

Dating and Perspectives of Attractiveness Amongst Hangzhou Dianzi University Students

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Abstract: The People's Republic of China has grown tremendously as a country along with its economy. Yet some may be surprised to learn that the industries of dating, marriage, and beauty are growing as well. The purpose of this study is to find what university students find attractive, what influences these opinions, and if these things affect the students' dating habits. Through random sampling, 578 students (N = 578) from Hangzhou Dianzi University (HDU) were surveyed regarding what students find attractive, what influences their perspectives of attractiveness, and how these things relate to dating. This research concludes that personality and career are two factors that influence perspectives of attractiveness most amongst students at HDU. Other findings show a lack of correlation between certain factors and dating.

Keywords: Attractiveness, China, Dating, Hangzhou Dianzi University, Influence, Perspective, University Student

Research Topic

This research involves the effects of perspectives of beauty and attractiveness on dating customs amongst university students enrolled in Hangzhou Dianzi University (HDU) located in Hangzhou, Zhejiang, China. The following questions were explored using past research on attractiveness, Chinese beauty culture, and relationships as my basis. The primary research question is: are there any relationships between perspectives of attractiveness and the dating habits of Chinese university students? This consists of three, more detailed sub-questions: (a) do views of beauty and attractiveness have an effect on dating amongst Chinese university students?, (b) what do Chinese university students find attractive in a prospective partner?, (c) because China is a patriarchal society, do men's opinions and views of attractiveness affect women's views and/or vice versa? In a larger scope, do dating partners affect an individual's views at all? Through the knowledge of various researchers, some hypotheses have been conceived.

Social sciences' fascination with attractiveness began in 1966, when Hatfield and colleagues made an interesting discovery with an experiment where they randomly set up male and female college students on blind dates (Gangestad and Scheyd 2005). In a Western environment, these researchers found that the most influential variable when deciding whom to date was one's physical attractiveness. I hypothesized that although my survey would be done in an Eastern context, the results would be the same, and the Chinese students would also find physical factors such as facial appearance and body to be important. The results of the survey for this research have been compared to this previous study for similarities and differences.

In another study, Staley and Zhan (2011) tested variables of attractiveness, which states that the face is the most important factor in physical appearance to female Chinese students. Will HDU students rate facial appearance to be the most influential to their perspective of what is attractive or will they find other factors more appealing as well? Jankowiak, Gray and Hattman (2008) also stated that it is only natural for individuals to find physical appearance an important factor when choosing a mate because it could result in healthier and more attractive offspring. It is simply a part of human nature. The second hypothesis of this study is that its results will be the same, and the students of HDU will also find facial appearance to be most influential. Staley and Zhan (2011) also suspected that the students would prefer Western style to Eastern as China has

been highly influenced by Western culture in past years. The survey for the study includes a question of preference for Western or Eastern style, I suspected it would be the former.

The last of my hypotheses refers to the issue of women seeing themselves as men define them and/or vice versa. Simone de Beauvoir brought this idea to light in her book, *The Second Sex*, in which she describes her distaste for “institutions imposed on women by what she considered a patriarchal society” (Gray 2010). Historically, the men were considered the masters in many cultures, so women were meant to shape themselves in their image. Although times are changing in China, a gender gap still exists in various aspects such as sex ratio, education, employment, and more (World Bank 2006). This gender gap can indirectly influence the perspectives of both genders because they both experience different levels of equality in society. On the other hand, Chinese women believe it is a necessity for men to own property before proposing (The Committee of Match-making Service Industries of China Association of Social Workers 2011). Both genders have different expectations that they must fulfill, which led me to believe that the opinions of the opposite sex would affect each other.

This study is meant to gain an understanding of what Chinese university students find attractive, what influences what they find attractive, and finally, compare my results to those who have researched similar topics before me. Being an English teacher has allowed me to come in contact with a plethora of Chinese university students between the ages of 18 to 26. Throughout my time at this university, many questions have come up regarding Americans’ views of love, relationships, beauty, and attractiveness. Just as my Chinese students are curious about the American perspective of these topics, I am curious of the Chinese perspective. China is continuously developing, and with it are its people and culture, which include viewpoints and practices. Standards of beauty and attractiveness are different within each culture and are continuously changing (Staley and Zhan 2011).

Key Terms

- **Attractiveness:** Qualities that a person possesses that give intense pleasure or satisfaction to the mind, usually relating to the senses such as visuals. Features and variables that make one person attractive to another. (Merriam-Webster 2013)
- **Dating:** Partner selection through social interaction. When two individuals spend time together and are attracted to one another. This can possibly lead to marriage or other long-term commitments.
- **Influence:** The ability to produce an effect without obvious exertion of force or direct use of command. (Merriam-Webster 2013)
- **Perspective:** A point of view, outlook, or opinion. The subjective evaluation of relative significance as a result of one’s ability to perceive things. (Merriam-Webster 2013)
- **University student:** Students enrolled in university at either the undergraduate or graduate level who are typically ages 18 and above.

Overview of China

As the world’s most populace country with such a long and fascinating history, the People’s Republic of China (PRC) is a great place for a case study. Chairman Mao proclaimed the establishment of the PRC in 1949 after the success of the Communist party during a civil war (BBC 2013). Mao’s death in 1976 led to new leadership and economic reform, which includes the dismantling of collective farming and the authorization of private enterprise (BBC 2013). Yet China’s economy is not the only thing that has changed over time. Perspectives of attractiveness and relationships have changed as well. China under the rule of Chairman Mao experienced a time of rigid authoritarianism, which included control over feminine beauty and other aesthetics.

China, before the Cultural Revolution of the Communist regime and during the revolutionary era, is often associated with asceticism and androgynous clothing. It is also said the Cultural Revolution was a time of masculinization and puritanical asceticism where both genders criticized women's preoccupation with appearance, but nothing could erase self-beautification practices from society (Ip 2003). Natural beauty aligned with communist ideals. Many Chinese historical figures have considered beauty to be relevant to "the national project of strengthening China" (Ip 2003). Confucius, who is China's most well known philosopher, is a perfect example because he believed that to be a good woman, she must have virtue, words, and work; which includes appearance (Man 2000). China has been through so many changes, including its leadership and viewpoints. China's views on attractiveness have changed drastically since the times of both Confucius and Mao Zedong, yet both men are still revered and ideologically present in China today.

Deng Xiaoping, Mao's successor, is known as the man who started economic and political reforms in China 30 years ago (The Economist 2008). This increase in pragmatism has led to "200 million less citizens living in poverty, a 6% share of global GDP compared with 1.8% in 1978, [and] a nearly 70% increase in grain production" (The Economist 2008). This strengthening of the economy has allowed for the growth of multiple industries, including China's beauty and personal care market. In 2010, China's total sales of beauty and personal care products were reported to be worth US\$ 24 billion, which is three times the amount of total sales in the year 2000 (Jian 2012). One reason for this is the quick expansion of middle class consumers who have had an increase in disposable income levels. Another reason is that China has made large investments and advancements in its telecommunications infrastructure, which allows citizens to access information from other countries and various markets (Subramanian 2011). Internet users in China are responsible for the highly increased interest in the beauty market. Online retailers have created this \$24 billion cosmetics market in China, and the nation is now seen as a "major source of growth for the industry's players" (Burkitt 2013). These developments would not have been possible without China's shift in power from Mao Zedong to Deng Xiaoping. Economic reform has led to almost every aspect of modernization, which has given China a greater international presence and has made it a fascinating nation to study.

