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The Hairsapes of Chinese International Students

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Abstract

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Under the background of the growing field of Linguistic Landscape studies that started to explore meaning-making systems in public other than languages, this study applies the Triadic Model of Linguistic Landscape analysis to investigate the hairstyles of Chinese international students as a semiotic system. Eleven Chinese international students who were studying at US colleges participated in online interviews with open-ended questions. They talked about stereotypes, expectations, and regulations on hairstyles on various occasions as well as their personal experiences and feelings regarding hairstyles. The researcher identified 11 conceived spaces that strongly influenced the participants' hairstyle choices. The participants' lived reactions to these conceived spaces were varied and even contradictory. The study extends the scope of Linguistic Landscape studies to hairstyles and thus expands the understanding of how meaning-making happens in public spaces. It also demonstrates that the meaning-making of hairstyles of these Chinese international students is based on existing expectations and stereotypes in the setting, and it reveals that the diversity of Chinese international students might be greater than expected.

Keywords: Linguistic Landscape, semiotics, personal front, hairstyles, Chinese student, US society

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The Hairscales of Chinese International Students

The modern world is marked by its increasing globalization and mobility. The evolution of transportation makes international travel convenient and swift, and the multitude of online platforms and resources makes it possible to handle information from all over the world through a tiny smartphone or a thin laptop. Another example of the globalization trend is the significant increase of international students around the world in the past 10 years. In the US, the number of international students increased 43% from about 700,000 in 2009/10 to over 1,000,000 in 2019/20 (Open Doors, 2020). This increasing trend of globalization and mobility exposes people to an unprecedented large variety of signs and discourses in public spaces. Linguists, as investigators of meaning-making systems, are intrigued by these signs and discourses. For Scollon and Scollon (2003), the meanings of those signs and discourses are intimately related to their location in the physical space. They call this study of the relationship between semiotics systems and their physical placement geosemiotics.

Scollon and Scollon's (2003) exhaustive and in-detailed geosemiotic study of sites including commercials, public signs, logos, graffiti, and even verbal discourses, builds on previous Linguistic Landscape (LL) studies regarding the relationship between semiotic systems and their physical location. The concept of LL was first defined by Landry and Bourhis (1997) as "the visibility and salience of languages on public and commercial signs in a given territory or region" (p. 23). Since that early definition, the field of LL and its research methods have evolved over time. Zabrodska and Milani (2014) summarized this evolution as consisting of three major phases. The initial LL studies were mainly quantitative. They aimed to quantify the instances of different languages in a given public space as evidence for the power dynamics between these languages and the language communities. In the next phase, LL research gradually shifted from quantitative to qualitative studies, such as the interplay between languages and other visual elements or semiotic systems. The most recent

phase has taken a further step by transcending the focus on signs themselves and starting to investigate various ways in which humans interact with signs.

As LL studies gradually evolved from being purely quantitative to becoming more qualitative, including the investigation of human-sign interactions, there was an impending need for an analytical approach that allowed researchers to approach LL more comprehensively. This is when the Triadic Model for analyzing space came into play. It was first conceived by sociologist Henri Lefebvre (1991) and later adopted and developed as an LL research method by Trumper-Hecht (2010). Malinowski (2015) developed the Triadic Model of LL further by applying it to language pedagogy. Drawing on Lefebvre (1991), Trumper-Hecht (2010) divided the LL into three dimensions: the “Conceived space” as “the representations held and promoted by policy makers”, the “Perceived space” as that “which is created by people and documentable through the camera”, and the “Lived space” as “the ‘experiential’ dimension of the LL as it is presented by ‘inhabitants’” (p.237). Through this multidimensional approach, researchers can fathom not only the signage and the signification behind it, but also the interaction between signs and people, including those who stipulate the policy of the sign and those who “experience” the signs as viewers. Using the Triadic Model of LL, Trumper-Hecht (2010) discussed how Arab and Jewish residents in Israel interacted with the presence of Arabic in their city. Malinowski (2015), in turn, applied the Triadic Model of LL as a tool for language teaching. He assigned students different tasks to complete in each space. This enhanced not only the language ability of the students, but also their understanding of the language-speaking community and the language policies.

Another salient feature of modern LL study is that an increasing number of researchers focus on semiotic systems beyond written languages and examine the roles these signs play in society and culture. In other words, LL study is no longer limited to *landscapes* and now is beginning to explore a range of other “scapes.” An example of such research

would be the study by Roux et al. (2019) of “skinscapes.” They treated the tattoos of females in Johannesburg, South Africa as a semiotic landscape and investigated the meanings conveyed in these bodily signs. Through investigating the places, patterns, and languages used in those tattoos, the researchers examined how some females in South Africa used their body, languages, social experience, and their creativity to express their attitudes about gendered-identity representations through their tattoos. Another example of a study that moved away from purely linguistic landscapes to include other semiotic landscapes is Järlehed’s (2019) investigation of “clothing-scapes” in Spain. The researcher delved into the playful manifestation of Galician and Basque languages and cultures by examining T-shirts that contained references to either culture. The researcher treated these T-shirts as the appropriation and commodification of the Galician and Basque rural cultures from the past. There are also studies about “smellscapes” that examine how smells from different people, objects, and activities create a semiotic system (Pennycook & Otsuji, 2015), “soundscapes” that reveal how urban planners design their projects based on different noises produced in different spaces (Raimbault & Dubois, 2005), and “bikescapes” that investigate, for example, how the position and circulation of dockless shared bikes in Sydney revealed the current condition of the city (Pennycook, 2018).

However, as an omnipresent and varied visual semiotic system that everybody possesses, hairstyles remain largely untouched by LL researchers. Any research into how hairstyles function beyond sheer body decorations has taken place largely in psychology, sociology, and history. Oyedemi (2016) and Thompson (2009) discussed how the Eurocentric ideology of beauty pushed young African American women to manipulate their hair to meet that beauty standard. The authors described the acceptance of European-Asian hair as “beautiful” hair as a “violent journey” (Oyedemi, 2016, p.537). Not only have these young African American women experienced cultural violence in which they felt pressure to

appreciate and pursue the Eurocentric ideology of beautiful hair and thereby belittle their natural hair texture due to the influence of mass media and society, but they have also experienced physical harm in the form of toxic chemical products used to reduce curls in their natural hair and achieve the long and straight European-Asian looking hair. Another study from Psychology (Matsumoto & Hwang, 2018) revealed that hairstyles could be used as major evidence to determine people's nationality, especially in determining Japanese nationals. The main rationale behind this is that Japanese culture encourages people to use artifacts and decorations to enhance self-appearance more than the US culture. From these studies, we see how aesthetic standards for hairstyles are set up by authorities in certain cultures and how individuals manifest their acknowledgement of that standard, whether it is voluntary or involuntary. Besides the mainstream Eurocentric culture and the Japanese culture, some non-mainstream cultures also impose a strong influence on people's hairstyle choices. For example, Garot and Katz (2003) demonstrated how students and staff of the US inner-city high schools contradicted each other in dress codes and hairstyles. Students had to prudently choose specific combinations of hairstyles, clothing, and accessories to show their character while also avoiding being identified as gang members. As school authorities were not clear about these specifics, they showed unanimous fear towards looks that were even "somehow defiant" (p. 449) and thus tried to regulate students' looks according to their understanding. Oftentimes such regulations went against students' will and creativity to express themselves and thus generated conflicts of all kinds. People's hairstyles thus signify their acceptance, affiliation, or denial towards a certain culture or identity. Even larger societal issues are present in hairstyles as signs such as the power dynamics between different cultures, self-recognition, or social pressure.

The choice of hairstyle as an expression of opinion, belief, identity, or social status is not a modern invention. In Asian culture circle, such a practice has been in existence for over

a thousand years. In ancient China, untrimmed long hair was the only appropriate hairstyle for Han Chinese adults. It was a revered symbol that displayed Han Chinese people's familial connections and their filial piety. This idea originated from *Xiaojing* ("Classic of Filial Piety"), a famous Confucius scripture. In this scripture, Confucius declared that "our bodies - to every hair and bit of skin - are received by us from our parents, and we must not presume to injure or wound them. This is the beginning of filial piety" (Sturgeon, 1861). This doctrine was strictly put into practice by Han Chinese people until the advent of Manchu rulers over the Chinese country by the 17th century. Changing the traditional hairstyle of Han Chinese people into that of the Manchu people was one of the first decrees promulgated by the Manchu rulers onto the Han people. This decree triggered great resentment among the Han Chinese people and in turn generated several nationwide rebellions against the Qing government and a lot of deaths (Gu, 2001). This historical event demonstrates how powerful hairstyles could be seen as signs of identities. To the 17th century Han Chinese people, the abandonment of their traditional hairstyles was not only changed their appearance but also severed their connections with families and discarded their filial responsibility, and to knckled under the dominance of another culture. Besides China, other countries in East Asia also have their long-standing tradition of manipulating hairstyles as signs. Choi (2006) summarized various functions of hairstyles made by Korean and Japanese people "from ancient to early modern times" (p.69). Choi stated that these hairstyles had four main functions: to avoid evil influences, to demonstrate the beauty, to show women's marital status, and to manifest socio-economic status. Here, the multifunctionality of hairstyles is substantiated. They extend beyond simple body accessories to include personal information and supernatural rituals.

In addition to the general implications of hairstyles regarding culture and identity, there is another important topic that connects with hairstyles: gender. In modern society where males' hairstyles and hairstyle routines are generally very different from those of

females, hairstyles are frequently used as gender-specific markings. The use of hairstyles as gender-specific markings can start very early in childhood and persist into adulthood.

Blakemore (2003) studied how 3-to-11-year-old children evaluated the violations of gender norms in a range of societal practices, such as activities, clothing, adult occupations, and hairstyles. It turned out that boys with feminine hairstyles or clothing were depreciated more by the children than girls with masculine hairstyles and clothing. This attitude persisted in evaluating toys. Toys like Barbie dolls, as compared to G.I. Joes, were considered feminine because they entailed more manipulations of hairstyles and clothing. Youdell (2005) conducted an analogous study with older children. The study aimed to investigate how daily routines including clothing, hairstyles, and accessories affected 15-to-16-year-old girls' construction of sexed, gendered, and sexualized selves. In one example, the researcher presented the case of Toni, a girl whose masculine hairstyle and clothing constituted her unique gender identity. From these two studies, it becomes clear that people start to establish hairstyles as gender-specific markings at a rather young age. Children are aware of the sex or gender distinction incorporated in different hairstyles, and they already develop attitudes and stereotypes for people according to their gender-specific hairstyles. For adults, gender-specific hairstyles might influence their judgment of attractiveness for the other sex. Mesko and Bereczkei (2004) found that among all hairstyles provided by the researchers, only long and medium-length hair significantly enhanced the attractiveness of females rated by males. Moreover, various hairstyles also boosted the attractiveness of the females who were deemed not that attractive when they did not possess those hairstyles. The researcher proposed that longer hair is associated with health, femininity, and sexiness and thus renders those females who possess the hair more attractive. Similarly, Guéguen (2015) administered an experiment in which male and female pedestrians' reactions to a female-confederate who was unaware of her loss of a glove were observed. The result revealed that male pedestrians were more eager

to help the female-confederate with the lost glove when her hair was worn-down hair in a natural way than when she had a ponytail or put her hair into a bun. These experiments demonstrate that gender-specific hairstyles can have a major impact on people's perceived attractiveness.

One way that gender is presented is through one's personal front. The noted sociologist Goffman provides helpful insights behind the phenomenon that hairstyles can be gender-specific and used as signs. The concept of the personal front was conceived by Goffman (1963, as quoted in Scollon and Scollon, 2003) to be a kit of characteristics selected from the sum of all one's characteristics and identities from which one might choose to represent oneself (Scollon & Scollon, 2003). The demonstration of the personal front can be either conscious or unconscious. An important aspect of the personal front analysis is "fitting in." To "fit in" means to minimize disturbances, draw excessive attention, or violate courtesy in a given context. People can convey messages by choosing to obey or disobey the given social context. Thus, by choosing to conform to or violate the explicit gender codes made by institutions or the implicit gender expectations of families or social contexts by manipulating hairstyles, people show their standpoints toward these gender rules and expectations, and their personal opinions and beliefs are also revealed in turn.

Besides the personal front, Goffman also exemplifies specific gender expressions in modern society. In his book *Gender Advertisements* (1979), Goffman talks about various ways in which gender is presented in commercials. Two types of gender-based presentation are "Feminine Touch" (p.29) and "Licensed Withdrawal" (p.57), both of which offer insight into the relationship between hair length and people's understanding of femininity. The first type of presentation, "Feminine Touch" describes how women are pictured "using their fingers and hands to trace the outlines of an object or to cradle it or to caress its surface" (p.29) more than men. The Feminine Touch can be related closely to actions involving one's

hair, such as combing or grooming, playing with one's hair, or pulling strands of hair in front of one's eyes. Such motions can only be applied to hair that has some length. Another form of presentation, the "Licensed Withdrawal" characterizes how women "are pictured engaged in involvements which remove them psychologically from the social situation" (p.57). One example of the Licensed Withdrawal is "when one presents oneself as if on the edge of the situation or otherwise shielded from it physically" (p.70), including partially being concealed by the edges of other objects or people. Long hair that covers one's ears or includes long bangs that cover the forehead can blur the contour of one's face and thus fits the situation of the Licensed Withdrawal. These two ways of portraying femininity brought forth by Goffman illustrate how hair length can have gendered implications.

To sum up, hairstyle is a sign that embodies rich meanings including culture, nationality, identity, society, and gender. Therefore, this study looks to expand the scope of LL research to include hairstyles. Specifically, this study investigates how Chinese international students (Chinese students who are currently studying in the United States) use their hairstyles as signs of expressing identities, attitudes, and beliefs.

There are reasons for choosing Chinese students as the object of study. To begin with, as discussed above, China has a long history of codifying hairstyles and endowing different hairstyles with distinct meanings as illustrated by *Xiao Jing* and those rebellions caused by Machu rulers' hair regulation. Although long hair is no longer the appropriate hairstyle in China due to the impact of Western culture in the 20th century (the predominant hairstyles in China nowadays are similar to those in the western world), the emphasis Chinese people put on hairstyles continues in modern ages. For example, a lot of schools and institutions have their own hairstyle regulations that explicitly state what hairstyles are permissible and what hairstyles are improper. In *Zhong Xue Sheng Ri Chang Xing Wei Gui Fan* ("The Daily Code of Conduct of Middle School Students") issued by the Ministry of Education of the People's

Republic of China in 2004, it is stated that middle school students “should not perm or dye their hair... male students should not grow long hair.” Besides this general code, schools may have their own more detailed hair regulations. Yan (2005) mentioned plenty of such examples. For male students, there is a ban on parted bangs, rules about the longest permitted length on the front, the sides, and the back, and a ban on using pomade or gels. For female students, even the allowable colors of their hairpins are regulated. To Yan (2005), the excessive hair regulations imposed by school authorities are similar to those imposed by the Manchu rulers hundreds of years ago, for the school regulations are

...not so much a reflection of the rulers’ preference for a certain hairstyle as a means of mind deterrence or body suppression, or to say that it reflects the operational norm that the coercive power is omnipresent in daily school lives. (p.15)

Besides the pressure from school, the authority of the family cannot be overlooked. The ancient Chinese tradition of keeping long hair originated from the requirement by *Xiaojing*. People’s long hair served mainly as proof of filial piety and their relationship with their families. This shows how strong the authority of family was in ancient China. Such an authority, although no longer as strong as it once was, still exists in modern Chinese society.

Hence, the Chinese tradition of regulating hairstyles has never really been lost. It persists from ancient times to modern days in China, only that its form has been greatly altered. Chinese students socialized in such a hairstyle culture thus develop a strong consciousness about their hairstyles. What happens to such students’ hairstyles when they come to another country and experience a new culture is the focus of this study. Specifically, the research focuses on the central question of whether the international student experience influences hairstyles. As young adults, Chinese students might be more creative and less conventional in choosing their hairstyles compared to older generations in their families, especially when they encounter different life events or social changes, or when embracing a

new identity or getting in touch with new cultures. They might express their new identities, attitudes, or beliefs by intentionally conforming to or transgressing the social expectation for hairstyles as well. Expressed in terms of the Triadic Model of LL presented earlier (Trumper-Hecht, 2010), this study examines the interaction between the Conceived space and the Lived space and how this is reflected in the Perceived space for international students, that is, the hairstyle choices made by international students in reaction to various regulations and expectations about hairstyles. Specific Conceived spaces to be investigated will be regulations or expectations imposed by family, society, school, professions, social occasions, and gender.

Method

Eleven participants volunteered for this study. The participants were drawn from 18- to 28- year-old male and female Chinese international students who study at universities outside of China. Although the researcher did not initially intend to investigate only Chinese international students who were studying in the US, all the participants who ended up participating in the study were all studying in the US. Adults unable to consent, individuals who were not adults, pregnant women, prisoners, cognitively impaired or individuals with impaired decision-making capacity were excluded from the study.

