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# **Making Culture Visible In Counselling Psychology**

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Portfolio for Professional Doctorate in  
Counselling Psychology (DPsych)

City, University of London

Department of Psychology

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Thanks to this doctoral training, I have been continuously learning to turn all the negative experiences into positives, and believe that all the past experiences will positively contribute to my work and the rest of my life.

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## **Introduction to Portfolio**

-----Making Culture Visible In Counselling  
Psychology

I will start with this introduction to my portfolio by introducing the context within which my study of psychology began to help the reader understand where my thoughts with regard to *making culture visible in counseling psychology* stemmed from.

I am from China. When I began with my study of psychology in the UK in 2006, an increasing number of Chinese had already begun coming to this country for further and higher education. However the majority of Chinese focused on courses in business and finance, reflecting a radical transformation of economic ideology in an unprecedented era of China.

Regarding psychology, the disciplinary development was still in its infancy in my native country. Many Chinese were still skeptical about the discipline and generally called it 'Western Psychology', implying that it would not work with the Chinese population. Even a well-known Chinese public intellectual and famous writer Shaogong Han (2010) once sarcastically shared the following idea in his article, i.e. for wives who do not need to struggle with making a living anymore, it is popular to choose to study psychology. By and large, that was the view about psychology among the Chinese when my initial engagement with psychology started in the UK; not to mention counselling psychology. Thus my study in psychology has been somewhat a rather lonely journey, as I was the only mainland Chinese person on the initial study programme I attended, and I was also the first Chinese from Mainland China when I initially embarked on this professional doctoral training in counseling psychology in 2008<sup>1</sup>. At the time, the knowledge and understanding of mental health services and mental health professionals was still limited and biased among the Chinese generally speaking. Some Chinese even

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<sup>1</sup> After 2010, my study had been disrupted / suspended a few times due to some unpredictable life crises.

likened indigenous psychotherapists in China to charlatans. I personally experienced some very well educated Chinese friends who raised their doubts with me: 1) Can counseling really be helpful? 2) Is a psychotherapist from western background capable of working with Chinese clients? The latter also seemed to raise the question of how as a Chinese person can you really work with clients from other ethnic or cultural backgrounds?

Starting my study in psychology within the context introduced above, I have been standing between the two cultures and taking advantage of both to develop my understanding and critically evaluating my learning. I was engaged in this doctoral training in counselling psychology as a 'critical insider'. Valuing mainstream theories and approaches in counseling psychology rooted in the Euro-centric worldview, I have been eager to learn and practice guided by these theories. I also bear the concept of culture-specificity in my mind, which led to a more critical understanding of theories and therapeutic interventions. Especially after I re-looked into Chinese cultural heritage, and the deeper I became engaged in this field, the more I appreciated that my position standing between East and West helped to deepen and sharpen my understanding of many issues in counselling psychology.

In the DSM<sup>2</sup>, it is emphasised that whether a client's problem is a socially or culturally sanctioned response to a particular event needs attention when the client's problems are assessed. This is attention paid to the cultural element when identifying a client's problems in clinical practice. In my intra-cultural group, some Chinese indigenous psychotherapists also argue for a contextually grounded approach to counselling and psychotherapy (Moodley, Gielen, and Wu, 2013). Culture-specific approaches could penetrate into various aspects of

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<sup>2</sup> DSM stands for Diagnostic Statistic Manual.

the field, including epistemological perspective, theoretical approaches, counseling and therapeutic interventions, etc. (Sue and Sue, 1999). I see this as an opportunity for disciplinary development by elaborating on cultural dimensions to form a more complex and profound disciplinary framework, whereby current Euro-centric counselling psychology could become more self critical, more global and thus more relevant to all. Therefore, I advocate *Making Culture Visible in Counseling Psychology*. The work that I present in this portfolio largely concerns this theme.

This portfolio consists of three pieces of my work as follows:

1) Research thesis:

*How intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolves over time from the Chinese wives' perspective*

2) Publishable paper:

*Discussion of CBT in relation to the Person-Centered Approach  
----A propensity for theoretical convergence*

3) Clinical work:

*Case Study:  
Working with complicated grief in the framework of Assimilative Integration*

These three pieces covered the three main areas of professional competency required as a chartered counselling psychologist, i.e. research, theory and practice respectively.

The first piece of the presented work is a demonstration of an academic competency in empirical research to provide new knowledge and understanding, which can contribute to the field of counseling psychology. I studied the phenomenon of intermarriage, in which the husband and wife are from different ethnic groups and cultural backgrounds. My research



paid attention to a particular group of inter-cultural couples. Thus the subject matter involved a cultural element from the very beginning.

The second piece of the presented work is an academic article through which I critically discussed the dominant counseling approach of CBT in relation to the person-centered approach, and addressed the theoretical developmental trend in the field. I propose that there is a propensity for theoretical convergence in counseling psychology, that is East meets West per se. The Positivist origin of traditional CBT has tended to be shaken by a philosophical shift of adopting eastern wisdom, and religious/spiritual practice. This has enriched theoretical perspectives and therapeutic interventions in counselling psychology. At the same time, scientific studies of the efficacy of the philosophical basis of practice have supported eastern wisdom with some scientific grounding in evidence, thus boosting its value.

The third piece of work is a case study introducing my counselling practice in working with grief and bereavement. I chose a case that involved me working with a White British client, so as to demonstrate my clinical work as a psychologist from a Chinese ethnic background, who mindfully holds a cultural awareness and sensitivity. I could work well with a client from a different ethnic and cultural background, as culture is not a formidable barrier for me. Thus the claim of *making culture visible in counselling psychology* is thought of as strengthening the overall theoretical and therapeutic power in counselling practice; this idea is captured by the metaphorical meaning conveyed by the Chinese idiom of ‘adding wings to tiger’. Culture specificity would not be necessarily understood as a source of division and a ‘clash’ with regard to the mainstream approach.

Research, theory and practice have shaped this professional doctoral training in counselling

psychology. The three presented pieces can be seen as a demonstration of the overall and integrated outcome of this professional training, which will hopefully speak in favor of the intended professional competencies.

This doctoral training has been rewarding for me; it has facilitated both my professional and my personal development. The end of this training is a departure for me towards becoming more available to devote myself to the work in counseling psychology. All my past experiences will contribute to my work and benefit my clients. The thought of *making culture visible in counselling psychology* will ensure the appropriateness of my practice when I continue to work with clients from culturally diverse backgrounds.

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## **Part 1: Research**

How intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolves over time  
-from the Chinese wives' perspective

# **Chapter 1: Introduction**

## **1.1 Background and context**

**1.1.1** I would like to begin this introduction with a few snapshots as follows:

### **No.1**

#### **The social context of contemporary China before its “open door” policy**

As the researcher of this study, what did the country of China where I came look like before its opening-up to the rest of the world?

We were taught that it was a sin to be wealthy and ambitious; beauty and aesthetics were disregarded; the most natural facets of human life, like ‘love’, ‘romance’ and ‘sex’ were seen to be toxic features of capitalism, and could not be openly talked about. The government had utterly manipulated this ideology. The people were caged in an ideological bondage.

I remember that when I was in high school, the tutors took rulers and scissors to watch out for the students passing the school gate, They were standing there to measure the height of our shoe heels and the width of the legs of our trousers, ready to cut away anything that exceeded the ‘norm’.

It was an era rife with political movements. People radically devoted themselves to the Great Cultural Revolution. Everybody firmly believed in socialism and communism.

That was the China of 1949 - 1978.

In December 1978 China implemented economic reforms hallmarked by an “open door” policy to the rest of the world. It was the first time that we Chinese opened our eyes to focus on the world outside and reflected on our own ethnic identity. Overall China’s radical societal and economical transformation marked a new era for the country.

## **No.2**

### **My personal experience**

We used to be entirely isolated from other ethnic groups in the world.

In 1979 as an elite school, my primary school was privileged to be selected to receive a delegation of foreign educators. Our teachers had to keep warning us: do not chase after these strange creatures with blue eyes and blonde hair because of curiosity! However, later I engaged in foreign trade as my first profession, which greatly relied on connections with foreign countries. Also, I used to be a TV journalist interviewing foreigners face to face. I ended up in a relationship with a 'Caucasian' man who once had seemed to be like a 'rare animal' for me, and now I am living in the UK, which I had always seen as "outer space".

## **No.3**

### **A few iconic Chinese celebrities' intermarriages**

**a -**

5 years after China's "open door" policy began, on the 26 August 1983, China promulgated provisions for the registration of marriage between Chinese citizens and foreigners. In the same year, a well-known Chinese movie star Danping Shen married a Caucasian man from Germany. As there was no precedent, this high profile marriage became an icon of intermarriage for the Chinese. Going through the ups and downs of marriage over three decades, Danpeing Shen's marriage was seen to be a fairy tale and became a role model of intermarriage. Danping Shen shared her love story with various official medias, such as CCTV (China Central Television), the website of China pathway Sinhua Net and Tengxun Net, etc. as follows:

At the time she met her husband, this social novelty strongly challenged social norm and cultural tradition in China. Danping Shen and her husband had to wear face masks when going out together, and often walked meters away from each other in the street. The way they talked to each other in public looked like communication between two spies. They were

even once chased by a police car when they were together. Danping Shen faced the dilemma of choosing between her parents and her husband. Her parents had long been against her marriage and disowned her due to her decision to marry a Caucasian man. Their relationship was viewed as a social taboo from the very beginning.

**b -**

Time moved forward to the end of the 20th century. In 1999, about 16 years after Danping Shen's intermarriage, Wendy Deng married the media tycoon Rupert Murdoch. Both her marriage and her divorce became sensations and strongly controversial in China. While hostile, derogative views on intermarriage were still overwhelming, such as "these women enjoy being fucked by White men, etc. ", surprisingly some people changed their tones even viewing Wendy Deng as "role model" for her image of an unscrupulous opportunist boldly pursuing her life aspiration. She was seen to be a contemporary "Cinderella", despite being married to a White man, and having more than a 30-year age disparity, which normally was not positively viewed in public at that time.

**c -**

Time moved forward further to 2012. 13 years after Wendy Deng's intermarriage, the news that an overseas Chinese woman Priscilla Chan married the founder of Face Book Mark Zuckerberg stirred up enormous turmoil. Every significant event in their life was commented on by the Chinese. This time, their marriage was viewed neither as a taboo, nor as controversial, but merely as inspiring for they were generally perceived as a great match. Some people even associated it with pride in being Chinese.

In summary, by giving a few snapshots, I intended to deliver readers a vivid imagery and social context of the occurrence of intermarriage in contemporary China, through which you may be able to get a flavour of what being married to people from another ethnic group and / or nation, used to mean for the Chinese, and therefore what a novelty intermarriage was for Chinese people and how radical is the social change that has been taking place there.

### **1.1.2 Abolition of the law prohibiting interracial marriage in the United States**

In the United States, in 2016 there was an emotionally striking film named “Loving”, which was based on a true story about interracial marriage between a black woman and a white Caucasian man, which transpired in the state of Virginia in 1958. At that time their marriage still violated anti-miscegenation law. This was a milestone case pushing American civil rights protection forward. The Supreme Court of the United States eventually abolished the law prohibiting interracial marriage in June 1967, and this became a landmark decision for marriage was fundamental as a civil right. Thereafter interracial marriages have been rapidly increasing in the United States.

### **1.1.3 Increase and popularity of intermarriages in both the United States and China**

According to the available data provided by the U.S. Census Bureau, among heterosexual married couples, one in ten (5.4 million couples) are interracial, representing an increase of 28% since 2000.

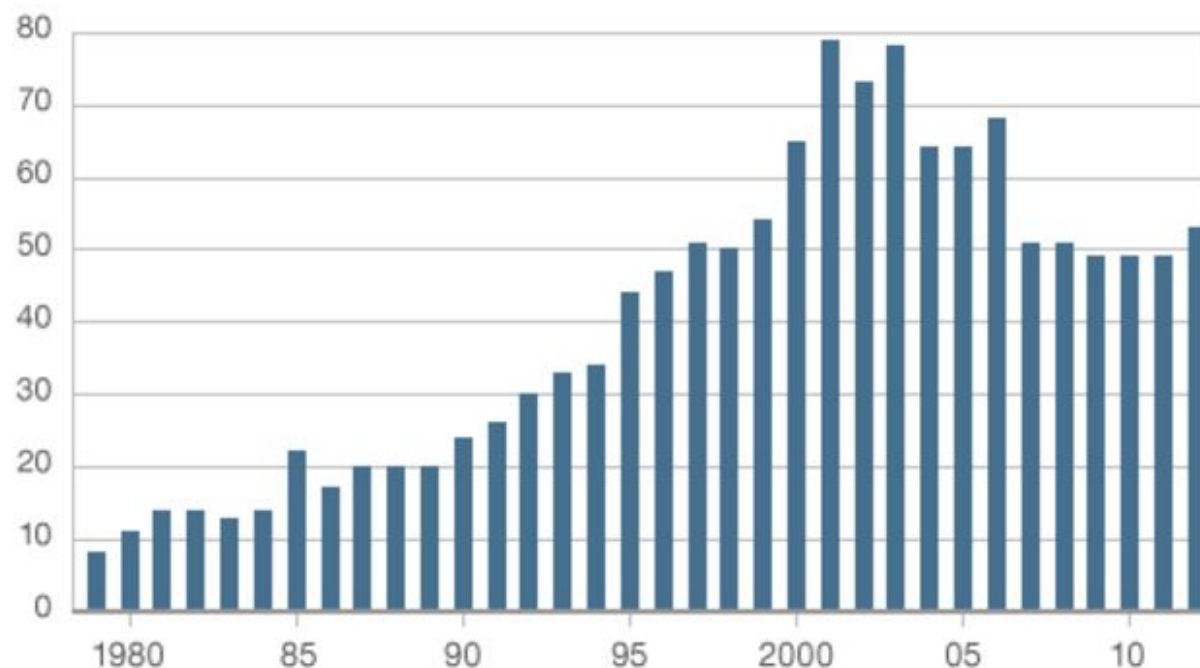
The latest data covering 2011-2015 suggests that 17% of new intermarriages are interracial or interethnic, approximately one in six. These new data reveal a more than five-fold increase in the rate of intermarriage since the second half of the 20th century (Alberti, 2017).

According to the data from Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs, intermarriage reached its peak period after the year 2000, when the first dating website Match.com landed in China. Subsequently there was a decline; soon it stabilized and still remains a high level. In recent years there has been an upturn (see Figure 1 below).



## Marriages between Chinese and foreign nationals\*

Thousands



\*Includes Hong Kong, Taiwan and Macau

Source: Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs

*Figure 1: Developmental trend in intermarriages between Chinese and foreign nationals*

Reprinted from Chinese Ministry of Civil Affairs by Murphy, Z., 2013. Retrieved July 15, 2017 from <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-asia-24371673>.

However, apropos of intermarriage in China, as the countries where intermarriages were registered vary, it is difficult to acquire rigorous data. Regarding the available statistics, data sources often vary, and the results turned out to be various. Many data are often based on regional surveys and the precision and authoritativeness of these data are in question; thus the following figures merely provide a reference for readers to grasp a sense of the increasing trend and its popularity.

According to the Shanghai municipal government's white paper on intermarriage, between 1996 and 2002, over 21,000 inter-couples registered their marriages. The annual registration was 3000 pairs on average. Compared with the figure in 1980, it was a seven-fold increase; according to the figures provided by Shanghai Civil Affairs Bureau, in 2006 there were 2960

inter-couples registering their marriages, a 22.97% increase compared with the figure from previous year.

In Beijing in recent years, the rate of increase is over one thousand newly intermarried couples annually.

It was reported intermarriages are often more likely to occur in those more developed large cities of China. Nonetheless, when considering a relatively less developed region, for example, Shanxi Province, according to their intermarriage registration office, in 2011 there were 115 newly registered intermarried couples. In the Jiangxi Province of China in 2012, there were 1500 newly registered intermarried couples (Cankao xiaoxi, 2015).

By taking the two large and representative countries of China and the United States as examples, we can see intermarriage is not as common as intra-marriage. It has been taking its own course and become socially and legally accepted and thus the popularity of intermarriage has been rapidly increasing.

#### **1.1.4 Initial inspiration of my research interest**

Captured for historically being a social novelty and a social taboo as stated above, I had long been interested in these intermarried couples in the context of a radical societal transformation, including the change of social value in general and the social attitude toward intermarriage in China. Additionally quite a few female friends of mine, who had difficulties in finding their Mr Right among Chinese men in China, finally married Caucasian men when intermarriage was still a novelty in China. This was the initial inspiration of my research interest. However, in addition to the aforementioned societal background and personal interest, intermarried couples seemed to have faced more 'problems'. I initially observed this from my intermarried friends' experiences, together with the fact that the first client who saw me for a relationship issue was an intermarried Chinese woman. Further inter-marital problem will be stated in the next section.

## 1.2 Problem statement

Since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the phenomenon of intermarriage reflects the dramatic increase in international mobility (Cottrell 1990). It reached an unprecedented rise in numbers toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Breger & Hill 1998; Molina et al., 2004).

Moreover, social attitudes are becoming more and more accepting of intercultural marriages. Nevertheless they are often viewed as problematic and less successful than intra-marriages (Schoustra-van Beukering, 2002), i.e. inter-marriages seem to be more vulnerable to divorce than intra-marriages (e.g. Clarke, 1995; Ji, 2008). The marital success is defined in relation to divorce or by a measure of marital satisfaction (Goodman, 1991). It is difficult to obtain valid statistics of divorce rates to support this claim (Breger & Hill, 1998). However, there are empirical studies comparing the marital quality, e.g. happiness, satisfaction or stability in intermarriages, with that of intra-marriages. The findings show that intermarriages tend to be more stressed and dysfunctional (Fu et al., 2001; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008; Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; Seto & Cavallaro, 2007).

With the political and economic reforms implemented since 1978, the change of ideology in Chinese society is overwhelming. While the number and popularity of intermarriages are increasing, they appear to be problematic. There have been many discussions about intermarriages in the public media in China, rather than empirical studies.

Once known as fairy tales, noticeable numbers of Chinese celebrities' intermarriages finally ended in divorce, e.g. the famous Chinese female singer Weiwei's disputed divorce. Due to traumatic experiences, Chinese embassies sometimes receive requests for support from Chinese wives in intermarriages who are living abroad.

Following a random Google search by key words like "intermarriage through Internet-dating" on Chinese websites, it is not unusual to see those striking headlines, delivering the message that intermarriage is a pitfall, risky and traumatic. For instance, in the official website of the embassy of China in the UK and Northern Ireland, there is an article titled as

*Warning: Pitfall and fraud of intermarriage starting with Internet dating.* (2009); on the BBC Chinese website, there is a feature: *Multiple challenges Chinese facing in intermarriages* (Murphy, 2013).

Taking a legal perspective, focusing on the most prominent characteristics, such as the great disparity in age, educational and cultural level, Zhang (1991) specified a proposal to amend matrimonial law to protect Chinese. He suggested for example, extending the intermarriage registration period, and introducing strict requirements for marriage registration, such as a requirement of language competency and educational level, and introducing training for cultural knowledge. He even suggested regulating the great disparity in age between intermarried couples.

In addition, some members of the Chinese national congress have proposed a revision of the clause of matrimonial law restricting the registration of intermarriages so as to protect Chinese citizens (Ding et.al., 2004).

Besides the above, Robert Waldinger (2015) has long been devoted himself to the study on happiness and adult life. Through the 75-year longitudinal study of adult development, he revealed that good quality relationships have powerful influence on both our physical and mental health. Especially marital satisfaction has a protective effect on people's mental wellbeing. People in good relationships are less likely to be depressed and involved in substance addiction such as drug and alcohol addiction.

Waldinger's research reveals that close and warm relationships are better predictors of long and happy lives, and are more important than factors such as money, fame, social class, IQ or even genes. Thus the research on intermarriage is meaningful, and merits my dedicated study.

### **1.3 Research aim and contribution to counselling psychology**

The popularity of intermarriages, together with problems has been continuously sparking my research interest.

The focus of this research is on the basic social-psychological process of what happens over time in the marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men. What ‘happens’ here does not necessarily mean something negative, it simply implies a dynamic process. The process consists of sequenced moments leading to change, which are linked with each other as parts of a larger whole. The present reflects the past and lays the foundation for the future (Charmaz, 2006, 2014).

The aim of the research is to explore how this type of marital relationship evolves or works and how the marital couples in this particular group interact with each other to proceed with their relationships. I aimed to embark on this research by tentatively exploring the basic process by myself to reveal the nature of this type of marriage as a naïve observer, without any preconceived assumption.

Studies focusing on intermarriage involving Chinese, especially, those from Mainland China are indeed scarce. Large combination of possible couples, in terms of their diverse backgrounds, cautions against generalising from empirical findings. The extent to which the findings of existing studies can be applicable across diverse combination of intermarried couples is in question.

Bond (2000, p.114-115) stressed that “a commitment by counselling psychologists to work within their own competence is fundamental to working ethically ...A generalist dealing with an infrequently raised issue would be considered incompetent”. This brings a new challenge to counselling psychologists working with marital relationships.

China has largest population in the world. Nevertheless Chinese, as a representative population, were absent in many empirical studies in psychology, not to mention in counselling psychology. Few Chinese from Mainland China were studied, thus the existing literature does not sufficiently reflect the perspective of Chinese participants, and is therefore

limited and only presents a partial view. With respect to the existing researches in which Chinese were studied participants, most researchers were from Hong Kong, or they were overseas Chinese. I am the first person who embarked on this professional doctoral training in counselling psychology in the UK. Therefore from my point of view, to some extent the interpretation of data was constrained, or may be even misrepresented. This is an intrinsic drawback. Thus in general both the studied population and researchers from Mainland China are valuable for studies in this field.

There was historically little knowledge and understanding about this type of intermarriage; hence ultimately this research aims to generate a theoretical model for counselling psychologists to gain a good understanding of this type of marriage, thereby supporting their clients with increasing evidence-based confidence. This research might also be a reference of intermarriages in general. On this basis, later researchers could advance the explorations further in this field (see Discussion and Conclusion in 1.6 Critical Literature Review)

This research will depart from here.

#### **1.4 Clarification of subject matter**

Although a greater diversity of relationships can be observed and accepted in more and more open societies, marriage is still a powerful and ubiquitous social phenomenon. The marital relationship leads to a wider and deeper involvement in many facets of life from two individuals, rather than looser dating relationships (Markowitz, 2007).

Moreover, due to the visa and immigration policy, an 'unmarried' couple relationship is not possible for this group. Therefore this research studies 'marital' relationships and focuses on 'married' Chinese women.

In addition, marriage is referred to the legally registered and valid hetero-marriage.

In this research specifically, intermarriage is defined as the marriage between two people from different backgrounds fundamentally differing in terms of the generally agreed dimensions in intermarriage studies, i.e. race, ethnicity, national origin, religion (Moreland et

al.,1996). In respect of my studied population, that is intermarriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men that are inter-racial, inter-national, inter-ethnic, the primary factors are Inter-crossed simultaneously. What really matters here is the upbringing background that shapes them. However, in this research, I circumspectly use the phrase 'intercultural marriage' 'cultural differences' or 'cultural background' for the sake elucidated in the following section (see Development of Research Question in Introduction).

### **1.5 Development of research question**

In contrast to researches grounded in other methodologies, the research question of this study was gradually formulated until finally it took shape. This was determined by the nature of the research and the chosen methodology, i.e. the Charmaz social constructivist approach to grounded theory (see Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods).

The initial research question was *how intercultural marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men evolves over time*. It may appear to be relatively vague. This is exactly the beauty of grounded theory, in which a good research question is often process oriented, aiming to explore how a phenomenon evolves. The initial research question merely points a direction without predicting or being able to predicate the outcome until reaching the point when the research is completed and a theoretical model emerges. It only serves to identify a particular phenomenon of interest, which the researcher intends to investigate. At best it remains at a descriptive level to orient the researcher toward action and process, without any explanatory assumption (Willig,2008). The chosen methodology is advantaged in this regard by giving the research rigor through a tentative, open analytic process, including the development of the research question.

Here follows the reflective process of research question formulation, in which I gradually developed and refined the research question to be contextually more specific leading to the indefinite approximation of rigor.

See Box 1-1 below indicating the process by which my research question was developed and finalized.

**Research question:**

How intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolves over time

-----from the Chinese wives' perspective

**Key words:**

Intermarriage

Chinese women and Caucasian men

Internet-dating

Chinese wives' perspective

Evolve

**The process of developing the research question**

1. How Intercultural marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men evolves over time
2. +Starting with Internet-dating
3. +From Chinese wives' perspective
4. Intercultural marriage → intermarriage

*Box 1-1. Development of research question*



## **1. Chinese women and Caucasian men are the focused combination of the studied intermarriage**

The result of an Internet survey conducted in 2013, involving 122,592 participants, showed that in 90.6 % of intermarriages Chinese women “married out” to foreign men, the so called “population exodus”. Among intermarriages, the combination between Chinese women and White Caucasian men are representative and popular (Cankao xiaoxi, 2015).

It also suggested that when two people join into a relationship, it is more challenging with a polarized ethnic and cultural background, such as Asian and Caucasian.

Regarding the term “Caucasian”, this research adopted the definition found in the Oxford Dictionary which is seen to be the most accepted, i.e. “(In North America), it refers to White-skinned; of European origin. U.K follows this definition” as well.

Additionally for this research, it refers to Caucasian men who are from North America, UK, or European countries, as this is the reality of preferential partner choice.

## **2. Starting with Internet-dating**

A few celebrities’ intermarriages were introduced earlier to give a glimpse at the occurrence of intermarriage in China. However for ordinary Chinese, it was the rise of matchmaking agencies, especially Internet-dating websites, that contributed to the increasing opportunity for Chinese women connecting with foreigners and engaging in intermarriages. The leading dating website Match.com started in China around the year 2000 as mentioned earlier, and thereafter intermarriages began to rapidly increase until reaching their peak. Therefore Internet-dating played a vital role in facilitating such relationships at the very beginning of this century. At the same time these relationships appeared to be more problematic (see Problem Statement in Chapter 1).

Initially I did not frame my participants criteria into this dimension, i.e. my participants must have met their husband on Internet-dating websites, nor was this reflected in my research question until I gained the following insights, i.e. I realized all of my randomly approached participants met their husbands through dating websites. Internet dating is not only a platform

where they met and their relationships were initiated, but also became a part of the process determining how this kind of marriage proceeded, bringing about opportunities and also challenges. My research findings indeed proved this understanding.

### **3. The Chinese wives' perspective**

It merits paying attention to the social milieu of China, where it is widely known that single women between the age of 27-30 are called Leftover, those between 30-35 are called Advanced Leftover, while those between 35-40 and onward are called Permanent / Ultimate / Hopeless Leftover (Fincher, 2014).

However, women who never married were also discriminated against as incomplete and regarded as marginalized outsiders. In Chinese social media there is an article disclosing the fact that midlife Chinese women abandoned by Chinese men found their paradise, becoming hot potatoes and being spoiled by Western men. It suggested that these 'leftovers' found their way out of desperate single life through Internet-dating proceeding to intermarriage (see Sample Consideration in Chapter 2: Methodology and Method). This is the social reality that my participants were facing.

I initially sampled Chinese wives rather than the couples for the following three reasons: ethical concerns, sample availability, and the researcher's background. Nonetheless, during the research process, I ensured I was entirely consistent with my chosen methodology of 'grounded theory', it enhanced my understanding that participants did not only evidence the marital process, but also actively constructed the reality. During the interview, the reality they presented was what they viewed as significant in their marital journeys. Thus it is selective, and not a mirror presentation. Especially with the awareness of the social reality stated above, this research studied the marital process through the lens of these wives. Therefore the understanding and explanation of this social and psychological process is developed largely through these wives' perspective.

#### **4. Intercultural marriage vs Intermarriage**

There are a number of terms for this type of marriage, such as interracial, interethnic, international, interfaith, exogamous, intercultural, cross-cultural, trans-cultural, etc. They are often interchangeable with the underlying tacit assumption that cultural difference is the common property. Therefore intercultural marriage appears to be the most widely adopted term. However, the nature of what I aim to explore determines that I do not depart in this research from any pre-assumption.

When considering cultural differences, one must start with defining every single culture, for instance, what is Chinese culture, what is western culture? What are the prominent characteristics of each culture, and who has the authority to make that definition? It is not easy to reach unanimity of definition. Once these questions can be satisfactorily answered, differences can then surface and be discussed.

Moreover, in addition to the term intercultural marriage, other terms above could be misleading. Taking the term 'inter-racial' as an example, there seems to be a literal emphasis on racial difference. However, inter-racial could also be simultaneously interfaith, international or intercultural.

I do not intend to convey the message of cultural differences through naming it, and therefore finally decided to adopt the more neutral term "intermarriage", rather than place an emphasis on the cultural dimension at the very beginning. Thus the research question is finalised as:

*How intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolves over time*

*-----from the Chinese Wives' perspective*

## 1.6 Critical Literature Review

### Clarification

The founders of grounded theory Glaser and Strauss (1967) advocate delaying the literature review to avoid the researcher seeing the studied phenomenon through a colored lens. Therefore to maintain researcher's neutrality, normally a literature review will not be suggested until the research is completed.

Nevertheless not all grounded theorists share this view. The so-called "prior/pre-conceived knowledge" is ambiguous. Paradoxically even Glaser (1978) himself raised the question whether analytic theorizing would be possible without learnt theoretical codes. Silverman (1993, p.1) also argues that 'without theory there is nothing to research' (in Willig, 2008, p.9); an open mind is not an empty head (Dey, 1990).

What I understood is that the idea of leaving the literature review behind is mainly to ensure that researchers eschew conclusive information directly associated with the subject matter, which may affect their understanding of it.

Taking a critical view toward previous studies helped me enhance my idea as to where I intended to embark on this study. It also helped me understand where my research would be positioned in the family of intermarriage studies and clarify what contribution could be in counselling psychology both theoretically and practically. Existing literature induced my curiosity and inspired me to engage in this research.

Therefore in choosing to have a preliminary literature review on intermarriages, I am aware that I had some knowledge before my research started and I completed a thorough review when the research findings emerged. It has proved to be helpful in my own experience, i.e. a researcher can benefit from the literature review while controlling the 'contamination' by any pre-conceived knowledge during the research process. Nevertheless I still decided to structure the Critical Literature Review in the Introduction in order to provide a more logical presentation for my readers and to enable them to easily follow and understand this research.

Furthermore, since there was no research studying this particular type of intermarriage, and since studies focusing on the Chinese population being general and those specifically from mainland China scarce, theories about intermarriages especially in psychology, are rare. In order to gain a holistic view about this field, I thus opted to conduct a literature review with a more extensive scope rather than framing it to a very specific group.

Lastly, a clarification is necessary: why I opted for the positivist grounded theory approach to my literature review, which may appear to be a contradiction to my choice of the constructivist grounded theory approach.

As aforesaid, the data driven inductive exploration is seen to be the core of the classical grounded theory approach supporting its positivist epistemological perspective. It raises the concern that a contamination of the data analysis may ensue due to the researcher's pre-conceived knowledge. Thus, some classical grounded theorists suggest a delay of literature review.

In the framework of Charmaz's social constructivist grounded theory approach underpinned by a social constructionist epistemological perspective, the impact from literature review on the data analysis is not viewed a real concern, perhaps even beneficial instead; e.g. Charmaz, (2006) mentioned "sensitizing concepts account for your starting point, theoretical codes can help you explain how you conceptualize the arrangement of key ideas" (p.169).

In this sense, the fact that despite adopting Charmaz constructivist grounded theory approach, I still conducted the formal/thorough literature review 'after' my research findings emerged, may appear to be a contradiction to my chosen methodology/method.

However, firstly I have critically reflected that Charmaz tended to take the researcher's impact on the research for granted, thus too quickly license the researcher's involvement. While I agree with her regarding the point that researcher can not approach data without any expectation or ideas of their own and that these can be helpful in finding meaning in the data, as stated above, I still felt that it was important to try to open myself up to my participants' meaning-making as much as possible and ground my analysis in the data (working 'bottom –

up') (this will be re-addressed in Methodology and Methods Chapter and Epistemological Reflexivity in Discussion).

In addition, anyway Charmaz did not explicitly clarify whether the literature review should be delayed in her social constructivist GT approach; she merely 'introduced' the critical discussion on the position of literature review in the framework of the Classical Grounded Theory.

For the two reasons stated above, critically adopting Charmaz' constructivist approach, I chose to conduct the formal literature review after completing the data analysis.

### **Literature Review**

Since the mid 20<sup>th</sup> century the phenomenon of intercultural marriage reflects the dramatic increase in international mobility (Cottrell 1990). It reached an unprecedented rise in numbers toward the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Breger & Hill 1998). Thus this literature review, by and large, focuses on publications dated back to the 1990's and onwards.

This research studies 'marital' phenomenon clarified afore (see Clarification of Subject Matter). Thus this literature review framed the literature to the area of marital relationships. Additionally in order to be consistent with the hetero-marriage this research studied, the literatures reviewed refer to studies on "heterosexual marriage".

This literature review is based on professional journal articles, prior literature reviews, dissertations, as well as scholarly books in both English and Chinese language<sup>1</sup>. All literature covered is a result of an extensive search through computerized databases, including psychINFO, psychology and behavioral sciences collection, E-journal, Google scholar, and the British library catalogue. I used the following key words, such as intermarriage, intercultural marriage, cross-cultural marriage, cross-racial marriage, cross-national marriage, mixed marriage, trans-cultural marriage, inter-racial marriage, interethnic marriage,

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<sup>1</sup> Popular literature, i.e. novels, magazines, and newspapers are not included, because they only present anecdotal evidence and general opinions.

international marriage, intercultural marriage counseling, and intercultural therapy. Regarding the literature in Chinese, the leading academic database of the China Knowledge Web ([www.cnki.net](http://www.cnki.net)) was the main source.

Culture is a pervasive social phenomenon. Intercultural marriage<sup>2</sup> is generally defined as a marital relationship with two individuals that come from different cultural backgrounds (Breger & Hill, 1998). Boas (1930) defined culture as ‘the social habits of a community’ (p.30), and Smith and Bond (1998) defined it as ‘systems of shared meanings’ (p.69).

In a sense, all types of marriage are intercultural, it is hard to find a couple coming from an identical background. Because ‘culture’ is a socially constructed concept, the cultural background could differ even in terms of profession, political view, social class etc. It depends on the grouping principle (Falicov, 1995).

Moreland et al. (1996) identified four primary factors that are often used to classify intercultural couples, i.e. race, ethnicity, national origin, and religion. There seems to be a tacit agreement with this classification in the literature (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). Thus the existing literature on intercultural marriage is usually not concerned with couples beyond this classification.

It is noteworthy that these dimensions, i.e. race, national origin, ethnicity, and religion are often intertwined in combinations that result in more complex intercultural differences, e.g. a married couple that is cross-nation is often simultaneously cross-race; an inter-faith couple could also be inter-ethnic etc. Thus these terms are often interchangeable with intercultural marriage in the existing literatures. What really matters is how the differences of culture that the two individuals bring into the marriage impact on the marital relationship (Falicov, 1995).

In general, the literature in this field could be grouped into the following two categories: Quantitative studies which test the hypothesis that intercultural marriages are problematic by

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<sup>2</sup> In Literature Review, I still adopted the term ‘inter-cultural marriage’ to be consistent with the reviewed literatures, as where the term was widely used.

quantitatively comparing their marital quality with that of intra-cultural marriages, in terms of dimensions like happiness, satisfaction, stability etc (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004; Hohmann-Marriott & Amato, 2008). The second, much larger group of studies starts with the assumption that intercultural marriages are problematic, attempting to qualitatively reveal the problems raised in intercultural marriages and how they impact on marital quality. These latter articles will be the focus of this literature review for their relevance to my research and counselling psychology.

Cultural differences between the married couple are often seen to be the heart of the matter, from which marital problems in these marriages derive (Baltas & Steptoe, 2000; Schoustra-van Beukering, 2002; Breger & Hill, 1998; Bhugun, 2016). Thus in general, existing studies on intercultural marriage have been inclined to study marital problems by looking into cultural differences (Falicov, 1995; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006; Mao, 2015).

#### **a - Global aspects of cultural differences**

Taking a social constructionist perspective, Falicov (1995) proposed global aspects of cultural difference that are socially constructed, and that can generally be found across the four primary factors classifying intercultural couples, i.e. race, nation, ethnicity, and religion. Her work was influential, directing later studies on intercultural marriage (Sullivan & Cottone, 2006).

Frame(2004) summarized that diet, extended family expectation, value, gender, religion, childrearing, money, sexuality, social class, language, communication etc, are generally areas with common concerns.

Bhugra and De Silva (2000) further distinguished these global cultural aspects as follows: At the micro-cultural level, the global aspects of cultural difference include gender identity, gender role expectations, expectations from the extended family, underlying values, beliefs, communication styles, sexuality, religion, issues of child rearing, as well as diet and costumes etc. At the macro-cultural level, the global aspects of cultural difference include



societal attitudes, in particular, stereotyping (e.g. Bacigalupe & Ilerena-Quinn, 2009; Daneshpour, 2009). These aspects are often suggested to be relevant to all classified intercultural marriages (Falicov, 1995; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006). The literature on intercultural marriage, by and large, can be presented in terms of these aspects specifying where the cultural conflicts arise within intercultural marriage.

### ***Gender identity and gender role expectations***

“Gender is the sex-stereotypical attributes of a person” (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p.348). It refers to “those social, cultural, and psychological traits linked to males and females through particular social contexts” (Lindsey, 2005, p.4). Gender is regarded as one of the most challenging areas for intercultural couples to negotiate (Carine, 2006).

Men and woman are generally assigned as complementary gender roles<sup>3</sup> within a specific culture. Therefore a couple growing up in the same culture generally holds a common model for understanding their separate roles in the marriage. However, within intercultural marriages, there is often a mismatch between the expected gender roles (Refsing, 1998). If so, the potential for conflict arises within the couple.

In general, in patriarchal societies<sup>4</sup> women are expected to play the role of caretaker, whereas men are expected to be the breadwinner. In contemporary western culture, gender role differences are being blurred, i.e. male and female roles tend to be less distinct (Ji, 2008). Cottrell (1990), in his cross-national literature review, had already emphasized that a major issue addressed in African, Japanese and Thai studies is how women from western culture were struggling to live with traditional families in male dominated societies.

Refsing’s (1998) study on Japanese-Danish marriages revealed that whether conflict arises from different gender role expectations depends upon which culture contributes which sex and where the couple chooses to live.

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<sup>3</sup> Gender role is defined as expected attitudes and behaviors a society associates with each sex (Lindsey, 2005, p. 4).

<sup>4</sup> Patriarchy refers to male-dominated social structures leading to the oppression of women (Lindsey, 2005, p.3).

Marriages between Japanese women and Danish men living in Denmark tend to have no problem with their gender role expectations, i.e. Japanese wives appear to feel lucky that they get unexpected support from their Danish husbands, and that they are encouraged to go out to work, whereas their Danish husbands appreciate that their Japanese wives not only partially play a role of breadwinner, but also share domestic responsibilities without complaint. At the emotional level, Japanese women are encouraged to express their strong feelings, like anger and frustration, while in their home culture, a graceful woman is supposed to suppress such feelings.

Problems arise in combinations between Danish women married to Japanese men in Denmark. In these cases the competitive labour market shattered the gender identity of the Japanese men as breadwinners. Japanese men had to reduce their status by sharing the responsibility of household chores.

In the case of Japanese-Danish couples living in Japan, the gender identity of the Danish men was less likely to be threatened. On the one hand, the identity of Danish men does not hinge upon a steady job. On the other hand, objectively, they have a better chance to find employment than Japanese men in Denmark. Regarding Japanese men married to Danish women in Japan, no gender identity crisis arises. However, the husband's long working hours took them away from the family chores, and thus raised a conflict with their Danish wives who expected them to share in the domestic duties. Danish wives in Japan also found it hard to transform themselves to be a housewife only. In short, the combination between Japanese husbands and Danish wives shows greater potential for conflict among the Japanese-Danish Marriages. The Danish female identity is challenged when living in Japan, while the Japanese male identity has little room in Denmark. Refsing's study (1998) clearly shows how the findings differ in terms of the various situations investigated.

Refsing's study also demonstrates that the claim that eastern women are more family oriented (Ji, 2008) has to be viewed with caution. Japanese women married in Denmark appear to be happy to change their gender role. This implies that they do not really appreciate their initial gender identity. The traditionally ascribed gender identity is not the free

choice of the women from eastern countries. It is the effect of an unequal power distribution. In the west, the relative gender equality is the hard won fruit of feminist movements. It took time to change the patriarchal family system (Schoustra-van Beukering, 2002).

Furthermore, when analyzing the conflicts in Sino-western intercultural marriage, Ji's (2008) assumption that Chinese women still take a traditional gender role is a gross oversimplification. In the period of socialist China (1949-1978<sup>5</sup>), ideology was highly controlled by the central government, under the direct leadership of the communist party. The economic climate, and the government imposition of gender equality actually reduced the gender role differences (Wolf, 1985). Without considering the history of this period, together with China's subsequent societal transition, today's female gender identity and gender role in China cannot be viewed, and thus any further analysis of the potential conflicts arising from gender role expectations within intercultural marriages would be flawed.

Recently, there seems to be a certain tendency towards a partial 'restoration' of the traditional gender role in China. However, empirical identification and analysis is required. It is important to maintain a historical perspective in analyzing gender issues.

According to a study of intercultural marriages involving African (Ghanaian) and African American partners (Alex-Assenosoh & Assenosoh, 1998), not all African men expect their African-American wife to be purely subordinate. Due to their religious background, good education, and western cultural influences, they do not mind leaving their traditional gender role behind to share domestic duties. Surprisingly, however, African American men seem to re-accept patriarchal notions of male superiority and described their African wives as more supportive and less domineering than typical African-American women. This study thus furnishes one more example of the complexity of gender role issues in intercultural marriages.

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<sup>5</sup> In 1949, the People's Republic of China ('New China') was established. In 1978, China's economic reform or open policy was carried out.

### ***Expectations from the extended families***

Many articles found that the essential meaning of marriage differs within different cultures. Breger and Hill (1998) suggested that today, in the west, married couples are mostly concerned with the psychological and emotional aspects of their marriage. A good marriage means that the couple is happy and emotionally well suited for each other. In contrast, in certain religious/ethnic groups, for instance in Islamic societies, 'love' is criticized if it conflicts with the maintenance of a well-integrated family unit (Yamani 1998). The cultural expectations about marriage highlight the values that maintain contact and continuity with the extended family (Molina et al., 2004). Some cultural groups may favour family interdependence, whereas others prefer greater autonomy and self-development. This difference may lead to clashes with extended family expectations, and consequently impact on the quality of marital life (Falicov, 1995).

There is also a cultural conflict between the western value of equality and eastern hierarchy, i.e. the vertical loyalty overrides the horizontal loyalty. According to the eastern principle, the elder generation, i.e. the parents, have control over the children, and men have control over women (Schoustra-van Beukering, 2002). The parent's power is not only involved in giving permission to the intercultural marriage, but also reaches into the married relationship itself, affecting marital quality. Various articles exposed the issue of how married western women feel disempowered facing the expectation from the eastern extended families. They do not have the right to make decisions following their own wills. There is a lack of privacy for such couples (Alex-Assensoh & Assensoh, 1998). In particular, it is common that mothers-in-law highly intervene in the intercultural relationship. Family expectations appear to be rather heavy in Asian and African extended families, e.g. Sisson Joshi and Krishna (1998) revealed how frustrated English and North American women were who married into Hindu joint families. It seems the power of the mother-in-law has pervaded even into the very intimate space. An African-American wife also encountered the demand to support her husband's relatives in Ghana although she had never met them (Alex-Assensoh & Assensoh, 1998).

However, Yamani (1998) suggested that some Saudi Arabian men tend to marry foreigners so as to liberate themselves from the burden of taking the huge responsibilities to please and care for the local family of their wife. Thus it seems that the expected obligations towards the extended family are sometimes felt to be a problem even within such a culture, and could drive some to marry out. Yamani's study (1998) implies that the issue is not a culture clash between the west and the east, but simply a question of which cultural values are more challenging and potentially in conflict with personal needs or desires. This notion can be applied to the issues of gender identity and gender role expectation as well.

Like Saudi Arabia, China is a country where the extended family once strongly impacted on married couples. Here too, even within intra-cultural marriages, the expectations of the extended family are often viewed as a burden and source of family friction. Living together with the extended family is no longer considered to be a state of happiness as it used to be (Wolf, 1985). Married couples prefer to be independent. The fact that the traditional family values change even within eastern countries like China implies that the conflict arising from this aspect in East-West intercultural couples might not be as salient as expected. Moreover, for those intercultural couples who settle in a third country, extended families are less likely to intervene in their life. Therefore, the claim of conflict from extended family expectations should be cautiously made, and investigated specifically in terms of the cultural groups involved.

### ***Communication***

A sizeable part of the literature addressed the issue of miscommunication due to the cultural differences between intercultural couples (Crippen, 2011; Ji 2008; Frame, 2004; Molina et al., 2004; Perel, 2000; Pickett, 2000; Piller, 2000). Many articles studied the difference between "high-context" (collectivistic-oriented) and the "low-context" (individualistic-oriented) communication (e.g. Bacigalupe & Ilerena-Quinn, 2009). Hall (1990) defined context as the information that surrounds an event. The context is inextricably bound up with the meaning of the event.

A high-context communication or message is one in which most of the information is either in the physical context or internalized in the person, while very little is in the coded, explicit, transmitted part of the message. A low-context communication is just the opposite, i.e. the mass of the information is vested in the explicit code. (Hall, 1976, p. 91)

Ji (2008) emphasized that during conversations between a Chinese wife and her white husband, the mismatch between the high-context culture and the low-context culture often resulted in misunderstandings. The Chinese mode of communication is often said to be indirect and implicit, whereby many background assumptions are not explicitly delivered. Only those who share the same culture are able to fully understand.

Culturally specific linguistic taboos are another aspect of communication that impact on intercultural marriages. Joshi and Krishna (1998) studied English and North American daughter-in-laws in the Hindu joint family. Many issues that are considered to be primary and normal in the family in America and England become a forbidden topic in the Hindu context. Western wives were used to openly join discussions about business and political affairs, but they lost this freedom in front of their in-laws, or even with their husbands who now deferred to their parents as the authoritative figures in Hindu culture. Some topics are simply not acceptable to be broached by women. This, once more, exposed the cultural difference between equity and hierarchy (Schoustra-van Beukering, 2002). This communication inequity has only been challenged within those societies where feminist movements have been active.

A discussion on communication would be simplistic without a discussion on the function of language (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). Philosophers, communication theorists, and sociologists view language as a cultural, social performance (Willig, 2008). A language is not a mere vehicle conveying a message, but constitutes a worldview (Whorf, 1956). The same insight underpins the growing emphasis on discourse analysis in social psychology (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002). A further indication of the power of language is given with the so-called Cultural Frame Switching effect (CFS) where bicultural individuals shift values and

attributions in the presence of cultural stimuli (Hong, Chiu, & Kung 1997). This effect has been evidenced when a bilingual shifts language. Here the shift in language induces a shift in personality (LaFromboise et al., 1993). How these effects impact on the communication within intercultural marriages merits investigation.

### ***Sexuality***

Sexuality plays an important role in a marital relationship. Each culture has its own beliefs and taboos regarding various sexual practices, e.g. menstruation, virginity, fidelity, abortion, contraception, masturbation, hygiene issues etc (Leslie & Letiecq, 2004). Therefore, sexuality is a factor that potentially burdens intercultural marriages. However, it seemed to be neglected in the literature and only touched upon by the authors referred to above.

### ***Religion***

Religion is hard to separate from culture (Frame, 2004). Many interfaith couples<sup>6</sup>, as a subset of intercultural marriages, are affected by the same global cultural factors mentioned above. However, there are additional conflict areas that are unique to this group, like matters of religious ritual and worship, religious holidays, and the issue of the children's religious affiliation (Daneshpour, 2009). There are some factors, although not unique to inter-faith couples, that are especially intensified through their religious underpinning. As Daneshpour (2009) points out, Muslims for instance, perceive their religion as a way of life regulating accepted behaviour in many ways. Issues like the use of birth control, attitudes towards abortion, fidelity, divorce, parenting style (Daneshpour, 2003), and moral codes in general, are closely related to faith.

### ***Social attitude***

A stereotype is defined as a widely shared and simplified evaluative image of a social group and its members (Hogg & Vaughan, 2002, p.40). The social acceptability of intercultural

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<sup>6</sup> Interfaith marriage refers to a marriage wherein the partners belong to different religious groups.

marriage is influenced by stereotypes concerning groups, such as nations, races, religious communities, and ethnic groups. There are value judgements embedded in the power differential between the various groups within society. Stereotypes are thus emotionally charged (Brah, 1996).

