. As discussed in a previous section, a few women who were raised in China did specify CUSA as a starting point for social interaction in the United States, but otherwise there was no significant point of difference.

CONCLUSION

The responses I received from my participants generally supported my hypotheses. Overall, the Chinese-(American) women who grew up in the United States were more open to dating interethnically whereas those who were raised in China stated a preference for Chinese-(American) men. There were exceptions, but those women shared experiences that differed in one way or another from the common responses I received.

I hoped to focus my thesis around cultural homophily and believed that individuals would prefer to date others that shared similar cultural beliefs, traditions, practices, and values rather than simply choose intimate partners based on race or ethnicity. This proved to be true for women who grew up in the United States, but culture and ethnicity are too closely related in China. Several women emphasized that the Chinese traditions, values, and beliefs are built into the ethnic identity. They are what make a Chinese individual Chinese. Therefore, women raised in China who stated that they were mainly attracted to Chinese-(American) men for cultural reasons essentially preferred to date them because they shared a common ethnic background.

I found that respect for Chinese culture seemed to be important to my participants across the board whether or not they chose to participate in ethnic festivities or held traditional values. Family influence was one of the leading considerations for my participants, and often made the difference in dating practices, particularly for women who were raised in China.

It was interesting to note that no woman raised in China stated that they were mostly attracted to non-Chinese-(Americans). This could be due to the fact that they had not been in the United States long enough to form close relationships with non-Chinese-(American) individuals and be able to communicate as comfortably with them at the time of our interview.

Given the apparent importance of family opinion from my research and since many of the women who grew up in China that were most attracted to Chinese-(American) men were not against dating interethnically themselves, their offspring may eventually hold similar attitudes and preferences to those women in my study who grew up in America. With the increasing rate of Chinese-(American) presence in the United States, this research indicates that future generations of Chinese-(American) women may be even more open to and accepting of interethnic dating.

REFERENCES

- “Chinese Undergraduate Student Association.” *N.d. Maize Pages*. University of Michigan Office of Student Activities and Leadership. Retrieved February 22, 2012 (<http://studentorgs.umich.edu/group/10006971>).
- Clark-Ibáñez, Marisol and Diane Felmlee. 2004. “Interethnic Relationships: The Role of Social Network Diversity.” *Journal of Marriage and Family* 66(2): 293-305.
- Day, Jennifer C. *N.d.* “Population Profile of the United States.” *US Census Bureau*. Retrieved March 6, 2012 (<http://www.census.gov/population/www/pop-profile/natproj.html>).
- Joyner, Kara and Grace Kao. 2005. “Interethnic Relationships and the Transition to Adulthood.” *American Sociological Review* 70(4): 563-581.
- Kibria, Nazli. 1999. “College and Notions of ‘Asian American’: Second-Generation Chinese and Korean Americans Negotiate Ethnicity and Identity.” *Amerasia Journal* 25(1): 29-51.
- Luo, Baozhen. 2008. “Striving for Comfort: “Positive” Construction of Dating Cultures Among Second-generation Chinese American Youths.” *Journal of Social and Personal Relationships* 25: 867-888.
- McPherson, Miller, Lynn Smith-Lovin, and James M. Cook. 2001. “Birds of a Feather: Homophily in Social Networks.” *Annual Review of Sociology* 27: 415-444.
- Parisi, Domenico, Federico Cecconi, and Francesco Natale. 2003. “Cultural Change in Spatial Environments: The Role of Cultural Assimilation and Internal Changes in Cultures.” *The Journal of Conflict Resolution* 47(2): 163-179.
- “Population Statistics & Demographics.” *N.d. Asian-Nation: Asian American History, Demographics, & Issues*. Retrieved April 12, 2011 (<http://www.asian-nation.org/population.shtml>).

- Pyke, Karen and Denise L. Johnson. 2003. "Asian American Women and Racialized Femininities: 'Doing' Gender across Cultural Worlds." *Gender and Society* 17(1): 33-53.
- Qian, Zhenchao and Daniel R. Lichter. 2007. "Social Boundaries and Marital Assimilation: Interpreting Trends in Ethnic and Ethnic Intermarriage Social Boundaries and Marital Assimilation: Interpreting Trends in Ethnic and Ethnic Intermarriage." *American Sociological Review* 72(1): 68-94.
- Weiss, Melford S. 1970. "Selective Acculturation and the Dating Process: The Patterning of Chinese-Caucasian Interethnic Dating." *Journal of Marriage and Family* 32(2): 273-278.

