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Interracial Dating: Examining Race Preference Attitude in Hmong Adults

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Interracial Dating: Examining Race Preference

Attitude in Hmong Adults

by

Chue Her

A Thesis

Submitted to Graduate Faculty of

St. Cloud State University

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Thesis Committee:
Jennifer Connor, Chairperson
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Abstract

While past research on Asians in interracial dating has found that Asians are more likely to engage in interracial relationships with White individuals, there is little information known regarding specific Asian ethnicities. More so, there is even less information regarding Hmong in interracial dating. To better understand Hmong in interracial dating, this study examined Hmong adults' openness to interracial dating and whether race preference exists. Participants were asked to complete a survey pertaining to their attitudes toward interracial dating with specific racial groups as well as level of acculturation. Results revealed Hmong adults are open to interracial dating across all four racial groups. However, Hmong adults' perception of their parents' attitudes differs. Limitations and future research along with implications are discussed.

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Chapter I: Introduction

Over the accumulating years, race has become a controversial subject in regards to dating and marriage. Since 2000 to 2010, interracial marriages have increased from 7.4% to 9.5% (U.S. Census Bureau, 2010). With a 2.1% increase in the past decade, interracial romantic relationships are becoming more common among communities in the United States. According to Qian (1999), although Asians make up one of the smallest racial groups, they have the highest rates of interracial marriage. Based on the 1990 U.S. Census, Harris and Ono (2005) found that Asians have the lowest rate of intraracial relationships compared to other races with 30% of Asian women and 18% of Asian men in interracial relationships. With the steady and increasing rate of interracial marriages among Asians, Min and Kim (2009) found that native-born Asians from the second-generation account for the highest number of interracial marriages.

While there are various explanations regarding this phenomenon, most studies showed that Asians with higher levels of acculturation (i.e., higher English proficiency skills) are more likely to engage in interracial relationships (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian, 1999). Studies have also found that gender and parental influence played a factor in mate selection of interracial relationships (Jacobs & Labov, 2002; Qian, 1999; Zantvliet, Kalmijn, & Verbakel, 2015). Although there are varying explanations regarding Asians in interracial relationships, they all are impacted by the culture of the interracial couple as well as the culture in which the relationship takes place. Yet, there is little information known when examining specific ethnicities across the Asian race in regards to interracial dating. Since Asians vary greatly in their ethnicities as well as their culture, it is

it important to note that categorizing all Asians together is problematic (Olson, Defrain, & Skogrand, 2010). Thus, we will be examining the Hmong ethnicity.

Purpose of Study

Previous research has found that Asians are more likely to engage in interracial relationships with White individuals (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009). However, when examining race preference pertaining to specific ethnicities, little is known. The little information known about specific ethnicities in Asian interracial relationships indicates Hmong individuals are engaging in interracial relationships (Morgan, 2012). Nevertheless, there is little research regarding the Hmong population, their race preference attitude, and how acculturation impacts their openness to interracial relationships. Therefore, the purpose of this study is to examine if the Hmong population has a race preference attitude and are open to interracial dating.

Research Questions

The research questions for this study are as follows:

- 1) Descriptively, how open are Hmong adults to interracial dating?
- 2) Are Hmong adults more likely to have a race preference attitude for White individuals than other races in interracial dating?
- 3) Are acculturated Hmong adults more likely to be open to interracial dating?
- 4) Do Hmong adults' attitudes correlate with the perception of their parents' attitudes?

Chapter II: Review of Literature and Hypotheses Statement

The Hmong Community

The Hmong are a Southeast Asian cultural group who originated in Northern China and fled south in the early 19th century to escape the Chinese government's persecution. Many of the Hmong settled in the highlands of Southeast Asia such as Laos, Thailand, and Vietnam. During the early 1970s, the Hmong allied with the United States and participated in a secret war in Laos (Lamborn, Nguyen, & Bocanegra, 2013). When the United States' military retreated and Laos's new government took control, the Hmong population received harsh repercussions for helping the U.S. In order to flee from the persecution of the Laos government, the Hmong sought refuge in Thailand and the United States in 1975. Many of the Hmong refugees and immigrants settled into the United States. Today, California, Minnesota, and Wisconsin are the three states with the largest Hmong population (Su, Lee, & Vang, 2005; Vang & Flores, 1999; Yang, 2001).

In order to differentiate one another, the Hmong are separated by clans pertaining to one's last name, allowing for 18 clans to exist in the Hmong community. In a traditional structure, there is a power hierarchy. The ones who possess the most power and authority to influence everyone are the clan leaders. Similarly to other traditional family roles, in a Hmong household, the father holds the most authority and power while the children have the least. Due to the strong gender roles played in traditional Hmong households, the fathers and sons are seen as prestige figures (Vang & Flores, 1999). As with many Asian cultures, the Hmong value family commitment, respect for elders, and hard work while practicing their own

religious beliefs (Shamanism/Animism) and traditions (Olson et al., 2010; Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013).

However, since the resettlement of Hmong refugees and immigrants into the United States, family conflict has increased in particular to intergenerational conflict between parents and children. For instance, when Xiong, Eliason, Detzner, and Cleveland (2005) conducted a Southeast Asian immigrant study regarding parents and children's perception of what it means to be a good child and parent, results showed there was a discrepancy between their perceptions. While the parents expressed a "good" parent as providing economic means, spending time, and observing their children, the children expressed a "good" parent as understanding and showing love. Due to the two different viewpoints, the parents and children often clashed when discussing ideologies about one another's role.

Studies have found that the discrepancy between parents and children's perceptions is because children have a higher level of acculturation than their parents (Park, Kim, Chiang, & Ju, 2010; Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013). Su et al. (2005) noted that immigrant parents are less likely to adapt to the host culture. Therefore, Hmong parents have a more difficult time adjusting to the dominant culture versus their children causing intergenerational conflict. Yet, despite the high levels of intergenerational conflict, when compared to other Asian families, Hmong families tend to sustain their traditional family structure (Bahrassa, Juan, & Lee, 2013).

