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A Model of Sexual Constraint and Sexual Emancipation

ABSTRACT

In the United States, public concern in sexual matters and stigmatization of sexual identities make people retreat into privacy. This sexual constraint makes people experience shame and guilt. According to Scheff, shaming is a cause of violence. In contrast, the German society shows less public concern and social opposition in the sexual-erotic domain. This sexuality allows privatization as independence and creates sexual emancipation. Consequently, Germans associate less shame with their sexual identities, and will be less likely to introduce violence into the sexual-erotic domain. This article develops a recursive cultural/structural model to investigate and explain cultural, subcultural and historical differences in sexual constraint, and emancipation.

Keywords: theoretical model, identity, ideal type, cross-cultural comparison, sexual emancipation, sexual constraint, sexual violence

A Model of Sexual Constraint and Sexual Emancipation

Max Weber's concept of the ideal type, the *Idealtypus* (synonymous to *reiner Typus*) (1922, Hauck 1984) makes it possible to define sexual constraint and emancipation as two possible states prevalent in a society at a historic point of time. Ideal types are theoretical constructs that allow the investigation and classification of empirical reality. This idea was reflected in the concept of symbolic universes of Berger and Luckman (1966) that stands for a generalized set of values held by most people of a given country. Developing a theoretical model of sexual constraint and emancipation, I follow Weber's perspective of *verstehende* sociology (Weber 1922). Similar to Cooley's concept of sympathetic introspection, Weber's concept of *verstehen* is concerned with meaning, and is often translated as "meaningful understanding." For Weber, *verstehen* consists of placing oneself in the position of the other to see what meaning is relevant for one's actions. Hereby, Weber (1922, Hauck 1984) helped paving the road for modern symbolic interactionism. In this tradition, culture-specific meaning will be investigated with the qualitative operationalization of ideal types (*Idealtypus*, synonymous to *reiner Typus*). Giddens' (1992) work on modern sexual relationships and eroticism serve as a conceptual background for building the antithetical culture-specific ideal types of sexual emancipation and of sexual constraint. Representing structural meaning in both societies, ideal types are used in the structural categorization of American society as sexually-constrained and German society as sexually-emancipated. The two states of sexual constraint and emancipation represent pure ideal types of identities that, by Weber's definition, cannot match empirical reality. However, ideal types are helpful to illuminate an empirical problem theoretically, especially when contrasted as antithetical ideal types.

While nations are structural properties, providing borders within which people interact in patterns, society as a cultural property implies common pattern of perception, thinking or feeling. Naturally, personal histories of patterned behavior will show more diversity than common culture. This fact is addressed by Strauss (1995) when he states that symbolic universes cannot capture individual symbolic representations, the differences in structural and historical conditions that bear on collective or individual actors. Because “our nation [USA] is among the clearest examples of a country that is not a society,” (p.10) it would be foolish to use a sample of U.S. undergraduate students to represent North American society.

In cross-cultural comparison, however, such a sample can be used to compare groups of people with similar structural properties to investigate differences in their shared symbolic representations. For that purpose, the German equivalent of the U.S. undergraduate is replicated by matching age, education, and, to a large extent, social class. Differences in the education system made it necessary to proportionally merge pupils of the German *Gymnasium* and beginning students of a university for my cross-national study. Comparing then affective meanings associated with symbolic representations of German and U.S. undergraduates allows us to infer cultural differences. Described as ideal types, these cultural differences become representative for the symbolic universes that systematically influence symbolic representations. In the comparison of differences in affective meaning of symbolic representations, I locate differences in the underlying symbolic universes using Weber’s ideal type as a methodological tool in the analytical process of *verstehen* (Weber 1922). For the convenience of this understanding, the national descriptive of Germany and the United States are used as ideal typical classification of symbolic universes that influence symbolic representations.

There is a negative connotation of sexuality in the United States that is combined with the public concern about sexual issues (Schneider 2002a). This is different in Germany, where sexual-

erotic concepts tend to be seen in a more positive light, and where they receive less public concern. Here, sexual identities are more of a private matter that is relatively independent from public investigation and stigmatization (Schneider forthcoming). In contrast, people in the United States tend to hide their sexual identities from public concern; in this case, their privacy is achieved through retreat. Following Goffman's (1963) principles of impression management, this retreat can be accomplished in multiple ways: not speaking about sexual activities, hiding them in the bedroom, or removing them from youth magazines (Schneider 1999a) or sex education literature are some of the possibilities.

