

DATING ON THE EDGES OF TWO CULTURES: A QUALITATIVE STUDY ON MATE
SELECTION AND DATING BEHAVIORS OF CHINESE STUDENTS ON A U.S.
COLLEGE CAMPUS

By

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To My Mom

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

FACSS	Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars
GPA	Grade Point Average
GRE	Graduate Record Exam
RENREN	A Popular Chinese social network website with similar functions of Facebook
TOEFL	Test of English as a Foreign Language

Abstract of Thesis Presented to the Graduate School
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By

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This thesis presents the research results from a qualitative study of Chinese international students who are currently studying on a U.S. university campus. The research explores their perceptions and preferences with regard to mate selection and dating behaviors within the context of their experiences of living and studying in a western setting. These students are of an age when dating and planning for future marriage are culturally expected, even as they focus on pursuing higher education and enhancing their future career options. Their status as international students in a foreign country provides an opportunity to examine the ways in which migration, social networks, and varying cultural expectations may influence and complicate their perceptions, preferences, and behaviors with regard to dating and mate selection.

Research results supported the notions of segmented assimilation of Chinese international students with regard to mate selection and dating. The participants partially adopted American norms and ideologies on intimate relationships: dating is viewed as a casual way of 'making friends' and 'having fun' instead of for the main (traditional)

purposes of mate selection and family formation; singlehood and delay of marriage are viewed as acceptable alternatives; personal characteristics and emotional connections are valued over social economic affluence and family background. However, some eastern traditional values and norms are still kept: parents' acceptance of the relationship is still a 'must' for Chinese students; the tradition of 'Dowry' and 'Bride Price' is still practiced; pre-marital intimacy and cohabitation are 'commonly practiced' but have to remain 'under the table' (i.e., hidden from parents and sometimes other social networks). The close network and community among Chinese students on the one hand provides support and assistance for seeking dates and potential mates, but on the other hand also functions to reinforce Chinese traditional cultural values within the group. Racial or national homogamy is most commonly practiced and preferred, however, gender differences are apparent with regard to interracial relationships. Male students reported that they strictly preferred people of Chinese descent or at least of Asian race for a future spouse. Female students were more open to interracial relationships, particularly with white males, but they expressed concerns about social pressures and negative perceptions of interracial relationships with non-white men from minority groups. The findings are discussed in the context of increasing access to international studies and potential immigration among Chinese young adults.

CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

This study examines Chinese international students' spouse/mate selection processes, preferences, and dating patterns in the context of migration and the experience of living and studying on a U.S. campus. The study explores the unique patterns in mate/spouse selection decision making for Chinese international students in America who have been immersed in traditional Chinese culture as well as exposed to American culture. The research is based on participant observation at two social events in the Chinese international student community as well as 21 in-depth, qualitative interviews with Chinese male and female international students. Respondents represented a range of dating and relationship status categories, including single, in a local relationship, and in a long distance relationship. In this chapter I present the (a) research questions guiding this study, (b) the background for the research questions, and (c) the rationale for the research project.

Research Questions

The current project addresses the following six main research questions

What are the standards of selecting spouses or mates among Chinese students? Standards of selecting spouses or /mates are likely to reflect both traditional Chinese values and westernized romantic values. Also, as potential immigrants who may be seeking employment and permanent residency in the U.S., some materialistic values may be taken into account as part of the standards of selecting a future spouse or mate.

How do western culture and life style influence spouse or mate selection preferences among Chinese students in the U.S.? For those Chinese people who currently study and work in the U.S., their spouse or mate selection preferences may

differ from those of their Chinese peers who live in China. These differences might be the result of their acculturation and assimilation in the U.S. The study examines Chinese students' perceptions of how the experience of living on a U.S. campus has influenced in their attitudes toward mate-selection.

What are the means and media for Chinese international students to meet potential spouses or mates in U.S.? Chinese students maintain a highly closed and interactive social network on many U.S. college campuses. This social network provides them with unique opportunities to meet potential dates. The study examines how the relatively closed social network among Chinese students provides them with the means and media for seeking connections with friends and potential partners.

What are the orientations and motivations for seeking spouses or mates among Chinese people in the U.S.? Why do Chinese students look for their partners in America? Some may want to get married and build up their new homes in America. Others may just be interested in companionship in order to get over the loneliness and homesickness in a foreign country. Are they seriously dating? Why or why not?

How do parents or families influence relationships and spouse or mate selection seeking in the U. S? In most cases, the parents are in China and only some of the parents may come to the U.S. for short visits. Most of the Chinese students keep in contact with their parents through the internet and phone calls. The current research explores the parents' roles in spouse or mate selection processes. Do students tell their parents that they are dating? How much do they reveal to their parents about whether and whom they are dating? Is there contact between their parents and their partners? How do they view their parents' opinions of their relationships?

How does the racial dynamic in the U.S. influence Chinese international students' mate selection preferences and attitudes towards interracial marriage? Besides students from China, American campuses also include immigrants and international students from a wide variety of background (e.g., Indians, South Americans, Europeans, Africans, etc.). Living and studying in the U.S. provides the opportunity for Chinese people to have contact with Americans and people of other nationalities. What are their attitudes towards dating or marrying people from another country or from other racial-ethnic groups? Do they have any preferences regarding the nationality and race of their significant other? Who is favored? Why?

Background to the Research Questions

The cultural diversity of the United States is reflected in the large size of the international student population in American higher educational institutions (Bradley, Parr, Lan, Bingi, & Gould, 1995). According to data collected by the Institute of International Education, the enrollment of international students has increased significantly over the years. Recently, many U.S. educational institutions have further expanded their enrollment of international students as a way of broadening their reach academically and funding themselves through the income from tuition. At the same time, significant economic growth in China has increased the financial ability of many Chinese families, allowing more Chinese students to study in the U.S. As a result, the number of Chinese international students enrolled in U.S. educational institutions is significantly increasing. According to data from IIE (Institute of International Education), 194,029 Chinese international students came to U.S. seeking education in 2012 from China (Institute of International Education, 2012). And these numbers are likely to

continue increasing in the future. China is second only to India when graduate students and undergrads are counted. A large number of potential immigrants enter the U.S. every year through the channel of education. Thus, the increasing number of incoming Chinese students results in a growing population of potential immigrants as many of these students will seek employment after graduation and permanent residence in the U.S. According to data from the US Census Bureau's 2010 American Community Survey (ACS) and the Department of Homeland Security's Office of Immigration Statistics (OIS) for 2008 and 2009, there were about 1.6 million foreign born from China (including Hong Kong) residing in the United States in 2008. In the decade between 2000 and 2009, more than 630,000 Chinese foreign born gained lawful permanent resident statuses in the United States.

Identity of the Student Group

The current research focuses specifically on Chinese international students from Mainland China (People's Republic of China). They entered the United States on F1/J1 visas, the types of non-immigrant student visas that allow foreigners to pursue education in the United States. Most of them finished their college education or at least high school education in China, and they came to the U.S. to pursue higher education and attend graduate or professional schools. Although these Chinese international students initially entered the U.S. with Non-immigrant student visas, most of them expressed their desire to seek employment and permanent resident status in the U.S. after their graduations. I would describe their identity as students as well as potential new immigrants. As students and potential immigrants, these Chinese international students are experiencing academic pressure from school and work as well as going through the process of acculturation and assimilation. While all college students face

challenges adjusting to college life, Chinese international students face particular challenges such as adjusting to a different language and cultural values, academic expectations and preparation, and experiencing isolation, alienation, and potential discrimination (Winkelman, 1994; Kline & Liu, 2005). Between disruptions to their established social network and the challenge of new cultural surroundings, Chinese international students are more susceptible to stress and attendant psychological problems than American students. Cultural alienation, confusion, and conflict can then impede the process of achieving the level of acculturation desired by Chinese students (Kline & Liu, 2005).

Social Network and Community

In their social lives, Chinese international students usually maintain their social networks within their group as they represent a unique population facing similar pressures of adaption and acculturation. Associations and societies formed and run by Chinese international students are common at U.S. colleges. These associations usually organize certain types of activities during traditional Chinese holidays and provide assistance to newcomers that have just arrived in the U.S. Chinese students stay close to each other, and they usually prefer to go for interpersonal social support from their peers instead of choosing to seek help and assistance from school officials or local communities (Ye, 2006). The close social networks among Chinese students make it possible for them to stay immersed in their traditional culture and social norms; in other words, these networks may slows down or even segment their acculturation and assimilation in U.S. society.

Mate Selection and Preferences

With reference to spouse selection and marriage, the Chinese international students continue to practice endogamy, preferring a future partner/spouse that is Chinese or at least of Chinese descent. In addition, the associations and organizations run by Chinese students provide opportunities for single, unmarried male and female Chinese students to meet and get to know each other. Activities such as welcome parties for new students, BBQs, picnics and speed dating events are popular and common among Chinese students on U.S. college campuses. Filial piety beliefs are still very influential to Chinese international students, and they usually keep close contacts with their parents and family members in their home country (Kline & Liu, 2005). Such close contact with family members may strengthen their family's influence on their spouse selection decisions and dating behaviors. However, since the Chinese students are gradually adapting to Western culture and being influenced by individualism in the west, their dating behaviors may also reflect their acculturation in the U.S.: Choosing a spouse or partner based on romantic, emotional feelings instead of expectations from parents; engaging in pre-marital intimacy and cohabitation which is common and generally accepted among international students; and "Going Dutch" on dates and in relationships instead of having the man pay for most or all of the expenses.

Chinese international students are among the largest group of international students on most U.S. college campuses (Institute of International Education, 2011), and many of these students intend to stay and settle down in the U.S. (Institute of International) Knowing the patterns and preferences with regard to their spouse or mate selection processes may allow for better predictions of future trends in immigration as well as better support for these students during their years of education on U.S.

campuses. On the other hand, there are also a large number of Chinese students returning to their home country right after finishing their study in the U.S. Their experience of being immersed in Western culture may also be influential for these returning students' views on mate or spouse selection and dating. More generally, understanding their experiences on the edge of two cultures may help to elucidate processes of assimilation and acculturation as they relate to dating preferences and behaviors.

Rationale of the Research Project

The significance of this research project that is related to two essential questions: Why Chinese international students? Why focus on spouse or mate selection and dating behavior? In responding to these two questions, I provide the rationale behind this project.

Why Chinese International Students?

Research on diverse groups of people of different countries of origin is a relatively underdeveloped area when compared to studies of different racial-ethnic minority groups in the United States. Studies on international students from a particular country are even rarer. Chinese international students would usually be categorized under the label of students, new immigrants, Asian students, or Chinese. However, Chinese international students on U.S. college campuses represent a unique and important group due to their special socio-economic background, marital status, and immigration status.

First of all, Chinese international students who come to the U.S. are usually from advantaged educational backgrounds and well-off families, thus their socio-economic status is different from that of earlier generations of Chinese immigrants who migrated

to the U.S. as labor workers and refugees (Holland, 2007). Most Chinese students who come to study in the U.S. are pursuing graduate and professional degrees. For them to be admitted into a graduate program in a U.S. educational institution, they need a relative competitive GPA (Grade Point Average) in college and score well in their GRE (Graduate Record Exam) and TOEFL (Test of English as a Foreign Language). They also need to go through application processes in U.S. graduate schools and wait several months for news on the admission decisions. The relatively high admission requirements and potential high costs of attendance in most U.S. educational institutions allow only students with high academic achievements or well-off families to be able to attend college and graduate school in the U.S. The Chinese students who end up attending American colleges or graduate schools are also relatively fluent in the English language, familiar with Western Culture, and are self-motivated to come to study in the U.S. This pre-selection effect may be correlated with unique acculturation and assimilation patterns different from those of earlier generations of Chinese immigrants.

Secondly, as students, they are usually faced with not only pressures from acculturation and assimilation, like other immigrants, but also academic pressures from their new learning environment. For most international students, U.S. college campuses and academic programs are unique environments for international students to get first-hand information on U.S. society upon arrival. International students have opportunities to get to know their fellow students of similar ages from both the U.S. and other countries. International students are required to take classes, finish assignments, and take exams in English rather than their mother tongue. For Chinese international

students, they also need to encounter considerable acculturative stress because of the differences in academic and social norms between Chinese and U.S. cultures (Yeh & Inose, 2003). Most Chinese international students are socialized with beliefs about the virtues of humility, emotional restraint, self-effacement, and saving face (Ho, 1989; Kim, Atkinson & Umemoto, 2001). For example, students from China are usually taught to be compliant, remain quiet in class, and withhold expressing their thoughts or asking questions until invited to do so by their teachers according to their collectivistic cultural tradition. But they are now expected by their American professors and peers to take the initiative in asking questions and expressing their opinions (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006). For them to measure up with their American peers and conquer language strains, they usually choose to socialize and work with their Chinese peers in the same academic program or same class. This phenomenon is especially common in academic programs in the hard sciences and engineering where lots of Chinese students choose to enroll. Such 'national enclaves' distinguish (and may separate) Chinese international students from the rest of the college student body.

Thirdly, unique study abroad experience and culture backgrounds distinguish Chinese international students from other Asian students. Chinese students are usually categorized as Asian right upon their arrival in the U.S. However, 'coming from Asia' is not necessarily equivalent to the experience of 'being Asian in the U.S. ' Suddenly becoming racial minorities in a new environment is a unique experience for these students who come from a relatively homogeneous country. Different from their American Chinese/Asian peers, Chinese international students have to adjust to both American culture and the racial dynamics in the U.S. Simply categorizing Chinese

students into the large vague 'Asian' category would neglect their unique experiences and their special angle of viewing the U.S. racial dynamic as foreign newcomers.

Why spouse/mate selection and dating behavior?

Some previous study has been conducted regarding acculturation, psychosocial and language adjustment, and family relationships of Chinese international students (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Ho, 1989; Kim, Atkinson & Umemoto, 2001; Yeh & Inose, 2003; Winkelman, 1994; Kline & Liu, 2005). However, the spouse or mate selection and dating behavior of Chinese international students have not been widely studied. Dating, coupling, and mate selection are important life stages for human beings, especially in young adulthood, and they fulfill important functions of socialization and recreation (Schwartz & Scott, 2012). Considering the fact that most Chinese international students on American college campuses arrived after high school and college at the age from 18 to 30, the majority of these students are unmarried and in the life stage of dating and getting involved in romantic relationships, mate selection and family formation. Having newly arrived in a foreign environment and being immersed in western culture may create unique norms of dating and mate selection for Chinese international students. Studying Chinese international students' mate selection and dating behavior will allow us to see how the interface of Eastern and Western cultures affects mating and coupling behaviors as well as students' attitudes and preferences. Such study would also provide us expanded understanding of the Chinese student population from the point of view of marriage and family concerns.

CHAPTER 2 OVERVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

This section gives an overview of the literature and has been divided into the following subsections: theoretical approaches on spouse/mate selection processes; theoretical overview of assimilation and acculturation; previous demographic studies on mate selection; studies on spouse/mate selection and marriage of Chinese people; history and life styles of Chinese immigration to the United States; and acculturation and psychological adjustment of Chinese international students.

Theoretical Approaches on Spouse/Mate Selection Process

Research about marriages and families provides us with important observations about intimate relationships. Various marriage and family theories and perspectives provide us with basic frameworks to help in analyzing and understanding observations (Schwartz & Scott, 2012). Social exchange theory and the theory of complementary needs provide conceptual frames and possible theoretical explanations for the proposed study. In addition, theoretical works on intermarriage and homogamy provide us with more in-depth explanations of mate selection and related phenomena.

'Social Exchange Theory' adopts an economic model of human behavior based on costs, benefits, and the expectation of reciprocity; for this reason it is sometimes referred to as the rational choice perspective (Schwartz & Scott, 2012). The fundamental premise of social exchange theory is that people seek through their interactions with others to maximize their rewards and to minimize their cost (Benokraitis, 2011). A number of scholars have used social exchange theory to explain the process of spouse or mate selection. They argue that one person is attracted to another person because the latter can provide certain resources. Whether the two

people can be matched to each other depends on whether an exchange of resources can be formed between them. As a result, most people will continue in a relationship as long as there are more benefits than losses. There are different types of resources, such as wealth, personality, social status and capability. In perhaps the most popular interpretation of exchange theory as applied to mate selection, men are seen as exchanging their socioeconomic resources for women's sexual and domestic services (Schoen & Wooldredge, 1989). Hence, women are thought to be more concerned with the socioeconomic status of potential spouses, and men more concerned with physical attractiveness (South, 1991). If there is a lack of resources on either side, there need to be certain kinds of reimbursement taking place such as dowry and bride price. For example, women's good appearance can be used to exchange for higher social status of men.

The 'Theory of Complementary Needs' was developed from social exchange theory. The basic hypothesis of the theory of complementary needs in spouse/mate selection is that each individual seeks within his or her eligible field for that person who gives the greatest promise of providing him or her with maximum need gratification. It is not assumed that this process is totally or even largely conscious (Winch, Ktsanes, & Ktsanes, 1954). The theory of complementary needs in mate/spouse selection suggests that human beings' choices in selecting spouses/mates are based on their needs, which can be biological, social, economic and emotional.

Previous theoretical work on intermarriage and homogamy helps the understanding of mate selection patterns. Mate selection and marriage patterns arise from the interplay between three social forces: the preference of individuals for certain

characteristics in a potential spouse, the influence of the social group to which one belongs to, and the constraints of the marriage market in which one is searching for a spouse (Kalmijn, 1991). Unmarried men and women seek spouses or potential dates within a marriage market where each individual considers a set of potential spouses/mates. Potential mates are evaluated on the basis of the resources they have and the seekers' personal preferences (Kalmijn, 1998). According to Kalmijn, socioeconomic resources and cultural resources are considered as the two most important characteristics. Socioeconomic resources refer to one's economic well-being while the role of cultural resources is based on a preference to marry someone who is similar. Preferences for cultural similarity have been addressed most extensively in the social psychological literature on personal attraction (Byrne, 1971; Kalmijn, 1998). Similarity of values and cultures can be translated into mutual confirmation of each other's behavior and worldviews thus leading to personal attraction, so it is one of the major determinants of homogamy and dating within one's social group.