Hmong Dating and Marriage

When it comes to dating, Hmong women are more closely monitored by their parents compared to Hmong men. In some cases, Hmong women were restricted from dating

(Bahrassa et al., 2013; Lee, Xiong, & Yuen, 2006). This is because in the Hmong culture, women are constantly being prepared to be a “good wife.” If a Hmong woman was to be seen with a man before marriage, she will be shamed along with her family and clan (Bahrassa et al., 2013; Lee et al., 2006). As Lee et al. explains, individual behavior reflects upon the whole family and clan due to the Hmong culture’s collectivistic worldview. Thus, if an individual behaves in a “shameful” manner such as dating multiple partners before marriage, the family and clan of the woman will lose face. Therefore, when compared to Hmong men, Hmong women may be more scrutinized when it comes to dating.

Although some cultures do not approve of early marriage, it is common for early marriages to take place in the Hmong community (Vang & Bogenschutz, 2014). Many Hmong marriages occur between the ages of 18 to 30 for men and 14 to 18 for women with an average age of 16. Studies show that Hmong women tend to marry at a younger age in order to escape from their duties as a daughter (Hutchison & McNall, 1994; Lee et al., 2006). In a study conducted by Ngo (2002) that looked at early marriages in the Hmong community, results showed that Hmong women chose to marry at an early age as a way to challenge their parents’ restrictions on their social lives. They also believed marriage meant gaining a sense of freedom. Contrary to their beliefs, Ngo found that by marrying, Hmong women were only replacing their authority figures with another set, parents-in-laws.

Traditionally, the Hmong community does not permit dating or marriage within the same clan and last name. This is because the Hmong believe that all individuals who have the same last name are related and have a kinship bond that can be traced back to one’s ancestral roots. Thus, dating and marriage within clan members are taboo and marriage outside of one’s

clan is practiced (Xiong, Deenanath, & Mao, 2013). In addition, marriage and dating outside of the cultural group is also prohibited in regards to both interracial and intraracial. If one was to engage in an interracial or intraracial relationship, he/she could be disowned by his/her parents and ostracized (Renko, 2003).

Theoretical Contexts to Interracial Dating

Assimilation theory. In general, Asians traditionally frown upon the union of interracial romantic relationships (Yalom & Carstensen, 2002). Ironically, Asians account for the highest number of interracial relationships (Harris & Ono, 2005; Qian, 1999). According to the National Healthy Marriage Resource Center (2009), Asians marrying Whites make up the largest proportion of intermarriages in the United States. In addition, in a mass online research to explore Asians' race preference in interracial relationships, Tsunokai, McGrath, and Kavanagh (2014) found that Asian women preferred to date White men versus their own racial counter partner. To account for these statistics, researchers explored different theories.

One of the more popular theories used to explain the patterns of Asian interracial romantic relationships is Assimilation Theory. According to Gordon (1964), Assimilation Theory (commonly known as traditional assimilation theory) involves seven steps: cultural assimilation, structural assimilation, marital assimilation, identification assimilation, attitudinal-receptional assimilation, behavioral-receptional assimilation, and civic assimilation. Each step explores different phases that racial minorities may experience living in a dominant culture that is not their own. Ultimately, Assimilation Theory suggests that when racial minorities assimilate completely to the dominant culture, the racial dissonance between cultures will decline (Djamba & Kimuna, 2014; Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2010).

Gordon (1964) defines marital assimilation as the most crucial phase of Assimilation Theory. This is because when racial minorities intermarry, it means they have fully assimilated. Meaning, racial minorities have successfully stripped themselves from their cultural values and lifestyle and adopted the dominant group's values and lifestyles (Berry, 1990). Lewis and Ford-Robertson (2010) explains that when racial minorities intermarry into the dominant culture, Assimilation Theory assumes that the stigma associated in interracial dating and marriage will diminish. With the removal of the stigma, the interracial romantic relationship is normalized. Therefore, when looking at Asian interracial relationships in the U.S., it is not surprising that Qian and Lichter (2001) found that racial minorities were more likely to engage in interracial relationships with Whites (the dominant racial group) than other racial minorities.

In addition, Assimilation Theory provided an explanation for why some Asian ethnicities entered in interracial relationships at a faster rate than others. For instance, after World War II, there was a peak in interracial marriages between Japanese and White individuals. As an explanation, Assimilation Theory posits that the peak of interracial marriages occurred because during this time, Japanese Americans were being interrogated by the U.S. In order to prove the Japanese's loyalty, many Japanese Americans assimilated into the American culture and were also encouraged to marry Whites (Yalom & Carstensten, 2002). Thus, Assimilation Theory proposed that Asians engaged in interracial relationships in order to assimilate to the White culture and become more socially acceptable.

However, Assimilation Theory has been criticized for not being inclusive of later generations experiencing different circumstances such as more exposure to multiculturalism

and bigger waves of immigrants settling into the U.S. (Djamba & Kimuna, 2014; Greenman & Xie, 2008; Lewis & Ford-Robertson, 2010). Researchers have found that with the bigger waves of immigrants entering the U.S., more interethnic romantic relationships (same racial group but different ethnicities) are occurring (Morgan, 2012). For example, Tsunokai et al. (2014) found that Asians were more likely to date within their racial group if they had to choose between an Asian and a White individual with the same level of education. With the lack of a theoretical basis to inform why intraracial relationships are rising, Assimilation Theory has been criticized for not being more inclusive of new trends.

