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**Title:** Dating Preferences Among Asian American Students at the UIUC

**About the Author:** Betsy An is a second generation Asian American freshman student at the University of Illinois. She is currently majoring in international studies with a focus in international business, and enjoys the college campus life a lot. In her spare time, she likes playing the piano, guitar, and engaging in photography. Louise Zhang is a second-generation Asian American freshman at the University of Illinois. She is currently in the Division of General Studies but is leaning towards choosing a major related to business. In her spare time she likes to travel, go shopping, lay out in the sun, watch movies, run, and scrapbook. Tony Jin is a second generation Asian American freshman student at the University of Illinois. He is currently in the college of business and still deciding on a major. He enjoys learning about Asian American culture in his spare time. Kim Vo is currently finishing her first year at the U of I. She is majoring in Psychology and going into Pre-Nursing. She was born in Vietnam and migrated to Chicago when she was 5 years old. She is the youngest out of 5 kids. She likes to think of herself as a liberal person. She is against abortion and supports gay marriage. In her spare time, she likes to go shopping and play board games. She loves watching reality shows and surfing the net. Her favorite kinds of food are Asian and any kind of pasta. She loves music and dancing even though she is the least musically coordinated person. She loves spicy food and eats everything with hot peppers or hot sauce. She adores kids and would love to have a big family one day. Robert Washington is an Freshman in the College of Engineering. He went to the public boarding school Illinois Math and Science Academy for three years before coming to UIUC. He is a part of AIESEC Illinois, Illinois Rowing, and Engineers without Borders.

**Keywords:** Dating preferences, dating among Asian American students, campus life, dating influences, ethnic dating, interaction between Asian American students, cultural norms

**Abstract:** This student EUI research project was to investigate how university campus life here at the University of Illinois at Urbana–Champaign influences and/or impacts the Asian American student body and their dating preferences. The members of this research project observed social environments ranging from dining halls to Greek life to religious church groups/gatherings. Interviews were also conducted with students from the various social environments that they were observed in. After doing this research, the five researcher of this project have analyzed the university campus and have concluded that the UIUC campus does in fact influence and facilitate dating preferences among Asian Americans.

**Question:** Does campus life facilitate or influence dating preferences among Asian Americans?

**Plan:**

**Data (observation):** Betsy An's Observations:

4/7/09

Yesterday (3/6/09), another classmate from AAS, Kim, and I conducted an observation study for our group research project in PAR (Pennsylvania Avenue Residence) dining hall at the UIUC. We arrived there during dinner time, and started recording our data and observations at 5:58 pm. There are two sides at the dining hall where people can sit and eat. We sat at one side of the dining hall first and later moved to the other side to record more observations. The PAR dining hall was very crowded and very diverse as well. There were students of Indian, Asian, Caucasian, and African American race all eating, but it seemed to be segregated. Specifically, the blacks would be sitting with blacks, whites with whites, Indians with Indians, Asians with Asians, and there was also a big table of just mixed races. The first side that we sat on consisted of 3 tables of just Asian students who were all males.

Table 1: 3 males

- Stereotypical "nerd-like" features: shoving glasses up with middle finger
- 1 wearing glasses, 2 not
- 1 drinking soymilk
- All spoke with mouth open while eating

- Thin physical structure
- All ate food from the stir-fry line/Chinese food of some sort
- Chinese
- All talking and interacting with each other
- All have bushy eyebrows

Table 2: 3 males

- 2 wearing glasses, 1 not
- 1 wearing badminton pants
- All spoke with mouths open while eating
- All eating stir fry
- “Nerdy” looking
- Spoke in Chinese
- 1 Keeps rubbing head

Table 3: 4 males

- Koreans
- 3 wearing glasses, 1 not (all glasses are thick rimmed)
- 1 has blonde dyed hair
- All have long shaggy hair
- “Fashionistas”
- All eating from stir-fry line
- All speaking in Korean
- 1 has big fur coat on

At 6:16 pm, the entire stir-fry line is Asian – about 20 Asians or so.

At about the same time, another table behind us filled up with 5 Asian students. This table consisted of 2 girls and 3 boys. They all seemed to be speaking in Chinese Mandarin. They seem to all be friends. They were more on the quiet side and kept to themselves. One of the boys was wearing glasses.

Kim and I then moved to the other side of the dining hall to record more observations. We spotted a large table consisting a total of 11 Asian American students. 5 were girls and 6 were boys. They were all wearing blue, black or grey colored clothing, and they were all speaking in English. I was not able to distinguish all of their races and ethnicities, but it looked like this large table of Asian

Americans consisted of several different ethnicities. 2 of them were wearing glasses. At least half of the table ate something from the stir-fry line. They were not the typical stereotype of Asian-looking nerds. They were casually well-dressed. All of the males had short black hair, and all of the females had straight black hair.

