Macrothink Institute™

International Journal of Culture and History
ISSN 2332-5518
2025, Vol. 12, No. 2

Chinese Students' Intermarriages in Exclusion-Era U.S. Newspapers

Yunxin Chen (Corresponding author)

School of English Studies, Sichuan International Studies University

Chongqing, China

E-mail: 244563270@qq.com

Received: October 29, 2025 Accepted: November 18, 2025 Published: November 21, 2025

doi:10.5296/ijch.v12i2.23269 URL: https://doi.org/10.5296/ijch.v12i2.23269

Abstract

Antimiscegenation had been an important means for white Americans to exclude nonwhite people from the American body politic. Initially enforced against Blacks, it was extended to the Chinese after their arrival on American shores in significant numbers. The ban targeting the Chinese became particularly severe from the 1880s -- when Chinese exclusion became a federal policy -- through the 1910s, when exclusion was made permanent. Chinese students, exempt from exclusion and rapidly assimilating into American society, received special treatment. American public opinion did not openly resist their relationships with American women but couched its disapproval in terms that emphasized the political, social, and even personal challenges facing such unions. A study of this attitude could enhance one's understanding of how race and nation impacted the most intimate aspect of cross-racial interactions in American society at the turn of the twentieth century.

Keywords: Chinese students, cross-racial, marriage, the United States, public opinion

1. Introduction

Since the end of the seventeenth century, antimiscegenation had been a significant means for white America to maintain domination over nonwhites. It started in Maryland in 1661, when a law was passed to enslave white women who married Black men, as well as the children of these marriages. Native Americans and Mexicans were later added to the list of prohibited groups, though they were sometimes classified as white. After the mid-nineteenth century, the large influx of Chinese immigrants was perceived as a new danger to the purity of American bloodlines. Consequently, whites began enforcing antimiscegenation against Chinese residents in 1881, banning marriages between whites and "Mongolians." This ban was

reinforced in 1901 and 1905 amid escalating anti-Chinese sentiment (Koshy, 2004, pp. 4-7).

Since antimiscegenation mainly targeted marriages between white women and nonwhite men, the predominantly male composition of the Chinese population in America made Chinese immigrants a particular source of concern for white Americans. They demonized Chinese men as vicious predators of white women, portraying them as a grave menace to white society. As Amy Sueyoshi (2018) argues in her study of turn-of-the-century San Francisco, local people tended to cast male Chinese as "sexually degenerate." They accused them of drugging and seducing white girls "as young as thirteen into opium dens." Chinese men symbolized "a degraded savage masculinity" in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (pp. 94-101). Mary Ting Yi Lui (2005) comes to a similar conclusion when examining the social ramifications of a white girl's death in New York in 1909. After the young woman, Elsie Sigel, was found killed in a trunk, rumors spread that her Sunday school student and lover, Leon Ling, was the murderer. Though the suspect remained at large, both press reports and police actions reassured ordinary Americans of the hideousness of Chinese men and the depravity of Chinatown. Concentrating on the Midwest, Victor Jew (2003) notes analogous "fears about Chinese males and interracial contact with white females." According to him, "allegations of sexual misconduct" involving two Chinese males and several white girls in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, in March 1899, not only resulted in anti-Chinese riots but also led to "the direct disciplining of the city's Chinese and the indirect disciplining of its school-aged white females" (pp. 389-410).

In these researches, Americans reached a near consensus that Chinese men posed a real danger to the chastity of white women. They should consequently be closely monitored while their marriages with whites should be strictly prohibited. Though this finding is well-supported and insightful, it basically reflects white people's attitude toward Chinese laborers. While laborers comprised the majority of Chinese immigrants in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, other Chinese groups also lived in the United States during this period. One was students, who were exempt from harsh exclusionary policies. It would be both interesting and enlightening to investigate if American society prohibited their marriages with white women as it did for Chinese laborers, or if it allowed them greater freedom to court white girls in accordance with their exempted status.