Furthermore, critics also argue that Assimilation Theory does not account for all racial minority groups since there are some groups who have not engaged in interracial relationships (Djamba & Kimuna, 2014). In addition, critics argue that Assimilation Theory is too simplistic in its cultural assimilation process and does not account for cultural changes such as racial prejudices and pragmatic decisions that may change one's environmental interactions (Qian & Lichter, 2007). According to Qian and Lichter's study, there is a distinguishable difference between the number of Asians in and not in interracial relationships with White individuals. Asians who obtained a lower level of education reported lower numbers of interracial relationships with White individuals. Whereas Asians who obtained a higher level of education reported more interracial relationships with White individuals. This is important because in receiving a higher education, there was more exposure to interacting with White individuals. Eventually, this lead to unions of more interracial relationships with White individuals. Thus, Assimilation Theory has been criticized about its inclusivity.

Some of the modifications of Assimilation Theory include looking at race as a social construct that can be “crossed, blurred, or shifted” over time. Crossed boundaries refer to moving from one group to another without any extreme changes in boundaries that assumes complete assimilation from minorities in order to increase benefits. Blurred boundaries refer to the inability to identify racial groups apart due to the increase of mixed races. Shifted boundaries refer to when outsiders are accepted into the dominant group (Qian & Lichter, 2007). While each one addresses different ways in which racial boundaries can be redefined, they all address contemporary racial issues regarding interracial relationships.

Acculturation theory. Many Asians are acculturating. Acculturation occurs when racial minorities adopt the values and lifestyles of the dominant culture (Bahrassa et al., 2013). Acculturation not only crosses racial boundaries but shifts and forms blurred boundaries through interracial relationships and their mixed-race offspring. This is because when Asians acculturate, they are actually blending their cultural values and lifestyles with the dominant culture’s values and lifestyles (Olson et al., 2010). Due to this, their culture changes and creates cultural shifts in racial minority groups that produces crossed and shifted racial boundaries (Lau, Markham, Lin, Flores, & Chacko, 2009). Extensive research has found that the more acculturated Asians are, the more likely they are to engage in interracial relationships (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Lee, 2013; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian & Lichter, 2007).

Unlike Assimilation Theory, Acculturation Theory posits that racial minorities intermarry because they want to relate to the dominant culture rather than assimilate. Meaning, as racial minorities relate to the dominant group, they are more likely to engage in

interracial relationships because they share commonalities with one another. There are two levels in which acculturation can occur, group and individual. While the group level pertains to a societal change in structure such as political organization and economic base, the individual level refers to changes in one's behavior, identity, values and attitudes.

Acculturation Theory posits it is at the individual level that one can assess the differences among the varying levels of acculturation (Berry, 1990). Thus, when examining Asians in interracial relationships, one's acculturation level has a direct impact on one's decision to enter into an interracial relationship. Therefore, when examining Asians in interracial relationships, it is not surprising that more acculturated Asians are more likely to enter into interracial relationships with White individuals in the U.S. (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian, 1999).

In addition, Acculturation Theory recognizes that one's level of acculturation is also impacted by the type of racial minority group. There are four types of racial minority groups that experience acculturation: ethnic, native, immigrants/sojourners, and refugees. Ethnic refers to people of later immigrant generations. Native refers to Indigenous or Aboriginal individuals that were residents prior to colonization. Immigrants and refugees are individuals who migrated from a different part of the world. Sojourners are temporary immigrants who reside for a duration of time and have plans to return to their country of origin. Depending on what type of category racial minorities fall into, they may experience acculturation faster or slower (Berry, 1990). For instance, Berry found that immigrants may acculturate faster than refugees because they voluntarily migrated versus refugees who were forced to move locations due to their vulnerable environments. In relation to Asians in interracial

relationships, research shows that those entering interracial relationships are individuals with higher levels of acculturation and identify as a later immigrant or refugee generation (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian & Lichter, 2007).

Meaning, more acculturated Asians are open to engaging in interracial relationships despite the Asian cultural norms.

Social exchange theory. Unlike Assimilation Theory and Acculturation Theory, Social Exchange Theory looks at the role race plays in interracial relationships and how it impacts interracial relationships (Feliciano, Robnett, & Komaie, 2009). According to White, Klein, and Martin (2015), Social Exchange Theory revolves around the concept of economics. Meaning, individuals make decisions based on the costs and benefits they encounter. Due to this idea of costs versus benefits, individuals make decisions that maximize their benefits while minimizing their costs. Thus, in order to achieve maximum benefits, Asians are more likely to engage in interracial relationships with the dominant group than racial minorities (Fu, 2008).

When it comes to the role race plays in Asian interracial relationships, research shows that status exchange appears to be one of the most influential factors (Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). According to Fu (2008), status exchange occurs when racial minorities engage in interracial relationships with the dominant group in order to balance/move up on the racial hierarchy. This comes from the idea that the dominant group possesses traits and characteristics that are more attractive compared to other racial groups. Thus, the dominant group is perceived as the racial group with the most dominance and power on the racial hierarchy. Unfortunately, based on historical practices such as Jim Crow laws and other forms

of oppression, the Black race is often perceived as the “inferior race” on the racial hierarchy (Song, 2004). Due to this, Social Exchange Theory assumes the high numbers of Asian-White interracial relationships are due to status exchange (Hwang, 2013). Therefore, there is a notion that race discrimination exists in Asians’ attitudes when it comes to interracial relationships.

In addition, unlike Asian women who are perceived as “desirable” when it comes to engaging in relationships, Asian men are often perceived as domineering men who treat women poorly and are unattractive physically (Tsunokai et al., 2014). While these stereotypes may not be the experiences of all Asians, they have played a role in who is entering into interracial relationships with the dominant group. Research has found that due to these stereotypes, Asian women are more likely to perceive the dominant culture as more attractive in that by engaging in interracial relationships with White individuals, they are able to move upward in status. More importantly, by engaging in interracial relationships with the dominant culture, Asian women are able to change their “traditional” roles (Fujino, 1997; Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). Thus, Social Exchange Theory not only emphasizes the role race plays in interracial relationships, but gender as well.

