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# Are Sexual Promiscuity and Relationship Infidelity Linked to Different Personality Traits Across Cultures? Findings from the International Sexuality Description Project

David P. Schmitt

*Bradley University, Peoria, Illinois, dps@bradley.edu*

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# Are Sexual Promiscuity and Relationship Infidelity Linked to Different Personality Traits Across Cultures? Findings from the International Sexuality Description Project

## **Abstract**

Over 17,000 participants responded to self-report measures of sexuality and personality as part of the International Sexuality Description Project. It was expected that romantic relationship infidelity would be associated with the personality traits of disagreeableness and a lack of conscientiousness across most cultures. Sexual promiscuity, on the other hand, was expected to relate to extraversion across most cultures. Analyses across 58 cultures from 52 nations revealed that romantic relationship infidelity was significantly associated with disagreeableness and low levels of conscientiousness across most cultures. Sexual promiscuity was related to extraversion across many, but not most, cultural regions. The expected pattern of findings was most strongly evident in South America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania. In some world regions, such as Africa and East Asia, sexual promiscuity was completely unrelated to extraversion levels. Discussion questions focus on why regional differences in sexuality-personality linkages seem to exist.

## INTRODUCTION

Early in the summer of 2000, I published a research article about the different kinds of words that people use to describe their sexuality. A colleague of mine and I had found that one of the most significant groups of sexuality words had to do with how faithful people are to their romantic relationship partners, what we called the dimension of *Relationship Exclusivity*. Sexual adjectives like "monogamous" and "promiscuous" belonged to this important category of English sexuality adjectives (Schmitt & Buss, 2000). Not surprisingly, most people tended to describe themselves as much more faithful than unfaithful when it came to the dimension of Relationship Exclusivity. Equally unremarkable was our finding that men tended to describe themselves as more promiscuous (or less exclusive) than women did. This was to be expected, given that men are often rewarded for promiscuity in North American culture, whereas women are often punished for similar desires and behaviors—a consequence of the sexual double standard (Sprecher, McKinney, & Orbuch, 1987).

### An Unexpected Finding

We did come across one unexpected finding about sexuality and words in the English language, though. Some of the Relationship Exclusivity adjectives tended to form a separate cluster from the rest. Most exclusivity words like "adulterous" and "unfaithful" had to do with sexual infidelity, with romantic betrayal and sexually cheating on a long-term partner. Words like "promiscuous" and "loose" were different, however. These words did not necessarily imply a lack of fidelity. One can be described as promiscuous even though one does not have a steady long-term partner. Promiscuity while not involved with someone special would not necessarily imply a sense of romantic betrayal. Conversely, one can also be sexually unfaithful, but only briefly with one extra-relationship partner. In this way, infidelity would not necessarily imply having "promiscuous" sex with numerous partners. We argued in our paper that Relationship Exclusivity probably has at least two related but psychologically distinct sub-components: *Relationship Infidelity* and *Sexual Promiscuity*.

I have since found that different types of personality traits are linked to these two sub-components of Relationship Exclusivity. For example, people's self-descriptions of their "Big Five" personality traits (Goldberg, 1990) are linked in different ways to Relationship Infidelity and Sexual Promiscuity. People who report that they are generally unfaithful in romantic relationships tend to be disagreeable (i.e., they lack trust and empathy) and low on the trait of conscientiousness (i.e., they tend to be disorganized and unreliable). Indeed, both men and women high on Relationship Infidelity are disagreeable and low on conscientiousness. People who report that they are promiscuous, in contrast, are not particularly disagreeable or unconscientious. Instead, individuals who are sexually promiscuous tend to describe themselves as more extraverted (i.e., they are active and talkative) than people who are not promiscuous. This difference between the personality correlates of being sexually

unfaithful versus being sexually promiscuous can be called the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis.

### **An Idea for Cross-Cultural Collaboration**

Later in the summer of 2000, psychologists from other cultures began contacting me about my paper on sexuality adjectives in the English language. Some of them wanted to know whether I would be interested in collaborating with them to see if my findings from the United States would generalize to other cultures and other languages. I was very interested in studying that issue. I decided to try and assemble a group of researchers from a diverse group of cultures and investigate whether my findings on sexual psychology were universally true across all cultures, or whether they were perhaps limited to certain languages or regions of the world. I was a bit naïve when I made that decision, however. I had little idea about the actual amount of time and energy it would take to formally study this issue cross-culturally.

In September of 2000, I began assembling a team of researchers from various cultures to contribute to what I decided to call the International Sexuality Description Project (ISDP). I contacted a few people from other cultures whom I had met at scholarly conferences and asked them if they would be willing to administer a survey to about 200 people (100 men and 100 women) from their culture. In addition to studying sexual adjectives in the ISDP survey, I decided also to include measures of romantic attachment, personality traits, self-esteem, sociosexuality, short-term sexual desire, and a survey of mate poaching experiences (i.e., experiences with attracting someone who is already in a relationship). All of these topics are related to my general research interests, and I had developed some of these measures for other research projects. Along with the original group of interested researchers who contacted me, I was able to assemble a group of about a dozen researchers from a half dozen separate cultures, all of whom were willing to translate and administer what was now the official 9-page ISDP survey.