Participants

The diversity of the 11 participants (3 male students and 8 female students), in terms of their age, hometown, and school year in which they came to the US, is indicated in Tables 1-3.

Table 1

The Age of the Participants When Participating the Study

Age	Number of Participants
20	5
21	3

22 2

Table 2

The Hometown of the Participants

Hometown	Number of Participants
Beijing	2
Shenzhen	2
Chengdu	1
Dalian	1
Hangzhou	1
Harbin	1
Nanjing	1
Shanghai	1
Taizhou, Jiangsu	1

Table 3

The School Year the Participants Attended after Coming to the US

School Year Attended after Coming to the US	Number of Participants
Eighth Grade	2
Ninth Grade	3
First year of University	5

Procedure

After receiving approval from Emory University's Institutional Review Board for the study, the researcher recruited participants through WeChat, a prevalent Chinese social messaging app. A general description of the research study written in Chinese was provided in a WeChat post (similar to a Facebook post, which could be seen by all friends of that account) and was sent to two group chats of Chinese international students attending Emory University during the 2020-2021 academic year (Appendix A). The estimated number of people who received the messages was around 800. Students who were interested in the study directly contacted the researcher through WeChat. The researcher checked the qualification of those students who expressed their interest, explained the research more thoroughly to those students, and sent them the informed consent via WeChat. Students became prospective participants if they were qualified and expressed their interest in participating in the study

after viewing the consent form. The researcher then set up the online interview schedule with the prospective participants. The interviews were held over Zoom. Before the interview started, the researcher reviewed the informed consent form with the participant and clarified any remaining questions or concerns of the participant. If the participant was still willing to participate in the research after the clarification, he or she signed the informed consent form and emailed the researcher a photo of the signature page. The researcher officially started the interview after receiving the signature from the participant. The interview was held in either English or Mandarin, depending on which language the participant and the researcher thought best expressed their thoughts. During the interview, the researcher followed the interview guideline (see Appendix B) and asked participants questions about their current hairstyles as well as their hairstyles in the past.

The interview questions were all open-ended. Silverman (1993) proposed two types of interviews: positivist and interactionist. Positivist interviews focus on real-world facts, while interactionist interviews focus on individual experiences and subjective views of the research objects. For this study of the hairscapes of Chinese international students, interactionist interviews were used. In other words, there was no intention to ascertain a nation-wide or a community-wide trend of Chinese international students regarding their hairstyles. Instead, individual life experiences about hairstyles, subjective interpretations of phenomena related to hairstyles, the uniqueness in the maturation process of each of my participants, and their diversity in regional cultural backgrounds was the main focus of the study. Such a case-study-like research design is significant for linguistic studies according to Duff (2014) since it can bring forth new topics of research and refine existing theories. According to Denzin (1970), a study with such an interactionist intention should use open-ended interview questions since open-ended interview questions can discover respondents' "unique ways of defining the world" (p.95) and "raise important issues not contained in the schedule" (*ibid*).

Since the interview consisted of open-ended questions and was largely participant-centered, the researcher adjusted the interview guideline to fit each participant. For example, the researcher slightly adjusted the sequence of some questions or the way of asking questions according to the response and the topics brought up by the participants as long as such adjustments would not jeopardize the original research topics addressed in the interview questions. The researcher also encouraged the participants to elaborate on certain questions.

After the interview was finished, the researcher asked for verbal permission to administer follow-up questions to the participants in the future if needed. The participants had the right to end the interview at any time without adverse effects. Every interview was audio-recorded, and pictures sent by the participants (including their own photos or pictures that they deemed to be similar to the hairstyles described) were preserved. To ensure confidentiality, any type of data obtained through meetings (e.g., photos, voices, written notes) were not accessible to anybody except the researcher and the Emory faculty members who served as senior honors thesis committee members and provided guidance on this senior honors project. The data were anonymously categorized so that nobody could identify individual participants through the data. The audio recordings were translated into English (if needed) and transcribed after all the interviews ended.

The researcher analyzed the data after finishing all the transcriptions. A qualitative content analysis was adopted to analyze the data instead of a quantitative statistical analysis. According to Selvi (2020), qualitative content analysis has three unique characteristics. First, qualitative content analysis focuses on excavating the hidden meaning of the data through context-dependent analysis. Second, a coding frame must be developed to code the data into categories. Third, the qualitative analysis focuses more on the data extracted from the participants' *per se* and the interpretations of these data rather than on treating these data as mere constituents of a larger statistical pool. These characteristics cater perfectly to the needs

of this study. As stated previously, this study aims to excavate individualized authentic experiences about hairstyles instead of to ascertaining overall facts about Chinese international students' hairstyles. Thus, the qualitative content analysis which emphasizes the interpretation of the data per se becomes crucial. The qualitative content analysis followed the norm proposed by Schreier (2014, as quoted by Selvi, 2020). The analysis consisted of five stages: "building a coding frame", "segmentation", "trial coding", "evaluating and modifying the coding frame", and "main analysis" (Selvi, 2020, p. 174). For the first step, the researcher used the Triadic Model of LL landscape (Trumper-Hetcht, 2010; Malinowski, 2015) as the backbone when building the coding frame. The three main categories were thus Conceived space, Perceived space, and Lived space. For this study, the Conceived space of hairstyles consisted of outside influences on the hairstyle choices of the study participants, the Perceived space of hairstyles represented the objective description of the physical characteristics of the hairstyles, and the Lived space of hairstyles corresponded to the participants' subjective description, response, reflection, desire of experiencing a hairstyle (of him/herself) or other people. Such an approach captured the diverse factors that influenced the hairstyle choices of the participants. The researcher gradually added subcategories to each of the three spaces according to topics mentioned in the interviews. The result was a coding frame consisted of three main categories and 28 subcategories (see Appendix C). For the second step of segmentation, the researcher divided the narratives of the participant into utterances so that each utterance would fit into at least one of the subcategories. In the third step of trial coding, the researcher coded all utterances according to the categories and subcategories determined in the previous steps. Twenty-five percent of the utterances were coded by two raters, the researcher and a thesis committee member. All of the differences in coding between the two raters were resolved through discussion and, if necessary, changes were made to the coding frame. Interrater reliability was about 90%. For the rest of the data,

the researcher presented any uncertainties in coding and resolved them with the research committee member. The fourth step was the evaluation and modification of the coding frame, during which the researcher added, deleted, or adjusted the definitions of the categories and subcategories according to the new findings in assorting utterances. It is worth noticing, however, that the changes and adjustments to the categories and subcategories was not done at once. Instead, the researcher continuously changed and adjusted the categories and subcategories when coding utterances. This fourth step, however, was to finalize the coding frame and to make it no longer open to changes. The last step, the main analysis, was done by checking narratives that were already coded before this final stage to ensure all narratives were coded by the final version of the coding frame and to extract general findings.

All the aforementioned data, including the transcribed recordings and the photos, will be deleted before the ultimate publication of the research. There is no plan for long-term follow-up for the data of this research.

Results

External factors that influence the hairstyles choices of Chinese international students turned out to be multifarious, and the responses of the participants to these factors were also manifold. Besides the research topics proposed by the researcher at the beginning, the participants brought up several unexpected topics during the interviews. All of the topics discussed in the interviews have been organized according to the following conceived spaces, that is, the outside influence on hairstyle choices:

1. family
2. hair stylist
3. society
4. school authority
5. popular culture

6. professions and school activities
7. occasion or events
8. race
9. gender
10. the COVID-19 pandemic
11. the private sphere

Following the presentation of each conceived space, participants' subjective responses and life experiences in these conceived spaces, i.e., the lived spaces as experienced by the participants, will be presented. Some of the lived responses of the participants did not correspond with any of the conceived spaces and thus will be listed separately at the end of the conceived spaces. Perceived spaces will be treated as objective reflections of the physical attributes of the hairstyles chosen by international students in reaction to various conceived spaces.

Family

Family played a large role in regulating the participants' hairstyle choices. It is notable that different families and different members of the same family might have very different opinions and requirements about their children's hairstyles. They might also take different actions when trying to regulate their children's hairstyles.

Family Members

Regarding different family members, the reference to one's mother was disproportionately more frequent than those of other family members. For these participants, their mothers usually played a more active role in control their children's hairstyles compared to their fathers, and such an influence was mentioned to be present in all life stages. Also, they usually had ideal hairstyles for their children in mind and strived to achieve that hairstyle through many means. Fathers usually had a more laissez-faire attitude toward their

children's hairstyles, and they tended to be less aware of their children's hairstyles compared to mothers. They would, however, sometimes express slight preferences of certain hairstyles for their children. Male participant Purple talked about how his mother controlled his hairstyles when he was younger:

“So I feel like in middle school and elementary school, like, my mom was always supervising my hairstyle, and I was not really conscious about my hairstyle.” “An impressive memory of mine was, once I went to the hair salon for a haircut and when I came back, my mom was like: ‘Um? Why does your hair look like it has been chewed on by dogs?’. Then she went to the salon to quarrel with the stylist. It turned out to be the mistake of a new stylist that just came.” (Purple, male)

Female participant Sticky talked about how her mother controlled her hair color when she was five years old and about her father's non-caring attitude:

“My mom dyed my bangs into 3 colors.” “My dad... he doesn't really have anything to say (about hairstyles). He... My dad liked my short hair pretty much. Like, clean and tidy.” (Sticky, female)

A more evident example highlighting the contrast between the mother and the father's awareness about her hairstyle is provided by female participant Golden, although she did not specify when this interaction happened:

“My mom is actually pretty supportive to my doing my hair because she thinks as long as it's good-looking it would be fine. She said, ‘I don't quite understand the aesthetics of you young people’, but she trusts my aesthetics.” “My dad is like, as long as I don't bleach my hair blond, he won't be able to tell if I've cut or dyed my hair. He was like: ‘you cut your hair today?’ and I was like: ‘yeah?’ ‘You dyed your hair today? Or did you not?’ ‘Yes, I did!’” (Golden, female)

The participants' lived reactions to their parents' control over their hairstyles varied. In response to their mothers' active control and clear ideals for their children's hairstyles, some participants expressed dissatisfaction and confusion, such as male participant Purple, but other participants did not mention their opinions about this.

“But my mom, she has a really clear opinion about the hair. And, she has her own aesthetic system. I feel that her aesthetics is very... um... I can't say that it represents the aesthetics of all other middle-aged women, but um, a least it is not the same as my aesthetics. For example, she loved the hair sticking out all over very much. All the hair is sticking straight out. She thinks... she thinks it looks very energetic. But I feel this sucks. But, well, anyway in China, I always went to the hair salon for a haircut and my mom was like 'wow this is so great, I am so satisfied', and I was like 'where do you think it's great, why don't I think it is great.'” (Purple, male)

Older generations seldom appeared in participants' narratives, but when they did, their control was very influential to the participants. This is natural in Chinese culture, in which the elderly people are highly revered. Older generations also tended to hold more conservative views about their children's hairstyles, i.e., the hair should remain in its natural state and should not be dyed or permed. Female participant Kraftwerk talked about her grandmother's objection to her decision of dyeing her hair after she graduated from her high school in the US and returned China during summer break:

“And my maternal grandma objected me to dye my hair at the time, she thought, like, 'you receive your body, your hair, and your skin from your parents'¹, how can you dye your hair? And then she started to chatter. I said 'Haven't I cut my hair short? See? You've also cut your hair short.' and then she said no, you can't dye your hair into strange colors.” (Kraftwerk, female)

¹ The quotation from *Xiao Jing*.

Female participant Crimson also recalled the reactions of her grandparents when she returned home after graduating from a US high school, having her hair dyed and made herself up in the “American style”: “They scolded me, yeah, like, really, that kind of disappointed... like, my grandparents would be disappointed, like ‘how can you do this’.”

The reactions of these two participants to their grandparents’ control over their hairstyles, however, were very different. Participant Kraftwerk was not discouraged by her grandmother and her grandmother even accepted the participant’s decision to dye her hair at the end:

“I said, haven’t I cut my hair short? See? You have also cut your hair short, and then she said no, you can’t dye strange colors. But I don’t listen to my family too much, and my family knows this well, like they already understand they can only dissuade me but can’t determine (unclear) my decisions. So, after I dyed it, like I dyed it, the hairdresser dyed a light color, a brownish-green color. My grandma saw it and she was like: ‘well, actually it looks ok, it looks natural, and it doesn’t matter.’ And later I added purple, and my grandma was like: ‘well, it is not that apparent, it’s pretty good looking.’ It doesn’t matter, like, it’s OK.” (Kraftwerk, female)

Participant Crimson, in contrast, was hurt by the comment of her grandparents and decided to go back to “normal Asian style”:

“Because they were very close to me, they always loved me so much, they, like, they never talked severely to me. And, em, well, it was the first time that they talked to me in such a disappointed tone, and I felt, of course, I felt very hurt.” “So I started to self-question, like how much of that change was like, myself, how much of that is because I wanna be someone else I was not, and then um, and then I started to think about these questions.” (Crimson, female)

Family Ideology

Besides family members' different opinions on hairstyles and ways of controlling hairstyles, there was also significant diversity in different families' general ideologies regarding their children's hairstyles. These ideologies can be put into a continuum, in which "conservative" families are on the one end and "liberal" families are on the other.

Conservative Families.

Although not common, there are conservative families who hold a more "traditional" view about hairstyles which prefers hair to be not processed in any way, either permed or dyed. Also, they think that their children's hairstyles should correspond to their gender, age, and social identities. Female participant Metallica talked about how her parents banned her from dyeing or perming her hair. She did not mention when was the ban, but through her narratives, it could be inferred that such a ban has always existed:

"The main reason was that my parents didn't allow me to dye my hair, and they didn't allow me to... I had never permed my hair from childhood, and I haven't... tinkered with my hair. They didn't allow me to do this. They think hair should be black, and think, like, my hair is pretty good, and should not be, like, processed in any way, blablabla. They're like, comparatively traditional, and severe parents." (Metallica, female)

Another female participant, Kraftwerk, talked about how her mother reacted to her decision to cut her hair as short as a boy's regular haircut when she was a rising junior in college:

"My mom and dad were pretty against it. My mom thought, thought like, how could you cut your hair like this? She said last year that 'if you dare to cut short hair, I would, I wouldn't consider you as my child.', like, she was joking." (Kraftwerk, female)

The more the families held conservative views on hairstyles and required their children to style their hair according to the families' understanding of hairstyles, the more

those children wanted to rebel. Participant Metallica dyed her hair twice when she was at the university, once highlighting her hair and the other time dyeing her hair red. Although she attributed her action to her friend's instigation and the boredom caused by the COVID quarantine, she did specify that her parents were "traditional and severe to their children, and the severer they are to me, the more I want to be rebellious or something like that, to revolt." Participant Kraftwerk also reported that "I don't listen to my family too much, and my family knows this well, like they already understand they can only dissuade me but can't determine (unclear) my decisions."

Liberal Families.

Liberal families, on the contrary, reined in their children only very loosely. They did not interfere too much or have opinions about the hairstyle choices of their children. Some more liberal families even encouraged their children to try out different hairstyles, including perming and dyeing. For example, female participant Little introduced how loose her family was in controlling her choices of hairstyles:

"I think my parents are pretty open. Like, maybe before I went abroad, like when I was in China, like, maybe because I was in the track and field team, they might think, like, shorter hair would be better, like, I thought it was reasonable. I also accepted that. After I went abroad, it seemed like, like, they didn't really, well, I can't say they didn't care about it at all, but comparatively, they didn't really care. Like, 'if you dye your hair, you dye your hair.'" (Little, female)

Male participant Aereo described his mother as a "creative and fashion-forward person" and how his mother abandoned social stereotypes and encouraged him to dye his hair when he was in high school:

"Regarding hair perming, that was really my mom's idea. I hadn't even thought about it. Because in the traditional view, perming and dyeing are not positive things for boys

to do. They seem more like things that loungers would do, like people who don't attend their proper duties. So I hadn't thought about perming. My mom was like, 'how about perming your hair to change your image', and I was like, 'yeah, I could give it a try'." (Aereo, male)

Participants with liberal families were generally more satisfied with their parents in terms of the family control over hairstyles in their tone of reporting.

Family Influence

A few participants reported concrete examples of how their families controlled or influenced their hairstyle choices. Different families did this in different ways. They could be as direct as cutting their children's hair themselves, as drastic as verbally scolding their children, and as mild as making simple suggestions.

