

Sociology Of Emotions

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Abstract

Using semantic differential ratings of evaluation, potency and activity of American and German undergraduates, I will test the general hypothesis that if both cultures agree on the sexual-erotic denotation of sentiments, sentiments will differ disproportional in their affective representations. It will be demonstrated that there is an interconnection of role-identities and emotions. Affective representation of sexual role-identities differs in German and American culture. Emotions associated with sexual-erotic role-identities have a deviant and violent quality for Americans. The same role-identities associate with emotions of impression and passion for German subjects.

Comparing the German and North American culture, I expect sufficient similarity of both cultures that enables me to find common grounds where they can be compared cross-culturally. Similarities can be traced to the fact that a large proportion of Americans have German ancestors and that German was the most commonly spoken second language in North America until it was recently surpassed by Spanish. Still, both cultures should be distinctive enough to allow a proper instrument to locate differences (Schneider & Heise 1995). Differences should be prevalent in specific domains or denotative categories, but not in others. Personal experience as a bicultural person and explorative field studies in both countries let me expect that differences are especially prevalent in the evaluative dimension of the sexual-erotic domain. Sexual-erotic role-identities are expected to be devaluated by American youth. Therefore, the display of sexual-erotic identities will be associated with negative emotions in America. To bring this assumption in a more testable form, I state the following hypothesis: **if Americans and Germans agree on the sexual-erotic denotation of sentiments, sentiments will differ disproportional in their affective representations.**

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Emotions and Role-Identities

Emotions can be defined generally as appraisals of situational stimuli, indicating changes in physiological sensation (Thoits 1989). They are social constructions and individual improvisations (Averill 1980, Hochschild 1979) that confirm or disconfirm role-identities (Smith-Lovin 1990). Typical (Heise 1987) or characteristic (MacKinnon 1994) emotions correspond directly with the affective quality of a particular role-identity. Typical emotions are linked to role-identities through their common affective representation and quality.

By confirming salient identities (Stryker 1980, 1987), people experience emotions characteristic of role-identities. Those validating positive role-identities experience positive emotions (a lover feels in love,

for example); those confirming negative role-identities, negative emotions (a widow experiences grief). In this way, the private emotional lives of people are a function of the confirmation of their identity-situated selves in social interaction.

The public expression of emotions through emotion displays or verbal accounts enable others to make inferences about a person's private emotional experiences, and, hence, the identity a person is trying to confirm in a present situation. If a widow seems cheerful at the funeral of her husband, others will be reluctant to confirm her identity of a widow. Instead, they might conclude that she is acting out some other identity -- wife for instance. They might infer, perhaps, that the woman has not accepted the death of her husband -- neither cognitively nor emotionally, that she is trying to hold onto a valued identity and the positive emotions that accompany its reenactment in memory. Or they might adopt a less compassionate stance and fault her for failing to accept the situated identity (widow) that is appropriate to the ritual at hand (her husband's funeral), and sanction her deviant emotional expression through overt disapproval. In any case, hypothetical scenarios like this one reveal that the public expression of emotion is normatively regulated.

The Affect Control Theoretical Framework

The symbolic interactionist framework of affect control theory (ACT) not only connects identities with emotions theoretically, but gives an empirical mathematical operationalization to work with the interrelation of identities and emotions (Heise 1987, MacKinnon 1994, Smith-Lovin 1987). If emotions, generated by a specific event, do not confirm the affective meaning of a particular identity, they are disturbing the adequate role performance of this identity. The affective meaning of identities, emotions, and other determinants of events, are empirically measured. The potential disruption that each element of an event can cause is operationalized mathematically as deflection. "ACT supposes that the confirmation of meaning through minimization of affective deflection is the basic motivational principle in human social behavior" (MacKinnon 1994, pp.50-51). For Heise (1987), successful interactions are those that minimize deflections by confirming the role-identities of participants. In this case the interactants experience emotions that are characteristic for their identities. Confirming role-identities, or minimizing deflections, maximizes the fit between emotions and role-identities. Individuals are motivated to experience emotions consistent with the salient identity (or identities) they are trying to confirm.

