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"Why would you choose it?" - Exploring Culturally Motivated Life Choices Through In-depth Interviews with American University Students of Chinese Origin.

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"WHY WOULD YOU CHOOSE IT?" - EXPLORING CULTURALLY MOTIVATED LIFE CHOICES THROUGH IN-DEPTH INTERVIEWS WITH AMERICAN UNIVERSITY STUDENTS OF CHINESE ORIGIN.

by

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B.A., Maria Curie-Skłodowska University, 2014

A Research Paper
Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the
Master of Arts

Department of Sociology
in the Graduate School
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RESEARCH PAPER APPROVAL

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Approved by:

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

We are currently living in a globalized world where cultural influences are intertwined and permeate from one society to another. Expressions such as intercultural communication, intercultural competency, or multiculturalism are very popular, but do we really know what they mean and entail? Sociologists and anthropologists, among others, have been theorizing for decades about the very concept of culture. Moreover, courses on intercultural, or cross-cultural communication tend to be, to varying degree, built on stereotypes and overgeneralizations.

In my research, I applied a bottom-up perspective in order to hear from the participants what role culture actually played in their lives. In order to do this, I conducted a series of in-depth interviews with international students from Mainland China as well as with second- generation Chinese-American students. I focus on their life choices, past and present experiences, as well as their plans for the future. The purpose of my study is to see to what extent the interviewees' life choices concerning the areas of study, work, and romantic relationships are influenced by traditional Chinese cultural values.

In my study, I aim to answer the following questions:

1. What is the connection between traditional Chinese culture and life choices of Chinese international students?

2. What is the connection between traditional Chinese culture and life choices of Chinese-American students?

Understanding cultural motivations for action (if they exist) of students is important in order to create appropriate advisement and other university initiatives. It can help universities recruit and retain international students, but, most importantly, it can help the students receive the right resources they need for success. My study is just a small step; I believe that similar studies, preferably on a bigger scale, should be conducted with representatives of other ethnicities.

Comparing the ideas and experiences of students born in China and in America, but both to Chinese parents, can shed some light on the role of primary vs. secondary socialization.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

Ethnicity and Language

There are fifty-six ethnic groups, or 'nationalities' (*minzu*) officially recognized in China. However, fifty-five of them constitute together only around 8 percent of the whole population. The majority of Chinese society is identified as Han *minzu* (Stockman, 2000) and the terms "Chinese" and "Han" are often used interchangeably (Link, 2015). Interestingly enough, the Han group is not homogenous, and the promotion of Han-ness as a unifying identity originated in 20th Century; more precisely, it was used by Sun Yat-Sen in the Revolution of 1911 to form a coalition against the Manchu overlords (Joniak-Lüthi, 2013; Stockman, 2000).

In China, there are seven main dialect groups, and Mandarin Chinese is the national language in the country (Gong et al. 2010). It is necessary for the Chinese to be fluent in Mandarin Chinese if they want to be successful, because it is the language used in schools, workplace, and media (Mullaney et al. 2012).

Cultural values

Chinese society is built upon three philosophical perspectives: Taoism, Buddhism, and Confucianism. The two first doctrines have provided people with spiritual, transcendental ideas, whereas Confucianism has given the Chinese rules and moral guidelines. It can be concluded that Taoism and Buddhism are about the "Why?" of life and Confucianism is about the "How?" (Fang, 2006; De Bary et al. 1960; Zupan et al. 2014). Since Confucianism gives moral guidelines for behavior, most cultural aspects

discussed further in this paper will be analyzed with Confucianism as a point of reference.

Chinese culture is collectivist, which means that the focus is put on in-group loyalty, adherence to social norms and the fulfillment of group obligation (Hofstede, 2005; Holmes et al. 2015). Moreover, collectivism gives rise to an interdependent self, which is constructed in reference to a social context and can be identified only in relation to others (Stockman, 2000; Kim and Lee, 2014; Park and Kim, 2015).

The roles of individuals in Confucian society are organized around five following hierarchical relations (doctrine of *wu lun*): the relationship between father and son that should be marked by affection, the relationship between ruler and subject that should be based on duty, between husband and wife, that relies on distinction, between older and younger brother, formed on precedence, and between friends, founded on trust (Stockman, 2000; Luk-Fong, 2012). According to Confucius, adherence to these roles is crucial to preserving harmony in the society.

Five main social virtues in Confucianism are: good faith, loyalty, sense of duty, sincerity, and filial piety (Stockman, 2000). The virtue particularly worth noting is the one of filial piety (*xiao*). In Chinese society, individuals are expected to obey and respect elders in their family, which starts in early childhood, and continues throughout the lifetime (Found and Sam, 2013). It is believed that one can only truly rely on relatives; therefore family ties should be strong. What is more, it is thought that if one learns how to respect authority in family, he or she would find it easier to do the same in school, workplace, and beyond, which would ensure his or her success later in life (Tan, 2001).

Family is the primary source of children's education, and Chinese parents tend to

educate through control and training (the concept of *shun*) (Chao, 1994). Success in school is believed to be a reflection of the outcomes of this training, and also a sign of children honoring parents (the concept of *xiao*) as well as fulfilling the expectations for their role in the society (Chao, 1994; Found and Sam, 2013). It is worth noting that parenting strategies and the approach to the value of education of Chinese-American parents are similar to those of parents in China (Chan and Rao, 2009).

Education

The education system in China is very competitive. One aspect of this competition is visible in the classroom, where teachers publicly praise, criticize, compare and rank students (Chao, 1994). Students are taught that all they need for success is diligence and effort, and that personal improvement can be attained through commitment to learning (Chan and Rao, 2009). Another element of competition in the Chinese education system is the process of graduating from high school and applying for college (Liu and Peng, 2015). The final examination after high school called *gaokao* is one of the most important and stressful events in Chinese students' lives (Du, 2013). The test, in terms of prestige and rigor, has its roots in 7th century's examination for Chinese royal court officials (Chan and Rao, 2009; Du, 2013). High school curriculum and teaching strategies that highlight lectures, memorization and "giving the right answer" are designed in such a way in order to prepare students for the *gaokao* (the national college entrance examination) (Du, 2013; Hsu and Wu, 2015). When it comes to college applications, high levels of competition gives opportunities for corruption, bribery, and using social network for an unfair advantage (Chao, 2015). Because many parents in China view this education system as flawed, they decide to send their

children to study abroad, mostly to the USA (Yan, 2015).

Mianzi and Guanxi

One of the most interesting ideas that guide interactions in Chinese society is the concept of *mianzi*. When translated literally, *mianzi* means face, however it is more culturally specific and has more layers of meaning as well as social implications than 'face' in certain Western cultures (Yang, 2010). *Mianzi* is important in social interactions; it is a measure of a person's reputation and position in a network (Buckley et al. 2006). *Mianzi* can be gained, borrowed, given, lost, and maintained (Wang and Spencer-Oatey, 2015). Saving *mianzi* is crucial to successful building of social capital, or more specifically, benefiting from *guanxi* (Buckley et al. 2006).

Guanxi is a very distinct element of Chinese collectivist society where individuals are perceived through their relations to others; it is a Chinese way of networking (Yang, 2010). *Guanxi* originates from Confucian ideas of social hierarchy and harmony; however, nurturing *guanxi* became a more common and necessary practice after the Cultural Revolution (1966 – 1976). During the Cultural Revolution, China was in a state of chaos and lawlessness. People could not be sure whom to trust; therefore they started to look for alternative channels of gaining resources and information. They started to employ *guanxi,* based on reciprocity and informal connections (Stockman, 2000). However, this "bending of rules" that could be seen as a form of resistance during the Cultural Revolution has been transferred also to the new market economy, giving rise to corruption and nepotism. Current government in China introduced various strategies that aim at stopping the abuse of *guanxi* (Yang, 2010).

Gender roles

The origins of gender roles and expectations in China can be found in two philosophical doctrines native to China – Taoism and Confucianism. One of the main ideas of Taoism is the harmony between Ying and Yang, which are two opposites that are complementary and mutually dependent. Their complementary features are, for example, negativity and positivity, passivity and action, as well as femininity and masculinity (Luk-Fong, 2012). This understanding of the world gave rise to a view that women and men should have complementary roles in a society and family.

The concept of complementary gender roles was also highlighted in Confucianism, which promoted the idea that "'men are for the outer realm' and 'women are for the inner realm'" (Luk-Fong, 2012, p.13). What is more, it was Confucianism that contributed to the development of a hierarchical gendered structure in China (Lui, 2013; Choi and Lee, 1997). In Confucianism, women gain social status when they become mothers (Chang et al. 2011), and throughout their lives, women are expected to be "obeying fathers when young, husbands when married, and adult sons when widowed" (Lui, 2013, p.6).

In Maoist China, gender equality was highlighted and women were encouraged to work. However, the official stance of the Party was that all occupations were equally important to the success of the Communist Revolution. As a result, job assignments were usually gendered (Perry and Selden, 2003).

In the 1980s, China experienced a wave of lay-offs, especially in the state sector, due to new Market Economy. At that time, women were categorized as "surplus labor", blamed for the fiasco of planned economy, and the slogans "Women return home" were

advocated in the media and the public sphere (Perry and Selden, 2003).

All these cultural and historic influences have shaped the contemporary perception of gender roles in China. Even though many people do not follow the tradition in this regard (Chang et al. 2011), the mainstream expectations placed on women and men continue to be highly gendered (Lui, 2013).