Whether the stereotyping is positive or negative could facilitate or filter out potential spouse choices. Shibata (1998) stressed that stereotypes rather than actual experiences are influencing people's views on intercultural marriage. Race and hostility between nations are two critical factors upon which stereotypes are based (Breger & Hill, 1998). Most discussion of stereotypes is found in articles that focus on the factor of race. The power and oppression associated with racial differences can be considered a primary factor in many intercultural relationships.

Social scientists generally agree that race is a social and cultural rather than a biological category (Lee & Bean, 2004). The relative prevalence of racial intermarriages can be taken as a measure of social distance, prejudice and group boundaries (Lee & Bean, 2004; Fu, Tora & Kendall, 2001; Lee & Fernandez, 1998; Rosenfeld, 2002).

Spickard (1989) discussed how stereotypes impact on the choice of spouse between African-Americans and white Americans in the USA. The majority of intermarriages are those between white women and African-American men. White women tend to stereotype African-American men positively with strong sexuality and masculinity, whereas black men tend to hold the view that white women are caring and relationship-oriented. However, African-American women tend to stereotype white men as being tightly associated with the past of slavery, and sexual harassment in which women were the victims of white men, whereas white men stereotype African-American women as overly dominant, controlling, and too strong (Spickard, 1989).

Leslie and Letiecq (2004) found that a strong, positive racial identity, i.e. developing pride in one's race (without devaluing other races or cultures) may be a good foundation for a successful interracial-marriage.



## **b - Factors beyond the culture**

While many authors focus on the cultural differences within intercultural marriages and emphasise the conflicts caused by these differences, some authors assert that differences in cultural baggage do not seem to be a major point of contention in intercultural marriages, although such cultural differences can act as a problem contributor (Barth, 1969; Breger & Hill, 1998; Romano, 1988). In some studies informants indeed reported that they do not think that their cultural differences are accountable for their marital problems. Cultural variables like race, or ethnicity are seen to be of little importance in the relationship (Killian, 2001; Kouri & Lasswell, 1993). There are other aspects, beyond culture, that burden intercultural marriages, but these have generally received less attention in this field.

Some authors explored the attributes of individuals who get involved in intercultural marriages, asking whether intercultural marriages occur by chance, or whether there are some identifiable factors contributing to this choice. Therefore the question of why marrying out, and the topic of spouse selection stand out. Generally existing theories suggest intermarriage can be understood in terms of exchange theory focusing on social conditions, or from psychological perspective looking into the psychological conditions manifested by intermarried couples. It will be detailed as follows.

### ***The Feeling of Marginality***

Taking a psychological approach, some articles revealed that people who are involved in an intercultural marriage tend to be characterized by a feeling of marginality in their own culture, i.e. they tend to have a sense of being different from others, lack cultural belongingness, and have a feeling of being socially isolated (Cottrell, 1990).

Khatib-Chahidi, Hill and Paton's (1998) study on "Chance, choice and circumstance: A study of women in cross-cultural marriages" supports this suggestion of a sense of marginality. The authors categorized marginality into three types in terms of the formation of marginality, i.e. structural marginality, family/personal marginality, and marginality for the escape from cultural gender roles (pp.57-62).

“Structural marginality” is caused by the predicament that a person’s naturally assigned place in a social structure, for instance, the person’s ethnicity or social class, constrained their integration into the mainstream of society, thus leading to feelings of exclusion. “Family/personal marginality” is mainly due to isolation from the family, due to particular family issues, for example, a subject raised by her grandparents and separated from the rest of her family. Later when she returned, she found she was not easily accepted by her siblings, and felt a lack of attachment to her parents. With respect to “the marginality for escaping from gender roles”, those getting involved in an intercultural marriage often seem to be rebellious to the conventions of their own countries (Khatib-Chahidi, Hill and Paton, 1998). They choose to marry a foreigner so that they can eschew the gender role expectations within their home countries (Yamani, 1998; Rfsing, 1998). This is voluntary marginality implying a desire to be different from the mainstream society. The person wishes to be embraced by a more open culture rather than being restricted by his/her own society against his/her desire (Khatib-Chahidi, Hill and Paton, 1998).

Imamura’s study (1990) on “mate selection in international marriages in Nigeria” also found “objective marginality” as a force for individuals to marry out. This is comparable to the “structural marginality” indentified by Khatib-Chahidi and Paton (1998). Likewise, in Cottrell’s review (1990) on cross-national marriage, it was pointed out that both partners of the so called ‘war bride’ couples of the 1950s, i.e. both the wives from Japan or Korea and their American husbands had feelings of marginality, which drove them to find a foreign partner.

In general, those who were most emancipated from their ethnic heritage choose to intermarry. To some extent, the feeling of marginality implies a problem with identity, i.e. self-identity and group identity, even gender identity (Cohen, 1988; Hill & Paton1998). The feeling of marginality becomes an impetus to pull away from their own culture, pushing them toward other cultures. However, many of those who married out did not find the belongingness they expected through the intercultural marriage. Mostly, a new feeling of marginality arose within the new, exotic culture that has replaced their original marginality within their home culture (Breger & Hill, 1998). Nevertheless, Cohen (1988) suggested that these intercultural couples

tend to find foreign partners once more after their previous intercultural marriage has broken down. This discovery, based on a limited number of cases, is interesting, but needs more empirical evidence and in-depth analysis.

### ***Personality***

As early as 1933, Resnik proposed that persons who intermarry tend to be emancipated, rebellious, and adventurous. Cottrell (1990) emphasized the same personality traits in his literature review on cross-national marriages, and complemented them with two further personality types: 'embracers' and 'multiculturals'.

Khatib-Chahidi, Hill and Paton's (1998) assessed the personality of their intermarried informants by complementing their unstructured interviews with one of the most commonly used personality tests, the personality questionnaire 16PF. The finding revealed that those involved in intercultural marriage are significantly more imaginative, unconventional emotionally stable, more adventurous, and uninhibited, more sensitive to others, and more experimental, liberal and freethinking. This finding is largely consistent with the publications referred to earlier. Ding et al. (2004), and Ji (2008) focused on intercultural marriages involving Chinese. Similar conclusions were found, i.e. those who are open-minded and unconventional are more likely to get involved in intercultural marriage.

The finding that people who enter into intercultural marriage share the aforementioned marginality and personality traits seems to be nearly unanimous. However, most of those studies tend to be pilot studies involving only a small sample size.

### ***Motivation to engage in intercultural marriage***

Reiss (1976) proposed that love is greatly facilitated by the commonality of social and cultural experience. This proposition stresses the importance of similarity for marital compatibility.

Breger & Hill (1998) in their book 'cross cultural marriages', summarised that, initially, seeking the "right" partner is primary, rather than being interested in the partner's foreign

culture. Just like intra-cultural couples, intercultural couples still desire similarity with respect to common interests, and educational level. They also seek differences in their spouse. However, these desired differences are more differences of individual personality (Kahatibhidi, 1998).

Another prevalent theory is the exchange theory (Merton, 1941). It suggested that potential spouses weigh up the resources they can offer and what they are able to gain from the potential partner. Taking hypergamy perspective, Davis (1941) articulated that interracial marriage can be explained in terms of its function for upper caste or class, e.g. male partner exchanges his high social position for the achievement, beauty, intelligence, youth or wealth brought to the marriage by the female partner, but Van Den Berghe (1960) added that intermarrying for maximization of status only occurred when the female could benefit from the status gain for her or her children, whereas the male would not have a substantial loss of his status. Kalmijin (1998) stressed the aspects of individual preferences including socio-economic status, attractiveness and cultural resources. The exchange theory thus highlighted importance of complementary differences and reciprocal compensatory situation in a relationship to satisfy individual needs. The exchange theory is comparable with the proposition of “ulterior motives” in the study of interracial marriages, i.e. sexual curiosity, social exhibitionism, and socio-economic mobility. However, existence of these motives has also been questioned (Davidson, 1992). Thus the proposition of ulterior motives needs to be further substantiated. It suggested, for instance, that Individuals tend to be sexually curious about people from a different race (Aldridge, 1978; Berry & Blassingame, 1982). To some extent, this has been evidenced in Chinese and Japanese women married to white men, whose tall and sturdy bodies were considered to be especially attractive (Ji, 2008). An imagined strong sexuality is also a factor (Ding, 2004).

According to social exhibitionism, when black men have sexual relations with “forbidden” white women, some theorists imply that there is the ulterior motive to cross the “colour line”, to cross a cultural taboo (Berry & Blassingame, 1982; Porterfield, 1973). Ji (2008) also

suggests that when Chinese men have sexual relations with white women, this implies a certain “pride”.

Social-economic mobility is suggested to be another ulterior motive. Socio-economic class differences have been addressed in relation to Black-White interracial marriages. Exchange theorists suggest that white women with low socio-economic status exchange their high racial status for economic security (Schoen & Wooldredge, 1989; Heaton & Albrecht, 1996). This claim raises the following questions: Do only women face such crisis of spouse selection? How about white men with low socio-economic status? Beside the implied sexism, is the race “white” considered to be advantageous over the race “black”? If the author does think there is a racial hierarchy, what does the race “white” really mean today for those black men who enter into intermarriage?

Ding et al. (2004) point out that some of the Chinese women regard intercultural marriage as a springboard to change their relatively poor economic status, e.g. to achieve permanent residence in a western country, for the sake of a better education of their offspring. They further suggest that these motives are often based on illusions about the developed countries and question the robustness of marriages built on such a foundation. It seems in China the motive of social-economic mobility even overrides hostilities felt towards certain countries. Despite the fact that there is a strong historical hostility between Japan and China, Japan is the No.1 country for Chinese to marry out, due to the geographic proximity and due to its highly developed economy. In general, Chinese women tend to marry out to economically developed regions (Ding et al., 2004). Since the economic downturn, the number of Sino-Western marriages reduced in numbers (Ji, 2008).

Some research guided by the status exchange theory focused on the educational aspect of status. Researchers found higher status to be an avenue of out-marriage for low-status minorities (Fu & Heaton, 1997; Hwang et al., 1997; Qian, 1997; Qian and Lichter. 2007).

However in recent years, there is a sign of a changing trend among Chinese. The educational level and language competency of Chinese women marrying out have been gradually increasing and the prominent characteristic of age disparity between the

intermarried couples is decreasing. This implies a propensity that Chinese women are now changing to romance driven motivation rather than one seeking the exchange of social-economic status.

### ***Practical issues***

Intercultural marriage is characterized by a difference in the couple's cultural backgrounds. However, some practical issues burden this type of marriage as well.

Moving out to a foreign country poses many practical problems. Breger and Hill (1998) suggest that Asian wives are more likely to move out to the country of their white husbands. This imposes a greater burden of adaptation on them. Due to the language barrier, which is an often addressed practical issue (e.g, Bacigalupe & Ilerena-Quinn, 2009; Refsing, 1998), many decisions and dealings with the outside world are necessarily undertaken by their husbands. Often, these wives cannot find any but the most menial jobs, which further increases their dependence on their husbands. This creates a potentially conflict-laden power imbalance (Refsing, 1998). There are also legal work restrictions. Professional qualifications gained in one country are often not widely accepted by other countries. This implies a potential compromise in career development. Thus the foreign spouse would have to make a greater effort to re-establish her/his career. This potentially threatens the life quality of a spouse, which in turn might have an impact on the marriage (Breger, 1998; Varro, 1988). Also, the choice of language spoken at home can create an unhealthy power distribution (Romano, 1988).

### **c - Discussion**

As aforementioned, intercultural marriages are generally considered to be less "successful" than intra-cultural marriages. Success is defined in relation to divorce or by a measure of marital satisfaction (Goodman, 1991). Most of the literature reviewed here tends to attribute the problems and failures of intercultural marriages to the cultural differences between the couple. However, Cottrell (1990) suggested that two individuals from a different culture may,

in other respects, have many things in common, and that not all cultural differences cause stress. Cottrell also suggested that the degree of difference is not necessarily related to marital difficulty. Falicov (1995), as well as Sullivan and Cottone (2006), pointed out that cultural differences threaten the relationship only if they are exacerbated to become conflicts. Nevertheless, it seems that the analysis of the difficulties in intercultural marriages have long since been pre-framed in favour of cultural factors (Sullivan and Cottone's, 2006). Most authors look in this direction. On the other hand, there are some studies that go beyond the focus on culture, taking a social or psychological perspective to explore other aspects as introduced above. There can be no doubt that these factors, although over-shadowed by the dominant attention on cultural factors, do indeed contribute to the problems arising within the intercultural marriages. This raises the question whether cultural differences really are the primary factors that negatively impact on intercultural marriages.

Perhaps those factors beyond culture associated with intercultural marriages have been unduly downplayed, whereas cultural factors have been overly amplified, e.g. if a marriage is based on a distorted motivation, or is being overburdened by practical issues, it may also encounter difficulties.

Some authors attempted to shed light on those factors beyond culture, but did not answer to what extent they impact on the marital relationship. There is no empirical study clarifying this quantitatively. The clarification of this issue within further research would help counselling psychologists to identify and conceptualise the problems when working with intercultural couples.

### ***Sample issues***

In studies on intercultural marriages, there is a general inclination to focus on the experience of women rather than that of men (Breger & Hill, 1998; Ding et al., 2004; Ji, 2008; Joshi & Krishna, 1998; Khatib-Chahidi, Hill & Paton's, 1998). This can not simply be considered to be a flaw. The literature suggests that women are more likely to move out to their husbands (Barbar, 1989; Breger, 1998; Ding et al., 2004). Therefore intercultural marriages pose a

greater difficulty for women, and require a greater adaptation from them in contrast to their husbands. Moreover, in some male dominated societies, women tend to be seen as “our women” (Burton, 1994; MacDonald, 1994) implying that those women who marry outside their culture are morally questioned, in contrast to men (Tvrtkovic, 2001). Both the aforementioned actual difficulties and the biased social attitudes place women in a more challenging position. Therefore it is sensible that greater attention is paid to women in literature.

The majority of studies on intercultural marriages are targeting those married couples who are still in an ongoing relationship. The number of participants who have divorced weighs light. This is perhaps due to the greater difficulty in approaching this group. They might be less motivated, because intercultural marriage is no longer their concern. However, it is sensible to say that those who finally divorced could possibly make special contributions to our understanding of the difficulties and the dissatisfactions that tend to arise within intercultural marriages.

### ***Methodology***

Regarding the methodology, case studies weigh heavily within the literature reviewed. However, as introduced, intercultural marriage is a multi-disciplinary subject. Researchers in this field come from various academic backgrounds, e.g. there are sociologists, psychologists, anthropologists, and even lawyers. Generally these literatures fall short of clear epistemological and methodological clarification; consequently research designs and methods appeared to be less than stringent.

Attempts at in-depth exploration and analysis of intercultural marriages are dominant. But nonetheless many of them are merely ‘qualitative-like’ studies, i.e. they appear like surveys, journalist’s reports or commentaries, rather than constituting rigorous, qualitative research. Most articles lack a detailed, qualitative data analysis, guided by epistemological reflections. This is particularly true of the literatures found in Chinese, whose authors were largely from



normal universities (teacher's colleagues) or foreign language institutes; none of them have a background in psychology.

### **Conclusion**

The literature on intercultural marriages captured many interesting topics and discovered important factors, which may impact the marital quality, and generally provided many valuable insights into the characteristics of intercultural marriages. The review of the literature also revealed how complex this topic is. However, many studies appear to be not much more than good pilot studies, helping formulate hypothesis for further research. Most studies end with the discovery or suggestion of certain factors, which may impact the quality of intercultural marriage, thus appearing to operate in a piecemeal fashion, listing and briefly introducing factors, but lacking in-depth analysis and theoretical explanation.

Overall, there has been little rigorous empirical research in the field (Negy & Snyder, 2000; Sullivan & Cottone, 2006); regarding those scholarly articles that abound around the topic of intercultural marriage, they seem to lack empirical evidence to support their claims. Moreover, the large combination of possible couples in terms of their diverse cultural backgrounds, cautions against generalisations being made from empirical findings.

Even with respect to the global factors themselves there is as yet no clear consensus. To this extent, what the primary factors are that burden intercultural marriages is still an open question. Consequently, the foci within the literature are extremely scattered. This makes it difficult to group the articles, and to compare and synthesize the findings. The dominant impression gained from the literature is how intercultural marriage creates problems. However, the couples that overcome those problems may be rewarded with a heightened fulfillment and sense of self-actualization. Automatic assumptions about meaning in life are less easy to be maintained in an intercultural marriage (Eaton, 1994). They also entail general societal benefits by helping forge a viable, cohesive multi-cultural society. Intercultural marriages are thus a subject indeed worthy of the attention of counselling psychology.

## **Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods**

### **2.1 Methodology**

#### **2.1.1 Outline**

This is a qualitative research aiming to explore *how the intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men, starting with Internet-dating, evolves overtime from the Chinese wives' perspective*. Starting from a critical realism ontological assumption and a social constructionist epistemological stance, this research critically adopts Charmaz's constructivist approach to grounded theory as methodological guidance.

#### **2.1.2 Ontological clarification**

In order to articulate what kind of knowledge this research is going to produce, it is fundamental to clarify an ontological stance, which concerns the researcher's assumption about the nature of the world, namely what is out there to know and to study. On a continuum of ontological classification, if we view naïve realism at one end and radical / extreme relativism at the other end, in between, there could be critical realism and different versions of social constructionism (Parker, 1998; Willig, 2008). This research adopts critical realism as an ontological stance. This implies that the world is a real and universal existence, thus there is substantive knowledge about it (process, event, phenomena, object, etc.) to be gained. This research acknowledges the real existence of the marital process, because it is observable, recordable and documentable in terms of time, place and contextual situation. Nonetheless, in contrast to naïve realism, critical realists acknowledge our constraints in accessing what is

really going on in the world, and suggest the way we access or study that knowledge may vary. This variation occurs in the following ways: Firstly, it is an idealised view that the data provided by participants and collected by the researcher could perfectly represent reality. Secondly, during the process that a researcher transforms one form of data to another, a certain level of deviation from the original information may take place; for example, "Interview transcript can never be the mirror image of the interview" (Willig, 2008, p27). Thirdly, the data itself may not provide direct access to reality; it may involve interpretative understanding of it. In other words, it can only be an ideal to represent the marital process, in a way that is not constrained by data collection methods, and not contaminated by participants' perception and researchers' understanding of the data. In turn, this raises the question of what epistemological perspective is espoused to study knowledge and justify beliefs.

### **2.1.3 Epistemological orientation**

Quantitative studies focus on cause-effect relation. Researchers tend to impose preconceived "variables" to explore participant's responses to an event and attempt to generalize the findings. In essence, it is to test the hypothesis to verify existing theories through falsification, at best to refine theories, through a top-down deductive process. By contrast, "the objective of qualitative research is to describe and possibly explain events and experiences in-depth, but never to predict" (Willg, 2008, p.8-9). Qualitative research is largely conducted through a bottom-up inductive process; 'it aims to identify the phenomenon (e.g. the process, object or entity) which researchers intend to investigate"(Willg,2008, p.20). The focus of this research is the basic social-psychological process within the marriage between Chinese women and

Caucasian men, e.g. what transpires; how individuals act and negotiate in that social and psychological space and how the marital relationship develops or works. The action and the interactive process are central, without any pre-conceived hypothesis to be tested, thus this is a qualitative research.

Within a qualitative framework, this research adopts a social constructionist epistemological stance, in which it suggests that social reality is the product of human participation and negotiation, including perception, expressed through numerous versions (Willig, 2012, 2013). The way we represent reality is influenced historically, culturally and linguistically. This is consistent with the chosen critical realism ontological position, i.e. there is no direct access to reality.

## **2.1.4 Methodological orientation**

### **Grounded theory as chosen methodology**

This research aims to explore how the marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men evolves over time. The basic and dynamic inter-personal process is central. Studies focusing specifically on this particular group of intermarried couples are particularly scarce. There is no existing theory or theoretical model that could arm counselling psychologists as a reference to understanding the nature of this type of marriage, as aforementioned in the section of Literature Review. Grounded theory effectively meets the aim of this research, thus it is adopted as the methodology of choice.

In contrast with phenomenological research, in which participants are seen to be giving voice to their inner realities only, grounded theory is an inductive methodology, serving the purpose

of providing information about the basic social and psychological processes, where there has been little study (Crook,2001; Willig, 2008). This research aims to construct a theoretical model as an end product that furthers the understanding of a contextual world, through systematic, yet flexible guidelines to collect and analyse data (Charmaz, 2006). It is a rigorous research procedure leading to the emergence of conceptualized categories in substantive areas. Thus most theories generated from grounded theory methods are substantive and contextualized theories, which address problems in specific areas (Glaser & Strauss, 1971).

### **Three main approaches in grounded theory**

Generally there is a tacit agreement that the following three main approaches are considered to be representative of grounded theory, i.e. objectivist grounded theory, also known as classical grounded theory (Glaser & Strauss, 1965, 1967), symbolic interactionism grounded theory (Glaser, 1978; Strauss, 1987; Corbin & Strauss,1990; Strauss & Corbin, 1990,1998), and constructivist grounded theory (Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2002, 2006, 2009, 2014).

These three approaches showed an ontological shift from naïve realism to critical realism and showed an epistemological shift from positivism to constructionism in turn.

As the founders of the original grounded theory, two sociologists Glaser and Strauss aimed to move from qualitative inquiry beyond descriptive knowledge to explanatory theoretical understanding of the studied phenomenon (Charmaz,2006). In *The Discovery of Grounded Theory* (1967), Glaser and Strauss defined grounded theory as a method of *discovery*, thus underlying a naïve realist ontological assumption of the world and a positivist epistemological position, namely they suggested the reality is out there to be discovered. There is an objective reality, which could be impartially unveiled by researchers. Therefore the role of the

researcher is seen to be that of a passive and unbiased scientific observer. This is obviously challengeable and conflicts with the chosen ontological and epistemological perspectives of this research, and therefore it is not adopted for this research.

The development of symbolic interactionism was strongly influenced by American Pragmatism. "Pragmatists argued that reality is not a ready-existence and waiting to be discovered. Rather, knowledge acquisition is an active process of coping with life's demands and therefore always 'in the making' (Baert, 2005, p. 129)" (Pascale, 2010, p. 78). Rooted in the pragmatism philosophy, Blumer (1969) coined the term symbolic interactionism and suggested individual and society are never separable and independent from each other. With shared meaning, they interact to shape society, the self and reality. The concept of symbolic interactionism emerged to understand social reality through a dynamic process, in which people can and do think and reflect on their action, rather than understanding it by merely following behaviourist conception of stimuli and response mechanism. Starting from this pragmatism philosophical tradition, Strauss and Corbin (1990, 1998) established the symbolic interactionism approach of grounded theory. They moved forward from the objectivist grounded theory (Glazer & Strauss, 1967) and viewed "human beings as active participants and agents in their worlds, rather than as passive recipients of larger social forces" (Charmaz, 2006, p.7). They assume that social reality is the result of human participation, negotiation, intervention and interaction, and thus suggested that processes and structures are not just out there, but proposed the notion of human agency and emergent process. Symbolic interactionism approach of grounded theory conveys an emphasis on language, communication and interaction (Strauss, 1987). According to the perspective of symbolic

interactionism, interviewee's participation in social events or social reality can direct or influence the process, and "their interpretations of the events shape their consequences" (Willig, 2008, p.48). This basic process is interactive and conveys subjective meanings of negotiation, problem solving, etc, thus researchers should be sensitive to these dynamic properties by focusing on action, process and change.

As the founder of the constructivist approach, Charmaz (2006) classifies two prominent camps of grounded theory, i.e. Glazer and Strauss' 'objectivist/classical grounded theory' and her 'constructivist grounded theory', as she does not view 'symbolic interactionism grounded theory' as an opposed approach. Charmaz tends to embody/subsume symbolic interactionism approach into her constructivist approach. At least, she views it as a part of it, rather than seeing it as antithetic. Constructivists also see each the individual not merely as a unit in a local context, their actions act upon to influence a larger social system. Charmaz (2006) acknowledges and emphasizes on examining the interactive social and psychological processes, making the study of action central, and creating abstract interpretive understanding of data. In addition, she highlights the active involvement of the researcher in the process of data collection and data analysis, thus the presentation of social reality is not the same as the reality, but constructed/reconstructed by participants, researcher, and their interactions. This involves interpretative understanding of data. The role of a researcher could be likened to that of an explorer rather than a discoverer. Thus compared with symbolic interactionism grounded theory, Charmaz broadened the view to look into the social construction of reality. She argued that an interview is contextual and negotiatory; hence the research result is the product of the interaction between researchers and participants.

Constructivists recognize diverse local worlds and multiple-realities, which are constructed and co-constructed or reconstructed.

### **Constructivist grounded theory critically adopted as methodological guidance**

The initial/classical grounded theory has a positivist foundation, which implies an objective reality / truth out there to be discovered. It is characterized by a discovery of theory from data through an inductive process (Glazer and Strauss, 1967). However, during the data collection and data analyses, the presentation of social reality can never be separated from the involvement of participants and researchers and their interactions. The interpretations of events and processes from both participants and researchers inevitably come into play. Therefore the claim that the so-called 'data speaks for itself' is based on an idealised version of the research process. Without assuming that reality can be objectively studied (Charmaz, 1990, 2000, 2002, 2006), this research thus takes the constructivist approach to grounded theory.

The chosen methodology is entirely determined by the aim of research and underlying ontological and epistemological assumptions.

Looking into both participants and researchers' involvement in the research process, Charmaz (1990) as the founder of constructivist approach to grounded theory suggests, "grounded theory does not capture social reality, rather it is a social construction of reality" (Willig, 2008, p.49). On one hand, she still agrees to the notion that researchers should stick to the original data, and enter the world of participants to understand their perspectives. On the other hand, she tends to too quickly license researchers' impact on the research process and the ultimate impact on research results; she even tends to encourage this



contribution from researchers (Charmaz,2006). At this point, the constructivists' view seems to become paradoxical and reveals a tension within the argument (Willig, 2016). The encouragement of researchers' involvement implies that working with the same data, different researchers may generate different theoretical models. This raises a fundamental question as to where the theory is grounded and how to appraise the possible models. However, Charmaz justifies this challenge by adopting a pragmatism approach, i.e. whatever model is more helpful and best serves practical purposes would be the good model (Charmaz,2006). This seems to be plausible, but deviates from the fundamental principle of grounded theory, i.e theory should be grounded in data. Thus it is questioned at this point.

I agree with Charmaz in the sense that she acknowledges the interpretative and constructive element of reality from both layers, i.e. when participants represent reality, together with researchers' influences on the research process, i.e. the process during data collection and data analysis - these influences act upon the reality presentation. This could be referred to as the double hermeneutic perspective; initially coined by Anthony Giddens (1984, 1987). However, instead of holding an entire allegiance to Charmaz's constructivist approach, by taking a more critical view in response to the legitimacy of researchers' interactions with data to construct or reconstruct social reality, this research inclines to mitigate researchers' influences on data and stick to the authentic information and meaning delivered by participants. At least this could be a goal / aspiration. As counselling psychologists, we are not judgemental, and always avoid imposing our own values and ideas to our clients. The increasing capability to develop an empathy with our clients is fundamental. Therefore at least researchers should aim to mindfully stick to the inductive process when conducting research

and continuously verify the meaning of the original data with our participants.

### **Definition of Theory**

One of the core characteristics in grounded theory is to develop a new theory or theoretical model.

In the context of social science, Glaser and Strauss(1967) propose that theory is what makes the research relevant, and that it helps practitioners to understand more about how they make choices in a substantive area. Research questions should be able to direct the research to produce knowledge for understanding.

Glaser (1978) proposes the notion of middle-range theories, which consist of the abstract rendering of specific social phenomenon grounded in data. This is in contrast to the grand theories that make sweeping claims about social processes at the macro level and are de-contextualised from substantive areas, and which are not grounded in systematically analysed data.

In general, theories generated through grounded theory methods are based on data and are not products of logical deductions or ratiocination/rationalism.

Charmaz (2006) further articulated two categories of theory definitions, i.e. positivist definitions of theory and interpretive definitions of theory. According to the former frame, theories are discovered through emerging data separated from the scientific observer. These theories defined by positivists, are generated through Glaser and Strauss' objectivist / classical grounded theory approach. These theoretical concepts serve as core variables and hold explanatory and predictive power, whereas theories defined in terms of the latter frame are derived from the interpretive tradition of symbolic interactionism approach. These

theoretical concepts serve as “interpretive frame and offer an abstract understanding of phenomenon”, such as “patterns, connections rather than linear reasoning” (Charmaz, 2006, p.140,126).

Charmaz (2006) suggested neither data nor theories are discovered, so long as “there is an involvement of interpretive portrayal of the studied phenomenon, not an exact picture of it “(p.10) Therefore, theories are constructed. This interpretive theorizing stems from a social constructionist assumption, which is consistent with the chosen epistemological stance and constructivist grounded theory method aforementioned.

Grounded theory methods also benefit from their characteristic fluidity and flexibility in regard to the continuous theoretical sampling leading to the theoretical saturation. Ideally, each category or concept emerging from the analysis based on the previous data informs a new look at data. This may require a back and forth fashion of follow up data collection and data analysis, including data verification with participants, to refine emerging theoretical model until there is no new concept emerging. This is the so-called theoretical saturation (Willig, 2008). However, the real theoretical saturation can only be an ideal that requires never-ending data collection and data analysis. Thus the “published report is not the final one, but only the pause in the never-ending process of generating theory” (Dey, 1999, p.117, in Willig, 2008). In terms of the breadth and the depth of data collection and data analysis and the extent of theoretical saturation, there are two versions of grounded theory, i.e. Complete / Full Version of Grounded Theory, and Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory. In contrast with the abbreviated version, in the framework of Full Version of Grounded Theory, it aims to indefinitely reach theoretical saturation, thus it involves a back and forth pattern of data

collection and analysis to continuously update theoretical conceptualization until no new insight emerges any further (Willig, 2008, 2013).

Constrained by the time limit and additional work of translation and proofreading, this research adopted the *abbreviated* version of grounded theory, working with original data collected through a semi-structured interview in one go with each participant only to generate a theoretical model.

## **2.2 Methods**

### **2.2.1 Sample considerations**

#### **Sample description**

As stated in Chapter 1, the intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men tends to be more popular, but also more problematic, therefore this research focuses on this group.

In order to maintain the homogeneity of the samples, participants will be selected from Chinese wives, who meet the following criteria:

Chinese female participants will have been born and lived in China; moving abroad due to marrying a Caucasian man to share married life in the new host country. The couples get to know each other through an Internet-dating agency (see Research Question Development in Chapter 1). These Chinese wives also need to have been living in the husband's country and married between 2 and 10 years and are still in their marriage. Normally after 2 years of marriage, Chinese wives have been through the honeymoon stage and settled with

Permanent Residence<sup>1</sup>. Furthermore, since this research aims to explore the marital process, a time span is necessary to enable the process to open up, allowing the nature of this type of marriage to be manifested, so that both strengths and weaknesses of the marriage may surface and persist. Since there is no unanimity of agreement in the previous studies showing after how many years of marriage the relationship is likely to fall into an impasse, I therefore circumscribed that these participants of my study have been married to their husbands between 2 to 10 years. This is probably a period in which the most dynamic interactions and comprehensive experiences of the marriage would be evidenced, whereby the data may represent a more authentic picture of this type of marriage. I attempted to cluster as many participants as I could into similar lengths of marriage for the sake of sample homogeneity. Nevertheless, there was no assumption that every marriage must evolve with a shared pace in terms of a similar timeframe. What I avoided was too big a gap concerning the length of their marriage between participants, e.g. 2 years vs 10 years.

In addition, following a rapid development of the IT industry in China, the rise of Internet-dating started approximately shortly after the year of 2000, when pioneering dating websites such as match.com, Asiafriendfinder.com were first launched in China. In fact, considering the period when Internet-dating services emerged and allowing reasonable time for a relationship to proceed and head towards marriage, the longest intermarriage for this particular group generally would not exceed approximately 14-15 years.

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<sup>1</sup> This is the case in the UK, whereas in Sweden, Permanent Residence can be issued to those immigrants who have been in a marriage or in the status of co-habitation for minimum two years (As one of my participants was married to a Swedish man).

## **Sample size**

In contrast with quantitative research, generalization is not the aim. However, sample size is still a concern in qualitative research. There are many discussions in this regard. Sampling decisions often fluctuate between concerns about the breadth and the depth of the field (Flick, 2006). However, the nature of qualitative studies determines that they involve an intensive workload and are time consuming. Sufficient data for analysis and sufficient time to complete this research are the two main concerns. To be pragmatic, according to a rule of thumb, for this research initially eight participants were considered as an appropriate sample size, i.e. eight Chinese wives precisely. Nonetheless, due to the nature of this research, considering the involvement of the heavy workload of data translation from Chinese to English, the number of participants was further reduced to six. During the data collection, I initially intended to conduct one-hour semi-structured interview, but noticed this was not sufficient for each participant to represent her marital process. Finally three-hour interview on average was conducted with each participant. Additionally beyond the translation of interview transcripts, proofreading was undertaken to ensure the accuracy of translation. Therefore to capture the richness of data from each participant to achieve my intended study, and to realistically complete this research in the given timeframe, the sample size was further reduced to four following discussion with my supervisor Professor Carla Willig. This is the charm of grounded theory, during the ongoing research process, which allows the researcher to adjust and modify the initial research plan accordingly subject to a bottom up data driven, inductive process.

The focus on Chinese wives as a studied population only was due to the ethical concerns, i.e.

it is difficult to find both husband and wife in a marriage who feel comfortable to participate in the same study. They may have different perspectives and views on their relationship, and the presentation of the study together may have a potential risk giving rise to conflict between the spouses. Therefore participation from both wife and husband is less likely. Furthermore, the homogeneity of sample needs to be considered to ensure the consistency of data. Additionally as the researcher, my cultural background and gender also matter; this will be discussed in Discussion under the subheading of Reflexivity.

### **Sample recruitment**

Initially the plan to recruit the research sample involved searching those Chinese internet communities dedicated to Chinese who are engaged in intermarriages, and those websites where Chinese women participate in intermarriages blog, together with recommendation from acquaintances. However, due to emergent opportunities, the four participants who were interviewed for this research were finally recruited by the following methods: two participants were recruited by recommendation of acquaintances, one of the two was married to a British Caucasian man in the UK, the other married to a Swedish Caucasian man in Sweden; the other two participants who were married to British Caucasian men in the UK were found through websites as opportunistic samples, i.e. one was found in a Msn online Chatting Room, where she declared her life status as living in the UK; one was found at the Chinese blogging website <http://www.sina.com.cn>, where this participant's personal profile was posted in public, indicating her life status of living in the UK; additionally she saw my blog where my research interest intrigued her, therefore she approached me and her status perfectly met the pre-determined sample criteria.

**Demographic information of the samples (see Table 1 below)**

<b>Relevant Demographic Information of the Samples</b>	
<b>Age by 2017</b>	P1 <sup>2</sup> is approaching 50. P2 & P3 are in their late 40's P4 is in her late 30's
<b>Age when married</b>	P1 in her early to mid 40's P2 was in her late 30's, P3 in her early to mid 40's. P4 in her early 30's
<b>Marital history before the intermarriage</b>	P1 never married and never engaged in a significant intimate relationship, was still a virgin. P2 was divorced with one child. P3 was divorced without child. P4 never married and was never engaged in a long-term intimate relationship; without child.
<b>Length of intermarriage by 2016 when interviewed</b>	P1 6 years P2 9 years P3 3 years P4 6 years Initially they were all born and lived in large cities in China
<b>Host country for marital life</b>	P1, P2 & P3 married to Caucasian British, living in the UK P4 marrying a Caucasian Swedish, living in Sweden

*Table 1: Demographic information of the samples*

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<sup>2</sup> My participants will be labelled as P1, P2, P3 and P4 throughout this thesis. However, it is not in a prioritized order. For the concern about confidentiality, demographical information is not precisely specified above, but still sufficient to provide the general outlook.



### **2.2.2 Research materials (document and instrument)**

All these documents will be provided in the Appendices

1. Ethics Release Form
2. Research Advertisement
3. Research Information Sheet (in both English & Chinese)
4. Research Consent Form (in both English & Chinese)
5. Researcher Instructions for the Semi-structured Interview
6. Translator's Agreement
7. Debrief (if requested)
8. Iphone with the App of WeChat for the audio interview
9. Device and software for audio-recording, i.e. Iphone with the hard-wired App of Voice Memo
10. Laptop for the interview transcription
11. A translator translating the data from Chinese into English.

*Box 1-2. Research Materials (document and instrument)*

### **2.2.3 Ethical considerations**

#### **Research permission and approval**

The research was conducted strictly following the published ethical guidelines, namely the British Psychological Society Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (BPS, 2009) and British Psychological Society Code of human research ethics (BPS, 2010).

The Psychology Department Research and Ethics Committee, City University of London, and University Research and Ethics Committee granted the ethical approval of this doctorate research. The Ethics Release Form for Student Research Projects (See Appendix A) had been signed by the research supervisor Professor Carla Willig and the second department's ethics representative Dr Aylish O'Driscoll.

#### **Participants consent**

Prior to the data collection, participants read the Research Information Sheet in both Chinese and English (see Appendix B) and were fully informed about the aim of this research and the procedure. This consent mainly covers the issues of confidentiality and the principle of participants' rights regarding a self-determined participation and free withdrawal without a prejudice, disclosure of a debrief, complaint procedure and free counselling service if needed. Research Consent Forms (see Appendix D) were signed by participants to proceed with this research.

#### **Confidentiality**

The concern about confidentiality mainly resided in data protection and participants' privacy.

All data is safely kept in terms of the BPS guidelines for psychologists, i.e. The Data

Protection Act 1998. Adequate data keeping was introduced in the Research Information Sheet (see Appendix B),

Regarding the translation work, first of all, source data was based on the textual transcript, rather than the original audio source data from my participants.

Secondly, in the Chinese transcripts, which needed to be translated into English, all the identifiable personal details were removed before they were sent to the translator. Furthermore, there was no identifiable personal information to be translated.

Thirdly, the details of this research and the purpose of the translation were not disclosed to the translator.

Fourthly, a written agreement with the translator was signed, in which the translator agreed to keep the translating materials confidential and to destroy them upon completion of the translation work (see Appendix F: Translator's Agreement).

Lastly, in the thesis, all identifiable information was removed and presented anonymously.

## **Other ethical concerns**

### ***Interview style***

During the data collection process, rapport with participants was not neglected; participants' comfort level was prioritised rather than that of obtaining 'juicy' data only (Charmaz, 2006). Therefore before the research interviews commenced, this concern was addressed with every participant, i.e. during the interview, whenever my participants felt uncomfortable to continue due to the recall of any unpleasant experience, the interview could be paused, or even postponed to another day.

As the researcher, I also showed my empathy and concern when my participants became

emotional during the interviews (see details in Interview, p.79).

At the end of the interview, I expressed my appreciation to participants for their contributions to this study and welcomed their contact if any questions or concerns were raised (see details in Interview).

### ***Free counselling for possible stress***

To help alleviate possible stress caused by the recall of unpleasant experiences, a free counselling service had been introduced to my participants and they had opportunities to be referred to the service as necessary (see Appendix C).

### ***Ethical challenges of interpretation***

I was aware of possible bias during the data analytical process, e.g. “interpretive violence” (Willig, 2012, p. 54). I was sensitive to this potential and mindfully avoided it (see Ethical challenges of interpretation in Discussion).

### ***Debrief***

An opportunity for a debrief was offered to my participants, to help them further understand this research and their contributions if requested (see Appendix G).

## **2.2.4 Procedures**

### **2.2.4-1 Preparation of data collection**

After confirming participants’ eligibility and availability to participate in this research, I then established further liaisons with them for the following purposes: outlining my research, articulating participants’ tasks and their contributions to this research, addressing ethical issues, especially including an accentuation on confidentiality.

Research Information Sheet, Research Advertisement and Researcher's Instructions for Semi-Structured Interview, together with Research Consent Form were sent to participants (see Appendices B, C, D & E). Thereafter, as their interest in this research and willingness to participate in the study remained, I arranged an audio conversation either via mobile phone or via chatting software of WeChat to see whether they had any potential concerns and questions. By that point, my participants' questions/concerns mainly centred on precisely what they needed to talk about and what I wanted to know. We confirmed the interview time and date, and then they signed the Research Consent Form after the preliminary discussion (see Appendix D).

It is noteworthy that this initially unintended preparatory / introductory session of about 30 minutes before the engagement in the formal interviews proved to be necessary, helpful and not omissible. As the interview required recalling what happened in their marriages, according to the feedback from my participants, they needed to revisit/think through all years of marital lives in their minds in advance, whereby they were able to provide pertinent and rich information and also ensured coverage of meaningful detail in reasonable proportion regarding each incident and experience. In addition, it was a better choice to separate the introduction from the research interview, as this allowed participants to comfortably make their decisions concerning their research participation.

#### **2.2.4-2 Interview**

Stated in the Methodological Orientation, the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory was espoused (Charmaz, 2006; Willig, 2008). It is pragmatic to collect data starting with a semi-structured interview with each participant, and then working on the data only to generate

theoretical conceptualization, rather than collecting data further for the theoretical saturation.<sup>3</sup>

On the day of interview, I introduced the interview agendas by starting with providing the interview context, including introducing researcher and the purpose of the interview, confirming that my participants read and fully understood the Research Information Sheet (see Appendix B), reiterating ethical issues and confidentiality, explaining the use of recording device, and offering the time for free questions before the interview started.

Regarding the interview, I began with the open-ended questions such as:

*What does your marriage look like? Could you tell me about the story of your marriage?*

*What is going on with your marriage?*

*If you do not know where to start, you could follow a timeline of your relationship, e.g. when, where or how did you meet your husband?*

(see Appendix E for more details).

Participants generally began with the background / contextual information outlining their reasons for starting Internet-dating. It took approximately three hours with each participant for each interview.

Grounded theory is compatible with a wide range of data sources and data collection methods (Willig, 2008). Hence the data for this research was collected through semi-structured

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<sup>3</sup> In contrast to the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory, in which researchers work with the original data only to generate their theoretical models, in the framework of Full Version of Grounded Theory, each category or concept emerging from the analysis based on previous data informs a new look at data, therefore this may require a back and forth pattern of follow-up data collection and data analysis to continuously update and refine the theoretical model (i.e. theoretical saturation) (Willig, 2008, 2013). However, the real 'theoretical saturation' is an ideal that requires a never-ending data collection and data analysis (see Methodology).

interviews in the form of either face-to-face talk or audio conversation via the chat software of WeChat. Each data source has its own strengths and weaknesses, which can supplement each other, for example, a participant expressed her discomfort in attending a face to face-interview, but would be more at ease with an audio-conversation.

Finally, three interviews were conducted via App of the WeChat on Iphone. One face-to-face interview was conducted in a quiet coffee shop in London.

Given my role as researcher, I was mindful not to be judgemental, but to evoke conversation for the richness of the data only. Especially in the framework of Grounded Theory, the authentic presentation of participants' marital process is essential (Charmaz 2006, 2014). To avoid any suggestive direction of their statements, I attempted to keep my questions and interactions as simple and brief as I could, and endeavoured to take a naïve observer's stance when asking open-ended, semi structured questions, which were introduced in the foregoing section.

In order to allow my participants to openly share what happened in their marriages, based on their own perspective and experiences as much as they could, I mindfully adhered to the principle of grounded theory throughout; my interventions merely served to initiate and provoke participants' responses/narratives.

During the interviews, I intermittently entered the discussion in order to prompt questions further, accordingly to expand upon their answers only, and also to ensure their answers were relevant. In addition, I sometimes sought clarification of their authentic meaning in order to avoid my speculation, and to facilitate my understanding.

I maintained my sensitivity to my participants' feelings during and after the interviews, as the

experiences shared by some participants at times were emotionally challenging. An example of this is where one of the participants recalled a painful journey, illustrating how she supported her husband fighting against cancer. Another participant shared how her husband supported her when her mother was diagnosed with a terminal disease. I monitored my participants' feelings and offered them the choice of pausing the interview or even postponing until another time. The interview continued on the premises that I ensured they were fine to continue according to their feedback (regarding the ethical sensitivity during my interview, see Appendix H: Extracts from the Interview Transcripts).

At the end of each interview, I expressed my appreciation for the contribution of participants' to my research and I reiterated that I could refer them to a free counselling service in the event of recall of unpleasant experiences, which had been introduced in the written document before the interview (Appendix B).

Directly after the interviews finished, I reflected on and noted every interpersonal interaction and observation, which merited my attention; and kept these notes as 'Memo-writing' for reference purposes. Regarding the data, it was safely kept in terms of the BPS guidelines on Record Keeping for psychologists (see Appendix A).

For the details of the interview agendas and explanations, see Appendix E.

### **2.2.4-3 Transcription and Translation**

Data analysis was carried out based on textual data; therefore a transcription from the initial audio data was conducted. In the framework of Grounded Theory, the content of interviews would be the basis for my analysis. It is sufficient to verbatim transcribe what is being said (words) (Willig, 2008, 2012), namely, non-linguistic feature of speech is not a focus. However,



I still watched for participants' non-verbal cues and documented these in my notes as reference, mainly to aid my understanding of participants' narratives, e.g. their mood and tones when they described a certain experience.

Due to the nature of this research and in order to gain more rigorous analysis, based on the transcripts, a translation from Chinese into English was involved, mainly for the purpose of discussion with my English-speaking supervisor.

A professional translator was hired; a Translator's Agreement was signed concerning confidentiality and chosen translation approach to best meet my research aim. The literal / direct translation was adopted. It sought to match the individual words of the original as closely as possible of the target language (Munday, 2016) (see Appendix F: Translator's Agreement and Appendix I: Memo-writing on Discussion of Translations). Following the translation, I undertook proofreading to ensure accuracy of the translation by continuously scrutinizing the translations back and forth between the source data and the translations. If the translation still remained questionable, another translator was approached to finalise the translations for the best accuracy. Regarding the issue of translation and sensitivity to language at every stage, e.g. at the stage of translation, in the coding and interpretive analytical process, I maintained critical language awareness and caution all along. This will be reflected in Discussion.

#### **2.2.4-4 Data analytical process**

Memo-writing, coding, categorising, synthesising and theorizing are the general processes that inform data analysis (Charmaz, 2014). The constant Comparative Method is essential for the researcher in order to find similarity and commonality shared by all participants, whereas

to see differences and develop insights into negative cases also (Glaser & Strauss, 1967).

In grounded theory, theory generating is an inductive process. Coding bridges the pivotal connection between data collection and theory generating, through which, the researcher makes sense of data by finally transforming data into theory. "Coding means categorizing fragments of data with a short name/label, or in concise terms that summarizes and accounts for each piece of data" (Charmaz, 2006, p. 43). It shapes the analytic frame, from which my analysis was developed.

Critically adopting Charmaz's social constructivist grounded theory approach (Charmaz, 2006), I progressed through three main coding phases: initial open coding, focused coding and theoretical coding. The lower the level of coding; the more descriptive were the categories which developed. With the progress of analysis, the lower level of categories was integrated to form the higher level of categories, which were more abstract, until the theoretical model crystallized. Coding with gerund is a strategy to capture process and stick to the data and action central (Glaser, 1978).

### ***Initial open coding***

In this preliminary stage, coding was conducted line by line, sentence by sentence and moved onward to incident-by-incident, etc. This is the first step in moving beyond the concrete data toward analytic interpretation. As researcher, closely reading the transcripts, I constantly constructed my codes with my understanding of these data. I tried to keep codes precise, simple, substantive and contextual, rather than being too general.

To adhere to the principle of the grounded theory, i.e. data driven conceptualization, line by

line coding helped closely stick to the original data and avoid subtle information being overlooked. This was a way to maintain my researcher's stance as a naïve learner of the research topic and to avoid my preconceived knowledge too quickly coming into play in the analytical process.

Nonetheless, due to the nature of the research topic, participants' statements manifested in story telling fashion, sentences were often strongly context dependent, therefore the line by line coding did not always make sense. Coding based on a longer textual unit delivering a substantial meaning was still considered. There was a balance between the line- by-line coding and the longer textual unit coding.

Initial codes were constructed and defined in terms of what I read about data, which were strongly grounded in the data itself, reflecting participants' perspective and their tacit meaning behind their statements. Grounded theory coding is flexible; as a researcher I took a rather open stance, sticking to whatever the data suggested; and whenever an alternative way of coding came across, I wrote down all possibilities. The initial coding remained open to all possible conceptual directions for later exploration and discernment of its value in terms of the research topic, therefore initial codes are provisional and comparative (see Table2 as follow).