### **Locating for More Cross-Cultural Collaborators**

In locating some of these collaborators, I had needed to find their phone numbers and e-mail addresses in scholarly society membership lists. I had access to these lists because I was a member of the societies. At this point, I came upon an ambitious idea. I decided to contact the people on those lists whom I did not know personally, but who listed "sexuality" or "personality" as a research interest. I used society directories from the International Society for the Study of Personal Relationships, the Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality, and the Human Behavior and Evolution Society. Using this technique, I was able to increase the number of collaborators to about 40 and the number of cultures represented in the ISDP to about 20. I felt this was quite an accomplishment, and much of North America, Western Europe, and East Asia were now represented in the ISDP.

In trying to contact some of these potential collaborators, I had located their personal websites using the Internet. I also came across their official university and psychology department websites. This gave me another ambitious idea. I decided to scour the Internet for all psychology department websites and find more scholars who conducted research on gender, sexuality, and personality. I tried to use a few "mega-sites" that exist. These sites list 100's of universities from around the world, but most of those links were dead-ends for non-European universities. Tracking down individual scholars turned out to be a very long and difficult task. I spent over 100 hours trying to track down sex and personality researchers from all across the globe using the Internet. Perhaps the most difficult was task of identifying scholars with the right research interests when their websites were not in English and no e-mail addresses were provided. This meant I had to mail them personally using "snail-mail." Even so, after this stage I was able to accumulate about 80 interested collaborators from 50 separate cultures.

Finally, I posted messages during the beginning of 2001 on several psychology-related list servers (e.g., Society for Personality and Social Psychology, Individual Differences Assessment Network). These messages asked any parties interested in collaboration to contact me via e-mail. All interested parties from cultures not yet represented in the ISDP were invited to join the collaboration at that time. Any culture with a willing collaborator was included in the ISDP, making this a "random sampling" approach to cross-cultural research. In the end, I was able to assemble a team of over 100 collaborators from over 60 cultures. It turned out that finding people who said they would collect data was the easy part.

### **Problematic Issues of Cross-Cultural Collaboration**

#### **Collaborator motivation and a survey that is "too sexual" for some.**

I had found over 100 interested collaborators, actually it was closer to 150 originally. In order to motivate the collaborators to join the ISDP, I had promised them "fame not fortune." By this I had meant that I possessed no federal, state, or private funding for the ISDP study. I could not help pay for each collaborator's translation procedures, their photocopying, their administering of the survey, their mailing the 100's of surveys back to me in the United States for data entry, and so forth. I could only promise being co-authors on "at least 3 journal articles" resulting from our collaboration. Because it was my opinion that these journal articles describing data collected from over 60 cultures would become well-known in psychology and social science, I felt that promising "fame not fortune" would be a reasonably accurate and stimulating motivation.

In hindsight, this "fame not fortune" motivation was clearly not enough for many collaborators. I had several collaborators who said that they would collect data, but in the end they withdrew from the ISDP because they had too little time and money to translate and collect the ISDP survey data without remuneration. Collaborators from

Sweden, Norway, Russia, and several African cultures were forced to back out of the ISDP because I had no funding with which to pay them. I also had collaborators withdraw from the study because they felt the ISDP questions were too explicitly "sexual" for their culture. Several collaborators wanted to be part of the ISDP from mainland China, but none of these researchers could gain permission from their state-run universities to collect ISDP data. Even some of those that did collect ISDP data (e.g., from Chile, Jordan, and India) did not administer the entire survey due to its explicitly sexual nature.

### **Communication and translation problems**

Other problems arose from a lack of consistent communication among collaborators. I had used air-mail to send most of the early collaborators a copy of the survey and some related academic papers, but in the end I was forced to run the ISDP primarily using e-mail to communicate. Several collaborators lost touch with me for months at a time due to e-mail problems. The collaborator from the Democratic Republic of the Congo had problems receiving her e-mail; a volcanic eruption had disrupted much of country during the latter stages of the ISDP. The ISDP collaborator from Brazil had gone on strike as a public university professor during the latter stages of the ISDP and was unable to get in touch with me via her university e-mail account. She ended up sending me her sample data at the very last minute.

In terms of time and academic conflict, however, the most vexing problems concerned the process of translation. We used a standard translation/back-translation procedure for the ISDP survey. This meant that each collaborator translated the survey into their native language, then an independent colleague back-translated the survey into English. Of course, there are always differences between the original English survey and the translated/back-translated English survey. These differences point out translation issues that need to be discussed and choices need to be made about which words should be used in the non-English translation. At all times, the primary goal is to maintain the intended meaning of the original ISDP survey while maximizing the appropriateness and utility of the translated survey in a local culture. This translation/back-translation process was extremely difficult. I had to provide feedback to many collaborators to help them decide what the original intention was in the English ISDP survey. Fortunately, I had designed most of the ISDP measures for use in my own research. Still, being involved in over 30 independent translations was a very time consuming process, especially when multiple collaborators from some cultures disagreed very strongly about the best word in their native tongue. In some of the more contentious translation cases, I had to play personality peacemaker as much as language translator.