Some families controlled their children's hairstyles by directly cutting their children's hair instead of letting them visit hair stylists. This usually happened when the researchers were younger, such as when they were in elementary school or primary school. Other families chose to accompany their children when they went to hair salons and told the stylists to cut the hair of their children in a specific way. Such instances usually occurred when the participants were relatively young. Male participant Aereo talked about how his hair was cut by his father:

"Actually I... maybe before my second year in middle school, my hair was always cut by my dad. Like, when I was young, when I was very young, I went to hair salons for my haircut, and every time they cut my hair, my mom said I would cry, and I didn't behave well when they cut my hair. And after that, I didn't go to hair salons for haircuts. My dad cut it for me. He bought a clipper, and then put a guard on it, anyway he cut my hair flat." (Aereo, male)

Male participant Moody talked about how his mother asked the hair stylist to cut a specific hairstyle for him when he was a third-grade student at elementary school:

“My mom took me there (the hair salon), like, at that moment, like, she conspired with the hair stylist, and I got a buzz cut.” “She was like, summer is very hot, so can we try a shorter haircut, and I said yes, and then I got a very short buzz cut.” (Moody, male)

Participants with families that directly cut their hair or commanded the hair stylist were usually unsatisfied about the hairstyles they got. Participant Aereo commented, in describing the hairstyle cut by his father, that “the hair that short looked pretty awful, not a good image.” Participant Moody also expressed his annoyance about his mother’s directions to the hair stylist and about being teased by elementary school classmates:

“They did not care about my feelings, and they gave me a buzz cut...although I did not feel so bad about it... she (her mother) only said that summer was hot, so could we try a shorter hairstyle, and I said yes, and so I got a really short buzz cut. When I went back to school with this haircut, my classmates did not recognize me... It was terrifying.” (Moody, male)

Two of the participants reported that their families used strong words to scold them because of their hairstyle choices, or they possessed rooted stereotypes about certain hairstyles that they deemed to be unacceptable. Female participant Mettalica talked about her parents’ profound stereotypes against certain hairstyles:

“Sometimes they would associate (hair dyeing with), like, like ‘whores’ or ‘shameless’, or, like, they think it’s too ostentatious. Like... maybe I’m referring to girls, I don’t really know boys... oh yes, if boys dye their hair yellow... I feel like my parents would feel it’s the hairstyle of ‘bullies and local toughs’, like, really, they really have this kind of strange associations, they can always associate, and they are

very serious about that. Like, I feel like if I really dye my hair, like, bright red, my dad would be very... he would really think that girls who dye their hair like this are very dissolute or something. Yeah, I think he would be really serious about that.”

(Mettalica, female)

These two participants both reported that they felt uncomfortable when they heard such comments, especially Metallica. Although she did not mention how she felt about her parents' stereotype about girls who dye their hair, she did express her discomfort when hearing similar comments from other parents:

“And I remember that I saw others complaining from various social media that, for example, for example a girl dyed their hair orange or pink, her parents would talk to her in a very... I feel like, a very malicious tone, like ‘you are like a whore’ or something. Then I thought this kind... this kind of judgment is very scary. But I feel like there is no such a problem between peers right now, but older generations would judge hairstyles and the hair colors.” (Mettalica, female)

Compared to scolding, mild comments and suggestions were the choices of most families. They would not scold their children or express their ideals about hairstyles radically. Rather, they used mild suggestions, reminders, or other impassive ways of communicating their opinions to their children. Female participant Little described how her parents expressed their opinions when she told them that she would dye her hair into certain colors when she was at her high school in the US:

“And, before I dye my hair, like, before I dye my hair into comparatively light colors, I would tell them, like, ‘I’m gonna dye this color’. And then, like, my parents would say, like, it does not look good, something like that. But they wouldn’t, like, stop me from dyeing my hair.” (Little, female)

Male participant Moody talked about the language his family would use to suggest him to get a haircut: “They do not really have any expectations on my hairstyles. They would only suggest me to cut the hair when it was too long and cannot be longer.”

A special case was the family of male participant Purple. His father was an artist and had shoulder-length hair tied into a ponytail. Although his father never explicitly stated his expectations on participant Purple’s hairstyle, participant Purple was influenced by his father’s hairstyle and stated that long hair is one of his potential choices of future hairstyles. This case shows that even a family does not explicitly express its mildest comments or suggestions on hairstyles, the child could somehow be influenced by the presence of a hairstyle on one of the family members.

Participants with families that used mild comments and suggestions did not report many feelings or thoughts about such expressions in the interview.

Family Presence

Some participants reported that they or other Chinese international students they knew changed their hairstyles when they came from China to the US for school. To them, however, it was not necessarily the encounter with the US culture that motivated their hairstyle changes; rather, the psychological distance from their families played a major role. That is, the participants felt liberated from the regulations of their families because their families were no longer with them. Female participant Crimson described her feelings of liberation after coming to the US for high school:

“Until... the time that I had the real independent awareness, like, about, like hair and hairstyles, or look, was when I was, um, freshman at high school, cuz my high school was in US, and at that time, like, I had never had so much freedom, like, more freedom than I ever had, um, in my past life.” (Crimson, female)

This feeling of liberation was one of the reasons why she later decided to cut her long hair into shorter hair above her shoulders.

Female participant Pistol also described a similar feeling she had from her experience of coming to the US for summer school: “Also, it was a kind of... I felt that I was away from home and I could refrain from constraints, like, I could do whatever I wanted, so I chose the most exaggerated color and the most exaggerated kind of hairstyle that I could accept at that time.” This feeling contributed to her later decision to perm her hair with big curls and to dye her hair red.

Hair Stylists

The role of hair stylists on participants' hairstyles is already partly mentioned in the previous section about the conceived space of the family. Participant Purple, Moody, and Aereo reported their experience of their parents taking them to the hair salon. Sometimes parents communicated with the hair stylists and asked for a specific hairstyle to be cut for their children. Hair stylists, however, were not impassive hair-cutting machines that were always at their customers' beck and call. A lot of participants reported their close relationships with their hair stylists. These hair stylists knew those participants well, and they often played a pivotal role in influencing the hairstyles of the participants. Some hair stylists stopped participants from getting certain hairstyles because they deemed those hairstyles to be inappropriate for the identity of those participants, or that they thought those hairstyles would not go well with the participants' looks. For example, female participant Sticky described how in 11th grade in the US her hair stylist stopped her from choosing the hairstyle that she wanted and how they reached a compromise to each other, and she ultimately got another hairstyle with which she was satisfied:

“And then when I was 16, in 2016, um, I wanted to go with the kind of handsome style so much, and I wanted to cut boys' hairstyles, like the very short ones, like split-

bang hairstyles, but the stylist stopped me because I was still in high school, I was 16. Later I compromised, like, I shaved the hair on the temples and got two engravings on the sides. And I also shaved the back and the area above my neck. But it was short hair, like if I wear my hair down it would be normal short hair. But when I tie the short hair up one can see the shaved parts.” (Sticky, female)

She added more details about this experience later in the interview:

“I was stopped by the stylist. He/She² just told me like “how hard it is to manage it, you are still a student, it is inconvenient, you have to use hair wax, you have to blow it, and (unclear), and I thought it was troublesome, well, just forget about it. It is what it is. Because I heard it is hard to manage, (unclear) I went to the barber shop and I said I want this hairstyle, and at last the barber compromised and shaved an area (of my hair).” (Sticky, female)

Similarly, female participant Kraftwerk described how her hair stylist tailored the hairstyle that suited her the best through negotiating with her. The happened when she was a rising junior university student:

“I wanted to cut my hair short, like, to cut it to ear-length. But that hair stylist said that you (unclear) and does not suit this kind of hairstyle. Like, it would make my head very small, like, very unbalanced, the proportion would be very unbalanced. So he/she suggested that I should cut a middle-length hair. But I... since then I wanted to try short hair very much, he/she told me that you could try out boys’ short hair. Like, it might suit me.” (Kraftwerk, female)

The result of such negotiations between the participants and their hair stylists were usually very successful. Although when asked about potential hairstyle choices in the future,

² The pronunciation of the pronoun “he” and “she” is identical in Chinese. These two pronouns are thus only distinguishable in their written forms and cannot be distinguished in their audio form.

Participant Sticky answered that she still wanted to try the hairstyles she proposed initially but stopped by the stylist, she thought that the hairstyle that she actually got after negotiating with the hairstylist was “pretty handsome” after all. Participant Kraftwerk even elaborated on how much she trusted her hair stylist and how close their age-old relationship was:

“A lot of the times my hairstyles came from the suggestions of my hair stylist. My hair stylist cut the hair for my whole family, so he/she knows the texture of the hair of each family member very well. The thing is, because he/she is the hair stylist downstairs, our relationship... like, he/she has been cutting my hair for years, we have a good relationship with each other. He/She knows what kinds of hairstyles I like, and he/she would suggest some afterwards. I actually trust my hair stylist very much, so I would mostly agree with his/her suggestions mostly. I think (hairstyles) he/she suggested in the past fit me quite well, so for example, if you want to cut a short hairstyle you have to cut a little bit of bangs in the front, like his/her suggestions were all pretty good, so I would always trust him/her.” (Kraftwerk, female)

Another noteworthy feature in the participants’ narratives about the hair stylist was the comparison between American hair stylists and Chinese hair stylists. A lot of participants mentioned the high cost of going to a hair salon or barber shop in the US compared to China. Also, they mentioned their doubts about American hair stylists’ skills, especially when cutting Asian people’s hair. For example, female participant Little shared her comments and experiences with US hair stylists:

“... a lot of boys got haircuts pretty frequently, and their feedback was like ‘the stylist gave me a weird hairstyle’, like they would cut the hair on the temples, and I hadn’t cut my hair in the US when I was in high school, because I wanted to grow my hair long.” “Also, I think the price-performance ratio is very low.” “And the only time I

cut my hair in the US was that short hair I cut that time... and it was really bad”

(Little, female)

Similarly, male participant Aereo said “because I have seen my friends getting hair cut in the US, none of them were satisfied, and it also cost a lot.” The most interesting case was provided by participant Purple. He came to the US for high school. He lived with a host family, in which the host mother’s major in college was to become a beautician. She had a barber’s chair and mirror in the living room, so her family members often went to her house for a haircut. Purple described that the only hairstyle that the host mother cut was “really short on the sides, a little bit longer on the top, like a ‘buzz cut’ in terminology” and he said, “I felt really strange every time she cut my hair, like, it looked like a soy egg.”

In response to the comparatively high cost of US hair salons and the distrust of the skill of American hair stylists, these participants reported that they refrained from getting their hair cut in the US and only got a haircut when they went back to China for vacation. Participant Little said that “I developed the habit of getting haircuts back in China after high school. Like, after approximately half a year the hair would grow into a length that needs to trim and cut”, and participant Aereo also expressed that “I don’t have a big problem without getting a haircut for three to four months, so I didn’t cut my hair in the US at all.” An interesting case was from female participant Golden. When she decided to thoroughly bleach her hair when she was in the US during winter break, she chose a specific hair salon opened by Chinese hair stylists in New York because she “trusted their skills.”

Society

The definition of “society” can be manifold, and so is the definition for the conceived space of the society. However, the conceived space of the society in this study focused specifically on the comparison between attitudes towards various hairstyles in Chinese society and US society.

The Chinese and the US society on hairstyles

All study participants had spent their childhood in China but came to the US for school. Such a life experience endowed them with the understanding of stereotypes and conceptions about hairstyles in both the Chinese and the US society. Most participants felt that the US society was more accepting of various hairstyles, and people in the US have more varieties of hairstyles compared to Chinese people. For example, female participant Pistol described the cultural shock she experienced after coming back to China following summer school in the US:

“The feeling at that time was... I should be influenced by a... at that time I went to the US for a summer school and after I came back, I had that need to change my appearance, like I would feel that I experienced a cultural shock, that I can be bolder and more unconstrained, and it could manifest my characteristics.” (Pistol, Female)

Male participant Moody described the great variety of hairstyles that he had seen when he was at his university in California:

“So I feel that I... I came to a different world. I’ve seen everything.” “We do not have any limits on hairstyles. Really, there is no limit. I’ve seen all kinds of hairstyles. I do see them.” (Moody, male)

Female participant Crimson also commented on the different extent of judgements in China and in the US society:

“Um hum. Of course, there’s a lot of differences. Of course, I think in the US, at least when I’m in the US, like, nobody cares, nobody really cares, like, whatever you do has nothing to do, like, they won’t, like, as long as you don’t go streaking, generally nobody would think that you, like, your style has any problem. But I think in China, there are more judgmental looks.” (Crimson, female)

Confronting similar situations in the US society, these three participants, however, developed different lived reactions. Participant Pistol said the cultural shock she experienced in the US motivated her to choose “the most exaggerated color and the most exaggerated type of hairstyle that I could accept”, which was to perm her hair with big curls and dyed her hair into bright red, after she came back from her summer school. Participant Moody, however, seemed not to be influenced by his experience at California and did not do much to his hairstyles. Participant Crimson did dye her hair a few times when she was studying at a US high school, but she attributed those changes to the influence of “American beauty standards”, the popular culture, and the surrounding vibe (to be discussed later), instead of the generally looser constraints on hairstyles in the US society.

Nevertheless, the comparatively looser constraints on hairstyles in US society does not mean that there are no judgements or stereotypes in US society about hairstyles at all. Three participants mentioned their observations about existing stereotypes regarding hairstyles in the US. Female participant Pistol talked about her thoughts after listening to her American college roommate talking about her family’s attitude about hair dyeing:

“Um, it seems that I haven’t received any judgements on my hairstyles in the US. Well, in fact, there is. I, I remembered that I dyed my hair at that time, it was very exaggerated, Americans, my roommate was American, um, she was from New Jersey, and we, um, like, she was a white girl who grew up in New Jersey and, in fact, she told me that if she dyed her hair red, she would be scolded by her parents, and I would think, well, this contradicted, like, the every-day feeling that I received, like I would feel that people, um, in the first place wouldn’t judge, and people accept all kinds of changes or diversity from their hearts. But I felt, maybe their ‘respect’ was the respect to kids from other families, or like they would not judge people out of their personal scopes, because that would entail certain biases or disrespects, so they would respect

people out of their little personal scopes. But they would think that, if this family itself, if this core family is comparatively conservative, in fact they would, have some requirements for their own kids, or to judge their hairstyles.”

Similarly, female participant Kraftwerk perceived some stereotypes in the US with bright-colored hair: “I think no matter in what country, people have... with very bright colors. Like, people would start to judge.” The lived responses of the participants seemed to be unaffected by this conceived space of the US society. Their hairstyle choices did not change due to their understanding of the existence of stereotypes and judgements on certain hairstyles or hair colors in the US.

Specific Stereotypes on Hairstyles in the Chinese Society

In addition to the contrast between how accepting the conceived spaces in Chinese and US society were of different hairstyles, some participants reported that there were specific stereotypes that correlated with specific types of hairstyles in the Chinese society.

Some participants mentioned that in China, cutting one’s hair short was often associated with a break-up or taking things too hard. Female participant Pistol directly stated this stereotype:

“I feel like the change of states/conditions, um, besides myself, a lot of examples around me, like broadly speaking, a lot of people would think, oh, I broke up, so I have to cut my hair or whatever, like, this is, I think at least in Chinese society, this is a scenario that everybody is capable of relating to. Like, somebody would think, I eagerly need to change, (he/she) would start from the hair.” (Pistol, female)

The existence of this stereotype could be further supported by Female participant Metallica’s lived experience of cutting her long hair short in order to show her resolution to break up with her boyfriend at that time:

“I feel like the feeling between us could no longer sustain us any longer, but he did not want to break up and whatnot, I kinda forget it, like, at that moment I wanted to sever my connection with him, and then, I feel like hair always has some connections with romantic relationships, I don’t know why. I cut my hair at that time out of impulsion, and I had a little bit of regression afterwards.” (Metallica, female)

Male participant Moody had a similar lived experience. He shaved his hair off during the COVID quarantine last year. His initial motivation was to free himself from the hair that was excessively long for him, but when he posted a picture of himself with his new hairstyle on the social media, a lot of people also asked him if he was “taking things too hard.”

Another stereotype about hairstyles in China was specifically correlated with hair dyeing. This kind of stereotype was discussed previously in the section about the conceived space of the family, and more examples of this stereotype will be presented in the discussions of the conceived spaces of school authority, the profession, and the gender.

Female participant Little stated that she thought there existed a general stereotype in China about people who dyed their hair: “People in China might consider people who dye their hair are comparatively, love to play? Like, I don’t know how to describe it, but different judgements will be given, like for example, ‘people with black hair are comparatively obedient’.” This stereotype of considering people who dyed their hair as people who were rebellious or “loved to play” was mentioned again in the narratives of another two participants. Female participant Golden shared her personal experience of being judged in China because her hair that was dyed blond:

“Even that last time that I was with my mom, like, when I had blond hair, I went shopping with my mom, and, the waitress, it seemed that she told my mom something? Like, ‘Is your daughter in her rebellious period?’ and if I was a little bit mischievous? And I was like, ‘no, it’s just fashion’.” (Golden, female)

Another female participant Sticky also reported that she thought there was more prejudice associated with hair dyeing than with hair perming in China:

“Yeah, yeah. Like, for example, dyeing the hair. Dyeing the hair is, like, (people would treat that) more sensitively in China than perming the hair. Like, (people) would think that, they might question if your academic degrees, or maybe like, you do not study well. There would be, there would be such a phenomenon. And maybe (there would consider one as a) girl who loves to play, something like this. There will be such stereotypes.” (Sticky, female)

The lived response of these two participants did not seem to be affected by the judgements and stereotypes on hair dyeing in the Chinese society. When reporting her potential hairstyle choices for the future, participant Golden said that she would like to dye her hair in a “really light golden color from root to tip.” Participant Sticky also had experience of dyeing her hair in the US by herself because after she finished her college application, she “got nothing to do”.

