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The Impact of Culture and Gender on Sexual Motives: Differences between Chinese and North Americans

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Abstract

Recently, social scientists have begun to investigate the myriad of reasons why young men and women engage in sexual activities. As yet, however, they have not begun to investigate the impact of culture on people's sexual motivations. In this paper, we will address three questions: Does culture have an impact on sexual motives? Does gender have an impact? Do culture and gender interact in shaping sexual motives? In this study, we asked Chinese and North American college students to indicate the extent to which communal and individualistic sexual motives had influenced their decision to participate

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in sexual activities. As predicted, both culture and gender had an impact on young people's endorsement of various sexual motives. In a few cases the findings were not entirely as we had predicted, however.

Keywords: Sexual motives, Culture, Gender, China

The Impact of Culture and Gender on Sexual Motives: Differences among Chinese and North Americans

Recently, scholars from a variety of disciplines have begun to investigate passionate love, sexual desire, and sexual behavior. Specifically, social psychologists have started to ask such questions as: “Why do young men and women engage in sexual liaisons?” and “Why do they avoid such encounters?” Unfortunately, this research has been almost entirely Western-centric in its approach. Western scholars have posed these questions, Western psychometricians have developed the sexual motives scales designed to assess these motives, and interviews and surveys validating these questionnaires have been administered to North American college students (see Hatfield, Luckhurst, & Rapson, 2010, 2011, for a summary of this research).

Social psychologists have long been aware that culture may have a profound impact on people’s customs, values, habits, beliefs, attitudes, behaviors, and lifestyles (Bond, 1997; Fiske, Kitayama, Markus, & Nisbett, 1998; Kashima, 1998; Kitayama & Cohen, 2007; Segall, Lonner, & Berry, 1998; Singelis, 2000). As yet, however, there exists surprisingly little literature on the impact of culture on sexual motives. Thus, this study was designed to investigate the sexual motives of men and women from two very different cultures—the People’s Republic of China and the United States of America.

Definition of Sexual Motives

In this paper, we define “sexual motives” as: “The conscious and subjective reasons that men and women give for participating in sexual activities.” Sexual activities

will be defined as romantic kissing, French kissing, petting (touching of breasts and /or genitals), oral sex, manual sex, penile-vaginal intercourse, and/or anal sex.

Assessing Sexual Motives

Thirty years ago, Nelson (1978) developed the first battery of tests designed to assess sexual motives. Other test batteries soon followed. These include scales designed by Browning (2004), Browning, Hatfield, Kessler, and Levine (2000), Cooper, Shapiro, and Powers (1998), DeLamater and MacCorquodale (1979), Hawk, Tang, and Hatfield (2007), Hill and Preston (1996), Horowitz (2002), Leigh (1989), Meston and Buss (2007), and Tiegs, Perrin, Kaly, and Heesacker (2007).

In planning this study, our first task was to collect all available measures of sexual motives that we could find—especially any that had been developed for use in China. To this end, we contacted pioneers in love and sex research as, scholars who were currently conducting research on sexual attraction, sexual desire, mating, sexual motives, and sexual behavior, and asked them for leads. We also conducted computer searches of the terms: “sexual attraction,” “sexual desire,” “sexual motives,” “approach and avoidance sexual motives,” and so forth, utilizing the PsycINFO database (American Psychological Association, 1967-2009) and MEDLINE (National Library of Medicine, 1966-2009) and search engines such as Google, GoogleScholar, Safari, Explorer, and Netscape to find anything we could on the assessment of sexual motives. Initially, we were able to identify 85 potential measures. After securing these scales, we were able to identify 35 scales that possessed information as to face validity, reliability, and validity (and seemed appropriate) (see Hatfield, Luckhurst, & Rapson, 2012 and submitted, for detailed information as to this selection process).