Emotions are bound to role-identities and, like role-identities, they are motivational and normative. When her husband dies a wife is likely to develop a high salience for the role-identity of a widow and is expected to experience and express grief at his funeral. When a woman marries, Bride becomes a salient role-identity and she is supposed to feel joyful at her wedding. In short, emotions are direct affective correlates of role-identities. And, if a role-identity has sexual-erotic denotation, emotions typically associated with this identity will be sexual-erotic as well. For example the affective profiles of feelings like lustful or promiscuous are very similar to those for the role-identities of pornstar, ladykiller, flirt, or vamp.

PROCEDURES

Measurement of Affective Meaning

Semantic scaling on evaluation (E), potency (P), and activity (A) dimensions allows valid and reliable measures of affective meaning of sentiments (Osgood 1962; Osgood et al. 1975). That is, sentiments are not only bad or good; they are also strong or weak and lively or quiet. To the extent that EPA ratings are similar emotions and role-identities share the same affective quality.

Through the affective associations evoked by social cognitions, the cognitive complexity of external reality is emotionally experienced in simpler form. "*Classifications of places, people, objects and behaviors get transformed into a domain of feelings, where they lose their qualitative uniqueness, become comparable to one another, and begin obeying quantitative principles*" (Heise 1987, p.6). Or as Collins would say, "*disparate goods do not have to be directly compared, only the emotional tone of situations in which they are available*"(Collins 1981, p.1005).

Psychological evaluation and potency dimensions have their sociological equivalents in status and power (Kemper 1978, 1987), the activity dimension in social expressivity (Parsons & Shils 1951). EPA profiles can be seen as a metalanguage that sociologically describes differences of emotions and identities. This capacity makes EPA profiles an ideal media for cross-cultural comparisons, especially when multiple languages are involved.

Poles of the three-dimensional semantic scales are defined by adjectives:

Evaluation: good, nice - bad, awful

Potency: big, powerful - little, powerless

Activity: fast, young, noisy - slow, old, quiet

Intervals between the points labeled as "neutral," "slightly," "quite," and "extremely" are coded as differences of 1.0. The differences between the scale endpoints: "extremely" and "infinitely" are coded 1.33, corresponding to visual scale distances.

Reconstructing the original sub-population of undergraduate students the American study (Heise 1978) is replicated in Germany (Schneider 1990) . Blind backtranslation of concepts enhances the comparability of the stimuli (Krebs & Schuessler 1987).

Category of Sexual-Erotic Meaning

Hundreds of role-identities and emotions, rated by both males and females on EPA dimensions, have to be compared across both cultures. Word by word comparisons would not only overwhelm the reader in details, but could not provide a general picture where differences are concentrated. For that reason categories have to be created.

Going through the list and picking sentiments that appear sexual-erotic to the researcher is prone to subjective bias. I used the affective representation of sentiments as a basis for a non-subjective categorization method. Osgood's theoretical differentiation of affective meaning (feeling tones) and denotative meaning (lexical categorization of meaning) is a promising basis for categorizing data. Indicating that the connotative interindividual and denotative might be two parts of the same coin

(sentiment), Osgood's (1960) suggestion that denotative and affective meaning are interconnected is supported by the pragmatic application of cluster analysis. Here higher order abstracts of denotative lexical categorizations, emerge from the empirical measurement of affective meaning (Schneider 1994). To the extent that EPA ratings are similar, corresponding role-identities share one denotation (Schneider & Heise 1995a).

The underlying assumptions for the identification of the empirical category of sexual-erotic meaning are the following:

- (1) Sentiments with nearly identical EPA profiles are synonymous. To the degree EPA profiles of sentiments are alike, their denotation is similar.
- (2) Resembling the cognitive organization of denotative categories, K-means cluster analysis establishes sets of EPA ratings that are maximally distinctive across sets, while being maximally homogeneous within sets.
- (3) Cluster analysis of role-identities allows the emergence of an authoritative cluster in the American and German culture (Schneider 1993). Since sexual-erotic denotation is an important and unique concept in human cognition it should build a group of its own.