Participant's Quote	Initial open coding
He is a doctor working in France,	<i>Desirable profession (as a potential partner)</i>
who had typical French style and was romantic.	<i>Desirable personal style / trait</i>
He accepted my parents and cared them very much.	<i>Desirable quality: filial piety</i>
I even planned to bring him to my father in the hospital.	<i>Being satisfied, leading to further action</i>
Eventually he was conscientious enough to tell me he got a cancer, cured but not clear for sure.	<i>Acknowledging his conscience; Emerging health issue; Feeling unexpected</i>
So I was concerned of two issues i.e. How could we deal with it abroad if he had a relapse? my son and I both found French difficult to speak, you know? (laughing)	<i>Having two concerns 1.Potential challenge  2.Language barrier (Thinking of uncertainty of life and difficult adaptation)</i>
I said feeling was second to me at this stage	<i>Being level headed, thoughtful, Stressing her primary need ( in the 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage, Romance was no prioritized, being pragmatic...)</i>

Table 2. Example of initial open coding

### ***Focused coding***

Through the initial open coding, both relevant information and less than significant ‘clutters’ all emerged from lengthy narratives. My goal at this coding phase was to eliminate ‘clutters’ to allow the bones/meaningful categories to stand out, ready for being assembled into a working skeleton, i.e. for analytic interpretation toward theory generating.

Thus during this phase, the initial disorganized data was cleaned up; those bland, insignificant or irrelevant ‘clutters’ were sifted out from a large amount of data, and initial information became more organized, showing an analytic and potentially conceptual value.

Focused coding is a selective, directive and conceptual process, during which I started acting upon data and inputting more critical and analytic effort to understand participants’ actions

and process surrounding the research topic.

The initial codes that stood out as most salient, relevant, significant with analytic sense were retained; subsequently codes speaking to the homogeneity of a phenomenon were synthesised to form the most significant categories and subcategories through the phase of focused coding (see Figure 2 below).

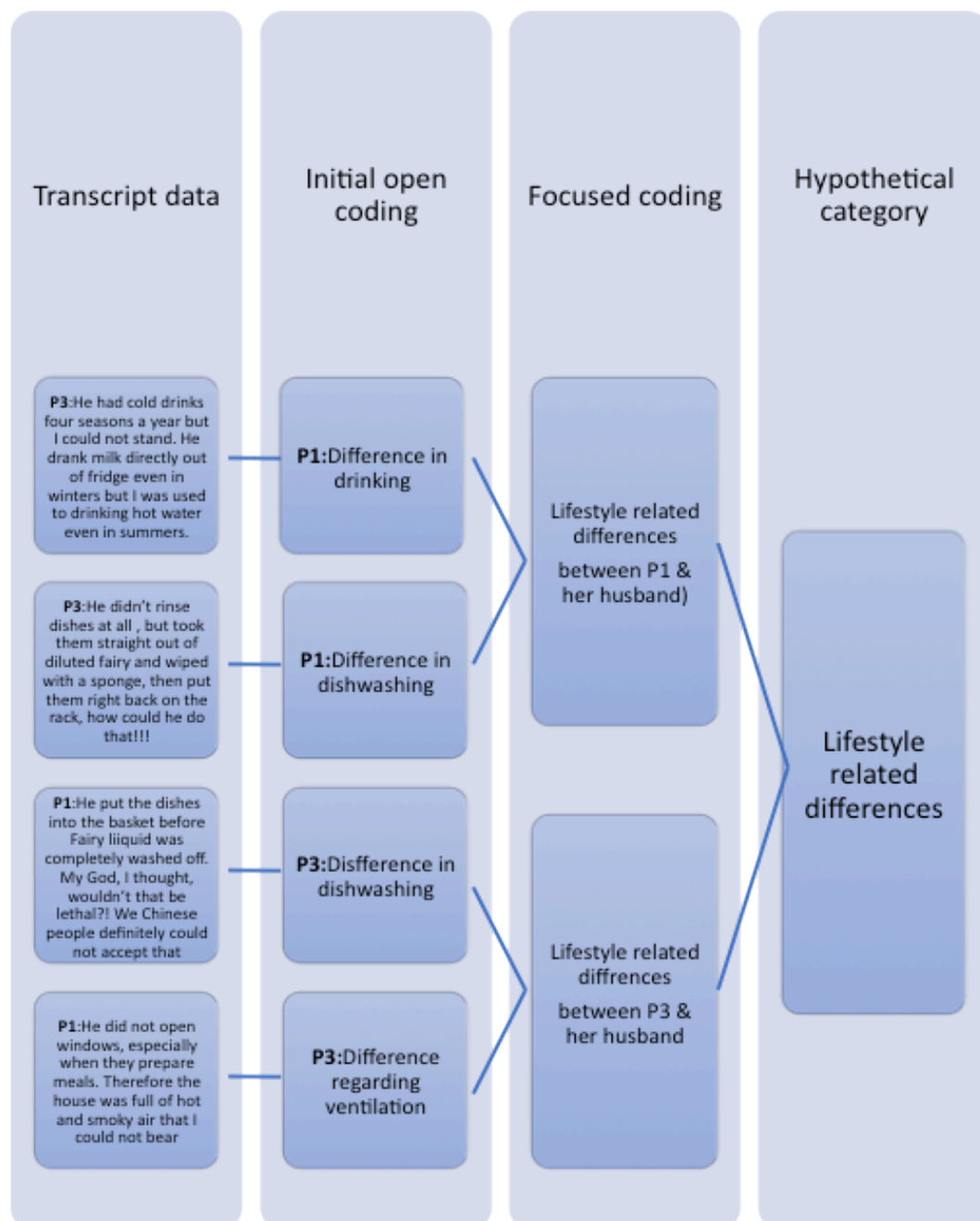


Figure 2. Example of coding process

### ***Theoretical coding and theory generation***

Grounded theoretical coding is not about sifting, sorting and categorizing / synthesizing data only, but heading toward conceptualization through constant study of the logical connections between categories. This is a sophisticated level of coding toward theory generating, where the researcher's interpretive understanding of data was involved.

Theoretical conceptualization began with the focused coding and proceeded throughout the theory generating process. This involved a constant comparative analysis about data back and forth within one interview and between interviews. This is a process to determine relations and connections between these analytical codes.

Due to the nature of this research, my interest resides on the processes manifesting how the marital relationship evolves over time. Participants generally described what happened in their marriages following a timeline. I first recognized that the progress of the relationships could be understood in the context of some stages, which were inter-connected and marked transitions or turning points of the relationships. I tried to identify and specify these, and then followed a back and forth comparative analysis between interviews to check the extent to which they were shared stages between my participants. This finally crystallized as the first core category of 'purposefully progressed stages', and then I looked into details of what happened in each stage of their relationships, described by the participants, and make logical connection between them, and stepped back out again to position this within a larger whole, whereby I identified the other three core categories in turn, i.e. 'good matches' (reality matched marital expectations and good compatibilities between the spouses); 'adaptations and problem-solving'; 'shifting contributions and power'. The emerging process was strongly

substantive and contextual (see Findings).

### ***Language sensitivity***

Some codes were carefully developed from participants' representative language/utterances.

In order to make sense of ambiguous statements, I went back to gain the participant's clarification, e.g. What do you really mean? Do I understand you correctly? This caution was retained during my interviews and coding and analytical process. However, this was also an interactive process. I discussed discrepancies with my participants if any until we reached congruence during the interviews.

Language plays a crucial role in this research; I was looking at both initial data in Chinese and translated data in English: sticking to the Chinese transcript was intended to embrace the participants' perspective as closely as I could, and observing the English translation was necessary to aid discussion with my supervisor and present my analysis in English. Regarding language sensitivity, it will be reflected on in depth in Discussion.

### ***Negative case analysis***

In quantitative research, "outliners" are discarded in the researcher's vision, whereas qualitative researchers take heed of exceptional or deviating cases to gain a more complete understanding of a particular phenomenon.

Negative case analysis is part of the analytic process in grounded theory approach. On one hand it helps with the credibility check of the emerging theoretical model, on the other hand, it provokes new insights, encouraging continuous sampling to reach theoretical saturation (Henwood and Pidgeon, 1992; Charmaz, 2016).

Those negative cases were generally manifested as follows within this research:



Firstly, a negative case may be understood as a demonstration of variety of a phenomenon. Alternatively, it indeed appeared to be an anomaly; however, if there was underlying account for the deviation, these were not really in conflict with my findings, rather in support of them. Finally, the analytic result from one of my participants turned out to always deviate from others'; there will be a dedicated 'Negative Case Analysis' in depth in Discussion. The remainder of deviating cases will be illustrated in Findings.

#### **2.2.4-5 Memo writing**

Memo-writing is crucial in the grounded theory method, which ran through my research process from beginning to end; therefore memo-writing itself in fact plays a part in my research process.

Charmze (2006, p. 3) suggests that "Grounded theory methods have an advantage that contains explicit guidelines showing us the process of the data analysis". Reading through my memos when the research was completed, I saw them as a manifestation of the meta-cognitive process, which recorded and documented how my research proceeded and how the theoretical conceptualizations were generated and developed.

There is no single rule to confine what Memo-writing should look like, what should be documented, and documented in which way (Charmaz, 2014). They are determined by the researcher to best serve the ultimate goal of generating theory. Memo-writing is the researcher's courtyard where I communicated with myself. Following my research procedure, I recorded everything that came to my mind, which was considered helpful, valuable and which could contribute to the intended theory generation. I used memo-writing to emphasize what was happening during the process of, e.g. research proposal, supervision, interview,

transcription, translation, data analysis including coding, categorizing, theorizing, etc. The central focus of Memo-writing was on the analytic process. With the opening up of the research, my thoughts were continuously provoked, I recorded inspirational thoughts whenever they emerged and constantly updated, modified, refined, articulated, sharpened them, even corrected mistakes, e.g. regarding the development of my research question, decision of the sample criteria, exploration and identification of the “process” my study intended, together with my insights into negative cases, etc.

Through Memo-writing, conceptual direction became clearer and clearer for me, some memos were completed in one go if they sufficiently addressed one issue; some had progressed through a gradually developing process, perhaps starting with a question, I then progressively developed my answer over time through my further understanding of the data. Starting with a naïve observer’s stance in the framework of grounded theory, without a preconceived direction of research outcome, it was through Memo-writing that I smoothly forged ahead with my research moving from initially rather scattered and fragmental data and no real understanding of this type of intermarriage (see Box 1-3. Example of Memo-writing as follow).

**Memo** -- 1. Honeymoon experience still mingled with homesickness

(Stage 5 - Engagement visa period)

## 2. Reflection on interpretative analysis grounded in data

### 1. Honeymoon experience still mingled with 'homesickness'

*Incident: P3 -p.25-26*

*Once regarding whether she should buy a kind of snack, her husband was surprised why she liked to have such kind of unhealthy junk food, she suddenly cried out in front of many people in the supermarket and frightened her husband*

*---Conflict and strong reaction*

*"I was upset and said to him " I have been in China for such a long time and my living habit is just like this. Am I not allowed to eat what I like here?"*

*---Feeling her life habit disrespected and controlled by her husband.*

*"I felt so wronged that I had given up my job and left family to come here, how could you prevent me from eating what I like, and it was but a snack, oh, I felt so wronged."*

*-- Feeling imbalanced between her commitment and self perceived ill treatment.*

*"Probably because I had left home and changed living environment and faced up to different things around me, so when he suddenly said something discordant, I exploded with feeling of being ill-treated and I had homesick."*

*Self interpreted conclusion—Underlying homesickness*

*She reflected on her exaggerated reaction and suggested the real trigger might be the underlying homesickness and the feeling of being controlled, and her automatic thought was "I gave up my job and left family to leave for you, which was such a big commitment, how could you be so demanding and criticize me for such a small thing etc".*

*Deep down, probably there was some level of profound concern or loss, as she articulated further "if that happened in China, it would mean nothing" but it triggered her enormous reaction in the UK.*

### 2. Reflection on interpretative analysis grounded in data

*For me, during the life transition period in her unconscious mind, there tended to have some accumulated and covert emotion, which was unshared and suppressed, that could be accounted for by 'displacement reaction' by Freud.*

*However in grounded theory, the researcher does not interpret participants' hidden meaning. P3 reflected and analyzed and clarified the hidden drive by herself, thereby I still grounded my analysis in data.*

## Box 1-3. Example of Memo-writing

## **Chapter 3: Findings**

### **3.1 Presentation of findings**

The presentation of the research findings will begin with an overview of findings, and then move forward to the introduction of findings in detail, in terms of the identified categories and subcategories following a sequenced timeline. Finally, the findings will be integrated into a theoretical model.

Due to the nature of the data, i.e. it is presented in a story telling fashion; appearing discursive and meandering. To best serve the purpose of explicit presentation within the word limit, the findings will be illustrated and supported by a balanced combination between verbatim citation from my original data and summaries of my participants' accounts. Where some findings involve overlapping information, they will be presented by way of cross-referencing to keep the presentation succinct.

### **3.2 Overview of the findings**

Marriage is a tangible entity manifesting itself into a process, especially for this particular group starting with Internet-dating and proceeding from the virtual world to marriage in reality. It is processual.

My participants shared similar feelings about their marriages by highlighting the following expressions; e.g. "lucky", "happy", "content", "better life", "positive change", "rewarding", "appreciative", "worthy of effort and investment", etc.

Regarding the participant whose marriage did not seem to work well, and whom did not seem to be as satisfied as other participants with her marriage, as many aspects turned out to deviate from others; this will be presented as a dedicated Negative/Deviant Case Analysis in Discussion.

The findings showed that this particular type of intermarriage can be understood through the following two mingled processes: 1) a relatively factual process, generally shared by all my

participants in terms of a sequenced timeline (chronological line), that also involved a social-psychological process, which illustrated what their lives appeared to be 2) what the couples did in the process, how they responded to the events, environment and reacted at different stages of their relationships. The former and the latter go hand in hand, forming the complete picture of intermarriage of this particular group.

Four core categories were identified as a result, providing a holistic view regarding how the intermarriage between Chinese wives and Caucasian husbands starting with Internet-dating evolves over time from the Chinese wives' perspective.

1. Purposefully progressed stages
2. Good matches: Reality vs Marital expectations, and good compatibilities between couples
3. Adaptations & Problem-solving
4. Shifting contributions and power

The first category *purposefully progressed stages* as the basis is at the heart of the core categories. The following illustrates a figure of the four core categories indicating their relations.

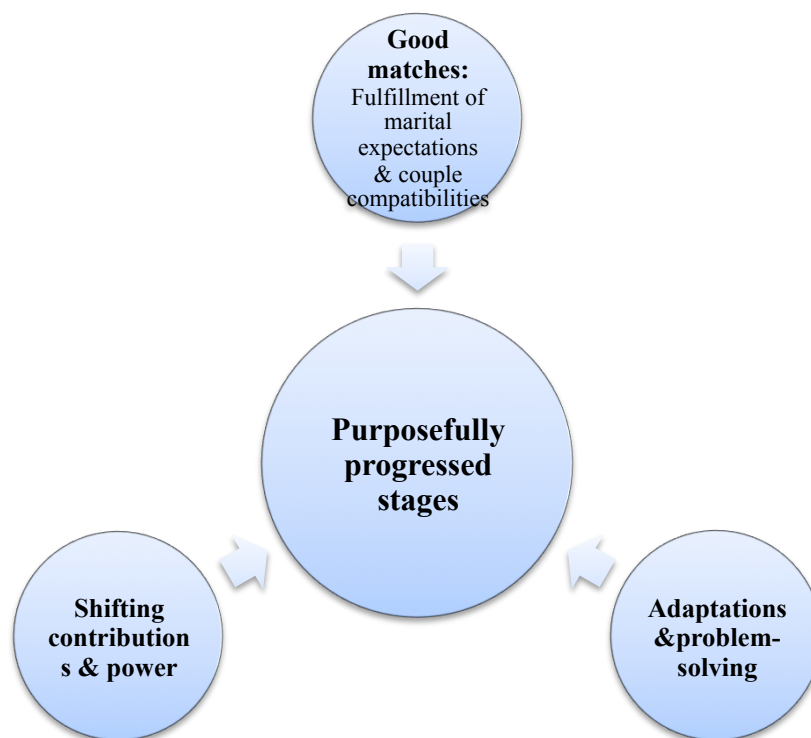


Figure 3. Connection of four core categories

As these categories illustrated above are inter-connected with one another, to some extent there is some overlap regarding the content in each category. In the final section of the Findings, a theoretical model will be presented to integrate the categories and subcategories as a whole, where the logical connections between the core categories will be introduced as a summary of the marital process.

### 3.3 Category 1: Purposefully progressed stages

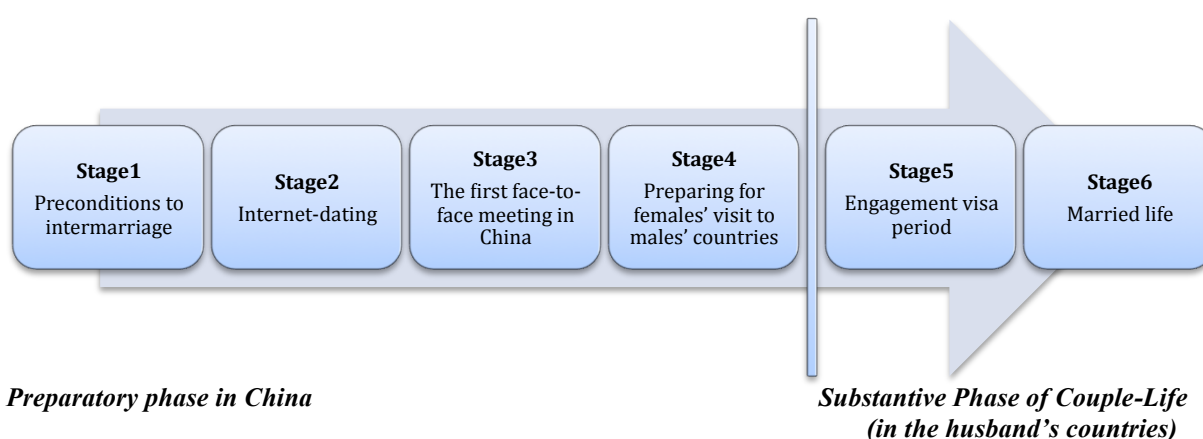


Figure 4. Category1: Purposefully progressed stages

Indicated in Figure 4 above, six stages were identified and disseminated in two main phases, which followed in China and in the husbands' countries in turn. The former is the preparatory phase toward the marriage; the latter is the phase of substantive couple-life together. These couples purposefully proceeded with their relationships stage by stage toward their goal of marriage.

## Preparatory phase in China

### 3.3.1 Stage 1: Preconditions to intermarriage

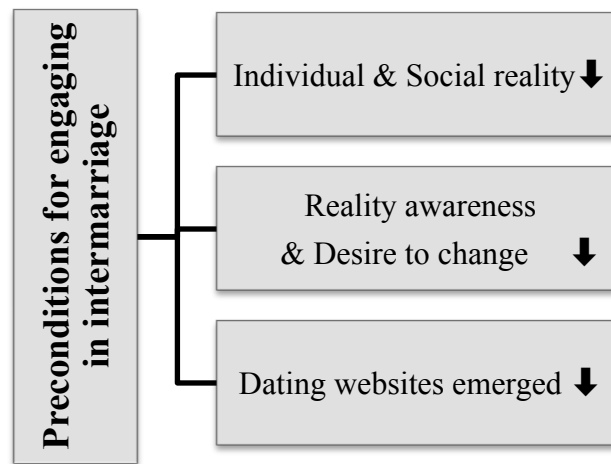


Figure 5. Stage 1

#### Individual reality and social reality

##### *Individual reality*

In general, participants found themselves in the following life situations prior to Internet-dating:

Poor educational background, unsatisfactory job, relatively narrow social circle to find a partner (P1 & P4), substantive responsibility for elderly parents (P1, P2, P3 & P4), voluntary or involuntary unemployment (P4, P1), divorced with or without a child (P2, P3), together with the “perceived” disadvantage of middle age (P1, P2 & P3).

P1 described her circumstance at the time:

“I was only a high school graduate. I used to be a shop assistant in a rice store... In a state - owned company, there was little chance to make friends...I was immediately unemployed soon after the “grain coupon” was lifted, struggling to find a new job, financially had to support my parents.” (1138-1139)<sup>1</sup> “Hearing that I was a ‘shopping assistant’, they disliked my job, and were unwilling to associate with me” (38-39). “Some government staff was too condescending to get in touch with low level people, like me” (1135-1136).

P2 realised she entirely underestimated the negative impact that her divorce had upon her son, e.g. loss of father role, poor school performance. In addition, the mistress of her ex-husband had been continuously disturbing her life. Therefore she was eager to change her living environment owing to concerns about her son, i.e. looking for a decent father role and peaceful life and healthy environment (p. 2).

### ***Social reality***

These individual circumstances cannot be understood separately from China’s social reality, i.e. negative bias toward divorced women, especially those with children. These women are considered to have difficulty in re-marrying; additionally, the derogatory term “leftover” was used for Chinese women over 27 years old and still single<sup>2</sup> (see background information in Chinese Wives’ Perspective in Research Question Development in Chapter 1). Chinese men were perceived as paying undue attention to a woman’s age, physical attraction, marital history and whether the woman had children, etc.

For instance, P1 described her experience with Chinese men:

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<sup>1</sup> In this thesis, all the verbatim citations from my participants’ narratives will be referenced as the number of lines indicating its location in the transcript, e.g. 1138-1139; for those summaries from the original narratives of my participants will be indicated by page numbers, e.g. p.2.

<sup>2</sup> In China it is widely known that single women between the age of 27-30 are called Leftover, those between 30-35 are called Advanced Leftover, whilst those between 35-40 and onward are called Permanent / Ultimate / Hopeless Leftover (Fincher, 2014).



“I am average looking, many Chinese men overlooked your inner world, but focused on your appearance only” (37-38).

“Chinese men were not satisfied with me, and I was rejected by them as always” (1185).

P3 had been divorced for eight years, ever since she could not find a partner and was feeling hopeless and almost lost her confidence and quit the idea of finding a partner in China (p.1-3).

### ***Reality awareness & desire to change***

The participants were aware of this reality, i.e. they experienced unsatisfactory life circumstances. They perceived themselves as unpopular with Chinese men and felt rejected and had little opportunity in China’s marriage market. At the same time, Chinese men did not appear to meet their expectations either (see Partner Choice in Stage 2), thus my participants desired change, which led to their attempts at Internet-dating to re-boost their lives.

P4:

“I was not as busy as before in a relatively empty and free period. I found my life exhausting and it consisted of nothing but work and earning money, meaningless!” “My workload was laid off all of sudden ...and I thought I needed to change the way of living” (1172-1175).

P1:

“Having not had a serious relationship, I still held my dream and a strong belief in true love” (p.2).

In the meantime, my participants’ husbands shared the similar preconditions for intermarriage (see Category 2: Good matches).

### ***Dating websites emerged***

As my participants desired to change their unsatisfactory lives, a novel resource, i.e. dating websites, supported their efforts shortly after Internet-dating arrived in China around the year 2000. P1 got to know about dating websites by chance; P3 was encouraged by her cousin, who found her husband through a dating website and P4 once helped those service users on

the dating websites with their English translations, and therefore got to know about the websites.

My participants were open and hopeful, and self-determined to try this medium, e.g. P1 described herself as being “Unlike others, I won’t feel inferior, it was nothing... (she meant being belittled by Chinese men and then trying Internet-dating) I still dream of true love and marriage. I’ve got a dream in my heart and want to make it real” (40-41).

The preconditions to intermarriage could be summarized as follows:

*Unsatisfactory life status (reality) → desire to change: 1) little opportunity for finding a partner (spouse) in China 2) Chinese man is not the ideal partner (spouse) choice → Dating websites emerged*

### 3.3.2 Stage 2: Internet-dating

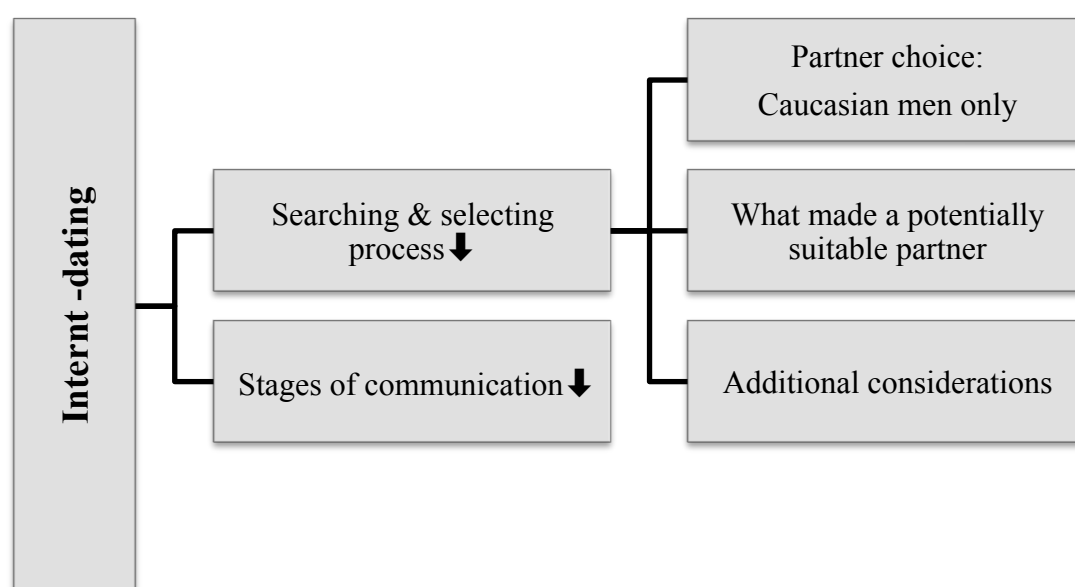


Figure 6. Stage2

## **Searching and selecting process**

My participants showed clear awareness of what they expected from their husbands and marriages, and intentionally selected those men who met their desirable criteria from the very beginning (see Category 2: Good matches).

This process was characterized by careful and thoughtful searching and selecting, except for P4 who initially joined a dating website to improve her English.

### ***Partner choice: Caucasian men only***

Internet-dating broadened my participants' minds considering interracial partners. My participants generally framed their partner choice among Caucasian men from UK, European countries or North America.

Beside the aforementioned social reality in general, i.e. the perceived unpopularity and disadvantage in the marriage market of their intra-group (home country), they did not think Chinese men were desirable partners in meeting their personal aspirations of life and marital expectations.

For example, P1 desired a lifestyle traveling around the world. This dream developed when she was young (p.2). P2 was eager to change her living environment by leaving China for her son; additionally she perceived that only western men can generously accept and well treat her son whom she had with another man (her ex-husband) (p.2-3). After years and years of effort, P3 could not find a partner among Chinese men for 8 years following her divorce. Her cousin was married to a British man and they were happily living together in the UK, this demonstrated a good model of inter-marriage for her (p.1). P4 felt no chemistry with Chinese men who focused only on career, business, success and making money. She had limited conversational common ground with them, and they were not like-minded and not congenial with her (p.1-3).

### ***What makes a potentially suitable partner?***

#### *Searching criteria*

Through photos and basic information in personal profiles on dating websites, and then through emails and online chatting, my participants screened off those males whom they did not have a good impression of, and only became acquainted with those very limited numbers who met their threshold.

Here follow some examples of my participants' first impressions of their now husbands:

P1 said "What he wrote was pretty down to earth, he said: ' I am a DIY man, enjoy travel bla bla...' made me feel real, authentic" (80-82).

The smiling of her husband impressed P3, which she interpreted as an indication of a kind person.

P4 described her husband as interesting, fresh and special; his hobbies of horse and dog racing particularly appealed to her by contrast with Chinese men who only focus on business and money making (p.5); she also appreciated that he paid attention to environment protection.

#### *Age:*

Age was a factor, which my participants particularly mentioned; there is a pronounced disparity in age between the spouses, i.e. young wife and older husband.

P3 articulated that the accepted husband's age for her could be up to 20 years older. In reality, P1, P2 & P3's husbands are 19, 12, and 12 years older than them in turn, with the exception of P4 whose her husband is one year younger than her.

P2 pointed out "I was affected by my previous experience, now he had to be honest, better not too handsome and a bit older" (227-228).

P3 expressed " I don't know if it's related to "Electra complex" since he (her father) passed away at an early age. I simply felt that the man older than me could give me the sense of

security. My ex-husband is of the same age with me and I think him extremely childish” (575-578).

This age difference preference largely derived from their previous marital experiences with their ex-husbands of the same age. They perceived that the same age correlated with immaturity, to which the failures of their first marriages were partially attributed. Generally, my participants desired maturity and a sense of security, apart from P4 whose husband who was one year younger than her and was seen to be “cute and energetic”, which was what she liked. However, what my participants desired was the maturity and sense of security underlying age, but not a physically old man. P2 articulated that initially she was disappointed, as “he looked a little old” (348), whereas P1 and P3 emphasized that meeting their husbands in person, they did not physically feel there was a big age gap at all.

Besides age, P3 added “I look at picture first, age second, and profession third to decide if I should chat with, professionals were desirable for me, e.g. professor or medical doctor” (208-209).

#### *Husbands’ marital history and children*

To ensure they were available or ready for a relationship, participants were also eager to know their husband’s status, e.g. being single or divorced, whether stepchildren were involved, and their purpose for being on the dating websites.

For example, a stepchild would be a concern for P2, as she prioritized the man who could entirely take a good father role for her son. Thus “I knew he had no children, which was most important!”(507-508). P3 noticed her husband’s marital history of being twice divorced, and with the added factor of two stepsons. Ideally she wished to find a man who had never married and was without children; particularly as she thought it would be a challenge being a stepmother.

### *Looking for serious relationship toward marriage*

Besides the aforementioned basic screening, only those males with the same goal of looking for a serious relationship toward marriage could be considered for further contact; e.g. P1 said “If he had told me that he had no intention to marry, I would have immediately stopped getting in touch with him...You know I had been already 38 years old and could not afford to just play and have fun there. I seriously wanted a marital relationship and wanted a family” (87-90).

P2 also highlighted that those who appeared to be ‘playing tricks’; would be immediately screened out. Participants all made it clear that their goal was dating towards marriage at the very beginning, to avoid wasting both their time.

### ***Additional considerations***

Besides age, P2 emphasized that she did not marry for physical attraction in her second marriage, as she partially attributed her ex-husband’s extramarital affair leading to divorce to his “good looks”. Therefore appearance was not important; perhaps less than good looking would enable a safer marriage (p.12). She highlighted that she completely adjusted her search criteria accordingly by looking for maturity and reliability and down to earth older men. Previous experiences with Chinese men tended to have an indelible impact on my participants’ partner selection.

P2 also tried to avoid some potential challenges which a certain choice of partner might bring about, e.g. she parted from a French man who had potential health issue, to avoid the possible risk of soon becoming his carer; although she was aware that he was a perfect and very desirable partner who was good looking, romantic and financially very secure. For easier life adaptation for both her and her son, she also prioritized men from English speaking countries.

Furthermore, P2 valued the man’s filial piety; only those who were able to understand her concern about her elderly parents would be considered a good match.

## **Stages of communication**

### **1. Personal profile on dating websites**

First impressions were generated through personal information, statements and photos posted on dating websites, but there was no interactive communication at all.

### **2. Exchanging emails**

The couples exchanged information freely by email, which enabled them to know more about each other beyond the given information on the dating websites. There was still no 'instant' interaction.

### **3. Audio and video conversation through chatting software on computer and phone calls.**

It was a more private and convenient communication whereby relationships became more real.

The stages of communication resulted in substantial progress, i.e. relationships became one step more real beyond getting to know each other through written profiles on the websites, to hearing their voices and then seeing vivid images. For example, P1 suggested: "We started our communication by typing. Successfully applying a Skype ID, one day we logged in there...We both felt unbelievable that all of sudden we met, it became more real. And then I said to him: 'ring me, ring me!' " (102-105).

### 3.3.3 Stage 3: The first face-to-face meeting in China

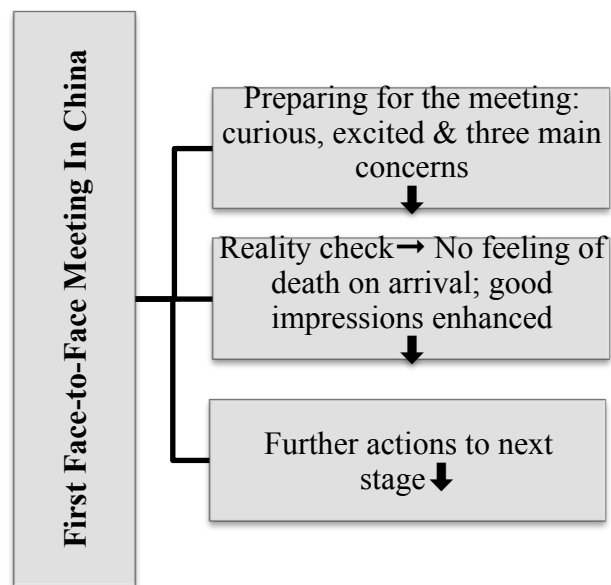


Figure 7. Stage3

It was the husband taking the initiative to propose the first face-to-face meeting; this was a significant step leaving the “virtual world” for real life contact and a milestone event for the relationships of my participants.

#### Preparing for the first meeting:

Feeling curious and excited; mingled with three main concerns

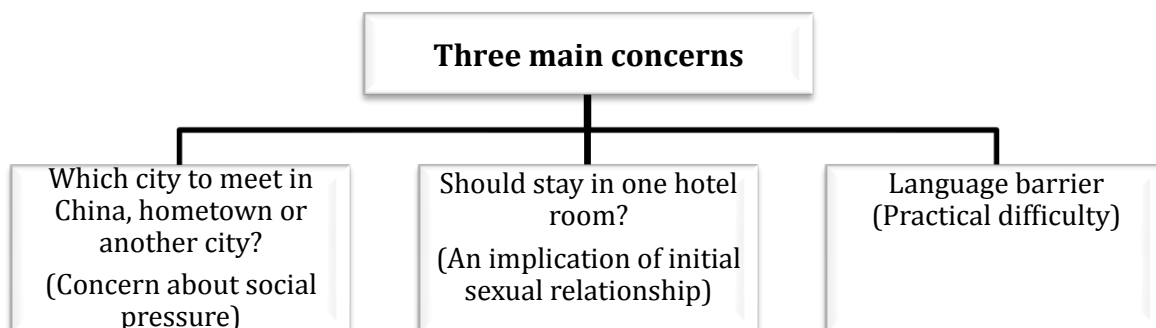


Figure 8. Three main concerns (before the first meeting)



### ***1.Which city to meet in China? – (concern about social pressure)***

P2 & P3 chose to meet in another city, they explained they were concerned that if the relationship could not continue, they would have felt it difficult to face up to their families and friends, and therefore preferred to keep this initial meeting private.

This concern was associated with potential social pressure regarding how people viewed Internet-dating, when it was still a novelty and a sensitive topic to many Chinese.

However, P1 & P4 still met their husbands in their hometowns and did not seem to have this concern. This could be attributed to the fact that their family ties and social circles in their hometowns were relatively simple, especially P4 who had left her hometown and lived in another city in China for many years.

### ***2.Whether to stay in one hotel room? – (an implication of initial sexual relationship)***

This implicated in an early engagement in sexual contact for my participants.

If the relationship could not continue, accidental pregnancy would be a concern, as P1 explained “As a single mother without a societal acknowledgement, I would be looked down on by others” (p.40). Besides, she felt she still needed to know more about her husband, e.g. whether he had a complicated sexual life, which caused him health issues, such as venereal disease. As a 38 year old virgin, she was also afraid of her inexperience with sex, whereas P3 worried that too soon an engagement in sexual contact would challenge her understanding of women’s decency and serious relationships; “Is it too thoughtless to live together first time when we meet? (she meant sleep together). After all Eastern women are relatively conservative” (186-187). “I was concerned because I was not that kind of easy woman” (195). However, advised by her friend, P3 took a different perspective towards looking at the possibility of sex happening during their first meeting, i.e. it was necessary to thoroughly check the man whom she falls in love with, including his sexuality, in case he experiences sexual dysfunction (p.7-8).

In essence, it implied an underlying trust issue and uncertainty of their relationships at this stage. It also demonstrated my participants’ caution in progressing the relationships. Through

open and outspoken communications, all these men showed their complete respect by leaving the choice to my participants, and were willing to book two hotel rooms. Owing to this respectful stance, all my participants chose to stay together with their partners and felt naturally comfortable to break through the physical barrier to having sex. It started with a concern, but turned out to be a good result, which was a relief, and the couples became closer.

### **3. Language barrier - (Practical difficulty)**

The face to face meeting required instant communication in English; it was a stressor for my participants whose English was poor.

In addition, P1 added “There was a measure of anxiety, as I have never met with a foreigner, not to mention talking face to face” (113-114).

### **Reality check**

The primary purpose of the first meeting was for a reality check, to see to what extent the initial good impressions and feelings developed through Internet-dating were real. Besides, they explored other aspects, which they could not do through Internet-dating.

Participants particularly wanted to know about the financial status of their prospective partners. They tried to find out at an early stage to avoid starting off in the wrong way, but in a discrete manner, e.g. my participants observed whether the man was generous when spending money; P1 noticed that her husband frequently travelled; P2 said that her husband booked 5 star hotels and demonstrated a demand for comfortable accommodation.

Regarding their first meeting, P1 suggested that they were like old friends who had not met for a long time, very much enjoying all conversational topics (p.6), whereas P3 was touched by small details, e.g. her husband offered his seat to the older persons and young children on the underground, picked up waste and litter in the tourist destination of the Great Wall in Beijing, carried bags and looked after her always when they travelled together” (p.7). She

thus commented: "My husband is a real gentleman...Really, there was nothing displeasing, ...He smiled as always, no difference from my first impression through his photo" (255-256).

"He is honest keeping the way he is...I found he was exactly the same as I knew from the website. He made no disguise before, hid nothing" (135-136).

P2 was impressed that her husband showed her documents concerning his property and proof that he had a decent job (319, p.12/). "He was honest, reliable and financially competent, he did not play tricks" (295); and he particularly touched her by the fact that he showed his concern about her ill father (p.11).

***Outcome of the reality check:***

***No feeling of 'death on arrival'; good impressions enhanced***

My participants felt everything progressed naturally and comfortably. The relationship was not a love fantasy ending up with "death on arrival" <sup>3</sup> (P3-133). Initial good impressions were enhanced, and more positive attributes of their husbands were discovered, leading to better impressions.

In the meantime, all these Caucasian men showed their satisfaction with my participants; no disappointment was experienced. All participants indicated that following their first impression generated through Internet-dating, their husbands were further impressed by their physical attraction; with the exception of P2, who felt momentary disappointment: "After all he was good in all aspects except being old. But it seemed I couldn't find anyone better" (269-270). However, she explained that she soon realized what she wanted from the second marriage: "Be down to earth and pragmatic...condition is more than love and appearance" (161-162, p. 6).

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<sup>3</sup> This is a verbatim translation from the initial transcript in Chinese; this means the couple 'falling in love' through Internet-dating suddenly lost their love or feeling of love when they first met in reality.

### **Further actions to the next stage**

The first meeting resulted in the following actions

1. The couple confirmed the relationship and decided to continue
2. Both agreed to unsubscribe and leave the dating websites. However, the relationship was not solid, and any signs of unfaithfulness would challenge the newly established trust and consequently deter these cautious and sensitive wives from moving forward.
3. Males made a proposal for females' to visit their home countries.

After the first meeting, the couples became closer; regular contact continued as routine. Their conversational topics became more private and intimate, which tended to be more relevant to their personal lives and families; and more concrete for the mutual goal of preparing for their life together. There was increased mutual care and understanding.

P3 suggested: "Our topic was closer... Both of us aimed to marry and it was serious. I started to miss him and expected to talk with him online each day, a different feeling now... Sometimes he would ask about my family condition, for example, the daily life and hobbies of my family members, but he particularly wanted to know me, in order to be ready for living together in the future" (213-222).

### 3.3.4 Stage 4: Preparing for females' visit to the males' country

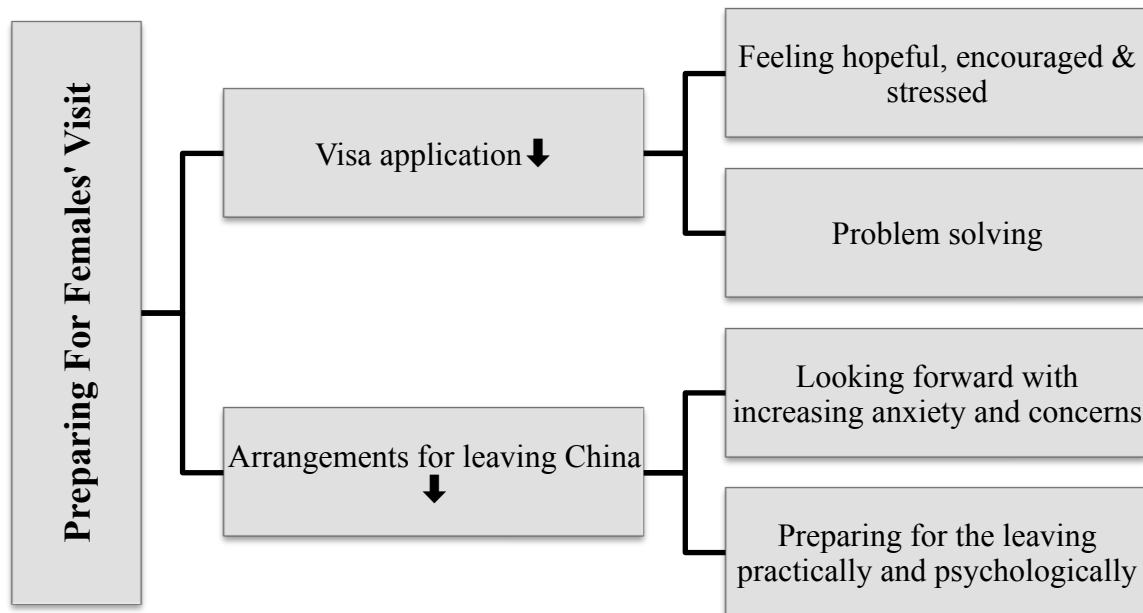


Figure 9. Stage 4

#### Visa application

This involved the engagement visa/fiancé visa (6 month residence permit after arrival in the UK and in Sweden)

After the first meeting, following the proposal of the female's visit to 'forge ahead' with the relationship, the visa application became an immediate task, with the exception of P2 who only agreed to the visit after the 2<sup>nd</sup> face-to-face meeting, due to her cautiousness.

My participants generally felt encouraged, hopeful and to some extent stressed. By and large the stress stemmed from practical difficulties in the visa application to "get things done" at this stage (P1, p. 8).

### ***Problem solving and implications for relationship***

The visa application process presented as a significant obstacle or difficulty in proceeding with their relationships, for example P1 had experienced extreme frustration with the application process and was rejected three times by the British Embassy in China, thus, her experience involved three applications, an appeal process and additional associated costs (p.8-11).

Although not all my participants had this difficulty, it depended on immigration policy and individual circumstances.

P2 attributed her good luck with the visa application to her advantage in English proficiency and having a good profession as a college teacher, otherwise the visa application process could have been more complicated.

P3 's husband paid a solicitor to complete the visa application, making it a smoother process. Visa application was superficially a practical issue, but P1 stressed that her husband's confidence in their relationship and his encouragement to motivate her not to give up were factors in easing the process. They shared the difficulties in visa application and shared the happiness of the final success, which strengthened and enhanced their relationship; bringing them closer together and enabling them to cherish their relationship more (p.12).

### ***Arrangements for leaving China***

This refers to the arrangements for my participants and for their elderly parents' settlement, which allowed participants to leave their homeland with inner peace and without concern.

### ***Looking forward and increasing concerns and anxiety***

Whilst happily celebrating their impending life together on receipt of their visas, participants also reported increasing anxiety at the prospect of leaving their home country and their customary way of life.

The anxiety was associated with the following concerns:

1. Risk taking: practically it involved participants' decision to resign their jobs and make good, practical arrangements for their elderly parents (P2 & P3).

2. There was a time pressure to decide whether to marry within the visa permitted period.<sup>4</sup>

Again, these concerns implied the uncertainty of the relationship and the uncertainty of the future.

P3 suggested: "In fact I felt that all the true challenges appeared before I came to the UK, and I had many concerns in China". "To tell the truth, it was the biggest challenge in my life" (85-86), which could be summarized as follows:

1. Living in China for years, can I get accustomed to the life in the UK, especially in a foreign country, which I have never been to and spend the rest of my life with a man whom I just got to know?

2. If this relationship cannot go well; if love as a fantasy and the initial passion has gone, I may find it hard to ground myself in the UK with my complete independence, but I had resigned my job without a fallback (p.22).

During the interview, looking back to that period, P2 was even amazed by her courage to leave. She reported "Once I had a nightmare that immediately after landing, he drove me to a slum like place! " This was further clarified by her "it was probably a sign of my potential worry leaving for a strange country " (495-496).

However, P1 and P4 showed much less concern about leaving, this could perhaps be attributed to their status, i.e. neither worked in a status of 'involuntary' or 'voluntary' unemployment respectively. P4 had left her family and was living in another city alone for many years; therefore they did not face the decision to resign their jobs (P1& P4) and leave her hometown (P4).

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<sup>4</sup> According to the immigration policy at the time, the engagement visa permitted six-month-residence in the UK, within which if the visa holder married, she would have two-year visa extension; otherwise she needed to leave the UK. However, in Sweden, getting married was not an only condition to get the visa extension, the status of co-habitation could also be accepted.

### ***Preparing practically and psychologically for leaving***

In preparation for leaving, the husbands all went to China again to meet their wives in their 'hometowns' for two reasons, 1) To meet the participants' family. 2) To take these wives to their home countries in person. In doing so, P3's husband explained (as recounted by P3):

"There ought to be a ritual and a promise to your family since I take their beloved one so far away from them. I need to tell them I am serious and save them from worrying. So I must go there to pick you up, besides I simply won't leave you in the long journey alone." (324-327)

P2's husband gave her and her family great financial support (See category 3 & 4). In short, these husbands tended to bring my participants a sense of security before their leaving. This was seen to be a sign of care and commitment by the participants, and was therefore strongly appreciated. The exception was P4, who flew to Sweden alone. She explained that her husband had financial difficulty, but he borrowed money from his mother to pay for her flight ticket.

In order to relieve concerns and leave China with peace of mind, P3 reflected on the lessons she learnt from her first marriage and recognized her growing capability of dealing with the new relationship. P2 purposefully made self-protection plans. "The chosen period coming to the UK was the school summer holiday, if the relationship could not go right, my son and I would have gone back to enable my son to catch his new school semester ... I applied for a credit card and saved a large amount of money in it before leaving for the UK, which I kept secret from him. I gave the card to my son to keep and said to him: 'We can use the money to buy tickets back if things cannot go well'. So, we came to the UK this way" (478-482).

This preparation for their life together is both practical and psychological, involving mutual efforts.



## Substantive phase of couple Life

(in the husband's country)

### 3.3.5 Stage 5: Engagement visa period

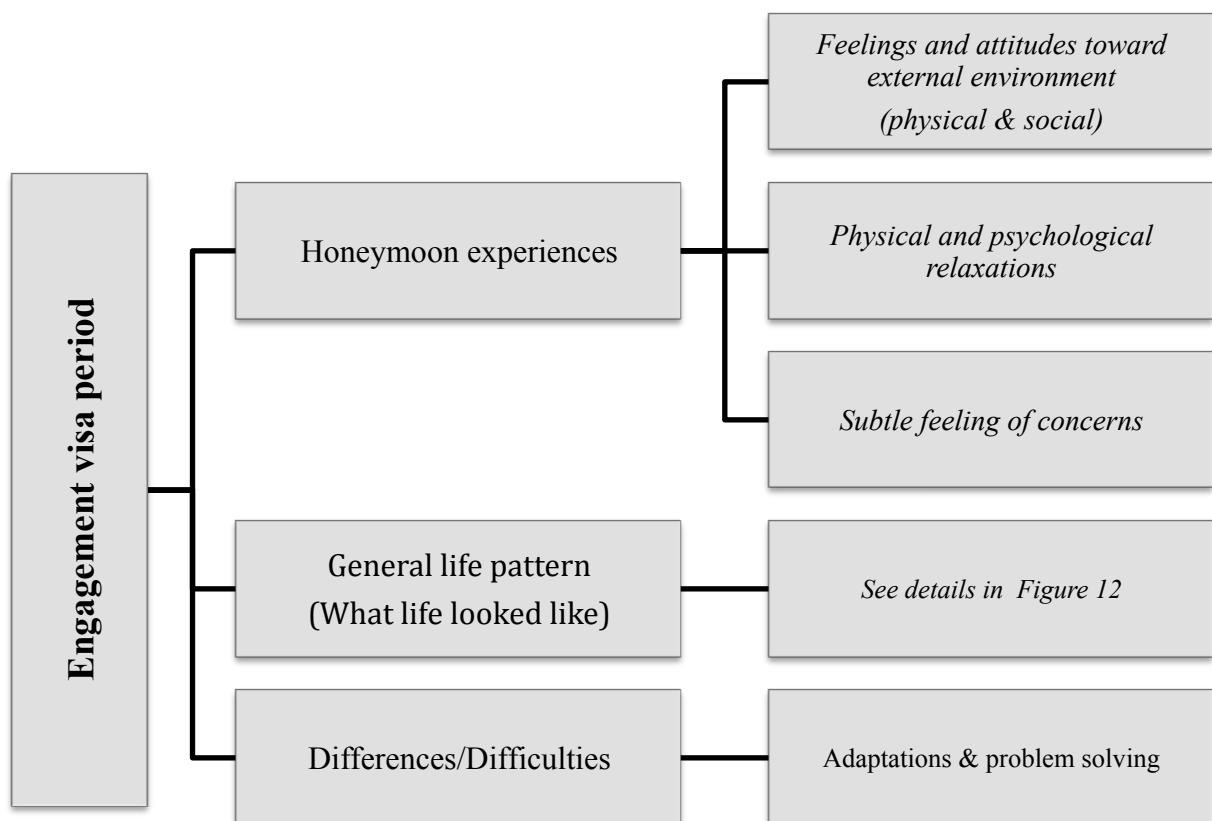


Figure 10. Stage 5

By and large, this is a period between participants' arrival in the husbands' countries to the point of getting married.