There was another table on the same side that consisted of 3 girls and 1 boy. By the time I got over to their table, they had already finished eating. They were all speaking English and looked Chinese. They all seemed to be Americanized. The boy seemed to be the dominant one in the conversation. They all ate something from the stir-fry line. All of the girls had short black hair. The girls seemed like good listeners.

End time: 6:42 pm

Kim Vo's Observations:

4/6/09

I started my observation at Pennsylvania Avenue Residence (PAR)'s dining hall at around 6:00 pm. I sat at a table surrounding other tables with Asians. At table 1, there were 3 Asian guys. They were heavily in their conversation and laughing while speaking in their native language. The one guy speaking was very expressive with his hands. One guy was sitting down crossing his legs, and two guys wore glasses. At table 2, there were also 3 Asian guys but they were quieter in their speech and conversation. One guy was wearing glasses. At table 3, there were 4 Indian guys who were finishing up their meals. They had a lot of drinks for only 4 guys. There were about 10-12 empty cups on the table. They spoke in English.

At around 6:13 p.m., a new table had started behind us. It was 2 Asian girls and 2 Asian guys. Two guys were wearing glasses and one guy had really big afro-like hair. It seemed like almost at every table I observed with Asians, there was at least 1 person wearing glasses. They spoke in their native language. One guy from this new table got up to say hi to a guy from table 1. They were friends. There was really no conversing between one another at the table

initially because they were all eating.

Looking around at the stir fry line, I noticed that the line had all Asians, of around 20 people. When I got my food 20 minutes before, it was racially mixed. This could mean that the majority of Asians went to eat dinner later and could be waiting for all their friends. The stir fry line was a popular choice, certainly the line was longer there than at the pasta and pizza line. This could also be because Asians can relate with stir fry food with their own native foods.

At a booth near my table, there was 1 Asian girl and 1 Asian guy eating. They were both eating stir fry food. The guy had spiky hair and they spoke in English. They sat facing each other at the booth. They were talking and laughing. By choosing to eat at the booth, it felt more intimate and comfortable. It could be a great place for a date because it was like eating at a restaurant.

On the other side of the dining hall, I observed a huge table of Asians eating. It was a long table and there were 11 Asians all sitting together. There were 5 girls and 6 guys. Three girls sat together in the middle on one side of the table while the other 2 girls sat at each end on the other side of the table. This was a good distribution so it wasn't like girls were on one side and boys another. This allowed for the two sexes to interact and converse easily. They spoke in English and many cracked jokes. There were a lot of smiling and laughing. 2 Asian girls walked by with their trays and said hi to the group, they were friends but the 2 Asian girls sat at their own table.

Based on these observations, I do notice that Asians mostly only sat with other Asians while eating at the dining hall. Many of the ones who sat and ate with each other spoke in their native language. I can assume that they are the same nationalities and this might be one indication of something they have in common. This could also be a sense of comfort with your own people factor. Because the majority of them did live PAR, many of them recognized familiar faces and said hi. There were however a good mix of boys and girls who sat and ate together. From most of these tables, there was a group vibe to it. I ended my

observations at 6:42 pm.

Louise Zhang's Observations:

On the evening of 4/8/09 at 8:57 pm, Robert, another peer from AAS 199, and I went to a social event at the Asian American Cultural Center held by the ladies of the alpha Kappa Delta Phi Sorority. It was the sorority's 9th birthday since starting the chapter at the University of Illinois. There were people there of all cultures, many Asian but also Hispanics, African Americans, and Caucasians. Alpha Kappa Delta Phi had invited all the chapters in the United Greek Council to come but the birthday party was open to everyone. When we first walked in, it was very crowded and loud; R & B, rap, and pop music filled the air. Since it was a 9th birthday for the chapter, the theme of the party was literally a "9th birthday party", meaning games like musical chairs, pin the tail on the phoenix (changed from donkey to obviously incorporate the Asian affiliation), and Bozo Buckets were being played. People were all wearing jackets, shirts, sweatshirts, and hats all proudly displaying their Greek letters. There was a main group circling around the musical chairs game. Everyone was laughing and chatting. Mainly at this point the two gender groups kept to themselves, girls stood by girls and vice versa. Not a lot of flirting was going on, probably due to the excitement of the game. As the game ended, some entertainment for the night was a singer who sang a couple of songs. The people at the party sat down, still in small groups of their own friends. Still there is no direct flirting or action that concludes really even being there for the opposite sex. There are about a handful of conversations between a guy and a girl. The cake is now being served with ice cream. Girls are yelling telling guests to make sure to grab a piece of cake. A boy gets a piece of cake and wipes some frosting on a girl's cheek. She flirts back by playfully hitting him and running away; he chases her. Then there was a small dance off when the song "Do Da Stanky Leg" came on between another guy and girl. A place where some couples would go was the kitchen to talk with one another. Some guys even approached me and said hello during the time I was there. Overall it was a great time to meet people and catch up with friends from all Greek affiliations.