Besides one's personal preference, Kalmijn (1998) also believes that 'third parties' play a part in one's mate selection decisions. He states that 'third parties' have an incentive to keep new generations from marrying exogamously because it may threaten the internal cohesion and homogeneity of the group. Group identification and group sanctions intervene in mate selection choices of group members as group members develop a sense of identification and an awareness of a common social history (Gordon, 1964) and then develop the tendency toward being attracted to someone who shares the same identity. The family, the church and the states are three

most important examples of parties that may sanction out-marrying. Strong group sanctions on exogamy scare group members away from out-marrying.

The third important determinant of endogamy or exogamy is the marriage market (Kalmijn, 1998). Group size and gender ratio affect the possibility of endogamy by defining the availability of potential similar partners. An imbalanced gender ratio or small group size may prompt group members to seek alternatives outside of the group. Also, the chance of encountering a member of one's own group does not depend on group size alone but also on the way a group is dispersed geographically (Blau & Schwarts, 1984). Concentrated geographic distribution generally contributes to a high rate of endogamy. Local marriage markets in which unmarried people spend most of their time are often socially segregated and are therefore very important for explaining marriage patterns. Three local marriage markets have been considered most frequently: the school, the neighborhood, and the workplace. Demographic distributions within local marriage markets determine unmarried people's choices in mate selection (Kalmijn, 1998).

Theoretical Overview of Assimilation and Acculturation

Migration to another country necessitates some adaptive response on the part of immigrants to the culture and society of the host country. In the case of Chinese immigrants in the U.S., some living habits and values are changed in order to adapt to American society. We may guess that their spouse/mate selection patterns are going through such changes as well.

Classical assimilation theories were first conceptualized and developed to describe European immigrants in the United States. Assimilation was conceptualized as a natural process by "which diverse ethnic groups come to share a common culture and

to gain equal access to the opportunity structure of society” (Zhou, 1999). This process necessarily involved the desertion of ethnic cultural traditions and behavioral patterns and the adoption of those of the host society—in this case, the U.S. society is creating a melting pot for immigrants from all kinds of cultural and social backgrounds. Gordon (1964), one of the premier exponents of this perspective, identified seven stages in the process of assimilation commencing with acculturation—which he conceived of as the “minority group’s adoption of the ‘cultural patterns’ of the host society”---and proceeding steadily toward structural assimilation, which is the “entry of members of an ethnic minority into primary group relationships with the majority group” (Alba & Nee, 1999).

Assimilation theories have been criticized as inapplicable with regard to the experiences of Asian American immigrants to the U.S., and the flaws in the assimilation perspective have become more evident. Alba & Nee(1999), and Zhou(1999) noted that the greatest shortcoming of the assimilation argument has been in its expectation of an “erasure of all signs of ethnic origin” by immigrants so as to become melted into mainstream American society and to gain equal access to the opportunity structure. In addition, assimilation theories do not account for structural constraints—the most important being socio-economic class and racial and ethnic systems—inherent in American society that impinge on the ability of an immigrant group to assimilate into American society. This is especially evident in the conceptualization by Gordon (1964) of the desired cultural standard that represented the direction and eventual outcome of the acculturation process—the “middle-class cultural patterns of, largely, white Protestant, Anglo-Saxon origins” which he called the “core culture” of American society. This conceptualization does not account for the heterogeneity in American society with

regard to social class and racial and ethnic systems into which an immigrant group or people may assimilate. It should also be mentioned that assimilation theories refer largely to new and permanent immigrants.

Several scholars proposed segmented assimilation in response to the flaws of assimilation theories (Porte & Zhou, 1993; Zhou, 1999; Zhou & Xiong, 2005).

Segmented assimilation explained that immigrants tend to become an integral economic part of the host society while preserving ethnic culture and identity. In response to the flaws of assimilation theories, some scholars of migration and immigration developed theories of acculturation instead. Gans (1999) states that different from assimilation, which refers to newcomers leaving their original formal and informal ethnic associations and other social institutions and attempting to fit into the host society as non-ethnic ones, acculturation refers mainly to the adoption of culture, behavior, practices, values, and lifestyles of the hosting society.

The concepts of assimilation and acculturation were developed to explain different waves of immigration in the U.S. Assimilation is more suitable in explaining the process of early waves of European immigrants or more accurately 'early colonists' entering the American continent and developing 'American Culture' by melting in their European cultures of different kinds. Acculturation is more suitable in explaining later waves of immigrants' adaptation after migrating to the U.S. and adoption of existing 'American Culture'. Different from the 'assimilation' concept, acculturation indicates the process in which new immigrants arrives in the host country making an effort to fit into the mainstream of the host society while preserving and holding onto their own culture and identity.

Assimilation and acculturation theory thereby provides a very good theoretical background on how immigrants adjust themselves in order to adapt or melt into American culture, which is relevant for understanding how American culture and American life affect Chinese people's spouse/mate selection processes in the U.S.

Previous Demographic Studies on Mate Selection

Many demographic studies have been conducted on mate selection, which provide us with larger overall background on social-demographic differentials in mate selection preferences and processes. Notably, gender differences in mate-selection preferences have been reported as significant in demographic studies. Men place more value than women on physical attractiveness in a spouse, while women emphasize a potential mate's employment stability and earnings (South, 1991). However, economic consideration is not totally irrelevant to men's mate selection preferences. Men are more willing than women to marry someone who is not likely to have a steady job, someone who earns less, and someone who has less education (Sprecher, Sullivan, & Hatfield, 1994). But other studies show that among male respondents (not comparing to women), there has been a shift toward being less willing to marry a woman lacking steady employment (South, 1991), though men who are looking for women with less education and who earn less money have a higher likelihood of marriage (Raley & Bratter, 2004).

Several demographic studies on racial and ethnic intermarriages are found to be enlightening for the proposed study. Previous studies show that there is a rapid increase in the trend of inter-racial and inter-ethnic marriage in the U.S. (Qian & Lichter, 2011) Changes in marital assimilation have taken on momentum of their own; that is, America's growing multiracial population has fueled the growth of interracial marriages

with whites. Asian Americans are third most likely to marry whites following Hispanics and American Indians (Qian & Lichter, 2007). The overwhelming share of immigrants tend to marry same-race immigrants rather than same-race natives or other racial minorities. At the same time, racial minority immigrants are substantially more likely to marry their native same-race counterparts than to marry Whites (Qian & Lichter, 2001). Interethnic marriage between Asian ethnic groups is limited to several ethnic groups, but is much more frequent among natives than among immigrants. Among Asians, Japanese and Chinese Americans, who have lived in the United States for several generations, have the highest rate of interethnic marriage (Qian, Blair & Ruf, 2001).

Studies on Spouse/Mate Selection and Marriage of Chinese People

Many studies on spouse/mate selection and marriage of Chinese people have been conducted which have specifically focused on Chinese people who live in mainland China. These studies provide additional cultural background on the spouse/mate selection processes of Chinese people. Since the respondents of my study will be Chinese international students who were brought up in mainland China, it is important to get the knowledge on the spouse/mate selection processes of Chinese people in mainland China and to compare potential differences between the spouse selection processes of the two groups and observe the influence of American culture among Chinese international students. Both qualitative and quantitative studies have been done on spouse/mate selection of Chinese people.

Xu and Fang (2002) conducted research on 1,328 dating advertisements published in major Chinese magazines using the method of content analysis. The research found that there were gender differences in the standards of mate selection among Chinese unmarried young people. Male advertisers were more likely to describe

themselves as healthy, muscular, and wealthy. They were also more likely to note the properties that they owned, such as having a self-owned car, having two apartments, owning a company, etc. Female advertisers were more likely to describe themselves as young, kind, having great sympathy, tender, understanding and good at doing housework. The research reported six most common standards of mate selection among Chinese people: personality, appearance, property, age, height, and previous marriage history.

Xu (2000) and his research team conducted a survey in Shanghai and Harbin Cities to collect data on spouse/mate selection processes of Chinese urban residents. The research applied regression models to identify the most important mate selection preferences. The findings showed that Chinese people still valued stability and long lasting marriage. However, since the late 1980s, people began to pay more attention to socioeconomic and physical conditions. The results did not support previous studies on specific inter-group differences: that people who were over marriageable age and had lower occupational status generally gave more consideration to economic features of potential mates or that young people paid more attention not to recent economic status but to the potentials which could be transformed into material gains in the future. Xu posited that greater modernization of our living environment increases attention given to romantic love. Mate selection and family forming decision makings started to become a way for unmarried people acquire social economic status and material resources other than based on pure romantic unconditional love.

William R. Jankowiak (1989) conducted mate selection and sexuality research in China, which included differences in mate selection standards between genders,

marriage patterns, and sexual behavior. The researcher employed standard ethnographic techniques that included guided and open-ended interviews, external and participant observation of domestic and public interactions, and collection of life histories. In this study, most of the data were collected through interviews conducted by the researcher and his research assistant in Huhhot, one of the largest cities in northern China. The research found out that Chinese women preferred to dwell on romantic fantasies that focused on pulling men into intense, emotional, and enduring relationships; by contrast, men's romantic fantasies dwelled on the seduction and de-emphasized the enduring qualities of the relationship. Chinese men consistently preferred a sexually attractive wife, desired sexual intercourse more frequently than their spouses, assumed the primary responsibility for initiation of sexual intercourse, and were more inclined to seek partner variety.

Some studies have focused specifically on people's preferences with regard to virginity in the spouse/mate selection process of Chinese people. Virginity is considered an important value in traditional Chinese culture. Premarital sexual involvement is scorned and regarded as a social vice. However, among the youths today, it has become more acceptable. One study of sexual attitudes among 541 university students revealed that 48% of the students considered that "virginity was important," 33% believed that "the concept was too traditional, and should be abolished," and 19% did not have an opinion one way or the other. Gender differences were found in this study with 55% of females versus 38% of males considering virginity important; 36% of males and 31% of females considered this concept too old-fashioned; 26% of males and 13% of females did not have an opinion one way or another (Zhen et

al., 2000). In another study, among those 20 to 30 years of age, 34% considered chastity outdated; 64% of males and 84% of females thought the concept unfair for women (Li & Xu, 2004). As virginity is still a sensitive topic in China, it is hard to get respondents for qualitative interviews; existing studies have all employed survey methods in data collection and quantitative methods in data analysis. The results of the above mentioned studies show that although virginity is highly valued in traditional Chinese culture, its importance has declined among young people for both genders.

To be noted here, one comparative study on spouse/mate selection between Chinese and American college students has been conducted by Zhang and Kline (2009). They examined the comparative influence of network members on one's intention to marry and on relational commitment among 616 college students in both China and the United States. Compared with U.S. participants, Chinese students believed that their dating partners would meet their filial piety beliefs, that such beliefs were more important in their potential decision to marry their dating partner, and that they were more likely to comply with network members regarding the decision to marry. Social networks were seen as having a significant influence on Chinese marital intentions and relationship commitment, whereas relationship length and beliefs about support, care, living a better life, and network influence predicted U.S. participants' marital intentions and/or relationship commitment.

History and Life Styles of Chinese Immigrants in the U.S.

In absolute numbers, the United States remains by far one of the principal receiving countries of Chinese immigration flows and has experienced a steady increase in immigration since the end of World War II under the influence of the 1965 passage of the Hart-Cellar Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act

(Rumbaut, 1994; Fix & Zimmermann 1995; Lapinski, Peltola, Shaw & Yang, 1997). By now, there are approximately 3 million ethnic Chinese living in the United States and they are becoming one of the largest visible minorities in the United States (Holland, 2007).

The first immigrants from China arrived in the United States in the 1820s in small numbers and were mostly male labor workers. A larger number of Chinese immigrants arrived in the United States in the 1850s as a result of the discovery of gold in California in 1849 and an increase in political and economic instability in southern China caused by the Taiping Rebellion and the Opium Wars (Holland, 2007). Later on, more male labor workers entered the west coast of the United States to work on the construction of the railroads. However, after the transcontinental railroads were complete, the demand for cheap Chinese labor dropped greatly. In order to minimize the perceived competition of Chinese laborers with white workers, Congress enacted the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882. This policy of excluding Chinese immigrants continued unabated in the U.S. into the first quarter of the 20th century until the end of World War II. The United States repealed the Chinese exclusion acts in 1943 because veterans of Chinese ancestry fought for the U.S. in the Second World War. The Chinese Exclusion Repeal Act, commonly known as the Magnuson Act, allowed Chinese immigration to the U.S. in 1943. People of Chinese ancestry were allowed to immigrate to the U.S. and become naturalized citizens however the allowance every year was very small. It took another 20 years until Chinese immigrants began to be admitted into the U.S. under the same criteria as all other applicants of immigration----through the 1965 passage of the Hart-

Cellar Amendments to the Immigration and Nationality Act (Holland, 2007), which eliminated regional quotas and restrictions on immigration.

Several studies have explained life patterns of Chinese immigrants in the U.S. Most have focused on the differences between first and second generation Chinese immigrants, examining spouse/mate selection issues and acculturation among Chinese immigrants and the second generation. The study by Rosenthal and Feldman (1992) revealed a significant association between generation in the United States and feelings of being Chinese among Chinese Americans. First-generation Chinese Americans were more likely than their second-generation peers to identify themselves as being more “Chinese” than “American.” This research used a survey and quantitative data analyses which provided general information on the differences in self-identity between the two generations of Chinese immigrants. Hynie, Lalonde and Lee (2006) examined parent-child similarities in traditional mate preferences among Chinese immigrants in North America. They found that family allocentrism (the creation of an affective or emotional dependency of a person towards one or several other people, because of a need for identity recognition) was a marginally significant partial mediator of parent’s influence on children’s preferences. Family connectedness may, therefore, facilitate intergenerational transmission of values in immigrant Asian families, including preferences for marrying within the group.

Acculturation and Psychological Adjustment of Chinese International Students

By 2012, Chinese international students became one of the largest groups of international students on most U.S. college campuses (Institute of International Education, 2012). The large and increasing number of Chinese international students on U.S. college campuses has aroused attention, debates, and concerns in both

academic and non-academic circles with regard to well-being, adaptation, and acculturation of Chinese international students. Most academic studies of Chinese international students have come from areas of counseling, psychology and education (Wang & Mallinckrodt, 2006; Kline & Liu, 2005; Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007; Ye, 2006; Huang; 2005). These research studies mostly focus on cross cultural adaptation, language adjustment, acculturation, psychosocial adjustment and social network support, and academic stress. Previous research has noted that Chinese international students face particular challenges, such as adjusting to a different language and cultural values, academic expectations and preparation, and experiencing isolation, alienation, and potential discrimination (Winkelman, 1994; Kline & Liu, 2005). Chinese international students were found to be more vulnerable than American students and other international students from western countries when facing academic pressures (Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007; Ye, 2006; Huang; 2005). However, their acculturative stress tended to decrease with greater length of time staying in the United States and improvements in their English proficiency (Wei, Heppner, Mallen, Ku, Liao & Wu, 2007). Previous research also found that Chinese international students tended to maintain strong communication and close relationships with their parents and family members in China. Social network was also very important for the cross cultural adaptation of Chinese international students; however, they tended to limit their social networks to Chinese nationals or people of Chinese descent in the U.S. instead of socializing actively with other American students (Ye, 2006).

Summary and Reflection

The theoretical overview of the literature provides us with solid background regarding mate selection as well as immigration. However, the summary of previous

quantitative and qualitative research on the population of interest reveals important gaps in the existing research and in our knowledge of mate selection processes among Chinese international students. Research on Chinese international students has generally been limited to an emphasis on academic adjustment, cultural assimilation and psychosocial adjustment, whereas mate-selection and dating behaviors have rarely been touched on by previous research. When lifestyle and mate-selection topics have been examined, Chinese international students have been over generalized into the 'Asian', 'Asian immigrants', 'Chinese', or 'American Chinese' categories (Rosenthal & Feldman, 1992; Hynie, Lalonde & Lee, 2006; Qian and Lichter, 2001; 2007; 2011). Chinese international students' mate-selection and dating behavior need an independent study that distinguishes them as a unique population with the identities of 'student', 'Chinese' and 'newcomers in the U.S.

In an effort to explore the underdeveloped areas with regard to knowledge of Chinese international students in the United States, this study chose to focus on examining the patterns of mate/spouse selection and dating behaviors of Chinese international students. The researcher adopted qualitative research methods, including two observations (one participant observation and one non-participant observation) and 21 semi-structured qualitative interviews. The research method and sampling procedure will be explained in detail in the next chapter (Chapter 3).

CHAPTER 3 METHOD

The current chapter outlines the methods that were used in this study and covers the following topics: (a) research design, (b) sample, (c) sampling method, (d) data collection, (e) analysis strategy, and (f) validity.

Research Design

Qualitative research methods are especially appropriate when “one is interested in the respondents’ own interpretation and wording with respect to their behavior, their motives, emotions and experiences in the past and the present” (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). Further, qualitative research also facilitates the collection of data in “close proximity to a specific situation or context” (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Chinese international students are an understudied group and the focus of the proposed research. Therefore, use of a qualitative research design has enabled me to examine how Chinese students themselves think about, interpret and understand their spouse/mate selection processes in the context of U.S. society and how western culture influences their opinions and practices with regard to spouse/mate selection and relationships. Through the study, I have sought to better understand mate selection issues among Chinese students and to generate rich and holistic data, with detailed descriptions and illustrations of the life experiences of the participants (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Qualitative research is also a particularly suitable approach when the research project is perceived to be sensitive and private by the participants and the researcher (Heyink & Tymstra, 1993). Spouse/mate selection and especially dating patterns are private and personal subjects that are generally not to be openly discussed in public.