This is the first period of couples' lives together, mainly to test whether the relationship can progress towards the goal of marriage. Participants all encountered honeymoon experiences during this stage, which also mingled with some lifestyle related adaptations.

### 3.2.5-1 Honeymoon experiences

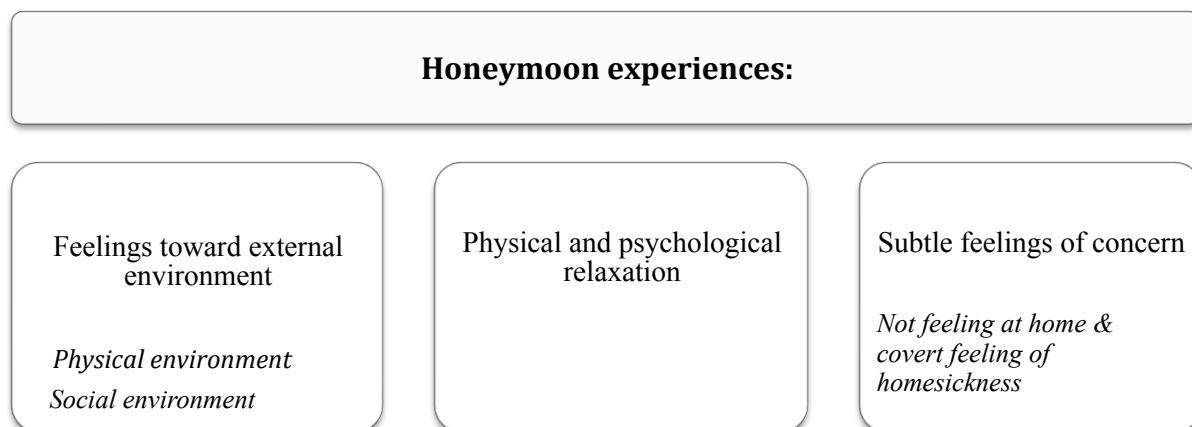


Figure 11. Honeymoon experiences

#### ***Feelings and attitudes toward external environment:***

All participants showed a great similarity in the positive experiences directly following their arrival in the husbands' countries, onward to the early stage of their marriages. These honeymoon experiences are characterized by their feelings, which they described as "curiosity", "freshness", "excitement" and "appreciation" of the external environment (physical and social) and their physical *and* psychological relaxations. In general, they described the first period of couple life as "all good", "perfect" and "extraordinary".

My participants stressed that there was no gap between the reality and their expectations, apart from P3, who suggested that "reality was better than I had imagined" (435). It is noteworthy that the participants always described their experiences in contrast to their lives in China.

*1. Physical environment impressed my participants by its friendly environment and serenity.*

P4's portrayal is representative:

"I remember it was in July 2009 when I saw green forest once I stepped off the plane. I thought the environmental resources were so well preserved in Sweden!" (162-164).

"And I liked to walk around alone and thought what a good environment it was to see foxes, squirrels, rabbits and deer on the road. It was so beautiful that I almost wanted to cry" (209-211).

Conversely, the environment in China was unanimously described by my participants as "busy", "noisy", "polluted", "environmentally unfriendly", "the food unsafe", etc.

*2. The social environment impressed my participants with its good social welfare system and local people who were seen to be kind, simple and not superficial.*

P4 shared the details that she was at ease with in Sweden as there was no worry about children's education, medical treatment and care of the elderly. She appreciated certain elements, e.g. the maternity leave with full salary and tax exemption. By contrast she would not have felt safe and secure unless she was married to a rich man in China (230-236 / p.9). Compared with the Chinese, she felt the Swedish were less superficial having much less interest in luxury and brand products ... Life was easy and simple in Sweden (p.8 -10).

P3 highlighted that the friendly and safe environment even changed her, i.e. "I used to avoid talking freely with strangers in China since you never knew if there was a trap, so I dared not. But after I came here I gradually realized it was pretty normal... Later I even took the initiative to say hello to strangers and enjoyed that" (334-337).

P4 particularly appreciated that the Swedish always saw paying tax as their obligations and had no intention for tax evasion.

### ***Physical and psychological relaxation***

Suddenly faced with the reality of no work, no financial struggles, freedom from stress, sleeping until natural awakening, no unduly heavy responsibility for parents and a large family, all my participants unanimously accentuated that they felt lucky to have such relaxation and liberation from their previously stressful life in China and enjoyed their very quiet lives.

P2 explained: "I was busy with my English teaching class all day and got very tired in China. After I came here, no pressure to work, life became easy for me. I often didn't know when he (husband) left for his work in the morning... I had nothing to worry about... I just felt I like the way I lived, say sleeping until natural waking up every day" (518-521).

P4 stated:

"Life was in no hurry, I felt so good to lead a life like a retired one. There was such great contrast to the pace of life in China! I almost forgot what was competition." (223,227-229) She then added: "I didn't like the job of tourist guide... Some clients hinted at me sleeping with them to get more tips as exchange, which made me feel wronged and indignant" (257-259).

Whilst other participants tended to focus on their previous stressful life to make a living, P4 also stressed her liberation from unreasonable family responsibilities: "I was exhausted and the pressure from my family was great"; "One child who had a better life circumstance, other relatives would take her support for granted and cling to him/her, the one would have full responsibility for everyone in the family." Her father even pressured her to marry to a rich man for money, therefore she strongly expressed: "I hate my life in China" (p. 10).

### ***Subtle feelings of concern: not feeling at home and covert feeling of homesickness.***

Although expressing their satisfaction, deep down my participants seemed to still hold some subtle concerns.

For example, P2 reported: “There was still a sense of being a stranger when I just arrived, I felt that I had arrived at HIS home, but not my place. For example, I did not touch his belongings except daily necessities...” (546-548).

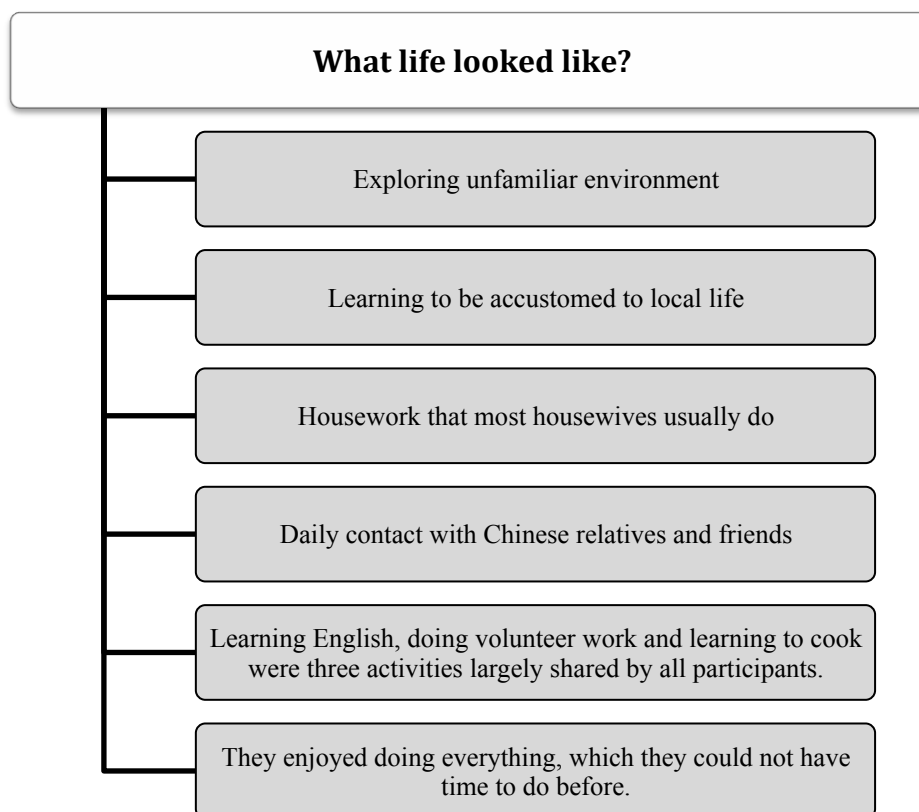
By giving an example of an unexpected and exaggerated conflict with her husband, P3 suggested perhaps it was a sign of homesickness in her un-conscious mind (604-642/p.23-24) (see Box 1-3. Example of Memo-writing for detail analysis).

### **3.3.5-2 General life pattern**

During this period, participants’ lives were characterized by learning to become familiar with the new environment and becoming accustomed to their new lives.

Furthermore, constrained by immigration policy (no work and learning course permit, visa required to travel outside the host countries), participants appeared to have limited life choices, showed rather similar life pattern during this period (see Figure 12), and had a strong dependence on their husbands to make arrangements for their lives. Nevertheless, with the honeymoon effect, all participants expressed that this quiet, simple and stress free life was “desirable”, “perfect”, “extraordinary”.

Here follows the summary of what participants’ lives appeared to be during this period (see Figure 12).



*Figure 12.* Life pattern in stage 5

What P3 described was representative of the participants' life patterns during this phase:

Sleeping until natural awakening; she spent a large proportion of time making contact with her mother everyday via QQ (widely used chatting software in China) on the computer, especially talking with those Chinese women in intermarriages living in the UK, including her cousin married to an English man, as she was eager to know more about life in the UK and learn from their experiences. At the weekend, her husband drove her around to explore different towns and cities and took her for friend and family visits, dining out and enjoying other entertainment together, such as camping, picnics and watching films. P3 also took a volunteer job in a local charity shop, to improve her English and make social connections; and to learn more about local customs and culture (p.16-18).

In addition, P4 said: “ I now have plenty of free time for reading, listening to music, doing anything which I could not manage to do when I was in China. I felt music had never sounded so lovely” (225-227). This view was shared by other participants.

### **3.3.5-3 Lifestyle related differences between the couples emerged**

All participants noted that they realized there were lifestyle related differences with their husbands soon after their life together began. Differences resided in everyday life, such as diet/food, using air ventilation and heaters, dishwashing and vegetable washing and attitudes toward pets. None of my participants perceived these as difficulties. However, adaptations and problem solving were involved (see Category 3: Adaptations and Problem-solving)

Besides the lifestyle related adaptations, language as one of their difficulties remained almost throughout their marriage.

### 3.3.6 Stage 6: Married life

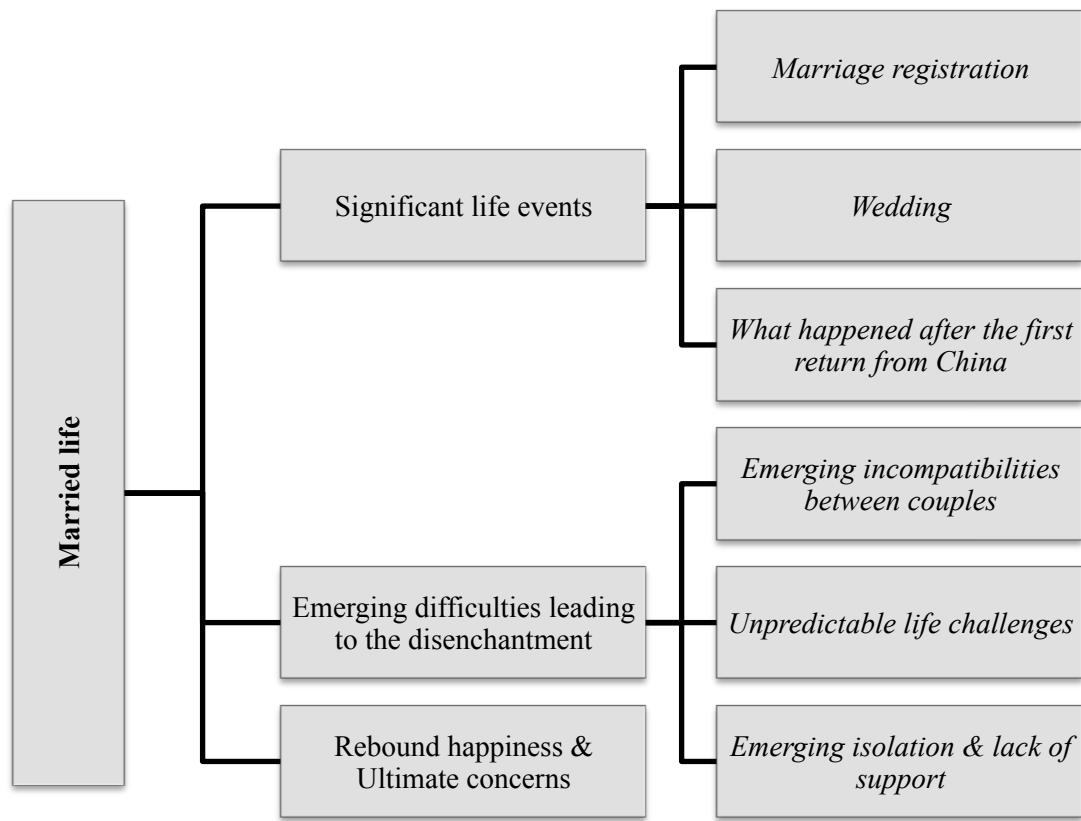


Figure 13. Stage 6

#### 3.3.6-1 Significant life events

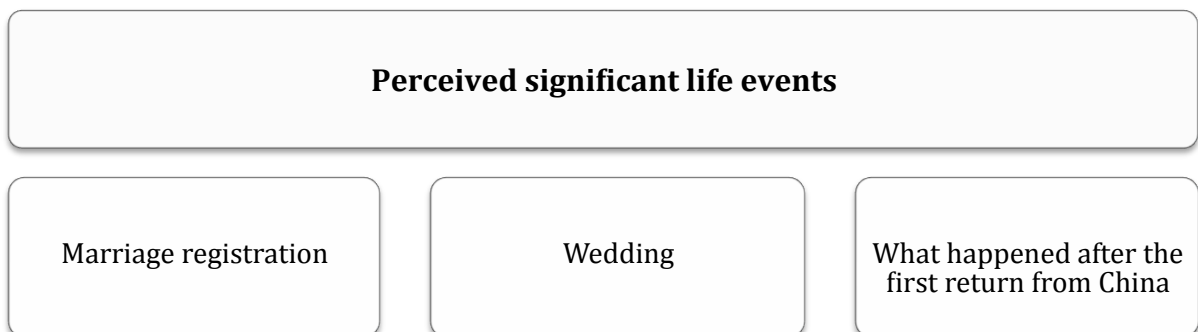


Figure 14. Significant life events (Stage 6)



### ***Marriage registration***

In terms of immigration policy, within a 6-month period of the engagement visa, whether to marry had to be decided. However only 2-3 months after living together, participants married. As they explained, these men proposed the initial visit as they already generated thoughts of marrying them. It was more to do with whether these Chinese women intended to continue the relationship (P2 & P3). The exception was P4 in Sweden, who married when reaching the maximum 6 months of her residence permit, as the immigration policy was different <sup>5</sup>

### ***Wedding***

Seeing the wedding as a necessary event, generally the couples both preferred to keep it simple (P1,p.13-14; P2, p.22-23; P3,p15; P4, p.4).

They each perceived traditionally tedious ritual as banality, based on their shared values and compatible expectations, thus they were a good match in this regard (see Good Matches), e.g. P1 & P4 mentioned they were blasé about a big wedding, preferring to spend money on ensuring good quality of everyday life. P4 even felt relieved to marry a Caucasian man, which allowed her family to escape from a banal marriage ritual, and saving her relatives from the burden of sending her a dowry.

### ***What happened after the first return from China?***

Soon after being married, generally there was a common need for the Chinese wives to return to China, as when they came to the husbands' country, whether to marry was still in question. Since marrying, the future became clear; they returned to China to prepare for the long-term life in the husband's country. The substantial stage of marital life started only thereafter. The update of visa status objectively broadened their life choices and facilitated their active life engagement <sup>6</sup>, i.e. my participants were able to be accepted to attend formal

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<sup>5</sup> Unlike the immigration policy in the UK, there was no time limit for the decision to marry in Sweden. Following the Engagement Visa, the Visa Extension is possible to continue cohabitation.

<sup>6</sup> Two-year visa extension was received after being married, and then followed by the Indefinite Leave To Remain according to the UK immigration policy during the time. In Sweden, the pertinent policy is similar. For my participants, this meant work permit and allowance for attending formal learning or training courses

learning courses and permitted to work; and it also meant more convenient travel across countries. Thus the participants started to plan their long-term life and tried to settle down. This was in contrast to the previous period to some extent, where they lived like a guest or outsider.

P1 & P3 immediately attended a formal language course to improve their English to enable them to pass the must-pass exam of Life In The UK for permanent residence. It was perceived as a big hurdle for my participants, whose English was poor.

P4 started to learn Swedish from the outset. P2, being a former English teacher had no language difficulty; she attended a professional training course to rebuild her new career in preschool education.

In the meantime, all participants had continued doing volunteer jobs, mainly to improve their English, make social connections and to mesh into local culture and custom.

### **3.3.6-2 Emerging difficulties leading to disenchantment**

#### **(adaptations and problem solving involved)**

The honeymoon effect sustained until the early stage of their marriages. Over time, the initial honeymoon experiences started to fade, and less than perfect reality emerged giving rise to feelings of disappointment, frustration, loss, loneliness, and stress. This finally affected their feelings of marital satisfaction.

The difficulties in this stage can largely be encompassed into the three categories below. However not every participant experienced difficulties in all three categories. On the other hand, these difficulties were sometimes intertwined and acting upon one another.

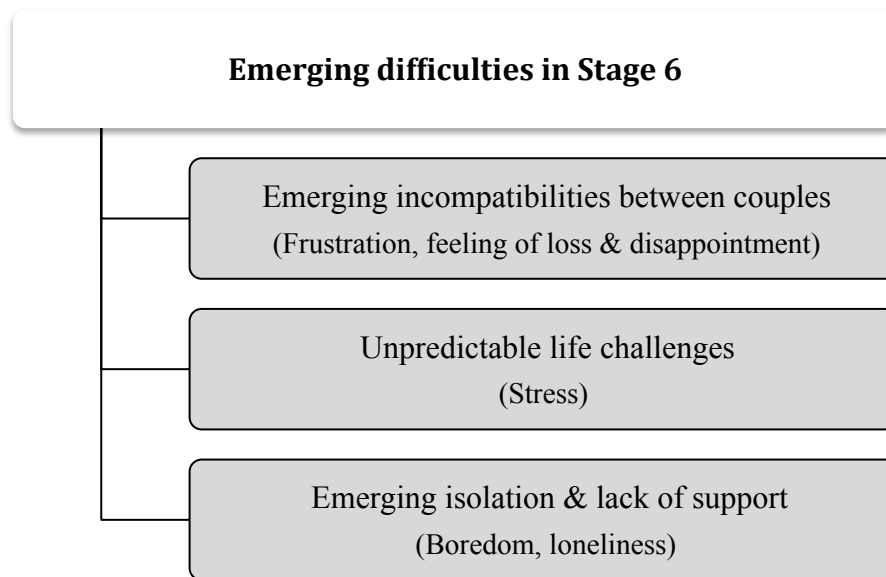


Figure 15. Emerging difficulties (Stage 6)

**1. Emerging incompatibilities between couples**  
***(frustration, feeling of loss and disappointment)***

My participants started to see incompatibilities with their husbands, which mainly resided in individual hobbies and interests (P2, P3 & P4), conversation topics (P2 & P4) and life aspirations (P4 as a negative case).

***a. The lack of common hobbies and interests***

For example,

P2 explained:

“He is amused to watch very old films, but I am not interested at all” (1025-1026)

“I watched TV drama produced by China one episode and another (laughing), and he watched football matches and his TV programmes such as old films... So we had no common interest “ (822-825).

“We seldom went to exhibitions or festival events. After all life is plain...” (1089).

"I do not like his way of spending holidays, namely lying beside a swimming pool everywhere he went, I liked to tour around" (927-928).

P3 shared her experience:

"He likes watching sports programme... I am not interested, especially I know nothing about rugby, and some games are not popular in China" (565-567).

*b. The lack of shared conversation topics*

P2 reported:

"So we got less common topics. Actually, we did not talk too much so far. Certainly, there was a sense of loss. For example we were not like couples falling in love at an early age and sharing common interests. They had many in common, but there was little between him and me" (818-821). "If I have any disappointment with the marriage, it is the difference in interest and hobbies and little common language (she meant conversation topics), thus less passion in my eyes." (996-998).

The following is noteworthy:

P1's experience was an exception, as she did not report any incompatibility, but highlighted that they were a perfect match as they enjoyed doing everything together (772), whereas P4 perceived these incompatibilities as insurmountable. Underlying different life values also brought about financial difficulty, thus continuously challenging her relationship (This will be thoroughly discussed in the Negative Care Analysis in Discussion).

In between, both P2 & P3 realised they lacked some common hobbies and interests. P3 was not bothered by these differences at all; she added that this was perhaps because her husband showed his sensitivity to their differences by compensating her with more care and trying to explore other activities they could enjoy doing together. In contrast, with less support from her husband and accepting the differences, P2 applied more personal effort in finding

alternative ways to enjoy her time alone, therefore she still felt fine (see Category 3: Adaptations and Problem-solving).

## **2. Unpredictable life difficulties (stress)**

At this stage, my participants started to encounter unpredictable life difficulties, which mainly manifested as elderly parents and husband's health crisis, thus substantive care responsibilities ensued. Unexpected financial difficulty presented as another issue.

P1 spent a significant part of her marital life accompanying her husband who was diagnosed with a terminal disease, whilst he 'fought against death'. This continued until he passed away.

Besides the challenges of looking after the hopeless "patient" as his carer, less than proficient English and limited supporting resources in the UK made the journey extremely challenging for her.

P3's mother was diagnosed with a terminal disease. It was not only an emotional challenge but also a huge responsibility of care. At the final life stage of her dying mother, she had resided in China, looking after her mother for over 6 months. Her husband had started his private business in the UK and therefore could not move to China. She even mentally prepared for divorce due to the long-term separation (see Extended Family in Category 3: Adaptation & problems solving).

P2 faced financial difficulty paying for a better education for her son. As her husband could not sufficiently support paying for the additional tutor, she had to return to the job market (this will be detailed in Child in the Category 3: Adaptations and Problem-solving; and Category 4 Shifting Contribution and Power).

### **3. Isolation and lack of support (boredom & loneliness)**

In contrast to the honeymoon experiences, my participants started to realize their very quiet provincial life was not as favourable as they initially thought. Daily Internet surfing and regular routine life at home started to be not enough to fulfil their life; and the lack of friends and their own social life became an issue. This constrained life increased their expectations about their husbands' support and their dependence on their husbands. The lack of sufficient support furthered their helplessness and loneliness, especially for P2 & P4.

P4 stated:

"You see it was too quiet for me to stay somewhere like a rural place alone. I was secluded and like a place for retired people... It was totally different from the rich and hilarious life in China" (494-497). On one occasion they had an argument, as she was annoyed with her husband who was addicted to computer games when she kept talking: 'I was bored and lonely.' Walking out in the rain alone and crying, she found nowhere to turn (p.14).

"Without my own life and friend circle, I put more hope on him and hoped he could be more sensitive to my needs and understand my difficulty..." (505-507/ p.19).

#### **3.3.6-3 Rebound happiness & ultimate concerns: Identity, cultural belongingness and uncertainty of future**

##### ***Rebound happiness***

Having been through continuous life adaptations and personal development, the participants appeared to have gradually gained their ground outside their home country. By and large they passed the language hurdle, developed new careers, were socially more engaged, had increasing financial freedom and life choices, therefore their dependence on their husbands reduced, and their self-confidence increased.

Regaining control of their lives, my participants experienced a rebound happiness following the stage of disenchantment.

For example, P4 reported: "I feel much better now, for I am proud to have taken English, Swedish, Swedish middle school and professional caring programmes and found a job... With less dependence upon him, my life becomes more active, and this helps me in the end." (975-978)

### ***Ultimate concerns***

Paradoxically the increasing self-life control in fact facilitated my participants' reflection, i.e. what really concerned my participants was not about everyday life difficulties or relationship with their husbands, but the emergence of profound loss: deep down, perhaps these losses were about identity, cultural belongingness and uncertainty of future.

P2 reported "I get on well with British people and can make friends. I did not, just like other Chinese immigrants, merely stay in the Chinese community. However, after I am back and stay at home alone, I still have the feeling that I have not been truly integrated into the British society"(1134-1137). She felt those good friends whom she made in the UK were still superficial and could never be the same as her old Chinese friends (p.41). P4 expressed: "I came from a cultural group and entered another one... I am unable to deeply accept the new group, meanwhile extending distance with my original group. So, I am in the middle... Finally I understand that the greatest and fatal barrier is not language, but probably something related to culture. However my distance with him seems not cultural" (979-984) "I still feel floating... even if he is lying beside me. Like a wind, where is my home? " (988-991).

Given the current circumstance that her son started working, P2 was feeling that it seemed she had completed her mission in the UK. The idea of returning to China once even came across her mind. She also addressed " I was somehow worried about the future because of his (husband's) age given that he bears all the family expense. (1293-1294) She has a concern about her capability of dealing with life uncertainty in the UK alone (p.49).

### 3.4 Category 2: Good matches: Reality vs marital expectations & Couple-compatibilities

<b>Category 2: Good matches:</b> 1.Fulfilment of marital expectations (Reality vs marital expectations) 2.Good couple compatibilities	
Marital expectations:	1.Primary needs 2.Desirable lifestyle
Good compatibilities:	Similar preconditions to intermarriage Compatibilities in age, child, sex, and shared values and attitudes toward marriage, e.g. wedding, mutual appreciation. Desirable qualities in both husbands and wives.

*Table 3. Category 2: Good matches*

#### 3.4.1 Fulfillment of marital expectations (Realities vs expectations)

Participants showed a clear awareness of what they wanted from marriage and from their husbands. This can be evidenced from the very beginning, where they carefully selected the suitable partner in line with their expectations (see details in the Searching & Selecting Process in the Category 1).

##### **Primary needs to be met in the marriage**

P2's primary need of intermarriage was to leave behind her stressful life circumstances, i.e. the mistress of her ex-husband continuously bothering her in China; and her divorce which had an immediate impact on her son. Thus she decided to marry, and seek a good father for



her son. This purpose determined her searching criteria, e.g. the potential husband had to have no child of his own and be entirely willing to accept and treat her son well. Besides, she expected a man to have filial piety, who could understand “I was very filial and put parents needs on top utterly.” (165)

As a result, in P2’s marriage, what satisfied and comforted her most was that her husband was a good father, getting on well with her son and happy with the outcome that on graduating from university her son already found a job.

Her husband also touched P2 with very good financial arrangements for her parents before she left for the UK, and his concern about her ill father, which she perceived as a demonstration of filial piety, and nicely met her expectation (see Extended family in Category 3). Therefore she expressed: “It seemed I couldn’t find anyone better.” (370) “We were like some said “be married before falling in love. I had more gratitude than love. Gradually as time flew we had developed love, the kind of deep and long.” (632-634)

P3 was looking for a considerate and kind man with high sense of responsibility with whom she could spend the rest of her life (p.21).

As a result, she said: “I simply thought I had found the right one who perfectly satisfied me in every aspect.” (369-370) “It is just these details that make me feel warm.” (565) “I have never asked for anything, but each time he thinks it for me and does it for me in advance. He never calculated his gaining or loss.” (860-861) “He is always considerate... I really have no expectation gap or dissatisfaction so far.” (1120-1121)

### **Desirable lifestyle:**

For the participants having no experience traveling outside China before they married, and marrying a Caucasian man to settle down in his country partially meant marrying for the desirable lifestyle or environment, which the man could offer. This was generally part of their marital expectations (see Honeymoon Experiences in the Category 1).

P1 explained:

Travelling around the world was her dream, which was kindled by the most popular tourism TV program in 1980's in China, called Zheng Da Variety Show, introducing travel destinations worldwide. It was also sparked by her experience of seeing cruise ships taking visitors from all over the world sailing through the famous Yangtze River when she was very young (p.2). Thus in her husband's profile on the dating website, she was first captured by his message of "I enjoy travel..." (81)

In her marriage, worldwide traveling with her husband was a big part of her marital life.

Besides other desirable attributes in her husband, P1 declared: "I never thought of having a garden of my own, even in my dreams...so lucky. I could not have such a life in China. I am very grateful, especially as I had been over 30 year old" (579-581).

"Yes, yes! We hardly have any friction. I often told my husband that I was a lucky girl. If I have no dream, I would be just in China, just be an ordinary housewife. But now, my dreams are fulfilled step by step, including those I dared not to dream say travelling with my husband in caravan. Back to then I even didn't dare to have such dreams, but now my life is very lucky" (1141-1144). P1's martial expectations perfectly fulfilled, to some extent, it even counteracted the imperfect reality, thus she 'felt' nothing really dissatisfied her, she felt very content in her marriage overall (p. 42).

### 3.4.2 Good compatibilities between the couples

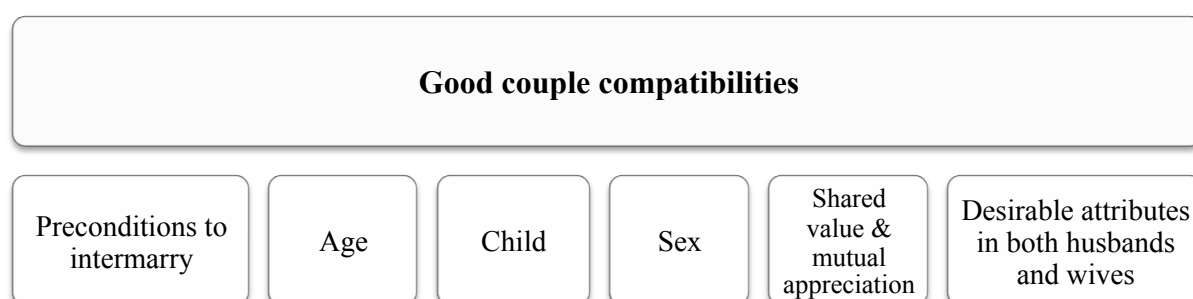


Figure 16. The aspects of good couple compatibilities

The figure above illustrates the major aspects where my participants had good compatibilities with their husbands, leading to the conclusion that they had found their 'Mr Right'.

### **1.Preconditions to intermarriage**

The pre-conditions of my participants to intermarry were elucidated afore. It was reported that their husbands were faced with similar circumstances, i.e. reaching the bottleneck of their unsatisfactory lives, these Caucasian men desired to change.

P1 explained: "when my husband woke up each morning, he would go to the garden for a walk. Suddenly he realized that his life was not supposed to be as boring as watching the garden himself, that he wanted to look for a new life. So he came up with the idea of finding a partner online" (3-6).

The wife of P2's husband passed away, he had long been suffering from sadness, loneliness and was even depressed, therefore he was craving for a life companion, especially one who was much younger and in good health.

P3's husband had divorced twice leading to a radical change, whereby he was eager to look for somebody "very different" to boost his life.

Besides the above, the couples each intermarried for some special attributes in their spouses which they could not easily find in intra-relationships, e.g. these Caucasian men felt it impossible to find a young wife among Caucasian women, whereas my participants were perceived to be unpopular for Chinese men (see Partner Choice in the Category 1).

### **2. Desirable attributes in both the Caucasian husbands and wives**

#### ***a. Desirable attributes in the Caucasian husbands***

*(the sequence does not suggest a priority order)*

The following personal qualities/attributes were strongly appreciated and valued by participants, which were mainly extracted from participants' original utterances.

<b>Shared desirable attributes in the <i>Caucasian husbands</i></b>	
Honest, kind, loving, reliable, responsible, thoughtful, faithful/loyal.	
<i>Generous</i>	<p>Generous praise for their wives  Financially generous  Generously encourage the wives to have their independent lives</p> <p>For instance,  <i>P1 said "he was so generous to praise me that touched me as always, but I never had such a lot of compliments and encouragements from Chinese men". She was also impressed that her husband encouraged her to learn to ride a bicycle for the convenient and active social life, in contrast to a Chinese man preferring his woman to stay at home.</i>  (p.21,p.17-18)</p>
<i>Respectful</i> <i>Tolerant</i>  <i>Appreciative</i>	<p>Respecting and tolerating individual differences, otherness and free-will, e.g. regarding their life choice of whether to have their own child (see Child in this Category 2)  Be able to appreciate their wives and their contribution to the marital life</p> <p>For instance,  <i>P2 appreciated that her husband expressed: " You don't have to change yourself, just be yourself, that's alright... I am happy so long as you are happy."</i> (p39)</p>

*Table 4.* Shared desirable attributes in the Caucasian husbands

***b. Desirable attributes in the Chinese wives***

*(the sequence does not suggest a priority order)*

Participants perceived the following attributes in them desirable for their husbands.

<b><i>Shared desirable qualities in the Chinese wives</i></b>
<p><i>Understanding, kind, caring, loving, committed;</i></p> <p><i>Thrifty, not greedy, not demanding, easily satisfied;</i></p> <p><i>Adaptive, strong;</i></p> <p><i>Being good at housework;</i></p> <p><i>Perceived physical attraction: looking young and beautiful.</i></p>

*Table 5. Shared desirable qualities in the Chinese wives*

### **3. Shared value/attitude and mutual appreciation**

Participants reported that they shared values / attitudes toward marriage with their husbands, and there were mutual appreciations of, even gratitude towards each other and their marriages.

P1 expressed that she felt so lucky to have a husband who was like-minded that they could openly discuss anything. P2 & P3 described having thoroughly reflected and learnt from previous relationships, and both they and their husbands held the same attitudes toward their 2<sup>nd</sup> marriage, i.e. they understood they could not afford to divorce again, thus were very serious, faithful and committed in the marriage.

Especially all these couples showed mutual appreciation of the positive changes, both in their lives and in themselves through their intermarriage, which gave rise to the feelings of being lucky and blessed.

P1 suggested: "I thought I was very lucky to be married to him! My life was truly different after marriage. He took me to a higher level of living." (1175-1177), whereas her husband was so surprised: "you were so capable, why Chinese men did not take you as wife, and left

such a good luck to me?” (561).

Due to the loss of his ex-wife, P2's husband said: “maybe I would already be dead if you were not married to me” (679); “I am no longer lonely, my life had a purpose now” (684).

In response, P2 expressed: “It seemed I couldn't find anyone better.” (370); “Because my previous marriage failed, I just felt that in the end there was someone who loved me so much, and pampered me” (643-644).

P2 further expressed her understanding that a good marriage was to bring out the best in a person and to overcome the bad, with mutual growth leading to a better self, e.g. she used to be a worrier, but her husband was simple, always optimistic, lived life carefree, which was contagious. She expressed the view that the Chinese tend to be too busy and anxious most of time, and unable to sit back to enjoy life. She has been learning from him (p.26). P4 appreciated her change due to her marital life by saying: “when I was back in China, friends all said I was less harsh and much calmer, perhaps due to the quiet environment and stress free quiet life. That was the change I liked” (491-493).

#### **4. Age**

Stated in Stage 1, participants were inclined to choose husbands who are much older for maturity and security seeking. They perceived that their husbands were very happy and even felt honoured to have much younger wives. For them ‘young’ meant beauty and vigour. Being able to have young wives gave rise to their feelings of bliss and luck leading to increased appreciation of their marriages. In addition, P2 said the ex-wife of her husband had died of a disease. A young wife also meant good health for him, as facing another loss would be another trauma for him. These husbands especially thought it was impossible for them to find such a young wife among Caucasian women (e.g. P1, p. 21; P2, p. 9), whereas these Chinese wives perceived their intermarriage as very good luck, considering their realities in China as stated before. The great disparity in age turned out to be a good compatibility between the couples.

## 5. Child

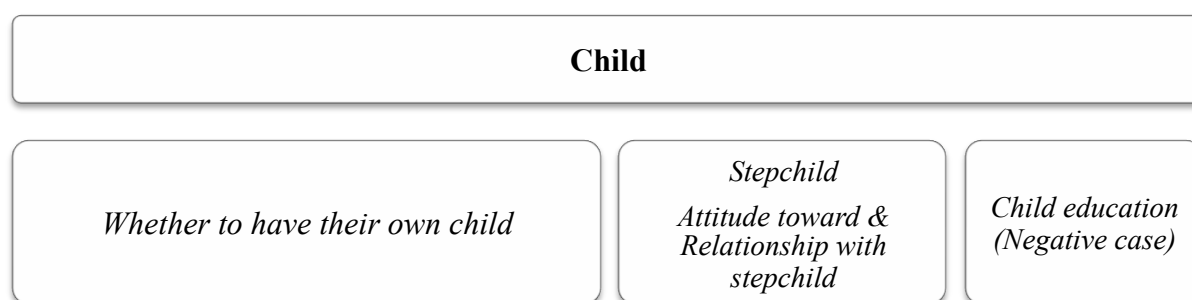


Figure 17. Child related issues

### a. *Whether to have their own child*

The major concern regarding children for this studied group of couples was to decide whether to have their own child. My participants all showed their “appreciation” and “gratitude” to their husbands, who were described as “respectful, tolerant and generous” in this regard. They often contrasted their experiences to the attitude of Chinese men toward the decision whether to have their own child (P1 & P4).

P4 expressed: “I did not want to have a baby, my husband was kind and he followed my decision... I would face the pressure of giving birth to a child if I was with a Chinese man. (524-526) “I was afraid of them... There is absolutely no pressure from my husband since he respects my free will all along.” (1165-1168)

Echoing their husbands, my participants also showed their openness and unconventional attitude toward the decision, i.e. they could accept marital life without a child, as P3 stated: “My life doesn’t have to be incomplete without a child.” (732) This has not been widely accepted by many Chinese yet. <sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> A woman without child is somehow seen to be incomplete, whereas Chinese men’s eagerness to have their biological child underlies the Chinese traditional ideology, and can be accounted for by Mencious doctrine/thought, e.g. BU XIAO YOU SAN, WU HOU WEI DA. Literally it means that there are three forms of un-filial conduct, the worst is to have no descendant. (Mencious is one of representatives of Confucian school)

Regarding the decision not to have their own biological child, the reasons varied. Whether it was a voluntary or involuntary choice (e.g. P1&P4 had no desire to have children whereas P2 and P3's husbands had lost their fertility), what really matters was that these couples were happy with their decisions without any struggle or concern. On the contrary, the participants generally felt lucky and blessed to find such a like-minded husband.

### ***b. Attitude toward stepchild***

Among the participants, only P2 had a biological child with her ex-husband. She felt wise and blessed to have such a husband completely accepting her son and getting on well with him. By contrast, she did not perceive that Chinese men could be as generous as her Caucasian husband financially, and emotionally treating her son as his own. To emphasise: "My husband even said he felt it a bonus to have my son after he was married to me (laughing)." (1244-1245) She greatly appreciated that her husband viewed her son's participation in his life filled the gap in his own life. This was a big comfort for P2, which even counteracted her disappointments in the marriage.

### ***c. Relations with stepchildren***

Among my participants, only P3 had stepchildren with her husband (p.4). Being a stepmother was seen to be a challenge for her at the very beginning, she worried whether she could get on well with the two "western adult sons" (373-391/p.14-15). However she was happy that "We have been together for so long without any dispute, we got on perfectly" (937) and even developed an emotional bond with them. She attributed the good outcome to her effort of mentally preparing for this challenge in advance; she tried to avoid biased and rejecting attitudes toward her stepsons, instead "being open, genuine, generous and heart to heart with them." (p.34)

She felt comforted with the outcome and sensed her husband's appreciation in this regard, which subtly facilitated their marital relationship.



In summary, generally there was no concern about the question of children for my participants, rather the common attitude toward children enhanced their positive belief in their partner choice that they were a good match. At a more concrete level, P2 felt her husband could not understand her attention to her child's education. However it turned out to be a surmountable issue, and did not raise real concerns. It will be explicated as a negative case as follows:

#### ***d. Child education***

P2's husband had a different opinion about children's education, which practically impacted his willingness to invest in an additional tutor for her son, in relation to his financial difficulties. This caused disappointment and frustration and required mutual adaptations and changes.

"I said I was afraid that my son would fail in the university entrance exam. He said let it be and if he failed, and then he could go to work." (1053/p38)

"I asked him what to do if there was no decent job, he said, 'how can you have such a thought? Any job could reward you so long as you work hard'. " (1056-1057)

" I always have the feeling that he does not understand me. So I speak to him impatiently: 'Oh, my god! You simply don't understand my feeling ' ." (1058-1059).

"He does not understand what a big accomplishment that we Chinese parents expect our children to achieve... He always says 'happy is enough'." (1060-1063)

"He does not take going to university seriously and a must. So, at the beginning he thought it unworthy of employing a family teacher for my son." (1069-1070)

P2 described herself as a typical "tiger mother"<sup>8</sup>(590) and attributed this conflict to both culturally related difference<sup>9</sup> and individual difference, i.e. the fact that her husband had no experience of being a father before their marriage.

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<sup>8</sup> "Tiger Mother" has become a well-known phenomenon, which speaks to an image of tough Chinese mothers who strictly demand from their child to achieve a high school accomplishment.

<sup>9</sup> There is a Chinese idiom: "Wang Zi Cheng Long", which literally means every parent wishes her/his child to become a dragon. It reveals Chinese tradition that Chinese parents have high expectation of

When P2's husband could not sufficiently support her with the information to find a tutor and was reluctant to pay for the tutor, P2 quickly adjusted her perspective to digest her disappointment, rather than exacerbate the conflict. She soon became a problem solver of her own.

Firstly, P2 actively participated in social events to make friends so as to gain more social resources to get help in finding a tutor.

Secondly, the financial difficulty in paying a tutor motivated her to go back to the job market. Thus she studied hard to get her qualification in preschool education and developed her new career. Finally, she successfully overcame financial difficulty without upsetting her husband.

Thirdly, she developed an alternative thought to understand the conflict: 1) She learnt to understand and accept her husband's limitations and self reflected on whether she was unrealistic in making demands on him. 2) She acknowledged and appreciated her husband's contribution to their marriage, as he was generally a good father.

Lastly her son has graduated from university and easily found a job. Her husband became proud of him. The fact of her son's accomplishment changed her husband's attitude towards additional spending on education. At this point, finally their mindset converged.

## **6. Sex**

Intermarriage is still relatively special and even remains mysterious for many Chinese. P2 pointed out: "Chinese people are particularly curious about your sexual life with a White man"(1193-1194). P1 disclosed that some of her Chinese friends tended to hold their stereotypes, such as "How about sex games by foreigners, can you get used to them?" (they meant sexual sadism & sexual masochism) (1183-1184), whereas P2 & P3 mentioned their friends thought White men had a stronger sexuality. All my participants tried to correct the myths according to their own experiences.

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their child's talent and achievement. There is a Chinese ancient verse "Wan Ban Jie Xia Pin, Wei You Du Shu Gao", which reflects the ideological tradition that the Chinese value education, knowledge and learning as a stepping stone to success and a bright future.

They articulated that their husbands superficially probably looked older than Chinese men at the same age, but physically appeared to be more energetic. Nonetheless they do not think race is a relevant factor leading to the conclusion that White men have stronger sexuality than that of Chinese men as outsiders suggested, e.g. P4 articulated: "I am satisfied with him regarding our sexual life. He is young and energetic, however I think it has nothing to do with his race" (1043-1044).

P3 added there was no age related dissatisfaction regarding their sexual life. On the contrary, it was her that has less sexual needs, and her husband was very respectful and never pushed (p24), her husband was physically stronger and healthier and appeared more masculine than Chinese men. (581-589/p.22)

P1 stressed: "I am not the kind searching for excitement and passion. He is similar because he has reached such an age...I am relatively old and touched this aspect (she meant 'sex') at a late time. I really don't ask too much (she meant 'sexual need'). Anyhow it's all about being happy together" (1211-1213).

In summary, sex was not perceived as a race and culture related issue, the great age disparity did not cause concern about their sexual life either. My participants were satisfied with their sexual life and defined this satisfaction as "a good match", i.e. a good match regarding sexual need, their expectation and understanding of love.

However it merits attention that P4, who is much younger than the other participants and even one year older than her husband emphasized: "Happy sex plays an important role for us to keep our relations for so many years. Personally I have stronger sexual need... This is one of the reasons I can't break up with him. I once left a man who did not meet my need of sex. So I am able to tolerate him although I am dissatisfied with him in many other aspects" (1047-1051).

By contrast, P2 implied a certain level of bland sexual life, which was compensated by other marital satisfactions through balanced thinking: "Again I accept that, I know what I want and it was quite normal to give up something for my son's sake. I can neglect this as long as the big goal is met"(1210-1211).

In summary, the findings showed that the marital process is a process of testing out to what extent the reality meets the marital expectations, as well as good couple compatibilities revolving around the intrinsic couple qualities, and issues regarding age, children, and sex. Generally, the extent of good matches contributed to the marital satisfaction of this particular type of intermarriage.

Moreover, the fulfilled expectations and compatibilities of the couples could counterbalance some marital dissatisfactions, e.g. for P2, she expressed that the satisfaction of meeting primary expectation (i.e. a good father role) had overridden the undesirable aging appearance of her husband and the lack of common hobbies and bland sexual life. Therefore, she still expressed her overall satisfaction. However marital expectations and couple compatibilities were not always perfectly met, and then participants switched to the mode of adaptations and problem solving, during which they showed shared personal strengths in dealing with differences, difficulties and uncertainties. This will be articulated in the following section.

### **3.5 Category 3: Adaptations and problem solving**

#### **3.5.1 Shared personal strengths**

**(it can largely be identified as individual attributes/personal traits as shown below)**

Participants showed the following shared personal strengths contributing to forging ahead with their relationships at the early stages, subsequently to the adaptations of their new lives and finally working through difficulties.

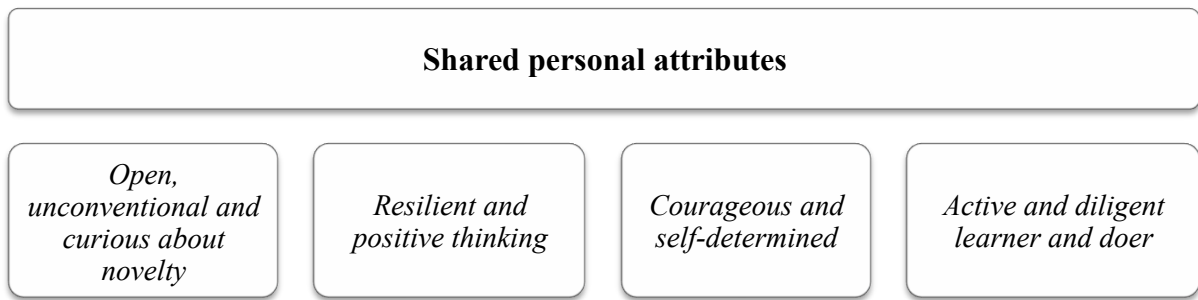


Figure 18. Shared personal attributes among the Chinese wives

#### 1. *Open, unconventional and curious about novelty*

Holding some traditional values, participants were happy with their role of family oriented housewife and the role of husband as breadwinner. However, their openness and curiosity about novelty and alien culture appeared to be more salient than their conventional side, e.g. making use of Internet-dating websites to change their lives, which was still a novelty at that time. They were delighted to be embraced by the new lifestyle and environment. Their attitude toward issues such as the wedding, and the question of children as stated above, showed they were rather open, which also meant to some extent they were rebellious toward their intra-cultural tradition, thus unconventional.