APPENDIX

Table 1: Participants according to country raised and dating preferences

	Raised in United States	Moved to US After High School
Attracted to Chinese- (American) individuals.	2 Dawn Faye	6 Olivia Wendy Beth Quinn Rachel Tina
Attracted to non-Chinese- (American) individuals.	2 Gwen Janet	0
Attracted to non-Chinese- (American) individuals and Americanized Chinese- (American) individuals	3 Sarah Kate Zelda	2 Violet Clara
Ethnicity does not at all influence attraction to others	7 Eva Helen Lisa Nicole Yuri Anna Mary	2 Irene Paige

Table 2: Consideration of Language Barriers in Dating Preferences and Practices

	Raised in US	Raised in China
Language Barriers?	Not really. Sometimes can't pronounce words right but I don't think it's a barrier (Dawn) I would say not that much. Fluent in English and Chinese (Faye)	English not my native language, barriers that I just can't conquer (Beth) Language doesn't really matter (Olivia) Not a problem talking to girls, but hard to hold conversation with guys (Quinn) Language barrier I can't explain. More comfortable dating Chinese (Rachel) Barrier in terms of culture. Maybe can improve English (Tina) For marriage, language a concern b/c of communication with parents (Wendy)
	Fluent in Chinese and English. Exchange of learning languages could be positive but extreme communication barriers won't work (Gwen) No (Janet)	
	No (Kate) No, fluent in both but dating someone who speaks Chinese will make my parents feel less judged (Sarah) No (Zelda)	When I first got here yes, but now not really (Clara) I don't think I would actively pursue someone who didn't speak Chinese, but I wouldn't turn someone down b/c of language (Violet)
	I don't see any language barriers (Anna) No, fluent in both (Eva) Can understand Chinese fluently but speaking a problem. Don't care if boyfriend speaks Chinese (Helen) Comfortable with both Chinese and English but not technical or slang terms in Chinese (Lisa) Language isn't huge factor (Mary) Maybe in Chinese. Speak fluently but lack deep understand (Nicole) Only in Korean with boyfriend's mom (Yuri)	I'm comfortable with English and Chinese. Because he speaks Chinese, he is more receptive to the culture (Irene) Don't really have any barriers. Language wouldn't affect who I chose to date. (Paige)

Recruitment script:

Hello,

My name is Julia Wang and I am a senior at the University of Michigan. I am currently working on my senior thesis about female Chinese- (American) perspectives on interethnic dating. I have asked _____ (i.e. President Vincent Giang) to pass along my research information to _____ (i.e. the rest of the Chinese Student Association). If you identify as a Chinese female undergraduate or Chinese-American female undergraduate, please consider participating in my study! Participants will meet with me in an empty campus classroom and discuss personal observations of attraction and potential influences on relationship preferences. The interview will last about an hour. Your responses will be kept completely confidential, and at the completion of the interview, you will receive a \$5 gift card to Borders. Please let me know when you are free to meet, and I will set up a time to talk with you.

Thank you very much. I really appreciate your consideration!

Sincerely,

Julia Wang

Attention!

Chinese- (American) Undergraduate Women

Between the Ages of 18 and 24,
What are your views on interethnic dating?

* * * * *

Julia Wang is a senior in the Sociology Honors Program conducting a study of female Chinese- (American) perspectives on interethnic dating. She wants to hear about your experiences and outlooks.

\$5 Borders gift card for an hour-long interview!

If you are interested in participating, please email her at juliasw@umich.edu

Thank you!

华人或华裔女性本科生(18-24岁), 你对不同肤色约会会有什么看法?

请参加一项本科生社会学研究. 说说你的经历和观点,
并得到五美元的 **Borders** 礼物卡!谢谢! ☺

Julia Wang, 大学四年级, 社会学系

电邮: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Sociology Interethnic Dating Study
Contact: juliasw@umich.edu

Interview Supplemental Survey:

UMID #: _____

Age: _____ Sexual Orientation _____

Socioeconomic class _____

Ethnicity: Chinese Chinese-American
Relationship Status: Single In A Relationship

Choose one: I was raised in the US I came to the US after high school

Year in School: Freshman Sophomore Junior Senior

UM School/College (LSA, Nursing, Business, Engineering, etc) _____

Concentration(s) _____ Minor(s) _____

Which of these statements describes you the best?