Robert Washington's Observations:

KDPHI 6th Birthday Party Observation I attended the KDPHI, an Asian sorority, celebration of its chapter's 6th year here at the university. Prior to attending the event, I was expecting to be one of the few non-Asian people there. I was mistaken because once I had arrived the room was filled with cultural diversity. There were Black, Indian, and Latino sororities and fraternities at the event. The interactions between the various sororities and fraternities seemed to be limited despite their effort in diversity. I noticed that it seemed the Asians in the sorority seemed to be more social than the Asian males. They sorority girls were slowly making their way around the room, socializing and even flirting to a certain extent with people of other races. On the other hand the Asian males seemed to talk in circles near the back of the room and kept to themselves unless approached by others, which tended to only be Asian females. This could be a natural phenomenon or due to the fact that the sorority girls were obligated to do so since they were hosting the event. The fraternization between the other various groups seemed to only be with their own fraternities and sororities, race not being the only influential factor in this. I took into account that not only is these people of the same race, but they are also good friends with these groups of people being that they are Greek brother and sisters. I noticed specifically that the way one Asian girl flirted with some of the guys in the Latino fraternity differed from how she did so with the Asian Frat guys. Her interactions with the communication with the Latino Frat consisted of light hearted joking and almost childish flirtatious mannerisms, while the interactions with other Asians were more physical. Her interactions with Asian males seemed to be almost equally as juvenile, but they played with each other; she came up behind them and covered their eyes, she poked them and their sides and she came up behind them and wrapped her arms around their waist. Again it was unknown as to whether she had previously known these Fraternity guys, so race may have not been the only thing influencing her mannerisms with them.

Tony Jin's Observations:

I have begun to notice many things after observing the Christian group on UIUC's campus called CFC. CFC stand for Covenant Fellowship Church and this church is made of mostly Asian Americans, I remember hearing that its 50 percent Korean and 30 percent Chinese. From the outside it seems as though all they all hangout as one big group or "cult".

I observed from CFC events that guys and girls are constantly chatting, talking, and the occasional flirting. It seemed as though everyone is friends with everyone or at least knows of each others names. I also observed that a large majority people in CFC are single. And that many are looking to "hook up". I heard from some of the older people that "so many people hook up here" and that many relationships in CFC skip the dating phase. This is because the couple usually knows each other so well already.

It seems as though many members in CFC are unwilling to go and find other friends outside of this large church. In CFC it's divided into areas, for example CFC Six-Pack, CFC Far-Par, CFC ISR, and so on, each area really doesn't know one another. Everyone just hangs out with their own CFC area when one does hang out with CFC. And it's a pretty big deal and seen as "betrayal" to live in switch area dorm. It seems as though many people stick to their area as they know everyone already and feel more comfortable. It seems inevitable that people in CFC eventually hook up because of the amount of time they spend with one another. And the fact that most people aren't so willing to change CFC area. This combined with the fact that most people in CFC stick closely to one another. Especially if one is really into Asian American relationship CFC is the way to go. The Illinois campus definitely influences people's preference when it comes to dating with large groups such as CFC.

**Data (interview):** Betsy An's Interview:

On Sunday April 12, 2009 at 8:30 pm I interviewed an individual who was apart of my observations in the PAR dining hall a week earlier. Her name is Sarah Yu and she is of Taiwanese ethnicity. Sarah is an acquaintance of whom

I met through another Asian American friend. Sarah is a freshman at the U of I, majoring in Journalism. I interviewed Sarah in my dormitory room. I had her sit on my bed and told her to feel at home so she wouldn't feel so tense during the interview while I sat at my desk and took notes during the interview process. Throughout the entire interview process, Sarah was very comfortable with expressing her opinions and thoughts with me. She answered all of my questions thoroughly and I did not feel like she had anything to hold back.

Sarah grew up and lived in the wealthy West Lake Village, which is in a California suburb, north of Los Angeles until her sophomore year in high school. Then, she moved to Iowa City after her sophomore year in high school. Sarah comes from a highly religious family. She considers her parents radical Christians since they are very active in their faith. In California, she had a lot of Asian friends primarily because the area where she lived in was concentrated with Asian Americans. Sarah had a group of white friends that she would hang out with at school, and also had a group of Asian friends that she would hang out with outside of school. She met a good majority of her Asian friends through the church that she attended. Sarah mentioned that she was a lot more comfortable spending time and hanging out with her Asian friends, because they all knew each other's families, and were able to relate to the Asian culture and traditions. This way, they were able to relate to each other, and better understand where each friend was coming from when confronted with situations. In addition, Sarah also felt pressured at school with her white friends because of the "popularity-cool factor." In other words, she felt like she had to live up to their physical standards and social status in order to fit in and be accepted.