K-means cluster analysis uses all 420 role-identities that match in both, the American and German data. Each of the 420 role-identities is rated by approximately 120 undergraduate students. To guide my explorative cluster analysis I used the following algorithm: (1) I start with a few clusters. (2) Then I analyze concepts within clusters: if clusters are not distinctive in their denotations, I use a higher number of clusters. If larger numbers of cluster result in single-item clusters, I lower the number of clusters. (3) In this process I closely observe my main indicator for good and stable cluster solutions: increasing the number of clusters should not predominantly cause cases to be exchanged between clusters that are already established; instead, cases are assigned to the newly-established clusters. Clusters should split into clusters of different denotations. (4) I keep single item clusters as long as the increase of the number of clusters leads to additional distinctive clusters. (5) Single-item clusters should only be deleted in a precluding test of the overall stability of the cluster solution. Following this algorithm, the 6-cluster solution using the K-means method in SYSTAT (Wilkinson 1988) is interpreted as offering the most robust and distinctive clusters for both the German and the American data.

In the American cluster solution clusters are labeled as *authority*, *sexual-eroticism*, *family*, *winner*, *loser*, and the single item cluster of the hyper-authority *God*. Since Germans did not rate *God* as extremely good and powerful this role-identity is within the authority cluster. Germans established an additional cluster for coercive-deviant role-identities. To avoid cultural bias in the interpretation of clusters, a second survey was conducted with American expert raters, rating sexual-erotic quality of role-identities.

RESULTS

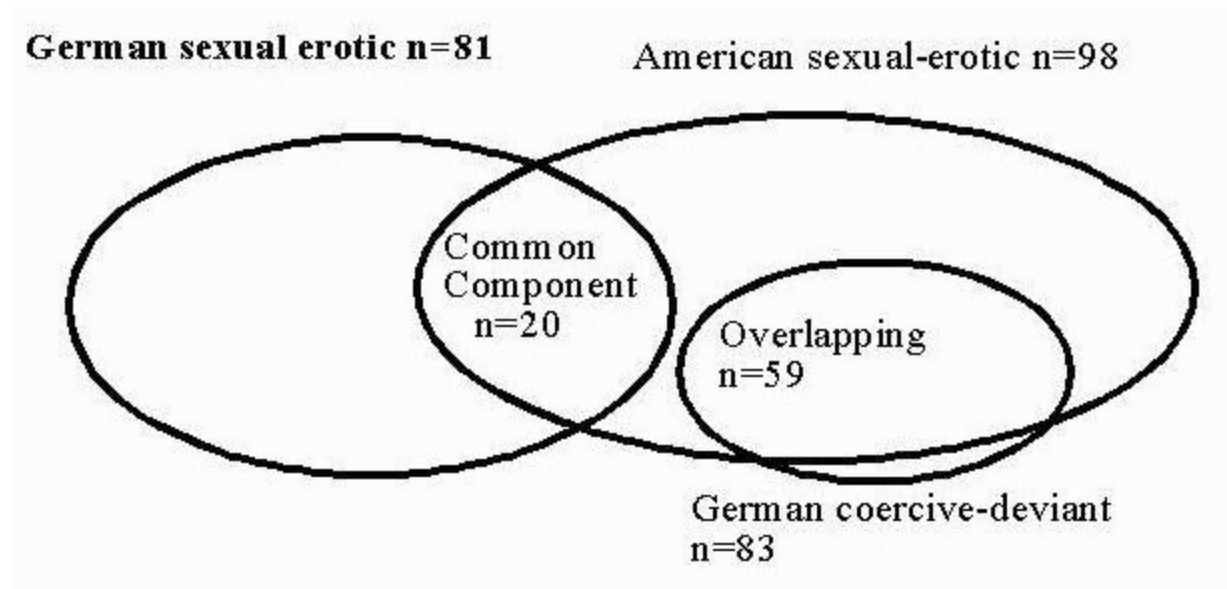
There are two interdependent modes of cross-cultural agreement/disagreement: a mode where emergent denotative categories and their overlappings are compared and a mode where EPA measurements of affective meaning are the media of comparison. (1) Denotative meaning is defined by cluster membership. Cultures agree on the denotative quality of role-identities to the degree to which clusters of one denotation overlap. Cross-cultural disagreement is indicated by the degree clusters of different denotation overlap cross-culturally. (2) Direct cross-cultural comparison of affective meaning has to be done within categories where denotation is agreed on. These categories are called inter-cultural common