### **Rationale for the Current Study**

In total, over 80 samples from 62 cultural regions across 56 nations were administered at least part of the ISDP survey (for details, see Schmitt, Alcalay, Allensworth, Allik, Ault, Austers, et al., 2004). Because not all samples completed the sexuality adjective measure, the results reported here include 58 cultures from 52 nations. Having this many cultures meant that we could now evaluate the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis across many different cultures. We can determine whether this psychological phenomenon is a true human universal (Brown, 1991; Lonner, 1980).

In addition, we can explore whether certain patterns or trends exist across cultures. Perhaps this difference in sexuality and personality only emerges in certain ecological or historical situations. Perhaps only some geographic, linguistic, or ethnic groupings display the same "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" that we found in the United States using the English language. Perhaps the link between sexuality and personality only emerges in a given religious or political context. Given the large number of cultures represented in the ISDP, we can more fully evaluate these and other potential moderators of sex and personality.

### **Method**

#### **Samples**

The first data collection phase of the ISDP ended in December of 2001. As seen in Table 1, the final ISDP collection of cultures included eight "cultural regions" from the North America, five cultures from South America, nine cultures from Western Europe, 11 cultures from Eastern Europe, six cultures from Southern Europe, four cultures from the Middle East, seven cultures from Africa, three cultures from Oceania, five cultures from South or Southeast Asia, and four cultures from East Asia. Overall, this collection of cultural regions represents a diverse array of ethnic, geographic, and linguistic categories. In total, the 62 cultures of the ISDP represent 6 continents, 13 islands, 30 languages, and 56 nations.

#### **Procedure**

All collaborators were asked to administer an anonymous 9-page survey to at least 100 men and 100 women. As seen in Table 1, almost all collaborators reached this approximate sample size of men and women. Most collaborators administered the ISDP survey in college classrooms; many also surveyed general community members. All collaborators had participants return the survey in an anonymous manner, often with the use of sealed envelopes or drop-boxes. Some of the college samples were provided extra-credit or received small monetary rewards for their participation, most were volunteers.

**Table 1**

Sample Sizes, Sampling Type, and Language of Survey Across the 62 ISDP Cultural Regions

Sample	Sample Size		Sample Type		Language
	Men	Women			
<b>Canada</b>					
Canada-English	313	553	College	Students	English
Canada-French	60	113	College	Students	French
<b>United States of America</b>					
USA-Northeast	72	156	College	Students	English
USA-Midwest	184	357	College	Students	English
USA-South	368	570	College	Students	English
USA-West	287	487	College	Students	English
USA-Hawaii	88	224	College	Students	English
<b>South America</b>					
Mexico	106	109	Community-Based		Spanish
Peru	106	100	College	Students	Spanish
Bolivia	92	89	College	Students	Spanish
Chile	100	212	College	Students	Spanish
Argentina	110	136	College	Students	Spanish
Brazil	42	55	College	Students	Portuguese
<b>Western Europe</b>					
Finland	24	90	Community-Based		Finnish
UK-Northern Ireland	56	244	College	Students	English
UK-England	82	101	College/Community		English
Netherlands	115	126	College	Students	Dutch
Belgium	166	356	College	Students	Dutch-Flemish
France	55	56	College	Students	French
Switzerland	103	130	College	Students	German
Germany	294	496	College/Community		German

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Table 1 continues

Austria	207	260	College/Community		German
Eastern Europe					
Estonia	79	109	College	Students	Estonian
Latvia	90	103	College	Students	Latvian
Lithuania	47	47	College	Students	Lithuanian
Poland	309	537	College	Students	Polish
Czech Republic	106	129	College	Students	Czech
Slovakia	83	100	College	Students	Slovak
Ukraine	100	100	College/Community		Ukrainian
Romania	123	128	College	Students	Romanian
Serbia	100	100	College	Students	Serbian
Croatia	113	109	College	Students	Croatian
Slovenia	88	117	College	Students	Slovenian
Southern Europe					
Portugal	110	142	College	Students	Portuguese
Spain	95	178	College	Students	Spanish
Italy	92	108	College/Community		Italian
Malta	133	198	College	Students	English
Greece	47	182	College	Students	Greek
Cyprus	30	30	College	Students	Greek
Middle East					
Turkey	206	206	College/Community		Turkish
Lebanon	124	139	College	Students	English
Israel	180	214	College	Students	Hebrew
Jordan	80	195	College	Students	Arabic
Africa					
Morocco	93	89	College	Students	English
Ethiopia	140	100	College	Students	English
Tanzania, United Rep. of	93	43	College	Students	English

Table 1 continues

Congo Dem. Rep. of	126	66	College/Community		French
Zimbabwe	100	100	College	Students	English
Botswana	97	116	College	Students	English
South Africa	81	81	College	Students	English
Oceania					
Australia	201	288	College	Students	English
New Zealand	116	158	College	Students	English
Fiji & Pacific Islands	81	82	College/Community		English
South/Southeast Asia					
India	100	100	College	Students	Hindi
Bangladesh	83	62	College	Students	Bangla
Malaysia	50	91	College	Students	Malay
Indonesia	55	56	College	Students	Indonesian
Philippines	121	161	College	Students	English
East Asia					
Hong Kong (China)	100	101	College	Students	English
Taiwan	116	93	College	Students	Mandarin
(South) Korea, Rep. of	195	295	College	Students	Korean
Japan	157	102	College	Students	Japanese

Worldwide ISDP Sample: 7,432; Varied Samples: 10,372; 30 Languages

Note: Most samples were primarily comprised of college students, some included general members of the community. All samples were convenience samples. Details on sampling methods within each culture are available from the author.