Romantic relationships

Cultural values are important also in the sphere of romantic relationships and mate selection. In China, people tend to choose their spouses in line with parental expectations and according to gender-specific characteristics. Since men are still believed to be responsible for supporting the family financially, and women should be the ones who nurture and care, women look for well-educated men with high income, and men prefer a delicate, 'feminine' wife who is expected to take care not only for her husband and children, but also parents-in-law (Kline and Zhang, 2004; Lui, 2013). What is more, even though the mean age of first marriage in China has been on an increase for the past 40 years (Jones and Yeung, 2014), women are still expected to get married earlier than men are, due to women's primary duty of being a mother (Chang et al. 2011). The women who are over 27 years old and single are called "leftover women" (*sheng nü)* and find it increasingly difficult to find a husband, even though they tend to be highly educated (Yu and Xie, 2015). However, entering into a relationship too early is also frowned upon. In China, a lot of attention is paid to the phenomenon of *zao lian,* or 'early love', which is regarded as a social problem. In Chinese society, it is generally thought that dating anytime before finishing high school is dangerous for one's emotional development and academic success. Some even claim that people should

only start any romantic relationships upon graduating from college (Shen, 2015). In 1981, this preoccupation was reflected in an official rule by the Ministry of Education that stated: "Normally, college students should be those who are not married. Anyone who wants to get married should leave college." (Shen, 2015, p.96).

Professional career

In general, when people plan their professional career, they build their human capital and their social capital. In order to accumulate human capital, individuals invest in their own education, training, and other instrumental endeavors that will be helpful in job-seeking and advancement process. Through networking and investing time and resources in relationships, people build social capital, which they can later use to learn, for example, about employment opportunities (Liming and Zhang, 2015). In China, both education and networking are extremely important (Stockman, 2000; Found and Sam, 2013).

The aspects of a job that people find valuable can be grouped into four categories. Extrinsic work values are connected with instrumental benefits of a position, including salary, perks, and job security (Zupan et al. 2014). Intrinsic values are stemming from an internal motivation to do a good job, to feel a pleasure while doing it, and to see satisfactory results (Ye, 2015). Another category of work values is called social-altruistic and it reflects relationships with others and doing something for others (Lyons et al. 2010). The final category is prestige values (Schwartz, 1999). In Chinese society, high income and prestige help maintain *mianzi* as well as aid in finding a spouse (for men, who are still expected to be breadwinners) (Stockman, 2000; Liu et al. 2012). Also, contributing to the society through hard work is seen as the fulfillment of

one's duty (Lu and Koehn, 2014).

Assimilation Theories

There are three main schools of thought when it comes to the assimilation of immigrants into the American society. Classical assimilation theorists advance the idea that there is a unified "core" of American society, and that immigrants gradually become absorbed into it. Park (1950) proposes a "race-relations cycle" that consists of four stages: contact, conflict, accommodation, and assimilation. The longer someone lives in the U.S, the closer he or she gets to being "American". Moreover, the more ethnically heterogeneous the primary groups are, the quicker immigrant youth assimilates to the new culture (Gordon, 1964). An important factor that contributes to the ethnic diversity of primary groups is geographic mobility, i.e. moving out from ethnic enclaves to suburbs. (Waters, 1990). Alba and Nee (2003) point out that three important elements needed for assimilation are intermarriage, residential integration, and occupational mobility. According to classical assimilationists, the generations born in the U.S feel less attached to their ancestors' home country. Some reasons for this phenomenon include environmental pressures (e.g. peer pressure) or the fact that children have higher expectations from American society than their parents did (Gans 1979). Gans also introduces the notion of formal and informal acculturation, which are types of cultural assimilation that leads to groups losing their distinctive ethnic characteristics. Formal acculturation happens for example through schooling, and the informal one through friends or media.

Multiculturalists disagree with classical assimilationists' idea of a unified core. They see American society as fluid and composed of distinct ethnic groups (Gans,

1979; Waters, 1990). They argue that second generation "ethnics" are not on an automatic path to becoming "American", but rather that they are already Americans who choose certain aspects of their ethnic heritage and use them in their new life context (Conzen et al., 1992). Jeung (2002) sees the assimilation from this multicultural perspective. According to him, because of the unique multiracial quality of American urban centers, second generation Asian youth develops a pan-Asian or Asian-American consciousness. Also, their identification with ancestors' culture is more symbolic than substantive, because the ties with their home country are looser (Jeung, 2002).

Finally, structuralists view "ethnics" as assimilating neither to a unified core, nor to a fluid community of Americans, but rather to a stratified system of social inequality (Omi and Winant, 2015). Portes and Zhou (1993) utilize the structuralist framework to introduce the concept of segmented assimilation. They claim that people assimilate into subsocieties, based on their social capital as well as economic resources.

Overseas Chinese and Symbolic Ethnicity

Stockman (2000) notes that even though some Chinese immigrants lead a truly cosmopolitan lives, the majority tries to preserve their cultural heritage, keeps strong connections with family back in China, as well as aims to pass down the culture and language to their children. However, Chinese parents abroad want their children to also learn the same things about their new country; to be "*you zhong you xi* [of East and West] rather than *bu zhong bu xi* [without East or West]" (Fang, 2015, p.54). Consequently, the children often find it difficult to self-identify (Song, 2010), or they form a hyphenated identity (Benton and Gomez, 2014). The third generation, in turn, generally feels more detached from their Chinese ancestry and find it more natural to

identify themselves with their birth country (e.g. American) (Benton and Gomez, 2014).

Herbert Gans (1979) introduced the notion of *symbolic ethnicity* which encompasses the idea that "love for and a pride in a tradition that can be felt without having to be incorporated in everyday behavior" (Gans, 1979, p.9). It can be also explained as "a type of ethnicity expressed through symbols." (Khanna, 2011, p.1049). Eating 'ethnic' food and celebrating festivals are some examples of these symbols (Gans, 1979). Some of the traditional festivals in China include Spring Festival, Lantern Festival, Grave-Sweeping Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, and Mid-Autumn Festival (Gunde, 2002). The most important festival celebrated by the Chinese in China and overseas is the Spring Festival, or Lunar New Year (You and Chen, 2008). It is a national holiday in China, when people travel to their hometowns to celebrate with their families. The celebrations include eating a big dinner, decorating one's door with red couplets that are to bring prosperity for the upcoming year, and playing with fireworks and firecrackers. Children also receive red envelopes with gift money (Tan, 2001; You and Chen, 2008). Spring Festival has been commodified in many Chinatowns around the world, where parades and lion dances are supposed to represent Chinese culture in a nutshell and attract clients to businesses (Tung, 2008).

From the literature reviewed above, it seems that the main areas of life in China are heavily influenced by traditional Chinese values that stem from Confucianism with elements of Taoism and Buddhism. Moreover, the focus on collectivism and harmony serves as a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy, since it strengthens the adherence to these and other values that arise out of them.

External forces such as formal and informal acculturation may mediate the

importance of family in the Chinese society that is translated to the overseas

communities. Rather than living out the Confucian tradition, Chinese-Americans are

likely to perform symbolic ethnicity.

CHAPTER 3

METHODS

The topic of my research focuses on the interplay between culture and important life choices of American university students of Chinese origin. The results are not meant to be generalized to the larger society, but rather due to the study being qualitative and exploratory in nature, I am interested in seeing patterns and overlaps in personal experiences of the interviewees.

Sample

I have conducted interviews with nine international students from Mainland China as well as with four second-generation Chinese-American students. By Chinese international students I mean students that were born and raised in Mainland China and are currently studying at an American university either at the undergraduate or graduate level. By Chinese-American students I mean students that are currently studying at an American university either at the undergraduate or graduate level and who were born and raised in the United States to parents that are first-generation immigrants from China. My population of interest was undergraduate and graduate students from two research universities in the Midwest. Potential subjects were approached through my personal contacts. The youngest participant was 19 years old, and the oldest 32 years old. I interviewed 3 men and 6 women born in Mainland China, and 1 man and 3 women born in the USA.

Procedure

I took reasonable steps in order to protect the interviewees' identities. I obtained written consent for audiotaping and quoting. When quoting, I use pseudonyms randomly

generated by online software (http://random-name-generator.info). I chose to give my participants English pseudonyms because all of them use English real names, too. When I refer to specific persons in the text, I add an abbreviation AC (American-born Chinese) or MC (Mainland-Chinese) so that it is easier for the reader to follow.

I have asked the interviewees about life choices they recently made or will make in the near future. I chose to only include university students, because they are at the stage in life when they are faced with the decisions I am interested in examining.

For the interviews, I used an interview script. Questions focused around four areas: ethnic identity, study, work, and romantic relationships. The interviews lasted between 25 and 45 minutes.

In the section about ethnic identity, I asked whether or not the participant spoke Chinese, what Chinese and American festivals he/she celebrated, what their food preferences were, what were the three most important values for them, and how they understood responsibility. I created this section in order to see how much my interviewees knew about Chinese culture, and how they "do culture" through daily practices.

In the section concerning academics, I asked questions about the role of family in their education, as well as about respondents' academic path, including one's choice of major, and satisfaction with the major chosen. I also inquired about hypothetical or actual decisions about changing a major and quitting college. The purpose of this section is to see whether there are any cultural overlaps in interviewee's answers with regard to their approach to studies.

In the section touching upon the area of work, I asked about work-life balance, importance of work in general, the interviewees' professional plans and goals in general, as well as specifically in five and ten years. Here, I planned to see whether any cultural values transpire through participants' answers concerning the area of work. I also explicitly asked about two cultural concepts of *mianzi* and *guanx*i.; however, I did that after I asked more general questions so that the answers are not directed towards culture from the beginning.