Drawing upon my own Chinese identity, I realize that this topic is most commonly discussed with close friends and family members among Chinese people. Even with family members and close friends, people are still conservative about talking about details of their mate/spouse selection standards and dating behavior, especially details regarding pre-marital intimacy and cohabitation. Thus, qualitative research method has been used to enable me to get closer to the respondents and build up mutual trust and thereby to collect more complete data.

Research Sample and Sampling Method

Setting of the University Campus

In this study, 2 observations and 21 semi-structured qualitative interviews were conducted on a public university located in a college town of a southeastern state in the United States. This is a major, public, comprehensive, land-grant, research university and it is also the oldest and most comprehensive university in its state (from the university website). Both undergraduate and graduate/professional degrees are offered in the university. This university is distinguished by its diversity of academic areas and the student population. According to data provided by the International Center of the university, there are 5,500 international students and 1,000 international visiting scholars hosted by the campus each year.

Chinese International Students on Campus

The data submitted to the Institute of International Education Open Doors Report (2012) shows that the university had 1,536 Chinese international students enrolled in fall 2012. China has become the biggest contributor of international students on this campus, followed by India, South Korea and Taiwan. The majority of Chinese

international students are enrolled in this university for graduate school. Most of them major in science, engineering and business.

Chinese international students on this university campus have formed several organizations to facilitate social networks and bonds. The student organization FACSS (Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars), run by Chinese international students, helps to organize major events within the Chinese community. New arrivals are usually offered help by volunteers---fellow Chinese international students who arrived earlier. The forms of help usually include picking up from the airport, providing temporary accommodations, advising on housing options, providing transportation to local stores, etc. Some students even receive advice in academic fields from their fellow Chinese students who arrived earlier.

The same mother tongue and cultural background bring Chinese international students very close with each other. The accommodation arrangement among Chinese international students also reflects their closeness with each other. They usually choose to share apartments with fellow Chinese students rather than with American students or students from other countries. Most newly arrived students choose to live in apartment complexes with lots of other Chinese residents. There are a handful of apartment complexes known for their large Chinese resident populations in this college town. Chinese students usually form close social networks and friendships with each other not long upon their arrival. The pressures from adjusting to various aspects of the new environment bring them closer to each other. Private dinner parties, BBQs, picnics, and other sorts of social get-togethers are common and popular among Chinese international students. During their get-togethers, their homesickness gets relieved to

some extent by having Chinese food, speaking their own mother tongue with their peers, and discussing shared pressures from school and cultural adjustments.

Chinese international students in this university not only share close ties with each other in real life but also online in cyber spaces. Online chat rooms and discussion forums are common means of communication among this population: students who were admitted each year usually have their own online chatting groups or forums to exchange information on housing options, part-time work opportunities, and even experience of vehicle shopping and registration. Some major academic programs where there are a large number of Chinese international students have their own online forums in which to exchange academic information, including rating of each professor, course options, assignment requirements, review of exams, etc. Larger online networks, such as the email list-serve among Chinese people in this college town, also exist. Anyone Chinese can join the email list-serve for free and send out emails to everyone on the list. Carpool information, advertisements of used furniture for sale, advertising of used vehicles for sale, and information on available housing are commonly exchanged on this list-serve.

Although the Chinese international student population is large (over 1,500), Chinese students are bonded to each other through 'invisible ties': they may have met each other in private dinner parties and get-togethers; they may have mutual contacts and heard of each other; they may have talked with each other online; or they may even just meet somewhere in Chinese grocery stores and restaurants. Such close network bonds among Chinese international students make this population rather hard to reach without inside contacts.

Sample of the Research

The sample for the study was made up of unmarried Chinese students on this university campus. There were two groups included in the current study: the sample for the qualitative interviews and the sample for the observations.

The sample for the qualitative interviews was made up of Chinese international students who were currently enrolled in the university. I created a sample of sufficient numbers of women and men who were not married to ensure the reliability and credibility of the results. All respondents had a “single” marital status at the time of interview. I interviewed 21 respondents in total (11 male and 10 female), who were in one of three different relationship statuses: single/not in any romantic relationship; in a local romantic relationship; in a long distance romantic relationship.

Table 3-1. Quota sampling matrix---gender by relationship statuses (N = 21)

	Single	In a local relationship	In a long distance relationship
Male	5	3	3
Female	4	4	2

The research also included two observations of the Singles' Day speed dating party for Chinese students, organized by FACSS, the Chinese international students organization. The sample for the observations consisted of the Chinese students who attended the two speed dating events on Nov 11th, 2010 and 2011. It is assumed that all the participants who showed up at the singles' speed dating parties were people not involved in romantic relationships or at least not in committed relationships.

Sampling Method

For the interviews, participants were recruited using a combination of quota, snowball sampling, and convenience sampling methods. Although the population of

Chinese international students at the university was large enough to construct a “sampling frame,” it would have been difficult to get a name list from any official department or organizations (Bernard, 2000). Quota sampling was therefore used to identify the “sub-populations of interest” and the proportions of those subpopulations in the final sample. As stated above, the participants were recruited to represent roughly equal numbers in three relationship statuses. Since gender is an influential factor in dating and mate selection behavior suggested by previous research (Schwartz & Scott, 2012), I also took gender into account when sampling to make sure there was enough data from both genders among the three categories.

Snowball sampling is appropriate when attempting to access “difficult-to-find” populations (Bernard, 2000). Convenience sampling is useful for exploratory research when there are no sampling frames available (Bernard, 2000). I adopted convenience sampling methods in the recruitment of research respondents. I posted recruitment emails on the list-serve of subscribers of the FACSS (Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars) list-serve, offering the best way to reach the largest number of Chinese students on campus. I also asked Chinese students that I knew to introduce me to people that they thought might be interested in participating in my research. However, since my research did not offer monetary or material reimbursement (and possibly also because of the relatively personal nature of the research topic), the response rate from the email list-serve was relatively low. To ensure validity and objectivity, I did not recruit people that were very close to me before I interviewed them. I have maintained contact with some of the respondents after the interviews, and they have been helpful in providing suggestions and commentary from their points of view on

my research. These key participants also helped me to get in contact with several other participants so that I could get enough interview participants in a short amount of time. Finally I was able to recruit 21 people in total.

Data Collection

Gubrium and Hostein (1998) have described the interview as a means of contemporary story-telling, where people divulge life accounts in response to interview questions. The goal of this study was to examine the stories and perspectives regarding dating and spouse/mate selection among Chinese international students on this U.S. college campus. Interviewing was used as one of my data collection methods. Semi-structured, in-depth interviews are effective in facilitating the exploration of topics more openly than in a structured interview (Esterberg, 2002). Most importantly, the semi-structured interview format enabled me as the researcher to remain in control of the interview while allowing the participants the flexibility to express their perspectives on the topic in a non-structured manner and elaborate to the greatest possible extent; it facilitated the investigation of leads and topics as they emerged in the course of the interview (Bernard, 2012; Esterberg, 2002).

The interviews were conducted with attention to the convenience of the participants. The interviews are all conducted in Mandarin Chinese as it was more comfortable for the researcher and respondents to communicate. Using the same mother tongue brought us closer so that my participants were more willing to tell me more inside stories of their lives. Interviewing provided a way of generating empirical data about the social world by asking people to talk about their lives. In this respect, interviews are special forms of conversation (Holstein & Gubrium, 1997). In order to get more vivid data, I wanted to make the participants comfortable. Interviewing them at

their office or home where they were familiar helped to ease nervousness and allowed them to chat comfortably. Conducting the interview with them in their first language helped to avoid difficulties in communication and allowed them to talk more comfortably. I interviewed the participants on their own and brought the proper documents from IRB (Institutional Review Board), and I ensured them that their privacy was protected. I asked questions appropriate to their relationship statuses: single, in a local romantic relationship, or in a long distance romantic relationship (see Appendix section for details for the questionnaires). For those people who were single, I asked about their previous dating stories in the U.S. and their plans for finding new dates and mate selection. For those participants who were currently in a relationship, I asked questions about their current relationships and their future plans with their current partners.

Interviewing people gets information about their attitudes and values and what they think they do. What people say they do and what they actually do are not always the same (Schwartz & Scott, 2012). However, when we want to know what people actually do, we can conduct direct observations, watching people and recording their behavior on the spot (Bernard, 2012). Two direct observations were therefore included in the research design -- one participant observation and one non-participant observation. I went to observe the Singles' Day speed dating event, which provided opportunities for Chinese international students to meet their potential dates and was organized by FACSS (Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars). Nov 11th is commonly called Single's Day among Chinese people as the date 11-11 is considered to be most suitable for representing single's day (the numerical date has the

most “1”s, with each “1” representing a single person). I conducted observations on the annual speed dating event among Chinese international students in 2010 and 2011.

As suggested by Bernard (2012), participant observation reduces the problem of reactivity, of people changing their behavior when they know they are being watched or studied. Participant observation also helps to get vivid and inside information through natural hang outs and conversations with participants. So I conducted a participant observation in the 2010 speed dating event organized by FACSS. I signed up for the event online as a ‘female single Chinese international student looking for potential significant other’ and actually had conversations with over 50 male students at the speed dating event. I wrote up detailed observational notes as soon as I arrived home.

After having conducted one participant observation, I noticed that I was only able to talk with male students who were looking for potential dates at the event. However, the behaviors of female students were automatically neglected by me during the observation since I only had limited attention and I had to talk with male students only due to the ‘role’ I was playing at the event. As an ‘observing participant’ (Bernard, 2012), I was only able to record some aspects of the environment around me and was not able to get an overall picture, so I decided to go back to the event the next year conducting a non-participant observation. In the next year, November 2011, I conducted a non-participant observation of the speed dating event organized by FACSS. I joined the group of people who were FACSS members working on organizing the event. I got permission from their group leader and was able to observe the event as well as work ‘under-cover’ as one of the servers at the snack bar. I was able to observe the speed dating activity objectively and even had the chance to chat casually with

some of the participants when they came for a snack or soda. I noted down my observations as detailed as possible when I got home as I did the first time.

Data Analysis Strategy

The interview transcriptions and field notes were analyzed qualitatively by identifying themes as they emerged from the data, a process called coding, which is considered as the “heart and soul of whole-text analysis” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2003). I mainly adopted a modified grounded theory approach when analyzing the data. The grounded theory approach is the method of analysis of data that uses codes to connect data and theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1967). It is especially suitable for analyzing interview transcripts since it helps in identifying any emerging themes and patterns from the conversations.

My first step in analyzing the data was to develop a summary sheet that generalized the main theoretical and methodological themes that emerged during the interview and observation (Bernard, 2012). This procedure helped me to get an overall picture of each interview and observation and helped me to further identify themes and patterns in greater detail. The next step was the identification of a “corpus of texts” and the “units of analysis within the texts”.

I used the coding method suggested by Miles and Huberman (1964) as “partway between a priori and inductive coding” to discover themes and patterns in the transcription and observation notes. Coding started with identifying some general themes derived from the reading of the literature with the addition of more themes and sub-themes as the analysis progressed (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I started with generalizing some main themes: gender differences in mate selection, influence of social network, attitudes towards pre-marital intimacy, influence from parents, etc.

During the coding, as more sub-themes appeared, I paid more attention to how the emerging themes were linked to one another and how these sub-themes linked to the main themes---a process of building conceptual models (Bernard, 2012). While examining the linkages between the sub-themes and main themes, I composed memos as suggested by Bernard (2012): “memo is a widely used method for recording relations among themes....it involves continually writing down your thoughts about what you are reading.”

Once a conceptual model on Chinese international students' spouse/mate selection processes emerged from the data, I searched for negative cases which did not fit into the model and thus suggested new connections that needed to be adjusted and accommodated into the main themes (Bernard, 2012). The results of the data analysis will be reported in detail in the following two chapters.

Validity & Reliability

To ensure validity of the research, I tried my best to rely on proper data collection processes, proper data management, and proper research instruments. As stated above, data were collected through two means: interviews and observations. These two data collection processes complemented each other and helped to minimize any biases of the sample. Through interviews, I collected in-depth data on people's attitudes and experiences. Through observations, I could get insights into how people actually behaved when looking for dates and potential relationships.

Observation notes were composed in Chinese, and all of the interviews were recorded and transcribed in Chinese. The data in the original Chinese language were then analyzed in Chinese using the analysis procedure described above. Using the

same language to collect and analyze the data helped to reduce mistakes and gaps between translations.

Limitation & Reflexivity: Insider Person's Advantage and Disadvantage

As a Chinese international student myself, I enjoyed the convenience of being an 'inside' person and having access to information and social networks that would have been hard to reach by an outsider. However, I sometimes felt the unavoidable insider's bias and limitations. My identity as a member of the group I was studying brought me into the research as I saw and heard stories of spouse/mate selection from Chinese international students that were familiar to me. We have relatively close social networks in this college town in which people are highly connected with each other. The experiences and conversations contributed to my interest of the current study. Being Chinese enabled me to better understand the spouse/mate selection situation of Chinese people. I am familiar with the cultural background regarding marriage and family among Chinese people, including moral values and family values. Holstein and Gubrium (1995) explained that the interviewer's background knowledge of the context within which the interviews are embedded can be a valuable resource for assisting respondents to explore and describe their "circumstances, action and feelings". Since I am familiar with the cultural backgrounds, I was able to probe into some of the sensitive questions in a non-threatening manner and in a culturally appropriate way especially for questions related to the respondents' dating history and attitudes towards sexual behaviors.

Being Chinese also implied that there were shared meanings between my participants and I where we were both aware of the contextual nature of specific references to union formation. Denzin and Lincoln (2003) argue that these common

understandings act like a mnemonic device wherein certain terms convey certain ideas. Knowledge of the Chinese language is also a clear part of the advantages of being an insider as a Chinese student. Sharing the same first language with the participants allowed me to appear to be more familiar and more understanding to them. Being able to conduct interviews in Chinese also helped to avoid the difficulties of communication and nervousness of the participants. However, one potential disadvantages of being an insider is that if mutual understanding is implicitly assumed, my respondents may have felt that they didn't need to explain things to me that were culturally shared or "obvious". I tried to ask and confirm with them more details and encourage them to explain their points by asking questions like: "What do you mean by.....Could you please provide me more specific details?" For example, my respondents used phrases such as 'spend nights together', 'live with each other sometime', 'live off campus together for some nights' to imply 'sex' and other kind of intimacy behaviors. Such phrases are commonly used to imply sex and intimacy by Chinese people. As a Chinese student, I understand their implications but I would confirm with them in order to make sure they were really meant to imply the meanings as I understood them: "What do you mean by spend nights together and live together some time, do you mean sex and intimacy were involved?"

Being Chinese decreased the difficulty in finding enough participants. As I have many personal connections with Chinese people in the university and I was friendly with some leaders of the Chinese students' organization. I managed to recruit some participants through these connections. Also as a Chinese international student, I was able to observe the speed dating events as they are only open to Chinese students.

Being Chinese, however, had one potential disadvantage for my research. Although I had less difficulty finding respondents, recruiting respondents mostly through personal connections might have caused some bias in the sampling. People out of the reach of my social network would not have been included in the sample. As Chinese students in town had a relatively tight and close social network, my respondents might also have worried about their privacy being disclosed due to my Chinese identity. Since I am very likely to share mutual friends with them and I am more likely to attend social events with other Chinese people, they may have worried that I might talk about them and disclose private information. However, I worked hard to build up mutual trust with my respondents with sincerity and academic seriousness and by assuring them that the study was approved and supervised by the Institutional Review Board of the university. I assured all respondents of the ethical conduct of the research, and that I would maintain their anonymity in all the transcriptions and research papers. Most of the respondents seemed to behave in a relaxed way and felt non-threatened during the interviews, but I did have people further questioning me regarding my intentions and confidentiality issues. Although my insider status presented a few challenges, overall, I believe that the research mainly benefitted from the access and cultural knowledge of being an insider.

CHAPTER 4 AMERICAN DREAM OR NIGHTMARE? ---- THE LIFE THEY ARE LIVING

This chapter describes the overall lifestyles of Chinese international students that I am studying. Knowing the lives that Chinese students are living on a U.S., university campus is essential for developing further understandings of their mate selection and dating behaviors. In order to analyze their mate selection and dating behaviors using social exchange theory, the theory of complementary needs, and Kalmijn's (1998) theory of intermarriage and homogamy, we have to be able to consider the situations in which the respondents are placed. The following exploration includes three major themes: social economic well-being of the respondents; psychological well-being and pressures from academic work and assimilation; and. uncertainty with regard to future plans

Where Are They From And What Are They Here For?

All of the respondents in the current research have come from mainland China and are of Chinese nationality. Although mainland China has a great geographical variety with regard to levels of social economic development, all respondents reported that they were from urban areas and above average family backgrounds. Over half of the respondents (14 out of 21) were pursuing a doctoral degree in their academic programs and the rest (7 out of 21) were pursuing master's degrees. For most (20 out of 21), their current university was the first educational institution they had ever attended overseas. Among the 14 doctoral students I interviewed, only one was not fully funded by his program; the rest of the students were funded with teaching or research assistantships in their academic programs. All of the M.A students were self-funded through family support or wages from part-time jobs. For example, Julia, a student from

a large urban area in China, discussed her family's financial support, including their expectations and her own feelings. All interviews were conducted in confidentiality, and the names of interviewees are withheld by mutual agreement, all names appear below and throughout the thesis are aliases.