Literature Review

Views of attractiveness are subjective and ever changing, just as dating in China has slowly been redefined as young adults are allowed more free choice and independence. Many studies have been done on physical attractiveness and what variables affect perspectives of attractiveness. Perspectives of attractiveness and dating practices can change for various reasons, but more recently, one reason has been the growth of globalization. There is more intercultural communication than ever before, and even more diversity within communities. The articles used as reference for this research focus on Chinese relationships, perspectives of attractiveness, and possible influences of what people find attractive.

Perspectives of Attractiveness and its Influences

Globalization is the process of international integration, and as technology continually develops, communication between countries also develops. This process can lead to the adaptation of preferences in physical attractiveness as people are exposed to different cultures and styles. Researchers have studied this by comparing Chinese people's preference between both East Asian and Caucasian models as well as the differences in perceptions of attractiveness between genders (Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman, 2008). This previous study provides me with a good basis of the evolutionary perspective of physical attractiveness and what Chinese men and women find attractive. This study aimed to discover what Chinese university students find attractive in dating partners. As a result of their interviews and surveys, they found that Chinese women were more

interested in personality traits such as confidence (*zixin*), honesty (*puzhe*), and grace (*shuai*) as well as social achievement. According to the survey conducted by Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman, many Chinese women stated that Westerners were more attractive than Chinese because the women presumed that Caucasian men have a more luxurious lifestyle compared to urban Chinese men.

The study done by Staley and Zhan (2011) also discusses perceptions of beauty, specifically amongst “Chinese women who were exchange students in the United States” and “Chinese women who were students in their homeland.” First, they found that “standards for physical attractiveness differ cross-culturally” (Staley & Zhan, 2011). Next, they learned that these standards change with time, even within a single society (Staley & Zhan, 2011). Thus, it is important to study the society prior to studying its perspective of attractiveness as well as the effects of these perspectives on the psychological health of the individual. The authors studied past and current preferences of beauty in China. These studies provide context for the research at hand. Their research argues that long ago, China considered fullness to be more attractive as it demonstrated a higher socioeconomic status. This view has changed as the authors note that women would fast and diet for Emperors because they began to prefer thinner women instead. They claim that the more recent preference to thinness was caused by Western influence. Yet regardless of weight, Staley and Zhan found that overall, the face has always been considered the most important feature in beauty as displayed by cosmetic advertisements. The respondents’ answers and criterias will be compared with the results of Staley and Zhan which state that the face is the most important feature in determining a woman’s level of attractiveness. Other factors will be tested to see what HDU students find most important as well.

Man (2000) is a believer in capitalistic Western influence on Chinese notions of female beauty. In her writing, she outlines contemporary notions of female beauty in communist China using classical Confucian and Taoist texts. Traditional texts use the term *nu se* (woman color) to describe different aspects of womanly beauty and erotic qualities. These qualities include skin color as well as “her bodily beauty, the shape of her limbs, the gentleness of her behavior, the charm of her voice, the way she dresses and makes up” (Man, 2000). Yet in Confucian texts, there is also a moral meaning behind feminine beauty. Beauty “denotes material benefits and connotes wealth, abundance, longevity, vitality, good reputation, and power. The world also refers to one’s behaviors and outstanding abilities of many kinds” (Man, 2000). After conducting research, the results will be compared with Man’s research. It is possible that men still define beauty as Confucius had. Wark (1997) explored this idea and argues that “Woman sees herself and makes her choices not in accordance with true nature... but as man defines her.” In China, Confucius and other important men have always had a major influence on what people thought as moral and beautiful. Since China is mainly a patriarchal society, the men have a tendency to have more power and influence. Femininity and beauty are necessary for women to achieve cultural acceptance and desirability from men.

Dating, Relationships, and Marriage in China

As put by Sebag-Montefiore (2012), “dating is hard at the best of times” in Beijing, China. As a part of Chinese culture, many Chinese are expected to date for marriage, not just love. Practicality trumps romance as dating has “become a commercial transaction” (Sebag-Montefiore 2012). There are many examples of these transactions such as singles’ clubs where individuals are set up according to height, income, and property; matchmaking events, and meetings in parks where parents and/or grandparents gather to introduce their children to one another. The ideal Chinese man equates to “having a car, an apartment, a good salary and, preferably, a tall stature” (Sebag-Montefiore, 2012). The Committee of Match-making Service Industries of China Association of Social Workers (2011) reported that “92% of women think a stable income is necessary for marriage and approximately 70% think that men should only get

married after buying their own housing properties” as a result of their survey. On the other hand, it is ideal for women to get married by 27 at the latest, or they will be called *sheng nu*, which means “leftover women”. According to this information, men are considered attractive based on what they have, and women are considered attractive based on youth. The All-China Women’s Federation, a government body, conducted a survey in 2010 and “more than 90 percent of male respondents agreed that women should marry before age 27 or risk being forever undesired” (Larson, 2012). Marriage is heavily related to resources and worth in China, as women are essentially considered nothing until they are married, no matter how successful they are. According to the article, matchmaking is still common despite arranged marriages being banned in 1950.

Ying Hong (2006) investigates the shift of arranged marriages to free-choice marriages further. This shift could be a result of increased intimacy among couples, which allows them to decide what is attractive for themselves as opposed to what authority figures tell them. Higgins and Sun (2007) also investigate the fact that the Chinese have more choices in many aspects of their lives than before as a result of political and economic reforms. Yet the act of sexual behaviors are still less open than those in the West. It seems that attitudes are changing more than behaviors are. The authors examined 1100 university students from different areas of China and their views on marriage, choosing a partner, and sexual behaviors. What they found is that male superiority over women still persists in multiple areas such as marriage, age, education, and height. According to Higgins and Sun (2007), men tend to seek younger, smaller, and less educated women while women seek older, taller and more educated men. This shows that there may be some differences between what Chinese men find attractive, and what Chinese women find attractive. It also verifies the survey done by Sebag-Montefiore, who researched the ideal marriage partners for Chinese men and women.

Although the idea of leftover women still exists today, the idea of a single woman has changed a little over time. In the past, women had to get married no matter what, but as education levels increase and people focus more on their careers; there are higher expectations that have caused them to marry later and have fewer children. To make this easier, the popularity of online dating has increased with websites such as Jiayuan.com, which has 62 million members (Bloomberg News, 2012). The members of Jiayuan.com often specify what they desire in their prospective partners appearance such as height. Estimates claim that marriage registrations will decrease by 17 percent in Shanghai while its fertility rate has dropped to 0.79 in October 2010 (Bloomberg News 2012). It is speculated that individuals are becoming more discerning in choice and more selective due to growing standards of attractiveness; as well as the fact that more people have the option to choose who they marry.

Despite Higgins and Sun (2007) discovering more free choice for Chinese when selecting a mate and being unmarried or marrying later has become slightly more acceptable, the pressure to get married is still a heavy burden. Pressure to find a mate has been seen as the cause of the online dating boom and increasing divorce rates, which reached a new high in 2010. Thus, dating before marriage to get to know your partner better and dating after getting a divorce have both become more crucial. The Ministry of Civil Affairs states that almost two million couples registered for divorce last year, which is “1.5 divorces per one thousand people” (Jiang 2011). The National Women’s Union and Baihe.com have conducted research on singles in China and found that the nation has 180 million bachelors of which half are using online dating sites. For every 100 females in China, there are 119.45 males due to three decades of the one child policy (Jiang 2011). The Chinese Academy of Social Sciences believes that “there will be 24 million more men of marriage age than women” by 2020 (Jiang, 2011). Despite the fact that China has a large number of bachelors and bachelorettes, studies find that standards when selecting a mate continue to rise. These statistics demonstrate the importance of both dating and making oneself more attractive in a highly competitive dating market.