#### 2. *Resilient and positive thinking*

Participants tended to have a great capability of looking at things from different perspectives and to think positively. P3 stated: “I really think there is no big difficulty, because I think I had a good attitude that I took all the difficulties here as granted and welcomed my new life with this attitude. (706-711) “All the difficulties here are nothing compared to the pressure in China, so I can accept and face them all” (716-717), whereas P2 shared her attitude toward difficulties as follows:

“I am good at accepting the fact. Maybe some people like to complain about everything, it’s no use. You either change it or give it up. It seems that I always do things following my own course... I know what I want and it was quite normal to give up something for my son’s sake. I can neglect this (disappointment) as long as the big goal is met...” (1208-1211) (see the following section of Adaptation and Problem Solving for further examples and details).

### *3. Courageous and self-determined*

When facing friends’ doubt about the feasibility of Internet-dating, the compatibility with their older husbands, and the risks associated with leaving for an alien country and uncertain life, all my participants entirely followed their own judgement and inner feelings to proceed with their relationships and were less likely to be influenced by others’ values and comments. As P2 explained: “I was not afraid and if I could not handle it, I would just go back to China!” (477). “I was clear that once I made the decision I would take into action. Just like my divorce, though my relatives and friends tried to persuade me not, but I just couldn’t stand, I must do that if I want to.” (421-423); P1 expressed: “Unlike others, I won’t feel inferior, it was nothing, I’ve got a dream in my heart and want to make it real ” (she meant Internet-dating) (40-41).

### *4. Active and diligent learners and doers*

Living in an alien country, to adapt to the new life and situation, all participants demonstrated that they were active learners. Their learning was embodied in everyday activities such as learning to cook, to use a sewing machine, to ride a bicycle, and drive etc. It was also embodied in language learning and professional training to return to the job market.

P1 stated: “I keep feeling that I want to learn everything, to do anything. It is natural, unlike what someone said that it was a difficult gap to jump over in intermarriage living abroad” (404-405).

P2 pointed out: "Learning is not a problem to me. I can study up to the doctoral degree if it is required. So to me preschool education program is a piece of cake" (789-790).

P4 shared the same attribute, i.e. "I loved learning and enjoyed the process of it" (533); "I think I am good at learning...I am diligent and serious..." (466-467).

Participants were also active doers, as the outcomes demonstrated they achieved their goals through diligent learning and adaptations, e.g. both P2 and P4 are now professionally qualified and found jobs. Initially P4 could not speak Swedish and P1 knew little English.

During this process, my participants demonstrated their pronounced resilience to adapt to their new lives. These personal strengths are often interrelated or interdependent. Without these individual qualities, the intermarriage would not seem to be able to work. This particularly contributed to the adaptations and problem solving process.

### **3.5.2 Adaptations and Problem-solving**

Beyond the "good matches" addressed in the category 2, i.e. good matches between reality and expectations, and good couple compatibilities, the couples recognized there were still some differences / incompatibilities and difficulties between them, which required their adaptations and problem-solving. The following are generally identified areas where participants often had difficulties, followed by the presentation of adaptations and problem solving involved, which participants particularly specified.

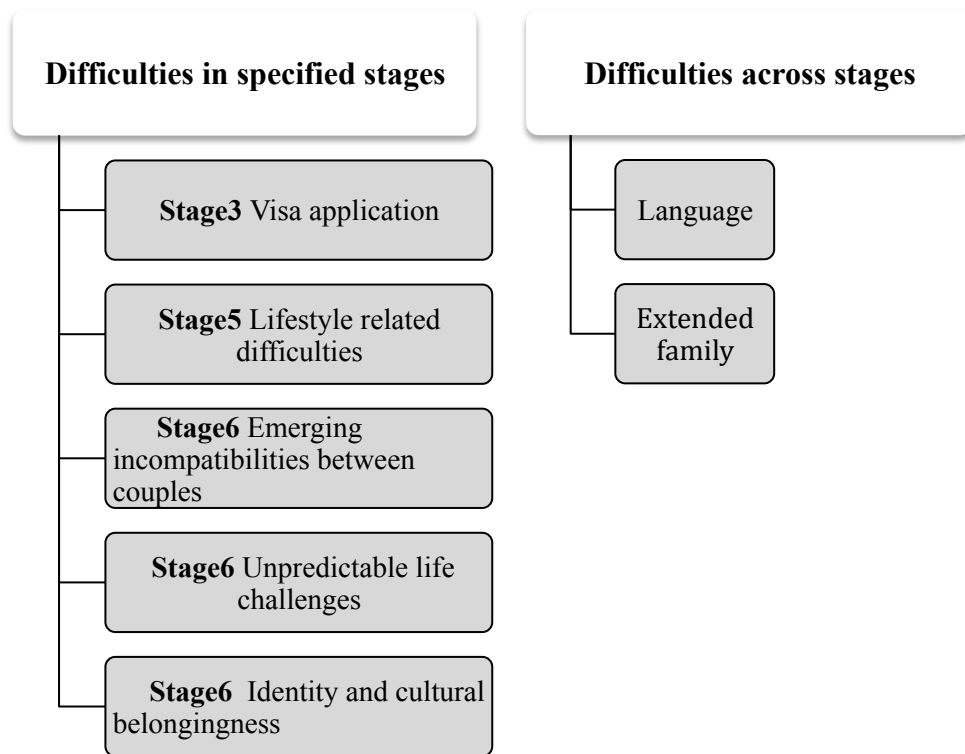


Figure 19. Identified difficulties



## Lifestyle related difficulties

These difficulties were mainly evidenced in the Stage 5 - Engagement visa period, i.e. the period immediately following the arrival of participants in the husbands' countries, which were identified in this area, such as diet/food, cooking, dish and vegetable washing, using air ventilation and heater, attitude toward pets.

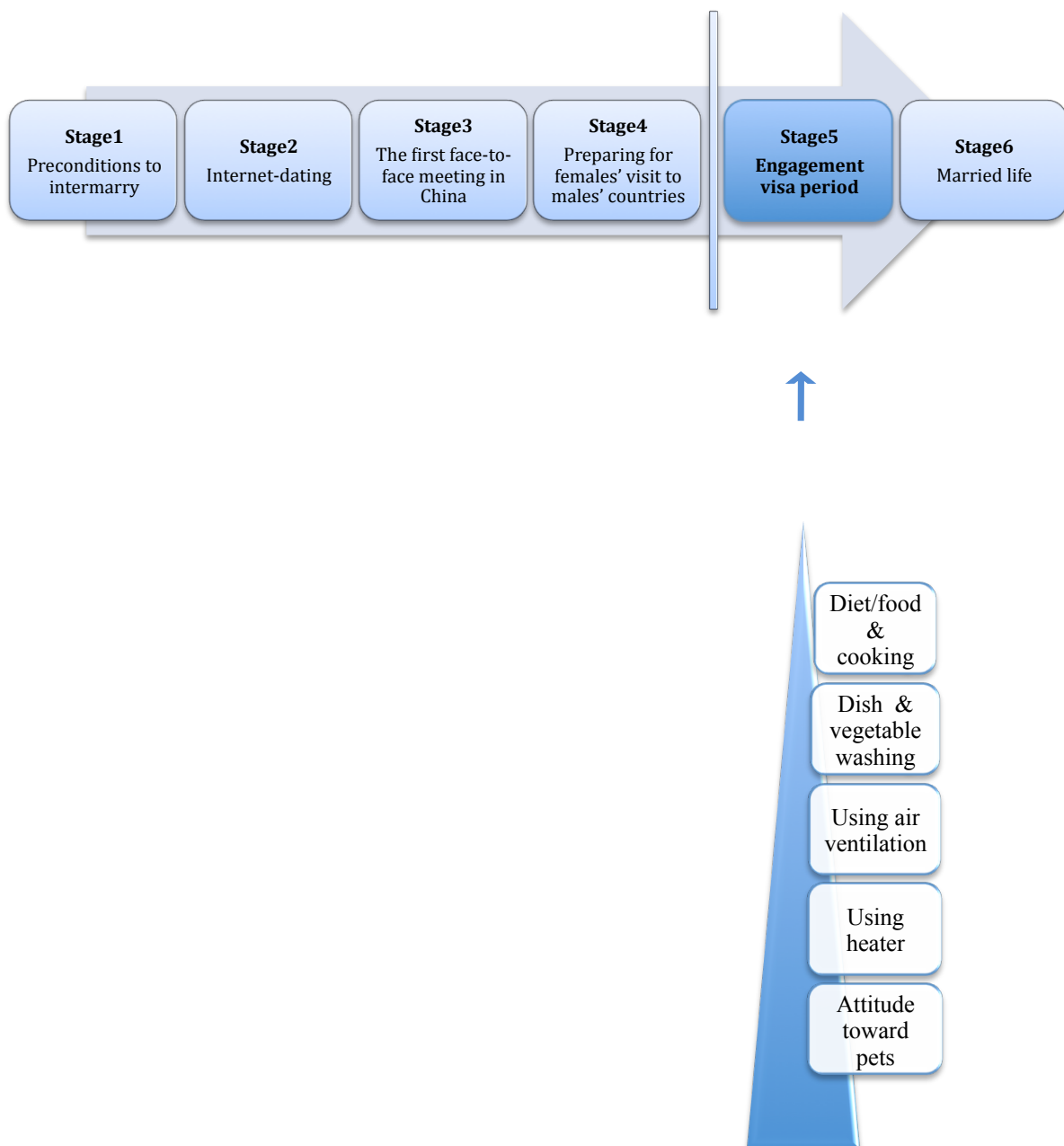


Figure 20. Lifestyle related difficulties (mainly occurred in Stage 5)

None of the participants perceived these ‘differences’ as difficulties, and saw them as ‘individual differences’ between couples (see Discussion on Cultural Differences). However participants did make an effort to cope with these ‘differences’ and underlying potential clashes between the couples. The following are identified shared strategies, which participants often applied to adapt to the lifestyle related ‘differences’:

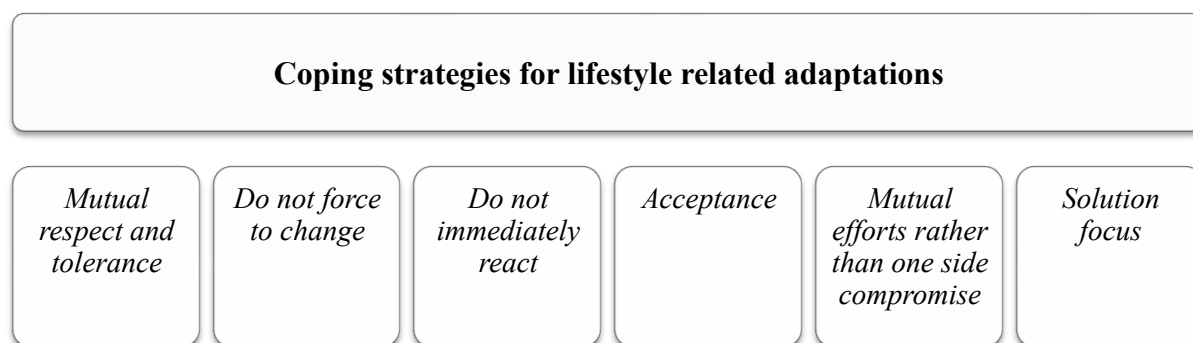


Figure 21. Coping strategies for lifestyle related adaptations

Applying the difference in food/diet between the couples as an example:

Firstly, being ‘open and curious’ to try western food, my participants enjoyed it as a fresh experience, but they soon realized they could not really westernize their stomach and needed to ‘find an alternative way’ to adjust their food menu; this involved ‘mutual adaptations’. P3 stated: “my husband had cold drinks four seasons a year, but I could not stand, he drank milk directly taken out of the fridge even in winter, I was used to drinking hot water even in summer”;

“Given ‘mutual respect’, it was not a big deal in our relations, it was fine and I did not have too many concerns like perhaps others did...” (414-418).

In order to take care of her husband’s mood (being respectful), P1 would try western food recommended by her husband, however she ‘did not always compromise’ by trying the food she disliked, e.g. dessert, but patiently explained to her husband: “ You know, we grew up

under poor condition and sugars were sold on quota, so I would rather say I have not developed such a habit than I do not like those kinds of snacks” (429-431).

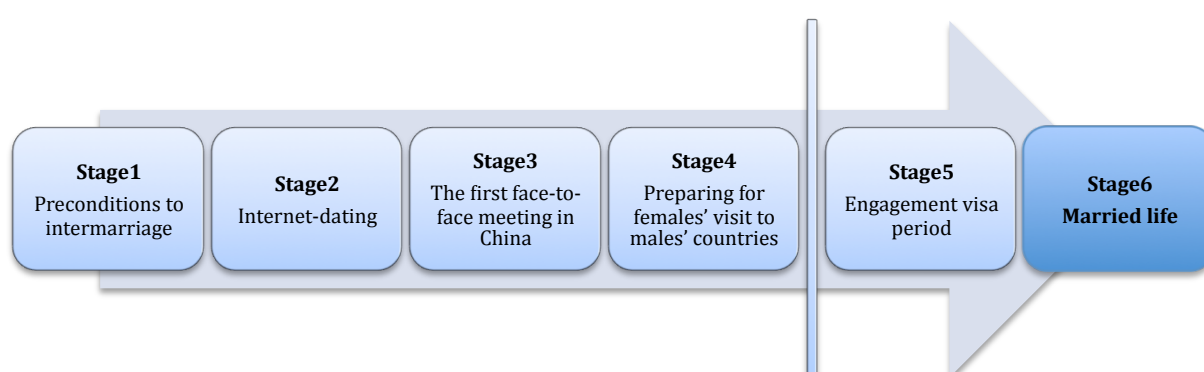
P2 & P3 indicated that their husbands were world travelers, therefore were adaptive to Chinese food, and they were not picky and could get used to British cuisine too (mutual adaptation).

P2 stressed that whenever she really missed Chinese food, she just went to the Chinese supermarket to buy (solution focused), whereas P4 indicated that her husband was often happy to go when she suggested going to a Chinese restaurant (mutual adjustment).

In addition, all participants are active learners; learning how to cook food which can satisfy the diet habits of both (solution focused).

### **Emerging incompatibilities between couples**

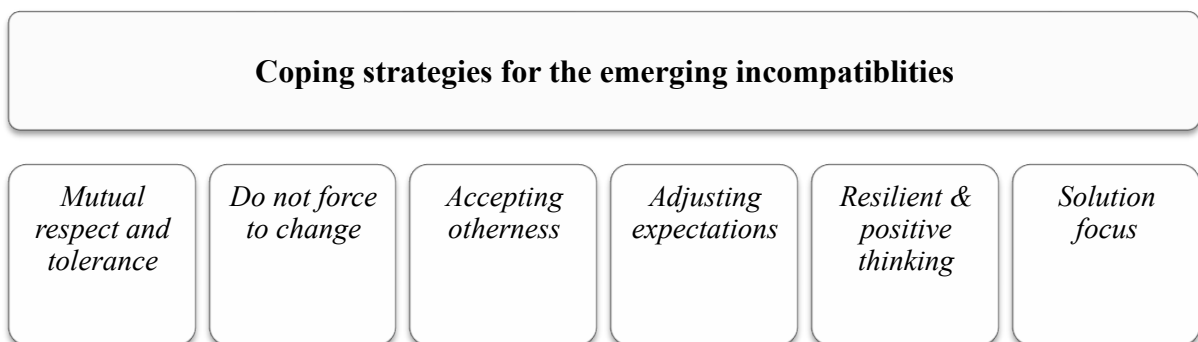
Introduced in Category 1, the incompatibilities between couples emerged in Stage 6 after they were married and once the honeymoon experiences were fading. These incompatibilities were mainly specified as the lack of common hobbies, interests and common conversation topics (see 3.3.6-2 in the Stage 6, Category 1, in Findings).



*Figure 22.* Stage indication for emerging couple incompatibilities

### ***Coping strategies for couple incompatibilities***

Compared with the lifestyle related adaptations evidenced in Stage 5, the lack of common hobbies, interests and conversation topics are still concerned with dealing with differences between couples per se, thus there is some overlap regarding coping strategies. In addition to 'mutual respect', 'tolerance' and 'acceptance of otherness', 'not forcing change', participants also reduced their expectations and focused on problem solving by exploring activities which the couples can enjoy together, and alternatively developing their own independence by learning to enjoy doing things alone. During this adaptive process participants' resilient and positive thinking of accepting the imperfect reality turned out to be salient.



***Figure 23. Coping strategies for the emerging couple incompatibilities***

Here follow some examples, which illustrate how the participants reacted and adapted to the identified areas of incompatibilities:

P2 reported: "so he went to play grass bowling, and I stayed home doing whatever I liked." (826-827); "I watched TV drama produced by China (laughing), and he watched football matches and his TV programs, such as old films (laughing)...(821-824).

----*Mutual respect of otherness*

"I accept my current situation quite well...he always says: 'You are just fine, and you don't have to change yourself, just be yourself.' ...We tolerate each other because we are grateful to each other " (1026-1033).

*----Tolerance and appreciation*

Respecting and accepting the differences, these couples still explored whether there was anything both could enjoy doing together. P3 reported: "he (her husband) doesn't want a big gap to develop between us. For example, we will take a walk at weekends and enjoy nature. We will also watch a film or find some amusement together in order to keep pace with each other" (651-653).

Additionally, participants actively attempted to rebuild their own lives to reduce the dependence on their husbands by working, searching for social activities and keeping their volunteer jobs, e.g. P2 said: "Keep myself busy! So I fulfil myself with two jobs" (1163); P4 shared her strategy: "So I must learn hard and try to find a job suitable for me, I felt less lonely and dull with the support of a goal " (P4-534-535).

*-----Exploring solutions, seeking alternatives.*

Besides taking actions to make some behavioural changes stated above, participants also developed a more constructive perspective by looking into their marital strengths rooted in fundamental couple compatibilities, e.g. what initially brought them together, whether the primary expectation was met, learning to accept the less than perfect reality of lacking commonality in day to day life trivia; they balanced between benefit and cost; they were reflective and able to see the positive side of their husbands, e.g. their contributions, sacrifices and efforts.

P2 reflected: "I knew my limitations, if my husband was relatively perfect, he would have gone for a woman far better than me, then, therefore I'd rather being down to earth."

*--- Self-reflection, expectation adjustment, being down to earth.*

P2 always felt that “he was particularly kind to my son.” Besides being a good father, her husband quit his hobby of playing golf to reduce life costs after his retirement and she also acknowledged his effort by adapting to her way of taking holiday, as she explained: “I didn’t like his way of spending holidays, namely lying beside a swimming pool everywhere he went. I liked to tour around” (927-929).

*---Being able to see positive side of her husband*

P3. “All difficulties here are nothing compared to the pressure of life in China, so I can accept and face them all “

*---Balancing between benefit and cost*

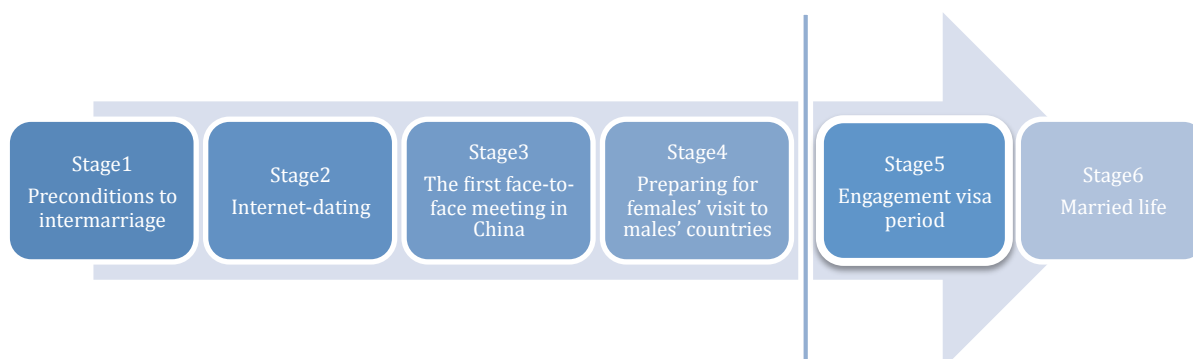
P4 appreciated her husband as the breadwinner who worked hard, and she should therefore be more understanding and tolerant.

P3 acknowledged they sometimes lacked common hobbies. However “He (her husband) will go upstairs to have a look after a while and ask me what I am doing or what I need. He will also check to see if I am bored and suggest going out to the cinema together” (568-570).

Taking a more adaptive perspective helped participants reconcile the disappointment from the lack of commonality in daily life. The capability of positive and resilient thinking facilitated their understanding of an imperfect reality, leading to ultimate appreciation instead of complaint and dissatisfaction.

## Difficulties and adaptations across stages:

### *Language and its implications for relationships*



*Figure 24. Stage indication for language difficulties*

None of the participants perceived language as a challenge in their marriages. However it seemed to occur disproportionally in their narratives. The language related difficulties were noticeable throughout, and had implications for their relationships. Especially at the beginning when they were establishing and developing the relationship and when they arrived in the husband's country; indicated in the figure above.

P1 especially, initially knew little English. P3 and P4's English was very limited. P4 did not know Swedish before she went to Sweden. However, P2, as a former English teacher, did not have a language problem, but stressed that her advantage in English proficiency enhanced her confidence in intermarriage (p.3 & p.17-18). (this negative case will be re-addressed in Discussion)

### *Preliminary stage in China*

In initiating the relationship, language was fundamental from the very beginning, e.g. creating a personal profile on the dating websites, getting in touch with potential partners and then the interview for the visa application, which were all in English. Initially P1 had to ask her friends who were able to speak English to sit next to her for help with the 'instant chatting'. As

communication between P1 and her future husband increased, the language requirement was increasing, and it perpetrated her anxiety and doubt as to whether she could handle and proceed with the relationship.

#### *The period living together in the husband's country*

The language barrier did not only affect daily life at home, but also hindered participants' opportunity to engage in a social life, and thus contributed to their social isolation, loneliness, and consequently increased their dependence on their husbands. This finally led to tension in their relationships.

P1 initially even had difficulty in naming kitchen utensils.(585-591/p.20); P3 reported that on arriving in the UK, she immediately realized her difficulty in talking with people (338-340/p13). The UK government continuously adjusts the policy of UK spouse visa. There is an increasing English requirement, which has to be strictly met. The must-pass exam of Life In The UK appeared to be a big hurdle for participants whose English was poor.

Later, at a much more demanding level, when P1's husband was diagnosed with a terminal disease, she found it very difficult to understand his health condition, and to communicate effectively with medical doctors. Given a will by her husband, she had difficulty in understanding it, and was anxious concerning whether she could handle things if the will was disputed. Her poor English also raised her husband's concern as to whether she could handle her life in the UK alone after he passed away.

Knowing little Swedish, P4 found no social life, not to mention work in Sweden.

#### *Implications for relationships*

The language barrier hindered the social engagement of my participants, leading to social isolation, which gave rise to loneliness. In turn, expectations of their husband's support increased. This led to further dependence on their husbands. P4 reported that she became sensitive to her husbands' response to her needs. Frustrated with and disappointed by the



lack of empathy and support from her husband, she became more vulnerable which ultimately affected her feelings toward the relationship. P1 also reported that wherever there was any difficulty between her and her husband perhaps this happened whilst she was learning English.

Additionally participants in their late 30's or mid 40's did not find it easy to acquire a new language. However they were all active and diligent learners and hard workers. At the early stage of their lives in the host country, language learning became a major task. Participants were actively engaged in self-study, taking language courses, doing volunteer jobs and participating in community events to improve their language proficiency. The command of language broadened their life choices and re-boosted their confidence. Improved life quality reduced their dependence on their husbands and soothed their frustrations.

### ***Extended Family***

An extended family is generally defined as family extending beyond the nuclear family. However in this study, only participants' parents and their parents in law had implications for their marital relationships.

The manifestations of extended family's involvement vary case by case, which can be illustrated below:

#### ***Negative attitude against the intermarriage from extended family in law***

P1 encountered some difficulty at the very beginning. Her parents in law were unhappy with their son choosing a Chinese wife, and questioned her intention in marrying out as a means of gaining UK permanent residency. Therefore they did not acknowledge their relationship and refused to attend their wedding (p.14).

The way her husband handled the situation and the participant's capability in coping with the stress were seen to be crucial.

Being confident in their relationship, her husband challenged his parents' prejudice, e.g. "How do you know she is not good, you have not met her yet..." (371-372). P1 showed her appreciation for his supportive gesture.

With her husband's protection, P1 was able to move through the difficult moment by thinking more productively, e.g. "marriage is the business of the two of us, I don't care" (376). With a shared understanding of their marriage, the couple bonded together to face external pressure. This allowed their relationship to forge ahead.

However, P2 expressed a different experience, "I was least worried about extended family involvement. I was familiar with some British culture and knew it was not likely for parents to interfere in their children's private life as long as their son was happy" (510-514).

#### *Expectations of support from parents in law*

Having difficulties with her husband, P4 approached her mother in law for help, but was questioned, "Why you stay with him if you are so unhappy with my son?" (407).

This plausible response from her mother in law silenced her. Initially P4 was expecting her mother in law to help reconcile their relationship, as Chinese parents often play the role of mediator between the couples. What she learnt from this experience was to withdraw and adjust her expectations. This incident increased her cultural awareness in this regard.

#### *Responsibilities for extended family*

##### *a. Elderly parents' settlement*

The Chinese strongly value filial piety and voluntarily take responsibility for their elderly parents. This tradition is a potential challenge for Caucasian husbands, as it implies additional financial and emotional input. Whether these husbands were able to treat the parents in law well had a big impact on the marital relationships.

As introduced in the Searching and Selecting Process in Stage 2 in Category 1, P2 only considered that the man understanding her concern about her elderly parents represented a

good match. She stressed that what her husband did for her parents strongly touched her, e.g. before her leaving for the UK, her now husband suggested her resigning her job to spend more time with her parents, and he covered all her life expenses. In particular he made thoughtful financial arrangements for her parents, i.e. he pre-paid her ill father's carer, and paid off the mortgage of her parents' flat, which initially was paid by her. It was this generous and thoughtful stance that actually encouraged her decision to further their relationship. "So you see, he was so sweet to me that anyhow I had to leave for him" (447). "He was good in all aspects, except looking a bit old, it seemed that I could not find anyone better" (369-370 / p.16 -17).

*b. Elderly parents' health care and death*

P3's mother was diagnosed with cancer soon after they got married, and it was her husband that paid for her tickets to return to China in time and was so empathetic to suggest her staying there as long as she needed with her mother. To remove her concern about her ill mother, her husband completely supported her idea of bringing her mother to the UK. He was thoughtful and generous in not only applying for her mother's visa, but also treated her completely like his own mother. During the last stage of her mother's life, her husband gave her complete financial and emotional support.

Having resided in China for more than 6 months to look after her mother, she assumed her husband would have affairs and she was mentally prepared to give up the marriage; but her husband shared the hard time with her throughout; "My mother was very grateful for him. This is also enough to touch me life long " (892).

In summary, extended family issues have implications for this type of intermarriage. Successfully going through the difficulties together is also a factor that can encourage the woman to effectively forge ahead with the relationship during the stage of decision-making (e.g. P2) and later consolidates the good marital relationships (e.g. P3).

### 3.6 Category 4: Shifting contributions and power

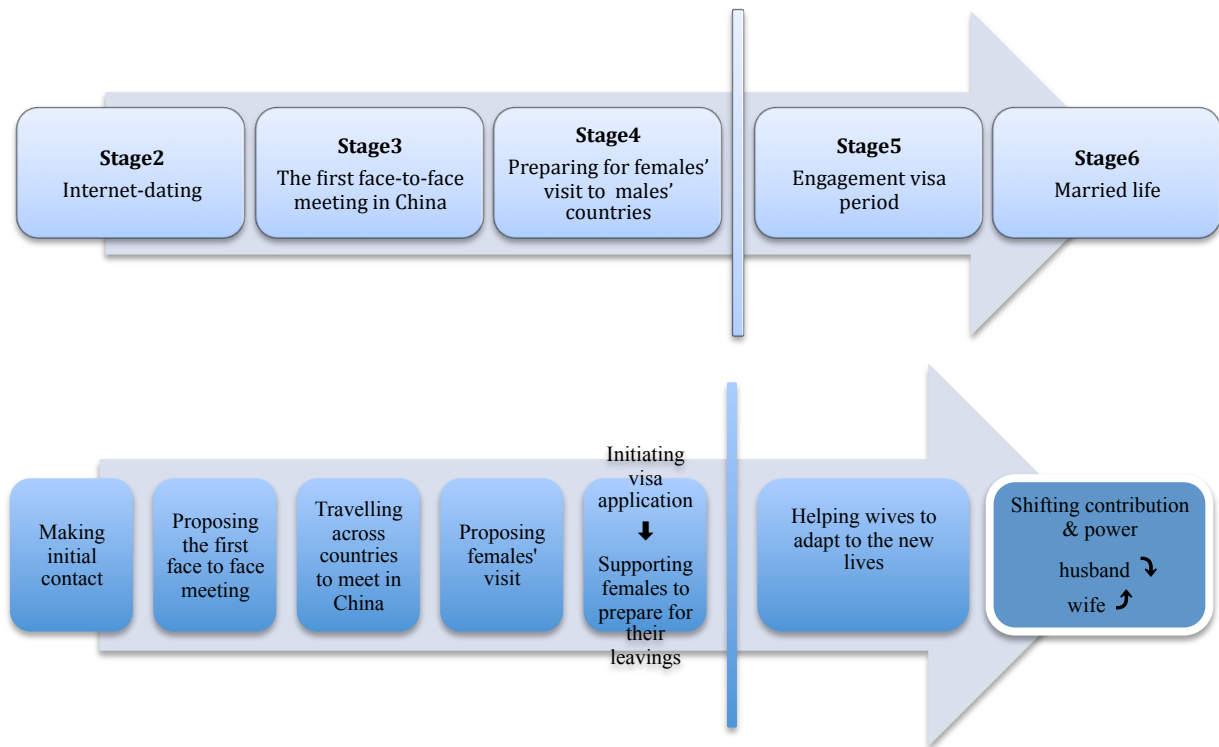


Figure 25. The period of husband dominance

#### 3.6.1 Husband dominance

The husbands' contributions are mainly specified in the figure above, and characterized by the husband's initiative and emotional encouragement and financial support to progress the relationship; followed by their emotional and practical support after the couple lived together. The husbands' dominance remained in the relationship until the period when honeymoon experiences gradually faded. Thereafter there tended to be a shift of contribution and power due to the wives' transformational development.

#### To forge ahead with the relationship toward the marriage

Illustrated in the figures above, these Caucasian husbands played a dominant role in the early stages of the relationships. Their proactive stances, being willing to make an effort and subsequently turning their willingness to action was crucial in forging ahead with the

relationship; finally turning virtual dating to marriage in reality. The wives appeared to be more discreet, thus less proactive as there would be a greater upheaval of their lives for marrying out than that of their husbands; thus involving greater risk taking.

It was the confidence of the Caucasian men in the future of their relationships, and their decisive and assertive styles that encouraged the Chinese women to bravely give their relationships a try. Otherwise, the language barrier, financial difficulty, visa application etc all could have deterred them from proceeding with the relationships.

P3 described the situation; “During the process of visa application, he did not want to trouble me at all, and he was afraid that I might give up. He said he would take everything on his shoulder and I should worry about nothing”. The man plays an important role that takes many responsibilities in order to make it more possible to succeed. By that time if he had any worry or concern I would be more likely to give up” (300-303).

All the Caucasian husbands prepared the documents for the visa applications. Both P1 & P3’s husbands paid for the translation of documents and hired lawyers to speed up the visa applications, whereas P2’s husband paid her all the life expenses to encourage her to resign from her job and prepare for her leaving.

### **To help the Chinese wives overcome their difficulties in adapting to their new lives.**

Since landing in the host country onward to the early stage of their marriages, their husbands were almost the only supporting resource, whom the participants strongly depended on.

The extent to which these husbands were empathetic in understanding the wives’ difficulties as immigrants, and as to whether they could sufficiently support these wives to meet their needs accordingly, could either consolidate or tense their relationships.

Their contributions were largely embodied in daily life trivia and emotional support, e.g.

all husbands bought phone cards to ensure their wives could contact China regularly.

They proactively made life plans and arrangements for their life together, including entertainment, friends and family visits, trips, movies, helping their wives search for language courses, making financial arrangements such as opening joint accounts and applying for

bankcards for the wives. These things appeared to be very tedious, concrete and time-consuming. Nonetheless, being able to understand their wives' feelings and needs was fundamental. These wives initially had no friends, were unfamiliar with the environment, even unfamiliar with their own home. In short, these wives' in their new lives, were at first completely dependent on their husbands. The lack of sensitivity to the wives' needs could turn out to exacerbate their vulnerability, e.g. P4 strongly expressed her isolation and showed her disappointment due to her husband's insensitivity to her needs (see Stage 6 in the Category 1).

### **Taking financial responsibility as breadwinner**

How does this group of intermarried couples make their financial arrangements? How do the financial arrangements impact on the marital relationship? It matters all the way through their relationships, which could be traced back to the period when they planned for the face-to-face meeting.

#### *a. Initial financial circumstance*

1. In general, these Chinese wives had relatively disadvantaged financial status compared with their much older husbands, as making a living was no longer a life focus for these husbands who were approaching the life stage of retirement.

2. Resigning from their jobs to marry out and constrained by the objective situation such as the language barrier, unfamiliar environment, immigration policy, no local professional qualification; it was difficult for my participants to find a paid job, at least in the early stages of their marital life.

Thus the husband's financial capability of being the breadwinner seemed to be a precondition for the feasibility of the relationship, together with their willingness for taking total financial responsibility from the very beginning. This included financial responsibility for extended family (see Responsibility for extended family in the Category 3).

### *b. Psychological implications*

All participants stated the notion that 'Let's go Dutch' seemed to be a part of western culture (P3: 1006/p.37), nonetheless they felt lucky and appreciated that this did not happen to them; their husbands were financially so generous that they paid for everything. Participants did not feel there was a real sense of financial insecurity. They would have felt uncomfortable and embarrassed to ask for money from their husbands. P4's experience was an exception, she expressed that she struggled to demand pocket money, "Finally I had to ask him directly, 'You must give me some money...' As he was not willing, I said, 'You have to think of a way since I have nothing but you...sometimes I felt shameful to take that money and I was embarrassed to tell others'" (575-579); she further explained that she was financially independent in China and was able to support her family (see Negative Case Analysis in Discussion).

Considering their previous self-determined financial freedoms in China, it was a big switch to complete financial dependence on their husbands.

It also suggested an imbalance of power due to the imbalance of financial status. This affected participants' perception of family position regarding making their voice heard, and decisions regarding family affairs, as suggested by P2 & P4, e.g. P2 commented: "after one year I began to feel I had no right of financial decision" (587).

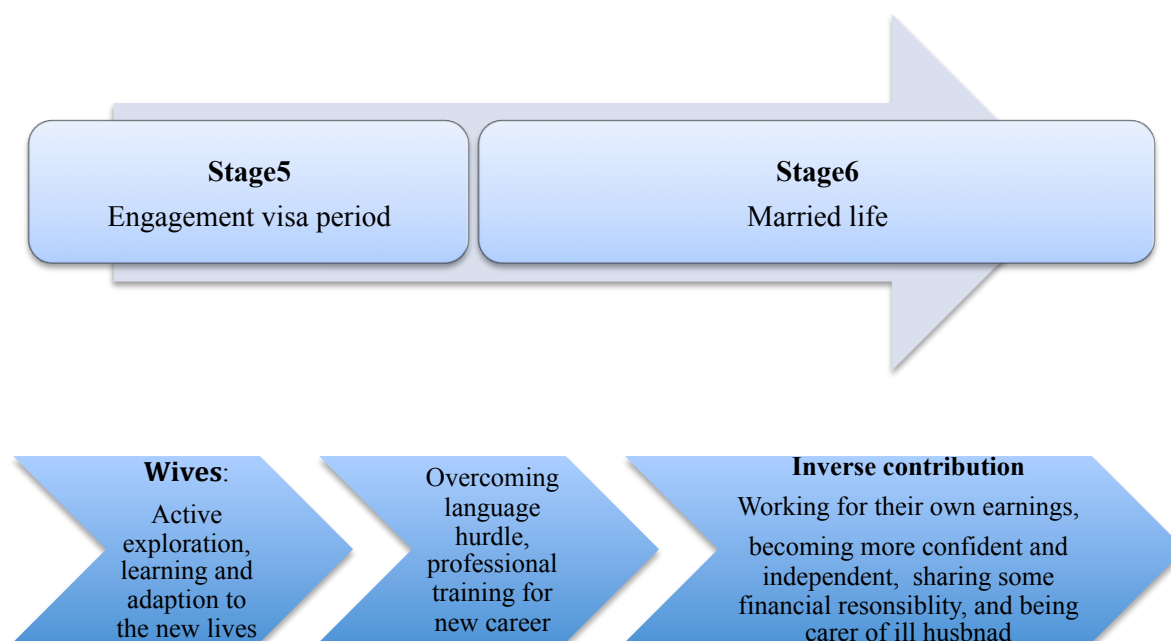
Overall, the Caucasian husbands played an important role, particularly in the early stages of the relationships, which was characterised by their initiative, together with their emotional encouragement and financial input to forge ahead with the relationship toward marriage, and subsequently helping their wives settle down in the host countries.

### **3.6.2 Shifting contributions and power**

(from the husbands to the wives)

All participants showed strong appreciation of their husbands' contributions to the overall relationship. However, over time there tended to be a shifting contribution and power from

the husbands to the wives due to the imbalanced personal development between the couples.



*Figure 26. Shifting contributions and power (from the husbands) to the wives*

Initially, participants strongly depended on their husbands financially, socially and psychologically. However, once these Chinese wives were gradually accustomed to their local lives, especially through becoming gradually familiar with the environment, passing the language hurdle, and obtaining professional qualifications, they broadened their life choices and regained self-control of their lives. At the point of being interviewed, both P2 & P4 had been working and had their own earnings. With increasing self-confidence and life aspirations, they started to plan for continuous professional and personal development, aspiring for further achievement.

By contrast, these husband's lives appeared to slow down. As aforementioned, P1 & P2's husbands were either retired or retiring. Retirement in this context had two implications, i.e.

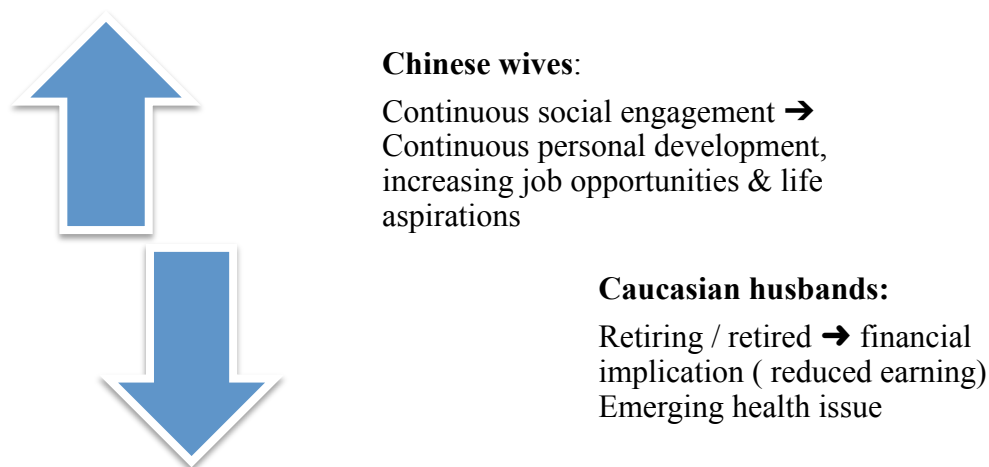


firstly, the husband tended to be more domestically oriented; secondly their reduced earnings led to potentially reduced quality of life and financial difficulty, e.g. P2 said that her husband quit his hobby of playing golf and also found it difficult to pay a tutor for her son after he retired. In fact, this financial difficulty was the initial drive for her to go back to work. Moreover, these husbands at this stage of their lives were likely to encounter health issue, e.g. P1's husband was diagnosed with a terminal disease, which resulted in death; P4's 'young' husband felt content with his job of milk delivery, whereas P4 started to obtain her own earnings and became more ambitious with her increasing life aspiration. In short, the husbands' lives tended to change in an opposite direction compared with their wives. P3's husband was an exception; he started his own business, and seemed not to be on a downward spiral, whereas P3 had long been in China looking after her ill mother and the couple lived apart and not living a regular married life. The situation was rather different from the other couples.

Therefore, the wives did not only become more independent, but also began contributing more than before, e.g. P2 paid for her son's tuition and therefore shared some financial responsibility with her husband. P1 demonstrated her firm marital commitment by looking after her ill husband, and shared the extremely difficult time with him from the very beginning to the end. Her husband said on his deathbed: "I feel happy since I married you, that is the happiest time in my life, that is enough..." (1131-1132). This flow chart largely illustrates a developmental trend and my finding does not suggest a disproportionate contribution between the married couple; it points to a mutual contribution and reciprocal reward overall. In addition, the husbands' financial conditions are still better than the wives' in general.

Lastly, this shifting contribution and power underlies a divergence of personal development between the couples, e.g. P4 pointed out, "I feel much better now, I am proud that I qualified and found a job. It is absolutely unnecessary to compromise my feeling and need. With less dependence on him, my life becomes more active and this helps me" (975-978); P2 reported that realizing this mutual change of life status, her husband maybe sensed that their current

life status could not satisfy her anymore and therefore, he needed to do something to consolidate the marital bond (p.44).



*Figure 27. Developmental trend between the couples*

### 3.7 Theoretical integration

The intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men, beginning with Internet-dating from the perspective of Chinese wife and evolved following the six identified progressive stages in which the couples purposefully proceeded with their relationships, step by step. This is a progressive process to test the extent to which the reality meets marital expectations and desirable compatibilities, which contributed to the marital satisfaction of the participants. However this type of intermarriage starting with Internet-dating brought about radical change of life reality to the participants. ‘Good matches’ cannot always be expected, thus the capability towards adaptation and problem solving helped participants deal with emerging differences, difficulties, and uncertainties in their marital lives. This group of Chinese wives demonstrated shared personal attributes, which facilitated this process of adaptations. In addition, marriage is a journey/process, over time, the nature of this type of

marriage appears to have the developmental tendency of shifting contribution and power, which may have implications for the marital relationship. Following the logical connections elucidated above, all four core categories integrated into a larger whole are thus able to provide a holistic picture and comprehensive understanding of this type of intermarriage.

(See figures below, it merely provides an overview and does not cover all subcategories).

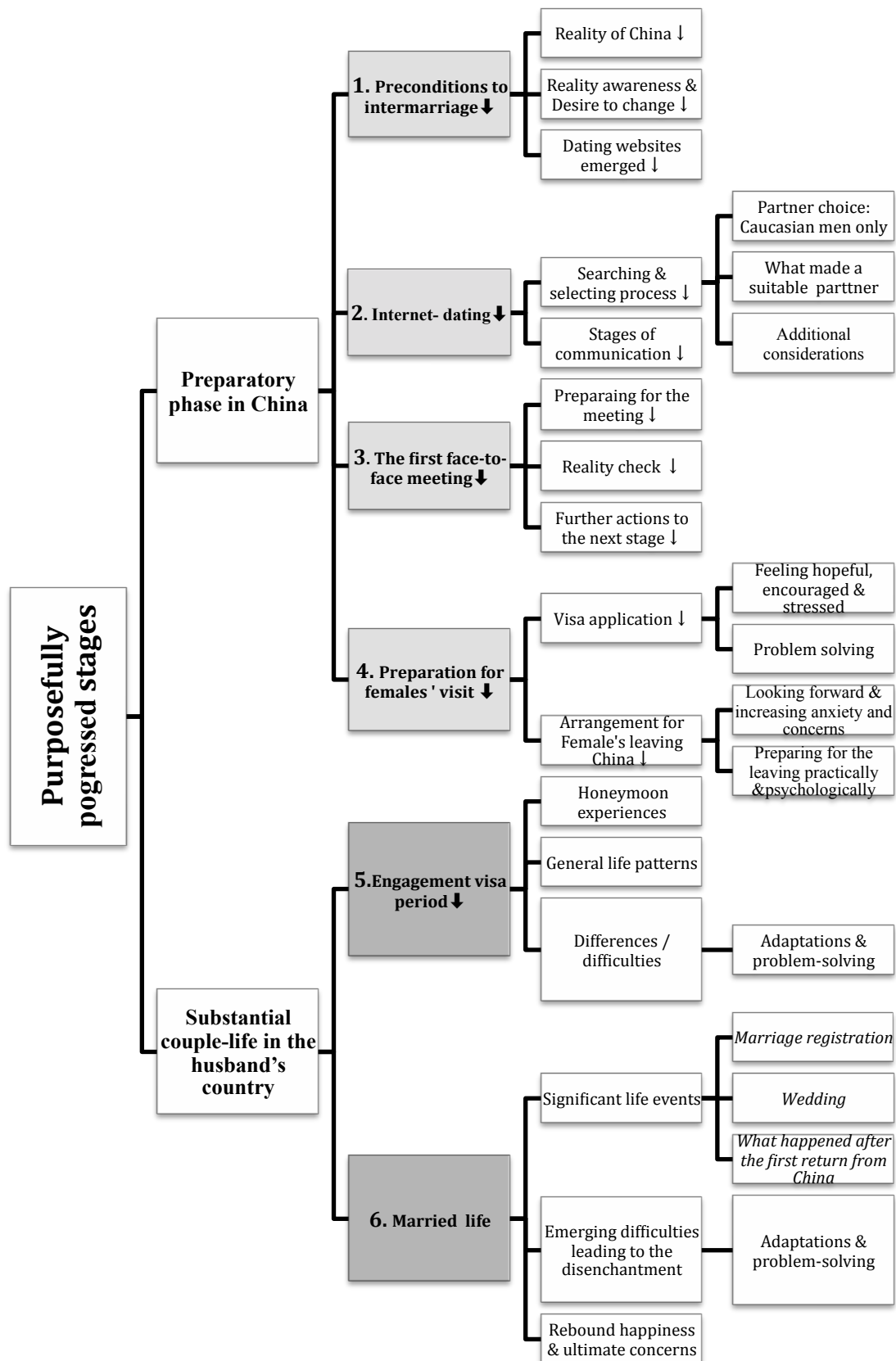
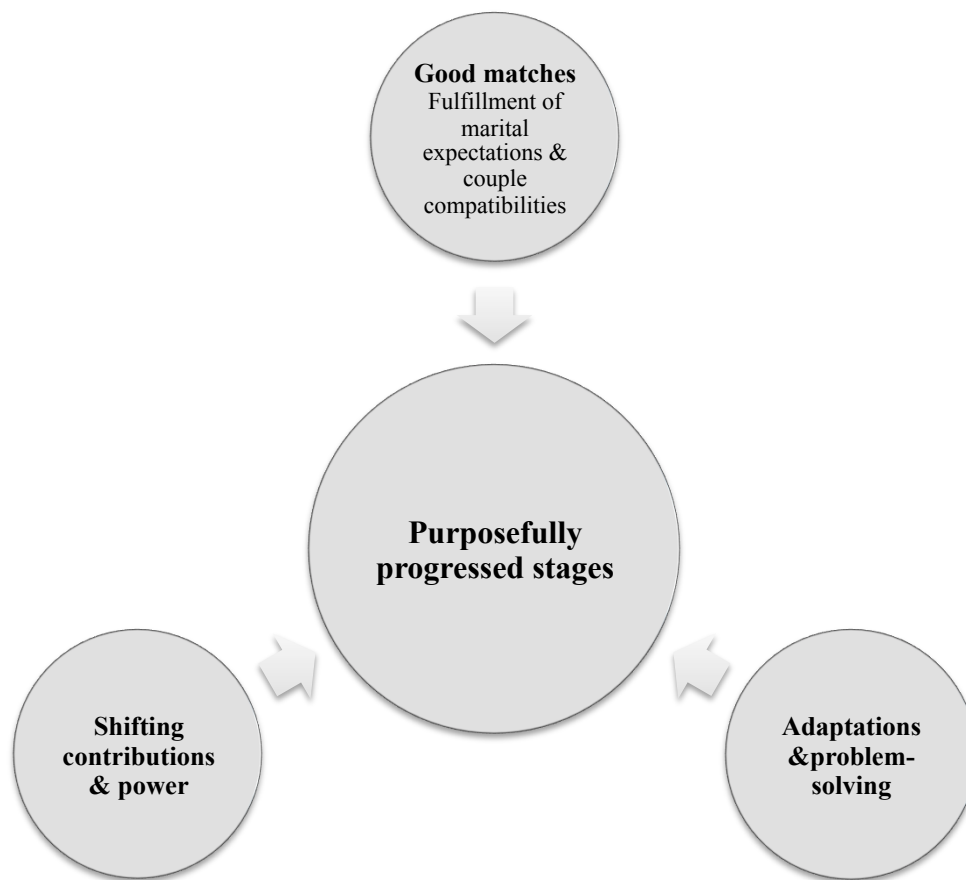


Figure 28. An overview of the marital process



*Figure 2.* Connection of four core categories (Recap)

## Chapter 4: Discussion

The discussion will start with a Recap and The Interpretation of the Research Findings to facilitate the reader's understanding, followed by the Academic Implications of the Research, including a discussion on the findings in relation to existing studies, and an elucidation of distinctiveness/originality of this research; subsequently, there will be Evaluation of The Research followed by Reflexivity, Critical Language Awareness, Limitations and Improvement of the Research, and then Suggestions for Future Study will follow; finally there will be the Implications For Practice and Implications For Professional Development of The Researcher.

