Rice eaters in the land of cheese: the context of ethnic socialization of Chinese-Dutch children

Yang, Y.

Chapter 1

General Introduction

The notions of the 'model minority' and 'forever strangers' have been used to describe the lives of Chinese immigrants worldwide. After the outbreak of COVID-19, it was the latter than appeared to prevail, as anti-Asian prejudice became rampant in North America and Western Europe. Protests such as Stop Anti-Asian Hate in response to racial discrimination against people with Asian roots attracted much attention to the impact of interethnic prejudice for Asian people in the diaspora. These movements sparked discussions about how to improve interethnic relations and build a more inclusive society for all ethnic groups, including Asians.

In recent years, there is a growing body of research about how interethnic prejudice develops and how to improve interethnic relations between White and Black populations in the United States. However, research on Asian populations and in the European context is much less but also urgently needed. For example, the underrepresented Chinese groups have been found suffering from discrimination experiences in the Netherlands and the UK (e.g., Bhala et al., 2020; Broekroelofs & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). In addition, it is unclear how children are impacted by the ethnic socialization context (e.g., parents, the media, world-changing events). Research indicates that the development of ethnic prejudice starts from early childhood. However, ethnic prejudice of dominant and children from underrepresented ethnic groups and their developmental patterns seem to be population-dependent (de Bruijn, 2022). Different social-contextual factors, such as parents, media and societal developments, are highlighted to have a potential influence on the development of prejudice based on Social Learning Theory (Levy & Hughes, 2009). In this area, research has focused mostly on the U.S. and studies on children from underrepresented ethnic groups are lacking in the European context, such as in the Netherlands, which is a multi-ethnic country with more than 25% of people with a migration background. More studies are needed to identify patterns for underrepresented ethnic children's experiences and prejudice and understand the potential influence of various social-contextual factors to which they are exposed. This dissertation aims to provide insight in the development of ethnic prejudice among a largely ignored underrepresented ethnic group: the Chinese-Dutch group, through three social-contextual factors (parents, children's books, and COVID-19).

Key constructs and definitions

Ethnic prejudice can be defined as a preconceived evaluation of persons based on their perceived belonging to a different group in terms of their racial, cultural, or religious characteristics (Eagly & Diekman, 2005). More specifically, ingroup favoritism and outgroup rejection are forms of interethnic prejudice (Everett et al., 2015). Furthermore, the term ethnicity is consistently used rather than race in this dissertation. Ethnicity refers to social groupings based on common origins, culture, language, history and value, while race based on biological foundations linked with physical appearance (Brown & Langer, 2010). Although the terms 'race' and 'ethnicity' are associated with each other, ethnicity is a broader term than race and more commonly used in the European context, because the term 'race' seems to maintain an unbreakable tie to the history of racism (i.e., Nazism) in Europe (Berg et al., 2014). Therefore, ethnicity-related terms are consistently adopted in this dissertation, including 'dominant ethnic group' and 'underrepresented ethnic group'. Another term used, specifically in Chapter 4, is people of color. People of color refers to non-White ethnic groups collectively, and has been accepted in the academic discourse as a bias-free language (American Psychological Association, 2022).

Chinese diaspora in the Netherlands

Research on interethnic relationships is needed in Europe, and the Netherlands provides an interesting context given the rapid increase in ethnic diversity in the last couple of decades. Almost one out of four people has an immigrant background (at least one parent not born in the

Netherlands), and approximately 14–16% of the population has a non-Western immigrant background, depending on the definition (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2022a). Migration from China started from the moment the first Chinese arrived in the Netherlands as a boarding sailor in the year 1911. The Chinese came to the Netherlands for work in the beginning, then through family reunification, and gradually more frequently for study (Gijsberts et al., 2011). In the past century, the underrepresented Chinese group (0.6 % of the total Dutch population) has become the largest East Asian community, and the seventh largest non-Western underrepresented group in the Netherlands after those with roots in Turkey, Morocco, Suriname, Indonesia, (former) Netherlands Antilles and Aruba, and Syria (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2021a). In addition, since 2007, an increased immigration flow from mainland China to the Netherlands exceeded that from Turkey who represent the largest underrepresented group in the Netherlands (Mandin & Gsir, 2015). In recent years, almost half of the immigrants in the Netherlands are from within Europe, followed by 18% of immigrants from Asia, mostly India and China (Centraal Bureau voor de Statistiek, 2020).