School Authority

As mentioned in “The Daily Code of Conduct of Middle School Students” and Yan (2005), Chinese school authorities tend to have strict regulations on the hairstyles of students. Such a fact was also reflected in the narratives of the participants. The Chinese schools of the participants, however, did not have the exact same hairstyle regulations, and the seriousness of their enforcement also varied. Some participants had stricter hair regulations in their elementary schools and middle schools, but the ban was largely lifted in their high schools.

Female participant Pistol and male participant Moody had this kind of experience:

“In about, primary school and middle school, including perhaps the early stage in high school, I feel like, for example I know some schools would check the students’ appearances including your hairstyle, like checking the color, length, something like

that. They would also check the length of your skirt, and the length of your pants. But, um, us high school students were comparatively better, because, um, I went to (unclear) high school and they did not check, like, we were not asked to wear school uniforms. So we were comparatively freer.” (Pistol, female)

“In elementary school and middle school, because of the requirements of the schools, I cannot keep long hair. Having bangs was ok, but the sides could not be too long, like, could not exceed the ear. I remember the requirement of the middle school was ‘not to keep long hairstyles and weird hairstyles’, something like that, so because of such requirements, in elementary school and middle school, I usually kept a middle-length (hair), like a moderate length.” “In high school, they did not care about it too much, or that we had some ‘freaks’, so... so... um, you know, we set our hairstyles free.” (Moody, male)

This chronological change of hairstyle regulations from elementary school to high school imposed some influence on these two participants’ choices of hairstyles. After the ban was largely lifted, they started to try those previously banned hairstyles. Participant Pistol reported that: “The time that I started the extensive perming, dyeing, and changes in length should be in high school, because our high school did not limit hairstyles and clothing.” Similarly, participant Moody reported that after he entered high school with looser hairstyle regulations, “we just left it to grow. So if it (the hair) was long, it was long. I didn’t really care.”

The detailed aspect of hairstyles regulated also varied from school to school. Female participant Sticky and female participant Crimson mentioned that the schools they attended in China banned female students from braiding their hair with patterns. Long hair tied into a ponytail and short hair with bangs above the brows were the only allowed hairstyles for girls. Female participant Little reported that her middle school had regulations on the color of hair

rings girls could use to tie their hair: “it has to be black or brown, like, deep colors”.

Regarding male students’ hairstyles, male participant Moody mentioned the regulation of “not to keep long hairstyles and weird hairstyles” and “the sides could not be too long, like, could not exceed the ear”. He also mentioned that perming and dyeing were banned in middle schools and high schools.

Besides these detailed aspects of hairstyles that Chinese schools regulated, the seriousness of enforcing these regulations was not the same for every school and even for the same school in different situations. For example, female participant Metallica mentioned the contrast between how her school enforced hairstyle regulations during military training³ and in regular teacher-student interactions:

“I remembered that boys had (explicit regulations on hairstyles). I can’t remember if it was in middle school or high school, maybe my high school was, well, then it was during the military training in middle school, there were boys who were dragged to cut their hair, because there seemed to be barbers at the army. For boys, I remembered that there would be, but it seemed that there were no explicit regulations, maybe there was, but I can’t remember it clearly, but in my memory, sometimes boys would be dragged by teachers and said, ‘the hair should be cut’, or the teacher would tell him ‘your hair should be cut’, and then he had his hair cut by the next day. Something like that.” “But it’s not to say that if he didn’t cut it, the teacher would beat him up or tell his parents. Like, our teacher was almost like our brother when he/she was with us. So it was like, asked him to cut his hair in a jocose tone.” (Metallica, female)

Male participant Aereo recounted how his high school regulated hair dyeing in a comparatively loose manner:

³ Most Chinese schools have one or two weeks of military training for their new students before their first semester starts. It could be held inside the campus and directed by military officers, but it could also be held directly in the barracks. Training contents usually involve parade-stepping, standing at attention, and squatting.

“They didn’t really have any (explicitly written regulations for hair perming), but they might not allow hair dyeing. Like, there should be no explicitly written regulations, but I remember that in high school, there was a classmate who dyed hair, dyed hair into... a greenish color, and it was pretty eye catchy. Then after the flag raising ceremony, the head teacher talked with that student a little bit, like, the school authorities thought that this hairstyle, this hair color was not that appropriate, and you must dye it to a normal color. But I’ve also seen people dye their hair into a chestnut color, like the hair color that it’s hard to tell that it’s dyed. Like, they won’t care about it that much.” “Maybe dyeing the hair into a more red-ish, or chestnut-ish color, there is hair dyeing indeed, but it’s the hair dyeing that is not that apparent to see. Like, the school won’t care much about it.” (Aereo, male)

The lived responses of the participants to these Chinese school regulations on hairstyles were rather analogous: none of the participants chose to violate those school regulations. Their interview responses showed that if they were to manipulate their hairstyle in a way that was prohibited by their school, they did it after they graduated when the ban was lifted.

Compared to the hairstyle regulations of Chinese schools, the participants who attended US high schools reported that hairstyle regulations of US schools were not as strict and detailed. However, one thing in common for most of the US schools was that dyeing unnatural hair colors was banned. For example, male participant Purple described the overall “conservative” ideology at his Protestant high school and how this ideology pervaded in dress code and hairstyle regulations:

“But no matter what, our high school was a Christian school, so like, yeah, you, uh, because the school was Protestant, it did not have that many rules as a Catholic school. But your, well, your hairstyle cannot be overly exaggerated. ““For example,

nobody dyed their hair green, like, no, nobody did that. You know that the parents of the students who attended these schools, they were also very, conservative, so for example in our school you would never see a student with tattoo. You would never see a student with tattoo, and also, um, let me think, we had dress code, for example what is the position of your skirt (the length of the skirt), you cannot expose your shoulders, something like that. We had this kind (of dress code).” “But in general, compared to China, it was very open. For example, if you dye a reasonable color, you dye your hair yellow, right, nobody cares about it. As long as you don’t dye your hair green or purple.” (Purple, male)

Female participant Sticky also reported similar but looser regulations in her high school in the US:

“Yeah, we had that. But it was more about, no unnatural hair color for the whole hair. For example, I couldn’t have pink hair all over my head. But I could, like, a few strands of highlights, like, a few strands of pink hair, not apparent ones. But what it means by ‘cannot dye unnatural hair colors’, is that I could dye my hair blond.”

“Perming is also permitted.” (Sticky, female)

The high school that female participant Black attended, however, was an exception. They did not ban students from dyeing unnatural hair colors, but “The only regulation (from school) is that we could not wear hats.”

Another exception is the high school that female participant Crimson attended in the US. She described how her high school urged a female student to change her hairstyle because of the identity expressed in that hairstyle:

“And as it comes to haircut, I, I don’t remember we had, like, specific rules about my haircut, but I know that, like, because it’s super Christian, so they’re like super anti-gay, super anti-LGBTQ, and they were like, I had a friend who was, like, like, you

could tell that she was a gay (lesbian) at the first glance. And she, she was a girl, and her hair was, like she cut a really short boy's haircut. And she, like, she didn't wear skirts. And, not wearing skirts was fine, but they were like, I think they did not aim at her skirts or the length of hair, what they aimed at was this hair of hers, the identity it encompassed, and you, you couldn't force her to grow her hair long right, and they would constantly talk to her, like, something like, educated her to follow God, stuff like that, I personally thought it was very very ridiculous. But I felt that in this aspect, it was more, like, what this haircut represents, like, instead of this haircut per se."

(Crimson, female)

The lived responses from the participants who attended schools in the US were mixed. For example, the school of female participant Sticky and the school of female participant Kraftwerk had the same hairstyle regulation: the ban on dyeing unnatural hair colors.

However, the responses from these two participants were very different. Participant Sticky said that not a lot of people at her school tried to dye their hair into unnatural colors because they already considered their high school's regulation on hair to be loose enough: "It was too free, on the contrary, not many people wanted to challenge that authority." However, participant Kraftwerk felt limited by the ban and attributed her decision to bleach the below-shoulder portion of her hair and to dye her hair purple after graduation as an act of rebellion:

"I think, if my high school did not have requirements for dyeing the hair that strict, maybe I wouldn't want to dye my hair as soon as I graduated. Like, those really strict requirements stimulated my rebellion a little bit. Like, everybody started to dye their hair as soon as they graduate." (Kraftwerk, female)

She also described the story of how two female students at her high school dyed their hair green and red the day before their graduation commencement to rebel against the school authorities:

“... girls in my high school got very angry. And then one day, when I was a freshman, when the female senior students graduated, there were two students who were disgusted with this system so much, and they dyed their hair the day before graduation. On the commencement, when the whole school was watching, there came a green head and a red head. And then, anyways, they also sent the school an email, like, they sent the email to everybody of that school, like, they said it was not right for the school to do that, we want to rebel, so we dyed our hair. This, like, this event was a very hotly debated event in our high school.” (Kraftwerk, female)

As for universities, none of the participants mentioned any regulation on hairstyles.

Thus, the regulation on hairstyles only existed during the K-12 stage. No participant indicated their will to remain “rebellious” at their universities.

Popular Culture

Several popular cultures imposed great influence on the participants’ preferences and evaluations for certain hairstyles across many life stages. It is noteworthy that these popular cultures did not influence the participants’ past hairstyle choices as much as they influenced the participants’ choice of potential future hairstyles and how they perceived certain hairstyles of other people. Also, the conceived space of popular culture did not change with countries. Its influence on participants hairstyles did not differ whether the participants were in China or in the US.

Short Video Platform

Male participant Purple mentioned the social stereotype in China of a certain type of hairstyle (See Figure 1) that is commonly associated with “She Hui Ren” (社会人) or “Jing

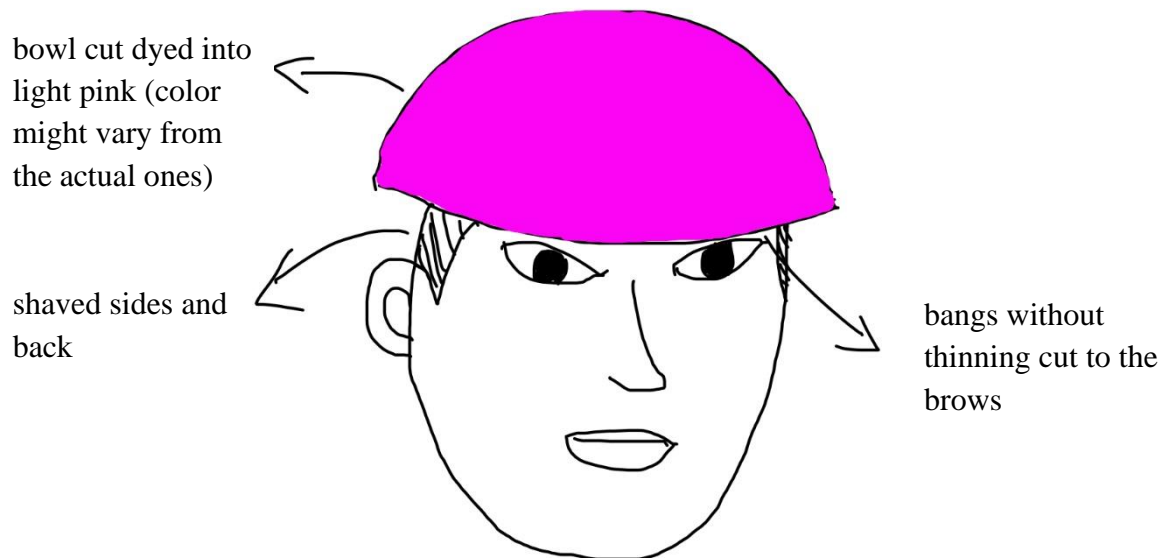
Shen Xiao Huo” (精神小伙),⁴ a subculture prevalent on certain Chinese short video platforms.

“But some hairstyles in China, people would treat them as hairstyles of She Hui Ren and Jing Shen Xiao Huo. You know what I mean.” “I could say that it's aesthetic originated in the Northeast China. An aesthetics that prevails in Northeast China. This kind of hairstyles usually pairs with specific clothing choices. Like when you see it, you'll be like, oh, this person has this hairstyle, and you will feel that he/she will also have this dressing.” (Purple, male)

Participant Purple realized that his lived opinions about this type of hairstyle were affected by this social stereotype: “This illustrates that I also have some stereotypes. For example, when I see this kind of hairstyles, I would have a subtle feeling.”

Figure 1

Illustration of the Hairstyle of She Hui Ren and Jing Shen Xiao Huo as Described by Participant Purple



⁴ This is a unique internet slang in China. The closest parallel that I could think of in the US culture is “Thug Lyfe”. According to Urban Dictionary, “Thug Lyfe” is “A sarcastic way of spelling ‘Thug Life’. Typically used to describe a situation, life, or event that is not really ‘gangsta’ or hardcore, but still crosses some sort of line, like removing a ‘Do Not Remove’ tag on a piece of furniture. It can also be used to describe someone who thinks that their life is hard/fucked up, but is really just ignorant to the fact that they don't meet the definition of a thug.”

Note. This figure is drawn by the researcher according to the description of participant Purple and the photograph he provided.

Movies

Male participant Moody described how he was influenced by Harry Potter movies. The first experience happened when he was a third-grade student. He said in *Goblet of Fire*, Harry Potter had long hair and it was “so damn handsome”, but in *Order of Phoenix* Harry Potter changed his hairstyle drastically, “so I thought cutting (the hair) too short might be terrifying, so I didn’t want, I didn’t cut it very often. I just let it grow.” He also said that “he (Harry Potter) cut it (the hair) too, I don’t know how to explain it, too deliberately, and it does not seem that great. Maybe the effect is not as good as just letting it grow.” As a lived response, participant Moody said he started to grow his hair longer than the buzz cut that he used to have when he was younger due to the influence of Harry Potter movies.

Besides Harry Potter movies, participant Moody also expressed his will to have the same hairstyle as Anton Chigurh in *No Country for Old Men* in the future, which is also a longer hairstyle that covers the ears.

Japanese Anime

Japanese anime exposed some participants to various hairstyles. These hairstyles might influence participants’ choice of their future hairstyles and their stereotypes against certain hairstyles. Male participant Moody who provided the most narratives among the three participants who mentioned the topic of Japanese anime described himself as “poisoned by the Er Ci Yuan⁵” and noted that “I always feel that the Japanese hairstyles are worth trying.” His lived response was reflected in his listing several hairstyles from Japanese anime characters as his potential hairstyle choices for the future, including Vincent from *Cowboy*

⁵ Er Ci Yuan (二次元, “Two-Dimensional Space”), or “weeb” in English is an Internet slang that is used to refer to those people who are obsessive with Japanese anime and Japanese popular culture. It can be used in a pejorative or sarcastic sense, but it could also be used as a neutral term to describe Japanese anime and Japanese popular culture fans.

Bebop: The Movie, Spike from *Cowboy Bebop*, Yang-Wenli from *Legend of the Galactic Heroes*, and Rohan Kishibe from *JoJo's Bizarre Adventure: Diamond Is Unbreakable*. He did note, however, that some of those hairstyles would not fit him. For example, for the hairstyle of Spike, he commented that “it (Spike’s hairstyle) was too similar to a chicken roost; although I want to have that, my face is not good enough.” His lived response about the preference for hairstyles of the opposite sex was also influenced by Rei Ayanami in *Neon Genesis Evangelion* who had a sky-blue bob haircut. He said, “but if I were to say which one is my type, I would say, you know, after I send the picture of Rei Ayanami, you would understand which one is my type.”

Besides participant Moody who described himself as a big fan of Japanese anime, another two participants also mentioned how Japanese anime influenced their stereotypes against certain hairstyles and their own hairstyle choices. Female participant Metallica noted her stereotype against a high ponytail (the ponytail tied at the upper half of the head) and how that influenced her lived response of hairstyle choices:

“I feel like young maidens in the anime, like, I don’t know why, like those young maidens, or something like the ‘dark maidens’, they would tie high ponytails. I feel like they are somewhat energetic or youthful, so I actually avoided this hairstyle for a period of time. Perhaps, I don’t know why, probably that my age has increased, and I want to correspond, I want my appearance to correspond to the growth of my age.