The cultural difference between the qualities of privatization of the sexual-erotic domain is mainly determined by two structural variables: the extent of public concern in sexual issues and the social opposition people face in this domain. Having to hide one's stigmatized sexual identity from the concerned public creates sexual constraint, which will be experienced as shame. According to Scheff (1990a, 1990b, Scheff and Retzinger 1991, 1997), shaming experiences lead to shame-violence cycles. If shame is triggered by sexual-erotic concepts, the resulting violence should also target the sexual-erotic domain. Because shame triggers violence, cultures that follow the ideal type of sexual constraint will facilitate a violent component in sexual eroticism.

In the recursive model I present, the structural variables of public concern and social opposition are products as well as causes of the cultural variables sexual constraint and emancipation. In a culture of sexual constraint, sexual identities are hidden and shame experienced on the individual level. This general model of sexual constraint and sexual emancipation is not restricted to national comparison and the explanation of sexual violence, but allows the investigation of historical changes in one nation.

Before the model is introduced in detail, gender issues have to be set into perspective to cross-national differences. Public concern and opposition are structural variables that just like

cultural variables of sexual constraint and emancipation are expected to have a different impact on males and females. Gender differences are expected to be prevalent and similar -- certainly not identical -- in North America and Northern Europe. Schneider (2002b) demonstrated that in today's young generation, gender differences are marginal compared to cross-cultural differences between the United States and Germany. Schneider's findings are supported by Muehlenhard and Cook (1988), Weinberg et al. (1995, 2000), and Schwartz (1993).¹ There was an overall lack of gender interaction effects even in the forecast of permissive sexual attitudes (Weinberg et al., 2000). The merger of violent and sexual concepts was observed in the U.S. data for males and females (Schneider 1999b). Again, cross-cultural differences were substantial compared to minimal gender differences.

While this relative gender symmetry might come as a surprise to many, the current rupture in the gendered research on domestic violence might be even more shocking. According to Buzawa and Austin (1993), Lobel (1986), Stets and Straus (1989), Sugarman and Hotaling (1989), Anderson (1998), and Larimer et al (1999) females and males have a similar likelihood to engage in domestic violence. Brush (1990) finds that even though "no significant difference between men and women in committing violent acts" (p.59) is found, "women are more likely to be hurt than men" (p.59). In a related argument, Morse (1995) sees similar prevalence for males and females but higher incidence rates for males.

It is not within the scope or interest of this work to investigate or dispute gender differences with respect to domestic violence. In the establishment of the model of sexual constraint and emancipation, I focus on the explanation of the larger cross-national differences. Once this model is established, further research might investigate the differentiations expected to explain the smaller gender differences.

THE MODEL OF SEXUAL CONSTRAINT AND SEXUAL EMANCIPATION

Extending Giddens' Ideas of Modern Sexuality into a Process Model that Establishes Sexual Ideal Types

The model of sexual constraint and emancipation is inspired by Giddens' (1992) idea of sexuality becoming privatized in late modern societies. If people experience sexual constraint because of public concern, they can hide sexual-erotic identities. A society in which privacy is used to hide sexual-erotic identities from public concern and social opposition will be typified as a society in the state of sexual constraint. Becoming independent from the demands of church and state, societies allow self determination. Here, sexual-erotic identities might become private because they are not the subject of public concern and social opposition anymore. If privatization of sexuality is based on independence, we can typify a society as reaching the state of sexual emancipation.

FIGURE 1 HERE

Dynamics in the Model: Micro-Macro Interdependence

Sexual constraint and emancipation are ideal typical states that allow many nuances. Societies may progress and regress between these ideal typical states over time. A model portraying these states cannot be static, but has to be a process model. It has to demonstrate the development of a society from the state of sexual constraint to the state of sexual emancipation and the regression from sexual emancipation to sexual constraint.

If sexual identities are stigmatized, and the sexual life of people is scrutinized, people retreat by withdrawing their sexual behavior from public attention. Social opposition, stigmatization, and the shameful retreat into privacy indicate sexually constraining societies. If

public concern and opposition become less dominant in a given society, retreat becomes less relevant for the individual, and privatization will be more likely a result of independence. If this is the case, societies progress from the ideal typical point of sexual constraint in the direction of sexual emancipation. This progress will be stabilized and driven by the resulting decrease of public concern and opposition that in turn changes the quality of privatization from retreat in the direction of independence. While sexual constraint exemplifies macro determination, sexual emancipation does not imply that sexuality is exclusively determined by the individual; sexuality is still a social construction (Foucault 1984). However, stigmatization and public concern, reflected in cultural practices and structural regulations, impose less constraint for the individual or sub-cultural construction of sexuality.