components (CC). This mode of comparison will be used to test my assumption that, the more both cultures agree on sexual denotation, the more they will disagree in their affective representation. I compare affective representation in two nominal categories: the common component, and its remainder in which both cultures do not agree on sexual denotation (Non-CC). A third category, where neither culture indicates sexual denotation (Non-Sex) will serve as an additional control category.

Inter-Cultural Comparison of Denotative Meaning

Comparing American and German clusters with sexual-erotic denotation we find little agreement cross-culturally. The common component of both clusters contains only 20% of the American sexual-erotic cluster (figure 1). This is by far the smallest overlapping component in all denotative domains (Schneider 1995). Taking the authority concept as an example, 61% of the German authorities are in the common component with American authorities (Schneider 1993;1994). Taking the authority concept, that was traditionally seen as very unique in the German culture (Adorno 1950), as a comparison, the degree of disagreement in the sexual-erotic domain is truly astonishing. The reason for this disagreement on sexual denotation is rooted in the different conceptualization of violence in both cultures. The American sexual-erotic cluster is composed to a large extent by role-identities that are in the German coersive-deviance cluster. Actually, the vast majority (73%) of the German coersive-deviance cluster is located in the American sexual-erotic cluster. The inter-cultural classification through cluster analysis of affective meaning demonstrated a surprising power of explanation. More than 80% of the American sexual-erotic cluster is identified by the common component of sexual-eroticism and the overlapping component with the German coersive-deviance cluster.

Fig. 1. American and German sexual-erotic cluster and the German cluster of coercive-deviance: The common component and the overlapping component.



As a bicultural interpreter of the overlapping components of American sexual-eroticism and German coercive-deviance was challenged between interpreting this subcategory as deviant, or sexual-erotic. Labeling the American sexual-erotic cluster as deviant proved to be a German culture-centric interpretation. The label sexual-erotic is demonstrated to be an American culture-centric interpretation. A more culture neutral description for the overlapping component might be found in the label *vice*. Vice reflects deviance and sexual-eroticism of this large overlapping component. Role-identities like *pimp* or

slut, that are located in the overlapping component of German coercive-deviant and American sexual-erotic cluster, sustain the vice concept.

From the American subject's point of view, this overlapping component does not carry criminal or deviant denotation. Rather it is indeed sexual-erotic. To make sure that the American cluster indeed deserves the label *sexual-erotic* I used two independent samples of American expert raters. One sample (n=12) rated concepts as "definitely sexual", maybe "sexual", and "definitely not sexual". In the other sample (n=14) I use the wording "sexual-erotic" to eliminate the gender denotation of "sexual". In both samples the sexual-erotic cluster scores significantly ($p=1\%$) highest.

Inter-Cultural Comparison of Affective Meaning

To test my hypothesis that if Americans and Germans agree on the sexual-erotic denotation of sentiments, sentiments will differ disproportional in their affective representations, I will investigate if both cultures differ more within their sexual-erotic common component than in the remaining sentiments. There are two groups of remaining components that can contrast the common component. First, sentiments of the common component will be compared to remaining sentiments that are not in the inter-culturally shared common component of sexual eroticism (Non-CC, n=400). A second possible comparison category is established by sentiments that are neither in the American, nor in the German culture, seen as sexual-erotic (Non-Sex, n=260).