Methodology

Research Design

This research focuses on aspects of attractiveness and dating amongst HDU students. More specifically, it seeks the variables that make individuals seem more attractive, if there are any correlations between men's perspectives of attractiveness and women's, any possible differences between men's views and women's views, and what influences these views. In order to study these topics, various quantitative methods were used to produce reliable and valid research. Surveys were the main method for my research and a pilot survey was implemented to test my formulated questions. The pilot group, which consisted of 10 friends and associates who completed the survey online within a span of a week, allowed me to see if any of the questions were unclear and improvements were made to the research instrument. The survey was originally written in English, which was later translated into Mandarin Chinese by a translator (see Appendix B). Prior to the survey, students were given a consent form for their approval to participate in the study (see Appendix A).

Sampling

Survey distribution began online on February 26, 2013 and ended on March 16, 2013 using Google Drive's survey application via random sampling and snowball sampling at HDU. The link to my survey was distributed to various classes at HDU with the help of other foreign teachers and my students. Some students assisted me by using QQ, a messaging and social networking device; to post my survey online so fellow HDU students could take it. A total of 434 surveys were completed through Google Drive, while 144 were completed using paper surveys. Surveys were randomly distributed on HDU's Wenyi campus and teachers outside of the Foreign Affairs Department were asked to hand out my survey in their classes. All together, 578 surveys were collected, with a small percentage of non-HDU students ($N = 578$). A specific geographical area was chosen in this study to strengthen the results because it could lead to more consistency. After the data was collected, it was coded and transcribed using Excel. These statistics include descriptive information, which are measures of central tendency, measures of variance, and correlations.

Survey

The survey, titled "Dating and Attractiveness Survey," consisted of 15 questions in total. Seven questions were based on demographic studies to identify the characteristics of the respondents, four were based on the Likert-scale, two were preferential questions, and two were for additional comments from the respondents for any information they wanted to add. The Likert-scale questions allowed respondents to rate what they found attractive, and how much certain variables affected these opinions. The factors included in the survey, regarding what the students find attractive or suitable for a long-term partner, were based on past research of what the Chinese find attractive. The factors of possible influence on what students find attractive were mainly based on conversations with students. Two of the Likert-scale questions were specifically for those who have had or currently have a boyfriend or girlfriend to test how dating has influenced perceptions of attractiveness. It was also very important to learn about the respondent to see if any of their characteristics affected their preferences or perspectives.

Results

Demographics

This research was based entirely on the students of HDU. Hangzhou is located in Southeast China along the coast and is the capital of Zhejiang Province (Hangzhou Dianzi University n.d.). The city is densely populated with about 480 people per square kilometer (CPC Hangzhou Committee and Hangzhou Municipal Government n.d.). In 2008, the government reported that the city had a total population of 6.7764 million residents (CPC Hangzhou Committee and Hangzhou Municipal Government n.d.). HDU focuses on science and technology and is where I have been teaching English since September 2012. HDU was founded in 1956 and is the second public university founded in Zhejiang Province. As a public university, the Ministry of Industry and Information Technology and the Provincial Government directly administrate it. Although the school's strengths reside in electronics and information science, it also focuses on a wide range of disciplines such as engineering, science, economics, management, literature, law, and education.

The university has four campuses in total: Wenyi, Dong Yue, Xiasha, and Xiasha East. The largest of the four is the Xiasha campus. Along with these campuses, the university has more than 40 research institutions. Currently, there are more than 15,000 full-time undergraduates and postgraduates enrolled with a staff of 1,300 (Hangzhou Dianzi University n.d.). The university boasts various awards, achievements in research, and well-esteemed graduates. I choose to conduct my research at HDU for various reasons. As mentioned, Hangzhou is a rapidly developing and growing city, and HDU is one of the first public universities in its province. Thus, it the ideal place to conduct research, especially since both the city and the school attracts individuals from all over China. One percent of my respondents reported their nationality to be something other than Chinese; these respondents are most likely international and visiting students from various countries.

Gender

China is known for its large male population, with a 2011 estimated sex ratio of 1.06 male(s) for every one female (CIA 2013). Even more surprising, the British Medical Journal found that males under the age of 20 exceeded females by more than 32 million in 2005 (Zhu, Lu and Hesketh 2009). China's one child policy, launched in 1979, plays a great role in the nation's gender gap and is largely responsible for this shocking male to female ratio. As mentioned before, the China Academy of Social Sciences has officially estimated that suggests that 24 million men in China of marriageable age will be unable to find a spouse by the year 2020 (Jiang 2011). The preference for sons comes from two sources in China: cultural preference and economic reasoning. Males are able to "carry on the family name and inherit family properties" (Li 2011). Chinese parents throughout history have gone through extremes to give birth to sons instead of daughters. These methods include female infanticide, the abandonment of girls, and sex selective abortion (Zhu, Lu and Hesketh 2009). Oddly enough, the majority of my sample is female with 61% (351 out of 578) to 39% (227 out of 578). Although the exact gender ratio of HDU is unknown, if one were to observe the campus, they would see more males than females. It is my impression that my sample is not entirely representative of the campus or the country. This could be due to the fact that the majority of the students who took the survey were English and International Trade majors; majors with many female students. For example, a class of English-Speaking Countries classes can have 41 female students and one male student. As explained later in the study, gender was the most influential variable when respondents were choosing what they found to be most attractive. There could be various reasons for this. Men and women still have different expectations as demonstrated by the slang term *sheng nu* or "leftover women". Women

are expected to marry earlier than men and have more pressure placed upon them to marry. Gender imbalance and inequality could lead to different expectations and desires in a partner.

Age

Since it was decided to specifically study university students, smaller intervals of age were inputted into the survey. Respondents were given five options: below 18, 18-20, 21-23, 24-26, and 26+; but none chose below 18. The individuals of this age were raised in a more developed China than their parents before them. This is a generation with more opportunities and more free choice (Higgins and Sun 2007). After being in China for some time, it became clear that different areas of the country calculate age differently. In America, everyone starts at age zero from the day they are born, but in Hangzhou, some babies start at age one or two depending on how close their birthday is to the Chinese New Year. Knowing this, respondents were asked to choose their age based on the day they were born starting at the age of zero. It was also decided to ask the students' year in school: freshman, sophomore, junior, senior, or postgraduate. At HDU, postgraduates are separated into two levels, but it was decided not to distinguish them. In many cases, age and year in school can be indicative of each other. Thus, it would be safer to ask for both. If their curves are similar, they are fact checks for one another. The majority of respondents, at 53% answered that they are 21-23 years in age. In terms of level in university, the majority of the sample reported to be sophomores with 31.7%, but a few of the others do not trail too far behind: 141 juniors, 122 freshmen, and 113 postgraduates. Results of the survey can be seen in Figures 1 and 2.