Typically, her white group of friends were more fashionable and more up-to-date with society as opposed to her Asian friends, who sometimes were stereotyped as "nerdy." When Sarah moved to Iowa, she hung out with mainly white students, because her high school had only about 7-10% Asians. She made friends quickly and felt more comfortable at her new school in Iowa, because she felt that the students were more liberal, down-to-earth, open-minded, more eager to learn, and accepting of her friendship. Sarah considers herself an extremely liberal

individual so it was easier for her to fit in with her new group of friends in Iowa.

After coming to the U of I, Sarah started hanging out with a lot more Asian Americans and made a lot of new Asian American friends, mainly of Korean and Taiwanese ethnicity. The reason being is because she lives in the FAR (Florida Avenue Residence Hall) dormitory, which has one of the highest Asian student populations. In addition, Sarah is also apart of a church group that she attends once a month.

Sarah has been in three relationships throughout her life. Her first two boyfriends were Caucasian, and her current boyfriend, Jeremy, is Korean. She felt equally comfortable with her boyfriends and relationships, but mentioned that in terms of family, she definitely felt more comfortable introducing Jeremy to her family, because of the culture connections. Sarah's dating preferences before coming to the U of I were quite specific. Her ideal boyfriends had to be white, have dark skin (tan), have brown hair and eyes, be musically and artistically inclined or at least show an interest, must like American literature, and must like to travel. After coming to the U of I, her physical preferences of her ideal boyfriend are not as specific, hence why she is dating an Asian male. For Sarah, physical features do not play as strong of a role now as they used to back in high school. She claims herself of being more accepting and open-minded towards physical features of one after coming to the U of I.

Sarah is involved in three different clubs/organizations here at the U of I: AIESEC, The Buzz, and Phi Eta Sigma.

AIESEC is an organization that promotes global issues and awareness such as environmental practices, genocide, and poverty related topics. The Buzz is the arts and entertainment magazine for the Daily Illini. She mainly joined these two clubs in correspondence with her major.

Phi Eta Sigma is an honors society that recruits undergraduate students with a 3.4 GPA or higher. Here, she is involved with volunteering and networking opportunities. All three of these organizations that she participates in have low Asian American populations. Sarah mentioned that she would never join any organization associated with Asian culture just for the sake that it's Asian, because she feels that she does not have trouble

integrating herself among other Asians. In addition, she has plenty of Asian friends and actually did not meet any of them through organizations. In other words, she would not go out of her way to meet other Asian American students.

Ultimately, Sarah believes that campus life at the U of I does influence Asians dating other Asians, because clubs and organizations associated with Asian culture gives Asian American students a great opportunity to engage in friendships and relationship among other Asian Americans students since they are surrounded by their own race a majority of their social networking time. Thus, because of the Asian surroundings, the Asian race is the only that Asians would date. Finally, our interview ended at 9:12 pm.

Tony Jin's Interview:

The person I interviewed was part of my small group within a Christian fellowship. My Christian fellowship is called CFC and is an Asian church here on campus consisting of 50 percent Korean and 30 percent Chinese. He is from the suburbs of Chicago and also a freshman. I asked a variety of questions trying to figure out if campus clubs and organizations help to facilitate dating preferences among Asian Americans.

My interviewee went to high school in a majority white suburban school on the outskirts of Chicago. Although he had always been part of a church almost all his friends outside of church weren't Asian American. After coming to University of Illinois for the first time it was somewhat of a culture shock for my interviewee because he wasn't aware that so many Asian Americans existed.

My interviewee had hung out with mostly non Asians in high school but that completely changed after coming to the University of Illinois. After joining a small group he recounts "I think it's just a natural tendency for people to stick and become close friends with their own race." My interviewee hadn't set out to hang out with Asian people exclusively. He also expressed his desire to branch out more at U of I and make friends with other races. But also states that it's become much more difficult with so many Asian Americans on campus. It's something he was never offered growing up in high school. He also rants "I have

never seen so many cute Asian girls until coming here on campus this past year.” He wants to date an Asian girl and coming to campus and joining such organizations such as CFC he believes will really help him out with that.

#### Kim Vo’s Interview

For my interview, I went back to PAR dining hall and interviewed an Asian girl who was eating with her 3 friends. In her interview, she talked about who she hung around with in high school. In her high school, they have this tracking program where students are grouped into certain classes, freshman through senior year with the same people. For example, if you are in Honors classes, you will take the same Honors level classes with the same people all four years. Because of this, she hangs around with mostly the same people. Her high school was mostly white and less than  $\frac{1}{4}$  Asian but in her Honors classes, there were about  $\frac{2}{3}$  Asians. Her inner circle of friends was both half White and Asian, which made sense that her dating preferences prior to coming to the U of I were either Asian or White. However, after a year and a half at the University, her dating preferences have leaned towards Asians more. I asked her why she thinks this is so, and she responded, “Coming to college, everything is so new and different so I tend to relate towards people of the same ethnicity as I am. I try to clump towards people of my own race because you feel more comfortable with Asians and being able to relate. I can relate with taking off my shoes before entering a room and eating rice with every meal”.