Even though Social Exchange Theory posits Asians engage in interracial relationships due to status exchange, researchers have found inconclusive data regarding this (Fu, 2008; Wang & Kao, 2007; Wu, Chen & Greenberger, 2014). Rather than status change, Asians are engaging in interracial relationships more so based on their level of acculturation such as educational attainment and their level of exposure to the dominant culture (Fu, 2008; Okamoto, 2007; Wang & Kao, 2007). For example, Fu (2008) found that Asians are more

likely to engage in intraracial relationships versus interracial relationships if the partners of their choice had the same level of education. Thus, while Social Exchange Theory sheds insight to the racial and gender differences in Asian interracial relationships, it does not account for how the dominant culture influences interracial relationships such as acculturation. Therefore, when examining the patterns of Asians interracial relationships, it is important to be inclusive of how race, gender, and acculturation impact one's attitude.

Research on Asian Interracial Relationships over Time

In the past years, research on Asian interracial relationships has progressed extensively. Many of the research on Asian interracial relationships focused on interracial dating patterns. In examining intermarriage patterns, researchers have found that gender and acculturation attribute to Asians involvement in interracial relationships. Fujino (1997) found that Asian women are more likely to date interracially than Asian men. She concluded that this may be because Asian men receive more pressure to marry intraracially since they carry the family name. In regards to acculturation, research has found that Asians with higher levels of education and proficiency in English who identify as later generations are more likely to be in interracial relationships (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian & Lichter, 2007). As mentioned above, researchers propose this is due to the blurring of racial boundaries in which racial minorities are receiving societal acceptance (Lau et al., 2009).

More importantly, in order to understand why Asians are predominantly more likely to date and marry White individuals (National Healthy Marriage Resource Center, 2009), research has investigated if race preference exists and how it impacts one's decision to enter

in an interracial relationship (Herman & Campbell, 2012). Interestingly, Qian and Lichter (2007) found that Asians are more likely to enter in interracial relationships with White individuals than they are with Black individuals. Classic Assimilation Theory and Social Exchange Theory propose that racial minorities assimilate and engage in interracial relationships with White individuals in order to advance in various structures of the dominant culture (Hwang, 2013; Qian & Lichter, 2007; Tsunokai et al., 2014). On the other hand, Acculturation Theory proposes that racial minorities engage in interracial relationships with White individuals because they have more shared commonalities with the dominant culture (Berry, 1990). Thus, when looking at the discrepancy between how many Asians are engaging in interracial relationships with Whites versus other races, there is a notion that race preference exists.

Hmong in Interracial Relationships

Due to the lack of research on the Hmong population in interracial relationships, there is little information known regarding statistics, rates, and patterns of Hmong in interracial relationships. In breaking down the literature, research shows that culturally speaking, the Hmong population is not open to the idea of interracial relationships (Renko, 2003; Xiong et al., 2013). Considering the collective nature of the Hmong culture, parental beliefs and practices often play a vital role in sustaining cultural norms (Olson et al., 2010; Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013). Interestingly, contrary to the cultural norms in the Hmong culture, Southeast Asians are the least resistant Asian subgroup to date and marry interracially (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015). Some factors that attribute toward this discrepancy using Assimilation Theory and Acculturation Theory are: decreasing racial dissonance and level of

acculturation; whereas Social Exchange Theory posits this discrepancy is due to status exchange based on one's racial status and gender (Gordon, 1964; Hwang, 2013; Lau et al., 2009). However, studies predominantly show that Asians engaging in interracial relationships with White individuals are more acculturated (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015; Min & Kim, 2009; Okamoto, 2007; Qian, 1999).

Hypotheses

The research hypotheses for this study are as follows:

- 1) Due to the first research question being an exploratory question, there is no hypothesis.
- 2) Hmong adults are more likely to have a race preference attitude for White individuals than Black individuals in interracial dating.
- 3) 3) As Hmong adults level of acculturation increases, so does their openness to interracial dating.
- 4) There is a positive relationship between Hmong adults' attitudes toward interracial dating and their perception of their parents' attitudes towards interracial dating.

Chapter III: Method

Overview

The sample consists of participants recruited through convenience sampling using a survey, in which this researcher was able to connect with the student organizations through mutual relationships. The survey was given to participants during a general meeting at three different Hmong student organizations: Hmong Student Club, Hmong Men's Circle, and Hmong Student Organization. These organization were chosen because they serve to assist the Hmong ethnicity and act as support groups for the Hmong student body. A letter was obtained from the student organization stating their cooperation to the study. No compensation was provided for participants willing to complete the survey.

Participants

For the purpose of the study, only participants 18 years or older were allowed to complete the survey. For confidentiality and ethical purposes, the participants were given a consent form to view and sign. It is important to note that while all members present at the general meetings were given a survey, not all members participated. In addition, participants who did not identify as having a Hmong ethnicity were omitted from this study. Please refer to Appendix A for consent form and Appendix B for demographic questionnaires.

Instruments Used

The survey consisted of two parts: Acculturation and Attitudes toward Interracial Dating. Please refer to Appendix C to review survey. The Acculturation section of the survey consisted of questions pulled from the Suinn-Lew Asian Self Identity Acculturation Scale (SL-ASIA). The SL-ASIA's purpose was to measure Asians' level of acculturation by

assessing different aspects of their values and lifestyles. The scale has coefficient alphas ranging from .88 to .91 (Chung, Kim, & Abreu, 2004). With scores ranging from .88 to .91, the SL-ASIA scale showed that it had strong reliability and strong internal consistency in measuring Asians' level of acculturation.

For the purposes of this study, questions were modified to fit the context of the Hmong ethnicity. The coefficient alpha for this study was .74. Although the coefficient alpha is not strong, it is adequate. While there are a total of 26 items pertaining to language, friendship choice, behaviors, generation/geographic history, identity, and attitudes, only the original questionnaire items (1-21) were used to measure for level of acculturation. The average of all 21 items together determined participants' level of acculturation. On a continuum of 1.00 to 5.00, 1.00 reflected low acculturation whereas 5.00 reflected high acculturation (Suinn, Ahuna & Khoo, 1992).