As a matter of fact, white Americans neither prohibited nor encouraged marriages between Chinese students and white females. Rather, they considered such unions as fraught with risks and uncertainties. In their narrative, cross-racial relationships involving Chinese students faced impediments not only from governments and social environments but also from personal challenges. Although the emphasis varied over time, this tendency to denaturalize the marriages between Chinese students and white females persisted through mainstream American public opinion, testifying to Americans' restraint in endorsing Chinese-American miscegenation while Chinese exclusion was under full swing.

Such a finding enriches our understanding of antimiscegenation in American history. Chinese students no doubt experienced racialization, a process by which whites ascribed usually racist meanings to "different types of human bodies." These meanings became "crystallized" and

were not easily dissipated (Michael Omi and Howard Winant, 2015, pp. 109-12). Despite this racial profiling, Chinese students did not face violence due to their intermarriages. This contrasts sharply with white attitude toward marriages between Black men and white women, which often ended with lynchings of those Black males. Neither did white people discourage Chinese students' intermarriage by persistently highlighting their "uncivilized" heritage, as they did with Mexican men (Molina, 2014, pp. 31-32). White Americans thus exhibited greater restraint to Chinese students, exhibiting some sort of recognition of their Americanization and exempted status, while revealing a mentality that scholars have yet to fully acknowledge.

To justify its argument, this essay draws evidence from the historical newspaper archives spanning the years from 1881 to 1909. The year 1881 marked the end of China's first official study-in-America program, commonly known as the Chinese Educational Mission, as well as the eve of U.S. exclusion of Chinese laborers and exemption of Chinese students. In 1909, the Chinese government formally resumed sending officially-funded students to the United States. The newspapers selected include not only national publications such as the *Washington Post* and the *Chicago Tribune* but also local ones. In this way, the findings of this study could convincingly illustrate mainstream American society's attitude toward Chinese students' marriages during a period when Chinese exclusion was the harshest.

2. Constraints Unrelated to American Government

Since beginning to operate schools in China in the first half of the nineteenth century, American missionaries often brought promising students with them on their return to the United States. These Chinese children continued their education in America either under care of religious people or through sponsorship by charitable institutions, becoming the first major group of Chinese students among Americans. Following their steps were the Chinese government-supported students of the Chinese Educational Mission, which started in 1872 but was abruptly ended in 1881. These boys, together with their church-sponsored compatriots, formed a small Chinese student population in the United States when Chinese exclusion struck. Although they arrived in America as children, they had reached marriageable age by the early 1880s.

In those years, Americans were already wary of Chinese men's sexual contacts with white women. But as Chinese students had become considerably Americanized, they did not view their relationship with white girls as a scourge. Nor did they wholeheartedly endorse such liaisons, given the escalating anti-Chinese sentiment. Instead, they portrayed the relations as contrary to the prevailing socio-political attitudes in both the United States and China, through not explicitly banned by the U.S. government.

On one hand, American public opinion attributed the difficulties in the relationships between Chinese students and white girls to the interference of unreasonable social forces in America. Under the guise of empathy, this perspective sought to assure its audience that such unions were not really acceptable to many Americans. One most telling piece of evidence of this mindset was the press coverage of a Chinese student's suicide in 1881. According to the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, the student, William Newkim, was studying at Marietta College in

Ohio. Having come to "this land of liberty about ten years ago," this "son of the Celestial Empire" demonstrated "considerable talent for literature" and "a great desire for mental development." He planned to become "a missionary to China" after finishing his "theological studies' in the United States. While staying at a boarding house in Marietta, Newkim fell in love with Sophia Hoff, "a pretty little servant girl" who worked there. Their "link of love" endured even after Hoff moved to Cincinnati. However, nominally considering the servant girl unworthy of the Chinese student, Maria Woodbridge, from her old boarding house, persistently harassed Newkim and tried to prevent their relationship. The harassment was so distressing that he felt desperate about their "future happiness." Becoming "despondent from chagrin," Newkim finally committed suicide (Here's, 1881, p. 1).