Well, it’s not about getting older, but about becoming a senior at school.” (Metallica, Female)

Female participant Kraftwerk, on the other hand, shared her lived opinions on the identities of those people in China who dyed their hair in a certain way:

“I think Chinese people who dye their hair into strange colors are youngsters, especially a lot of girls of Er Ci Yuan. Um, they dyed (their hair) very, very trendy (colors).” (Kraftwerk, female)

Web Novels

Although the conceived space of web novels is only mentioned by female participant Metallica, these web novels are especially influential among younger generations of China. Participant Metallica talked about how a character in a web novel she liked influenced her lived response of wanting to dye her hair red in the future:

“I want to dye my hair red because I liked red hair when I was very young. Also, I kinda have the feeling that this is because I, I have always been reading this novel called *Dragon Raja*, and it, the female protagonist had, she had red hair.” (Metallica, female)

Girl Groups

Female participant Golden mentioned the conceived space created by girl groups. Although she did not explicitly explain how this conceived space influenced her potential hairstyle choices in the future, the way she narrated this topic indicated girl groups’ potential influence on her:

“I wanna dye it, dye it into that orange color, that kind of hair that you have to have really white skin and you have to make up every day to be able to hold it, like that kind of hair color of girl groups. But I don’t think it’s realistic because it hurts the hair too much, and it takes a lot for you to maintain it.” (Golden, female)

Celebrities

Female participant Crimson mentioned the conceived space of celebrities in her narrative. She noted how the appearances of certain models and celebrities pressure girls to look in a certain way:

“I think there might be, there might be a kind of social pressure in it, an invisible pressure, like, pressure girls to look in a certain way, looks like a model, looks like, you know, looks like, celebrities, like, unlike personals, I feel like it’s like, look like that is something you have to do as a girl.” (Crimson, female)

When the researcher asked participant Crimson about specific celebrities who influenced her, she replied that she liked those models in Victoria’s Secret. The first model she mentioned was Taylor Hill. She liked the vibe that Taylor had and appreciated Taylor’s having her own sense of beauty and never deliberately shaping herself. As a lived response, participant Crimson used to dye her hair brown because of her affection for Taylor Hill. Another celebrity she liked was Selena Gomez. Participant Crimson said that Selena did not influence her in terms of hair, but she really liked Selena’s songs and Selena’s caring for other people.

Fashion

Female participant Metallica considered dyeing her hair into black blue as one of her potential hairstyle choices for the future. One of the reasons was that she considered this color to be “popular”.

Professions and School Activities

Eight of the 11 participants mentioned that professions or club activities established a conceived space. This conceived space was in effect in different life stages for different participants depended on their life experiences. Some of these participants had experiences working in the medical field, in retail, and in a dental practice; others participated in various clubs or activities at school such as dance club, track and field team, and musical performances. Each of these professions and club activities formed its unique conceived space, controlling or imposing expectations on the hairstyles of its members. According to the narratives of my participants, the conceived space of professions and club activities have two patterns of regulating hairstyles: rigid or necessary requirements and soft requirements.

Rigid or Necessary Requirements

Rigid or necessary requirements refer to hairstyle regulations that are necessary for certain professions because it would cause great inconvenience if people of those professions violated these regulations. These rigid or necessary requirements only varied with different professions or club activities and did not necessarily vary with different countries. For instance, female participant Little was on the track and field team when she was in middle school in China. Her lived response to this was to cut her hair shorter to a length that barely surpassed her collarbones: “Later because I participated in the track and field team, like, it was very inconvenient (to have long hair), so my hair was, I kept it to a length that it could be tied up, but, like, it only had a little bit of length.” Female participant Pistol who did her internship as a medical worker explained why certain regulations about long hair are necessary at hospitals:

“In hospitals, coiled-up hair is a must, because if you (your hair) stick out all over the place, it would be inconvenient for you to do the surgery. So, like, coiled-up hair is a must, because they have to wear surgery hats, like you have to coil it up, it’s like the swimming hat that covers up (the head) completely.”

Female participant Black, who was a pianist, introduced why tying her long hair up is necessary during her performances when she was in her high school in the US:

“I mentioned that I couldn't wear my hair down because, like, I am now in a ponytail, if I wear my hair down, the hair on the sides would move to the front and would block my sight, so I have to tie it up. Tying it up, is mainly tying the hair at the back of my ears, so that it would not fall to the front.” (Black, female)

Participants who practiced these professions or participated in these club activities always conformed to the rigid and necessary requirements on hairstyles since not conforming to these requirements would cause great inconveniences or even failures.

Soft Requirements

Contrary to rigid or necessary requirements, soft requirements are not about whether the job can be done propitiously for certain professions, but more about people's general impression and stereotypes about people in those professions. According to the responses from the participants, black hair dark and darker hair colors were generally more acceptable for jobs and interviews in China. Dyeing, especially dyeing hair into lighter colors, was considered less acceptable. Female participant Golden mentioned her interview with MUJI.⁶ MUJI's regulations indicated that their employees must have "dark hair colors and cannot overly dye their hair." The participant had blond hair at that time, but she did not respond to this conceived space by dyeing her hair into a deeper color. Nevertheless, she was still afraid that she would not be admitted. Ultimately, she was refused not because of her hair color, but because she had to go back to the US for school shortly, and MUJI thought she would not be able to work for them for so long and invited her to "come back to the interview next time." This example shows that such regulations on hair dyeing are soft requirements that does not interfere with the normal operation of the profession and might not be enforced seriously. Female participant Little also talked about the stereotypes against hair dyeing she sensed in certain professions:

"I feel like, also for dyeing the hair, perhaps some professions, some formal professions don't want you to dye your hair in flashy manners very, like, yeah." "And I feel that people like to presuppose your character through your hair, which is pretty normal. People just do something like this. Including what I just said about professions, it was no more than that people in the company would think you are not that descent, or if you are, yeah, like these." (Little, female)

⁶ MUJI is a Japanese retail company that sells daily necessities. Its stores are widespread in China.

Contrary to negative stereotypes associated with hair dyeing in professional settings in China, formal and appropriate looks could be advantageous in these settings. Female participant Metallica mentioned one of her colleagues with whom she used to work. That colleague looked very young, and thus was treated as a child by others when working. Participant Metallica recounted her conversation with the colleague:

“She said that because she looks young, people always treat her as a child, but she said when I first arrived I looked like a professional woman or something, like I was well- disguised, like shaped a seemingly serious and very professional figure through my hairstyle and wearing, and people would, she said people’s first impression of you is strongly associated with how they treat you later or, like you meet your customers for the first time, they would judge you according to your appearance, like how they treat you and your position on their minds would be greatly different. I think this is very, very necessary.” (Metallica, female)

As a lived response, participant Metallica considered the use of hairstyles and dressing to create a serious, mature, and professional look at work to be necessary and beneficial.

Occasions and Events

Even for the same or similar hair length and trim, participants manipulated their hair in different ways such as curling, tying, and applying pomade according to different occasions and events in which they would participate. Participants mentioned the following occasions and events for which they would manipulate their hair in specific ways to construct a personal image different than usual.

Formal Contexts

Formal contexts included proms, professional meetings, conferences, and interviews, in which a more formal and delicate look was expected. Male participant Purple shared his

experience of having a prom at his high school in the US. As a lived response, he asked his host family to cut his hair in a specific way and styled his hair with hair products:

“What was my hair like, in the first place my hair grew very long, and before the prom, my host family asked me, she said ‘do you think I need to manage your hair a little bit for you’, and I said, ‘so please cut the sides and the back a little shorter.’ And so she only cut my sides and my back and the top was actually very long. That was the hairstyle I said, a comparatively manipulatable hairstyle. And then I applied hair spray and rubbed it for quite a while, like I made a, an image that was not me, a comparatively good hairstyle.” (Purple, male)

Similarly, female participant Kraftwerk described how she would manipulate her hair in formal contexts: “I would curl my hair in formal contexts, like, I would curl all my hair up a little bit. Um, it makes my hair look fluffier. And, um, I would definitely wash my hair before formal contexts, this is a must.”

The most detailed case was provided by female participant Black who was a pianist. She described her chronological change of hairstyles for her piano performances when she was in her high school in the US from her freshman year to her senior year. In her freshman year she put her hair into a bun due to her lack of knowledge on potential hairstyles for music performances. She expressed her dissatisfaction with that hairstyle during the interview:

“My technique of putting my hair into a bun was very very awful. It looked like my head had a lump of, something. I don’t know. It was a very very awful hairstyle. It was like a boiled egg with a small thing on it. Like, really awful hairstyle.” (Black, female)

In her sophomore year, she decided to tie her hair into a ponytail instead of putting it into a bun for performances. She was more satisfied with this new way of styling her hair: “at least it looked better than my hairstyle in freshman year. At least it did not look like a boiled egg.”

In her junior year she knew some friends who also played piano and she started to participate in formal competitions. This was when she finally found a hairstyle with which she was satisfied and easy to explain to other people so that they could help her make this hairstyle:

“At first my technique of plaiting the hair was really awful, but, like, my teachers would also help me plait my hair. And especially, I went to Carnegie Hall once to perform when I was a junior. Before that I had to find a comparatively good-looking hairstyle, so I researched a lot by myself. The result was to pick a strand of hair from each side, plait them into braids, and tie them up in the back. This was my hairstyle for recitals in junior year. And I found that hairstyle really easy to explain and very suitable, very suitable for recitals, so that became my hairstyle for the recitals since then. Like, since then, on any occasion that I need to play piano, I was always in the hairstyle I just described.” (Black, female)

Hanging out with Friends

There existed a large contrast in the lived responses of the participants when encountering the conceived space of hanging out with friends. On the one hand, some participants claimed that they did not care much about their hairstyles when they hang out with friends. Here are two examples of such participants:

“Um, well, like, if its comparatively casual, like at home or go out with friends, like, when there is no need for adjustments, maybe, normally, for the current length (of my hair), I would wear my hair down.” (Pistol, female)

“Usually, for example when I go to school, or I eat out with friends, I won’t care about it.” (Moody, male)

On the other hand, other participants claimed that they would manage their hair well when hanging out with their friends:

“And, maybe, say, I get together with my friends, and you’ll feel, you haven’t been seeing them for a very long time, and you’ll want to, like, present yourself in a, like, the best that you can possible to, and you will manage your hair, something like that.”

(Crimson, female)

Such a contradictory lived reaction could even exist within the same individual. In her responses, Female participant Metallica gave two distinct responses under different circumstances. When she needed to go out with a specific well-acquainted friend, she would not care too much about her hairstyle: “(I would) act at my greatest ease and like... yeah, like don’t care about the hairstyle and I just go out like that.” However, she would take a different action when she needed to hang out with her “besties” and knew that they would take pictures: “when you go out with your besties and you know you’re gonna take pictures today, you would definitely make yourself up painstakingly. Like, you have to wash your hair, something like this.” It was unclear from the interview whether it was the specific friend with whom she went out or it was the fact that they would take pictures during the hang out made the difference.

Eating out with Families

Two participants mentioned the conceived space of eating out with their families. However, they had different lived responses for that same conceived space. Male participant Moody claimed that he would “tidy my hair up a little bit” when he had to eat out with his family, but female participant Crimson claimed that she would not do much to her hair when she had to eat out with her family.

Other Occasions

All the following conceived spaces were only brought up by one of the 11 participants.

Female participant Metallica brought forth the conceived space of romantic dating, for which sometimes she would tie twin ponytails as a lived response: “For example, when I go out with my boyfriend, maybe sometimes I want to (make myself look) innocent, timid, and cute, so I might, I might tie twin ponytails, sometimes, yeah, sometimes.”

Female participant Crimson mentioned the conceived space of night clubs, for which she would manage her hair well and wash it if she knew that “a good-looking boy or girl would also come.”

Female participant Kraftwerk mentioned that she would manipulate her hair in different ways when she had long hair according to the greasiness of her hair to make it look better: “When I had long hair, I coiled it up, because, um, let me think, I tied it up, say, if I cannot wash my hair for 3 days, in the first day I would wear my hair down. Second day, a ponytail. Third day, in a bun. It is in direct ratio with the greasiness of my hair.”

Two female participants reported that they would tie their long hair up during physical exercises for convenience, such as working out and dancing.

Race

The conceived space of race refers to the biological and genetic constraints that genes have on the hair of people from different races. For example, Asian people have relatively dark, smooth, and straight hair and relatively flat back of their heads as opposed to Caucasian people who have relatively light-colored and curly hair and relatively round back of their heads. These features of the hair of different races could lead to a lot of constraints on hairstyles.

The most frequently mentioned topics about the racial difference of hair characteristics was that it contributed to the open-mindedness of the US people and schools toward various hair colors compared to Chinese people and schools. Male participant Purple attributed the larger acceptance for hair dyeing at his high school in the US as opposed to

Chinese schools to the racial diversity of the US population: “Also, just think about it, in the US, people’s hair has many types of colors, so they cannot really distinguish it.” Female participant Sticky also attributed the lack of a ban on hair perming in her high school in the US to the natural curls in some US people’s hair: “Because American people’s hair is like, naturally curling, so we could perm our hair.”

Another topic brought up by the participants was how the racial difference on hair characteristics influenced the hair-cutting technique of hair stylists. Male participant Purple analyzed why his host mother, who was a beautician, could not give him a haircut with which he was satisfied in light of the physical characteristics of Asian people: “What’s the reason, one of the reasons is that there is a slight difference in head shapes, for example like our heads, maybe the back of our heads is flatter. And then there is the difference in the texture of the hair.” Female participant Kraftwerk also mentioned that “I often hear people say that foreign people (non-Chinese people) don’t quite understand how to cut Asian people’s hair, something like the quality of the hair.” As noted in the section on the conceived space of the hair stylists, American hair stylists’ lack of skill to cut Asian people’s hair might have jeopardized the participants’ overall evaluation among the participants and resulted in the participants’ lived response of choosing to go to hair salons only in China or those owned by Chinese hair stylists.

The last topic regarding the conceived space of race was how this influenced people’s choice of hair dyeing. Female participant Kraftwerk mentioned her admiration for Caucasian people’s lighter hair color which gave them the advantage of dyeing their hair into lighter colors because they would not need to bleach their hair first and the dyed color would not look awkward when it gradually faded. Chinese people who dyed their hair into lighter colors, however, could not enjoy this advantage:

“I admired them a lot at that time, I think the texture of hair, especially when dyeing, the hair has a lot to do with your race. Your hair texture, and the color of your hair determine how much you could tinker with it to a great extent. Like if they want to dye lighter colors, they don’t need to bleach their hair. Oh my god I admire this so much, and then, like, they dye their hair pink, like the more they fade (unclear), I really admire that. Like, they could actually fade into that color, I really admire that. Like, if we bleach our hair and then the color fades, (unclear). Like, a lot of people dye their hair blond, and their hair is like caramel pudding, the upper part is black, and the lower part is blond. Like, it is very awkward. And especially those who want to dye other colors that have to bleach the hair really light, like, it depends on what color you want to dye. This actually has a lot to do with race.” (Kraftwerk, female)

Another female participant Pistol shared her conversation with a hair stylist about what she knew about Asian people’s (which included Chinese people) choice of dyeing their hair. The hair stylist claimed that when Asian people attempted to make some changes to their hair, they were more prone to change their haircuts instead of their hair colors. This tendency was the exact opposite of that of the European-American people who predominantly wanted to change their hair color:

“Like, um, he/she thought, like East Asian area, like Japan and Korea, and China, people’s pursuance on hairstyle was more on length and the curl of girls’ hair instead of colors, like the change in colors were still similar to the original color like Asian people’s black (hair), made some adjustments to it, such as brown or grey et cetera. But, um, when he/she was studying in Europe and America, she found that American changed their hair more in terms of the colors. Like, um, for some comparatively bright colors and light colors, you need to first bleach your hair and then do it. But for

them (American people) there is no such a need because the original color of their hair was comparatively light, like blond or silver.” (Pistol, female)

The lived opinion of participant Pistol, however, was to disagree with this trend and the corresponding stereotype in the hairdressing profession:

“So, like, (it) provides a different perspective, like within the, um, the hairdressing profession, they feel like, um, there is a stereotype for Asian people, like they would tell me, you, as an Asian person, your skin is comparatively yellow, and light colors does not fit you, so I could only switch between, like deep black, um, black, brown, and grey. He/she says light colors do not fit you, like, it’s a stereotype, and he/she said, like, white people would look better (with those hair colors), and I was like, ummmm, that’s not the case, something like that.” (Pistol, female)

Gender

As illustrated in the introduction, hairstyles can become gendered personal fronts. This holds true according to the narratives of the participants. Here are the features of the conceived space of gender extracted from the narratives of the participants.

Females

Expectations and Preferences for Females’ Hairstyles.

For females, longer hair was expected and preferred. Two participants explicitly stated that they viewed, or thought others viewed, longer hair as a symbol of femininity:

“I feel like, in general, people feel like buzz cut or bare head are comparatively very masculine symbols, and (unclear), but very long hair or even ponytail or waist-length hair are comparatively feminine symbols. I (unclear) an article called “The Sociology of Hair”. It talked about, like, for girls, long hair is unrestrained sexuality, and cutting the hair short is to restrain sexuality. Like, this is what people would subconsciously assume about each other when seeing this (hairstyle). Like, they might not say them

explicitly, (unclear), and I think it (the article) does make sense. According to my own experience, I think, um, it is very true. Yeah. (Kraftwerk, female)

Female participant Pistol also expressed similar thoughts: “I feel like, in general, people feel like buzz cut or bare head are comparatively very masculine symbols, and (unclear), but very long hair or even ponytail or waist-length hair are comparatively feminine symbols.”