We can interpret the model of sexual constraint and emancipation as a process model with interdependent structural actions (Wallace 1983) that establish a homeostatic causal loop maintained by reflexive self-regulation (Giddens 1979). Depending on the two prerequisites, this model shows two potential oscillating saddle points (Heise 1975): sexual constraint and sexual emancipation. Once partial self-determination is achieved and people become more emancipated in their sexual behavior, reasons for their constraint vanish. This process will not happen overnight. However, once a more liberal climate allows for privatization as independence and sexual emancipation becomes more prevalent, the cause for public concern and social opposition is reduced (dotted lines in figure 1). The degree of independence defines the quality of privatization. The emerging new quality of privacy allows identities to be sexually-emancipated. Sexual constraint and sexual emancipation are ideal typical opposites that mark the endpoints of a continuum.

The states of sexual constraint and emancipation can coexist in a given society, be prevalent at different stages in the life of an individual, and/or be operational for different sexual

contexts at a given time. If true segregation of church and state is achieved, individuals have the choice to live outside the moral scrutiny of religious institutions. They can live in a world of sexual emancipation while the world of individuals, who are followers of sexually repressive religions, is sexually constrained. In this ideal case, different segments of a society will be at different stages in the model of sexual constraint and emancipation. While living in a world of peer concern, individuals might experience sexual constraint as teenagers. Becoming more independent from their peer group, and moving more towards internal referential systems, these individuals might experience sexual emancipation as adults. A bisexual person might experience different degrees of sexual constraint and emancipation at the same time, depending on the sexual identity he or she chooses.

Dynamics in Identity

Giddens' (1992) idea of the "transformation of intimacy" helps to illuminate the relative development of sexual eroticism in different cultures or the historical development within one culture. Giddens asserts that Freud (1953), Reich (1961), and Marcuse (1970) are wrong in their belief that modern societies depend on sexual repression. Instead, "sexuality became sequestered or privatized ... as a result of social rather than psychological repression" (Giddens 1992: 177). Growing public concern about sexuality and a tendency of social life to oppose individual sexual self-determination are two social factors that lead to the retreat of the sexual-erotic domain into private life.

In an environment that grants the opportunity to keep identities private, and where, at the same time, the sexual-erotic domain is subject to intense moral scrutiny by the public, people learn to withdraw sexuality from public attention. In a more recent trend, sexuality follows the characteristic tendency in modernity, "the creation of internally referential systems -- orders of

activity determined by principles internal to themselves” (p.174). Following this tendency, sexuality is emancipated from the influence of church and state and becomes an independent area of social life. This independence allows sexuality to be evaluated with internal referential systems, which enables behaviors to become truly private.

Public concern and social opposition lead to a state of sexual constraint. Subjected to potential investigation and stigmatization of their sexual identities, people will seek privacy for their sexual lives. If possible, they can hide their sexual identities. By hiding their identities, they use privatization as a retreat. Here, sexual eroticism is governed by external referential systems of a repressive society that attempts to regulate and control the sexual behavior of the individual. In most empirical cases of repressive societies, the public opposes individual freedom in the choice of sexual behavior. If there is concern about behaviors, identities, or displayed values in a certain domain, and if this domain is stigmatized, people will suffer. To avoid their suffering, they will welcome the opportunity of keeping stigmatized sentiments private. Privatizing the stigmatized sphere will help individuals evade open shame. As long as external referential systems are still predominant, privatization can only be chosen as a retreat. In this case, only the open shame can be avoided; unacknowledged shame (Scheff 1990a) will still be present. Modern societies introduce personal freedom by granting individuals certain degrees of privacy that can be used as a retreat. This alone, however, does not contribute to sexual emancipation. Public concern and social opposition in a society will not be altered if individuals retreat into privacy, and sexual constraint will be prevalent.

With the advanced independence from church and state, people not only evade the social repression constituted by public concern and social opposition, but see sexual eroticism as a private matter entirely. Here they are able to engage in experiences determined by their partner’s knowledge and interest rather than by public concern and social opposition. In order to enter the

state of sexual emancipation, societies have to offer opportunities for self-determination and have to respect privacy. Referential systems, then, start to become internalized, allowing individuals to be emancipated in their choice of behavior. Using internal referential systems people create their own forms of sexual eroticism that are independent from public concern and social opposition. Hereby they achieve self-determination. At this state in the model, privacy is no longer a matter of retreat, but of emancipation. Shifting the focus to an internal referential system and locating sexuality in the private sphere is extremely crucial for the formation of sexual-erotic identities. This reflexivity that Giddens associates with modern sexuality makes the concept of identity methodologically relevant for an investigation of sexuality.