The section devoted to romantic relationships covers topics such as views on dating and marriage in terms of age, responsibility, and personal plans concerning them, as well as the relationship between family of origin and family of marriage. Here, similarly to the previous sections, I look for common patterns in experiences and ideas expressed by my interviewees and see to what extent culture is important in terms of life choices concerning romantic relationships.

The exact questions can be found in Appendix 1.

Analysis

I conducted both transcription and coding. Each interview was transcribed into a separate file. Transcripts include word-for-word questions and answers. Also, I noted each full-minute mark in the transcripts in case I would need to go back to a specific response. I employed the constant comparative method to code emergent themes connected to the interplay between traditional cultural values and life choices of the respondents (Goetz and LeCompte, 1981; Lincoln and Guba, 1985). First, I rearranged data into categories, or new files, based on the questions. Next, while reading them, I assigned codes to each answer. For example, I assigned the code "education in

Mandarin" to the answers where respondents were talking about being encouraged to use Mandarin Chinese at school and in public in order to be successful, or I assigned the code "female profession" where the interviewees were saying that teacher is a perfect job for women. After the transcript for the first question was coded, I proceeded to identify codes in the next one, etc. I based codes in the new transcripts on the ones created in the previous ones, and added new ones as well. During the process, I was constantly revising and double-checking the transcripts.

CHAPTER 4

RESULTS

The questions I have asked were grouped into four thematic categories. The goal of the first part was to better understand how the respondents "do culture" through their everyday practices, including usage of language, dietary habits, and celebrations of traditional festivals. Also, I asked questions about values that are important in their lives. I aimed to see whether or not the answers would be in line with the literature discussed above, as well as to look for similarities and differences between the lived experiences of international students from China and American-born Chinese students.

I. Culture

The interviewees from China identified themselves as Chinese (5 people), Han (3 people), and Asian (1 person). One respondent born in the USA claimed Asian identity, one Chinese-American, one both Taiwanese and Chinese, and one mixed race; however, they all stated that the Chinese-origin parent has had the biggest influence on their upbringing.

All respondents born in China are fluent in Mandarin Chinese, which is the official language used in school and public sphere. The majority also speaks their local dialects at home and with elder family members. Being able to communicate in a local dialect helps people to identify with a community and to better express feelings. Amy (MC) stated "My dialect (…) can make me express my feelings better to my relatives, or to my friends. Yes, and I think that because of that dialect I have a sense of belonging."

However, Mandarin Chinese is perceived as more prestigious, polite and useful. For example, Patricia (MC) said:

Actually, I just don't use my dialect too much, because in my school, and my teachers, my parents, they encourage me to learn Mandarin and speak in that way, because that will seem more polite to other people. (…) Because if you keep saying your dialect, you will be regarded as less educated.

For the interviewees from China, there is a clear distinction between Mandarin Chinese being a dominant language needed for academic and professional success, and local dialect being the carrier of family's heritage. For American-born Chinese respondents this binary is translated into the relationship between English and Mandarin Chinese, even though their family sometimes originally spoke another dialect, too:

[It is] very important [for me to speak Chinese], because it's just good to know more than one language, and because I am Chinese, that is born to Chinese family, and it's important to keep that culture. *And, is it more important for you to speak Mandarin or Cantonese?* It is more important for me to speak Mandarin because that's the main dialect in China, and just everyone knows it more than Cantonese, because Cantonese is only spoken in Hong Kong. So, that's why I'm learning Mandarin, but I was born speaking Cantonese, yeah… when I was growing up.

(Julia, AC)

All respondents from China but one have eaten Chinese food every day since they arrived in the USA. They claimed that they were simply used to it, and the only alternative they saw was American food, which, to them, is synonymous with greasy and overly sweet fast food:

> Yes, I like Chinese food. My stomach is accustomed to it, so I cook at my apartment by myself. *So, how often do you eat Chinese food?* Almost every day, 3 meals a day I eat Chinese food.
>
> (Jason, MC)

> Because it's like routine, daily… just like I have a Korean friend and she said: "Oh, I cannot live without rice and Kimchi." So, it's just like… how you're growing up with the environment and food.
>
> (Kelly, MC)

> I cook it every day. *Why do you cook Chinese food?* I don't like fast food. Yes… I don't like hamburgers. I think they are oily and they make me fatter.
>
> (Amy, MC)

My roommate cooks it every day. *So, why do you eat it?* Because

I can't eat fast food, like, constantly… Because, if I eat it today, I

definitely won't eat it tomorrow.

(Patricia, MC)

Participants born in the USA admit that they grew up eating Chinese food every day, but since they left for college, they ate it less often and would rather go to a restaurant than cook it themselves.

When it comes to the celebration of festivals, the question I asked was: "What do you know about Chinese festivals, and do you celebrate them?". Only one responded talked about the origins of various festivals; the majority of the interviewees described the ways in which they celebrated them. The most important festival, and the one always mentioned first by the participants from China, was Spring Festival. It was often compared by the interviewees to Christmas or Thanksgiving. The most important aspects of this festival include eating a lot of good food, meeting with family, and having a long break in classes:

The most important is the Spring Festival, and we use another

calendar… I don't know how to say that…   Usually it's in the end

of January, or in the beginning of February. And we will have

some fireworks, and all people in the nation will have a break for

about 7 days, and we… it's like…   the importance of Spring

Festival to Chinese is like Christmas to Americans… Yes, all

people get together… the families get together, and we have dinner, and we have all dishes, like fish, pork, beef, and all the good dishes…

(Amy, MC)

For example, our most important festival every year is the Spring Festival, following the lunar calendar. So, we celebrate at home. All the family members stay together and eat dinner and watch TV, and talk, and play mahjong, that kind of stuff, eat dumplings… That is how the Spring Festival looks like at home.

(Kelly, MC)

The most important one is definitely the Spring Festival. It is for the family reunion, it is, I think, equivalent to Thanksgiving here, in America. So, people in China cherish, and put a lot of importance on this festival. For example, my father, he will force me to go back to my hometown to see my grandparents.

(Jason, MC)

They also describe their celebrations of Mid-Autumn Festival, Dragon Boat Festival, Tomb Sweeping Day, Chinese Valentine's Day, and October 1st National Day. Some celebrate in local Chinese Christian churches (even though only one participant claimed Christian faith; others did not even understand the meaning of major Christian

festivals such as Christmas or Easter), but one respondent said it does not count, another celebrates them again with friends and says that in church he can celebrate only major, non-Confucian festivals, another said that the celebration is not real, and that they do different things than they used to do back in China.

The respondents born in America admitted that they celebrate only two major Chinese festivals. However, while the students from China called them Spring Festival and Mid-Autumn Festival, those from the USA referred to them as Chinese New Year and Moon or Mooncake Festival:

Like, Chinese New Year, we celebrate as a family. It is a big deal for us. We would just get together, family and friends. We would eat dinner together, and we pass out red pockets, and just watch the lion dance as well. *Ok. Any other festivals you celebrate?* Umm… What's the one? The Moon… Lunar… It's… sorry, I don't know, I'm blanking right now. It's in September… Just this year… Like, it's every September. Usually, it's… It's a Mooncake Festival – That's what it is! Mooncake Festival! So, yeah, we do that too. It's not as big. We just have little dessert that is shaped like the Moon, and we just go outside, look at the Moon, have lanterns, yeah… *So, only these two festivals?* That we celebrate? Yeah. I'm not sure if there's more…

(Julia, AC)

I don't know too much. I think in general my mum was less about
teaching me those things when I was growing up, so more or less
I know that they celebrate like New Year's, the lunar New Year,
like dragons are very important in that, lots of fireworks, red is
like the lucky color, you know, it's about offering to ancestors and
stuff, so it's very different from what we do here in America.
There is also Moon Festival. I don't know much about it besides
that you eat mooncakes. I don't know what the significance is off
the top of my head though.

(Eric, AC)

I'd like to think that I know about them. I mean I always google
dates for them, but like… I celebrate the Moon festival, and the
Chinese New Year, yeah… there's also that Autumn festival. Is it
the same thing as the Moon Festival? I think they're the same
thing.

(Nicole, AC)

When asking about values, my intention was to see whether there are any
parallels between the answers and the Confucian values discussed in the theoretical
chapter. The question was: *"What three values would you say are the most important to
you in life?"*. Top three answers of students from China (that were mentioned by 3
people) are: filial piety (obedience to and taking care of parents), family, and friendship.

Two people mentioned kindness (Emily even quoted Confucius' famous saying "Treat others the way you want to be treated."), and two talked about hard work and career. Other values discussed by the students from China were (mentioned once): balance between tradition and openness to new things, food, generosity, gratitude, honesty, humor, independence, love, optimism, purity of mind, religion, and sports.

Top values mentioned by American-born respondents (by 2 people) are honesty and open-mindedness. The ones mentioned once are adaptability, Bible, everything learned on one's own, everything taught by parents, honesty, optimism, staying true to oneself, and trust.

By asking the next question "How would you describe responsibility?", I wanted to see if there were any common points between students' answers and the Confucian understanding of responsibility as one's duty to fulfill the expectations of their specific role in the society. This pattern was clearly visible in all the responses. The participants born in China see themselves as having multiple responsibilities in life. The ones they mention are the responsibility generally towards other people, or the society as a whole, towards parents (now and in the future), towards own family (spouse and children), and toward self. They define responsibility as persisting in a task, finishing what was started, and sacrificing oneself for the sake of others:

> I think, firstly, I should be responsible for myself. For example, I must study hard to make a good living for the future, and, on the other hand, I think I should be responsible for my family, for my parents. When they are old, I should help them. For the society. I

want to be a teacher in the future. I think it's my responsibility and
my ability to the society.