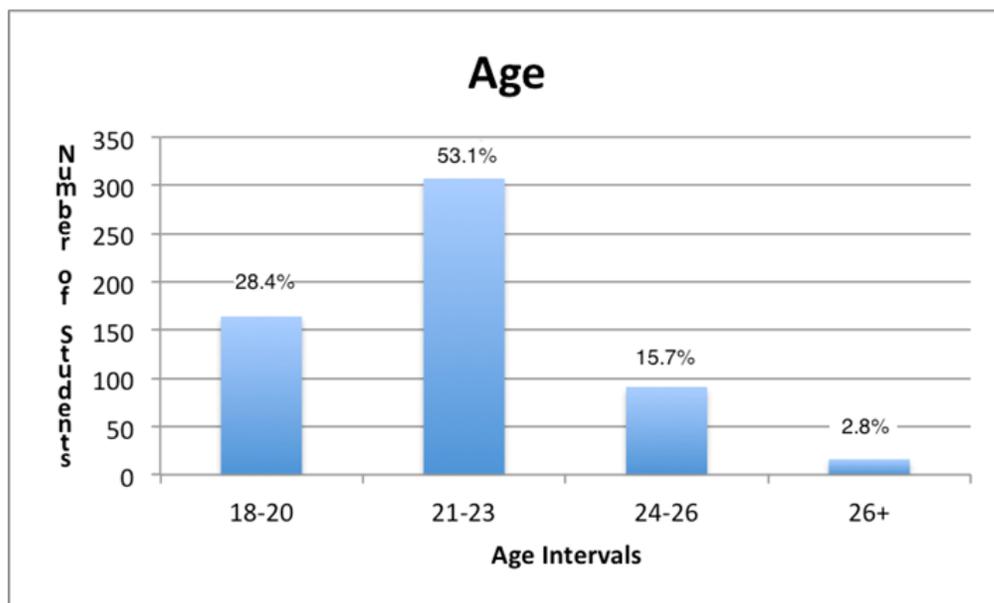


Figure 1: Respondents' Age (N=578)

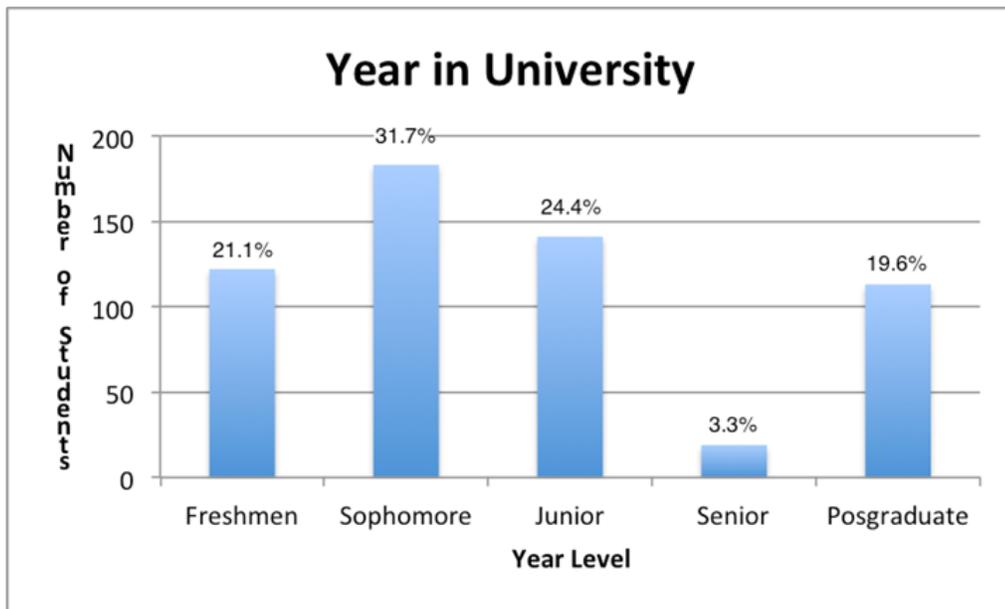


Figure 2: Respondents' Year in University (N=578)

Family Income and Education

Wealth, career, and education were and are still important in Chinese relationships. Thus, it was decided that a respondent’s family income must be determined to test for correlations with factors of attractiveness. As previously mentioned, China’s economy has gone through changes which has caused growth in wealth, although there are still large disparities. The CIA World Factbook determines family income through the Gini index, which “measures the degree of inequality in the distribution of family income in a country” (CIA 2013). Simply put, the lower the number, the higher the equality of the country’s income distribution is amongst its citizens. An ideal Gini index would range near 25, which includes the likes of the Scandinavian countries Norway and Denmark. The higher the number, the higher the inequality in income distribution is. In 2012, the first time the nation had officially reported its Gini coefficient in seven years, China’s Gini index was reported to be 47.4 (CIA 2013). In the World Factbook’s country comparison, China ranks 30 out of 136 countries; meaning it is a country with one of the most unequal income distributions. This is demonstrated by the survey results as the majority of respondents reported their family income to be in the lowest interval, which is 0 – 100,000 Renminbi (RMB) per year, at 54.5%. One RMB, also called Chinese yuan (CNY), is equal to 0.16 of one US Dollar. Low income can be indicative of a lower education level. Thus, both family income and parents’ highest education level were questioned to see any correlation and to see if socioeconomic factors affected views of attractiveness. The results can be seen in Figures 3 and 4.

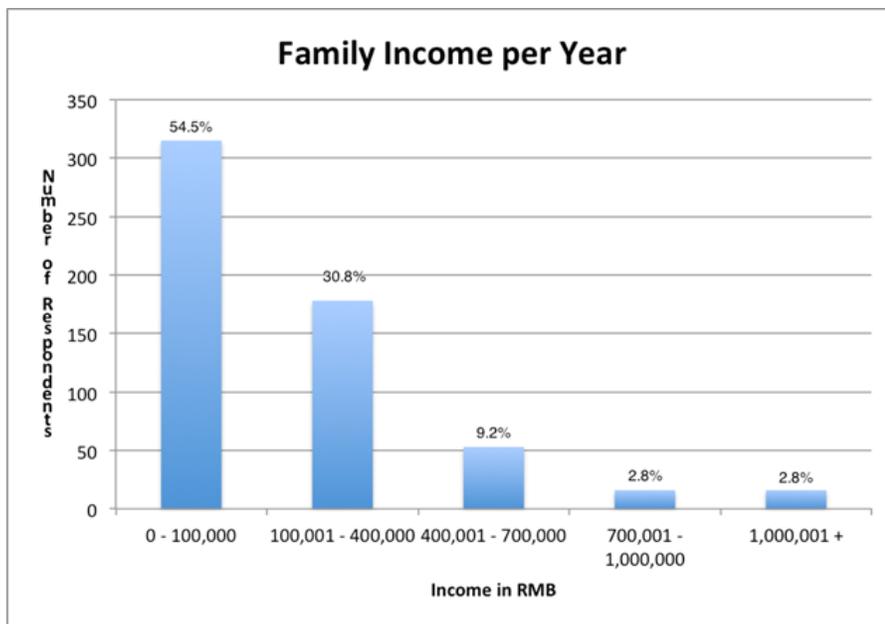


Figure 3: Respondents' Family Income (N=578)

