

**EXPECTATIONS OF LOVE AND MARRIAGE
IN RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN CHINESE WOMEN AND WESTERN MEN
IN URBAN CHINA**

by

© Xiangrong Huang

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ABSTRACT

This study presents a qualitative exploration of the experiences of intercultural couples (Chinese women and western men) in urban China. It is intended to offer a new perspective on intercultural relationships in China by emphasizing and analyzing issues that emerge from the participants' narratives. Through the use of multiple in-depth on-line and email interviews, ten participants (five Chinese women and five western men) contributed narrative accounts of their experiences. Drawing on grounded theory for an analysis of these narrative accounts, the study focuses on two primary themes: myths and attractiveness. While participants' narratives challenge existing dominant perceptions of intercultural relationships in China, their contradictions also reveal the complexities of the issue and reflect the necessity of exploring intercultural relationships from different perspectives. Implications for study in this area and recommendations for further research are provided.

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Chapter 1: Introducing the study

My interest in the experiences of intercultural couples emerged from my own experiences and observations of intercultural relationships in China. This project was conceived even before I came to Canada for Women's Studies. With more and more Westerners coming to China for business or for sightseeing, intercultural love and marriages have been increasing rapidly in mainland China. I knew a few intercultural couples personally and had the experience of being in relationship with a western man myself. This made me aware of all the misconceptions and misunderstandings people have about intercultural couples, the social pressure these couples have to bear, the mutual attraction and the conflicts arising from differences in personality and culture. The experience also made me question myself as a self-acclaimed independent professional woman and finally led me to apply for Women's Studies in Canada.

In 2004 I decided on intercultural relationships in China as my thesis topic. Early discussion with friends helped shape the study. For example, I first discussed this idea through emails with my American friend Allen who had been living in China since 1985 and was married to a Chinese woman. As an old friend of mine, Allen is very supportive of my project, but he suggested that I narrow down the topic and warned me against generalizations and stereotypes. Allen cautioned, "on the theme, I have this to say: generational differences within cultures could actually have as many or more differences than foreign cultures do. When I think of my Mom, my sister and her daughter: each had experience of love and marriage in such a completely different way." When I discussed with him my impression that "it seems most western men can separate love from sex

while Chinese women tend to be serious with their sex partners”, he argued,

Concerning the issue of sex/love, my impression is a far cry from "it seems most western men can separate love from sex while Chinese women tend to be serious with their sex partners." This is because most of the Chinese girls I have known intimately and whom my foreign friends have known, have seemed quite able to switch sex partners without qualms or even conscience.

Even worse, we Westerner men, famous for separating sex and love, can still be shocked by Chinese men with money, who openly advertise their second and third wives, so that both these sugar-daddies and the girls who are easily swayed by cash seem, even to us, crass and unethical. Or are they being practical?

Again, we have to consider which generation we are discussing, because China wasn't like this twenty years ago, when I first came.

No place is like it was twenty years ago (August 22, 2004).

His argument made me question my own assumptions about Chinese-western relationships and the generalizations and stereotypes I had about westerners and Chinese. He also made me realize it is important to put my study within the context of today's China. In the response, I explained to him that

China is in a transition period with traditional codes of behavior coexisting with the imported modern values. There are all kinds of people with very different values. There are very traditional women who still look at virginity as the utmost important thing for a woman. There are moderately traditional women who do not think virginity is so important but can only have sex with men they love. There

are also some women who separate sex from love and can have sex only for fun.

The third type certainly exists, but I do not know any of them around me. A lot of (not all) women associate with Westerners because of curiosity (difference creates beauty), or vanity (westerners have been highly respected in China), or for very practical reasons (westerners are said to be rich!). For these women, there is usually no love involved in the relationship and of course they can switch easily without qualms or conscience.

As for the sugar-daddies and the girls who are easily swayed by cash, there is no love involved in the relationship between these men and women, who are actually whoremasters and sex workers or quasi sex workers. They are definitely practical. But this is not what I'm gonna talk about in my thesis, which is a comparison and a cultural analysis of the attitudes towards love and marriage.

The issue of sex/love was raised again by Jack, another westerner friend of mine, when I told him of my thesis topic and asked him to recommend interviewees for me. He posed some very provocative questions which really made me think more deeply about my topic. Following is our email conversation on the type of relationship I should focus on:

Jack: but as to the pattern you are focusing on, is it love per se or love heading toward marriage? or marriage, without regard to love?

Huang: ... how do you know what kind of relationship they had before interviewing them?

Jack: no, the thing is: how do you decide who to interview? do you think that it is

obvious? do i ask "have you ever planned to marry / been in love / had recreational sex with a white-looking foreigner"? or: "i know you were with a white-looking foreigner once/twice/often. can you tell us whether you were after: marriage or love or sex?" the only women that obviously have had some connection are the ones who have or had such a boyfriend/husband. but i think most of the "expectors of love or marriage" are unknown to outsiders, let alone the experimentrices. the obvious ones are merely ONE TYPE within the parameters you state.

Jack suggests that

one category you ll have to include in yr study if it is to reflect the current modern china is that of free sexual experimenting - women who simply want to try sex away from their confining marriages/familio-social structures. some are attracted by the reputation of westerners as being more romantic (less jealous and controlling), or sexually sensitive (sometimes simply more hygienic). in this century, not all women here are looking for a way out of china, or even for marriage. they are becoming consumers of experience, like their sisters in the west.

Allen's and Jack's observations reflect the social realities of China in the recent twenty-five years after its economic reform and opening to the West. To demonstrate his point, Jack also sent me an article titled "Boys as Toys" by Tom Miller which was published in *South China Morning Post* on October 31, 2005. The article is about a 27-year-old woman from Shanghai, Ms. Xue Dandan, who is the chief representative of a

French company in Mainland China and who claimed to have slept with 72 or 73 different men. Ms. Xue confessed that she frequently “play[s] boys as toys”. She is now seeing a British businessman and she planned to wait until her mid-30s before settling down. While Xue might be an extreme case, she represents a generation of urban young Chinese who are experimenting with sex that might not entail love or marriage. Miller compared “the sexual loosening of urban China” to “the social revolution experienced in the west in the 1960s” and pointed out that

for the generation of young urban Chinese born in the late 1970s and early 80s, sex doesn't always imply a serious relationship, and a sexual relationship does not necessarily entail marriage. Sexual relations and marriage, once two sides of the same traditional coin, have begun to slip apart - and marriage is no longer quite the be-all and end-all that it once was.

While the issue of sexual relationship that Allen and Jack suggested is a fascinating topic to explore, after some consideration, I still felt it was too complicated for me to deal with in this Master's thesis. I decided to stick to the “obvious” boyfriend & girlfriend/husband & wife type of intercultural relationship, hoping “the sex experimentrices” and disappointed/sadder-but-wiser females will be able to be dealt with in later studies.

However, their suggestion of “reflecting the current modern China” became a guiding principle for me in conducting the research. As Allen said, “No place is like what it was twenty years ago.” A more contemporary perception of cultures as evolving rather than static is important in understanding the values of people. Following Allen's

suggestion I narrowed the thesis topic to urban areas in China. I don't have exact figures on intercultural love and marriages in China, but according to my personal observation, intercultural love between Chinese women and western men far outnumbers that between Chinese men and western women¹. In this thesis, I limit my discussion to studying the expectations of love and marriage among Chinese women and western men in urban China.

From September 2005 I began to recruit participants. Some participants were my personal friends and some were recommended to me through friends, or the friends of friends. A lot of my requests went unanswered or were declined because of unavailability. However, I managed to get ten participants, five of whom were Chinese women and the other five were western men. I conducted guided on-line interviews and multiple email interviews with each of them. Guided on-line interviews took place through MSN messenger.

In understanding the responses, I drew on Nicole Constable's book *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail-Order"*. Constable's study of international correspondence relationships provides a good example of examining intercultural relationships from a non-stereotypical angle. She also helps identify the complexities of power in these relationships. Constable writes,

Contemporary feminist theories provided tools with which to understand

international correspondence relationships. Rather than focus on women and

¹ According to Wang Jie, a lawyer specializing in intercultural marriages, among intercultural marriages in China between foreign and Chinese citizens, the proportion of foreign women is much lower than that of foreign men. In the 21st century, the number of Chinese men marrying foreign women is increasing, but still only accounts for 25% of intercultural marriages. (<http://www.0759law.com/showatc.asp?id=282>)

universal female subordination, contemporary feminist concerns lie in understanding gendered heterogeneity and differences that are complicated by class, nationality, race and so on. Rather than view women as simply dominated by men, attention is paid to more complex and subtle articulations of power, as well as to the way in which institutions and processes (such as immigration and citizenship) may be engendered. Power, in other words, is not something men 'have' and women do not. The more I learned about correspondence relationships, the more inadequate binary notions of 'women's oppression' or 'male domination' seemed, and the more important contemporary feminist concerns with power, ideology, representation, and positionality became. (5)

Through doing interviews and analyzing the data, I began to find that expectations of love and marriage in intercultural relationships are more complex than I expected. I have come to realize that simplistic depictions of western men as seekers of subservience or equal-partnership, and Chinese women as gold/visa-diggers or independent modern women are not enough. Instead, they should be depicted as multi-dimensional, often having both traditional and modern values. These values might conflict with each other, although they themselves might not realize it. Hence, the goal of the next five chapters is to avoid simplistic depictions and give a more realistic analysis of the intercultural relationships I studied.

Chapter two examines related literature on attitudes towards love and marriage in China, representations of Chinese women and Chinese culture, depictions of western men and western culture, and analyses of intercultural marriage. Review of these areas

provides the social, cultural and historical context from which to study intercultural relationships in China and highlights the importance of including perspectives of gender, race, culture and class in this study.

Chapter three explores the epistemological and methodological paradigms from which this research emerges. Feminist perspectives in research methods and grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were employed. The methods of participant selection, data collection, data analysis, the limitations and ethical considerations were discussed in detail. Identifying with a constructivist, interpretive perspective for this study, the process was aimed towards an emergent, open-ended design, and a similarly interpretive analysis of the data.

Chapter four introduces the five western men (Mike, Fred, Jack, Allen, Peter) and five Chinese women (Anna, Lucy, Qingqing, Lanlan, and Xiu) who participated in this study. A brief description of their backgrounds as well as direct excerpts from interviews is provided to contextualize the expectations and views of these participants. From the direct excerpts, themes emerge: myths of intercultural relationships and attractiveness.

Chapter five and six explore those themes that emerge from the participants' narratives, focusing primarily on the myths of intercultural relationships and the attractiveness and unattractiveness that intercultural couples find in each other. Chapter five focuses on themes related to the myth of subservience and the image of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers. Chapter six focuses on themes related to the attractive qualities that Chinese women and western men find in each other and the conflicts they have.

Drawing on the themes and analyses from chapters five and six, the concluding chapter integrates and synthesizes what I have learned from this study in an attempt to provide a summary of the findings. Finally, through this summary, recommendations and implications for future research are considered. Before proceeding it is important to review some of the literature on which the study is based. Chapter two examines related literature on attitudes towards love and marriage in China, representations of Chinese women and Chinese culture, depictions of western men and western culture, and analyses of intercultural marriage.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

2.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to outline literature in four areas: attitudes towards love and marriage in China, representations of Chinese women and Chinese culture, depictions of western men and western culture, and analyses of intercultural marriages. As my thesis is centered on relationships between western men and Chinese women in present-day China, it is important to review such studies to have an idea of the social, cultural and historical context of these relationships. Sources deemed integral to the development of the thesis are presented in detail in this chapter, and the contribution of this study is described. It should be noted that since popular literature is an important source to consult because it can offer valuable insights to my research, I am purposely drawing on both academic and popular publications in my literature review.

2.2 Studies on Attitudes towards Love and Marriage in China

As mentioned in the Introduction, “reflecting the current modern China” is a guiding principle in conducting this research. Since this research focuses on relationships between western men and Chinese women in present-day urban China, it is essential to study the social context where the relationships are set in order to understand the values of people within. With this goal in mind, this section explores literature on attitudes towards love and marriage in both ancient and contemporary China, with an emphasis on the social and cultural change after the transition to a market economy in China. The literature explored includes Lin Yutang’s *The Importance of Living*, James Farrer’s

Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai and Chinese Urban Life under Reform edited by Wenfang Tang and William Parish along with articles by Lu Rucai, Lu Zhu and Tom Miller.

First published in 1937, *The Importance of Living* by Lin Yutang distills the philosophy of generations of Chinese sages and offers a historical context for us to understand Chinese people's values towards family. In Chapter Eight Lin describes the Chinese family ideal as something "in which man is not regarded as an individual but as a member of a family and an essential part of the great stream of family life" (186). Lin argues that in this "stream-of-life" theory, human life is seen as "a growth or a continuance, in which every man plays a part or a chapter in the family history, with its obligations toward the family as a whole, bringing upon itself and upon the family life shame or glory" (187). What is most interesting is the role of women in this continuous family life. According to Lin, women are not seen as "a decoration or a plaything, not even essentially a wife, but as a vital and essential part of the family tree – the very thing which makes continuity possible" (188). It should be noted that it is women who made the continuity possible, but it is men who "play[s] a part or a chapter in the family history" (187). Women are merely the tools to give birth to boys who can carry on the blood of the family. If they are not able to produce boys, they lose the only function they exist for and become useless. The stream-of-life theory also shows that continuity of the family tree, rather than love, was the more important function of marriage in ancient China.

In the 20th century, especially in the eighties and nineties, great changes took

place in people's attitudes towards love and marriage. Published in 2002, *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*, by James Farrer, is a fascinating up-to-date ethnographic study on values of love, sexuality and marriage in present-day urban China. The book describes the sexual culture of young unmarried heterosexual Shanghainese, concentrating on people from eighteen to thirty-five - their dating lives, personal sexual stories, and public narratives - and analyzes how these cultural practices have changed during the market reforms from 1980 to 2000. Farrer situates the cultural practices in the larger social context of labor, commodity, and culture markets; family authority; and state-controlled institutions. He points out that institutional changes that come with the market economy (increasing income gaps, freer labor markets, commercial housing markets, greater liberalization of the media, less state monitoring of private life, etc.) have created a new social environment for young people engaging in sexual and romantic interaction. He argues that "Shanghai youth have fashioned a new sexual culture, finding particular 'cultural tools' and 'strategies of action' that respond to the incitements of the market economy- including increased pressure to make personal choices, greater emphasis on money, wider social inequality, and a growing consumer leisure culture" (13). In order to cope with the contradictions and conflicting goals of the new liberal market environment, Shanghai youth employ a loosely ordered repertoire of compensatory codes that balance one attitude with its opposite- balancing pragmatism with romance, lust with love, and seriousness with play (14).

When discussing how the new social environment of the market society puts contradictory pressures on young people in making and explaining sexual choices, Farrer

describes that for Shanghai women, the choice of partners is “a difficult balance between ‘material conditions’ and ‘romantic feelings,’ a choice made more consequential by increased differences in wealth and income among men and a greater emphasis on the emotional quality (and worries about the fragility) of subsequent marital relationships”

(13) . He analyzes why women in Shanghai have higher expectations of romantic love:

Romantic passion is in evidence in most, perhaps all, societies. However, the way it is expressed, indeed its essential definitions, depends on social structures, local practices, and cultural traditions. According to Charles Lindholm, romantic love most generally represents an attempt to escape from the contradictions and tensions of strategic social relations through the transcendental love of another person. In societies characterized by rigid and strategic family relations, romance is only possible outside of marriage, as was more or less the case in medieval Europe and classical China. On the other hand, in a society characterized by atomistic market relations of mobility, competition, and individuality, the “couple” becomes a refuge against the hostile world of strategic market relations, and romance is sought in courtship and marriage. (192)

Farrer also tries to explain why Shanghai women have practical considerations too: “for women in market societies, love is both a strategic choice and a refuge from market strategies.... It is not that Shanghai women are more pragmatic (or more romantic) than women were before, but that their individualized choices are more problematic and subject to critique in a liberal market society in which women must seek love in marriage, but also economic support for child rearing” (192). Farrer borrows from

the feminist critique of romance by Jane Collier to strengthen his point:

As Jane Collier writes, 'women in market societies find it difficult to attain the standard of pure love set by men.... [A] women's choice of a husband always appears tainted by greed.' Men feel these contradictions as well, but less so, since they are more easily able to pursue strategic relations in one realm (career) and emotive relations in another (marriage). One might also argue that women delude themselves by pursuing both material security and emotional transcendence within marriage. (192)

In my study, the conflicting expectations of Chinese women for both romance and material security is one of the themes to be explored. As such, Farrer's discussion is very helpful for my analysis of the expectations of love and marriage of Chinese women participants which have to be understood in the social and historical context.

Farrer also points out that in Shanghai, there is "a slow-burning moral panic over the cultural consequences of the market transition, especially greed and avarice and the weakening of sentimental bonds" (17). As a consequence, "in popular culture and in idle talk about society, Shanghai people construct a mythic world of materially and sexually motivated characters, a dramatistic tool kit of 'big moneys' and 'girls today,' who serve as foils for interpreting the actions of real people" (17). The cynicism of Chinese people in the era of market transition can be seen from the reaction of Shanghai people to intercultural couples walking together on boulevards in Shanghai:

Almost always the eye falls first on the "foreigner" then drops quickly to his female companion, scanning her from head to toe, judging her the way an

audience judge any performer, whether she is cut out for the role, whether she is pretty enough, tall enough, confident enough to play the character she has chosen to play: the ambitious Shanghai girl who has “caught” a foreigner. When asked, their comments reflect their judgments of her performance. For an unattractive woman: ‘Why do foreigners pick such ugly Chinese girls?’ For a young woman with an incongruously unattractive old man: “That’s no different from prostitution!” For a performer who fits her role: “Pretty girls all want a foreigner or a rich guy.” (41)

All my interviewees are very familiar with this kind of situation Farrer discusses. In my thesis, I will analyze the experience taking into account political economy and popular assumptions of global hypergamy, a term Nicole Constable uses to discuss the belief that women from non-western countries who marry western men are marrying up (146).

In Chapter 8 “Making Love and Talking about it”, Farrer discusses the notion of sex as a kind of conquest for Chinese women. Both the successful young white-collar women and women at the lower end of the social ladder he interviewed believed that to have sex with a man, a woman has to “feel like he is stronger than me in some way, that there is something stronger in him that allows him to conquer [zhengfu] me because for a woman there is the feeling of being conquered....” “...at least this is the way Chinese women feel, when you do that with a man, then you feel he is conquering you [zhengfu ni]....” Farrer comments that

These young women felt as though being ‘conquered’ by a stronger man was not

as much a loss of status as a fulfillment of a gendered sexual fantasy, which might even bring status.... The game derived from a notion of male sexual attraction associated with recognized signs of social status and physical attraction, setting up a game of conquest in which a man must prove his 'strength' in order to win her sexual assent... For both of these young women, sex was a naturally gendered arena in which the usual norms of equality and autonomy were subordinated to the play. Lei, in particular, was very successful in her career and highly valued her autonomy, but she enjoyed the idea of conquest. (278)

This gendered game of sexual seduction and flirtation is understood by Chinese women and men, but not necessarily foreigners. Farrer cites a young Chinese woman who complained that her westerner husband did not understand the gendered grammar of conquering (zheng) and giving in (fu) that defined sexual relations for her:

My husband, he doesn't understand the way that Oriental women show their sweetness. Sometimes my way of showing my sweetness to him, you know kind of acting babyish and feminine, he doesn't understand it at all. He doesn't know what I'm doing. Maybe Westerners don't have the same sense of conquering [zheng] and giving in[fu] that a woman wants to feel with a man. I think that for Westerners maybe men and women act just the same with each other. (278)

In my study, the tendency of Chinese women to play games and play babyish/feminine is mentioned by some western male participants. Farrer's description of the gendered game of sexual seduction and flirtation and the gendered grammar of conquering and giving in helps me to analyze this phenomenon from a gendered

perspective. I will also analyze this issue from a cultural perspective.

Chinese Urban Life Under Reform: The Changing Social Contract (published in 2000) also examines the dramatic changes in the lives of average, urban Chinese since the introduction of market reforms in the 1980s. In Chapter Ten “Gender and Family”, William Parish and James Farrer draw on several surveys from the late 1980s and early 1990s to create an account of the modern urban Chinese family. They point out that in China, socialist institutions and market institutions are the two most important macrolevel mechanisms for social change in the family. Socialism gave women the resources (income, education, childcare facilities, and an ideology of gender equality) to become more autonomous in their bargaining with husbands over relationship issues such as housework, but also limited women’s autonomy by restricting their opportunities to leave relationships or to use income to buy labor-saving appliances. The market produces and transmits new cultural ideals of sexual fulfillment and sexual liberality, which augment individual autonomy in sexual relations: more pre-marital and extra-marital sex, freer decision making in marriage and divorce and the pervasiveness of a romantic ideal of marriage (236-239).

Parish and Farrer argue that China is undergoing two simultaneous macroeconomic processes: “the buildup and then slow collapse of state socialist institutions that we have observed in Eastern Europe” and the emergence of the social patterns more typical of other “Asian tigers” like Japan and Singapore (269). They conclude that

The impact of these macrosocial processes on the family is predictably mixed.

The market economy has brought women more opportunities for individual fulfillment, but to some extent has made relationships with men seem more problematic or less satisfying....improved education, work, and income have many benefits for women by increasing their options. Today urban women in the formal sector have a much better chance of supporting themselves on their own, and much greater security in the face of family mishaps such as the loss of a husband through death or divorce. The market, by increasing the space for autonomous socializing and providing resources and cultural frames for articulating dissatisfaction, has allowed family members more autonomy in challenging traditional patterns, allowing the open expression of dissatisfaction and increased divorce, but also creating pressures for more mutually beneficial and mutually satisfying relationships. (269-270)

Parish and Farrer's account of social change in the modern urban family and the influence of social institutions on women's role in the family provides a good background for understanding the expectations of love and marriage of modern Chinese women.

The social change described by Parish and Farrer can also be seen in the article "Changing Chinese Attitudes towards Marriages" by Lu Rucai, the staff reporter of *China Today*. The article offers five personal accounts of love and marriage from generations spanning 60 years. People in the 1950s and 60s, like people in Ancient China, did not have much freedom of choice in choosing life-partners and parents acted as their matchmakers. In the 1970s and 80s free love was still not common, but many of

that generation said that they got married and later fell in love. According to a 45-year-old female office worker Liu Ying, “marriage to us means how to live harmoniously. Love is important, but it is not enough to make it last” (34). Lu Rucai suggests that in the 1990s, most young people entered marriage after experiencing what they interpreted as falling in love. Nowadays people in their 20s pursue love and happiness, but not necessarily marriage. According to “The Single Life”, another article in *China Today*, at present, in metropolitan areas like Beijing and Shanghai, a large number of well-educated and well-paid white-collar female workers are enjoying a comfortable single life. The author Lu Zhu points out that in China where family ethics have always been paramount, the emergence of a single female group is an indicator of increased social and economic independence of Chinese women (37). Lu suggests that this trend also indicates “a friendlier social environment of pluralistic values, different lifestyles and individual freedom” (37). Although *China Today* is not a scholarly journal, it does provide some background on social and cultural attitudes and experiences.

Similarly, as mentioned in the Introduction, “Boys as Toys” by Tom Miller, published in *South China Morning Post* on October 31, 2005, provides a glimpse of popular views. The article uses the example of Ms. Xue Dandan, a Chinese woman who claimed to have slept with 72 or 73 different men to describe the sexual loosening of urban China which is comparable to the social revolution experienced in the west in the 1960s. Miller uses the study by Li Yinhe and Renmin University to prove his point: “According to a study in Beijing by Li Yinhe, China's first female sexologist, the percentage of young Chinese having premarital sex has increased from 15 per cent in

1989 to about 70 per cent today. Another survey, carried out by the Institute of Sociology at Renmin University in Beijing, found that urban youths lost their virginity at an average age of 17, compared with 22 just 10 years ago and 26 in the 1960s.” Miller also points out that “for the generation of young urban Chinese born in the late 1970s and early 80s, sex doesn't always imply a serious relationship, and a sexual relationship does not necessarily entail marriage. Sexual relations and marriage, once two sides of the same traditional coin, have begun to slip apart - and marriage is no longer quite the be-all and end-all that it once was.” Miller further points out that “Chinese couples have increasingly high expectations of relationships - a major reason for the soaring number of divorces on the mainland in recent years. In 2004, 1.6 million couples dissolved their vows.” Miller traces the liberal attitudes to sexual behavior among young Chinese back to the early 1980s, when market reforms started in urban centres and traditional norms began to disintegrate under the pressure of economic and social development. Miller attributes this change to urbanization which has brought greater mobility, better housing, and enhanced personal space, to economic growth which puts disposable income in people's pockets and provides entertainment venues in which to spend it, and to the mass media which educates people about modern lifestyles and promotes an awareness of self-potential. Miller also observes that as traditional codes of behavior have yet to be replaced by a modern rulebook, “some young Chinese find there's nothing to guide them away from the self-destructive extremes of living a ‘modern’ life.”

All the studies reviewed in this section document ways that attitudes of Chinese people towards love and marriage have changed with the dramatic social change in China

in recent years. My study, centered on relationships between western men and Chinese women in present-day China, draws on this body of literature that portrays the social context of Chinese love relationships.

2.3 Studies of Chinese Women and Chinese Culture

With more than 5000 years of history, Chinese society has undergone several evolutions from the feudal society, to semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, capitalist society, socialist society and capitalist society again. Women's situation and status have been changing all the time too. It is impossible to understand the mindset/situation of modern Chinese women without putting it on the background of Chinese history and culture. To get a better understanding of the expectations of love and marriage of Chinese women within a historical context, this section examines studies of Chinese women and Chinese culture. The literature to be reviewed includes Mary Gallagher's "Women and Gender", two books by Elizabeth Croll: *Feminism and Socialism in China* and *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self-Perception in Twentieth Century China*, and *Chinese Men and Women* (in Chinese) by Yi Zhongtian. Although my study is about women in urban China, sources about rural women are also cited to describe the change of the situation of Chinese women in general.

China has 2000 years of feudal history. Mary Gallagher describes traditional China as "patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal" which means that "men had the power in the society, inheritance and descent were through the male line, and the newly married couple resided with the husband's family. Women were subjected to the authority of men

throughout their lives. (90)” The traditional ideal woman was a dependent being whose behavior was governed by the three obediences and four virtues. The three obediences are obedience to the father before marriage, the husband after marriage and the son in case of widows. The four virtues are propriety in behavior, speech, demeanor, and employment. Women were kept dependent by being denied the right to inherit property. Girls were seen only as burdens and temporary members of the natal family. Any investment in a daughter’s well-being was considered a waste of money. The well-known facts about ancient China -- bound feet, polygamy, and concubines -- were all the indication of the lower power and prestige of Chinese women.

However, Chinese women were not entirely passive in this patriarchal system. According to Gallagher, women responded to their formal position of powerlessness by “strenuously apply[ing] their energies and efforts to the one arena in which they could exert some control: the family, and particularly that subsegment of the family that Margery Wolf (1972) labels the ‘uterine family,’ consisting of a mother and her children....By bearing children, completely devoting herself to them, and thus psychologically binding them to her forever, a woman was able to provide the close emotional ties otherwise lacking in her life. (92)” According to Gallagher, since women at that time were not allowed their own property, the uterine family was a strategy to achieve not just emotional security but also economic security. This strategy was successful for many women as can be seen from the biographies of most famous Chinese, including Mao Zedong, who credit their successes in life to the indomitable strength, will and steadfastness of their mothers. It is also in the many jokes about hen-pecked

husbands and women who run their families with an iron hand (92-93). Gallagher points out that while the orthodox or official state ideology was that women were inferior to men, there was in China a consistent heterodox tradition that negated the view that women were inferior, and provided an alternative perspective. The story of Hua Mu Lan², the thousand-year-long White Lotus³ tradition, the cult of the Queen Mother of the West⁴, and the large-scale Taiping Revolution (1850-1864) which advocated the equality of men and women, the marriage resistance movement which flourished in Guangdong Province in southern China for at least one hundred years⁵ all proved that though the heterodox tradition was outside the mainstream of conventional thought, it provided challenges and alternatives to orthodox beliefs (95).

The twentieth century was a century of great change for Chinese women: 1911 was the end of more than two thousand years of the feudal system. Because of western influence and the action of anti-footbinding societies, footbinding was largely stopped by the 1920s. Girls going to school, freedom in choosing marriage partners, and women working outside the home were popular in the cities in the early-twentieth-century China.

² Hua Mulan is the heroine in a famous Chinese poem known as the Ballad of Mulan. In the story, Mulan disguised herself as a man to take her elderly father's place in the army. She was very good at martial arts and in 12 years of service, nobody in the army knew she was a woman.