### 4.1 A recap and the interpretation of the research findings

#### 4.1.1 Overview

This research aimed to explore *how intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolves over time, from the Chinese wives' perspective*.

The research findings answered the research question intended, revolving around four core categories revealing the nature of this type of intermarriage. The core categories supplemented with subcategories formed a theoretical integration and captured the basic social and psychological process in the context of a factual process in terms of a sequenced timeline. However, the two processes are mingled with one another.

“Grounded theorists aim to provide a rich and comprehensive description of a phenomenon, (e.g. a way of life, a situation), which communicates to readers a sense of its quality and texture” (Willig, 2008, p.156). The findings of this research did provide a contextual explanation and interpretation of how this particular type of intermarriage evolves and facilitated a good grasp and comprehensive understanding of this substantive, social-psychological phenomenon of intermarriage.

### **Category 1 – Purposefully progressed stages**

At the heart of the core categories, the category *purposefully progressed stages* suggests that this type of intermarriage is characterized by a goal-oriented plan to forge the relationship step by step. Each stage could be seen as a turning point of the relationship, where a significant event/circumstance that marks the progression of it. These stages are interconnected with one another. Successfully passing the early stage ensures that the relationship moves forward. Each stage holds both the fruits of the previous stage and the seeds of the next. The initial stage in particular disclosed the drive of my participants engaging in such intermarriage, i.e. the identified preconditions for this group of Chinese women to marry out.

By contrast, in intra-marriages, generally couples can start their relationships by chance, and allow the relationship to spontaneously develop without a plan or time pressure. For the researched group of couples, lengthy communication to know more about each other was not feasible. Instead there were certain tasks to be completed during each stage of the relationship. To allow the relationship to move forward, for the wives, it involved big decision-making resulting in a radical change of life and risk taking. This gave rise to a certain level of anxiety, together with excitement for these Chinese wives marrying out. Objectively, at macro level, social forces, such as visa and immigration policies also brought about practical difficulties when proceeding with the relationship toward the goal of marriage: there was a time limit when it came to decision-making regarding their relationships.

### **Category 2: Good matches: Fulfillment of expectations and good couple compatibilities**

As aforementioned this type of intermarriage is strongly goal oriented and particularly purposeful and thus the second core category emerged, i.e. the fulfilment of marital expectations at different stages and at different levels in marital reality, and a continuous reality test of compatibilities between the couples / spouses. My participants showed a clear

awareness of what they expected from their husbands and marriages, which were strongly context dependent, e.g. partner choice is framed among Caucasian men only, and the desirable lifestyle the husband can bring along. This group of Chinese wives knew why they desired to marry out, whom they desired to marry, and what regions they desired to move out to.

The fulfilment of expectations and good couple compatibilities provided an important account for marital satisfaction, namely, it seems that the greater the extent to which expectations and compatibilities were fulfilled, the greater the level of marital satisfaction reported.

P4 turned out to be a negative case confirming the above: her marital difficulties resided in the reality that marital expectations could not be fulfilled and the issue of incompatibility could not be well-solved, thus she showed stronger disappointment and was in a less than a happy marriage compared with my other participants (see Negative Case Analysis in Discussion).

Part of their marital expectations was associated with preconditions to intermarry: my participants married out for a change of their unsatisfactory life status. However, each individual was unsatisfied with individual circumstances. Their desire to change was mainly for social and cultural factors, rather than for the maximisation of socio-ethnic stratification or social-economic status exchange as suggested by exchange theory (Merton, 1941; Davis, 1941; Ding, 2004; Ji, 2008). My finding is consistent with Merton's sociological perspective in understanding intermarriages in the sense that the couples indeed married for a reciprocal compensatory situation, i.e. both wives and husbands were looking for something which they found hard to have in their intra-groups considering their status.

Additionally the finding of this research is to some extent resonant with Freeman's (1955) account of reasons for intermarrying from a psychological perspective, i.e. having been rejected and thus rebellious in their own intra-group and therefore idealize or desire the way of life of the new group. This implies only rebels from the new group can be attracted. Thus for this research, the similarity in *preconditions for engaging in intermarriage between the spouses* (see Stage1 in Category 1 & Category 2), which underlies compatible psychological need stands out as one of the aspects of good couple compatibility.



In addition, age was another aspect of good compatibility/match. It is noteworthy that the age preference was characterized by a great age disparity (young wife & older husband) between the couples. Nevertheless, this was my participants' preferential and intentional choice, rather than a 'concern' as suggested in the previous literature (see Problem Statement in Introduction, e.g. Cankao xiaoxi, 2015; Zhang, 1991). These studies did not provide an explanation as to why it is a concern. Therefore it seems that this was more to do with taking for granted certain assumption based on commonly held beliefs. My finding surfaced this issue and accounted for it by providing an understanding of underlying drives, i.e. maturity and security seeking for the Chinese wives, whereas energy, beauty and health seeking for the Caucasian husbands. Thus 'age' turned out to be an aspect of good compatibility between these spouses

Nonetheless, the age preference needs to be critically understood, i.e. physical aging is not a favourite, as P1 and P3 expressed that they did not feel there was a great age disparity (e.g. P1: 162-163/p. 6). P2 particularly mentioned her initial disappointment, as her husband looked a little old, whilst she appreciated "it was like a father taking care of his daughter... I felt he loves me so much" (641-642). These wives seemed to hold the understanding that "you cannot have your cake and eat it", it was about the balance between appearance (older looking husband) and maturity, sense of security; my participants prioritised the latter, as they were clear what they wanted from the marriage.

Nevertheless, the fact of a "much older husband" may give rise to practical life challenge, this will be discussed later in Beyond Findings.

Regarding the comparison between Chinese men and Caucasian men, my participants suggested that Chinese men tended to pay undue attention to physical beauty, which implied that they (the participants) were not advantaged in this regard. Interestingly, they also particularly stated that their Caucasian husbands were very much attracted to their physical attributes. Therefore, with respect to this there did not seem to be a substantial difference between Chinese men and Caucasian men. Again expectations and compatibilities matter.

### **Category 3: Adaptations and problem solving**

In reality, perfectly fulfilled expectations did not always happen. Especially when unknown differences/incompatibilities between the couple emerged, which could develop into difficulties or even problems. Hence participants' resilience in response to adapting to uncertainties, differences, and the capability of problem solving became important individual qualities to work through the possible difficulties. Therefore the third category was crystallised as 'adaptations and problem solving', in which my research findings revealed what the main challenges were at different stages, how these Chinese wives responded, what strategies they used and what particular personal strengths this group of Chinese wives tended to share.

With regards to personal strengths, a part of which manifested as personality traits, my findings were resonant with the finding from existing studies on personality of intermarried couples (e.g. Ding, 2004; Ji, 2008; Khatib-Chahidi; Hill and Paton's, 1998). However, besides the traits like *open-minded*, *unconventional*, *adventurous*, etc. My participants showed some other attributes, such as positive cognition, self-determined, etc. (see Category 3 in Findings).

### **Category 4: Shifting role of contributions and power**

The findings revealed imbalanced contributions and power distribution between the couples at different phases of the relationship, which was determined by the nature of this type of marriage. It especially shows the important role of the husbands to turn Internet-dating from the virtual world to reality, and later to help the Chinese wives adapt to their new lives in the host countries. In the early stages, the husband tended to be dominant and made a greater contribution to the relationship. Seto and Cavallaro (2007) suggested that the place of residence had an impact on power distribution in a relationship; the party who moved in was seen to be disadvantaged. However, this is only partially true according to my findings, which showed a tendency of power shifting between the spouses. This was ascribable to the personal transformation of these Chinese wives over time, i.e. from being outsiders, my

participants gradually grounded themselves in the host country and their life aspirations were further boosted, whereas their husbands status showed a tendency of downward change.

In the meantime, there seemed to also be an increasing reciprocal contribution from the Chinese wives, e.g. P1 showed great commitment as a carer of her dying husband diagnosed with cancer. However, this is not only about power shift and inverse contributions, the developmental divergence between these spouses tended to have an implication for the wives' mentality, i.e. being less tolerant of the incompatibilities between them and their husbands, and less willing to compromise. This potentially gives rise to challenges and risks to the relationship (see Findings), therefore a longitudinal study would be a good choice for future study (see Suggestions of Future Studies).

#### **4.1.2 Negative case analysis**

The role of negative case analysis in the framework of grounded theory was introduced in the Methodology and Methods. Besides the negative cases addressed in the Findings, P4's case merits a dedicated discussion, as she showed some phenomenal deviations from the findings drawn from other participants.

1. In contrast to the preconditions to intermarriages of others, P4 initially went to the dating website not to find a husband, but to practice her English and she started the relationship with her now husband by chance.

2. What initially appeared to be positive aspects in her husband, making him special and interesting for her and evoking her curiosity and leading her to fall in love, became negative in her marriage. As she suggested 'they' caused financial problems and took away her husband's time and care for her, i.e. initially she appreciated her husband's hobbies of horse and dog racing, and that he did not only focused on his business/career and money making. In other words, it was those initial attractions that drove her and her now husband together that became challenges in her marriage.

By contrast, by and large, there was no expectation gap for the other participants; P3 even

reported that the reality was “better than imagined”, and a “perfect match” was reported by P1.

3. P4 suggested that the incompatible aspect, for instance, their hobbies, seemed to be insurmountable underlying different values and life aspirations, e.g. P4 reported that she craved knowledge and that her hobbies included reading, listening to music, learning to play piano, etc., whereas her husband was addicted to horse and dog racing as well as computer games. P4 further explained that her hobbies were more associated with learning and boosting personal development, whereas she perceived her husband as having a “carpe diem” attitude, i.e. lacking career ambition, having no interest to improve his life, but being very satisfied with his job of milk delivery.

In addition, her husband’s reaction of being extremely blasé and indifferent when his father passed away shocked her underlying different value system. She commented that it was like a wake-up call, and exacerbated the already fragile relationship. As filial piety is regarded as an admirable virtue in Chinese culture, there is a general saying in Chinese: “to see whether a person is kind-hearted/of fundamental goodness, you only need to see whether he/she treats his/her parents well”. By contrast, other participants’ husbands perfectly demonstrated their respect towards and concerns about elderly parents; moreover, they also generally perceived any emerging incompatibilities as solvable issues, which therefore did not challenge their relationships.

4. Objectively her husband did not have a good financial condition and therefore, she could not get as much financial support as other participants had. In addition, in contrast to other participants’ caution from the very beginning, P4 reported she did not even think that the financial issue might affect her relationship, until she stepped into real life (586, p.22).

In summary, in contrast to other participants, the identified aspects described above may thus be able to account for the fact that P4’s marriage did not seem to go as well as others’; she appeared to be an unhappy wife. However, this finding of a negative case enhanced the credibility of my research findings, i.e. this type of marriage is a well-prepared and

purposefully planned and proceeded relationship. The fulfilment of marital expectations and good compatibilities between the couple contributes to their marital satisfactions. When expectation gaps and incompatibilities emerged, the difficulties have to be solvable through adaptations and problem solving. Additionally the husband's good financial situation was seen to be important and helpful to ensure a smooth relationship.

Furthermore, to understand what attributes possibly contributed to the deviating case of P4, I noticed P4 differed from other participants in the following aspects: she was much younger than other participants and her husband was one year younger than her, whereas the other participants are much younger than their husbands. Also, P4 was married to a Swedish man living in Sweden, whereas all other participants were married to British men living in the UK. This may challenge the homogeneity of the samples. As age similarity (between my participants) and age gap between the spouses are characteristics of this group shared by the other three participants. Consequently these aforementioned factors may affect other aspects, such as financial status, sexual need, mental maturity and so forth. These may account for the 'deviations' of the findings between P4 and the other participants. In a future research, perhaps participants' age, age disparity between spouses and country, which the wives moved to should merit some attention when defining participant criteria so as to refine the research (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, 2006).

#### **4.1.3 Beyond the findings**

The research findings warrant further thoughts with regards to age preference and the life stage of my participants.

##### *Critical review of good compatibility regarding age preference*

a-

Marrying a husband who is much older, the wife is likely to be challenged by his potential health problems and even the potential loss of him, especially given the situation that these wives did not entirely mesh well into the host countries as immigrants. The challenges could

therefore be enormous. This happened to P1 (see Stage 6 in Findings). She had been through an extremely difficult journey with her dying husband, during which she took on the strongly demanding responsibility of being his carer.

The fact that she had left her home country and customary life for an unfamiliar environment, which is part of the nature of this type of intermarriage, possibly determined her isolation and limited supporting resources leading to her helplessness during the process of looking after her dying husband. Right after the loss of her husband, she had to face adapting to life alone in the UK. This challenge cannot be dismissed.

b-

These “midlife” Chinese wives are likely to face extended family crisis, i.e. an increasing responsibility for health care of their ailing elderly parents (as aforementioned, family loyalty / filial piety has long been valued in China; in 2013 China updated their Elderly Rights Law by which visiting and caring for parents has become a legal obligation for adult children) This may challenge the relationship practically and psychologically, due to the wives’ needs to frequently travel to China resulting in physical separations between the spouses

For instance, P3’s mother was diagnosed with a terminal disease; it was not only an emotional challenge, but also a huge responsibility of care. At the final stage of her ill mother’s life, P3 had been in China looking after her for over half a year. She was already mentally prepared for a divorce as she thought that a long-term separation from their family life together would harm the marital relationship (see Stage 6 in Findings).

These age related features, i.e. a great disparity in age between the spouses and the life stage these intermarried wives have been facing, may increase the likelihood of the potential challenges stated above, which is worthy of awareness.

## **4.2 Academic implications**

### **4.2.1 Deviations from the two main assumptions**

Existing studies often started with the following two main assumptions: firstly, intermarriages tend to be more problematic and more likely to turn out to be a failure; secondly, cultural differences were at the heart of the problems, and therefore they often aimed to explore and identify what cultural differences between the couple/spouse challenged intermarriages and subsequently, coping strategies were explored.

First of all, in my research, participants reported high satisfaction with their marriages overall: they did not perceive their marriage problematic.

Some may argue that the Chinese wives this research targeted were still in their marriages, and thus presumably happy. This was not always the case, e.g. P4 tended to report more problems and disappointments than happiness. Therefore I did not take it for granted that 'still being in the marriage' must link to marital satisfaction; rather, I identified my participants' marital satisfaction by taking their reports into account.

Secondly, in my research findings, cultural differences did not turn out to be an apparent contributor to marital problems as existing studies suggested. All my participants particularly stressed that they did not think there was a big cultural issue in their relationships as people often assumed. This captured my attention, as some parts of their narratives did not appear to be consistent with this assertion by my participants, as will be demonstrated in the next section.

#### **4.2.2 Discussion of the main deviating findings**

Looking into the data, I think there were some culture-related issues residing in the areas like lifestyle adaptations and problem solving; these culture-related issues largely centred on diet, food, attitudes toward the wedding ritual, hobbies, as well as cultural belonging and identity. Moreover, all my participants tended to describe their relationship experiences with their Caucasian husbands in contrast to those with Chinese men; they also tended to describe their lives in the host countries by making comparisons with their previous lives and environment in China. When addressing the differences between the couple, they tended to

attribute them to the ethnic group they belong to, rather than attribute to the individual woman or man, for instance, my participants used 'we Chinese', and reported that their husband used 'you Chinese' as such.

Taking incompatible hobbies as an example, these individual hobbies and interests developed during individual's upbringing within their own culture, e.g. my participants found it hard to share sports, films and TV programmes, which were popular in the UK with their husbands, as they knew little about them or had never even heard about them, thus they felt they had no interest in them, whilst they did watch Chinese soap operas, or sports which were popular among Chinese.

As lifestyle is defined as the way of life of an individual or a group of people, embodied in food, diet, costumes, 'interests', etc., it is seen to be a part of a culture and influenced by cultural components, such as values, norms, traditions, customs, etc. Therefore rethinking about my participants' claim, what I understood was:

Firstly, the reason they did not identify those aforementioned differences as cultural was perhaps due to the individual understanding of the concept of culture, and then their understanding of cultural differences. For instance, P3 explained that she did not think there were cultural issues in her marriage, as her husband learnt about Chinese culture before they married and knew about Chinese Zodiacs and Chinese traditional festivals, etc. This was her understanding of "culture" as it may be implicated in her relationship. This echoed with my concern addressed in the Introduction, where I stressed that I would be inclined to cautiously use the term "culture", and treat carefully around identifying "cultural differences" (see Research question development in Introduction).

Secondly, and more importantly, cultural differences do not necessarily turn out to be a problems, as they could be either appreciated (Yamani, 1998), or overcome through adaptations and problem solving. My participants showed both. Some culture differences were desirable and appreciated and thus becoming part of their marital expectations; this supported the theory explaining the motivations to intermarry / why intermarry, i.e. to be embraced by a new group (Freeman, 1955), otherwise my participants adapted to the



differences by reconciling or negotiating with their husbands. This finding is resonant with the suggestion that the party who married out tended to conform and mesh into the dominant host culture (Cottrell, 1991). This adaptation/acculturation probably accounted for the reality that culture differences did not turn out to be a problem for my participants, thus they paid little heed to the cultural aspect when they were talking about their marriages. Therefore whether these differences were identified as culture related differences did not really matter, the ways my participants perceived and handled it matter and made sense. It was the positive thoughts and the solution-focused problem-solving strategies that helped, which have been shown to be powerful and strongly encouraged in the framework of CBT (Beck, 1976), thus 'positive cognition', 'active learner and doer' were identified as part of their positive attributes (see category 3 in Chapter 3). The research findings revealed that there were indeed shared personal strengths, including personality traits, which were positive contributors when these wives came to deal with differences, uncertainties, and difficulties. Looking at the impact of cultural differences on intermarriages, culture appears to be a double-edged sword, as it can be either positive or negative, which depends on the user using it. When it emerged as a negative factor challenging the relationship, my findings contributed some constructive answers to supplement existing studies exploring coping strategies for culture related stressors (e.g. Bustamante, Nelson & Henriksen, et al., 2001), My findings to some extent enriched the tool kit of coping strategies (see Category 3 in Chapter 3).

#### **4.2.3 Manifestations of culture related issues**

When zooming in to look into areas where culture related issues can be evidenced within this particular group, some global aspects of cultural differences across diverse couple combinations which were strongly suggested by previous studies<sup>1</sup> did not turn out to be

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<sup>1</sup> For instance, Frame (2004) summarized that diet, extended family expectation, value, gender, religion, childrearing, money, sexuality, social class, language, communication, etc., are generally areas with common concerns.

relevant for my participants; compared with those global aspects (see Literature Review), which were relevant for this studied group, my research findings showed they turned out to have different manifestations of culture related issues.

Religion was not a relevant area to my participants at all; likewise, my participants did not mention social class, communication style, race-related issues and gender role conflicts. As illustrated in the Findings, participants perceived that areas, such as lifestyle, child, money (finance), sexual life and extended family were relevant in their marriages, which were parts of the global aspects suggested by the existing studies. Nevertheless, they either did not turn out to be a concern, rather a demonstration of a good match instead, or had different manifestations, e.g., given the age of these spouses and the age disparity between them and the life stage they were in, my participants did not any report conflicts with their husbands regarding childrearing and parenting style as suggested by existing studies (e.g. Rosenblatt & Stewart, 2004; Bhugun, 2016), which perhaps are more relevant to young couples. For the studied group, issues relating to children mainly manifested in the decision-making on whether to have their own child, or how to get on well with stepchildren. Overall, my participants reported they were good matches in this regard, especially in comparison with their experiences with Chinese men. Generally, “children” was not seen to be a factor challenging their relationships, except P2, who expressed her frustration regarding her husband’s different views on child education. However, the problem was solvable, she eventually found her psychological equilibrium around the issue.

With respect to sexuality, it was impressive that my participants tended to correct the public myth that they married for the Caucasian men’s physical attractiveness and strong sexuality, which have also been suggested by literatures (e.g. Ding, 2004; Ji, 2008). None of my participants particularly married for these physical attractions; P2 was even disappointed by her husband’s appearance; they also stressed that sexuality was irrelevant to race. They married for the good match between their expectations and the experienced reality of their relationship, including sexuality and sexual needs. Again, this fitted into part of my research findings, i.e. these women were rationally married for the fulfillment of their expectations and

good couple compatibilities.

In respect of the concerns associated with extended families, existing studies mainly centered on the intermarried couple's conflict revolving around extended family expectations. My studied group showed different manifestations regarding this, i.e. responsibility for elderly parents was the main issue, including a good financial settlement for the parents, a good arrangement for the parents' visits to the host country, and dealing with the elderly parents' needs for health care, etc. Moreover, actually P4 had to adjust her expectation from extended family-in-law, rather than the opposite suggested by existing literatures (see Category 3 in Findings and Literature Review).

My research findings also suggested that the areas my participants particularly addressed and accentuated seemed to be those which existing studies paid less attention to, i.e. those which were beyond the cultural dimension, such as practical issues, like language, family financial circumstances, personality, etc.

Furthermore, it is noteworthy that cultural practice is ubiquitous; whenever culture stood out as an issue, my findings suggested that these Chinese wives' efforts in acculturation were more to do with the adaptations to their lives in the host country, rather than with overcoming the cultural conflicts within the spouse. In other words, the manifestations of these cultural issues are generally culture related difficulties shared by 'immigrants' (Ho, 2013). For instance, language barriers, social isolation, lack of deep-seated cultural belonging, identity, constraints due to visa and immigration policies, etc. As a matter of fact, primarily these Chinese wives are a specific group of immigrants. Referring to the studies on challenges of immigrants may be more helpful than focusing on cultural conflicts within spouses, and successfully solving problems faced by immigrants could help strengthen their marital relationships. In other words, to support these couples most effectively, accurately identifying where difficulties reside and subsequently providing support accordingly in response to their actual needs is important. My findings could propel this awareness and understanding.

#### *Critical reflection on the understanding of cultural differences*

Regarding the culture differences addressed above, I chose to critically echo the terms, such as 'global cultural aspects', 'cultural differences', which were identified by existing studies, to allow the comparison. In essence, whether they are culture related depends on how to define this socially constructed concept of *culture*, which is an intrinsic difficulty, already addressed in the Introduction.

In addition, as aforementioned, this research studied a particular type of intermarriage, which was not studied before. Therefore considering the extent to which this research can be compared with existing studies, readers need to be aware that I did not intend to generalize the findings, but attempted to provide a reference/directive guidance to propel the awareness, knowledge and understanding of this particular type of intermarriage.

#### **4.2.4 What makes this research distinctive?**

Besides the discussion above about my findings in relation to the existing studies, the relatively comparable studies are scarce and appear to lack academic rigor in terms of methodological clarification and research design (as stated in the Introduction). There is little empirical research exploring how intermarriage evolves, not to mention the focus on this particular type of intermarriage, and thus this study is original.

Being down to earth, this research revealed a fundamental social-psychological process of this type of intermarriage; it did not aim to advance the research to develop a contextual couple therapy providing a problem-solving remedy. My findings did provide a comprehensive and explanatory and interpretive description of how this type of marriage evolves, which enriched explorations in the field of intermarriage studies.

Taking Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach, this study eschews taking for granted pre-assumptions and provides a holistic view of this type of intermarriage, whereby readers are able to gain a relatively complete grasp of the complexity of this particular type of marital phenomenon, whilst the existing studies often focused on a single aspect or discrete events based on pre-determined assumptions, for instance, studies on acculturation within intermarriages or, as an example of even more discrete subject, 'intercultural child rearing

and parenting', 'gender identity within intermarriages', etc. This research still sheds light on specific marital events/aspects, but every single event or aspect was also a specified occurrence mapped as part of the marital process, yet it was strongly contextual as part of a larger whole.

Especially the issues of marital expectations, couple compatibilities and differences, marital challenges and marital power distributions were not entirely isolated and discrete issues, and therefore have to be understood in the context of a whole process, in which my participants demonstrated that it was all about balancing, reconciling and negotiating between all these matters. For instance, if initial marital expectations were satisfactorily met, it could help counterbalance other disappointments and vice versa. This research explored a basic social-psychological process, thus allowed a comprehensive picture of what transpired in this particular group of intermarriage to unfold. Compared with existing studies, this holistic and dynamic view is distinctive.

This research also advanced the field with a fresh perspective, i.e. I did not begin the research with the "problematic", "failure" and "dysfunctional" presumptions leading to the focus on the marital weakness. This allowed the nature of this type of intermarriage to be unveiled, i.e. what actually happens in the type of marriage and how the marriage works through an inductive data analytic process, in which both strengths and weaknesses and coping strategies emerged spontaneously as part of the findings, i.e. these Chinese wives showed their shared personal strengths in successfully dealing with differences, difficulties and uncertainties, whilst in the meantime, some challenges or vulnerabilities remained too.

Furthermore, this study also clearly set out that the explorations would be based on the wives' perspective, whereas the relatively comparable studies did not clearly make this clarification. Initially, sampling the wives only was for ethical concerns as well as the ease I thought to have in approaching interviewees with similar background to myself. However, during the research process, I reflected that it was also the right choice for the rigor of the study although initially this was not intended (see Research Question Development in Introduction).

Additionally, both the studied population and the researcher were from Mainland China – very valuable for studies in counselling psychology, as they were often absent or under-represented in the studies in the field.

### **4.3 Evaluation of the research**

The evaluation of qualitative studies is to assess quality rather than validity or to what extent findings can be generalized. The rigor and trustworthiness can be examined through evaluation criteria tailored to adopted epistemology and methodology.

A few authors attempted to identify evaluation criteria for all qualitative research in psychology (e.g. Henwood & Pidgeon, 1992, 2006; Elliott et al. 1999, Yardly, 2008, 2016; Williams & Morrow, 2009). However, I agree with researchers such as Madill et al. (2000), Reicher, (2000), and Willig (2008), who suggested that the criteria for evaluating qualitative research should be compatible with the chosen epistemological and methodological approaches, as different approaches are based on different assumptions about the nature of working and knowledge and the role of the researcher. In addition, various research methods should be evaluated within their own terms, which were coined in response to the dedicated methodology (Willig, 2008).

To appraise research findings in the frame of grounded theory, the following criteria are often considered: grounded in data, conceptualized, usefulness, durability over time, modifiable and explanatory power (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss 1967). In addition, disciplinary and evidentiary were added by Charmaz (2006).

The evaluation guidelines generated by Henwood and Pidgeon (1992, 2006) were inspired by the grounded theory approach, and therefore responded well with concepts and terminologies in that framework. Considering that their guidelines are most relevant to this research, I thus basically used their evaluation criteria listed as follows:

Importance of fit

Integration of theory

Sensitivity to negotiated reality

Reflexivity

Documentation

Theoretical sampling and negative case analysis,

Transferability

However, I supplemented the above by or referred to some additional criteria suggested by other authors, as I considered them relevant to this study, i.e. credibility check, accomplishing general versus specific, and resonating with readers by Elliot et al (1999), as well as sensitivity to context by Yardly (2008, 2016). Despite the differences in terminology, there are some overlaps between appraisal criteria by different authors.

The chosen methodology of constructivist grounded theory implies that the researcher's belief in the 'constructed' feature of reality. The research subject matter is thus not an independent entity. Therefore the core of the research evaluation concerns the extent to which the identified categories fit the data well while acknowledging the researcher's involvement in the research process. In other words, it is to assess whether the theoretical conceptualisation was developed adequately in the framework of the chosen methodology; "reflexivity" will be particularly highlighted for its strong relevance to this research.

### *Importance of fit*

I always mindfully monitored my coding to see whether analytic categories fitted data well, or whether they perhaps had gone too far, becoming my overly idiosyncratic and creative interpretations. That's why I treated some of my insights as by-products of the findings, and explicated in the chapter of Discussion if I viewed these insights as not strongly derived from initial data, but largely from my further understanding/interpretation of the findings.

From the very beginning an effort was made to stick to line-by-line coding or the coding based on relatively smaller data units, this was one way to avoid "wandering" away from data. Later a back and forth comparative analysis was also a powerful way of ensuring that theory

generating was grounded in data. This will be further reflected on in 'Sensitivity to Negotiated Reality' and 'The Role of Interpretation In the Analytic Process'.

### *Integration of theory*

Grounding my analysis in data, I initially found it not easy to integrate all categories and subcategories into a logical and convincing structure so as to make sense of them as a whole. I always asked myself whether my research findings answered the research question, and whether my findings had explanatory value to facilitate the understanding of the studied phenomenon in the framework of the chosen methodology.

### *Documentation*

Paying attention to documenting my research process through Memo-writing, I documented everything that helped me progress with the study, such as my questions, thinking, procedure, etc. Memo-writing was like my courtyard where I continuously developed, corrected, refined and sharpened my understandings and thoughts; all forms of documentation as a feature of the grounded theory approach have proved to be helpful as that is where the contextual conceptualisation arose.

### *Sensitivity to negotiated reality*

Constructivist grounded theory methodology has an underlying belief in constructed reality. Based on this belief, I chose an "empathetic" and "tentative" approach in interpreting data (Willig, 2012), and respected and prioritized participants' understanding of the studied phenomenon. Therefore, during the interview I sometimes carefully interrupted to let participants clarify what they meant; I also kept an option open to go back to ask them for further clarification if the interview data was not clear for me. When there was still some discrepancy between my interpretation and the participants' clarification, I then reflected to find out what made that difference, e.g. regarding the question of whether 'cultural differences' was an issue for this type of marriage, there was a dedicated discussion in this



chapter.

### *Theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation*

Strictly speaking, sampling for any qualitative research is purposive and purposeful, but with different purposes at different stages. In relation to Grounded Theory, there are two major types of sampling, i.e. initial sampling and theoretical sampling. The former refers to where to start. I clearly defined the selection criteria of my participants to fit my intended research purpose, but they were gradually finalized in the research process in the context of Grounded Theory. This is my initial sampling (see Sample Considerations in Chapter 2, p.70).

I chose to take the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory approach (in Chapter 2: Methodology and Methods, p.69), i.e. there were neither follow-up interviews with the existing participants, nor further participants which could have had the purpose of exploring the extent to which my analysis based on my existing participants was theoretically saturated. This 'absence of purposive sampling' (Theoretical Sampling) was mainly due to pragmatic considerations, i.e. a manageable workload in the given time scale to complete this research. In addition, with my four participants the interviews were conducted one after another, so rather than finishing one data analysis and bearing the existing analysis in my mind, I moved on to proceed with the next interview straight away, without analyzing the first interview first, and so on. This was because, firstly, I needed to ensure richness of data in order to capture the complex manifestations of the studied phenomenon; I therefore felt that it might be too quick to go to Theoretical Sampling early in the data collection process (e.g. based on one data analysis from one interview). Secondly, it was also due to my pragmatic concerns about the given time and the availability of participants and subsequently their time availability. However, after each interview, I did develop some preliminary insights, which helped with the following interviews.

In the context of grounded theory, data saturation is tied up with theoretical sampling and theoretical saturation, which refers to data collection stops when there is no new insight emerging from the existing data and data analysis (Charmaz, 2006). However, this can only

be an ideal; theoretical saturation always has a relative status, and is thus provisional.

As I explained in chapter 2, constrained by the given time, I adopted the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory. However, through extending the initially one-hour semi-structured interview to three hours on average with each participant, I ensured richness of the data for analytic sufficiency with each participant from each interview (Dey, 1999). This research could be improved through adopting the Complete Version of Grounded Theory (see Improvement of The Research).

### *The role of interpretation in analytic process*

Critically adopting the constructivist grounded theory approach, I appreciate and echo Charmaz's (2006) understanding that the social reality was constructed by participants' active social participation and their interactions with the researcher, together with the researcher's understanding of and acting upon data during the analytic process. Therefore, I treated my participants as the constructors who participated in and also witnessed the social reality (Willg 2012). Premised on the assumption that my participants meant what they said and said what they meant, an element of interpretation was involved to make sense of the data.

I adopted an "empathic" interpretation approach driven by empathy (Langdrige, 2007, in Willig, 2012, p.13), which was decided before the process of interpretation. This type of interpretation approach was determined by my 'critically' adopted social constructionist epistemological stance, i.e. on one hand, I echoed Charmaz constructivist perspective acknowledging the researcher's contribution in the analytic process, on the other hand, I still aimed to ground the data analysis in the participants' perspective. It serves the purpose of generating shared understanding of the participants' world and their perspectives. In doing so, whilst respecting the participants' perspective and meaning-making, it helped to notice aspects of experiences that participants had not noticed before, or had neglected, and it "aims at a re-collection of meaning in its richest, most elevated, and most spiritual diversity"

(Ricoeur, 1996: 152, cited in Willig, 2012, p. 15).

In addition, the purpose of interpretation is also grounded in a tentative approach which is provisional and consistent with the chosen methodology of the constructivist grounded theory. The purpose is to gain an insight into underlying mechanisms and dynamics that can account for the data.

The empathic and tentative interpretation approaches determined my strategies with regard to detaching from my researcher's knowledge, experiences and personal view on the subject matter. Bracketing and openness are two strategies supplementing each other. The latter prevented interference from my subjectivity when bracketing was not always possible; at least an open mind helped loosen or counteract my subjectivity and carefully look into alternative understandings. I did mindfully balance between the participants' perspective and my / the researcher's involvement (Williams, 2009).

#### *Ethical challenges of interpretation*

"To interpret another person's experience means claiming to have access to (some of) its underlying meaning" (Willig, 2012, p. 19). I was sensitive to avoid at all costs getting involved in any "interpretive violence", even unwittingly, by imposing my biased understanding on participants (Willig, 2012, p. 54). Therefore interpretation was carefully conducted in this regard, e.g., when I conducted the coding for the social reality that my participants were facing in China's marriage market, I did mindfully think about my wording, such as "unpopular", "disadvantaged", "little opportunity" before finalizing it.

#### *Unintended triangulation and credibility check*

In the framework of grounded theory, it is compatible with different data sources, thus flexible regarding the data collection method. Triangulation as a data collection method refers to collecting data by combining two or more data sources, which enables an insight into the same phenomenon from different viewpoints. It helps with the credibility check of emerging categories and models (Willig, 2008). In this study, triangulation was not initially intended.

Nevertheless, by chance some information from my participants served the same function as triangulation to some extent.

For instance, language was one of the identified difficulties for these wives in my findings. P2, a former English teacher, did not have a language barrier to overcome, thus she turned out to be a negative case. However, she shared that with her English language skills, she helped many Chinese women with their translations for Internet-dating toward intermarriage; she pointed out that poor language was generally a shared issue among most women in this group, "To me, it was not dating, but trading...they even asked me if I could sit shoulder by shoulder with them in front of the computer to offer assistance at the time of pre-arranged chatting with foreign men"(P2: 13 & 16-17).

From the perspective of triangulation her observation and insight supported the finding that language was indeed an aspect of difficulty for this group of wives. Additionally, stressing her advantage in English, P2 tended to differentiate herself from other intermarried women whose English was poor. In doing so, she once more confirmed the importance of language proficiency in intermarriage.

My participants often shared a feeling of being "lucky" when comparing themselves to other intermarried couples whom they knew; e.g. regarding diet, P3 described that her cousin who married a British man had to cook Western and Chinese food for each of them separately...(P3: 500-502/p.19). Through the insight into other intermarried couples' experiences, she seemed to suggest that differences in diet habits between the intermarried couple could potentially become a marital difficulty. Thus with regard to diet, it may have different manifestations couple by couple.

Besides the above, P2 & P3 addressed that they heard from their intermarried friends how a poor financial status of the husbands made the relationship difficult (P2: p.16; P3: p.12). Thus, again they felt 'lucky'. On one hand, this triangulated information supported my research finding regarding the importance of husband's role for this type of marriage, especially their financial situation and financial support to the wives; on the other hand, it also suggested that with regards to future studies, the sample size could be enlarged to enrich the

data and explorations, allowing more complete manifestations of a certain issue. This could enhance the credibility check, and probably contribute to improving my model toward the goal of indefinite theoretical saturation (Credibility Check by Elliott et al., 1999).

Moreover, besides the unintended triangulation, the result of my negative case analysis also supported my research findings as another way of credibility check, as explained above.

### *Transferability*

According to the grounded theory approach, explanatory and interpretive understanding of a phenomenon is context-dependent. This research aims to generate a contextual middle-range theoretical model; thus I gradually developed and finalized the research question over time. One of the reasons for this was to steadily specify context and make it precise, so that it allows readers to explore the extent to which they can or cannot benefit from the study and to test out its applicability and usefulness (Glaser, 1978, 1992; Glaser & Strauss 1967).

I am aware that contextual theorizing also means limitation of applicability/usefulness. Moreover, even within the framed context, there are macro contexts at social level and micro contexts at individual level, which are often intertwined, dynamic and changing overtime, such as adjustment of visa and immigration policy, matrimonial law, and social and economic changes in Western countries and China, etc. This could have implications for this type of intermarriage. Therefore I appreciate that a historical or developmental perspective is appropriate to evaluate the applicability of contextual conceptualisation even within the context.

## **4.4 Reflexivity (Personal and Epistemological)**

### **4.4.1 Personal reflexivity**

As a researcher I appreciate it is impossible to retain entire neutrality, as if a complete outsider to my research subject throughout the research process. My participation in

contributing to the construction of the studied reality was inevitable. Therefore, I explored and reflected in which ways I possibly influenced the study and acted upon and formed the research findings, and how conducting this research affects me as well (Nightingale & Cromby, 1999).

In the framework of grounded theory, researchers have to remain detached from and unbiased toward their subject matters in order to avoid the possible contamination of data collection and data analysis (Willig, 2008). However, researchers' personal, cultural, social background, their values and their beliefs, etc. do fundamentally and indigenously come into play shaping the research process and findings. As a researcher, on one hand I was aware of the insurmountable subjectivity, on the other hand, I therefore paid unrelenting attention to this by bracketing my subjective involvement throughout the research to minimize its effect. Especially in the framework of the grounded theory approach, it places a great emphasis on the idea that researchers should strongly adhere to a 'bottom up' inductive process. Therefore, I understood it was particularly important to engage in the research with a stance of a naïve outsider.

In the context of this research, I especially reflected on the following aspects as I considered them strongly relevant.

Firstly, one of the key characteristics of grounded theory is to generate a theory revealing phenomena previously unattended to and providing explanatory and interpretive accounts of them resulting in a contextual theoretical model. Thus as a researcher, my expectation of a novel exploration leading to the emergence of a meaningful theoretical conceptualization may have potentially encouraged a certain type of information sharing by my participants during the interview, which in turn may have impacted my interaction with my participants, e.g. asking suggestive questions. As a researcher, "I should not look for answers in certain places, simply because they are familiar and easily accessible, rather I need to look in the places where the answer is likely to be, no matter how inhospitable" (Lorion 1990, p. 321-23). Therefore, I intentionally minimized my interventions during the data collection, adhering to the principle of merely initiating and eliciting my participants' narratives (see Interview style in

Methods).

Secondly, the researcher's own identity is rooted in culture, gender, age, ethnicity, nationality, etc., which all matter and may influence the research process and consequently impact the findings, either limiting or facilitating the research (Willig, 2008).

My own identity as a Chinese woman and a researcher is like two sides of the same coin. In this research, I focused on Chinese wives, who shared the same ethnicity, gender, cultural background and even a similar age group with me. This sameness greatly familiarized me with the participants' cultural milieu and personal status, thus my 'intrinsic' *emic*<sup>2</sup> stance (Cromby, Harper & Reavey, 2013) expected to be consistent with my participants' perspective in interpreting process and support the data analysis. This 'sameness' or similarity to my participants proved to be more helpful and positive rather than problematic. During the data analysis, I soon realized that if the researcher had been from a different background, the likelihood of being unable to make sense of some information in depth, or even missing some valuable information would have been much higher. This *emic* stance is intrinsic and not a chosen perspective, which enabled me to understand my participants better and it also enabled my participants to share freely and soon get to the points they wanted to make (as they assumed that I had the pertinent background information, contextual knowledge of an insider and I was able to understand the underlying suggestions as well). Taking one of the pre-conditions of the wives' "marrying out" as an example: without the knowledge of China's social tradition and social reality, there would be no understanding as to why my participants suggested they were too old to find a partner when they were in their 30's in China. Likewise, the same drawbacks may have occurred regarding the data analysis of the issues around children, sex and extended family (see Findings).

However, looking at the flip side of the coin, due to my sameness with my participants, I might unwittingly impose my subjective assumption on the subject matter during the research process, for instance my own personal experience of intermarriage. Having thoroughly

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<sup>2</sup> The *emic* approach understands people through a cultural insider's view, whereas the *etic* approach understands people through a cultural outsider's view (Cromby, Harper & Reavey, 2013).

reflected on my own marriage in depth before my research, I had already gained a clear understanding of the challenges in my relationship, which was characterised by a relatively unique, very private circumstance (that I did not even remotely encounter in any of my participants) It was therefore not too difficult for me to prevent my knowledge developed through my personal experience from contaminating the interpreting process. The constant awareness of needing to control my possible assumptions was helpful though.

In summary, I think having been in a position of managing to control subjectivity is a better position to be in than if I had no knowledge facilitating the cultural understanding. Therefore, the *emic* stance was the right one for this research. Nonetheless if time permitted, having another researcher taking the *etic* stance to interpret the same data, and then compare the findings with mine could be an option to refine this research and ensure its credibility.

Thirdly, in the framework of grounded theory, researchers should engage in their studies without pre-conceived knowledge about the research subject to entirely let the power of data determine the outcome. However, researchers do not live in a vacuum, on the contrary, they have often developed their research interest due to some knowledge about the studied subject. In the introduction I stated that I did have some knowledge about intermarriage through various sources, such as media news, my friends, my client, etc., before I started the research. However, due to the variety of information sources, the knowledge in my mind was rather fragmented, which did not shape my understanding of the studied phenomenon and thus formulated stereotypical assumptions; rather the fragmented and diverse information diluted the effect of preliminary understanding on the subject matter and inspired me to know more by studying the subject by myself. Thus this flavour of my fragmented knowledge sparked my research interest in this field instead. In fact, it even helped me to be more careful with the data analysis. I documented those potential findings against the claims from existing studies and thought through what made the differences. Additionally, due to the nature of grounded theory, analytic data tended to be factual and content based, there was not much room for pre-conceived knowledge of the subject matter to interfere with the data analytical process.



During my professional doctoral training in counselling psychology, I have developed an increased capability for empathy, i.e. taking the perspective of clients, without being judgemental in posing my values, experiences and knowledge on them. This is fundamental to the training in counselling psychology. As counselling psychology trainees, we had an advantage in this sense.

Nevertheless, I am aware that a certain level of subjectivity when undertaking research always remains, which is an intrinsically insurmountable issue. The effect of my subjectivity can only be minimized but not be fully eliminated. Thus I also learned to embrace my participants' perspective with my openness to counteract this limitation.

Ramalho, Adams & Huggard, et al.,(2015) pointed out that the key point of preventing pre-conceived knowledge from being acted upon during the research process was to keep an open mind, but not an empty head, thereby allowing for a thorough exploration. Therefore, while bracketing my existing knowledge of the subject matter, my professional training in counselling psychology seemed to have implications for my perspective when looking into data and the language used for coding. When categorizing during the data analytic process, I for example tended to use phrases such as "adaptation and problem solving", "coping strategies", "positive cognition", etc. to explain how my participants reacted in the studied context. This is one way that my prior knowledge (of counselling psychology) acted upon and shaped the research process, but not the knowledge of the research subject; it is also a way of how my professional identity as a counselling psychologist influenced the research.

Further more, it would be more helpful to critically take a dialectic view on the bracketing of my researcher's subjectivity. As stated, I tried to ground my analysis in the data, nonetheless it may be that tapping into my own experiences or knowledge allows me to understand something and/or see meanings that a researcher without my personal backgrounds may not be able to see or understand, e.g. I had reflected on my intrinsic *emic* stance in the section of Personal Reflexivity. On the other hand, under the Role of Interpretation In Analytic Process, I also pointed out that "whilst respecting the participants perspective and meaning-making, the involvement of my subjectivity could also help to notice aspects of experiences that

participants had not noticed before, or neglected...” (p.188).

In this sense, the researcher’s subjectivity is like a double-edged sword that could be a productive contributor as well. Thus, strictly bracketing (or attempting to bracket) my researcher’s subjectivity has its disadvantages or limitations. In essence what I needed to cautiously bracket were my subjective conclusions strongly associated with the studied phenomenon, based on my own experiences or knowledge overriding my participants’ meaning-makings.

Fourthly, in addition to all of the above with regards to my subjective involvement as the researcher- given the great amount of raw data, a time limit and a word limit to complete the research, I have to admit that it was not possible for every bit of information to equally capture my attention. During the focused coding and theoretical coding, I retained the information, which I considered most relevant and significant. I might therefore consciously or unmindfully have neglected some subtle messages conveyed in the participants’ narratives.

#### **4.4.2 Epistemological reflexivity**

The Grounded Theory approach helps us map social-psychological processes and their consequences for participants, rather than reveal their inner psyche (Willig, 2008).

Like other research methodologies, Grounded Theory has its own limitations. The main criticism is concerned with epistemological root and epistemological variation, and the current variation of approaches in grounded theories resulting in the lack of standardised methods. However, Charmaz (2006) argued that grounded theory methods are not necessarily tied to a single epistemology. Like it is not necessary to be tied to a single method of data collection or emerge from a specific theoretical perspective” (p. 178). This ‘reasoning’ seems not persuasive, as it raises the question what makes a methodology stand out as distinctive. Nonetheless, whether grounded theory is the most adequate name to a constructivist approach, and whether the objectivist grounded theory and the constructivist grounded theory should be grouped together into one independent methodology would not

necessarily be a real concern for me. What matters here is that Charmaz' constructivist perspective was considered an appropriate methodology for this research.

As I already elucidated in the section on Methodological Orientation, grounded theory is characterized by the discovery of theory from data through an inductive process (Glazer and Strauss 1967). It has a positivist foundation. However, during data collection and analysis the presentation of reality can never be separated from the involvement of participant and researcher and their interactions. The interpretations of events and processes from both participant and researcher inevitably participate in the analytic process; the so-called data speaking for itself is therefore merely an ideal. Thus, constructivist grounded theory was adopted as the methodological position for this research, the researcher's fundamental belief in how the data was accessed made sense of matter. This raises another criticism that constructivist grounded theory has deviated from the initial tenet of grounded theory, i.e. theory is grounded in data. Nevertheless, this is merely a matter of degree. Although in the framework of constructivist grounded theory interactions between participants and the researcher are involved and an interpretive element comes into play during the research process, in essence, the theoretical model as the end product of research is still based on empirical data, rather than on outcome reached through a logical deduction alone. In contrast to the phenomenological methodological perspective, which focuses on individual experiences only, constructivist grounded theory centres on the basic process of a phenomenon or event, which is relatively objective.

Looking into my participants' narratives apropos of what happened in their marriages, I realized that the events/details from them seemed to be more strongly selective than I expected. What they shared with me were what they perceived to be significant in their marriages, hence were retrieved from their memories, which would not be a mirror presentation of reality, as reality is not there to be discovered, but to be explored. This fact consolidated my understanding and belief that the presentation of social reality is not the same as the reality, but co-constructed by participants and the researcher through the research process. Thus, it supported my choice of social constructionist epistemology and

the methodology of constructivist grounded theory. Participants' active engagement in the events largely shaped the reality. It therefore made sense to clarify that this study was based on the Chinese wives' perspective. This explicit clarification was not found in existing studies. However, every coin has two sides, the above also disclosed the constraint of the study, i.e. Chinese wives were the only group selected for this research (to understand the decision of sample choice, see Sample Considerations in the chapter of Methodology and Methods). This research thus revealed a manifestation of the marital process as perceived by Chinese wives only; It is difficult to predict to what extent Caucasian husbands' perspective is different from their wives'. This is still an unknown area; this gap could be filled in the future through follow-up studies by sampling Caucasian husbands.