This tragedy aroused considerable attention from other newspapers, which similarly foregrounded the formidable obstacles that relationships between Chinese students and white girls would most possibly come across. One such obstacle was the perceived reluctance of Americans, even the girls themselves, to really accept these cross-racial unions. The *Jackson Standard* of Ohio agreed with the *Cincinnati Daily Gazette* that this was "a case of genuine love." It also criticized the "meddlesome parties" which "interfered to break off the match" for the Chinese youth's decision to kill himself (A Chinese, p. 2).

Some journalistic comments directly announced that the servant girl herself was unwilling to take the student seriously. The *Daily State Gazette* hinted that Hoff deliberately misled the student and was directly responsible for his death. As the paper narrated, Newkim firmly believed that his contract with her was "binding," only to discover that "the girl was free." The *Gazette* expressed regret over his death, describing him as "a bright boy" who had "many friends" (Suicide, p. 3). The *Evening Critic*, published in Washington, D.C., unequivocally labeled the white girl a deceiver. It professed that Newkim was "imposed on by a Cincinnati girl," who was apparently Sophia Hoff. Hoff "made him believe he was married to her," but upon "discovering the deception," Newkim immediately took his own life, the *Critic* stated. The title of the report, "Even a Chinaman Will Kill Himself for Love," further discouraged readers from believing that true love could ever exist between a Chinese student and a white girl (Even, p. 1). Though not implying the girl's deception, the *Portland Daily Press* still stressed her negative attitude toward the relationship. It believed that the student committed suicide "because a servant girl refused his love" (The Chinese, p. 2).

In other press narratives, the Chinese attributes that the student embodied disqualified him from enjoying this relationship. For instance, while praising his intelligence and censuring "the people in Marietta" for their inability to "endure the thought of so bright a student marrying a servant girl," both the *Chicago Daily Tribune* and the *Dallas Daily Herald* blamed the student's lack of prudence for the tragedy. As they put it, Newkim killed himself "with the usual recklessness of the Chinese in such matters" (Suicidal, p. 3; Ah, p. 2). From the same event, the *Emporia Weekly News* of Kansas drew a conclusion that defined the entire Chinese community in the United States as incapable of becoming true Americans so that they could develop sustainable relations with American females. The paper first reported Newkim's suicide and then claimed that it was "a moral impossibility for a Chinaman to become assimilated" and "feel ... sympathy with our Republican institutions" (A Chinese

Student, p. 2). Such an assertion could only reinforce the belief among ordinary Americans that the Chinese student's inability to assimilate had prevented him from winning the heart of the servant girl.

At the same time, American newspapers sensationalized alleged Chinese cruelties to solidify the pessimistic view of unions between Chinese students and American females. Throughout its long history, China did emphasize the national loyalty of its subjects but rarely intervened in Chinese marriages with foreigners. Still, several newspapers devoted considerable coverage to the rumored death of another Chinese student to highlight the risks involved in relationships across the Sino-U.S. borders. Chin Chin Chan was said to be one of the 120 Chinese boys sent to study in the United States from 1872 to 1881. While residing in Connecticut, he "became interested" in a Miss Sherman. He kept this relationship "alive" even after the Chinese government recalled him and other students back for fear that they become "thoroughly Americanized' and "marry American wives." According to a widespread story, the Chinese authorities eventually became aware of "Chan's persistence in his devotion to Miss Sherman." The student was then sentenced to death and "beheaded in Hongkong" (Romantic, p. 3).