Mead (1913, 1934) and Cooley (1922) stated that reflexivity is a necessary prerequisite for the construction of a self. Following Mead, the concept of self can be seen as a self-conscious ego that merges in the interaction between the “I” and the “me.” This is a dynamic process where the self interacts with previous stages of itself and/or with selves that take the attitude of another, or there will be no development of the self. The person will “leave the field of the values to the old self (1913, p.378),” which Mead calls selfish. “The justification for this term [selfish] is found in the habitual character of conduct with reference to these values” (p.378). In the life of many Americans this habitual character can be seen as structured by hard work and a pattern of consumption. The concept of consumption can be applied in the sexual domain. Sexual consumption, removed from procreation, that Giddens (1992) calls plastic sexuality, and love have become a valuable object by itself. This objectification leads to a standstill in the development of the self. Mead stated that the development of the self is dynamic. In order to engage in a moral process in which new selves arise, people have to stop their habitual actions and reflect upon the problems of their selves. This process of development was later systematized by Strauss (1995) who, in his biographical historical methodology, emphasized the social histories of the identity.

Strauss, like other identity researchers (e.g. Burke 1980, Stryker 1980, Zurcher 1977), called this the reflexive self-identity.

Here, the concept of reflexivity is important in two ways. In an application of the concept of the ideal type, I transfer the idea of the reflective development of the self or identity to the macro level of social and cultural structural analysis. On an individual level, reflexivity also is a prerequisite for the emergence of shame (Lewis 1971, Scheff 1990a).

Social Problem of Violence in Sexually Constrained Societies

Why should it matter how privacy is achieved? If privacy for sexual-erotic identities is achieved through retreat to avoid public concern and stigmatization instead of independence, shame emerges. Following Scheff's model of shame and violence, when people have to hide their stigmatized identities, unacknowledged shame will arise. This shame manifests itself in emotions of anger and violence. Emotions of anger and violence will be associated with their cause – shame --- creating a shame violence spiral. In contrast, the sexuality of sexually-emancipated individuals will not contribute to this shame-violence spiral.

Cooley (1922) stated that we are virtually always in a state of either pride or shame. In her theoretical and empirical work on shame, Lewis (1971) furthers this idea by distinguishing between acknowledged and unacknowledged shame. Scheff (1990a) and Retzinger (Scheff and Retzinger 1991) state that sexual repression leads to unacknowledged shame which in turn may escalate into violence. High levels of public concern and social opposition lead to a constrained sexual identity. Sexual constraint facilitates the emergence of episodes where shame is misnamed or avoided, and individuals experience unacknowledged shame. Emotions are a product of the self-other relationship (Heise 2002, MacKinnon 1994, Scheff 2003). If sexual-erotic identities are salient (Stryker 1980, Stryker & Serpe 1982) to individuals whose sexuality is constrained, shame

will merge into more general sexual-erotic concepts, and sexuality receives a violent undertone.

EMPIRICAL SUPPORT

While a formal test with new data is not within the scope of this work, empirical evidence is provided by discussing results of a number of existing studies. These studies add evidence at different levels of observation. Comparing legal regulations demonstrates differences in the normative structural environment that, depending on the research perspective, reflects or forms the cultural expectations towards identities. Studies of affective meanings that show cross-cultural differences in the stigmatization of sexual-erotic identities and corresponding emotions add support to the cross-cultural application of the model. Sentiments towards sexual-erotic identities, emotions and behaviors, referred to as the sexual-erotic domain, are the most abstract category investigated for empirical support of the model. Finally, support is also found for the consequences of shame evoked by sexual constraint. Here, cross-cultural differences in sexually violent behavior are compared by using crime statistics in the United States and Germany.

Public Concern Expressed by Legal Regulations

Sodomy laws serve as an example of public concern, regulation, and stigmatization of the sexual-erotic domain. Even if regulations are not always likely to be legally enforced, they have the potential to criminalize substantial portions of the population. While by 1992 sodomy laws were still on the books in 24 American states (Boszormenyi-Nagy 1993), by 2002 they were still upheld by 14 American states, Puerto Rico, and the U.S. military (American Civil Liberties Union 2002). The regional pattern of the states that still uphold the sodomy laws is interesting. Sodomy laws are present primarily in the South, a region that historically showed a time lag in diversity issues. The empirical development in sodomy laws demonstrates how the model of sexual constraint and

behavior can be used not only in cross-national comparison, but to investigate cultural differences and historic change in a culturally diverse nation (Strauss 1995).