#### **4.5 Critical language awareness**

Language is not a mere vehicle conveying messages, but shapes one's worldview (Whorf, 1956). Therefore, qualitative research is sensitive to language. Willig (2008) stressed that researchers needed to be aware of linguistic variability in general. According to the social constructionist perspective, language is an important aspect of socially and culturally constructed knowledge. Particularly, according to the constructivist approach of grounded theory, social-psychological processes involve communication, and meaning sharing; in the research process, when participants interact with the researcher, when the researcher conducts data analysis, interpretations which are language dependent are always involved (Charmaz, 2006).

Especially for this research language was an extremely sensitive issue with regards to ensuring a rigorous outcome, as it involved translation and culturally dependent interpretations.

### **The language used for the interviews**

I carefully thought about this, thus I balanced the dilemma during the data collection, i.e. Interviews conducted either in Chinese or in English could be problematic. If interviews were conducted in the native language of my participants, translations would be required. Some language expressions may not have translational equivalence in English and additionally the translator may be constrained by their inevitable subjectivity, thus in the translated data, a certain level of deviation from the participants' original meaning may ensue. Alternatively, the participants could have been interviewed in English, but they might not have been able to express themselves so explicitly as constrained by their English proficiency. Therefore, either way there would have been insurmountable issues, as it is an intrinsic problem. I ended up prioritizing the choice that all my participants preferred to be interviewed in their native language. Hence the initial data was collected in Chinese.

### **The language of the data transcripts**

I was aware that ideally, I would have directly worked with the original transcripts in Chinese without these being translated. However, as this doctorate research involved English speaking supervisions, all transcripts were translated into English first for the sake of thorough discussion with my supervisor to ensure the rigor of data analysis, and I then conducted the data analysis in English too, so as to facilitate this English research report.

### **Translations**

Both the translator and translation approach were carefully considered.

#### *The choice of translator*

Firstly, the chosen translator was a professional and experienced translator.

Secondly, only one translator was engaged in this research to maintain translation consistency.

Thirdly, there would be always pros and cons regarding the gender of the translator. Whilst a

male translator might be weak in understanding nuances of female psychology through their language expressions, a female translator, so of the same gender as my participants, was possibly more likely to fall into the peril of taking her personal understanding of the issues for granted when translating. Thus either a female or a male translator would have had her/his intrinsic strengths and weaknesses in this translation work, hence there was no flawless choice. A male translator was eventually hired for practical convenience.

### *The choice of translation approach*

In 'translation study', there are two basic translation approaches: the literal (direct) approach and the oblique approach. The former was the chosen approach<sup>3</sup> for this study.

Requirements of the translation approach were articulated in the Translator's Agreement as follow (see also Appendix F: Translator's Agreement):

#### *Box 1-4. Requirements on the translation approach*

##### **Requirements on the translation approach**

*Take the literal/direct translation approach as the primary approach, to adhere to the expression and meaning of the source language.*

*The oblique translation approach can be adopted only if there is no language equivalence in English, e.g. if idioms, slangs, and proverbs etc. were used in the source text.*

*Maintain characteristics and features of the language of the interviewees.*

*When the original expression in Chinese is not complete or not articulated, additional annotation is a good supplement, please place in parentheses.*

*Translator's personal interpretation should be strictly avoided.*

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<sup>3</sup> It seeks to match the individual words of the original as closely as possible to individual words of the target language (Munday, 2016).

The reason I was inclined to take the 'direct translation' as the basic approach was to keep the translated data as original as possible, otherwise twice interpreting from both translator and researcher (at different level) would have led to a greater loss of original meaning.

Additionally, I proofread the initial translations. When a controversial translation was noted, there was another equally competent translator involved to double check the accuracy of the translation. Furthermore, when the full data from one interview was translated, there was a feedback discussion with the translator to improve the following translations. Here below follows a memo providing an example of the discussion of translations (see also Appendix I for one more example).

In general, I could always go back for meaning verification with my participants if needed.

In a future study with a more flexible timeframe, a back-translation<sup>4</sup> will be a better choice to double check to what extent the translations adhere to the original expressions.

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<sup>4</sup> One Hour Translation – World's Largest Online translation Agency introduced the definition and its purpose as follows (2008):

"Back translation can be defined as the procedure according to which a translator or team of professional translators interpret a document previously translated into another language back to the original language. Usually this process is made by a translator or translators who had not been previously involved in the project and who have no prior knowledge of the objectives or its specific context...The process of back translation is especially useful for professional translators who wish to ensure the most absolute quality and accuracy to their clients."

## **Memo: Translations**

### **A discussion with the translator of transcript1 - (Date: 16-03-2016)**

1. Solitude vs. Loneliness. I know you probably wanted to avoid using loneliness again and again. However, solitude relates to positive aloneness, whereas my participants wanted to express the negative feeling of loneliness.
2. Regarding the abbreviation of “CCTV”: for Chinese, it means China Central Television, whereas for British People, it refers to Closed Circuit Television; what the participant meant here was the former. Therefore, an explanation would better be given in a bracket.
- 3, What the interviewee meant was that the drug “paracetamol” could not help with the pain caused by cancer, but your initial translation was “I knew paracetomal had nothing to do with pain relieving”, which was not accurate.

*Box 1-5. Example of discussion of translations*

## **Reflection on other language related issues**

### *Characteristics and features of my participants’ language*

When writing the transcripts, I noticed that each participant’s utterances disclosed her such as educational and life background, her emotional states. In theory, in the framework of Grounded Theory, the relatively objective content, i.e. the substance of what was being said by participants was the focus of my analysis; thus I took those individual non-verbal characteristics into account merely to help me get into the participants’ world to facilitate my empathic understanding of their narratives, e.g. P4 used “hate” to express the feeling of her previous life in China; P1 used a Chinese word “TMD”, meaning ‘fuck’ when she described her encounter with Chinese men who belittled her.



### *Intrinsic constraint on language as the researcher*

As a researcher, my native language is not English and I am not rooted in English culture; however, the data analysis was conducted in English and the research report is presented in English. This might have implications for the language I was using for coding, categorizing and theoretical conceptualisation, etc. I did have an awareness of this intrinsically formidable drawback.

However, compared with IPA, this study focused on a relatively objective process, rather than a merely inner psychological process. Therefore, what my participants said was assumed to be true (i.e. a realist ontological perspective). Their narratives were rather descriptive, factual about an outward process and therefore easier to translate than individual accounts of subjective experiences and feelings which would be more dependent on language specific categories and nuances that are hard to translate. In this sense therefore language had less of impact on the interpretation of the processes.

## **4.6 Limitations and improvement of the research**

### **Limitations of sampling**

The limitations of sampling could be mainly specified as the lack of theoretical sampling (see Evaluation in Discussion) and the limitation of sample size.

### ***Sample size***

Qualitative research is concerned with the texture and quality of a phenomenon in depth, and by its nature, it is heavily time consuming and laborious. Constrained by time and workload, generally a much smaller sample size was involved compared with quantitative studies that aim to generalize findings.

However, the sample size still matters in qualitative studies, and Glazer & Strauss (1967) recommended a principle to guide determination of sample size by importing the concept of “saturation”. This means that sample size is not rigid in figures, but theoretical saturation

matters, i.e. sample size will be considered appropriate until no new insight or perception emerges from existing samples. This has become a generally acknowledged principle.

Statistical data (Tesch, 1990) drawn from 174 PhD studies taking a grounded theory approach showed sample size ranged from 4 up to 87, with a mean of 32. However, for a PhD study, the researcher has a more flexible time scale than is provided within the context of a Professional Doctorate.

Since then different authors have suggested different sample sizes for research in the framework of the grounded theory approach, e.g. Morse (1994) suggested 30 to 50 participants, whereas Creswell (1998) suggested 20 to 30. Nonetheless, the attainments of saturation from these surveys were not really proven but self-proclaimed, and these suggested sample sizes were not empirically supported and therefore cannot lead to the generally accepted principle.

Furthermore, how to understand the concept of saturation is equivocal; especially the extent to which the saturation is achieved may differ study by study, as it is determined by the research subject matter. It does not mean the more interviews, the more satisfactory saturation. Critically reviewing the concept of saturation, I perceived that there are at least two levels of saturation. Theoretical saturation has already been discussed. Here where I want to particularly pinpoint the “saturation” at the level of each interview, i.e. a richness of data collection has to be ensured to reach fundamental saturation with each interviewee.

In summary, there is no unanimity of rule concerning appropriate sample size for either qualitative studies in general or grounded theory research specifically. Attempts at generalizing a more or less fixed sample size for all studies have so far been less than convincing and run into the risk of being arbitrary.

I was therefore inclined towards Patton’s (1995) suggestions that sample size may be best determined by the time allotted, resources available, and subject matter.

Taking a pragmatic stance in adopting the “abbreviated version” of grounded theory approach, there were neither follow-up interviews with the same participants nor involvement of further samples in my study. Secondly, constrained by timescales, I prioritized the

fundamental analytic saturation with each interviewee, so had to ensure that each participant could thoroughly share her pertinent stories. I found that at least three hours to three and half hours for each interview were needed to reach that sufficiency, rather than the one-hour semi-structured interview initially intended. This resulted in the reduction of sample size to four eventually.

Critically understanding of theoretical saturation<sup>5</sup> and being aware that I was grounding my analysis in data collected in one go - rather than via repeated visits to the field, I conducted a careful and thorough coding and analysis, during which possible alternative understandings of the data were considered with the aim for analytic sufficiency (Dey, 1999).

### ***Constraint of data collection***

Assuming that all my participants genuinely shared their stories during the interviews, I still noticed that cognitive abilities, such as memory, language construction/expression, logical thinking, meta-cognition and retrospection might have an impact on the quality of data. The data may turn out to be subtly different if interviews are conducted at different times and across different situations and emotional states of these participants, as the way that they describe and understand the past reality may differ. These intrinsic constraints merit to be addressed, which may have an implication for the quality of data.

### **Improvement of the research**

In future research, this study could be improved through theoretical sampling:

Firstly, I could take the Complete Version of Grounded Theory to explore the extent to which

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<sup>5</sup> In contrast to the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory, in which researchers work with the original data only to generate their theoretical models, in the framework of Full Version of Grounded Theory, each category or concept emerging from the analysis based on previous data informs a new look at data, therefore this may require a back and forth pattern of follow-up data collection and data analysis to continuously update and refine the theoretical model (i.e. theoretical saturation) (Willig, 2008, 2013). However, the real 'theoretical saturation' is an ideal that requires a never-ending data collection and data analysis (see section of Methodological Orientation, p.62).

my existing research findings reached theoretical saturations. Hence the research design could be refined by adding follow-up interviews with the same participants and/or involving more participants so that more data can be added on for a continuous back and forth comparative analysis, whilst acknowledging that in grounded theory, theoretical conceptualization is always provisional (Glaser and Strauss, 1967; Willig, 2008).

Secondly, I could consider conducting one interview and working on the data for data analysis straightaway, and then continuing the following interviews using the existing analysis as a reference for the following interviews.

In addition, I could simply enlarge the initial sample size to collect more data for the theoretical conceptualization – even if remaining in the framework of the Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory.

Besides considering an alternative researcher from an *etic* background, which has been addressed in Personal Reflexivity, and increasing the sample size, the grounded theory approach is compatible with a wide range of data collection methods (Willig, 2008). Thus for future research, blogs or diaries could be considered in addition to semi-structured interview. This may be particularly relevant as interviews based on retrieving memories are constrained; memory may fade over time, whereas documentation like blogs and diaries are more reliable in this sense. Additionally, some participants may feel uncomfortable genuinely sharing certain information in a face-to-face interview or even through audio conversation, but they may feel more at ease with sharing their blogs and diaries.

Each data source has its own strengths and weaknesses; they can supplement each other and counteract the confounding factors to minimize the limitations of my data (Willig, 2008).

Besides the data collection method of “triangulation” mentioned earlier, the credibility check could be enhanced by including Focus Groups<sup>6</sup> in the research design; conducting the same

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<sup>6</sup> The purpose of Focus Groups is to appraise the emerging model, to verify to what extent the theoretical model captures the reality; what accounts for the exceptional phenomenon (if any) going beyond what the model covers, consequently what potential areas need to be further explored, etc. It facilitates further discussion and directs future research (Willig, 2008, 2012).

data analysis by a researcher from an *etic* background is another choice in this regard, which has been aforesaid, so as to improve the emerging theoretical model.

#### **4.7 Suggestions for future study**

##### *Longitudinal study*

Marriage is a dynamic process. At the point of my research ending, it seemed that every participant was reaching their next transitional juncture, thus tended to be confronted by potential challenges accordingly, i.e. P1 lost her husband and started her life alone; P3, who had been taking enormous responsibilities looking after her ill mother in China, probably soon will go back to her normal marital life in the UK; P2's son left home for his job in another city; both P2 & P4 had stable jobs, increased earnings and new aspiration of life (personal developmental growth) together with the propensity for developmental divergence between the spouse. Therefore, following-up my research by a longitudinal study would allow to undoubtedly expand the exploration of the studied phenomenon.

##### *Alternative perspective*

This research focused on the subject matter from the Chinese wives' perspective. Considering alternative perspectives, obviously it will be a good choice to sample Caucasian husbands to further understand the same phenomenon. In addition, children and extended family members or even friends of the couple may offer a worthwhile alternative perspective.

##### *Facilitating homogenous studies*

This research can inspire studies taking the same methodological perspective to explore the same subject matter, but focusing on different combinations (e.g. different countries or ethnic groups) of intermarried couples, and thereby enrich the explorations in the still under-represented area in the field of intermarriage studies.

## **4.8 Implications for practitioners**

### **Facilitating culture-specific counselling**

In the past decades, culture-specific counselling has long been discussed (Collins and Arthur, 2010). In the training of counselling psychologists, 'context, diversity and standards' is a fundamental topic, in which it places a great emphasis on cultural awareness, sensitivity and appropriateness in counselling practice; Bezanson and James (2007) suggested that at the very least a culture-specific approach should be a complementary approach for clinical excellence. The NICE guidelines though do not provide a clear reference for the family therapy dedicated to intermarried couples, not to mention a theoretical model to gain a holistic understanding of this particular type of intermarriage, in order to support these couples more effectively.

Bond (2000, pp.114-115) pointed out: "A commitment by counselling psychologists to work within their own competence is fundamental to working ethically...A generalist dealing with an infrequently raised issue would be considered incompetent". In general, the findings of this research support the proposition of culture-specific counselling with knowledge and conceptual understanding of this specific population group.

### **Filling the gap of therapeutic understanding of intermarriage**

Although there are some studies, which stress multicultural couple counseling competencies (e.g. Killian, K. D., 2013), apparently there are various configurations of intermarriages and situations. Whether existing intermarried-couple therapies can be applied to the group is in question, calling for evidence-based studies on their transferability; there is little empirical research that has been done with this particular group to reveal its nature, not to mention a conceptual understanding of it, and useful interventions.

This research provides valuable explorations and detailed insights for practitioners like psychologists, psychotherapists, counsellors, including community social workers, who are working with intermarried couples. It will facilitate their awareness and knowledge of this type

of intermarriage, whilst also gaining contextual understanding of the marital phenomenon, thereby arming themselves with professional and ethic competencies to best meet their clients' needs and support them more effectively.

### **A fresh and positive perspective working with intermarried couples**

This research aimed to merely reveal the nature of this type of intermarriage by taking a neutral stance; there was no pre-assumption of dysfunction and failure of intermarriages. Therefore it allowed both the strengths and weaknesses of the relationships to be manifested. Especially with regard to reporting their marital satisfaction, this group of wives demonstrated remarkable strength-based adaptations and problem solving. This positive perspective would be enlightening for practitioners. Therapists can either help their clients develop and consolidate those strengths, as well as explore more effective support accurately when responding to identified difficulties.

Providing therapists who devote themselves to this field with a good knowledge and understanding, this research may facilitate therapists' sensitivity to contextually specific interventions. For those practitioners working with intermarriage issues that are beyond my studied group, this study may be a good reference point for thinking through to what extent it is applicable to other groups (transferability).

### **Facilitating development of contextual intermarried couple therapy**

Among helping professionals providing mental health services, counseling psychologists are qualified as both competent practitioners and researchers. This research has laid a foundation to inspire them to develop intermarried couple therapy, especially which could be tailored to this particular group; this could expand or further the contribution to the field.

### **For supervision and psycho-education**

The findings of this research can be capitalized on in general psycho-education and supervision of couple or/and family therapists to enrich their knowledge and to broaden their

minds when working with intermarried couples.

The findings could also be a good reference point for those who desire this type of relationship / marriage to well prepare them for getting into it; for those who are already in the interrelationships, it is a good guide for them to gain a better understanding of their relationship and strengthen it towards marriages.

### **Informing pertinent policy adjustment and amendment of matrimonial law**

This research also revealed the impact from dynamic social forces on proceeding with the relationship, e.g. visa application and immigrant policies. Armed with this knowledge of this study, counseling psychologists could potentially prepare to participate in discussions on pertinent policy adjustments to maximize intermarried couples' chances with regard to a healthier marital development.

## **4.9 Implications for professional development of the researcher**

Within the context of counseling psychology research, researchers from China, and Chinese research participants, particularly those from Mainland China are extremely sparse.

In London I am the first one to have embarked on the professional training in counselling psychology at doctoral level. Even among psychotherapists and counselors, Chinese, especially Mainland Chinese, are scant. There are however, an increasing number of Chinese migrants and intermarried Chinese in London.

Since having been engaged in this research on a culture-related subject matter, my confidence in working with intermarriage, and with cultural issues in general has increased, I will continue to contribute to the mental health provision of the London Chinese population, whilst working with a variety of ethnic groups.



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## **Appendices**

Appendix A: Ethics Release Form

Appendix B: Research Information Sheet (English & Chinese)

Appendix C: Research Advertisement

Appendix D: Research Consent Forms (English & Chinese)

Appendix E: Researcher Instructions for the Semi-structured Interview

Appendix F: Translator's Agreement

Appendix G: Debrief for Participants

Appendix H: Extracts from Interview Transcripts

Appendix I: Memo-writing on Discussion of Translations

Appendix J: Memo-writing for Data Analysis

Appendix A  
Ethics Release Form

## Ethics Release Form for Student Research Projects

All students planning to undertake any research activity in the School of Arts and Social Sciences are required to complete this Ethics Release Form and to submit it to their Research Supervisor, **together with their research proposal clearly stating aims and methodology**, prior to commencing their research work. If you are proposing multiple studies within your research project, you are required to submit a separate ethical release form for each study.

This form should be completed in the context of the following information:

- An understanding of ethical considerations is central to planning and conducting research.
- Approval to carry out research by the Department or the Schools does not exempt you from Ethics Committee approval from institutions within which you may be planning to conduct the research, e.g.: Hospitals, NHS Trusts, HM Prisons Service, etc.
- The published ethical guidelines of the British Psychological Society (2009) Guidelines for minimum standards of ethical approval in psychological research (BPS: Leicester) should be referred to when planning your research.
- **Students are not permitted to begin their research work until approval has been received and this form has been signed by Research Supervisor and the Department's Ethics Representative.**

### Section A: To be completed by the student

Please indicate the degree that the proposed research project pertains to:

BSc      M.Phil      M.Sc      **D.Psych**      n/a

Please answer all of the following questions, circling yes or no where appropriate:

1. Title of project

How the marriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men evolve over time

2. Name of student researcher (please include contact address and telephone number)

Wenxia Shen  
School of Social Sciences  
The City University  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB



Email Address: Wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk

Contact Number: +44 (0)20 7040 5060

3. Name of research supervisor

Carla Willig

4. Is a research proposal appended to this ethics release form? Yes No

5. Does the research involve the use of human subjects/participants? Yes No

If yes,

a. Approximately how many are planned to be involved?

8

b. How will you recruit them?

Online intercultural marriage communities, together with the recommendation by acquaintances are the main recruitment resources.

c. What are your recruitment criteria?

Chinese woman who was born and grew up and lived in China initially, due to marrying to a Caucasian man, moved from her native country to join her husband's life abroad.

She has been living abroad and in this marriage between 2 – 10 years.

See Appendix C: Research Advertisement

d. Will the research involve the participation of minors (under 18 years of age) or vulnerable adults or those unable to give informed consent? Yes No

d1. If yes, will signed parental/carers consent be obtained? Yes No

d2. If yes, has a CRB check been obtained? Yes No

(Please append a copy of your CRB check)

6. What will be required of each subject/participant (e.g. time commitment, task/activity)? (If psychometric instruments are to be employed, please state who will be supervising their use and their relevant qualification).

Each participant will be required to involve task(s) as follows. She can choose whichever task(s) applied to her.

1. She will involve 1 session face-to-face interview or an interview on the phone, which will be tape-recorded. It takes about 1 hour.

---

For some participants, there may be a follow up interview if necessary.

2. An online conversation with researcher by typing. The text will be saved as research data.

3. Personal blogs or diaries relevant to her marriage.

7. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to the subjects/participants?

Yes      No

If yes,

a. Please detail the possible harm?

Participant may recall some unpleasant experiences in the marital relationship during the interview.

b. How can this be justified?

The chance of risk is low, probably it will also be an opportunity for the participants to talk and share and offload their negative emotions suppressed in the marriage. Nonetheless, I will monitor their feelings of through observation and their self-report during the interview, including the ending point when the task is finished. For those who are really stress, I can refer them to a free counseling service (See question C ), whereby the potential harm could be minimized.

c. What precautions are you taking to address the risks posed?

Before the chosen task(s) begins, address the issue to participants: e.g. "During the interview, some unpleasant memories may be shaken up and disturbing, are you able to cope and still willing to participate at this point? Anyway, during your participation, please feel free to tell me about your stress, we will stop whenever you feel uncomfortable".

In addition, participants are free to withdraw from the participation at any point. For those who are really stressed, I will be able to refer them to Chinese National Healthy Living Centre, which is a charity organization dedicated itself to helping Chinese rebuild their physical and social and psychological well-being. a free counseling service in order to help alleviate any possible stress.

8. Will all subjects/participants and/or their parents/carers receive an information sheet describing the aims, procedure and possible risks of the research, as well as providing researcher and supervisor contact details?

Yes      No

For details, see Appendix D: Research Information Sheet

9. Will any person's treatment/care be in any way be compromised if they choose not to participate in the research?

Yes      No

10. Will all subjects/participants be required to sign a consent form, stating that they fully understand the purpose, procedure and possible risks of the research?

Yes      No

If no, please justify

11. What records will you be keeping of your subjects/participants? (e.g. research notes, computer records, tape/video recordings)?

Tape recordings from the face-to-face interviews, or interviews on the phone and textual conversations by using online chat software, e.g. Messenger and copy of participant's dairies or blogs

12. What provision will there be for the safe-keeping of these records?

In terms of BPS guideline on Record Keeping, during the research, all the records will be safely saved without identifiable labels, and locked at the place, where research takes place, to make sure nobody else can have an access, except the researcher. The data will be attached with a note "CONFIDENTIAL-DO NOT COPY". For the digital data saved on computer, a password is required to unlock the computer. Consent Form signed by the participants should be saved separately from the data records.

---

13. What will happen to the records at the end of the project?

All the records including original textual, audio data will be destroyed. Once this is done, a note will be delivered to participants to ease them from their potential concerns.

14. How will you protect the anonymity of the subjects/participants?

The issue of confidentiality will be clearly addressed before participation. All the aforementioned records will be erased after the research is completed. Regarding transcripts from original data, including those which are cited or appended to the research report, all the identifiable information will be altered, or kept anonymously.

15. What provision for post research de-brief or psychological support will be available should subjects/participants require?

During the process of participant recruitment, the aim of research will be clearly introduced. Due to the nature of this research, i.e. by taking grounded theory methodology, participants will have an opportunity to receive a de-brief after the research is completed.

Again, a free counseling service is always open to participants if there is any psychological support needed. Here follows the web-link of Chinese National Healthy Living Centre (CNHLC) and address and contact number, where the free counseling will be offered.

Web link:

<http://www.cnhlc.org.uk/>

Post Address

29-30 Soho Square

London

W1D 3QS

Contact Number: 02075346546

If you have circled an item in **underlined bold** print or wish to provide additional details of the research please provide further explanation here:

Once the ethic concerns are cleared up and the research proposal is approved, the pertinent documents to participants will be translated into Chinese to make sure that every participant has a clear understanding of the study and procedure and their rights.

Signature of student researcher Wenxia Shen -----Date 20 January 2014

**CHECKLIST:** the following forms should be appended unless justified otherwise

Research Proposal \*

Recruitment Material \*

Information Sheet \*

Consent Form \*

De-brief Information: Due to the nature of the research, de-brief will be provided after research is completed

## Section B: Risks to the Researcher

1. Is there any risk of physical or psychological harm to yourself? **Yes** No  
If yes,

a. Please detail possible harm?

I will meet and have an interview with each participant alone, there is a potential concern about my safety.

b. How can this be justified?

The chance of the risk to the researcher is low, in particular, precautions could be made to ensure the safety of the researcher. See the question c as following.

c. What precautions are to be taken to address the risks posed?

1.The interview will take place at a safe venue, e.g. a room at City University, or some coffee shop.

2.Before I leave for the interview, I could prepare a sealed letter left to my family member, which tells where I go. By a given time, if I could not get back, he could open the letter, and try to find me in terms of the given details in the letter.

### **Section C: To be completed by the research supervisor**

*(Please pay particular attention to any suggested research activity involving minors or vulnerable adults. Approval requires a currently valid CRB check to be appended to this form. If in any doubt, please refer to the Research Committee.)*

Please mark the appropriate box below:

Ethical approval granted

Refer to the Department's Research and Ethics Committee

Refer to the School's Research and Ethics Committee

Signature ----- Date-----

**Section D: To be completed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Departmental staff member** *(Please read this ethics release form fully and pay particular attention to any answers on the form where underlined bold items have been circled and any relevant appendices.)*

I agree with the decision of the research supervisor as indicated above

Signature ----- Date -----

---

researcher. See the question c as following.

c. What precautions are to be taken to address the risks posed?

- 1.The interview will take place at a safe venue, e.g. a room at City University, or some coffee shop.
  - 2.Before I leave for the interview, I could prepare a sealed letter left to my family member, which tells where I go.
- By a given time, if I could not get back, he could open the letter, and try to find me in terms of the given details in the letter.

### Section C: To be completed by the research supervisor

(Please pay particular attention to any suggested research activity involving minors or vulnerable adults. Approval requires a currently valid CRB check to be appended to this form. If in any doubt, please refer to the Research Committee.)

Please mark the appropriate box below:

Ethical approval granted

Refer to the Department's Research and Ethics Committee

Refer to the School's Research and Ethics Committee

Signature Paul L. Kelly Date 5.04.14

**Section D: To be completed by the 2<sup>nd</sup> Departmental staff member** (Please read this ethics release form fully and pay particular attention to any answers on the form where underlined bold items have been circled and any relevant appendices.)

I agree with the decision of the research supervisor as indicated above

Signature David O'Donnell Date 14.11.14

## Appendix B

### Research Information Sheet (English & Chinese)



#### **Title of study :**

How does marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men evolve over time?

We would like to invite you to take part in a research. Before you decide whether you would like to participate, it is important that you understand why the research is being done and what it would involve for you. Please take time to read the following information carefully and discuss it with others if you wish. Ask us if there is anything that is not clear or if you would like to get more information.

#### **What is the purpose of the study?**

This research is to generate a theoretical model for counseling psychologists to gain more knowledge and a good understanding of the marriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men, whereby they are able to provide and support counseling service for this particular group of people when they come for their marital difficulties.

#### **Why have I been invited?**

You are invited because you meet the following criteria as a valid participant:

Chinese woman who was born and grew up and lived in China initially, due to marrying to a Caucasian man, moved from your native country to join your husband's life abroad.

You have been living abroad and in the marriage between 2-10 years.

6 participants will be recruited

#### **Do I have to take part?**

As it is stated above, participation in the project is entirely voluntary, and you are free to choose not to participate in part or all of the project. You can withdraw at any time and any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

It is up to you to decide whether or not to take part. If you do decide to take part, you will be asked to sign a consent form. If you decide to take part you are still free to withdraw at any time and without giving a reason.

### **What will happen if I take part?**

- This is a qualitative study on marriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men. Data will be collected through a one-hour interview. Personal blogs and diaries relevant to your marriage could also be a part of data. Adopting grounded theory method, the researcher will work with these data, through a bottom- up data analysis, a theoretical model is expected to finally emerge.
- This research will take place in London.
- The research will be completed before September of 2015.
- You will spend about 2 hours with the researcher for one session (1 hour for the interview)
- Before the interview starts, she will briefly introduce the aim of the research, and the issue of confidentiality, you will have an opportunity to ask questions freely, finally need to sign a Research Consent Form.
- Basically, you need to participate a one-hour interview, and / or contribute your personal blogs or diaries if any.
- The interview will be conducted at a safe and quiet place without a concern with confidentiality.
- In the interview, you need to answer some open-ended questions to share your marital process and experience, e.g. what happened in your marriage etc.

### **Expenses and Payments (if applicable)**

During the interview, free tea or coffee will be offered.

If it is an interview on the phone, you will not be involved with any call cost.

### **What do I have to do?**

You are free to choose the following tasks, whichever applied to you to participate.

1. You will involve 1 session face-to-face interview or an interview on the phone, which will be recorded.

It takes about 1 hour.

For some participants, there may be a follow up interview if necessary.

2. An online conversation with the researcher by typing. The text will be saved as research data.

3. Personal blogs or diaries relevant to your marriage.



In brief, what researcher expects to know is about your marital experiences, what is going on in your marriage.

**What are the possible disadvantages and risks of taking part?**

Participant may recall some unpleasant experience in the marital relationship during the interview. However the chance of risk is low, otherwise a free counselling will be offered to ease you from the stress.

**What are the possible benefits of taking part?**

Marriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men have become a social phenomenon. Its popularity has been appealing to many who are still single.

Your participation to this research will contribute to counseling psychologists to gain a better understanding of this kind of marriage, whereby they could help marital couples look into their strength and weakness, in order to achieve, and sustain a real marital happiness.

Your contribution could also help those who wish to engage in such a marriage gain more knowledge about it.

**What will happen when the research study stops?**

In terms of BPS guideline, all the recorded data including textual, audio data could be kept for 5 years, According to guideline of City University, the raw data could be kept for 7-8 years, thereafter they will be destroyed. However it is strongly confidential. Once this is done, a note will be delivered to the participant to ease her from her potential concern.

Regarding the transcripts, including those cited or appended to the research report, all the identifiable information will be altered or kept anonymously.

**Will my taking part in the study be kept confidential?**

Certainly yes!

In terms of BPS guideline on Record Keeping, during the research, all the data records will be safely saved without identifiable labels, and locked at the place, where the research takes place, to make sure nobody else can have an access, except the researcher. The data will be attached with a note, 'CONFIDENTIAL – DO NOT COPY'

For the digital data saved on computer, a password is required to unlock the computer.

Consent Form signed by the participants should be saved separately from the data records.

After the research is completed, all the records including original textual, audio data will be destroyed, once this is done, a note will be delivered to participants.

Regarding transcripts from original data, including those which are cited or appended to the research report, all the identifiable information will be altered or kept anonymously.

Your consent covers your permission for the future publishing from this research, however the rule of confidentiality still applies.

Regarding the data archiving/sharing, there must be no identifiable personal information attached, or anonymous.

Exceptional condition that the rule of confidentiality aforementioned will not apply:

If terrorism plan and child abuse involved, according to national law, we would be legally obliged to disclose pertinent information.

### **What will happen to the results of the research study?**

There is a possibility of future publications, which may arise from this research, certainly anonymity will be maintained.

A debrief including summary of the result will be provided to participants if you are interested in and send a note to claim.

### **What will happen if I don't want to carry on with the study?**

You are free to withdraw from the study without an explanation or penalty at any time at any stage of the project.

### **What if there is a problem?**

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, City University London has established a complaints procedure via the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee. To complain about the study, you need to phone 020 7040 3040. You can then ask to speak to the Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee and inform them that the name of the project is How are marriages between Chinese women and Caucasian men unfolded.

You could also write to the Secretary at:

Anna Ramberg  
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee  
Research Office, E214  
City University London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB

Email: Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

### **Who has reviewed the study?**

This study has been approved by City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee, approval number *[insert approval number here]*

### **Further information and contact details**

Researcher Wenxia Shen, Research Supervisor Carla Willig

Post Address

School of Arts & Social Sciences  
The City University  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB

Email Address: Wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk

C.Willig@city.ac.uk

Contact Number: +44 (0)20 7040 5060

**Thank you for taking the time to read this information sheet.**

## Research Information Sheet (in Chinese)

### 有关研究项目的背景信息

#### 研究课题

《中国女性和白人男性结合的跨国婚姻如何发展演变的》

在此我诚邀你参予以上课题的研究。在你决定是否受访之前，有必要对如何参与等相关信息有所了解。请花一些时间详细阅读以下内容，如果你认为有必要，也可以和家人朋友商量。同时，如果你有疑问或不明白之处，需要更多信息，请放心质询，无须顾虑。

#### 研究目的

此研究旨在揭秘中国女性和白人男性结合的跨国婚姻的基本特点，为咨询 / 临床心理学家建立一个理论模式，从而帮助他（她）们对这种组合中的跨国婚姻，有更多的了解和理解，更好的为有困难和冲突的夫妻，提供有效的帮助和支持。同时对那些有意进入跨国婚姻的单身人士，也是一种准备和借鉴。

#### 为什么我被邀请

因为你适合研究课题所设定的人群范围。

中国女性，在中国大陆出生，长大，婚前在中国大陆生活，因为婚姻的原因，移居丈夫所在国家。

#### 参与原则

参与者完全自愿，你有选择拒绝，参与和部分参与的自由。同时你可以在课题进行的任何阶段选择退出，没有任何损害，无需说明任何理由。

如果你决定参与，你将签署一份参与同意书，表示你了解以上信息之后，决定参与的。

#### 如果我决定参与，如何进行下一步？

这是一个关于中国女性外嫁白人男性的跨国婚恋的定性（质化）研究 (Qualitative Study)。研究数据主要基于一个小时的采访，可能辅之以参与者提供的相关博客，日志。研究员将采纳“扎根理论” (Grounded Theory) 的研究方法，就这些原始数据进行分析整理，旨在建立一个基本理论模式。

该研究课题在伦敦进行

预计在2016年9月前完成

大概耗时两小时（包括准备），采访大约一小时，可能会有后续追踪作为补充。采访开始前，研究员将介绍该研究的目的，隐私保护，自由提问，最后签署一份参与同意书。

概括而言，你需要做的，主要是参与一小时左右的采访和可能的后续补充。

采访将在安静，安全，没有隐私泄露担忧的环境或状态下进行。

受访过程中，你会被问及一些开放式的问题，比如，谈谈你的婚姻生活是如何开始，发展的？

费用问题（如果适用的话）：

如果是面对面采访，研究员提供饮料咖啡，如果是在线语音形式，受访者不涉及任何话费

## **参与细节**

你可以自由选择如下的方式参与，

1. 一小时有录音的面对面的采访，或者通过在线语音通话，或者电话，可能会有后续跟踪访问作为补充，以保证研究员对采访数据的准确把握。
2. 在线文字交流，文本将记录存档作为研究数据。
3. 和婚姻主题相关的个人博客，日志记录等。

简言之，研究员意欲了解整个婚姻过程如何开始，发展，演变的，就像一部纪录片，向对跨国婚姻知之甚少的人，相对客观的展现其基本特质。

## **如果参与，对我有潜在的不利和风险吗？**

因为这种真实的呈现，受访过程中，参与者可能会因为对婚姻过程的回顾，碰触到一些不愉快的经历。即使如此，我们认为因此受到的心理创伤风险很低。否则，将有免费的心理辅导服务提供，以减压。

## **如果选择参与，对我有何意义？**

中国女性，外嫁白人男性的婚恋，正在或已经成为一个值得关注的社会现象。它的流行，也使不少单身人士，看到了择偶的新机遇，欲把握尝试。但是既有研究表明，跨国婚恋中出现了不少问题，使婚姻关系常常触礁，问题似乎比对婚姻的满意度更突出，所以你的参与，将对在这个领域的专业人士，比如咨询，临床心理学家，更好的服务于在此跨国婚恋中，遇到挑战和困难的夫妻，帮助其改善并提高婚姻和两性关系质量，作出贡献。

你的参与，同时可以帮助那些欲尝试跨国婚恋的单身人士，以此为鉴，做好准备。

## **研究课题完成后的后续事务**

根据英国心理协会的研究指南，所有数据，包括语音，文字等，最长可保留5年，之后将被销毁。具体到本研究项目，旨在论文完成，尽快销毁。

关于文字转本（transcript）中，被引述或者以附录出现在研究报告中的，所有能对号入座的个人信息，都将被改动或以匿名形式出现。

## **我参与此研究，将被保密吗？**

一定！

根据英国心理协会关于研究进行期间，数据存留的问题，所有数据将被安全存档锁定，无可以对号入座的识别标签。为了保证除研究员本人之外，另无他人涉足数据。数据存放处，会确保隐私保护，严禁被他人查看复制。如是存放于电脑的数字信息，电脑会有密码锁定。

参与者签署的《参与同意书》，将和采访数据本身分开存放，以确保隐私保护。研究完成，原始数据将被尽快销毁，不保留。

关于基于原始数据提取的文字转本（transcript）中，被引述或以附录出现在研究报告中的，能对号入座的个人信息，都将被改动或以匿名形式出现。

对于未来潜在的进一步用途，比如出版发表等，如牵涉隐私，受访人将被联系通知，并征得同意。

关于信息存档或共享，将以匿名或避免对号入座的方式进行。只有如下两种状况例外于上述隐私保护条例，比如，涉及正在进行的暴力，自残自杀，或伤及他人的犯罪行为。

### **如何处置研究结果？**

以此研究为基础，对于潜在的出版意向，隐私保护的原则不变。关于此研究结论，如受访人有兴趣，可以要求获取概要。

### **关于退出该调研**

你有充分的自由，在此研究项目的任何时间，任何阶段，选择退出，无需给予理由解释。

### **如果出现问题，需要投诉**

如果你希望就参与过程中的经历，进行投诉，City University London, 建立了专门的投诉程序。你可以致电 02070403040, City University Senate Research Ethics Committee的秘书，并告知课题名称：《中国女性外嫁白人男性的跨国婚恋是如何发展演变的》

你也可以直接发函至此：

Anna Ramberg  
Secretary to Senate Research Ethics Committee  
Research Office, E214  
City, University of London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB  
Email: [Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk](mailto:Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk)

该研究课题的批准机构:

City University London Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee

进一步的联系方式:

Researcher Wenxia Shen,  
Research Supervisor Carla Willig

Post Address  
School of Arts & Social Sciences  
The City, University Of London  
Northampton Square  
London  
EC1V 0HB

Email Address: Wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk  
C.Willig@city.ac.uk  
Contact Number: +44 (0)20 7040 5060

**诚谢你花时间阅读以上信息**

**Many Thanks!**



**Department of Psychology  
City University London**

**PARTICIPANTS NEEDED FOR  
RESEARCH IN *Marriage***

We are looking for volunteers to take part in a doctoral study on  
***Marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian Men***

**Description of a valid participant:**

Chinese woman who was born and grew up and lived in China initially, due to marrying to a Caucasian man, moved from your native country to join your husband's life abroad.

You have been living abroad and in the marriage between 2 - 10 years.

6 participants will be recruited

**Your contribution to the research**

Intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men has become a social phenomenon. Its popularity has been appealing to many who are still singles.

Your participation to this research will contribute to counseling psychologists to gain a better understanding of this type of marriage, whereby they could help marital couples look into their strengths and weaknesses, in order to support them to achieve, and sustain marital happiness.



Your contribution could also help those who wish to engage in this type of marriage gain more knowledge about it.

## **Involvement**

**(Choose from the following task(s) whichever applied to you to participate)**

1. You will involve 1 session face-to-face interview or an telephone interview which will be recorded. It will take about 1 hour.

For some participants, there may be a follow-up interview if necessary.

2. An online conversation with the researcher by typing. The text will be saved as research data.

3. Personal blogs or diaries relevant to your marriage.

## **Confidentiality:**

Entirely anonymous and private information is strictly protected.

For any **other** inquiries, please feel free to contact:  
*Wenxia Shen, or research supervisor Carla Willig*

Psychology Department  
at  
020 7040 5060 or

Email: wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk

C.Willig@city.ac.uk

This study has been reviewed by, and received ethics clearance through the Psychology Department Research Ethics Committee, City University London.

If you would like to complain about any aspect of the study, please contact the Secretary to the University's Senate Research Ethics Committee on 020 7040 3040 or via email:  
Anna.Ramberg.1@city.ac.uk

## Appendix D

### Research Consent Forms

#### Consent Form

#### 受访者同意书

The purpose of this survey is to complete a research on marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men. This research is conducted by Wenxia Shen, studying a Professional Doctorate Program in Counselling Psychology in the Department of Psychology, City University London. This research is supervised by Professor Carla Willig.

此调研采访的目的，是为完成该研究课题：《中国女性和白人男性结合的跨国婚恋的演变反展》。该研究，由 City University London,心理学系，咨询心理学专业，攻读“专业博士”的沈文霞主持，由博士生导师 Carlar Willig 教授督导。

Three types of involvement are listed below, please tick whichever you are able to contribute.

以下列出了参与该调研的三种方式，请在你能够或者愿意参与的项下打勾。

- 1. A face to face interview or telephone interview, interview via chatting software, which will be tape-recorded.

有录音的面对面采访，或者电话语音采访。

- 2. An online interview by typing. The text will be saved as research data.

通过打字的在线采访，文本将记录存档作为研究数据。

- 3. Personal blog or diary etc, which is relevant to your marriage.

和你的婚姻有关的个人博客，日志内容等。

This survey also requests some of your demographic information, e.g. age, how many years you have been in the marriage, etc. It will take about 1 hour to complete the interview. A follow-up interview may happen as a supplement.

该调研同时要求一些人口统计信息，比如：年龄，婚龄等等，“主要采访”大约一小时，之后可能会有后续跟踪采访作为补充。

The data collected from participants will be used solely for this research. All information and personal details will be strictly confidential; you will not be identifiable in any report of the research. Audio-taped data and textual data, including copied diaries and blogs will be erased once the research is completed.

通过受访者采集的数据，将专用于该研究课题。所有信息及个人资料严格保密。可以对号入座的个人信息将不会出现在任何研究报告中。音频，文字，包括复制的日志，博客内容等，一旦研究完成，将全部销毁。

All participation for this survey is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time and any stage without prejudice to you. Due to the nature of this research, you will have an opportunity to be debriefed after the research is completed.

该调研本着自愿参与的原则。你有权在任何时间和任何阶段退出参与,不对本人构成任何损害。该研究完成后，你可以要求了解研究项目的细节及结果。

#### PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

参与者认同

I have been informed of and understand the purpose of this survey and its procedures and wish to participate.

本人被告知，并了解该调研意图和参与程序之后，愿意参与支持。

Name of Participant

参与者姓名 

Signature

签名 

Date

日期 05 / 01 / 2016

Note: When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher

注释：一旦该同意书完成，参与者和调研员各一份

For further inquiries, please feel free to contact researcher Wenxia Shen or research supervisor professor Carla Willig

更多详情，敬请垂询研究员沈文霞，导师 Carla Willig 教授

Tel:020 7040 5060

Email wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk C.Willig@city.ac.uk

## Consent Form

The purpose of this survey is to complete a research on marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men. This research is conducted by a trainee counselling psychologist Wenxia Shen, studying a Professional Doctorate Program in Counseling Psychology in the Department of Psychology, City University London. This research is supervised by Professor Carla Willig

3 types of involvement are listed below, please tick whichever you are able to contribute.

1. A face to face interview or a telephone interview, or an interview via chatting software which will be tape-recorded.
2. An online interview by typing. The text will be saved as research data.
3. Personal blog or diary in which the content relevant to your marriage.

This survey also requests some of your demographic information, e.g. age, how many years you have been in the marriage, etc. It will take about 1 hour to complete the interview.

The data collected from participants will be used solely for this research. All information and personal details will be strictly confidential; you will not be identifiable in any report of the research. Audio-taped data and textual data, including copied diaries and blogs will be erased once the research is completed.

All participation for this survey is voluntary. You have the right to withdraw from this research at any time and any stage without prejudice to you. Due to the nature of this research, you will have an opportunity to be debriefed after the research is completed.

### PARTICIPANT'S CONSENT

I have been informed of and understand the purpose of this survey and its procedures and wish to participate.

Name of Participant [REDACTED]

Signature [REDACTED]

Date 05/01/2016

Note: When completed, 1 copy for participant; 1 copy for researcher.

For further inquiries, please feel free to contact the researcher Wenxia Shen or research supervisor Carla Willig

Tel: 020 7040 5060

Email [wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk](mailto:wenxia.shen.1@city.ac.uk) [C.Willig@city.ac.uk](mailto:C.Willig@city.ac.uk)

## Appendix E

### Researcher Instructions for the Semi-structured Interview

#### **1) Provide participant with the context for the interview, this will include**

- a. Introducing researcher
- b. Ask the participant whether she has read and fully understood the Research Information Sheet (Especially reiterate ethic issue and confidentiality)
- c. Stating the purpose of the interview –

*E.g. The purpose of this interview is to explore the process of your marriage with a Caucasian man. We will do this by spending the next about three hours talking about your marital experiences. There are no right or wrong answers to any questions I may ask, You know marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men is becoming more and more popular, and also bring about mystery for outsiders, I am interested in the story about your marriage.*

- d. Explaining the use of audio recording device.
- e. Free questions
- f. Give Research Consent Form to sign

The procedures above had been done during the half hour ‘preparatory session’. Before the formal research interview, I re-addressed them all.

- g. Ask if they have any further questions before interview begins.

#### **2) The interview**

***In the preparatory session, the following had been introduced:***

*“You know marriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men is becoming more and more popular, and also gives rise to mystery for outsiders.*

*As my interviewee, you are encouraged to freely share what happened in your marriage, how it proceeded and how it worked. No matter whether it is good or bad and how you handled them, whether you have overcome those difficulties if any or they probably still remain.*

*You could tell me about your marriage from beginning by telling me, e.g. when and where did you meet each other initially?*

*All in all, if somebody knows little about your marriage, through your story, they should be able to get some sense or knowledge about it, to some extent it is like documentary...”*

*Beside questions introduced in the preparatory session, which were listed in the box above, here follows more for the interview.*

***Open-ended questions like:***

*What does your marriage appear to be ?*

*What is going on in your marriage?*

*What have you been experiencing?*

*Could you tell me about the story of your marriage?*

*If you do not know where to start, you could follow a timeline of your relationship, e.g. could you tell me about your marriage from beginning? When, Where or How did you meet? How did your relationship start?*

*When the interview opens up, the researcher may prompt elaborate questions accordingly to ensure the answers to be relevant and helpful.*

*Throughout the interview it is good to use questions which can encourage the participant to expand upon their answers, e.g. 'Could you say something more about that?'; 'Do you have any details?'*

*It is also important to clarify with the participant, whenever the researcher feels ambiguous or unclear, e.g. 'What did you mean when you said that?'; 'Can you explain?'*

**3) Closing the interview –**

E.g. 'We've come to the end of the interview, I have no further questions. Do you have anything more you want to add in or ask about before we finish?' (It is important to give the participant the chance to voice and discuss any thoughts or worries they may have following the interview).

'Anyway, if you feel anything missing, you want to say more after this interview, please feel free to contact me, we could arrange another meeting'. (Although in principle, a three-hour interview is intended, to gain best understanding of the data, at least keep the option open for the purpose of meaning clarification. The research is still conducted in the framework of Abbreviated Version of Grounded Theory)

Lastly, re-addressing the offer of free counseling

**4) Switch off the recorder, and thank the participant for her participation.**

**5) Notes after the interview –**

It is worth spending some time reflecting on and noting any particular interpersonal interactions, observations and keep them in the Memo-writing.

Appendix F  
Translator's Agreement

**译者同意书**

**保密原则：**

我同意对原文及翻译保密，一旦翻译工作完成，销毁相关文档，不做存留。

**翻译要求：**

保证意思准确易懂的前提下，采用逐字逐句的直译。

如果受访人的表达在英文中，没有对等的翻译，比如成语，俚语，谚语等，此时可以采纳意译。

尽量保留受访人语言特色。

如果受访人有表达不完整，或者意思本身含混不清的地方，可以辅之以括弧注解。

切忌引入译者的个人解读。

译者姓名：

日期：05 / 03 / 2016

签字：

**Translator's Agreement**

**Confidentiality**

I agree to keep the source text confidential and to destroy it upon completion of the translation work.

**Requirements on the translation approach**

Take the literal (direct) translation approach as primary approach, to adhere to the expression and meaning of the source language.

The oblique translation approach can be adopted only if there is no language equivalence in English, e.g. if idioms, slangs, and proverbs etc were used in the source text.