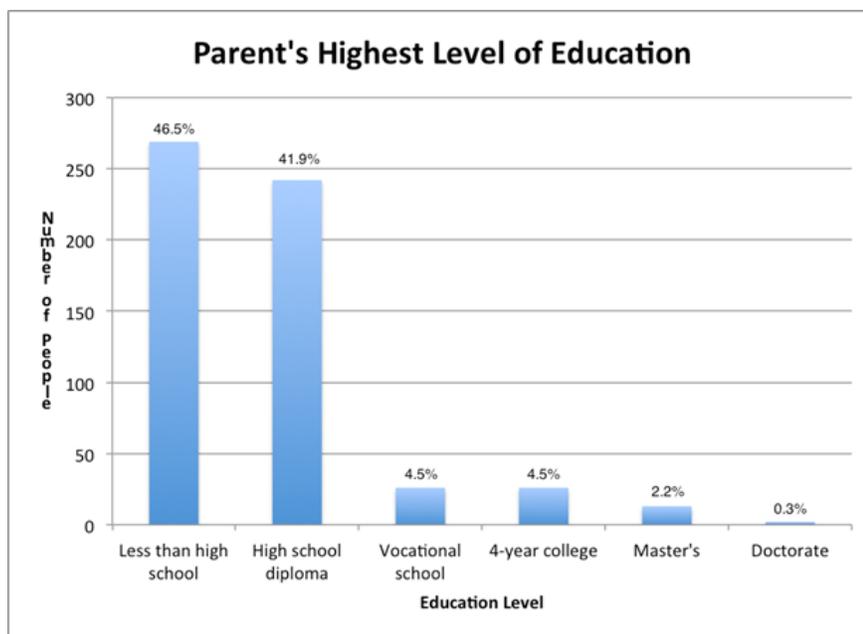


Figure 4: Respondents' Parent's Highest Level of Education (N=578)

Data Analysis

The purpose of the study is to find the effects of perceptions of beauty and attractiveness on dating customs amongst HDU students as well as determine what these students find to be attractive. For the univariate analysis, which is the examination of a single variable such as gender and age, a Descriptive Statistics Table was created, which is *Table 1.1*. These single variables are also discussed in further detail in the *Demographics* portion. Bivariate analysis will be used to illustrate any empirical relation between two variables such as income and perceptions

of what is attractive to an individual and how this relates to dating. Lastly, multivariate analysis will be used to test multiple variables and if they have any effects on dating customs. Ultimately, the variable with the most influence was gender because both had slightly different preferences. This was not surprising, considering that the studies used in the literature review of this study conducted research with gender differences in mind and specifically tested them. The survey results are representative of China’s evolution towards openness.

Table 1.1: Descriptive Statistics Table

Variable	Mean (SD)	Percentage
Nationality		
China	-	99%
Other	-	1%
University		
Hangzhou Dianzi University	-	94%
Other	-	6%
Gender		
Male	-	39%
Female	-	61%
Age (Mode)	21-23	-
Year in School		
Freshmen	-	21%
Sophomore	-	32%
Junior	-	24%
Senior	-	3%
Postgraduate	-	20%
Parent’s Highest Level of Education		
Less than high school	-	47%
High school diploma	-	42%
Vocational school	-	5%
4-year college degree	-	4%
Master’s	-	2%
Doctorate	-	0%
Income (Mode)	0 – 100,000 rmb	-
N	578	-

Factors of Attractiveness

A large part of my survey focuses on various factors that could influence how attractive an individual is to the respondent using the following: “On a scale from 1 to 4, what makes a person attractive. 4 being the most influential, 1 being the least influential”. *Table 1.2* lists the seven factors that were specifically chosen to test as well as the percentages of responses that were chosen by my sample based on a Likert-scale of one to four (from not influential to very influential). According to the survey results, “personality” is the most influential factor in making a person attractive with 49% (n=283) followed by “career” with 44.5% (n=257). Factors that are considered somewhat influential by the survey respondents are “wealth” with 49.7% (n=287), “facial appearance” with 46.5% (n=269), “education” with 44.3% (n=256), and “body” with 43.8% (n=253).

It is unsurprising that “career” was chosen as one of the most influential factors when considering a dating or marriage partner because marriage is seen as a big market in China. It is more conservative and practical to choose “career” as an influential factor compared to the choice of “personality”. “Wealth”, “facial appearance”, and “education”, although mostly marked as somewhat influential, are all considered more conservative and practical. Each of these factors is listed when parents and/or grandparents visit China’s infamous marriage markets, which are meant to uphold China’s old-fashioned dating style in modern times (Bolsover 2011). They are simply a legal form of an arranged marriage, where parents are able to scope out the individuals they see fit to join their family. The difference is, the children are not forced into marriage as they were in the past, just encouraged to date and possibly pressured into marriage. It is not uncommon for these concerned family members to attend marriage markets without the permission of their offspring. The influence of personality demonstrates the changing times of China from a majority of arranged marriages to a growing number of free choice marriages in the younger generations. During a time when China was isolated and less developed than it is today, the characteristics of “diligence and the willingness to suffer the burden of life” (Home n.d.) were enough to make one a suitable partner. In summary, the ratings of career, wealth, facial appearance, and education represent the practicality of dating and marriage in China while personality represents the nation’s shift towards free choice and increasingly independent young people who crave intimacy.

Table 1.2: Factors of Attractiveness (N = 578)

	Not influential (1)	Not very influential (2)	Somewhat influential (3)	Very influential (4)
Career	6.4%	15.6%	33.6%	44.5%
Skin	31.1%	44.6%	19.0%	5.2%
Education	9.0%	38.6	44.3%	8.1%
Body	5.5%	31.5%	43.8%	19.2%
Personality	6.1%	15.1%	30.0%	49.0%
Facial Appearance	6.1%	32.2%	46.5%	15.2%
Wealth	8.8%	26.3%	49.7%	15.2%

Male vs. Female Preferences

After determining the most influential variables according to the sample, bivariate analysis was used to find relationships between the descriptive variables and the choices made on the Likert-scale. First, ANOVA was used between gender, which is nominal, and personality, which is ordinal. The result of this test is $F(1, 576) 17.66 > F \text{ crit } 3.86, p = 0$, which is very significant because the p-value is lower than 0.05. Whenever the p-value is less than 0.05, there is proof that there is a strong relationship between the two variables. This result more specifically shows that according to the survey respondents, gender can influence whether or not personality is considered attractive to them. To look deeper into the relationship, cross tabulation was used and the results have been organized into *Table 1.4*. As seen in the figure, 54.7% of all females’ (n=227) marked “personality” as very influential (4) compared to 40.1% of all males (n=351). Although the majority of both find personality to be important, 14.6% more females find it very influential compared to males. China is a patriarchal society, so men and women are sometimes raised differently, treated differently, and have different obligations. These differences can give reason to why Chinese men and women do not have the exact same preferences for a long-term

partner, but it is still surprising that men valued personality so highly at all. Past research has commented on what Chinese men find sexy and physically attractive, but not on what personality traits or social achievements they value.

The influence of personality when selecting a mate rings true to the research of Jankowiak, Gray and Hattman (2008), which commented on notable differences between men and women’s preferences. They discovered that women were attracted to certain personality traits, and took this information one step further by finding that women often associated certain personality traits with other factors. These other factors include social achievement, career, higher intelligence, and physical attractiveness. This could imply that the respondents of this survey feel the same, and associate personality with other positive and attractive features. The results also imply China’s changing social environment.