The Attitudes toward Interracial Dating section consisted of questions pulled from the Cross-Group Relationship Scale (CGRS). The CGRS's intent was to measure approval of interracial relationships in general and acceptability of specific types of interracial relationships. Reliability and validity using factorial analysis on the CGRS showed there were high frequencies of .80 and low frequencies of .30. Meaning, the CGRS has good reliability and validity. Based on the frequencies of .80 and .30, the CGRS showed that it measured one construct, attitude toward interracial relationships (Field, Kimuna, & Strans, 2013).

The CGRS measured for: 1) Approval of Asian/Black dating, 2) Approval of Asian/White dating, 3) Approval of Asian/Hispanic dating, and 4) Approval of Asian/Other Asians dating in regards to this study's purposes. In order to assess for individual attitudes

toward interracial relationship and specific types of interracial dating, questions consisted of four items modified from the CGRS: (1) “I think it is good for Blacks and Hmong to date,” (2) “I think it is good for Whites and Hmong to date,” (3) “I think it is good for Hispanics and Hmong to date,” and (4) “I think it is good for Other Asians and Hmong to date.”

To assess for Hmong adults’ perception of their parents’ attitude, questions consisted of four items modified from the CGRS as well. The questions were: (1) “My parents think it is good for Blacks and Hmong to date,” (2) “My parents think it is good for Whites and Hmong to date,” (3) “My parents think it is good for Hispanics and Hmong to date,” and (4) “My parents think it is good for Other Asians and Hmong to date.”

Participants were given a Likert scale of four options to choose from: “Strongly Disagree,” “Disagree,” “Agree,” and “Strongly Agree.” To account for one’s true attitude, the option “Neutral” was omitted. “Strongly Disagree” and “Disagree” were grouped together and categorized as “Negative.” While “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” were grouped together and categorized as “Positive.” The purpose of categorizing participants’ responses as “Negative” and “Positive” was to identify what types of interracial dating is preferable or accepted.

Procedure

Participants received the survey at the start of the student organization’s general meeting under supervision of the researcher. The same survey was distributed to every participant in an on-campus classroom setting and did not present more than minimal risk to participants. Participants were asked to complete the survey and informed that there are no right or wrong answers. In addition, participants were informed that all responses were confidential as stated in the consent form. To prevent potential risks, inconveniences, and

discomfort, surveys remained anonymous. In addition, participants were given the option to leave the study. The survey took approximately 15 minutes to complete. After completing the survey, participants returned the surveys to the researcher for data collection. The data was securely stored in a password protected computer and contained no identifiable information. After the data was analyzed and the study was completed, the raw data was destroyed.

Method of Analysis

To assess the first research question, descriptive statistics were used to analyze the data. The mean and mode were used to find the average age of the participants and most common response identified by participants in regards to attitudes toward interracial dating. Depending on how participants identified with the “Positive” and “Negative” categories determined how open participants were to interracial dating. If participants identified with the “Positive” category, this meant participants were open to interracial dating. If participants identified with the “Negative” category, this means participants were less open to interracial dating.

To assess hypothesis 2, frequency in data distribution were used. The two subgroups that were assessed are: White and Black. Using frequency data, the subgroup with higher counts for the “Positive” category determined which subgroup was more favorable. For example, if there was a higher count associated with the “Positive” category for Whites, this meant participants have a race preference for White individuals compared to Black individuals.

Due to lack of variance, hypotheses 3 and 4 were not tested as noted in the following section as well.

Chapter IV: Results

In this study, a total of 53 participants completed the survey. However, 10 surveys were omitted because these participants did not identify as having a Hmong ethnicity. In addition, while there were a total of 43 participants, 3 of the 43 participants did not complete the Acculturation and Attitudes toward Interracial Dating sections. Due to this, these three surveys were omitted from the study as well. With a total of 40 participants, results were as follows.

Sample Characteristics

The average age of participants was 21 years old, with the youngest being 18 years old and the oldest being 41 years old. More than half of the participants identified as men. All participants identified that they were attending college with the exception of three individuals. Please refer to Table 1 for a closer look regarding sample characteristics.

Table 1

Participants' Characteristics

Variable	<i>n</i>	%	Mean
Gender (40)			
Female	8	20	
Male	32	80	
College (40)			
Saint Cloud State University	20	50	
North Hennepin Community College	12	30	
University of Minnesota-Twin Cities	6	15	
Not attending College	2	5	
Age (40)			21.5
Level of Acculturation (40)			2.95

Hypothesis 1

Accumulated data from Attitudes toward Interracial Dating section was used to address descriptive statistics. Across all four subgroups (Black, White, Hispanic, and Other Asians), the response “Agree” accounted for the highest count in regards to Hmong interracial dating. Because “Agree” falls in the “Positive” category, this meant participants were open to interracial dating. Please refer to Table 2 for a closer look at the distribution across the subgroups in regards to “Negative” and “Positive” categories. The number indicated represents the number of participants who identified with the response.

Table 2

“Negative” and “Positive” Outlook on Hmong Interracial Dating

Hmong Interracial Dating Subgroups	“Negative”		“Positive”	
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
Black	1	0	10	29
White	1	0	11	28
Hispanic	1	1	10	28
Other Asians	0	0	12	28

Hypothesis 2

To account for race preference attitude between Whites and Blacks, descriptive statistics were assessed. As noted in Table 1, both White and Black subgroups have one count aligned with “Strongly Disagree.” Although most participants identified with a “Positive” outlook on interracial dating in both subgroups, there is a one count difference in the “Strongly Agree” and “Agree” responses. While this does not suggest variation, it suggest a slight difference in acceptance level.