³ White Lotus is a type of Buddhist sectarianism that appealed to many Chinese, most notably to women and to the poor, who found solace in worship of the Eternal Mother who was to gather all her children at the millennium into one family. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/White_Lotus)

⁴ The Queen Mother of the West, in Chinese mythology, is the ruler of the western paradise and goddess of immortality. (http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Xi_Wangmu)

⁵ In the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in the Canton delta where silk production was the prominent industry, many women who were economically self-sufficient by earning their living in the silk industry resisted marriage and lived together in communities. In her article "Marriage Resistance in Rural Kwangtung", Marjorie Topley identifies two primary patterns of marriage resistance: Some women opted to completely resist marriage and would take vows in a ceremony that they would remain unmarried, becoming self-wedded women. They were often referred to as "women who dress their own hair" (*zishunü*) because of the rituals during their vow ceremony. Other women, known as "women who do not go down to the family" (*buluojia*), did marry, but they rejected patrilocal marriage and refused to live with their husbands after the marriage ceremony (67-88).

October 1, 1949 saw the establishment of the People's Republic of China. After gaining power, the Communist Party adopted a series of measures to improve the condition of women. In the *Marriage Law* which was promulgated on April 13, 1950, women's equal rights in the political, economic, cultural/educational, social and familial realms are explicitly upheld. The Law made polygyny, arranged marriages, child-adoption marriage, prostitution, the buying and selling of women, and other past abuses of women illegal. Besides ensuring women's rights by law, the Communist Party also adopted several measures to improve the conditions for women. The All China Women's Federation was created to see to women's issues and women were mobilized into the work force. The Great Leap Forward⁶ saw large numbers of women going out of home to take part in paid employment. In rural areas, women began to enter into agricultural production and to take part in large numbers of industrial, water conservancy and construction projects. In urban areas, women were also encouraged to enter social production. Large numbers of neighborhood factories were built and expanded to provide employment for women. The government also tried to solve the conflict between collective social production and individual domestic labor faced by most women through socializing household chores. During the Great Leap Forward many forms of household labour, such as preparing meals, processing food, sewing clothes and caring for children gradually became collective enterprises in many areas. The involvement of women in social labor and the socialization of housework undermined the traditional division of labour, and women were able to maintain independence and acquire equal status in the distribution of social

⁶ Great Leap Forward: a movement propagated by the Chinese Communist Party from 1958 to 1961 for a rapid transition to socialism by mobilizing masses of people to contribute to the production of goods.

resources. Relations between husbands and wives and parents and children could be based on genuine affection and not on economic considerations. The legal rights and economic independence of women meant that they could take an equal part in decision-making. As is pointed out by Elizabeth Croll in her book *Feminism and Socialism in China*,

... to a large extent women were no longer reliant on their relations with their sons, gossip or threatened suicide in bargaining to improve their position in the household. No longer were daughters considered to be economic burdens and no longer were they subject to the same flagrant forms of discrimination that had been grounded in the traditional sexual division of labour. Marriage reforms had introduced the rights of individual choice, by free will and divorce, which considerably strengthened the position of the younger women in the household.

(282)

Although the implementation of these measures did not go as well as expected and certain aspects of the patriarchal gender relations were not changed, these measures did greatly enhance the status of women in China. Although “women hold half the sky” might not really describe the social reality, it became a popular phrase in China.

Two post-Mao government initiatives: strict population control and liberalizing economic reforms have produced changes in patriarchy, patrilineality, and patrilocality. Although with free market competition and the loosening of government control, women’s interests have been infringed upon and have been less protected by the government, women generally had more opportunities than before. In “Women and

Gender” Gallagher cites the findings of Gao and Judd to describe the situation of rural women in the reform era: “Gao thinks that although the effects on women have been uneven, overall rural women’s lives are better. She finds that there is less patriarchy as males ‘recognize women’s competence and authority in the home, discuss important matters with their wives, subsidize their daughter’s school attendance, and are beginning to help with household chores’” (101). Judd, who did fieldwork in Shandong between 1986 and 1990, also believes that power relations in the domestic realm are undergoing renegotiation. The male patriarch does not have complete control over family finances as women’s earning power has given them more of a say (101). Gallagher also discusses the situation of urban women: in urban areas, women generally are employed away from the home and they are usually the ones who control family spending. Most people only have one child and if that child is a daughter, parents invest as much in her education. Many couples prefer to have daughters because they have closer relationships with parents as they get old (101).

Gallagher points out that in trying to understand women’s lives in China, “one of the intriguing points is that Chinese women by and large have not internalized the ever-present social idea of women’s inferiority. Whenever the economic or social system allows them some options, they take them. Women in China do not usually play the part of the downtrodden, pitiful victim” (102). Gallagher draws on Henry Rosemont’s opinion to explain the reason:

... though Confucian ideology is often antiwoman, it is not antitypical female gender traits, traits such as nurturance, yielding, intuition. The yin-yang symbolic

concept, based on supposedly natural differences between male and female, also implies each gendered person incorporates, at different times and in different circumstances, the gender traits of the other sex. Being active is called for at some times, being quiescent at others; being logical in some circumstances, being intuitive in others; being nurturant to some people, being demanding of others. In a Chinese world each person does not have a core, innate identity, but rather each person is contingent, relational, and constantly being constructed from interactions with others. Each person performs themselves into being, through ritual role performances. Although gender hierarchies are everpresent, which gender's traits an individual manifests depends on the situation. As blatantly sexist as the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal traditional Chinese society was, women were able to resist internalization of personal inferiority, and instead model traits adaptive to their context. This enabled them as individuals to deal with their personal circumstances, and to change their behavior as those circumstances changed. (102)

To get a more detailed account of women's experiences in twentieth century China, I turn to Elisabeth Croll's *Changing Identities of Chinese Women: Rhetoric, Experience, and Self-Perception in Twentieth Century China* which was published in 1995. Based on self-portraits, personal narratives and remembered moments of girlhood, this daughter-centered study focuses on the changing reality of female lives during the Republic (1911-1949), the Revolution (1949-1978) and in the present era of Reform (1978-). Croll cites Tang Sheng when she describes the Republican period of China:

“China was struggling and swimming in a rapid, whirling tide where the influx of the West met the traditions of the East, where the two streams combined but were, as yet, not thoroughly mixed” (60). Croll notes that for women who “stepped out of the past and into the future” in that period, “there was a confusion of expectations surrounding the becoming of new women - both the process of becoming and of new womanhood itself” (61). The old Confucian rhetoric had been questioned but for women of this time, “there were few cues or established patterns of behavior to support rebellion or rejection of past conventions...” (62). When the Communist Party took power in 1949, “a new and pervasive revolutionary rhetoric of gender was generated” to erode Confucian rhetoric (7). However, according to Croll, “the new rhetoric not only prescribed male and female equality but also either denied gender difference altogether or reduced it by collapsing male and female categories” (7). As a result, in the post-Mao era of Reform (1978-), as a reaction against the enforced female appropriation of a male-defined world during the revolution, there was a re-emphasis of gender difference which led to an appreciation and cultivation of images based on traditional definitions of femininity. Croll points out that this search for gender difference “cannot be taken merely as a reiteration of past qualities, for a prevalent theme of the new literature on female attributes includes female self-sufficiency and independence of person” (155). Actually the conflict between the socially approved qualities of “virtuous wives and good mothers” and the ideal of the newly independent modern woman has been a dilemma faced by many women. Croll notes that young women especially feel themselves to be hovering within a plurality of expectations originating from a variety of sources including state, family and male, so that the

identification of ‘proper’ or ‘appropriate’ female behavior and priorities seems difficult in the absence of a single rhetoric defining proper female needs and interests appropriate to a modern woman. Indeed, confusion is the prevalent theme in present-day representations of women and in the written and spoken words of women themselves. (171)

Croll describes in further detail the confusion of Chinese women in the reform era:

Now, in a shift to concern with the personal, individual and gender qualities, women are exhorted to be strong, independent of spirit and uniquely female, not depending on or reflecting the light of male others. Yet despite this new rhetoric, women are still by their admission influenced by male desires and preferences, especially in love and marriage choices.... While overlapping gender categories are rejected, definitions of female still very much take the qualities of the male other as the yardstick in identifying different and uniquely female characteristics. If men are assumed to be strong and independent then in becoming separate and different, women have been tempted to adopt opposite or female qualities traditionally associated with femaleness and femininity. Both among men, but also among women on their own admission, ‘traditional beliefs also run deep.’ From the turn of the century during Republican and Revolution and now Reform, even the most strong and independent of women be they pioneers, models or entrepreneurs find themselves succumbing to customary thoughts and practices in public, in the domestic and within themselves as they shape their identities to please very mixed societal, familial and specifically male expectations. (177)

In the female participants of my study, we can also see this “confusion”, the conflict

between the wishes to be independent modern women and the expectations of traditional gender roles. Croll's analysis provides valuable insight into the dilemma Chinese women face nowadays.

Chinese Men and Women (in Chinese) by Yi Zhongtian is one of the most in-depth discussions of relationships between Chinese men and women. The author draws on popular culture to make an insightful point. While traditional western romance novels are mainly about the brave men saving the beauty, romances about how the beautiful lady saves the bookish young man from troubles were a popular theme in classical Chinese literature. Yi argues that many Chinese women are restricted by the traditional standard of "obedient wife and good mother". Thus in traditional Chinese society, women are oppressed under patriarchy. Yet, they also protect and pamper men. Yi observes that for some Chinese men, "marriage is just the transference from the arms of one woman to those of another" (49). Under the protection of mothers, sisters and mothering wives, some Chinese men are feminized while women lose their girlish naivete early in life and shoulder the responsibility of taking care of their fathers, brothers and husbands. According to Yi, the consequence of this is that for a large number of traditional Chinese women, motherhood outweighs, or even totally replaces wifehood (50). The tendency of Chinese women to be bossy and mothering is mentioned by some western male participants in my study. Yi's book is useful for my analysis of the various identity traits of Chinese women.

The studies reviewed in this section attempt to understand Chinese women within their cultural and historical context. Thousands of years of patriarchal culture and the

social changes in the 20th century have had deep and sometimes conflicting impacts on Chinese women. It is impossible to understand the expectations of love and marriage of Chinese women without knowing the cultural and historical forces that mold their values.

2.4 Studies of Western Men and Western Culture

In this section, related literature in the area of masculinity and western culture is reviewed for insights into the cultural and racial issues involved in intercultural relationships. The literature examined includes *Masculinities and Culture* by John Beynon, “Family, Gender and Masculinities” by David Morgan, *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America* by David Eng, and *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls & Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient* by Sheridan Prasso. Both Beynon and Morgan adopt a culturalist approach and focus on the social construction of masculinities in the western society. Eng’s work is not about western men, but mainly about the masculinity of Asian men in the U.S. However, the racial issues raised in the book throw some light on the image of western men in China. Prasso’s work is about the lenses of “Asian mystique” that westerners use to view Asia and its people and offers some interesting insight into what some western men encounter in Asia and the images of some westerners in the eyes of Chinese women.

Masculinities and Culture by John Beynon is an ideal entry point into the scholarly study of Western men and masculinities. Opening with the fundamental question, “What is masculinity?”, the author discusses the social construction of masculinities, imperial masculinities, the “crisis in masculinity” and the

commercialization of masculinities, and suggested methods for future research. Beynon adopts a culturalist approach to masculinity and points out that masculinity is shaped by “such factors as culture, age, ethnicity, belief system, locality, disability, nationality and sexual orientation and so forth” (12). Beynon cites Doyle’s identification of six generalized ‘ideal types’ of historical masculinity, namely the heroic, the spiritual, the chivalrous, Renaissance man, the hedonist and the he-man. It is unlikely that any man conforms rigidly to any one of these templates. However, they serve to highlight the cultural and socio-economic foundations of masculinity. In Chapter Five, Beynon identifies three contemporary versions of masculinity: the ‘old man’, the ‘new man’, and the ‘new lad’. The old man is married and had a regular job, and remains somewhat sexist and homophobic. With the transition from an industrial to a postindustrial economy, the increase of women in the labor market and the influence of the feminist movement, there emerges in the 1980s “the new man-as-nurturer” who attempts to put his “sharing and caring” beliefs into practice in his daily life and “the new man-as-narcissist” who is a playboy, a yuppie, a hedonist, seeking out the latest fashions and taking a great interest in grooming and appearance. In the 1990s, there appears the ‘new lad’ who is engaged in heavy drinking, drug-taking, and riotous behavior, “a resurrection as a commercial project in the 1990s (and particularly associated with the magazine *Loaded*) of the historical figure of ‘Jack-the-lad’, a riotous young man enjoying life to the full” (164). According to my observation, there are all these three types of Western men in China at present. Although we cannot simply classify western men with these stereotypes, Beynon’s description of contemporary Western masculinity is helpful for me to explore

the behavior of Western men in China.

In “Family, Gender and Masculinities,” David Morgan discusses the various interchanges between gender and family, focusing specifically around the constructions of masculinities. He presents four models of societies: traditional, early modern, late modern, and post-modern. The notion of family and masculinities vary in each model. According to Morgan, in traditional societies, the notion of the family is merged with wider networks of relationships identified often in kinship terms and masculinities are not simply adult male identities, but are considered in terms of identities within a wider nexus of social relationships. In early modern society, the definition of family is centered upon marriage and parenthood; masculinity “revolves around notions of the breadwinner, the assumption of mature adult responsibilities in terms of a wife and children, the settling-down into respectability, duty and security” (226). In late modern society, men experience “a relative loss of a stable patriarchal authority within family relationships and wider challenges to masculine dominance in many spheres of public life” (228). The neat and coherent interchange between family and gender has been lost. Many men tend to seek male identities outside domestic life altogether. Morgan argues that this ‘flight from commitment’ has two dimensions: “on the one hand, there is a flight from the breadwinner role or from any kind of domestic commitments on the part of men. On the other hand there is a move away from the commitment to work or a career to a more whole-hearted embracing of domestic identities” (228). In post-modern society, Morgan argues that “family relationships are less obviously organized around gender; there is talk of ‘partners’ rather than ‘spouses’ and of ‘parents’ rather than of mothers and fathers”

(230). There is a self-conscious search for models of masculinities and the masculine identities consciously created may be in opposition to family commitments and obligations. In my study, one of the conflicts between intercultural couples arises out of difference in their expectations of gender roles. These four models discussed by Morgan help me in analyzing the reason for different expectations.

In *Racial Castration: Managing Masculinity in Asian America*, David Eng analyzes the various ways in which “the Asian American male is both materially and psychically feminized within the context of a larger US cultural imaginary” (2). He cites at the beginning of the “Introduction” the declaration of Song Liling, the Chinese opera diva/transvestite/spy in the Tony-award-winning movie *M. Butterfly*, to the court: “I am an Oriental. And being an Oriental, I could never be completely a man” (1). Song’s statement shows that “racial fantasies facilitate our investment in sexual fantasies and vice versa” (2). Eng points out that it is through the “racial castration” of Song that Gallimard (the French diplomat who takes him as a woman and falls for him) strives to “maintain the tenuous boundaries of his own assaulted white male (hetero)-sexuality” (3). The West has always been associated with being masculine and the East with being weak, delicate, feminine. The example from *M. Butterfly* indicates that sexual and racial difference cannot be understood in isolation. It is impossible to think about racism and sexism as separate discourses. Compared with the racial castration of Chinese men in western countries, what is the experience of western men in China? How does that influence the mate-selection of Chinese women?

The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls & Our Fantasies of the Exotic

Orient is not a book specifically about western men's experiences in Asia, but on the lenses, or, borrowing from the author Sheridan Prasso's words, the "Orientalized filter" of "Asian Mystique" (xi), that westerners often use to view Asia and its people. However, it offers some interesting insights into what some western men encounter in Asia. Prasso points out that in Asia, western men who may find traditional notions of masculinity diminished in their own cultures can find restitution (7). She suggests that "in their perceptions of their interactions with Asian women and Asian culture, they can experience feelings of dominance, wealth, power, and masculinity – at least temporarily. Here, any man can experience feeling attractive again – even loved. Old, fat, or ugly by western standards, it doesn't matter. Anyone can be the Alpha Male and Lord Jim" (7). As a middle-aged oil worker from England cited by Prasso shouted in an Asian sex strip: "Here, you can be KING!" (7).

Prasso also points out that western men's expectations of obedient and submissive Asian wives mainly come from the way that Asians have been depicted in Western culture (8). She notes that "the image of the submissive, subservient, exotic Oriental is a pervasive one: the tea-serving geisha, the sex nymph, the weeping war victim, the heart-of-gold prostitute" (8). Interestingly, Prasso uses the dialogue in the same film *M Butterfly* that we just talked about to show how silly the story would be if put in a different context. The conversation is between the Chinese opera singer Song Liling and the French diplomat Gillimard about the opera of Puccini *Madame Butterfly*:

Gillimard: It's a very beautiful story...

Song Liling: It's one of your favorite fantasies, isn't it? The submissive Oriental

woman and the cruel white man.... Consider it this way: what would you say if a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese businessman? He treats her cruelly, then goes home for three years, during which time she prays to his picture and turns down marriage from a young Kennedy. Then, when she learns he has remarried, she kills herself. Now, I believe you would consider this girl to be a deranged idiot, correct? But because it's an Oriental who kills herself for a Westerner – ah!- you find it beautiful. (87)

Although it is not fair to say that the appetite for sweet and subservient Asian women is the main motive for western men to seek out Asian women, Prasso's analysis provides insight into what some western men might expect based on cultural stereotypes. In my study, the myth of subservient Chinese women is one of the important themes to be discussed.

Prasso also points out that while in developing countries, western men may appear to be richer, better-educated, and desirable to a large part of the female population, especially women on lower economic and social rungs, this is not true for all Asian women (6): "... marrying a Westerner – as desirable as it has been to hundreds of thousands of poor Asian women as their societies have strived to develop and modernize over the last century – is no longer as widespread a golden dream as it once was" (24). Prasso cites how a group of young professional Chinese in Guangzhou expressed disdain at the idea of marrying a westerner: in Chinese cities, women can usually get help from the extended family or domestic helpers, but "if you marry a foreigner, you have to clean your own house and raise your children by yourself! ... Only poor girls from the country

are interested in foreigners.” Another woman interjected, “white guys who hang around in China without real jobs looking all googly-eyed at Chinese women are really just ‘losers’ back in their own countries anyway”. Even though several of these women had been educated in Britain or the United States, they chose Chinese men as husbands (24-25). While these women’s comments might be partial, they reflect how some Chinese women view western men and what these women expect from marriage. They also challenge the popular belief of Chinese women marrying western men only for money or for a visa to western countries.

The studies reviewed in this section focus on the construction of masculinity in western society and the display of western masculinity in Asia. Because masculinity is linked with race, they inform my study of interracial relationship between western men and Chinese women.

2.5 Studies on Intercultural Marriages

The reasons why people enter intercultural relationships say a lot about their expectations of love and marriage. In this section, literature on intercultural courtship and marriage is reviewed to get an insight into the motives why people step into intercultural relationships. Work by Sue Chow, Dugan Romano, Karl Lacroix and David Marriott, and Nicole Constable offers different angles to view this issue.

In intercultural love and marriages, race is an important factor that cannot be ignored. Although my thesis is mainly a comparison of different expectations and an analysis of cultural and gender differences, it has to touch on the topic of race as race

affects mate-selection preferences and acculturation in relationships between intercultural partners. In her article “The Significance of Race in the Private Sphere: Asian Americans and Spousal Preferences” published in 2000, Sue Chow uses qualitative analysis of narratives of United States-born Asians to examine how spousal preferences and views on intercultural couples are affected by racial status inequalities. She argues that racial inequality affects those who prefer Whites, those who prefer Asians, those indicating no racial preferences, and those whose preferences change through the life course. Chow introduces the concept of racialized relationship capital to explain the dynamics of racialized preferences. According to Chow, “relationship capital” is constituted by sets of beliefs about valued attributes, characteristics, and behavior associated with both significant others and relationships with these significant others, which play an integral part in one’s sense of well-being and desired self-image. She notes that “intimate relationships with those perceived to be bearers of these valued characteristics provide cultural and psychological capital for those who subscribe to these beliefs” (5). Chow goes on to explain that “for those who prefer White spouses, high valuation of attributes, real or imagined, associated both with Euro-Americans and with having Euro-Americans as intimate partners was apparent. Whites were viewed as being more spontaneous, more physically attractive, more sensitive, more interesting, and more desirable” (5). She concludes by pointing out “perceptions of the desirability of White mates were accompanied by close identification with the dominant group, and identification that includes attributing desired Euro-American cultural behavior to oneself and negatively categorizing fellow Asians” (23). Although Whites are not a dominant group in China,

“the white supremacy” associated with the racialized world system is also one of the factors in the mate choice of Chinese women. This gives some explanation of why some Asians would seek out white partners, but why would Whites choose Asians?

Sheridan Prasso’s *The Asian Mystique: Dragon Ladies, Geisha Girls & Our Fantasies of the Exotic Orient*, discussed in Section 3, offers some insight into this question. However, Dugan Romano (2001)’s *Intercultural Marriage: Promises and Pitfalls* provides a fuller picture. In the first part of the book, “Daring to Be Different,” Romano discusses some of the general personality types who tend to marry outside of their own cultures and some of the motivations which frequently underlie their marriages. He describes some of the intercultural spouses according to the following types: nontraditionals, romantics, compensators, rebels, international, others. According to Romano, nontraditionals feel detached from their own culture and peer groups and do not share mainstream values. Living with a partner from another culture makes him “feel free of that world with which he did not want to identify” (8). Romantics marry across all boundaries - class, race, religion, age - because each difference makes the challenge and adventure more exciting. Compensators are often those “who are looking for their ‘better half,’ their alter egos” (9). They believe only a foreigner can provide them with what they lack. Rebels are people “who consciously or unconsciously marry cross-culturally almost as a form of protest against something in their own cultures which they don’t like” (12). Internationals are usually the children of diplomats, missionaries, military personnel, academics, or international business executives who have grown up in a culture different from his/her passport country. They are cultural outsiders who do not feel that they

belong completely to any one culture. Romano points out that besides people who marry internationally for honest, loving reasons, there are also others who have more “calculated” or “self-serving” goals in intercultural marriages (15). Some are marginal people who feel ostracized by their own society and may unconsciously attempt to find a place which they can dominate. Some may feel unattractive or unpopular with the other sex in their own society and delight in their popularity among foreign men/women. Some are social climbers who marry to improve their social or economic position and some marry to gain citizenship. According to my own observations, intercultural couples in China often fit into one of several of these types. Although Romano’s descriptions are oversimplifications, they help to explore the motives of intercultural love and marriage in China.

The motives of some western men seeking Asian women can also be found in *How to Marry a Western Man* (in Chinese) by Karl Lacroix and David Marriott (2003). Written by two western authors, this book teaches Chinese women all the techniques of how to marry a western man. The authors offer instructions on subjects including what is the best occasion to meet them, how to attract their attention, how to date, what western men want from Chinese women, first sex, visiting each other’s parents, how to get married and then how to get divorced. Traces of phallocentric discourse can be seen everywhere. For example, the authors tell the readers that as long as a western man loves you and wants you to be an indispensable part of his life, he wants you to be dependent on him. Although independence is an important value in the West, he does not want you to have too strong a personality. The authors argue that the reason a lot of western men

look for Chinese wives is that they are afraid of the feminist women at home. Sexist and non-academic as it may be, the book gives a popular picture of what Western men expect from Chinese women, although it is a partial picture. Does it apply to all western men in relationships with Chinese women in China? This is what I will explore in the later chapters.

Nicole Constable's *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail-Order" Marriages* published in 2003 offers a new perspective on intercultural relationships by providing a critical rereading of correspondence relationships between Asian women and western men that are often called "mail-order marriages." She critiques popular images of "mail-order brides" as "trafficked women" and victims and stresses that such representations "present a skewed and partial picture that is grounded in older assumptions about gender inequality and marriage that reinforce orientalist stereotypes of Asian women and reduce "mail-order marriages" to a form of capitalist market exchange" (11). Constable also points out that some scholars overlook the vast cultural, educational and class differences within Asian countries and their depiction of Asian cultures promotes "dehistoricized, essentialized images of submissive and obedient Asian women and reinforces the assumption of Asian women as victims" (83).

Constable discusses the widespread assumption that Asian women who marry westerners are "marrying up" in a pattern of "global hypergamy". She argues that "political-economic approaches that neglect the possibility of emotion risk reducing an individual's life-altering decisions to seemingly 'rational' calculations that fail to recognize the humanity and sentiment of even the most ruthless and seemingly pragmatic

acts” (119). She believes that network capital, a possible “bridge to America,” and the potential for greater wealth and freedom are certainly attractive to many Chinese and Filipinas and to their kin in Asia, but these attractions do not necessarily preclude romantic love – or other deep emotions (119). Constable states that “correspondence relationships are often based on ideals of romantic love or, at the very least, reflect attempts to define them in such terms. They are thus sorely misrepresented if boiled down to crude materialistic motives” (118).

Based on interviews she conducted in 1999 and 2000, Constable introduces five urban Chinese women and their views and experiences regarding correspondence and the suitability of western men as potential spouses. She concludes that “these sketches reinforce the point that personal circumstances, class backgrounds, and marital prospects in China are key features that underlie their interest in western men. Material concerns... are popularly assumed to be central to women’s motivations, but are only one of many factors that influence women’s decisions. Despite their larger social structures within which their choices are framed, Chinese women often exert a high degree of selectivity and choice in their dealings with and negotiations of relationships with US. men” (145).

Constable also problematizes the assumption that Asian women who marry Americans are “marrying up”. She points out that “in the case of international correspondence courtship and marriage, it is assumed that women marry up in terms of social and geographical location. Yet they may be said to marry down in other ways... some couples I encountered involved Chinese women with higher levels of education and higher status professions than their US partners” (168).

Men in correspondence relationship are often misunderstood or glossed in stark and stereotypical terms too. As Constable points out, men are often “depicted as ‘buying’ brides, as wanting women they can control and exert power over; they are said to want women who are subservient, submissive combinations of sex slave and domestic servant” (6). From her study, Constable finds that “Just as women I met do not fit the image of ‘mail-order brides,’ the men do not fit the image of all-powerful, dominant white males” (9). She concludes that “I have come to see the men involved in correspondence relationships as a very diverse group of people; many are decent and well-intentioned human beings who have learned a great deal in the process of their relationships” (6). In my study, the myth of western men seeking Chinese women for subservience and the popular belief that Chinese women marry western men for money/visa are important themes to be discussed.

The studies reviewed in these sections focus on the motives of people entering into intercultural relationships. This issue has been explored from different angles. The motives of people seeking partners from a different culture are diverse and should not be analyzed in a stereotypical way. As my study is centered on interracial relationships between western men and Chinese women, it is important for me to go beyond stereotypes to analyze their expectations of love and marriage.

2.6 Contributions of this Study

So far, most of the studies on Sino-western love and marriages have been done in the US about what is happening in the US. There are studies about relationships between

Asian women and western men in Asia, but research concentrating on intercultural love and marriages in China is scarce. This study is an attempt to fill the gap in this area.

The study is intended to offer a new perspective on intercultural relationships in China by emphasizing and analyzing issues that emerge from the participants' narratives. Gee proposes, "One of the primary ways- probably *the* primary way- human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form...." (11). Allowing intercultural couples a voice through my research is one way to challenge existing dominant perceptions of intercultural relationships in China. Analyzing the contradictions in the narratives of the participants reveals the complexities of the issue and reflects the necessity of exploring intercultural relationship from different perspectives.

I understand that the attitudes and expectations of the participants in my study were not representative of those of all Chinese women and western men. As a result, I do not intend to generalize the data collected in this research to all Chinese women and western men, but to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of a few. However, since little research seems to have been done on this topic, my research may also provide a model and a preliminary study to build on.

2.7 Conclusion

In this chapter, key literature exploring attitudes towards love and marriage in China, Chinese women and Chinese culture, western men and western culture, and intercultural marriages were examined. As can be seen from this review of literature, intercultural love and marriage is a topic which touches upon gender, race, culture and

class. Gender, racial, cultural and class differences intermingle to form a fantastic picture of attraction and alienation. So far, research concentrating on intercultural love and marriages in China is scarce. My research is intended to fill this gap. The next chapter focuses on the design of this study, and discusses in further detail the methodology and epistemological underpinnings for my research.

Chapter 3: Methodology

3.1 Introduction

The purpose of this chapter is to explore the epistemological underpinnings of this study. Feminist perspectives in research methods and grounded theory methods of data collection and analysis were employed as they pertain to the study in question.