(Janet, MC)

I think the responsibility is something from within. Just like many
people have many identities, such as, I'm a student here, and I'm
a sister to my cousins, and I'm a daughter to my parents, I'm a
granddaughter to my grandparents, and maybe some day I will
be a girlfriend, or I will be a wife, I will be a mother… and I will
have a lot of responsibilities. And I think the most important thing
to the responsibility is like… never let other people worry about
you, or try to make them happy because of you. Yes, and do the
things you must do, not the things you want to do.

(Amy, MC)

For the American-born Chinese, responsibility is also something that requires
sacrifice, but it is more about one's own character than fulfilling duties of a given social
role:

I think of, like, either an obligation, or something you want to do,
and want to succeed in, because there are different kinds of
responsibilities. Something that you should take seriously, as to,
like, not let people down, and especially not let yourself down.

Being responsible.. I mean, living up to, like, your own expectations, and other people's expectations, if they're in line.

(Laura, AC)

Something that you have to do, even if you don't want to, you still have to do it. It's kind of a greater good mentality.

(Nicole, AC)

Hmm… Responsibility is basically keeping your word for everything you say and do, and like… not backing out constantly, and getting the work done.

(Julia, AC)

II. Education

The second part of the interview consisted of questions on the topic of education. I asked about past experiences of the interviewees, their current place on the academic path, as well as plans for the future. My goal was also to understand the role of family in students' choices connected to education.

There are three main themes emerging from Mainland Chinese students' answers about the role of family in their education. The first one is financial support. Their parents have been paying for school both in China and in the USA. Almost all the respondents started their answer with mentioning the financial support:

Until now, for 22 years, they paid for me totally. Yeah, because in China they will always pay for my fees.

(Janet, MC)

They are my financial support.

(Kelly, MC)

First of all, they are very supportive of me, no matter how further I want to go with my education. Like, when I chose to go abroad, to be here to study, that needs a lot of money, but my family, my parents, they are very supportive. And also, back in China, before my graduate program, when I was in college life, undergraduate program, my family supported me financially, and also spiritually. So, I think that they are really important in the educational process for me. If they are not supportive, like, at least if they are not supportive of me being… studying abroad, at least, I do not have enough money for that, so then I don't think I can make it.

(Tina, MC)

Second, they talk about the emotional support and encouragement that parents have been giving them throughout their education process. They give credit to parents for teaching them how to study and how to value education itself:

It's not just they give you money, but also they say: "Ok, if you want to study abroad, you can do it, and I'm really proud of you, because you are capable of studying alone in another country."
(Tina, MC)

My parents, they are both educated. They have Master degree, so they value my education a lot. So, they try their best to send me to the best primary school, high school, middle school, and university. And they also encouraged me to study abroad, in America. So, my family plays a very important role in my education. Without my parents' help, I wouldn't be here today.
(Jason, MC)

My family, actually, at the very beginning, I didn't like to study, truly speaking. But, you know, I have a good father. My father would always say: If you want to be a good man… at the beginning I didn't understand what was the true meaning of a good man. But I understood it later. So, education helps you become a good man
(Matthew, MC)

In most cases though the encouragement has been intertwined with high pressure and expectations from the parents' part:

It's a combination of support and pressure. (…) Pressure means they don't understand what we've been through here, they don't understand our life here, but they have their own expectation. That expectation puts pressure on myself. Support means they appreciate what I have done, they support what I have done, they agree with my decision. So, it's a combination of support and pressure.

(Thomas, MC)

My parents… I think they, like, push me to study hard. And, they are very interesting, because when I just… when I was very little, they were very strict. Yeah, they were strict with me on my study. But, like, in middle school, in primary school, they would check my… every time… the grades on my paper, and they would, like, criticize me on my bad scores, and when I entered high school, they just let me go, I think. They know I have pressure, so if you push hard, I will be overwhelmed. So, they just let me relax and take care of my daily life. Now, they also care about my study. Yes, they care about it. Because every time I have video chat with them, they will ask "How is your study going?"

(Patricia, MC)

The descriptions of students born in the USA differ between each other. Eric and Nicole said that their parents wanted them to be "ahead of the game" when they were younger. Eric has been also experiencing a lot of pressure from his uncle and grandmother to pick a specific major in college. Nicole's parents let her study what she is good at rather then push her to put effort in what she does not enjoy:

> My mum would push me when I was younger, so she would buy workbooks when I was growing up to accelerate learning. I would be doing grade 4th workbook in 1st grade, or something like that.
> (Eric, AC)

> When I was maybe up till 3rd grade, I had tutoring, so it was more like to get ahead of the game when I was younger, but like I think in upper elementary and on, they were just like "Well, you're gonna just study on your own and figure it out." And so, like my parents also realized that I wasn't as strong in like Math like my brothers were, and so I just kind of like stuck to my science and social studies.
> (Nicole, AC)

Julia said that her parents encouraged her to do well at school for the sake of better future, but they did not put pressure on her. Laura admitted that her mother has always been confident in Laura's abilities, so she did not have to control her studies and employed a kind of laissez-faire approach:

> My mum didn't really care, because she knew that I will succeed
> anyways, so… I mean, pretty passive role. I think she took more
> interest in my brother, because he's not as good at school… But,
> yeah… pretty passive. She never, like, got on me about my
> homework. She would always tell me, like, "Stop studying. Stop
> doing this. Go have fun. Go watch a movie."
> (Laura, AC)

Respondents from China had various reasons for choosing their major in college. They highlighted the fact that in China people focus more on picking a good university than a major, because employers check how prestigious applicants' college is rather than what kind of degree they have. Therefore, choosing a major was a secondary thing to think about. The priority was to be admitted to a "right" university. Interestingly enough, it was usually the parents who picked the university for them, and then they applied for a major according to their own interest. In some cases, parents also influenced the choice of the major to make it more oriented towards landing a good job:

> I chose the major, and my father recommended the university,
> according to my major. Because there are also other universities
> I can go to, but maybe I cannot go to my favorite major, so he
> recommended to me this university.
> (Emily)

So, I like art about drawing and painting. So, I was looking for

some majors related to art. So, and my parents suggested me to

study design. *Did they say why?* Maybe it's easier to get a job.

(Kelly)

Some respondents signed a contract with the Chinese government that

guarantees that they will have a safe job in a public institution for at least 10 years upon

graduation, and the job security became the main reason for selecting this specific

major. Everybody was satisfied with their current major, only two respondents changed

major after first year of undergraduate program.

When asked when they decided to major in what they are studying now, all the

respondents born in the USA provided me with an exact time, like "at the end of Spring

semester of 2015", or "senior year of high school". None of the Chinese-born

participants were that specific. My theory here is that the students from China could not

plan their academic path before getting results of *gaokao,* and also they gave

precedence to choosing university over a major, whereas those born in the USA had to

know exactly what they wanted to study before finishing high school in order to prepare

application materials. The timeline was clearer for them since it was directed towards a

more specific goal, and they had more agency in the process.

Top reasons of American-born Chinese students for picking the major were

personal interest, and wanting to help others based on own experience with a given

issue. Interest in a specific area was usually backed up with a lot of involvement in

school's clubs and extracurricular activities:

In high school I was involved in multitude of activities involving

law and public policy, among those were Model United Nations,

Model Congress, and mock trial, and also debate at one point. I

really like arguing about litigation and different global issues, and

I was also very involved in community service, and I enjoyed

getting involved in community.

(Laura, AC)

I grew up with Legos and Connects and I took a few technical

classes, like workshops in high school, so I've always been

interested in building things and designing things.

(Eric, AC)

While the majority of respondents (both from China and America) chose their

major in line with personal interest in a given area, parental influence on the choice is

more visible in the case of Mainland Chinese. Also, American-born Chinese were

involved in a wider array of extracurricular activities while in high school, and the main

focus of Mainland Chinese was on getting a good score on the *gaokao.*

When asked "*What would happen if you decided to change your major?",* the

majority of respondents from China started their answer by saying that they never

thought about it. Even though two people did change their major, and did not describe

any significant drawbacks of this decision, those who did not change major see such a

move as one with many negative consequences. The interviewees believe that they do

not have much agency and that their decision is highly dependent on external and structural circumstances:

> Maybe if the society didn't need Chinese teachers. You know, in China we choose majors not just because we like it. It's also decided by the society's requirement about this major.
> (Janet, MC)

> If I had this chance, I may choose a major about journalism, because I like to chat with people and I like to observe others, and I like to think. So I think if I'm a journalist, I can chat with people from different countries, from different classes, from different backgrounds, and I can learn more, and I can also express more. *So, you said that if you had a chance, you would change major. How would that chance look like?* Hmm… maybe like… when I graduate from university, or maybe I can change my major for the… further education.
> (Emily, MC)

> I have no chance to do that. Yes, because to change major in China is very difficult, and only when you get into your Master degree, you can change the major. But you need to work hard. The other students learned these things for 4 years. Yes, but if I

do that, I will be older, and… that's abnormal in China, so I won't

do that.

(Amy, MC)

Two out of four participants from the USA changed their major, and are happy

with their decision. The other two do not see changing major as something abnormal,

the only disadvantage of such a decision according to them is loss of progress.