I don't think our program provides funding to any one, especially to international students. My parents pay for my tuition and my other costs, I feel bad but they told me that they consider it as an investment for my future...It would be easier for my future if I have U.S. degree. I guess even I go back to China, I will be better off than others who only have Chinese degrees. (Julia, single, Non-science/engineering professional student)

International study was perceived by families as an important investment in the future, but it was also connected with feelings of guilt among the students and obligations to parents. Financial support and closeness with parents was also discussed with regard to students' considerations about whether to pursue job opportunities in the U.S. or return to China.

My parents know my plans from the very beginning and they try to support me as much as they can both financially and emotionally...I am not too worried about them if I am going to stay...I will visit them when I can and they can come to visit me too. They still have each other, and their jobs, my dad has his own business... (Joe, in a long distance relationship, engineering major)

Male students in particular expressed a desire to supplement their financial support from parents with their own earnings, and they were concerned about establishing their independence from parents.

Most of my tuition and living expenses come from my parents...I do not have to work for money and my parents advised me not to do that because that may delay my study...But I am about to graduate soon, I have less course work and I am a man. I want to be independent and not taking money from my parents any more....(John, in a long distance relationship, engineering major)

These results confirmed my expectations regarding the characteristics of Chinese international students: they are generally a well-educated group and from families of above average socio-economic backgrounds. Although some research oriented graduate programs in U.S. universities do provide fellowships and other kind of teaching/research assistantships to graduate students, the available funding has decreased since the 2008 recession making it harder for Chinese students who seek to attend graduate school in the States to get funded. Also many U.S. universities have opened greater admission opportunities to self-funded Chinese students as a substitute for the funding shortages they are experiencing; more self-funded Chinese students have been coming to the United States for college and graduate educations. The cost of attending a U.S. institution is very high for most Chinese families, and only relatively wealthy families can afford to send their children to U.S. colleges and graduate schools. In addition, the standard tests (TOEFL and GRE) that students must pass to apply to U.S. universities are also expensive, potentially limiting the applicant pool to students from more affluent families. Students admitted with financial aid and assistantships also have to cover up-front costs of application. In this way, students from rural areas and poor family backgrounds in China are less likely to pursue the opportunity to attend college or graduate school in the U.S., and Chinese international students who have come to the U.S. are usually from stronger education backgrounds and well-off families. Their select social economic and education backgrounds raise important questions about their potential mate-spouse selection and dating behaviors: Are their family opinions more influential to them due to the financial support they had received from their families? Are they adjusting and assimilating better than other foreign populations

in the United States due to their high levels of education? Will they be more open and accepting to western culture and social norms? All these questions will be explored in greater details in later chapters.

How Are They in the U.S.?

From the last section we see that all the participants in the current study came from urban and above average family backgrounds in China. Well-educated before arrival, they are here in the U.S. for more higher education. As part of the general college/graduate student population, they are faced with academic challenges from school, including research, assignments, and exams, as are all other students. As foreigners and newcomers in the U.S. society, they also face a series of difficulties associated with 'getting to know the surroundings' and 'adjusting to everything new'--- difficulties associated with assimilation and acculturation. For most international students, U.S. college campuses and academic programs are unique environments for international students to get first-hand information on U.S. society upon arrival. International students have opportunities to get to know their fellow students from both the U.S. and other countries of similar age. International students are required to take classes, finish assignments and take exams in English rather than their mother tongue. Chinese international students also encounter considerable acculturative stress because of the differences in academic and social norms between Chinese and U.S. cultures (Yeh & Inose, 2003).

As part of the group myself, I experienced the above difficulties and adaptations firsthand. My interest in the situations of other fellow Chinese international students arose from both my personal curiosity and from some themes that emerged from the first few interviews.

Some respondents are too busy to look for dates and relationships...

(Interviewer: Thank you so much for participating...I will be asking you a series of questions regarding to you mate selection and dating behaviors...) About my own story or my opinions only? (Interviewer: Both)...I can tell you what I think but I am literally 'too busy to date' myself...hahaha... (Linda, single, engineering major)

I would love to, but I do not see it happening any time SOON...I have too many things to plan for...my assignments, tests, and my plan after graduation... I don't know...It depends... maybe I am not too used to my program so I am really busy...But I see other people [he meant his Chinese classmates] are like this too. We are in library almost all the time...unless we meet someone in the library...Where do we find dates? (Jeremy, single, engineering major)

Both Linda and Jeremy were engineering students who put most of their attention in their school work and research. For students like them, they were indeed looking forward to new dates and relationships, but their occupied life spared them no time to actively looking for dates nor relationships.

Some relationships that happen accidentally – not looked for, but arose out of interactions, social networks.

My fiancé was very helpful to me, he took care of me when my car had problems, when I was immobile without my car...I was taking the bus but I cannot ride the bus to grocery stores, they are too far away...I wasn't thinking of getting in a relationship with him back then, but he was really helpful during my difficult time and you know how important it can be right? (Interviewer: I sort of understand but can you give me more details about how you felt?) I didn't know anybody better, not to mention I had to find mechanics to fix my car...I didn't know much about cars...I only knew my car was malfunctioning when one day I could not start it at all... (Doris, in a local relationship, science major)

Female students accept the relationships so they can be 'well taken care of' in the new environment when facing unmanageable life difficulties.

He sort of took care of everything for me back then...Helped me finding a good mechanic and helped me bargain with them...I thought it would not be a bad idea to date him afterwards...My parents were happy for me too as

they knew I would be well taken care of...They started worrying less about me after I started dating him...(Doris, in a local relationship, science major)

Since he was really helpful to me and my roommate, we sort of naturally developed friendship and became more friendlier later...One of my other roommate has boyfriend in California, the other one was in a relationship with her ex...they broke up later on...And they were sort of joking to me saying: hey, Diana, if you don't become his girlfriend, he would go look for someone else, and if he find anybody else, he wouldn't be taking us grocery shopping any more...Then we wouldn't be able to reach the Asian grocery store any more...(Diana, in a local relationship, non-science/engineering professional student)

In Doris' and Diana's cases, we can see that the unique migration experience of hers actually pushed them into their current relationship. Facing difficulties of settling down in a new country, Doris and Diana chose to develop a relationship with some one more 'resourceful' and 'helpful'.

Some couples Met through friends...They feel it is very helpful to have people to talk to and provide support. Such psychological need led them into relationships.

(Interviewer: Could you please tell me the characteristics of your girlfriend that attracted you at the first place?) She wasn't talkative when we first met at the friend's house...Everyone was chatting and she was just sitting there listening and smiling... (Interviewer: So she is quiet?) No...She is quite talkative sometime... But she can be a really good listener...I guess that was her first impression on me. (Interviewer: why that is attractive to you? Can you say something more?) Well, I know most man are attracted to outgoing girls...But for me, I need a listener...I had to listen to my boss (his supervisor), my colleagues, my professors everyday...I am sick of it somehow...I want to talk too...But I always end up listening...Sometimes even when I have an opposite opinion...but I gave up my chance of speaking up...I was worried if I could express my idea properly in English...I think you'd understand, right? This kind of situation happens all the time for us...Americans think we are submissive and docile because we always follow their ideas and seldom speak up...But really? If I can talk to them in Chinese, I will have a hell of a lot to say...hahaha (laughing) (Interviewer: I see, so you meant that your girlfriend is a good listener and that's what you were looking for at the time?)...Kind of...But she has other good characters besides that for sure... (Daniel, in a local relationship, science major)

From the above interviews we can see that the lifestyles of Chinese international students influence their mate selection and dating behavior to a great extent: Linda and Jeremy indicated in the interview that they were looking forward to getting into a relationship and finding a romantic partner but that they just hadn't met anyone yet because they were too occupied with research and school work and had no time and opportunity to meet anyone. Jeremy's and Linda's experiences were common among the single participants in my research: they were seriously occupied with getting used to the new environment and adjusting to the new research and learning environments. They generally put dating and mate selection on the bottom of their to-do list. On the other hand, the unique experience of living in a foreign country studying as international students changed many people's mate-selection standards like in Doris and Daniel's cases. Living abroad as a foreigner experiencing difficulties in life and study made people like Doris and Diana feel attracted to people that could help them through life difficulties such as fixing their car and taking them grocery shopping. Their needs for help at the beginning of the migration process and settling into a new living environment led to the development of romantic relationships: Doris needed her fiancé's help with her car while Diana and her roommates need lifts to the grocery store. Migration experience and the difficulties during the process of 'trying to fit into the new society' made Daniel changed his mate selection preference: he indicated that most men would prefer outgoing girls while he just needed a 'good listener' because he was experiencing 'fit in' difficulties in his new learning and researching environment.

Where Are They Heading to?

During the interviews, the majority of the respondents (19 out of 21) indicated that they intended to stay or at least try to stay in the U.S., seeking employment and

immigration after graduation. Although these students indicated that they would make an effort to look for employment opportunities in the U.S. or at least in North America (e.g., U.S. or Canada), all of them expressed worries for their uncertain futures. For James and his fiancé, the prospect of seeking work and settling down in the U.S. was a topic of concern from the beginning of their relationship:

...We [meaning him and his fiancé] definitely want to stay [in the U.S.] after we graduate. We are kind of on the plan for getting a job, settling down, getting our green card applications on the way, and then thinking about having kids...I guess we are on the typical plan of most Chinese students here...We both are used to the life here, it's kind of hard to imagine moving back to China...We made sure with each other we are on the same plan before we get serious and committed...She is going to graduate soon, in half a year and she is going to look for a job...And I will see if I can move to her future location...We know it will be hard for us to stay here and finding jobs but it is not much easier even we decide to go back home, right? Hard work is the only way to get a good life unless if you are born very rich...
(James, in a local relationship, engineering major)

James and other respondents who were not single also mentioned that they had to make sure with their significant others that they were on the same plan before their relationship became more serious, and now they were working on putting forth their plans together.

For Harry, future plans about work involved balancing concerns about his parents in China with his girlfriend's aspirations and work.

I was thinking of going back to China after I graduate for sure because my parents are getting older and they need me nearby, especially my father, he was very sick earlier this year...But my girlfriend is graduating 2 years later than me and if I go back we will have to deal with international distance...Now I can fly to [a distant U.S. city where she lives] to see her whenever I have time off, it costs money and time, but it is still better than international flights...I kind of have to stay and seek employment for her...at least for the two years she will still be in school...and then we will deal from there...(Interviewer: What's your plan for the long run? Have you communicated with her in details about the future for both of you?)...I know she kind of wants to stay...I mean coming to the U.S. for Ph.Ds. was her initial idea...I was about to look for jobs in China to stay close to my

parents...But I applied with her because I want to be with her...
(Interviewer: If she insists on staying here after her graduation, would you be willing to compromise for her again?)...I don't know...I am kind of struggling in my mind too...We haven't made our final decisions yet and I think I will see how it goes after she graduates...I would not call it 'compromise'. I think every couple has similar situations in life like this, we kind of have to work through it together, not one compromises the other...Worst case scenario, I will have to move my parents over here to take care of them and it is not unacceptable...(Harry, in a long distance relationship, science major).

Harry's account, as someone who was also in a relationship, showed how one partner's wish to stay could influence the other's decisions and career plans. Harry did not intend to come to the U.S. for graduate school but was following his girlfriend's path. Although he had a strong wish of returning home and to take care of aging parents, Harry noted that he might have to 'compromise' again for love.

Different from students who are faced with making joint decisions with their significant others, single students have more freedom in choosing their future job locations and career opportunities: they are more likely to go with the flow in their career paths. However they expressed more uncertainty towards their future....

...I am trying to find a job here...I am moving to California for job hunting after I graduate...in 4 months...Hopefully I will find a job there. I have friends and previous classmates working in Silicon Valley there, and I am heading there hoping they can recommend me into their companies...Although, it is easier for me to find a job with my major (electronic engineering), nothing is guaranteed...Even if I find a job, I still have a long way to go...I am not sure I want to file immigration petition to stay here forever or go back to China after I got a few years of work experience in the U.S....(Linda, single, engineering major).

I don't know yet...I am about to graduate this spring (2013 spring) in 4 months...But I am still not sure...I applied for a handful a Ph.D. programs in the States...Mostly in California because if I get in, I can do research as well as doing some internships in local companies...There are more internship opportunities for us (electronic engineering majors) there in California, big cities...But I haven't heard from them (the school he applied) yet...I got offers from two other universities, but they are not in California...I

am still deciding between going to either those two schools or just go look for a job in California...(Interviewer: How about after you get out of school? I mean after you graduate with your Ph.D.?) ...That's so far away...I guess I will want to get a job in the U.S. first and then go from there...I don't want to work for other people my whole life...I want to have my own business eventually...(Wayne, single, engineering major).

Each of these students expressed a desire to stay in the U.S. after graduation yet they were also unsure if things would go as they have planned. Some of them talked about the possibility of going back to China sometime in the future, but overall their decisions to try to stay first had been made.

Earlier generations of Chinese immigrants who came to the U.S. as cheap labor and refugees had to stay as they had paid large amounts of money to the agencies that brought them over; they had no choice but to work in the railways or other kinds of construction to pay off the costs of entry. Also, earlier generations of Chinese immigrants were mostly from poor family backgrounds and came from politically and economically uncertain circumstances (Holland, 2007). Going back to China would have meant going back to a 'worse' life for most Chinese labor workers and refugees, so most of them ended up staying with no other alternatives. Different from earlier generations of Chinese immigrants described by Holland (2007), this current cohort of Chinese students has come from good educational backgrounds and will be graduating with masters' or doctoral degrees soon. With better social economic resources and well-being compared to earlier generations, it is easier for these Chinese students to seek good employment and pursue their 'American Dreams'.

However, their better off backgrounds and resources also provided them with more choices and uncertainties. The choice of going back to China meant being able to stay closer to their families, friends and potentially better or more certain career

prospects. They would be considered 'better-off' than their peers who only had Chinese degrees, and they would not face potential discrimination against immigrants and minorities. Although not the majority, some respondents indicated that they were going back to China right after their graduation. For Mandy, the decision was connected to her fiancé's successful career in China.

I am heading back to China for sure, even not right after graduation but within a short amount of time...I will stay for one or two more years if only I get a super well-paid job upon graduation, like more than 10,000 USD a year...I told my fiancé this too, that I will stay for one or two years if I get such a good job so that I can save a 'large amount' of money for us...hahaha (laugh)...But it is almost impossible...Everyone says it is impossible...Graduates from my lab even our whole department usually get post-doc jobs...Only a few Americans have gotten jobs in industry, but not well paid at all...So I guess I will just go back to China...My fiancé is there, he is in Shanghai working ... in a university...I guess I will follow his route... He graduated ... [several] years ago and he headed back immediately after graduation... He told me he wanted to have a great career but it will never happen here...We are foreigners forever...We can never get away from the 'invisible glass ceiling' and will work for other people forever...postdoc positions forever...We are engaged now and he is definitely not coming back to the U.S. so I guess I will head back, too. (Mandy, in a long distance relationship, science major).

For Jeremy, who was single, the decision to return to China was related to the possibility of staying close family members and confidence of a future successful career with his newly achieved U.S. degree...

...I plan to go back to China after I graduate...Actually, I have already started looking into booking an air ticket...I haven't decided where to look for jobs in China yet but I guess will be in Beijing, Shanghai and big cities like that. I'd love to stay closer to my parents...I am the only child...I guess I am not used to here (the U.S.) still...Everything seems harder for me...And I will get good jobs in China with my degree so I am not too worried about going home...(Jeremy, single, engineering major)

Both Mandy and Jeremy indicated that their decision to head back home was also related to their negative perceptions of life in the U.S. and the fear of potential discrimination they may come across as new immigrants in the U.S.

Besides, I think he is right (her fiancé's 'invisible glass ceiling' theory: immigrants' career paths are limited due to their immigration status)...I am also the kind of people who want great careers...I was pretty active and advocating in China...But I am softer and more tolerant here as I have to...(Mandy, in a long distance relationship, science major).

I don't like here to be honest...I might come back on business trips or for traveling but not for long time residency. I think I will get better job opportunities in China than here... (Jeremy, single, engineering major)

For students like Mandy and Jeremy, the choice of staying in the U.S. was influenced by a desire to be united with families and partners and better career opportunities. Although I only had one case in my sample in which the respondent was in a committed long distance relationship with a partner in China, this respondent's story (Mandy) showed the possible influence of a relationship partner on decision-making about whether to return to China. Mandy told me that although she agreed with her fiancé's 'invisible glass ceiling' ideology, her decision to return home partly came from what she saw as the impossibility for her fiancé to move back to the U.S.: her fiancé clearly expressed his intention of staying in China pursuing more successful career and unwillingness to return to the U.S. to work as 'second class citizens'.

From the stories of Mandy, Harry, and James and many others, we can see that the decision to 'stay' or 'return' may sometimes become a dilemma for couples of Chinese international students. However, for single students like Linda, Jennifer, Wayne and Jeremy, since they have no strings attached from any romantic significant others; they feel they have more flexible options as they follow opportunities. Based on these observations, I became interested in the question of whether the intention to 'stay' or 'return' might be a major theme regarding mate selection standards for Chinese

international students, but there was little discussion of this issue in my interview transcriptions.

Summary

This chapter summarized the lives that Chinese international students are living on this U.S. university campus. For them, coming to the U.S. to pursue an education was a dream and it was the dream that they had worked toward for a long time, preparing for tests, completing their applications, and putting together all of the other travel documents. However, after they had 'realized' this 'American Dream' of studying in the U.S., they came across a series of difficulties in both school and everyday life. The experienced difficulties of living in a foreign country and studying as international students restrained some of them from actively seeking mates or dates even if they really wanted or intended to. Also, their unique experiences as international students shaped some of their mate/spouse selection standards. For some of them, mate selection decisions were influenced by their need for help in the new living and learning environment. After experiencing difficulties and hardships studying and living in the U.S., I was surprised that most of them still wanted to continue their 'American Dream' by trying to stay for employment and immigration after graduation. Of course, most of them expressed their concern over their uncertain future and how such uncertainty would affect their relationships. Further research needs to be conducted on Chinese immigrant couples who have managed to stay and get through the immigration process and how these processes influenced (or were influenced by) their relationships and family considerations.