- I am attracted to Chinese- (American) individuals.
- I am attracted to non-Chinese- (American) individuals.
- I am attracted to non-Chinese- (American) individuals and Americanized Chinese- (American) individuals
- Ethnicity does not at all influence my attraction in others

On a scale of 1 to 5 (strongly disagree → strongly agree), please **circle** the number that represents how you feel about each of the following statements:

I am generally more attracted to individuals who are Chinese or Chinese-American

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

I would only date someone who is Chinese or Chinese-American

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

I am in support of interethnic dating

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

I am generally more attracted to individuals who do not identify with my ethnicity

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Ethnicity is not an important consideration for me when it comes to dating preference

Strongly Disagree 1 2 3 4 5 Strongly Agree

Interview Supplemental Survey (Chinese)

UMID#: _____

年龄: _____ 同 / 异 / 双 性恋: _____

种族: _____

社会经济地位 (高 / 底 / 平均 收入): _____

你现在有没有男 / 女朋友? _____

你是在美国长大的还是高中以后来美国的? _____

你是大学几年级学生? _____

密歇根大学部 (LSA/护理 / 商学院。。。。。) _____

你的专业是什么? _____

四选一: _____

- 1) 我最喜欢中国男生.
- 2) 我对中国男生不敢兴趣。
- 3) 我喜欢外国男生和美国化的中国男生。
- 4) 肤色不重要

选择问卷:

*** 中国男人很吸引我。**

不同意 1 2 3 4 5 同意

*** 我只跟中国男人约会。**

不同意 1 2 3 4 5 同意

*** 我赞成不同肤色约会。**

不同意 1 2 3 4 5 同意

*** 我通常喜欢非华裔男生。**

不同意 1 2 3 4 5 同意

*** 对我来说, 在情侣关系问题上, 种族并不重要。**

不同意 1 2 3 4 5 同意

Interview Guide

Please explain what generation you identify with (First, second, third, 1.5...). Where were your parents born and when did you/your family members come to the United States?

Please tell me as much as you can or want about your past relationships (both serious relationships and casual dating).

Have you always been attracted to others who (**share your ethnic identity**) / (**were not Chinese**) or has this changed over time? Why?

Please describe your current intimate partner/significant other/most recent ex if you have one. If you have never been in a relationship, please describe ideal partner.

(To probe: physical appearance as well as personality traits, and level of importance of each of these characteristics to you; also, Ethnicity, height, body type, shy/outgoing, liberal/conservative, mannerisms, career goals, etc)

Do you share the same traits?

What (**did your**) / (**might a**) first date look like?

What kinds of activities would you like to share with your significant other?

How ethnically diverse were your surroundings during your childhood, teenage years, and adult stages.

(To probe: How ethnically diverse was your neighborhood, school surroundings, social network, extracurricular activities, and work setting?)

Do cultural factors influence your dating preferences or attraction trends?

Do you face any language barriers? (If so, does this make you shy away from those who do not speak your language or do you see interethnic dating this as an opportunity to practice another language?)

Are there religious practices that you think are really important? If so, does your significant other have to share them?

Do you celebrate any ethnic traditions or holidays that you would want to share with your significant other?

Have you ever held a “no dating at a young age” mentality?

When it comes to dating and your intimate personal life, how big of an influence are your family members’ opinions, in particular, those of your parents’?

Do your parents hold a traditional oriental mindset of dating within your ethnicity? Would your parents be okay with you dating someone who is not Chinese/Chinese-American?

On a similar note, how big of an influence are your friends’ opinions?

Describe your social network/circle... is it ethnically diverse? Do you hang out with people of the same ethnicity? (Different levels- best friends, good friends, friendly acquaintances)

Think of five to ten of your best friends. Please give me their names and ethnicities.

Would your friends be encouraging of interethnic dating?

Have you ever been involved in an ethnically based student organization? (such as CSA, TASA, AAA, aKDPHi) Which one(s)? On the flip side, have you ever joined a predominantly Caucasian organization to challenge stereotypes associated with Asian student groups?

Why did you join/ why did you choose not to join one?

If you have been involved at all in such an extracurricular, describe your level of involvement and what you hope(d) to get out of it.

Would you expect to meet a significant other through a social channel like this?

Where would you expect to meet a potential date/crush/significant other? (Class, extracurricular activities, work, social settings like clubs, bars, parties)

Does the level of seriousness of the relationship impact your preference of ethnicity in a significant other?

Casual dating (going out on dates; not necessarily a public relationship)

Serious relationship (friends/family aware of relationship; exclusive)

Marriage (perceived)

Is there anything I did not ask but you think could be helpful for this study?