One of the main reasons why many Chinese people end up in the Netherlands or other Western countries can be traced back to colonial history in the 19th century. China was defeated by Britain in the Opium Wars (1840–1842) which forced opening up to Euro-American powers and ideology. In the following approximately 100 years, China gradually transformed into a semi-colony under Western military coercion (Lan, 2016). Although the Republic of China was founded in 1949, the long history of (semi-)colonial domination has shaped people's ideas about race, culture and so forth. Postcolonialism can be defined as the effect of colonization on the colonized people and their culture after a certain period of high imperialism and colonial occupation (Drew, 1999). Many researchers have indicated that people and cultures mostly identified as White (or Western) are seen as superior to people of color and their culture in China due to globalization of white culture and postcolonial mechanisms (Goon & Craven, 2003; Stohry et al., 2021). The colonial history provided a foundation for 'white supremacy' and Chinese people commonly regard White people and Western culture as 'civilized' and 'progressive' in contemporary China (Liu & Croucher, 2022; Yu, 2021). There has been a prejudicial treatment of people exclusively based on skin color, with lighter skin evaluated more favorable than darker skin (Yu, 2021). More specifically, Chinese media generally depict a positive image and proximity to White people and culture (Stohry et al., 2021). In addition, current postcolonial globalization influences are seen in trends like the popularity of models and celebrities identified as White people, and whitening products (Goon & Craven, 2003). Even children's books written by White people tend to be seen as more civilized cultural products by Chinese parents and publishers, with the growing popularity of those imported books (Yang , 2012). White preference in social representation may also apply to children (Durkin et al., 2012), suggesting an early origin of different attitudes towards White outgroups and outgroups of color. Besides the preference for countries with dominant White people and White or Western culture, there are many other possible factors for migration from China, such as its political and ideological climate.

The situation of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands can be described as positive according to several indicators. For example, employment rates (73.2%) of Chinese immigrants (defined as born in China) in the labor market are close to those of native Dutch people, and the Chinese-Dutch and native Dutch groups are both over-represented in highly qualified occupations and less represented in less qualified ones (Mandin et al., 2015). In addition, Chinese immigrants were polarized in terms of education, often low but also often highly educated (diplomas obtained in China or in the Netherlands). Specifically, a higher percentage of Chinese immigrants received maximal elementary school education (27%) than migrants with Surinamese or Antillean backgrounds (20%), but lower than migrants with Turkish and Moroccan backgrounds (45-47%). Meanwhile, more Chinese immigrants received tertiary

education (28%) than the other four migrant groups (6-19%, Gijsberts et al., 2011). This is mainly because most Chinese immigrants arriving before 2000 came to the Netherlands for work or family reunion, and they were generally lower educated. However, new immigrants (arriving after 2000) more often came to the Netherlands for study and were more often higher educated (47%). If we leave out this student migrants, the educational level of Chinese-Dutch people is still higher than that of the other largest migrant group, and comparable with that of native Dutch people (Gijsberts et al., 2011). In addition, the report over Chinese immigrants showed that Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands generally feel more accepted and less excluded in the host country and report less discrimination when compared with other migrant groups (Gijsberts et al., 2011).