These scales were inevitably self-report measures, which assessed such motives as spiritual transcendence, a need for affection, enhancement of self-concept, peer acceptance, reputation enhancement, partner novelty, exploring sexual activities, cheer up when depressed, drive-reduction, pressure from partner, appeasement, retribution, making up after a fight, fostering jealousy, duty, satisfying the partner, maintaining the relationships, and sex as currency. Generally, people indicated the extent to which a recent sexual encounter (or their general sexual behavior) was motivated by such concerns. Alas, none of these scales were crafted by Chinese scholars or designed for use by people in China or other cultures,

Cultural and Sexual Motives

Culture has been defined as:

The totality of equivalent and complementary learned meanings maintained by a human population, or by identifiable segment of a population, and transmitted from one generation to the next (Rohner, 1984, pp. 119-120).

As Matsumoto and Yoo (2006) observed, “the backbone of cross-cultural psychology is cross-cultural comparisons that document the existence of differences across cultural groups” (p. 234). In this pioneering study, we attempt to determine whether or not men and women from two very different cultures, China and America, differ in their sexual motives. As cultural theorists have pointed out, cross-country comparisons constitute only the first phase of cultural research. To truly understand cultural differences, one must demonstrate that people in various countries possess different cultural identities, identify meaningful dimensions of cultural variability, determine whether these variables operate in the same way in a variety of cultures, and identify how various cultural constructs are linked in shaping attitudes and behaviors (see Heine & Norenzayan, 2006; Matsumoto & Yoo, 2006; Smith, Spillane, & Annus, 2006.)

Nonetheless, in this study we will begin at the beginning—comparing men and women from two different cultures and countries—China and America.

Given that these cultures emerged from different philosophical and historical traditions, it is not surprising that they differ in their very nature (Bullough & Ruan, 1994; Hatfield & Rapson, 2005; Pan, 1994; Ruan, 1991; Vincent, 1991).

The world's cultures differ profoundly in the extent to which they emphasize individualism or collectivism (although some cross-cultural researchers focus on related concepts: independence or interdependence, modernism or traditionalism, urbanism or ruralism, affluence or poverty, and the like). Individualistic cultures such as the United States, Britain, Australia, Canada, and the countries of Northern and Western Europe tend to focus on personal goals. Collectivist cultures such as China, many African and Latin American nations, Greece, southern Italy, and the Pacific Islands, on the other hand, press their members to subordinate personal interests to those of the group (Kitayama, 2002; Triandis, McCusker, & Hui, 1990). Triandis and his colleagues (1990) point out that in individualistic cultures, young people are allowed to do their own thing; in collectivist cultures, the family and the group come first.

Hofstede (1980, 2003) mapped more than 40 nations on the individualistic-collectivistic dimension. This dimension is often regarded as the one deemed to capture the essence of the West- East dichotomy. In Hofstede's (2003) study, China (including Hong Kong) ranked 37th in individualism, while the USA ranked the 1st. Likewise, in Schwartz's (1992) study of Chinese and North American values, America was located near the dimensions of "pleasure" and "exciting life" (which cluster with individualism) while China was located far away from these dimensions. (A variety of studies, such

as those reported in Welzel, 2010, document that China and America differ markedly on collectivism/individualism.)

Passionate love and sexual desire are cultural universals. Culture may effect people's definitions of passion, their attitudes toward sex, how free they feel to engage in sexual activities, and what they consider to be the consequences of such activity—but in all cultures, in all eras, people feel the same stirrings of desire (Hatfield, Rapson, & Martel, 2007; Martin & Nakayama, 2010.) Given that America and China are classified as very different on the individualism/collectivism dimension, however, it seems reasonable to argue that people might display such deep seated values in sexual attitudes and behavior. We would propose that the Chinese should display more collectivist motives (such as wishing to please their partners and maintain a relationship) in making their sexual decisions. North Americans should display more individualistic motives (such as seeking sexual pleasure and reducing sexual stress) in making their sexual decisions.

Gender and Sexual Motives

Theorists have argued that men and women differ markedly in collectivism-individualism (or a host of related constructs, such as independent vs. interdependent, agentic vs. communal, and separate versus relational) (see, for example, Kashima, Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Cho, Gelfand & Yuki, 1995).