While changing a major is still a somewhat reasonable decision for my

interviewees, quitting college is definitely not. The immediate answer to the question

What would happen if you decided to quit college? for the majority of Mainland Chinese

was mentioning the reaction of their family:

My parents will kill me…

(Jason, MC)

Quit college? First, I need good reason to persuade my parents.

Yes… Because it's like… all my money comes from my parents.

So, they have the duty, and they have the right to control me,

like… whether I can change or drop off, or not…

(Amy, MC)

Quit college? Oh, gosh… Quit college… I don't know. I think, at

least my parents will be really disappointed. Yeah… Chinese

parents, they really value education and college environment.

They think that that is the only way for you to be successful in

your future.

(Tina, MC)

After talking about the negative reaction from parents, Mainland Chinese students discussed other consequences of quitting college. They talked about no job prospects and even about their life being ruined. It is clear that having a college degree is a default plan for my respondents' lives.

The participants from America also talked about the potential negative reactions of their parents. However, these reactions do not seem to have a very big influence on them. Instead of seeing a life after dropping out from college as completely wasted and directionless, they discuss potential backup plans:

If I did that, I would get in a lot of trouble with my parents, and I

will probably have to just start a business maybe, or go into the

entrepreneurial route, I guess… with no degree.

(Julia, AC)

If I decided to drop out of school, I would probably go to the

Peace Corps, like teach Chinese somewhere, or teach English

somewhere.

(Laura, AC)

If I quit college now, my parents wouldn't be very happy, I'd

probably enroll in culinary school. I mean there always would be

a back up plan.

(Nicole, AC)

III. Work

When it came to work plans, every interviewee intended to find a position connected with their major in college. However, choosing a major was highly gendered. The majority of women from China that were interviewed intended to be a teacher. They saw it as a position that is appropriate for women, not very difficult, good for the society, and conducive to finding a husband:

My parents told me that for teachers it's easier to find the Mr.

Right.

(Patricia, MC)

I want to be a teacher, because, first of all, it is not very tough. I

think that it is kind of a very easy job. And also it has vacations,

and you have a lot of free time. And, I think for a girl, or for a

female, it is really important to balance your work and your

family.

(Tina, MC)

Another thing that is important for my respondents is finding a job with high salary. The goal of most of the students from China was to be able to own a house and a car in next five to ten years. The American-born Chinese students also planned to be financially independent in the next five to ten years, however their main reason to work was helping others, often because they wanted to give back to the community or to provide others with help that they themselves received in the past. All participants believe that it was important to work in general. However, these views were gendered. As mentioned above, the interviewed women from China viewed the care for family as their first responsibility. However, they believed that they should not be housewives, and saw their professional career as a way of being independent:

> My mum told me that a girl has to be independent for your financial part. That means you cannot rely on anyone else, except your family. So, I think I'm getting my job so I can earn money to do my stuff.
>
> (Kelly, MC)

> Yes, it is very important [to work]. Because, I think everyone needs financial independence. It's like… some Chinese people think that the girls in the society… they just need to serve their husband and educate their children, but I think that is not equal. The woman needs to have her own job, and needs to be

independent in a family. Yes, and she will be more equal with her husband, and her husband will respect her as well.

(Amy, MC)

I don't want to be a housewife. I can have a job that is not so busy, and that can give me a lot of free time, but at least, I think, I need to work outside. I need to know what is going on outside, I want to get myself improved with the development of the society.

(Tina, MC)

All men interviewed stressed the fact that it is their main responsibility to be the breadwinner, and their wives can work, but that they should be responsible for caring for family in the first place:

To work? It depends. *On what?* For male, yes. For female, not necessarily. *Why?* Because female can be a good housewife, but male, it's not… it's generally not accepted to be a househusband. But for female, it's generally accepted to be a housewife. People will say the housewife is doing a great job. Or babysitter, they are doing a great job.

(Thomas, MC)

In my family, the husband and wife, I think they have different works to do. My job is to make money, to provide them with better life, and she has to be more careful, to take care of these tiny things. Hmm… I need her to accompany me, and to take care of our child, and I don't expect her to make a lot of money, but I would like her to support our family together with me.

(Jason, MC)

Eric, who was born in the USA, has more egalitarian views:

We both need to take care of the kids, and the same with cooking, cleaning and stuff, and making money to support us.

When asked to describe what the respondents needed to do in order to get the dream job, the interviewees from China focused only on human capital. Basically, they believed that they simply needed to be good students, i.e. fulfilling the duty of their current position in society to advance to the next step:

I think I should have great grades, I should know how to teach, and they will give me interview, and they will test me to see whether I can be a good teacher.

(Emily, MC)

I need to get a high grade… GPA, and I need to pass the interview… Yes, it's like, we have about 100 students graduating one year, and they only need like 20. Yeah, so I need to be the perfect one, or a good one, to be the top one.

(Amy, MC)

If I want to teach in the future, the prerequisite is to get a Doctor degree. And, if I just want to do some administrative work, then… it's just enough for me to get Bachelor Degree.

(Jason, MC)

In terms of skill and experience, I already have, but what else… maybe I need to learn more skills, and apply for job, and see if I'm lucky. But in terms of skill and knowledge, I think I'm already good for any position.

(Thomas, MC)

The interviewees born in the USA, on the other hand, take a more pro-active approach. Similarly to being involved in different clubs and activities while in high school to prepare themselves for college, now they actively seek internship opportunities to build a resume and gain hands-on experience. All respondents from the USA plan to apply for internships. Eric said: "I want to get some internships, or a research position to have on resume and to be able to talk about things when you talk to recruiters." Laura has already one internship experience; this year she is going for another one abroad,

and already plans one next year. Laura has two potential career plans and therefore she interns in places that would help her with either career option.

It is interesting that no participant from China mentioned networking; especially taking into account their descriptions of the importance of *guanxi* in China that follows.

When asked to explain their understanding of *guanxi*, students born in China gave many examples, but never directly connected it to themselves. The most popular examples included someone they knew getting a job, a promotion, or being admitted to a university only on the basis of *guanxi* and when not really deserving it:

> Sometimes, if you want to get promoted, you want to get a good salary, you will fail, because you don't have good relationship. This relationship is not like in America, like your relationship with your boss in America. Because that kind of relationship, you know, if you want to maintain this relationship, you have to do a lot of things. You have to flatter, you have to bribe, you have to exhaust every kind of your mind to maintain a very private relationship. Because your boss wants to get benefit, a personal benefit from you.
> (Matthew, MC)

> There are many examples around me. My friend's sister… her father and the headmaster of the best school are classmates. So, because of this *guanxi* she became a teacher in this school. But

she's not the most perfect person among other people. So, I think

this phenomenon is popular in China.

(Janet, MC)

Guanxi… Ok, so, when you're applying a job and maybe you

need to do an interview with your employer, and if some people

you know, maybe it's your family, maybe it's your friend, so, they

know that employer, so they can speak to him or her in advance.

"Oh, I know her. She's my friend… Could you ask her some easy

questions or give her a high score on the test?" Something like

that.

(Kelly, MC)

Guanxi is perceived as a negative phenomenon, but also one that is deeply

rooted in Chinese culture and therefore impossible to change. Even though the

respondents do not approve of the use of *guanxi*, they admit that they must use it if they

want to function in Chinese society. Thomas (MC) said he did not have to use it in the

USA for the last 7 years, but if he goes back to China, he will have to. He then adds:

In here, you can earn a job, earn a place, you can live well

without network. You can be nobody, but you can live well. But in

China, in most cases you need network to help you. That's why I

say it's different.

The Mainland Chinese see *guanxi* as essential to success and even more effective than bribery. This view is illustrated by an anecdote told by Amy (MC):

My cousin, she wanted to go to primary school in the city, not in the village, and because of the rules, she can't. And her mother just gave the money to headmaster of the school, and the headmaster of the school… she's a woman, and the woman said: "No, I won't take the money", and my auntie was really confused, like, why other people give money and they can do the things, why I can't… And, she just asked her friends and found many people, and finally she knows that other people have relationship with the friends of that headmaster. And, maybe the headmaster doesn't need that money. She just needs a person to say some good words to her, and the person is also important to the headmaster.

Patricia (MC) sees her desire for seeking true friendships as a disadvantage in a society where she is supposed to befriend people in order to gain resources or other advantages:

I think it [*guanxi*] is important, but I'm not good at this, because my relationships are not good, because I have said that I make

friends with you, because you're worth it. So, there are lots of people that… I don't like them but they might have good fame, good prestige, good position… So, I may not even know them. That really is kind of disadvantage for me.

The American-born Chinese, on the other hand, are not familiar with the notion of *guanxi*. When asked about a certain kind of networking or making connections that is specific to Chinese culture, they did not know either.

Mianzi, the second culture-specific concept that I asked about was also perceived as important in Chinese society by the respondents from China. They claim that saving *mianzi* was not only for the sake of self, but also for the whole family. Moreover, it was important in public, not at home, with close friends or family:

For example, with my parents… so, as you know, man is always the head of family… Ok, and so, if my father is doing something wrong, and my mother could talk to him about his mistake. But, at home this is fine, but if we are doing something outside, like, you know, group, so, even though my father did something wrong, my mother is not able to speak out his mistake in the group. So, I think this is my father's *mianzi.*

(Kelly, MC)

Mianzi… so, that is like an important thing for people to pursue. Yeah… Hmm… My parents, they have *mianzi*, and they rely on me to get more *mianzi.*

(Patricia, MC)

If I'm talking with my friends, we don't need to take the *mianzi,* because we know each other, and I can tell her that I just don't have money, because I wasted a lot of money on buying clothes, and she will just say: "Ok, just take my money, and just remember to return it next month."