CHAPTER 5

RACE DOES MATTER: RACIAL ENDOGAMY AS A PRACTICED NORM, AND INTERRACIAL RELATIONSHIPS AS AN UNSPOKEN TABOO

This chapter explores the mate or spouse selection standards of Chinese international students with regard to the race/ethnicity of their potential significant others. The following explorations of race/ethnicity as part of mate selection standards reveals three broad areas that emerged from the in-depth interviews: (a) gender differences in attitudes towards interracial relationships; (b) a lack of acquaintance as one major cause of racial endogamy; and (c) third parties' influence on interracial relationship taboos.

Race/ethnicity has to be taken into account as a fairly important part of mate/spouse selection criteria for Chinese international students within the context of the multi-racial/ethnic society of the U.S. Race/ethnicity is a relatively new and unfamiliar concept for Chinese international students who have newly landed in U.S. society since China is pretty much a homogeneous society: the whole population would be counted as 'Asian' under U.S. racial definitions and the majority of the population is of 'Han' ethnicity. The concept of race has never been a big concern for these students while they were in China. However, they are identified as 'Asian' and 'Minority' in U.S. society upon their arrival, and students report feeling that it seems that they have to start taking a 'side' or 'place' in the American racial system.

Kalmijn's (1998) theoretical framework on intermarriage and homogamy also helps to provide a framework for understanding Chinese international students' racial preferences in mate selection and attitudes towards interracial relationships. As summarized in the literature review, Kalmijn (1998) suggested that mate selection and marriage patterns arise from the interplay between three social forces: the preference of

individuals for certain characteristics in a potential spouse, the influence of the social group to which one belongs, and the constraints of the marriage market in which one is searching for a spouse (Kalmijn, 1991). The research results of the current study reflect and correspond to Kalmijn's theoretical framework and can be used as an example of how the above three social forces affect people's mate selection behaviors and preferences.

Previous demographic research has suggested that racial endogamy is most commonly practiced among Asians in the U.S., especially for Asian immigrants. Compared with other groups, Asian immigrants are most likely to marry immigrant partners of the same race followed by native partners of the same race rather than marry interracially. And for Asian immigrants who do marry interracially, the chances are higher that they are married to Whites rather than other racial minorities (Qian & Lichter, 2001; 2007; 2011). In many ways, as discussed in Chapter 1, Chinese international students have a unique standpoint within the U.S. racial system. To what extent the above demographic findings apply to the population of Chinese international students and what really influences their decisions and preferences on the racial aspects of dating and mate selection are waiting to be explored.

Attitude Towards Interracial Relationships----Gender Matters

The current study found a high level of racial endogamy and nativity endogamy reflected in the preferences and practices of Chinese international students. All of the single respondents (9 out of 9) revealed that they would primarily prefer Chinese people or at least Asians as their future partners or spouses. However, there was an obvious gender difference regarding racial preferences. Males were more likely to admit frankly that they had racial preferences in mate selection, whereas female respondents'

statements of racial preference were less clear and potentially more ambivalent in their own minds.

Most single male respondents (4 out of 5) expressed their preference for a female of Chinese descent or at least Asian race. White and light skin Latina females were considered as alternative options, but these men revealed that they would go for these alternatives only if they happened to meet someone 'special' or 'connected', in their own words 'if it is the fate for them.' However, all the five single males admitted that they felt it would be extremely hard for them to feel 'connected' or 'sparkle' with a non-Chinese or non-Asian woman, so their choices were limited to Chinese/Asian females anyhow. Three of them even admitted frankly that they would certainly not choose to date dark skin minorities. Michael expressed doubts that he could connect with a non-Chinese woman.

...I would definitely want someone Chinese or at least American born Chinese, some sort of Chinese, I guess...I usually hang out with Chinese and I think it would be easier for me to develop 'feelings' for Chinese women. I haven't felt 'connected' to women of other race/ethnicity so far and I don't think I will ever feel connected to them in the future either. However, I would not mind hanging out with girls of other races or go on dates with them to see if we can develop any kind of 'romantic connections' but it is very unlikely to work out...(Michael, single, engineering major).

Leo went a bit further in noting a sense of living in different worlds from women of other racial groups. He admitted to finding White and Latina women physically attractive, but felt that such women were too different from him to allow for common understandings, tastes, or experiences.

...Well, of course I would primarily consider Chinese girls. I don't discriminate people of other races; however, I do feel we don't belong to the same world. Although I admit that White girls and Latino girls are hot and attractive...Well, yes, they are hot and sexy... But I don't think I can handle such girls. I don't think they would feel attracted by me either...If it happens,

then it proves that I am hot and attractive to them...I'd be happy about it...ha ha (laughing)...But no such thing has ever happened yet. And I don't see it happening any time in the future...It would be definitely more practical to date Chinese girls. We would have so much in common: language, experience, even preference for foods...I can eat western food once a while but definitely not every day and I cannot expect a western girl to cook Chinese food for me of course...(Leo, single, engineering major).

Having common interests and experiences was an important theme, and this was assumed to be connected with having a common ethnic and racial background.

I think I'd go for Chinese girl or at least American born Chinese girls...I think Chinese girl who is like me, you know, come here for graduate school and then decide to stay to find a job would be ideal. Well, I mean I think I would have a lot in common with them and have will have common topic to have conversations about...I cannot imagine having no common topics to talk about with someone who is your girlfriend or wife...I would not mind dating other races of course as long as we have something in common to talk about. I am not a racist of course. However, I would definitely NOT date black girls or Indian girls...Well, dark skin Latinos can be considered but I would choose not to if I can. (Interviewer: Are there any special reasons why you would not want to date dark skinned girls? Do you just dislike dark skinned people in general or there are any special reasons?)...Well, as I said I am not a racist. I have Indian classmates and it is difficult for me to understand their accent and I don't think I would feel attracted to any Indian looking people. As for black people, I think they are ok but I don't think I would feel attracted to them either. To me, they are just from a different world from mine... (Wayne, single, engineering major)

All of the four female respondents suggested that they would not typically 'discriminate' against males of other races when making mate selection decisions and they would like to date people of other races although they would prefer someone Chinese or at least Asian to be their future partner or spouse. Interestingly, contrary to their 'non-discrimination' statements, they also expressed their concerns with regard to dating dark-skin minorities. Other than personal preference and the worry about 'not having common language and cultural background', female respondents expressed

more concerns and worries about societal opinions and parents' expectations and acceptance towards interracial relationships.

...I think I am open to interracial relationship or at least I am not against it. I don't mind dating Whites, Blacks or Latinos as long as I like them. I don't mind their skin color as long as they are nice people and are nice to me. I think I might be most likely to date White beside Asian or Chinese because a lot of Asian girls date Whites and it is not a big deal...(Interviewer: What about other races?) I won't typically choose to date Blacks or Latinos, but I am wondering if I would feel attracted to them. And I am not sure I would have anything in common with them...As I said, I would date them as long as I like them but I am not sure if I would have such emotional connection with them... Also, I don't think my parents would be accepting of Blacks or Latinos...In China, they would look down upon girls who date or marry Blacks, but some Chinese girls do marry Whites and it would not be a big deal if you marry White, you know.... They all think Asian-White babies are cute and beautiful, but they always make bad jokes about Asian-Black babies... (Jennifer, single, engineering major)

... (Interviewer: Do you have any racial preference when choosing future dates or boyfriends?) No, I don't think so. (Interviewer: So you are open to date men of any race?) Well, maybe not ANY race. I think I might be more attracted to Chinese guys just because I know Chinese guys better. I think White guys are acceptable as long as they have a stable job and they make enough income to be independent. Latinos are fine but I really do not know any Latinos in person so I am not sure if I will even get in contact with any Latinos. I think I would say NOT Blacks if you are really interested what race I won't date. I just cannot accept their look, I don't feel attracted to them at all and I don't think my parents would be happy to see me marrying Black not to mention when I am imagining the look of our future kids...(Linda, single, engineering major)

For both Jennifer and Linda, opinions about interracial dating were expressed in terms of both personal preferences and attractiveness as well likely responses from family and others. Their comments also reflected basic assumptions and stereotypes, with White men assumed to be acceptable if they were financially stable, whereas men from racial minority groups were regarded as more different and less acceptable as potential dates or partners.

The current research results correspond to previous demographic research that has reported that Asians and Asian immigrants were more likely to marry within their race and that any interracial marriage was more likely to happen with Whites rather than other minorities (Qian & Lichter, 2001; 2007; 2011). From what we can see above, male students were more likely to express concerns about with personal preferences while female Chinese international students were more likely to note the influenced of their social group (Chinese society), as suggested by Kalmijn (1998).

**“It’s Not That I Don’t Like Them...It’s Just That I Don’t Know About Them...”----
Lack of Acquaintance as One Major Cause of Racial Endogamy**

As results suggested above, all single respondents revealed that they felt closer to other Chinese people and were more likely to date Chinese or at least Asians. The researcher found that the lack of acquaintance with other racial groups may be a major contributor to the taboo of interracial dating. All of the respondents (21 out of 21) admitted that their major social network was within the Chinese community and that the majority of their friends and acquaintances were Chinese. Some of them even worked in research labs that were run by Chinese supervisors, and all of their colleagues were Chinese graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. These people noted that they had very few opportunities to communicate or hang out with people other than Chinese, not to mention getting to know people of a variety of racial/ethnic backgrounds.

...I hang out mostly with Chinese international students like me. We have potluck dinners, play basketball, football; sometimes we travel together if there is somewhere we all want to go. It is not that I do not like to hang out with Americans but I don’t think I like their way of hanging out...They typically go to night bars to get drinks...And I don’t know what to talk with them...I mean it is not a language barrier, I speak English well enough to go to school here but I just don’t know what they are talking about...Hanging out and traveling with Chinese is so much simpler, no language nor cultural

problems. We typically bring Chinese food if we have potluck dinners play 'San Guo Sha' (A popular Chinese role play card game) after dinner and complain about our classes, assignments and difficulties we come across in research...(Ryan, Single, science major)

The supportive social network of other Chinese international students provided a comfortable context for socializing, but also resulted in social segregation of these students, thus limiting opportunities for them to get acquainted with their non-Chinese peers.

There are American people in my lab and in my classes but I don't ever hang out with them. We are colleagues but may be not friends...Well, we are friendly to each other and we have conversations more or less, mostly regarding our research projects or during lab meetings...But we are just not the kind of friends that would hang out with each other. (Interviewer: What are the races/ethnicities of your American colleagues? Are there other international students from other countries?) All my American colleagues are White. There is a girl from Thailand but she told us she came to the U.S. with her parents when she was very young, so she is not an international student. All the other people in my lab are Chinese, our supervisor is Chinese, too. I think he typically hires Chinese because it is easier for him to communicate with us too... (Charles, in a long distance relationship, science and engineering major)

...I would date non-Chinese if I knew any of them better and if I like them...But I didn't have much close contacts with any of them...I know some Whites and Indian guys through classes and we say hi to each other if we see each other but nothing further than that. I don't think I can handle dating White guys or guys of any other races... My boyfriend was senior than me in my department and I sometimes asked him for help of all kinds and he was really helpful and resourceful, so naturally we became boyfriend and girlfriend... (Mandy, in a long distance relationship with a Chinese man, science major)

...It's not that I opt out regarding other guys (non-Chinese), but I just don't know many western guys. I dated one White guy last year for a couple of times...I mean we hung out, just two of us. He was from my department and we were both single at the time. That was my only experience of dating non-Chinese. I only know a few Americans; I mean 'know' as being familiar with. Only the guy that I dated was a single man of my age so I guess I sort of wanted to see if we would work out and if it would work out for me to be with American guys...But that was it, we did not work out and I haven't been asked out by other western guys and I haven't met any American

guys I feel like asking out ... If I do meet one I would ask him out...I am busy with my research and I started teaching a year ago. I feel I am occupied every day and I have no time to hang out with Americans. If I have time for hanging out, I'd hang out with Chinese. It's just easier and I don't have to feel uncomfortable and complicated. (Jane, single, non-science/engineering professional student)

The above examples reveal that Chinese international students generally opted out of any interracial relationships in their mate selection choices due to both their personal preferences for Chinese partners and their lack of acquaintance with people of other races/ethnicities/nationalities. For most Chinese international students, interracial dating and relationships were not an option for them because they did not know many non-Chinese people in the marriage market. Some respondents mentioned that they prefer Asians in mate selection process which indicate that they would be willing to accept people of other pan-Asian groups: Japanese, Koreans, Vietnamese, and the etc. as their potential mates, but the fact that they are only socializing with their same nationality peers decide that the probability of them choosing mates from other nationality groups is very small. Their preference towards Asians actually means the 'preference towards Chinese only' in reality.

The above result can be interpreted within the framework of assimilation theory proposed by Gordon (1964) and Alba and Nee (1999), as well as Kalmijn (1998)'s theory of intermarriage and homogamy. Intermarriage has been viewed as the final step of assimilation (Gordon, 1964; Alba & Nee, 1999). The commonly practiced racial endogamy among Chinese international students can be viewed as a reflection of their levels of assimilation in the U.S. society. As most Chinese international students choose to socialize and maintain their social networks within the Chinese community and isolate themselves from other racial/ethnicity groups in U.S. society, the low likelihood of them

dating or marrying interracially can be expected. Kalmijn (1998) suggested that endogamy and homogamy are not only governed by individual and group level factors but also by structural arrangements. The chances of marrying endogamously are higher the more often one meets people within the group and the more often one interacts with group members on a day-to-day basis. Although physically in place on a U.S. university campus, most of the Chinese international students on this U.S. university campus limited their social networks and contacts with other Chinese international students and therefore had limited acquaintance with non-Chinese and American students. Thus, their marriage market was limited within the Chinese community. In this way, their practice of racial endogamy resulted from both their personal preference towards same race partners and the limitation of available candidates of other races/ethnicities.

“What They Say....”----Third Parties’ Influence Interracial Relationship Taboos

As my research went on, I heard almost all of my respondents express their preference for finding a partner of Chinese descent or at least of Asian race. At the beginning, all of the non-single participants introduced to me during snowball sampling were in relationships with Chinese. They either had Chinese partners with them in town or were in a long distance relationships with someone who was Chinese. I heard participants who were single telling me their preference towards Chinese people as future partners as well as their concerns about interracial relationships. That raised my curiosity to explore the real life experiences of Chinese international students who were currently in interracial relationships. Their side of the story might either support or contradict the themes that already emerged. I then went on asking my key participants to introduce me to people that they knew who were dating non-Chinese. Two female Chinese students were introduced to me who were both dating White men. Their stories

corresponded to the previous emerging themes and added insights from their different set of experiences.

The first female respondent who was willing to participate in my research was Wendy; I have met her at a mutual friend's dinner party. We had some casual chats and I remember other people telling me that her boyfriend is White. Although not knowing her well, I still tried to contact her through online social network among RenRen (People & People, a network like Facebook for Chinese young adults). She was very easygoing and accepted my invitation to be my participant.

Wendy expressed her initial reason to date her current White boyfriend: no one Chinese was interested in her because of her liberal, untraditional personal character:

My boyfriend is American... I mean White if you are specially asking me about his race...I did prefer to find a Chinese boyfriend before I started dating him. But unfortunately, it seemed that none of the Chinese boys around me was interested in me. I am too carefree and non-submissive I guess...There were some men after me but none of them were Chinese...So I guess I had to accept the fact (Wendy, in a local relationship, science major).

Mandy's met his boyfriend online instead of through everyday traditional face to face interaction which corresponds to the theme that Chinese students do not socialize with people of different races, rather they would stay close and connected to their Chinese peers...

I met my boyfriend through Facebook. We had a mutual friend, an American colleague of mine. I was alone here at... Christmas and I updated my status asking if anyone wanted to hang out and he responded. We started to hang out and he asked me to be his girlfriend after a couple of times... (Wendy, in a local relationship, science major)

Mandy tried to hide her interracial relationship from her Chinese social network and family as a strategy for gradual and selective disclosure until her relationship became more serious and committed:

Only a few people knew about our relationship at the beginning, I tried my best to stay low key. Only my really close friends knew. I tried to keep our relationship unknown for most Chinese friends until we were committed to each other....I didn't want other people to know about him, not even my parents. I told my parents later but I only said that 'There is this person and we are kind of friendly to each other...' not in any details. I don't want my parents to be excited or worried because it may not work out. My parents came over to the U.S. last year and kind of met him but only for a dinner; again I didn't want them to expect anything further out of our relationship yet...

Mandy feels the invisible threat and potential negative judgments that she might get from her Chinese peers so she resists by hiding her relationships to minimize possible negative reactions. She felt such social pressure only from her Chinese peers, yet she felt freer revealing her interracial relationship to Americans.