Of course, some people expressed doubts about the truthfulness of the death sentence. However, even when reporting these doubts, newspapers remained insistent on emphasizing the impracticality of such romantic relationships rather than portraying them in a positive light. As early as January 14, 1882, the Chicago *Daily Inter Ocean* not only cited an American missionary who suggested that the execution might not have happened but also claimed that the whole rumor could have been a scheme by the Chinese student. "Chin Chin Chan may have invented the story himself to touch the heart of a New Haven girl," the paper asserted, because the girl "did not return his love" (This, p. 12). The paper intended to convey that the relationship was fruitless just because of the girl's unwillingness to be engaged. In a letter published in the *Boston Daily Advertiser* on May 18, 1882, American missionary S. C. Partridge corroborated this theory based on his field investigation in Hong Kong. He doubted the veracity of the rumor not only because the Chinese government could not execute a Chinese in the British colony but also because no "foreign residents in China" had ever heard of the student's death. "Chin Chan is very probably in the government employ somewhere in the vicinity of Shanghai," Partridge said (The Recalled, p. 2). Though he did not blame anybody for the hearsay, his investigation and the publication of its result were sufficient to convince people that relationships between Chinese students and American ladies faced formidable obstacles.

The Chinese student population in the United States was insignificant on the eve of the nationwide exclusion of the Chinese. Those who formed romantic relationships with white women comprised an even smaller proportion. Students' voluntary and rapid Americanization meant that their romances with American females might not have appeared so menacing to white people as the relationships between Chinese laborers and American women. Nevertheless, entrenched stereotypes portraying the Chinese as Others prevented Americans from fully embracing the unions between Chinese students and white ladies. Their newspapers discouraged such relationships by publicizing the various risks involved in

developing those connections.

3. Chinese Students' Personal Defects

After more than two decades of growing hostility, anti-Chinese sentiment eventually led to the passage of the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned Chinese laborers from entering the United States. Sinophobia reached a fever pitch in the following years. Correspondingly, American attitude toward unions between Chinese students and American females experienced subtle changes. They no longer focused their attention on obstacles unrelated to the students themselves but spent much time exposing the students' personal shortcomings that would ultimately ruin their romances with American women. By making this emphasis, American public opinion continued to urge caution in cultivating intimate relationships with Chinese students.

Among the Chinese students who caused a sensation because of their cross-racial marriages was Yan Phou Lee (Li Enfu), a Yale graduate as well as a writer and editor. Lee was one of the 120 Chinese boys sent to the United States by the Chinese Educational Mission. After being recalled back to China in 1881, he managed to return to America and attend Yale University. In 1887, he married Elizabeth Maude Jerome, who was "good looking and an heiress to a fortune estimated at $100,000" (The Jap, p. 4). It remains unclear how the couple first met, but they might have "crossed paths in church and social circles" when both were staying in New Haven. They had two children before divorcing three years later amid rumors of Lee's infidelity (Branch, 2021).

Just because of this relationship, Lee was drawn into a whirlpool of negative sentiments regarding Chinese students' interactions with American women. For example, on August 2, 1887, the *Washington Post* articulated its disdain for Lee's marriage by mocking his name. It referred to him as "Phon Lee, or Lee Phon -- whatever the true arrangement of his name may be," in an obvious attempt to fit Lee into the stereotype of grotesque Chineseness. The *Post* sought to emphasize the abnormality of the Lee-Jerome union by describing it as the laughingstock of "all the small paragraphers of the country" in their "poor puns." After all this lead-in, the paper ridiculed "this love" as "a wonderful thing" (When, p. 2).

Even when reporting the birth of the Lees' first child, newspapers maintained a noticeably disapproving tone. They almost unanimously implied Lee's inassimilable status. On May 16, 1888, the *New Haven Evening Register* told its readers that "a daughter was born to Mr. and Mrs. Yan Phon[u] Lee yesterday." But it immediately emphasized that Lee's "native place" was China and that his baby was therefore a "little stranger" (Yan, p. 4). The *Daily Inter Ocean* openly invoked Chinese exclusion to describe the coming of the Lees' daughter. On October 6, 1888, it stated that each Yale class had a tradition of giving a silver cup to "its first male offspring." Lee's class had expected him to win the "much-prized and valuable" souvenir, but the Lees were "blessed with the advent of a girl," the paper reported. A classmate got the prize as "the happy father of the 'class boy.'" This white man did not forsake the opportunity to scorn the Chinese student and his marriage to an American woman. As the *Daily Inter Ocean* reported, he "jubilantly" announced that "the Chinese exclusion bill has been passed," suggesting both the Lees' loss of the cup and their vulnerability to

American nativism (Says, p. 2).