Interview Guide (Chinese)

你是第几代来美国的？你的父母出生在哪儿，你和家人都是哪年来美国的？

请形容你所有有过的男朋友。谈谈普通约会和比较严肃情侣关系。

你一直都喜欢 中国男人 / 外国男人吗？还是随着时间的推移有明显的变化？这是为什么？

请形容你现在的爱人或者最后一个前男友。如果你没有过男朋友，请形容你理想中的男朋友。(Probe: 外貌，性格（外向 / 内向），种族，身高，保守 / 开放)

你也是这样的性格吗？

你理想中的第一次约会是什么样的？

你想跟爱人一起都做些什么（业余活动）？

你小时候接触过很多不同种族的人吗？初中，高中呢？现在呢？
(Probe: 邻居，社区，课外活动，学校结构，工作环境)

各种文化因素都会影响你找男朋友吗？

你有任何语言障碍吗？

你的宗教信仰是什么？你很重视宗教信仰吗？你的男朋友必须有同样的宗教信仰吗？

你希望和爱人一起庆祝传统或民族节日吗？

你有过‘不到一定年龄不能约会’的想法吗？

如果你的父母不同意你跟某一个人约会，你会尊重他们的意见吗？

你父母希望你找一个中国男朋友吗？他们会同意你跟外国人约会吗？

你看重你朋友的意见吗？

请形容你的社交圈。你朋友当中大部分是中国人吗？（最好的朋友，比较好的朋友。。。。。）

请列出你五到十个最好的朋友的名字和种族。

你的朋友会赞成不同种族的约会吗？

你参加过任何亚洲 / 中国学生会吗？（中国学生会，台湾学生会，亚美学生会，姐妹会 aKDPhi。。。）哪一个？另外，为了挑战刻板印象，你参加过以白种人为主的学生会吗？

你为什么参加 / 为什么决定不参加？

如果你参加过，你投入了多少时间和精力？你希望从中获得什么？

你觉得可以通过亚裔学生组织结识男朋友吗？

你觉得在哪里可以认识到未来的男朋友？（课堂，课外活动，工作，舞会，酒吧。。。）

在谈男女朋友的时候，是不是关系越正式种族方面的考虑越重要？在下面三种情况下，种族因素的影响有多大？

普通的交往（约会，不是公开的关系）

正式男女朋友（唯一的，家人朋友承认的）

婚姻

你觉得还有什么想法对我的研究会有帮助？谢谢。

Consent to Participate in a Research Study
CHINESE UNDERGRADUATE WOMEN'S PERSPECTIVES ON
INTERETHNIC DATING

Principal Investigator: Julia Wang, Department of Sociology, University of Michigan
Faculty Advisor: Elizabeth A. Armstrong, Ph.D., Department of Sociology,
University of Michigan

You are invited to participate in a research study about Chinese undergraduate women's perspectives on interethnic relationships. The purpose of this study is to investigate how two different generational groups of Chinese students choose their intimate partners.

Description of study:

The focus of my senior research thesis project is to compare personal sentiments of Chinese undergraduate women raised in the United States on interethnic dating with Chinese undergraduate women who moved to the US after high school.

Twenty students will be invited to be a part of this research study. If you agree to participate, you will be asked to complete a brief survey and participate in a face-to-face interview in a reserved university classroom.

I will ask you various questions relating to your own preferences and experiences on the subject matter. The interview will consist of a short survey followed by a recorded dialogue between us, and will last around one hour altogether.

Confidentiality

All of your responses will be kept completely confidential. At the completion of my senior research thesis project, all interview materials will be erased. All email communication will also be deleted once the interview is finished. My faculty advisor might request to look at the data that I am collecting, but otherwise I will be the only person who has access to your responses. Your name will not appear in any of my final publications.

Voluntary Participation

Your participation is entirely voluntary. You may decide to stop participating at any time. You may choose to skip or refuse to answer any question, both on the survey and during the interview.

Benefits

I really appreciate your time and would like to offer you a \$5 gift card to Borders for participating in my study.

Contact

If you have any questions or concerns regarding this research, including questions about the scheduling of your interview, you may contact the researcher, Julia Wang at (734) 550-6150 and at juliasw@umich.edu. You may also contact Julia's advisor, Elizabeth A. Armstrong at elarmstr@umich.edu.

Consent

A copy of this consent form will be kept on record with my other documents. You will also keep a copy of this consent form.

I have read the above information and hereby consent to participate in the study.

Printed Name: _____

Signature: _____ Date: _____

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

All my thanks to:

Professor Elizabeth Armstrong and Professor Pamela Smock for their guidance and insight along the way. Without their contributions, I would not be able to proudly present this finished thesis.

My Sociology Honors cohort peers for their shared experiences and advice. We faced many similar challenges together over the course of a year and half. I am so proud of our progress and strong finish.

My family, friends, and boyfriend for their constant encouragement and support. Thank you for flyering with me in the cold, reading through numerous drafts, and listening to my findings and frustrations throughout the process.