I feel I am kind of two faced between my Facebook and RenRen profile (an equivalent of Facebook for Chinese people). We updated our relationship status on Facebook and sometimes we post our pictures on our Facebook profiles. People could tell who I am in a relationship with from my Facebook but the majority of my Facebook friends are Americans and I sort of feel freer. However, I haven't uploaded any pictures of us or revealed I am in a relationship with a White man on RenRen where the majority of people I am friends with are Chinese. I don't want to hear their judgment...I know some extreme Chinese people hate Chinese women who date White or any non-Asian. I know about those hateful comments and I don't mind them cursing me but he (her boyfriend) is innocent, I don't want people to comment negatively about him... If it was only me, I don't care about what they say, but I have family members in China who are my RenRen friends. They would see the negative comments and will worry about me...My boyfriend is going back to China with me to meet my parents again and the rest of my family. Not a lot of people know about our trip and I am not sure how it will go...You know us being together in China is different from being here. I am not sure if I am ready for people's reaction in China yet... (Wendy, in a local relationship, science major)

As a female Chinese international student, Wendy ended up dating interracially because she experienced the shortage of available dates from the marriage market (Kalmijn, 1998): she indicated that no Chinese male students were interested in her because of her 'westernized' and 'liberal' personal character. Her decision to date interracially was not totally out of her personal preference: she had intended to date Chinese but no dates were available for her. Although she did not typically want to date interracially, she would still feel it necessary to keep her relationship hidden to avoid negative comments and reactions from her Chinese peers. She worried that her Chinese friends still would judge her and gossip. However, the fact that Wendy felt freer on her American social network and with her American friends indicated that she felt more comfortable accepting interracial relationship among Americans under the multi-racial background of this country. Wendy felt that dating or even marrying interracially was not that much a 'significant incident' for American people who are socialized into a diverse society. She felt that she could frankly reveal her relationship with her different race boyfriend among Americans since she was now situated in U.S. society, but at the same time she felt the tension with her Chinese identity, sensing guilt and shame to hide her relationship to avoid group sanction from her Chinese peers. Although they are engaged and are planning a civil marriage ceremony in the U.S., Wendy is reluctant to reveal this to her peers and plans to have a separate wedding celebration later with family in China.

Like Wendy, Eva did not meet her boyfriend of a different race through usual social settings; but through engaging in western religious activities:

I am grateful that Church brought us together and it is really important that we have the same religious belief. Otherwise I don't know how we can get through our relationship... (Eva, in a local relationship, science major)

Eva was also worried about being portrayed negatively among her peers. She expressed concern that her peers might attempt to discredit the legitimacy of the relationship – by labeling it as not 'real', and inferring a motivation related to obtaining a green card. As a result, Eva has had to pretend that she is not so intimate with her fiancé.

I don't think many people understand us. All they see is a Chinese girl dating a White American...And they were saying that it would be easier for me to get green card and citizenship...They were saying it in an envious as well as jealous way...They sometimes ask me when I am getting married and when I will get my green card...That's why sometimes I had to pretend I was not very close to my fiancé...I am different from the girls who are marrying Americans for a green card. I have good education and we met in Church...I am not the kind of girls that people hate and I plan on being with my fiancé for the rest of my life...I am not using him...(Eva, in a local relationship, science major)

Kalmijn (1998) suggested that group sanctions may restrain people from marrying exogamously. Kalmin (1998) identified three most important examples of parties that sanction intermarriage: the family, the church, and the state. However, the narratives from the two female Chinese students who were in interracial relationships reflected invisible third parties' influence on interracial relationship: rumors and hateful comments from a more generalized Chinese society of acquaintances and peers. Neither Wendy nor Eva identified the person or persons who commented negatively but they all expressed the idea that they knew how people would comment and how people would think about them.

The hateful comments about Chinese girls who date non-Asians mentioned by Wendy and Eva have existed for a long time. No research has been done regarding these negative comments but they exist on the common online social networks among Chinese immigrants and international students. Negative comments were initially focused on Asian girls who wanted to marry westerners to get residency and citizenship in more developed western countries. Their marriages were regarded as not out of love but based on exchange: an exchange of sex and opportunity to move to western countries.

Wendy and Eva both regarded themselves as international students who have migrated to the U.S. for educational attainment and their own professional aspirations; they expressed feeling troubled and hurt by negative comments about interracial marriages based on exchange and motivations regarding foreign residency. Yet their choices with regard to dating non-Chinese or non-Asian men were still interpreted within the cultural framework of the stereotypical exchange because they had the potential chance of getting a green card and citizenship sooner than their peers who chose to date Chinese men. These hateful comments were spread through the internet, online forums among Chinese people in the U.S., and of course through word-of-mouth. Although neither Wendy nor Eva had come across such hateful comments regarding their own relationships, they both responded to the expectation of such pressures and sanctions: Wendy tried her best to stay low key to avoid such comments and Eva understood the implications of people asking her about her immigration status so she tried to hide the nature of her relationship with her fiancé.

Although rumors and hateful comments as group sanctions were not carried out by formal parties or organizations, they acted as invisible group sanctions that played an important role in discouraging racial exogamy and influencing Chinese students' mate selection choices in the U.S. And if we look back at the interview with Jennifer, such concerns were evident with regard to expected social attitudes about different kinds of interracial relationships:

...In China, they would look down upon girls who date or marry Blacks but some Chinese girls do marry Whites and it would not be a big deal if you marry White, you know.... They all think Asian-White babies are cute and beautiful, but they always make bad jokes about Asian-Black babies... (Jennifer, single, engineering major)

We can see how rumors and hateful comments influence dating behaviors of Chinese students who are in interracial relationships as well as pressure single Chinese students to avoid dating certain races.

Summary

Racial endogamy is what the majority of Chinese international students choose and prefer to practice even though they are now located in the multi-racial society of the United States. Although both male and female respondents expressed their preferences for racial endogamy, their preferences reflect different factors: personal preferences were the major factor that influenced male respondents' mate selection choices; female respondents seemed to be more open and accepting of interracial relationships, and their preferences for same-race partners were expressed mainly around concerns about societal opinions and their parents. Most Chinese international students had to 'prefer' Chinese as future partners and spouses because they did not have many acquaintances from other racial/ethnic groups. Rumors and hateful comments on interracial marriages also shaped the behaviors of Chinese students who were currently

in interracial relationships (and awareness of such pressures probably influenced the behavior of single students more generally). The current research results discussed in this chapter correspond mostly to Kalmin's (1998) theoretical framework of intermarriage and homogamy. However, themes such as gender differences in the attitudes towards interracial relationships and the negative influence of rumors and hateful comments in restraining interracial dating and relationships provide important details that build on the 'structural bones' of Kalmin's (1998) theory.

CHAPTER 6 DANCING CAREFULLY IN BOTH CHINESE AND AMERICAN NORMS: SEGMENTED ASSIMILATION IN DATING AND MATE SELECTION BEHAVIORS

This chapter presents the research results on the assimilation of Chinese international students regarding their dating and spouse selection behaviors. The presentation is framed by three basic themes: (a) the role played by the close and exclusive network and community among Chinese students with regard to dating and selecting potential mates; and (b) the 'PARTIAL' adoption of American norms in dating with regard to mate selection standards, perceptions of romantic relationships, and acceptance and practice of pre-marital intimacy.

The Important Third Parties

As I have mentioned in previous chapters, Chinese international students maintain a very closed and exclusive social network and community on the U.S. university campus where the research was conducted. Chinese students usually limited their social networks and friendships within the Chinese community. Most Chinese students socialized and communicated with Chinese people only, although they were situated in a foreign country surrounded by people of different cultural and social backgrounds. Besides their personal preferences, such 'closeness' among Chinese students had the effect of limiting their options for potential dates/partners within the Chinese community (Chapter 5). In this section, I discuss the role played by this close, exclusive network among Chinese students with regard to dating and selecting a potential mate. On the one hand, this social network provided support and opportunities for Chinese international students to seek dates and partners. However, on the other hand, it functioned to reinforce Chinese traditional social and cultural values within the Chinese international student community.

FACSS

FACSS (Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars), a student organization run by Chinese international students, helped to organize major events within the Chinese community. Among the activities it organized, two major events provided important opportunities for Chinese students to seek dates: the “airport pick up” and the “Single’s day” speed dating event.

The “airport pick-up”

At the beginning of every fall semester, FACSS organized volunteer activities to help Chinese students who had just arrived in town to settle down and get used to their new living environment. Every summer, the organizers of FACSS sent out ‘call for volunteer’ recruitments through their mail-list which reached every Chinese student on the mail-list.

Chinese students who were willing to help and had means of transportation, which typically meant they owned a car, would sign up to become a volunteer to help new students in settling down. It was implied and encouraged that single senior male students were to actively help new students, especially new female students, to settle down so that they would get opportunities to ‘help’ but also ‘get to know’ more female students. And of course, they were allowed and encouraged to develop romantic relationships with young female students who had just arrived.

Diana, a newly arrived non-science professional student told me about her story of how she met her current boyfriend. With the intention of looking to meet ‘new girls’ who newly arrived in town, both her boyfriend and her boyfriend’s roommate had signed up to be volunteers to help in picking up newly arrived students from the airport

and help them in settling down. However, her boyfriend's roommate, who was the original volunteer assigned to help Diana and her roommates, started a relationship with another female new student he had helped. As soon as the male student found a girlfriend among the new students, he stopped helping Diana and her roommates. Diana's boyfriend, who didn't have a girlfriend back then, was introduced to them to 'help' as well to 'get to know' them.

Diana got to know her boyfriend indirectly through the 'airport pick' volunteering:

...He (her boyfriend) was the person who helped me to get around when I first got here. He took us, me and my two other roommates to grocery shopping many times... (Interviewer: Oh, so he was the person who was assigned as a volunteer to help you?) Not initially, another senior male student picked us up from the airport and settled us down at a temporary place but later on we were neglected... (Interviewer: why? What happened?) He [the senior male student who picked them up] got a girlfriend...He helped to pick up multiple girls from the airport including us...but one of the girls became his girlfriend...So he started to help his girlfriend and her roommates frequently, so we had no one to help us...(Diana, in a local relationship, non-science/engineering major)

The original volunteer stopped helping Diana and her roommates immediately after he found a girlfriend, his behavior proved that his true intention of 'helping new students' was motivated by a desire to 'look for a girlfriend among the new girls'. As soon as his true intention was achieved, he stopped his 'volunteering' and introduced his roommate to 'help' Diana, offering his roommate the opportunity to find a girlfriend among the new girls...

...But, he [the student who picked her up from airport] asked his friend who is my boyfriend now to help us out...And he (her boyfriend) was single by the time, so of course he was willing to help...(Diana, in a local relationship, non-science professional student)

In most male students' minds, volunteering to pick up new students from the airport is associated with the important opportunity to look for girlfriends. We can see

how the 'airport pick up' organized by FACSS has significant meanings in mate selection among Chinese male students...

(Interviewer: So as you mentioned you are still single, are you looking into getting a girlfriend sometime soon? Are you actively looking for a girlfriend?)...Maybe, it is not easy as you said...I do want a girlfriend, well, I mean, who doesn't?...But I missed the opportunity to help pick up new students [from the airport] this summer because I hadn't got a car back then. I may have to 'pick up' new students next year... ... (Jeremy, single, engineering major)

However, the implication for airport pick-up is gendered. It seems that only men are expected to do this. Women can be the recipients of this attention but are not supposed to be the helpers:

(Interviewer: So as you mentioned you are still single, are you looking into getting a boyfriend sometime soon? Are you actively looking for a boyfriend?)...I don't know...It's not easy for us girls, right?...At least those men can go helping to pick up new students [from the airport], but we cannot, I mean I wouldn't...(Interviewer: Why is that? Can you tell me more details?) Well, it would be embarrassing; people will think I am desperate, right? ...(Jennifer, single, engineering major)

And there seem to be some rituals to the interaction – initial pick-up, further communication, and assistance. Male students help new female students with the expectation and intention of developing romantic relationships with them; in return, gratitude from female students who accepted help is expected. Thus, in some female students' minds, such 'help' equals exchange, and possibly desperation for a girlfriend on the part of the man. Some female students viewed it as "pitiful" and were highly critical of the practice.

(Interviewer: Could you please tell me the characteristics of your boyfriend that attracted you at the first place?) He is not like the others, the pitiful ones...The ones who help new students just to find dates and girlfriends...He was very noble...I didn't like the ones who exchange help for emotion and love...So I went to him asking for help myself...(Interviewer: Can you be more specific what kind of help did you ask for? For example, was that help in academic area?) Both academic

help and non-academic help. I asked him questions about registration for classes and about the experiment I was working on...Oh, and I asked him to take me to grocery store a couple of times... ..(Mandy, in a long distance relationship with her fiancé in China, science major).

From what we can see from the interview transcriptions, 'picking up new students from the airport' was considered as a very important opportunity for senior male students to meet potential dates and partners. In some cases, this initial encounter brought single male and female students together and provided opportunities for male students to 'help' the newly arrived female students, with the hope of beginning a relationship.

However, as we can see from the comparison between Jeremy's and Jennifer's attitudes, male students were more likely to take the initiative, while female students were expected to be passive in this activity. The recruitment of volunteers was not gender limited: both male and female volunteers were welcomed. However, male students were more likely to take the opportunity and view it as a valuable opportunity to seek girlfriends, while some female students would viewed it negatively as a pitiful 'exchange'.

The "singles" day speed dating

FACSS (Friendship Association of Chinese Students and Scholars) also organized another very important event to help Chinese students to find dates and partners. Every year FACSS organized one speed dating event for single Chinese students, and it always happened on November 11th. This day is commonly called Single's Day among Chinese people as the date 11-11 is considered to be most suitable for representing singles' day (the number has the most "1"s, with each "1" representing a single person). This date is therefore considered to be an auspicious day

for seeking potential dates or mates. I conducted a participant observation at this event in 2010 by signing up for the event online, and I conducted a non-participant observation in the following year, 2011, by joining and assisting the group of organizers. Results from analyzing my observation notes provided more insights into how such an event was viewed by the students.

Gender norms that men should take the initiative and be assertive while female should be submissive and passive can be seen from the way the event was organized and set up:

We as girls were seated on one side of the table, and there is a seat across the table, it is for our speed dates. We had 2 minutes to talk to the other person. There were more male students than females, so some male students had times when they have no one to talk to and they had to wait for their turns. The place was decorated pretty romantic, there were candles lighted up in the room and chocolate placed on the tables that we can eat. I could tell most guys that I talked to were pretty relaxed but a few of them were really nervous....(Notes from 2010 participation observation)

Interactive activities were designed following gender norms. Female students who tried to break the gender norms encountered negative reaction from their peers.

All the interacting games and activities needed participation by pairs of two. The host and organizers always encourage male students to invite female students to participate together. And usually, guys would do that. I saw a lot of them inviting girls to participate with them. However, in one activity, they were short for participants, a girl with glasses suddenly turn around and invited the guy beside her and went ahead and joined the game. Everybody was shocked and then started scoffing. The guy who was grabbed immediately turned really red. "Oh, my god, she just grabbed him like this...on his shirt..." Julie who was part of the organizer group mocked how the girl invited the boy... 'She must be desperate, I saw her trying to flirt with another guy earlier...' Comments on the girl started among Julie and other organizers who were working in the snack bar... (Notes from 2011 non-participation observation)

Many male Chinese students seemed to attend this event with the true intention of looking for serious relationships...

...This guy, I will call him Robert, came to me and got seated. He was really nervous and quiet. I could tell he is much older than me and really serious. I asked him why he is here participating in the speed dating. He told me he is 33 already and he needs a wife. A WIFE...Obviously he was there looking for long term committed relationship there and a marriage. He asked me if I like the environment around and if I like the speed dating event. I told him I think the place was decorated well... "It is too dark here, and it (the darkness) made me nervous...." The place was lighted by candles placed on the tables...Robert also told me that he did not want to come initially because he was 'not used to speed dating' and such style is 'too young for his age'. But one of his friends really encouraged him to come and signed up for him. "He told me I would not be able to meet girls especially this 'A LOT' of girls otherwise" ...(Notes from participation observation)

All the participants seemed actively involved in the speed dating activities and engaged in the process of getting to know each other briefly.

After they finished talking to each other intensively, all of them appeared to be really thirsty and they all rushed over to the bar for water and beverages. But as soon as the interaction and game section started, they left the bar to participate in the games.

However, some female students could not find any men who fit into the age range for ideal spouse. They seemed to be still following traditional gendered norms of mate selection: women are expected to date and marry men who are older than themselves:

"No, it (the speed dating) is useless" one of them answered, I will name her Lillian. "Why would you say so? Anything I can help?" I asked her friendly. "All the boys are younger than me...I don't think they'd be interested in old woman like me...""Is it really important for you to find someone older than you?" I tried to move the topic to get more information about her. "Yes, it is. I wouldn't want a younger man, at least not this young, I am 28, and the boys I talked to are 24 or 25 maximum..." (Notes from 2011 non-participation observation)

These 'speed dating' events helped to provide opportunities for single Chinese international students to meet and interact with a large number of singles from the

opposite sex in a short amount of time. For people like Robert, it was a great opportunity to get to know other single Chinese students outside his daily social network and potentially develop a romantic relationship. FACSS as an agency and important third party was playing an active role in assisting single Chinese students to meet their potential significant others.

However, I also found out that such arranging activities organized by the Chinese community also served to reinforce traditional eastern gender norms. As we can see from the notes above, single females were placed in the situation and activities submissively. Female participants were asked to be seated still while male participants were allowed to move around and talk to different females. Interacting games and activities were designed to have male participants inviting female participants instead of the opposite. Any female who tried to break the 'submissive' norm was judged and mocked. For single female students like Lillian, the traditional norm that 'a woman cannot date a younger man' was reinforced and reflected her own practices during the speed dating: she gave up actively looking for dates at the events and stopped interacting with other male participants.

The Important 'They'

Besides official and formal organizations like FACSS, informal, unorganized groups of acquaintances, friends, or colleagues and social networks also played essential roles in Chinese students' mate selection and dating behaviors. During my interviews with participants, I noticed that almost during every interview, there were sentences like 'they say that...' 'I heard they say...' "They told me that...". In some interviews, I tried to ask my participants to identify who 'they' were or at least give me more details about where they heard these comments and opinions. Most of them were

not able to identify who exactly passed these comments and opinions onto them or they just gave me a vague answer saying comments are passed around by a group of people---a vague social network among them and their Chinese friends.

The earlier examples of how Wendy and Eva were worried and upset by rumors and hateful comments about interracial relationships reflected this generalized sense of a “they” with strong, critical opinions. Both Wendy and Eva reported having to hide their relationships or pretend to be NOT so close with their intimate partner in order to pass through the ‘invisible’ judgments from ‘them’---their Chinese peers.