However, there are also many challenges for the underrepresented Chinese group in terms of integration in the Netherlands. For instance, there has been a lower rate of holding Dutch citizenship among Chinese immigrants (Mandin et al., 2015). Because China does not recognize dual citizenship and Chinese citizens who acquire Dutch citizenship or nationality have to abandon their Chinese nationality, almost half of the first-generation Chinese immigrants still have Chinese citizenship rather than Dutch citizenship (Mandin et al., 2015). There are different reasons for not giving up Chinese citizenship and only holding a Dutch permanent residence permit (legally staying in the Netherlands for an unlimited period while without voting rights and with some other limitations). For instance, family ties still bind for some (Cai & Qiang, 2022), especially younger first-generation Chinese immigrants who are the only child in their families due to the one-child policy. Citizenship rights, such as voting procedures are different in the Netherlands than in mainland China, and immigrants from China are therefore not familiar with or not motivated to play an active role in the political life in the countries to which they migrated (Cai & Qiang, 2022) This may also have led to a lower rate of being represented in policy making process, political participation, etc. In addition, it is reported that the Chinese community overall is less oriented towards native Dutch people compared to other migrant groups. Most of the Chinese immigrants have less than weekly friendship contact with native Dutch people, less often than the other large migrant groups (e.g., with Moroccan, Surinamese, Turkish backgrounds, etc., Gijsberts et al., 2011). Intergroup contact seems more common when we look at the second-generation Chinese group; more than half have a native Dutch best friend, and three-quarters have contact with native Dutch friends or acquaintances at least once a week (Gijsberts et al., 2011). The number of ethnically mixed relationships (married and unmarried) of Chinese immigrants in the Netherlands has been relatively low and began to increase since 2001. About a quarter of relationships in the underrepresented Chinese group are ethnically mixed, which is lower than in Surinamese groups but higher than in the Turkish and Moroccan migrant groups (Gijsberts et al., 2011).

The outbreak of COVID-19 in China in December 2019, as a major societal event, has influenced the lives of the Chinese diaspora in the past several years. Since the ongoing negative messages in the news media about the COVID-19 outbreak in Wuhan, China, the underrepresented Chinese group has suffered from more discrimination experiences than before the pandemic (Broekroelofs & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021). At least 314 COVID-related discrimination events were reported by people with an East Asian appearance, making up approximately 12% of all the reported race-related discrimination incidents in 2020 in the Netherlands (Antidiscriminatievoorzieningen, 2021). Discrimination events included verbal abuse, insult and threats, and defamation of their ethnic origins. There is also physical violence, for example, Yanni (a 16-year-old boy with an Asian background) in Zaandam was kicked in the head, while Cindy (a 24-year-old woman with a Chinese background) in Tilburg was beaten to unconsciousness and was left with several cuts by a knife (Asian Raisins, 2020). Besides, more than 5000 reports were received by the discrimination agency in the Netherlands in response to a song on a public radio show promoting mistrust and exclusion of Chinese

immigrant people and led to the petition "We zijn geen virussen! (We are not viruses!)" which was signed more than 65,000 times (Antidiscriminatievoorzieningen, 2021). The recent societal changes, specifically the COVID outbreak targeting people with a Chinese background (or with an East Asian appearance), makes this underrepresented ethnic group thus an urgent minority group to add to the study. Compared with increasing attention to interethnic attitudes and relations in the Asian underrepresented group in the U.S., less studies have been done in the European context, and even less studies have included children from this underrepresented ethnic group. Studying children is particularly important because children today represent society's future. It is important to understand their lives and problems they may encounter, and to identify avenues for positive change.

Ethnic prejudice development in children

Social Identity Theory (SIT) explains the development of ingroup favoritism and outgroup rejection. More specifically, people tend to favor ingroup members and make biased intergroup comparisons, serving the basic human need of enhancing a positive self-image and self-esteem (Brown, 2010; Tajfel & Turner, 1979). In addition, insights from Systematic Justification Theory (SJT) explain why interethnic prejudice in underrepresented ethnic groups may be different from those in dominant ethnic groups. Ingroup favoritism is lower in stigmatized groups than in dominant groups, which is thought to reflect internalized knowledge of the societal devaluation of (underrepresented ethnic) ingroup, leading to dominant group favoritism, i.e., White favoritism (Brown, 2010). This means that people from underrepresented or low-status groups, seem to preserve and justify the social status quo and show high-status outgroup favoritism (Jost, 2019), and can even rationalize negative stereotypes about their own group (Jost & Banaji, 1994).