Cross and Madson (1997) speculated that the Western cultures encourage men to take an individualistic approach to life, women to take a collectivistic approach. Others have proposed that Asian women are more collectivistic (or more concerned about interpersonal relationships) than are Asian men (Kashima, Yamaguchi, Kim, Choi,

Gelfand, & Yuki, 1995; Miller, 1994; Li, 2002). Some, like Kashima et al., (1995), argue that cultures are characterized more by individualistic-collectivistic differences, while gender differences are better characterized by relational differences.

Theorists have proposed a variety of reasons why men and women might differ in their approaches to life, including sexuality. Some stress the importance of culture in shaping people's sexual attitudes and motives (Broude & Greene, 1976; Francoeur, 1999 to 2002; Jankowiak, 1995; Wallen, 1989). Others focus on social role socialization (Delamater; 1987; Eagly, 1997; Gagnon & Simon, 2005; Hatfield & Rapson, 2005; Laws & Schwartz, 1977). Still others attribute gender differences to humankind's evolutionary heritage (Baumeister, Catanese, and Vohs, 2001; Buss, 2003; Symons, 1979).

Baumeister (2004) argues, for example, that women's sexuality is inherently more pliable than men's sexuality—that women are more responsive to cultural events, historical circumstances, socialization, peer influence, and other social variables. Probably most scholars take a psychobiological approach, arguing that culture, socialization, and evolved physical and reproductive capacities influence men's and women's sexual motives (Oliver & Hyde, 1993; Petersen & Hyde, 2010; Wood & Eagly, 2002).

Whatever the theoretical reason, Hatfield, et. al., (2010), in their comprehensive review of the sexual motives literature, found that North American women were more likely than men to endorse the following sexual motives: love and commitment, intimacy, sexual compliance, please partner and meet his needs, and solidify a relationship.

Sometimes they reported being forced to have sex. Men were more likely to endorse these sexual motives: physical appeal of partner, pleasure, self-affirmation, status and

recognition, power, conquest, peer conformity, seeking sexual experience and variety, stress reduction, rebellion, financial and other utilitarian motives, and goal attainment.

Given that Chinese and North American men and women are thought to differ so profoundly on the individualism/collectivism dimension, it seems reasonable to argue that men (in general) might possess more individualistic motives (such as seeking sexual pleasure and reducing sexual stress), while women might possess more collectivist motives (such as wishing to please their partners and maintain a relationship) in making their sexual decisions.

Hypotheses

This study was designed to test three hypotheses:

Hypothesis 1: Chinese students will be more likely to endorse collectivist motives such as “please the partner” and “maintain the relationship” than will their North American counterparts. North American students will be more likely to endorse such individualist motives as “pleasure stimulation” and “stress reduction” than will their Chinese counterparts.

Hypothesis 2: Chinese men and North American men will be more likely to endorse individualist sexual motives, while Chinese women and North American women will be more likely to endorse collectivist sexual motives than are their peers.

Hypothesis 3: Culture and gender will interact in determining how individualistic or collectivist people are in their sexual motives. We expect gender differences to be greater in China than in America.

Method

Participants

Participants

Two-hundred and seventy-seven Chinese college students at Sichuan University (117 males and 160 females) and 266 University of Hawaii students (105 males and 161

females) were recruited to participate in this study. Ten additional individuals (9 Chinese and 1 American) participated but did not indicate their gender; their data was removed from analysis. The Chinese sample ranged from 18 to 29 years of age ($M = 21.14$) and was comprised entirely of men and women of Chinese ethnicity. The North American sample ranged from 17 to 53 years of age ($M = 21.98$). As is typical of Hawaii, the UH sample was diverse in ethnic heritage: 32% Caucasian, 22% Japanese-American, 14% Chinese-American, 11% Filipino-American, 5% Korean-American, 3% Hawaiian, 3% Hispanic, and 2% of each of the following groups, African-American, American Indian, Pacific Islander, South Asian, and Other (not specified). Although American students' ancestors came from a variety of regions, previous studies demonstrate that today the various groups are so Americanized that one rarely finds any differences between them and mainland Americans (once again, see Hatfield & Rapson, 2005). We will see later that in this study, too, students from an Asian-American background did not differ in their responses from those of European-American students. Thus we think it is appropriate to treat "Americans" as a single group.