Unlike the responses for White and Black subgroups, responses for Hispanic and Other Asians showed more differences in regards to participants' attitudes toward interracial dating. Hmong/Hispanic interracial dating accounted for the highest "Negative" outlook whereas Hmong/Other Asians accounted for the highest "Positive" outlook. Although Hmong/Other Asians is not an interracial relationship, results provided information regarding attitudes toward intraracial dating.

Hypothesis 3 and Hypothesis 4

Due to the lack of variability in participants' responses on their own openness towards interracial dating, hypothesis 3 and 4 cannot be tested. However, data was also collected regarding participants' perception of their parents' attitudes toward interracial dating. Unlike how participants' identified, results varied depending on how participants' perceived their parental attitudes' toward each subgroup. The subgroup participants' perceived their parents having the most "Positive" attitudes associated with was Other Asians. The other three subgroups (Black, White, and Hispanic) had more "Negative" attitudes associated with Black accounting for the highest count in "Strongly Disagree." Please refer to Table 3 for a closer look at participants' perception of their parents' attitudes toward interracial dating.

Table 3

Participants' Perception of Parental Attitudes on Hmong Interracial Dating

Hmong Interracial Dating Subgroups	"Negative"		"Positive"	
	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Agree	Agree
Black	23	10	3	4
White	12	18	3	7
Hispanic	16	17	2	5
Other Asians	0	0	12	28

Chapter V: Discussion

One of the more understudied populations in Asian interracial relationships is the Hmong population. The Hmong population is one of the most resistant groups to change when it comes to traditional beliefs and practices (Bahrassa et al., 2013). Yet, when it comes to traditional belief that interracial dating and marriage are taboo (Xiong et al., 2013), Southeast Asians are least resistant to practice this traditional belief (Bohra-Mishra & Massey, 2015). Research has found that one of the biggest contributing factors to this is one's level of acculturation (Okamoto, 2007). More interestingly, research has found that Asians are more likely to engage in interracial relationships with Whites versus other racial groups (Min & Kim, 2009). The purpose of this study examined if the Hmong population is open to interracial dating and whether race preference exists.

To test the first hypothesis, descriptive statistics were gathered to examine Hmong adults' attitude toward interracial dating. While there is little information regarding the statistics of Hmong in interracial relationships, previous research has found that Asians account for the highest numbers in interracial relationships (Harris & Ono, 2005; Qian, 1999). Similarly to this trend, results of this study showed Hmong adults identified with more "Positive" attitudes toward interracial dating. Meaning, Hmong adults in this sample are open to interracial dating contrary to traditional beliefs in the Hmong culture. However, it is important to note that although results showed participants are open to interracial dating, it does not indicate that they have engaged in interracial dating. Thus, even though results indicated Hmong adults are open to interracial dating, we cannot conclude that Hmong adults who are open to interracial dating have engaged in interracial dating behaviors.

To test the second hypothesis, we examined whether there was a difference in Hmong adults' attitudes toward Hmong/White and Hmong/Black interracial dating. As noted earlier, when it comes to interracial dating, how individuals perceive racial groups (i.e., stereotypes) impact their openness to engage in interracial relationships with them (Fu, 2008; Herman & Campbell, 2012; Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). It is possible due to status exchange, the White race is perceived as more desirable for Hmong adults (Song, 2004). Thus, results showed a more positive attitude associated with Hmong/White interracial dating than Hmong/Black interracial dating. However, although participants indicated a more positive attitude toward Hmong/White interracial dating, we cannot conclude Hmong adults have a race preference for Hmong/White interracial dating compared to Hmong/Black interracial dating due to the lack of variability. Instead, we can conclude that based on the results of this study, Hmong adults are open to interracial dating with both racial groups.

It is interesting to note, when examining the distribution of Hmong adults' attitudes toward racial groups in interracial dating, the racial group with the highest counts associated with a "Negative" outlook was Hispanic. On the other hand, Other Asians was found to have the highest counts associated with positive attitude. This finding is consistent to previous research that found Asians are more likely to engage in intraracial relationships compared to interracial relationships if the opportunity presented itself (Fu, 2008; Morgan, 2012; Tsunokai et al., 2014). Based on this study's results, it is implied that intraracial dating is associated with more positive attitudes than interracial dating. Meaning, Hmong adults may be more open to intraracial dating compared to interracial dating.

Although hypotheses 3 and 4 were not tested due to the lack of variability, it is important to note that results showed there is a shift in participants' attitudes compared to their perception of their parents' attitudes toward interracial dating. As noted in the results section, most Hmong adults indicated "Positive" attitudes toward interracial dating. However, when it came to how they perceived their parents' attitudes toward interracial dating, many indicated "Negative" attitudes. A possible explanation to this is the differences in acculturation.

According to Su et al. (2005), parents are less likely to acculturate to their host culture compared to their children. Due to this, Hmong parents and children often have differing perspectives from one another as Hmong children acculturate to the dominant culture. As shown in this study, the average level of acculturation is 2.95. Meaning, on average, participants identified as bicultural (Suinn et al., 1992). When individuals identify as bicultural, it implies they have fused their cultural values and the dominant cultural values together (Sue & Sue, 2013). Thus, bicultural individuals practice both their cultural beliefs and the dominant cultural beliefs. This is important because when examining this trend, this study's results showed discontinuity between Hmong adults and their perception of their parents' attitudes.

Furthermore, Southeast Asians are more likely to experience intergenerational conflict due to the differences in acculturation between them and their parents (Park et al., 2010; Supple & Cavanaugh, 2013). In a qualitative study done by Juang and Meschke (2015), results showed that while Hmong children understood the practices their parents displayed in particular to social restrictions, they did not want to transmit these practices onto their own

children. Meaning, Hmong children believed their parents' practices were not conducive for them in that it limited their social interactions. The underlying contributing factor to this was due to the cultural clashes Hmong children experienced between their cultural values and the dominant cultural values. Therefore, when examining this study's results, it is not surprising that participants identified differing attitudes from their perception of their parents' interracial dating attitudes.