Lee's marriage hit rock bottom two years later, sparking another wave of warnings against American women forming intimate relationships with Chinese students. A frequently recounted story revolved around Lee's alleged infidelity, intended to caution American females against developing relationships with the Chinese, no matter how Americanized they appeared. On May 7, 1890, the *Chicago Daily Tribune* reported that Jerome had sued Lee for "absolute divorce" due to his "unfaithfulness in the marriage relation." She accused her husband of "adultery with divers unknown women in San Francisco and Portland, Ore." To create the impression that unfaithfulness was a common trait among the Chinese, the *Tribune* not only highlighted Lee's admission of "leading a double life" but more tellingly, identified him as "the son of a nobleman in his native country" (A Chinese Nobleman, p. 8).

Other newspapers forthrightly warned American females against marrying Chinese men just because of Lee's alleged deception. For instance, the *Cincinnati Commercial* called the failed marriage "another sad warning." Portraying Lee as inherently malicious, it claimed that he became Americanized simply because "he wanted a Caucasian wife and her money" to secure the resources needed to maintain "another family more to his liking." This divorce case was "full of warning" for "the next romantic young woman" who wanted to "make herself conspicuous by marrying a Chinaman." Given the deceptive attributes attributed to Lee, the paper argued that American women's desire to "form extraordinary and unnatural matrimonial alliances" with Chinese men was "beyond the reach of logic or argument" (Another, p. 4). To underscore the hopelessness of marriages between Chinese students and American girls, the *Arizona Republican* deemed the divorce as "the usual result" of such unions. Lee's fragile relationship with Jerome was merely "another unhappy marriage between a Chinaman and a white girl," the paper asserted (The Unusual, p. 1).

American public opinion was so focused on attributing the failure of the marriage to Chinese viciousness that it barely acknowledged Lee's rebuttal. The New York *Evening World* seemed to be the only newspaper which published his statement. However, even this report did not conceal its stereotypical perception of the Chinese. Indeed it conveyed Lee's refutation of Jerome's allegation as "cruelly untrue" and as a result of his mother-in-law's "superabundance." Amid this seemingly fair account, the *Evening World* described Lee as "almond-eyed" (I, p. 1).

Besides the Lee case, relationships involving other Chinese students also appeared to reflect purportedly negative characteristics of the Chinese. In October 1887, with a mixture of prejudice and mockery, at least two newspapers reported on a Chinese student courting an American actress. When performing in Boston, the actress, named Pauline Hall, reportedly received a love letter from the student. But the papers betrayed their prejudiced attitude toward the Chinese and his courtship of the American woman in their subsequent narration. They likened the letter to "a wash bill" on "brown wrapping paper" and compared the Chinese pen to a "tooth-brush," reminding readers of most Chinese residents' lowly occupation as well as the supposedly grotesque habits of the Chinese nation, even though the author of the letter was an Americanized student. At the end of the story, "some of Chicago's

Chinese Sunday-school students" were said to be preparing to "do him up" when the student followed "the fair Pauline" to the Windy City, a detail that the papers used to play up Chinese men's perceived craving for white girls (Pauline, p. 6).