Social Identity Development Theory (SIDT; Nesdale, 2004) was developed as an extension of SIT to propose four sequential phases in which children develop ethnic prejudice (undifferentiated, ethnic awareness, ethnic preference, and ethnic prejudice). Specifically, in the first undifferentiated phase (prior to 2-3 years old), racial cues are not yet described as salient for young children. Later on, the ethnic awareness phase emerges at around age 3 years when children start to identify different ethnic groups and categorize people as belonging to a particular group. In the third phase (5-6 years old), children's ethnic self-categorization firstly activates a focus on their ingroup and accompanying ingroup preference, before it eventually may develop into outgroup rejection (at around 7 years old; ethnic prejudice phase). In contrast to these developmental patters described based on SIDT, meta-analytic research shows that prejudice among children from underrepresented ethnic-racial groups (i.e., Black group) towards higher status outgroups (i.e., White group) is neutral or positive in early and middle childhood (until 7 years), and negative at older ages (Raabe & Beelmann, 2011). In addition, research on the development of prejudice from one underrepresented group towards other underrepresented groups is limited and the research results in the latest study including young children (6-10 years) in the Netherlands is not consistent based on the specific ethnic group children belong to and prejudice is measured against (Pektas et al., 2022). In other words, the ethnic prejudice of underrepresented ethnic children and its (potential) developmental patterns seems to be population dependent. The variance in prejudice development, especially between middle and late childhood, indicates the importance of the research in diverse underrepresented ethnic populations, as well as social and environmental influences at this stage.

Social learning theory

There are multiple approaches to explain the development of ethnic prejudice among children, including cognitive, social-cognitive developmental, and social learning approaches summarized by Levy and Hughes (2009). Specifically, the social learning approach suggests that children mimic, and then come to believe what they are exposed to in their environment, from sources such as parents, peers and media. The cognitive approach based on the cognitive-developmental theory suggests that children's ethnic attitudes are influenced by their ability to deal with group information in complex ways (e.g., classifying others on multiple dimensions, perceiving similarities between different ethnic groups). The social-cognitive developmental approach combines both the aforementioned social (e.g., immediate and broader contexts) and cognitive approach (e.g., cognitive skills, age; Levy & Hughes, 2009). In terms of individual development, social-contextual factors are relevant to the development of individual differences and play an important role in influencing one's cognitive process and therefore impacting one's prejudice (Aboud et al., 2012). The social-contextual factors (and changes) in children's immediate and broader contexts fit the social learning approach. Social-contextual factors that are frequently examined in research on ethnic prejudice development are parents and media. A meta-analytic review showed the similarity in interethnic attitudes and behaviors between parents and their children throughout childhood and adolescence (Degner & Dalege, 2013). In addition, media exposing to children can also serve as an effective intervention to impact child ethnic prejudice (Aboud et al., 2012). Briefly speaking, children from middle childhood (with cognitive skills to categorize people in different ethnic groups) can be influenced by their social environment (e.g., family conversations, media consumption; Levy & Hughes, 2009), while the content of messages in their environment is influenced by major societal events.

This dissertation focuses on three social-contextual factors in children's immediate and broader social environment to help us understand child ethnic prejudice development: parental ethnic socialization, children's books, and major world-changing events.

Parental ethnic socialization

Parents are one of the important social-contextual factors for children when it comes to instilling potential prejudice and norms regarding ethnicity. More specifically, parental ethnicity-related ideologies and behaviors are investigated descriptively and to understand potential associations with individual differences in child ethnic prejudice. Chapter 2 examines multiculturalism among Chinese-Dutch mothers and its association with children's ethnic prejudice. Multiculturalism is an intergroup ideology that refers to a belief that differences in ethnicity should be given attention and respect (Rosenthal & Levy, 2010). In addition, it proposes that the knowledge and acknowledgment of differences of the ingroup and outgroups can reduce interethnic prejudice (Whitley & Webster, 2019), because this can affirm group identities and contribute to feelings of acceptance and security in outgroup members (Rattan & Ambady, 2013). Research increasingly indicates that being exposed to multiculturalism ideology through socialization and engagement in discussion could reduce children's interethnic prejudice in the White dominant group (Perry et al., 2020; Tadmor et al., 2017; Vittrup & Holden, 2011). In the Dutch context, associations between parental multiculturalism and lower child ethnic prejudice were found in the White group but not in all underrepresented ethnic groups (de Bruijn et al., 2021). Research on intergenerational associations between parental multiculturalism and child interethnic prejudice in the Chinese population is lacking (Chapter 2). In addition, Chapter 3 describes self-reported maternal ethnic socialization practices, for example, parents talking about different ethnicities and cultures to children.