In general, Chinese students were less sexually experienced than were North Americans. When asked about their sexual experience (from hugging and kissing to sexual intercourse) Chinese students were generally less sexually experienced. Chinese students (as compared to American students) were less likely to hug (86.7% versus 97.8%), equally likely to hold hands (93.8% versus 93.6%), less likely to kiss on the mouth (72.9% versus 91.4%), to French kiss (55.9% versus 87.6%), to kiss on neck and ears (54.4% versus 88.4%), to stimulate breasts with hands (40.8% versus 76.8%), to engage in oral stimulation of breast (31.3% versus 74.2%), to stimulate genitals (own or

other's) with hands (28.7% versus 81.6%), or to engage in oral stimulation of genitals (18.8% versus 78.3%). Most notably, while 23% ($n = 62$) of Chinese students had engaged in sexual intercourse, a full 78% ($n = 207$) of American students had done so.

Materials

Sexual Experience Measure

Participants were asked to complete a checklist indicating all the sexual behaviors in which they had ever engaged. Possible experiences ranged from kissing to sexual intercourse.

Sexual Motives Measures

We selected four types of measures (from the 35 test batteries we had assembled earlier), which seemed best to encapsulate the differences between collectivist and individualistic sexual motives. These constructs were: (1) Please the partner. This included such items as: *I have sex because* “I feel good about having sex since I know it means a great deal to my partner” or “我对进行亲密行为感觉很好，因为我知道这对我的伴侣来说意义很大。” (2) Maintain the relationship. This included such items as: “I have sex because as long as I keep my partner sexually satisfied, he/she has no reason to seek sex elsewhere” or “我进行亲密行为因为只要我一直能在这方面使我的伴侣满意，他/她就没有理由在别人那里寻找满足感。” (3) Pleasure stimulation. This included such items as: “I have sex because as long as I keep my partner sexually satisfied, he/she has no reason to seek sex elsewhere” or “我进行亲密行为因为只要我一直能在这方面使我的伴侣满意，他/她就没有理由在别人那里寻找满足感。” (4) Stress reduction. “Many times when I am feeling unhappy or depressed, thinking about sex or engaging in sexual activity will make me feel better” or “很多次当我感觉不开心或者郁闷的时候，进行亲密的行为会让

我感到好受。” The items designed to measure collectivist motives, “To please the partner” and “to maintain the relationship,” were taken from Hill and Preston (1996) and Hawk, Tang, and Hatfield (2007), respectively. The individualist motives, “pleasure stimulation” and “stress reduction,” were taken primarily from Nelson (1978) and Hill and Preston (1996), respectively.

Since all of these scales were crafted from a Western perspective, we invited a team of Chinese and North American scholars to assess the appropriateness of the scales for an Asian context and to slightly rewrite any “odd” items to make sure they would convey the same meaning to all participants.

Each of the four scales consisted of eight items; responses were to be indicated on 5-point scale, ranging from 1 = not true at all to 5= completely true. The higher the number, the more important that sexual motive was to a respondent.

All scales were then translated into Chinese by English-Chinese bilingual speakers, using the double-translation method (translation and back translation) and utilizing a committee translation method to establish consensus as to the meanings of the Chinese items (Brislin, 1970). A pilot study was then conducted in Hawaii and Hong Kong to assess item clarity, and additional modifications were made to ensure students from both cultures could easily understand the items (See Tang, 2011) for a detailed description of these translation procedures.)

For the Chinese and North American samples, Chronbach’s α s were: (1) *Please the partner*. Chronbach’s α s were .80 and .80, respectively. (2) *Maintain the relationship*. For the Chinese and North American samples, Chronbach’s α s were .81 and .89, respectively. (3) *Pleasure simulation*. For the Chinese and North American

samples, Chronbach's α s were .83 and .86, respectively. (4) *Stress reduction*. For the Chinese and North American samples, Chronbach's α s were .79 and .92, respectively.

Procedure

Participants were given an informed consent form, which briefly described the study. It assured them that their answers would be confidential, and reminded them that they had the right to withdraw from the study at any time.