Participants were provided with a brief description of the study, including the following written instructions: "This questionnaire is entirely voluntary. All your responses will be kept confidential and your personal identity will remain anonymous. No identifying information is requested on this survey, nor will any such information be added later to this survey. If any of the questions make you uncomfortable, feel free not to answer them. You are free to withdraw from this study at any time for any reason. This series of questionnaires should take about 20 minutes to complete. Thank you for your participation." The full cover story provided by each collaborator varied, however, and was adapted to fit the specific culture and type of sample. Details on incentives and cover stories used across samples are available from the authors.

## **Measures**

*Demographic measure.* Each sample was first presented with a demographic measure entitled "Confidential Personal Information." This measure included questions about gender, age, date of birth, weight, height, sexual orientation, current relationship status, socioeconomic status as a child, socioeconomic status now, area in which one was raised (rural, urban, suburban), total number of years of education, current religious affiliation, degree of religiosity, ethnic background, and political attitude (conservative versus liberal).

*Personality and sexuality measures.* All samples were administered a measure of personality traits (Benet-Martinez & John, 1998). All but four samples (i.e., Chile, Jordan, South Africa, India) were administered the "Sexy Seven" measure of sexuality adjectives (Schmitt & Buss, 2000). The collaborators from the cultures of Chile, Jordan, and India chose not to administer the sexuality adjective measure because of the extremely sensitive nature of these questions in their cultures. The South African collaborators chose not to include the sexuality adjective measure due to limitations on the time they had to administer the survey.

*Other measures not used in this report.* All samples were administered a two-dimension/four-category measure of adult romantic attachment called the Relationship Questionnaire (Bartholomew & Horowitz, 1991) and Rosenberg's global self-esteem scale. Multiple sexuality measures were administered, including measures of short-term mating tendencies (Schmitt, Shackelford, Duntley, Tooke, & Buss 2001), the sociosexual orientation inventory (Simpson & Gangestad, 1991), and a survey of human mate poaching experiences (Schmitt & Buss, 2001).

## **Results**

A primary objective of this research was to examine the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis-to determine whether Relationship Infidelity and Sexual Promiscuity are related to personality traits in different ways, and if this difference remains the same across all cultures. It was expected that Relationship Infidelity would be related to low agreeableness and low conscientiousness, but would

be unrelated to extraversion. In contrast, Sexual Promiscuity was expected to relate to extraversion, but be largely unrelated to agreeableness and conscientiousness.

As seen in Table 2, in most North America cultures Relationship Infidelity was significantly related as predicted to low levels of agreeableness and low levels of conscientiousness. The only notable exception to this trend was that in Mexico people who were unfaithful did not tend to report lower levels of conscientiousness. In addition, Relationship Infidelity was unrelated to extraversion across all North American cultures. This finding would be true across almost all cultures of the ISDP. These findings on Relationship Infidelity strongly supported the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis.

Contrary to expectations, however, Sexual Promiscuity was also related to agreeableness and conscientiousness across most North American cultures, though these results were generally smaller in magnitude and less consistent than the results with Relationship Infidelity. In support of the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis, Sexual Promiscuity was significantly related to high levels of extraversion in the USA-West sample,  $r(772) = .11$ ,  $p < .01$ , and in USA-Hawaii,  $r(310) = .12$ ,  $p < .05$ . Still, the results from North America were not as strong as expected.

The results from South America were similar to the findings from North America. In Peru, people who were unfaithful described themselves as disagreeable,  $r(204) = -.14$ ,  $p < .05$ . In Bolivia, people who were unfaithful tended to describe themselves as low on conscientiousness,  $r(179) = -.28$ ,  $p < .01$ . Notice that the Chilean sample did not complete the sexuality adjectives measure, so we were unable to evaluate their sexuality-personality correlations. In Argentina and Brazil, as in the western United States, Sexual Promiscuity was associated with higher levels of extraversion. Overall, in the Western Hemisphere it appeared that Relationship Exclusivity was more strongly related to low agreeableness and low conscientiousness than was Sexual Promiscuity; whereas Sexual Promiscuity was more closely related to extraversion than was Relationship Exclusivity.

Across Western, Eastern, and Southern Europe, Relationship Infidelity was related to low agreeableness and low conscientiousness in most, but not all, cultures. In Finland, the Netherlands, France, Latvia, Ukraine, Slovenia, Spain, and Italy, Relationship Infidelity was unrelated to agreeableness. These findings would seem to somewhat contradict the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis. However, as expected Relationship Infidelity was largely unrelated to extraversion across European cultures, whereas Sexual Promiscuity was associated with high extraversion in several European ISDP cultures, including the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Austria; as well as, several Eastern European cultures. These results provided some support for the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis.