Participants were requested to engage in guided on-line interviews through MSN and multiple email interviews. A discussion of the methods of participant selection, data collection, data analysis, the limitations and ethical considerations of the research follow.

3.2 Epistemological Underpinnings

3.2.1 Feminist Research Methods

It is important to position this study as a feminist work. As Shulamit Reinharz maintains, “feminist is a perspective, not a research method” (249) and my research examines the expectations of love and marriage of Chinese women and western men in intercultural relationships from a feminist perspective. Consistent with Patti Lather’s statement that “to do feminist research is to put the social construction of gender at the center of one’s inquiry” (571), my study inquired about how sexuality and people’s values are socially constructed. As Reinharz notes, feminist research must be guided by feminist theory (249) and this thesis draws on feminist theories to deconstruct the social construction of femininity and analyze the reason for the differences in values. Finally, Reinharz also states that “feminist research aims to create social change” (249) and one of the purposes of my research was to raise the consciousness of both Chinese women

and western men, as well as the awareness of interested others, concerning the roots of the gender and cultural conflicts and differences in intercultural relationships. In all these ways, this research is feminist.

3.2.2 Grounded Theory Methodology

I chose grounded theory because a grounded theory approach assures close proximity between theory and the experiences of those involved in the study. According to Strauss and Corbin, “grounded theory” means “theory that was derived from data, systematically gathered and analyzed through the research process” (12). Strauss and Corbin state that in this method, data collection, analysis, and eventual theory stand in close relationship to one another. Researchers do not begin with a preconceived theory in mind, but begin with an area of study and allow the theory to emerge from the data (12). Strauss and Corbin believe that “theory derived from data is more likely to resemble the ‘reality’ than is theory derived by putting together a series of concepts based on experience or solely through speculation. Grounded theories, because they are drawn from data, are likely to offer insight, enhance understanding, and provide a meaningful guide to action” (12). The inductive nature of this method assumes an openness and flexibility which help the researcher break through the biases and assumptions that can be easily brought to or developed during the research process. We all have ideas and preconceived notions, but from the beginning of the study, Allen and Jack’s warnings and suggestions made me question my own assumptions on Chinese-western relationships and the generalizations and stereotypes I had about western and Chinese people. Later on

in the study, I was very careful not to use any preconceived hypotheses in my analysis that would inhibit my understanding. I tried to identify and challenge my own biases and assumptions. Following the approach of grounded theory, I decided to allow participants to lead me through the study and let theories generate from data, from the words, experiences, and meaning making of participants.

3.3 Participant Selection

In this study, I employed snowball sampling technique as the method of recruitment. I contacted one married couple and an unmarried western man I knew at the start of the research. In my emails to them, I made sure that participation in the research was totally voluntary and it would not influence our friendship if they were not interested. I then asked them to introduce more people to me. Considering the sensitive nature of the research, I either asked participants to inform the potential candidates about the study and have them contact me directly if they are interested or I had participants check first with potential candidates before nominating them. In the end, I interviewed ten participants, five of whom are Chinese women and the other five western men. Among the ten, there were two married couples, one unmarried couple, one married western man, one unmarried western man and two unmarried Chinese women, all of whom were or had the experiences of being in relationships with Chinese women or western men. The five western men participants were from three different western countries (United States, Canada and Australia), and the five Chinese women came from four different Chinese cities. Participants' regions of origin are presented in crude

categories as opposed to the specific province, state, or city, and some place names are omitted from quotes in an attempt to provide as much anonymity as possible to participants.

3.4 Data Collection

Interviewing has been favored by qualitative researchers because, as Reinharz says, it “offers researchers access to people’s ideas, thoughts, and memories in their own words rather than in the words of the researcher” (19). According to Charmaz, “Intensive qualitative interviewing fits grounded theory methods particularly well. Both grounded theory methods and intensive interviewing are open-ended yet directed, shaped yet emergent, and paced yet unrestricted.... the combination of flexibility and control inherent in in-depth interviewing techniques fit grounded theory strategies for increasing the analytic incisiveness of the resultant analysis” (29). I also adopted this method. However, I did not use the traditional face-to-face communication. Rather, I used on-line interviews which are not so established as a form of research. Reinharz believes that “feminist research will use any method available and any cluster of methods needed to answer the questions it sets for itself” (213). Although it is true that on-line interviews lack the spontaneity and the rich paralanguage of face-to-face conversation, I feel that in some ways the questions in my research were better answered by using on-line interviews rather than the face-to-face ones. First, the long distance between Canada and China and the dispersion of the participants in several major Chinese cities made it difficult for me to conduct face-to-face interviews with them. Second, Chinese women may not feel free

to talk about personal feelings before other people, especially when it comes to sex. (As a Chinese woman myself, I am well aware of this situation.) Western men may also find it difficult to voice their opinions about Chinese women when facing a researcher who is a Chinese woman herself. On-line interviews ameliorated these difficulties by giving the participants the opportunity to reflect on their experiences, and to write freely without constraints imposed by a meeting with the researcher.

Patton believes that no single source of data can provide as comprehensive a picture of the phenomena as is needed for understanding (qtd. in Whitt: 412). In order to provide what Reinharz calls “a richer and far more accurate interpretation” (213), I supplemented on-line interviews with multiple email interviews and text analysis. Following is my discussion of these data gathering methods in greater detail.

3.4.1 Guided On-Line Interview

Semi-structured interviewing was employed in my research. As is pointed out by Reinharz, semi-structured interviews differ from structured interviews in that they include “free interaction between the researcher and interviewee” (18). I directly involved participants in the structuring of the interview process, and found that a friendly, conversational style interview, founded on reciprocity between the participant and the researcher, is very conducive to data collection. Some participants really enjoyed talking to me on line and were interviewed five times. However, in an attempt to accomplish what Patton describes as “increas[ing] the comprehensiveness of the data and mak[ing] data collection somewhat systematic for each respondent” (206), I prepared some open-

ended questions on specific topics and issues to guide the interviews. As is suggested by Charmaz, “having an interview guide with well-planned open-ended questions and ready probes can increase your confidence and permit you to concentrate on what the person is saying. Otherwise you may miss obvious points to explore because you become distracted by what to ask next and how to ask it” (29-30). Interview questions were divided into three parts: introductory interview questions, interview questions and a list of attributes that people seek in a long-time romantic partner (see the Appendices C&D). Consistent with the grounded theory emphasis on “simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis”, some questions were generated during the interviews which were then added to the list and posed to other participants.

Each on-line interview ranged from 90 minutes to 150 minutes and participants had one to five on-line interviews depending on their availability and access to internet. Interviews with western male participants were carried out in English. Interviews with some Chinese female participants (Qingqing, Anna, Lucy) were carried out in Chinese and quotes from them were translated into English by me. Interviews with Lanlan were carried out all in English and with Xiu, partly in English and partly in Chinese. The quotes in Chinese from Xiu were also translated into English by me. Two of the participants (Peter and Lanlan) were not available to talk on line and were interviewed by emailing the questions to them which resembled what Shere Hite (qtd. in Reinharz: 238) described as “long, essay-type questionnaires”.

3.4.2 Multiple Email Interviews

According to Reinharz, “multiple interviews are likely to be more accurate than single interviews because of the opportunity to ask additional questions and to get corrective feedback on previously obtained information” (37). Most participants were interviewed on line more than once and all participants were interviewed more than twice by email after the main interviews. The follow-up email interviews were mainly utilized to ask vignette questions and questions about general attitudes towards love and marriage which participants needed more time to read and think about. Emails were also used to clarify unclear points and ask additional questions that arose during the reading and analyzing of the main interviews.

3.4.3 Text Analysis

Whitt points out that documents are a useful, if often overlooked, source of data in qualitative studies. Both public record and personal documents can provide rich insights into the setting and can also be used to support information from other data sources (411). Following Reinharz’s suggestion that researchers “search for data from everyday life and identify missing information” (162), I used data from public forums on the internet (<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=28988> and <http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=104749>) and the personal website of a western man in Hongkong (<http://www.bigwhiteguy.com/tales/50.php>) to support information from other data sources. Public forums are the kind of data “from everyday life” which have been neglected by many researchers. They are valuable to me in that they possess what Reinharz describes as “a naturalistic, ‘found’ quality because they are

not created for the purpose of study” (147). It is a natural flow of thoughts which reflects the genuine feelings of the speakers. Writing anonymously enables the speakers to express their innermost thoughts and personal experiences that they may not be able to share with anyone. This is why Charmaz believes that “internet posts... may give you insights into perspectives, practices, and events not easily obtained through other qualitative methods. (39)” However, public forum data also has a major weakness: it is impossible to ascertain the authenticity of gender of the speaker. For this reason I only used it as a supplement to other data sources.

3.5 Data Analysis

For data analysis, I followed the following principles of grounded theory practice that Charmaz summarizes in *Constructing Grounded Theory*:

- Simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis
- Constructing analytic codes and categories from data, not from preconceived logically deduced hypotheses
- Using the constant comparative method, which involves making comparisons during each stage of the analysis
- Advancing theory development during each step of data collection and analysis

(5)

Following the principle of “simultaneous involvement in data collection and analysis”, I began the analysis almost immediately after each interview. As is pointed out by Charmaz, simultaneous data collection and analysis can help go further and deeper

into the research problems because it helps us learn about gaps and holes in the data from the earliest stages of research (48). The questions that arose during the data analysis were asked in subsequent interviews and used for the refinement of initial questions. I

observed the procedures of inductive analysis of data: During the initial coding, I studied fragments of data-words, lines segments, and incidents- closely for their analytic import.

While engaging in focused coding, I selected what seem to be the most useful initial codes and test them against extensive data. Throughout the process, I compared data with data and then data with codes. Writing memos helped me generate categories and themes. The emerging hypotheses were then tested against the data, and the themes that seemed to be emerging were challenged by seeking alternative understandings. I adopted an interpretive/constructionist view of theory that Charmaz advocates. According to Charmaz, the interpretive definition of theory emphasizes understanding rather than explanation. She states that “interpretive theory calls for the imaginative understanding of the studied phenomenon. This type of theory assumes emergent, multiple realities; indeterminacy; facts and values as inextricably linked; truth as provisional; and social life as processual” (126-127).

Patton offers a suggestion on how to write qualitative research. He points out that reports of qualitative research require “thick description”, ie. detailed descriptions of the phenomenon (qtd. in Whitt:413). In my thesis, I try to use verbatim quotations as much as possible to “convey the feelings, surface and deep meanings, and consistencies and inconsistencies of the insiders’ experiences” (Fetterman qtd. in Whitt: 413).

3.6 Limitations

Conducting a study about the attitudes of any group of people poses questions related to generalizability. According to Whitt, the paramount objective of qualitative research is understanding, rather than the ability to generalize. She says “The qualitative research seeks to understand the ways in which participants in the setting under study make meaning of -- and so understand -- their experiences” (407). In this thesis, I attempt to understand the ways in which Chinese women and Western men in intercultural relationships in China understand their love and marriage experiences. With the aim of the in-depth analysis of the expectations of a group of Chinese women and western men, generalizability was not the goal of this study. Although I tried to find participants with diverse backgrounds so as to be more representative, the result of this research could not be generalized to all Chinese women and western men. For future research endeavors, it would be beneficial to triangulate methods of data collection, using larger-scale interviews or supplementing interviews with focus groups and quantitative methods.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

All information gathered was treated in a respectful and confidential manner. Because I used snowball sampling, the participants might be quite familiar with one another, and since some were couples, matters of privacy required careful attention. All names and identifying information were changed if requested by the participants. My supervisors saw sections of the printed interviews, but any information that might identify the participants or the people they mentioned were deleted from what they read.

The transcripts of on-line interviews and email interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed five years after completion of the research in case of challenges to the results of the study. It will also allow time to prepare papers for possible conference presentation and/or publication.

3.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the epistemological and methodological paradigms from which my research emerged. In chapters four, five and six, which follow, findings and analyses are presented. Chapter four introduces the five western men and five Chinese women participants and presents the findings from the data collection.

Chapter 4 An Introduction to the Participants

4.1 Introduction

The main purpose of this chapter is to introduce the five western men (Mike, Fred, Jack, Allen, Peter) and five Chinese women (Anna, Lucy, Qingqing, Lanlan, and Xiu) who participated in this study. A brief description of their backgrounds as well as direct excerpts from interviews is provided to contextualize the expectations and views of these participants. From the direct excerpts, themes of the myths of intercultural relationships and the attractiveness and unattractiveness appear. Excerpts from the interviews are presented as transcribed, and barring typos, are quoted verbatim. Omissions made for continuity or shortenings for practical purposes of relevance and ease of reading are indicated by ellipses. As mentioned earlier, participants' regions of origin are presented in crude categories as opposed to the specific province, state, or city, and some place names are omitted from quotes in an attempt to provide as much anonymity as possible to participants.

4.2 Participants

4.2.1 Mike: *"Myself, I'm mystified."*

Mike is 31. He is from the US and has a B.A. He has been in China since 1997 and has worked in two Chinese cities as teacher, musician and translator. As an old friend of mine, he is honest, straightforward and supportive, contributing significantly to my study. Mike has been in relationships with four Chinese women. He shared stories about his first three Chinese girlfriends:

The first: When I left the southern Chinese city to return to the US, I said I didn't want to continue the relationship with her. That I wasn't in love with her and didn't plan to return to China. She was upset. After that we communicated sometimes by mail and phone. When I came back to China, she was upset that I came to another city rather than her city. Her mother called me without her knowledge and asked whether I loved her. I said no. When she found out about this call, she said she never wanted to speak with me again, and she hasn't. I've learned that she is married to an Italian.

The second: She began to feel impatient about financial matters: she very much wanted to buy an apartment for her mother and stepfather. Also, she wanted to move to the US to promote her career. I wasn't ready to buy an apartment. I considered moving back to the US with her, and we looked into getting a fiancée's visa. But throughout this process, we often disagreed about the directions we wanted to pursue. I wanted a maximum of free time to read and write. She wanted to make money. We decided it made most sense for us to split up. She was introduced to an American businessman from Boston. Within a year she had moved to the US and married. She and I are still in contact.

The third: From the outset we had talked about our relationship as an "affair" rather than a serious relationship. She began to feel that it had gone beyond that, that we were ready for more commitment. Throughout this time I had already been attached (emotionally) to my current girlfriend, but it seemed there was no chance of that working out. The two women knew of each other. When it seemed

like there WAS a chance of things working out, when this girlfriend decided to try to find a position in my city, I decided to break up with the girlfriend here. She didn't agree. That only confirmed that we were in deeper than I wanted to be. The period of separation lasted about two months. Since then, I've seen her only a few times, and only by coincidence.

His current girlfriend Qingqing is a judge in a court in a western city. He met her there when he was teaching in a local university. Qingqing, a law undergraduate at that time, sat in on his class and offered to teach him Chinese. As mentioned above, Mike was dating another woman at that time. Later he returned to the US and then came back to China, but to a different city where he has been working as a musician in local bars and as a free-lance translator. He dated two other women there and was in touch with Qingqing through emails, phones and occasional visits. He said, "through all that time, she and I were only corresponding, only slowly falling in love, never 'dating'". He "would marry her tomorrow if she and her parents consented", but their trajectories "seem to be opposite" and her parents will only consent to their marriage if he has a stable job in a decent organization.

Mike finds Qingqing has excellent sense of humor, intelligence and iconoclasy, but her filial piety makes it difficult for him to be with her. He feels that she doesn't have the courage of her convictions. "She talks and thinks like an iconoclast- supporting freedom of the individual, even calling herself an anarchist- and indeed I think she really believes in these things- but as far as her own behavior is concerned, she's rigidly

Confucian⁷.” He loves the generosity in her character, but find her lines in conflict with his, which are “individualism, anarchist politics, Zhuangzi⁸”.

Mike and his girlfriend have been living apart for 7 years. When I asked Mike whether he had considered moving to her city, he said he had thought of it, but the climate there is almost unbearable (very humid), and the great obstacle is he is reluctant to step under her familial umbrella which is traditional.

Four months after my interview with Mike, he moved to join his girlfriend. He and Qingqing have rented an apartment there. Mike met some Tibetans who do community development work such as building schools and is looking for a chance to spend time in a very distant countryside village in southwestern China. But Qingqing thinks her parents might literally die of a stroke or heart attack if she moved with him to the countryside and so puts her chance of leaving with him there at less than 50%. What will happen between them is “entirely uncertain”.

Having stayed in China for about ten years and read extensively about China, Mike has a good understanding of Chinese history, literature and culture. As a writer, he is highly perceptive and articulate. Mike finds Chinese women are “less submissive than I expected. Certainly more materialistic. But then, everyone's more materialistic than I expected.” “Chinese women seem more "practical", less "romantic"; this is unattractive. They play more games, which includes telling lies, and they pout much more, which to me is unattractive. They tolerate more unfairness from their partners. Tolerance, by and

⁷ Confucius (550BC-479BC): a Chinese thinker and social philosopher, whose teachings and philosophy have deeply influenced the Chinese society. His main themes of thought include governmental morality and social relationships.

⁸ Zhuangzi: an influential Chinese philosopher who lived around the 4th century BC. His main beliefs include anarchy, idealistic human freedom and the ultimate equality of all things in the universe.

large, is attractive. They're less cynical than westerners, very attractive. They're less self-conscious or inhibited while having sex, also attractive." The main issues of the myth of subservience and the attractiveness and unattractiveness of Chinese women throughout Mike's reflections will be analyzed in the next two chapters.

4.2.2 Fred: *"They (Chinese women) are more real I feel about life and are not afraid to work at it."*

Fred is 47. He is from the US and is now living with his wife in a southern Chinese city. He has a BS degree and was a project manager for a company in the US. His wife, Ping, is 42. She is from Guangdong province and has been working for a Law Firm in the southern city. They met at a friend's party in 2001 when Ping visited the US for business. Afterwards, they corresponded through letters, emails, phone calls and occasional visits. Fred says Ping expressed affection first through words in their correspondence about 3 or 4 months after they met. Fred proposed to Ping in early 2002 when they made dinner together and they got married on November 1, 2002. It is the first marriage for both of them. They started the immigration procedures for Ping to come to the US, but it took longer because she still worked in China and did not reside in the US. Later Fred's job was not going very well, so they moved to China in May 2005. Fred is now working as a consultant and an English teacher in China.

Fred thinks his wife attracts him most because "she is very independent. I like that in a woman. She is very friendly, adventurous, smart, outgoing, honest, loyal. She has a certain grace about her. We both have different interests and she respects that. She

is very supporting and loving.” But he also finds his wife bossy sometimes.

Being in China only one year, Fred is not very familiar with Chinese culture, but hence provides some very fresh impressions of Chinese women and Chinese culture. Fred made some interesting comments about both Chinese women and western women:

Western women tend to want a man who can give them all that they want. They expect and think that they deserve things. Western culture perpetuates the myth of the knight in shining armor who will come along and be there everything. Then there is the myth of the super women who can have it all. A career and a family, etc. This is not true. I feel that Chinese women have not been exposed to a lot of these cultural myths. They are more real I feel about life and are not afraid to work at it. I do tend to like a more independent woman.

We had serious arguments over some of his opinions which make the interviews very interesting and much longer than expected. It ended up I interviewed him three times and the longest one lasted five and a half hours. The themes arising from his perceptions will be presented in the next two chapters.

4.2.3 Jack: “.... I don’t want to be portrayed as a disappointed seeker of subservience.”

“Western women are citizens; no Chinese are.”

Jack is 38 and is from Canada. He has a B.A. and is now teaching English in a southern Chinese city. He has been working as an English teacher for Chinese companies and language schools for ten years. Jack says he had two “real (consuming, romantic) love” experiences in mainland China. In the first one, “she wasn’t entirely serious. I

was”; in the second one, “she was serious about getting a materially beneficial man” and left him when “she saw that western did not mean material.” Now they are “all in the past” and he is in “caring” relationships with several Chinese women at present.

Being very critical and original, Jack contributed greatly to my study by offering his unique and unconventional perceptions on gender and cultural issues within relationships. Throughout the interviews, Jack was very careful to avoid “the race-gender obsessive” that he worried might exist “in my line of thought”. When I asked him “what are your expectations for the real (consuming, romantic love)”, he answered, “intelligence, gentleness, independence” and then brought up the topic of the myth of subservience:

Some say that ‘western’ men imagine oriental women to be more subservient; that these men look here for matches because western women are too free or unfeminine. But any man who has come to the East knows that this is just a myth. For my part I never wanted subservience.

When I wanted to talk a bit more on this topic, he said,

I am not going to go into this because I was never interested in subservience. I don’t want to be portrayed as a disappointed seeker of subservience. People who seek subservience will find it, whether in their own country or abroad. People who seek subservience (or any specific character trait) within broad categories (like “female”, “male”, “Chinese”, “American”) must necessarily be disappointed.

When I asked, “Generally, what do you think of Chinese women compared with western women? Are there any particular aspects that you find attractive and some that

you find unattractive?” He objected to “speaking generally” “because that turns me into the race-gender obsessive that I object to in yr line of thought. I don’t believe there are any differences that have anything essential about them. More westerners are fat, but easterners are catching up - because of industrial & “fast” food. (so if I were to choose a stranger’s body for sexual purposes, I would be smarter to specify Chinese; but this will change)”. Jack’s objection against essentializing cultural and gender differences is very postmodern.

Jack also provided very pungent and insightful remarks on Chinese women and Chinese culture. For example, he observed that oriental women play at being girl-children while western women are rather more likely to resist such sexist displays because they know it encourages bad ideas. He asserted that “western women are citizens; no Chinese are.” He also commented on the lack of individuality in general in China which accounted for “a world of beings who are childlike (good)/childish (bad).” His observations will be discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

4.2.4 Allen: “The absolute most uncooperative, independent, strong-willed, difficult and obstinate people on the planet, the Chinese women I’ve known well: (about 5)”

Allen is 49. He is from the US and has two M.A. degrees. He came to China in 1985 and has been teaching in several Chinese cities. He married his first American wife in the US when they both just turned 20 and got divorced 16 years later in 1991. He met the current wife Lucy in June 2000 in a language school when she was taking his English summer class. They moved in together in August 2001. He proposed to her in November

2001 and they got married in April 2002.

As an old friend of mine, Allen has been very supportive of my project and has been trying to be “a provocative inspiration” for my further study. Earlier in 2004 when I was just conceiving the idea of writing about intercultural relationships, he gave me some very valuable suggestions on narrowing down the topic and on what he thinks of intercultural marriage. He also recommended some useful sources including the website of Big White Guy (<http://www.bigwhiteguy.com/tales/50.php>) .

Allen finds it hard to understand Chinese women. He thinks that the Chinese women he’s known well (about five) are “the absolute most uncooperative, independent, strong-willed, difficult and obstinate people on the planet”. He finds Chinese women “basically selfish, inconsiderate, and dishonest! Like most babies!” However, they “can also have delightful sides” which are “uninhibited, playful, childish, very good at teasing and being teased”. He is attracted by his wife’s “cute, funny ways”, and he thinks that “she seemed to be from the start a “we’re in this together” team player type, who would not only pitch in to help, but loyally fight alongside if need be.” But he also finds that his wife “tends to be bossy and rude if not reminded and his former girlfriends “all wanted to rule”. He is also disgusted with Chinese women playing games. However, he admits that

To me the perfect woman is Asian, if she's been to finishing school. A certain magical charm, way of holding the head and way of speaking and laughing, absolutely captivating, and don't remember US women being so. They are usually too fat and too wasteful, and their heads are full of even more muck than....it's the religious indoctrination on top of the political.

We had 4 interviews and some email conversations before and after. During the interviews, I explored some of the things in Chinese women that have been baffling him for a long time. He found my thoughts very helpful and told me “I have so much to learn. I wish I could have learned from you since 1999!” and said that next time if he sees something he cannot understand, “I will need your counsel.”

4.2.5 Peter: “Western women do these things (playing babyish) to a far lesser extent than Chinese women although I don't know why.”

Peter is 26 and is from Australia. He has a PhD and is a lecturer at a university in Australia now. He met his wife Lanlan at a capital city in northern China, in October 2002. He was an English teacher at a university and his wife was a student there. They met at a party. He asked for her phone number and invited her to dinner the next week. He spoke about their relationship to his friends and family about one to two weeks after their first date. He said Lanlan expressed love first by saying “I love you” in Chinese. They decided to get married about one and a half years after they first met. She came to Australia on a prospective marriage visa and he formally proposed to her on New Year's Eve, 2004. He didn't have any serious relationships before getting married but did see a small number of women on a casual basis. He found his wife much more caring and considerate than other women. “She is very kind, considerate and loyal. She is very committed to our relationship and genuinely wants to take care of me.”

I contacted Peter through a friend who was in the same university where he taught English. As it was not convenient for him to talk on MSN, I emailed all the interview

questions to him, and got all the answers from him through email. All the follow-up questions and answers were carried out through emails too.

Before coming to China, Peter thought that Chinese women were very obedient and submissive. He admitted that it is a common stereotype of Chinese women and he got it from things he'd seen and heard about China and his impression of Chinese classmates as quiet and reserved. But after being in China, he found that "although Chinese women have a strong sense of looking after their husbands they express their own opinions and are not afraid to ask for what they want." Peter was aware of the potential for some Chinese women to want to marry for a visa or money but felt confident that he could tell who was genuine and who wasn't. When asked about Chinese women playing babyish, Peter believed that

most Chinese women do these things. I would say they do it because they feel that's what women should do or how women should act. Sometimes they do it to get what they want. In my opinion Western women do these things to a far lesser extent than Chinese women although I don't know why. I think pouting/ playing feminine/babyish makes Chinese women more approachable and easier to get along with but if it's done too much it can be annoying.

4.2.6 Anna: "There are tons of opportunities, why should I go to the West?"

"Sometimes women should be like women."

Anna is 31. She is from a southern province in China. Graduated from a college, she has been an executive assistant, and doing administration and sales work in two

economically developed southern Chinese cities. At present, she has her own business. She met her former boyfriend Matt in October 1998. One night she was waiting for the bus at a bus stop when Matt stopped his bike by her to ask her the way. She sent him home by taxi. He called her later and invited her to dinner. Anna refused because she thought it was just a small thing. After he called several times, she finally went to the dinner with a girlfriend of hers. When asked why, she says she was a bit afraid to meet a foreigner and wanted to protect herself. Matt went back to the US for Christmas in 1999 and stayed till he finished his university degree. He came back to China in September 2000. Anna was seeing another man while he was away because she was not sure he would come back. After Matt came back, they were together for a while, but finally broke up in May 2001. Anna thinks the main reasons they broke up is that he is not financially secure, he is not mature and also they have different opinions on people and things.

We talked about marriage, but every time we talked about it, it didn't end up good, coz we were afraid of marriage. I thought it impossible to marry before he got settled. I still think so now. My boyfriend hoped that we could go to the US, but I thought how we could get married if we went to the US where we had nothing. We should be more realistic, a lot of my friends say so. I think they are right. It's a realistic society. My boyfriend was not financially secure, but I had good conditions. It's easy for me to find a man with financial stability. I thought a lot about these, so was not sure whether to marry him or not. My friends laughed at me. They said I was wasting time; romantic things are not realistic and I should think about my future. But my boyfriend said there was no need to worry, take it

easy. We had different characters. Time passes quickly, we can't take it easy. ... I was very busy with my work, and I could contact people of different levels, so my values were changed. So we had different opinions and ideas.

Another reason I broke up with him is that he gave me the feeling of being very insecure. He didn't have an exact idea and plan of marriage. He proposed it when he thought of it and it seemed he wanted to finish it as soon as possible. If the issue was not raised, then he could just leave it there without thinking about it. So this insecurity had become a burden on my mind.

He didn't want to stay in China. He didn't like this city either. He thinks he should go to bigger cities, such as Shanghai/Beijin/Shenzhen/Hongkong, where he could probably find the job he wants. Or he could go to other countries. But it's the best to go back to the US.

He is not mature: he is never sure what he wants to do and what is suitable for him. He changes with time. He had plans, but the plans were soon replaced by new ideas.

After 9.11, it became very troublesome for us to go through the procedures to get married. That delayed our thing. It has some influence on us too, destroying our confidence.

I asked her whether she would consider being with this boyfriend again if he is economically better off. She answered,

Actually I just hope that he can find a job that he likes and he wants to do. Then there will be a higher possibility that we can be together. I don't like that he

always has too many ideas and is never sure what he wants. We are still in contact now. But the man I will marry should be a man with thinking, with knowledge, and with economic security. He is in the US now and has just moved to a bigger city. He says he will contact me when he gets settled. We really know each other very well, if money is not the problem, I would still be with him if we can start again.