Compared to such seemingly laughable characteristics, the alleged villainies of Chinese students could be a more serious turnoff to prospective American girlfriends. On August 5, 1886, the Minnesota *Worthington Advance* reported on Miss Geary's application for divorce. Her husband was "a young Chinese student," who had "become addicted to the opium habit and other evils," the paper claimed (Miss, p. 2). In early 1896, another sad story about an American girl's marriage to a Chinese student appeared in newspapers. Sent to America by the Chinese government, the student managed to convince an American girl into accepting his marriage proposal. He silenced "all protests" from the girl's family with his "apparent sincerity" and conversion to Christianity. However, after the girl went to live with him in China, she was first "neglected, then ill-treated and finally turned out of doors starving," simply because she resisted the "companionship" of his "two additional native wives." By highlighting these purportedly evil behaviors of the Chinese student, editors sought to alert American women to "the full horror of such unnatural marriages" (Unhappy Is, p. A6; Unhappy Fate, p. 3).

With Chinese exclusion becoming increasingly draconian in the last two decades of the nineteenth century, American public opinion no longer attributed failed unions between Chinese students and American women to factors unrelated to the students. Instead, it focused on how the students themselves had caused the breakdown of these cross-racial relationships. Despite their apparent Americanization, they still retained traits typical of the Chinese nation but detrimental to the stability of their relations with white females, American newspapers contended. By stressing the personal responsibility of Chinese students, they not only absolved American women of any blame but more importantly, illustrated the omnipresence of prejudices against the Chinese in the exclusion-era United States.

4. Qualified Endorsement

By the twentieth century, America's anti-Chinese sentiment had reached a state of relative stability, though there was little to no alleviation. This was especially evident after Congress passed a bill in 1902 permanently prohibiting the immigration of Chinese laborers. With less focus on Chinese immigration, Americans shifted their attention to restricting "undesirable" immigrants from Eastern and Southern Europe. They thus became less critical of Chinese students in Chinese-American relationships, despite maintaining their usual discouraging tone. In their accounts, marriages between Chinese students and American women remained unacceptable to many Americans but, fortunately, appeared satisfactory to the American women involved.

Some newspapers portrayed American females as passively courted but finally accepting relationships with Chinese students. Notably absent was the remorse that publications from earlier eras often emphasized. On April 7, 1903, the San Francisco *Examiner* exemplified this perspective when reporting the marriage of Grace Catherine Williams, "a pretty girl of eighteen," to Chan Ah On, a Chinese student at a local night school. Williams conceded that

she did not love her husband but was grateful for his help amid the "cruel treatment" by her mother and brother. She consequently accepted the marriage proposal from the "good and kind" On. Despite the lack of love in the relationship, Williams was still "willing" to live with the Chinese, the *Examiner* emphasized (Miss Grace, p. 3). That same year, another Chinese-American marriage attracted media attention. According to the *Pittsburgh Post*, Carrie Haines was watching a horse show when her handkerchief blew away. Fred Kew, a Chinese student from the University of Pennsylvania, "chased and caught it and restored it to her." Kew began courting her thereafter, culminating in "a quiet wedding a week ago," the *Post* reported without any cautionary remarks about potential mistreatment by the Chinese (Weds, p. 9).

Even amid this apparent tolerance, newspapers continued to remind Americans that unions between Chinese students and American girls were fraught with difficulties. Some explicitly expressed their revulsion toward such marriages. For example, while reporting on a New York girl's wedding to a Chinese student from the University of Michigan, the Michigan *Kalamazoo Gazette* described it as "another case of marrying for 'Chink'" (A New, p. 4). "Chink" was a derogatory term for the Chinese. The *Gazette*'s use of this slur to refer to the Chinese student betrayed its persistent discrimination against Chinese persons.

Other publications were less blatant but still insistent on characterizing these marriages as something that many Americans continued to disapprove of. On September 28, 1902, the *Detroit Free Press* conveyed this sentiment by highlighting an American's circumspection when announcing the wedding between a Chinese student and an American girl. Snatchuan C. Yin, a "well-known" Chinese student, was said to have married Maude Marlette, a nurse from New York. But the person who made the announcement on the previous evening "refused to discuss the matter" the following day, leaving the story to be "authoritatively confirmed," according to the paper (Chinaman, p. 10). Though the *Press* did not explain the informant's subsequent silence, its specific mention of the detail might have led readers to speculate that the interracial marriage was unacceptable to certain people.