(Amy, MC)

Most of the respondents from China claim that *mianzi* is important for them, but that it should not be taken to the extreme where thinking about others' opinions would lead to no longer being own self:

I think it's important in my life, but now it has become less important, because I grew up to recognize that you should be a person that not just lives for yourself. Sometimes you should learn from others, the others' suggestions or advice, but I mean, it's important to be yourself. So, I think, if I pay too much attention to others' views about me, I will lose myself.

(Emily, MC)

In my high school, my classmates… they pursued it by buying a

lot of expensive clothes, and expensive shoes, and they would,

like, treat other people to have a big dinner in a good

restaurant… Yeah.. Because one thing I didn't do… I don't want

to do things beyond my ability to pursue *mianzi*. That is my

personal basic principle. Because my parents don't have the

ability for me to do that, so why I should do that? And, I think,

mianzi, if you don't pursue it beyond your ability, so *mianzi* can

be your dignity, your pride. So, I have to protect it for my parents,

for me.

(Patricia, MC)

The participants born in the USA were all familiar with the notion of *mianzi*.

However, they talked about saving *mianzi* as a phenomenon present in Asian American

communities, but not necessarily in their own lives. In some cases, there was even a

contrasting view on *mianzi* between the respondents' and their parents' approaches:

All of their [Chinese-American children's] parents were friends,

and all of their parents wanted the kids to be better than each

other. So, and like if anyone ever got a B in a class, they would

be scolded so much by their parents and all of the parents will

know, because they all want to know each other's business. So, I

think it's so stupid. I mean, I think it's really ingrained into Chinese society, and Asian society in general, but that's a concept that I don't like and I try not to buy into, because I feel that it's just not necessary… just be happy! Be content! Just chill!

(Laura, AC)

I don't really care. I think, like using that example, coming to my university, I know that my parents were kind of like "You're going to state school? Oh my gosh! That was so easy to get into!" So, telling their friends "I'm gonna be so embarrassed to tell my friends." But I was just kind of "I don't really care."

(Nicole, AC)

IV. Romantic Relationships

The views of the interviewees from Mainland China in about romantic relationships are rather conservative. For two Chinese-born participants, as long as you are ready to commit and are mature enough, you can start dating, but the majority says that it is best to start dating after finishing high school and turning 18 years old. The interviewees see college as a good place to find a romantic partner. High school years are perceived as time that should be devoted to studying and preparing oneself for the *gaokao*, and dating would add stress and pressure, or might contribute to failing the exam. Also, they claimed that parents and teachers do not allow dating before graduating from high school:

Maybe at least you need to date above 18 years old. Because 18 years… once you enter the university, it means you have much choice. So, maybe at that time before you enter university, you just have a small range of friends, so you're dating maybe randomly, or you don't have a very good variety of choice. But once you have a variety of choice, for example when you enter university, maybe that's a good time.

(Matthew, MC)

I think after 18 years old, because… hmm… first reason is that after 18 years old, I am an adult. And then, because in China we have more stress in high school. Always… 18 years old means that you graduated from high school and that you can start your university life. You will leave your home, and you become more independent, and you should meet others, and have your date.

(Emily, MC)

I think, to me… 18 is good. *Why?* Because you don't want to start dating very late than other people. Yeah… I know, some people start dating in high school, but I think it's too early. *Why?* Because you want to focus on your study to pass the exam. So, if you focus on other stuff, you will have to work very hard.

(Kelly, MC)

18. *Why?* Because 18 is the law of the adult, and most of the students go to college at 18, and we always say that college is a small society, and we need to practice the ability to get relationship with different gender. Yes, because, like, in middle school, our parents and teachers don't allow us to have date with another guy, and I think that it would have a bad influence on our study. So, we are forbidden to do that. And, I think that… when I go to college, if I fall in love with somebody, that is ok, and if we are dating, that is really ok.

(Amy, MC)

The interviewees that were born in America also responded that the right age to start dating was around 18 years old, but the reasons for this answer were different from those of Mainland Chinese. Rather than focusing on external circumstances such as study, exam preparation, and rules set by people in position of authority, they highlighted the importance of maturity and understanding of self:

For me, I really think, with my personal experience, I didn't think… I thought I was most ready in college… right now. Because back in high school is just that the maturity level is really

low. Like, with a lot of people at school, so, I would, just to be safe, and not to waste time, I would wait until college.

(Julia, AC)

I think it's more about how mature you are, so I think it depends on if you feel like you can handle all your responsibilities and a relationship with someone else. You can't just like: "Oh, I'm just doing it to have a girlfriend or boyfriend." You know, you'd want to actually be there for them. Then, I think it's time. Which with some people it can happen earlier that with others.

(Jason, AC)

When they have like an understanding of who they are. Maybe not fully, but like a good understanding of like what their values are, and what they want to do in life. Well, maybe not what they want to do, because nobody knows that, but just like having stability and like knowing who they are before dragging someone else into it too. *So, do you think there is a right age for that?* I think that for most people probably like later in college, but like it depends on who they are though because like some people may mature faster than others.

(Nicole, AC)

All those interviewed wanted to get married at some point in the future. Both respondents from China and those born in the USA believed that a couple should spend 1-2 years together before getting married.

When asked: "*What do you think generally is the best age to get married?",* most of the participants from China provided me with higher age for men and lower age for women. Only one person born in the USA had similar views. The answers can be seen in the table below.

Table 1

The best age to get married

Male respondents from China		Female respondents from China	
Men	Women	Men	Women
If studies: 25-27 If does not study: 22-24	<25	27	25
25-26	25-26	27-30	24
25-40	25-30	>30	25-30
		28-35	25
		1-2 years older than woman	25-26 (cities) 22-23 (villages)
		>24	>24
Male respondents born in the USA		**Female respondents born in the USA**	
mid 20s – mid 30s	mid 20s – mid 30s	high 20s- low 30s	mid 20s
		22-35; depending on priorities in life	22-35; depending on priorities in life
		Personal choice	Personal choice

For the respondents from China, the reasoning behind the idea that women should be younger than men when getting married was also connected to the perception of gender roles in the society where the main responsibility of husband is to provide financially, and for women to bear and raise children:

> For men is like 28, for women 25. 25 is because I have seen some news about how dangerous it would be if a woman had a baby over 30 years old, so, I mean, as early as possible to have a baby, but not as early as possible, like before 25, I think that is the age you're not mature enough, and you still cannot make good decisions. And for men, I think either between 28 and 30 - 35 is ok, because men have to work more on their own career to support the family. Yeah, because sometimes, I mean, the standard of finding the husband will become… if you have a house, if you have a car.
>
> (Patricia, MC)

> Man is a little bit older than woman in the expectation. It's like… I will never marry to a man who is younger than me. Because I want somebody to protect me… It's like that.
>
> (Amy, MC)

Between 25 to 30, I think. *So, is it the same for men and women?*

Hmm… For women. *And for men?* Hmm… There's no best age.

Ok. Should he be older, younger, or the same age? For men, I

think it's at least 25, and then all the way until maybe 40. *And*

why do you think there is a set age for women? Because

women… It's important for women to be young and beautiful

when they are in a relationship and married, and also have

children. So, I think between 25 and 30 is the best. I'm not saying

before 25 and after 40 is not good, I'm just saying that between

25 and 30 is the best time.

(Thomas, MC)

Julia (AC), who also said that men should be older, provided a different explanation, not

a one that reflects gender expectations:

I think mid-20s, depending on your maturity level. *Is it the same*

for men and women? Umm… For men I think it needs to be a

little older, like towards the high 20s or even low 30s, because

that's when they actually start maturing, like… completely

(Julia, AC)

Laura (AC) acknowledges the fact that people have different priorities in life.

Therefore, she provided different "best age for marriage" for those who want to focus on

having children first and those who want to give precedence to the development of their career:

> Biologically, for your child 22 – 23, so that you can have your first kid by the time you're 24, because then that's the age when your kid's gonna be the smartest. So that's biologically, but I feel like, career-wise, if you're not quite developed in your career yet, and you do want to, or you want to travel more before you have a kid, probably like 26 or 27, but again, that depends on when you meet. And if you really want to do that second part, so just travel a lot, have fun with your friends, and you really don't want children, then probably when you're like 35.
> (Laura, AC)

Respondents from China generally believed that women should be married before turning 30. They viewed society and family expectations as the factors that put pressure on women to get married before 30. However, such pressure was nonexistent for men:

> For women, usually most of the parents hope their daughter can get married around 25, before 25. Especially, after the girl passes 25, it means she's approaching 30. That is terrible for Chinese parents.

(Matthew, MC)

I don't know if it's a cultural thing, but in China people always consider that, oh, if a man is older than 30 years old, then he is very strong, and his career is very successful… like that. But when a woman is getting older and older, then ok, so if you are 30 years or above, you are getting older and older. So, men and women are very opposite way at 30 years old. So, man is up and woman is down.

(Kelly, MC)

In China there are many women who are beyond 30 years old, and they are very nervous. But men don't worry about it.