Table 1.4: Male v. Female Influence of Personality on Attractiveness (N=578)

	Not influential (1)	Not very influential (2)	Somewhat influential (3)	Very influential (4)
Male (n=227)	9.7%	18.5%	31.7%	40.1%
Female (n=351)	2.3%	12.8%	28.8%	54.7%

Second, one-way ANOVA was used to determine the strength of the relationship between gender and the influence of career on attractiveness. The result is $F(1, 576) 34.95 > F \text{ crit } 3.86, p = 0$. Once again, the p-value is lower than 0.05, which is very significant. Thus, according to the survey, gender can determine whether or not career is considered attractive to an individual. To observe this in further detail, cross tabulation was used for analysis. Of all the males, 38.3% found “career” to be very influential (4) and 12.8% found this factor to be not influential (1). On the other hand, 48.4% females found “career” to be very influential (4) and 2.3% found this factor to have no influence (1). Percentages are shown in *Table 1.5*. Career may be important to Chinese females due to China’s “bride price” (Lim 2013). The ordinary “bride price” is US\$ 10,000, but many grooms are expected to pay a higher amount while owning a home and in some cases, a car. This money is given from the groom and his family to the bride and her family. The “bride price” became more prevalent as Chinese were able to earn more money after China’s economic reform. As mentioned before, the Committee of Match-making Service Industries of China Association of Social Workers (2011) took a survey where they found that “92% of women think a stable income is necessary for marriage and approximately 70% think that men should only get married after buying their own housing properties”. A stable income, housing properties, status, and social achievement are all related to one’s career. Thus, career is still an important factor when considering a long-term partner or marriage.

Table 1.5: Male v. Female Influence of Career on Attractiveness (N=578)

	Not influential (1)	Not very influential (2)	Somewhat influential (3)	Very influential (4)
Male (n=227)	12.8%	23.8%	25.1%	38.3%
Female (n=351)	2.3%	10.3%	39%	48.4%

As demonstrated by the results of the survey, views and perspectives are constantly changing. Surveys by Jankowiak, Gray, and Hattman (2008) throughout the years have proven this. In 1983, it was found that Chinese women preferred tall men who achieved or had the potential to have a prominent social position by an overwhelming amount (Jankowiak, Gray and Hattman 2008). A few years later in 1987, income entered the criteria because the “ability to purchase luxury products (e.g., refrigerator, washing machine, and electronic merchandise) had

become important” (Jankowiak, Gray and Hattman 2008). The latest surveys in the mid-1990s and in 2006 match the survey of this study with a preference to personality traits. Since free choice marriage is a more recent development and now a higher possibility for Chinese, more and more individuals are looking for emotional connections and intimacy as opposed to marriage just for the sake of being married. Though pressure from families and social pressure still exists, which is why career is a top priority and the bride price needs to be paid.

Factors of Influence

Not only did the survey look for the most influential factors in attractiveness, but also the possible factors that influence the individual’s perception of what they consider attractive using a Likert-scale. The distributed survey stated the following: “From 1 to 4, rank what factors have influenced your opinions of attractiveness most. 4 being the most influential, 1 being the least influential”. The majority of the factors considered “very influential” (4) go to “family” with 30% (n=173), followed by “friends” with 15.6% (n=90). The highest percentage of “somewhat influential” (3) consisted of “friends” with 47.1% (n=272) followed by the “opposite sex” with 36.7% (n=212). The results can be seen in *Table 1.3* below.

It is unsurprising that “family” was marked “very influential” (4) compared to the others. Chinese families demonstrate the pressure they put on their children in various ways. One of the most infamous is the marriage market, where parents and grandparents show pictures of their children and grandchildren along with their basic information and set them up on blind dates. Chinese women around the age of 27 have the most pressure forced upon them because if they do not wed by then, they are considered “leftover women”. It is more difficult for women to find a groom after the age of 27 because men often prefer younger women. Families fear that their daughters will never get married because it also means they may never have children to continue the family line. Becoming a “leftover woman” causes families to lose face (*diu lian*), which means to be disgraced. The bride’s family also reinforces the “bride price” and negotiates an appropriate price with the bride, the groom, and the groom’s family before the wedding is underway. Both families will also consider various factors when deciding if their children are a good match such as all the factors of attractiveness mentioned before: career, personality, education, etc. It is not one individual’s decision, but the decision of families, so it is actually surprising that there were not more respondents who marked family as “very influential” (4).

Table 1.3: Factors of Influence on Perspectives of Attractiveness

	Not influential (1)	Not very influential (2)	Somewhat influential (3)	Very influential (4)	N
Family	12.1%	22.5%	35.3%	30.0%	577
Media	15.1%	38.4%	36.0%	10.6%	578
Friends	7.1%	30.3%	47.1%	15.6%	578
Opposite Sex	13.0%	35.5%	36.7%	14.9%	578

Style Preference

The question of preference for Western style versus Eastern style is a popular topic amongst cultural studies. Respondents were asked which they prefer as well. The overwhelming response is that the students prefer Eastern style with 82%. The examples for Eastern style in the survey are “Chinese, Korean, etc.” and the examples for Western style were “America, Europe, etc.” There is increasing speculation that China is greatly influenced by Western beauty ideals. With the opening of China’s doors, came foreign films, practices, products, and more (Journeyman

Pictures, 2013). According to the short documentary, *Tortured Beauties – China*, more and more women want to look more Western and go to extreme lengths to achieve this through procedures such as plastic surgery and use of whitening products. Surprisingly, the results of the survey challenge the theories and concepts of this film and the results of research completed by Jankowiak, Gray, and Hattman (2008), who claim Chinese women preferred Caucasian male and female models to East Asian models. Though the same study also found that Chinese men find Caucasian and Asian female models equally attractive, but the men would be more likely to start relationships with Asian women. Results are shown in *Figure 5*.

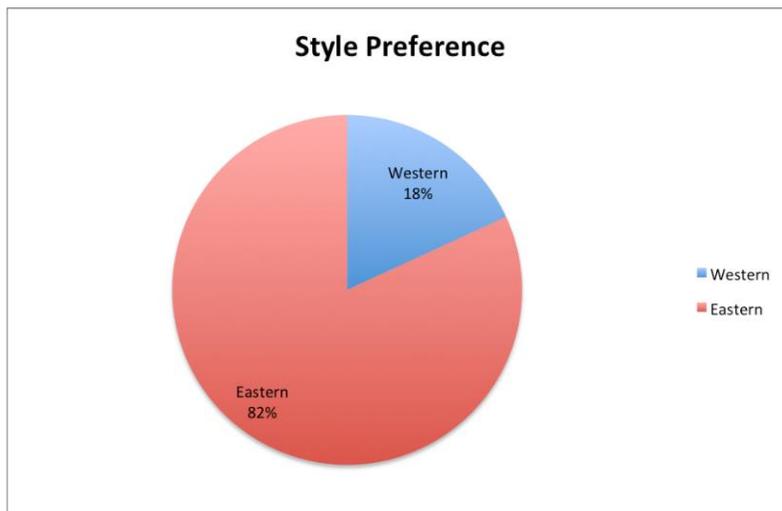


Figure 5: Style Preference (N=578)

Relationship Experience

Aside from perspectives of attractiveness, the respondents were asked about their dating history. First, the respondent was asked if they had any experience with a serious relationship. The majority, at 59% of the sample (N=577), said that they had been in a serious relationship with a boyfriend or girlfriend while 41% reported that they had not been in a serious relationship before; as shown in *Figure 6*. One respondent left this question unanswered. To follow up on the respondents' dating experience, the individual was also asked to rate how much having a boyfriend or girlfriend has influenced their views of beauty and attractiveness on a Likert-scale of 1 to 4 with the following: "On a scale of 1 to 4, how much has having a boyfriend or girlfriend affected your views of beauty and attractiveness? (4 meaning very much, 1 meaning not at all)". As shown in *Table 1.6*, the majority of those who have or had a serious relationship (48.6%) responded with a 3, "somewhat influential". It is natural for people to affect each other's opinions, especially when wanting to impress them, which may be the case in dating. Respondents were also asked to rank the importance of an individual's appearance when they considered dating a person on the Likert-scale from 1 to 4. Similar to the responses to the question on the influence of relationship experience on the respondent's perceptions of attractiveness, *Table 1.7* shows that the majority (60.9%) chose "somewhat important" (3). This demonstrates that it is important, but not the most important factor compared to others such as personality and career.