Anna and Matt are still in contact. Matt wants her to move to the US, but Anna is still hesitating. She feels Matt is still not financially secure. Also, Anna has a strong sense of filial piety and does not want to leave her parents. Being busy with her own successful career in China, she does not want to give it up either. The most recent news I got from her is that Matt promised to go to China in 2008 and invited her to watch the Olympic Games in Beijing with him.

Anna was introduced to me through a friend. At first she was cautious, but later on, she began to trust me and become very cooperative, telling me everything on her mind. We had about eight major interviews, varying in length from 40 minutes to four hours. She recalls very emotionally and in great detail how they met, how they fell in love, and later how they finally broke up because of frequent arguments. Even after the interviews, she still chats with me on line from time to time, asking about my news and telling me about her own progress with work and boyfriends. Anna is very frank, open, down-to-earth and talkative, typing Chinese at a very fast speed. As a typical career woman in urban China, she is independent, confident, enterprising and shrewd. Unlike people who are crazy about going to developed countries, she is reluctant to go to the US,

because she knows very well that not speaking English well, she would have to start from the very beginning and it would be hard for her to be integrated to the local society. She is attracted to her boyfriend mainly because he is romantic and respects women. Independent as she is, Anna believes that “sometimes women should be like women” and thinks that Chinese women playing babyish is a show of femininity and the symbol of the high status of women in China. A detailed analysis of her experiences and perceptions will be presented in the next two chapters.

4.2.7 Lucy: “*Chinese won’t tell you these.*”

Lucy is 34 and is from a southern Chinese province. After completing her high school, she worked as a hotel attendant and an interpreter. She met her husband Allen in 2000 in a language school where Allen was her English teacher. Allen dated her about two months after they met. He invited people to his place for a party and then to dinner together. After dinner, he invited Lucy to a bar, but she refused. A couple of days later, he invited her again to dinner and this time Lucy went with a friend. They decided to get married two years after they met. Allen proposed to her three times during this period. She accepted the third time he proposed to her. Lucy has been working as a homemaker since they got married in 2002.

Lucy accepted Allen’s proposal only the third time he raised it because she felt she was not prepared the first two times. She was worried that she wouldn’t be as free if she got married. She says her husband gives her all the freedom she needs. Using her sister’s example, she feels that probably if she was married to a Chinese, she would have

a lot less freedom. In-laws are too close and put pressure on her sister to bear children, and before the child is born, she was monitored a lot. In a way she lost her sister who was forced to change her personality! “She became less generous and caring for her own family.”

Lucy’s parents were very against their marriage at first because he was married before and he is more than 10 years older than her. However, after seeing that Allen was very considerate and Lucy really insisted, they did not say much more. Her friends could not understand their relationship either because her former boyfriends were all tall and handsome, but this time she got “an old man” and he was a foreigner. They were also worried about their cultural and language differences.

Lucy was quite cautious at the beginning of their relationship. She said, “from what I watched on TV, it seemed they were very free and easy, can fall in love with anyone at random. After associating with some, I find that if they love someone, they don’t really care much about her appearance rather than what is inside. If they really fall in love, they are not sparing with their love. They will constantly let you feel the love and your position in his heart.” When I asked her what the qualities in him that attract her most are, she answered, “He can make me happy everyday. He is very confident, always full of hope. He has many good qualities. The most important thing is I know he loves me very much.” She had four or five boyfriends before Allen, but compared with him, they were all ordinary. “Coz he always let me know he loves me, and let me know that in his eyes I’m the most beautiful woman in the world. He is grateful for everything I do for him. Chinese won’t tell you these.” When I asked her about the qualities in his

personality that she does not like, she said,

I can't say I like or dislike. It's only that there are very big differences in our two cultures. Before, I thought he thought and did things in a very different way than normal people and I argued with him a lot. But later after we understood more about each other, I found that he had a lot of good qualities and those bad points gradually disappeared. And he has a very kind heart, which is what I like in him most.

In the interview with her husband, he told me that he has been broke since he met Lucy and Lucy had to borrow from her Mom until recently when he found a better paying job. When I asked Lucy "Do you give economic support to your parents?" Lucy simply answered, "No, they don't need my support. But he (Allen) always asked me to buy things for them. He buys things for them too. If it's necessary, he won't have any problem. He loves my parents."

We had on-line interviews twice. Lucy frequently apologized for typing Chinese too slowly. We had some follow up email discussions too. One of the major issues arising from Lucy's contribution to the study is the issue of the attractiveness of western men. This theme is discussed in detail in the next two chapters.

4.2.8 Qingqing: *"there are all kinds of birds when the forest is big."*

Qingqing is 28. She has a Master's degree and is a judge at a local court in a southwestern Chinese city. She met her boyfriend Mike in 1998 when he was an English teacher and she was a law student in the university. She cannot remember when the

formal dating started, but she asked him questions about literature first.

Qingqing finds that the major differences between her and her boyfriend is “the value of family, how to deal with the relationship between parents”. For her boyfriend, “it seems filial piety is not the duty of the children, but for her, “I tend to as pious as possible.” Qingqing’s parents were not happy with their relationship at first. Later on they began to understand, but still wanted her boyfriend to move to her city.

Before associating with western men, Qingqing found them “handsome, colorful, open, tolerant, charming”. Now she thinks that “there are all kinds of birds when the forest is big”. She is attracted by western men’s “values (innovative, adventurous, not brain-washed by the Communist Party), expressiveness, humor, respect for women.” However she finds “many of them don’t know much about Chinese tradition and present situation”. And she doesn’t like them being drunk a lot. When Qingqing compares her western boyfriend with her former Chinese boyfriend, she finds that the latter is “traditional. He also has a loving heart, but he is more worldly-minded, and more burdened.”

As a well-educated woman, Qingqing is open-minded and has some original ideas about life, love and marriage. For example, she believes that people get married because they try to be lazy, because marriage can save some strength for them both economically and emotionally. Some of Qingqing’s opinions are quite unexpected and surprising for me. For example, when I asked her about her attitudes towards extra-marital sex, her answer startled me. The following is our conversation on this topic:

Huang: What do you think of extra-marital sex?

Qingqing: Normal.

Huang: What if one side has sexual relationship with another person without letting the partner know about it?

Qingqing: If there is only sexual relationship, it's normal (who hasn't tried something new outside? It's human nature). If there is feeling involved, then you have to consider when you want to come back or get divorced.

Huang: If one side only has sexual relationship with another person, then the partner doesn't need to feel hurt?

Qingqing: There are legal red-light districts in France.

Huang: Sorry if I use an inappropriate example. Suppose your husband has sexual relationship with another woman, what will be your reaction?

Qingqing: First, he really has a good appetite. Second, he is not well-fed at home. Third, he is bored by the lack of changes of dishes at home.

Huang: Will you feel the need for constant change a burden? Is it a goal that can be obtained?

Qingqing: Yeah, everything has a limit: you can't remain unchanged, and it's tiring to change constantly too. It depends on whether his limit can match mine.

Huang: If you are bored with the dishes at home, will you go outside?

Qingqing: It's possible.

Later I emailed her some more questions and her responses are as follows:

Huang: What kind of sexual behavior do you think is immoral?

Qingqing: Having more than one sex partner.

Huang: I remember that last time you told me "If there is only sexual relationship, it's normal (who hasn't tried something new outside? It's human nature)." Can you say a bit more on this topic?

Qingqing: If other people do it, I understand. But I won't do it.

Huang: If your partner does it, will you understand?

Qingqing: I do. But there is a limit: it's Ok if he does it occasionally. There must be some reason for him to do so. If he takes it as pleasure, then he is not on the same trajectory with me.

Huang: Do you think "monogamy is a kind of interpersonal tyranny"?

Qingqing: No, it's not.

Qingqing seems to be open in theory, but not in behavior. Although analysis of sex/love is not the focus of my study, as is stated in the "Introduction," Qingqing's self-contradiction on this issue reflects the confusion of a lot of young people in modern China where the old codes of behavior have been discarded but there are not new rules of conduct to replace them. Detailed analysis of her perceptions will be presented in the next two chapters.

4.2.9 Lanlan: "For me, I prefer western man."

Lanlan is 24. She is from northeastern China. She has a BA degree and had taken a part-time teaching job at a foreign school when she was at university. She met her husband Peter at her English teacher's party in October 2002. She told her friends and family about their relationship in Dec 2003. Interestingly she says Peter expressed love

first about three months after they met and it was she who proposed to get married in August 2004 by asking “when will we marry?” But Peter says she expressed love first and they decided to get married together. Peter says Lanlan had trouble finding a job in Australia, so for most of their relationship he was the only one working.

As it was not convenient for Lanlan to talk on MSN, I emailed all the interview questions to her, and got all the answers from her through email. All the follow-up questions and answers were carried out through emails too.

Lanlan thinks her husband is “a gentle person, very considerate, takes good care of me.” And the only qualities that she does not like is that he gets grumpy when he has trouble with his computer sometimes and always spills food on his shirt. When talking about her former Chinese boyfriend, she said, “we went to different universities in different cities, and he had 3 or 4 new girlfriends. We broke up. My ex-boyfriend is a chewing gum, getting dull as time goes by. My husband is a bottle of Mao Tai (Chinese alcohol), time only makes him more attractive to me.” Before meeting her husband, Lanlan thought western men were “handsome, gentleman, tough, some of them are playboys”. After she met her husband, “he introduced some of his friends, they are all nice people, I think most of them are very responsible, loyalty to their partners.” Lanlan told me frankly that she preferred western men to Chinese men and gave me three reasons:

For me, I prefer western man. First, they are extremely responsible after they marry. They are less likely to have affairs, even some of them have affairs with other women, few of them will look for prostitutes. To the contrary, Chinese men

normally promise a lot before they get married, but once they get married, they get so much interested in affairs, especially those who get rich, “ER NAI⁹” are more and more popular, prostitutes are having more and more customers. Second, few western men have virgin complex, they think men and women are equal, if men can have sex before marriage, so can women. Third, you don’t have to concern too much about the relation with your in-laws if you married a western man.

Lanlan concluded the questionnaire I sent her by saying that “I just have one western husband and one Chinese ex, so the comparison I made is basically between the two people, maybe not correct, coz I really think I am lucky to have such a good husband.” In the next two chapters we will see whether Lanlan’s comparison is unique or common.

4.2.10 Xiu: “If I meet any westerner, the future life is an X¹⁰.”

Xiu is 25. She is from a province in Mid-China. She went to France for graduate study. While attending language class in February 2003, she met her boyfriend Chris who is from the US and was also learning French there. For the first date, he called her and they went to the highest point in Paris to see the night view of the city. The second day, he sent her a heart-shaped card with fresh rose petals inside and a CD of love songs. Then they dated everyday and she felt like flying everyday. Two and a half months later, she

⁹ Er Nai: mistress supported by a man.

¹⁰ X: a popular word in China to describe something unknown or uncertain.

told her family and friends about their relationship.

Chris came to China in August 2005. Xiu went to look for a place for him to stay. She then returned to France after getting him settled down. After Xiu graduated at the end of October she went to China and stayed temporarily in Chris's place. Xiu found that Chris's attitude to her changed a lot after he came to China. After a very unhappy month together, she found an apartment for herself and moved out. She proposed to separate a few times, but until now has not really broken up with him.

When I asked her whether she would consider having another westerner boyfriend, she said, "No. I wish to stay in China and spend a kind of steady life. In a certain long period, I do not want to move. If I meet any westerner, the future life is an X."

When Xiu told her parents about her relationship with Chris, "they were shocked" and were "absolutely against it". Xiu recalls that "they were afraid I might get hurt. They were afraid the relations between China and the US won't be stable. They were afraid of cultural differences and we wouldn't be happy". Later when Xiu brought Chris to see her parents, their attitudes were changed a little bit. "They had to accept him, but they still did not support in their heart. But they still had to consider being polite."

Xiu finds her boyfriend "is unique". She told me, "The first time I went to his place, he took out very delicate tea cups and made very nice rose tea, which made me feel he is so special. He is very romantic." However, she finds "many differences." She does not know "whether differences in personality are bigger than cultural differences, or that cultural differences cause differences in personality. But there are definitely cultural

differences.” Xiu feels that her boyfriend pays too much attention to formalities which for her is a kind of estrangement. She couldn’t bear his extremely individualistic behavior and gave two examples of how he did not buy water for her mom and aunt when they went out, and how he let her go to the internet cafe rather than using his computer for her resume. Detailed descriptions of her experiences will be provided in the next two chapters.

4.3 Conclusion

The brief characterizations in this chapter are intended to present a snapshot of each participant rather than to personify the characters of these individuals. Although some are my friends and I conducted interviews and email correspondence with all participants, I cannot say that I know them well enough to provide comprehensive descriptions at this point. The participants’ narratives are presented in more detail in the next two chapters to provide the basis for analysis. The next chapter discusses perspectives of the ten participants concerning their motivations for entering intercultural relationships. Two popular misconceptions about intercultural relationships among both westerners and Chinese people are analyzed.

Chapter 5 Myths

5.1 Introduction

This chapter discusses perspectives of the ten participants concerning their motivations for entering intercultural relationships. Quotes from the participants are presented to provide a sample of the experiences and views they shared with me, and in an attempt to offer them an opportunity to speak for themselves. In some cases, I have included my questions to contextualize the response. The themes covered in this chapter include the myth of subservience and the image of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers. The two popular beliefs about intercultural relationships are influential among both westerners and Chinese people. This chapter deals with these two themes in two sections. Each section analyzes the existence of the myth, its historical origin, and whether it really reflects the social reality.

5.2 Myth of Subservience?

Some say that 'western' men imagine oriental women to be more subservient; that these men look here for matches because western women are too free or unfeminine. But any man who has come to the east knows that this is just a myth.

For my part, I never wanted subservience. (Jack)

...Hey bonehead, my wife isn't an object. She's my best friend – that's why I married her.... (Big White Guy)

This first section discusses the myth of subservience which is widespread among western men who seek Chinese women. I consider where the myth comes from, what the

western men find after associating with Chinese women and ask whether western men are really looking for submissiveness in Chinese women. The quotes above from two participants set the scene for the theme raised by participants in this section. I begin with an introduction to common stereotypes of Chinese women by sharing some of my own observations and experiences.

In January 2004, when I came from China to Memorial University of Newfoundland for graduate study, I lived in residence with three undergraduate girls from Newfoundland as roommates. I soon got on well with these lovely, warm-hearted Newfoundland girls. Whenever there were guests to our apartment, my roommates would proudly show me off before them: "This is our beautiful China Doll." At that time, I didn't know what "China Doll" was. Something cute, I guessed. As I chatted more with my roommates, I began to find that "China Doll" is part of the impression that they have about Asian people along with the image of Chinese men with pigtailed in Jackie Chan's movies and the rhyme which is recited while kids pull their eyes upwards and downwards to indicate the physical appearance of Chinese or Japanese eyes: "Chinese, Japanese. See these. Money please." These were my first encounters with the stereotypes that westerners have about Chinese people. And it became a question I asked when I interviewed the western men participants: What was your mental image of Chinese women before coming to China? Is there any difference between what you imagined and what you really found? This theme of western men's perceptions of Chinese women emerged from the participants' narratives.

In the interviews with participants, the myth of Chinese women's submissiveness

was certainly present although that might not be the reason they seek Chinese women. The topic was first brought up by Jack, who was also my first interviewee. As already mentioned in Chapter Four, Jack seems to be very sensitive to this issue: when I asked him “what are your expectations for the consuming, romantic love”, he answered, “intelligence, gentleness, independence.” and then brought up the topic himself:

Some say that ‘western’ men imagine oriental women to be more subservient; that these men look here for matches because western women are too free or unfeminine. But any man who has come to the east knows that this is just a myth.

For my part I never wanted subservience.

When I wanted to talk a bit more on this topic, he refused to go into it because he was “never interested in subservience” and “do not want to be portrayed as a disappointed seeker of subservience”. While Jack seems to be very cautious of being portrayed as “a disappointed seeker of subservience”, Mike does not mind at all. When I asked Mike what was his imagination of Chinese women before coming to China and whether there was any difference between what he imagined and what he really finds, he answered that “perhaps they (Chinese women) are less submissive than I expected”. After the interview with Jack, I was a bit worried that western male participants might be reluctant to talk about the topic, so I broached the topic hesitantly with him, reassuring him that I am not deliberately trying to portray western men as seekers of subservience. He reassured me too: “It's alright if you are. I don't claim we aren't. Myself, I'm mystified.”

Pleasantly surprised by Mike's openness to discuss this topic, I asked him why he expected Chinese women to be submissive and where he got that impression. Following

was his answer:

.... trying to reconstruct my impressions: from film, magazines, books: from these I knew of bound feet, Chinese polygamy, and concubines; these three phenomena all point to submissiveness, at least on first consideration. (I would have viewed--and still mostly do view--the new revolutionary woman/female model worker as just laughable social-realist propaganda slapped over the social reality, whatever that is.) One book: *The Good Earth*--what I remember is how available women were to a man with a little cash (though on re-reading I expect I'd find a powerful figure in the wife). *The Sand Pebble* is one of many films where a foreigner falls for a Chinese (or in other cases Vietnamese or Japanese) woman. Stories of Vietnam War soldiers/*Madame Butterfly* stories informed my imagination of Asian women in general. Also, there's the art and literature of China itself--insofar as it gets to the US--meaning the Tang/Song poetry, *Hong Lou Meng*, Chinese landscape paintings--which itself is effete, introspective. Then I had female Chinese-American classmates (American daughters of Chinese immigrants, who were in a difficult position between cultures): one in jr. high/ high school, several in college. They were more domestic-minded than classmates with American parents: said they wanted to be housewives; and they seemed more bent on pairing up with men; seemed to have more sex.

Mike's self-reflection of how he got the impression of the Chinese women as submissive from literature and movies shows how Asian women have been depicted in western culture. As Prasso observes, "the image of the submissive, subservient, exotic

Oriental is a pervasive one: the tea-serving geisha, the sex nymph, the weeping war victim, the heart-of-gold prostitute” (8). *Madame Butterfly* is the archetypal story of western notions of the Asian mystique: a delicate Asian woman with undying love for an American naval officer. According to Prasso, the original story was actually about a “tiresome, money-counting prostitute” and it was later adapted several times before finally being transformed by Puccini into “the story of a pining, suicidal lover” (86). But Puccini’s opera was so widely acclaimed that his story has become the standard and most influential version. *Memoirs of a Geisha*, a 1997 novel by Arthur Golden that was adapted to a movie in 2005, is another notorious example of distorting the life of Asian women. Out of curiosity, I obtained both the movie and book versions and saw a cliché Orientalist story of a pretty girl being sold to the geisha house at a young age by poor parents, having undying love for a man she met only once on a bridge, and then resolving to become a geisha to be able to get close to him someday. Then I read in Prasso’s *Asian Mystique* the author’s visit to Miss Iwasaki, the real-life inspiration for the character, and found that actually real geishas come from good backgrounds and choose this profession because of the free, wonderful life of singing and dancing it offers. Geishas are not prostitutes; they would never auction their virginities. Miss Iwasaki sued Golden for misrepresenting her character and is writing her own memoir as a rebuttal to Golden’s book.

The Good Earth by Pearl Buck, which is mentioned by Mike, might provide a fairly accurate account of Chinese women in the early 20th century. However, published in 1931, it is now an outdated description of Chinese women more than seventy years ago.

No place is like what it was 75 years ago. As discussed in Chapter Two, in the 20th century, the Chinese society has evolved from the feudal society, to semi-colonial and semi-feudal society, to socialist society. Women's status has been changing all the time. Also, as Mary Gallagher points out, "... Chinese women by and large have not internalized the ever-present social idea of women's inferiority. Whenever the economic or social system allows them some options, they take them. Women in China do not usually play the part of the downtrodden, pitiful victim" (102). Gallagher further draws on Henry Rosemont's opinion to explain that "though Confucian ideology is often antiwoman, it is not antitypical female gender traits, traits such as nurturance, yielding, intuition.... As blatantly sexist as the patriarchal, patrilineal, and patrilocal traditional Chinese society was, women were able to resist internalization of personal inferiority, and instead model traits adaptive to their context" (102). In *Myths of "Mail-Order" Marriages*, Constable also argues that even the Confucian "three obediences" refer to ideals of an idealized Chinese past. She points out that some representations of Asian women "overlook distinctions between ideals, past history, and actual lived experiences.... this representation of women is largely a male view of how things should work, as opposed to how they actually do or did; women had their own ideas about family structure and their own access to power and authority" (83).

Mike, Peter and Allen's comments about the submissiveness of Chinese women will help us better understand Gallagher, Rosemont, and Constable's analyses about Chinese women. When I asked Mike why he thought Chinese women were less submissive than he expected, he analyzed it this way:

It might be that I'm seeing their position now from a more Chinese perspective. That's to say, they seem submissive like bamboo: they understand and exploit the power in the passive-aggressive stance or the passive-passive-aggressive stance. (The role of the main heroine in Lin Yutang's "Moment in Peking" is an example: discovering her husband is having an affair, she invites the mistress into the house, offers to share her husband, which offer the husband of course refuses so that she ends up with him to herself; or the roles of certain of the women in Hong Lou.) Single illustrative instances are hard to find; certainly on the face of it--especially in public- Chinese men enjoy an image of domination. But watching a couple over the long run, you see that most of the important decisions end up falling to the woman's preferences. Maybe the man makes the decisions, but they fall to the woman's preferences. In 1950s generation, people now in their fifties, many of the men have been broken by the times: they're depressed, bad-postured, unmotivated, heavy-smoking. Their wives are more energetic, more active, more positive, healthier. An example: an acquaintance had a full professorship at BeiDa; he was very satisfied with it, was himself a native of the north and felt that he could happily spend the rest of his life in that position; but he had spent some time as a grad student in the U.S., and his wife's mother was adamant that her grandchild grow up in America; so now they live in the U.S., he's a non-tenured associate professor at a second-tier university in a city with only a small Chinese population; he misses Beijing painfully. Another example: a young couple I know: the man was trying to get into graduate school: he'd taken the test two years in a

row and wanted to take it a third time, but the woman didn't want him to: he wasn't getting anywhere, she said: wouldn't it be better if he went to work full time and made some money to buy an apartment and get married within the year? They disagreed about this for about a week, and then he relented. The pattern is: the man seems to have made a choice--an apartment, a job, a school, a sofa, etc, etc--but in fact it was made by his wife. He'll say: Suan le suan le...hong ta gaoxing yi tang! Wo bi buGuo ta de zui! (Forget it! Forget it! I can't compete with her mouth!)

Peter has the same feeling as Mike: "I thought Chinese women were very obedient and submissive. Since being in China I have found that although Chinese women have a strong sense of looking after their husbands they express their own opinions and are not afraid to ask for what they want." As already mentioned in Chapter Four, Allen described the five Chinese women he knew well as "the absolute most uncooperative, independent, strong-willed, difficult and obstinate people on the planet".

What Mike, Peter and Allen report about Chinese women echoes what one Chinese woman claimed in Constable's *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail-Order" Marriages*: "Even Chinese men may think of themselves as the head of the household, but in fact, women are often the ones in charge, even if the men don't know it!" (67). Constable points out, "Men's ideas of power and control, in other words, can coexist with women's notions of their own power and control. Both men and women, meanwhile, are subjected to other forms of power that at once restrict their options and offer new possibilities." In *The Asian Mystique*, Prasso also

discusses this issue:

Yes, there are traditions in Asia, such as Confucianism, foot-binding, bride burning, and the like, that have helped form our notions of Asian women as 'oppressed' But, to be fair, women in the United States and Europe also face institutionalized sexism, as evidenced by the enormous class action suit by women refused advancement by Wal-Mart, or the multi-million-dollar sex discrimination settlements by large Wall Street firms that currently employ women in only one out of five executive management positions. In Asia, it's much the same story. Sex discrimination exists there too. But Asian women also run major companies ... They run more than half of all registered businesses in Thailand and the Philippines. Women in Asia who want successful careers ... are able to have them. The Philippines has more women than men in the civil service, and it has more women elected to national public office than does the United States. Even Japan has close to the same ratio of women governors as the United States – four out of forty-seven, compared to six out of fifty. Thus, the stereotypes we still hold are based on old notions preserved, as if in aspic, by limited contact between East and West. (23)

Prasso also argues that superficial cultural practices contribute to the stereotypes. For example, a number of her Asian women interviewees said explicitly that their tactics (not their inner selves or core values) are different from Western women when it comes to male-female relations which can be summed up as something like, "Catch them first, reveal yourself later" (23).

From what we have discussed above, the myth of subservient Chinese women is quite well-known among westerners before they come to China, but this does not mean that these western men come to China to seek for submissive Chinese women. As Jack says, "... for my part I never wanted subservience." There are certainly some men who come to Asia to look for the feeling of being King and to look for lost masculinity and to escape the feminists at home, but there are also very happy, equitable relationships. Most of the western men I interviewed are looking for soul mates rather than servants. Independence is valued by all of them. As Fred says, "Ping and I are also very good friends. We just really liked each other right at first meeting. We had many of the same interests, etc."

A Canadian man, Randall van der Woning (he calls himself BWG---Big White Guy), married a Chinese woman from Hongkong. His website (<http://www.bigwhiteguy.com/tales/50.php>) answers questions that are often asked of them, some of which are "downright rude". For example:

~ Do you have yellow fever?

Oh, shut up! I despise that term. It amazes me that people assume I married my wife because I have some kind of fetish for Asian woman.

A fetish is defined as any non-sexual object that abnormally excites erotic feelings.

Hey bonehead, my wife isn't an object. She's my best friend – that's why I married her. That she's Chinese was never a factor. Take note: using the word fetish around me when talking about Mabel is likely to get you punched in the head.

In the internet forum of China Daily, I also discovered some very interesting discussions of intercultural relationships. This is how Blue Tiger responds to Bigsky who asserts that “interracial marriages don’t work”

<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=28988>):

Your post is extremely racist, displaying your personal insecurity---and likely your ability to attract a woman of any race.

I am a white American male, very muscular and good looking. I have a wonderful Chinese fiancée, who I will marry in January. She is highly educated in science, very strong and athletic, and more emotionally strong and in control of herself than you are!

It is those qualities that I love her for, and she loves me, because I am so strongly supportive of continuing personal development.

She visited me and stayed with me for the whole month of July. She paid her way here and insisted on sharing expenses, while she was here. She insisted on paying for dinners at nice restaurants and for our travel in this country.

My cooking is excellent, so when we ate at my home, I cooked for her.

She completely impressed me with all aspects of her intelligence, sweetness, strength, and many talents.

In the modern world, educated men and women share work and expenses. My wife to be and I will work together, equally, to prosper in love and life.

....

On one hand, people like you complain that ALL westerners stereotype Chinese,

yet you are completely guilty of such behavior. In fact, you sound exactly like the uneducated person of America's old deep south, where there was racial hatred. White men used your same hateful, faulty reasoning to discourage white people from marrying those of African descent.

....

Racism and blind nationalism is immoral.

My wife to be is most certainly not a toy, nor does she want my money, as I am not wealthy and greedy. There is much more to life than money, and we share those many things---including our love for learning and our tolerance of people of all races, nationalities, and cultures.

....

One last thing: marriages within the same race are no more lasting and happy than interracial marriages. In fact, interracial marriages are often stronger.

All these men stress their desire for an egalitarian relationship. They claim to be looking for women who are their best friends and who share the same interests with them rather than submissive servants. There might be men looking for subservience, but they cannot represent all western men in intercultural relationships with Chinese women and their motives cannot be generalized. There are men like those quoted above who clearly do not see themselves as seeking subservient women.

While the myth of subservience of Chinese women is known among western men who seek Chinese women and in western culture, after associating with Chinese women, most western male participants find that Chinese women are not as submissive as they

expected. They also claim that they are not looking for submissiveness in Chinese women. The next section will discuss a second myth about intercultural relationships that is prevalent in China: the gold digging women.

5.3 Gold/visa-diggers?

Allen: "I don't think it's just a popular belief among Westerners. It's a fact that is quite obvious globally. Most Chinese know it too, especially Chinese women!"

Anna: ... There are tons of opportunities here, why should I go to the West? If I have money, I can go around the whole world....

This section discusses another myth that is prevalent among both westerners and Chinese: that Chinese women in relationships with western men are gold/visa diggers. It addresses what Chinese people, western men and Chinese women think about this issue, looks at where the myth comes from, and problematizes the widespread assumption of global hypergamy.

5.3.1 Political Economy

As is mentioned by James Farrer in his book *Opening up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*, when a western man is seen walking with a Chinese woman down a boulevard, the “ambitious Shanghai girl who has ‘caught’ a foreigner” always attracts the attention of Chinese people. My interviewees are also very familiar with this kind of attention. It not only reflects the cynicism of Chinese people toward the sexual motives of other people in the era of market transition, but also a popular belief in China

that Chinese women marry western men for money or for a visa to a western country. To understand this belief, it is necessary to first have a look at the situation of China from a historical and political-economic perspective.