Through the responses of male participants, it was also indicated that overly short hair (such as the regular short haircut for men) were less preferable for them when they were asked about the preference for hairstyles of the opposite sex. Male participant Purple said: “In the first place I, I feel that, like a very very short hair would make girls, lack a little bit of femininity.” Similarly, male participant Aereo said:

“My own opinions toward girls, in fact, I think that short hair, like slightly shorter hair but not very short, at least not the same as boys, the same length as the hairstyle I had earlier. Hair approximately to the shoulders or to the neck, I think that’s all acceptable. I still think that this depends on individuals. Some people do suit those slightly shorter hairstyles very well, like neck-length hair, and somebody suits longer hairstyles better.” (Aereo, male)

There is one exception to this, however. Female participant Metallica reported that in her hometown girls were asked to keep the short hair which only reached their lower jaw. Her lived response to this act was her condolence and anger:

“I feel like it’s really cruel. In the most youthful and beautiful age of girls, people asked them to keep this kind of hairstyle. Some people might look good in this hairstyle, but a lot of people don’t. Also, they took charge of boys’ hairstyles, maybe, I’m not a boy and I don’t understand quite well how boys perceive hairstyles or something, but I think for girls, typically, girls who have long hair are all, I remember when I was young, I did not want to cut my hair badly. So, I feel like that kind of

requirement to cut their hair short or something, in fact, to a certain extent, it was a devastation for those young hearts. I feel like, in worse contexts, they might cry all night, like, it is pretty scary. I feel like... it was very morbid. Yeah, it was morbid. Why? What's wrong with them? Yeah, right." (Metallica, female)

The narratives quoted above describing the general stereotypes on females' and males' hairstyles did not specify whether these stereotypes existed in China or in the US. However, a few participants did specify or contrast between countries when they talked about stereotypes regarding females' and males' hairstyles. For example, male participant Aereo presented how stereotypes about males' and females' hairstyles were different in China and in the US according to his observation:

"Chinese, I think it is more about, traditional opinions want females to keep longer hair and want males to keep shorter hair. At least this is the education that I received, how I was instructed to look at the hair of boys and girls. But I have seen a lot of foreign boys with very long hair, and there are also foreign girls who have very short hair, like, there are all kinds of hairstyles. So, there is greater acceptability abroad. They don't care much about it. There isn't that kind of stereotype. What I mean is not "not caring about their hair" but there is no such stereotype regarding the length of the hair, and hairstyles." (Aereo, male)

Female participant Pistol also noted later in her interview that she found the stereotypes about male hairstyles were overall more salient in China:

"And this, I think, in fact, that (the researcher) chooses China as the study object is comparatively typical, because I don't know other countries well, but in terms of the difference between China and the US, I think China... um, would have more biases toward male's hairstyles." (Pistol, female)

Specific Stereotypes about Females' Hairstyles.

Some female participants recounted specific cases of how expectations and stereotypes in the society formed a conceived space on the hair length of females. Female participant Metallica used to be asked about her gender before and after she entered kindergarten. Her mother buzzed her hair down to just a few centimeters because her mother heard that after shaving the hair, the new-born hair would be better and healthier. Participant Metallica remembered that some people asked her mother if she was a boy or a girl. Although this query about gender was meant in jest, it somehow reflected the gendered stereotype for hairstyles in China.

Female participant Kraftwerk listed some stereotypes she knew about females who did not possess long hair as expected, including cancer patients, people who take things too hard, and lesbians. Her lived response to these stereotypes was that she had not yet dared to try a buzz cut that she wanted to have:

“I want to know what’s the feeling of it (the buzz cut) having. It’s something that I haven’t experienced. Um, I still want to try or experience different things. And then, for example, but I will also worry about, like, one of my biggest worries is that, after I get a buzz cut, one it is cold, and second, how other people would view me. Like, other people would think, do you have cancer, or what’s the matter with you, as a girl, are you taking things too hard, why do you get a buzz cut. Like, I’ll be very worried about these thoughts.” (Kraftwerk, female)

Even so, participant Kraftwerk did get a “boy’s short hair” (not as short as a buzz cut) when she was a rising junior in college since she said she worried less about whether others would assume. Moreover, she said another reason for her to cut get that hair cut was her desire to combat the gender stereotypes imposed on her when she used to have long hair:

“But later, I thought that other people were, it was exactly because I don’t want others to, like, assume anything about me because I keep long hair. It was exactly because of

their opinions that, um, I'm aware of their perspectives, so I cut my hair short. Like, I don't want everybody to assume a lot of whimsical things when they see me. Like, I don't know what you are assuming, but I know when I have other hairstyles, when I have longer hair, I don't want you to assume what you have assumed (when I have longer hair)." (Kraftwerk, female)

Despite her will to combat the conceived space of gender on hairstyles, another lived response of hers reveals the persisting influence of this conceived space on her. She said: "Because (I) look too similar to a boy, when I see myself in the mirror, sometimes I cannot accept it." She also mentioned that she intentionally made herself look less feminine through her dressing styles because she wanted to avoid others' excessive attention on her due to her violation of the gender stereotype on hair length.

Besides stereotypes against females who have shorter hair than expected, there also existed stereotypes about females who dyed their hair. These stereotypes can sometimes be humiliating. Female participant Metallica recalled several gender-specific humiliating stereotypes held by Chinese families about females who dyed their hair, and she expressed her lived feelings about it:

"But it seems that, in some comparatively, like, I don't know why, I feel like in my perception, a lot of other people say that the stereotype is that only those who are not decent would dye their hair in weird colors. And I remember that I saw others complaining from various social media that, for example, for example a girl dyed their hair orange or pink, her parents would talk to her in a very, I feel like, a very malicious tone, like 'you are like a whore' or something. Then I think this kind of, this kind of judgment is very scary. But I feel like there is no such a problem between peers right now, but older generations would judge hairstyles and the hairstyles

colors.” “Sometimes they would associate, like, like ‘whores’ or ‘shameless. or, like, they think it’s too ostentatious.” (Metallica, female)

Female participant Crimson narrated the social expectation she felt for girls’ appearances not only about hairstyles, but also for their general look:

“I think there might be, there might be a kind of social pressure in it, an invisible pressure, like, pressure girls to look in a certain way, looks like a model, looks like, you know, looks like, celebrities, like, unlike personals, I feel like it’s like, look like that is something you have to do as a girl.” (Crimson, female)

Males

Expectations and Preferences for Males’ Hairstyles.

As indicated in the narratives quoted from the last section from female participant Kraftwerk and female participant Pistol that compared the stereotypes about male and female hairstyles, it is already reflected that shorter hair was expected and preferred for males, especially in China. This expectation and preference were also inherently reflected from female participants’ reports about their preference for hairstyles of the opposite sex. The more appreciated quality was “clean and tidy.” The female participants seldom specified the length of the hair, but sometimes a shorter hair length was implied as an essential condition for the definition of a “clean and tidy” hairstyle. Here are a few examples:

“Well, my personal preference, um, my personal preference is boys with clean and tidy hairstyles, because my personal type is more prone to, like, I like those sporty sunny boys, so the stereotype given boy these boys to the people is, the stereotype is, like, these boys would be comparatively (unclear), like the undercut, like those comparatively clean and tidy hairstyles.” (Sticky, female)

“I think, hairstyle, well, hairstyles of the opposite sex depend on how one looks, yeah, but, normally, like, normally, you know, like, I think as long as it’s not unkempt,

greasy, and as long as one takes care of his hair it will be ok, as long as one looks clean and tidy that will be ok.” (Golden, female)

“Um, my personal preference is, um, shorter, I guess. Like, long hair is also fine, but it can’t be long, like, it can’t be very messy, this I feel like, it’s more about the tidiness. Lile, um, because I think maybe shorter hair is easier to manage and is easier to be kept clean and tidy.” (Crimson, female)

In contrast, two female participants specified that they preferred longer hair as the hairstyle of the opposite sex because of the uniqueness and the rareness of long hair for males.

“In fact, I would think that boys, um, keep that, you could imagine it, like, like, shave the sides and tie up a little bun in the center here.” “In fact, it’s not that I have some special preference to this specific kind, but that as long as (the hairstyle) is different from (those hairstyles of) most (people) who walk on the street, it would be comparatively special, because, um, I don’t like everybody in the same appearance so much. Wouldn’t it be boring? Like, when you walk in the street and see 10 girls, they should have 10 different hairstyles, but when you see 10 boys, eight of them may have the same (hairstyle), so the two different ones would be special, so I would think, it is better not to look the same with others.” (Pistol, female)

“I find that, for boys with long hair, like, their hair exceeds my hairstyle, almost reaching the shoulders, I would always give them a second look. This is (unclear) true. This is what I found from self-observation. But this would not influence (unclear). It doesn’t mean anything. I think it’s a, I don’t mind (their hairstyle) so much. Like, if the other person, like, if I see a boy with long hair, I will give a second look.” “But I would, I would think that boys with long hair, I would think that they are interesting, like, why would they have such long hair.” (Kraftwerk, female)

Specific Stereotypes on Males’ Hairstyles.

Similar to negative stereotypes associated with females who perm or dye their hair, the preference for unpermed and undyed hair for males was reflected in the responses of two female participants:

“I hate unctuous boys, and, unctuous boys, I feel like they are that kind of, like, in the streets there are (people with) perm, like, there are good perms, but those bad ones look unctuous.” “Also, maybe personally I can’t quite accept boys who dye their hair yellow, like those apprentices at the barber shop, I can’t quite accept that.” (Metallica, female)

“But for boys, I feel like, um, I feel like, well, yeah, like I feel like I seem to have greater acceptability for darker hair colors, like, not acceptability, like I feel, I don’t know, because I feel that few boys, dye their hair, like, if you dye your hair you would be comparatively obtrusive, because of the quantity. but I feel that it’s fine, because I seldom care much about others’ hair colors.” (Little, female)

A special case about male hair dyeing is the dyeing of the color green. In Chinese tradition, “wearing a green hat” is the metaphor for being cuckolded, and the green hair shares a similar connotation. A lived response to this was from male participant Moody who took the hairstyle of Rohan Kishibe as one of his future choices of hairstyles due to the influence of Japanese Anime. However, he claimed that he would not adopt Rohan’s hair color, which was green.

Comparing the Two Genders

Besides the stereotypes, expectations, and regulations imposed solely on male or female hairstyles, there arose some features when the participants compared stereotypes across these two genders.

First, different participants seemed to disagree on whether the society constrained males’ hairstyles more than females’ hairstyles or vice versa. Female participant Pistol stated

that: “I feel that the color and length of boys’ hair and their hairstyles are comparatively more constrained by this society.” She later elaborated on this statement by giving examples:

“I feel like, in general, people feel like buzz cut or bare head are comparatively very masculine symbols, and (unclear), but very long hair or even ponytail or waist-length hair are comparatively feminine symbols. But when a girl chooses buzz cut or short hair, in fact people will think, well, it is special. But when boys, if they tie ponytails or grow their hair long, it will make people feel that, not only special, but people will think that you are strange, so I think that this is a very general opinion.” (Pistol, female)

Based on her knowledge in philosophy, participant Pistol proposed a possible explanation for this phenomenon:

“Em, because, because I am, um, doing the Philosophy Major, so there are a lot of discussions about questions like this. Like, societal and some, um, like discussions about prejudices. And, um, one opinion I’ve heard but I do not quite agree with it is that: they would attribute all, like distinctions between genders, to that we are in a patriarchal society, and all these are misogynistic. But, I feel that, for example, this example of hairstyles provides a counterexample to a certain extent. Because comparatively, you are more acceptable for females (on hairstyles), but not for male. So, I would think, like, like, patriarchy is not necessarily like, males are superior, and misogyny belittles women. In fact, sometimes, it is a constraint for both genders. Like, you have set that male are more masculine and they should be, um, like, powerful, or like, should not have such a redundant thing as long hair. It (patriarchy) is in fact a constraint for both genders.” (Pistol, female)

However, female participant Crimson stated that “In China, however, judgments were posed both on girls and boys, especially for girls.” This seemed to contradict with participant Pistol’s opinion.

The second feature spanning both genders that arose from the narratives of the participants was that some female interviewees considered females pursued beauty more than males, and females paid more attention to their hairstyles and appearances compared to males. When female participant Little talked about how her desire to experience different hairstyles propelled her to cut her hair short in the past, she added a comment regarding how the desire to experience different hairstyles might vary according to the gender: “I think girls, probably have these kinds of thoughts, like, like wanting to change their hairstyles and so on.” She also stated that she thought girls were more prone to discuss hairstyles and share opinions about hairstyles with surrounding people compared to boys when she later talked about how she discussed hairstyles in her daily life. Another female participant, Metallica, also thought that girls would be more prone to observe themselves and to think about what hairstyles fit them than boys.

The chronological change of attitudes towards gendered hairstyles

Although the conceived space of gender on hairstyles was always present, participants’ lived responses to this conceived space might change during their maturation process. Some participants conformed to or believed in these gender stereotypes regarding hairstyles when they were younger, but they no longer conformed or believed in such stereotypes after they grew older. For example, when asked about potential hairstyle choices for this future, female participant Pistol responded that she would like to cut her hair shorter, “almost similar to a buzz cut or cut it to my lower jaw”, which was a hairstyle that she used to resist when she was in elementary school in China:

Because I remember, it should be, um, when I was in elementary school, my family members used to cut it for me. It was, um, at that time, because, um, I did not quite like it at that time. At that time, I thought girls should grow their hair long, so at that time I was comparatively resistant (to this shorter hairstyle). But when I retrospect from now, I think that, well, I could try it for a second time. (Pistol, female)

Female participant Kraftwerk was also obsessed with the image of “floating long hair” when she was younger. However, she abandoned this obsession when she entered her high school in the US and decided to cut her hair shorter:

“I think another reason was, I thought that other kids all had that hair style, and I liked it pretty much as well, like, I want to see the feminine kind of, um, like, floating long hair, that kind of image. Later I found it impossible, and I, um, after that I felt it didn’t matter, so I started to try out all kinds of strange things such as dyeing and cutting (my hair) shorter.” (Kraftwerk, female)

She attributed her change to her understanding that she would never achieve the image she imagined with the quality of her hair:

“And then until I, let me think, high school, that I realized that, say, like, the texture of my hair could not achieve that “long floating hair”. My hair was not that thick, like, and, long hair, like, my hair was easy to get greasy, so it was easy to attach to my face. In fact, it was a very unsightly appearance. And then I tried, say, then in high school I tried to cut my hair short.” (Kraftwerk, female)

COVID-19

The pandemic caused by COVID-19 began in 2020 in the US and continued into 2021. The lives of Chinese international students in the US were greatly disrupted. No matter if they chose to stay in the US or to return to China, the quarantine and other inconveniences

caused by the pandemic were dilemmas that they had to face. The conceived space of the COVID-19 pandemic generated manifold lived responses of the participants.

During the quarantine, some participants started to cut or dye their own hair. Male participant Purple described how he honed his skill of self-cut during the quarantine:

“I have started to cut my own hair since the pandemic. Yeah, I got this skill not so long before now, but I was pretty satisfied with my very first self-cut. At the very beginning I was like ‘damn, this really works’, like, uh, I am more satisfied with this hairstyle then those given by the barbers in the past.” “I have cut my own hair for four to five times” (Purple, male)

Female participant Metallica also dyed her hair red during the quarantine to combat the boredom: “The time when I dyed my hair again in my junior year was, (the hair) was also dyed by (the name of her friend), like, I was too bored during the pandemic, so I bought that kind of foam hair dye and we did it at home.”

Female participant Pistol mentioned cutting and dyeing her hair after the quarantine in China in order to embrace a new state of life:

“And, one point that I would like to mention is that, this year, after I came back to China because of the pandemic, because I did the quarantine in Shanghai and now return to Shenzhen, so at that time, when I was released from quarantine and went back to Shenzhen, the first thing I did was to cut my hair short, cut my hair short, and, and dyed a color. That would be a type of, how to put it, a change to an experience, and try to get rid of that condition before.” (Pistol, female)

Besides this, participant Pistol expressed her will to recover a hairstyle that she used to have before because of the lack of image recording of her in that hairstyle:

“Also, including, um, the very long red hair I had before, because, um, I cut, um, not long after I made that style, I went to the US and the pandemic happened and

everybody quarantined at home, so I did not have many photos or videos. Like, like, I really like that hairstyle, but there remain not many photos or videos, so I would think I want to make (that style) again...” (Pistol, female)

Contrary to the above-mentioned participants who cut or dye their hair during the quarantine, male participant Aereo took this chance to grow his hair longer:

And then the COVID came, and it led to my unable to go back home this summer vacation. Like, starting from January, at the end of January, before school starts, I got a haircut once. But I haven't cut it since then. Now it has grown very long. In fact I've thought about getting a haircut, but there is this pandemic, the barber shops are closed.” (Aereo, male)

Private Sphere

The conceived space of private sphere refers to the influence imposed on people's hairstyles by one's immediate private sphere such as friends and peers. The conceived space of the private sphere had three main features according to the narratives of the participants:

First, when a particular hairstyle was present in one's private sphere, participants' hairstyle choices tended to be influenced by that style. The lived responses from the participants to this influence, however, differed from one another.