In terms of public concern, the German equivalent to the anti-homosexuality content of the sodomy laws is §175 in the criminal code (Bundesgesetzbuch §175). The criminalization of specific sexual acts disappeared when this paragraph was substantially modified in 1969. In a second revision in 1994, the age of consent was lowered to fourteen for heterosexual and homosexual relationships, behaviors that qualify as statutory rape in all states in the United States. Today, German law is simply less concerned about sexuality than U.S. law. Sodomy laws and the statutory rape legislation serve as examples establishing empirical evidence that the sexual-erotic domain is more regulated in the United States than in Germany. The explicit and detailed legal regulations of the sexual-erotic domain in the United States formally indicate public concern and social opposition.

Stigmatization of Sexual-erotic Identities

Schneider (1999a) replicated a U.S. study of the affective representation of sentiments (Heise 1988, 2001, Smith-Lovin & Heise 1988) in Germany. Sentiments (e.g., identities, emotions, and behaviors) are rated on Osgood's semantic differential scale (Osgood 1962, Osgood et al. 1975). Semantic differential ratings of sentiments on the evaluation, potency, and activity dimensions are very similar for American and German undergraduates. However, they differ in the sexual-erotic domain.

On an evaluation scale of affective responses where identities received a rating of negative three to positive three, U.S. males rated sexual-erotic identities with -0.86 .² This compares to the slightly positive ratings of 0.08 for German males. With an evaluation rating of 1.06 U.S. females stigmatized sexual-erotic identities insignificantly higher than U.S. males. German females, who

evaluated sexual-erotic identities very similar to German males (0.10), failed to stigmatize sexual-erotic identities. Based on these data, Schneider (1996) is not able to reject his main hypothesis that “*if Americans and Germans agree on the sexual-erotic denotation of sentiments, sentiments will differ disproportionately in their affective representations*” (p.124, italics in original). U.S. undergraduates systematically stigmatize sexual-erotic identities. This stigmatization does not happen in Germany. In further analysis Schneider (2002a) finds a causal relationship between sexual-erotic connotation and stigmatization in North America. Regressing evaluation, the inverse of stigmatization, on ratings of sexual explicitness of identities fits a quadratic curve, where some indication of sexuality actually contributes to the positive evaluation of identities. Sexually explicit identities, however, are stigmatized. This stigmatization of sexual-erotic identities is much stronger in the North American data than in the German data.

Emotions of Guilt and Shame

People try to confirm their identities by normatively creating events that give rise to emotions that affectively represent their identities; therefore, identities and emotions are closely related. This identity-emotion-link is described in current symbolic interactionist models (Britt & Heise 2000, Heise 2002, MacKinnon 1994, Owens, Stryker and Goodman 2001, Schneider & Heise 1994). Stated simply: good people are supposed to feel good, bad people should feel bad. People who act upon their sexual-erotic identities will construct events that make them feel sexual-eroticism. Sexual-eroticism is an affective state that can be represented by identities or emotions. The affective meaning of identities, emotions, and emotional states are rated on a semantic differential scale (Osgood 1960). Emotions are empirically matched by their ratings of affective meaning to correspond to the average rating of role-identities with sexual-erotic denotation. Emotions, or emotional states closest to the average rating of sexual-erotic identities, are selected as examples

of typical emotions associated with sexual-erotic identities.

Schneider (1996) finds that sexual-erotic identities in the United States are associated with emotional states, like being *panicked*, *irate*, *impatient*, and *furious* (Italicized emotions and emotional states refer to empirical results). Emotions of anger and violence are experienced by Americans as typical emotions that accompany sexual-erotic identities. These emotions stand in contrast to the emotion of being *excited* or the emotional states of feeling *moved* seen by Germans to correspond to the same set of sexual-erotic identities. For German subjects, sexual-erotic identities did not show any indication of anger or violence.

Another cross-cultural study (Schwartz 1993) compares the emotional sexual experience of U.S. and Swedish female undergraduates. American female undergraduates are more likely than Swedish female undergraduates to report negative affective reactions, such as feeling guilty or fearful after their first coitus. Similar results are reported for males and females in the study conducted by Weinberg et al. (1995). Here it is not only the first but also the most recent coitus in which “the Americans stand out in reporting the highest percentage of feeling guilty and the lowest percentage of feeling happy” (p.422).