During the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, China experienced imperialism as foreign powers established rights to Chinese treaty ports and markets through the “unequal treaties” following China’s defeat in the Opium Wars. When the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) defeated the Nationalist Party (KMT) and came to power in 1949, it is alienated by the US and other western countries. Following the establishment of the PRC in 1949 were several decades of Cold War between China and the West and the maintenance of a rigid “closed door” policy.

With the death of Mao in 1976 came the era of economic reform and the open door policies. Foreign enterprises, joint ventures, and cultural and academic exchanges made the exchange between China and the West possible. For the first time after 30 years of “closed door” policy, people began to see what was going on in the west and were amazed by the economic prosperity of western countries. The difference in the exchange rate of the Chinese and western currencies made people feel that every westerner in China was rich. A lot of Chinese in the 1970s and 80s had a blind admiration for the West and believed that “even the moon in the West is brighter.” At present, after 30 years of the capitalist economic development (although the officials resist this term), the booming economy has brought a phenomenal increase in the standard of living of many urban Chinese. The loosening of state control over culture and arts has led to greater exposure to the West. More and more Chinese are going to the west for study, for business or for

permanent residence, and some of them have returned to China with a deeper understanding of western cultures as well as of Chinese culture. However, it is still hard for the vast majority of Chinese people to obtain the visa necessary to travel to western countries and for them, the West is still a mysterious place of freedom and prosperity described in Hollywood movies.

5.3.2 What Do Chinese People Say?

With the attitude that developed countries are affluent and therefore all men from western countries must be rich, it is not difficult to understand why people assume Chinese women choose western men for money or for a visa.

This attitude can be seen in the attention my interviewees get from passersby when they go out. All the participants have received unsolicited attention from people they encounter and feel uncomfortable with it. While some just “ignore it” (Lanlan) or “get used to it after a while”(Qingqing), others respond less positively. As the experiences of Allen and Lucy, and Anna show, this can be disturbing.

Following is my conversation with both Allen and Lucy on this topic:

Huang: When you go out with Allen, is there too much attention from people around? What do you think of it?

Lucy: Yes. I’m amazed at how impolite, crude, rude people can be. I was surprised to find how disrespectful Chinese people can be. They don't care if people hear derogatory comments.

Huang: What derogatory comments?

Lucy: Can you handle the size of him?

Allen: She saved me from fighting by lying to me about what they said.

Huang: Did they say that behind you and Lucy or did they ask Lucy that?

Allen: Asked her, laughed, and ran off

Huang: How often do things like this happen?

Allen: Never happens here. Happens frequently in the mainland city I lived before,
and other Mainland tacky cities

Huang: Did that make you afraid of going out?

Allen: We dreaded going out because Allen hated their behavior and Lucy
wanted peace above all, allowing us to be insulted.

Huang: Do you think people are hostile to intercultural couple?

Allen: In general, the way foreigners are treated in China is in a kind of
unconsciously disrespectful way. Something about Chinese culture makes
everything kind of unintentional. People don't understand what they are
doing, or seem unaware of why they are getting hostile reactions to their
"hostility".

*Huang: What do Chinese people think of Chinese women who marry western
men?*

I mean did you hear about what people say and what was your reaction?

Allen: We had some extreme reactions where an old woman abused us on the
street, but most just say something like he is a businessman and she is his
secretary, or she is a prostitute.

Huang: What did the old woman say? What did you do?

Lucy: She pointed a finger: how can you possible be with that foreigner?

Allen: Very nasty and cruel

Huang: How did you react?

Allen: Disbelief

Anna and her boyfriend shared a similar experience:

...at that time we were faced with the bad comments from a lot of people. However bad they were, we had to bear them. For example, when we went out shopping, there would be a lot of eyes around us. My boyfriend would say hello to them, but some people who are of low-quality and not educated enough would use South Fujian dialect or some other dialects to make some very harsh comments behind us, such as how can this woman be with a foreigner? She must have some problems, or she must like foreign countries, or she must be with him because foreigners are rich, or that woman is no good either, etc.. etc..

Of course there are some people who would say this woman is good, she can speak English, they both look good, or this foreigner is very polite... But when we went out, it was very uncomfortable to be stared at as if we were rare animals....

It is usually the Chinese woman who receives more attention. Mike noticed this:

...there was never significantly more attention than I get when I'm alone in a Chinese environment. The interesting thing is that the attention mostly gets

transferred from me to the girlfriend--she's the one people are more curious about.

This naturally makes girlfriends uncomfortable....

When people see a pretty young Chinese woman with a seemingly unattractive foreign man, their reactions can be extreme. Mike told me that "sometimes young Chinese men respond antagonistically to seeing a foreigner with a Chinese woman. For me it hasn't gone beyond looks and comments (such as "Hello" in a falsetto voice) that are hard to distinguish from this group's behavior toward me when I'm alone. I knew a small Frenchman who was physically attacked on several occasions when he went out with his Chinese girlfriend (who happened to be particularly beautiful)."

Big White Guy's analysis on his website summarizes very well what is going on in these people's mind:

I get a big kick from watching the eyes and facial expressions of people we approach as we walk holding hands. I can see the wheels turning in their heads and can read their minds:

- What's she doing with him?
- What's he doing with her?
- How did she land him? He's handsome!
- Gold digger!
- I wonder what it's like in bed with him?
- Disgusting! She sleeps with a foreign devil.
- He's so tall! He must be enormous!
- How dare she marry outside our own people?

- Oooh, I wish I could find one like him.
- Aiyah! I wish all gwai los would go home!

The eyes truly are the windows to the soul.

5.3.3 What Do Westerners Say?

The stigma of Chinese women in relationships with westerners as gold diggers is not only popular among Chinese people, but also among westerners. As is said by Westdragon (<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=104749>) who posted an article titled “Asian women: caution when dating western men in Asia” on the internet forum of *China Daily*, “some of westerners have stereotype that Asian women wanna to marry them for a better life or possibility of living in USA. Deep down they are very caution when dating you.” (par. 5) Most of the western men participants I interviewed agreed that it is a popular belief among western men in China that Chinese women want to marry western men for money or for a visa and most of them were cautious when dating Chinese women. Jack states, “... many women have approached me for marriage (and emigration, I suppose). But as I say it’s not interesting, since I never considered it.” Allen even asserts, “I don't think it's just a popular belief among Westerners. It's a fact that is quite obvious globally. Most Chinese know it too, especially Chinese women!”

5.3.4 What Do Chinese Women Say?

Are all western men in China rich as Chinese imagine? Do Chinese women really choose western men for money or visas? Facing so much social pressure, do Chinese men

married to western men really get money or visas?

It is too great a generalization to say western men in China are rich or poor, but the warning Westerndragon (<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=104749>) gives for Asian women who have unrealistic dreams in western men offers some insight into this issue:

For some of the Asian women having unrealistic dream in western men, I would like to tell you that.

If an American man is very successful in New York he won't come to Tokyo to teach English. So pls don't expect much in westerners.

It takes husbands and wives to work very hard to afford a good living in USA. It's not all Americans live in upper communities; and dress like "Sex in the city" as we oftenly seen from Hollywood movies. (par.10-12)

The roommate of Anna and her boyfriend, a man from New Zealand, has also given Anna this suggestion: "no western young men have money. They spend and play away all the money they have. Nobody would think about the future. A girl like you should live with a man with financial stability."

There are Chinese women, like Mike's second girlfriend, who want an apartment and a visa and Jack's second love, who left him after seeing that "western did not mean material" (Jack). But, there are also women like one female participant who had to borrow from her Mom until recently as she and her husband have been broke since they met. And this was told me by her husband rather than by herself. She simply answered my question "Do you give economic support to your parents?" like this: "No, they don't

need my support. But he always asked me to buy things for them. He buys things for them too. If it's necessary, he won't have any problem. He loves my parents."

When I asked Fred how he and his wife deal with the economics of the relationship, he said his wife made most of the money now. "I have savings but she does not want us to touch it. It can be difficult because I feel I should be making more. I do express my concerns and Ping says that if she were in the States I would be doing the same thing. She is very wise."

When I asked Mike "Who pays for the bill when you go out with your girlfriend? Do you ever 'go Dutch'?" He said, "She used to always want to go Dutch. That was before dating. She still likes to pay for all or half of anything. I call her a bad communist. I have more money, so clearly I should be paying for things. Neither she nor I believe it has anything to do with the male/female difference."

From Big White Guy's answer to a rude question on his website, we can also see the point:

~ Don't you think the real reason she married you is so she could have a sugar daddy.

Oh, shut up! The concept is laughable. Neither of us were what I'd call wealthy when we met.

Listen up, ignoramus. We've been together since 1990. If she *had* married me for money, she would have left me by now. I'm not rich.

Yet.

Do these women choose western men so that they can emigrate to a western

country? Lucy and Allen have been married for four years, but Lucy has never yet been to the US and they never plan to go back there. Fred and his wife met in the US when his wife went there for business and Fred moved to China to join his wife after they got married because his wife has a very good job which she did not want to give up. Big White Guy met his wife in Canada when his wife was studying there and they moved back to Hongkong later because his wife was tired of Canadian winters. Qingqing's parents do not want their daughter to be far from them. They want her boyfriend Mike to stay in China and move to the city where they live. One of the conflicts Anna had with her boyfriend was that Anna wants to stay in her city but her boyfriend thinks "it's best to go back to the US". When I asked Anna, "You didn't want to go to the US?" She exclaimed,

I never wanted to go to the US since I started the relationship with him! I hoped he could stay in China. It's weird, right? Many people laugh at me for being so silly. Many people are trying so hard to go to the West. But I don't think that way. There are tons of opportunities here, why should I go to the West? If I have money, I can go around the whole world. This is what I think. Maybe it's a bit selfish... I told him I have my family and friends here. I'm familiar with the lifestyle and the life I want. If I go to the US, I won't have anything and have to start from the very beginning. I would need to go to school again, and I would need to work, and the job I can get will probably be the worst job that I've never done in China. It will take me some time, half a year or one year or even longer to be integrated to the local society and the circle of foreigners. It would be hard for me to face this new

lifestyle, coz I won't be an international student who has her own circle of friends. I will be married to you and you will be my circle! He asked me if I should stay with him if I marry him. My answer was yes, but I don't want an anchorless life!

Xiu met her American boyfriend while they were both studying in France. They both moved to China and are working there now. Their relationship is about to end. When I asked her, "If you really break up with him, do you think you might have another Westerner as a boyfriend?" She answered definitely,

No. I don't think so.

Huang: Why not?

Xiu: Too tired already. I just want to settle down. Romance is risky and unstable life.

Huang: Do you think all the western men are unstable?

Xiu: There might be exception. But I wish to stay in China and spend a kind of steady life. In a certain long period, I do not want to move. If meets any westerner, the future life is an X.

Huang: Why do you prefer to stay in China rather than a foreign country (e.g. France or US) ?

Xiu: Coz my root is in China. Even I went abroad, I felt there was a thread attached me to the home country.

Huang: But there are so many people who try every means to go abroad.

Xiu: Everyone is different.

I feel I was like a kite when stayed in abroad. Only returning to the origin can bring me the safety.

It is also a popular belief in China that marrying a westerner benefits not only Chinese women but also members of their families who also may obtain the opportunity to go to a developed country where their desires for wealth and freedom can be met. But from the interviews I did with Chinese women participants, most of the Chinese parents were against the relationships of their daughters with westerners because they worry about the happiness of their daughters. As already mentioned in Chapter Four, Qingqing's parents were very much against her daughter's relationship with a westerner at first. Later when they saw that their daughter was very determined, they insisted that her boyfriend stay in China and move to their city rather than go to the US. Xiu's parents were shocked when they knew that their daughter is in relationship with a American man. "My family is absolutely against it.... They were afraid I might get hurt. They were afraid the relations between China and the US won't be stable. They were worried about cultural differences and that we wouldn't be happy." Lucy's parents were very much against her relationship with an American man too. "They were against because he was married before and he is more than 10 years older than me...." Anna's parents even "gathered a family meeting which includes my uncle's family, voting to decide whether I can associate with him." She couldn't help laughing when talking about this, "Hahaha... it's so fun to think of it! My parents didn't really agree at the beginning, but later they saw that we were serious and began to accept him." For these Chinese parents, their daughters' happiness is much more important than the so called practical considerations

of immigrating to the developed countries.

These stories prove that it is not fair to say that all Chinese women choose westerners for money earning potential or for a visa. Well-educated Chinese women like Qingqing, Anna, Xiu and Fred's wife have equal or even stronger earning potential than their western boyfriends or husbands. While there might be some Chinese women who choose westerners so as to be able to go to western countries, there are also women who would prefer to stay in China or go back to China after studying in western countries because of the job opportunities and the feeling of safety in the home country. While it is true that most of these women I interviewed are well educated and professional and do not represent all Chinese women in relationships with westerners, they at least challenge the myth that all the Chinese women in relationships with westerners are gold/visa diggers.

5.3.5 Hypergamy?

The popular belief among Chinese and westerners that Chinese women marry westerners for money or for a visa reflects the widespread assumption that Asian women who marry westerners are "marrying up." It is a pattern that Constable refers to as "global hypergamy" (146). According to Constable, hypergamy most often refers to the cultural expectation in some societies that women will marry up and out of their own social or economic group. She points out that "regardless of the man's actual socioeconomic standing, foreign women who marry U.S. men – men who are citizens or residents of the 'world's greatest super power,' as the United States is widely viewed from both the inside

and the outside, are commonly thought to marry 'up' in a global and geographical sense" (167). In her book, *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and "Mail-Order" Marriages*, Constable argues that "correspondence relationships are often based on ideals of romantic love or, at the very least, reflect attempts to define them in such terms. They are solely misrepresented if boiled down to crude materialistic motives" (118). She maintains that material concerns which are popularly assumed to be central to women's motivations, are only one of many factors that influence women's decisions.

Constable also problematizes the widespread assumption that Asian women who marry Americans are "marrying up," in the pattern of global hypergamy. She points out that some Asian women may be said to marry down in some ways and gives the example that some couples she encountered involved Chinese women with higher levels of education and higher status professions than their US partners (168).

My female interviewees provide good examples of what Constable argues about international courtship and marriage. The men they are in relationships with are all from developed countries, but they choose them not for money or for a visa. As is suggested by Constable, "if the notion of hypergamy is to retain value for today's anthropology, it must be posed as a problem, a question, and a means of producing more complicated and nuanced pictures of social reality" (169). The motives of Chinese women marrying western men are much more complicated than just what can be relegated to the category of "hypergamy". Material concerns might be a motive for some Chinese women, but not all of them. Also for some Chinese women (my interviewees are good examples), it is hard to say conclusively whether they are marrying up or down in terms of education and

professions.

The myth of subservience and the popular images of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers tend to echo two different but interconnected stereotypes of Asian women. One is the sweet and innocent, sexual-romantic “oriental doll” or “lotus blossom”; the other is the conniving, devious, and shrewd “dragon lady.” According to Nicole Constable, “these two images are deeply rooted in much older popular stereotypes of Asian women. Such images have long been reproduced and popularized in what Renee Tajima describes as simplistic, inaccurate, persistent, and unchanging images of Asian women over time in Hollywood films. As lotus blossoms, Asian women are seen as an ‘utterly feminine, delicate, and welcome respite from their often loud, independent American counterparts.’ As dragon ladies, prostitutes, and devious aggressors, they represent the threat of foreign women’s hyperagency”(13). These images underlie the simplistic, dualistic images of Chinese women as either willing and helpless victims of controlling western men, or alternatively as shrewd foreigners out for a green card and a free meal ticket through marriage with innocent western men.

These two myths also reflect that people’s perceptions of global relationships are both gendered and raced. The “natural” and “logical” construction of the proper relationship involves dominant men and submissive women. The assumption is that women in the Third World marry up to men in the developed countries. The dialogue in the film *M Butterfly* between the Chinese opera singer Son Liling and French diplomat Gillimard (which is cited by Prasso in the chapter Literature Review) about the absurdity of the imagination of “a blonde homecoming queen fell in love with a short Japanese

businessman” is a good example of this point. In *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and “Mail-Order” Marriages*, Constable uses the fact that most people would consider the possibility of western women looking for Asian husbands abroad as “unimaginable” to prove that “global imagination” is “not only gendered but also raced” (170). She borrows Brackette Williams’s argument to explain this point:

...by virtue of their gender and race, individuals are positioned differently in relation to nationality, citizenship, and notions of respectability. Relationships between U.S. men and Asian women are part of a more common cultural logic, a well-recognized imaginary, in which it is considered more acceptable for women to marry partrilocally and more acceptable for men to marry “down” than for women. Another factor is how these imaginings are structured around assumptions of particular types of upward global mobility. “Upward mobility” is not only asymmetrically gendered, but it also involves a particular logic of global geography that can, at times, negate considerations of class and ethnicity. In other words, marriage of women in Asia to U.S. men is assumed to be a “logical” or imaginable upward geographic trajectory from “East to West”, “Third to First World”, or from assumed poverty, lack of freedom, or lack of opportunity to a place that is understood or assumed to be more “advanced”, “modern” or “developed”, at least from a western perspective. (170)

5.4 Conclusion

This chapter explored themes that emerged from participants’ contributions

through interviews and email discussions. Chapter five focused on themes related to the myth of subservience and the image of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers. The male participants were aware of the myth of subservience and but reported that Chinese women were not submissive as they imagined. Most also claimed that they were not looking for submissiveness. Both the male and female participants had experiences of receiving extra attention because of the popular image of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers. Their stories showed that these women did not always tend to or really “marry up” as in the widespread assumption. Analysis revealed that these two myths tend to echo two different but interconnected stereotypes of Asian women as “oriental doll” or “dragon lady”. The two myths also reflect that people’s imaginings of global relationships are both gendered and raced. Chapter six follows the same format as Chapter five in that it includes a discussion of the participants’ narratives, interpretations, and related literature. Chapter six explores attractiveness. What are the attractive qualities Chinese women and western men find in each other and what can be inferred from their comments? From the discussions in Chapter five, it seems both the western men and Chinese women in this study are looking for equal relationships. It should be taken into account that both the men and the women have quite a high level of education – the women in particular – and considerable social mobility and opportunities. Chapter six further explores this issue from both gendered and cultural perspectives.

Chapter 6 Attractiveness

6.1 Introduction

This chapter explores perspectives of the ten participants on the subject of attractiveness. The chapter considers both the attractiveness of Chinese women and the attractiveness of western men. It is divided into three sections: the first focuses on the attractive qualities that western men find in Chinese women and what we can infer from the western men's comments; the second focuses on the attractive qualities that Chinese women find in western men and what we can infer from the Chinese women's comments; and the third compares these comments with western men's comments on the unattractive qualities of Chinese women.

6.2 The Attractiveness of Chinese Women: Free from Feminism

Mike: ...They tolerate more unfairness from their partners. Tolerance, by and large, is attractive. They're less cynical than westerners, very attractive. They're less self-conscious or inhibited while having sex, also attractive.

Fred: ... I feel that Chinese women have not been exposed to a lot of these cultural myths. They are more real I feel about life and are not afraid to work at it....

From the discussion in Chapter Five, it seems that the western male participants are not looking for subservient wives. Rather, they are looking for an equal partnership. However, from the discussion of what they find attractive in Chinese women, we can see traces of patriarchy. Feminism is blamed as the scapegoat for all the unpleasantness of

western women. Free from the influence of feminism, Chinese women are seen as less self-conscious, less inhibited while having sex, less cynical and more real about life.

When I asked Mike what he thought of Chinese women compared with western women, he mentioned one attractive quality of Chinese women which surprised me at first: "They're less self-conscious or inhibited while having sex." Western women are more self-conscious or inhibited while having sex? For me it sounds contradictory to the sexual revolution that's been going in the West since the 1960s. So I asked Mike why he said that and he offered the following explanation:

The ideological arguments that western women have been using to fight discrimination in the public sphere get carried over to the private sphere, where they function as inhibitions. Women who (rightly) spend a good deal of time indignant about being treated as sex objects cannot easily discard that indignation when they're ready to have sex. There are times when it's APPROPRIATE to be treated as a sex object, but what happens when you're accustomed to rejecting that position? Giving a man oral sex seems degrading or submissive. Likewise certain sexual positions. Western women bring a heavier ideological component - more awareness or projection of signification - to sex, which is to say that they're more self-conscious. Chinese women? Behind closed curtains they're less self-conscious, less inhibited than westerners. Because the curtains are really closed, the sex is really separate from the outside world, and the particular acts or positions are not associated with "gender wars" or sexist oppression.

Is sex really separate from "gender wars" or sexist oppression"? Does sexuality

really have nothing to do with “ideological component”? Nelson & Robinson argue that “sexuality scripts are composed of culturally created guidelines defining appropriate and delineating roles to be performed by participants in a sexual encounter”(301). They go on to borrow Dodson’s descriptions to explain that while each script seemingly casts performers into different roles, these scripts typically involve variations upon the same underlying themes:

In one [script]... he is expected to get an erection from her naked beauty, keep his erection, arouse her passions, and hold off his orgasm until he reaches hers. He’s required to do all his without any information about what really turns her on. The woman is passive, beautiful, and graceful while she waits for this incredible experience called orgasm, and when nothing happens, she concentrates on the romance. In another [script], the poor woman is responsible for the man’s erection. She does oralsex [sic] to get him hard and remains focused exclusively on his pleasure. He gets on top and does what feels good for him and she accommodates him, going into her act of passionate sounds to excite him all the more. He comes, she fakes it, and he dozes off holding her in his arms. She’s happy because she has pleased him, and she loves the closeness. He’s happy because her response has proved he’s a good lover, and he loves her loving him. (301)

Nelson and Robinson point out that “Since marriage manuals of the early part of the twentieth century granted men the right and obligation of awakening women’s, preferably their wife’s, sexuality, our sexuality script has mandated that, within sexual encounters, men be assigned the roles of choreographers and teachers, and women the

role of willing, perhaps naive, students. The two scripts variations presented by Dodson depict women performing either a completely passive or an active, but still supporting role. Both scripts prescribe that female sexuality should be constructed and presented according to the needs of male sexuality” (302) .

In the West, with the influence of feminism and the sexual revolution, women’s sexual attitudes have been greatly changed. Women began to write their own new sexual script which is highlighted by equality. Instead of taking male pleasures as first priority, western women now take a greater responsibility for their own sexuality and have become more assertive about their own wants and desires. They also, as Mike said, carry “the ideological arguments that western women have been using to fight discrimination in the public sphere” over to the private sphere and refuse to do what they do not feel comfortable with. Chinese women, however, are not so much influenced by feminism and less assertive about their own wants and desires. They are less “self-conscious”, more passive, and hence more attractive in the eyes of western men who prefer to have the power and control in their sexuality scripts.

Another attractive quality of Chinese women that Mike mentioned is that Chinese women are less cynical than westerners. I did not really understand what he meant by “cynical”, so I asked him to expand. He answered,

By cynical I mean "scornful of the motives or virtues or integrity of others."

(Critical theory as applied to literature, for example, CAN become cynical, or come across that way, by eliminating the author and authorial intent from the picture; as in, "He pretended to have high motives, but in fact he was driven by an

unresolved oedipal complex.") Western women, especially college graduates, may tend to see "Freudian" or "power-dynamic" or "misogynist" or "homophobic" etc motives in men's behavior where Chinese women would not. That isn't in itself cynical. It becomes cynical when they're scornful of the motives they identify. Take pornography. In Chinese (and Japanese) porn it's unclear whether the woman is in pleasure or pain; she generally appears so sensitive that the merest touch of her breast sends her into caterwauls. Some American porn is just the opposite: the woman gets penetrated roughly from several directions at once, and yet, in the midst of it, she might look directly into the camera and crack a joke about the man's size or about the position they're in or something; she maintains a kind of critical distance that you don't find in the Chinese films. That critical distance, especially if it's mixed with scorn, can be deflating.

"Being cynical" is the same as what Mike describes as "self-conscious". Influenced by feminism, western women are conscious of the sexual inequality and tend to use theories of feminism to analyze motives in men's behavior. Chinese women, however, generally do not have this consciousness, and hence are less cynical.

The example of pornography given by Mike again reflects western men's obsession with the traditional sexuality script which is focused on male pleasure: whether the woman (in Chinese/Japanese porn) is in pleasure or pain is not important. It is important that she can fake pleasure and use "passionate sounds" to excite the man and let him feel he is masculine and "he is a good lover". I happen to have watched examples of both Chinese/Japanese porn and western porn, and my views are totally the opposite of

those of Mike: The caterwauls in the Chinese/Japanese porn sound much more pain than pleasure. The women there seem to be passively enduring great pain, which, rather than turning women on, makes them afraid of sex. Western porn, which is still characterized by dominance, exploitation and violence, however, represents a newer sexuality script where women display their power over sexuality by “look[ing] directly into the camera” or “crack[ing] a joke about the man’s size” (Mike). This critical distance reflects their consciousness and the active stance they would like to adopt in their sexual encounters. However, for the male participants in and the male viewers of pornography, this critical distance is an infringement on the power and control they possess over their sexuality. Of course it is “deflating”!

Mike’s comments about attractive qualities of Chinese women as being less self-conscious and less cynical reflect western men’s wish to have more power and control in their sexual encounters. His comparison of western and Chinese/Japanese porn reflects the necessity for women to have their own sexuality script which, rather than being male-oriented, promotes egalitarian sexual encounters and encourages women to gain power and control over their sexuality and their roles in sexual scripts.

Fred is another man who mentions the influence of feminism on western women. When I asked him to compare Chinese women with western women, he made the following comments:

Generally I think that western women tend to want a man who can give them all that they want. They expect and think that they deserve things. Western culture perpetuates the myth of the knight in shining armor who will come along and be

there everything. Then there is the myth of the super women who can have it all. A career and a family, etc. this is not true. I feel that Chinese women have not been exposed to a lot of these cultural myths. They are more real I feel about life and are not afraid to work at it. I do tend to like a more independent woman.

Perplexed by what he meant by “a more independent woman”, I asked Fred to explain. He said,

I mean a woman who can take care of herself. Not be afraid to be alone. She has her own interest and goals, but is not afraid to share them with you as well. I think a lot of women think they must be competitive with their partner. I do not know any man who wants to come home and compete with his wife. People have to compete in the world but at home it should be non competitive.

For Fred, western women are either too independent in that they want to become superwomen who have both a career and family or too dependent in that they believe a knight in shining armor will bring them everything. Chinese women seem to him to be more realistic about life. They are not competitive, but independent enough not to be a burden for their husbands. This preference for a woman to be both non-competitive and independent was also expressed by Peter who seeks in his long-term partner both “willingness to support me and help me accomplish my goals” and “some degree of independence (i.e. someone who doesn’t have to be around me all the time and understands the importance of a life outside the relationship).”

Fred believes that the reason “Chinese women are more real about life and are not afraid to work at it” is that “western women have been able to experience feminism and

technology more; this has created conflict with traditional roles more. I think most people are more comfortable with traditional roles. I think it creates less conflict. The more choices you have the more conflict.” Fred is not the only man who blames feminism for disturbing traditional gender roles and making women both too independent and too dependent. In her book *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and “Mail-Order”*, Constable also discusses this issue:

While some men seek marriage partners abroad because they think western women are ‘overly liberated’ and place their careers ahead of marriage and family, others seek foreign partners because they think western women are materialistic, spoiled, lazy, and unwilling to work in or outside the home. These two images of western women (motivated career women versus pampered and lazy) are in fact diametrically opposed, although they are sometimes blurred in men’s discussions. Men sometimes said that feminists were to blame for women’s lack of commitment to the family, overlooking the fact that women who are lazy and spoiled can hardly be considered feminists. (68)

According to Nelson & Robinson, “research in both Canada and the United States finds that wives and women cohabitators, whether employed full- or part-time or not employed, consistently devote more absolute and proportional time to household duties, performing approximately 75 to 80 percent of all housework” (252). “The myth of the super women who can have it all” that is mentioned by Fred is indeed a demonstration of a highly demanding set of traditional and modern gender roles that women are expected to take on in today’s society, but Fred does not really consider why men can have both

career and family, but women cannot.

Like many men, Fred blames feminism for disturbing the traditional gender roles and the traditional division of labor, but at the same time, he wants women to have their own interests and goals and “stay interesting”. I asked him what interests and goals women can pursue if they have to stay at home all day and pay all their attention to children and husbands. He admits that it is a dilemma. However, he still believes that “it’s all a matter of choice. Unfortunately we can not have everything we want in life. Balance is very hard thing”. When I said that a lot of men in the age of 40s are bored with their wives after they have sacrificed a whole life for the family and become uninteresting in their husbands’ eyes, he really began to think, “I am thinking. The reality generally speaking is that the more money a man makes the more younger and attractive a women he can get. Women want to be taken care of and have nice things. Men want to be envied.” However, when I pointed out to him these are all symptoms of a patriarchal society, he still insisted that “It is just the way humans are wired.”