The results from the Middle East strongly supported the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis. Relationship Infidelity was related primarily to low agreeableness and low conscientiousness, whereas Sexual Promiscuity was related only to high extraversion in Turkey, Lebanon, and Israel.

**Table 2.**

Personality Correlates (Controlling for Gender) of Relationship Infidelity and Sexual Promiscuity Across the Cultural Regions of the International Sexuality Description Project

	Relationship Infidelity			Sexual Promiscuity		
	Ext	Agr	Con	Ext	Agr	Con
<b>Canada</b>						
Canada-English	-.01	-.29***	-.27***	.01	-.17***	-.28***
Canada-French	-.06	-.15	-.37***	.08	-.18*	-.26**
<b>United States of America</b>						
USA-Northeast	.05	-.15*	-.23***	.03	-.09	-.24***
USA-Midwest	-.01	-.21***	-.21***	.06	-.21***	-.11*
USA-South	.06	-.20***	-.21***	.04	-.10**	-.14***
USA-West	.06	-.22***	-.21***	.11**	-.14***	-.20***
USA-Hawaii	.07	-.28***	-.18**	.12*	-.15**	-.14*
<b>South America</b>						
Mexico	.05	-.27***	-.01	.12	.02	-.18**
Peru	.05	-.14*	-.08	.10	-.08	.02
Bolivia	.08	-.14	-.28**	-.13	-.10	.00
Chile(a)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Argentina	.08	-.10	-.10	.26***	-.10	-.15*
Brazil	.12	-.05	-.14	.47***	.05	-.01
<b>Western Europe</b>						
Finland	-.05	-.18	-.10	-.09	-.25**	-.31***
UK-Northern Ireland	.00	-.19***	-.20***	-.01	-.17**	-.17**
UK-England	.11	-.23**	-.07	.11	-.22**	-.13
Netherlands	-.03	-.07	-.30***	.35***	.05	-.15*
Belgium	.02	-.16***	-.25***	.36***	.13**	-.10*
France	.15	.01	-.21*	.11	.00	-.03
Switzerland	-.01	-.25***	-.22***	.04	-.12	-.28***
Germany	.02	-.21***	-.15***	.38***	-.09*	-.13***
Austria	-.08	-.16***	-.26***	.26***	.00	-.10*
<b>Eastern Europe</b>						

Table 2 continues

Estonia	.13	-.27***	-.28***	-.08	-.06	-.09
Latvia	.11	-.14	-.20**	.28***	-.05	-.08
Lithuania	.33***	-.26**	.20*	.30**	.00	-.17
Poland	.11	-.24***	-.13***	.26***	-.08*	-.12***
Czech Republic	-.02	-.15*	-.13*	-.06	-.31***	-.19**
Slovakia	-.06	-.16*	-.13	.07	-.04	-.18*
Ukraine	-.01	-.11	-.12	-.07	-.07	-.05
Romania	.05	-.23***	-.02	.11	-.12	.00
Serbia	.10	-.31***	-.12	.30***	-.28***	-.12
Croatia	.01	-.21**	-.04	.18**	-.11	-.01
Slovenia	.16*	.00	-.22**	.04	-.12	-.23**
<b>Southern Europe</b>						
Portugal	.08	-.16**	-.19**	.11	-.19**	-.14*
Spain	-.12	-.08	-.09	.12	-.12	-.04
Italy	.13	-.10	-.19**	.13	-.05	-.02
Malta	.07	-.31***	-.23***	.06	-.08	-.23***
Greece	.10	-.27***	-.33***	.08	-.19**	-.21***
Cyprus	-.07	-.51***	-.06	-.15	-.32*	-.18
<b>Middle East</b>						
Turkey	.13**	-.24***	-.15**	.11*	-.04	-.06
Lebanon	.08	-.24***	-.12	.16**	.02	-.07
Israel	.05	-.25***	-.24***	.23***	.00	.07
Jordana	--	--	--	--	--	--
<b>Africa</b>						
Morocco	-.01	-.11	-.19*	.11	-.16	-.14
Ethiopia	.03	-.29***	-.17*	-.06	-.25***	-.20**
Tanzania	-.11	-.33**	-.26*	.06	-.14	-.05
Congo	.01	-.11	-.07	-.05	.01	.12
Zimbabwe	-.06	-.25***	-.27***	-.03	-.16*	-.18*
Botswana	.05	-.15*	-.19**	-.06	-.05	-.07
South Africa (a)	--	--	--	--	--	--

Table 2 continues

Oceania						
Australia	.07	-.23***	-.20***	.13**	-.12**	-.16***
New Zealand	.15*	-.30***	-.24***	.17**	-.17**	-.10
Fiji & Pacific Islands	.03	-.12	-.29***	.09	-.07	-.31***
South/Southeast Asia						
India(a)	--	--	--	--	--	--
Bangladesh	.05	-.25**	-.18*	.05	-.05	-.02
Malaysia	.06	-.27**	-.16	.23*	-.08	-.07
Indonesia	-.09	-.21	-.12	-.06	-.17	.11
Philippines	.01	-.19**	-.16**	.08	-.16**	-.22***
East Asia						
Hong Kong	.13	-.25***	-.11	.04	-.25***	-.13
Taiwan	.03	-.21**	-.08	-.06	-.16*	-.28***
South Korea	-.04	-.24***	-.31***	-.06	.04	-.26***
Japan	.03	-.20***	-.14*	-.08	-.15*	-.31***

Note: (a) = sample did not complete full sexuality adjective measure. \* =  $p < .05$ , \*\* =  $p < .01$ , \*\*\* =  $p < .001$ .