I also wanted to know about her family dynamic growing up and if they allowed or encourage dating. She told me that growing up in a Christian family, dating was not encouraged at all. Instead, her family told her to focus solely on academics and save dating for after schooling. Next, I wanted to know why she thought people joined clubs/organizations and church groups. She said, “To find more about themselves, out of curiosity, and to take advantage of what college has to offer. I don’t think there will be another type where you can have all the available resources to meet so many different people.” She is currently in Philippine Student Association and it has helped her meet more people of her race and culture.

Besides that, she is taking advantage of the opportunity. Going into more specifics about my individual observation, I asked her to give her opinion on whether dining halls were a good social place and how it affects meeting new people. She eats at Pennsylvania Avenue Residence (PAR) dining hall often and said, "I think it's a good opportunity to if you see someone in your classes and you say hi. I've never sat with a person I've never met before, but if I've seen them around before. I think that it's more of a place for old friends or already friends to socialize and interact. But it does help meet new people when you eat with your friend's friend. It's all about networking and socializing". I feel that now that she is able to choose between so much resources like different clubs and organizations, meeting new people is encouraged and given social places like the dining halls, it helps to foster those new relationships and can guide her dating preferences to lean towards a certain race or ethnicity that is hangs around with more, which is now predominantly Asian.

Louise Zhang's Interview:

I met \*Jennifer downstairs in the food court of the Illini Union on April 14, 2009 at 2:15 pm. She approached me wearing a black North Face, a high ponytail, and a smile on her face. I greeted her and thanked her for meeting with me and allowing me to conduct an interview with her. I told her that our interview would consist of questions regarding her dating preferences at the U of I and if the university influences or facilitates dating preferences among Asian Americans. Jennifer is a second generation Korean American. We started talking and I asked her if campus life facilitates dating preferences among Asian Americans and she told me that since she was in an Asian sorority, it somewhat limits the kind of guys you can date because you're always hanging around with the same group of guys. In her case it is the men of the Lambda Phi Epsilon and Chi Sigma Tau fraternities. She enjoys hanging out with these guys but it is not so fun after a while if you're not interested in any of them. So far Jennifer has not participated in any clubs or organizations here at the university but she plans on joining PSA and AAA, which are both pan-ethnic organizations on campus. I proceeded to

ask her some more personal questions about her own dating preferences and asked her what they were before coming to the U of I, she said, “Well definitely because I came from a very diverse high school, my group of friends were never one race specifically and I did like white boys but starting my junior or senior year I started hanging out with the Asian crowd more and started noticing Asian boys more. It’s just easier you know. White guys might be taken aback at the culture.” After she told me this we talked about how it is true that many friends who are not of an Asian decent might be a little overwhelmed at the culture but then again we talked about how some guys or friends who are not Asian are especially fascinated with East Asian culture and truly want to learn more and be in a relationship with an Asian girl. We moved on to talking about her dating preferences after being at college for 8 months. After high school Jennifer’s preferences have still remained Asian. Her ideal preferences are that the guy has to be taller than her, somewhat good-looking, and of course funny. She came here “so excited to meet some hot Asian guys”. Back in high school her friends even consisted of mainly Asians but she had a white group and an Asian group but said they never really came together. Now at school all her friends are Asian and she doesn’t even have one white friend. I asked if she enjoyed spending time with Asian people more or non-Asian people more. She said, “I think it’s different from both places. When I’m with Asian people I definitely feel like I’m more at home and I can be as Asian as I want. With white people I feel like I can’t completely be myself. You never see a FOB with a white group. It’s an identity thing for me, get more in touch with my Asian side.” I then asked her about her dating history and in the past she has dated some white people but nothing serious came out of it. She has had one long-term boyfriend of off and on three years and he was Korean like her. She is currently not dating anybody right now and I asked her, her reasoning for joining the sorority she did. She said, “One huge reason was to definitely meet a more broad range of Asian men.” We ended the interview with the last question on if she thought the U of I is doing a good job with allowing Asians to meet other Asians. She said, “Definitely that, when I first came on to campus I thought it was very segregated.

When you go to the 6 pack it's very white. When you go to PAR/FAR you start seeing many races, black, Asian, Hispanic. It's not even I of I man, Asians just find other Asians. Jennifer had me cracking up through the whole interview. She was very friendly, energetic, open, and comfortable talking to me about personal issues and I believe we both had a good time. She helped a lot with our EUI project. Our interview ended at 2:45pm.