(Janet, MC)

Another question in the area of romantic relationships was about qualities that a potential spouse should have. The respondents were not given a specific number of characteristics they should give. The quality that was present in answers of three interviewees from China and in none of answers of participants from the USA was responsibility towards family and towards both sets of parents (One participant from USA said that the spouse should be able to take responsibility, but for their own actions):

I think she doesn't have to be very beautiful, her facial appearance is not the most important thing, but I want her to be responsible to the family, and to my parents, and to her parents.
(Jason, MC)

I think the responsibility is not just towards me. The first is towards himself. He should have the responsibility for everything he did, for his every decision. And also towards me, and his parents, and my parents, and even our children.
(Emily, MC)

For two respondents, honesty was an important quality, and for two participants, their spouse should be tolerant towards them. It is interesting to note here though that only women mention tolerance. Patricia (MC) looks for someone who will "bear her shortcomings". For Janet (MC), this quality is the only thing that she looks for in a spouse:

Be tolerant about me, about all the bad things, my character and faults. Maybe you quarrel with others, and get easily angry about something… I think it's a fault of character.
(Janet, MC)

The characteristics that were mentioned by two out of four interviewees born in America were hard work, honesty, and trustworthiness. It is interesting to see that

women from China seek a partner that will tolerate them, be rational, reliable and able to support family, whereas American-born women want to find someone who is able to adapt, well-mannered, and on the same "mental level" as them. The whole list of all the features discussed by both Chinese-American and Mainland Chinese participants is in the table below.

Table 2

Desirable Spouse Qualities

Mainland Chinese	Female respondents	Male respondents
	• responsible (for family and towards parents) (2) • tolerant (2) • able to make a living (1) • Christian (1) • fun (1) • honest (1) • kind (1) • loyal (1) • rational (1) • reliable (1) • respectful to her (1) • respectful to parents (1)	• loving (2) • has the same level of education (1) • honest (1) • optimist (1) • responsible (towards family and parents) (1)
American-born Chinese	**Female respondents**	**Male respondents**
	• accepting of friends (1) • adaptable (1) • being on the same "mental level" (1) • Christian (1) • hard-working (1) • honest (1) • independent from each other (1) • intelligent (1) • kind (1) • open (1) • responsible (1) • trustworthy (1) • well mannered (1)	• equally wanting kids(1) • hardworking (1) • honest (1) • passionate for job or career path (1) • trustworthy (1)

Four Mainland Chinese female respondents said that their spouse had to be Chinese. The main reasons they provided are connected with family and culture. Janet (MC) answered that "If he's Chinese, it means we have the same cultural background, and we have the same education… we have the same point of view." Emily (MC) said: "I think if he's not Chinese, there will be a gap, and it's hard for my family to adapt to that." Tina (MC) talked a bit more about that:

> I don't think it is a good choice for me, for my family, to accept a foreign guy, because my family is I think very traditional Chinese family. If I introduce some foreign guy, there may be a lot of conflict. Culture, eating habits… And also, even for myself, I think if I'm married with a foreign guy, I don't think… yeah… I have some… not friends, but I had some talk with foreign people, American here… I don't think we have the same perception, the same understanding of many things.

Two women from China said that they would prefer a Chinese spouse, but could imagine having a non-Chinese one. None of the male respondents from China needed to marry a Chinese person; Matthew (MC) noted however that his spouse had to be able to speak Chinese:

> I want my future wife to get along very well with my mother. So, if I find a wife that speaks a different language, I think it's hard. I don't want them to sit together and just smile,

without communication. That is very terrible for me. Even if I can

translate… I want them become very good friends. Maybe my

mother will like her as a daughter. *What if she wasn't Chinese but*

she spoke good Chinese? That's no problem.

(Matthew, MC)

Also, none of the American-born participants required his or her spouse to be

Chinese. However, they all admitted that their families wanted them to marry a Chinese

person. Nicole (AC) said "My parents want them to be Chinese, but like, I don't really

care."

To me, it doesn't really matter, to my uncle, it would. To my

grandma it would. To me, as long as I want to be with them, they

fit I guess with how I am, then that's fine whatever race they are.

(Eric, AC)

Receiving a "green light" for the relationship meant very much for the participants

from China. Only Jason (MC) said that he would do whatever he thought was right,

even if the parents disagreed:

It's not very important for me. I think my parents won't interfere

me too much about my choice, but some people do that. In my

opinion, I will first get their permission. If they don't like my wife, I think I will insist on myself.

(Jason, MC)

Other Mainland Chinese valued the parents' opinion to the degree that they would break up with their partners if advised so:

It is very important. Without blessing from my parents, I won't have happiness in my marriage, in my future life.

(Amy, MC)

If my parents will not approve my relationship with some guy, I will break it off. Yeah… I mean, at the very first I may try to convince my parents, and try to get them… my parents and my boyfriend to contact each other more, and they know each other more… If my parents are still very unapproving of this relationship, I will break it off, because it's like… parents, they always want best for you, and the reason why they think he is not suitable for you, there must be a very big issue, so they can be so unapproving. So, I think we're not mature enough, your parents are very experienced human beings. They have seen so many things. And I think that is better to respect your parents' ideas. To follow their suggestions… I think that is more important

for me. So that's why my family is very traditional. And I'm a traditional Chinese girl.

(Tina, MC)

The interviewees from the USA recognized that their families would try to have a say in their partner choice, but that ultimately family's opinion was less important than their own:

I had a boyfriend in high school, and they were like "Why are you dating someone in high school?" Like, even though he was Chinese, they were like "You're not gonna know if he's successful until he goes to college." So, there's that… So, they're very like focused on how this person is going to help me in the future, and like their ethnicity is very important to them. *So, if they disapprove, what would you do?* I mean, I'd probably do what I wanted anyway, because they can't really do much about it.

(Nicole, AC)

It's important, because they make it important. *Ok. So, it's more important for them than for you?* I would say, yeah. *So, what would happen if they wouldn't approve?* Umm… Well, that's not their decision, so… It's my decision, so I would probably still just go off of my instinct, and see if it's good or not.

(Julia, AC)

Of course I would prefer it, but if I were to find someone that didn't fit their approval, I would probably still want to date them, or get married to them. If that's who I truly feel I want to be with. Though, my uncle would probably disown me if I married a Black woman. That's sad to say…

(Eric, AC)

Finally, I asked the participants about the responsibilities that they thought they should have towards their spouse and vice versa. When talking about responsibilities towards one's spouse, women from China framed them around the roles of supporter and nurturer. They also saw themselves as responsible for taking care of children and in-laws:

One thing, I think, I need to support him when he is down… Either his career, or his life is in low point of his life, I need to be with him, and support him. I will not say that I will support him for every decision he makes, but I think, most of the time… we… I want to be his partner, and also I want to support him when he has some troubles or something, and another thing, I think I need to… support his parents. It is always son's responsibility to provide financially, and spiritual comfort to your parents. It's like… if you are the only son of your family, when your parents are in bad condition, or even not so good… not in a very good

position, you need to provide everything they need. It's your responsibility. So, as a daughter-in-law, I think that is also my responsibility. So, I think it is important to be good, to be nice to his parents, and also, I think it is my responsibility to have a child. And also to raise him, or raise her to a very nice guy. And also, I think I need to contribute a lot to this family. I need to do housework. Not all the housework… I think we need to split it half and half. But it is always better if you keep your family in a healthy condition.

(Tina, MC)

I don't want to be a burden for him. I hope I can help him, his family

(Janet, MC)

My responsibility is to educate my children well, and to support him, and whether he would be the winner or loser, I will not give up on him.

(Patricia, MC)

Both Matthew (MC) and Thomas (MC) thought that their responsibility was to love their partner, and to take care of them, even to the point of sacrifice. Jason (MC) said: "My job is to make money, to provide them with better life."

Most female respondents from China also thought that it was their spouse's responsibility to be "the head of the family", which meant to be the breadwinner and main decision-maker:

> I don't know if it is discrimination or not, in my opinion, women are always in a fragile position. It's like… men are strong, and they need to be the shield of the family, and when we come across something difficult, for example, if a thief, or a robber breaks in our family, our house, I think he should be the one to fight against him instead of hiding behind me and saying: "Oh, you go!" Yeah, that is one. And also, he should be, I think, he should be responsible for me and my family, also, we need to support both sides. And he needs to do some housework, and I think as a husband, he should earn the major income of the family. But, you know, in a family, men are always treated like… more important than women… it's like this way. Though I don't want to be in this way, but it is like when something bad, something horrible happens, you want to trust him, you want him to be the one to fight against that. That is… I think that is kind of traditional style of Chinese family. Even now, sometimes my mother… she makes many decisions, but when it comes to something important, my mother will listen to my father, and sometimes will… I don't know if it's right or not, but it seems my

mother… yeah, I think they talk, they communicate… they reach some agreement and they make a decision, but for me, I hope that my husband can be more reliable… sometimes make some decisions for me.

(Tina, MC)

First, I think he should be serious about his every decision about our life, like when should we buy a house, or when should we go somewhere, or when should we have a baby, or something else.

(Emily, MC)

I think it's more about the family… how he supports the family. For example, he has to work hard to feed the baby.

(Kelly, MC)

For Thomas (MC), his spouse's responsibility was the same as his towards them; Matthew (MC) and Jason (MC) believed that their spouses should take care of children and take care of home. Matthew said: "If we have a baby, I think she should be a good mother. That's her responsibility.", and Jason answered: "I need her to accompany me, and to take care of our child."