Indeed, the findings from Israel are exactly as predicted by the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis.

In Africa and Oceania, the results were only somewhat supportive. Relationship Infidelity was related to low agreeableness in all cultures except Morocco, the Congo, and Fiji. Relationship Infidelity was related primarily to low conscientiousness in all cultures except the Congo. Sexual Promiscuity was related to high extraversion only in the Westernized cultures of Australia and New Zealand.

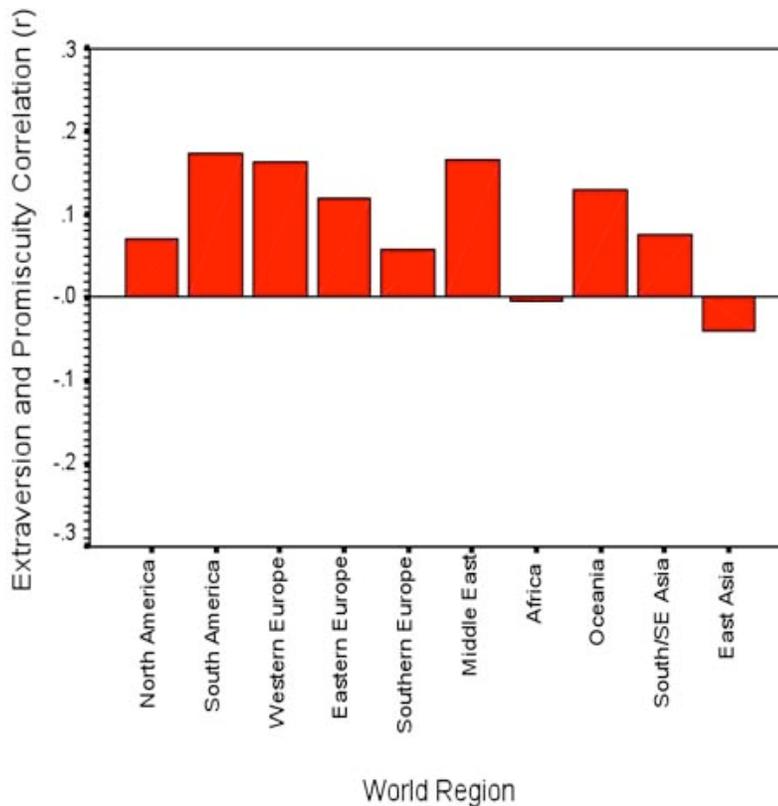
In Asia (both South/Southeast Asia and East Asia) the results again only partially supported the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis. Relationship Infidelity was related to low agreeableness in almost all cultures, and was unrelated to extraversion in all Asian cultures. However, Relationship Infidelity was related to low conscientiousness only in Bangladesh, the Philippines, South Korea, and Japan. Contrary to the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis, only in Malaysia was Sexual Promiscuity was significantly related to high extraversion.

## Discussion

Based on the responses of over 17,000 people across 58 cultures from 52 nations, data from the International Sexuality Description Project demonstrated that self-

reported Relationship Infidelity was associated with the personality traits of disagreeableness and low conscientiousness across most cultures. People who described themselves as more unfaithful tended to have personality traits linked to a lack trust and empathy (i.e., low agreeableness) and they tended to be disorganized and unreliable (i.e., low conscientiousness). Sexual Promiscuity, on the other hand, was often unrelated to agreeableness and conscientiousness, and was linked instead to the personality trait of extraversion across many, though not most, cultural regions.

This expected pattern of findings was called the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis. As displayed in Figure 1, Sexual Promiscuity was linked to extraversion most strongly in South America, Western Europe, Eastern Europe, the Middle East, and Oceania. In other world regions, such as Africa and East Asia, Sexual Promiscuity was largely unrelated to extraversion levels. Overall, the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis was supported in many, but not all, human cultures.



**Figure 1.** Mean-level correlations between extraversion and sexual promiscuity across the 10 world regions of the International Sexuality Description Project

The reason why cultures vary in the personality correlates of sexual behavior is an important area for future research. The results reported here suggest that the link between extraversion and Sexual Promiscuity varies considerably across cultures. Because extraversion has been linked to increased sexual risk-taking in the United

States (Zuckerman, 1994), future studies that explore how culture can attenuate the link between personality and promiscuity may have important implications for research on HIV/AIDS. Indeed, the more we know about why people engage in promiscuous and unfaithful sex practices, the greater our ability to increase healthy sexual behavior and decrease behaviors that place individuals at high-risk for disease and romantic despair.