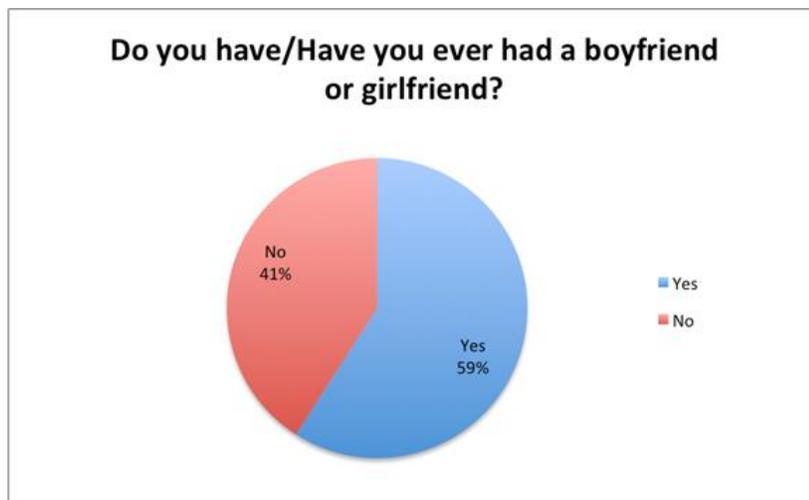


Figure 6 Serious Relationship Experience (N=577)

Table 1.6: Affects of Serious Relationship Experience on Perceptions of Attractiveness (N=346)

	Not influential (1)	Not very influential (2)	Somewhat influential (3)	Very influential (4)
Relationship Experience	9.2%	26.3%	48.6%	15.9%

Table 1.7: Importance of Appearance when considering whom to Date (N=345)

	Not important (1)	Not very important (2)	Somewhat important (3)	Very important (4)
Appearance	2.6%	24%	60.9%	12.5%

Limitations

China has the highest population in the world with a reported 1.344 billion people in 2011 (CIA 2013). This was a large part of my reasoning for only surveying and studying students from HDU. Future research can expand to more citizens of Zhejiang province as well as other areas of China and other age groups. Zhejiang province is also slightly wealthier than others, so less affluent areas may hold different opinions. With an expansion in sample size, the research can be more representative of China as a whole. A more equal sample would also be more accurate to compare both genders. The majority of my sample was female, so the comparison between males and females is not entirely equal.

Although the survey went through a pilot period, my findings have resulted in vagueness and lack some specificity. In terms of paper surveys, my instructions may not have been clear enough because many of the surveys submitted left questions unanswered. This is a plus for online surveys since respondents cannot submit my survey without completing the required questions. Yet more specificity in my questions could have improved my results. For instance, respondents were asked to select an age range instead of filling in their exact age. More questions and detail would make cross tabulation analysis and finding correlations simpler and more reliable.

Future Research

Those who plan to research these areas in the future should learn from the mistakes of the study and be more detailed in their survey. Future research could also expand to other areas of China and other age groups. Socioeconomic change has affected cities more than the countryside, so it would be interesting to be able to compare results from various areas. My findings mainly show the differences between the preferences of males and females, as opposed to the correlation between dating and perceptions of attractiveness. Discovering this correlation can teach us a lot about Chinese culture, relationships, and society. As a nation, China is still developing and changing, so there must much more information to be found.

Conclusion

China has grown immensely since Deng Xiaoping's economic reform, which has allowed the improvement of various industries and has changed views of attractiveness and relationships. Changes in China's political system also allow its citizens more freedom. My fascination with these views began within the first few weeks of teaching both undergraduates and postgraduates at HDU. This study began with over-arching question of a relationship between Chinese university students, dating, and perspectives of attractiveness as well as three sub-questions in mind: (a) do views of beauty and attractiveness have an effect on dating?, (b) what makes someone more attractive?, (c) do men's opinions and views of attractiveness affect women's views and vice versa? Some hypotheses were created based on past research and information as the basis for this study, but my main focus was to learn what HDU students find attractive and how this influences dating in China. What the respondents' found attractive also allows us to make implications of how China's society and institutions of dating and marriage have changed and how they continue to change. For instance, economic reform resulted in China's growth of wealth, which has changed what variables are important to them when choosing a long-term partner.

Influence of Attractiveness on Dating

My findings for question (a), which tests the influence of attractiveness on dating amongst HDU students, remains inconclusive. The survey included two Likert-scale questions regarding this; the first tested the effects of dating experience on perceptions of attractiveness. The majority of respondents find dating experience to be somewhat influential (3 on the Likert-scale), but it's not enough to draw a solid conclusion. With the second question, the majority of respondents found appearance when considering whom to date somewhat important (3 on the Likert-scale), which also leads me to believe that the hypothesis cannot be proved or disproved. More research is needed to make more conclusive results, but there are some implications that can be made. The factors of attractiveness in a suitable mate have changed over time along with society, China's economy, dating, and marriage. Arranged marriages are long gone which means Chinese are allowed to date and parents can attend marriage markets in a way of upholding tradition. In a way, it seems that China's dating practices have more affect on attractiveness than vice versa. Since an individual's family has great influence over whom the individual can and cannot date or marry, the individual must find a mate who fulfills their family's expectations. If the couple intends to marry, the groom must also pay a "bride price", if requested by the bride's family. Not all individuals can afford the price, though it varies by family. Some families even request that the groom purchases a home and/or a car. Thus, women must keep these ideas in mind when dating, and must have a great impact on what they find suitable and attractive.

Factors of Attractiveness

Overall, personality and career were said to be the most influential to what the respondents find attractive. Both males and females marked these two factors as the most influential when considering if someone is attractive, but there were higher percentages of females who found these important. Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman (2008) conducted a survey in which women marked personality as highly important in a man. More specifically, women valued the personality traits of confidence, honesty, and grace. Many women believed that a good personality is all encompassing, meaning it is related to other important factors such as social achievement and intelligence. The results of my survey match the results of Higgins and Sun (2007) who also found both men and women find personality to be most important. Their study also found that women considered social and economic status more important than men did, which also matches the results of this study. More females ranked both career and personality as more important than males.