Then they were given the questionnaire, which consisted of demographic questions and the Sexual Experience Scale. They were asked to think of the most "serious" sexual activity they had engaged in (i.e., kissing to sexual intercourse), indicate the nature of the activity they would be describing, and tell the researcher why they generally chose to engage in that activity. Then followed a series of items designed to measure sexual motives. The items from these scales were presented in a random order.

Results

A 2 x 2 ANOVA (culture x gender) was performed on participants' responses to the questionnaire to determine if sexual motives differed depending on the culture and gender of the individual engaging in sexual activity. Four ANOVAs were run, with one analysis on each of the four sexual motives: please the partner, maintain the relationship, pleasure stimulation, and stress reduction.

Please the Partner

A two-way ANOVA for the sexual motive please the partner did not show a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 495) = .181, p = .671$. This lack of effect indicates that the culture of the individual did not influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to please his or her partner. This is contrary to hypothesis 1,

which predicted that Chinese participants would score higher than North American participants on this motive.

The two-way ANOVA did show a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 495) = 4.78, p = .029, \eta^2 = .001$. This indicates that the gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to please his or her partner. However, contrary to expectations (and hypothesis 2), males ($M = 2.85$) reported higher mean scores than did females ($M = 2.66$).

Finally, as predicted, there was a significant interaction between culture and gender, $F(1, 495) = 5.42, p = .020, \eta^2 = .001$. This interaction effect indicates that culture and the gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to please his or her partner (see Table 1.1). This supports hypothesis 3, which contended there would be a bigger gender difference between Chinese men and women than North American men and women.

Table 1.1
Please the Partner Means by Culture and Gender

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Chinese Males	2.93	0.76	100
Chinese Females	2.54	0.78	146
American Males	2.77	1.06	98
American Females	2.78	1.05	155

Maintain the Relationship

A two-way ANOVA for the sexual motive maintain the relationship revealed that as in the previous case, we failed to secure a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 505) = 1.42, p = .234$. This lack of effect indicates that the culture of the individual did not influence whether he or she engaged in sexual activity to maintain the relationship. Once

again, this finding is contrary to hypothesis 1, which predicted that Chinese participants would score higher than did North American participants on this scale.

As in the previous case, the two-way ANOVA did show a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 505) = 9.75, p = .002, \eta^2 = .002$. This indicates that gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to maintain the relationship. However, contrary to expectations (and hypothesis 2), males ($M = 2.64$) reported higher mean scores than did females ($M = 2.40$) on this motive.

Finally, there was not a significant interaction between gender and culture, $F(1, 505) = 2.06, p = .151$. This lack of an interaction effect indicates that the gender and the culture of the individual did not interact in influencing whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to maintain the relationship (see Table 1.2). This finding does not support hypothesis 3.

Table 1.2
Maintain the Relationship Means by Culture and Gender

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Chinese Males	2.74	0.76	106
Chinese Females	2.39	0.74	144
American Males	2.54	1.02	101
American Females	2.51	0.92	158

Pleasure Stimulation

A two-way ANOVA for the sexual motive pleasure stimulation did show a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 479) = 25.02, p = .000, \eta^2 = .006$. This effect indicates that the culture of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to experience pleasure. As predicted in hypothesis 1, North American participants ($M = 2.60$) reported higher mean scores than did Chinese participants ($M = 2.15$).

The two-way ANOVA also showed a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 479) = 16.85, p = .000, \eta^2 = .004$. This indicates that gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to experience pleasure. As expected in hypothesis 2, males ($M = 2.59$) reported higher mean scores than did females ($M = 2.26$).

Finally, there was also a significant interaction between culture and gender, $F(1, 479) = 5.57, p = .019, \eta^2 = .001$. This interaction effect indicates that the culture and gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to experience pleasure (see Table 1.3). This finding supports hypothesis 3.

Table 1.3
Pleasure Stimulation Means by Culture and Gender

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Chinese Males	2.47	0.74	93
Chinese Females	1.93	0.71	139
American Males	2.69	1.11	97
American Females	2.55	0.98	154

Stress Reduction

A two-way ANOVA for the sexual motive stress reduction did show a significant main effect for culture, $F(1, 485) = 4.11, p = .043, \eta^2 = .001$. This effect indicates that the culture of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to reduce stress. As expected in hypothesis 1, North American participants ($M = 2.24$) reported higher mean scores than did Chinese participants ($M = 2.08$).