Studies of Schwarz (1993), Weinberg et al (1999), and Muehlehard and Cook (1988) support the link between sexual constraint and feelings of guilt and shame and they demonstrate that feelings of guilt and shame are more prevalent amongst young Americans than young Northern Europeans when sexual-erotic identities are salient. They add substantial empirical support to my argument that in the United States public concern and stigmatization lead to sexual constraint and shame.

Merger of the Sexual-erotic Domain with Sexual-violence

I demonstrated that emotions correspond with identities. Implementing classic role theoretical

assumptions (Turner 1962), it can be stated that behavior will correspond to social roles or identities. If an identity carries the denotative meaning of sexual-eroticism, emotions and behaviors will also be likely to correspond with that meaning. In this way, I close the circle and come back to the term “sentiment” that includes the concepts of identity, emotion, and behavior. I refer to the abstract category of sentiments associated with sexual-erotic identities as the sexual-erotic domain. Another important domain, mainly identified by stigmatization of potent sentiments, is the coercive-deviant domain.

The ability to differentiate between sexuality and violence is largely determined by the exclusion (versus overlapping) of these categories (Schneider & Roberts, 2004). In Germany, where stigmatization of sexuality is largely absent, sexual connotation should exclude deviant connotation. In North America, where sexual identities, emotions, and behaviors are stigmatized, the deviant domain should overlap with the sexual domain, making it difficult to differentiate between concepts of sexuality and deviant coercion. The absence of differentiation should merge the deviant and sexual domain in North America. This merger of sexuality and violence in the United States is demonstrated in an explorative K-means cluster analysis of affective meanings (Schneider 1999b). The U.S. data fail to establish a category of sexual eroticism; instead, sexual-erotic sentiments join coercive deviant concepts in one category. This merger does not happen in the German data where the sexual-erotic domain emerges as a separate cluster.

Violent Sexual Behavior Reflected in the National Crime Statistics

The dramatic differences between Germany and the United States in the prevalence of sexual violence make both nations good examples for demonstrating the explanatory power of the model (Schneider 2002a). A comparison of the German statistics on rape, attempted rape and sexual assault in the Polizeiliche Kriminalstatistik Bundeskriminalamt (2000) and the American statistics

published in the Uniform Crime Reports (UCR, 2000) indicate an approximate threefold difference of prevalence of sexual violence separating the United States and Germany. Such crimes were reported for 32 of 100,000 females in the United States, compared to 9.1 of 100,000 females in Germany. These results are supported by a special comparative investigation of the Bureau of Justice Statistics (1998). Using data from 1992 and limiting the comparison to former West Germany and Berlin, the 114 page report indicates a fivefold difference in reported rape rates. The magnitude of these cross-national differences in sexual violence reported to the police by far exceeds the differences that might be based on different reporting behaviors.³

CONCLUSION

Studies support the idea of a double moral standard in the United States. This double moral standard is both the consequence and cause of people's tendency to shield sexual identities from public concern and opposition. Contradictory moralities in the United States cause emotions of shame and guilt. In the case of American undergraduates, sexual-erotic identities are shown selectively within the peer group that is most likely the source of sexually permissive attitudes. However, since the peer group is also aware of the general traditional norms, keeping the display of sexual-erotic identities within the peer group cannot fully prevent stigmatization. This awareness creates a "catch 22" situation for those who give in to the pressure and appear sexually explicit. American undergraduates are unlikely to rationalize peer pressure. If they give in to peer pressure, they will attribute their display of sexual-erotic identities to internal motivation. In this way, they take responsibility for breaching moral norms and experience emotions of shame and guilt. For American undergraduates, the salience of sexual-erotic emotions leads to the emergence of shame and guilt.

Stronger regulation of sexual behavior stems at least partly from the double moral standard

that is observed in the population of American undergraduate students. The restrictive part of the double moral standard is rooted in the traditional norms of the Protestant ethic. Shame and embarrassment associated with eroticism might be triggered by the reaction of religious or political fundamentalists who find fertile ground in American religious heritage. This argument can be traced back to Weber (1930, Schwedberg 1998), who describes the Protestant ethic as a basic determinant of the American culture, in which earthly indulgence, and sexual indulgence in particular, is considered sinful. The double moral standard, prevalent in the United States, leads to stigmatization of sexual-erotic identities. Further, it is this double moral standard that leads to a selective display of sexual-erotic identities which generally are achieved by retreating into privacy.