Chapter 4 examines parental socialization practices related to ethnic norms, including color-evasiveness and white normativity, in Chinese-Dutch families. Color-evasiveness reflects an expansive racial ideology of denying the significance of race and actively avoiding talking

about racial differences (Annamma et al., 2017). Although the original intention of these beliefs seems to avoid appearing biased (Apfelbaum, Sommers, et al., 2008), the approach of deliberately not seeing race allows for the denial of racial subordination, thereby allowing the perpetuation of current racial inequalities. It seems that endorsement of color-evasiveness is population dependent, with some studies indicating that members from the dominant ethnic group tend to endorse color-evasiveness more strongly than members from underrepresented ethnic groups (e.g., White and Black American or Dutch adults; de Bruijn et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2007). However, other studies indicate no differences between dominant and underrepresented ethnic groups (e.g., White and Latino Americans, White and Turkish-Dutch, White and Asian Americans; de Bruijn et al., 2021; Meyers et al., 2021; Ryan et al., 2010). Furthermore, underrepresented ethnic groups' exposure to color-evasive approaches may lead to their worse cognitive performance (Holoien & Shelton, 2012) or frustration, pain and isolation (Lewis et al., 2000). Additionally, Asian Americans who endorse color-evasiveness themselves are found to internalize social messages that devaluate and marginalize their own ethnic groups while adopting the mainstream White identity (Marinari, 2005). In conclusion, the approach of deliberately not seeing race, and not recognizing racism, allows for the denial of racial subordination, and is therefore interpreted as being racist in itself (Annamma et al., 2017; Neville et al., 2013).

The social norm regarded as another form of contemporary racism is white normativity, which exposes people of color to the risk of rejection or expulsion if they do not conform to the white norm (Bhandaru, 2013). White normativity refers to a social norm indicating White as natural and the standard category of human beings and representing all other racial categories as 'Others' (Harlap & Riese, 2021; Morris, 2016). As a result, whiteness stands at the center of racial categorization. When reflecting white normativity in society, all differences between the White group and groups of color make groups of color seen as 'abnormal' or 'unusual', and the centering of White people leads to groups of color being marginalized (Morris, 2016). When it comes to achievement, success for populations of color (e.g., high visibility of African Americans in certain professional sports, better academic performance of Asian Americans) is commonly attributed to race and marked as racial stereotypes by the dominant White group so as to minimize the individual variations and efforts within a specific group of color (Frankenburg, 2020; Morris, 2016).

Children in middle and late childhood can quickly learn to see color-evasiveness and white normativity as socially appropriate behaviors according to internalization theory, which shows that commonly observed social norms (e.g., an idea, concept, action) can be learnt, rationalized and finally accepted as one's own viewpoint (Scott, 1971). This acquisition also applies to children from underrepresented ethnic groups. Based on the Social Learning Theory proposed by Albert Bandura (1977), children can learn such social norms from their parents, for example through observational learning about what is and is not regarded appropriate to talk about. Given that children from underrepresented ethnic groups are more likely to suffer the consequences of racial inequalities but still show reluctance to talk about race (Pauker et al., 2015), behavior observations of parents from underrepresented ethnic groups are needed to understand the established model and ethnic socialization context that children are exposed to at home.

Parasocial contact hypothesis

Chinese children's books represent another social-contextual factor that Chinese immigrant mothers may include as part of their ethnic socialization. Ethnic representation in Chinese children's books is examined in this dissertation (Chapter 5). Research has found that books with characters of different ethnic backgrounds can play a positive role in young

children's social learning experiences regarding their interethnic prejudice (So, 2016; Welch, 2016). Based on the parasocial contact hypothesis, positive messages and representation of outgroup members (either with or without interactions with ingroup members) can increase preference or reduce prejudice (Schiappa et al., 2005). The human brain processes 'direct experiences', and it processes media experiences likewise. Thus, the presentation of outgroup characters in the media acts as a source and is related to people's attitudes to real people (Schiappa et al., 2005). More specifically, the preferred ethnic features shown in media influence children's ethnic (feature) preferences (Rice et al., 2016; Thompson & Heinberg, 1999). Preferences for specific ethnic physical features start early, as shown for example by the fact that White Barbie dolls are preferred over Black ones by children 3–7 years of age of various ethnic backgrounds (Gibson et al., 2015). This is because preferences for specific physical features and the ethnic people and culture that these features represent are transmitted through various social-contextual factors (e.g., parents, toys, printed media, books), that children then internalize. In other words, studies on ethnic representation are a first step in understanding what the opportunities for parasocial contact in these books are. Chapter 5 examines ethnic representation in Chinese children's books that children with a Chinese background can be exposed to. This can therefore better help understand to what extent the books may transmit potential white-normative messages about ethnic physical appearance and culture to young children with a Chinese background.