Fred’s preference for the traditional gender roles and for a woman who is both non-competitive and independent, who is less demanding and assertive about what she wants from life reflects that his expectations for relationships are positioned somewhat between the traditional and the egalitarian model. This supports Nelson & Robinson’s argument that in such western societies as Canada, marriages, and presumably cohabiting relationships do not fit neatly into either the traditional or the egalitarian model, but “could best be characterized as either neotraditional or pseudoegalitarian. These terms, similar to Hochschild’s (1990:15) transitional ideology, characterize most relationships as

still being essentially asymmetrical and male dominated, where his work status and patterns dictate the pace and rhythm of couple and family life, and his perceptions of himself as primarily a breadwinner and his wife as primarily a homemaker still prevail despite any proclamations of equity or objective evidence to the contrary” (267).

From what some of the western male participants describe as attractive in Chinese women (less self-conscious, less inhibited while having sex, less cynical and more real about life), we can see that they prefer women who are less influenced by feminism, who are less demanding and assertive, more tolerant of unfair treatment and who would like to take on traditional gender roles. Despite proclamations of equity, their expectations are for a relationship that is still male-dominated, rather than an equal partnership. However, it should be noted that these are the opinions of some male participants. They do not represent all male participants, even less western men.

6.3 The Attractiveness of Western men (1): Being Romantic

Lucy: ...he always let me know he loves me, and let me know that in his eyes I'm the most beautiful woman in the world. He is grateful for everything I do for him. Chinese won't tell you these.

Allen: The ones I know would never consider love without money, except Lucy... In other parts of Asia, Chinese are criticized for love of money above all else.

This section focuses on what Chinese women find attractive in western men. The quality of western men to be romantic was frequently mentioned, which shows that in the shift to a market society such as in reform-era China, there is a trend of a greater

emphasis on the expression of romantic love in ordinary courtship relations. However, the soaring living expenses, the insufficiency of the social welfare system at the beginning stage of capitalist development in China, and the strong sense of filial piety toward their parents mean that Chinese women are unable to ignore economic factors in their mate choices.

6.3.1 Western Men Being Romantic

When I asked female participants what attracted them most about their partners, being romantic was frequently mentioned. Xiu finds her boyfriend “very romantic. He is unique. The first time I went to his place, he took out very delicate tea cups and made very nice rose tea, which made me feel he is so special... For the first date, we went to the highest point of the city to see the night view. The second day, he gave me a heart-shaped card with fresh rose pedals and a CD of love songs as presents.”

Anna also says her boyfriend “is very romantic, interested in the quality of life and the fun in life.” Anna also compares Chinese men with western men in this regard and finds that:

Chinese men don’t know much how to be romantic. They are more restrained and more careful. Westerners are more natural and direct. Westerners know how to express love and how to give you surprises (they are more creative). They pay more attention to the ambience. But some Chinese men are priggish, indirect and shy.

Western men are direct in sex too (I don’t like this), but they knew how to make

you feel good and comfortable. They ask you how you feel. They are not selfish in this aspect! It's hard to find a Chinese man who is so polite and cares about you. To make it clear, westerners know how to make love! They pay more attention to the techniques and cooperation, while Chinese men are clumsy or only care about themselves, not caring about how the partner feels.

Lucy shares the same opinion of Chinese men. She had four or five boyfriends before Allen, but compared with him, they were all ordinary. Allen always lets her know he loves her, and lets her know that in his eyes she is the most beautiful woman in the world. "He is grateful for everything I do for him. Chinese won't tell you these." When I asked her, "Do you think Chinese men are not good at expressing or are just ungrateful?" She replies, "I think some are not good at expressing, and some just feel those are what you should do. 'That's what I marry you for'."

When Qingqing compares her western boyfriend with her former Chinese boyfriend, she also finds that the latter is traditional: "He also has a loving heart, but he is more worldly-minded, and more burdened." I asked in what way he is traditional and in what way he is burdened. She answers,

Traditional: he has a very strong sense of responsibility for the family. He takes care of his girlfriend. He takes both family and career as his responsibilities, making money to support the family.

Burdened: In order to make money, he has to attend many social activities, drinking, accompanying customers.

The demand of Chinese women for romance reflects the change in their

expectations for relationships in the recent twenty years. Not just satisfied with a traditional provider who “has a strong sense of responsibility for the family”, they have higher demands for passion, emotion and affection from their partners. As is pointed out by Ms Cui, a woman interviewee in Tom Miller’s newspaper article, “People’s expectations of marriage used to be very different ... Women wanted a stable life and a steady, simple man - someone who would make a good husband and father, without being too demanding. Sex was not important. As long as they could pass the days comfortably, that was enough.” Tom Miller continues to point out that “In contrast, modern Chinese women are increasingly aware of their sexual needs and confident about expressing them: sex should be a pleasure, they believe, not a wifely chore.” As Ms Cui states, “A good relationship has to be romantic, stimulating, exciting... I need to feel fire when I look at my man. Everybody needs this: if you don’t feel passionate, how will you stay together?” This “increasing awareness of sexual needs”, the demand for romance and “the quality of life” and the confidence in expressing them all reflect that Chinese women have higher expectations of love and marriage and are more assertive in expressing them and in satisfying their own needs. All this supports the social change that Parish and Farrer describe in “Gender and Family”: The market produces and transmits new cultural ideals of sexual fulfillment and sexual liberality, which augment individual autonomy in sexual relations: more pre-marital and extra-marital sex, freer decision making in marriage and divorce and the pervasiveness of a romantic ideal of marriage (236-239). In the same article, Parish and Farrer argue that along with the higher expectations of romance, people, especially young women, have become more mercenary in their marriage choices

too. In the next section, we will see what western men participants say about Chinese women on this issue.

6.3.2 Chinese Women Being Practical

The expectations of Chinese women for romance in relationships contrast with what western men say about Chinese women. Allen finds that financial security is all important in the mate choices of Chinese women: "The ones I know would never consider love without money, except Lucy... In other parts of Asia, Chinese are criticized for love of money above all else."

Mike finds Chinese women "certainly more materialist. But then, everyone's more materialistic than I expected." He also thinks that "Chinese women seem more "practical", less "romantic"; this is unattractive". When I asked him to explain how he got that impression, he answers:

I expect that surveys would bear this out to some extent: what is the relative importance that women place on the financial strength of their spouse? Ditto the social status of their spouse? Chinese women—I know several examples--may well refuse to get married until their partner has acquired enough things and provided enough (money/apartment/car) for her family. The prevalence of introductions/introduction services suggests the degree to which the quality of a person as a partner is seen as quantifiable (by educational attainment, income, professional achievements, possessions, etc--mostly material considerations). Are Chinese women not more inclined to remain with their husbands even if they're

no longer in love and even if they feel betrayed? This last bespeaks perhaps not materialism, but certainly a degree of practicality and a willingness to live without romance.

He also recalls his relationship with his second girlfriend:

she began to feel impatient about financial matters: she very much wanted to buy an apartment for her mother and stepfather. Also, she wanted to move to the US to promote her career. I wasn't ready to buy an apartment. I considered moving back to the US with her, and we looked into getting a fiancée's visa. But throughout this process, we often disagreed about the directions we wanted to pursue. I wanted a maximum of free time to read and write. She wanted to make money. We decided it made most sense for us to split up. She was introduced to an American businessman from Boston. Within a year she had moved to the US and married. She and I are still in contact.

Jack had a similar experience with his second love in China who left him when “she saw that western did not mean material”:

She was serious about getting a materially beneficial man. As she came to know me, she saw that she would be better off with a Chinese businessman.... She's with a businessman now (or last I heard). They re not in love and she never wanted to be anyway. She's got the support she wanted, and can do business. She may have known my feelings but she couldn't really understand, coz they were alien to her. She was very pragmatic, she saw love as a tool, not an end.

When I asked him whether he thinks that there are many Chinese women like her, he

says:

No idea. Material security is a concern for all humans. A natural attraction of a wealthy male in the eyes of females. Therefore there must be many women like her. Nothing to do with race. But the majority of women are not interesting to me. You could say that my expectations of love include a willingness (in my love object) to bother less about that, to care less about face/status.

From the interviews I did with Chinese women, except for Anna, there are no obvious signs of materialism in their mate choices. Western men almost all rate “social status” as the least important in the list of ten attributes desired in the long-term partners. Most Chinese women rank it among the less important attributes. Even Anna who seems to be the most realistic one among all the women interviewees, just ranks “social status” as number six, behind “honest and trustworthy”, “kind and understanding”, “intelligence”, “similar to you”, and “emotionally stable”. It should be taken into account that since their westerner partners who are well aware of the practicality of Chinese women start relationship with these women, they might be different from other Chinese women. Like What Allen said, “The ones I know would never consider love without money, except Lucy...”

In Anna we can find an interesting combination of both romantic and mercenary expectations of marriage. The man she will marry “should have a certain financial security, the spirit of enterprise, and responsibility. He should understand me and takes care of me, and he should also know how to enjoy life... Marriage is not a children’s game. It needs the effort from both of the couple. It needs both love and a certain

financial security to give marriage color and life.” For Anna, financial security is an important condition for marriage, but also “you must love your partner, otherwise the marriage won’t be happy.” Actually when Anna started the relationship with her boyfriend, she never thought about economic factors. “I’ve been taking love as the most important thing in my life. Those years of relationship has exhausted the youngest times of my life, and has exhausted my energy, my body and mind.”

The conflicting expectations of marriage of Chinese women interviewees are consistent with what Parish and Farrer find in their study of the present-day urban Chinese families that “people, especially women, have become more mercenary in their marriage choices but also – in an apparent contradiction – that people have become more romantic, with higher emotional expectations of both courtship and marriage” (232). According to Parish and Farrer,

...there is a continuing utilitarian element, particularly in the one-fourth of all women who insist on education and occupation. This fits anecdotal accounts of the role of financial considerations for women in marriage.

However, for most men and women the emphasis is not on family background and political credentials (possible choices in the 1991 survey) but on the personal qualities of individual character or moral standing (*renpin*). All of this is consistent with other accounts of how the companionate ideal has spread in China. This spread has been accelerated by popular newspaper accounts and talk shows and by movies, love songs, and other types of popular culture from Hong Kong and Taiwan. But much of it existed earlier, as suggested by the relative uniformity

of mate choice responses by people of different ages. Whatever the exact origins, a 1989-90 study of sexual behavior finds ample evidence of the pervasiveness of the romantic ideal in cities, one example being the 88 percent of urbanities who agree that marriage must involve love. (241)

As is discussed in the Literature Review, in his book *Opening up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*, James Farrer links higher romantic expectations of Shanghai women with the emergence of a market society. He points out that romantic love represents a refuge against the hostile world of strategic market relations and confirms that in a shift to a market society such as in reform-era China, there is a trend towards a greater emphasis on the expression of romantic love in ordinary courtship relations. However, the precarious labor market of reform-era China also makes women seek material security in marriage.

In the transition to a market economy, money displays its power more than ever before. The security net of the socialist state has been broken and the new social welfare system is not well-established, Chinese people are startled by the soaring prices of apartments and the fierce competition in the job market. Wealth is often the only buffer in a society which has an insufficient safety net. To ensure a more secure life, making money and saving money have become primary concerns for most Chinese people. After graduating with a Master's degree from France, Xiu went back to Shanghai and found that "Shanghai is such a realistic world." She decides, "Now I am considering realistic life in Shanghai. Even if you don't care at first, you can't help paying attention to the price of house." When I ask Anna what is the most important thing in marriage? She says,

“Two people in love should know how to manage their marriage. They need both love and economics as the basis. They need to have enough income which can at least pay for the mortgage of their apartment each month.”

Anna’s attitude towards marriage is one of the major sources of conflict between her and her boyfriend. As discussed in Chapter Four, Anna thought it impossible to marry before her boyfriend got settled. Her boyfriend hoped they could go to the US, but she thought, “how we could get married if we went to the US where we had nothing? We should be more realistic, a lot of my friends say so. I think they are right. It’s a realistic society.” When I asked her, “Did you think about economic factors when you started the relationship with him?” She answered,

No. That’s why when we realized we have decided to get married, we found that nothing is prepared. Actually it’s very normal for westerners. In western countries, young people who get married, but have no house, no stable income and no bank account are everywhere. He thought it in a very simple way. He told me as long as we love each other, he won’t let me suffer in the US. But I don’t think so.

The insufficiency of the social welfare system in China makes Anna unable to believe that her boyfriend won’t let her suffer in the US. Being a very competent and independent woman, she is also reluctant to give up her prosperous career in China and follow her boyfriend to the US where because of the disadvantage of language she would have to be supported by her boyfriend.

If I go to the US, I won’t have anything and have to start from the very beginning.

I would need to go to school again, and I would need to work, and the job I can

get will probably be the worst job that I've never done in China. It will take me some time, half a year or one year or even longer to be integrated to the local society and the circle of foreigners. It would be hard for me to face this new lifestyle, coz I won't be an international student who has her own circle of friends. I will be married to you and you will be my circle! He asked me if I should stay with him if I marry him. My answer was yes, but I don't want an anchorless life!

In my opinion, the wish of Anna for a more secure life rather than "an anchorless life" demonstrates the desire of independent Chinese women to have more control over their own lives. It also proves that economic competence has given women more bargaining power in their relationships, which is consistent with Parish and Farrer's study of Chinese women: "As women's income resources rise they become more assertive relative to their husbands" (256). In their study they found that "except at the equality of 50 percent, more income increases assertiveness and conflict. Economic dependency, with incomes less than 30 percent of total income, reduces assertiveness and conflict" (262). Anna's case provides a typical example of what Parish and Farrer conclude in their study: "the market economy has brought women more opportunities for individual fulfillment, but to some extent has made relationships with men seem more problematic or less satisfying" (270).

The insufficiency of social welfare system in China also explains why Lanlan and Peter have different opinions on money. Although they have moved to a country with good social welfare system, out of habit, Lanlan is still very focused on saving money for

their old age whereas Peter is more inclined to spend money on things he wants now. Allen also made this comparison: "Chinese are better at practicality than Westerners, who live in a world of ideals and false illusions. So marriage can be quickly turned into something lacking in romance, and tendency towards marrying for status or money might be slightly higher in China."

Another reason Chinese women seem to be more practical about marriage is that they do not see marriage as merely something between a couple; they feel they have to consider the well-being of their parents too. Ann claims, "Marriage is not just between two people. We have to consider our family members, our parents. You know Chinese people value respecting the old and loving the young. So we should consider the future child and our parents. We should now work hard to make money first to give ourselves a good life, second to prepare for the future child and third to let parents enjoy the rest of their life." Qingqing has the same view of the obligation of children towards parents even after they get married. When I ask her, "Do you think love and marriage is the same thing? Do you have the same expectations for love and marriage?" She says, "Not really. For love, I expect love, understanding, and trust. For marriage, I also expect responsibilities, the responsibilities towards the partner, parents and children, trying to make them live better and happier."

Qingqing and Anna give economic support to their parents. Lanlan does not have extra money for her parents now "because we just move to a new city and saving for our home deposit" but according to her husband, "we have different opinions on obligations to family members, my wife sometimes worries that she won't be able to support her

parents.” Xiu cannot economically support her parents now since she has just started working, but she wishes that she could buy an apartment for her parents in the future, and “if the apartment just approaches my uncle’s home, that will be perfect.” When I was amazed at how nice she is to her parents, she said, “I just feel the parents are my fortune. They give everything to me. I should pay back of course. So theirs is mine, or say mine is theirs”.

Western male participants’ comments on the practicality and lack of romance of Chinese women, together with Chinese women participants’ comments concerning the lack of romance of Chinese men which was discussed in the last section, both support Dion & Dion’s proposition in “Individualistic and Collectivistic Perspectives on Gender and the Cultural Context of Love and Intimacy”: “Romantic love is more likely to be considered an important basis for marriage in societies where individualism as contrasted with collectivism is a dominant cultural value” (58). In another of Dion & Dion’s articles “Romantic Love, Individual and Cultural Perspective”, they cited psychological anthropologist Francis L.K.Hsu’s comparative analysis of American and Chinese beliefs and values about love and marriage: “Hsu characterizes American culture as ‘individual-centered,’ with great importance attached to emotions; in contrast, Chinese culture is ‘situation-centered’ and tends to ‘underplay all matters of the heart’. He speculates that intense affective experiences are more likely to occur among North Americans. Hsu argues that in the Chinese cultural tradition individuals’ greater dependency on others mitigates the intensity of their emotional experiences because they are more likely to be shared in a broader social network” (276). The broad social network in the Chinese

culture tends to mitigate the intensity of emotion in romantic relationship and may make Chinese women seem less romantic in the eyes of westerners. With the shift to a market society and the development of individuality in the Chinese society, Chinese women are demanding for more expressions of romantic love. However, the long tradition of collectivism still makes broad social network and extended family ties a point of conflict between some women participants and their western partners. When I asked Peter whether there was anything in his wife's personality or habits that he did not like, he answered: "She tends to listen to her family and friends more than me, on a number of occasions she has not believed/accepted things I tell her but believes the same thing if her family or friends tell her." Mike also finds that her girlfriend's filial piety makes it difficult for him to be with her.

This section discussed the quality of being romantic that Chinese women find attractive in western men. The demand of Chinese women for more romance shows that in the shift to a market society, there is a greater emphasis on the expression of romantic love in ordinary courtship relations. However, soaring living expenses, insufficient social welfare system at the beginning stage of the capitalist development in China, and the strong sense of filial piety that these women feel toward their parents make them unable to ignore economic factors in their mate choices. The broader social network in the Chinese culture also tends to mitigate the intensity of emotion in romantic relationship and make Chinese women seem less romantic in the eyes of westerners.

6.4 The Attractiveness of Western Men (2): Equal Partnership

Qingqing: ... western men respect women more.

Anna: ... playing babyish before men is a show of femininity:

tenderness/charm/loveliness.... Sometimes women should be like women. Some people say women are like cats! That's what it means. No matter whether playing babyish is a bit unreasonable or not, men would take it as a manifestation of love or fondness....

This section focuses on other qualities of western men that Chinese women find attractive: respect for the feelings of their partners, no virgin complex, loyalty after marriage, and giving partners personal freedom. The fact that Chinese women find these qualities attractive suggests that they are attracted to western men because they seem more democratic, open-minded, less controlling and patriarchal compared with Chinese men. They look for a more equal relationship. However, what western men find special in Chinese women (being bossy and rude, playing babyish and playing games) seems to suggest that Chinese women are not always ready for an equal partnership. This issue is considered from both the gender and cultural perspectives.

6.4.1 Western Men Respect Women More

The Chinese women in this study find that western men care more about the feelings of women. As already discussed in the last section, Anna thinks that while Chinese men only care about themselves, and not about how their partner feels, western men are not selfish and try to make you feel good and comfortable. "It's hard to find a Chinese man who is so polite and cares about you." Qingqing also feels that compared with Chinese men, western men respect women more which means they "do not force

women to do anything they don't want to do".

Western men's respect for women is also shown in their attitude towards virginity. Lanlan noted that "few western men have virgin complex, they think men and women are equal, if men can have sex before marriage, so can women".

Both of the married women participants---Lucy and Lanlan, who originally imagined that western men were not serious in relationships, find that western men are not what they expected. Lucy, who thought that western men could "fall in love with anyone at random" finds that "if they love someone, they don't really care much about her appearance rather than what is inside. If they really fall in love, they are not sparing with their love. They will constantly let you feel the love and your position in his heart." "The western men I know all love their wives very much." Lanlan, who thought some westerners are playboys, also finds after the marriage that the friends of her husband are all nice people and most of them are very responsible and loyal to their partners. This point is stressed again when I asked her to compare western men with Chinese men. As mentioned in Chapter Four, she frankly states that "For me, I prefer western man" and the first reason she gives is that western men are "extremely responsible after they marry". Unlike Chinese men who promise a lot before getting married but too often have extra marital affairs after marriage, western men are less likely to have affairs or to look for prostitutes. Anna is also proud that "...my boyfriend is quite conservative. He never plays around. If he takes you as his girlfriend, he will treat you well and will also treat people around you well. He is also very patient and accompanies me shopping or goes singing with us, watching us beside."

Both of the married women, Lanlan and Lucy, feel that marrying western men gives them a kind of freedom that they would not be able to get from Chinese men. Lanlan lists this as the third reason she would prefer western men to Chinese men: “you don’t have to concern too much about the relation with your in-laws if you married a western man.” Lucy also says that if she is married to a Chinese, she would have a lot less freedom. Compared with her sister whose in-laws are too close and put pressure on her to bear children, she feels lucky that her husbands gives her all the freedom she needs.

In *Romance on a Global Stage: Pen Pals, Virtual Ethnography, and “Mail-Order” Marriages*, Constable also discusses the comments of her female Chinese interviewees on western men: “... the vast majority of Chinese women believed foreign men would be more understanding.... Divorced women, and also women in their thirties who had never been married, spoke of western men as more open-minded and less controlling than Chinese husbands. Most thought foreigners were more romantic, open, and expressive, and knew how to treat women ‘like ladies.’ Some spoke of western men as better educated, more cultured, and more intellectual than Chinese men” (134).

The attractive qualities that Chinese women participants find in western men: respect for the feelings of their partners, no virgin complex, loyalty after marriage and giving partners personal freedom suggest that these women are attracted to western men because they are more democratic, open-minded, less controlling and patriarchal compared with Chinese men. They are searching for a more equal relationship. The next section will discuss whether Chinese women are really ready for an equal partnership.

6.4.2 Chinese Women: Bossy, Babyish, Playing Games

This section focuses on the conflicts between Chinese women and western men and analyzes them from gendered and cultural perspectives. What western male participants find special in Chinese women: being bossy and rude, playing babyish and playing games indicate that all Chinese women may not be ready for an equal partnership.

6.4.2.1 Bossy and Rude

In western culture, politeness is a necessity for all relationships, even for intimate ones. Western men (Allen and Fred) complain that Chinese women are bossy and rude because they never say “please” “thank you” and “sorry”, but Chinese women may think these words are used only between strangers. Politeness can be insulting between couples, even between very close friends. For Xiu, too much formality is one of the major conflicts between her and her boyfriend:

...I think that it's not necessary to have too many formalities for intimate relationships. But he will protest if I go into his room without knocking at the door. He is very concerned with his personal space. He pays too much attention to formalities which for me is a kind of estrangement.

Huang: Do you mean he always use thank you and sorry? Did you talk to him about the custom of Chinese couple?

Xiu: Yes. That's it. I mentioned something to him. But he still doesn't change.

Huang: Does he want you to change?

Xiu: Not necessarily. But he knows if I suddenly become very polite, there must

be something wrong.

Chinese women being bossy means more than being informal in intimate relationships. It shows a tendency of Chinese women to mother their partners. Allen finds this trait in all the Chinese women he has been in relationships with:

She (his wife) tends to be bossy and rude if not reminded, and is physically rough at times, and loud; sometimes anti-social. She just tells me what to do, and tries to rule the house to an extreme, even checking the garbage cans and playing detective about silly household things. I usually laugh it off, as it's pretty amusing and amazing, but sometimes I get tired of it.

Huang: Were your other Chinese girlfriends bossy?

Allen: Yes. They all wanted to rule.

Huang: Do you think they tend to mother you?

Allen: Yes. Very strange when I've been a lot older.

Huang: How about western women?

Allen: Not so much, especially if one is older.

Allen also finds "a strange kind of sabotage" which his former girlfriends and his wife have done to him --- "trying to diminish me[him] in the eyes of others." Following is my conversation with him on this aspect of Chinese women:

Huang: Have you ever had any conflicts or tensions with her?

Allen: Oh yes!

Huang: What were they about? How did you solve them?

Allen: A lot of it was her jealousy of people I really had no interest in and was

thus insulted, or her "losing my face" in front of others. Also a strange kind of sabotage which other girls had done as well, trying to diminish me in the eyes of others

Huang: How did she lose your face in front of others?

Allen: By having open and unreasonable conflict with me in front of others, sometimes ten or more.

Huang: They try to diminish you in the eyes of others? How?

Allen: I took her to an appointment which offered potential, a corporate training deal, and she told them I was a bad teacher. Even as a joke, it was not funny. And inappropriate. Lucy can be a boor. Another girl used to come in to "help" with my classes or lectures, and then try to ruin them.

One of my friends was wickedly scolded and shamed by his Chinese wife, in USA, for being ten minutes late from a tennis game.

Another friend's Chinese wife shouted, "I hate you!" to her husband after we had dinner. I couldn't see that he'd done anything wrong at all. So compared to my expat friends' experiences I feel much better off. I've seen at least four different couples doing this. She started to change when I kept explaining that we need a face. Explaining to Chinese that we need face is pretty odd. Chinese are the ones who save face: but it is just their own, no one else's: a rude awakening to learn that.

Huang: Did she explain why she did that?

Allen: She really doesn't seem very aware of what she does or even less why she

does things. It might be a kind of daydreaming as people do in heavy traffic or tossing things from windows: an inability to connect one action to a result: if you turn in front of a bus your bicycle, there's no danger of being killed? If you toss boiling water into the street, no one will pass by and be soaked and burnt?

Huang: I guess they probably try to show a kind of intimacy and possession.

That's what a lot of Chinese parents do to their children. They want to show that they are very close to you and they can do anything to you.

Allen: You gave a perfect explanation of Chinese cultural mindset: she's showing she's so intimate, she can do anything and get away with it. In my culture, it's nothing but a sign of wickedness and treason.

Diminishing partners in the eyes of others is connected with being bossy. They are both a show of intimacy and possession. Chinese women believe that since their men belong to them, they can do anything to them. Chinese women are trying to use these tactics to tell their partners or other people that they are intimate with their partners, that politeness is not necessary between them. Diminishing partners in the eyes of others is also a kind of modesty that Chinese people feel they should display in front of outsiders. It can also be seen in what Chinese parents do to their children and what close friends do to each other. Chinese who can understand this kind of communication will not be insulted; rather, they might feel flattered by the show of intimacy from their partners. However, for westerners, "it's nothing but a sign of wickedness and treason."

While western men find Chinese women "bossy and rude", Chinese women often

find western men too direct and self-centered. Anna complains,

My boyfriend was quite direct and embarrassed me sometimes... He once asked, 'why Chinese high school students look like American elementary school students? And you look like a girl rather than a 26-year-old American woman!' My God! I was pissed off and retorted, 'You Americans look like elephants and we look like sheep!' We knew each other only half a year at that time. Later he understood that he couldn't compare this way. He would feel it is hard for him to understand what Chinese say. He said we are too polite and sound affected! I told him it is implicitness. It means well. That is cultural difference!

And Anna explains this cultural difference this way:

They have a very strong sense of self. There is no milk of human kindness... I should put it this way: westerners are more self-centered! When doing things, they think of themselves and their own wishes first. They speak more directly, not caring much about the face of other people. Chinese speak more implicitly. Before saying anything, we tend to think first whether it might hurt the others and how to put it in a better way. Chinese cares more about human relationship. Westerners treat things as they are, no matter who they are dealing with. China has a long history of courtesy, and the *savoir-vivre* has naturally formed....

Xiu has also been offended by the self-centered behavior of her boyfriends several times. She recalls that

I was very upset when he went back to HUNAN staying with my families. We climbed the YUELU Shan. My mum and aunt were just behind us. He paid the

bill only for himself and me. Maybe I should be thankful that he bought the ticket for me.

We were thirsty; he bought just one bottle of water. When I proposed he should buy more for my mum and aunt. He just said when they arrived they would buy for themselves.

I asked her, "Were you mum and aunt unhappy?" She said, "If considering him as my boyfriend, of course they won't be too happy. But if just think him as a common friend from western country, then they won't mind too much." Xiu's parents did not support their relationship in their heart, but "had to consider being polite". After this event, "now none of my family supports us."

Xiu also gave another example of the extreme individualism of her boyfriend. When Xiu looked for jobs in Shanghai, there was one time when she need to use the computer for her resume because she needed it for an interview the second day. She wanted to borrow her boyfriend's laptop, but he refused, saying that Xiu could go out and use a computer in an internet bar.