Cross-cultural differences in EPA ratings within the common component of sexual-erotic role-identities (CC) are compared to differences within the remainder of the common component (Non-CC). The cross-cultural disagreement on sexual-erotic sentiments is stronger than between sentiments that have no sexual denotation in both cultures. Surprisingly, the small gender disagreement that is found across all sentiments does not increase in the specific domain of sexual eroticism.

The observed cross-cultural disagreement on sexual-erotic sentiments were shared by males and females. Ignoring gender differences for a moment, I simplify the comparison across culture and compute a coefficient of cultural difference that averages EPA ratings by gender: $(US_{male} - US_{female} / 2) - (G_{male} - G_{female} / 2)$ (see table 1). Findings fail to reject my hypothesis that if Americans and Germans agree on the sexual-erotic denotation of sentiments, sentiments will differ disproportional in their affective representation.

Using the non-common component category (Non-CC) in the comparison of cross-cultural differences, includes sentiments that are seen as sexual-erotic in either of both cultures. Excluding sentiments that are sexual-erotic in either culture, I use Non-Sex as an additional comparison category. Hereby I test my hypothesis again, but with a modified comparison category in my measurement proposition: Sexual-erotic sentiments in the common component differ more cross-culturally than all other sentiments that are not seen as sexual-erotic in neither culture (Non-Sex). Again, there is more cross cultural difference within the common component of the sexual-erotic category than in the comparison category (table 1). Although the emphasis in this comparison lies on the evaluation dimension, this holds true for the potency and activity dimension as well. These modified conditions of my working proposition also failed to reject my hypothesis.

An analysis of the potency dimension shows high variation in potency ratings. The potency dimension is redundant in the establishment of sexual denotation. Using a database of role-identities and their corresponding EPA profiles, the redundancy of the potency dimension can be demonstrated in changing E, P, and A values. The values of the potency dimension can vary to a high degree before corresponding identities lose their sexual-erotic denotation. These findings are in concordance with Morgan and Heise

(1991) who found that potency adds nothing to the presentation of positive emotions that is not already provided by evaluation and activity. For negative emotions, however, the potency dimension is necessary to allow the distinction between anger and fear, fight and flight.

Showing stable cross-cultural differences, the remainder of both sexual-erotic clusters (Non-sex) showed a higher average evaluation than the remainder of the common component (Non-CC) (see Table 1)

Table 1 Mean EPA Ratings for American and German Role-Identities (n=420) in the Common Component of American and German Sexual Cluster (CC, n=20), the Remainder of Role-Identities of the CC (Non-CC, n=400), and Remainder of both Sexual-erotic Clusters (Non-Sex, n=261). Cultural Difference ($US_{male} - US_{female} / 2$) - ($GE_{male} - GE_{female} / 2$).

	Category	Males		Female	
		U.S.	GE	U.S.	
Evaluation	CC	-0.86	0.08	-1.03	
	Non-CC	0.15	0.09	0.35	
	Non-Sex	0.64	0.39	0.85	
Potency	CC	-0.59	-0.03	-0.39	
	Non-CC	0.12	0.28	0.32	
	Non-Sex	0.29	0.31	0.45	
Activity	CC	1.34	0.89	1.13	
	Non-CC	0.38	0.41	0.39	
	Non-Sex	0.13	0.24	0.16	

Cross-Cultural Differences in Role-Identities Imply Emotional Differences

What emotions are typical associates with sexual-erotic role-identities? Affective meaning, the common cognitive-psychological basis of role-identities and emotions, is used to indicate these sexual-erotic emotions. For a qualitative presentation of inter-cultural disagreement on emotions I use the mean EPA ratings in the common component in which denotation is inter-culturally agreed on. Table 2 lists emotion concepts that are closest to the mean of the sexual-erotic common component. All emotions of the American dataset (Heise 1993) that are within a predefined Euclidian distance of the cluster means

are listed. There is no filter used in the empirical selection of emotions.