COVID impact

This dissertation also includes a broader social-contextual factor, specifically COVID-19, to see how the Chinese underrepresented group coped in a White dominant society during the pandemic. COVID-19, as a world-changing event, can impact developments in interethnic prejudice. The fact that this new virus was detected first in China led to racialized descriptions of the virus, such as it being labeled as 'the Chinese virus' in public discourse (Ittefaq et al., 2022). With the portrayal of the virus in the media as highly destructive and as a physical threat, negative emotions increased in the general population such as fear, anger, and hostility (Clissold et al., 2020; Ittefaq et al., 2022). Integrated Threat Theory (ITT) explains the pathway from these emotions (e.g., fear) for an infectious disease to discrimination against Chinese people in the diaspora based on the perception of threat to physical well-being (Croucher, 2017; Stephan & Stephan, 2016). An increasing number of studies (mostly in the U.S.) examine the discrimination against Chinese or people with an East Asian appearance during the COVID pandemic, and some studies discussed its consequences of having experienced discrimination (e.g., mental health problems, strengthened group identification; Lee & Waters, 2021; Li et al., 2021; Lou et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021). However, almost all the studies collected data after the outbreak of COVID-19. Therefore, the discussion about increased discrimination against Chinese (or other East Asians) is mostly based on deductive analyses based on previous events related to disease spreads and subsequent xenophobia (e.g., Clissold et al., 2020; Elias et al., 2021), descriptive investigation during the COVID-19 with a non-experimental design (e.g., Broekroelofs & Poerwoatmodjo, 2021; Cheah et al., 2020), or a focus on negative physical and mental health consequences caused by discrimination experiences (e.g., Lee & Waters, 2021; Wu et al., 2021). To our knowledge, only Haft and Zhou (2021) did pre- and during-pandemic data collection, specifically among Chinese college students in the United States, presenting a natural experimental design by comparing samples pre- and during-COVID-19 in the same study. Higher perceived discrimination in the during-COVID group than in the pre-COVID group was found (Haft & Zhou, 2021).

In our research project, COVID-19 broke out exactly in the middle of the data collection in the Chinese-Dutch group, leading to a dataset with half of the data collected before and half

during the pandemic, which meets the conditions for a natural experiment. From a methodological perspective, pre- and during-pandemic data collection is crucial to accurately examine potential differences in discrimination experiences and other ethnicity-related views influenced by the COVID pandemic among the Chinese diasporas. Therefore, Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 describe a unique exploration of the impact of the pandemic, i.e., a social-contextual factor, on discrimination experiences and ethnic-racial socialization among Chinese-Dutch mothers, and, uniquely, ethnic prejudice differences pre- and post-COVID outbreak among Chinese-Dutch children.

Outline of the dissertation

This dissertation aims to provide insight in ethnic prejudice in Chinese-Dutch children and the ethnic socialization context they are exposed to through three social-contextual factors, i.e., parents (Chapters 2, 3 and 4), children's books (Chapter 5), and the COVID pandemic (Chapter 2 and 3). More specifically, **Chapter 2** examines interethnic prejudice among Chinese-Dutch children aged 7-11 years, focusing on their preference for and rejection of East Asian, White, Middle Eastern and North African (MENA), and Black peers. In addition, interethnic prejudice is examined in relation to maternal multiculturalism ideology, and in relation to the COVID pandemic with a natural experimental research design. **Chapter 3** again presents a natural experiment examining self-reported perceived discrimination experiences, ethnic identity, and ethnic-racial socialization on children among 80 Chinese immigrant mothers in the Netherlands before and during the COVID pandemic. **Chapter 4** provides insight in the socialization adhering to color-evasiveness and white normativity observed among Chinese-Dutch mothers in a social categorization game with their children. Specifically, maternal behaviors are observed by avoiding ethnic-racial questions, asking such questions later and taking more time to formulate them, and by coding on which ethnic group the questions are focused. **Chapter 5** examines the ethnic representation of authors, illustrators, and characters of Chinese books for young children (6 years or younger) and the physical features (i.e., eye shape, skin tone, hair color, hair style) of human East Asian characters in these books. **Chapter 6** includes the main findings as well as the interpretation and insights provided by the main findings of this dissertation. Limitations, and future research directions are also discussed.