Some participants chose to assimilate their hairstyles to the surroundings. Such assimilation of their hairstyles to the style might be propelled by participants' own preference for the hairstyle or by the sense of awkwardness and uncomfortableness caused by having a different hairstyle from other people. For example, female participant Metallica recounted her chronological change of lived responses to the conceived space created by her peers while in the college in the US. When she first entered university, she tried not to make herself look too “exquisite” or “strange” or “fashionable”, because “everybody just wears a hoodie, pajamas or T-shirt and they go out”. As a result, she said “I didn't really make my appearance in the

way that I really liked.” A second example of the influence of one’s private sphere was provided by female participant Crimson. She remembered the “invisible peer pressure” between adolescent girls when she was in her high school in the US. They would like the same hairstyle if they saw somebody had a good-looking one. She considered this as both an appreciation and an implicit peer pressure. She also mentioned the prevalence of White people’s style among her peers at school:

“I had a lot of white girl friends around me, because my high school was a comparatively white high school. And, and, there weren’t a lot of Asian, and these few Asian people also wanted to assimilate into white, so, like, a lot of ABC⁷ girls wanted to change their appearances into those of white people, they talk like a white girl, and they, like, dress up like a white girl, you know, and their style was all like that, you bleach your hair really blond, or you, anyway it was like that really ABC, and that very white style. And because I didn’t have a lot of international students as friends around me, more of them were white people and Asian American friends who wanted to assimilate into white people.” (Crimson, female)

As a lived response to that, she also bleached her hair gold and started to make up more in an “American casual style” rather than the “Japanese, Korean, or Chinese style” that she had before.

However, not all participants who encountered a style within their private sphere tried to assimilate themselves. One participant, female participant Golden, presented her unique lived response to the private sphere. Before she entered her university in the US after graduating from her high school in the US, she highlighted her hair and bleached it blond. During her winter break of the first year, she bleached her hair again, and this time “more thoroughly.” When asked about her motivation of bleaching her hair gold instead of choosing

⁷ American-born Chinese.

other colors, such as the “reddish brown” hair she used to dye when she was in high school, one of her reasons was: “Everybody has this hair color, I don’t want to dye the same hair color as they do.” This lived response revealed that instead of assimilating herself to the surrounding, she sought to manifest her uniqueness in character and thus detached herself from the surrounding.

The second feature of the private sphere as a conceived space was its changeability. When a style disappeared or was replaced by another one, the interviewees would often change their hairstyles accordingly. Sometimes a stronger will of expressing oneself would also cancel off the influence of a particular vibe. Participant Metallica initially tried to assimilate herself into the look of her peers at her university in her freshman year, but she started to disregard the vibe and to pursue her own path after entering sophomore year. She said: “I clarified some issues of my identity and knew clearly what’s my favorite look of myself, and, and started to look for my most comfortable look and to express my favorite look of myself through hairstyles, wearing, so I had a lot of variations of my hairstyles.” Participant Crimson also reported that she changed back to the “normal” Asian style from the “casual American style” after going back to China after graduating from her high school in the US, exposing herself to a different private sphere in China, meeting new Chinese friends who would attend the same university as she would, and receiving admonishment from her family (as discussed in the previous sections). Another example was provided by female participant Kraftwerk. She narrated how she would often explore a hairstyle that she had not tried before during vacations or when she entered a new school because there would be fewer judgements on her hair by the surrounding people.

“I think it’s hard to tell. I think that maybe there would be fewer judgements when I leave an old environment. If I changed my hairstyle in an old environment, there would be a lot of people judging my hair. But in a new environment, maybe people

won't judge the hairstyle of a person with whom they were not so acquainted. Like, even if the hairstyle is a little bit ugly, I won't have the risk of being mocked by others. There is less psychological pressure." (Kraftwerk, female)

Such an example revealed how a change of the surroundings corresponded to a change of hairstyles for participant Kraftwerk.

Nevertheless, there was one case of an exception to the temporality of the private sphere conceived space. Female participant Black used to always tie her hair into a ponytail before coming to the US for middle school. However, after entering her middle school in the US, she soon found that "all other people around her" wore their hair down. This made her feel herself "weird." She also mentioned that some of her classmates liked to untie her ponytail for fun. She said, "the whole second semester of eighth grade was spent by me trying to tie a ponytail and my schoolmates trying to untie my hair." As a result, she usually prepared three hair bands. When she entered high school, she needed to take pictures for the yearbook. She did not feel like blowing out her hair as a preparation before taking pictures, so she wore her hair down when she took the picture. After this whole series of experiences, she started to wear her hair down. Participant Black considered her decision to wear her hair down as "an attempt to habituate to the surrounding's, to the habit of hairstyles of the surrounding people" and "a merge into the culture." This experience of female participant Black revealed that the influence of one's private sphere could be long-lasting if it was compelling enough for the participant who experienced it.

The third feature of the private sphere conceived space is that, compared to the temporal and inconsistent influence of the private sphere on participants' actual hairstyles, this influence was long-lasting on participants' opinions and stereotypes towards other people's hairstyles. For example, female participant Pistol described her seeing the patients at

the hospital for which she worked. As a lived response, she developed larger acceptability for other people's hairstyles from then on:

"I am pre-med, and we did some internships in hospitals before. We encountered, like being ill, or need (unclear), or it was just that he/she lived in the hospital for treatment, (the hair) would be very inconvenient, so he/she would choose to shave the head or get a buzz cut. This has nothing to do with gender, so I think this is, um, these changes of hairstyles because of certain special needs make me have less stereotypes, like you can be whatever you want, as long as you feel it's convenient." "Because for somebody, his/her hair would fall over because of the chemotherapy, so he/she would shave the head before the hair starts to fall. This is very common in films and television works, but in fact, a lot of people, after living in the hospital for a long time, they would shave it or cut it really short. The aim is that in the hospital, washing hair and other things are not very convenient, so he/she would, like, um, get rid of a trouble." (Pistol, female)

Male participant Aereo reported how his current taste for hair colors of the opposite sex developed from the surrounding females with black hair whom he saw in his daily life in China when he was younger:

"And, like, girls with short hair, if they have black hair, it might not be very good-looking. At least I think it is not very good-looking. It might be due to traditional thoughts, and I have always been looking at black hair since young, so I cannot quite accommodate myself to comparatively shorter black hair. But I think, for example, short hair that is silver, or including blond and red, is pretty good-looking." (Aereo, male)

Lived Responses without Corresponding Conceived Spaces

As I mentioned at the beginning of the Results section, some of the lived responses of the participants did not seem to correspond to any of the aforementioned conceived spaces. Some of these lived responses were not responses to external influences but independent thoughts and decisions of the participants based on their own characteristics and interests. Others were probably caused by innumerable stereotypes or expectations from different conceived space so that it was hard for the participants to pinpoint any single one of those conceived spaces.

Convenience

All participants mentioned that they had the experience of choosing or abandoning a certain hairstyle because of the convenience or inconvenience in managing it. They also regarded the convenience of management to be important when considering potential hairstyle choices for the future.

The most frequently mentioned factor that caused inconvenience was the length of hair. For example, female participant Pistol claimed that she would not grow waist-length hair as a future hairstyle choice because she used to have it and “washing the hair was very inconvenient.” Female participant Little also cut her hair short that it “barely touched the shoulders” in 2020, and one of the motivations was because she considered her hair inconvenient when it was longer, and it took her a long time to wash it and blow-dry it. Different from other female participants who were bothered by longer hair, female participant Metallica was bothered by shorter hair. She claimed that she would not cut her hair shorter than shoulder-length as a future hairstyle choice because she found it harder to manage shorter hair for people “whose hair is thrusting to all directions” like hers.

Not only were female participants bothered by the inconvenience of hair length, but male participants also were concerned with this issue. Male participant Moody claimed that

he did not care much about the look of his hairstyle, but he would get a haircut when he felt inconvenient washing his hair due to its length.

It is worth noticing that the evaluation of whether a hairstyle was convenient to manage might not be always consistent. This happened for male participant Aereo who showed his ambivalence during the interview session. He reported that he has not been cutting his hair for eight months due to the COVID quarantine in the US. When asked why he did not choose to self-cut but instead grew out his hair, he replied that he considered long hair to be more convenient than doing a self-cut:

“I’ve also thought about this (buying a hair clipper and cutting the hair by himself), but because I am lazy, and, and I don’t have the tools, and it’s also quite a trouble to clean things up. So I didn’t cut it. I feel like it is not that inconvenient. Sometimes, after I get up and take a shower, I will get a tower, well, hair that is too long is quite a trouble after taking a shower. It will take a long time till it dries. After it’s dry, I would take a hairband and tie it up, I wouldn’t let it block my sight at least. Like, what I have now, in fact, it’s OK.” (Aereo, male)

However, later in the interview, he mentioned that he considered long hair as inconvenient:

“Well, indeed. Now I think long hair, is a little bit inconvenient. Inconvenient to take a shower, and it takes a long time to dry it after the shower, and in daily life, it blocks my sight a little. It also makes me feel a little hot. Yeah.” (Aereo, male)

Besides hair length, the second most mentioned factor that caused inconvenience was bangs. Female participant Black claimed that she would never choose hairstyles with bangs for potential future hairstyles.

“I had bangs when I was in elementary school, roughly from the third grade in elementary school to sixth grade in middle school. I interrogated myself why I grew bangs since I had bangs. It was such a trouble. Although it looked good, it would

make you hot, very very hot, if you have a lot of hair. Once you (unclear) it would be very very greasy. I had to wash my hair a lot of times a day. Once there comes a gust of wind, your hairstyle would be ruined. So, it only looked good when I was indoors and I when just washed my hair.” “(The bangs made me) very very hot, and that stuffiness made me grow pimples. Like, bangs are the hairstyle that I would definitely not try because it is such a trouble. I still remember myself pulling on my bangs and asked myself why I would grow bangs. It was such a trouble.” (Black, female)

Another female participant Golden also recounted how she found her bangs about which she used to obsess became inconvenient after she started to play tennis and dance in her high school in the US.

Novelty

Besides the concern of convenience, another reason that propelled the participants to change their hairstyles or to make decisions about their future hairstyles was the pursuance of novelty, i.e., the desire to continue experiencing new hairstyles that they had never tried before and to make changes. For example, female participant Sticky cut her hair short with shaved temples and two engravings on the side when she was in high school in the US as mentioned in the section on the conceived space of hair stylist. When asked about the motivation behind this change, she replied: “Well, long, I am, bored with having long hair” and “I feel like I like to make changes.” Another example was female participant Kraftwerk who expressed her will to try a buzz cut in the future as mentioned in the section on the conceived space of gender. She commented: “I want to know what’s the feeling of having it. It’s something that I have not experienced. Um, I still want to try or experience different things.”

Worries about Hair Damage

Female participant Golden and female participant Black reported their lived responses based on their worries about hair damage. Participant Golden cut her hair shorter when she was a rising senior in college because she bleached her hair lots of times before that and was worried about the hair damage caused by the bleach. Participant Black also indicated that she would never perm or dye her hair in the future:

“I have never permed or dyed my hair, and I don’t have such plans right now. (unclear) Because I’ve seen people perming their hair and I think (this would lead to) hair damage. Like, I think my hair is in pretty good quality, but I think dyeing and perming would make my hair quality not that good.” (Black, female)

Taste in Hairstyles Evolving with the Maturation Process

Five participants mentioned that their taste in hairstyles developed as they matured. When they were very young, they neither thought about which hairstyles they wanted, nor did they consider hairstyles as important. However, as they grew older, they gradually realized which hairstyles they really wanted and took action to pursue those hairstyles.

The most in-detailed narrative was provided by male participant Purple. He claimed that during elementary school and middle school, he was not conscious about his hairstyles and did not care much about his hairstyles. However, things started to change after he went to high school in the US. As reflected in the previous sections of conceived spaces, he was unsatisfied with the haircut given by his host mother. This dissatisfaction showed that participant Purple started to develop the ability to distinguish hairstyles that he liked and he disliked. He also started to use hair clay in high school, and the main reason was to avoid the haircut from his host mother while still being able to shape the hairstyle that he could accept:

“In high school, as you just said, I started to use hair clay, the major motivation was to avoid letting my homestay cut my hair. Let it (the hair) be as long as possible and also in my control. This is the aim of using hair clay.” “Like, if I don’t use hair clay, I

really could not stand it, like I would feel that I couldn't go out and meet people. If I controlled it more, I would be able to buy some time and then let her cut it, going back to the initial state. Because, when the hair is long, although it is messy, at least you have the ability to control it, like, it's malleable. You can shape it like this or like that. But like, after you cut it short, you don't have any way (to control it). You have no choice. Yes." (Purple, male)

After participant Purple entered his university in the US, he further developed the ability to describe his desired haircut with the hair stylists:

"I think my greatest change on hairstyle is that when I go to the barber shop, I can communicate effectively with the barber. Like, in the beginning, in the past, like when I first entered university, and I went to a barber shop, I would say: 'just cut it short, whatever', and later I found I was not satisfied at all. After that, I would tell them like: 'I hope you do this to this area of my hair', like usually I would say 'give me a taper', like shorter in the bottom and longer upwards. And I would say, for example, like 'keep it long at the upper back of my hair', and this would make my back of the head look plumper, something like this. Also, I would tell them how long I want on the top and so, like, I would tell them clearly, and they would do a way better job." (Purple, male)

Such chronological changes in the attitude towards one's own hairstyles could also be observed in the life experiences of other participants. Female participant Golden claimed that she used to take whatever hairstyle her parents gave her when she was very young, but she started to be obsessed with a specific hairstyle (flat bang) from fifth grade to tenth grade, and she would "get mad" if her bang was cut above her brows. She started to perm and dye her hair after tenth grade. Female participant Metallica said that she wanted to have bangs when she was very young because "bangs look gentle, or a lot of girls have bangs." But at the time

of the interview, participant Metallica already abandoned this thought because she thought bangs did not fit her short forehead. Female participant Crimson claimed that she did not have a sense of how she looked when she was about five and six years old, and her family members always combed and tied her hair for her. However, she started to pay attention to her hairstyle after she entered high school in the US. That was when she started to look at herself in the mirror and asked herself how she wanted herself to look. This was when she started her journey of cutting and dyeing her hair on her own. Male participant Aereo's hair was always cut by his father before his second year of middle school, and he did not resist that. However, he started to resist his father's cutting his hair and began to go to hair salons for his haircut after the second year of middle school. Participant Aereo attributed this to his adolescent rebelliousness and his will to change his appearance at that time.

The only participant who was different from others was male participant Moody. He claimed that he had no change in his aesthetics of hairstyles from younger years to his current age.

Communication about Hairstyles

As indicated in the interview guide, one of the interview questions was dedicated specifically to asking the participants whether they talked about hairstyle-related topics with other people in their daily lives. This question was designed initially with the aim of gauging how much attention and concern the participants put toward their hairstyles. It turned out that most participants did not talk too much about their hairstyles in their daily lives. When they did talk about hairstyles, they did so only with specific individuals such as friends, parents, or the significant other. For example, female participant Metallica only talked about her hairstyle with her boyfriend and her mother sometimes:

“If I want to dye or perm my hair, I will definitely tell my parents about it and ask about it. But I don't, have the energy and appeal to this aspect (talk about hairstyles). I

usually, for example, at most, say that today my hair is greasy, or my mom says that ‘your hair has scurf on it’, yeah, like ‘your hair turned into strands’, yeah, normal topics. Also, but, like when I go out with my boyfriend for a date, I would ask him ‘does my hairstyle today look good’ or something.” (Metallica, female)

Male participant Moody also claimed that he almost never talked about his hairstyles with other people:

“It seems that I never (talk about my hairstyle). The only time I talked about it with others was when I posted my shaved head on the Internet, a lot of people asked me if I was taking things too hard. And the second time is you (this interview).” (Moody, male)

Only one participant, female participant Golden, reported that she talked about her hair “all the time” with her friends, especially when she had not managed her hair for a long time.

Discussion

Based on the results presented in the previous section, several important findings emerge regarding how Chinese international students who are currently studying in the United States use their hairstyles as signs to express their identities, attitudes, and beliefs.