\*Name was changed for this interview.

Robert Washington's Interview:

I conducted an interview with a good friend of mine who is Chinese American. It was more of a discussion than a formal interview, making him feel less awkward and more comfortable with sharing. We covered topics about his current dating preferences, his dating preferences in high school, and his thoughts on how he thinks college life on UIUC's campus influences dating preferences. He comment saying that he felt the he wasn't really influenced by college culture and he felt as if it didn't really affect the type of girls he was attracted to. He felt that if anything, it reaffirmed his dating preferences.

The interviewee didn't seem to have a specific type of girl racially that he tended to be attracted to more so than others. I asked him about his dating preferences in high school and he responded saying that he didn't really date in high school. I rephrased the question asking what girls he was physically attracted to or "wouldn't have minded dating" in high school then and he told me that he was "pretty open in what type of girl I like. I mean if you ask anyone I know you would be able to tell that by my track record [referring to his past girlfriends]." This doesn't mean that he didn't have a type of girl he wasn't attracted to certain types of girls it was just that race wasn't a factor.

From high school to college he said that his racial dating preferences hadn't changed. A little background on the interviewee from what I know as his friend is that he does not hang out with an all Asian American social group. During the interview he gave me a sense that he somewhat resented people that only socially interacted with people of the same race as they were missing out on learning

experiences other cultures could offer them. He has many friends that he talks to, but his core group of friends is racially diverse. I found this interesting and pondered how the predominant race of one's friends might affect or be a representation of their dating preferences. He spoke about how he had observed how college life affected other people's dating preferences despite his staying consistent from high school. I then asked him if he thought that he thought campus life influenced people to date within their race or outside of their race. He thought that over all, excluding Greek life, that campus life didn't discourage interracial dating and that the people he observed explored their dating options in college. The single thing that bothered him when it came to influence on dating preferences in college was the Greek system. He commented on how he thought frats and sororities had set up a certain image for what was desirable in a man or woman that was superficial and close minded. He even thought the same of minority frats and sororities as he thought that the people who joined them were looking for partners of their particular race.

**Analysis:** The plan of our group for this EUI project was to investigate how university campus life here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign influences and/or impacts the Asian American student body and their dating preferences. The members of this research project observed social environments ranging from dining halls to Greek life to religious church groups/gatherings. Interviews were also conducted with students from the various social environments that they were observed in. After doing this research, we have analyzed the university campus and we have concluded that the UIUC campus does in fact influence and facilitate dating preferences among Asian Americans.

From the data and observations we have collected through interviews, we have come to the conclusion that the Asian American student body does associate themselves with each other if they desire, and that the university provides many environments and opportunities where this can be possible. One previous reading that relates to our research project is from the second part (Ideology and

Performance) of Maira Sunaina's reading titled "Nostalgia." Sunaina's reading correlated to our research project, because her reading ultimately dealt with the opportunities that were provided for the students who were apart of the college campus life. Sunaina mentioned in her reading that college students are exposed to many opportunities to integrate themselves into clubs and organizations of their choice in order to network, socialize, and meet new people. This in turn allows the students' minds and experiences to expand, open-up, and this essentially contributes to developing preferences among these new college students. In relation to our research project, Asian American students here at the U of I are provided with an expansive opportunity to integrate themselves among other Asian American students, because they may feel a sense of belonging through cultural understandings. As a result from our observations and interview collection, we have found that because of the wide range of opportunities Asian American students have at the U of I, they tend to associate themselves within their own cultural and ethnic group by joining clubs and associations of Asian culture, along with Asian sororities, fraternities, and church groups. Thus, these data collections essentially support the fact that campus life does influence and facilitate the dating preference among Asian American students. This is also significantly illustrated through the observations that were made in the dining halls where we witnessed that Asian American students tend to separate themselves from non-Asian American students by sitting only with other Asian American students. Ultimately, because Asian American students are primarily surrounded and incorporated with other Asian American students on a daily basis, they tend to prefer dating only other Asian Americans.

We also learned that many Asian Americans did not have an opportunity to identify with their own ethnic group during high school. After coming to college there is a much more diversity that allows for each ethnicity to identify with each other. According to Rebecca Kim's article, "Made in the USA: Second-generation Korean American Campus Evangelicals", the church can be the social place where Asian Americans can share their ethnic and cultural origins. Especially at our own school, this is evident when there is a huge Asian American church called CFC, which stands

for covenant fellowship church. With such a large Asian American organization on campus it is quite evident that Asian American campus life will facilitate dating preferences if one chooses to search for possible dating partners through churches.