Again, consistent to previous research that examined intergenerational conflict and differences, this study's results indicate a shift in Hmong dating practices. It is important to note that while this study does not examine contributing factors to this shift, it does indicate potential challenges Hmong children may encounter with their parents due to the differing perspectives they have. Previous research regarding Hmong have indicated conflict often resulted in Hmong families as Hmong children expressed differences in values and steered away from traditional practices (Xiong et al., 2005; Juang & Meschke, 2015). Due to this, Hmong parents often feared their heritage and culture will be lost (Cha, 2010; Lee & Tapp, 2010). It is possible that due to this fear, Hmong parents enforce more rigid practices in order to prevent their children from acculturating. This is important because as Hmong attitudes shift, Hmong parents may become more rigid causing more tension to arise in Hmong families. Thus, increasing the conflict between Hmong parents and children. Therefore, when it comes to interracial dating, this study indicates potential challenges Hmong families may encounter as openness towards Hmong interracial dating increases among Hmong adults.

Limitations

The results of this study should be interpreted with caution due to various limitations imposed. Some of these limitations include: sample characteristics, gender differences, and lack of variation in participants responses. First off, while the small sample size is appropriate for the variables assessed, this study's results are not generalizable for all groups in the Hmong population (Salkind, 2014). This is because this sample's characteristics are not applicable for all groups in the Hmong population. For instance, almost all participants in this sample size are college students, mostly men, and have similar levels of acculturation with an average age of 21 years old.

Secondly, although previous research indicated Asian women are more likely to engage in interracial relationships compared to Asian men, we were not able to assess this trend in Hmong adults (Fujino, 1997; Hwang, 2013; Tsunokai et al., 2014). Due to the small representation of Hmong women (32 men, 8 women), it imposed a limitation to the applicability of previous studies. Therefore, this study was not able to provide insight regarding how gender attributed to Hmong adults' attitude toward interracial dating.

Lastly, due to the lack of variation in participants' level of acculturation, this study was not able to assess for low acculturation and high acculturation differences. Due to this limitation, we were only able to examine participants with similar levels of acculturation (bicultural). Given that as individuals' level of acculturation decreases, they are less likely to adopt the dominant culture's values (Sue & Sue, 2013). Meaning, these individuals are more likely to practice cultural values instilled from their parents. Therefore, a variation in levels of

acculturation may have allowed results to provide more insight regarding how Hmong adults' perception of their parental attitudes impact their attitudes in interracial dating.

Recommendations for Future Research and Implications

Furthermore, recommendations for future research include: obtaining a larger sample size, examining attitude versus outcome for Hmong individuals open to interracial dating, and obtaining data from Hmong parents. By obtaining a larger sample size, we not only increase statistical power, but increase range of variation in regards to both gender and level of acculturation. For example, in this study's results, there was one individual who reported closed attitudes towards interracial dating in all races, though reported openness to dating other Asians. This individual had a lower acculturation score than the average, and a larger sample size could determine these distinctive features are represented in a larger group.

It is also important to examine Hmong adults' attitude versus outcome in interracial relationships. As noted earlier, Herman and Campbell (2012) found that just because individuals are open to interracial dating does not necessarily mean they will engage or have engaged in the behavior. By examining Hmong adults' attitude versus outcome, we can determine whether there is a discrepancy between attitude and outcome for Hmong individuals when it comes to interracial dating.

Finally, another future recommendation is to obtain data from Hmong parents rather than their children's perception of their attitudes toward interracial dating. In doing so, this will allow us to have more accurate information regarding parental attitudes toward interracial dating. It would be interesting to examine how parental attitudes expressed from Hmong

parents differ from Hmong children's perception of their parental attitudes toward interracial dating.

Overall, results imply Hmong adults are open to interracial dating despite cultural beliefs on interracial dating. While the Hmong population is noted to be one of the least resistant groups to change cultural practices and beliefs (Bahrassa et al., 2013), it seems Hmong adults' who are bicultural are less likely to believe in their cultural beliefs of interracial dating. Hence, there appears to be a shift in Hmong adults' cultural beliefs that differs from previous generations. Due to this, it is not surprising this study found that Hmong adults' attitudes differ from their perception of their parents' attitudes in interracial dating. Implications of this study show that consistent with previous research regarding Asians, Hmong adults are open to interracial dating despite their traditional beliefs and differing perspectives from their parents. Therefore, in moving forward, it is important to assess how these different perspectives may impact Hmong families along with whether or not Hmong people are engaging in interracial relationships.

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Appendix A: Implied Consent

1. I hereby consent to take part in research directed by Chue Her and sponsored by Saint Cloud State University and am at least 18 years of age. Chue is a graduate student enrolled in the Marriage and Family Therapy program at Saint Cloud State University. I understand that other persons will assist Chue in conducting this research.

2. Further, I understand that:
 - a. *Purpose.* The purpose is to study Hmong's race preference attitude for interracial relationships.
 - b. *Requirements.* My part of this research will be to complete a paper and pencil survey designed to measure my attitude toward specific interracial relationships and my level of acculturation. Surveys will be completed with everyone else in university classroom.
 - c. *Time Needed.* The total time required will be approximately 15 minutes.
 - d. *Voluntary Participation.* My participation is completely voluntary. Even after participating, I have the free will to stop. I understand that I can skip any item I do not wish to answer without giving reason. In addition, there will be no consequences for not participating or not completing the survey.
 - e. *New Developments.* I will be informed of new information that may impact my willingness to participate in this study.
 - f. *Risks & Benefits.* Risks include no harm or discomfort greater than those generally encountered daily. General benefits include having insight about the research and a chance to ask questions after taking the survey.
 - g. *Protections.* I understand that the following precautions were taken for my protection: (1) no part of the survey will ask for any identifying information such as my name, my responses will remain anonymous; (2) no questionnaire asks me to describe specific events in my life; (3) I have the free will to not participate at any time for any reason; (4) I also have the free will to skip questions without reason provided; (5) when the results are published, only aggregate data such as mean scores will be reported.
 - h. *Compensation.* There will be no compensation for participating in this study.