Being bossy and rude and diminishing their partners are all manifestations of intimacy and possession for Chinese women who view relationships as a kind of possession. However, for westerners, it is uncomfortable. Being polite to partners and paying attention to self and personal space are all taken as normal in the western individualistic culture. However, for Chinese women, it is cold and estranging. The conflict here is actually the conflict between relational self and autonomous self which will be discussed further in the next section. Chinese women like to be treated with

respect as equal partners; however some notions of the equal partnership are still contrary to their cultural expectations. The next section Playing Babyish discusses Chinese women playing babyish. Some Chinese women both want to rule and be ruled, both pamper and be pampered. Chinese men and women might pamper each other and they take this kind of love as natural. Chinese relationships encourage interdependence rather than independence. The relationships between Chinese husbands and wives seem to be more a kind of mutual domination than the equal partnership in the west.

6.4.2.2 Playing Babyish

The word “play babyish” is actually my translation for a Chinese term “Sa Jiao (撒娇)”, which describes a girlish behavior very common and popular among Chinese women. All the western men in this study have noticed that Chinese women like playing babyish. Allen exclaimed, “they are so kiddyish. Here a student over thirty has a “Hello Kitty” rear view mirror in her car and Disney toys everywhere.” Fred have also noticed “women here with all kinds of dolls and toys in their cars. In the back windows and on the dashboard. I thought it was a kids car and most of the time it ends up being a women's. They are not for any kids because most of these women are single. I found it strange. Still do.”

Except for Qingqing who “want to but am not good at it”, all the Chinese women participants admit that they like playing babyish and take it as “common girl’s style”(Xiu) and believe that “basically women all over the world do that, it has nothing to do with Chinese woman (Lanlan)”. Anna claims, “... playing babyish before men is a show of

femininity: tenderness/charm/loveliness.... Sometimes women should be like women. Some people say women are like cats! That's what it means. No matter whether playing babyish is a bit unreasonable or not, men would take it as a manifestation of love or fondness...."

All the western men find western women don't play babyish as much as Chinese women do. Peter says "In my opinion, western women do these things to a far lesser extent than Chinese women although I don't know why." Anna, though, explains it this way:

Do you think western women don't play babyish as often as Chinese women do?

No, they don't. I noticed that in parties. It seemed that western women seldom played babyish before men (I mean women and men in relationship). But I played babyish before my boyfriend. Luckily my boyfriend understood it. To tell you the truth, Chinese women look good when they play babyish, but western women look ugly if they do it. ...but western women play babyish on the phone...Playing babyish is part of culture! Have you seen women playing babyish in foreign countries? No? But in China you can often see women playing babyish before men. This is cultural difference. But if the woman is Chinese and the man is western, then the man will know why women play babyish and will understand the meaning of playing babyish. That's my feeling. But if you ask western men what is playing babyish and what women mean by playing babyish, they probably wouldn't know what to say...

For Chinese women I interviewed, "women should be like women" by behaving

in a certain way. Playing babyish is a show of femininity and lack of femininity on the part of western women is a sad thing. As Peter observes "I would say they do it because they feel that's what women should do or how women should act...." Jack also analyzes that

...all females playUp/exaggerate their real & supposed "helplessness" for perfectly sound biological reasons, the world over. Chinese women are not much different, and no different in their less obvious capacity for cold-hearted manipulation.

saJiao (playing babyish) is a preprogrammed way of dealing with a boy-friend...socio-familial propaganda shapes the mind of the female, tells her that there is such a thing as a boyfriend, that (in china) BF = fiancE, and how one should comport herself toward him. Her comportment is not original, not honest, not thought-out. It is a prejudice regarding the male suitor, widely shared (in china). Inauthentic experience, not a good way to live....

Jack has provided here a good analysis of the social construction of femininity. Playing babyish is "a way of dealing with a boy-friend" that is preprogrammed by the "social-familial propaganda", by the patriarchal society. It is the internalization of the social construction of femininity. In her article "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power", Sandra Lee Bartky states: "Femininity is an artifice, an achievement, a mode of enacting and reenacting received gender norms, which surface as so many styles of the flesh" (61). Allen Farber also points out that " 'Woman' is a creation of the masculine gaze. Before we can see how women thought of themselves and

of their relations with men, we must find out how they were seen by men. The masculine conception of woman gave rise to idealizations and norms that strongly influenced the behavior of women, who lacked the power to challenge the male view of their sex” (par.2). As my western male interviewee Fred said, “that (Chinese women playing babyish) also says a lot about Chinese men.” Chinese women play babyish because that is the “comportment” that men like. They have accepted the gender norms and have so internalized the disciplines that not playing babyish is looked at as a lack of femininity and hence a sad thing.

Playing babyish is not only a show of femininity; according to Anna, it is the symbol of high status of Chinese women:

Huang: Do you think western men like Chinese girls playing babyish?

Anna: ...if you compare western men with Chinese men, it seems the latter like women playing babyish more. However, to be more exact, we should say Chinese women tend to like playing babyish before men. A friend of mine in Japan told me that in the international society, the status of Chinese women is pretty high among women from all countries.

Huang: Do you think women playing babyish is the symbol of high status?

Anna: I mean women playing babyish before men is a show of femininity: tenderness/charm/loveliness. Its relation with status means that men allow women and like women to do this to them....

It is interesting that while Anna regards playing babyish as the symbol of high status of Chinese women, Jack analyzes that the result of Chinese women play babyish is

“a knowledge of the inferior place set for her in society, yes. Whether she believes it to be representative of her personal worth is up to her. But she has learned that direct “man-to-man” dealing is off. She must employ subtler methods to get what she wants. Grasping the “princess” role laid out for her is one way. But its privileges are few and shallow.”

Jack’s insightful analysis is really to the point: Instead of being a symbol of high status, playing babyish puts women in an “inferior place”, a powerless position, the position of a baby who needs to be pampered and given extra attention by adults. Direct, equal “man-to-man” dealing is off. Chinese women must “employ subtler methods to get what she wants”. They enjoy being treated as powerless, pitiable little princesses who always long for the protection and the conquest of powerful men. As is discussed in Chapter Two, in *Opening Up: Youth Sex Culture and Market Reform in Shanghai*, Farrer also talks about the notion of sex as a kind of conquest for Chinese women. He notes that all the Chinese women he interviewed enjoyed being conquered by a powerful man, no matter if they were successful young white-collar women or women at the lower end of the social ladder. He points out that “sex was a naturally gendered arena in which the usual norms of equality and autonomy were subordinated to the play. Lei, in particular, was very successful in her career and highly valued her autonomy, but she enjoyed the idea of conquest” (278). Anna, my interviewee, is another good example. Independent and successful as she is, she still believes that women should be like cats, knowing how to play babyish to show the sweetness.

The “little princess complex” of Chinese women reflects one way that Chinese women relate female sexuality with power. Our western male participants have found out

this point. Peter points out, “sometimes Chinese women play babyish to get what they want”. Fred also believes that “playing babyish is more of a way to get what you want from someone”. Our Chinese woman participant Lanlan also confesses: “Whenever we have problems I just chuck a sook, and then I get what I want. Basically women all over the world do that, it has nothing to do with Chinese woman.” It is true that there has been a long history for women to gain power over men by adopting a powerless position. As is pointed out by Nelson & Robinson,

For centuries, in Western and many other societies, sexuality has been an important resource for women as a means of gaining power itself, or at least access to power, in various forms. Where women have little direct access to money, prestige, and power, they are not only tempted but are even forced to use sex[uality] as their own weapon, their only resource. Only in using sexuality as a tool can they diminish the social distance between themselves and men and gain access to money and prestige and occasionally also to power. (305)

Nelson & Robinson continue to point out that “the actual power wielded by women here is debatable, since standards of physical and sexual attractiveness are controlled by men, and shaped to appeal to men’s fanciful desires. Women’s power largely resides in deciding whether or not to comply with these standards, not in creating and implementing the standards themselves ” (306). In the west, the power of sexuality to provide nonsexual gain for women is declining. Women have other means of access to power via education, occupation and income, legal change, and general social change. In China, women have much more access to power than before too. However, the standards

of femininity and the emotional dependency is so internalized that some Chinese women still enjoy adopting a powerless and pitiable role to express their femininity and attract the attention of males. Jack, one of my western male participants, makes a good comparison:

generally speaking, oriental women play at being girl-children (which is bad because it eroticises innocence) and western women are rather more likely (because they come from a more advanced civil society) to resist such sexist displays; they know it encourages bad ideas.... western women are citizens; no Chinese are.

Jack then extends from the dependence of Chinese women to the whole Chinese people:

but in china there is less individuality anyway. classmates herd with classmates, no one walks down a strange street, students dare not speak out, only the drunken approach strangers. so this social timidity makes for a world of beings who are childlike (good)/ childish (bad).

Allen also comments on the childlike/childish characteristics of Chinese women and Chinese people in general. Allen is a bit ambivalent about the childish behavior of Chinese women which he finds both attractive and unfair. He thinks that Chinese women playing babyish is “very sexy, very feminine”, but he also finds Chinese women “basically selfish, inconsiderate, and dishonest! Like most babies!” However, they “can also have delightful sides” which are “uninhibited, playful, childish, very good at teasing and being teased”. Allen also finds the childlike behavior of a lot of Chinese both despicable and delightful:

Children are delightful and also a pain in the *ss, and I think that adults should stay playful instead of getting so serious as they do in the west. At the same time, maturity of some sort is desperately needed among many of my students and my wife's family in particular.

Huang: You think western adults are too serious? In which way?

Allen: They are too busy, and afraid someone will cheat their hard-earned money. They hardly ever smile, where I've lived. Afraid to appear vulnerable, while Chinese seem to smile for no apparent reason. I've seen Chinese fifty-year olds playing tag or "got you last" in the park. I love it!

Jack and Allen's account of the lack of individuality of Chinese women and Chinese people leads to the discussion of relational self and autonomous self which was mentioned in the previous section. According to Dion&Dion, "the social construction of self and other differs greatly in individualistic as contrasted with collectivistic societies. Specifically, many important concepts in Asian societies, such as *amae*, are inherently relational (Ho, 1982). They reflect a sense of self as interdependent, rather than independent" (56).

Dion & Dion state that the Japanese construct of *amae*, which has been discussed extensively by Doi, provides a good example of the interdependence that characterizes many constructs from Asian psychology (56). They cite Doi that "a Japanese person who wishes to *amaeru* (the verb from of *amae*) seeks to be a passive love object and to be indulged by another" (56). According to Dion & Dion, Doi has used the *amae* concept as a single, sovereign principle for understanding Japanese personality as well as Japanese

society. The people one can *amaeru* with impunity define insiders and include one's parents, relatives, close friends, and others with whom one stands in a hierarchical relationship. Among outsiders, one must exhibit restraint or *enryo* and suppress the expression of any dependency needs, which Japanese find unpleasant (56). Dion & Dion state that

there is a marked difference in the evaluation of interpersonal dependency in individualistic vs. collectivistic societies. For example, *amae* psychology in Japan affirms an essentially positive and constructive attitude toward dependency upon others, especially in familial and pseudofamilial social arrangements. *Amae* has generally positive connotations to the Japanese, who use it to describe a variety of positively toned and sentimentalized relationships between parent and child, wife and husband, where one partner depends on the other to provide indulgent gratification and considerate affection. In contrast, the term "dependency" has primarily negative or ambivalent connotations in Western cultures... which value autonomy and individuality. There is no equivalent word to *amae* or *amaeru* in Western languages, a fact that apparently astonishes Japanese. (64)

Dion & Dion also give a second example of the cultural contrasts of collectivism and individualism by citing Roland's discussion of the *familial self* in India as compared with the North American *individualized self*. "the Indian conception of self is basically relational rather than autonomous. Roland suggests that the familial self developed in hierarchical relationships within the extended family in which the following qualities were present: strong emotional interdependence, reciprocal demands for intimacy and

support, mutual caring, and a high degree of empathy and sensitivity to another's needs and desires within the family structure" (56).

Playing babyish is a bit similar to the Japanese *amae*. It is not only what some Chinese women do to their boyfriends or husbands, it may be done vice versa, and between parents and children, and even close friends. In China, as in Japan and India and other countries where collectivism is a dominant cultural value, interdependence rather than independence is valued. Parents pamper their children and expect to be pampered by their children when they get old. Spouses pamper each other. Chinese women like playing babyish, but as discussed in the last section, they can also be bossy and tend to mother their partners. As is pointed by Lu Xun, a well-known Chinese writer in the 20th century, "In Chinese women, there is daughterhood and motherhood, but no wifeness". For him, I guess, wifeness means independence, an equal citizen as Jack describes.

Except for Allen who finds it "very sexy" and "so feminine", and Jack who finds it "disgusting", all the rest of the western men are ambivalent: "playing babyish is not attractive, but not necessarily repellent, either" (Mike). Fred is "not crazy about women playing babyish" but "do[es] not mind giving them attention" Peter "thinks pouting/playing feminine/babyish makes Chinese women more approachable and easier to get along with but if it's done too much it can be annoying". Even Jack who finds playing babyish disgusting and "despise[s] all fairy-princesses, as he "despise[s] any one who thinks the world should revolve around the self", also laments that "unfortunately it (western women resisting such sexist displays) takes away a lot of what normally goes on between men and women. Without it, there isn't much glue."

What is it that “normally goes on between men and women” and what is the “glue”? The ambivalent attitudes of western men towards women playing babyish reflect the influences of both cultural and gender discourses. Culturally, the western value of individualism makes western men feel unaccustomed to this show of dependence. However, the patriarchal discourse/stereotypes of femininity make them find Chinese women “more approachable and easier to get along with”. They also miss the interdependence, the “glue” between men and women. Actually, individualism not only takes away the glue between men and women, but also between any persons. It is always a dilemma. No glue is sad, too much glue is bothersome and a burden.

From the interviews with the Chinese women, we can also see a gradual development of individuality in Chinese people. When asked about why people get married, Qingqing analyzed it this way:

They try to be lazy. To begin with, everybody should live independently, both materially and spiritually. That means you need to solve all the economic and emotional problems by yourself and sometimes you might get tired. If you get married, it saves some strength for you both economically and emotionally. Although it might be easy to lose some self, it really saves some strength. The gain and loss all depends on yourself.

Qingqing’s analysis of the gains and losses of living independently and getting married and the dilemma of “los[ing] some self” and “sav[ing] some strength”, and her claim that “to begin with, everybody should live independently, both materially and spiritually” all manifest her thinking over the issue of independence and interdependence

in relationships.

The development of individuality of Chinese people can also be seen from what Lanlan and Lucy observe about mate choices. As is discussed in the last chapter on why Chinese women chose western men, the two married women Lanlan and Lucy feel that marrying western men gives them a kind of freedom that they would not be able to get from Chinese men. Lanlan lists not having to be concerned about the relation with in-laws as the third reason she would prefer western men to Chinese men. Lucy compares her own marriage with that of her sister whose in-laws are too close, and feels lucky that her husband gives her all the freedom she needs. She guesses that if she was married to a Chinese, she would have a lot less freedom.

In summary, the standard of femininity and the emotional dependency is so internalized by some Chinese women that they enjoy adopting a powerless and pitiable little princess role to express their femininity and attract the attention of males. Cultural factors should be considered too. Chinese culture values interdependence rather than independence. Equality and fairness in interpersonal relationships are not as emphasized in Chinese culture as western culture.

6.4.2.3 Playing Games

Another point of conflict between Chinese women and western men is that western men find Chinese women play more games and pout much more. Mike says, “they play more games, which includes telling lies, and they pout much more, which to me is unattractive.” When I ask Mike what kind of games they play and why they play

games, he answers:

Purposefully provoking jealousy; this could mean staying out late for no reason or breaking promises or conspicuously communicating with other men when the object is to ascertain her own ability to provoke jealousy in her lover. Or exaggerated displays of anger/passion: leaving “for good” only to stay with a friend for two days and then come back, or saying “I never want to speak with you again” and then calling back in ten minutes. These are just two examples. What makes these “games” is that the language doesn’t serve as a direct communication so much as an expression of a mood or a provocation to jealousy. I think that Chinese women (more than westerners) treat jealousy as a natural part of love and use it variously as a gauge and a tool in the manipulation of the relationship.

Lies are naturally a part of love games. “I was waiting for you for two hours.” Or “I was up all night.” Or “I was with so-and-so” or “My mother said that she prefers so-and-so” or “my parents say that if we aren’t married by June they’ll arrange another marriage,” or “you’re my only friend” or “you’re the first man I’ve ever been with”.

Huang: How did you know these are lies? Is it possible that they were telling what were really in their mind?

Mike: Of course I can't be entirely sure. In some cases a girlfriend has admitted in retrospect that she was lying. Or said "I wasn't really lying, I was just trying to see what you'd do."

The purpose of playing games is twofold: first to provoke jealousy or ascertain the ability to provoke jealousy in the lover. This shows the uncertainty of some Chinese women. Chinese women who are unsure of the feelings of their partners and feel it a loss of face to discuss it directly with their partners, may play these games to provoke jealousy and use the ability to provoke jealousy “as a gauge and a tool” to test the love of their partners. The second purpose of playing games is to display exaggerated anger/passion. It reflects the tendency of some Chinese women to use subtle methods to solve problems/get what they want rather than openly discuss them.

Whichever the purpose is, playing games is an indirect way to express mood and provoke jealousy rather than a direct communication with partners. Chinese men, who are used to this indirect way of communication, might not have problems in understanding what Chinese women mean by playing games. For western men, however, it is not so easy. When I discuss this issue with Allen, he cannot agree more:

Yes. They're very difficult people in general. I was amazed that several "dumped" me, and when I moved on to someone else, they came back in attack mode and accused me of cheating!

Huang: What made you feel they "dumped" you?

Allen: It was an obvious rejection of me: "It's over" etc. and I didn't even know why!

Huang: As far as i know, Chinese women are never serious when they say "it's over".

Allen: Another thing for laowai to learn!!!

....

Huang: So when they said "it's over", you just left?

Allen: Started dating someone else, (of course!)

Huang: Did you ask them why they said that?

Allen: I suppose I did! Don't remember clearly, but it happened several times!!!

Huang: They were waiting for you to apologize or just give more attention to them. Do western women do this?

Allen: No. Such indirect games would warrant a call to the mental health authorities.

Allen finds the tendency of Chinese women to play games childish and unfair:

...but poor Lucy was replete with hypocrisy when I met her: much better now

Huang: What kind of hypocrisy did she have? Can you give some details?

Allen: The kind of childish thought which expresses: you must like it when I do something, but if you do it I won't tolerate it. Her game was completely unfair, as if the concept of "fairness" was a new one on her....

Huang: Why do you think she felt that it's ok for her to do something but not ok for you to do it?

Allen: I kept asking that. Maybe because of gender difference, because before her, I got

the message: "be a man, and put up with unreasonable and unacceptable behavior"....

"Be a man!" This is a phrase often said by Chinese women to their men. For many Chinese women, being a man means tolerating whatever women they love do to them

and “put[ting] up with unreasonable and unacceptable behavior” on the part of them. For these women, being indulged and spoilt by their lovers is a manifestation of love from their partners. Fairness is not important. These women want to be treated as spoilt princesses, rather than as equal partners.

In her post titled “Asian women: caution when dating western men in Asia” on the internet forum of *China Daily*, westdragon (<http://bbs.chinadaily.com.cn/forumpost.shtml?toppid=104749>) warns Chinese women of this cultural difference:

Men in Asia are educated and expected to be strong, financially or psychologically in a relationship. They are expected to take care of their women in a lot of aspects. However, in western culture, they value equal-partnership. That’s why some western guys complain their Asian girlfriends are not independent enough. They are sweet and charming for sure but they also sick of being a good man according to Asian customs (their girlfriends expectation)

....

My dad is a traditional Asian man, he believes husband should bring breads home but it was very difficult to conveying such values to westerners. They probably would think their Asian girlfriends are trying to take advantage from them. Again it is cultural differences.

Westdragon provides a good example of the conflict between the expectations of some Asian women for “a good man” and the value of equal-partnership of their western boyfriends. Among my Chinese women interviewees, Lucy and Lanlan are

economically dependent on their husbands. Economically independent as some of my interviewees may be (e.g. Anna), they still expect a man to take care of them emotionally. This suggests that the equal-partnership that these Chinese women like in western men is still hard for them to totally accept.

David Morgan's discussion of gender, family and masculinities in the four models of societies can be applied here to explain the difference in the expectations of Chinese women and western men. The masculinity that some Chinese women expect in men is the type of masculinity that "revolves around notions of the breadwinner, the assumption of mature adult responsibilities in terms of a wife and children, the settling-down into respectability, duty and security" (226) that can be found in the early modern society. However, for western men who are from a late modern or post-modern society, masculinity is alienated from family commitments and obligations. "Family relationships are less obviously organized around gender; there is talk of 'partners' rather than 'spouses' ..." (230). When two partners come from two different models of societies with different expectations of marriage, family and gender roles, conflicts naturally arise.

Being bossy and rude, playing babyish and playing games all suggest that all Chinese women may not really be ready for an equal partnership. They want equal relationships and expect to be treated with respect by their partners, but deep in their mind, they still aspire to traditional gender roles. For them, women should be like women, and being women, they should enjoy some privileges of their gender roles and should be treated in a certain way. They use subtle ways to get what they want rather than ask for it directly. They play games to test the feelings of their partners rather than openly discuss

them.

However, this issue should not be considered only from the aspect of gender. Culture plays a part in it too. In China, as in Japan and India and other countries where collectivism is a dominant cultural value, interdependence rather than independence is valued. Parents pamper their children and expect to be pampered by their children when they get old. Spouses pamper each other. In contrast, dependency has primarily negative or ambivalent connotations in Western cultures which value autonomy and individuality. Equality and fairness are generally emphasized in all interpersonal relationships, whether it is between intimate partners or between parents and children. However in China, there has appeared a gradual development of individuality too.

6.5 Conclusion

As in chapter five, this chapter explored themes that emerged from the participants' contributions through interviews. It focused on themes related to the attractive qualities that Chinese women and western men find in each other and the conflicts they have. We can find influences of patriarchy in the discussions of the attractive qualities western men find in Chinese women. The attractive qualities that Chinese women find in western men suggest that these Chinese women are attracted to more open-minded, democratic and less patriarchal partners and are looking for a more equal relationship. However, from the conflicts between Chinese women and western men and what western men found special in Chinese women, we can say that all Chinese women may not be ready for an equal partnership. Drawing on the themes and analyses

from chapters five and six, the final chapter integrates and synthesizes what I have learned from this study in an attempt to provide a summary of the findings. Finally, through this summary, recommendations and implications for future research are considered.

Chapter 7: Conclusions

7.1 Introduction

In this chapter I step back to contextualize and reflect on what the study has revealed through the participants' experiences. This chapter presents reflections of a novice researcher. I do not make claims of generalizability, however this study can make a significant contribution to the research on intercultural couples in China. I review some of the salient features of the study and consider how this research can affect our present-day understanding of the experiences of intercultural couples in China.

7.2 Summary of the Key Themes

Based on the findings, several key themes are presented here to highlight the participants' experiences in intercultural relationships. Through this study, I hoped to learn about what this group of people in intercultural relationships expects from love and marriage. The purpose of the study was ultimately to provide insight, as opposed to reaching definitive conclusions, and the knowledge produced by this study represents only one piece of the puzzle. The findings of the study are suggestive rather than conclusive and it should be emphasized that the experiences and opinions of some participants in this study do not represent all participants, even less all western men and Chinese women.

This thesis drew on grounded theory for an analysis of narrative accounts based on the personal experiences of ten participants (five Chinese women and five western men) who have experienced intercultural relationship. The study focused on two primary themes: myths and attractiveness. Following are the major themes:

Myth of Subservience

In the interviews with the male participants, the myth of Chinese women's submissiveness was certainly prevalent although that might not be the reason they seek Chinese women. According to Prasso, the stereotype of Chinese women as being submissive mainly comes from western media which depicts Asian women as "submissive, subservient and exotic Oriental" "the tea-serving geisha, the sex nymph, the weeping war victim, the heart-of-gold prostitute"(8). After associating with Chinese women, most western men participants found that Chinese women are not as submissive as they expected. The myth of subservient Chinese women is reductionistic, simplistic, outdated and misleading. From the remarks of western male participants, we can see that an egalitarian relationship is stressed by them all. Most of them claim to look for women who are their best friends and who share the same interests with them rather than submissive servants. There might be men looking for subservience, but they do not represent all western men in intercultural relationships with Chinese women and their motives cannot be generalized. It should also be taken into account that both the men and the women in my study have quite a high level of education – the women in particular – and considerable social mobility and opportunities.

Stigma of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers

After 30 years of the capitalist economic development, the booming economy has brought a phenomenal increase in the standard of living of many urban Chinese and has

led to greater exposure to the West. However, for the vast majority of Chinese people, the West is still a mysterious place of freedom and prosperity. That's why most Chinese people assume Chinese women choose western men for money or for a visa to developed countries. This stigma is popular among westerners too. The stories of my participants suggest that it is not fair to say that all Chinese women choose westerners for money or for a visa. Some of my women participants have equal or even larger salaries than their western boyfriends or husbands and they prefer to stay in China or go back to China after studying in western countries because of the job opportunities and the feeling of safety in the home country.

The popular belief among Chinese and westerners that Chinese women marry westerners for money or for a visa reflects the widespread assumption that Asian women who marry westerners are "marrying up" in a pattern that Constable refers to as "global hypergamy". But the stories of my participants show that some of Chinese women may be said to marry down in some ways.

The myth of subservience and the popular images of Chinese women as gold/visa diggers tend to echo two different but interconnected stereotypes of Asian women that have long been popularized in Hollywood films. One is the sweet and innocent, sexual-romantic "oriental doll" or "lotus blossom"; the other is the conniving, devious, and shrewd "dragon lady." These images underlie the simplistic, dualistic images of Chinese women as either willing and helpless victims of controlling western men, or alternatively as shrewd foreigners out for a green card and a free meal ticket through marriage with innocent western men. The two myths also reflect that people's imaginations of global

relationships are both gendered and raced. It is natural and logical to imagine that the proper relationship involves dominant men and submissive women and that women in the Third World would marry up to men in the developed countries, but it would be unimaginable for most people to consider the possibility of western women looking for Asian husbands abroad.

Attractiveness of Chinese Women

From the discussion in Chapter Five, it seems that the western male participants are not looking for subservient wives, rather, they are looking for an equal partnership. However, from their discussion of attractiveness that they find in Chinese women, we can see the influence of patriarchy. Feminism is blamed as the scapegoat for all the unpleasantness of western women. Free from the influence of feminism, Chinese women are seen as less self-conscious, less inhibited while having sex, less cynical and more real about life.

In the West, with the influence of feminism and the sexual revolution, women's sexual attitudes have been greatly changed. Instead of taking male pleasures as first priority, western women take greater responsibility for their own sexuality and become more assertive about their own wants and desires. They also, as Mike said, carry "the ideological arguments that western women have been using to fight discrimination in the public sphere" over to the private sphere and refuse to do what don't feel comfortable with. In the view of several male participants, Chinese women are not so much influenced by feminism and less assertive about their own wants and desires. They are

less “self-conscious”, more passive, and hence more attractive in the eyes of western men who prefer to have the power and control in their sexuality scripts. In the view of several male participants, influenced by feminism, western women are also conscious of the sexual inequality and tend to use theories of feminism to analyze motives in men’s behavior. Chinese women, however, do not have this consciousness, and hence are less cynical.

The Western male participants also find that western women are either too independent in that they want to become superwomen who have both a career and family or too dependent in that they believe a knight in shining armor will bring them everything. They find that Chinese women seem to them to be more realistic about life and less competitive, but independent enough not to be a burden for their husbands. Western male participants’ preference for traditional gender roles and for a woman who is both non-competitive and independent, who is less demanding and assertive about what she wants from life reflects that their expectations for relationships are positioned between the traditional and the egalitarian model.

From what some western men participants describe as attractive in Chinese women (less self-conscious, less inhibited while having sex, less cynical and more real about life), we can see that these men prefer women who are less or not influenced by feminism, who are less demanding and assertive and more tolerant of unfair treatment, who would like to take traditional gender roles. Despite the proclamations of equity, their expectations of relationship are still a male-dominated one rather than an equal partnership. As noted above, however, it should be noted that these are the opinions of

some male participants. They do not represent all male participants, even less western men.

The Attractiveness of Western men (1): Being Romantic

What do Chinese female participants find attractive in western men? The quality of western men being romantic was frequently mentioned. All the female participants find their western partners more romantic, paying more attention to the quality of life, and caring more about their feelings. The demand of Chinese women for romance reflects their changing expectations of relationships in the past twenty years of market reform. Not just satisfied with a traditional provider who “has a strong sense of responsibility for the family”, they have higher demands for passion, emotion and affection from their partners and are more assertive in expressing them and in satisfying their own needs.