There also was a significant main effect for gender, $F(1, 485) = 23.83, p = .000, \eta^2 = .007$. This indicates that gender of the individual did influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to reduce stress. As expected in hypothesis 2, males ($M = 2.40$) reported higher mean scores than did females ($M = 2.00$).

Finally, there was not a significant interaction between culture and gender, $F(1, 485) = .020, p = .888$. This lack of an interaction effect indicates that culture and the gender of the individual did not interact to influence whether the individual engaged in sexual activity to reduce stress (see Table 1.4). This finding does not support hypothesis 3.

Table 1.4
Stress Reduction Means by Culture and Gender

	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	N
Chinese Males	2.32	0.77	97
Chinese Females	1.90	0.71	132
American Males	2.48	1.12	103
American Females	2.08	0.96	157

Discussion

This study was designed to find out whether or not Western crafted theories and research, which attempt to predict *why* young men and women engage in sexual relations, are equally applicable in Western and Eastern cultures. In this study we found considerable support for the contention that scholars can learn a great deal by broadening the scope of research. We found several differences in sexual motivation in our Chinese and North American samples—some expected, some not.

To explicate this, let us now consider our three hypotheses.

Hypothesis 1: Chinese students will be more likely to endorse such collectivist motives as “please the partner” and “maintain the relationship” than will their North American counterparts. North American students will be more likely to endorse such individualist motives as “pleasure stimulation” and “stress reduction” than will their Chinese counterparts.

From our data it is clear that Chinese and North American young people did not differ in their willingness to cite collectivist motives in explaining why they engaged in sexual relations. Both groups were equally likely to report that the reason they engaged

in sex was a desire to please their partner and a desire to maintain their relationship. We did secure significant differences in Chinese and North Americans willingness to admit that they chose to engage in sex for individualist reasons. As predicted, North Americans were far more likely to cite pleasure and stress reduction as motives for sex than were their Chinese counterparts.

Why didn't we secure the predicted differences in Asian's and North American's willingness to endorse collectivist motives for sex? In retrospect, we can imagine several reasons for these unexpected findings:

1. Perhaps hypothesis 1 is simply wrong. It may be that both groups are equally likely to engage in sex for "altruistic" or "collectivist" reasons. It is only in the willingness to engage in sex for "selfish" reasons that they differ. (We lean to this hypothesis.)

2. Or, critics might argue that the results we secured in this study are misleading. They may argue that indeed the groups do differ as proposed in Hypothesis 1, but we did not secure differences for a plethora of reasons. Let us now consider some of these reasons.

- a. In the wake of globalization, perhaps the cultural differences that once existed are rapidly disappearing. There is considerable data indicating this is so (Hatfield et al., 2007). If this is the reason for the fact that culture appeared to have only a weak impact on sexual motives, one might speculate that we would have secured larger differences if we had not limited our study to college students. Perhaps we would have secured far larger differences, had we had compared the reports of, say, Chinese grandparents and Chinese grandchildren to their Western counterparts. We might also compare the

reports of people in rural areas with those in urban, highly educated, areas of China. To demonstrate large Cultural differences *on all four sexual motives*, then, we would have had to broaden our sample.

b. Critics might also argue that our samples were not sufficiently different to allow us to detect differences. Our Chinese sample was comprised entirely of Chinese students, but our Hawaii sample also contained 14% students of Chinese-American ancestry. We are skeptical about this explanation, however. Hawaii has a multi-cultural population, and generations of UH graduate students have conducted experiments designed to secure differences between those of European and Chinese background. To our knowledge, in the area of love and sex, not one of these students has found differences. The Hawaii population is simply too westernized to secure such differences. (Personal communication, Elaine Hatfield. For a typical example of the many failures to secure differences between European-American, Chinese-American, and Japanese-Americans at the University of Hawaii, see Singelis, 1995.) Further evidence in support of our skepticism comes from the fact that when we conducted a series of analyses designed to determine if our Chinese-American students differed from our European-American students, we found no evidence that they did. (We will not report those results here. The comparisons become so numerous and the Ns so small given Hawaii's multicultural sample that nothing is significant. Thus the comparisons add nothing to our discussion. For those interested in these comparisons, see Tang, 2011).