Maintain characteristics and features of the language of the interviewees.

When the original expression in Chinese is not complete or not articulated, additional annotation is a good supplement, please place in parentheses.

Translator's personal interpretation should be strictly avoided.

Translator's print name

Date 05/ 03/ 2016

Signature

## Appendix G

### Debrief for Participants

This is a qualitative study taking social constructivist grounded theory methodological approach. The research explored *How does intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating evolve over time from the Chinese wives' perspective?*

Four intermarried Chinese wives were recruited as my research participants and participated in this research.

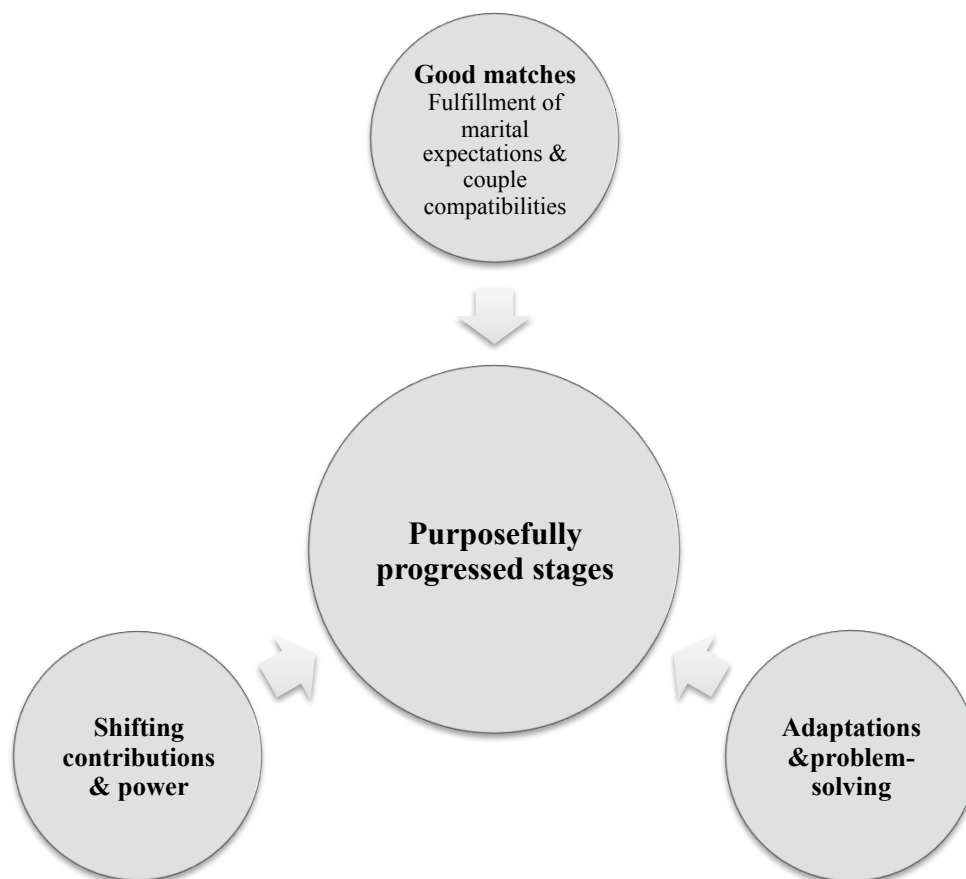
This study is original and contributes novel insights to the field of intermarriage study and counselling psychology.

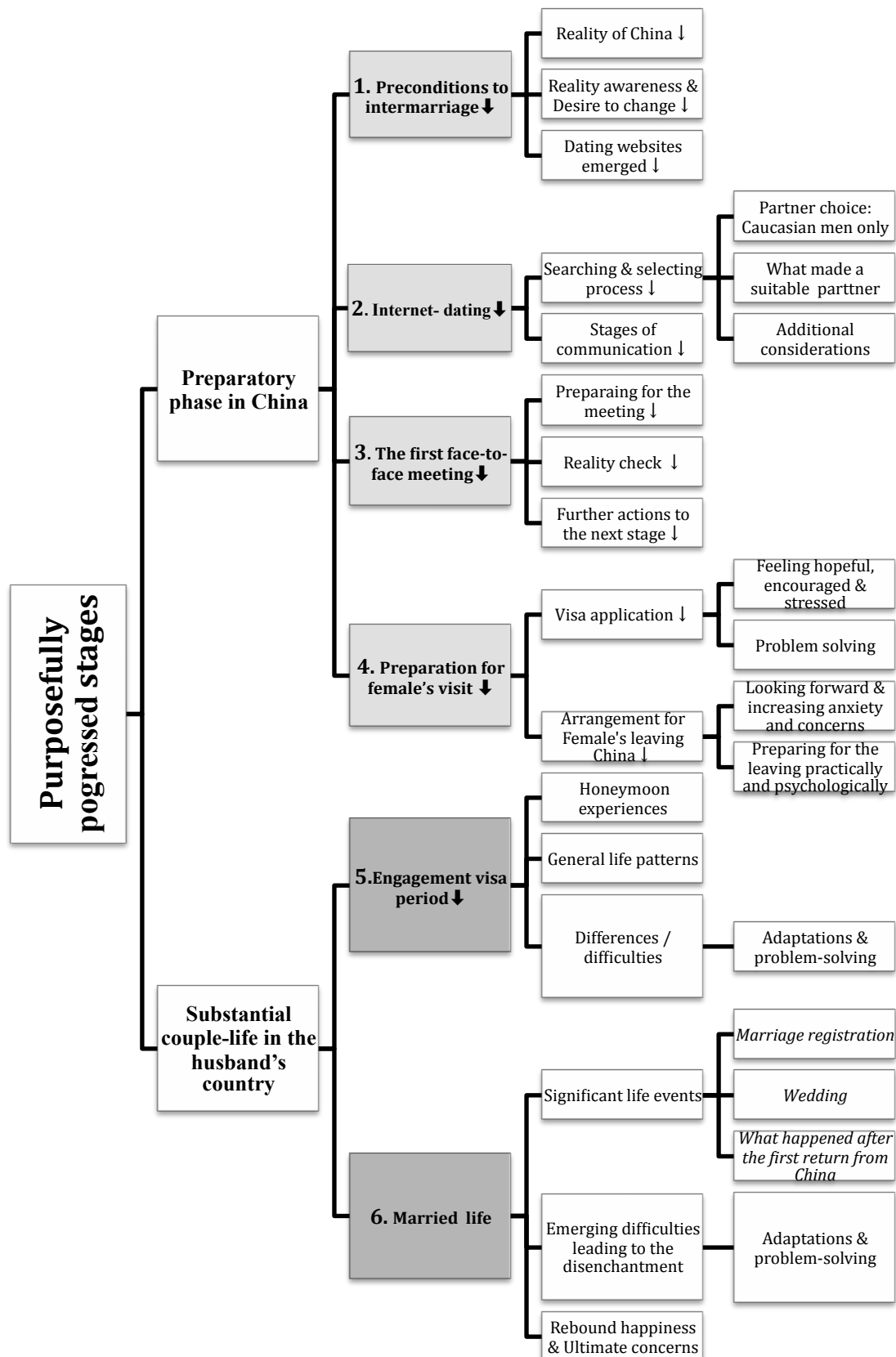
The research findings show the intermarriage between Chinese women and Caucasian men starting with Internet-dating from the perspective of Chinese wife evolves following the six identified stages one after another, in which the couples purposefully proceeded with their relationships step by step. This is a progressive process to test out the extent to which the reality meets marital expectations and desirable compatibilities, which contributed to the marital satisfactions of my participants. However, this type of intermarriage starting with Internet-dating brought about radical change of life reality to my participants; 'good matches' can not always be nicely expected, thus the capability of adaptations and problem solving helped my participants deal with emerging differences, difficulties, and uncertainties in their marital lives. This group of Chinese wives demonstrated shared personal attributes, which facilitated this process of adaptations. In addition, marriage is a journey, over time, and the nature of this type of marriage seems to have the developmental tendency of shifting



contributions and power, which may have implications for the marital relationship. Thus the following four core categories identified, i.e. 1) *Purposefully progressed stages*; 2) *Good matches: fulfillment of marital expectations and couple compatibilities*; 3) *Adaptations and problem solving*; 4) *Shifting contributions and power*

Following the logical connections elucidated above, all four core categories integrated into a larger whole thus provide a holistic picture of and comprehensive understanding of this type of intermarriage. The two figures bellow provide an overview of the research findings.





## Appendix H

### Extracts from Interview Transcripts

#### **Some extracts from my interview with P1**

R46: (Researcher's 46th interaction) I am afraid these topics will make you sad, if so we may stop anytime.

P1 (Participant 1): It does not matter.

...

R56: You look sad, would you feel better if we stop here?

P1: It doesn't matter, it doesn't matter, I am willing to say that, (as) I have never recalled the past in such a way.

...

R62: Thank you for sharing such experiences with me. If you can not free yourself from these sad feelings after this conversation, as I mentioned in the document of Research Information Sheet, please feel free to let me know. I can refer you to the free counselling service.

Lastly you are more than welcome to contact me, whenever you want to add on something you forgot to say today. Again, thank you very much!

#### **Some extracts from my interviews with P3**

P3: He is particularly considerate when something unexpected happens. I was informed that my mother had cancer at the beginning of 2013, it stroke me like thunder.

R43: I am sorry to interrupt. I am afraid those unpleasant topics will make you sad. Anyway we can stop anytime, or continue next time.

P3: It's fine.

R32: Do you need some water since you have been talking all the time?

P3: It doesn't matter. I think it's very good to remember (go through) what happened. It's interesting to look back to the past experience"

**Note: R stands for researcher, R56 means researcher's the 56<sup>th</sup> interaction with the participants; P1 & P3 stand for Participant 1 & Participant 3.**

## Appendix I

### Memo-writing on Discussion of Translations

#### **Memo: Translations**

*Occasionally espoused ‘oblique translation approach’ - (Date: 25-01-2016)*

*(Oblique Translation Techniques are used when the structural or conceptual elements of the source language cannot be directly translated without altering meaning or upsetting the grammatical and stylistics elements of the target language. <http://www.interproinc.com/blog/translation-techniques>)*

During the interviews, I had to cautiously use the frequently occurred key words, like “experience”, “happen”, e.g. I am curious what happened in your marriage? I would very much appreciate if you can share your experiences in the marriage etc. The “happen” in English conveys a more neutral meaning, whereas in Chinese, it is often associated with more serious and negative incidents, “experience” in English tends to be associated with more subjective feelings, whereas in Chinese it tends to be more factual. In this case, direct/literal translation would not work well, thus oblique translation had to be espoused occasionally.

## Appendix J

### Memo-writing for Data Analysis

#### **Memo : Reaching next turning point of the marital life by the point of interview**

**(Date 04-2016)**

P1's husband passed away, he left her no financial concern, nevertheless as an immigrant, she still had language issue and had not meshed well into British society yet, it was hard for her to find a job, she needs to adapt to the loss and take the helm of her new life alone, perhaps she will be facing a choice of whether to return to China or stay in the UK.

#### **--Adaptation to the loss and life alone**

P2's son found a job working in another city. She realized that her initial purpose to marry for her son seemed to have been achieved, and she began to experience a certain loss/emptiness, consequently the idea of moving back to China came across her mind, which would challenge their relationship. **--A need of new purpose of life**

Soon P3 has now returned to her normal marital life in the UK. Her husband's unconditional support sharing a hard time together looking after P3's dying mother consolidated their relationship. It seems that prince and princess will live happily ever after, however their substantial marital life seemed to be just starting. **---Returning to normal marital life**

P2 developed her new career in pre-education and was doing excellent, and was therefore promoted. The increasing career opportunity was boosting her ambition, whereas her husband's earning was reduced after retirement, which already brought about financial difficulty, this was her initial drive to study leading to her new career to earn money.

P2's life tended to become more outgoing, whereas her husband retired becoming more home oriented, the sign of developmental divergence could be a potential challenge in the relationship.

P4's good command of Swedish language and professional training in nursing increased her life choices, she found a job supporting herself with her own earning, and then was thinking of a new goal of higher education. This pronounced change of life status, psychologically increased her confidence to live in Sweden, giving rise to the rebound of happiness and motivation in her life, This personal development and financial freedom reduced dependence on her husband and subtly changed her attitude toward the way she interacted in her marriage. P4 expressed that she was becoming less tolerant with the disappointment and less willing to compromise in her marriage.

Whereas the husbands tended to be in a status of downhill change. (P2 & P4) The sign of developmental divergence between couples tended to enlarge the psychological gap between the couple further challenging the already fragile relationship. **-----Propensity for developmental divergence –Potential challenge of the relationships**

## **Part 2: Publishable Paper**

Discussion of CBT

in relation to the Person-Centred Approach

----A propensity for theoretical convergence

## 1. Abstract:

*Looking into the current practice in counselling psychology, so many new models and therapies are emerging and available on the “market”, and they are actively promoted for their own grounds and legitimate positions in the field. Consequently, various types of therapists arrive on the scene. They often have a string of titles, indicating they are this and that kind of therapists. This diversification of therapies does not only make it difficult for mental health professionals to communicate within a shared theoretical framework of mutual understanding of terms and therapeutic interventions, but it also makes the field appear to be not very regulated, it could therefore be argued that it is not positive for the disciplinary development.*

*Even between the three main approaches, i.e. the Cognitive Behavioral Approach (CBT)<sup>1</sup>, the Person Centered Approach (PCT) and Psychodynamic Approach, there tends to be a competition for pre-dominance in the field. Nonetheless I see the boundary between counseling approaches becoming blurred and less strict. There is a propensity for theoretical convergence. In essence it perhaps implies a convergence between eastern wisdom and evidence-based western science underlying positivist epistemology, I call the phenomenon “east meets west”.*

*This article will present a critical discussion of CBT within its own development and then the discussion will widen to CBT in relation to PCT leading to the insight: there is a propensity for convergence of counseling approaches.*

**Key words: CBT, theoretical shift, convergence, eastern wisdom.**

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<sup>1</sup> In the subsequent text, acronyms of therapies, such as CBT, PCT will be used instead of the full names as Cognitive Behavioral Approach, Person Centered Approach.

## **2. Current status in counseling and psychotherapy**

Looking into the current practice in counselling psychology, so many new models and therapies are emerging and available on the “market” and they are actively promoted for their own grounds in the field. Consequently, various types of therapists arrive on the scene. They often have a string of titles, indicating they are this and that kind of therapists.

In relation to the three main approaches, i.e. Cognitive Behavioral Approach (CBT), Person Centered Approach (PCT) and Psychodynamic Approach, it suggests that there are over four hundred different forms of psychotherapy in existence, such as Chess Therapy, Sandplay Therapy, Aromatherapy, Dynamic Running Therapy (DRT) etc. (Cromby, Happer & Reavey, 2013; Morrall, 2008). Some of them can at best claim that a certain intervention or technique is perhaps supported by some theory, or can be subsumed to an existing approach, but they are far from a validated counseling approach in their own right. Unless a new therapy sufficiently demonstrates its distinctiveness, their credentials need to be recognized as limited.

Sometimes these therapies can even be arbitrarily classified under the name of an existing approach for the purpose of promotion, merely by taking some idea from a well-established approach and integrating them into the new therapy without a sufficient ground.

This diversification of therapies does not only make it difficult for mental health professionals to communicate within shared theoretical framework of a mutual understanding of terms and therapeutic interventions, but it also makes this field appear to be not very regulated. For a mature disciplinary development, it is necessary to keep a high disciplinary standard, and sustain academic rigor leading to the ultimate goal of clinical excellence.

Even within the three main approaches, the strengths and weaknesses of each approach have been discussed at length over decades. Facing continuous challenge for their intrinsic drawbacks, each approach has been dedicated to improving itself to fill the gaps in line with the strengths of other approaches. However there tends to be a competition between the three main approaches for pre-dominance in the field.



Rather than seeing them competing with each other or embracing this “diversification” of therapies. I see the boundary between counselling approaches is becoming blurred, there is a propensity for theoretical convergence. This is not merely a personal preference, but based on the insight into the theoretical foundations that underpin them and the developmental trend of searching for new ideas so as to complement their intrinsic limitations.

This raises the question what makes an independent counseling approach?

These three aforementioned approaches have long been the most acknowledged approaches in counseling psychology as seen to be underpinned by relatively well-established theories. Based on its independent theoretical approach, each therapy can provide explanations for a wide range of psychological problems as well as therapeutic interventions within a coherent theoretical perspective. In other words, it is the underlying distinctive rationale that makes each approach work and stand out. Thus as an independent approach, it should not be subsumed under other approaches or interchangeable with the rationale of other approaches.

Among the three main approaches, in this article I would like to pay attention to CBT for the fact that it has gained a longstanding place in the NHS practice and has long been the recommended therapy for many psychological issues according to the NICE guidelines. Especially with its intrinsic strengths and a great developmental change, compared with other approaches, I think CBT has a greater potential leading to a revolutionary reflection on the disciplinary development in counseling psychology.

To open up the discussion, I will start with a brief revision of the traditional CBT and the third wave of CBT, which is followed by a critical discussion of its own development, and in relation to the person-centered approach (PCT). However the discussion will not concentrate on the level of therapeutic techniques and strategies, but on rationale as I see it at the core of the approaches, leading to the insight that there is propensity for theoretical convergence in counseling approaches.

### **3. Traditional CBT**

----It is generally regarded as the first wave and the second wave of CBT

#### **First wave of CBT**

The first wave of Cognitive Behavioral Therapy is “behavioral” therapy per se. It is theoretically based in behavioral psychology, shaped by Pavlov’s classic conditioning and Skinner’s operant conditioning. In this perspective, all psychological problems are associated with previous behavioral learning experiences. Therefore behavior modification is the central goal of the therapy. However, behavioral psychology has been criticized for its overly deterministic perspective, and for its neglect of mental processing. This theoretical limitation determined the practical limitation of behavioral therapy and gave rise to cognitive therapy.

#### **Second wave of CBT**

Underpinned by cognitive psychology, Ellis’ (1962) Rational Emotive Therapy (RET) and Beck’s (1976) cognitive distortion model introduced the cognitive dimension to therapeutic interventions. They emphasized how irrational or maladaptive thoughts impact on feelings and behaviours. The role of cognition is the focus of attention in the cognitive therapies. “Over time, behavioural and cognitive interventions were incorporated by practitioners into one approach referred to as cognitive-behavioural therapy “(Lovell,2000, p.310). Thus CBT takes advantage of the strengths from both behavioural psychology and cognitive psychology, but places primary emphasis on the internal cognitive processes (Westbrook, Kennerley and Kirk, 2007). The goal to change the way that clients view the world, self and events remains the central focus of all cognitive behavioral therapies.

A cognitive process does not operate in isolation though, but rather is a result of interactions between thoughts, emotions and behaviours, as well as biology (Padesky & Mooney, 1990). For people with psychological problems, these four factors act upon each other in a vicious cycle, within which people are locked and fall into a downward spiral without a way out.

Therefore, the main task of CBT is to guide the client to identify unhelpful thoughts *and* behaviours, and subsequently challenge and modify them with positive alternatives to break through this vicious cycle. The achievement of change is through a collaborative therapeutic relationship between client and therapist.

Underpinned by the theoretical integration of behavioral psychology and cognitive psychology, CBT has a positivist foundation. However behavioral psychology and cognitive psychology are two distinctive theoretical approaches, in this sense it raised the question whether CBT should be seen as an integrative approach, consequently it may shake its standing as an independent counseling approach.

Traditional CBT tends to assume that every individual can act as a rational problem solver. However, the critique in relation to CBT has been that most people are not as rational and reflective as CBT presupposes. In the framework of CBT, the work on thoughts targets their content only, whilst neglecting the deeper-seated thought processes. These limitations motivated the innovations of the third wave of CBT.

#### **4. Third wave of CBT**

The third wave of CBT has developed in the past two decades. It is based on traditional CBT, but espouses some new concepts and therapeutic interventions, some from other traditions and epistemologies, like Buddhist meditation, eastern wisdom (e.g. Taoist philosophy).

The third wave of CBT emphasizes themes, such as mindfulness, meta-cognition, acceptance, cognitive de-fusion, self-value, self-compassion, experiential strategies, and a less directive relationship (Hayes, 2004). However, there is no unanimity about the definition of the “third wave” and about which therapies are included in the third wave of CBT. I see the focus on cognition in the third wave of CBT as the shared commonality with traditional CBT, and therefore the new themes are viewed under the umbrella of the CBT approach.

The following are generally thought to be the representative therapies of third wave CBT (not exhaustive): Mindfulness Based Cognitive Therapy (MBCT), Acceptance and Commitment Therapy (ACT), Compassion Focused Therapy (CFT), Meta-cognitive Therapy (MT), Dialectical Behaviour Therapy (DBT), Behavioural Activation (BA), Functional Analytic Psychotherapy (FAP), Cognitive Behavioural Analysis System of Psychotherapy (CBASP), and Integrative Couple Therapy (ICT).

In contrast to traditional CBT, the third wave therapies do not aim to immediately correct cognitive distortions (Selgal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002), instead they question the concept of cognitive “distortions”. This constitutes a rather fundamental philosophical shift, with momentous practical implications.

The founder of ACT, Hayes (2004) stressed that the third wave of CBT is particularly sensitive to the context and function of psychological phenomena. This contrasts with the case formulation in traditional CBT, in which psychological problems are explained by introducing the mechanical system of the “hot cross bun” (Padesky and Mooney, 1990), i.e. a vicious circle in which behaviours, physiology, emotions and thoughts interact with each other to precipitate psychological disturbances. This problem formulation neglects how the problem has developed and sustained in a situational and historical context. Many third wave therapists acknowledge that the case formulation should be based on a good understanding of the functions of that person’s emotions, behaviours and thoughts in terms of the person’s historical experience and context (Cullen and Combes, 2006). This functional contextualism perspective changes the way psychological problems are defined. Disturbing emotions and negative thoughts are no longer necessary to be seen as problematic or a must-change. Rather they could be understood as reflecting the individual history of experiences and as having served a certain function in the past, e.g. grief and bereavement, trauma of sexual abuse or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) can be viewed as normal responses to an “abnormal” environment and might have an adaptive value (Cromby, Harper and Reavey,

2013). This openness allows for a more flexible appraisal of negative or irrational thoughts and whether those thoughts will be targeted for change is determined by their function.

Traditional CBT aims to establish control over thoughts and emotions. However this active challenge and attempt to induce change may exacerbate the problem. In contrast to this didactic and directive intervention, the third wave therapies adopt a more contextual and experiential approach. This is a profound, productive innovation that has been welcomed by many who struggled with the limitation of traditional CBT.

### *Mindfulness*

Among the aforementioned key concepts of the third wave CBT, “mindfulness” stands out as fundamental and is being particularly highlighted in the third wave therapies like MBCT, ACT, CFT, MCT. These therapies often start with mindfulness practice as basis to open up further interventions (Gilbert, 2010), thus mindfulness merits a special attention and elucidation.

The founder of the Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction programme, Kabat-Zinn (1994, p.4) defined mindfulness as “the awareness that emerges through paying attention in a particular way, on purpose, in the present, and non-judgementally to the unfolding of experience moment by moment”.

This emphasis on effortless <sup>2</sup>, meditative mindfulness is very different from traditional CBT’s focus on active problem solving efforts. Mindfulness suggests that the more effort we make to strive for the way we expect to be, the less likely will we succeed.

This mindful state is meant to help us realize that we have choices in responding to life events, and can sense them differently. Through mindfulness we attempt to change the way

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<sup>2</sup> Some may question the notion of ‘effortless’ according to the definition by Kabat-Zinn, which I cited above. It appears to be contradictory. As I stated in the Critical Discussion later in this article, ‘mindfulness’ is a pre-conceptual inner experience, it is ineffable, and difficult to define. Existing definitions vary, are always questionable. Nonetheless “effortless” here means effortless of challenge, control, change and adaptation. The basic effort to engage in mindfulness practice is still required.

how we relate to our inner experience. By detaching ourselves from our thoughts and experiencing (recognizing and observing) our thoughts as events rather than seeing the world through these thoughts, we are able to understand that thoughts are not reality, but the interpretations and understandings added to that reality, and that we have choices to respond to that reality (Teasdale, 1999). This increasing self-awareness prevents us from immediately reacting and behaving habitually due to the overwhelming emotions. It can indeed be a source of coping strategy.

Our thoughts gradually developed from previous learning experiences over time with ingrained emotional encodings and these internalized thoughts are not easily modified. This has long been an unresolved issue in traditional CBT (Wills, 2009). As it was recognized that 'alternatively thoughts' have to be connected with emotions for successful changes to happen (Hayes, 2004). In the third wave therapies, the themes of acceptance, letting go, non-striving, non-judging, compassion-focus etc are not merely dry concepts, but strongly experiential and cultivated through mindfulness meditation, which is able to facilitate the capacity to forge connections between thoughts and feelings/emotions (Kabat-Zinn, 1994).

## **5. Critical discussion**

One might argue that the supposedly new concepts promoted in the third wave of CBT, like 'acceptance', 'self-value', 'compassion focus', etc are not really new. In traditional CBT, through a 'guided discovery', clients still may arrive at these concepts as 'alternatively more adaptive thoughts'. Whereas, for instance, in ACT and CFT, these concepts are treated and directly introduced as fundamental to making therapeutic progress; and in MBCT these concepts are reinforced through experiential mindfulness meditation. One could therefore argue that traditional CBT and third wave CBT have different paths towards the same goal. Moreover the third wave therapies are not really separate, discrete models. Many of the 'new' concepts are interrelated, e.g. concepts like mindfulness, acceptance, and compassion may presuppose each other.

Furthermore, the third wave notion that we could change how we relate to our thoughts by perceiving them as mental events, rather than seeing things through these thoughts, has a precursor in Beck (1976, pp. 243-244) who also highlighted the importance of ‘distancing’ ourselves from our thoughts (‘decentring’). Thus, some of the third wave claims appear to be old wine in a new bottle. However, this does not detract from the fact that the third wave of CBT offers a new outlook and spirit that deserves attention and further debate. The third wave of CBT advanced the traditional CBT by way of rethinking the definition of the “problem”, broadening the therapeutic focus of change, questioning the emphasis on change, and in general by enriching the conceptual and practical toolkit of therapists. I view these contributions as useful supplements to traditional CBT.

## **5.1 Reflection on theoretical shift within CBT**

### **5.1.1 Theoretical shift**

Mindfulness practice is rooted in Buddhist meditation and philosophy. It used to not be recognized by mainstream therapy (McLeod, 2003). Today it is being widely used by the third wave therapists and NICE guidelines also recommend applying mindfulness-based therapies in NHS practice. As stated earlier, this implies a fundamental shift from the positivist foundation of CBT to a more philosophical position. These new concepts in the third wave of CBT like ‘accepting the way things are’ and ‘letting it go’ are grounded in the Chinese philosophy of Taoism, in which ‘Wu-wei’ is an important concept. Literally ‘Wu-wei’ means non-action, non-doing. It rejects challenge, control, and contrived action and fundamentally encourages inclusion and belonging to a larger meaningful whole rather than confronting with reality or self. Taoists suggest everything develops according to nature at its own pace and effortful challenge goes against nature, and can only interfere with the natural process and thereby exacerbate the situation, thus doing less can achieve more.

This is exactly what we practice through mindfulness meditation mentioned earlier: i.e. effortless action, non-striving. A relaxing conscious mind allows the intuitive bodily sensation

to take over. The important concept and strategy of 'acceptance' in the third wave CBT is about allowing unwanted thoughts to flood over, which is seen to be more effective than effortful control and striving (Marcks & Woods, 2005).

This goes against western philosophical tradition, which emphasizes the importance of goals, conscious striving, problem solving, self-control and will power. These concepts are very present in traditional CBT and therefore this western philosophy seems to have an implication for traditional CBT. Thus some may question to what extent the third wave of CBT is compatible with the traditional CBT. In fact, what the third wave CBT really suggests is that whether thoughts will be targeted for change is determined by their function, which have to be explored and then decided, thus situational, e.g. sometimes we do need to switch to the problem solving mode rather than challenge our thoughts / understandings of a certain situation as a normal and appropriate response to risks. (Selgal, Williams and Teasdale, 2002, Hayes, 2004). Therefore third wave therapists broadened their views looking into psychological problems, this openness allows for a more flexible appraisal of the function that emotions and thoughts have.

Attention to cognition is still the central focus for both the traditional and the third wave CBT. They share this commonality and are compatible. Thus the third wave CBT is still termed as 'CBT' and viewed under the umbrella of the CBT approach.

### **5.1.2 Positivist origin and eastern wisdom: not necessarily antithetical**

The third wave of CBT bears a certain similarity to meditative religious practice as a form of psychological support. This theoretical shift might thus be seen as somewhat shaking the scientific origin of CBT. It also raises a concern about its implication for practice. For instance, according to my clinical experience, due to the religious origin of mindfulness practice, some of my clients, especially from a Caucasian ethnicity, showed suspicion and resistance to the practice. However, in spite of its religious origin and starting point in philosophy, mindfulness practice gained some theoretical backup and empirical evidence



through psychological measurement and neuro-scientific study regarding its efficacy and therapeutic effectiveness.

### ***Theoretical backup***

Barnard and Teasdale (1991) developed a theory of the multi-mode mind, called “Interacting Cognitive Subsystems” (ICS), which is generally regarded as the theoretical grounding for mindfulness-based therapies (Willis, 2009). It suggests that humans receive and process information both cognitively and emotionally. Accordingly, this process is supposed to involve two main modes, i.e. the Conceptualising Doing Mode and the Mindful-experiencing Being Mode. The Doing Mode is focusing on problem solving, and activated when there is a conflict between reality and our wishes. The Being Mode acts like a buffer. It steers us to ‘accept and allow how things are’ without immediately reacting.

It suggests when individuals are problematically depressed or anxious, their ability to shift between modes is impaired. They rigidly depend on one mode. In particular, the Doing Mode becomes more active, overriding the function of the Being Mode. Through mindfulness training, clients can regain resilience by effectively switching between modes of mind according to the nature of the situation (Kabat-Zinn, 1994; Segal and Williams, 2002).

Therefore having a religious and philosophical origin, over time the third wave interventions have been supported by modern theory, although this notion of a multi-mode mind sounds like a suspiciously convenient ad hoc hypothesis. Thus mindfulness-based therapies might not be as robustly grounded in theory as claimed.

### ***Psychological measurement***

Moreover, through psychological measurement, mindfulness practice has been empirically proven to have beneficial effects on psychological well-being, e.g. reduction of rumination, boost to working memory, stress reduction, more cognitive flexibility and less emotional reaction etc. (Davis & Hayes, 2012).

There are a number of research findings that have supported the efficacy of mindfulness based interventions in the treatment of depression and anxiety (Hofmann, Sawyer, Witt, &

Oh, 2010; Roemer, Orsillo, & Salters-Pedneault, 2008), as well as coping with chronic pain (Grossman, Tiefenthaler-Gilmer, Raysz, & Kesper, 2007). However it needs to be noted that mindfulness practice in itself does not focus on specific problems, such as depression or anxiety, as I experienced this when I attended a 8-week mindfulness training. It is general mind/attention training, like going to the gym to exercise, it supports our general health, facilitating the functioning of the whole organism. In this sense I viewed it more about prevention of problems, mindfulness practice does not really target or treat specific problems, but it indeed improves general psychological strength and resilience via mood regulation and cognitive functioning.

The validity and reliability of the psychological measurement of mindfulness efficacy is questionable. There is the fundamental inquiry about what mindfulness is and how to ascertain it. As an internal experience, its reliable, intersubjective definition seems problematic. Various version of its definition are available, each capturing different suggestive components of mindfulness practice (e.g. definitions from Kabat-Zinn, 1994, 2005; Hayes, 1999, Wallace, 2006). Thus whether what each individual practiced and experienced is the same is not readily identifiable. All these characterizations are inherently difficult to operationalize for rigorous hypothesis testing. These scales work with pre-determined components of inner-experiences, but to measure a pre-conceptual, ineffable inner experience, which implies an intrinsic difficulty in measurement. Further, the reliability of self-reporting is always somewhat questionable. Moreover, these assessments are dependent on culturally specific, semantic descriptions, which put the universality of these scales in question. However this aforementioned review is not the rejection of all efforts to assess mindfulness, as the measurements of effectiveness could be constrained by the factors such as research designs and methods in the framework of positivist epistemology. This does not really disclaim the benefit from the practice. It only suggests a critical appraisal about its efficacy and an opportunity for future research.

### ***Neuro-scientific evidence of the change of brain activity***

Neuro-scientific studies provide neuro-scientific evidence of the changes in brain activity. This reveals that mindfulness practice can improve emotional regulation and cognitive functioning (Nataraja, 2008; Way, Creswell, Eisenbeger & Lieberman, 2012). In particular, mindfulness practice has a clear impact on the limbic system in charge of emotions. It reduces the activity in the amygdala. This is significant, as people tend to experience more depression and anxiety with a very active amygdala and therefore often overreact to stressors. Mindfulness practice has been shown to reduce emotional activity, making overwhelming emotions and immediate emotionally driven responses less likely.

The empirical evidence shows that mindfulness practice also facilitates the activity and functioning in the prefrontal cortex (PFC), which is in charge of a wide range of cognitive performances (Hölzel et al., 2007, 2011)

Neuro-science is an entirely different professional discipline. As psychologists, we are not really able to appraise its research methods, its validity and reliability. The fundamental question what mindfulness is, which implies an intrinsic difficulty in reliable measurement applies to this neurological study as much as to the psychological tests of the efficacy of mindfulness practice. In spite of the aforesaid critical review, the neurological evidence of the power of mindfulness practice can serve to legitimate it via science, thus increase the confidence of psychotherapists to apply mindfulness practice within counselling interventions and can encourage more clients to take up this practice, while also supporting religiously and philosophically rooted practice with a scientific grounding.

In summary, this theoretical shift from 'west to east' is not necessarily seen as somewhat shaking the scientific origin of CBT. I would rather say it has a propensity for convergence between eastern wisdom and an originally positivist perspective of science. I would like to call it 'east meets west'. It can co-exist, without an antinomy in the sense, like mindfulness practice critically reviewed above, having religious and philosophical origin, but to some extent it can also gain scientific grounding. In fact, within Chinese culture, besides the understanding of mindfulness at the philosophical level, condensing centuries of observation,

Chinese proverbs, and idioms have accurately captured many psychological phenomena, some of which have since become proven findings within empirical research in the west.

Thus eastern wisdom and positivist perspective can co-exist in counseling approaches in a way that the former provides valuable hypothesis to be tested through empirical/scientific study and also enriches counseling intervention; the latter helps ensure a safe and effective practice.

In addition, even in traditional CBT, the notion that the way we think determines the way we feel (Pedasky, 1990) is not innovative, which can be referenced in 'Jin Gang Jing', one of the most important sutras of Mahayana Buddhism. There is a statement 'Jing You Xin Zao' in the sutra, which literally means 'the world we see and experience is determined by our heart (mind).' This is perfectly resonant with the notion that our cognition impacts on our feelings/emotions and perceptions, which is emphasized by traditional CBT. Thus even traditional CBT to some extent has some Buddhist philosophical ground, whilst we often only focus on its positivist origin. Whether originated from eastern wisdom or evidence based science, different paths can lead towards the same insight.

What I suggest here is that eastern philosophical wisdom conceives many valuable hypotheses that can be openly adopted and tested through scientific studies, therefore eastern philosophical wisdom is not necessarily antithetic to western science.

## **5.2 Blurred boundary between CBT and PCT**

Following the critical discussion above within its own development of CBT, I will then widen the discussion of CBT in relation to PCT leading to the insight: there is a propensity for convergence of counseling approaches. The discussion will not concentrate on the level of therapeutic techniques and strategies, but on rationale as I see it at the core of the approaches.

### 5.2.1 Theoretical overlap

Underpinned by humanistic psychology, person-centred therapists start their client work with a philosophical assumption that all individuals have an 'actualising tendency' and an innate drive to achieve 'self growth' (Mearns and Thorne, 2007; Mearns, Thorn & McLeod, 2013, Rogers, 1951, 1957).

According to the PCT, it suggests that the conflict between the 'self worth' and 'conditions of worth' gives rise to psychological difficulties, therefore "the growth of 'self-acceptance' enables the client to value himself and trust his own valuing process" (Mearns and Thorn, 2007, pp.195).

Firstly to some extent, this overlaps with the concepts of 'acceptance' and 'self value' claimed in third wave therapies.

Secondly, according to PCT, "in childhood, we learn to define ourselves mainly in accordance with our parents' appreciation, due to the primary need of being loved" (McLeod, 2003, p.164). This "over-reliance on external evaluation is considered to be equivalent to a continued exposure to 'conditions of worth' (McLeod, 2003, p.165). The process of internalizing external value into her/his 'self concept' is in fact a social-learning process and is accounted for by conditioning theory in behavioural psychology.

Thirdly CBT basically attributes psychological difficulties to maladaptive thoughts, which are also developed through previous learning experiences, whereas the person-centred approach attributes client difficulties to a lack of self-acceptance, developed by being continuously exposed to "conditions of worth".

There is no substantial difference between the two. CBT encourages the client to replace mal-adaptive thoughts with well-adaptive thoughts, whereas the person-centred approach encourages the client to achieve 'self-acceptance' by respecting their own evaluation. The notion of 'self-acceptance' can be translated into CBT language as a more constructive thought. The lack of self-acceptance could be seen as one of manifestation of mal-adaptive thoughts. In essence, both approaches attempt to adjust the client's cognition, whether through a guided discovery (CBT) or self-directed discovery (PCT).

### **5.2.2 A propensity for developmental convergence**

#### ***Theoretical perspective***

I see a parallel between the fact that the third wave of CBT steers toward a more spiritual and philosophical approach, and the fact that staying away from the philosophical origin of PCT, the advanced person-centered approach shows an attention to cognitions. For instance, 'Emotion-Focused' Therapy (EFC), also known as Process Experiential Therapy, is considered to be a hallmark development in Person-centered approach (Greenberg, Rice & Elliot, 1993).

Firstly it highlights emotional awareness, identification and emotion regulation as foundations, which involves elements of "cognition" and "meta-cognition" (CBT concepts).

Secondly, according to the EFT theory, it suggests that the way an individual constructs reality is strongly emotionally based. Emotions provide us with clues about what happens to us and how we experience events and relationships. Emotions are guides to action. Thus EFT therapists focus on facilitating clients' emotional processing to resolve their intrapersonal conflicts (Greenberg, 2004). In essence, they help the client to reconstruct the meaning attached to what happened to the client through the identified emotion as clues. This can in fact be translated into CBT language, i.e. the identification of meaning attached to the emotion is 'thought identification'. CBT therapists always look into the four fundamental components of psychological make up, i.e. behaviour, emotion, thought, and physical response and their interactions. There is a great focus on the connection between thoughts and emotions. Which component will be started with therapeutically is a case determined choice, although CBT places primary emphasis on the internal cognitive processes (Westbrook et al., 2007).

### ***Therapeutic relationship***

The most prominent feature of PCT is the emphasis on the relationship between therapist and client. The therapist's non-directiveness is generally seen to be the touchstone of the classic PCT (Cooper and Mearns, 2011). However the feasibility of "non-directive" style appeared to be problematic thus has long been debated. As any therapeutic process spontaneously involves some interaction, in which both the client and the therapist act upon each other. Thus in practice, person centred therapists often found difficult to adopt a strictly sustained non-directive stance, and the rigorous non-directiveness was insufficient for the therapeutic change (e.g. Elliott, 1990, Elliott, ).

In addition, some clients may have difficulty engaging in a self-directed discovery without the therapist's guidance, as they may be constrained by their cognitive ability.

Influenced by the postmodernism French philosopher, Emmanuel Levinas who emphasized 'the relational nature of human being', contemporary person-centered therapists acknowledge the fundamental need of interpersonal engagement and take a dialectic view to understand Rogers' 'self autonomy' by rethinking the notion of 'self' as 'relational self', 'dialogical self'. These new thinkings have implications for practice, i.e. the therapeutic relationship becomes more dynamic and active, and therapists are in touch with their clients at a level of 'relational depth' rather than merely providing the client with a safe platform for self-growth. EFT therapist Elliot proposes 'process guiding', whilst still using the core conditions proposed in PCT as a basis to proceed with the therapy. Cooper (2005) advocated a 'collaborative relationship'. This seems to echo nicely with the characteristic of the therapeutic stance proposed in CBT. Thus Mearns and Cooper (2005) suggest this shakes the non-directive standing point of classic PCT.

It is noteworthy that a feature of the counselling style proposed in CBT has generated some misunderstanding; CBT is often criticised for its didactic and directive counselling style and for it neglected therapeutic relationship, I would argue that it perhaps superficially appears to be in the following way, e.g. agenda setting, structured sessions, and a wealth of counselling strategies and therapeutic techniques that may be introduced etc. However Padesky (1990)

stresses the therapy is a 'team work', 'two heads are better than one' and that it involves 'joint decisions' etc. Therefore CBT approach is not really 'directive', but 'collaborative' as aforementioned, and at best it is comparable with the "process guiding" proposed by EFT therapist Elliot (2007,2011).

Furthermore the therapeutic relationship is now generally regarded as central and prerequisite to proceed with substantive therapeutic interventions for all therapies (Paul & Charura, 2014) I can see regarding the therapeutic relationship, the focus varies from one approach to another, e.g. initially the PCT highlighted the non-directive, and client centred therapeutic style and the core conditions, whereas CBT stressed the collaborative relationship (Beck, Shaw, Rush & Emery1979b). In the person-centred approach, the therapeutic relationship is foremost. In fact it is almost all the person-centred therapist offers, through which a client-directed self-discovery can happen heading toward 'self-growth'. Thus I view PCT as having a more sophisticated discussion about the therapeutic relationship, whereas CBT stresses the collaborative relationship encouraging an active interaction between the client and the therapist, a good therapeutic relationship is seen as important, but it is not considered sufficient for therapeutic change (Beck et al., 1979b). Thus in CBT, it has a more parsimonious elucidation in this regard.

According to my experiences in practice, I am inclined to a more person centred stance in the preliminary stage of the therapy, using core conditions proposed in PCT as a basis, so as to develop the therapeutic relationship allowing the client to open up about their inner world. I then switch to a more collaborative relationship to facilitate further therapeutic interventions. Therefore I adjust foci of therapeutic relationship at different therapeutic stages, and see the stances of PCT and CBT with regard to the therapeutic relationship as not antithetic, but as complementary and compatible, therefore these therapeutic stances can converge into one counselling approach.

Generally in PCT, a less non-directive therapeutic relationship has been increasingly advocated which is veering towards the 'collaborative', 'process guiding' therapeutic stance proposed in CBT; meanwhile, CBT has tended to pay more attention to the therapeutic



relationship and can adopt the more sophisticated understanding of the therapeutic style from PCT, without compromising its initial theoretical grounding.

### ***A Shift in conceptualization***

At an ideological level, in contrast to behaviourism, humanism rejects determinism and focuses on the individual self, thus PCT encourages 'self-determination' against adaptation to external environment and it claims that 'self-growth' can happen through this individual autonomy. At face value, both CBT and PCT approaches propose the idea that clients are self-directed problem-solvers. However in CBT, adaptation is encouraged, thus implying an encouragement of relational connection with the environment. Again reflecting on the postmodernist philosophical claim that emphasizes the 'relational nature of human being' and the criticism of the simplistic 'self concept' of Rogers (1957), advanced person-centred therapists are inclined to the concept of 'configurations of self', 'multi-facet of self', 'alternate feature of self', 'pluralistic self' etc (Cornelius-White, 2016; Cooper & Mcleod, 2011; Rowan, 1990; Schmid, 2007). This loosens Roger's notion of self-determination, non-compromise on social expectation and environmental adaptation. Thus both CBT and PCT seem to be converging.

## **6. Summary**

It seems the boundary between different counseling approaches is becoming less strict. The most prominent features of PCT are challenged and weakened. Influenced by contemporary western philosophy, it has been developing toward CBT, whereas CBT has opened up to taking on eastern wisdom and also showed its flexibility in being able to refine itself by adopting ideas from other approaches without contradicting its original theoretical foundation.

The greatest strength of CBT is often seen to reside in its clearly defined, well structured, and easily operationalized techniques, as well as its wide scope of applications and wealthy practical strategies. Paradoxically, this has also been criticised as band-aid solutions,

focusing on technique, and overlooking the dynamic and quality of the relationship between therapist and client. McLeod (2003) points out: "It is more of a technology than a framework for understanding life" (p. 143), thus it is simplistic. Its advantage appears to be at once a disadvantage. Nonetheless from my point of view, it is superficial resting at technique level to understand the strengths of CBT. Compared with other dominant counselling approaches, I see the real power of CBT is its rationale, i.e. it captures the four fundamental components of psychological make up, i.e. behaviour, thought, emotion and biology and recognizes its interaction affecting our psychology (Pedasky, 1990). Regardless of whatever counselling approaches, ultimately it seems we can always trace back to the mechanism of how these four components work.

Besides above, it is not fair to say, CBT can only provide a quick fixing band-aid remedy. In CBT, the so-called maladaptive thoughts manifest at three levels, i.e. automatic thoughts, thought assumptions and core beliefs (Westbrook et al., 2007). What do the thought assumptions and core beliefs mean? Where are the core beliefs derived from and how are they developed? CBT therapists do guide their clients to work on the thoughts at different levels. How far they go depends on the therapeutic goal. At the level of addressing core beliefs, this will involve a guided discovery in depth dating back to understanding the client's early experiences. Thus it possibly happens and the therapeutic work in CBT can reach the analytic depth. It is merely a case-determined choice. Additionally in the third wave of CBT, there has been already far greater emphasis on how the presenting problems are developed and sustained in a situational and historical context.

Perhaps the development of the third wave of CBT is part of a certain convergence between the different counseling approaches. There is a propensity for that the different approaches act upon and take advantage of each other rather than competing with one another. This may open a prospect for a unified paradigm, which would be a great asset for the discipline and profession of counseling psychology. I believe that CBT may have a great potential to play the most important role in this revolution.

In addition, the current developmental trend of counselling approaches has also provoked a culture related reflection: in essence there appears to be a propensity for convergence between eastern wisdom and western positivist science. Ultimately it reinforces the attention: East meets West, making culture visible in counselling psychology.

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Appendix A  
Cover Page

The title of paper:

Discussion of CBT in relation to the Person-centred Approach  
---A propensity for theoretical divergence

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This paper is submitted for publication under 'Theoretical Papers' in Counseling Psychology Review. It has not been published elsewhere and is not under consideration elsewhere.



## Appendix B

### Information for Authors from Counseling Psychology Review

Counselling Psychology Review is the Division of Counselling Psychology's quarterly peer-reviewed research publication, bringing together high quality research pertinent to the work of counselling psychologists.

It primarily focuses upon work being undertaken in the UK but it is also likely to be of interest to international colleagues and those in related therapeutic disciplines. The content is pluralist in nature, with its focus being on excellent work rather than methodological or paradigmatic preference, and submissions are invited in the following areas:

- papers reporting original empirical investigations (qualitative, quantitative or mixed methods);
- case studies, provided these are presented within a research frame;
- theoretical papers, provided that these provide original insights that are rigorously based in the empirical and/or theoretical literature;
- systematic review articles;
- methodological papers related to the work of counselling psychologists.

#### **Information for contributors**

**1. Length:** Papers should normally be no more than 5,000 words (including abstract, reference list, tables and figures).

#### **2. Manuscript requirements:**

- The separate **cover page** should be completed. Contact details will be published if the paper is accepted.
- Apart from the cover page, the document should be free of information identifying the author(s).
- Authors should follow the Society's guidelines for the use of non-sexist language and all references must be presented in the Society's style, which is similar to APA style. For an electronic copy of the Society's Style Guide, go to the Publications page of **www.bps.org.uk** and then click on Policy and guidelines/General guidelines and policy documents and choose Society Editorial Style Guide from the list of documents).
- A structured abstract of up to 250 words should be included with the headings: Background/Aims/Objectives, Methodology/Methods, Results/Findings,

Discussion/Conclusions. Review articles should use these headings: Purpose, Methods, Results/Findings, Discussion/Conclusions.

- Approximately five keywords should be provided for each paper.
- Authors are responsible for acquiring written permission to publish lengthy quotations, illustrations, etc., for which they do not own copyright.
- Graphs, diagrams, etc., must have titles -these should not be part of the image.
- Submissions should be sent as email attachments. Word document attachments should be saved under an abbreviated title of your submission. Include no author names in the title. Please add 'CPR Submission' in the email subject bar. Please expect an email acknowledgment of your submission.
- Please make all changes after review using Track Changes and return them to the Editor.

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## **Part 3: Case Study**

Working with complicated grief  
in the framework of Assimilative  
Integration

















































