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### Related Websites

Magnus Hirschfeld Archive for Sexology: <http://www2.hu-berlin.de/sexology>

The Kinsey Institute at the University of Indiana:

<http://www.kinseyinstitute.org/index.html>

The Society for Human Sexuality: <http://www.sexuality.org>

The Society for the Scientific Study of Sexuality: <http://www.sexscience.org>

### About the Author

David P. Schmitt is an Associate Professor of Psychology at Bradley University. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Michigan in 1995. He has since published numerous articles on personality and human sexuality, and is Director of the International Sexuality Description Project (ISDP), a consortium of 100 scientists from over 50 nations. One of the aims of the ISDP is to uncover the ways that sexuality and personality are related to cultural variation. Dr. Schmitt's current research focuses on understanding how gender, personality, and culture combine to influence high-risk sexual behavior, including human mate poaching behavior (i.e., romantically attracting someone who is already in a relationship). E-mail: [dps@bradley.edu](mailto:dps@bradley.edu)

### Questions for Discussion

1. What do you think about the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis? Why would relationship infidelity be psychologically different from sexual promiscuity? Does the hypothesis make sense to you based on your personal experience with romantic relationships?
2. What other aspects of sexuality do you think should relate to personality traits in different ways? For example, which personality traits do you think will be linked to the other "Sexy Seven" sexuality traits (see Schmitt & Buss, 2000)? Including:
  - Sexual Attractiveness (including sub-facets of Beauty and Seduction)
  - Gender Orientation (Masculinity and Femininity)
  - Sexual Restraint (Abstinence and Prudishness)
  - Erotophilic Disposition (Obscenity, Indecency, and Lust)
  - Emotional Investment (Love and Romance)
  - Sexual Orientation (Hetero-eroticism and Homo-eroticism)

Do you think these sexuality-personality links will be stable across all cultures?

3. Do you think people tell the truth about their own sexuality in surveys? What can be done to help increase the accuracy of self-report sexuality surveys? How can

psychologists tell whether people are telling the truth on sex surveys? Can you think of a better way of studying infidelity than asking people about themselves?

4. Why are the links between sexuality and personality different across some cultures? What potential moderators of sex and personality (e.g., religious, ethnic, linguistic, geographic) can you detect by looking at the correlations across the cultures of the International Sexuality Description Project? Why was the "Infidelity-Promiscuity Personality Difference" hypothesis supported strongly in the Middle East?
5. Do you think both men and women will show the same relationships between sexuality and personality? If not, in what way will they be different and why?

### Author Notes

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Lydia Alcalay, Pontificia Universidad Católica de Chile, Chile  
Melissa Allensworth, Bradley University, USA  
Jüri Allik, University of Tartu, Estonia  
Lara Ault, University of Louisville, USA  
Ivars Austers, University of Latvia, Latvia  
Kevin L. Bennett, University of New Mexico, USA  
Gabriel Bianchi, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic  
Fredrick Boholst, University of San Carlos, Philippines  
Mary Ann Borg Cunen, University of Malta, Malta  
Johan Braeckman, Ghent University, Belgium  
Edward G. Brainerd Jr., Clemson University, USA  
Leo Gerard A. Caral, University of San Carlos, Philippines  
Gabrielle Caron, Université of Laval, Canada  
Marina Martina Casullo, University of Buenos Aires, Argentina  
Michael Cunningham, University of Louisville, USA  
Ikuo Daibo, Osaka University, Japan  
Charlotte De Backer, Ghent University, Belgium  
Rolando Diaz-Loving, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico  
Gláucia Diniz, University of Brasilia, Brazil  
Kevin Durkin, The University of Western Australia, Australia  
Marcela Echegaray, University of Lima, Peru  
Ekin Eremsoy, Bogazic Üniversitesi, Turkey  
Harald A. Euler, University of Kassel, Germany  
Ruth Falzon, University of Malta, Malta  
Maryanne L. Fisher, York University, Canada  
Dolores Foley, University of Queensland, Australia  
Robert Fowler, Bradley University, USA