Nonetheless, in subsequent research, we should begin not just by choosing respondents from China and America. We should go the next step and—using one of the traditional measures, document that our respondents do indeed subscribe to different

cultural values. In this pathbreaking study, it wasn't possible, but we hope to do so in subsequent research.

Scholars have developed a variety of measures designed to measure acculturation to Chinese or American values, individualism versus collectivism, interdependent versus independent self-construals, and the like (see Bond, Leung, Au, Tong, et al., 2004; Chinese Culture Connection, 1987; Hofstede, 1983; Kim, Atkinson & Yang, 1999; Markus & Kitayama, 1998; Schwartz, 1994; or Singelis, 2003. For a complete review of potential measures, see Taras, 2011). Our next step would be to insure that Chinese and North American samples do in fact differ, as predicted, in their values.

Hypothesis 2: Chinese men and American men will be more likely to endorse individualist motives, while Chinese women and American women will be more likely to endorse collectivist sexual motives than are their peers.

We did indeed secure gender differences in our Chinese and North American populations on all four sexual motives, but the nature of these differences was more complex than we had expected. Gender differences were small in the North American sample. It was the Chinese sample where differences were most evident. . . but these were in a far different direction than we had expected. Chinese men seemed MORE concerned about their partners' pleasure and more concerned about maintaining the relationship than were women, which contradicts a wealth of existing evidence that in general women care more about intimate relationship initiation and maintenance than do men. We can think of two possible reasons for this unexpected finding.

1. In traditional societies, men often feel that it is their responsibility to please and sexually satisfy their partners. This notion has diminished in the modern world, but

traces of that world view remain. Chinese men may simply be more courtly than we had expected.

2. Perhaps Chinese men are more comfortable with their sexuality, and thus can think of a myriad of reasons for engaging in sexual activity (using sex both for pleasure and to cement relationships as well as for pleasure and to reduce stress) than can Chinese women.

3. Perhaps Chinese men are more eager for sex and thus the maintenance of sexual relationships than are women. The fact that relatively few Chinese men and women have had sex may add to the plausibility of this argument; if sex is a rare commodity, one must sacrifice more to secure it. However, when we re-analyzed the data considering only participants who had engaged in sexual intercourse, there was very little change to our findings. We still found gender differences on all four motives, with males scoring higher than females on all four motives.

4. Guttentag and Secord (1983) have argued that the ratio of men to women in a society has a profound impact on men's and women's romantic relationships. In China, the one-child policy has produced a society in which there are more men than women. (This is due to the fact that couples sometimes abort a fetus if it is a girl and that in rural areas infanticide is occasionally practiced.) When there are more men than women (as in China), men should be willing to sacrifice a great deal to find a romantic partner, sacrifice a great deal to woo her and cement a relationships, etc. It seems reasonable to argue, then, that this fact may account for our surprising results, at least in part.

Hypothesis 3: Culture and gender will interact in determining how individualistic or collectivist people are in their sexual motives. We expect gender differences to be greater in China than in America.

As you saw earlier, there was some support for this hypothesis. On two of our variables—the desire to please the partner and the desire for pleasure, the difference between the reports of Chinese men and women was greater than that between North American men and women. This supports our earlier contention that in some respects Chinese men and women are more divergent in their attitudes and behavior than are North American men and women.

Finally, we should note that even for our significant findings, our η^2 values were extremely small, suggesting we accounted for a very tiny portion of the variance.

Future Directions

This study was intended only as a first foray into understanding the impact of culture and gender on sexual desire, attitudes, and behavior. In subsequent research we would hope to survey more diverse populations, who differ in age, acculturation, values, and sexual experience. We hope, however, that this first study is a good beginning. The fact that we were not always good at predicting the differences we would secure between Chinese and North American samples makes it clear that we have a great deal to learn.

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