Newspapers highlighted the challenges faced by Chinese-American romances also by accentuating the necessity for Chinese students to relocate in order to marry American women. One example was John Wing Lee, a student at Stanford University. According to the Chicago *Evening News* and the Nevada *Eureka Sentinel*, he fell in love with Bobb Clark Hoyt, the niece of a ranch owner for whom he worked as a secretary. Since the uncle could not approve the union, Lee and Hoyt eloped from the farm in Montana. Pretending to be headed for San Francisco's Chinatown, the couple actually went to Chicago, where they were married before leaving for the East (Wealthy, p. 4; Heiress, p. 1). Lin Shen Yu was another Chinese student who had to marry his bride far from his place of residence. In the telling of several newspapers, Yu was one of the "prize Chinese students" in the United States. While teaching him English, Dolly Trescott, "a charming Berkeley maiden," joined Yu "in worship at Cupid's shrine." They had become "more interested in each other than in English pronunciation and orthography," quipped one reporter. Despite their genuine love, California law prohibited "the marriage of white persons and those of the Mongolian race." Yu and Trescott therefore decided to travel to Utah to become "man and wife," according to press

reports (Charming, p. 33; Goes, p. 16; Married, p. 1; Fell, p. 3).

Of course, there were rare exceptions in which Chinese students' marriages to American females received blessings rather than opposition. For instance, in the *Washington Post* of January 30, 1907, the Chinese student Yung Kwai met his wife, Alice Burnham, when attending college in Springfield, Illinois. He became "a frequent caller" at the girl's family, where he was always "cordially welcomed." Burnham then married Kuai, who later became the first secretary of the Chinese Legation. As a result, Burnham was "the only American woman in the diplomatic colony in Washington who is married to an Oriental." Not only did she not regret the union, she even enjoyed her marriage, as the couple eventually had four children, the *Washington Post* observed (Social, p. 7).

It is true that American public opinion was more tolerant of marriages between Chinese students and American females in the early twentieth century. But this tolerance still had its limits. Instead of depicting these unions as fully acceptable, newspapers stressed the lingering, albeit not fierce, social and legal obstructions to their continuation. In doing so, they sought to remind their audiences to remain cautious when considering marriages with Chinese students. Such a stance reflects Americans' slow and guarded endorsement of miscegenation with Americanized Chinese in the early twentieth century.

5. Conclusion

As Chinese immigrants were often categorized alongside Black Americans, they were prohibited from marrying white American women. This was especially true during the peak of Chinese exclusion from the 1880s to the 1910s. Chinese students, who were exempt from exclusion, were not as strictly barred from forming such relationships. However, their unions with white females were still met with disapproval. American public opinion expressed its reservations not by openly inciting resistance but by emphasizing the forces that could ruin the relationships -- whether governmental pressures, personal shortcomings of Chinese students, or prevailing American prejudices. Consequently, the marriages between Chinese students and white American women were not outright forbidden but were fraught with difficulties and uncertainties in the exclusion era. This stance of white Americans stands in clear contrast to their attitudes toward Blacks' and Mexicans' marriages with white females. Studying the subject thus enhances our understanding of how race and nation shaped the most intimate aspect of daily interactions in American society at the turn of the twentieth century.

References

A Chinese nobleman sued for divorce. (1890, May 7). *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 8.

A Chinese student. (1881, November 10). *Emporia Weekly News*, p. 2.

A Chinese theological student in Marietta. (1881, November 17). *Jackson Standard*, p. 2.

Ah Kim. (1881, November 18). *Dallas Daily Herald*, p. 2.

Another sad warning. (1890, May 10). *Cincinnati Commercial*, p. 4.

Branch, M. A. (2021, May/June). Neither here nor there. *Yale Alumni Magazine*. Retrieved from https://yalealumnimagazine.org/articles/5324-yan-phou-lee

Charming Miss Dolly Trescott gives her hand to Len Shen Yu. (1906, May 27). *San Francisco Call*, p. 33.