I know some extreme Chinese people hate Chinese women who date White or any non-Asian. I know about those hateful comments and I don't mind them cursing me but he (her boyfriend) is innocent, I don't want people comment negatively on him... If it was only me, I don't care about what they say, but I have family members in China are my RenRen friends. They would see the negative comments and will worry about me.... Not a lot of people know about our trip and I am not sure how it will go...You know us being together in China is different from being here. I am not sure if I am ready for people's reaction in China yet... (Wendy, in a local relationship, science major)

Thus, Wendy cited concerns about generalized negative comments from her broader online social network, both in the U.S. and China, though she described being more candid about her relationship with her family (who was accepting of her interracial relationship). Eva, on the other hand, confronted comments and insinuations about women using relationships to get a green card.

And they were saying that it would be easier for me to get green card and citizenship...They were saying it in an envious as well as jealous way...They sometimes ask me when I am getting married and when I will get my green card...That's why sometimes I had to pretend I was not very close to my fiancé...I am different from the girls who are marrying Americans for green card. I have good education and we met in Church...I am not the kind of girls people hate and I plan on being with my fiancé for the rest of my life...I am not using him...(Eva, 29, in a local relationship, science major)

According to Wendy and Eva, neither had experienced harassment, discrimination, or isolation from their Chinese peers due to their interracial relationships. However, they both expressed clearly that they were engaging in behaviors to prevent such negative events from happening. Eva mentioned that her peers had asked about her immigration status. But according to her own words ‘...And they were saying that it would be easier for me to get green card and citizenship.’ her peers did not comment on her interracial relationship negatively. However, Eva interpreted it negatively: “They were saying it in an envious as well as jealous way”. From here we can see that comments on one’s relationship from third parties can be intertwined with personal interpretations of the action and then become an invisible power that drives one’s reactions and behaviors.

Although Wendy and Eva’s examples demonstrated the fairly explicit role of peer pressure and third party opinions in affecting Chinese students’ dating and mate selection behavior, other examples provide similar evidence of the importance of third party comments. For example, in her account of an ex-roommate’s dating experience, Mandy offered a vivid illustration of the shared group perceptions within her network of Chinese international students.

Jones was considered to be physical attractive so her peers expected her to find partners of better qualities in all aspects, including someone with a great social economic background:

... *They* all say that beautiful girls get more suitors as well as more drama after them. I think this is so true with Jones...I mean, she is really beautiful, we all agree. But she gets more trouble in relationships than us average girls...But from what I know, she is not as happy as she appears to be... (Mandy)

Jones' Chinese peers tend to use traditional norms to 'measure' and judge

Jones' boyfriends and whether they match up with her:

We don't think her current boyfriends are comparable with her. We have been talking her into breaking up with him...Well, first of all, he doesn't have a job. He could not find an employer to sponsor his working visa after he graduated from here one and half years ago...In order to stay here properly, he had to go back to China and re-apply for graduate school. Well, he came back eventually and got into another program here trying to get another M.A degree and have another round of shots later (Mandy).

Among Chinese international students, good social economic circumstances for a man include being able to find a stable job with sponsorship of immigration status and having their own wide social network

But we doubt if he will find a job this time when he graduates. If he would, he would already have a job right? Also, he is hanging out mostly with Jones and Jones' friends. He doesn't have his own friends...He depends for everything on her... We all think that man should be helping woman in a relationship and the man should be better off than his woman...He is the opposite... (Mandy)

Jones' boyfriend was judged as not successful and matching with Jones' physical attractiveness. So Jones' peers were quite direct in 'advising' her to break up with her boyfriend. Thus, close social networks among Chinese international students acted as 'policing' and 'judging committees' of their member's personal romantic relationships:

We advised her to give up her relationship. She is struggling and sometimes she wants to give him up. But you know when you are emotionally involved...it is hard to break up... (Mandy telling me about the experience of Jones)

According to Mandy, 'we'---the social network that both Mandy and Jones belonged to -- were acting as the judging committee of Jones' relationship and Jones' significant other. It seemed that 'they' were concerned about helping Jones to get the best out of the mate selection game and 'they' tried to advise her based on how they perceived Jones' relationship with her partner. According to Mandy, the judgments and

comments from Jones' social network and peers had influenced Jones in wanting to give up her relationship. Obviously, negative comments from peers and her own emotional attachment to this partner had created a dilemma for Jones in her relationship.

Jones was not the only one who was influenced by peer pressure and third party comments. Other respondents had reported similar situations where they had to make a decision based on 'what they say' about their personal emotional life. The closed and exclusive social network among Chinese students created an atmosphere of people wanting to watch out for each other in their big decisions such as mate selection, but it also restrained their personal freedom of choice and created struggles for people who were involved like Jones.

Dating as Americans While Dating as Chinese---Bi-Cultural Identity in Dating and Choosing Mates

On the one hand, immersed in a western culture and living environment, Chinese international students had adopted western values and ideologies with regard to dating and mate selection behaviors. On the other hand, having been brought up in China and still having parents resident in China, it was impossible for Chinese students to eliminate and throw away their cultural traditions in a short amount of time. This section displays and illustrates the emerging bi-cultural identity of Chinese students in dating and mate selection: they would accept and adopt western norms and consider themselves 'westernized' and 'Americanized' but they also kept their traditional filial piety beliefs (Kline & Liu, 2005).

What Are They Looking For in a Partner And Relationship?

Chinese students' understandings and expectations of dating, mate selection, and intimate relationships have been shaped by their experiences of living and assimilating into western society and their adoption of western value and norms. Contrary to previous research results from Xu & Fang (2002)'s and Xu's (2000) studies of young adults in China, Chinese international students on this U.S. campus expressed that they valued personal character and emotional connections over physical characteristics, social economic affluence, and family backgrounds. The results from the current study also contradict previous findings from Jankowiak (1989) and Xu (2000) --- Chinese young adults at the ages of family formation valued the stability and long lasting and enduring qualities of the relationship. Different from their peers in China, Chinese students on this U.S. campus appeared to be more open to free, fun, casual and less committed relationships. For them, dating and romantic relationships were no longer just for family formation and reproduction purposes only. Intimate romantic relationships were also seen as functioning to complement their needs for emotional connection, mutual support, psychological consolation, and other kinds of support in life. Although most participants admitted that western culture and social norms such as liberalism and individualism led to changes in their dating and mate selection ideology, they also implied that the unique experiences of migration and assimilation helped to encourage and implement such changes.

For Chinese people, a long lasting relationship was regarded as crucial. For example, the respondents expressed that it was best to avoid divorce for the benefit of the children because they did not want their children to suffer from negative consequences from parents' divorce. However, for some Chinese international

students, a long lasting marriage was not necessarily their primary concern, rather they emphasized happiness and emotional connection as more important. They explained that they would not give up personal happiness as sacrifice for the family and next generation:

One important thing occurred to me after you asked me earlier if there is any significant change in my attitude towards dating and mate selection. I think dating, romantic relationships and marriage should have been things associated with happiness. However, I think many Chinese people tend to turn them into burdens somehow. We make ourselves nervous, pressured and worried as we see other people getting into relationships, engaged or married. Or we would have many concerns on mate selection. And I think in China, many parents are really bad role models for their children...I know some couples (my friends' parents) keep their marriages barely alive even they have been separated for over ten years...Their only excuse to avoid divorce is 'for the benefit of their children'...I think they are actually making a very negative influence on their children's ideology on marriage. That's why today many Chinese young adults believe that 'marriage is not related to love'... (Tiffany, in a long distance relationship, non-science/engineering professional student)

These changes in their expectations and standards for judging the quality of relationships were seen as coming from the influence of their western peers:

I have come across many westerners talking about their parents' divorce casually and frankly. For them, divorce is neither stressful nor shameful at all...Now in my point of view, if a couple is not happy together and the emotional connection no longer exists any more, they should absolutely choose to break up, otherwise both they and the ones they care about will get hurt from the miserable relationship... (Tiffany, in a long distance relationship, non-science/engineering professional student)

Besides expectations toward marriage, Chinese students' standards of mate selection appeared to be influenced by western liberalism and the emphasis on romantic love in western society. Personalities and emotional connections rather than social economic factors or family backgrounds were considered:

).

(Interviewer: what are the most important characters that you think your future significant other should have?) She has to be an easygoing, optimistic, and happy person, it would be a plus if she has good interpersonal skills. (Interviewer: that's it? Would you have any preference regarding her education, income, or job?) No, I do not any preference on these aspects. (Interviewer: how about her family? Would you prefer her to come from a comparable family background as yours?) No, I don't care about it. I will be spending time with her mostly, not her family. (Interviewer: how about physical characteristics?) I don't have any typical preference or requirements on that as long as she is a nice person... (Interviewer: Has your preference ever changed before and after you came to the U.S.?) Yes and no...I did not care about all the other things you mentioned when I was in China neither but I have had situations when I have to consider realistic problems involving the things you mentioned...And that bothered me and created difficulties for my previous relationships. But I think I would not care so much about these things any more, we are in the U.S. now, and these things don't matter much anymore, right? (Jimmy, single, science major).

Jennifer went further in noting that physical attractiveness was not that important to her, but she cited the influence of American culture in explaining that feelings and the quality of the relationship should never been neglected:

Well, I don't know...I can't think of anything I would care so much, can you be more specific? (Interviewer: Just anything you care about such as physical character, family background, education, income and job) Well, as long as he is not ugly enough I would feel sick looking at him, hahaha (laughing)...I don't care about other things as long as we feel connected to each other, as long as I like him...As for income, as long as he make enough to cover his own expense... (Interviewer: How does U.S. culture affect your overall opinions on dating, mate selection and family forming?) ...I think the biggest change happened to me is that I don't think about man's family background and other important factors that Chinese people really care about any more. (What do you mean by the factors Chinese people care about? Can you give me more details?) I mean, things like you asked me earlier...the man's education, income, job and family background. I know these factors are very important for Chinese, but I see Americans are more concerned about personality, emotional connection, romance, and psychological comparability...I started to realize it when I was watching American movies, and I was thinking: "wow, they can just fall in love like that..." Now, I think their way of dealing with relationship is great... (Jennifer, single, engineering major).

Similarly, Wayne described what he saw as the positive values of western individualism as a model for life and relationships, while criticizing what he regarded as problematic in Chinese culture:

(Interviewer: How does U.S. culture affect your overall opinions on dating, mate selection and family forming?) Well, I really like the way Americans deal with life. Here people believe that if you work hard, you put effort in things, you will get success one day. Everyday depends on you...how you work things out...People always have the confidence to believe hard work will turn out good...Not like in China, there are so many rules, norms, this and that restricting you. You can't really do what you want to do. There are always people on top of you...You have to do things according to rules, according to how other people do things...Same for family, Chinese people always say they are family oriented...They always work hard for their families...And they don't enjoy their own life...But how will you make your family happy if you are not happy yourself? A man work for getting bigger houses, good cars, this and that...and then for the kid...work hard to make money for the kid, for his kid's toy, education, and future...They always believe that they can work hard and save money...save up all the money and wait until they become rich to enjoy life, to travel, to have fun. But when they are really old...actually they don't understand or know how to have fun how to enjoy life any more...How sad....Americans are not like this at all. I see them work as we do but they won't sacrifice and compromise to their families as we would ...They go have fun whenever they want to...They don't worry as much as we do...(Wayne, single, engineering major)

Most of the respondents indicated that they witnessed other people or they had personal experience of being restrained by social norms in China: Tiffany told us the stories of her friends' parents; Jimmy said he used to be restrained and bothered by Chinese standards of selecting a spouse; Jennifer mentioned that she knew Chinese people who were concerned about their significant other's social economic status and family backgrounds; Wayne expressed his deep sympathy towards hard working Chinese men who seldom enjoyed their own lives. Their impressions of Chinese mate selection standards and Chinese people's attitudes and expectations on marriage and family corresponded to previous research findings on Chinese young adults (Jankowiak,

1989; Xu, 2000; Xu & Fang, 2002). However, all of them indicated that their attitudes and expectations on their future spouse and marriage changed after they had witnessed and experienced American individualism and liberalism. They believed that happy relationships and marriages were not based on social economic factors only; family members should have personal freedom to enjoy their lives; a relationship or marriage should be ended if it no longer includes emotional connections and turns into unhappiness, suffering, and restraint for both parts. The changes experienced by these respondents indicate how migration from a conservative/realistic culture to a liberal/unrestrained culture influenced one's marriage/family ideology. From the pattern that we see here, these Chinese students had already started to understand and set up expectations on marriage and family in an 'Americanized' way.

Dating Like Americans While Dating as Chinese

This section will present how segmented assimilation and bi-cultural identity appeared in Chinese international students' dating behavior. We can see from the previous section that Chinese international students had adopted some western/American cultural values and ideology on marriage and family. However, segmented assimilation of Chinese students should also be taken into account as they were born and brought up in China and were immersed in Chinese cultural values and social norms for more than 20 years. American social norms and culture values were adopted gradually but Chinese students' dating patterns still largely reflected their own cultural identity.

“We are a team but he should still be the MAN!”

Questions regarding how Chinese young couples distributed financial responsibilities and made joint decisions were asked during the interviews with non-single participants. Based on the themes and patterns that emerged in data analysis, I found that most dating couples adopted western norms but also kept traditions brought from China. Although in some cases, the female actively made contributions to mutual expenses and was involved in decision making, males were expected to take care of the majority of financial responsibilities and make the majority of the decisions in the relationship.

(Interviewer: How do you distribute financial responsibilities with your partner? How are costs usually taken care of in your relationship?) I'd say almost equal but he may have spent more... I pay for our rent which is 480 dollars a month, and he takes care of everything else: car insurance, gas, grocery, utility, cell phone plan, and anything else... I just pay a fixed amount every month, but for him, sometimes it is a lot more than what I pay. (Interview: How about the costs of eating out, socializing, and traveling? I saw you guys have traveled a lot, these travel pictures on the wall are beautiful...) Eating out is of course his responsibility... Well, for travel, it depends, usually I pay for something, like air tickets, and he would pay for car rental, hotel and other things... Usually equal but we don't keep track of every amount... (Interviewer: Well, maybe this is too personal, you can choose not to answer... Do you both have stipends and does he get paid a lot more than you?)... We are both Ph.D. students and, yes, we both get paid... We get paid about the same amount... We are a team in life but he is still the MAN, you know? Girls get more things to spend money on... I am doing my best in contributing and I think I am an independent lady... But traditionally, it's natural for him to spend more... (Doris, in a local relationship, science major).

Although some female students like Doris would like to contribute to the mutual costs in her relationship and act as functioning parts in the relationship, some female students experienced patriarchal attitudes and expectations from their significant others. They reported that they were expected not to take the initiative or to contribute to financial responsibilities or joint decision making:

Usually he takes care of the costs...When he was still here (in the U.S.) he would take care of the costs of eating out and traveling...If I go to see him in [a distant U.S. city], he would book air tickets for me...Now since he is back in China, he would take care of the costs when I go back to visit him every summer...Because...ur....because he is working and I am still a student...(Interviewer: well, may I ask you a personal question? Does he make more than you? You don't have to answer if you don't want to...) Oh, well...if you convert my stipend into RMB (Chinese Currency), he doesn't make as much as me...Haha (laughter), shame on him, right...? But anyway, he is a very patriarchal person...even when he was here (in the U.S.)...He has his 'face' to keep...as always...And that's one of the reasons I had a crush on him...(Interviewer: How would you make joint decisions together?) Well, we almost never have joint decisions...He is the dictator...haha...Although sometimes I get on the top but only on small things like where to eat.....We are engaged now and he is definitely not coming back to the U.S. so I guess I will head back too. Besides I think he is right... (Mandy, in a long distance relationship, science major)

...I am usually the one to fly over to see her. I can get more time off than her and I think I should be the one who takes care of the travel cost...We make about the same amount but she lives near (a distant U.S. city), prices are higher there, you know rent, gas and groceries...Besides I am the man...Usually I would like us to make decisions as a team but she is always not so involved so I had to make most of the decisions... (Harry, in a long distance relationship, science major)

From the pattern of how these Chinese young adults distributed financial responsibilities with their significant others, we can see that their behavior does not align with standard expectations suggested by the social exchange perspective (Schwartz & Scott, 2012; N.V. Benokraitis, 2011; Schoen and Wooldredge, 1989). According to the social exchange perspective, human beings calculate costs and benefits in intimate relationships, they always try to maximum their benefit while minimizing the costs. Most people will continue in a relationship as long as there are more benefits than losses (Schwartz & Scott, 2012; N.V. Benokraitis, 2011; Schoen and Wooldredge, 1989). However, we can see above in the transcripts that the men did not make more than the women in all three couples; instead, patriarchal gender expectations appeared to dominate over social exchange considerations. In Mandy's

case, she even made slightly more than her fiancé. But in all three cases, the ‘man’ took care of most of the expenses to fulfill his ‘man duties’. In most cases, men were the decision makers while women were expected to act as passive followers. Their ideology of ‘man duty’ came from traditional gender norms and reflects the expectations of equity theory: they do what seems fair, even when it does not follow rational, calculated decision-making. But even more importantly, gender stratification – expectations of male dominance – appear to trump other considerations.

Bride Price & Dowry

‘Bride Price’ and “Dowry’ are Chinese traditions reflecting a social exchange perspective. The groom’s family is expected to pay a ‘bride price’ to the bride’s family, showing gratitude to the bride’s parents for bringing up their daughter in exchange for the right to take away the bride to the groom’s family. The bride’s family is expected to provide a ‘dowry’ to their daughter that will provide her with economic support in her new marriage and better status in her future in-laws’ family. The two concepts are still alive, and the traditions are still practiced among these westernized/Americanized Chinese young adults who now live overseas.