Douglas P. Fry, Abo Akademi University, Finland  
Sirpa Fry, Abo Akademi University, Finland  
M. Arif Ghayur, Al-Akhawayn University, Morocco  
Vijai N. Giri, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India  
Debra L. Golden, University of Hawaii-Manoa, USA  
Karl Grammer, Ludwig-Boltzmann-Institute for Urban Ethology, Austria  
Liria Grimaldi, University of Catania, Italy  
Jamin Halberstadt, University of Otago, New Zealand  
Shamsul Haque, University of Dakah, Bangladesh  
Dora Herrera, University of Lima, Peru  
Janine Hertel, Technische Universität Chemnitz, Germany  
Amanda Hitchell, Bradley University, USA  
Heather Hoffmann, Knox College, USA  
Danica Hooper, University of Queensland, Australia  
Zuzana Hradilekova, Comenius University, Slovak Republic  
Jasna Hudek-Kene-evi, University of Rijeka, Croatia  
Allen Huffcutt, Bradley University, USA  
Jas Jaafar, University of Malaya, Malaysia  
Margarita Jankauskaite, Vilnius University, Lithuania  
Heidi Kabangu-Stahel, Centre d'Enseignement les Gazelles, D. R. Congo  
Igor Kardum, University of Rijeka, Croatia  
Brigitte Khoury, American University of Beirut, Lebanon  
Hayrran Kwon, Kwangju Health College, Republic of Korea  
Kaia Laidra, University of Tartu, Estonia  
Anton-Rupert Laireiter, University of Salzburg, Austria  
Dustin Lakerveld, University of Utrecht, Netherlands  
Ada Lampert, The Ruppin Institute, Israel  
Maryanne Lauri, University of Malta, Malta  
Margeurite Lavallée, Université de Laval, Canada  
Suk-Jae Lee, National Computerization Agency, Rep. of Korea  
Luk Chung Leung, City University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong  
Kenneth D. Locke, University of Idaho, USA  
Vance Locke, The University of Western Australia, Australia  
Ivan Luksik, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic  
Ishmael Magaisa, University of Zimbabwe, Zimbabwe  
J. Marcinkeviciene, Vilnius University, Lithuania  
André Mata, University of Lisbon, Portugal  
Rui Mata, University of Lisbon, Portugal  
Barry McCarthy, University of Central Lancashire, England  
Michael E. Mills, Loyola Marymount University, USA  
Nhlanhla J. Mkhize, University of Natal, South Africa  
João Moreira, University of Lisbon, Portugal  
Sérgio Moreira, University of Lisbon, Portugal

Miguel Moya, University of Granada, Spain  
M. Munyae, University of Botswana, Botswana  
Patricia Noller, University of Queensland, Australia  
Hmoud Olimat, University of Jordan, Jordan  
Adrian Opre, Babes Bolyai University, Romania  
Alexia Panayiotou, University of Cyprus, Cyprus  
Nebojsa Petrovic, University of Belgrade, Serbia  
Karolien Poels, Ghent University, Belgium  
Miroslav Popper, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic  
Maria Poulimenou, KPMG Kyriacou Counsultants SA, Greece  
Volodymyr P'yatokh, Volyn Regional Hospital, Ukraine  
Michel Raymond, Universit, de Montpellier II, France  
Ulf-Dietrich Reips, Universit,,t Z rich, Switzerland  
Susan E. Reneau, University of Alabama, USA  
Sofia Rivera-Aragon, National Autonomous University of Mexico, Mexico  
Wade C. Rowatt, Baylor University, USA  
Willibald Ruch, Queens University Belfast, Northern Ireland  
Velko S. Rus, Univeristy of Ljubljana, Slovenia  
Marilyn P. Safir, University of Haifa, Israel  
Fabio Sambataro, University of Catania, Italy  
Kenneth N. Sandnabba, Abo Akademi University, Finland  
Rachel Schleeter, Bradley University, USA  
Marion K. Schulmeyer, Universidad Privada de Santa Cruz, Bolivia  
Astrid Sch tzt, Technische Universit,,t Chemnitz, Germany  
Tullio Scrimali, University of Catania, Italy  
Todd K. Shackelford, Florida Atlantic University, USA  
Mithila B. Sharan, Indian Institute of Technology, Kharagpur, India  
Phillip R. Shaver, University of California-Davis, USA  
Francis Sichona, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania  
Franco Simonetti, Pontificia Universidad Cat lica de Chile, Chile  
Tilahun Sineshaw, Ramapo College of New Jersey, USA  
R. Sookdew, University of Natal, South Africa  
Tom Speelman, Ghent University, Belgium  
Spyros Spyrou, Cyprus College, Cyprus  
H. Canan S mer, Middle East Technical University, Turkey  
Nebi S mer, Middle East Technical University, Turkey  
Marianna Supekova, Slovak Academy of Sciences, Slovak Republic  
Tomasz Szlendak, Nicholas Copernicus University, Poland  
Robin Taylor, University of the South Pacific, Fiji  
Bert Timmermans, Vrije Universiteit, Belgium  
William Tooke, SUNY-Plattsburgh, USA  
Ioannis Tsaousis, University of the Aegean, Greece  
F.S.K. Tungaraza, University of Dar es Salaam, Tanzania

Ashley Turner, Bradley University, USA  
Griet Vandermassen, Ghent University, Belgium  
Tim Vanhoomissen, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium  
Frank Van Overwalle, Vrije Universiteit Brussel, Belgium  
Ine Vanwesenbeeck, Netherlands Inst. of Social Research, Netherlands  
Paul L. Vasey, University of Lethbridge, Canada  
João Verissimo, University of Lisbon, Portugal  
Martin Voracek, University of Vienna Medical School, Austria  
Wendy W. N. Wan, University of Hong Kong, Hong Kong  
Ta-Wei Wang, Yuan Ze University, Taiwan  
Peter Weiss, Charles University, Czech Republic  
Andik Wijaya, Couple Clinic Indonesia, Surabaya, Indonesia  
Liesbeth Woertman, Utrecht University, Netherlands  
Gahyun Youn, Chonnam National University, Republic of Korea  
Agata Zupanèè, Univeristy of Ljubljana, Slovenia