In this study, the expectations of Chinese women for romance in relationships form a striking contrast with the comments of western men who find Chinese women “certainly more materialistic,” “more practical and less romantic”. The conflicting expectations of love and marriage of Chinese women interviewees are consistent with what Parish and Farrer found in their study of the present-day urban Chinese families that “people, especially women, have become more mercenary in their marriage choices but also – in an apparent contradiction – that people have become more romantic, with higher emotional expectations of both courtship and marriage” (232). In the shift to a market society, there is a trend of a greater emphasis on the expression of romantic love in

ordinary courtship relations. However, the soaring living expenses, the insufficiency of social welfare system at the beginning stage of the capitalist development in China, and the strong sense of filial piety toward their parents make Chinese women unable to ignore economic factors in their mate choices.

Western male participants' comments on the practicality and lack of romance of Chinese women, together with Chinese women participants' comments concerning the lack of romance of Chinese men which was discussed in the last section, both support Dion & Dion's proposition that "romantic love is more likely to be considered an important basis for marriage in societies where individualism as contrasted with collectivism is a dominant cultural value" (58). The broader social network in the Chinese culture tends to mitigate the intensity of emotion in romantic relationship and may make Chinese women seem less romantic in the eyes of westerners. With the shift to a market society and the development of individuality in the Chinese society, Chinese women are demanding for more expressions of romantic love. However, the long tradition of collectivism still makes broad social network and extended family ties a point of conflict between some women participants and their western partners.

The Attractiveness of Western Men (2): Equal Partnership

This section focuses on other attractive qualities of western men: respect for the feelings of their partners, no virgin complex, loyalty after marriage, giving partners personal freedom. The fact that Chinese women in this study find these qualities attractive suggests that Chinese women may be attracted to western men because they see

them as more democratic, open-minded, less controlling and patriarchal compared with Chinese men. They look for a more equal relationship. However, from what western men found special in Chinese women: being bossy and rude, playing babyish and playing games, we can see that some Chinese women are still not ready for an equal partnership. This issue is considered from both the gender and cultural perspectives.

In western culture, politeness is a necessity for all relationships, even for intimate ones. For the Chinese people, however, politeness can be insulting between couples, even between very close friends. Some western men complain that Chinese women are bossy and rude and have the tendency to diminish their partners in the public. For Chinese women who view a relationship as a kind of possession, being bossy and rude and diminishing their partners are all manifestations of intimacy and possession. However, for westerners, it is uncomfortable. Being polite to partners, attention to self and personal space are all taken as normal in the western individualistic culture. However, for Chinese women, it is cold and estranging. The conflict here is actually the conflict between relational self and autonomous self. Chinese women like to be treated with respect as equal partners, however some notions of the equal partnership are still contrary to their cultural expectations.

All the western men in this study have noticed that the Chinese women like playing babyish and that western women do not do this as much as Chinese women. The Chinese women I interviewed believe that playing babyish is a show of femininity and a symbol of high status. However, a male participant points out that playing babyish is “a way of dealing with a boy-friend” that is preprogrammed by the “social-familial

propaganda". I suggest that playing babyish is the internalization of the social construction of femininity. Chinese women play babyish because they have learned that is the "comportment" that men like. They have accepted the gender norms and have so internalized the disciplines that not playing babyish is looked at as a lack of femininity and hence a sad thing.

Instead of being a symbol of high status, playing babyish puts women in an "inferior place", a powerless position, the position of a baby who needs to be pampered and given extra attention by adults. Direct, equal "man-to-man" dealing is off. Chinese women must "employ subtler methods to get what she wants" (Jack). They enjoy being treated as powerless, pitiable little princesses who always long for the protection and the conquest of powerful men. The "little princess complex" of Chinese women reflects one way that Chinese women relate female sexuality with power. By adopting a powerless position, they gain power over men in intimate relationships. In the west, the power of sexuality to provide nonsexual gain for women is declining. Women have other means of access to power via education, occupation and income, legal change, and general social change. In China, women have much more access to power than before too. However, the standards of femininity and the emotional dependency is so internalized that some Chinese women still enjoy adopting a powerless and pitiable role to express their femininity and attract the attention of males.

Western male participants' comparison of Chinese women with western women and their account of the lack of individuality of Chinese women and Chinese people in general lead to the discussion of independence and interdependence in individualistic and

collectivist cultures. Chinese women playing babyish should also be considered from the cultural perspective. Playing babyish is a bit similar to the Japanese *amae*. It is not only what Chinese women do to their boyfriends or husbands, it may be done vice versa, and between parents and children, and even close friends. In China, as in Japan and India and other countries where collectivism is a dominant cultural value, interdependence rather than independence is valued. Parents pamper their children and expect to be pampered by their children when they get old. Spouses pamper each other and they take this kind of love as natural. All in all, according to my observations, fairness and equality do not seem to be as emphasized in any relationships in China as in the west. The relationship between Chinese husbands and wives seems to be more a kind of mutual domination than the equal partnership in the west.

Another point of conflict between Chinese women and western men is that western male participants find Chinese women playing more games “to provoke jealousy or ascertain the ability to provoke jealousy in the lover” and “to express exaggerated anger/passion”. This shows the uncertainty of these Chinese women and their tendency to use subtle methods to solve problems/get what they want rather than openly discuss them.

Western male participants also talked about the demands of Chinese women on him to “be a man, and put up with unreasonable and unacceptable behavior”. For many Chinese women, being a man means tolerating whatever women they love do to them and “put[ting] up with unreasonable and unacceptable behavior” on the part of them. For these women, being indulged and spoilt by their lovers is a manifestation of love from their partners. Fairness is not important. These women want to be treated as spoilt

princesses, rather than as equal partners.

The expectations of some Chinese women for “a good man” and the value of equal-partnership of their western boyfriends became one of the major conflicts between some intercultural couples. Gender roles are so internalized that although some of my female interviewees are economically very successful and independent, they still expect a man to take care of them emotionally. The equal-partnership that these women like in western men is still hard for them to totally accept.

In summary, being bossy and rude, playing babyish and playing games suggest that some Chinese woman are not yet ready for an equal partnership. They want equal relationships and expect to be treated with respect by their partners, but deep in their mind, they still expect traditional gender roles. For them, women should be like women, and being women, they should enjoy some privileges of their gender roles and should be treated in a certain way. Culture plays a part in it too. In China, where collectivism is still a dominant cultural value, interdependence rather than independence is valued. Fairness and equality do not seem to be as emphasized in relationships in China as in the west.

7.3 Benefits of the Study and Implications for Further Research

The biggest benefit of this study is that it shows men and women in intercultural relationships as a diverse group of people, rather than stereotyped seekers of subservience and gold/visa-diggers. However, although the men I interviewed value equal-partnership, some of them also show certain traces of the desire to dominate, and although Chinese women are attracted to western men because of their respect for women and the value of

a more equal relationship, some of them still rely on men emotionally and expect a man to take care of them. Both sides show the tendency to abide by certain gender roles. I have come to realize that simplistic depictions of western men as seekers of subservience or equal-partnership, and Chinese women as gold/visa-diggers or independent modern women are not enough. Instead, they should be depicted as multi-dimensional, often having both traditional and modern values. These values might conflict with each other, although they themselves might not realize it. Understanding that the expectations of the participants in my study cannot represent those of all Chinese women and western men, I am not intending to generalize the data collected in this research to all Chinese women and western men, but to gain a deeper understanding of the experiences of a few.

This study is expected to inform areas not yet explored in intercultural relationships in China. While results are not intended for generalization, the study contributes to an understanding of the experiences of a small group of Chinese women and western men in love and marriage and in doing so will create a qualitative basis for future quantitative and qualitative study of intercultural love and marriages in China. Since current studies on intercultural love and marriages in China are scarce, my research will be significant to those involved in this area of research. It will also be useful for those involved in the study of Sino-western marriages and the study of intercultural love and marriages worldwide. This investigation will also be helpful to those involved in the research of cultural differences and in feminist cultural studies.

It is my hope that this research might also encourage intercultural couples to reflect on the cultural, racial, and gender issues involved in their intercultural love and

marriage and on their own roles in their relationships. It might help intercultural couples solve their conflicts and enhance mutual understanding. For people who are starting intercultural relationships, this research might also serve as a guide for them to know more about the issues to be paid attention to.

With the aim of the in-depth analysis of the expectations of a group of Chinese women and western men, generalizability was not the goal of this study. For future research endeavors, it would be beneficial to triangulate methods of data collection, using larger-scale interviews or supplementing interviews with focus groups and quantitative methods. Internet is an exciting way of doing interviews, but personal interviews might yield a wealth of information that may support, refute and supplement the work already accomplished through this study. As mentioned in the thesis, “the sex experimentrices” and disappointed/sadder-but-wiser females would be interesting topics to explore. A study on relationships between western women and Chinese men in China could also yield different information and implications which would form an interesting comparison with the present study.

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Appendix A: Information for Participants

October 24, 2005

Dear Participant,

I'm a graduate student in the Women's Studies Program at Memorial, and the thesis is a required component for completion of my degree. In-depth interviews are the central focus of my thesis research entitled *Expectations of Love and Marriage in Relationship between Chinese Women and Western Men in Urban China*.

The purpose of my study is to explore what Chinese women and western men expect from love and marriage. The focus of my study will be love and marriages between Chinese women and western men in urban China. In analyzing the attitudes of Chinese women and western men towards love, sex, mate-selection and marriage, I'm attempting to identify whether there are any differences in their attitudes and if yes, what are the reasons behind the differences. Through the use of interviews I hope to compile the information necessary to support the results of my study. The interviews are intended to provide insight about the experiences of the intercultural couples and to explore relevant issues according to the participants' personal stories.

The information you provide in the interviews will only be used with your consent. Your participation is voluntary, you have the right to decide whether you want to answer the questions or not, and you may withdraw from the research at any time. If you should withdraw from the study at any time, all previous data obtained from you will be destroyed.

I will take every measure possible to ensure your confidentiality. Your name, address and any specific identifying information will not be included in the thesis unless you give me the permission to have them revealed. Pseudonyms will be the only names referred to in the thesis. My supervisors may see sections of the transcript of interviews, but any information that may identify the participants or the people they mention will be deleted from what they may read. You will have an opportunity to view the analysis of your interview before the final draft is completed. If you are not satisfied with the accuracy of the information or if you feel I have not provided the degree of anonymity you have requested or I have not adequately addressed other concerns, you may let me know and I will make the necessary amendments or if you request it, not use any of the material you provide.

The thesis based on this study will be given to the Queen Elizabeth II Library at Memorial University of Newfoundland and material from the thesis may be presented at conferences and/or published in an article and/or book format. The transcripts of interviews will be stored in a locked file cabinet and destroyed five years after research in case of challenges to the results of the study. It will also allow time to prepare results for

possible conference presentation and/or publication.

There will be an on-line interview with you through MSN messenger and a few follow-up email interviews. Interviews with western men will be carried out in English and those with Chinese women will be done in Chinese. The on-line interview will be 1-1.5 hours in duration. My schedule is flexible and I will accommodate your schedule for each interview appointment.

This study has received approval from the interdisciplinary Committee on Ethics in Human Research (ICEHR), meaning it has been deemed ethical according to the university guidelines. If you have ethical concerns about the research, please contact the Chairperson of ICEHR at icehr@mun.ca or by phone at 001-709-7378368. If you wish to participate in the interview process, please sign the consent form, mail one copy to me at the following address: Huang Xiangrong, Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7 and keep one for yourself.

If you have any questions, comments or concerns about this research, please feel free to contact me at Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7. Phone: 001-709-7538494; email: rowanhuang73@yahoo.com. You may also contact my thesis supervisor, Dr. Elizabeth Yeoman at 001-709-5791849, or by email eyeoman@mun.ca. Your participation is greatly appreciated and will constitute a significant part of my research. I look forward to talking to you on line or in emails and will schedule the interview with you at your convenience.

Yours Sincerely,

Huang Xiangrong

Appendix A: 访 谈 介 绍

亲爱的参与者:

我是加拿大纽芬兰纪念大学女性研究专业的研究生。论文是我完成硕士学位一个必不可少的组成部分。我论文的题目是《中国都市中西婚恋关系中中国女性与西方男性的婚恋观》。

本研究旨在探索中国女性与西方男性的婚恋观。研究重点是中国都市里中国女性与西方男性的婚恋关系。在分析中国女性和西方男性对于爱情、性、择偶、以及婚姻态度的同时试图找出其中是否有差异，以及差异的原因所在。我希望通过访谈来获得信息支持研究结果，希望通过访谈能够了解跨文化恋人的经历并根据参与者的个人故事探索相关的主题。

您在访谈中提供的信息只有经过您的同意才会使用。您的参与是自愿的，您有权决定是否回答问题，您可以在任何时间退出本研究。如果您退出研究的话，以前从您那里获得的任何信息都将被销毁。

我将尽力保证您所提供信息的保密性。您的姓名、地址以及任何可能会借以识别的信息都不会在论文中出现，除非您允许我公布这些信息。论文中使用的均为假名。我的导师们可能会看到访谈的部分内容，但是任何可能会识别参与者或是他们提到的人的信息都会从他们阅读的材料中删掉。在论文定稿之前您将有机会看到对您所做的访谈的分析。如果您认为信息不确切，或是没有达到您要求的保密程度，或是我没有充分地解决您所关心的问题，您可以告诉我，我将做必要的修改。如果您要求的话，我可以不使用您提供的任何材料。

根据本研究写出的论文将提交纽芬兰纪念大学的伊丽莎白女皇二世图书馆。论文的材料可能会在会议上演示或是以文章或书籍的形式出版。访谈记录将锁在文件柜中储存，五年后销毁，以防有人对研究结果提出质疑。这也为可能的会议演示或出版提供了准备时间。

我将通过 MSN Messenger 与您进行在线访谈，之后还会通过电子邮件进行一些信息的补充。我将用英语与西方男性进行访谈，用中文与中国女性进行访谈。在线访谈大约一个半到两小时。我的时间比较机动，我将根据您的日程安排确定访谈时间。

本研究经过了跨学科人类研究职业道德委员会的批准，这意味着该研究符合学校规定的职业道德标准。如果您对本研究的职业道德有任何问题的话请通过电邮 icehr@mun.ca 或电话 001-709-7378368 与该委员会的主席联系。如果您愿意参与访谈，请填写《访谈许可》，签字后一式两份，一份邮寄到以下地址：Huang Xiangrong, Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7，一份您自己保存。

如果您对于本研究有任何问题或是意见，请尽管与我联系。我的地址是 Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7。我的电话是 001-709-7538494，电邮是 rowanhuang73@yahoo.com。您也可以与我的论文导师伊丽莎白·悠曼博士联系。她的电话是 001-709-5791849，电邮是 eyeoman@mun.ca。非常感谢您的参与，您的参与对于我的研究意义重大。我期待着与您通过在线或电邮进行谈话，并将根据您的安排确定访谈时间。

此致

谢谢

黄向荣

2005年11月6日

Description of Research:

Consent:

Please fill this form, mail one copy to Huang Xiangrong, Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7 and keep one for yourself. Thank you very much!

Appendix B: 访 谈 许 可

研究内容:

该研究由黄向荣进行, 旨在探索中国女性与西方男性的婚恋观并分析其中是否有差异以及造成差异的原因。

许可:

本人, _____ (访谈参与者姓名), 理解并且同意参与该项研究。以下为具体事项:

参与在线访谈并允许黄向荣保存记录。 同意 不同意

通过电邮对本人进行访谈并且保存记录。 同意 不同意

允许黄向荣在该研究中使用本人的名字。 同意 不同意 (如果我选择“不同意”, 我明白在任何直接引用中都不会泄露我的名字以及其他识别信息。)

允许黄向荣在其论文中使用本人的材料。 同意 不同意

允许研究结果以会议论文的形式发布, 或以文章或书籍的形式发表。
同意 不同意

本人明白可以选择回答任何问题, 并且可以在任何时候以口头或是书面形式通知黄向荣退出该项研究。

本人明白如果有关于该研究职业道德方面的问题黄向荣不能解决的话, 可以通过电邮 icehr@mun.ca 或电话 001-709-7378368 与跨学科人类研究职业道德委员会的主席联系并讨论。

签字:

地址:

电话:

电邮:

日期:

有关本研究的问题请与黄向荣联系。地址: **Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7**, 电话 001-709-7538494, 电邮 rowanhuang73@yahoo.com。您也可以与伊丽莎白·悠曼博士联系。电话: 001-709-5791849, 电邮: eyeoman@mun.ca。

请填写该表, 签字后一式两份, 一份邮寄到以下地址: **Huang Xiangrong, Women's Studies Program, SN-4082, Memorial University of Newfoundland, St. John's, NL, Canada A1C 5S7**, 一份您自己保存。非常感谢!

Appendix C: Introductory Interview Questions

1. What is your name?
Surname _____
First Name _____
Middle Name _____
2. Contacts:
Address: _____

Phone # _____
e-mail _____
3. How old are you? _____
4. What is your country of birth? _____
5. What is your marital status? _____
6. Do you have children? If yes, how many? _____
7. What is your level of education? _____
8. When did you come to China? _____
9. What Chinese cities have you lived in since you came to China?

10. What is your current occupation? _____
11. What occupations have you taken in China/What were your occupations in China?

12. What pseudo name would you like to use for the research?

基本背景信息

1. 您的姓名: _____
2. 您的联系方式:
地址: _____
电话: _____
电子邮件: _____
3. 您的年龄: _____
4. 您的出生地: _____
5. 您的婚姻状况: _____
6. 您有孩子吗? 如果有, 有几个? _____
7. 您的受教育情况: _____
8. 您现在的职业: _____
9. 您在中国从事过哪些职业: _____
10. 您在中国哪些城市工作过: _____
11. 您希望在材料中采用什么假名? _____

Appendix D : Interview Guiding Questions

Name of Interviewee:.....

Date:.....

Start Time:.....

End Time:.....

Questions for Married Western Men:

Are you married to a Chinese woman?

Which province in China does your wife come from?

When and where did you meet her? How did you meet each other?

What did you do for the first date? Who paid for the bill?

What are the qualities in your wife that attract you most?

Is there anything in her personality or habits that you do not like?

Do you think there are cultural differences between you and your wife? If yes, what are they?

Have you ever had any conflicts or tensions with her before? If yes, what were they about? How did you solve them?

Did you associate with other women before meeting your wife? If yes, where are they from? What happened between you and them? How did you end the relationship? How do you compare them with your present wife?

What do you think of pre-marital sex?

Did you live with your girlfriend before you got married? If yes, do her parents know about it? What are their attitudes? How do their attitudes influence her?

Did your parents give you any advice on mate-selection? If yes, what are they?

What was the reaction of your parents when they found out that you are in a relationship with a Chinese woman?

What was the reaction of your friends when they found out that you are in a relationship with a Chinese woman?

If your parents did not agree, would you still marry her?

How do you and your wife deal with the economics of the relationship?

Who paid for the bill when you went out with your wife?

Do you give economic support to your parents? What does your wife think of it?

How do you and your girlfriend deal with household chores at home?

Do you have children? Do your parents help you take care of the children? What does your wife think of it? Do her parents help take care of the children? What do you think of it?

When did you start dating?

How important do you think sex is in the relationship?

What do you think of extra-marital sex?

Do you think that love and sex can be separated?

What is love? What is an example of real love? How can you tell if it is real?

During your life, have you changed your view of what love is? If yes, how is it changed?

What do you think is the most important thing in love?

What do you think is the most important thing in maintaining a marriage?

What was your imagination of Chinese women before coming to China? Is there any difference between what you imagined and what you find after being in China?

Generally, what do you think of Chinese women compared with western women?

Are there any particular aspects that you find attractive and some that you find unattractive?

Generally, are you satisfied with your present relationship?

Is there anything else that you want to say on this topic?

Following is a list of attributes that people seek in a long-time romantic partner- a steady date, a spouse or domestic partner, someone whom you might cohabit and/or raise children. Can you read over the entire list and rank order them from most to least important (1: most important characteristic to me, 10: least important characteristic to me, etc.)? ¹¹

Characteristic	Rank Order
Intelligent	_____
Kind and Understanding	_____
Emotionally Stable	_____
Honest and trustworthy	_____
Physically attractive	_____
Good sense of humor	_____
High social status	_____
Similar to you(e.g., interests, values)	_____
Good housekeeper	_____
Sexually inexperienced	_____

Beside these, what other characteristics do you seek in your long-time romantic partner?

¹¹ Adapted from Page 111 of *The Mating Game: A Primer on Love, Sex and Marriage* by Pamela Regan .

Name of Interviewee:.....
 Start Time:.....

Date:.....
 End Time:.....

Questions for unmarried western men:

Are you in relationship with a Chinese woman now?
 Which province in China does your present girlfriend come from?
 When and where did you meet her? How did you meet each other?
 What did you do for the first date? Who paid for the bill?

What are the qualities in your girlfriend that attract you most?
 Is there anything in her personality or habits that you do not like?
 Do you think you might marry her? Why or why not?
 Do you think there are cultural differences between you and your girlfriend? If yes, what are they?
 Have you ever had any conflicts or tensions with her before? If yes, what were they about? How did you solve them?

Did you associate with other women before meeting your girlfriend? If yes, where are they from? What happened between you and them? How did you end the relationship? How do you compare them with your present girlfriend?

What do you think of pre-marital sex?
 Did you live with your girlfriend now? If yes, do her parents know about it? What are their attitudes? How do their attitudes influence her?
 Did your parents give you any advice on mate-selection? If yes, what are they?
 What was the reaction of your parents when they found out that you are in a relationship with a Chinese woman?
 What was the reaction of your friends when they found out that you are in a relationship with a Chinese woman?
 Suppose you are getting married, if your parents do not agree, would you still marry her?

How do you and your girlfriend deal with the economics of the relationship?
 Who pays for the bill when you go out with your girlfriend?
 Do you give economic support to your parents? What does your girlfriend think of it?
 How do you and your girlfriend deal with household chores at home?
 Do you have children? Do your parents help you take care of the children? What does your girlfriend think of it? Do her parents help take care of the children?
 What do you think of it?

When did you start dating?

How important do you think sex is in the relationship?

What do you think of extra-marital sex?

Do you think that love and sex can be separated?

What is love? What is an example of real love? How can you tell if it is real?

During your life, have you changed your view of what love is? If yes, how is it changed?

What do you think is the most important thing in love?

What do you think is the most important thing in maintaining a marriage?

What was your imagination of Chinese women before coming to China? Is there any difference between what you imagined and what you find after being in China?

Generally, what do you think of Chinese women compared with western women?

Are there any particular traits that you find attractive and some that you find unattractive?

Generally, are you satisfied with your present relationship?

Is there anything else that you want to say on this topic?

Following is a list of attributes that people seek in a long-time romantic partner- a steady date, a spouse or domestic partner, someone whom you might cohabit and/or raise children. Can you read over the entire list and rank order them from most to least important (1: most important characteristic to me, 10: least important characteristic to me, etc.)?

Characteristic	Rank Order
Intelligent	_____
Kind and Understanding	_____
Emotionally Stable	_____
Honest and trustworthy	_____
Physically attractive	_____
Good sense of humor	_____
High social status	_____
Similar to you(e.g., interests, values)	_____
Good housekeeper	_____
Sexually inexperienced	_____

Beside these, what other characteristics do you seek in your long-time romantic partner?

姓名:

日期:

开始时间:

结束时间:

已婚中国女性访谈问题纲要:

您的男友来自哪里?

您什么时候、在哪里认识他的? 你们怎么认识的?

你们第一次约会都安排什么活动? 能告诉我谁买单吗?

您觉得您的男友有哪些地方最吸引你?

他的性格、习惯中有没有什么您不喜欢的地方?

您觉得会跟他结婚吗? 为什么?

您觉得您和他之间有文化差异吗? 如果有, 有哪些?

您和他之间有过冲突或不和吗? 如果有的话是关于什么的? 你们是怎么解决的?

您在认识您的男友之前和其他男性交往过吗? 如果有, 他们是哪里人? 你们之间后来怎么样了? 你们怎么结束关系的? 和您现在的男友比起来, 您觉得他们怎么样?

您怎么看待婚前性行为?

您和男友住在一起吗? 如果有, 您父母知道吗? 他们是什么态度? 他们的态度对您有影响吗?

关于择偶, 您的父母给过您什么建议吗?

他们知道您有一个西方男友吗? 他们有什么反应?

您的朋友知道您有一个西方男友吗? 他们有什么反应?

假设您和男友想结婚, 但是父母不同意, 您还会跟他结婚吗?

您和您的男友怎么处理经济上的开支?

你们出去时谁付账单?

您在经济上支持您的父母吗? 您的男友怎么看?

你们家务活谁做?

您有孩子吗? 您父母帮您带孩子吗? 您的男友怎么看?

您什么时候开始与男孩子约会?

您觉得性在恋爱关系中重要吗?

您怎么看婚外恋?

您觉得爱和性是可以分开的吗?

您觉得什么是爱? 能不能举一个真爱的例子? 您怎么知道自己是不是真的在恋爱?

您对于爱的观点有改变吗?

您觉得维系爱情最重要的东西是什么?

您觉得择偶时最看重什么？

您觉得维系婚姻最重要的东西是什么？

在接触西方男性之前，你对他们有什么看法？在接触之后，有没有发现与您以前的印象不同的地方？

总的来说，与中国男性相比，您对于西方男性有什么看法？他们有没有什么特别吸引人的地方？有没有什么特别不吸引人的地方？

总的来说，您对于现在的恋爱关系满意吗？

对于这个话题您还有没有其他看法？

我还有其他一些问题，能不能在email里跟您讨论？

以下是人们期望长期伴侣（稳定的约会对象、配偶）所具有的一些条件。您能不能按照您认为的重要程度对以下方面进行排序（1：最看重的——10：最不看重的）？

有智慧	_____
有爱心、善解人意	_____
情绪上稳定	_____
诚实可信	_____
外貌吸引人	_____
幽默感强	_____
社会地位高	_____
与你相似（比如在兴趣、 价值观方面）	_____
善持家	_____
性方面单纯	_____

除此之外，您还期望您的长期伴侣具有哪些方面的特性？

姓名:

日期:

开始时间:

结束时间:

未婚中国女性访谈问题纲要:

您的丈夫来自哪里?

您什么时候、在哪里认识他的? 你们怎么认识的?

你们第一次约会都安排什么活动? 能告诉我谁买单的吗?

您觉得您的丈夫有哪些地方最吸引你?

他的性格、习惯中有没有什么您不喜欢的地方?

您觉得会跟他结婚吗? 为什么?

您觉得您和他之间有文化差异吗? 如果有, 有哪些?

您和他之间有过冲突或不和吗? 如果有的话是关于什么的? 你们是怎么解决的?

您在认识您的丈夫之前和其他男性交往过吗? 如果有, 他们是哪里人? 你们之间后来怎么样了? 你们怎么结束关系的? 和您现在的男友比起来, 您觉得他们怎么样?

您怎么看婚前性行为?

您婚前曾和男友住在一起吗? 如果有, 您父母知道吗? 他们是什么态度? 他们的态度对您有影响吗?

关于择偶, 您的父母给过您什么建议吗?

他们知道您在和一个西方男人交往时有什么反应?

您的朋友知道您在和一个西方男人交往时有什么反应?

假设您和男友想结婚, 但是父母不同意, 您还会跟他结婚吗?

您和您的丈夫怎么处理经济上的开支?

你们出去时谁付账单?

您在经济上支持您的父母吗? 您的丈夫怎么看?

你们家务活谁做?

您有孩子吗? 您父母帮您带孩子吗? 您的丈夫怎么看?

您什么时候开始与男孩子约会?

您觉得性在恋爱关系中重要吗?

您怎么看婚外恋?

您觉得爱和性是可以分开的吗?

您觉得什么是爱? 能不能举一个真爱的例子? 您怎么知道自己是不是真的在恋爱?

您对于爱的观点有改变吗?

您觉得维系爱情最重要的东西是什么？

您择偶时最看重什么？

您觉得维系婚姻最重要的东西是什么？

在接触西方男性之前，你对他们有什么看法？在接触之后，有没有发现与您以前的印象不同的地方？

总的来说，与中国男性相比，您对于西方男性有什么看法？他们有没有什么特别吸引人的地方？有没有什么特别不吸引人的地方？

总的来说，您对于现在的恋爱关系满意吗？

对于这个话题您还有没有其他看法？

我还有其他一些问题，能不能在email里跟您讨论？

以下是人们期望长期伴侣（稳定的约会对象、配偶）所具有的一些条件。您能不能按照您认为的重要程度对以下方面进行排序（1：最看重的——10：最不看重的）？

有智慧	_____
有爱心、善解人意	_____
情绪上稳定	_____
诚实可信	_____
外貌吸引人	_____
幽默感强	_____
社会地位高	_____
与你相似（比如在兴趣、 价值观方面）	_____
善持家	_____
性方面单纯	_____

除此之外，您还期望您的长期伴侣具有哪些方面的特性？