Value change is a progressive force in a society (Inglehart 1977, 1990, 1997). It should be apparent that cycles of conservatism lead to a regression⁴ of the social value system of a society. In my model, external cultural and structural changes can lead to an increase in public concern and opposition and hereby cause a society to regress from emancipation into constraint. One might argue that in the seventies, sexual attitudes amongst young Germans and North Americans were more similar, and that the indicated differences stem from a current U.S. trend of moral conservatism indicated by Inglehart.

The ideal typical categorization of Americans as sexually constrained and Germans as sexually emancipated is based on several studies using undergraduates or people reported to the police who cannot be assumed to be representative of sexual minorities, such as the lesbian, bisexual, or gay population. While I do not expect that the empirical cross-cultural differences that I cited in support of the model can be generalized for the non-heterosexual population in both cultures, the model itself is able to scrutinize empirical differences and developments of sexual subcultures. This flexibility of the model was indicated in the description of the model's dynamics

where I stated that states of sexual constraint and emancipation can coexist in a given society, be prevalent at different stages in the life of an individual, and/or operational for different sexual contexts at a given time. The model, therefore, is not only applicable to empirical realities of mainstream culture, but can be used to scrutinize dynamics in subcultures. The process of sexual emancipation, described in the model, for example, parallels arguments in the social movement literature on the gay subculture (Kitsuse 1980, Schneider, 2000). Overcoming the private retreat and following the slogan of “getting out of the closet,” members of the gay/lesbian subculture met an educated elite that was within a specific historical time frame willing to grant them self-determination. Members of the gay community were able to exchange pride for shame (Britt and Heise 1997). Changes in the United States were so drastic that even in times of neo-conservatism and the AIDS crisis (Marcus 1992), large portions of the subculture were at least able to use privatization as a retreat. Bill Clinton’s “don’t ask, don’t tell policy” is an example of how these private retreats become institutionalized. Even though the subculture in general might have suffered a backlash in their ability of self-determination, they did not end up in mental institutions or jails as in the time before their sexual emancipation.

While supporting empirical examples were chosen for the application of cross-cultural comparison between the North American and German society, there is no reason to assume that the model itself cannot be used for the analysis of subcultures. The model can also be generalized for the analysis of people who are living in different cultural or sub-cultural realities simultaneously or sequentially. Since the model allows states of sexual constraint and emancipation to be seen as operational for different sexual contexts at a given time, it can be applied to people, such as bisexuals, whose multiple sexualities are subject to different degrees of public concern and opposition. Here it becomes possible to illuminate the problematic nature of segmentation faced by many individuals who have to comply with different normative standards concerning their multiple

sexualities. This segmentation can be very similar for multicultural individuals who are confronted with different standards of public concern and opposition for a single form of sexuality.

I presented shame as a potential outcome of sexual constraint and as a cause of sexual violence. There are multiple perspectives on today's problem of sexual violence, and there is most likely more than one cause. In a society of sexual fragmentation it might look strange to pinpoint sexual constraint as a cause of violence. Some who might see sexual variation as sexual freedom might argue that in contemporary American society we have an unprecedented level of emancipation. However, one has to keep in mind that the more specialized sexual identities are the more rules are necessary to regulate what is prescribed by mainstream society.⁵ By definition, these regulations lead to constraints.