These results do not match those of Gangestad and Scheyd (2005), who found that physical attractiveness was most important when choosing a mate, and Staley and Zhan (2011) who found that the face was the most important attractive feature. After reading these studies, it was surprising to see that the male respondents from my survey chose personality and career instead of facial appearance and body. According to these researchers, men are typically attracted to physical features such as the face. In terms of physicality, men are also expected to “value traits indicative of high reproductive value, or future reproductive output, such as youthfulness” (Jankowiak, Gray, and Hattman, 2008). In the end, this study’s results did not those of Gangestad and Scheyd (2005) and Staley and Zhan (2011), and my hypotheses were proved wrong. Facial appearance and body were ranked as “somewhat important”, which was not what I expected. It is unsurprising that my sample found that one’s career could affect how attractive one is because marriage is sometimes seen as business deal as opposed to a romantic gesture in China. The “bride price” and marriage markets demonstrate this dynamic of Chinese culture.

On the other hand, these results match reports like one made by Bloomberg News, stating that women are becoming relatively pickier in China’s dating scene because women feel they have more options. Official estimates state that marriage registrations in Shanghai, which is China’s richest city, will reduce by 17 percent (Bloomberg News 2012). Those who live in the city are starting to marry later and later and have fewer children. Statistics such as this are seen as the result of an urban shift in China, where people are receiving higher education levels and focusing on their careers. Juemin Zhou, director of the Shanghai Matchmaking Trade Association, was quoted saying “In the past, women were match-made by their parents... Now, if you don’t find someone suitable, you just don’t settle” (Bloomberg News 2012). Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman (2008) found the second most popular trait in a man was a plethora of social achievements. Although my survey did not include the words, “social achievements”, “career” and “wealth”, fit into this category. The Bloomberg News article and the research Jankowiak, Gray, & Hattman (2008) which both state that career is one of the first factors individuals look at when choosing a mate.

Factors of attractiveness amongst the students represent the changing times of China. In the early 1980s, women preferred height and prominent social positions. A few years later, income came into play as luxury products such as refrigerators, washing machines, and other electronics became more accessible and necessary. It was not until the 1990s and 2000s that personality traits entered the mix, as demonstrated by this study where personality was considered a highly attractive factor. Nowadays, a higher number of people desire intimacy in their relationships, especially since they have been allowed more freedom to choose their own partners. Though they still hold on to practical factors of attractiveness such as career, which is related to social achievement and wealth. Factors of attractiveness and China’s dating and marriage customs both

have affects on each other. Chinese views will continue to change along with Chinese policies and society, and it will be interesting to see what the future holds.

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Appendix A

Consent Form for Participation in DATING AND PERSPECTIVES OF ATTRACTIVENESS AMONGST HANGZHOU DIANZI UNIVESITY STUDENTS

Description of the research

You are invited to participate in a research conducted by Ashley Yu. The purpose of this research is to study the connection between perceptions of beauty and heterosexual dating. Your participation will involve in taking an online survey. The amount of time for your participation will be no more than 10 minutes.

Risks and discomforts

There are no risks associated with this research, but the survey requires sharing personal information such as age and ethnicity.

Potential benefits

There are no compensation or benefits for your participation in this research. This research may help us to understand the correlation between consumer spending and ethnicity.

Protection of confidentiality

We will protect your privacy. Your identity will not be revealed in any publication that might result from this study.

Voluntary participation

Your participation in this research is voluntary. You may choose not to participate or withdraw your consent to participate at any time. You will not be penalized in any way if you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study.

Contact information

If you have any questions or concerns about this study, please contact Ashley Yu at _____. If you have any questions or concerns about your rights as a research participant, please contact the instructor _____ or _____ at _____.

Consent

I have read this consent form and have been given the opportunity to ask questions. I give my consent to participate in this study.

Participant's signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Dating and Attractiveness Survey

This survey is for a Master's Thesis with Concordia University and is completely voluntary. Your identity will be anonymous and your name will not be recorded. Answering any of the following questions gives us your consent to use the data from this survey for our assignment.

If you have any questions about the research study, please contact Ashley A. Yu. Thank you!

You can write your answers in Chinese.

*** Required**

1. What is your nationality? *

你是什么国籍？

Chinese (中国)

Other:

2. Do you attend Hangzhou Dianzi University? *

你目前在读哪所大学？

Hangzhou Dianzi University (杭州电子科技大学)

Other:

3. Select your gender: *

你的性别是什么？

Male (男)

Female (女)

4. Select your age range: *

These ages are based on the actual day you were born, not the Lunar Calendar. (请填写阳历生日。)

below 18 (18岁以下)

18-20

21-23

24-26

26 +

5. Select your current level in school: *

选择你目前的水平在学校：

Freshman (大一)

Sophomore (大二)

Junior (大三)

Senior (大四)

Postgraduate (研究生)

6. What is your parent's highest level of education? (i.e. The parent with the highest education) *

你父母的受教育程度最高的是什么？（即最高的教育的家长）

Less than high school (低于高中)

High school diploma (高中/中专)

2-year college degree (AA) (2年的大学学位)

4-year college degree (BA/BS) (4年的大学学位)

Master's Degree (硕士学位)

Doctoral Degree (博士学位)

7. What is your family's household income per year? *

你的家庭每年的家庭收入是什么？

0 - 100,000 rmb

100,001 - 400,000 rmb

400,001 - 700,000 rmb

700,001 - 1,000,000 rmb

1,000,001+ rmb

8. On a scale from 1 to 4, what makes a person attractive. 4 being the most influential, 1

	1	2	3	4	
Career (事业)					being the least influential.*
Skin color (肤色)					
Education (文凭)					按照“吸引力”，用1到4的数字排列，4为最有影响力，1为影响力最小。
Personality (个性)					
Body / weight (体形/体重)					按照“吸引力”，用1到4的数字排列，4为最有影响力，1为影响力最小。
Face / facial features (i.e. eyes, nose, lips, etc.) 样貌 (如眼睛, 鼻子, 嘴唇等)					
Wealth (收入)					

9. Are there any other factors that affect if you think a person is attractive or not? If so, please write them here:

此外，如果你认为一个人有吸引力，是否有任何其他因素的影响？如果有，请写在这里：

10. From 1 to 4, rank what factors have influenced your opinions of attractiveness most. 4 being the most influential, 1 being the least influential. *

什么因素影响了你对“吸引力”的观念，用1到4的数字排列，4为最有影响力，1为影响力最小。

1 2 3 4

Your family (你的家人)

The media (TV, movies, music, magazines, etc.) 媒体 (电视, 电影, 音乐, 杂志, 等)

Your friends (你的朋友)

The opposite sex/someone you have dated before (周围所有异性/你的前任)

11. Are there any other factors that have influenced your perceptions of what is attractive? If so, please write them here:

是否有任何其他因素影响了你的审美观？如果有，请写在这里：

12. What do you find more attractive overall? (i.e. clothing and physical appearance) *

整体上来说，你比较偏向哪个风格？（例如服装或外表）

Western style (欧美风)

Eastern style (日本, 韩国, 中国, 等风格)

13. Have you ever had a boyfriend or girlfriend? *

你有过男/女朋友吗？

Yes (有)

No (没有)

14. On a scale of 1 to 4, how much has having a boyfriend or girlfriend affected your views of beauty and attractiveness? (4 meaning very much, 1 meaning not at all) *

用1到4的数字排列，有男女朋友对你的审美有了多大的影响？（4表示很大，1表示很小）

1 2 3 4

Not at all

Very much

15. On a scale of 1 to 4, how important is an individual's appearance when you consider dating them? (4 meaning very important, 1 meaning not important at all) *

用1到4的数字排列你在考虑跟某人约会时，他/她的外表有重要？（4表示非常重要，1表示并不重要）

1 2 3 4

Not at all

Very important

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