During our interviews, some respondents brought up phrases using the vocabulary of ‘dowry’ and ‘bride price,’ although they referred to these traditions in somewhat ironic ways, suggesting that they did not really expect to have a ‘dowry’ or ‘bride price’ exchange (at least not in the traditional sense) within their relationships. Instead, ‘dowry’ or ‘bride price’ is used to refer generally to material gifts from parents or partners:

...I love my car a lot...It’s my dowry...My parents bought it for me two years ago...It is brand new...She is beautiful, right?...Whenever I see it, I’d miss

my parents. They have been so supportive both financially and emotionally... (Jennifer, single, engineering major)

...My fiancé brought me a diamond ring and I accepted it and I told my parents about it...They did not comment too much...Then I said: 'Mom, you know what accepting a diamond ring means in western culture, right? It equals our bride price...'. And then I joked with my boyfriend: "Hey, my mom said a diamond ring is far not enough for the bride price, you need to buy me a car..." (Mandy, in a long distance relationship)

However, some Chinese students and their families do still practice the traditional norm of 'dowry' and 'bride price' nowadays:

...This summer I went to visit his family...He told his parents about my visit ahead of time so they will prepare 'bride price' ahead...Haha, he still follows the tradition...I don't really care that much but who would refuse money, right?... (Diana, in a local relationship, non-science professional student)

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“Sex, Even Living Together, is Not a Big Deal, BUT...”--- Premarital Intimacy as a Commonly Practiced, Under-the-Table Norm

Previous research has suggested that virginity and chastity are no longer regarded as an important standard for selecting a partner or spouse among Chinese young adults (Zhen et al., 2000; Li & Xu, 2004) The current research confirmed this observation and provided a more detailed and nuanced view of the attitudes and practices regarding pre-marital intimacy among Chinese young adults. Questions on attitudes and opinions about pre-marital intimacy were asked of both single and non-single participants during the interview. All 21 respondents expressed their acceptance of pre-marital intimacy but some also indicated that although pre-marital intimacy was commonly practiced among Chinese young adults, it was still an 'under-the-table' norm that should not be brought up openly, with other people even close friends and family members.

Since I have knowledge about the conservative cultural norm regarding pre-marital intimacy among the Chinese, I worded my questions very carefully in order to be polite and non-threatening. Instead of probing into their personal privacy, I asked the singles about their 'opinions' towards pre-marital intimacy and how they thought other Chinese young adults within their social network were dealing with pre-marital intimacy instead of asking them if they had ever had pre-marital intimacy. For Chinese students who were in a romantic relationship, I asked about their intimate behaviors with their current partner carefully and replaced the words 'have sex,' 'pre-marital intimacy' and 'pre-marital cohabitation' with 'spent nights together', 'living together some time', and 'moving in with each other'.

As I mentioned previously, most Chinese students preferred to use the more socially accepted phrases implying sex and intimacy instead of using the two words directly:

In college, some of my friends who had boyfriends would go out to 'spend a night off campus together'. My ex-boyfriend, my boyfriend in college, he was also my first boyfriend; we went out to 'live together' as well. But it was reported to our advisor; because we did not go back to our dorms for two nights...Our advisor talked to us many times about it...We were asked over to his office and were suggested not to do it again...Later on, our parents knew about the facts that we sometimes spent nights together somehow...and they were pissed...But people still do it, we know maybe it doesn't make us appear 'good', but it still happens...With my fiancé, we were not too bothered, but I still won't admit frankly to my parents...(Mandy, in a long distance relationship, science major).

However, most of the respondents reported acceptance and openness towards pre-marital intimacy:

(Interviewer: Do you think all kinds of pre-marital intimacy are wrong? To what degree it is acceptable?) I don't think it is wrong at all. What do you mean by 'to what degree'? Do you mean the ways of intimacy or the condition under which it happens? (Interviewer: Both). Well, anyway...I think none of them are wrong...as long as both parties are voluntary and

enjoying it...Even casual sex, friends with benefits, one night stands are not wrong since they are all voluntary...(Tiffany, 27, non-science/engineering major)

They also indicated that pre-marital intimacy is expected and commonly practiced in China among their age group:

...I don't think any kind of it (pre-marital intimacy) is wrong...I mean we all do it, right? It happens everywhere. It is kind of an unspoken norm for everybody, even people in China. (Doris, in a local relationship, science major)

However, most of them still expressed pressure from older generation family members and concerned about being judged by their peers:

But I cannot accept the latter(causal sex) and I won't do it myself...I am not telling my parents though...They won't accept it, especially my father, he'd kill the guy...Well, as long as it(sex) is only between us (her and her partner) and other people are not acknowledged, I don't see why it is unacceptable...But you know, everyone does it...they, I mean we (Chinese people) can always presume it is happening...But no one talks about their own privacy with others....(Tiffany, in a long distance relationship, non-science/engineering major)

...We moved in with each other three month after we started dating. It is just more convenient, we don't need to commute to see each other anymore. And it is more saving, more economical...We only need one car since we now live together, we sold his car, and we only need to pay one rent and utility...And we have more time together...But we know our parents won't approve it, and other people would think we moved in with each other too soon...We kept this as a secret for a while...We don't want to be judged by other Chinese people...And we don't want to upset our parents...But now, it is not a secret any more since we got engaged. (Doris, in a local relationship, science major)

Also, most of them believed that pre-marital intimacy should be kept as a secret between the couple and should not be openly discussed. Some male students indicated that they would potentially feel uncomfortable knowing that their future partner's intimacy history included someone besides themselves. They would expect pre-marital

intimacy had happened for their future partner, but they would choose not to ask about details.

But it should be kept only between the couple, I would admit it if I was asked...I won't lie...But I won't mention it on my own, I won't advertise it...I don't think there would be anyone stupid enough to ask 'Hey, are you guys having sex?' We all know it is private, right?... (Interviewer: How would you think of your future partner if she had pre-marital intimacy and cohabitation with other people? Will that affect your relationship with her?) I won't think about her negatively, that's for sure. We probably all have done it...It was her freedom and it happens before we started our relationship...Well, as long as it happened between her and her lover, not strangers...I might feel uncomfortable...I guess I would just avoid asking her about it...I don't want to know about the details, how it happened...Or I won't even ask her if it happens, you know, as a man, I'd feel uncomfortable...We would just avoid such conversations. (Wayne, single, engineering major).

During my interviews, I observed my respondents spontaneously and naturally using the phrases, 'spent nights together,' 'go out living together and spend night off campus some time,' or 'live with each other sometime' to avoid using the word 'sex' or 'intimacy'. As a Chinese student myself, I realized that these phrases were more acceptable while indicating the same meaning as 'sex' and 'intimacy,' so I adopted these non-threatening and culturally more acceptable phrases from them in my later interviews. Both single and non-single participants indicated that 'it' (pre-marital intimacy) was commonly practiced among Chinese young adults, even the ones in China. They appeared to be accepting and open to all sorts of pre-marital intimacy but they would prefer to keep their own behaviors under the table. They believed that what happened should only be kept between the couples and no one else should be known. Although they also admitted that 'it' (pre-marital intimacy and cohabitation) was a common norm and expected among Chinese young adults in romantic relationships, they still felt that it would lead to be judgments by parents, peers and even themselves.

Some of them, like Tiffany, Mandy, and Doris, would not acknowledge to their parents in order to avoid the potential for blaming or criticism. Doris kept her cohabitation from other Chinese friends and worried about being judged based on how soon she moved in with her partner. Some of them like Wayne chose not to discuss past history of intimate behaviors with his future partner to avoid 'feeling uncomfortable'. These patterns among my respondents indicated the tensions between acceptance and old fashioned traditional judgments towards pre-marital intimacy. On the one hand, they were open to and involved in pre-marital intimacies and expressed their acceptance and non-judgmental attitude towards it; they considered pre-marital intimacy as a common norm that everyone practiced. On the other hand, they would yield to traditional opinions from older generations and police themselves by setting rules, conditions, and timelines on how pre-marital intimacy should happen.

Summary

This chapter presented the 'American/Western' side of Chinese international students' dating or mate selection behaviors as well as the 'Chinese/Traditional' side (and both the similarities and differences between cultures). We can see how the bi-cultural identity was reflected in a variety of aspects of their dating and mate selection behaviors. On the one hand, organizations and agencies such as FACSS provided opportunities to encourage Chinese students to actively seek their significant others; Chinese students to a great extent adopted western social norms and standards when choosing mates and forming families; Chinese young couples from both genders would get actively involved in their relationships; and pre-marital intimacy was commonly practiced and accepted. However, on the other hand, eastern/traditional culture norms still influenced their dating behaviors to a great extent: traditional gender norms were

still followed as men were expected take the initiative, pay for expenses, and function as major decision makers while women were expected to be submissive, passive and act as the ones that needed to be 'taken care of'; old Chinese traditions such as 'Dowry' and 'Bride Price' were still practiced and regarded as important in some people's ideologies of marriage and family; and pre-marital intimacy was kept 'under the table' and not something they would frankly talk about.

CHAPTER 7 DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I conclude my thesis by summarizing key analytical themes and patterns that emerged from the interviews and the two observations regarding Chinese international students' dating and mate selection behaviors as well as provide a discussion to compare the current findings with previous theoretical and empirical studies. The discussion provides me an opportunity to elaborate on the connections between emerged themes as well as attempt to construct a generalized narrative about the Chinese international students' dating and mate selection behaviors. Also, summarizing the current research necessitates making suggestions for future research to be conducted in more detail on what the current research failed to explore. Overall, this discussion and conclusion chapter includes two major components: (a) a summary of the current research results and their connections with previous literature; and (b) suggestions for future research on dating and mate selection behaviors of young adults based on the current research findings.

“Made In China” But “Americanized”--- Bi-Cultural Identity and Segmented Assimilation

As I have mentioned from the start of the thesis, Chinese international students group represent a unique population, and they should not be only studied or generalized within bigger groups such as students, immigrants, or Asians. As Chinese young adults born and raised in China while now studying and living on U.S. university college campuses, Chinese international students have been influenced by Chinese social norms as well as American/Western individualism and liberalism.

Their Life in the U.S.

The surrounding environment, daily routines, and social psychological well-being of the participants provide us with an overall background for understanding their behavior, thoughts, and ideologies towards dating and selecting mates. Chinese international students entered the United States to seek further education, and they arrived with strong educational backgrounds and academic records. For them and their families, the time, energy, and financial costs spent on preparing for all kinds of standardized tests, applications, and travel documents were an opening gate that led to opportunities in the western world and investment for their futures.

Upon arrival, Chinese international students would have to go through all kinds of adjustments and assimilation into their new learning and living environments. They experienced pressures from academics, social life, and assimilation. As new arrivals and new students, they carried high expectations from themselves as well as their families to make the most effort to fit into American society and enhance their future career options. However, as sexually mature young adults at the proper age for dating and family formation, their dating and mate selection patterns changed during the same time of their assimilation process.

Being ‘Americanized’ Chinese in American’s Multi-Racial Society

Race/ethnicity were relatively new and different concepts for Chinese international students who newly landed in U.S. society since China is pretty much a homogeneous society. However, the current research found out that the themes and patterns raised from the interview transcriptions regarding Chinese students’ attitudes and experiences of interracial relationships corresponded to previous demographic research results on interracial relationships among Asian immigrant populations: Asian

immigrants are most likely to marry same-race immigrants or natives. Interracial marriages among Asian immigrants are most likely to happen between Asian immigrants and Whites instead of with other minority groups. Rates of interracial marriage vary greatly among Asians: Asian women are far more likely to marry interracially than Asian men (Qian and Lichter, 2001; 2007; 2011).

Among Chinese international students, females were more open to interracial marriage while males insisted on racial endogamy. It appeared that only interracial marriages with Whites were considered, particularly among female Chinese students. However, female students who were involved in interracial relationship still expressed their worries and concerns over judgments and possible discrimination from their Chinese acquaintances.

Although intermarriage has been considered as the final step of the process of immigrant groups' assimilation and melting into the host society by many classic assimilation theorists (Gordon, 1964; Alba & Nee, 1999), it appears that Chinese international students were more likely to assimilate into their same-race native populations, as reflected in their attitudes and preferences regarding interracial relationships. Secondly, they would consider the option of assimilating into the mainstream White/European American population when choosing intimate partners. Their rejection towards interracial marriage with other minority groups due to the fear of group sanction (Kalmijn, 1998) reflects the segmented assimilation suggested by Zhou (1999): they are trying to fit into the host society at the same time that they try to preserve the norms they were socialized into in their country of origin.

Also, in this research, it is found out that although most respondents announced their preference towards same race mates/spouses. However, such preference is actually limited to their same nationality peers only due to the limitation of their social network: most Chinese international students hang out with their same nationality peers only rather than expanding their social network to other pan-Asian groups. We may connect such facts with the findings of the importance of third parties: the student organization FACSS has been working on building strong community connections within the Chinese community and most Chinese students built up their social network through mutual friends they initially got to know upon arrival who are most likely to be Chinese. However, it is also highly possible that the settings of the college town had been contributing to the cause of the fact. Since all the respondents are currently graduate students, they are putting most of their energy on their study and research instead of putting effort in expanding their social network to other racial/ethnicity/national groups. Their experience may become different when they move onto their future jobs: they may be able to network with more people of other races/ethnicities/national origins. By now, we can only make the conclusion that Chinese international students on this specific campus would practically prefer their same race same nationality peers as their potential mates/spouses

Dating and Selecting Mates in Both Norms

From the research results we can see that Chinese students try to make an effort to fit into American norms by adopting westernized standards in mate selection and western ideologies toward dating and family formation. From the interviews and observations, we can see the efforts they have made to adjust to Americanized dating norms: the Chinese student organization tries to create opportunities for single students

to meet and get onto the track of developing romantic relationships; some female students expressed that they have made big contributions to the financial costs between the couples; and sex and cohabitation have been commonly accepted and practiced.

However, being brought up in Chinese culture and tradition, these students still kept some traditional norms on dating and family forming behaviors. Furthermore, the close and exclusive Chinese community and social network provided both promotion of western dating norms and protection/reinforcement of Chinese tradition. In some extreme cases, closed and exclusive social networks even functioned by advising and policing Chinese international students' dating and mate selection behaviors. Old Chinese traditions like 'Dowry' and 'Bride Price' were kept and partially practiced. Sex and cohabitation were practiced as under-the-table norms and considered as topics that should not be openly discussed' even among close friends and family members.

Again, the ways that Chinese students partially adopted Americanized norms and ideologies while keeping and practicing traditional norms they were socialized into in China reflected their segmented assimilation: On the one hand, they wanted to consider themselves and behave as 'Americanized' and 'Westernized,' but on the other hand, they would behave and think through 'Chinese' social norms. They struggled to carefully navigate and balance the boundaries between 'being Americanized' and 'as Chinese,' creating American and Chinese bi-cultural identities.

Not the End yet...

As a Chinese international student myself I really enjoyed the research as the research also helped me to identify and better understand my own behaviors and ideologies. The results from the current study, however, revealed a variety of issues that went beyond my initial expectations and my daily observations. As an insider, I enjoyed

my conversations, interviews and observations. I used the current research as an academic study as well as a self-reflection---an opportunity to learn about myself. The research results allowed me to explore the rationales behind Chinese international students' dating behaviors and attitude towards marriage and family. The results can be extended to explore segmented assimilation among Chinese international students in all aspects of social life in the U.S. However, my research was limited in not being able to examine further the Chinese parents' influence on these students' intimate relationships to a greater extent. Although some indicated that they would hide some facts such as sex and cohabitation from their parents, because of concern about possible criticisms, all of the respondents suggested that their parents gave them enough freedom and support towards their decisions made on intimate relationships. Further studies should definitely investigate how family members in China function as an important tie between Chinese students overseas and their home culture.

Also, the current study only reflects the facts about Chinese students in U.S. society. Some aspects of the study were very specific to an American setting, particularly the meanings of interracial marriage within the U.S. racial system. I wonder how Chinese students in less racially diversified or hierarchical western countries view interracial relationships. Would they be more tolerant towards intermarriage with a variety of racial groups, including darker-skin people in contexts with fewer negative stereotypes and less racialized social relations? To what extent are Chinese students' taboos about intermarriage with other racial minorities influenced by fears of group sanction within Chinese networks or the effects of interacting within American settings with existing racial prejudices and hierarchies? Further research across a variety of

settings should be conducted to explore the influence of both Chinese social networks and varying social contexts in receiving countries and institutions.

APPENDIX
LIST OF RESPONDENT WITH GENDER, RELATIONSHIP STATUS, MAJOR AND
CHAPTER MENTIONED

Alias	Gender	Relationship Status	Major	Chapters Mentioned
Julia	Female	Single	Non- Science/Engineering, professional	4
Jane	Female	Single	Non- Science/Engineering, professional	5
Jennifer	Female	Single	Engineering	4,5,6
Linda	Female	Single	Engineering	4,5,6
Jeremy	Male	Single	Engineering	4,6
Jimmy	Male	Single	Science	6
Wayne	Male	Single	Engineering	5,6
Leo	Male	Single	Engineering	5
Ryan	Male	Single	Science	5
Joe	Male	In a long distance relationship	Engineering	4
John	Male	In a long distance relationship	Engineering	4
Charles	Male	In a long distance relationship	Science & Engineering	4
Harry	Male	In a long distance relationship		
Mandy	Female	In a long distance relationship	Science	4,5,6
Tiffany	Female	In a long distance relationship	Non- Science/Engineering, professional	6
Daniel	Male	In a local relationship	Science	4
James	Male	In a local relationship	Engineering	4,6
Doris	Female	In a local relationship	Science	6
Diana	Female	In a local relationship	Non- Science/Engineering, professional	6
Wendy	Female	In a local relationship	Science	5,6
Eva	Female	In a local relationship	Science	5,6

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

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