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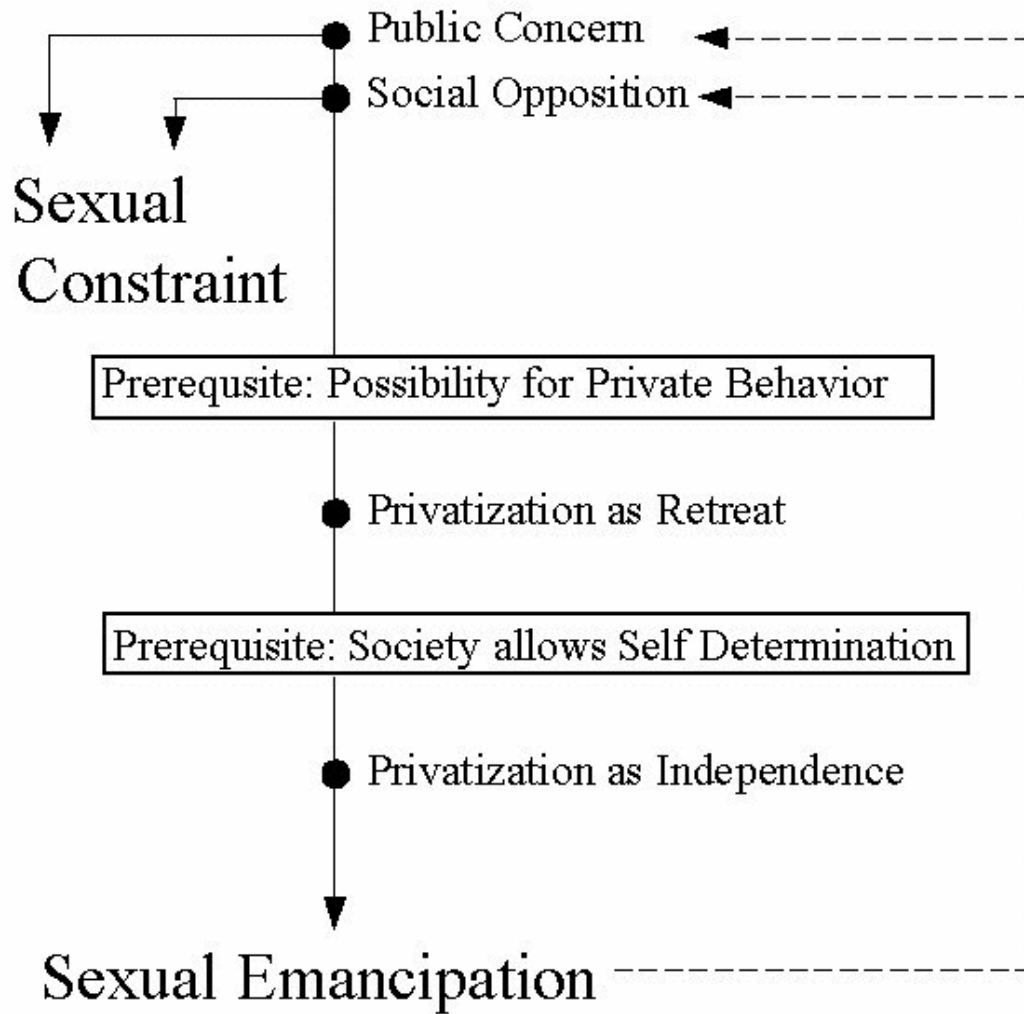


Figure 1: Model of Sexual Constraint and Sexual Emancipation

Endnotes:

¹ Just like Muehlenhard and Cook, Schwarz, and Weinberg et al. in their Northern European studies, the gender differences Schneider (1999a, 2002a) finds in his cross-cultural studies on sexual-erotic identities, emotions, and denotative categories of sentiments are marginal compared with the cross-cultural differences between the same gender. There were no significant differences between U.S. males and females in their stigmatization of sexual-erotic identities. Neither was there a significant difference between German males and females in their attitudes towards sexual erotic identities. However, U.S. males and females were significantly different from German males and females who failed to stigmatize sexual-erotic identities.

² The U.S. and German data used here is part of David Heise's (2004) simulation program JAVA INTERACT located at <http://www.indiana.edu/~socpsy/ACT/interact/JavaInteract.html>. Data can be analyzed with the program or exported for analysis with a statistical package. The cross-cultural data collection project is described by Heise (2001).

³ Schneider 2002a describes the problematic nature in the cross-cultural comparison of institutional key variables for overreporting: the definition of rape, and the institutional labeling of rape. Authors vary widely in their estimate of overreporting and underreporting in both nations. A detailed discussion of these differences is beyond the scope of this paper and might actually not be fruitful. Fortunately for this investigation, the cross-cultural differences in reported sexual violence are so tremendous that differences in reporting behavior are by far cancelled out and do not have to be accurately determined. Schneider (2002a) provides the empirical comparison of the 1995 rape statistics in detail. The magnitude of cross-cultural differences in these 1995 data is virtually identical to the 2000 data used here.

⁴ The term "regression" is used as an antonym of Inglehart's term "progression" and does not imply any value judgment.

⁵ The author served as an academic advisor of 'headspace,' a student group of an American University, formed to educate the community about Bondage, Dominance, Sadism, and Masochism (BDSM). One of the major concerns of the observed group was to establish and maintain rules that are described as safe, sane, and consensual. Even though these three basic rules cannot be taken for granted in mainstream society either, practitioners of BDSM go to much more expense to develop and follow regulations that ensure that these basic laws are protected. In group discussions, overall sexual play was reported to be much more reflected, verbalized, and negotiated in the form of rules and even contracts than in mainstream sexual activity.