For the American-born respondents, both spouses have a responsibility to take care of each other, as well as be able to make compromise and build the relationship:

Being able to be there for them, because relationship is about give and take, you both caring for each other. So, like you both have to be there for the other person in the time of need. I would definitely want to be able to help out my wife whenever she needed it. (…) We both need to take care of the kids, and the same with cooking, cleaning and stuff, and making money to support us. Also, make sure I trust in her, and trust me, because without trust in relationship it's not gonna work out. We both have a responsibility to be honest with each other, because if we're going to be married, then there shouldn't be anything that we need to hide from each other.

(Eric, AC)

Lifting each other higher, taking care of him, like cooking… and just teaching each other things that we don't know how to do, and being able to be a good friend as well as a wife. *And what do you think are their responsibilities towards you?* Same thing. Lift me higher, and be able to talk about everything. Talk out issues without being aggressive or mad. And help me out doing chores.

(Julia, AC)

Well, the same things that they give me, I have to give back to them. Like, if I expect them to be understanding of my

sensitivities, then I should be understanding of their sensitivities

and like be willing to work things out… really compromise more.

Yeah, compromise is probably what embodies that.

(Nicole, AC)

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION

The goal of this paper is to see whether the interviewed students of American Midwestern universities born in China and in America are influenced by traditional Chinese values when making important life choices when it comes to education, work, and romantic relationships. While it is not my intention to make the results of this study generalizable to a larger population, I believe that themes and patterns observed here are worth analyzing and can constitute a starting point for larger projects to follow.

It can be concluded from the analysis of the interview answers that the respondents from Mainland China tend to pay attention to Confucian values, whether they are aware of it or not.

I explicitly asked only about two concepts using their Mandarin names (*guanxi* and *mianzi*). The interviewees believed that these notions were very important not only in Chinese society, but also in their families, or even were or used to be meaningful to them personally. The approach of the students towards other traditional Chinese values could be read from their answers about questions concerning specific areas in their lives.

In the area of education, they put a lot of value on the process of gaining knowledge as well as on the outcomes of their study. They wanted to follow parents' expectations and did not want to disappoint them. Also, parents provided them with a mixture of support and pressure, and the participants felt that it was their duty to be good students. Moreover, parents were often actively involved in the process of choosing university, and the children were likely to follow the advice based on trust in

parents' experience and good intentions. What is more, the interviewees believed that through putting enough effort they could achieve a desired outcome. That is why being in high school was the time when all of their attention was focused on the preparations for *gaokao.* When in college, they continued hard work, and viewed their academic path as linear and clear; wandering off of it, i.e. changing a major or quitting school would mean going against the rules and was rarely seen as having positive consequences.

In the sphere of work, respondents from Mainland China still viewed themselves as following the path on which they stepped when entering college. Most believed that putting enough effort into being a good student would grant them the opportunity to be employed in a desirable position. When choosing a specific job, they tended to focus on its stability and potential of getting a high salary. Their views on employment seemed to be gendered in the sense that men were expected and willing to be the main provider for the family, and women were expected and willing to be the additional supporter and work in a "female position", such as high school teacher.

When it came to romantic relationships, the majority of participants born in China disapproved of dating in high school or earlier. Also, they tended to be of an opinion that women should get married earlier than men, and that the worst scenario for women was to be single over 30 years old. The explanations for this idea also are connected with gender expectations. According to these respondents, marriage should consist of husband - provider and wife – nurturer. In the process of mate selection, filial piety (*xiao*) was very important. The interviewees want to choose a partner that would gain approval of their parents, and one that would later help them in fulfilling responsibilities towards the parents.

It can be concluded from American-born Chinese participants' input that similar values were and continue to be important for their parents' generation in the USA, but not for them personally. However, they did not negate their Chinese heritage. First of all, they volunteered to take part in this study which was directed to students with Chinese origin. Second, they cherished certain symbolic aspects of their identity such as "ethnic" food, festivals celebration, or speaking language of their parents'. Although, they did not eat Chinese food every day as the students who come from mainland China do; they celebrated only two out of eleven traditional Chinese festivals, and they spoke only Mandarin Chinese which is the official language, but not the "language of belonging" for those from Mainland. The respondents born in the USA were familiar with the concept of *mianzi*, but they did not care about saving it. Finally, they had no idea what *guanxi* meant, and even upon hearing the explanation, they did not see it as necessary in their lives.

In the area of education, the experiences of American-born Chinese students differed from those described by the participants from China. Even though they valued education and recognized the role of their family in their academic path just like the Mainland Chinese did, their path itself was more flexible and, more importantly, self-designed. This manifested itself in their pro-active approach to major choice, based on interest and prior extracurricular involvements, as well as "backup plans" in case of dropping out of college or changing majors.

The same attitude of pro-activeness was visible in their approach towards job search. Rather than focusing solely on "being a good student", students born in America also built their resume through participation in internships. Also, instead of seeking

positions that would bring them prestige and a good salary, they wanted to find a job where they could help others and "give back to the community."

In both areas of work and relationships, American-born Chinese students had more egalitarian views than did their counterparts from Mainland China. Interestingly enough, when asked about a spouse, respondents from China talk about "husband" or "wife", and used pronouns "he" and "she"; participants born in the USA talked about "spouse" and used gender-neutral pronouns such as "they" or "them". According to them, the goal of marriage should be to build an intimate relationship rather than fulfill complementary roles. Also, the condition for "right" age for marriage was the level of emotional, and not biological, maturity. Finally, they respected parental input, but not to the extent of putting it above their own decisions and choices.

One limitation of this study is the fact that I do not speak Chinese, so all the interviews were conducted in English, which is a second language to the majority of the participants.

Also, I could only hear from those students who are already open enough to agree for the interview. Their experiences might be significantly different from the students' who did not agree to be interviewed.

I believe that there are several interesting themes emerging from this research, and each of them deserves to be studied more in-depth. First, I suggest analyzing the similarities between the relationship of whiteness to standard English in the U.S, and the relationship of Hanness to Mandarin Chinese in China. Studying this phenomenon from a postmodern perspective, taking into account the concept of *linguistic habitus* seems to be worth considering.

Second, I suggest a deeper analysis of Chinese parental styles. There is a body of literature that talks about American parenting styles, for example with a focus on social class (e.g. Lareau's (2003) distinction between *concerted cultivation* and *the accomplishment of natural growth*), I believe that such an analysis is needed in order to augment our understanding of the contemporary Chinese society as well as Chinese-American families in the U.S context.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

I believe that I have successfully presented the connections between the values present in Chinese society and the life choices made by students of Chinese origin who currently study in the USA.

The responses of Chinese-born respondents are in line with the ideas presented in the literature on traditional Chinese values. However, the Chinese participants sometimes had alternative views, which may suggest that their generation is moving slowly away from the tradition, as compared to the generation of their parents. Further research in this area could be beneficial.

The American-born Chinese respondents seem to follow the patterns described in the theories on assimilation. It is hard to see how the theory of selected assimilation applies here though, because I did not ask about parents' education or economic status. Also, Asian Americans are thought to be the "model minority", so they do not face as many obstacles in a host country as Black or Latina/Latino immigrants do.

From the answers of American-born participants, it can be read that they are indeed less connected to the Chinese culture than their parents are. However, they make conscious effort to preserve their heritage and still acknowledge their Chinese or Asian identity. It is also true that they "do culture" more symbolically than substantially, e.g. they celebrate festivals, but they do not know what they actually mean. As a result, it is possible that the cultural practices that they will pass down to their children will be re-invented or re-interpreted, and lose its original meaning or form. Finally, they are

open to intermarriage, which can further contribute to the losing of Chinese ethnic

identity of the generations to come.

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APPENDIX 1

INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions:

(probing for more detailed questions will take place when appropriate.)

I.   Ethnic identity:
- What ethnicity do you identify yourself with?
- Do you speak Chinese?
  - o Clarification:
    - Which dialect: Mandarin? Cantonese? Other?
    - How important is it for you?
    - Do you speak it at home?
    - Do you speak English outside of your university? If so, where? Are you more comfortable speaking English or Chinese?
    - Do you eat Chinese food? How often? Why/Why not? What is your favorite dish?
    - What do you know about Chinese festivals? Do you celebrate them? How?
    - What do you know about American festivals? Do you celebrate them? How?
    - What 3 values are the most important for you in life?
    - Do you prefer to spend time alone or in a group? Why?
    - How would you describe responsibility?

II.   Life choices:

   1.   Studies:
      - What was the role of your family in your education?
      - What do you study?
      - When did you decide to study (insert their major)….?
      - Why did you decide to study (….)?
      - Are you happy with your choice? What do you like and dislike about your major?
      - What would happen if you decided to change your major? What would happen if you decided to quit college?
   2.   Work:

      - What do you do in your free time? Do you have any hobbies?
      - Where do you plan to work? Why?
      - What do you need to do in order to get this job?

- Do you have any goals for next 5 and 10 years? If so, what are they?
- What do you think are some most and least respected jobs in society?
- Is it important to work? Why/Why not?
- What makes a good employee?
- Are you familiar with the concept of *mianzi* (face)? If so, how would you describe it? How important is it for you? In what contexts?
- Are you familiar with the concept of *guanxi* (connections)? If so, how would you describe it? How important is it for you? When do you take it into account?

3. Romantic Relationships:

- When do you think is acceptable to start dating?
- What is your relationship status? (*If not married:* Do you plan to get married?)
- How much time should you spend with your partner before marriage?
- What age is best for you to marry?
- What qualities are important in your (potential) spouse? Does she/he have to be Chinese?
- How important is your parents' approval of your significant other?
- What do you think are your responsibilities towards your partner/spouse?
- What do you think are the responsibilities of your partner/spouse towards you?

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