The list shows that American and German undergraduates do not agree on the kind of emotion that should be expressed by typical sexual-erotic role-identities. American emotional states like being rude, quarrelsome and impulsive carry more violent character than emotional states listed for the German. Feeling immoral, intoxicated, disobedient, and quarrelsome indicates the deviant denotation of American sexual-erotic role-identities. The presence of deviant denotation is especially astonishing in the sexual-erotic common component where the subcategory of role-identities, that is seen coercive-deviant by Germans, is excluded from analysis.

Table 2 Emotion-Concepts Corresponding with German and American Cluster Means of the Sexual-Erotic Common Component.

American EPA means	German EPA m
annoyed	astonished
compulsive	single
quarrelsome	anxious
impractical	captivated
immoral	impressionable
rude	snowed
disobedient	emotional
intoxicated	

For Germans sexual-erotic emotions are experienced more positive (E+) and relaxed (A-). The American vivid and negative interpretation of the sexual-erotic domain indicates violent denotation. However, since the potency dimension of role-identities, typical of expressing sexual-erotic emotions, is low, the potentially violent character of sexual-erotic emotions is not fully supported. It appears that only a lack of potency keeps sexual-erotic emotions of American undergraduates off the edge of violence. Although the potency dimension is largely redundant in the affective representation of general emotional feelings it is critical to distinguish between fear and anger; "In the contrast between flight and fight" (Morgan & Heise 1991, p.23). Lacking potency American sexual-erotic role-identities cannot be fully qualified as violent.

DISCUSSION

Emotions correspond to role-identities according to their affective meaning. They are not chosen to maximize confidence, initiative, enthusiasm and dominance, but to maximize the fit with a salient role-identity. Cluster analysis of affective responses reveals cross-cultural differences in the composition of sexual-erotic clusters of affective meaning. The American data do not allow the split between sexual-erotic and coercive-deviant role-identities. Doubts about the validity of the sexual-erotic denotation of the American cluster were eased by a second sample which rated sexual-erotic denotation. What is found is that it is not only the emergent clustering that indicates strong disagreement in the sexual-erotic domain, but also the different affective meaning of role-identities.

Indicating deviant denotation, Americans rate sexual-erotic role-identities as more negative and active than their German counterparts. The more sexual eroticism is agreed on, the more different is the affective representation. This is demonstrated by dividing the American sexual-erotic cluster into its common component with the German sexual-erotic cluster and its remaining components, where cross-cultural disagreement on affective meaning is compared.

Choosing emotions close to the average EPA profiles of affective meaning of the sexual-erotic common component gives a qualitative demonstration of inter-cultural differences. Emotions that American subjects associate with sexual-erotic role-identities clearly have deviant and violent character. Germans show emotions of impression and passion. American undergraduates are trapped in the decision to express sexual-erotic role-identities that support the young and lively peer culture, because these expressions carry a high potential for stigmatization. German undergraduates do not have to expect such negative implication when they express their sexuality.

Is this devaluation of sexual eroticism imposed by the Judeo-Christian tradition dominant in the U.S.A.? The Protestant ethic sees earthly indulgence, and sexual indulgence in particular, as sinful (Weber 1989 /1904-1905). And/or is there a glorification of sexual eroticism in Germany where naturism (*Freikörperkultur*), bohemian lifestyle and liberal erotic arts had an impact on the specific strata of undergraduate subjects. The positive attitude of Germans towards sexual-erotic concepts is reflected even in earnest print media, where nudity and sexual expressivity is not unusual. In a recent presentation of cross-cultural differences in sexual eroticism in an American undergraduate sociology class, I was advised by official university organs not to show samples of ads in a German news magazine (*Der Spiegel*) or an article in a popular German teenage magazine (*BRAVO*). The material in the teenage magazine, seen as appropriate and educational for German teenagers, is judged as potentially emotionally disturbing American undergraduate students. <!--American Media: sex in the area of vice: Most commonly watched movies: Western, detective movies (Miami Vice), and espionage deal with vice