Chinaman said to be married to N.Y. nurse. (1902, September 28). *Detroit Free Press*, p. 10.

Even a Chinaman will kill himself for love. (1881, November 8). *Evening Critic*, p. 1.

Fell in love with Chinese scholar. (1906, May 29). *Fairmont West Virginian*, p. 3.

Goes to Utah to wed Chinese. (1906, May 27). *San Francisco Chronicle*, p. 16.

Heiress elopes with Chinese. (1903, November 14). *Eureka Sentinel*, p. 1.

Here's another! (1881, November 9). *Cincinnati Daily Gazette*, p. 1.

I was a fool to marry. (1890, May 7). *Evening World*, p. 1.

Jew, V. (2003). "Chinese demons": The violent articulation of Chinese otherness and interracial sexuality in the U.S. Midwest, 1885–1889. *Journal of Social History, 37*(2), 389–410.

Koshy, S. (2004). *Sexual naturalization: Asian Americans and miscegenation*. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press.

Lui, M. T. Y. (2005). *The Chinatown trunk mystery: Murder, miscegenation, and other dangerous encounters in turn-of-the-century New York City*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press.

Married her Chinese pupil. (1906, May 28). *Charleston News and Courier*, p. 1.

Miss Geary. (1886, August 5). *Worthington Advance*, p. 2.

Miss Grace Catherine Williams. (1903, April 7). *Examiner*, p. 3.

Molina, N. (2014). *How race is made in America: Immigration, citizenship, and the historical power of racial scripts*. Berkeley: University of California Press.

Omi, M., & Winant, H. (2015). *Racial formation in the United States* (3rd ed.). New York, NY: Routledge.

Pauline Hall's Chinese admirer. (1887, October 22). *Evening World*, p. 4.

Romantic Chinese student. (1882, January 10). *Daily Examiner*, p. 3.

Says the Hartford Times. (1888, October 6). *Daily Inter Ocean*, p. 2.

Social gossip. (1907, January 30). *Washington Post*, p. 7.

Sueyoshi, A. (2018). *Discriminating sex: White leisure and the making of the American "Oriental"*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press.

Suicidal. (1881, November 9). *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3.

Suicide of a Chinese student. (1881, November 9). *Daily State Gazette*, p. 3.

The Chinese getting civilized. (1881, November 9). *Portland Daily Press*, p. 2.

The Jap and the heiress. (1887, July 10). *Kansas City Times*, p. 4.

The recalled Chinese students. (1882, May 18). *Boston Daily Advertiser*, p. 2.

The usual result. (1890, October 4). *Arizona Republican*, p. 1.

This is an era of denials. (1882, January 14). *Daily Inter Ocean*, p. 12.

Unhappy fate. (1896, June 5). *Griggs Courier*, p. 3.

Unhappy is their lot. (1896, March 29). *Courier-Journal*, p. A6.

Wealthy girl marries former Chinese student at Stanford. (1903, November 6). *Evening News*, p. 4.

Weds Chinese student. (1903, June 13). *Pittsburgh Post*, p. 9.

When. (1887, August 2). *Washington Post*, p. 2.

Yan Phon[u] Lee a father. (1888, May 16). *New Haven Evening Register*, p. 4.

Acknowledgments

Not applicable.

Authors contributions

Not applicable.

Funding

Not applicable.

Competing interests

Not applicable.

Informed consent

Obtained.

Ethics approval

The Publication Ethics Committee of the Macrothink Institute.

The journal's policies adhere to the Core Practices established by the Committee on Publication Ethics (COPE).

Provenance and peer review

Not commissioned; externally double-blind peer reviewed.

Data availability statement

The data that support the findings of this study are available on request from the corresponding author. The data are not publicly available due to privacy or ethical

restrictions.

Data sharing statement

No additional data are available.