A big factor that influences a person's dating preferences was their family life prior to coming to the University. Based on the interviews conducted, for Asian American females, dating was not encouraged in the family. They wanted them to really focus on academics. In the first part of Sunaina's article, Nostalgia, she talks about how the Indian parents of the second-generation females did not allow them to date and wanted them to marry someone within their race and even community. Because they did not have the support or push to date back home, it was a limitation to their dating preferences. Now, coming to the University and living in the era of multiculturalism where diversity is celebrated, it does impact their dating preferences. Because of the many resources of different ethnic to pan-ethnic organizations, church groups, and sororities and fraternities, meeting new people is encouraged. Many Asian American youth are experiencing self-discovery and growth. For this, they are much more open minded to try something new, meet someone different, and experience change. Its not that Asian American youth on the UIUC campus are consciously making the decision to date within a pan-Asian sphere, but rather that they naturally gravitate towards those with similar experiences, backgrounds, and ideologies. Different organizations and opportunities available on campus to students, they are ultimately provided them with the opportunity to establish and develop their own dating preferences at UIUC whether it is rediscovering one's sense of Asian pride and dating within their own race or branching out defying parents and dating outside their race.

**Research Proposal:** The plan of our group for our preliminary EUI data was to investigate how university campus life here at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign influences and/or impacts the Asian American student body and their dating preferences. The members of this research project

observed social environments ranging from dining halls to Greek life to religious church groups/gatherings. Interviews were also conducted with students from the various social environments that they were observed in. After doing this research, we have analyzed the university campus and we have concluded that the UIUC campus does in fact influence and facilitate dating preferences among Asian Americans.

From the data and observations we have collected through interviews, we came to the conclusion that the Asian American student body tends to associate within its self through the many environments and opportunities where this can be possible that the university provides. One previous article that illustrates this point in our research is the second part (Ideology and Performance) of Maira Sunaina's reading titled "Nostalgia." Sunaina's reading correlated to our research project, because her reading ultimately dealt with the opportunities that were provided for the students who were apart of the college campus life. Sunaina mentioned in the article that college students are exposed to many opportunities to integrate themselves into clubs and organizations of their choice in order to network, socialize, and meet new people. This in turn allows the students' minds and experiences to expand, open-up, and this essentially contributes to developing preferences among these new college students. Asian American students here at the U of I are provided with an expansive opportunity to integrate themselves among other Asian American students, because they feel a sense of belonging through cultural understandings. As a result of our observations and interview collection, we have found that because of the wide range of opportunities offered on campus Asian American students tend to associate themselves within their own cultural and ethnic group by joining clubs and associations of Asian culture, along with Asian sororities, fraternities, and church groups. Thus, these data collections essentially support the fact that campus life does influence and facilitate the dating preference among Asian American students because these students also date within these social constructions of Asian subcultures. This is also evident in the observations that were made in the dining halls where we witnessed that Asian American students had a tendency to separate

themselves from non-Asian American students by sitting together. Ultimately, because Asian American students are primarily surrounded by other Asian American students on a daily basis, they tend to prefer dating only other Asian Americans.

We also learned that many Asian Americans did not have an opportunity to identify with Pan-Asian groups during high school. After coming to college there is much more diversity that allows for each ethnicity to identify with each other. According to Rebecca Kim's article, "Made in the USA: Second-generation Korean American Campus Evangelicals", the church can be the social place where Asian Americans can share their ethnic and cultural origins. Especially at our own school, this is evident when there is a huge Asian American church called CFC, which stands for covenant fellowship church. With such a large Asian American organization on campus it is quite clear that Asian American campus life influences and provides numerous opportunities for Asian Americans to find Pan-Asian love interest.

EUI researcher Ami Patel found out that Asian American college students tend to stay within the Asian community when it comes to dating, but they also tend to change during college when they are more opened up to liberal and western ways here at the U of I. Ami shared personal experience; before coming to the U of I, she could not see herself dating Asian American boyfriends, but now after being on the campus for 3 years, she feels a stronger connection with Indian Asian Americans, because the U of I influences a student to embrace their ethnicity and culture. Another reason why Indian Asian Americans tend to date within their own ethnicity is because they are mainly encompassed in science majors as opposed to social studies majors, and this leads to increased interactions among their own kind. An interesting thing mentioned in this research was that Indian American students were are 1st generation or 1.5 generation tend to be more traditional and come from traditional families that strongly promote dating within the race, but once the student is exposed to college life and western ways at the U of I, their attitude may alter and they may begin to integrate into the mainstream culture and may date outside of their race. At the same time, Indian American students

who are less traditional and more mainstream also alter their attitude towards dating preferences as they are exposed more to their own culture and ethnicity and being to feel more comfortable and connected with their own race and begin to date within their own race.