3. My questions about this research has been answered. If I have further questions or want to request this study's results, I should contact:

Chue Her
 Phone Number: (763) 647-9287
 Email: cher1303@stcloudstate.edu

Research Advisor: Jennifer Connor
 Phone Number: (320) 308-4176
 Email: jjconnor@stcloudstate.edu

Appendix B: Demographic Questionnaire

1. How old are you? _____
2. Are you Hmong?
___Yes ___No
3. What is your gender?
___Female ___Male ___Transgender
4. Are you currently attending college?
___Yes ___No
5. What college do you attend? _____

Appendix C: Interracial Dating Attitude Survey

6. What language can you speak?
 1. Hmong only
 2. Mostly Hmong, some English
 3. Hmong and English about equally well (bilingual)
 4. Mostly English, some Hmong
 5. Only English

7. What language do you prefer?
 1. Hmong only
 2. Mostly Hmong, some English
 3. Hmong and English about equally well (bilingual)
 4. Mostly English, some Hmong
 5. Only English

8. How do you identify yourself?
 1. Asian
 2. Asian-American
 3. Hmong-American
 4. American

9. Which identification does (did) your mother use?
 1. Asian
 2. Asian-American
 3. Hmong-American
 4. American

10. Which identification does (did) your father use?
 1. Asian
 2. Asian-American
 3. Hmong-American
 4. American

11. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child up to age 6?
 1. Almost exclusively Hmong individuals
 2. Mostly Hmong individuals
 3. About equally Hmong groups and Anglo groups
 4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Hmong ethnic groups
 5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non-Hmong ethnic groups

12. What was the ethnic origin of the friends and peers you had, as a child from 6 to 18?
1. Almost exclusively Hmong individuals
 2. Mostly Hmong individuals
 3. About equally Hmong groups and Anglo groups
 4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
 5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
13. Whom do you now associate with in the community?
1. Almost exclusively Hmong individuals
 2. Mostly Hmong individuals
 3. About equally Hmong groups and Anglo groups
 4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
 5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
14. If you could pick, whom would you prefer to associate with in the community
1. Almost exclusively Hmong individuals
 2. Mostly Hmong individuals
 3. About equally Hmong groups and Anglo groups
 4. Mostly Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
 5. Almost exclusively Anglos, Blacks, Hispanics, or other non- Hmong ethnic groups
15. What is your music preference?
1. Only Asian (for example, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Hmong, etc.)
 2. Mostly Asian
 3. Equally Asian and English
 4. Mostly English
 5. English only
16. What is your movie preference?
1. Asian-language movies only
 2. Asian-language movies mostly
 3. Equally Asian/English English-language movies
 4. Mostly English-language movies only
 5. English-language movies only
17. What generation are you? (circle the generation that best applies to you:)
1. 1st generation = I was born in Asia or country other than U.S.
 2. 2nd generation = I was born in U.S., either parent was born in Asia or country other than U.S.
 3. 3rd generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents born in Asia or country other than U.S.

4. 4th generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S. and at least one grandparent born in Asia or country other than U.S. and one grandparent born in U.S.
5. 5th generation = I was born in U.S., both parents were born in U.S., and all grandparents also born in U.S.
6. Don't know what generation best fits since I lack some information

18. Where were you raised?

1. In Asia only
2. Mostly Asia, some in U.S.
3. Equally in Asia and U.S.
4. Mostly in U.S., some in Asia
5. In U.S. only
6. Other

19. What contact have you had with Asia?

1. Raised one year or more in Asia
2. Lived for less than one year in Asia
3. Occasional visits to Asia
4. Occasional communications (letters, phone calls, etc.) with people in Asia
5. No exposure or communications with people in Asia

20. What is your food preference at home?

1. Exclusively Asian food
2. Mostly Asian food, some American
3. About equally Asian and American
4. Mostly American food
5. Exclusively American food

21. What is your food preference in restaurants?

1. Exclusively Asian food
2. Mostly Asian food, some American
3. About equally Asian and American
4. Mostly American food
5. Exclusively American food

22. Do you

1. Read only Hmong language?
2. Read Hmong language better than English?
3. Read both Hmong and English equally well?
4. Read English better than Hmong language?
5. Read only English?

23. Do you
1. Write only Hmong language?
 2. Write Hmong language better than English?
 3. Write both Hmong and English equally well?
 4. Write English better than Hmong language?
 5. Write only English?
24. If you consider yourself a member of the Hmong group, how much pride do you have in this group?
1. Extremely proud
 2. Moderately proud
 3. Little pride
 4. No pride but do not feel negative toward group
 5. No pride but do feel negative toward group
25. How would you rate yourself?
1. Very Hmong
 2. Mostly Hmong
 3. Bicultural
 4. Mostly Westernized
 5. Very Westernized
26. Do you participate in Hmong occasions, holidays, traditions, etc.?
1. Nearly all
 2. Most of them
 3. Some of them
 4. A few of them
 5. None at all
27. Rate yourself on how much you believe in Asian values (e.g. about marriage, families, education, work):
- | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (do not believe) | | | | (strongly believe) |
28. Rate yourself on how much you believe in American (Western) values:
- | | | | | |
|------------------|---|---|---|--------------------|
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| (do not believe) | | | | (strongly believe) |

35. My parents think it is good for Whites and Hmong to date.
1. Strong disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree
36. I think it is good for Hispanics and Hmong to date.
1. Strong disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree
37. My parents think it is good for Hispanics and Hmong to date.
1. Strong disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree
38. I think it is good for other Asians and Hmong to date.
1. Strong disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree
39. My parents think it is good for other Asians and Hmong to date.
1. Strong disagree
 2. Disagree
 3. Agree
 4. Strongly agree