Positionality

No research is value-free, whether in qualitative or quantitative research (Holmes, 2020). I would like to reflect on my personal experiences and research positionality in this dissertation. I was born in Beijing, China, as were my parents and grandparents, and grew up in Beijing until I was 20 years old. Almost all of my classmates and friends were Han Chinese and very few of them have other ethnic backgrounds. Although I travelled from my early childhood to different places in China and experienced different regional cultures, I was mainly based in Beijing and had very limited contact with non-Chinese people except my English teachers in my primary and secondary schools who were White people from Canada and the U.K. and Black people from the U.S. From the age of 18 years, I went to different Asian countries for holidays, and at the age of 20 years, I went to South Korea for half a year for an exchange program and met many international students with different ethnic backgrounds. That experience was positive, and it was my first time to have more personal talks with White people (one from Poland and one from Germany) and Southeast Asian people (two from Malaysia). I realized that most international students subconsciously assume that people with different ethnic backgrounds (or nationalities) are pretty different, and still, they are very curious to keep asking about other

cultures. After completing my Bachelor's program, I did my master in Edinburgh in the United Kingdom and home-stayed with a local White English family for half a year. This experience made me feel that people with different ethnic backgrounds have much more in common (e.g., morals, values) than differences in daily lives. I felt humanity can make people get along well with each other and intergroup contact can be something easy and common.

At age 25 years, I got married to a Chinese man (born and raised in Northern China) and together we moved to Leiden, the Netherlands and had a son there. I started this project after three years of living in the western urban region of the Netherlands. The original research design for this dissertation was not specifically designed to test the effect of the pandemic on the Chinese immigrant group. However, after the outbreak of COVID-19 and the Anti-Asian racism and xenophobia that followed worldwide, including in the Netherlands, I, similar to many Chinese people in the diaspora, experienced mental stress brought on by the racism that followed. For example, I was worried about myself, and my child being discriminated against due to our Chinese background and refused to go out alone in the evening for a long time. I felt anxious about discussing COVID-related topics with my non-Chinese friends and felt ashamed when being asked how often and why Chinese people eat certain animals (e.g., bats), even though I also heard such news from the Dutch media for the first time. No blatant discriminative experiences happened to me. Only once my son (at that time about five years old) and my husband were asked by another older boy in a public playground in Leiden whether they were Chinese, and then told that they should go back to China. It did not hurt me too much (because my husband calmly explained something about cultural diversity and inclusive society to that boy and our son), but what hurt me was that my son let us know that he had been asked this question several times by other children when we were not there. The motivation for this dissertation includes my hopefulness for a more inclusive society with less prejudice between ethnic groups, including between children.

Although I learned Dutch (B2 level) and always try to have some contact with families with different ethnic backgrounds (mostly White and Asian), my position is that of a new Chinese immigrant coming to the Netherlands together with a family. As the families participating in the present dissertation have both Chinese mothers and Chinese or White Dutch/North-Western European fathers, I am both an insider and an outsider to the participants in this research. Meanwhile, this position could have impacted my work, such as the identification as an expat from China and not a Chinese-Dutch person. There is a potential bias towards regarding Chinese diaspora purely as victims during the pandemic while being less aware of salient support from the surroundings, as I myself do not have family members with a Dutch background. Fortunately, the diverse ethnic backgrounds of our research team and co-authors in different chapters (Indo-Dutch, White Dutch, Kenyan-Dutch, Turkish-Dutch) enriched my view from the White dominant and multiple underrepresented ethnic perspectives to help me better understand issues of ethnic prejudice and racism, in both research and in society.