Yet another pivotal factor that influenced Asian Americans' dating preferences was their family life prior to coming to the University. Based on the interviews conducted, for Asian American females, dating was not encouraged in the family. They wanted them to really focus on academics. In the first part of Sunaina's article, Nostalgia, she talks about how the Indian parents of the second-generation females did not allow them to date and wanted them to marry someone within their race and even community. Because they did not have the support or push to date back home, these limitations were instilled into their college dating preferences. Now, coming to the University and living in the era of multiculturalism where diversity is celebrated, it significantly impacts their dating preferences. The sheer number of both ethnic and pan-ethnic organizations, church groups, and sororities and fraternities, encourages the mingling of Asian Americans. Many Asian American youth are experiencing self-discovery and growth. Those that never showed interest in the opposite sex of their race are coming to terms with their racial identity and start to utilize the campuses resources to date exclusively within their ethnicity or pan-ethnically. On the other hand, those who have dated only within their ethnicity are participating in these Pan-Asian organizations and starting to date pan-ethnically. For this, they are much more opening minded to try something new, meet someone different, and experience change. It's not that Asian American youth on the UIUC campus are consciously making the decision to date within a pan-Asian sphere, but rather that they naturally gravitating towards those with similar experiences, backgrounds, and ideologies. Different organizations and opportunities available on campus to students, are ultimately providing them with the opportunity to establish and develop their own dating preferences at UIUC whether it is rediscovering one's sense of Asian pride and dating within their own race or branching out defying parents and dating outside their race. Another major factor that seems to make Asians on UIUC's campus date within their own

race is not only that they feel more comfortable with their “own”, but also because they find it difficult to relate to other ethnicities due to the clique mentality that all races exhibit to a certain extent. This mentality makes it even more difficult to date interracially because one the couple may have two sets of friends, one for each race. This puts the boyfriend or girlfriend in an awkward situation. One of our interviewee’s said that she felt the white people were overwhelmed by the culture when she attempted to date interracially, making relationships more difficult. The question then arises, “Why don’t Asians tend to date within other minority groups also?” In our observations of a Asian sororities birthday party, it was clear that the Blacks and Latinos were flirting with each other and even just mingling more so with each other, while the Asian Greeks mingled with each other more. According to Nazli Kibria’s article, College and Notions of “Asian American”, the clique mentality that Asians and other ethnic and pan-ethnic minor social groups stems from the fact that during the post-civil rights era Asian Americans were somewhat divided from Black and Latino social groups due to the fact that they had tensions and feelings of distances between them because of Blacks and Latinos were viewed as “taking advantage” of affirmative action, while Asians holding the “model minority” image never received these criticisms. This created opposing opinions of affirmative action, isolating Asian Americans on college campuses from other minority groups.

Asian American college students also seem to date very specifically, ethnicity wise. UIUC’s Asian Americans seemed not only to not like dating outside of their race also didn’t like dating non-American born Asians as they held the stereotype of being cliquey, party-driven(to a certain extent), and materialistic or nerdy, and unassimilated into American culture. One interviewee commented on how he despised the cliquey mentality that not only non-Asians portrayed, but also all races on campus. He specifically made effort to comment on how he didn’t enjoy the clique mentality of international Asian students. It wasn’t because of the fact that hung out together due to similarities, but he said(specifically about Koreans) that they all mimicked “what they saw in Korean soap operas…The crazy hair, the clothing. It’s like they all

a carbon copies with no mentality of their own.” Obviously he had a very strong and maybe excessive view on international Asian student social groups, but it illustrates the point that Asian Americans are getting specific down to the exact ethnicity and generation in America that they chose prefer to date. In a somewhat similar scenario, the EUI research of Nick Lange portrayed a Korean girl whose parents told her the many reasons why she needed to date so specifically. These reasons included cultural barriers, language barriers, religious differences, Korean history, and level of assimilation of Korean American families. It is fascinating how college can change one’s dating preferences or even relationships in general as observed by EUI researcher Ingrid Bergstrom. She looked at relationships that continued over into college when a couple went to the same college. She came to the conclusion that that the relationship does indeed change after coming to college because of the vast lifestyle shifts freshman experience. Our preliminary data support that there is a definite campus influence on Asian American dating, but with this presented information we propose that one delves deeper into the complexities of these preferences, analyzing and observing whether the campus life facilitates Pan-Asian dating or dating within one’s specific ethnicity.

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- Recommendations:**
1. There is already a drafted proposal to have an Asian American Studies major at the University of Illinois. We recommend that this passes so that there are more opportunities for Asian Americans to learn about their culture and meet other people and also non-Asians who are interested in learning about the Asian American culture. This way it will give more opportunities to explore within their own culture but to venture off into other cultures as well and to meet new people.
  2. We recommend promoting more students to think about taking a minor in Asian American Studies to gain further knowledge in Asian American culture.
  3. We recommend increase funding in cultural shows that is open to the whole University and covering all aspects of Asian ethnicities. The funding will provide more awareness and encourage other people with diverse backgrounds to come and get a glimpse of Asian culture.