First, the narratives of the participants revealed the presence of a semantic system of hairstyles constructed by various conceived spaces. Stereotypes, expectations, and regulations on hairstyles in the spaces not only influenced or regulated the hairstyle choices of the participants, but they also set up correlations between specific hairstyles and certain meanings. In other words, various conceived spaces assigned meanings to specific hairstyles (perceived spaces). For example, perming and dyeing one’s hair were often considered as signs of rebelliousness in the Chinese society, long hair was usually considered as a sign of femininity, and short hair was usually considered as a sign of masculinity. Although such correlations between hairstyles and meanings were not always consistent, they did influence

the lived experiences of the participants. Based on this semantic system of hairstyles, participants sought to use their hairstyles as signs of expressing their beliefs or attitudes, either consciously or unconsciously. Their uses of hairstyles as signs followed Goffman's theory of personal front. An important aspect of the meaning-making of the personal front is whether a specific personal front "fits in" the context. Following this principle, the meaning-making of the participants' hairstyles always used existing expectations, stereotypes, and regulations of hairstyles in a context as the baseline and by deviating from or conforming to this baseline, expressed meanings. In one way, participants sometimes rejected the correlations between hairstyles and meanings in the semantic system. These participants usually assigned meanings to these hairstyles on their own, which were distinct from those meanings defined by the conceived spaces. For example, having a buzz cut for females was seen as embodying an abandonment of femininity or suffering from a disease, but female participant Kraftwerk considered it as a means of pursuing something novel and different; hair dyeing was seen as embodying the rebelliousness in the Chinese society, but participant Pistol saw it simply as a way of responding to an uncomfortable condition during the COVID-19 quarantine. Such conflicts between the conceived spaces and the lived responses reflected how participants strived to regain the right of defining the semantic system of hairstyles from authorities and stereotypes. On the other hand, participants chose to sometimes accept this semantic system constructed by conceived spaces. They used their hairstyles as signs to express their thoughts and attitudes based on the correlations between hairstyles and meanings set up by the conceived spaces. In fact, all acts of conforming to the hairstyle expectations or regulations of a conceived space should be seen as submission or at least acquiescence to the semantic system constructed by this conceived space; that is, the participants' conscious choice of a hairstyle that conformed to the expectations and

regulations instead of a hairstyle that rebelled against these expectations and regulations was already an expression of their acquiescent or submissive attitude.

Although this study revealed the interactions between the semantic system set up by the conceived spaces and the lived responses of the participants, this semantic system of hairstyles and the reactions of the participants should not be understood as two monolithic systems with no diversity within. In fact, an astonishing feature of the hairscapes of Chinese international students was its diversity. Such diversity could be observed both in the conceived spaces and the lived spaces. For conceived spaces, the researcher only proposed six of them (family, society, school, professions, social occasions, and gender) as research topics at the beginning of the study based on previous studies on hairstyles. However, through open-ended questions in the interview, participants brought up new conceived spaces which were previously unexpected by the researcher, including hair stylists, popular culture, race, the COVID-19 pandemic, and the private sphere. These new conceived spaces brought up by the participants revealed the complexity of the factors that determined their hairstyle choices in different life stages, occasions, and countries, and that no one overriding factor dominated the hairstyle choices of the participants. Moreover, there was diversity even in the same conceived space. For example, different families had different attitudes and different ways of regulating their children's hairstyles, and different family members paid different amounts of attention to their children's hairstyles; different schools had different hairstyle regulations and seriousness of enforcing those regulations; different types of popular cultures, professions, school activities, and occasions imposed different influences and expectations on the participants' hairstyle choices. In terms of their lived spaces, each participant had his or her unique life experiences and responses to the conceived spaces. Although the small group of 11 participants did not show great diversity demographically, there existed great diversity among the participants in their lived experiences in reaction to specific conceived spaces. A

lot of the time, different participants reacted differently and even inversely to similar conceived spaces. For example, participant Crimson and participant Kraftwerk both had comparatively controlling grandparents who held conservative views about hairstyles in their families, but participant Crimson felt hurt by the comment from her grandparents, but participant Kraftwerk was not discouraged by the control of her grandmother. Participant Pistol, participant Crimson, and participant Moody all experienced the generally looser constraints on hairstyles in the US society compared to Chinese society, but only participant Pistol permed and dyed her hair due to this influence; participant Moody did not change his hairstyle after experiencing the influence of the new society; as for participant Crimson, although she dyed her hair when she was studying at a high school in the US, she attributed this change in hair colors to other factors. Such examples of different lived responses to similar conceived spaces also existed in several other conceived spaces such as the conceived spaces of school authority, gender, the private sphere, and the COVID-19 pandemic. Female participant Sticky and female participant Kraftwerk all came from US high schools which banned students from dyeing their unnatural hair colors, but only participant Kraftwerk dyed her hair as an act of rebellion against her school regulations; female participant Pistol and female participant Crimson both experienced the stereotypes and expectations of the hairstyles of different genders in Chinese society, but participant Pistol thought the Chinese society regulated males' hairstyles more than female hairstyles while participant Crimson held the exact opposite view; female participant Crimson and female participant Black both experienced the hairstyles of their peers at school, but only participant Black indicated this influence of this on a long-term basis; male participant Moody and male participant Aereo both experienced the COVID-19 lockdown and quarantine in the US, but participant Moody responded by shaving his hair while participant Aereo responded by growing his hair out. Through the diversity in the conceived space and lived space of hairscales drawn from an 11-

participant sample, there are reasons to believe that more diversity would be observed in these two spaces if the sample size were to increase.

The diversity in the conceived space and the lived space of hairscapes answered a central and driving question asked by the researcher at the beginning of the study; that is, how the experience of coming to another country to study and experiencing a new culture influenced Chinese students who grew up in China where hairstyles were constantly regulated. It turns out that the influence exerted by US society and culture varied for each participant, just like the diversity in the conceived spaces and the lived spaces of hairscapes, and there was no one dominant factor that determined whether or to what extent a participant would be influenced by US society and culture. For example, female participant Pistol mentioned that she was influenced by the looser constraints in US society on people's hairstyles and thus permed and dyed her hair after attending a summer school in the US when she was in high school. However, other female participants who came to the US for high school, such as participant Kraftwerk and participant Golden, did not report much about the influence of US society and culture on their hairstyle choices. In fact, the majority of participants did not emphasize the influence of US society and culture on their hairstyle choices. The conceived spaces that reflected most clearly the influence of US culture on hairstyles were the comparison between the hair stylists and school authorities in China and the US, together with difference between Asian people and Caucasian people's physical hair attributes. Such results indicated that experiencing the US society and culture was not the overwhelming factor that influenced the hairstyle choices of the participants. It was one of the factors that influenced their hairstyle choices, but its importance was not greater than other experiences that they had gone through in their past lives.

Another feature regarding the conceived space and the lived space of hairscapes drawn from the current study is that lived spaces sometimes seemed to be insulated from the

conceived spaces, such as those listed at the end of the Results section. Although lived spaces in the narratives of the participants were mostly as a response or reaction to a particular conceived space, there were also lived actions and thoughts that did not seem to correspond to any conceived space mentioned in the study. For example, some participants made decisions about hairstyles according to seemingly independent factors, basing their hairstyle choices on factors such as the convenience or novelty of a hairstyle. Sometimes they made hairstyle choices based on their aesthetics without specifying or being able to specify what conceived spaces influenced their aesthetics, such as the changing taste in hairstyles in the maturation process. It is possible that these lived reactions were triggered by a myriad of stereotypes, expectations, and regulations present in the conceived space which were out of the consciousness of the participants. Thus, the participants were not able to attribute these lived actions and thoughts to a particular conceived space in their narratives.

The current study on the hairscapes of Chinese international students not only revealed how Chinese international students used hairstyles as signs to express themselves, but it also filled a vacancy in LL studies on an untouched semiotic system, showing the complexity of human experiences and providing guidelines for future LL studies on hairstyles. As this study is the first one that applied LL research methodologies to hairstyles, there are several considerations for future studies on this topic. First, all the data of this study were collected through self-reports of the participants in the interview. Indeed, this methodology added authenticity and individuality to the lived space of hairscapes and provided abundant material for content-based qualitative analysis. Of course, when it came to the conceived space and the perceived space, all the narratives were unavoidably subjective since those “facts” and “features” of various conceived spaces and perceived spaces were observed by the participants through their lenses and personal feelings. The stereotypes, expectations, and regulations about various conceived spaces drawn from the participants’

narratives were thus highly particularized in nature, especially when it came to those conceived spaces that were larger in scale or more abstract, such as the conceived space of society and that of gender. As for the perceived space, although participants were encouraged to send photographs of themselves or those that showed the hairstyles that they described, not all of them did so. Even for participants who sent photographs, the researcher could only visualize those hairstyles for the reader by transforming them into hand-drawn pictures or written descriptions since directly using those photographs and pictures would cause copyright issues and might jeopardize the confidentiality of the study. These hand-drawn pictures and descriptive languages used by the researcher downplayed the objectivity of the perceived space, for only realistic photographs and pictures could demonstrate the appearance of a hairstyle without any ambivalence. Future studies on hairscapes should seek a more objective way of illustrating the conceived space and the perceived space. For the conceived space, future researchers can resort to social surveys or past studies on society and gender to obtain a more objective overview. As for the perceived space, computer-generated pictures or more delicate hand drawings might produce a more accurate characterization of the perceived spaces.

Future studies can also make improvements to this study's depth and breadth caused by limitations in time and funding. For example, if the researchers would like to focus on the general hairstyle trends of Chinese international students and the contributing factors of such trends instead of investigating individual experiences, broader-ranged quantitative studies that recruited more Chinese international students studying in different countries could be done. Based on various hairstyle topics that emerged from the current study, future quantitative studies can incorporate multiple-choice questions or Likert-scale survey questions to discover potential trends of correlations between the three spaces of the Triadic Model. They could also explore more deeply the uniqueness of each participant by

administering long-term case studies that tracked the chronological change of hairstyles of participants across several years or by pinpointing to one specific space and fathom the diversity within it. Research on different comparison groups is also a choice, in which researchers could compare Chinese students who study at US colleges to those who study at Chinese colleges or compare Chinese international students who study in the US to international students from other countries who study in the US.

To conclude, the current study on the hairscapes of Chinese international students not only extended the scope of LL studies to hairstyles and thus expanded the understanding of how meaning-making happens in public spaces, but it also showed the complexity of human experiences. Even for 11 participants, there were already significant variations and complexities behind their choices of hairstyles. These abundant variations and complexities in a small sample made the researcher wonder whether there would be a greater complexity of motivations behind the hairstyle choices of all Chinese international students as a group, or whether such variations and complexities presage similar complexities in other personal fronts such as wardrobe choices, make-ups, and ornaments. If so, these personal fronts might represent an even more complex mosaic of identities and beliefs of Chinese international students. The complexity of human experiences discovered from the current study suggests that the current tendency at US higher education institutions to view Chinese international students or even all international students as a monolithic group with similar backgrounds, life experiences, and beliefs might not be appropriate. This tendency of US higher education institutions somehow suggests a common bias of humans. We tend to magnify the cultural commonalities among certain communities but overlook the uniqueness of everyone's experience. This is how stereotypes, biases, and even hatred towards certain communities developed. We should not judge others based on the perceived space (such as the personal

fronts they utilize) using stereotypes and expectations present in various conceived spaces.

Instead, true understanding requires an open ear to the lived experiences of other people.

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Appendix A

Study Description

Note: This general description of the research was provided in a WeChat post and was sent to several group chats of Chinese international students at Emory in order to recruit participants. The description was in Chinese. This appendix provides a translation although the translation did not actually appear in the description during recruitment. The translation was completed by the researcher.

大家好，我正在做一个有关中国留学生发型的研究，想要招募 5-10 个研究对象，需要占用各位半个小时左右的时间进行线上采访。如果各位曾经有过改变发型的经历（例如烫发染发剪短留长等等）并且对我的研究有兴趣的话，请通过微信或邮箱 (wangqifan99@hotmail.com)联系我。感恩不尽。

Translation:

Hello guys, I am doing research about the hairstyles of Chinese international students, and I would like to recruit 5 to 10 participants. The research will take about half an hour to do an online interview. If you have ever changed your hairstyles (e.g. perm, dye, cut your hair short or grow your hair long) and are interested in my research, please contact me via WeChat or email (wangqifan99@hotmail.com). My infinite gratitude.

Appendix B

Interview Guideline

Note: The interviews were conducted mainly in Chinese. This appendix is translated into English by the researcher for the convenience of the readers.

Ice-breaking session & Informed Consent Confirmation

Hi, I'm Qifan Wang, one of the principal investigators of the study. Thank you so much for participating in this study! Before everything starts, can we do a brief self-introduction so that we understand each other better?

..... (Self-introduction)

Before the interview begins, I would like to check the informed consent form with you together again just to make sure that you fully understand every detail of this study.

..... (Check the informed consent with the participant together)

All right, do you have any further problems regarding this study? If not, could you please sign the informed consent for me and send it to me via email? Feel free to keep a copy of it.

Research Question Guidelines

1. Please describe changes in your hairstyle that you consider to be drastic (may include perm and dye) up to now including when did you change it, what was your hairstyle like before and after the change. You may send me photographs to help explain.
2. For each change, please explain why you decide to change your hairstyle.
3. Please describe potential hairstyles that you would like to try in the future and explain the reason. You may attach pictures to help explain.
4. Please describe hairstyles that you definitely will not try and explain the reason. You may attach pictures to help explain.

5. Did any of the educational institutions/organizations you were in have hairstyle codes? If they had, please describe those codes.
6. Did any of your family members express expectations or requirements regarding your hairstyle? If they had, please describe these expectations or requirements including reasons why they hope your hairstyle to be so if you know.

(If the participant went to a US high school or middle school, I would frame my question for 5 and 6 in the following way: “I understand you have been exposed to both the Chinese and the US culture for a long time. You went to the US for high school/middle school but received your education in China before that. Have you ever perceived the differences between these two cultures about how they view people’s hairstyles? Like, what kind of stereotypes/judgments they have for hairstyles/ how do they consider different hairstyles? I mean, in all aspects, like schools, society, family, and among peers.”

7. I would also like to know how much you care about your hairstyle. For example. do you talk about it with your friends and families? Like, for example, you tell them a hairstyle that you would like to try and they give you some feedback, something like this?
8. Do you manipulate your hairstyle in different ways in different contexts? For example, my roommate always applies wax or to use a hairband to kind of put his hair upward to make himself more formal during interviews. I would like to know if you do similar things.
9. Could you please talk about how you perceive the hairstyles of the opposite sex? Like, what kind of hairstyles do you deem attractive/good-looking for boys/girls? You don’t have to be “politically correct”; I just want to learn about your personal preferences.

Appendix C

Main Categories and Subcategories in Data Analysis

Conceived Space: The Participants' Description of Outside Influences on Hairstyle

Choices

1. How much families administrated/influenced/judged people's hairstyles (or other personal fronts).
2. How much hair stylists administrated/influenced/judged people's hairstyles.
3. How much general life experiences that the interviewees had influenced their hairstyles (e.g., homestay, working environment, a place where getting a haircut cannot be readily done, when they were in leisure).
4. How much the society generally administrated/ influenced/ judged peoples' hairstyles. (e.g., Chinese society vs. the US society, "I feel like people/others think that...").
5. How much school authority administrated/influenced/judged people's hairstyles (or other personal fronts).
6. How much popular culture influenced the people's hairstyles.
7. How much professions and school activities (including jobs, internships, club events, sports teams etc.) administrated/influenced people's hairstyles.
8. How much the occasions & events administrated/influenced people's hairstyles. (e.g., prom, performances)
9. How much race limited/influenced people's hairstyles.
10. How much the gender administrated/influenced people's hairstyles.
11. The influence of the COVID- 19 pandemic.
12. How the surrounding vibe influenced people's hairstyles.

Perceived Space: The Participants' Objective Description of the Physical

Characteristics of Hairstyles

13. The length of the hair (buzz cut/jaw-length/shoulder-length/below shoulder/waist-length etc.).
14. The trimming of hair (different hairstyles of roughly the same length, such as bang vs. no bang, flat bang vs. split bang).
15. The color of hair (red, green, light color, deep color, “natural hair color”, “unnatural hair color” etc.).
16. The styling of hair (e.g., braid, wear-down, perm, apply hair wax).
17. The texture/quality of hair (e.g., soft vs. hard, a lot of hair vs. not much hair).

Lived Space: The Participants’ Subjective Description, Response, Reflection, Desire of Experiencing a Hairstyle (of Him/Herself) or Other People.

18. Did the interviewee choose a certain hairstyle because he/she possessed certain attitudes/beliefs/ identities?
19. How the interviewee felt about/evaluated/judged hairstyles that he/she has had, or that he/she could have?
20. How the interviewee felt about/evaluated/judged other people’s hairstyles (including hairstyles that he/she could not have) and other peoples’ beliefs/attitudes towards hairstyles.
21. Did a certain hairstyle bother the interviewee? Did the interviewee think it was “convenient” or “burdensome” to have that hairstyle?
22. The relationship/communication/ experience between the interviewee and the hairdresser.
23. Did the interviewee consider a good hairstyle to be important/ have their own aesthetics on hairstyles? Did the interviewee have a personal taste about his/her own hairstyle?

24. Did the interviewee like his/her hairdresser? What was the relationship between the interviewee and his/her hairdresser?
25. Did the interviewee have any experience with dealing with his/her own hair (e.g., self-cut, self-dyeing)?
26. How does the interviewee respond/think about the authority (various conceived spaces)? Did the interviewee have any experience of conflicting with or violating the authority of families/schools/society etc. in terms of hairstyles?

Note: (This category is different from the subcategory 18 in that it is not specific to hairstyles)

27. Did the interviewee talk about hairstyle-related topics with other people like friends/family?
28. Other personal life experiences that were hard to categorize.