Endnotes

1. In the American data feeling cheerful, friendly, or good are emotional states whose EPA profiles most closely resemble the affective quality of a Wife.
2. Role-identities and Emotions of my example are affectively represented with the following EPA profiles for male American undergraduate students (first number represents evaluation, the second potency, and the third the activity dimension):

	Lustful	-.2	.8	1.6	Promiscuous	-.6
.1	1.9					
	Ladykiller	-.6	.9	1.5	Pornostar	-.6
-.2	2.0					
	Sexpot	-.3	-.1	2.0	Flirt	-.3
-.3	1.8					
	Vamp	-.6	.1	1.6		

3. I believe Collins incorrectly equates the activity dimension to the intensity of emotional energy (Collins 1990, p.50). Collins operationalizes emotional energy as potential of accumulated confidence, initiative, dominance and enthusiasm vs. apathy, withdrawal and depression. Even though his descriptions might correlate with ratings on the activity dimension, his concepts of emotional energy is not necessarily equivalent to the activity dimension of affective meaning. Emotional energy, like all affective phenomena, are spanned by all three dimensions of affective response. Emotional energy is best viewed as a motivational phenomena, similar to the minimization of affective deflection in affect control theory, but opposite in motivational impact. Minimizing deflections is the basic motivator in Heise's model; maximizing emotional energy, in Collins'. For Collins, individuals "are pumped up with emotional energy because of a successful interaction"(1990, p.34).

4. My translation of the scales profited highly from unpublished material by Charles Osgood. Intervals of the German computer based interactive measurement (Heise&Schneider; 1989) instrument are labeled as neutral, leicht, ziemlich, and äußerst. The poles of the evaluation scale are defined as: angenehm -- unangenehm, gut -- schlecht, freundlich -- unfreundlich, and schön -- hässlich. Poles of the potency scales are translated as klein -- gross, leicht -- schwer, zart -- kraftvoll, and schwach -- stark. The activity dimension is represented as bewegt -- ruhig, lebhaft -- gemessen, geräuschvoll -- still, and schnell -- langsam.

5. To correspond to the U.S. undergraduate population, German subjects are not only university students, but also pupils of the thirteenth grade in Gymnasium. The age and the number of school years are matched in the German sample (Krug 1964; Spring 1986; Tye 1985). The Gymnasium is the German educational equivalent to the American high school, a prerequisite for entering university that lasts one year longer than the American High school.

6. Expert raters were recruited from the joint seminar of the NIMH programs in "Identity and Measurement" at Indiana University, November 12, 1993. Twenty Subjects had to identify the sexual-erotic denotation of a list of role-identities. I used a three-point scale: Definitely a sexual-erotic (2), maybe sexual-erotic (1), definitely not a sexual-erotic (0).

7. Comparing the affective meaning of all sentiments (n=420) across gender only the evaluation and potency dimensions show small but statistically significant differences between German males and females. The T-values for a comparison of means are 9.3 for the evaluation dimension, 7.4 for potency, and only 0.2 for activity. Comparing EPA profiles within the sexual-erotic common component (n=20) across gender, only the potency dimension shows statistical significance (t=.45). None of the cross-gender differences can be judged as being substantial.

8. Sentiments in table 2 are rated with the question "being feels". Aware of the multitude of definitions of the term emotion, I will operationalize these sentiments as emotions. I use the female subpopulation in both cultures. Since there are only minimal gender differences in EPA ratings (see table 1) results for males were very similar.

9. The American data set has 484 modifiers that are incorporated in INTERACT II (Heise 1993). Only 98 of these are emotion terms (Clare et. Al. (1987); only they are in the German data set. INTERACT's database routine allows to scan for modifiers closest to an entered EPA profile. Eight sentiments that are closest to the selected EPA profile are displayed. The program only selects sentiments within a defined range. If there are not enough sentiments in a denotative field, less than eight are displayed.

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